

**Between the Hammer of the Occupation and the Anvil of Corruption:
Who Radicalizes the Palestinians?**

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A new chapter in the Palestinian question started in 1993 after the Palestinian Liberation organization (PLO) and Israel signed the Peace Accord. According to Oslo accord, the Palestinian Authority (PA) was to have built state institutions by 1999, Israel was to withdraw from the occupied territories in 1967 and the Palestinians were to have the right to self-determination. The main guideline was to have two states for two peoples. The Oslo process has utterly failed, and the Palestinians have lost their own strategy in the fight against occupation, and have become more fragmented than ever¹. The relation with the Israeli occupation has changed, and it reached a deadlock of negotiation for finalizing the agreement. In 2005, Sharon took the decision to disengage from Gaza with a tactic that weakened the PA. Meanwhile, Palestinians in the refugee camps in Syria are suffering in the same way as the Syrians are amid the civil war and the brutality of the regime. The Palestinians in Lebanon are not happier than their counterparts in Syria or the occupied territories. The more tragic situation affecting the Palestinians is the internal division between Fatah and Hamas, with no possible prospects for reconciliation².

The Palestinian suffering consists of the occupation that is taking more lives, confiscating land and building settlements, imprisoning thousands of the Palestinians, besieging Gaza Strip, depriving the Palestinian economy and stealing the natural resources in the occupied territories. Moreover, three major wars against the Gaza Strip have killed thousands of innocent people in less than six years. The psychological effects of the three wars on Palestinian youth are tremendous³. They were raised in a militarized environment where they have been witnessing horrors. As a result of the conflict, according to a new report by the U.N. Conference on Trade and Development Gaza, will be “uninhabitable” by 2020⁴. Israel and the radicals in the Israeli government made their best effort to end the two state solutions. They buried it in a ways that made finding a solution hopeless. The Israeli closure of the Gaza Strip has led to economic deprivation after having besieged almost two million people, most of whom are youth. The siege is not only by the Israeli, but also the Egyptian authorities. Since 30th June 2013, Egyptian authorities closed the only gate for individuals from Gaza to the outside. This was a policy against the Muslim Brotherhood’s branch in Palestine, Hamas⁵.

¹ <https://www.opendemocracy.net/abdalhadi-alijla/oslo-twenty-years-later>

² http://www.yourmiddleeast.com/opinion/why-palestinians-are-aggrieved-by-the-arab-spring_20733

³ <https://electronicintifada.net/content/frustrations-rise-rafah-crossing-closed-again/10064>

⁴ <http://unctad.org/en/Pages/PressRelease.aspx?OriginalVersionID=261>

⁵ <http://gisha.org/graph/2399>

Makdisi observes that a Palestinian cannot work, travel, study, tend crops, transport goods, dig for water, or even visit relatives in the next town without obtaining appropriate permission from the Israeli authorities. And so Palestinian life is subject to any 'ever-changing' and 'unpredictable' web of curfews, checkpoints, roadblocks, ditches, and closures, which keep Palestinian life 'off balance'⁶. Reinhart argues that the Palestinians are being pushed by the Israeli occupation into locked and 'sealed enclaves', fully controlled from the outside. This practice, she argues, is imprisoning the whole of Palestine in an unprecedented model of occupation⁷. This places Palestine into what Walter Benjamin refers to as a "state of emergency". A 'state of emergency', is where desperate conditions are not the exception but the rule of people's lives. The transformation of the perspective of the occupation's practices and policies in the occupied territories to be seen as normal rules sustain the state of emergency. In this state of emergency, the Palestinians live under societal, economical and political strain.

The steadily increasing number of divorce, increasing number of suicides, a very high rate of unemployment, decline in female students enrollment in universities, the hopelessness and frustration presented in social media among youth⁸, and the emergence of new social and middle class elites, backed by the political and economical strong personals⁹. According to Dr. Ayman Sahabani, emergency department chief in Gaza's main hospital, more than 30 suicide attempt arrive to the hospital every month. He asserts that the majority of them are young people¹⁰.

The other factor that fuels the feeling of hopelessness, frustration and anger from the situation in Palestine is the corruption of the Palestinian Authority in the West Bank and the carelessness and corruption of Hamas de-facto governance regime in the Gaza Strip. The corruption, nepotism, and patrimonailism in the public sector and public private institutions, and more widely so in

⁶ Makdisi, Saree. Palestine inside out: An everyday occupation. WW Norton & Company, 2010.

⁷ Reinhart, Tanya. The road map to nowhere: Israel/Palestine since 2003. Verso, 2006.

⁸ Hamed G I, Gahad, The Sociological Perspective on: The Attitudes of Arab Youth Towards Peaceful and Non-Peaceful Conflict Resolution, Institute for Middle East Studies, Canada (IMESC), ISBN: 978 -0-9918971-4-8, PP 1-7 (Online) February 2014. Page 3.

http://media.wix.com/ugd/88d1d4_101b0b1c5d344077b54b8e93fe669e3b.pdf

⁹ http://www.yourmiddleeast.com/opinion/from-jaljalat-to-daesh-radicalism-by-isolation-in-gaza_30180

¹⁰ <http://samanews.com/ar/index.php?act=post&id=219081><http://samanews.com/ar/index.php?act=post&id=219081>

civil society have different faces; from misusing public resources and budget to appointment of relatives in public positions at the account of others.

The recent leaks of official letters between ministers and members of the Palestinian leadership in the Palestinian liberation Organization and the Palestinian Authority shows tremendous violations of good governance and exploitation of the public budget for personal use. In one letter, a high rank official asked the prime minister to cover private school fees for the daughter of one of the ministers whose family lives in Jordan. The same official asked the government to cover private clinic costs for his family abroad. Although the prime minister denied his request, this example shows how huge costs and misconduct of public budget can be. It also reflects the way those officials have been managing the public budget in the past. Another leaked document shows that member of the executive committee of PLO asking the president for personal tickets for him and his wife to visit his daughter in the United States¹¹. Other letter document the request of the supreme court judge asking the president to appoint his lawyer son, proposing that he could be appointed in the foreign affairs department or one of the security apparatus, and not in the judicial system, to avoid roamers and corruption allegations. Other documented fact shows that one official has appointed his daughter and son in the foreign affairs department in the Palestinian embassies. These letters could be only very few compared to the roamers going on about the hug corruption in appointments, financial scandals and so on in the Palestinian Authority institutions. Many activists, including me as well, have asked the PA to publish the names of the Palestinian diplomats serving abroad, but these calls were ignored. The list of names could show how, for example, the Palestinian diplomats were appointed on behalf of the closed circles of the PA and PLO families. These leaks come at a time where most of the Palestinian youth are unemployed, and lack basic political and social rights in the West Bank and Gaza strip¹². According to V-Dem data, bribery and corruption among the executive in Palestine happens occasionally but it is not predictable (Graph 1)¹³

The same misfortune applies to the Gaza Strip. Hamas took over the Gaza strip in 2007, with no clear plan on how to govern the closed strip. With the Israeli siege and wars against the Gaza Strip, the place is left as a ghost city with no adequate infrastructure to sustain human life. The economic deprivation that leads to high unemployment rate among youth denied the majority of the Palestinian youth any chance to be productive. The pressure that Hamas put over the Palestinians through their regional stands against the Egyptian regime, rejection of national reconciliation, and the manipulation of their political interest, harmed the Palestinians in the Gaza

¹¹ <http://www.aljazeera.net/news/arabic/2015/8/12/السلطة-مالية-فسادا-تكشف-مسربة-وثائق>

¹² <http://www.alquds.co.uk/?p=385032>

¹³ www.v-dem.net

Strip and the West Bank. Hamas' policies denied them their political and social rights; lead them to support the extreme right, which is comprised of Islamist groups.

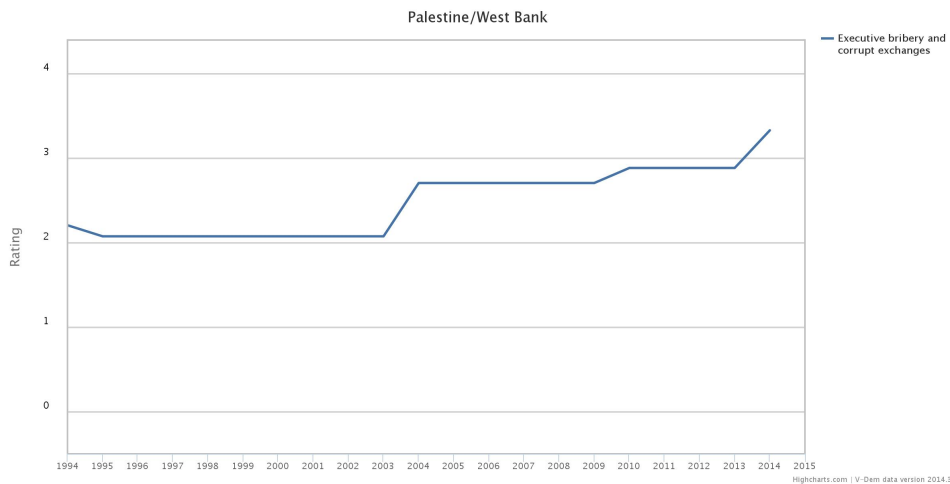


Figure 1 Executive bribery and corrupt exchanges in the Palestinian Authority.

Besides that, Hamas' severe corruption and exploitation of humanitarian aid, breakdown of civil society, and employment of their own members in their de-facto government, indefinite attempts of Islamization in schools, universities, public places laws and regulations¹⁴, increase of taxation for their benefit can only be seen as a manifestation of corruption and abuse of the Palestinians in the Gaza Strip. There is also corruption in the Palestinians civil society and its networks in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank¹⁵. Graphs 2 and 3 indicate how is the level of freedom of association in both parts of the occupied territories, under Hamas and the PA.

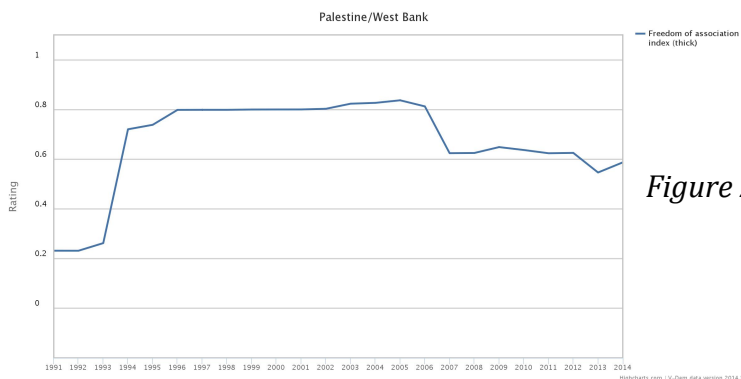


Figure 2 Freedom of association in the West Bank

¹⁴ <http://www.alarabiya.net/articles/2009/07/30/80323.html>

¹⁵ http://www.yourmiddleeast.com/opinion/the-epic-failure-of-palestinian-civil-society_28094

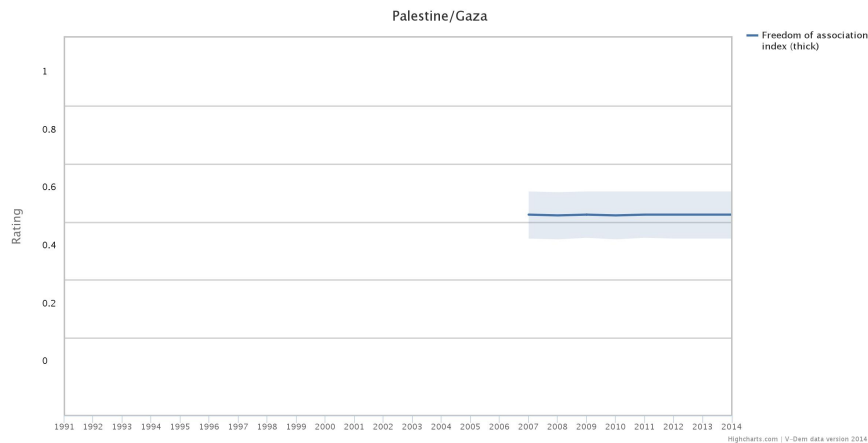


Figure 3 Freedom of association in the Gaza Strip under Hamas control

The increasing number of the Palestinians who joined and joining ISIS, in comparison to previous, is an indicator of radicalization in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank. These signals must be examined very carefully. The increasing numbers of radicals is not a matter that can be tackled through ending their driving forces, as their aftermath can continue to decades after that.

Many factors and events have been contributing to the radicalization of the Palestinians, particularly in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank. These factors, and others, including the widespread of the Salafis groups, funded by Saudi Arabia, the division, misunderstanding of Islam and its holy texts and the crack down of the opposition (Fatah in Gaza and Hamas in the West Bank). Although there are many factors assist in radicalizations of the Palestinians, two main driving forces of radicalization in the Occupied Palestine, namely, the Israeli occupation and the corruption in the Palestinian institutions. Both of these factors led the Palestinians to be a hopeless, frustrated, and under immeasurable societal, economical and political pressure.

Other factor that contributes to the radicalization of the Palestinian society is the internal conflict between Islamic factions. After Hamas took over the Gaza Strip, new groups, offshoot from Hamas, Jaljalat, declared their separation from Hamas, launching attacks against coffee shops, barbershops and security stations¹⁶. Moreover, the new division of the Islamic Jihad in the Gaza strip, which resulted in a new movement, affiliated with Iran, called, Al Sabirin movement¹⁷. There is accusation against this movement as being the new steps in Shiite groups, affiliated with

¹⁶ <http://www.bakerabubaker.info/index.php?action=show&pageID=587>

¹⁷ <http://www.aljazeera.net/news/reportsandinterviews/2015/7/9/أولى-بغزة-الصابرين-حركة>

Iran, in the Gaza strip. This led to more division and attacks against leaders and activists of this movement¹⁸.

As a result of the two monsters; the occupation and corruption, there is no wonder why dozens of Gaza's youth are traveling to fight along ISIS, and more of them are pledging allegiances for ISIS and other radical groups. The feeling of hopelessness, pain, anguish, misery, sorrow, desperateness gravity, and depression will eventually lead to more radical Palestinians. Israel's policy of taking millions of Palestinians as hostages, denying them their basic human rights, which accompanied by a corrupt Palestinian Authority institutions have contributed significantly to what happening in both parts of the occupied Palestine.

In sum, radicalization in the Palestine is fueled by the Israeli occupation, and the rest of the factors are results of the present and continuous occupation. The occupation allows regional powers to interfere, supporting the emergence of new groups, either radicals or not, in the name of fighting the occupation. Corruption is another element that must be fought in order to open hopes for the Palestinian youth that they have a shared and bright future in a democratic country.

What is needed now is a very serious and immense effort by international community and world powers to end the Israeli occupation, and then ensure transparency in the Palestinian administrative system. Without this, Palestinians will be more radicalized than ever, and we must not wonder and ask why and how they become so radicals while these factors are in front of our eyes.

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¹⁸ <http://www.watania.net/news/60141-الشيخ-اغتيال-محاولة-الصابرين-حركة>

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