IBN HALDUN UNIVERSITY
SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY

DOCTORAL THESIS

THE ISLAMIC BLOC IN PALESTINIAN UNIVERSITIES: STUDENT RESISTANCE, MOBILIZATION, AND POLITICAL OPPORTUNITY STRUCTURES

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by
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A thesis submitted to the School of Graduate Studies in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Sociology

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ÖZ

FİLİSTİN ÜNİVERSİTELERİNDE İSLAMİ BLOK: ÖĞRENCİ DİRENİŞİ, MOBİLİZASYON VE FIRSAT YAPILARI

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Bu çalışma, Filistin'in İslami öğrenci hareketi olan İslami Blok'un 1980'deki kuruluşundan 2021'deki Seyf el-Kuds ayaklanmasına kadar geçirdiği dönüşümü eleştirel bir bakışla analiz etmektedir. Çalışma, İslami Blok'un mobilizasyonunu yalnızca kültürelci açıklamalara ya da yapısal determinizme indirgemeye yönelik basitleştirici anlatıları sorgulamaktadır. Bunun yerine, Blok'un dönüşümünün; tarihsel dönüm noktaları (örneğin, Birinci İntifada, Oslo Anlaşmaları, Gazze savaşları), mekânsal-kurumsal bağlamlar, siyasi fraksiyonlarla kurulan ittifaklar ve üniversite idarelerindeki özerklik düzeyi gibi kültürel özneleşme ile yapısal koşullar arasındaki dinamik etkileşim tarafından şekillendiğini ileri sürmektedir.

1980–2021 dönemini kapsayan sözlü tarihler ve birincil kaynakların nitel analizine dayanan bu araştırma, Filistin'in farklı üniversitelerinde İslami Blok'un mevcut ve eski üyeleriyle gerçekleştirilen 31 derinlemesine mülakata dayanmaktadır. Çalışma, siyasi fırsat yapıları ile sosyo-politik aidiyetlerin (fraksiyonlar, üniversiteler ve İsrail/Filistin otoriteleriyle ilişkiler) kolektif mobilizasyon üzerindeki etkisini incelemektedir. Yöntemsel olarak araştırma, sosyal hareket teorisi ile konumlandırma teorisini birleştirerek sömürge karşıtı direniş ve kolektif hoşnutsuzluk söylemlerini kurumsal ve fraksiyonel dinamiklerle ilişkilendirmektedir.

Bulgular, etkili mobilizasyonun yalnızca hoşnutsuzluk temelli bir özneleşme değil, aynı zamanda siyasi olarak özerk kampüs ortamları ve İslami Blok'un değişen güç dengelerine stratejik uyumu gibi olanak sağlayıcı yapılar gerektirdiğini ortaya koymaktadır. Bu çalışma, işgal altındaki koşullarda İslami öğrenci hareketlerini analiz etmek için bütüncül bir çerçeve sunarak literatüre katkıda bulunmakta; dini söylem ile yapısal fırsatın, hareket inşasında birbirine zıt değil, birbirini tamamlayan unsurlar olduğunu göstermektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Direniş, Filistin, İslami Blok, Öğrenci Hareketleri, Sosyal Hareketler.

ABSTRACT

THE ISLAMIC BLOC IN PALESTINIAN UNIVERSITIES: STUDENT RESISTANCE, MOBILIZATION, AND OPPORTUNITY STRUCTURES

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This study critically analyses the transformation of the Islamic Bloc, Palestine's Islamic student movement, from its inception in 1980 to the 2021 Seif Al-Quds uprising. It challenges simplistic narratives that reduce the mobilisation of the Islamic Bloc to either culturalist explanations or structural determinism. Instead, it argues that the Bloc's transformation has been shaped by the dynamic interplay between cultural agency and structural conditions, including historical turning points (e.g., the First Intifada, Oslo Accords, and Gaza wars), spatial-institutional settings, alliances with political factions, and the degree of autonomy within university administrations.

Based on a qualitative analysis of oral histories and primary sources spanning 1980–2021 and drawing on in-depth interviews with 31 current and former members of the Islamic Bloc across multiple Palestinian universities, the study explores how political opportunity structures and sociopolitical affiliations (with factions, universities, and Israeli/Palestinian authorities) influence collective mobilisation. Methodologically, the research integrates social movement theory and positioning theory to bridge discourses of anti-colonial resistance and collective grievance with institutional and factional dynamics.

The findings reveal that effective mobilisation requires both grievance-driven agency and enabling structures, particularly politically autonomous campus environments and

the Bloc's strategic adaptability to shifting power landscapes. The study contributes to the literature by offering a holistic framework for analysing Islamic student movements under occupation, highlighting how religious discourse and structural opportunity are co-constitutive rather than oppositional forces in movement building.

Keywords: Islamic Bloc, Palestine, Resistance, Social Movements, Student Movements.

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I would like to extend my sincere appreciation to all my interviewees, some of whom were arrested or remain imprisoned, others who were displaced and forced to live in refugee camps, and some who were tragically assassinated during the most recent war on Gaza. I carry their voices with the utmost respect and gratitude.

Finally, I offer my deepest thanks to my family, who have supported me every step of the way. To my beloved mother, sisters, and brother, your constant prayers gave me strength. To my husband, Hasan Obaid, thank you for your emotional and scholarly support. And to my children, Tayba, Elia, and Ahmad, you are my greatest source of determination and purpose. This achievement is also yours.

Dalal Bajes SALEM

İSTANBUL, 2025

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LIST OF SYMBOLS AND ABBREVIATIONS

DFLP	Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine
DPSP	Democratic Progressive Student Pole (al-Qutub)
FYM	Fatah Youth Movement (al-Shabiba)
GUPS	General Union of Palestinian Students
IAP	Islamic Association for Palestine
IB	Islamic Bloc (al-Kutla al-islamiyya)
IL	Islamic League (al- Rabita al- islamiyya)
ILPG	Islamic League of Palestinians in Germany
ILPS	Islamic League of Palestinian Students (al-Rabita al-islamiyya li-Talabat Filastin)
ILPY	Islamic League for Palestinian Youths
ISM	Islamic Student Movement (al-Haraka al-tullabiyya al-islamiyya)
ITPS	Islamic Trend of Palestinian Students (al-Ittijah al-Islami li-Talabat Filastin)
KSF	Kuwaiti Student Federation
MB	Muslim Brotherhood (al-Ikhwan al-Muslimun)
MSU	Muslim Student Union
N/A	Not Available
PASF	Palestinian Authority Security Forces
PFLP	Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (al-Jabha al-Shabiyya li-Tahrir Filastin)
PLO	Palestinian Liberation Organization
PSA	Palestinian Student Association
PSM	Palestinian Student Movement
SCM	Structural Cognitive Model
SM	Social Movement
SMO	Social Movement Organization
USMI	Union Student Muslim in Italy

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION: CONTEXT, RATIONALE, AND THE STAKES OF STUDENT RESISTANCE

The origins of the Islamic student movement in Palestine can be traced to 1978, when a number of Islamist students, most of them linked to the Muslim Brotherhood, at Birzeit University in the West Bank secured control of one of the campus's most influential cultural platforms, the Literature Club. Two years later, in the 1980 Birzeit Student Council General elections, Islamist candidates gained 40% of the vote. By the following year, the initiative to establish an Islamic bloc had reached universities throughout Palestine. From that point onward, al-Kutla al-Islāmiyya (the Islamic Bloc, IB) maintained a consistent record of finishing in either first or second place in student elections at higher education institutions in both the West Bank and Gaza (Ghayatha 2000, 118–119; Bajes 2012, 193–194). Over time, this student movement became the central mechanism for supplying Hamas with both members and supporters in Palestine.

1.1. The Importance of This Study

Understanding the transformations that have occurred within Palestinian student movements, particularly the Islamic Bloc, over the years helps in comprehending their roles in contrast to their historical nature and self-formation. Yet the significance of this inquiry is not merely historical or descriptive. It is sociologically important because Palestinian student activism offers a unique vantage point for testing and expanding core concepts in social movement theory, such as collective identity, political opportunity structures, and framing, in a context of occupation, authoritarian fragmentation, and scarce political arenas. This study responds to a research gap in the sociology of social movements, which has often been dominated by Euro-American experiences of liberal democracies and thus insufficient for analyzing movements in colonized or semi-authoritarian contexts. The Palestinian case also carries

contemporary theoretical relevance: it demonstrates how youth-based movements sustain resistance, generate political subjectivities, and reshape organizational strategies in times of political closure. By foregrounding student activism as both a driver and mirror of wider societal transformations, this research contributes to sociological debates on resistance, mobilization, and the articulation of agency under protracted colonial conditions.

Examining the Palestinian student movement, particularly the Islamic Bloc (IB), is significant well beyond the confines of Palestinian universities and academic institutions. Tracing the shifts experienced by specific social actors in Palestine over time offers insight into how their current roles diverge from, or align with, their historical identities and modes of self-definition. Student movements have become central to Palestinian resistance.

In the context of an enduring absence of stable conditions necessary for holding national political elections, both syndicate (union) and student activities often assume the function of political arenas. This transformation arises from the scarcity of open political spaces in which parties might otherwise express their views freely and assert their presence and influence in public life (Tarrow 1994, 81).

Historical junctures have been among the most significant determinants of transformations in the Palestinian student movement. However, other determinants are almost equally important, including the places where the student movement developed, as well as the independence of Palestinian university administrations from security apparatuses and political structures in making their internal decisions. The arrangement of these factors in the hierarchy of priorities varies, making one or a group of them the decisive factor in the transformations of the roles of the Palestinian student movement.

In 1981, the IB members distributed a leaflet describing themselves as “Muslims governed by the Book of Allah and the Sunnah of His Messenger in everything we ask or say or do… We chose Islam as a faith and a way of life. We do not force anyone to choose what we have chosen, but we reject that anyone forces us to choose what one has chosen for himself.” (Islamic Bloc in Birzeit 1981)



Figure 1.1. Taken for IB leaders in 1984 at Birzeit University During the Electoral Campaign. The Banner Displays Two Slogans: "Islam is Our Identity" and "There is no Compulsion in Religion."

The 2004 bylaws of the Islamic Bloc retained the core of its earlier self-definition but expanded it to include a national component. In Article 2, the movement portrays itself as "a Palestinian youth movement that adopts a complete Islamic perspective way of life; it is the student wing of the Islamic movement and the intellectual extension of the Muslim Brotherhood" (Islamic Bloc, 2004, Article 2). According to the Islamic Bloc in Birzeit (2012), its objective is to "Islamize the university society and convince the students of the need for an Islamic solution for our main cause and the issues of liberation, land, and identity."

In 1984, the Islamic Bloc outlined the reasons for its establishment in its official magazine, *al-Muntalaq*. According to the publication, its goals were:

> To achieve the will of Allah in remaining as a congregation on the right side, nothing will harm them until Allah says his word, and to raise an Islamic banner so all Muslims shelter under it, and to implant psychological and practical preparedness for the Islamic state and a caliphate. The IB exists as an expression of the ideology and conscience of the nation, to show the truth and provide real service to the nation in general and students, and to work to guide

people and remind them of Allah to return to Islam so Islam returns to them (Islamic Bloc in al-Najah 1984).

The Islamic Bloc was not only the earliest organized student group representing the Islamic movement within Palestinian society, but it also ignited the initial wave of revolutionary activity in 1980. The Muslim Brotherhood (MB) had no political branch in Palestine until 1987, when the Hamas movement was officially launched alongside the outbreak of the First Intifada. That same period also saw the creation of its armed faction, the Qassam Brigades (Kata'ib al-Qassam), although its formal announcement did not occur until 1992.

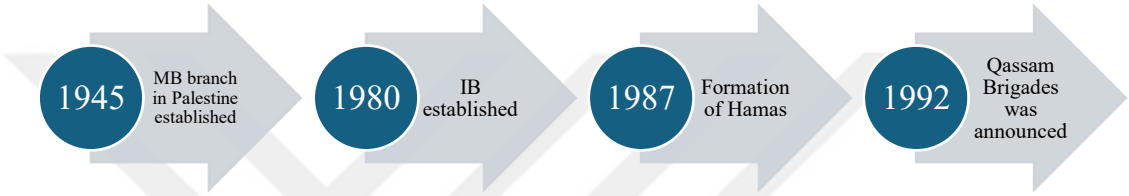


Figure 1.2. Timeline of IB Establishment

The timeframe examined in this study spans from 1980, when the Islamic Bloc (IB) formally came into existence, to 2021, the year in which Saif al-Quds battle took place. To assess the evolution of such a social movement, it is necessary to trace the shifts in its power over time. Understanding how sources of social mobilization interacted with pivotal historical moments, such as the Oslo agreements, the First Intifada, and later the Gaza wars and Palestinian division, provides a basis for explaining both the persistence and the transformations of the Islamic Bloc within the Palestinian territories.

1.2. Key Research Questions and Contributions

The observation by Altbach (1991, 250) that "where student activism is traditionally accepted as a legitimate element of the political system, it is more likely to have an impact on society" seems relevant to Palestine, where the student movement has played a major role in politics, culture, and educational development. The relationship between the student movement and Palestinian factions also played a significant role in the transformations of the student movement in Palestine. Four stages of this

relationship can be identified after the Nakba of 1948. Firstly, the establishment of the student movement and its militant and representational status. Secondly, integration with Palestinian factions. Thirdly, subordination to Palestinian factions and institutions and their agendas, and finally, the separation of the student movement from its mother movements (Obaid 2024).

The primary objective of this study is to enhance understanding of the student movement, particularly the IB, in the context of Palestinian resistance actions. This objective is theoretically relevant because, despite the prominence of Palestinian student activism, existing scholarship has tended to be either historically descriptive or narrowly institution-specific, often reducing the Islamic Bloc to a factional arm of Hamas. Such approaches overlook the broader sociological questions of how collective identity, political opportunity structures, and framing processes shape students' willingness to engage in resistance despite personal risks. Moreover, the post-2007 period of political division and intensified repression in Palestinian universities remains underexamined.

Equally important is the centrality of education to Palestinian society, which renders universities a disproportionately significant arena of political and social life. Palestine maintains one of the highest literacy rates in the Arab world, with 96.3% of the population literate, including 94.1% of women, up from 78.6% in 1995 (UNDP 2014; PCBS 2023). Higher education has expanded at an extraordinary pace, with enrollment rising by 940% between 1993 and 2011. Today, approximately 42–45% of youth pursue tertiary studies, well above the global average (The Global Economy, 2023; UNISON, 2024). Secondary enrolment also remains high, at about 90%. Notably, women constitute an increasing proportion of students, reflecting both the social centrality of education and its role as a space of gendered transformation. Scholars and policymakers alike have observed that Palestinians also rank among the highest populations globally in per capita PhD attainment (UNISON 2024).

In this context, universities serve not merely as sites of learning but as critical political arenas where broader struggles over identity, resistance, and nationhood are enacted. By situating the IB within social movement theory with a positioning theory approach, this study addresses these gaps, offering a more comprehensive framework for

understanding the relationship between student activism, identity formation, and resistance in contexts of protracted conflict.

A central focus is the transformation of the IB's framing processes, examined through the lens of political opportunity structures and mobilization frameworks. By exploring the drivers behind the IB's growth, influence, and organizational development, the study sheds light on how this student movement has maintained continuity and sustained its ability to mobilize and lead resistance efforts across multiple Palestinian universities and academic institutions. This study poses the following central questions:

- How is collective resistance, historically led by the student movement, influenced by political opportunity structures during the major historical turning points in the West Bank and Gaza?

- How does the relationship between the Palestinian student movement and the Palestinian factions influence the student movement's transformation towards resistance and its ability to mobilize adherents and lead collective actions?

The research questions deal with the relationship among three main variables: (1) the Palestinian factions as a social movement, (2) the student movements as asocial movement organizations, and (3) the orientation towards resistance and using armed resistance. This led me to study three determinants that could affect the collective action within the student movement body and the IB in my case study: 1) the historical junctures in the Palestinian cause, 2) the geographical places where the student movements developed, and 3) the relationship of the universities' administrations with political structures in West Bank and Gaza.

1.3. The Method

To address the core questions of this case study, a qualitative research approach was employed. Alongside a review of the existing literature, the methodology combined the analysis of primary sources and data with the use of unstructured narrative interviews. This study adopted a historical-descriptive approach, which is particularly

suitable for tracing the evolution of the Palestinian student movement and the Islamic Bloc (IB) within it. This method allows for situating contemporary patterns of mobilization and identity formation within a longitudinal context, revealing how historical, social, and political transformations shaped the movement over time (Ragin 1994; Yin 2017). The approach also enables the identification of causal and correlational relationships between organizational strategies, political environments, and patterns of activism, while accommodating the complex sociopolitical realities of Palestine.

The study is limited to the period from 1980, when the Islamic Bloc (IB) was founded, up to 2021, culminating in the Battle of Saif al-Quds. This temporal boundary is both methodologically and substantively justified. The Battle of Saif al-Quds represents a major political and social turning point in Palestinian history, marking significant changes in national mobilization, political activism, and university-based student movements. By concluding the study at this event, the research captures the IB's trajectory from its foundation through a critical phase of crisis and transformation, allowing for a coherent historical narrative that links organizational formation, strategies, and ideological development with broader political contexts. Limiting the study to 2021 also allows for a sufficiently long temporal span, four decades, to trace the evolution of the student movement, including phases of expansion, consolidation, repression, and adaptation, without fragmenting the analysis or introducing incomplete data for post-Battle developments, which are still unfolding and not fully documented. Moreover, this endpoint corresponds to the material available in the IB's archives and the documented experiences of interviewees; after the Battle of Saif al-Quds, many archival materials have been lost, destroyed, or stolen, including in Gaza during genocide and at Birzeit University during multiple military attacks. Focusing on this period, therefore, ensures that the analysis is grounded in verifiable sources and reliable firsthand accounts. Finally, ending the study with this event allows for a concentrated examination of how historical developments, organizational strategies, and student mobilization intersected under conditions of political repression and occupation, highlighting the IB's resilience and transformation up to a decisive moment in Palestinian resistance. From a methodological perspective, the historical-descriptive approach requires clearly defined temporal boundaries to construct valid

historical phases, trace organizational development, and analyze patterns of action over time, making 2021 a natural and meaningful endpoint for this research.

This timeframe encompasses key phases in the movement's development, including its formation, consolidation, and responses to political crises. The historical phases were delineated based on major organizational and political milestones, identified through preliminary archival research, organizational documents, and secondary literature. These phases were designed to capture the critical transformations relevant to the research objectives, allowing for a nuanced understanding of continuity, expansion, and decline within the IB's activities.

Between 1980 and 2021, the movement produced a wide range of printed and audiovisual materials, bylaws, magazines, brochures, internal circulars, newspapers, photographs, videos, and audio recordings that serve as the primary sources for this thesis. Many of these items were preserved in the IB's archives within Palestinian universities, while others were stored in official university collections or retained by former activists. Additional records were drawn from security reports concerning the organization. Although a small portion of these materials has been analyzed in prior scholarship, the bulk of the collection is examined here for the first time.

Gaining access required both formal and informal efforts: visiting university archives, engaging directly with past members of the IB, and securing permission from the group's leadership to review restricted archival holdings on campus. This archival work was critical, as many materials have since been destroyed in Gaza during genocidal attacks, while others were stolen by the Israeli military during the invasion of Birzeit University, including significant portions of the IB's organizational records. The careful collection, preservation, and analysis of these sources not only provide a methodological foundation for this thesis but also constitute a form of historical documentation, preserving knowledge that would otherwise have been irretrievably lost.

As part of the research, I carried out unstructured narrative interviews (Minichiello et al. 1990; Arksey and Knight 1999; Alvarez and Urla 2002; Fontana and Frey 2005; Corbin and Strauss 2008) with thirty-one co-founders and leaders of the IB in both the

West Bank and Gaza, representing male and female participants. Conducted from 2011 to 2017, these interviews yielded insights unavailable in archival collections or previous scholarly work. Each participant was interviewed in two or three separate meetings, with individual sessions lasting approximately two to three hours. The opening session invited interviewees to speak openly and narratively, without the constraints of rigid questioning or a fixed format. After reviewing and analyzing the first session's content, I developed more targeted, in-depth questions to guide subsequent meetings, enabling a richer and more nuanced understanding of their experiences.

Table 1.1. Demographics and Statement of Interviewees

Participants	Gender	Place	Age	Arrested before	What happened to them
1.	Female	Hebron, West Bank	41	no	Migrated to Turkey
2.	Male	Gaza	67	N/A	Assassinated
3.	Male	Gaza	63	N/A	Displaced
4.	Male	Gaza	65	no	Lost contact since November 2023
5.	Male	Gaza	67	yes	The house is destroyed; he is out of sight
6.	Male	Sudan	62	no	Still an activist
7.	Male	Nablus, West Bank	64	yes	Shot in both legs, arrested
8.	Male	Lebanon	60	no	Still an activist
9.	Female	Nablus, West Bank	57	no	N/A
10.	Male	Ramallah, West Bank	44	yes	Went through one of the longest hunger strikes after being arrested
11.	Female	Ramallah, West Bank	65	yes	Established an educational institution
12.	Female	Ramallah, West Bank	38	yes	Arrested and deported from the university by military decision
13.	Male	Berlin, Germany	63	no	Still activist

Table 1.1. (cont.)

14.	Male	Ramallah, West Bank	58	yes	N/A
15.	Female	Ramallah, West Bank	36	no	N/A
16.	Female	Ramallah, West Bank	38	no	N/A
17.	Male	Gaza	44	N/A	Lost contact with him after being displaced to Rafah
18.	Male	Ramallah	61	yes	Arrested, along with his four sons (all leaders in the IB)
19.	Female	Ramallah	33	yes	Arrested
20.	Male	Jerusalem	35	no	Migrated to UAE
21.	Female	Hebron	55	yes	Arrested, tortured, and released in a prisoner exchange at the beginning of the war
22.	Male	Gaza	35	no	Migrated to Turkey
23.	Female	Hebron	40	yes	Arrested 3 times
24.	Female	Ramallah	34	no	N/A
25.	Female	Ramallah	34	no	N/A
26.	Male	Ramallah	67	yes	Established an educational institution
27.	Male	Ramallah	43	yes	Banned from entering Palestine for five years.
28.	Male	Ramallah	35	yes	Arrested 4 times
29.	Male	Ramallah	62	yes	His brother was assassinated in the Rafah massacre; their house was seized and vandalized.
30.	Male	Gaza	55	N/A	Lost contact with, after being displaced to Rafah
31.	Female	Ramallah	41	no	Migrated to Jordan

Norman Denzin (1989) emphasizes that understanding a participant's world requires entering it from that individual's perspective and on their own terms. Guided by this principle, I adopted a positioning theory framework as the methodological lens for interpreting and analyzing the unstructured interviews conducted in this study. Using positioning theory, I explored how interviewees narrated their experiences, asserted

agency, redefined their identities, and inspired action, connecting individual stories to broader patterns in the origins, development, and consequences of social movements (Ganz 2001, 9).

Using positioning theory as my analytical framework, I aimed to explore how interviewees narrated their experiences in their own terms, asserted agency, redefined their identities, and inspired action. This approach allowed me to connect individual stories to broader patterns in the origins, development, and consequences of social movements (Ganz 2001, 9), focusing here on the Islamic Bloc. Rooted in social constructivism, positioning theory operates on several key assumptions, including that human behaviour is both goal-oriented and shaped by group norms, and that individual subjectivity emerges from each person's history of interactions with others (Barnes 2004, 1). As Harre et al. (2009, 6) note, studies employing this perspective examine cognitive processes that support human action, particularly by clarifying how specific behaviours acquire meaning within particular contexts. Through this lens, I sought to uncover the underlying motivations driving the actions of IB leaders and members, whether in relation to other student movements or in their interactions with the political regime.

As a researcher with prior exposure to student activism and familiarity with the IB, I occupy a dual positionality: partially insider, with access to certain narratives and organizational practices, and partially outsider, maintaining analytical distance to critically assess patterns and transformations (D'Silva and Smith 2014; Ntanyoma 2021). This dual position allowed for unique access to participants while ensuring critical reflection on interpretations. The insider perspective provided trust, cultural fluency, and a nuanced understanding of organizational practices, while the outsider perspective offered critical distance and prevented uncritical acceptance of narratives (Chhabra 2020). To mitigate potential bias and leverage these positions productively, I employed triangulation across interviews, archival documents, and secondary literature, alongside reflexive journaling and peer debriefing throughout the research process to examine assumptions, minimize bias, and enhance analytical rigor (Ntanyoma 2021).

Ethical considerations were central to this research, particularly given the political sensitivity of the subject and the vulnerability of participants. Confidentiality was ensured, informed consent was obtained, and particular care was taken in handling narratives related to arrests, displacement, or violence. Positionality also influenced ethical engagement, as navigating insider access required maintaining participants' trust while upholding critical objectivity (D'Silva and Smith 2014; Chhabra 2020).

The historical-descriptive method offers several key advantages for this study. It enables comprehensive documentation of the movement's trajectory over four decades, situates individual experiences within broader temporal and political contexts, and allows for the identification of structural patterns and critical turning points. By combining archival research with oral histories, this method also ensures rich, multi-layered insights into organizational development, collective identities, and leadership strategies (Ntanyoma 2021; D'Silva and Smith 2014).

However, there are inherent limitations. Historical sources may be incomplete, selective, or biased, and recollections from interviews may be influenced by memory, personal interpretations, or retrospective rationalization. To address these challenges, the study employed triangulation, cross-referencing archival materials, interviews, and secondary literature (Ntanyoma 2021; D'Silva and Smith 2014). Ambiguities or discrepancies in the sources were critically analyzed and discussed, and care was taken to contextualize participant narratives against documented historical events.

Fred Kniss and Gene Burns (2009, 696) identify three clusters of empirical questions relevant to the study of religious social movements, each corresponding to a distinct level of analysis. At the micro-level, or cultural/ideological level, the focus is on how religious beliefs and values influence the formation and direction of collective action. The meso-level, or organizational level, examines the functioning of religious organizations within their specific fields of activity. Finally, the macro-political level addresses the institutionalized relationships that develop between religious movements and the state.

In examining the collective action of the Islamic Bloc (IB), this thesis applies the three levels of empirical inquiry outlined by Kniss and Burns (ibid.). These analytical lenses

are employed primarily, though not exclusively, through the theoretical frameworks offered by Social Movement Theory. In particular, the study draws on the collective identity approach, framing processes, resource mobilization theory, and the concept of political opportunity structures to interpret the IB's strategies, organizational development, and interactions within the broader Palestinian political landscape. These approaches will help me answer my main questions about the similarities in the nature of the formation of the Palestinian student movement, especially the IB. It will also help in understanding the factors contributing to the continuity and expansion of student movement activity, as well as its decline. But it alone will not be sufficient to answer my deep inquiries regarding the specificity of the Palestinian situation. These approaches were formulated among American and European societies, which are not societies subject to occupation. Even if the theorists demonstrated an understanding of the specificity of conditions in countries subject to colonialism, they were unable to encompass all the factors contributing to the work of social movements in those countries. For this reason, I will also adopt Banu Eligür's (2010) approach to analyzing Islamic movements.

The combination of the historical-descriptive method, unstructured narrative interviews, and positioning theory provides a rigorous and complementary framework for this study. The historical-descriptive approach allows for a systematic tracing of the Islamic Bloc's development over four decades, situating individual and collective experiences within broader political and social contexts. Narrative interviews enrich this historical analysis by capturing personal insights, motivations, and interpretations that are not available in archival or published sources. Positioning theory further enables a nuanced understanding of how participants assert agency, construct identity, and interpret their social world, connecting micro-level experiences to meso- and macro-level organizational and political dynamics.

Central to this methodology is the extensive archival material collected and analyzed for this study. These archives—comprising printed and audiovisual materials, internal circulars, photographs, videos, and other documentation—offer a rare and irreplaceable window into the IB's history. Many of these materials are now lost, having been destroyed in Gaza during recent genocidal attacks, while others were stolen by the Israeli military during the invasion of Birzeit University, including

significant portions of the IB's organizational records. The collection, preservation, and careful analysis of these sources therefore represent not only a methodological necessity but also a historical act of documentation. This archival work provides a foundation for the thesis, ensuring that the trajectories, strategies, and experiences of the IB are recorded and analyzed with depth and authenticity, offering insights that could not otherwise be recovered.

Together, this integrated methodological approach—archival research, narrative interviews, and positioning theory—ensures both the rigor and originality of the study, capturing the complex interplay between history, organization, ideology, and individual agency in the Palestinian student movement under conditions of occupation and political repression.

1.4. Foundations of the Argument: Beyond Grievance

This thesis challenges common explanatory frameworks that reduce the mobilization of the Islamic student movement in Palestine to reactive expressions of grievance or religious conservatism. For instance, some security-oriented or modernization accounts, such as those found in Rubin (1997) or Levitt (2006), tend to portray Islamist movements primarily as protest formations responding to Western hegemony or socio-political marginalization, often framing them as anti-modern or inherently opposed to democratic values. While grievance and cultural factors may play a role, this thesis argues that such interpretations are insufficient. Instead, it proposes a multidimensional approach that situates the Islamic Bloc within broader social movement theory, political sociology, and ethnographic analysis. Specifically, it explores how political opportunity structures, moral discourses, organizational strategies, and religious identity intersect to shape student activism in ways that are neither simply reactionary nor reducible to cultural essentialism. By foregrounding the voices and narratives of IB members themselves, the study offers a more grounded account of how Islamic student movements in Palestine articulate agency, belonging, and ethical commitment in the context of both occupation and internal fragmentation. First, it emphasizes that historical junctures, key political, social, and national turning points, have been critical in shaping the trajectory and transformations of the Palestinian student movement and its modes of resistance. Second, it highlights the

significance of place, showing how the specific contexts in which the movement developed influenced its strategies of resistance and political engagement. Third, the thesis underscores the dynamic relationship between student movements and broader Palestinian political factions, revealing how these alliances and rivalries have shaped the resistance frameworks adopted by student activists. Finally, it argues that the degree of autonomy exercised by Palestinian university administrations, particularly their independence from security apparatuses and political structures, has played a crucial role in either facilitating or constraining the student movement's capacity for organized resistance.

What this thesis is trying to prove is that both grievances and a social movement must exist for a successful social movement mobilization to occur. In my case, collective resistance, as a collective action, not an individual one, is the one to be studied within this thesis.

1.5. Literature Review: Perspectives on Mobilization and Resistance

From a historical perspective, several scholars have examined student movements across regions such as Europe, North America, India, and Africa, aiming to build a comparative theoretical understanding of student activism. Their work explores the factors driving such activism, the ways it is organized, its ideological orientations, and its eventual outcomes, as well as the social backgrounds and identities of the activists themselves (Altbach 1969, 1989, 1991, 1992, 2015; Luescher-Mamashela 2005, 2013, 2015; Zuo 1995; Zuo and Ratsoy 1999).

In their review of scholarship on student participation within universities, Zuo and Ratsoy (1999, 2–3) identify five broad thematic categories shaped by different theoretical perspectives. These include studies on decision-making processes, particularly participative decision-making, followed by work grounded in human growth theories and democratic theory. Other strands of research focus on models of university governance, the historical development of student involvement in higher education governance, and the legal and legislative dimensions of student rights in such contexts.

Other scholars have analyzed how students acquire knowledge and develop within post-secondary settings through what are known as student development theories (Chickering 1969, 1974; Perry 1970, 1981; Chickering and Schlossberg 1994; Schlossberg, Waters, and Goodman 1995; Schlossberg, Lynch, and Chickering 1989). These theories are generally grouped into three main analytical types. The first, psychosocial theories, focus on interpersonal growth and identity formation, exemplified by Arthur Chickering's model of identity development (Chickering and Schlossberg 1994, 2). The second, cognitive-structural theories, examine changes in how individuals think and make decisions, as in William Perry's cognitive model of student development (Perry 1970, 3). Third, typology theories explore variations in how people perceive and interact with the world, with Holland's career choice theory and the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator serving as notable examples (Myers 1980, 1998; Holland 1973). While these frameworks offer valuable insights into individual student growth, they tend to focus primarily on personal development rather than the broader socio-political contexts that shape student life. In contexts where student activism and political mobilization are prevalent, such as in Palestine or South Asia, students' experiences may be significantly influenced by collective ideological, religious, and political engagements. Thus, complementing these developmental theories with perspectives from political sociology and social movement theory may offer a more comprehensive understanding of how students are formed not only as individuals but also as participants in wider social and political processes.

Scholars have approached the study of Palestinian student movements from a variety of angles. Some have adopted a historical perspective that emphasizes the political role of students and their alignment with established political factions (Ghayatha 2000; ʾIsʿaiyyed 2003; Khader 2008; Zelkovitz 2015). Others have focused on the contribution of higher education to shaping Palestinian national identity (Khalidi 1997; Abu-Lugud 2000; Paz 2000; Baumgarten 1991, 2006; Barakat 2008). A further strand of research narrows the scope to examine the influence of the Islamic movement, particularly Hamas, on the formation of Palestinian identity, using the Islamic Bloc (IB) as a primary case study (al-Kahlut 2009; Bajes 2012). This thesis builds on these different strands by integrating historical, political, and identity-based analyses to develop a more comprehensive understanding of the IB's role within Palestinian student activism.

Research on the Palestinian student movement suggests that religiously oriented student activism has been present since the earliest years of Palestinian universities. Scholars note that such movements also existed before that period at universities across the Arab world, including in Jordan, Egypt, and Kuwait (Ghayatha 2000; Paz 2000; Baumgarten 1991, 2006; Bajes 2012; Zelkovitz 2015). This broader regional precedent provides an important backdrop for understanding how the Islamic Bloc (IB) emerged and developed within the Palestinian higher education system.

Ghayatha (2000), himself a former student activist, identified the Islamic Bloc (IB) as the most stable of all Palestinian student movements, distinguished by its sustained level of activity over time. Although he devoted fewer than nine pages of his 226-page thesis, *The Palestinian Student Movement: The Practice and Effectiveness*, specifically to the IB, he observed that the movement had gained control of student councils at most Palestinian colleges and universities almost from its inception in 1980 (Ghayatha 2000, 118). Using a historical and descriptive approach, Ghayatha traced developments through the late 1990s, concluding that the Palestinian student movement's influence began to wane after 1982, when the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) was forced to withdraw from Lebanon (ibid., 9). Adopting a similar approach, Zelkovitz (2015) relied heavily on Ghayatha's work, analyzing the student movement through both historical and sociological lenses and underscoring the role of higher education as a driver of social change during the same period, 1952–2000. While both scholars treat the student movement as their primary unit of analysis, this perspective does not fully illuminate how collective identity shapes student activism. In particular, it leaves unanswered the question of why individuals choose to engage in sociopolitical movements despite the personal risks involved, an issue central to the present study's focus on the IB.

In a similar vein, Reuven Paz (2000) examined how a distinct Palestinian national identity took shape within educational institutions in the West Bank and Gaza, noting that this process fueled a wave of Islamic "uprisings" at universities in the early 1980s. He traces the roots of the Islamic student movement further back, contending that it originated within the Muslim Brotherhood long before its formal establishment. Paz points in particular to the Brotherhood's involvement in student elections in Jordan during the 1960s as an early manifestation of this trend (Paz 2000, 82). This historical

perspective reinforces the idea that the Islamic Bloc's emergence in Palestine was part of a broader, long-term trajectory of Islamist student activism in the region.

In his master's thesis, Jihad Isʿaiyyed (2003) shifted the focus of analysis to individuals and leaders within the Palestinian student movement, treating them as the primary unit of study. He developed a set of criteria for evaluating leadership success and failure, among them the legitimacy derived from electoral victories. His analysis underscores the significance of strong communication between leaders and their followers, the formative impact of imprisonment on shaping and socializing student leaders, and the ability of those leaders to articulate shared goals and design strategic plans. Isʿaiyyed also points to the importance of leadership quality and the availability of training programs that identify and nurture promising student leaders, noting their influence on the wider membership of the movement. Ultimately, he highlights the central role of effective leadership in fostering political participation (Isʿaiyyed 2003, 119–136). This leader-centered perspective provides useful insights for the present study, which also considers how the experiences and strategies of Islamic Bloc leaders have influenced the organization's capacity to mobilize and sustain its activism.

Isʿaiyyed's research was based entirely on interviews with Palestinian student leaders from al-Najah University, offering a focused but institution-specific perspective. In a similar approach, ʿAyed al-Kahlut (2009) concentrated on the Islamic University, investigating the political awareness of Islamic Bloc (IB) members and the organization's role in shaping Palestine's political landscape. Drawing primarily on interview data, al-Kahlut examined the instruments and strategies of political education employed within the IB. While both works contribute valuable insights, their methodological scope is notably limited: each derives its conclusions from a single university case study. This narrow focus restricts the applicability of their findings to the broader Palestinian context, a shortcoming this thesis seeks to overcome by exploring the IB's leadership dynamics and mobilization efforts across multiple universities in both the West Bank and Gaza.

In my earlier work (Bajes 2012), I examined the Islamic Bloc (IB) as a case study to explore the role of the Islamic student movement in Palestine. Using Chickering's student development theory, I assessed the IB's influence on students at the individual

level, while Tajfel's social identity theory provided a framework for analyzing its impact on students' social relationships. However, the timeframe in Tajfel's study, 1978 to 2007, leaves the subsequent decade unexamined, omitting key developments in both the Palestinian student movement and the IB from 2007 to 2021. To cover this crucial period, marked by the Palestinian political division, I have drawn on three studies that offer complementary perspectives on the student movement during this time (Yousef 2013; Farra 2015; Tamimi 2015). These works were selected for their analytical depth, direct engagement with the student movement, and their empirical grounding in the political and organizational transformations that shaped activism in Palestinian universities. While other sources exist, these three were prioritized because they provide detailed examinations of the dynamics of factionalism, the strategies of the Islamic Bloc, and the broader implications of political division on student mobilization. Together, they offer a balanced and multi-faceted foundation for situating this decade within the longer trajectory of the student movement. In his examination of the behaviour and practices of the student movement in Palestinian universities, Ayman Yousef (2013) contends that from the early 1970s onward, the movement's foremost responsibilities were resisting the occupation and opposing settlement projects in the Palestinian territories. Alongside these national and political objectives, he also identifies a range of non-political functions, such as addressing financial concerns and tuition instalments, fostering a constructive academic environment, organizing student elections, and promoting democratic practices among students. This combination of political and non-political roles offers a useful framework for assessing how the Islamic Bloc (IB) has balanced its resistance-oriented agenda with responsibilities toward the student body.

The second study, conducted by Abdul Samad al-Farra (2015), evaluates the role of the student movement in generating political interest during the period of Palestinian division, drawing on the perspectives of students from al-Azhar and al-Aqsa Universities. Using a descriptive-analytical approach, al-Farra examined responses from a randomly selected sample of 486 male and female students in the Gaza Strip. The findings indicate statistically significant differences based on educational attainment, as well as variations linked to gender, academic field, and levels of religiosity across different regions (North Gaza, Central, Rafah, and Khan Younis). These insights shed light on how contextual and demographic factors shape student

political engagement, an issue that resonates with the present study's exploration of the Islamic Bloc's ability to mobilize diverse constituencies within Palestinian universities.

The third study, conducted by Salsabil Tamimi (2015), an Islamic Bloc (IB) activist at Birzeit University, assessed the organization's effectiveness in achieving its stated objectives during the period 2011–2015. Tamimi distributed 200 questionnaires to both IB adherents and non-adherents, asking respondents to evaluate the movement's success in meeting the goals outlined in its "Rules of Procedure." From the perspective of IB members, the results indicated a high level of effectiveness. The highest-rated item asserted that "The Islamic Bloc seeks to activate the Student Council's role through the efforts of its committees within the council," while another emphasized the IB's role in fostering national awareness and a sense of belonging among students. Conversely, the lowest-rated statement was that "The IB conducts political lectures and conferences to increase students' political awareness." These findings offer a recent, member-driven assessment of the IB's performance, providing a useful comparative reference for the present study's broader, multi-university analysis of the organization's influence.

The two Israeli-authored studies discovered in the Islamic Bloc archives (Anat 1996; Alma 2013) exemplify a form of anthropological engagement rooted not in scholarly inquiry but in the logic of surveillance and counterinsurgency. Conducted on behalf of Israeli security agencies, these studies rely heavily on confessions extracted under psychological and physical coercion, framing the Islamic Bloc (IB) as a "terrorist" organization whose student leaders allegedly graduate into positions of military or political power within Hamas. Their methodology is profoundly unethical, treating Palestinian student activism as an internal threat rather than a political and cultural response to occupation. These works, shrouded in anthropological language, function as tools of state repression, stripping Palestinian resistance of its historical and social meaning and serving instead to justify its neutralization.

This approach stands in stark contrast to Maya Wind's *Towers of Ivory and Steel* (2024), which offers a decolonial critique of the very academic system that produces and legitimizes such securitized knowledge. Wind documents in detail how Israeli

universities are directly implicated in the mechanics of occupation, including collaborations with weapons manufacturers, development of military technologies, and training programs aligned with the Israeli Defense Forces (Wind, 2024, pp. 97–115). While studies like those of Anat and Alma portray Palestinian students as potential terrorists for engaging in protest or resistance, Wind highlights the grotesque asymmetry in how Israeli students, many of whom are active-duty soldiers, are treated. On campuses built on expropriated Palestinian land, these students are permitted to carry weapons openly, attend lectures while armed, and are fully accommodated by university systems that harmonize academic life with military service (Wind 2024, 124–127).

This disparity reveals the ideological machinery behind knowledge production in the Israeli academy. Where Palestinian students are criminalized for resisting occupation, Israeli students are valorized for enforcing it, turning the university itself into an extension of the colonial project. Wind describes this process as "academic militarism," whereby the university acts not as a neutral space of learning, but as a site of settler-state consolidation (Wind 2024, 12). By contrast, the IB's mere existence is framed as illegitimate, its members denied not only academic freedom but the right to grieve, to protest, or to imagine a different future. Wind's work thus offers a decisive counterpoint to the securitized anthropology of Anat and Alma, where their studies erase Palestinian political subjectivity, Wind affirms its centrality, and the university's role in its suppression.

While previous scholarship has significantly advanced our understanding of student movements globally and within Palestine, several critical gaps remain. Much of the literature on Palestinian student mobilization is either historically descriptive, narrowly focused on individual institutions, or limited by a factional lens that overlooks the role of collective identity and sociopolitical context in shaping activism. Furthermore, existing studies treat student development and mobilization as either individual psychological processes or organizational outcomes, rarely integrating both dimensions. Particularly underexplored is the post-2007 period marked by deepened political division and shifting dynamics in Palestinian higher education. My study addresses these limitations by offering a sociological analysis of the Islamic Bloc (IB) as a student movement situated within the broader frameworks of collective identity,

political resistance, and ideological formation. Drawing on original interviews, archival materials, and longitudinal fieldwork across multiple institutions, this research contributes a nuanced and updated understanding of the IB's evolving role from 2007 onward. It also bridges the gap between student development theory and collective action theory, positioning the IB not merely as a factional actor, but as a generator of meaning, identity, and political subjectivity within contested national and academic spaces.

1.6. Structure of the Dissertation

The dissertation comprises seven chapters and proceeds as follows:

Chapter I serves as the introduction, outlining the significance of the study, presenting the central research question, and explaining the methodology and main arguments. It also provides a review of the relevant literature to establish the scholarly context in which this research is conducted.

Chapter II examines key approaches within social movement theory, with particular emphasis on those applied by scholars to the study of Islamic movements. It argues that these approaches, while valuable, are insufficient on their own to analyze the actions of Islamic movements or to fully answer the central research questions of this study. The chapter begins by summarizing the development of social movement theory, then focuses on its four core approaches, collective identity, resource mobilization, political opportunity structure, and framing processes, and concludes by presenting the perspectives of Irfan Ahmad, Alev Erkilet, and Banu Eligür as alternative lenses for analyzing Islamic movements.

Chapter III traces the regional emergence of the Palestinian student movement and provides a detailed account of the Islamic Bloc's (IB) development, ideology, and objectives. It examines the IB's visual slogans in Palestinian universities as a means of understanding the movement's self-identification and goals, and reviews its organizational structure, with particular attention to bylaws governing Shura elections and overall organizational form. The chapter begins with an exploration of Palestinian student activism outside Palestine, comparing it to Islamic student movements in Egypt, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Sudan, various European countries, and the United

States, before moving to the establishment of the Palestinian student movement within Palestine. This section is critical for understanding the early relationship between the student movement and Palestinian political factions.

Chapter IV analyzes the IB's evolution within Palestinian universities as a social movement organization (SMO) across six distinct stages. The first stage (1979–1986) was devoted to forming an identity and gaining recognition from PLO-affiliated student groups. This was followed by a decade (1986–1996) of intense competition with PLO student trends, after which the IB experienced a period of dominance, leading student councils across all universities from 1996 to 2007. Between 2007 and 2012, the IB faced compulsory prohibition, significantly curtailing its activities. From 2012 to 2014, the movement relaunched its presence in West Bank universities, paving the way for the contemporary stage, which began in 2021 and continues to the present. The chapter concludes with an analysis of how the relationship between student movements and their parent political movements shifted throughout these phases.

Chapter V focuses on the IB's collective identity and framing processes, exploring how a relatively stable identity has been maintained alongside evolving frames. It analyzes three core concepts—participation, commitment, and solidarity—and examines grievance and relative deprivation as factors motivating participation among IB members. The chapter identifies three defining features of the IB's framing process: the negotiation of "self" and "other," the influence of religious discourse, and political rhetoric directed at opponents. It concludes with an examination of an internal IB study on its own framing processes.

Chapter VI addresses IB's resource mobilization strategies and the influence of political opportunity structures on recruiting activists and adherents. It considers the movement's moral, human, organizational, cultural, and material resources, and analyzes the impact of political arrests and assassinations on shaping the leadership of the student movement.

Chapter VII synthesizes the key findings of the study, reflecting on its theoretical and empirical contributions to the fields of social movement studies and Palestinian political sociology. It concludes by discussing the implications of these findings for the future of Islamic student activism under conditions of occupation.

CHAPTER II

THEORIZING STUDENT RESISTANCE: MOBILIZATION, IDENTITY, AND POLITICAL STRUCTURES

European and American scholars have traditionally examined the mobilization of beliefs and ideas through the lens of material conditions, arguing that revolutionary class consciousness emerges when those conditions align appropriately (Snow 2009, 381). That has lasted until Ronald Inglehart's *Silent Revolution* thesis provides a crucial cultural explanation for the rise of new social movements (NSMs) in post-industrial societies. He argues that as economic security increases, younger generations shift from materialist concerns (economic stability, physical security) to post-materialist values emphasizing self-expression, political participation, and quality of life (Inglehart 1977, 1997). This value shift underpins the emergence of movements such as environmentalism, feminism, and peace activism, which focus less on redistribution and more on identity, meaning, and moral claims. Inglehart's framework aligns with New Social Movement Theory and complements the work of theorists like McAdam (1982), Tarrow (1994), and Snow et al. (1986) by offering a cultural dimension to collective action. While McAdam's political process model emphasizes political opportunities and "cognitive liberation," Inglehart explains why certain generations become receptive to such shifts. Similarly, Snow's framing theory benefits from Inglehart's insights into the value orientations that make particular frames resonate. Though distinct from Resource Mobilization Theory (McCarthy and Zald, 1977), which focuses on the strategic use of organizational resources, Inglehart's thesis adds depth by revealing the motivational foundation of post-materialist activism. Despite critiques of its Eurocentrism and linear assumptions, the *Silent Revolution* remains central to understanding the cultural foundations of contemporary movements in advanced democracies.

Research on mobilization continued to evolve, incorporating additional explanatory factors such as grievance (Gurr 1970; Gurney and Tierney 1982; Finkel and Rule 1986). By the mid-1980s, scholarship had expanded significantly, focusing on the interplay between framing processes, collective action frames, and collective action—elements that together form the foundation of social movement theory (McCarthy 1986; Snow and Benford 1988; Melucci 1988; Gamson 1992; Tarrow 1992; Hunt et al. 1994). This later wave of studies emphasized the importance of examining how framing processes interact with other dimensions central to the dynamics of social movements, including political opportunities, discursive fields, opportunity structures, the media, ideology, narratives, identity, and emotions (Snow 2009, 386).

New social movement theory shifts the focus away from class consciousness as the primary driver of mobilization, arguing instead that participation is rooted in collective identities and cultural perceptions (Johnston et al. 1994, 10; Hunt and Benford 2009, 437). As Melucci (1988, 343) explains,

> The propensity of an individual to become involved in collective action is thus tied to the differential capacity to define an identity, that is, to the differential access to resources that enable him to participate in the process of identity building. Circumstantial factors can influence the structure of opportunities and their variations. However, the way in which the opportunities are perceived and used depends on the differential access of individuals to identity resources. (Melucci 1988, 343)

Although social movement approaches have been developed many times, there are still some gaps and shortcomings in adopting the American and Eurocentric approaches toward social movements in the Global South in general, and more precisely, the Islamic world. First, the existing literature discusses social movements functioning within civil states, where their aims are generally aligned with the state's values and norms. McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly highlight a significant gap in research that compares social movements within liberal democracies to those in other parts of the world. Likewise, Klandermans, Staggenborg, and Tarrow highlight the limited scope of social movement studies, which often rely on similar theoretical frameworks that fail to adequately capture movements outside Western democracies (Banu 2010, 8).

A second body of scholarship, focusing specifically on Islamic movements (Ismail 2004; Wickham 2004; Marshall 2005; Ahmad 2005; Olesen 2009; Banu 2010; Erkilet 2015), emphasizes the need to examine ideational factors such as culture and social interaction alongside other explanatory dimensions. As Olesen (2009, 7) notes, this involves, first, a network and organizational perspective that highlights the role of personal connections and established institutions, such as mosques and prisons, in recruitment processes, and second, an analysis of the structural and political environment in which these movements operate. This combined approach offers a more comprehensive lens for understanding how movements like the Islamic Bloc (IB) mobilize support and sustain participation.

This section analyzes the existing Eurocentric approaches for studying social movements' recruitment and mobilization. Further, it explains the relevance of the different approaches in Social Movement Theory for analyzing the role and activities of the Islamic student movement in Palestine. Finally, it argues in favour of using the Banu Eligür approach, enabling us to describe and analyze the IB's successful mobilization strategies.

2.1. Forging Collective Identity: Resistance, Belonging, and Activism

Many scholars have studied social movements from an identity-based approach (Melucci 1988; Gamson 1991; Snow 2001; Polletta and Jasper 2001; Hunt and Benford 2009). Most of them argued that one of the most important factors of any social movement's emergence, trajectories, and various impacts on the micro-level is collective identity.

Melucci (1988, 342) defines collective identity as "an interactive and shared definition produced by several individuals and concerned with the orientations of action and the field of opportunities and constraints in which the action takes place." It is also, according to Hunt and Benford (2009, 447), a "cultural representation, a set of shared meanings that are produced and reproduced, negotiated and renegotiated, in the interactions of individuals embedded in particular socio-cultural contexts." This agrees with Gamson (1991, 40), who identified the construction of a collective identity as a negotiated process, in which the "we" involved in collective action is elaborated

and given meaning. But according to Gamson himself and other scholars, these definitions are still "vague" (Gamson 1992, 60; Snow and Oliver 1995, 588).

Snow (2001) tried to eliminate this "vagueness" by distinguishing between three types of identity: personal, social, and collective. Although they often overlap, one cannot be inferred from the other. However, collective identity has some properties that differentiate it from other types of identity, as he argues:

> First, collective identities may or may not be embedded in existing social identities, since they are often emergent and evolving rather than firmly rooted in prior social categories. Second, the collective, shared "sense of We" is animating and mobilizing cognitively, emotionally, and sometimes even morally. Third, the emergence and operation of collective identities means that other social identities have subsided in relevance and salience for the time being. Finally, while the attribution or avowal of all identities is interactionally contingent, collective identities tend to be more fluid, tentative, and transient than either categorically based social identities or even personal identities. (Snow 2001, 2214)

We can also add that collective identities are expressed in cultural materials such as names, narratives, symbols, verbal styles, rituals, clothing, and so on. They do not imply the rational calculus for evaluating choices that "interests" do (Hunt and Benford 2009, 440).

When a new collective identity is constructed, it creates a sense of other via boundary identification, construction, and maintenance. It, most importantly, provides cultural contexts for planning, enabling, carrying out, and evaluating individual participation and collective actions (ibid., 450).

Collective identity, as Joshua Gamson (1997) argues, plays a major role in explaining the first step of joining any social movement: "In cultural systems that develop so many identities, a movement with clarity about who belongs can better provide its designated members with the strength and pride to revalue their identities" (179). We can highlight the role of collective identity in recruiting members for the IB by studying three main factors, which are well related to its collective identity: (1) commitment, (2) participation, and (3) grievance.

Commitment is a factor that took the attention of many scholars who studied collective identity (Klandermans 1997; Nepstad 2004; 2008; Corrigall-Brown 2012; Oselin

2015). It was defined as an "individual's identification with a collectivity that leads to instrumental, affective, and moral attachments that lead to investments in movement lines of activity" (Hunt and Benford 2009, 440).

Collective identity facilitates commitment by enhancing bonding with leadership, belief systems, organizations, rituals, cohorts, networks, and localities, especially when activists develop and maintain a symbolic linkage between their activism and their personal lives (ibid. 448).

Scholars (Klandermans 1997; Taylor 1989; Corrigall-Brown 2012; Oselin 2015, 176) pointed out two forms of commitment: (1) Affective commitment that reflects an emotional attachment to a social movement, sustained through affective interactions between fellow participants and the rewards derived from such engagement; and (2) Normative commitment that stems from the socialization process and moral obligations that compel individuals to continue to work to accomplish the movement's goals. In simpler words, as Gamson (1991,46) explains, some people may initially commit to a social movement as a result of personal loyalties to and social bonds with individuals who are involved, or due to personal ideological commitment, rather than any internalized movement identity. This gives an indication that commitment can be increased or decreased according to the organizational structure of the social movement. Another thing that helps in creating and strengthening commitment is the open/closed political atmosphere, as Gamson argues. Public demonstrations of commitment under conditions of risk help to create commitment and strengthen it; again, collective identity is central to the willingness to undertake such risks (ibid.). This argument helps us to understand, analyze, and answer one of the sub-questions of this study: how far would an individual commit to the IB even when participation threatens the individual's life? Such a question will lead us to highlight the link between commitment and participation.

When moving to the level of participation, Hunt and Benford (2009, 438) identify eight aspects of social movement participation: (1) onset of, or initial involvement, with a movement; (2) frequency of participation; (3) range of participation in movement activities; (4) dispersion of activities across movements or organizations;

(5) risk-intensity of participation; (6) persistence of participation across time; (7) disengagement from participation; and (8) drift in and out of participation.

A number of studies have traced a connection between religious belief and participation in social movements (Hafez 2003; Marshall 2005; Della Porta 2009; Pinard 2011; Corrigall-Brown 2012). They argue that individuals who have strong partisan attachments, who are religious and feel politically efficacious, can be seen as having stronger beliefs. Social movements and contentious politics are one outlet for these ideologies and beliefs, allowing individuals to voice their concerns (Corrigall-Brown 2012, 18).

The emergence and growth of social movements and participation in them, especially those based on communal groups defined by race, class, religion, gender, or the like, are likely to be greatly facilitated by pre-existing collective identities. When they are pre-existing, salient collective identities tend to lead to very rapid mobilization (Pinard 2011, 117).

Corrigall-Brown (2012,19) assumes that the reason why religiosity fosters activism is that belonging to and participating in a religious institution is associated with an orientation toward the collective good. In addition, connection to a community of like-minded believers provides the moral impetus to engage in collective action for social change. However, some other works claim that, in contrast, many religious institutions focus on conformity and obedience, which might suppress participation.

Finally, the last level to be studied using the collective identity approach is grievance and deprivation. McCarthy and Zald (1986) have admitted that in their early model, attention to the supply side prevailed over consideration of the demand side. They argue that any comprehensive account of movements must consider how grievances and life conditions contribute to mobilization (Pinard 2011, 13).

In her study of left-wing radicalism in Italy and Germany in the 1960s–1980s, Della Porta (1995; 2006) points out the importance of personal experiences and grievances as a precursor for radicalization. The biographies of the studied activists revealed that early personal experiences with police brutality, and a general sense of disillusionment

concerning the legitimacy of the state, gradually nudged them toward a radical outlook. In other words, scholars who have adopted the idea of strain and deprivation as a major cause of collective action have generally perceived activism as a result of social breakdown and/or experiences of strain and deprivation at the individual or group level (Olesen 2009, 11).

Not only was deprivation becoming the central focus of attention, but a particular type –relative deprivation– was being considered. In Ted Gurr's work, the deprivation models developed contained other factors, some structural, such as the coercive potential of opponents, the degree of institutionalization of the intermediate structure, facilitation factors for the insurgents, and the legitimacy of the regime (Pinard 2011, 9).

Social movements, as Tarrow argues, are deeply involved in the work of naming grievances, connecting them to other grievances, and constructing larger frames of meaning that will resonate with a population's cultural predispositions and communicate a uniform message to power holders and to others (Tarrow 2011, 144).

The researcher should take relative deprivation into consideration when analyzing the IB actions and experience with the Palestinian political structure, and when analyzing the main levels, components, and aspects of IB collective identity. This will be discussed in the third chapter, and also in the fourth chapter when discussing the political arrests among IB activists.

To summarize the role of the collective identity approach in my study, I will argue that the collective identity approach analyzes the micro-mobilizing of the IB as a social movement. In other words, it can, partially, explain why individuals participate in the IB, and how "grievance" may play a role in this participation. However, the collective identity approach cannot answer the study's questions about how the IB as a group attracts other individuals to join its ideology. It answers the question "why," but not the question "how." The "how" can be answered according to other approaches such as the framing process, which will be discussed in the next title.

2.2. Constructing Narratives of Resistance: The Politics of Framing

While some scholars have used collective identity theories and processes of collective identity construction as their main approach to analyze the collective actions of social movements through the process of collective identity construction, they use the framing process in order to take a more in-depth look into mass mobilization (Goffman 1974; Snow et al. 1986; Gamson 1992; Benford and Snow 2000; Williams and Benford 2000).

According to Goffman (1974), frames denote "schemata of interpretation" that enable individuals "to locate, perceive, identify, and label" occurrences within their life space, and the world at large (Goffman 1974, 21; Benford and Snow 2000, 614). It is also a term used to describe the process of meaning-construction whereby frames that "represent interpretative schemata that offer a language and cognitive tools for making sense of experiences and events in 'the world out there'" are provided by movement activists (Marshall 2005, 4).

Frame alignment is a necessary condition for movement participation. By frame alignment, scholars refer to "the linkage of individual and SMO interpretative orientations, such that some set of individual interests, values and beliefs and SMO activities, goals and ideology are congruent and complementary" (Snow et al. 1986, 464).

The credibility of any framing, according to Benford and Snow, is a function of three factors: (1) frame consistency, (2) empirical credibility, and (3) credibility of the frame articulators or claim makers. A frame's consistency refers to the congruency between an SMO's articulated beliefs, claims, and actions. The greater and more transparent the apparent contradictions in either realm, the less resonant the proffered framing(s) and the more problematic the mobilization. The more culturally believable the proclaimed evidence, and the greater the number of examples of such evidence, the more credible the framing, and the broader its appeal (Benford and Snow 2000, 619,620).

The credibility of frame articulators means that speakers who are regarded as more credible are generally more persuasive. The greater the status and/or perceived expertise of the frame articulator, and/or the organization they represent, from the vantage point of potential adherents and constituents, the more plausible and resonant the framings or claims (ibid.).

There are three major tasks for framing in any social movement, as Benford and Snow argue. These tasks are the so-called "Core Framing Tasks": (1) the diagnostic task, which means amplifying the movement's "victimization" by defining the actions of authority as unjust (Benford and Snow 2000, 615); (2) the prognostic task, that involves the articulation of a proposed solution to the problem, and imposes the question of what to be done to remove this "injustice" (616); and (3) the motivational task that serves as the rational for engaging in ameliorative collective action (617).

The three major tasks for the framing process necessitate four types of framing, as Snow, Rochford, Worden, and Benford (Snow et al. 1986) argue:

(a) Frame bridging: the linkage of two or more ideologically congruent, but structurally unconnected, frames regarding a particular issue or problem (Snow et al. 1986, 467). Frame bridging involves the linkage of a SMO with immobilized individuals who share common grievances and attributional orientations, but who lack the organizational base for expressing their discontent and for acting in pursuit of their interests (467).

(b) Frame amplification: the clarification and invigoration of an interpretive frame that bears on a particular issue, problem, or set of events (469). This type of framing facilitates support for, and participation in, movement activities by repeating five essential beliefs: (1) the seriousness of the problem, issue, or grievance; (2) the locus of causality or blame; (3) antagonists or targets of influence; (4) the probability of change or the efficiency of collective action; and (5) the necessity and propriety of standing up (470).

(c) Frame extension: the necessary amplification of these ideational elements in order to clarify the linkage between personal or group interests, and support for the SMO

(472). An SMO may have to extend the boundaries of its primary framework so as to encompass interests or points of view that are incidental to its primary objectives but of considerable salience to potential adherents (ibid.).

(d) Frame transformation: When the programs, causes, and values that some SMOs promote may appear conventional to lifestyles or rituals, new values may have to be planted and nurtured, old meanings or understandings jettisoned, and erroneous beliefs or "misframings" reframed, in order to garner support and secure participants (473).

Framing is no less a collective process during the early days of the movement than it is later on. But the collective settings within which framing takes place, and the nature of the framing process, are apt to be very different at different points in time. The initial framing process is less consciously strategic than later efforts. The initial framing process also has a more emergent, inchoate quality to it than do later framing efforts. The outcome of the process is less predictable than it is later on. Later framing efforts tend to be heavily constrained by the ideas, collective identities, and world views adopted previously. Later framing processes tend, far more than earlier efforts, to be the exclusive property of formal SMOs (McAdam et al. 1996: 16). This can explain why the IB, at the early stages of establishment contained some Salafist and Hizb al-Tahrir members, and why these members left the Islamic Bloc as soon as its later framing started to emerge; its political opinion in particular.

Finally, framing, as Robinson (2004,116) describes, is the “bumper-sticker” version of how issues get interpreted within a certain ideological context. It can help with connecting between the micro-level of analysis, which was discussed in the collective identity section, the meso-level of analysis, meaning the resource mobilization approach, and the macro-level of analysis represented by the political opportunity approach, which will be described in the next two titles. I will study the main features of both the IB’s initial and later framing processes by discussing its bylaws, publications, leaflets, pamphlets, and speeches to reveal the development in the framing process of the three previous decades.

2.3. Mobilizing for Resistance: Structures, Strategies, and Constraints

When we study social movements, the resource mobilization approach (also known as Resource Mobilization Theory RMT) is of particular relevance (McCarthy and Zald 1973, 1977; McAdam 1982; Jenkins 1985; Klandermans 1997; Edwards and McCarthy 2009). According to McCarthy and Zald (1977), resource mobilization aims to achieve two main goals: (1) converting adherents into constituents and maintaining constituent involvement, and (2) turning non-adherents into adherents (1221). In other words, it aims to strengthen commitment among members of social movements and attract new ones. It examines the variety of resources that must be mobilized, the linkage of social movements to other groups, the dependence of movements upon external support for success, and the tactics used by authorities to control or incorporate movements (McCarthy and Zald 1977, 1213).

There are five resource categories, as Edwards and McCarthy (2009) argue, that must be analyzed in any social movement to understand its capacity for mobilization: moral, cultural, organizational, human, and material resources.

Moral resources include legitimacy, solidarity support, sympathetic support, and celebrity. Neo-institutional organizational theorists make strong claims about the importance of legitimacy as a link between the macro-cultural context and the meso- and micro-levels of organizational processes (Edwards and McCarthy 2009, 125–126).

Besides this category being "problematic" because, as some scholars define it, "morality" belongs to "culture", the moral resources, as described by Edwards and McCarthy, are more likely the same as the collective identity factors which were described in the past section. Therefore, I would like to ignore this category and stick with the collective identity approach when it comes to the micro-level of analysis, which I assume is more appropriate to answer the question of identity and motivations of the individual's participation in the IB. Also, the framing process approach is more likely to be used as a link between the macro-cultural context and the meso- and micro-levels of the IB, as was discussed in the previous title.

The category of cultural resources includes movement or issue-relevant productions such as music, literature, magazines, newspapers, and films and videos. Cultural products such as these facilitate the recruitment and socialization of new adherents and help movements maintain their readiness and capacity for collective action (ibid., 126).

In this study, I will focus on the cultural resources of the IB as the main analytical tool to describe the IB's framing process. Social organizational resources exist in three different forms: infrastructure, organizations, and social networks. Both infrastructure and organizations are "nonproprietary social resources" (ibid. 127). These two forms will not help me with my study with regard to the IB recruiting volunteers or disseminating the IB framings. Therefore, I will ignore these two forms and concentrate on the social networks of the IB, which will play a significant role in recruiting and mobilizing new adherents, as will be discussed in the next chapter.

Human resources include labour, experience, skills, expertise, and also leadership. Clearly, not all adherents offer the same mix of capabilities (ibid. 127–128). This category is very important for Islamic social movements, as Wicham (2004, 236) argued previously. Therefore, I will depend on this category when describing the roles of the leaders of the IB in the seventh chapter. I will also pull from this category when analyzing the position of female students inside the IB, which will be discussed in the eighth chapter.

Finally, material resources include monetary resources, property, office space, equipment, and supplies (Edwards and McCarthy 2009, 128). This category will help me when dealing with the material resources of the IB in the seventh chapter.

Within the framework of this study, the resource mobilization approach treats the Islamic Bloc (IB) as the primary unit of analysis, focusing on the range of resources, cultural, organizational, and material, that must be mobilized for the movement to function effectively. This perspective offers valuable insight into the meso-level of mobilization, yet, as its originators acknowledge, it primarily addresses social movements after they have emerged. It also pays limited attention to the cultural environment and to the roles of ideology and belief in shaping mobilization and

recruitment. In this research, I apply resource mobilization categories to examine how shifts in the IB's resources have facilitated or constrained the development of its framing in relation to political and social issues. However, for analyzing the relationship between the IB and the political regime and assessing how broader political changes in Palestine have influenced the movement's mobilization and framing, the resource mobilization approach is insufficient. For these macro-level dynamics, I adopt the political opportunity structure framework, which will be discussed in the following section.

2.4. Political Opportunities and Constraints: Navigating the Terrain of Power

One of the social movement theories that deals with the macro level of social movements is the political opportunity structure (POS) theory. Some scholars consider it a "sponge" that contains all other social movement theories. Many researchers have benefited from linking it to the concept of social movement, whereby the concept of POS has become a good tool for monitoring, analyzing, and understanding the internal structure and dynamics of social movements (Eisinger 1973; Tilly 1978; McAdam et al. 1996; Tarrow 1994, 1998).

The political process approach contends that movement behavior is shaped by the broader political context or political opportunity structure, which can facilitate or hinder collective action (Hafez 2003, 39). An analysis of the political opportunity structure informs us of the broader context of opportunities and constraints under which movement actors seek to acquire and allocate resources for collective action. The opportunities and constraints present in the political environment enter into the rational calculus of movement actors and help shape intra-movement debates over the efficacy and legitimacy of violence, or any strategy discussed, such as participating in elections, or refraining from it (ibid. 65–66).

McAdam et al. (1996) identify four dimensions of political opportunity: (1) the relative openness or closure of the institutionalized political system; (2) the stability or instability of that broad set of elite alignments that typically undergird a polity; (3) the presence or absence of elite allies; and (4) the state's capacity and propensity for repression (27). Sidney Tarrow (2011, 163–165) determined visible POS factors as

the following: the opening of access to participation to new actors; the availability of influential allies; emerging splits within the elite; and evidence of political realignment within the polity.

A closed POS limits the movement's ability to organize in formal spaces, but the existence of informal associative networks may function as an alternative space to mobilize support for the movement. As long as the SMO proves that there is an opportunity to organize the masses while keeping the perceived costs low, the movement can still succeed, although it will encounter many more obstacles than in an open POS (Tarrow 1994). An open POS, on the other hand, perpetuates the perception that collective action is likely to result in change and will bring few negative costs, thereby increasing an individual's incentive to identify with a collective entity (ibid.).

The POS approach is a political process approach and pays "systematic attention to the political and institutional environment in which social movements operate" (Della Porta and Diani 2006, 16) and "stresses the crucial importance of expanding political opportunities as the ultimate spur to collective action" (McAdam et al. 1996, 7; Della Porta and Diani 2006, 16).

Researchers in the political opportunity tradition emphasize the mobilization of resources external to the group. They also emphasize mechanisms in the immediate environment that trigger mobilization, such as the attribution of opportunity or threat, the availability of potential allies, the formation of coalitions –both on the margins of, and within, the polity–, and the framing of entire episodes of contention (Tarrow 2011, 163).

The concept of a POS was developed to explain the "when" of social movement mobilization, identifying the conditions that facilitate or account for mobilization. It also explains the "how" of social movement action and "why" collective actions and protests occur, and under which conditions (Tarrow 1994, 83; Kitschelt 1986). However, some social movement scholars (Tuğal 2009) argue that the POS is insufficient to explain and understand the ideological transformation of Islamic social movements. POS can give me suitable tools to answer my question about the effect of

changes within the state structures on the collective action of the Islamic Bloc in Palestine. In other words, it helps me to analyze how political arrests among the IB's members and how "resource-draining" affect the IB's identity, ideology, and framing changes.

In addition to the approaches already outlined, the work of Charles Tilly offers an indispensable contribution to understanding the dynamics of contentious politics and social movements. Tilly's theorization of repertoires of contention provides a useful lens for analyzing how the Islamic Bloc (IB) and the broader Palestinian student movement drew upon, adapted, and innovated forms of protest and resistance over time (Tilly 1978; Tilly 2006). The archival materials collected for this thesis, including pamphlets, magazines, circulars, and audiovisual recordings, document the ways in which IB activists shifted from traditional repertoires such as leafleting, rallies, and student elections to more innovative practices, including cultural productions, symbolic occupations, and digital forms of activism, especially during the second Intifada and beyond. By moving beyond the binary distinction between material and non-material resources, Tilly's framework highlights the historically embedded and evolving nature of these strategies, showing how certain forms of mobilization became available, legitimate, or effective within the shifting Palestinian political context. Incorporating this perspective thus enables the study to situate the IB's mobilization practices within broader repertoires of contentious action in Palestine, linking archival evidence to the dynamic interplay of continuity, innovation, and constraint that characterizes contentious politics (Tarrow 1998; McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly 2001).

2.5. Digital Networks, Identity, and the Evolution of Social Movement Theory

Manuel Castells represents a major development in social movement theory through his theorization of *networked social movements*, which emerge in the context of global digital communication and are characterized by decentralized structures, horizontal coordination, and emotionally resonant narratives. In *Networks of Outrage and Hope* (2012), Castells explores how movements like the Arab Spring, the Indignados in Spain, and Occupy Wall Street leveraged digital platforms to organize collective action, often outside traditional institutional channels (Castells, 2012, pp. 10–20). These movements operate through what he terms *autonomous communication*,

enabling the viral circulation of shared emotions, particularly outrage at perceived injustices and hope for societal transformation (Castells, 2012, pp. 220–230). His work draws attention to the role of affect and identity in mobilization, themes that echo earlier insights from New Social Movement theorists such as Melucci (1989) and Touraine (1985), while updating them for the digital age.

Castells' contributions complement and extend several foundational theories in social movement studies. His emphasis on cultural meaning and emotional resonance aligns with Snow et al.'s (1986) framing theory, while his attention to shifting political opportunities in digital contexts builds on the political process model developed by McAdam (1982) and Tarrow (1994). Moreover, Castells critiques the assumptions of Resource Mobilization Theory (McCarthy & Zald, 1977), particularly its reliance on hierarchical organization and formal resource distribution, which are often absent in networked movements. Castells' framework also offers a global perspective that challenges the Eurocentric limits of Inglehart's (1977, 1997) post-materialist thesis by analyzing movements in both the Global North and South. Taken together, Castells' theory of networked social movements marks a significant and timely shift in the study of collective action, capturing the new logics of mobilization in the 21st century.

The following table offers a comparative analysis of various new social movement approaches in relation to Castells' conceptualization of networked social movements

Table 2.1. A Comparative Analysis of New Social Movement Approaches

Theorist	Focus	Relation to Castells
Inglehart	Value change, post-materialism	Castells adds technological and emotional dimensions to value-driven movements
McAdam/Tarrow	Political opportunities, structure	Castells brings in the digital transformation of these opportunities
Snow et al.	Framing, identity construction	Castells expands framing through emotional resonance and networked identities
McCarthy & Zald	Resource mobilization, strategy	Castells critiques hierarchical models in favor of horizontal, decentralized ones

While the comparative table provides a visual overview of how different new social movements (NSM) approaches align with or diverge from Castells' conceptualization of networked social movements, it is important to elaborate on these differences in text. NSM theorists such as Touraine (1981) and Melucci (1996) emphasize the role of identity, culture, and symbolic action in shaping collective mobilization. Their focus highlights how social movements construct meaning and challenge dominant cultural codes, a perspective that resonates with the IB's use of cultural repertoires such as poetry, theatre, and student publications. Castells (2012), however, extends these insights by situating them within the digital age, arguing that networked communication technologies enable decentralized, horizontal forms of organization that fundamentally reshape the logic of collective action.

At the same time, while both NSM approaches and Castells stress the importance of meaning-making and identity, their emphases differ. NSM scholars primarily analyze movements in advanced industrial societies, where struggles over recognition and lifestyle politics predominate, whereas Castells highlights the ways in which digital networks amplify contentious politics across diverse contexts, including those shaped by authoritarianism, occupation, or war. For the Palestinian student movement, and particularly the Islamic Bloc, these differences are crucial: while NSM theories help capture the centrality of cultural identity and symbolic practices, Castells' framework allows us to account for the growing significance of digital platforms in sustaining activism under conditions of repression. Taken together, this comparison reveals the need for a hybrid analytical lens, one that combines the identity-centered insights of NSM theory with the structural transformations identified by Castells in the era of networked social movements.

2.6. The Limitations of Classical Theories in Understanding Islamic Movements

It has been argued that neither collective identity, nor resources, including cultural factors alone, are responsible for a movement's emergence and development, and that researchers should study variations in political structure and political processes concerning the rule for shaping any social movement's strategies and tactics (McAdam et al. 1996; Tarrow 1998; Opp 2009). It has also been argued that rational-actor explanations that seek to explain mobilization through political opportunity

structures and political process models, have been effective at explaining the initial recruitment phase of Islamic movements, but have proven less robust when attempting to account for the sustained participation of individuals in the face of state repression (Marshall 2005, 6). Many scholars offer the framing process approach to explain this continued participation, citing the power of religious calls to action (Marshall 2005, 6; Ismail 2004, 386).

McAdam, McCarthy, and Zald's (McAdam et al. 1996, 8) believe that the effects of resource mobilization, POS, and framing are interactive, rather than independent, and that changes within these three factors become an opportunity only when defined as such by a group of sufficiently well-organized, and with a collective identity:

> If the combination of political opportunities and mobilizing structures affords the group a certain structural potential for action, these elements remain, in the absence of one final factor, insufficient to account for collective action. Mediating between opportunity, organization, and action are the shared meanings and cultural understandings, including a shared collective identity— that people bring to an instance of incipient contention. (McAdam et al. 1996, 5).

But that is not what concerns me to start with, I am concerned whether these approaches were, by the confession of their own scholars, they are shaped to fit the societies in which these researchers lived and experienced, meaningly the European and the American societies.

In *Disruptive Religion: The Force of Faith in Social Movement Activism*, Christian Smith (2014) advances a distinctive theoretical framework for understanding religion as a driving force in collective action. Rather than treating religion as a derivative of social, political, or cultural factors, Smith conceptualizes it as an autonomous and disruptive power that shapes activism in its own right (Smith 2014, 1–3). He identifies religion as operating through three interrelated dimensions: first, as a source of transcendent moral authority that legitimizes and sanctifies struggle (Smith 2014, 7–8); second, as an organizational resource, providing networks, rituals, and institutional structures that sustain mobilization (Smith 2014, 11–12); and third, as a meaning-making system that frames suffering, sacrifice, and resistance as purposeful and redemptive (Smith 2014, 16–17). This theoretical approach challenges reductionist accounts that confine religion to the symbolic sphere and instead positions it as central to the dynamics of social movements.

Applied to the Palestinian context, Smith's insights help illuminate how the Islamic Bloc infused its activism with religious meaning, transforming personal costs such as imprisonment, exile, or martyrdom into collective capital for the movement. Religion thus functioned not merely as an identity marker but as a constitutive force shaping repertoires of contention, legitimizing strategies, and reinforcing resilience under repression. By foregrounding religion's disruptive and generative capacities, Smith's framework enriches the analysis of student mobilization and highlights dimensions often overlooked in Eurocentric social movement theories (Smith 2014, 20–21).

In a wider context, Irfan Ahmad (2009, 26) critiques the Eurocentric understanding of social movements in academic scholarship, particularly in how it has historically excluded Islamist movements from the broader theoretical frameworks. He highlights how the dominant theories of social movements have often reproduced the East–West divide by privileging movements originating in liberal democratic contexts while marginalizing those emerging in non-Western settings. Drawing on the work of scholars such as Asef Bayat and Fuat Keyman, Ahmad notes that this exclusion reflects what Kurman refers to as "a core democratic bias", a tendency within social movement theory to equate legitimate mobilization with secular, Western-style democratic practices, thereby overlooking the complexities and political agency of Islamic movements.

Along with Ahmad goes Alev Erkilet's approach towards analyzing Islamic movements. She argues that the issue of objectivity has always been problematic in Eurocentric social movement approaches. She has studied the concept of modernization in radical Islamic movements with revolutionary ideologies that affect and are affected by social conditions in the Middle East in Turkey, Egypt, and Iran. From her perspective, it is wrong to consider economic, political and social external factors as the generator of the movement and that the socio-cultural structure or system is a product of its own internal dynamics. Psychological approaches are left aside, and structural solutions are resorted to since psychology often presents negative and subjective evaluations of mass movements.

Erkilet draws attention to the difference between the influence of modern Western culture on revolution (collective action) and the influence of Islamic culture. For that,

it is necessary to address the concepts of Islamic movements and revolutions from an original and internal perspective.

Banu Eligür (2010) has faced the same dilemma while studying the Islamic movements from the existing social movements' theories. After studying the existing social movement theories and approaches, she argues that existing literature primarily focuses on civil rights movements within civil states, where such movements often pursue goals that align with the prevailing values and norms of the state. McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly highlight a notable gap between analyses of social movements in liberal democratic contexts and those situated elsewhere in the world. Similarly, Bert Klandermans, Suzanne Staggenborg, and Tarrow emphasize the limitations in current scholarship, noting that similar methodological approaches and theoretical frameworks are often applied uncritically to movements beyond Western democracies, revealing a significant gap in the field (Eligür 2010,8). Stating that moving the masses to challenge the authorities through demonstrations, boycotts, or other actions aiming at changing a specific policy does not apply in the Islamic movements in Muslim countries. She wondered how movement participation, consisting of actions aimed at achieving political goals that are undertaken when conventional and institutionalized means such as voting are not available! She also argued that separating social movements from political parties, as suggested in existing social movements approaches, while they are almost one in our case, is not helping in understanding the mechanisms of Islamic movements (Eligür 2010, 9)

One of the biggest gripes with social movement approaches, according to Eligür, is its relative neglect of the important contribution that religion plays in social movement mobilization. As Christian Smith observes, religion, with its organizational resources, enabling a shared identity, motivational and moral systems, and public legitimacy, has a great potential to mobilize the masses. "Religion can help to keep everything in its place," Smith argues, "But it can also turn the world upside-down." (Eligür 2010, 12).

The review of literature on social movements, postcolonial critique, and Islamic activism has revealed the strengths and limitations of existing frameworks for analyzing the Palestinian student movement and, more specifically, the Islamic Bloc (IB). While new social movement theories (Touraine 1981; Melucci 1996) underscore

the importance of culture, identity, and symbolic practices, they remain rooted in Eurocentric contexts that differ significantly from the realities of colonization and occupation. Castells' (2012) conceptualization of networked social movements extends these insights into the digital era, highlighting the transformative role of communication technologies in enabling decentralized forms of mobilization. At the same time, Charles Tilly's theorization of repertoires of contention (1978; 2006) provides a historically grounded lens for understanding how forms of protest emerge, evolve, and adapt within shifting political opportunities.

Taken together, these approaches make clear that no single theory is sufficient to explain the complexities of the IB's activism. This study, therefore adopts a hybrid theoretical framework, drawing on three complementary strands: (1) the identity- and culture-centered insights of new social movement theory; (2) Castells' emphasis on digital networks and horizontal logics of mobilization; and (3) Tilly's focus on repertoires of contention and their historical adaptability. Anchored by this composite framework, the analysis will trace how the Islamic Bloc has mobilized identity, culture, and resources; how it has adapted its strategies to changing political and technological conditions; and how its activism fits within both the Palestinian struggle and broader patterns of contentious politics. This integrated approach provides the conceptual foundation for the chapters that follow.

CHAPTER III

REGIONAL ROOTS: THE RISE OF THE PALESTINIAN STUDENT MOVEMENT BEYOND PALESTINE

This chapter explores the regional and transnational roots of the Palestinian student movement, tracing its early formation in neighbouring Arab countries before its institutionalization inside Palestine. Long before Palestinian universities were formally established, Palestinian students in the diaspora, particularly in Jordan, Egypt, and Kuwait, played a pivotal role in constructing resistance networks that laid the groundwork for later mobilization. In "Transnational Student Activism: The Palestinian Diaspora and Resistance Networks," this chapter examines how exile shaped the political consciousness of students and enabled cross-border solidarity and activism. With the foundation of Palestinian universities in the 1970s and 1980s, "Student Resistance at Home" illustrates how campuses quickly transformed into key arenas of ideological and political struggle under occupation.

The emergence of the Islamic Bloc marked a significant shift in the ideological landscape of student politics. In "The Rise of the Islamic Bloc," the chapter analyzes its religious-political identity, strategic choices, and grassroots resistance efforts. "Symbols of Struggle" delves into the Bloc's use of visual narratives to assert identity and legitimacy. Finally, "Structuring Dissent" investigates the internal mechanisms of mobilization, highlighting the Bloc's organizational hierarchies, social networks, and the relational structures that sustained its activism across decades of repression.

3.1. Transnational Student Activism: The Palestinian Diaspora and Resistance Networks

The first Palestinian Student Association (PSA) was founded in Egypt in 1944 at King Fouad University. The reason for this is the simple fact that Palestinian students used to continue their higher education in the nearby Arabian countries, as there were no

higher education institutions in the Palestinian territories before the 1970s (Bajes 2012,13; Zelkovitz 2015, 94). In 1952, Yasser Arafat was nominated for the PSA presidency. Together with his friend Salah Khalaf, they led the PSA in a critical historical phase, when the Free Officers' Movement, with the same nationalist orientation as the PSA's new leaders, supported the Egyptian Revolution of 1952 and took control of the regime (Ghayatha 2000, 25). In 1956, the PSA was admitted as a member of the International Union of Students. This association served to provide grounds for the senior leadership of Fatah (Ghayatha 2000, 21; Zelkovitz 2015, 15-18). On November 19, 1959, the PSA in Cairo and Alexandria met with the PSA in Damascus, Lebanon and Iraq. Other delegations and student unions from Arab and foreign countries also attended this meeting. Together, they drafted an internal regulation and founded the General Union of Palestinian Students (GUPS). This meeting was considered the first GUPS conference (Brand 1988, 72; Ghayada 2000, 32).

In her book *Palestinians in the Arab world: institution building and the search for State*, Laurie Brand (1988) argues that the Muslim Brotherhood activists were the dominant trend inside the PSA in Egypt from the date of establishment until 1958, when it officially became the GUPS (Brand 1988, 72). Although President Gamal Abdel Nasser tried to destroy all their mobilization resources, the MB and their allies won the same number of seats as al-Baath activists in the 1957 PSA elections (Ghayatha 2000, 33). Brand attributes the reasons for the decline of the MB's influence within the GUPS after this point in 1959 to three main reasons: (1) the repression the cadres of the MB suffered after the Mensheya incident in1954[1], (2) the graduation of a large number of leaders of the MB and their allies like Arafat, Qaddoumi, and Salah Khalaf, and many of the founders of the PSA in Cairo, and (3) the arrival of a large number of Baathist national Palestinian students who were expelled by the Iraqi regime after the coup attempt failed in Mosul in 1959 (Brand 1988, 72,73).

[1] In 1954, Gamal Abdel Nasser was shot during a public speech in Alexandria, while the authorities said that it was an attempt to assassinate Nasser and accused the Muslim Brotherhood and executions were carried out against the leaders and cadres of the group.

Until the mid-1960s, GUPS had been the first and only representative Palestinian body to be formally recognized by the Arab League. Although the GUPS had welcomed the idea of establishing the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) in its third conference in 1964, it expressed its displeasure in considering the GUPS as one of the PLO organizations on June 18, 1964 (Ghayatha 2000, 44). Both associations argued about representing the Palestinians as a body of politics. Finally, on October 12, 1964, the PLO participated in the fourth conference of the GUPS. Both agreed that the PLO would provide the GUPS with financial support, but that at the same time, it would not interfere with the GUPS's internal affairs (Zelkovitz 2015, 30,31). This agreement did not last for more than one year when the GUPS insisted in 1965 that it had nothing to do with the PLO except at the grassroots level. It was only a matter of time after al-Naksa (the six-day war) in 1967 when the pre-student leaders of the GUPS became the new leaders of the PLO, and took control of the GUPS, to become one of several PLO organizations with the same political agenda in 1968 (Ghayatha 2000, 48).

On the other hand, there were some Palestinian students at different Arab and European universities who refused to join the GUPS for reasons that were connected to ideology, political attitude, and its relationship with the PLO, especially after curtailing the role and effectiveness of the MB within the GUPS. These students joined the Islamic Student Movement at their universities, which was related directly to the MB, or established their own movements in Egypt, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Sudan, Italy, Germany, and other countries (Bajes 2012, 13-15), as will be discussed in the next paragraphs.

The Islamic Student Movement at Egyptian universities began to reemerge in 1972 during the presidency of Anwar As-Sadat, after the repression it had been subjected to under the regime of Gamal Abdel Nasser, in 1952. Zakaria Bayoumi (1987) argued that As-Sadat could not get rid of the Nazarenes and leftists who tried to curtail his role in May 1971 and felt the need to create an anti-front to keep the political balance with the leftists and the Nazarenes internally. So, he hastened the release of politicians from the MB prisoners and allowed them to carry on their activity gradually, so long as they did not threaten his authority. The MB tried to achieve political advantage and regroup, especially within university student groups (Bayoumi 1987). At that time, some Islamic Palestinian activists were studying at Egyptian universities and were

close to the MB student leaders[2]. The influence of the MB's student wing manifested itself in the 1978 elections in Egypt, in which they won all the seats in the student union (Mustafa 1995, 369). One could conclude that the MB's results in these elections were due to their framing of slogans and their ability to mobilize the masses, along with their political opinions, and their opposition to the Camp David Accords. By the end of the 1970s, some of the first generation of Islamic student activists had finished their studies and returned to the Gaza Strip. Coinciding with the establishment of the Islamic University, they began to spread the idea of establishing an Islamic Bloc among the students affiliated with the Islamic University.

In Jordan, as Brand (1988) argues, the Palestinian's status as full citizens "renders difficult, and in many cases erroneous or artificial, discussions of them as separate from other Jordanians" (212). Although, according to Brand, the General Union of Jordanian Students GUJS called itself a base of the Palestinian revolution, the GUPS tried to establish a secret branch in Jordan between 1964-1966, and managed to open three branches in Jerusalem, Ramallah, and at Jordanian University (Brand 1988, 214).

Alongside the establishment of branches of the GUPS in Jordan, as researchers argue (Khrino 2000; Shwedler 2006; al-Nu'aimat and al-Lala 2010), the establishment of the Muslim Students Union (MSU) at the University of Jordan in 1965 marked the historical beginning of the Islamic Student Movement in Jordan. Beginning with publishing brochures and pamphlets, the MSU promoted adherence to Islamic principles. The co-founders of the MSU were Palestinian students: Mahmoud Kotkot from Hebron, Mamoon Jarrar from Jenin, Ahmad Nofal from Jaffa, Mohammad and Mahmoud Oida from Gaza, and Rajeh Kurdi from Nablus (al-Nu'aimat and al-Lala 2010, 29).

In 1972, the Union of Jordanian University Students (UJUS), was established (Khrino 2000, 128). Other scholars argue that it was not established until 1974 (Brand 1988, 217). In 1975, the MSU participated in the elections of the UJUS and won the

[2]Such as Ibrahim Al-Makadmeh, one of Hamas' founders and senior leaders; Abdel Aziz El-Rantisi, the co-founder of Hamas and its political leader after the assassination of Ahmad Yassin; Mahmoud El-Zahar, a co-founder of Hamas and one of its leaders; and others who were exposed to the philosophy of the MB, and who were influential at their universities.

presidency. This success, as al-Nu'aimat and al-Lala (2010) argue, was due to four main reasons: (1) al-Naksa (the six-day war) that decreased the popular support of the Arab nationalists in general; (2) studying and admiring the Islamic student movement experience in Sudan and their role in the student unions, and trying to transfer the experience into the University of Jordan; (3) reactivating the educational system of the MB after the events of Black September[3], and the return of leaders of the educational system from the ranks of Fatah to the University, like Ahmad Nofal, Rajeh Kurdi, and Abdullah Azzam, who was a professor in the University of Jordan, and whose students became, later on, the co-founders of the IB in Palestine; and (4) transferring the Islamic Law college from its old location in Jabal al-weibdeh (a quarter of Amman) to the University campus in 1973, which supplied the MSU with a great number of new adherents, as well as famous Islamic figures (ibid. 44-50). But other scholars argue that the MSU won only because GUJS leadership outside Jordan and some members of Fatah called for a complete boycott, because "they saw the union as a means by which the regime could discover which students were members of the secret student organizations" (Brand 1988, 217).

The popularity of the MSU, which is considered to be the MB student wing in Jordan, reached its peak among students in 1990, because of the active role of Hamas in the First Intifada. After that, it won most of the seats in the student unions with more than 80% of the vote (Khrino 2000, 128).

By the end of the 1970s, the first generation of Palestinian graduates who were members of the MSU at the University of Jordan went back to the West Bank. They spread the idea of establishing an Islamic Bloc among the students of Al-Najah University in Nablus, Birzeit University in Ramallah, and Hebron University. Later, most of them became members of the Palestinian Legislative Council in the Change and Reform Bloc Hamas parliament bloc[4].

[3] Black September refers to a violent Hashemite-Palestinian clash in September 1970, during which thousands of Palestinians were either killed or expelled and the PLO was driven out of Jordan.

[4]Some of the most effective leaders who graduated from Jordanian universities are Fadel Hamdan, one of the Hamas leaders in Ramallah and a member of the Change and Reform Bloc Hamas Parliament Bloc; Younis al-Astal, a preacher and member of the Change and Reform Bloc; Hamed Bitawi, a preacher and member of the Change and Reform Bloc; Nayef Al-Rajoub, one of the Hamas leaders in Hebron and a member of the Change and Reform Bloc; and Nizar Rayyan, a top Hamas leader and a professor of Islamic studies in the Islamic university in Gaza, and also a member of the Change and Reform Bloc, who was killed in an Israeli airstrike during the Gaza War in 2009 .

In Kuwait, in October 1959, Yasser Arafat, who had already graduated and started working in Kuwait three years before, together with Khalil al-Wazir, one of the MB's active members, Yousef Amira, the founder of the MB in Palestine and Jordan, Salah Khalaf, one of the most active members of the MB in Gaza, and later on Faruq al-Qaddumi, who was active in the Baath party, established Ḥarakat al- Taḥrīr al-Filisṭīnī (Fatah: The Palestinian Liberation Movement) (Khalaf 1996, 59; Salem 2006; Hussain 2013). On January 1, 1965, Fatah officially announced its establishment (ibid.), to become the most powerful and popular movement in the PLO. The support base of Fatah started to grow when Arafat and his colleagues started recruiting non-MB members. Again, the MB were no longer the dominant group in Fatah (Hussain 2013). This was reflected in the fundamental structure of the GUPS in Kuwait over the following years.

The GUPS in Kuwait, as Zelkovitz mentioned, was established with the foundation of the University of Kuwait in 1966 (Zelkovitz 2015, 78). Other scholars, like Brand (1988), mentioned that the efforts to establish a branch of the GUPS in Kuwait began in 1968, and came to fruition in 1969. It, at that point in time, began with only tens of members (Brand 1988, 138).

Since its establishment, Fatah headed the GUPS in Kuwait and most of its committees. MB student activists were not satisfied with the new orientation of Fatah. Khaled Mishal, who later on became the head of the Hamas political bureau, and Ezzat Al-Rishq, also a member of the political bureau of Hamas, along with other students, together formed the *Al-Haq* Islamic Bloc in 1977, which became known as the Islamic League of Palestinian Students (ILPS) at Kuwait University, in 1980 (Zelkovitz 2015, 79). The ILPS, as Brand argues, was strong enough to secede from the GUPS, having 80 former GUPS members out of 290 (1988, 141).

The National Union of Kuwaiti Students (NUKS), which is headed by MB students has supported the ILPS since its establishment in 1980. However, it changed its spontaneous style of support for the ILPS to a more systematic method after the foundation of Hamas in 1987. This support consisted of a standing committee entitled "The Palestine Committee" and aimed to support the Palestinian cause by using several means that were considered appropriate, such as financial and media support.

The activities of this committee have been characterized by MB tendencies: one of its prominent activities was organizing an oratory festival under the slogan Filasṭīn al-'Islām mina al-nahr 'ila al-baḥr (Palestine of Islam from the river to the sea) which Mahmoud Siyam, the president of the Islamic University participated in (National Union of Kuwaiti Students 1990, 179).

The ILPS in the University of Kuwait also arranged Palestine Week, which included an annual Palestine Exhibition as well as lectures, seminars, and various artistic forums. Its most prominent activity was the establishment of the committee responsible for issuing the Filasṭīn al-Muslima magazine in 1982, which is an important mouthpiece of the Islamic movement, particularly that of the MB, and Hamas as of 1987, to the world. In addition, the committee organized a festival of Intifada songs at Kuwait University in 1987 (ibid. 179–181).

In Lebanon, The Islamic League for Palestine Sons, as Ra'fat Morra one of the Hamas Political Bureau members said was established in Burj Barajneh camp in Beirut in 1985, as an advanced step of establishing many Islamic Palestinian associations in the world that was established by MB by the mid-1970s (Morra 2010, 114). This league turned to a student framework of the Islamic Palestinian movement in Beirut, after a lot of the League activists moved from Beirut camps to the city to study in the universities, after the war of the camps[5] finished in February 1987 (ibid. 115).

[5] War of the camps or *Harb al-mukhayimat* is part of the Lebanon Civil war that took place between 1984-1987.



Figure 3.1. The PLO Student Battalion During a Military Parade at the Municipal Stadium in Beirut, 1976

Source: Mouin al-Taher's website, one of the cofounders of the PLO Student Battalion.

In the early 1980s, the Muslim Brotherhood established over 35 student unions, leagues, and youth formations in some Arab and Islamic countries (ibid. 137). It has also established Palestinian committees in some European and East Asian countries (ibid. 137).

Between August and September of 1987, a lot of intensive talks and conversations took place at Ibrahim Al-Masri's house, the Chairman of Lebanon's Islamic Group (MB). Later, these talks took place at Faisal Mulawi's house, one of the Islamic Group leaders. These talks were mainly concentrated on establishing a Palestinian student frame which was later called the Islamic League of Palestine Students. From the Palestinian side were Kamal Morra, Nizar al-Husein, Samir Abdullah, Samir Atwa, and Ra'fat Morra (ibid. 115). The League was launched in October 1987. After two months, the Palestinian Intifada had begun.

In a short period, the Islamic League managed to build many committees at Beirut Arabic University and BUC University, which is known today as the Lebanon American University (LAU) (ibid. 116). The league also published a periodical

magazine called al'Israa', edited by Yasser Qaddoura and Yasser Ali (ibid. 118). The framing discourse of the Association since its inception was "the core of the Islamic students working for the liberation of Palestine". Its logo consisted of a book, a map of Palestine, a gun, and an Islamic banner (ibid. 118).

In 1988, the Islamic League (IL) in cooperation with the other Palestinian student movements in Beirut, managed to establish the Palestinian Student Gathering, in Lebanon. The Islamic League, as Yasser Ali mentioned in a personal communication with the author, refused to abandon Fatah students, led by Yasser Arafat, from the new gathering. But the other student movements insisted on abandoning them for two main reasons: (1) the split in Fatah in 1983; and (2) the pursuit by the Syrian forces of Arafat's followers at the time, which would affect the new gathering indeed (ibid. 122).

The IL organized photo fairs to support the Intifada at the American University in Beirut in 1990, an art festival in the Hamra area in Beirut in 1992, and a festival in Burj Al Barajneh in 1993 (126).

In 1992, Israel deported 415 Islamic leaders and activists from Hamas and Islamic Jihad to Marj al-Zuhour on the Lebanese border. A strong relationship began to form between the IL members and the deportees. The deportees started to organize educational, political, religious, intellectual, and organizational courses for their members, and for the IL members too. The IL organized a summer camp for undergraduate students who were deported to *Marj al-Zuhour*. Many Hamas leaders in Lebanon lectured at that summer camp and met Abdul Aziz al-Rantisi and Aziz Dweik. After the summer camp, the IL organized a course for its cadres in Beirut about the press and media work. It also organized workshops to develop Palestinian student work in Lebanon, attended by Ismail Haniyeh and many leaders of the expelled students' work (113).



Figure 3.2. Group of Deportees Receiving Education and a Certificate Award



MARJ AZ-ZOHOUR UNIVERSITY *
(Ibn Taymiyah)
El-Quds Camp
South Lebanon

جامعة مرج الزهور
(ابن تيمية)
مخيم القدس للعودة
جنوب لبنان

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

وفوق كل ذي علم عليم

date ٩٣/٨/١٥

شـــهَادة

يشهد مجلس جامعة مرج الزُّهور " ابن تيمية "

بأنّ السيّد : منير محمد شلدي العصراني المولود في : غزة عام : ١٩٥٩م

قد أنهى بنجاح دورة تجويد القرآن الكريم والتي انعقدت في

القدرة بين (٦/١ - ١٩٩٣/٨/١م)

وبناءً على ذلك فقد قرّر مجلس الجامعة منحه هذه الشّهادة .

رئيس الجامعة	عميد شؤون الطلبة والتسجيل	مدرّس الدورة
	د. هاشم عدوان	

جامعة مرج الزهور

Figure 3.3. Group of Deportees Receiving Certificate Award of Graduation

To the above: A group of deportees to Marj al-Zuhur receive their education at Ibn Taymiyyah University, which was established by the deportees and headed by Prof. Musa al-Aqtam, and the membership of Abdul Aziz al-Rantisi, Salem Salama, Aziz Duwaik, and Sheikh Hamed al-Baytawi. Down: A certificate awarded to a graduate of this university's courses. Source: Pal Info.

In Sudan, the Islamic student movement in the Sudanese universities began its work within a bloc called the Islamic Trend of Palestinian Students at the end of 1991. It was noted that there were Islamic students before this year, including Dr. Ahmed Bahar and Dr. Ghazi Hamad, but they were individual activists (al-Ashqar in a personal interview with the author, June 2016)

The Islamic students tried to participate in the administrative office of the GUPS for two consecutive sessions. But the Union refused to recognize them as a bloc and insisted on dealing with them as individuals. The Islamic trend also tried to prove itself as a bloc, rather than individuals, through its electoral strength, which is more than one-third of the student base (al- Ashqar in a personal interview with the author, June 2016). However, the Union allowed the students of the military college and the Sudan Police College to vote to raise the mass supporters of the PLO in the Union. The Islamists protested such an action that was, as they argue, a breach of the GUPS's bylaws (al-Ashqar in a personal interview with the author, June 2016).

In 1993, the Islamic Trend of Palestine Students mobilized the student base in Sudan with an alliance between Hamas, the Islamic Jihad students, independent students, and students affiliated with factions that separated from the PLO (the Fatah Revolutionary Council), and some Fatah and The Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) members. They managed to mobilize about two-thirds of the students' base in a conference at the Youth and Children's Palace in Omdurman and dropped the legitimacy of the GUPS because the president of the GUPS in Tunisia, Marwan Barghouthi, met the youth of the Israeli Labor Party in a European country. They considered this a clear violation of the Constitution of the Union. They established an alternative Union, which was approved by two-thirds of the students (al-Ashqar in a personal interview with the author, June 2016).

In 1993, two months later, another conference was called. A new Palestinian student body, called the Union of Palestinian Students (UPS), was established at that conference. The first administrative members of the UPS were: Alaa Al-Rafati, President; Yahya al-Abadsa, Deputy Chairman; Ahmad Jaber al-Amassi, for Media, Adnan al-Kahlout, for Interior; Osama al-Ashqar, for Culture; Maher Shamia, for Secretariat; and Ziad Abu Zeid, for Foreign Affairs (al-Ashqar in a personal interview with the author, June 2016).

In the establishment phase of the UPS, there were between 200-300 students to start with, which steadily increased until they reached about 700 students after the year 2000. For comparison, the number of the Palestinian community ranged from 300-400 families between the early and the mid-nineties (al-Ashqar in a personal interview with the author, June 2016).

The GUPS rejected the establishment of the Alternative Union and delegitimized it. However, the participation of the General Union of Sudanese Students, the World Islamic Union of Student Organizations, the Union of Non-Aligned Students, and the African Student Unions in the details of the Alternative Union gave it the needed legitimacy (al-Ashqar in a personal interview with the author, June 2016).

The GUPS in Sudan was established in the late 1980s. The first President of the GUPS in Sudan was Samir Abdul-Jabbar, a student at the Faculty of Medicine at the University of Khartoum, who is now the ambassador of the Palestinian Authority in Khartoum (al-Ashqar in a personal interview with the author, June 2016).

As has been mentioned, the existence of two representative Palestinian student bodies (GUPS and ILPS) in the different Arab and European countries, with two different political and ideological agendas, appeared before, and in conjunction with, the establishment of the Palestinian higher education system within the Palestinian Territories. The date of establishment, places of activities, and leaders of each body are summarized in the following:

Table 3.1. Establishment of Student Organization Bodies

Country	Student bodies	Date of establishment	Leaders of student bodies
Egypt	PSA	1952	Yaser Arafat, Abu Iyad
		1972	Abd Al Aziz Awda, Musa Abu Marzuq
Germany	PSA	1966	Abdullah al-Afranji, Ghazi al-Husayni
	ILPG	1984	Mahmoud Amr
Sudan	GUPS	1989	Samir abdel- Jabbar
	ITPS	1991	Aladdin al-Rafati
Kuwait	GUPS	1969	
	ILPS	1977	Khalid Mishal, Izzat al-Rishq
Lebanon	PSA	1959	Tawfiq Tirawi, As'ad Abd al-Rahman
	ILPS	1975-1987	Ra'fat Murra, Samir Atwa, Yasser Qadura
Iraq	PSA	1958	Zuhair Al-Khatib
Jordan	GUPS	1964-1966	
	MSU	1965	Mahmoud Kotkot, Mamoon Jarrar, Ahmad Nofal
Italy			
	ILPS	1973	Muhammad al-Barq
Syria	PSA	1959	Tawfiq al-Jabah
UK			
	ILPY	1979	Salah Inaya
USA	IAP	1981	Ali Mishal

Source: Ghayatha 2000; Al-Nuaimat and Al-Lala 2010; Bajes 2012; Zelkovitz 2015; a personal interview with Al-Ashqar 2016; Ali 2016 and Al-Zeer 2016.

The founding of Islamic student unions in Egypt, Jordan, Kuwait, and other countries represents a critical phase in the evolution of student activism and Palestinian Islamism. These organizations emerged not merely as administrative entities but as deliberate responses to perceived ideological and structural limitations within existing student frameworks, such as the General Palestinian Union of Students (GPUS). Many students considered mainstream organizations insufficiently attentive to Islamic values, unresponsive to local grievances, or incapable of providing a coherent platform for mobilizing collective action grounded in faith-based ethics (Tamimi 2007, 55–58; Saleh 1997, 33–36). Establishing separate unions allowed students to assert organizational autonomy, articulate demands related to both educational and socio-political reform, and foster collective identities anchored in Islamic principles. These unions also served as channels for leadership development, cultural and religious education, and coordinated activism that mainstream student organizations did not offer (Tamimi 2007, 62–66).

The broader political and intellectual context, particularly the 1967 Naksa, played a pivotal role in shaping these developments. The Naksa's territorial losses sparked intense debates among Palestinian intellectuals and students regarding its causes, whether internal failures within Palestinian leadership or broader imperialist dynamics. Tamimi (2007, 70–74) highlights how the Naksa prompted the Palestinian Muslim Brotherhood and affiliated student movements to reevaluate strategies, reinforcing the need for grassroots and ideologically coherent activism. Saleh (1997, 40–44; 2017) similarly emphasizes that this period underscored the necessity of organizations capable of mobilizing students around a unified Islamic identity and a commitment to resistance. Understanding these debates and organizational responses is essential for situating the emergence of Islamic student unions within the wider dynamics of political mobilization and the Palestinian struggle.

By the 1970s, a system of higher education was beginning to develop within the Palestinian territories, which opened new doors of education and social mobility for different social classes among the Palestinians (Ghayatha 2000; Zelkovitz 2015, 97-98)

3.2. Student Resistance at Home: Universities as Arenas of Struggle

With the establishment of the first four Palestinian Universities (Bethlehem, Birzeit, al-Najah, and Islamic University), students, who were already committed to the Palestinian political parties, began to transfer their ideological, and political attitudes inside of the university walls. They tried to push the political program of each of their parties through their positions in the student movement (Ghayatha 2000, 106). They also began to define themselves according to political and ideological views, thereby distancing themselves from each other. The PLO students founded student bodies that reflected their political and ideological support for the PLO, represented by al-Shabiba (Fateh Youth movement: FYM), the Student Action Front, known as al-Qutub al-Tullabi (Democratic Progressive Student Pole: PFLP), the Student Unity Bloc, which is considered the student wing of the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP), and the Progressive Democratic Students Union (PDSU), which is considered the student wing of the communist party. On the other hand, the Islamic student activists who did not recognize the PLO as the only legitimate representative for the Palestinians, formed al-Kutla al-Islamiyya (Islamic Bloc: IB) between 1978 and 1980, as was written in two different internal documents of the IB in Birzeit University (Islamic Bloc in Birzeit n.d.$_a$; n.d.$_b$). The table below shows some information about the relative convergence between the establishment of the Palestinian universities and the foundation of the Palestinian Student Movement, in general (Ghayatha 2000, 107-132; Bajes 2012, 19-26; Zelkoviz 2015, 98-99, 145-146):

Table 3.2. The Establishment of the Main Student Movements Within the Palestinian Universities

University	Date of establishment	IB (al-Kutla)	FYM (Shabiba)	DPSP (al-Qutub)
Birzeit University	1972	1978-1980	1980-1982	1981
Bethlehem University	1973	1985	1983	1979
Al-Najah National University	1977	1979-1980	1980-1981	1982
Islamic University	1978	1979-1980	1986	
Hebron University	1980	1981	1983	
Al-Quds University	1984	1984	1984	1984
Al-Azhar University	1991	1991	1991	1991

The table above illustrates that the IB in the West Bank and Gaza was formed at approximately the same time as other national student movements: Shabiba, Qutub (previously called Student Action Front), and the Student Unity Bloc, at the beginning of the 1980s (Islamic Bloc in Birzeit n.d.$_a$; n.d.$_b$; Paz 2000, 83). That does not mean that students were not politically and ideologically committed earlier on within their political movements outside the universities' walls, but this commitment was finally translated into organized student work inside of the universities.

The IB strengthened the MB, and later Hamas, by supplying them with a new, educated leadership. This leadership merged the focus on "Islamization" with one on Palestinian nationalism (Paz 2000, 81). Also, the competition between the IB, the nationalists (Shabiba), and the leftists (al-Qutub), forced the IB to develop its program in a clearer way, and at the same time to try to win more adherents among the student population.

A similar development can be observed within the civil society organizations adopting these opposing points of view; the MB established schools and educational institutions that "sponsored various social activities in the fields of culture, education, youth and sports in accordance with Islamic traditions" (Mishal and Sela 2006, 25), to mobilize their counter-framing against the Israeli propaganda on the one hand, and the PLO propaganda on the other hand.

To summarize this section, I conclude that the political opportunity structure in Egypt has played a major role in excluding the MB supporters from the PSA in Cairo and Alexandria, who became later the main co-founders of the GUPS. This has led to major changes in the GUPS identity. That also led the MB, later on in the 1970s, to think of establishing parallel Palestinian student bodies to express the MB's ideological and political views among university students in different Arabian and European countries. Political opportunity played a major role in shaping the identity of the Palestinian student body outside Palestine, which translated, later on, to establishing the IB inside Palestine.

3.3. The Rise of the Islamic Bloc: Identity, Strategy, and Resistance

Aqil Rabee, Nasser al-Din al-Shaer, and Mohsen Abu Ayta, who were co-founders of the IB in the West Bank in 1980, explain more broadly the IB's justifications of its formation. In interviews with them (2011; 2015; 2016), they attribute the IB's emergence to many different factors, such as:

- The emergence of an "Islamic Awakening" within the educated strata in the neighbouring countries and the return of Palestinian college graduates from universities in different Arab countries, especially Jordan and Egypt, where they had been very active in Islamic movements (Rabee 2011, personal communication conducted by the author).

- An increase in political and religious awareness among the new generation of Islamists at the Palestinian universities, colleges, schools, and mosques, due to the reading of Islamist literature from Egypt, Jordan, and Syria like Rasā'il al-Banna ("Tracts") of al-Hassan al-Banna, the founder of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood, Maʿālim fi al-ṭarīq ("Milestones") by Sayyid Qutb, Matha yaʿni 'intimā'i li al-'islām ("To Be a Muslim") by Fathi Yakan, Al- ṭarīq 'ila Filasṭīn ("The Path to Palestine") by Ahmad Nofal, al-Saraṭān al-'aḥmar ("The Red Cancer) by Abdullah Azzam, and all of Saʿid Hawwa's books (Rabee 2016, personal communication conducted by the author). The increase in political awareness was also due to listening to a new generation of MB preachers and political activists such as Hamed Bitawi, Mohammad Fouad Abu Zeid, Sayyid Bilal, Ahmad Haj Ali in Nablus (al-Shaer 2015, personal communication conducted by the author), Fadil Salih, Bassam Jarrar, Ibrahim Abu Salim, Hassan Yousef in Ramallah, Jamil Hamami, Mohammed Gamal Natshe in Hebron (Rabee 2016, personal communication conducted by the author), Emad Al-Alami, Nizar Awadallah, Mofid El-Ashi, and Abdel Aziz El-Rantisi in Gaza (Abu Ayta 2016, personal communication conducted by the author).

- The PLO's departure from religious affiliations, from the IB founders' perspective, and its orientation toward secularism. This created the impression that PLO supporters, leftists particularly, were against religion and led –as a reaction– to the

need for the creation of a new bloc to defend religion (Rabee 2011, personal communication conducted by the author).

- The interest of many religious students in having an Islamic Student Movement, similar to Fatah and the Left (ibid.).

My brother, we ask that you defend Islam before you defend the Islamic Bloc, that you support Islam before you support the Islamic Bloc, and that you give your allegiance to Islam before giving it to the Islamic Bloc.

If you ask about the Islamic Bloc at Birzeit University, we say:

- We abide by the Book of God and the Sunnah of His Messenger in what we present, say, or do.

- We seek neither dominance on earth nor corruption.

- We do not aspire to rule over people; rather, we aim to implement God's rule and law so that people may find happiness through it.

- We have chosen Islam as a creed and a way of life; we do not compel anyone to it, and we refuse to be forced by others to accept what they have chosen for themselves.

- We are not hostile toward anyone; we stand with people in all that is good, and we wish for them to stand with us in opposing all evil. We hope for them the best in this world and the hereafter.

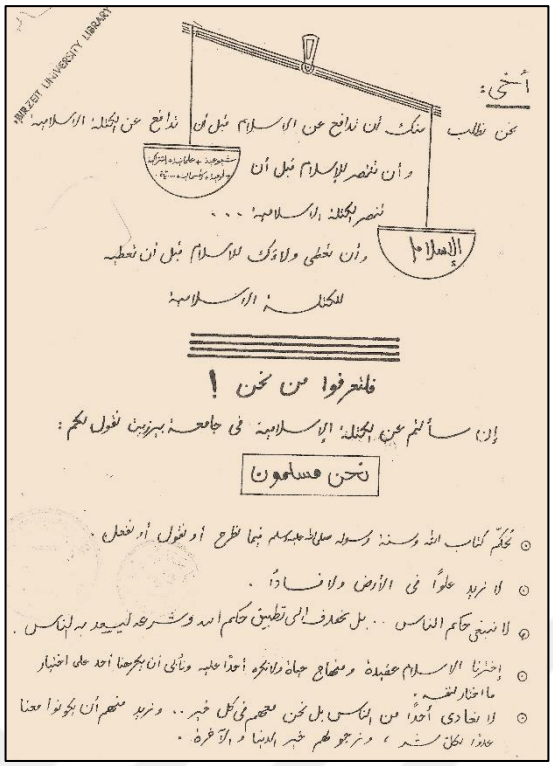


Figure 3.4. An Introductory Publication by the Islamic Bloc in 1981

Source: Birzeit University Library archive

The Islamic student action coincided with the beginning of al- Ṣaḥwa al-Islāmiyya (the Islamic Awakening), a term used by the leaders of the Islamic movement to express the increase of Islamic awareness in the mid-1970s, and the spread of MB thought among youth, and particularly at universities, schools, and higher educational institutions in the West Bank and Gaza after the Islamic Revolution in Iran.

The IB members, as Muhsin Abu Ayta who was one of the co-founders of the IB in Birzeit University in 1978 witnessed, communicated via small groups called *usra* ("family") and lectures that were delivered by MB leaders and imams to university students at the mosques (Bajes 2012, 18). At the same time, MB leaders were organizing religious, political, and economic seminars in the mosques that were near the universities, and sometimes inside the universities. The students from Gaza who were studying at Birzeit and al-Najah University played a leading role in the creation of the IB (Abu Ayta 2016, personal communication conducted by the author).

The IB established a set of objectives and worked diligently to avoid neglecting them. From its inception, one of the key objectives it set for itself was to transform the community of the Palestinian university into an Islamic one. The IB strove to impact and contribute to the change of this Palestinian reality as a part of the Palestinian society as a whole, and like all other sectors of the community, it was influenced by it. Likewise, it sought to convince people of the need to adopt an Islamist approach for the resolution of the central Palestinian issues, such as liberation, land, and identity. This stemmed from its core belief that there can be no solution to these issues other than through Islam. They must return to Islam and adopt its methodology and approach, in addition to becoming active in defending the homeland, its people, rights, sanctities, and nationalist issues. Also, they wanted to raise the awareness of the student community, as well as of all sectors of the Palestinian society, to the reality of the ongoing Palestinian/Israeli negotiations, the "solutions" they produced, and the danger the negotiations pose to the rights of the people and their future, in addition to raising awareness regarding protecting national institutions, particularly educational institutions, against the dangers of "normalization" with the Israelis and Zionism, especially in the atmosphere imposed by the Oslo agreements. Likewise, they tried to protect the educational institutions from militarization and from falling under the control of Palestinian security forces. By striving to defend various student syndicate issues and taking their troubles and concerns seriously, they wanted to reform the conditions of the Palestinian youth and students. Furthermore, they wished for the student movement to take its rightfully advanced position in leading the Palestinian people. Finally, they wanted to find a common trait that unifies all student movements at every university and institution so that they could have more impact on the Palestinian reality (Islamic Bloc in Hebron 2011).

3.4. Symbols of Struggle: Visual Narratives in the Islamic Bloc's Resistance

Sidney Tarrow emphasizes that collective action is not only strategic but also deeply performative, where slogans, imagery, and symbolic acts play a critical role in mobilization. He conceives protest as a form of public performance through which movements communicate their worthiness, unity, numbers, and commitment, what he terms the "WUNC" displays (Tarrow 2011, 22–25). These symbolic elements are not merely decorative; rather, they are central to how movements articulate their

grievances, assert collective identities, and cultivate emotional solidarity. Tarrow's notion of "repertoires of contention" highlights that movements rely on culturally resonant forms, such as chants, posters, flags, and ritualized acts, not only to express dissent but to frame it in ways that are morally compelling and emotionally engaging. These performances often distill complex political narratives into accessible and repeatable symbols, thereby enhancing the movement's ability to attract participants and shape public perception (Ibid. 22-25). In the case of the Islamic Bloc, the strategic use of religious and political symbolism, along with recurring visual and performative motifs, constitutes a crucial aspect of its mobilization repertoire, transforming protest into a visible, emotionally charged expression of collective resistance and identity.



Figure 3.5. IB at Birzeit University During the Electoral Festival in 2023

The visual slogans (logos) of the IB were drawn by the first generation of the IB at the Universities at the beginning of the 1980s. The logos reflect a vision, summarize goals, and confirm the fundamentals of the IB. They differ from one university to another, since there was no central organizational structure for the IB. But there are some common symbols in all the logos. The map of historical Palestine lies at the center of all the different logos, as an indicator of the IB's political view to liberate Palestine "from the river to the sea." An inverse Hilāl (crescent) surrounds the Palestinian map to stress the Islamic ideological background of the IB, and a book lies

inside the map or at the top of it. In some logos, the book is the Quran, in other logos it is just a book as a symbol of their main objective of establishing the IB as a student movement, which is education.



Figure 3.6. Different Logos of the IB in the Palestinian Universities

One other important common symbol between all the IB logos is the weapon; each IB logo has a different kind of weapon surrounding the Palestinian map or lying at the top of it. In the al-Najah University IB logo, there is a banner; later during the second intifada after the year 2000, it changed to a gun. In Birzeit University's IB logo, there is a stone. In al-Quds University's IB logo, there are two swords surrounding the Palestine map. Guns are surrounding the map in the IB logo of Hebron University, as well as those of al-polytechnic University and Bethlehem University. All these weapons highlight the role of armed struggle as a strategic choice to liberate Palestine from the IB's point of view.

3.5. Structuring Dissent: Networks, Hierarchies, and Mobilization

The IB's organizational structure is based on a bottom-up design. The first layer in the organizational structure of the IB, and one of the most prominent means of selecting new members, is called the family: Al-'Usra. It is a concept that is derived from the organizational structure of the Muslim Brotherhood and its mobilizing tools. Small groups of about seven to ten students are selected by the leaders of the IB in each university and informed of their missionary and educational tasks. These groups were cultivated, i.e., for those who showed a desire to join the IB, their cultural affiliation was strengthened by talking about contemporary issues, particularly regarding the Muslim world, and the Islamic movement in Palestine in particular, and discussing the contents of the daily newspapers, especially political news. They were trained in presentation skills, learned how to give public speeches (rhetoric), and held religious lessons. These are methods by which the IB trains its members discovers their abilities and then selects them for various positions in councils and the leadership of the rest of its committees at various universities (Personal interviews with Thabet 2012, Obaid 2014$_b$, and Rabee 2016).

According to Nowar Thabet, a previous student activist and member of the student council at Birzeit University between 2000 and 2004, the Al Usra committee is considered most important, as it focuses on the educational trends of the IB's members. It holds missionary seminars and lessons based on how the IB builds its cadres. Hence, it is oriented towards discovering their innate abilities and facilitating the selection process of Shura Council members and chairmen/chairwomen for their committees at different universities (Thabet in a personal interview with the author, March 2012).

Although Al Usra is considered the most important cultural and political mobilizing tool among the adherents of the IB, it is also considered to be the smallest organizational unit in IB's organizational structure in Gaza and West Bank Universities.

After the new members pass through the family, they are distributed to different committees in the different colleges in each university. The most important of these

committees are the *da'awa* (call to Islam), cultural, arts, and sports committees, in addition to the new students' committee, faculties' committees interested in students' academic issues and specializations, and the housing committee, which is responsible of finding student accommodation to the new students, especially the female students, and to visit them whenever needed. This division is clear from the wall magazines, publications, and cards distributed by the IB to students on various occasions, and from the interviews that I have made with many IB leaders.

From the heads of these committees and some of its distinguished members the "Shura" Council, of the IB is formed, which is considered the solid nucleus of the general structure of the IB, and they have between 20-25 males and the same number for female members in a separate Shura council. The Shura Council, for both males and females, elects a mini committee, *Lajnat al Masjid* (Mosque committee) from five to seven persons usually, to manage the IB, formulate the annual plan and supervise its implementation. The committee's name is changed from time to time and agreed upon by the Mother movement because of its important role, centrality, and knowledge of IB's internal secrets. The real number of its members also changes constantly, due to the complicated security situation. The elections for the Shura council and the mini committee take place annually inside the university camps.

For female students, Shura Council elections are annually held, but for male Shura councils, they are rarely held by the time, because of the security situation. It should be mentioned here that most members of the Shura Council are arrested when their names become public. Thus, divisions, structures, and the Constitution of the IB are not even announced to members in some cases to keep them secured. As for female students, the danger of being arrested used to be less than that of male students, or at least it was until 2018. That is why elections used to take place annually, and the names of the female Shura council were announced.

Finally, the mini committee chooses a person among its members to be the leader or the head of the IB, who is called "Amir", and he is entrusted to coordinate with the female sector, which contains the same structure, in addition to approving the annual plan, running the IB work in university, and coordinating with the university's administration on occasion as a representative of the IB when it is related to student

syndicate issues (Personal interviews with Qaddoumi 2015; Malki 2015; Barghuti 2015; Hasan 2015).

The diagram below shows the organizational structure of the IB in Birzeit University as it was in 2006, from the archive of the IB:

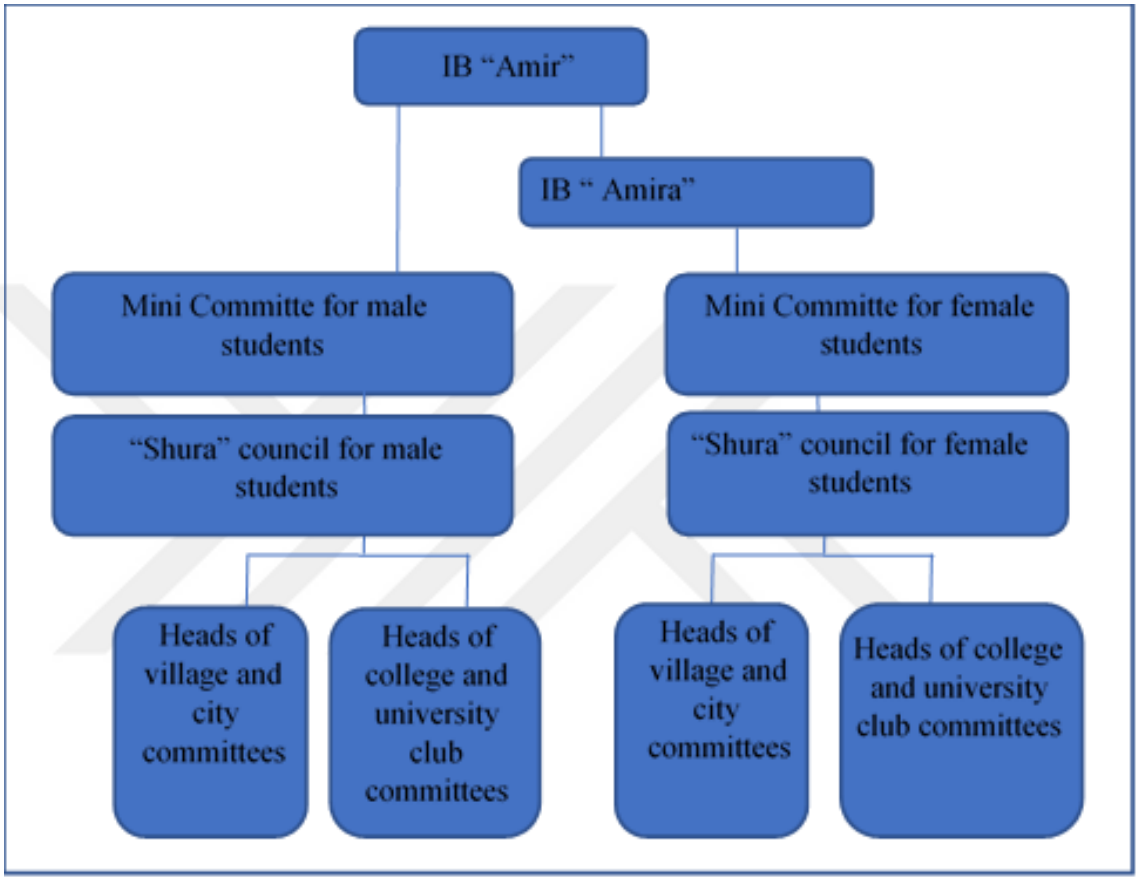


Figure 3.7. The General Structure of the IB at Birzeit University in 2005/2006 as Shown in an Illustration from the IB's Archive at Birzeit University

As noticed from the chart above, the organizational structure of the IB at Birzeit University is based on two similar parts, depending on gender bases. The party's primary base consists of "Usra" members as mentioned before, and then the most apt individuals are chosen to head college and club committees, whose functions are mostly syndicating issues with some educational "Da'wa" functions. In addition, there are the heads of village and city committees, who are responsible for classifying university students according to their geographic regions, visiting them in their homes and living areas, and getting to know them closely. The most qualified,

organizationally and educationally, of the committee heads from all four academic years are chosen to be members of the Shura Council.

It should be mentioned that this structure might vary from one university to another, according to the number of students in the university, its geographical location, in addition to the ratio of students who support Islamic ideas in the university, the number of faculties, and other factors related to the security dimension.

When talking about the IB in Gaza universities, about 60% of the articles included in the IB's bylaws (2004) contain details about membership terms and organizational structure, in addition to all other issues concerning the general Shura Council: its meeting minutes, terms of reference, and the power exercised by the chairman and his delegate. There are also details about the definition of the general administrative body; its powers and meetings; and divisions of different councils for areas, universities, and high schools (Bylaws of the IB, from articles 7-21). These bylaws only became valid in 2004, and only in the Gaza Strip because of the different political conditions of the West Bank.

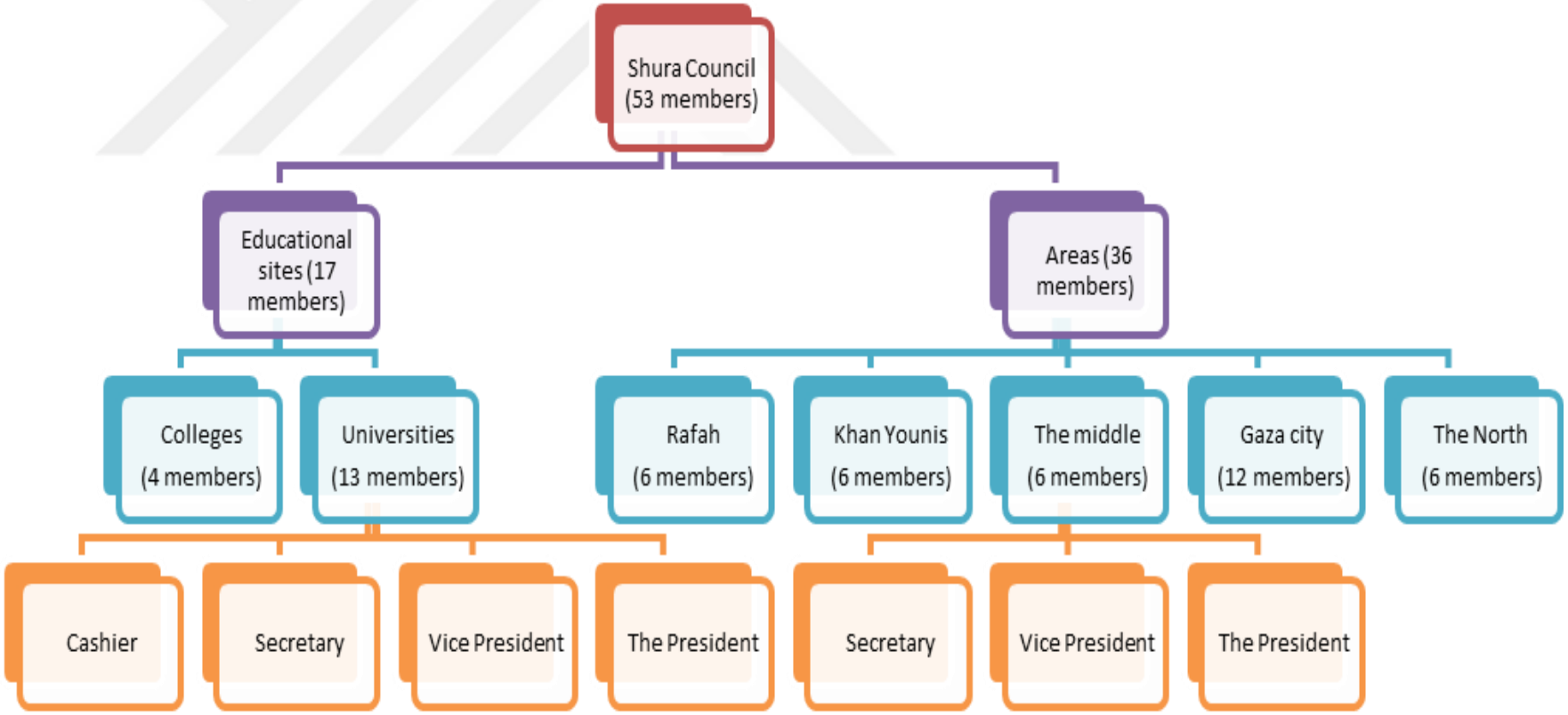


Figure 3.8. The Organizational Structure of the IB in Gaza, as Stated in Its Bylaws (Al-Kahlut 2009, 186)

In the organizational structure of the IB, there are two separate and theoretically equal sectors, one for males, another for females. The female sector has its own Shura council, and its own committee that is headed by a female representative called *Al Amira*. She is responsible for the female sector, and she is the communication link between the female sector and the head of the IB, usually *Al-Amir*.

The female student sector's importance does not come only from their management and organization of their own affairs, but from being a protection shield and a second line of defence in case the male student sector is exposed to arrest, pursuit, or deportation attacks. It was shown repeatedly that the strength of the female student sector comes from their ability to balance their responsibilities: the call to Islam *da'awa* and mobilization activities, mobilization and gathering, in addition to syndicate and academic activity tasks assigned to them. Female students are sometimes chosen to participate in the Students' Council and to head some of its committees.



Figure 3.9. Female Leaders of the Islamic Bloc

Source: Interviewee's archive

The photo on the left was taken of female leaders of the Islamic Bloc (Sisters) during the election rally at Birzeit University in 1985, where the mother _an interviewee_ was one of them, while the photo on the right was taken for the female sector during the Hamas movement launch festival at the same university in 2019, where the daughter was a female leader who had been arrested with her picture appears on the large banner behind the students.

Readers might have noticed similarities in the general idea of the Shura concept and its mechanisms within the IB at all universities in the West Bank and Gaza, but there is a difference with reference to its application: In the West Bank, the Shura is only applied individually for each IB at the respective university; there is no general Shura Council for all universities as there is in Gaza. That refers to (1) the different political circumstances between Gaza and the West Bank; the IB is more free to emerge and communicate in Gaza universities and higher education institutions. In the West Bank, there are different security agencies that seek after IB members and prohibit them from building a one-representing body for all IB members. (2) the difference between the social network of the mother movement (Hamas) in Gaza and the West Bank, which occurs a different point of view on how to deal with the IB as a separate organization that reflects the spirit of diversity in West Bank against the one- identity in Gaza.

Confidentiality also plays a major role in the Shura election system of the IB at West Bank universities. Concerning the male sector of the IB, there were hardly any elections in some years, and the results were not announced for security reasons. The female sector, on the other hand, used to perform annual Shura elections –sometimes in public places– and the names of the winning candidates were announced immediately after polling (Thabet 2014, personal communication conducted by the author).

This chapter has traced the regional emergence of the Palestinian student movement, illustrating how transnational networks, domestic educational institutions, and the Islamic Bloc's strategic and symbolic practices contributed to its rise. By situating the student movement within broader regional and political geographies, we gain a clearer view of its foundational dynamics. Yet, understanding how these early formations evolved under shifting political contexts requires a closer look at the historical junctures that redefined student activism in Palestine. The next chapter turns to the pivotal turning points in the Islamic student movement's development, beginning with its marginal origins and leading to its eventual dominance and institutional repression. Through a historical-political lens, Chapter Three explores the evolution of the Islamic Bloc across decades of leadership, prohibition, and cycles of resistance, revealing how it adapted to both internal rivalries and external pressures.

CHAPTER IV

HISTORY AND POLITICS-KEY TURNING POINTS AND THE EVOLUTION OF THE ISLAMIC STUDENT MOVEMENT

The significant events in the Middle East during the twentieth century have profoundly impacted the region's overall political and social dynamics. One of the most prominent manifestations of the influence of historical events on the political and social actors in the region is the emergence of the Muslim Brotherhood movement after the fall of the Ottoman Caliphate at the beginning of the century, followed by the rise of Islamic movements originating from the Muslim Brotherhood, the most notable of which is the Hamas movement. However, this historical turning point was not the only event that influenced the trajectory of the Islamic social movement in Palestine, in general, and the emergence of the student movement, in particular. It is no coincidence that the Muslim Brotherhood branch in Palestine was proved at the height of the struggle the Palestinians were witnessing against British colonialism just before the British withdrawal from historic Palestine. Likewise, it is no coincidence that the Islamic Bloc in Palestinian universities was founded following the success of the Islamic Revolution in Iran as an inspiration for the model and an attempt to replicate it in Palestine and the region. We should also not forget that the Islamic Resistance Movement Hamas was established and declared itself with the onset of the First Palestinian Intifada, as it transitioned from its educational preparation phase to engage in both popular and armed resistance. Furthermore, the Al-Qassam Brigades formally established and announced their existence shortly after the signing of the peace agreements between the Palestine Liberation Organization and the Israeli occupation.

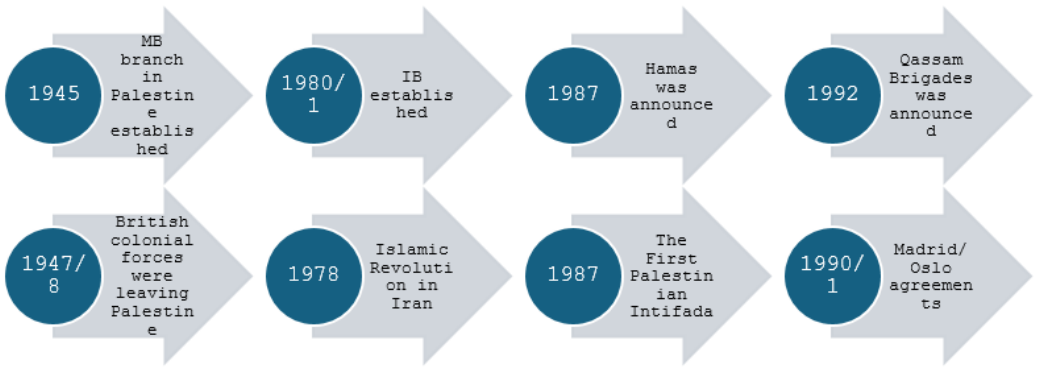


Figure 4.1. Establishing the Islamic Movement and the Historical Junctures in Palestine

Just as historical or pivotal events played a critical role in shaping the Islamic social movement in Palestine, less central events have also contributed to shaping the various phases through which the Islamic Bloc has evolved into what it is today. These events were sometimes linked to political dimensions and, at other times, to cultural and ideological ones. What remains certain, however, is that resistance constituted the most prominent factor influencing the structural and formal transformations that the Islamic Bloc underwent throughout its successive stages—stages which some scholars have divided into three distinct periods before the outbreak of the Second Palestinian Intifada (Ghayatha 2000, 120). Two additional stages emerged after 2007 due to changes in the dominant political, union, and social priorities that characterized each phase. This chapter will highlight the historical events and the most prominent features of each of these stages:

4.1. From Margins to Recognition: The Early Years of the Islamic Bloc (1979–1986)

The early 1980s marked the emergence of the Islamic Bloc (IB) at various Palestinian universities during that period. Many researchers agree that the IB was one of the first student movements to emerge in the country, coinciding with the establishment of several universities. (Ghayatha 2000; Paz 2000; Zelkovitz 2015, 148). Each Islamic bloc originated from various factors, including the nature of competing student groups, geographical location, and their relationships with university management.

For six years following Birzeit College's transition to a university in 1972, there was no indication of an Islamic bloc emerging as part of the Palestinian Islamic movement. During this time, student councils were elected by individuals aligned with the PLO, without the formation of official student organizations representing each of the PLO's political factions. However, at the end of 1978, a group of students chose to establish an Islamic student union, which became known as the “Student Action Bloc.” This marked the first such organization in any of the Palestinian universities. The bloc was founded by Abdel-Halim Al-Ashqar, along with Mohsen Abu Aita and others. In the same year, they won the election and took leadership of the Literature Club.

Islamic students organized several activities that transformed the ideological orientation of the literature club, leading to the cancellation of previously hosted masquerades. These events had been arranged by the Student Affairs Deanship in partnership with the Literature Club of the Student Council. However, the Islamic students opposed this activity, arguing that one of its components involved turning off the lights to allow students the freedom to introduce themselves. Some attendees were consuming alcoholic beverages, which resulted in "moral transgressions" deemed unacceptable within Palestinian culture, not only from a religious standpoint (Nimer 2016; Hasan 2016, personal communication conducted by the author).

The new members of the literature club also participated in the book fair during Palestine Week in 1978, where they sold religious literature—sales that were three times greater than those of the student council itself (Islamic Bloc in Birzeit n.d.a). That year, the Islamic Bloc decided to run for the student council elections under the name Student Action Bloc. However, the elections were postponed due to a two-month university closure and did not take place until 1980. The Action Bloc opposed the Unity Bloc, which included all factions supporting the PLO, and received 43% of the votes (Ghayatha 2000, 122).

One year later, in 1981, the IB ran in the elections under the name Islamic Bloc for the first time, gaining 34% of the students’ votes. In its electoral publication from 1980-1981, the IB defined itself as:

> Depending on Allah's book and the Sunna of his messenger in everything the IB offers, says or does, and that it is not seeking the people's judgment and it aims at applying the rule of Allah and his laws to bless people, and it has chosen Islam to be a doctrine and a way of life, and it is not forcing it on others, and it refuses to be forced by anyone to choose something that he has chosen, and it is not fighting against anyone, but it is with people for their best (Islamic Bloc in Birzeit 1981).

The IB held its inaugural book fair in 1980, but the university declined to promote the event (Islamic Bloc in Birzeit, 1983). As a result, students resorted to wearing signs on their chests and bags to draw attention to the exhibition. At that time, their most effective method of self-promotion was distributing brochures (Hasan 2011, personal communication conducted by the author).

As noted by Samer Nimer, one of its co-founders, the IB at Birzeit University was the first to advocate for proportional representation in student council elections. However, this proposal was rejected by PLO-affiliated student bodies. At that time, IB leaders believed that the prevailing attitude of "Absenteeism" heavily influenced the policies of other student movements, particularly among the leftists dealing with the IB (Nimer 2011, personal communication conducted by the author).

The IB detailed the conflict between the IB and the student bodies of the PLO in an archived document from around 1984, describing it in the following manner:

> The disdain for the Islamic Bloc (IB) became so pronounced that a leader from the leftist faction of the student movement proclaimed that the footwear of the Campos movement[6] members should be regarded as a symbol of honour for the leaders of the Muslim Brotherhood at Birzeit University. Additionally, some leftist leaders accused IB members of not only being allies of Israel but also suggested that they were connected to Mossad, the Israeli intelligence agency (Islamic Bloc in Birzeit n.d.b).

In Nablus, the IB first emerged at al-Najah National University during the 1978/79 academic year; it was founded by a few students including Jamal Mansour, a student in the faculty of Accounting and Business Administration, who later became a leading figure in Hamas. However, the first announcement of the IB was through a congregational prayer on campus, as prayers used to be performed individually. The IB ran in the student council elections in 1979–1980 as the Independent Bloc and

[6] The Campos movement is an Israeli student movement founded by Mordechai Vanunu and ten of his colleagues, including five Palestinians, and was sympathetic to the Palestinians. It was hosted by the leftist movements more than once at Birzeit University, with a big rejection from the IB at the time (Anti-Defamation League 2014: 3). The IB argued that all Israelis must be abandoned and that such an activity would be described as a "normalization" process with the Israelis.

achieved victory by obtaining ten seats out of eleven in the first student council. The council was headed by Khaled Shebaro, a student in the faculty of Physics. One of Shebaro's most prominent activities was the establishment of various book fairs, health insurance for college students, providing a photocopier for students, the organization of volunteer camps, and the organization of sports events and other activities. The following year, in 1981, the PLO groups united to form a single bloc and won the elections by winning six seats out of eleven, while the IB only got five. In 1982, however, the IB won all 11 seats again, under the leadership of Nasir al-Deen al-Sha'er. At that time there were three groups competing for seats on the council: the IB, the National Student Movement Bloc (Fatah), and the Student National Unity Bloc (leftist). Shortly afterwards, however, the university administration suspended the council's activities because of the riots which put an end to studying at the university for a long time (Islamic Bloc in al-Najah 1984, 16–19). These events helped the student national unity bloc to win the elections of the subsequent year 1983, but the IB returned to lead the council again in the following year 1984. This continued until the outbreak of the First Intifada. Since then, the IB has remained in control of the student councils at al-Najah University, except for some rare occurrences (Ghayatha 2000, 118)[7].

In Hebron, the Faculty of Sharia (Islamic law) was established in 1971, and until 1980 it remained a faculty for teaching Sharia law only. During that time there were no student blocs, not even after the formation of a student council in 1979, which was based on the representation of students at all stages of their studies rather than on a competition between different factions (Rabi' 2011, personal communication conducted by the author).

In 1980, when the Sharia Faculty became the University of Hebron, the faculty of arts was opened, including Arabic and English language departments. One of the most powerful student leaders in the Sharia Faculty at that time was Sheikh Raed Salah, who graduated in 1979–1980. He was one of the student action leaders, along with

[7]For more information on the results of the student council elections at An-Najah University, see appendix no. 3, which shows the results of the student council elections at different Palestinian universities from 1980 until 2016.

Sheikh Hashem Abdelrahman, who later became the deputy mayor of Umm Al-Fahm (Rabi‘ 2011, personal communication conducted by the author).

In 1981, there was competition between the Sharia Faculty and the new faculty of arts, since most of the Sharia students were close to the Islamic trend, while a lot of art faculty students were close to the PLO. The founders of the IB at that time felt that this new situation required the establishment of an Islamic bloc at the university, in anticipation of the emergence of student blocs that would run in elections for the student council, and to block any probability of strife between the two faculties of the university (ibid.). Aqel Rabi', one of the IB founders, describes the establishment of the IB in Hebron University, said:

> Hundreds of students who were in support of the formation of an Islamic bloc convened a meeting at which they decided to form the Hebron branch of the IB. They also decided that its members and council representatives must come from both the faculties of sharia and the arts. They also decided that, in the event of an IB victory in the elections, the council's leader should be from the arts faculty, and that there must be at least two women on the list of candidates (ibid.).

That year, the IB won control of the student council, and its leader had a team consisting of members from both faculties, including two women. Kamal El-Khatib, who later became the deputy head of the Islamic movement in historical Palestine, was one of the council members. From that time on, there was competition between the Islamic trend and the PLO faction. A bit later, the left-wing split from the PLO bloc and formed an independent group of its own (ibid.).

The presidency of the IB and its student councils was occupied successively by a group of representatives who have become prominent, such as Nizar Ramadan, who is now a member of the legislative council, and Saleh El-Aruri, who was arrested on charges of establishing a base for Al-Qassam Brigades in Hebron and sentenced to 15 years in prison[8], with the constraint to be exiled to Turkey after being released.

In Jerusalem, the Islamic bloc was established at Al-Quds University in the year of its foundation, i.e., in 1982. It began as the faculty of science and technology the faculty

[8]The forum of the Islamic bloc site at Al-Quds University,http://96.30.44.150/ vb/showthread. php?t=11971, visited on 6/26/2011.

of da'wa and the fundamentals of Islam. Then, in 1982, the Faculty of Arts for Girls in Jerusalem joined it. The bloc at Al-Quds was started in 1984 by Salah Darwazeh, the head of the IB at the university, who was a biology student and graduated in 1986. He was succeeded by Adel Awadallah, who studied mathematics at the faculty of science and technology, and Mohieddin Sherif, an electrical engineering student[9]. At that time, Dr. Zuhair al-Karmi was dean of the university. He totally rejected the presence of a union body for either students or employees at the university, as he considered it an obstacle to the first goal of the university, namely, study.

After many petitions and protests of the student body – all led by the IB, the most prominent group of the College, demanding the right to establish a student council, there was a strike, which resulted in a sit-in that lasted for about four months (Al-Barghouti 2011, personal communication conducted by the author). After many efforts and interventions from many parties, permission was given for the establishment of student clubs for various departments of the faculty, such as physics, mathematics, and computing. There were six elections, four out of which were won by the IB, and two out of which were won by the PLO alliance. The Bloc has participated in all elections for the student council since 1984 (ibid.).

In Gaza, the first student council was set up in conjunction with the establishment of the Islamic University, which was represented by the faculty of theology and Arabic language in 1979. A year later, the first student elections were held, and candidates from the Islamic movement won all the seats. The following year, three faculties were added to the university, and the work of the committees began in the student council, which was at that time considered to be under the leadership of the IB (Al-Abadsa 2011, pers. comm.). In 1981, the IB ran in the elections against the candidates of the Popular Front and the Islamic Jihad movement. The IB won all the seats on the council. In 1982, the Islamists ran in the elections under the name of "the Unified Student Action"[10]. A year later, in agreement with the leaders of the IB in the West Bank, the name was changed to IB (ibid.). Since then, the IB has run the student councils at the

[9] Salah Darwazeh was later sent to Marj al-Zuhhur, after which he became a well-known Hamas commander. He was assassinated in 2001. As for Awadallah and Mohieddin Sherif, they were both assassinated in 1998.

[10] At the top of the list were Khaled El-Hindy, Yahya Sinwar, Yahya Alebadisah, Ibrahim Jaber, Diaa El-Soussi, Ziad Abu-Zeid, Hassan Al-Makadmeh, Kamal Abu Jalal, and Shehadeh Al-Swairki.

Islamic University. During that period, there were significant political events, and the differences in political and social views became greater, which led to a violent conflict that included physical violence. This conflict reached its peak with the assassination of Dr Ismail El-Khatib, a lecturer at the Islamic University and affiliate of the Islamic trend, and members of Fatah were accused of assassinating him (Al-Kahlut 2009, 126).

The IB at the Palestinian universities assembled under the umbrella of the ideology of the Muslim Brotherhood; the other Islamic groups (Salafists and Hizb al-Tahrir) made little effort in the early stages to incorporate the IB, either for lack of conviction or because it did not exist at that time.

It was not the goal of the IB in the early stages, as its leaders say, to resist occupation, because "it was an emerging bloc which wanted to confirm its existence and establish its identity in the face of competition with other emerging groupings. The most important priority for the IB at that stage was the creation of an intellectual, cultural, and educational environment, through which they could establish a group of new Muslim leaders and intellectuals, which in turn would take the lead in "reviving the spirit of Islam" in the community" (Paz 2000, 83). This would be done, as IB leaders argued, by promoting its Islamic culture, for example via newsletters, magazines, daily lessons, religious lectures and the system of *'Usra* (family). They passed on tapes and used the Islamic anthem, as well as seclusion and fasting, organizing book fairs, public festivals, and plays; they also provided help for volunteer work; raised funds for the construction and restoration of mosques, organized preaching and leisure trips, and secured separate accommodation for male and female students (Bajes 2012, 48–57). In the most obvious sense, Aqel Rabi', in the interview, described this period of the IB's life like this:

> The IB was like a newborn baby who must be cared for until he becomes strong, and not be thrown straight into battle. It must not be forgotten that the Muslim Brotherhood at that stage was concentrating on education and not yet engaged in resistance. The IB chose to follow this path too, but it needed to exercise considerable influence to try and persuade the group of the necessity of a gradual transition to popular resistance in 1987 – not altogether successfully, as the group was involved in the first Palestinian uprising through pressure from the young members, who felt that the stage of preparation and spiritual education had gone on long enough and that it was time for direct involvement in resisting the occupation (Rabi' 2011, personal communication conducted by the author).

At the beginning of the 1980s, Islamic action was not prohibited by the Israelis, at least not formally. It was thus possible for the IB members at various universities to communicate regularly through meetings of the leaders and joint trips which were set up by the IB for its members at different universities (Abu Aita 2011, personal communication conducted by the author). One of the outcomes of the meetings that were held by the IB at Al-Aqsa Mosque in 1984, in which students from different universities and institutes participated, was the formation of the so-called Conference of Islamic and Student Movements. This conference agreed to organize a special day in Jerusalem, to be called "Jerusalem Day," on the twenty-seventh of Rajab every year, when IB members flock to Al-Aqsa Mosque in large numbers to hold seminars and host prominent figures from the Islamic movement, such as Sheikh Ahmed Yassin and Sheikh Mohammed Abu Tair (ibid.).

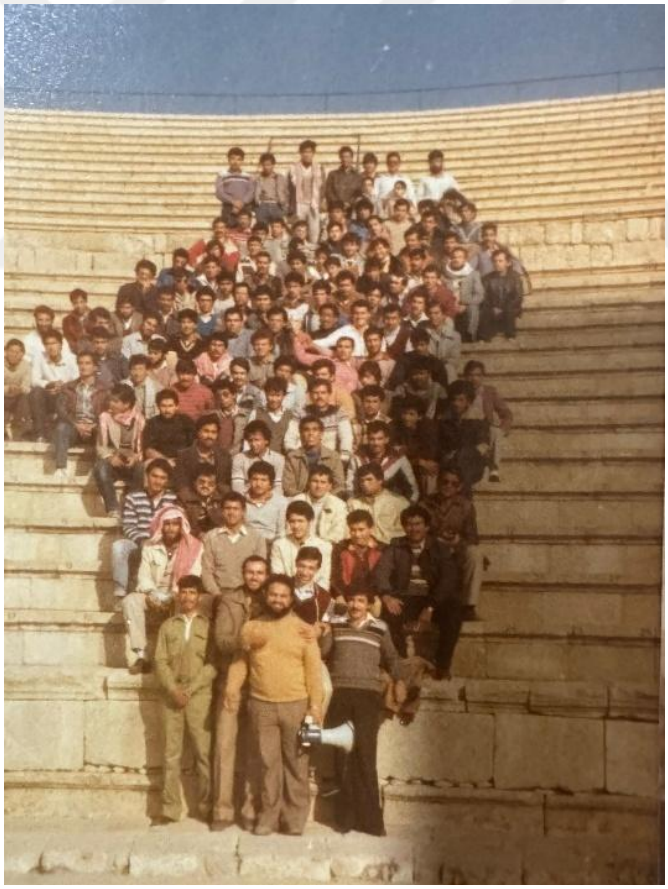


Figure 4.2. The Roman Theatre of Caesarea (Occupied Palestine 1948/Israel) – A Trip Organized by the Islamic Bloc in 1985, During Which Students Formed the Map of Palestine with Their Bodies

Source: Interviewee's archive

The IB branches had no central regulatory authority; each branch made its own decisions and had its own leaders. The members operated through their leaders, through consultation with its base, and regardless of the mechanisms and means the Shura used. As for the IB's members' relationship with each other within a student framework, it was a relationship of interconnection and exchange of activities and visits (ibid.). One manifestation of that relationship was meetings between the leaders of the IB and their discussions concerning common issues, as well as joint sessions for supporters of the IB and its members at universities and institutes, and sometimes the distribution of common leaflets, the exchange of expertise concerning electoral matters and student council issues, participation in the distribution of cultural magazines issued by the IB on various campuses, and carrying out reciprocal visits to participate in celebrations and festivals. These activities were not limited to the IB; they were also conducted by other blocs with their counterparts at the different universities (ibid.).

Initially, the IB did not only consist of Brotherhood members; it included all religious young people and those affected by the contemporary Islamic awakening. There was no formal relationship between membership in the IB and the Brotherhood, but the Brotherhood, by virtue of being the majority, were considered the most important intellectual and cultural environment for the emergence of these blocs (Rabi 2011, personal communication conducted by the author).

At the beginning of the 1980s, there were some conflicts between the IB members and other student movements at that time. These conflicts were the norm in the period during which IB was growing and developing its identity. IB was "fighting" to be recognized as a national power besides the four existing national powers (Fatah, leftists: PFLP and DFLP, and communists). IB adherents did not shy away from violence in their attempts to dominate the Palestinian campuses, as Zelkovitz argues, and they did not fear a clash with the nationalists (Zelkovitz 2015, 149). As for the IB leaders, it was a matter of identity- proving:

> IB was a "cast away entity" by the leftists and seculars. The clashes between IB adherents and nationalists have proved the existence of this new entity. Nationalists have reached the fact that there is a new student movement with a new identity and new discourse. It is the IB identity battle at the university (Abu Hujair 2011, personal communication conducted by the author).

What is meant by ‘identity’ here is the identity of the IB, primarily as an Islamic student organization, and the identity of the IB as a Palestinian Islamic movement, which seeks to practice Islam into a significant reality as will be discussed in the fourth chapter.

The IB experienced difficult challenges in its early formation. The most notable was the rejection of its existence by PLO student wings, and the refusal to recognize it as a student framework. This caused many clashes and problems between various student movements and reached the level of physical abuse for some IB students. These troubles evolved to the point of actual fights, in which even weapons, stones, and empty bottles were used. These took place three times during that period: at al-Najah University in 1982, at Birzeit University in 1983, and at the Islamic University in 1984.

The basic discord of the IB and other student blocs concerned the recognition of the PLO as the only legitimate representative for the Palestinians. PLO student blocs justified their marginalization of the IB by saying: since you will not recognize the PLO as the only legitimate representative for the Palestinians, the PLO will not recognize you, and it will consider you as an ousted part of Palestine's national frame. For that, the recognition conflicts between the nationalists and the IB overshadowed the union work in universities (Ghayatha 2000, 109; Abu Aita 2011, personal communication conducted by the author).

Before the first Palestinian Intifada, the best way for any Palestinian organization to gain legitimacy in the eyes of the Palestinians was by participating in the national struggle (Bajes 2012, 29). It was difficult for a “foreign body” that did not contribute to the resistance activities to compete with the PLO and its supporting student wings. Even though IB gained more than a third of the students' votes in the student council elections between 1980 and 1986 at Birzeit University, al-Najah University, Hebron University, and of course the Islamic University, the IB failed to gain legitimacy and recognition from the national parties until the policy of the IB towards the Israeli occupation changed; at the end of 1986, it gave permission for all IB members to participate in the most violent and the bloodiest demonstrations, in which 70 students were wounded, and two were killed, namely Jawad Abu Salmia and Saeb Dahab. After that incident, the IB issued a central statement in every city in the West Bank,

mourning the deaths of the two students, and adopted the armed resistance policy against occupation. Thus, there were demonstrations at al-Najah, Hebron, Jerusalem, and the Islamic Universities. After this broad and active participation, the IB gained a tacit legitimacy to carry out its activities at the universities, and for the first time organized an official ceremony at the University of Birzeit without any trouble (Hasan 2011, personal communication conducted by the author).

The IB increasingly became an important entity at the Palestinian universities in the West Bank and Gaza, and even at Bethlehem University, where it presented itself for the first time in the 1985 student council elections, managing to win the presidency of the sports club (Islamic Bloc in al-Najah 1985, 49). It is significant that the IB did not resort to an alliance with any other bloc, preferring to stand alone and develop its own identity, even as a new organization on the campus. At this stage, it won 40% of the votes at universities in the West Bank and 65–75% at the Islamic University in Gaza (Gunning 2007).

Table 4.1. Summary of Key Electoral Statistics and Outcomes Related to the Islamic Bloc at Palestinian Universities

University	Year(s)	Election Name / Outcome	IB Vote Share / Seats Won	Notes
Birzeit University	1980	Ran as "Student Action Bloc" vs. "Unity Bloc"	43%	Elections delayed due to 2-month closure
	1981	Ran as "Islamic Bloc"	34%	First time using the "Islamic Bloc" name
	1980–1986	Multiple elections	>33% in each	Did not gain full legitimacy until 1986
Al-Najah University	1979–1980	Ran as "Independent Bloc"	10 out of 11 seats	IB-led first student council
	1981	PLO groups united	PLO: 6 seats, IB: 5 seats	
	1982	IB led by Nasir al-Deen al-Shaʿer	11 out of 11 seats	
	1983	Post-riot elections	National Unity Bloc victory	Council activities suspended previously
	1984 onward		IB resumed leadership	Continued dominance until Second Intifada
Hebron University	1980	Student council election	IB-led council	Included members from Sharia and Arts faculties, incl. 2 women
Al-Quds University	1982	IB formed in science & da'wa faculties	—	Joined by faculty of arts for girls later
	1984–1990s	Participated in all student council elections	IB: 4 wins, PLO: 2 wins	Salah Darwazeh was first IB head

Table 4.1. (cont.)

Islamic University (Gaza)	1979	First council formed	IB won all seats	Represented theology & Arabic faculties
	1981	Contested against Popular Front & Islamic Jihad	IB won all seats	
	1982	Ran as "Unified Student Action"	—	Name changed to IB later
	1980s	Elections continued	65–75% vote share	Conflict peaked with assassination of Dr. Ismail El-Khatib
Bethlehem University	1985	First IB presence	Won presidency of sports club	Stood independently without alliance
All West Bank Universities	1985–1986	Aggregated results	IB: ~40% vote share	

4.2. Resistance and Rivalry: The Struggle for Student Leadership (1986–1996)

There were many external factors that played a strong role in the weakening of the student movement in general, causing it to return to the state in which it had been in its beginning, due to the closing of the Palestinian universities by an Israeli army, as Israel realized the role of students in the increasing resistance movement, which became known as the Intifada (Abu-Amer 2004, 222; Zelkovitz 2015, 155).

The murder of the two students from Birzeit University, Jawad Abu Salmia and Saeb Dahab, as well as others from the student movement at the end of 1986, was considered an important cause of the outbreak of the uprising and the prominent involvement of the IB in it. It also had a profound impact on the implicit recognition of the legitimacy of the IB. Until that time, the term "the four national blocs" (Fatah, PFLP, DFLP, and Communists) had prevailed throughout the Palestinian universities, meaning the blocs belonging to the PLO, but after the IB's engagement in the confrontations with the Israeli army, the term "the five national blocs" appeared (Hasan 2011, personal communication conducted by the author). Marwan Barghouti, president of the student council at Birzeit University that year, was the first to use the term, the day after the demonstration. That day marked a new stage in the history of the IB, which was initially characterized as an attempt of the PLO factions to control the IB. But these attempts soon failed (ibid.).

The IB played an active role in leading the masses in the West Bank and Gaza, as it asked the Palestinians in many statements and at various destinations to participate in public protests, particularly those from the universities of al-Najah, Hebron, and the Islamic University. However, the IB at the Islamic University was the main power behind the demonstrations in the Gaza Strip, organizing various events during the Intifada. This effective leadership of demonstrations led to the closure of the university, as it had happened with the other Palestinian universities (Abu-Amer 2004, 222).

> As the universities were shut down, activists of the various student factions returned to perform their roles in party. Members of the Shabiba [FYM] returned home to Fatah, the Progressive Student Action Front loyalists joined the PFLP, and students of the Islamic Bloc shaped the emerging Hamas movement, a direct result of the uprising (Zelkovitz 2015, 153).

At the beginning of the uprising, the Islamic resistance movement Hamas emerged, and the IB officially declared its adoption of Hamas's approach, despite its previous connection to the Muslim Brotherhood. In fact, the IB and Hamas, at that time, were really the same organization, as members of the IB were the leaders of Hamas in the cities and villages[11]. They were the ones who planned some events of the Intifada published the pamphlets and gathered the marchers for demonstrations (Abu Aita 2011, personal communication conducted by the author). They were also the ones who led the military action, which began to take shape in the simplest form of throwing stones, continuing with the use of Molotov cocktails, followed by preparation for suicide bombing operations, which mainly depended on members of the IB. These members were also at the core of the events and activities announced by Hamas during the Intifada. One Hamas leader, who was a student activist at that time, said: "When there was a strike from Hamas, the 'Ashbal' Cubs[12] and the student members were the ones who distributed the leaflets and who broke Israeli settlers' cars" (ibid.).

[11] Some examples of the IB members who were, at the same time, leaders of Hamas in their cities and villages: Husam Badran, Jamal Mansour, and Ismail Abu Shanab from An-Najah University, and Yehia Alebadsah, Ismail Haniyah from the Islamic University, as well as Salah Darwaza, Adel Awadallah, Mohieddin Sherif from Al-Quds University, Yahya Ayyash, Saleh Eltalahma from Birzeit, Saleh El Aruri, Nizar Ramadan and Nour El-Din Sherida from Hebron University.

[12] 'Cubs' is a term given to students in middle school and secondary schools who are involved in the thought of the Islamic movement to demonstrate that they are still in the process of preparation and training for the future (Abu Aita 2011, personal communication conducted by the author).

With the escalation of the Intifada, the IB, like the other student movements, in many statements rejected the attempts of 'normalization' with the Israelis which took place at some Palestinian universities. It also asked the universities to stay away from any actions that could lead to their closure by the Israelis. It demanded not to give the Israelis a reason to close the universities during that period, but these demands faced vehement rejection and sometimes even defiance (Islamic Bloc in Birzeit 1987).

The Israeli army closed the universities over than four years, resulting in irregular student attendance at universities and colleges, as the students were busy with public work. At the same time, the role of the student union decreased, even after the re-opening of Palestinian universities after the extended break (Abu-Amer 2004, 222).

The closure of the universities affected the IB negatively from an administrative perspective, as it returned to its starting point without having any student union work experience because of the arrest of some of its leaders and the graduation of others. However an internal IB memo shows that it was active in demanding compensation, which was pursued by Palestinian universities after their reopening.[13] This happened after some of the early leaders of the IB restructured it during this period through the selection of a group of students known to the leadership of the various colleges at the universities, and the formation of an interim leadership until the IB could be reconstituted (Bajes 2012, 34).

No sooner had the academic year 1990 at Palestinian universities begun than the Israeli group Temple Mount and Eretz Yisrael (Land of Israel) Faithful Movement[14] released a statement, in which it announced its intention to conduct a march to Al-Aqsa Mosque, and to lay the foundation stone for building the Third Temple there. The students at Al-Quds University in Abu Dis received this news quickly, and the next day the IB began to gather students by calling out through loudspeakers, and dozens

[13] See appendix no.2, which includes a message from the Islamic Student Movement to the university students after the university's reopening, in which it urges them to exclude universities from the conflicts, on the grounds that this might cause their shutdown.

[14] The Temple Guardians group, or Temple Mount and Eretz Yisrael Faithful Movement, is an orthodox Jewish movement; its headquarters are in Jerusalem and its goal is to "[l]liberate the Temple Mount from Arab (Islamic) occupation...and the Dome of the rock and Al-Aqsa Mosque to be transferred to, and rebuilt at Mecca." The founder of the movement is Gershon Salmon, who is an officer in the Israeli army (the official website of the Temple Mount Movement: http://templemountfaithful.org/).

of buses moved towards Al-Aqsa Mosque to demonstrate against them. The presence of large numbers of students inside the mosque did not prevent the Israeli soldiers from carrying out a massacre that day, which was later called the Al-Aqsa Massacre or Black Monday, which resulted in 21 dead, 150 wounded, and 270 arrested persons.[15]

In 1992, 418 leaders of the Palestinian Islamic movement from Hamas and Al-Jihad were deported to Marj al-Zuhur in Southern Lebanon; most of them had previously been leaders of the student movement, like Jamal Mansour, Jamal Salim, Salah Darwaza, Ismail Haniyeh, and Ayman Taha. Prominent preachers, who were highly respected and popular among Islamic student movement members, were also deported. Among them were, for example, Sheikh Bassam Jarrar, Ibrahim Abu Salem, Hasan Yousef, Nayef Al-Rajoub, and Hamed Bitawi. Also, 20 academic Islamists, such as Dr Aziz Dweik, Mahmoud El-Zahar, Abdel Aziz El-Rantisi, and Atef Adwan, and more than 200 university students from the IB such as Mahmoud Abu Honoud and Amjad Seif were deported. Mustafa Al-Lidawi, the head of the IB at Birzeit University, had been among the deportees of Marj al-Zuhur with seven additional members of the IB at Birzeit University (Zelkovitz 2015, 171). Despite its huge loss, the IB took advantage of this opportunity to highlight the issue of Palestinian deportees at universities. It organized festivals, at which the deportees' wives and daughters talked about their suffering. In addition, the IB distributed brochures condemning the deportation campaigns carried out by the Israeli authorities (Islamic Bloc in Birzeit. N.d.$_b$).

By the end of 1992, Hamas began to be a threat to the power of Fatah in all the regions, due to winning a series of student elections at prominent and central universities, including the strongholds of the Shabiba (Gunning 2007, 144) in al-Najah University, Hebron University, Islamic University, Polytechnic, and al-Quds University in Abu Dis.[16] In the same year, i.e., in 1992, there were 12 professional, union and student elections in different parts of the West Bank and Gaza Strip. While the voter turnout exceeded 85% in most cases, the ratios achieved by Hamas and its student wing IB

[15] Arab press website, visited 5/8/2011: http://www.m-3rab.com/news.php?action=view&id=71.
[16] See appendix no.3, which includes a table of results of student elections at Palestinian universities from the date of incorporation until 2016.

ranged from 45% to 50%, which was the same percentage that Hamas was hoping to gain in the Palestinian National Council (Fadel 1992).

In 1993, when the Oslo Accords had barely come into existence, the IB strengthened its status through its protest action and even made alliances with other student blocs. These alliances were characterized by their emphasis on politics rather than ideology, such as the alliance between the IB at Birzeit University and al-Qutub (DPSP) in 1993, and at Al-Quds University in the same period. It also made an alliance with the leftists at An-Najah National University in 1995 and at Al-Quds Open University in Gaza as well, because of their common rejection of the Oslo Accords. The result at Birzeit that year (1993) was not the only indicator of the strength of the opposition to these agreements: at the same time, eight student union elections took place and seven of them were won by the opposition, especially by the IB (Shalhub 1994, 24).

This period was characterized by giving priority to political discourse in union activities, in contrast to the previous stage at which the IB concentrated on preaching and student activities. This shows that the Oslo Accords were conceived of as being highly controversial. With the birth of the Palestinian National Authority in 1991, the number of universities and institutes in the West Bank and Gaza Strip had increased, entailing an increase in competition between student blocs, especially between the IB and the Shabiba. Al-Azhar University was established in Gaza in 1991 and Al-Quds Open University with its branches was established in the West Bank and in Gaza in 1991 as well.

In 1994, the Ibrahimi Mosque massacre – also known as the Hebron massacre – took place. More than thirty Palestinian worshipers who were praying Fajr at the mosque were killed by the Israeli Baruch Goldstein in this massacre (Wiles 2014). After this incident, the reprisals began, led by Yahya Ayyash (known as Al-Muhandis: the engineer), a previous student and IB leader from Birzeit University, who would become among the most celebrated individuals on the Palestinian street (Zelkovitz 2015, 171), for being responsible for planning a lot of suicide attacks against Israel (the Palestinian martyr/ suicide culture will be discussed in section 2.5.3). Ayyash

called these reprisals operations the ‘quintuple plan’.17 He established a group of military cells, including the “chosen union cell number zero,” whose five members were former students of the Palestinian universities18, who were later assassinated by the Israelis.

In 1996, Israeli authorities issued a law that criminalized working with the IB and declared all members of the IB terrorists, who were supposed to be imprisoned for two years. This was based on a report from 32 pages by an Israeli expert, which was submitted to one of the Israeli courts when she was asked to testify against the IB. The report was translated into Arabic by one of the IB members and was put in the archive of the IB in Birzeit. It stated that the IB was the representative of Hamas at higher educational institutions, that its student activists were ready to do anything on behalf of the movement, and that they would eventually become Hamas leaders after graduation or even before (Islamic Bloc in Birzeit 1996).

4.3. Resistance as Leadership: The Rise of the IB in Campus Politics (1996–2007)

In 1996, the Israeli army assassinated Yahya Ayyash. His assassination raised the popularity of the IB at Birzeit University, as he was responsible for suicide attacks against Israel, as previously discussed in section 2.5.2. Since then, Birzeit has joined the ranks of those universities whose student council elections were won by the IB. The IB organized memorial festivals for Yahya Ayyash at various universities in the West Bank and Gaza: in Nablus, Birzeit, Bethlehem, and Hebron, and at many other institutes. After the reprisals which were launched by al-Qassam Brigades (Izz ad-Din al-Qassam Brigades, EQB: the military wing of Hamas) in response to the assassination of Ayyash, a new stage began with respect to the relationship between Hamas and the Palestinian National Authority, the latter of which initiated a massive arrest campaign against members of the IB.

[17] The quintuple plan was drawn up by the al-Qassam Brigades to lead a reprisal in response to the Ibrahimi Mosque massacre in 1994, consisting of five suicide bombing operations carried out by Raed Zakarneh, Ammar Amarneh, Salah Shaker, Saleh Sawy, and Labib Azem, which aimed at the heart of Israel (Al-Majd n.d).

[18] Abdel Moneim Abu Hamid, a student from Birzeit University, Zuhair Farrah, a member of the student council at Al-Quds University in Abu Dis, Islam Abu Rumeileh, a graduate of Birzeit University, College of Arts, Abdul Rahman Hamdan, a student in the faculty of theology at the Islamic University, and Ali Al-Amoudi.

This period was characterized by tense relations between the Palestinian Authority and the IB, many of whose members were arrested in 1996 by the Palestinian security services. These arrests continued until the beginning of the Second Intifada, which coincided with, and was followed by, a campaign of arrests initiated by the Israelis for many male students and some female students as well, who belonged to the IB. The IB and PFLP detainees declared a hunger strike in the Palestinian Authority prisons in 1996 and remained on such a strike until their release.19 The most prominent detainees of these campaigns were the chairmen of the student councils from various Palestinian universities and institutes.[20] However, the IB also accused the Palestinian security services of assassinating a group of its leaders, including Mohieddin Sharif – the most prominent leader after Yahya Ayyash –, who was an IB leader at Al-Quds University in Abu Dis, and the commander of al-Qassam Brigades after the assassination of Ayyash. He was nicknamed "the second engineer" in 1998. Hamas also accused the Palestinian Authority of torturing some IB members to make them confess to crimes they did not commit, including the assassination of Mohieddin, and of illegitimately throwing them in prison for years.21 It also accused the Palestinian security services of handing over Birzeit University's IB leaders22 to the Israeli army during the storming of the Preventive Security headquarters in Beitunia in 2002 (Mansur 2003).

[19] See appendix no. 4, which contains a statement of prisoners of Birzeit University who are in the prisons of authority to the university students

[20] The most prominent of them all were Mohammed Naji Sabha, the chief deputy of the students council at An-Najah University in 1995, the president of the council in 1997, one of the founders of the union of student council chiefs in Palestine, and its first president. He was arrested eight times by the Palestinian security services, the first time on 20 April 1996, followed by his arrest by the occupation authorities, after which he was sentenced to 15 years in prison on charges of belonging to the Qassam Brigades, and for planning a number of military operations. There is also Qais Odwan, the president of the student council in 1999, who was detained by the Palestinian security services in the same period, one of the most wanted by the Israeli government until he was assassinated in 2002 as a leader of the Qassam Brigades in Nablus. There is also Saleh Talahma from Birzeit University, one of the closest friends of Yahya Ayyash. He was detained by the Palestinian security services from mid-1996 until the beginning of 2000. He was assassinated by Israeli army in Ramallah with two leaders from al-Qassam in 2003. Mohammed Abu Warda, the chairman of student council at the Institute of Ramallah in 1997, who was sentenced by a Palestinian Authority court to life imprisonment. He spent six years in prison, was released after a presidential decree because of the attack by Israeli army on the Palestinian cities. After that, the Israelies arrested him in 2002 and gave him 48 life sentences on charges of leading "the sacred reprisals" in response to the assasination of Yahya Ayyash. There is also Nash'at El-Karmi, the chief of the student council at the Polytechnic University in 1998, who was assassinated by Israeli army in 2010.

[21] For example, Imad Awadallah and Ghassan Aladasi.

[22] Including Bilal El-Barghouti, a leader of al-Qassam Brigades in the West Bank (16 life sentences) and Walid Anjas, a member of the "Silwan cell," which was formed in response to the assassination of Salah Shehadeh, the founder of al-Qassam Brigades (36 life sentences), and Ahmad Abu Taha (a 25-year sentence).Please write in complete sentences and exlain these cells nnd their activities in the text in ordert o inform the reader about the activitis of the IB!

By the end of 2000, elections at the Palestinian universities were halted by the Palestinian Authority, justifying it with the lack of suitable conditions, because of the outbreak of the second Palestinian uprising. Four years later, in 2003, elections were reinstated at the universities. The IB again won the student council presidency at most Palestinian universities and institutes.23

The IB participated in the second Intifada, like all other student bodies, supporting the suicide bombing operations. A study made by Mahdi Jaradat (2008) shows that the number of suicide bombers from Hamas between September 28th, 2000 and November 20th, 2008 has reached 72 including 3 women (Jaradat 2008). While in the Islamic Jihad suicide bombers have reached 48 including 4 women. Fatah has adopted 42 suicide bombers including 7 women, and the PLFP has adopted 10 (ibid.). A high proportion of suicide bombers were university students from within its ranks. At al-Najah National University there were 14 suicide bombers who were members of the IB, in addition to 21 others who were killed because of armed clashes or assassinations carried out by the Israeli army (Islamic Bloc in al-Najah 2012). At Birzeit University, Khalil Sharif, who was one of the leaders of the "Martyrs for Prisoners" cell,24 was killed in a suicide bombing operation in 1998, and two other students, Diaa El-Taweel and Ihab Abu Salim, carried out suicide bombing operations in 2001 and 2003. The IB at Hebron University had its share of suicide bombers, too – ten of them to be exact, in addition to other kinds of military action.25

It is clear that the IB electoral propaganda at all universities and institutes promoted suicide operations, and it began to define itself in its election campaigns through the number of "martyrs and prisoners" belonging to it, as well as the number of Israelis who were killed in these operations. The IB at each university had several "Mujahidin," as a high percentage of the prisoners serving long sentences belonged to the student movement; the number of IB prisoners from al-Najah University serving

[23] See appendix no.3, which shows the results of the student council elections at Palestinian universities until 2016.
[24] "Martyrs for prisoners" is a military cell which was founded by a group of Palestinian fighters from al-Qassam Brigades. Its goal is to liberate the Palestinian prisoners who were serving long sentences in Israeli jails. This cell includes Mahmoud Abu Honoud, Ammar El-Zibn, Khalil Sharif, and others (Bilal 2009).
[25] Raed Misk was one of them, along with two members of the student council, namely Nabil Khater and Taha Ezzat; and there is also Mahmoud Al-Qawasma from the Polytechnic University.

life sentences amounted to as many as 13. At Birzeit University there were eight, including the head of the student council of 1999, Mahmoud Shuraitah, and a girl, Ahlam Al-Tamimi, who received the highest sentence that a woman had ever received in the history of the Palestinian cause, namely 16 life sentences. From the Polytechnic University, two students were sentenced to life imprisonment: Mounir Mar'i, who received five life sentences, and Fady El-Dowik, who received 15.

To understand martyrdom/ suicide bombings culture among the Palestinians, "one needs to go beyond explicit physical manifestations in order to uncover the deeply embedded social and cultural corporeal motifs that speak to how the concept of body permeates multiple layers of meaning in the Palestinian cultural landscape and collective consciousness" (Raine 2013, 2). The commencement of village councils and municipal elections in 2005, and the victory of the Change and Reform Bloc, which is considered to be the representative bloc of Hamas in the local and legislative elections, which controlled the majority of these councils, as well as of the legislative council elections in 2006, which were also won by Change and Reform bloc gave the IB a clue about election results in this period, which the students called the "green tsunami" stage, clearly hinting at the control of the IB at various universities and institutes for the student councils elections.

4.4. The Era of Prohibition: The Impact of the Palestinian Political Division (2007–2012)

On 14 June 2007, the Qassam Brigades took control of the head offices of the Palestinian security bodies in Gaza, after fatal events and a lack of security in the Gaza Strip that had lasted for many weeks. Hamas now had full control over the Gaza Strip, and elections at universities were not allowed for security reasons. Such a change also had an impact on the West Bank, where public freedom was greatly limited, something that had never occurred before, especially not among Hamas supporters and the IB supporters at West Bank universities, as will be discussed in the next few paragraphs. IB activities were banned at West Bank universities, either by order of the Palestinian security bodies or by decisions of the councils of Hebron and Bethlehem Universities, or even by the FYM.

The Palestinian security bodies embarked on a vast campaign of arrests targeting IB leaders from all universities as well as student council members representing the IB. The number of Hamas detainees in 2007, as stated by the Hamas media office in an official, detailed bulletin, was 1,460, and increased to 2,046 in 2008. In 2009, the number further increased to 2,229 and in 2010 the peak of political arrests was reached, as the number of detainees climbed to 3,020. In 2011 there were 1,011 detainees, and in 2012 the figure further decreased to 830 (Information Office of Hamas 2014). This change might be attributed to the large number of sit-ins against these political arrests, as will be discussed later. Several IB leaders in the West Bank were shot in the stomach and legs, such as Muhammad Quzmar, a student from Birzeit University, or in the head, like Muhammad Radad who was shot directly on the head on al-Najah National University Campus (ICHR 2007, 7).

In 2008, the Palestinian security services, especially the Preventive Security Services and Intelligence Body, worked hard to destroy the IB structure at West Bank universities by embarking on a campaign of arrests against Hamas leaders among both the student movement and the political organization. Furthermore, funds, which the Hamas distributed to the students as scholarships or means of assisting IB activities at universities, were confiscated (Obaid 2014).

As a reaction to the unprecedented measures against the IB, the arrest of its cadres, and the banning of its activities, the IB suspended its participation in student elections from 2008 to 2012 to the extent that it nearly disappeared from the scene and organized no activities – they did not even issue circulars, organize panels, or hang up posters.

Table 4.2. Fluctuations in the Numbers of Hamas Detainees During the Period from 2007 to 2012

Year	Number of Detainees
2007	1,460
2008	2,046
2009	2,229
2010	3,020
2011	1,011
2012	830

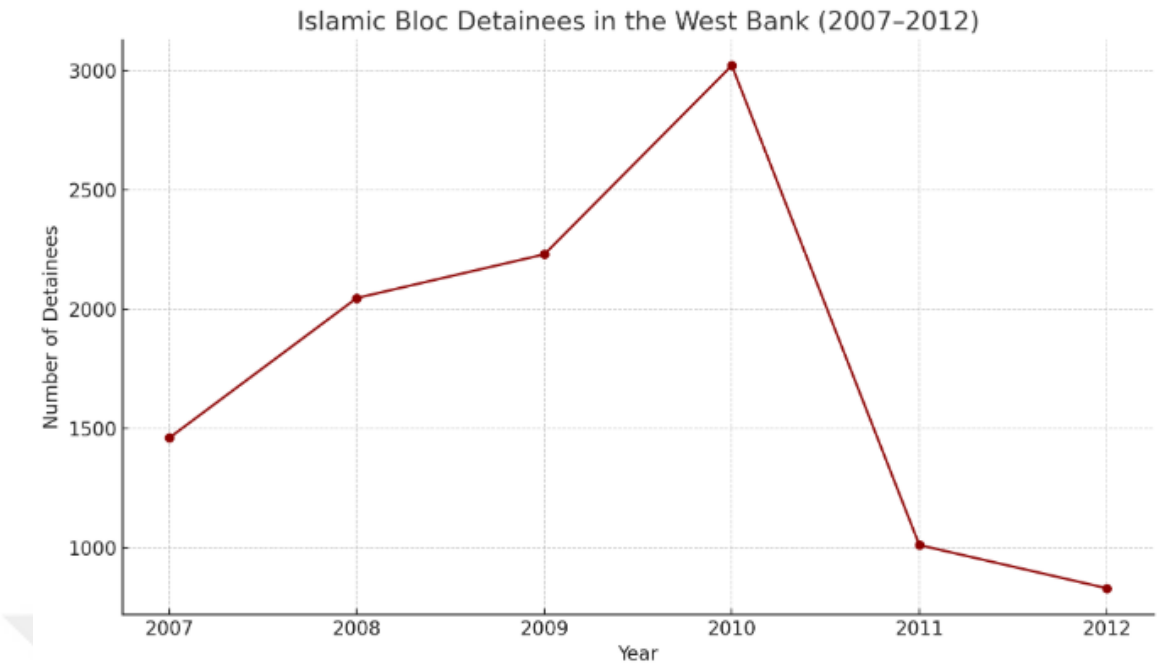


Figure 4.3. The Trend Shown of IB Detainees in the West Bank

The rapid rise of detainees between 2007 and 2010 demonstrates the ferocity of the crackdown on the IB's organization foundation, which peaked in 2010. A partial relief is evident in the resulting decline, which may have been brought on by both internal and foreign political factors. The table shows the number of arrests as well as the increase and decrease of political detainees throughout this time period

On the internal Palestinian level, this period was characterized by the reticence of the IB at the different universities in the West Bank, and the unprecedented secrecy of student activities. It also witnessed an increase in the gap between the supporters of the conflicting parties (IB the student wing of Hamas and Shabiba the student wing of Fatah), which had a negative impact on the general university atmosphere and led the universities to impose rigid laws governing many prohibited activities on campuses, such as political festivals and distribution of publications.

4.5. Cycles of Resistance: From Armed Struggle to Student Mobilization (2012–2021)

From 2008 until 2012 there were very few attempts from IB members to change IB domestic situation within universities or violate the prohibition of its activities until IB student members started a campaign of sit-ins and protests against the political arrests by the Palestinian Authority at universities, as will be discussed in the fourth chapter section 4.7. This stage featured hunger strikes, and the issuing of demands, the most prominent of which was to decriminalize the IB's activities and to end the harassment of its members by the Palestinian security forces under the slogan "Yes for Safe University Life".

The IB at West Bank universities started to resume its activities with statements, circulars, and panels, as well as festivals, art and charity exhibitions and events until it became active again at most of the universities except for a very limited number of colleges and universities such as al-Najah and Khaduri.

By the end of 2012, the IB had resumed its participation in student elections at all West Bank universities; the results were satisfactory and even exceeded expectations in some cases.[26]

Alma's (2013) account of the Islamic Bloc (IB) at Palestinian universities reflects her background as a former officer in the Israeli public security service's "Anti Underground Terrorist Operations Department" in Jerusalem and the southern West Bank, a position that raises questions about her academic neutrality and situates her work as an extension of Israeli security intelligence perspectives. In describing this stage in the IB's development, she writes:

> Contrary to the past, it is noticed that the IB's activists nowadays are not afraid of performing their uncovered activities in the IB, even if such activities are directly related to Hamas. This strategy was quite clear in the 'Clouds Pillar' Operation where a number of demonstrations led by the IB's activists were organized all over the West Bank and within the framework of the IB's activities during the elections period as open marketing and distribution of statements signed by the IB's name (Alma 2013).

[26] See appendix no. 3, which shows the results of the student council elections at Palestinian universities until 2016.

Alma also argues that the IB deliberately chose 2012 to be the year of the movement's relaunch. The IB, according to Alma, used the events of Hamas' 25th anniversary, which was greatly organized by IB supporters as an exemplification of its power. This took place at both Birzeit University, through the participation of the Hamas senior official, Gamal Al Taweel, and Polytechnic University in Hebron, through the participation of the Hamas senior officials including Abdel Khalek Al Natsha, the legislative council member from Hebron, who is currently under administrative arrest, as well as Samira Al Halyaka and Abdel Aziz Doweik, legislative council members of Hamas (ibid.). These activities enabled the IB's participation in the students' elections in 2013 and revived its involvement at large universities in the West Bank, like al-Najah National University, after the Palestinian division.

While her positionality shapes the framing of this account, it nonetheless documents a period when IB activists were increasingly visible in the public sphere. That same year, Bajes (2013) noted that Hamas interpreted the IB's university election results as evidence of its significance in the Palestinian political landscape at a time when no union, labour, municipal, or legislative elections were being held. On this basis, Hamas argued that it should not be excluded from political decision-making. Taking together, these perspectives, one external and security-oriented, the other internal and politically self-affirming, underscore the IB's heightened public presence and political relevance in 2013.

In the 2013 university elections, both of the principal rival factions, the Islamic Bloc (IB) and Shabiba, could interpret the outcomes as victories, each according to its own political priorities and reading of the wider context. From Shabiba's perspective, securing first place at all universities represented not only the preservation of its leading position in the West Bank political arena but also an affirmation of democratic practice. This result was especially advantageous for Shabiba at a time when it sought to reinforce its visibility and influence in the West Bank, both in the eyes of the Palestinian public and the broader international community (ibid.).

The Islamic Bloc (IB) interpreted its performance in the 2013 student elections as a significant achievement, particularly in light of the difficult security environment that residents of the West Bank had endured over the preceding six years. IB leaders also

emphasized the movement's limited capacity to attract the largest possible share of student votes when compared with the resources available to its rival, which they referred to as the "state." According to the IB, these rival resources included security services, free transportation, and other logistical means that were allegedly employed to monitor electoral votes across all Palestinian universities (ibid.).

Mohammad Qaddoumi, one of the IB leaders at Birzeit University in 2012 commented on the student election results in 2013: "When the IB decided to run in the student elections in 2013, it was aware that it would not win in the literal sense of the term, but rather open a hole in the wall of silence and fear that lasted six consecutive years" (Qaddoumi 2014, personal communication conducted by the author). In 2013, a confluence of political developments created what Hamas perceived as a renewed opportunity to assert its presence. These included the prisoner exchange agreement between Hamas and Israel, the eight-day war in Gaza, and the bombing of Tel Aviv carried out by Ahmad Musa, a member of the Islamic Bloc (IB) at Birzeit University. Parallel to these events, IB activists organized sustained protest actions, most notably a series of sit-ins and hunger strikes at Birzeit, Hebron, and Khaduri universities, opposing the practice of political arrests. Together, these circumstances facilitated the IB's participation in that year's student elections (Bajes 2013).

At the beginning of 2014, there was an internal conflict within Fatah, which reached its peak when Mahmoud Abbass, the head of the movement, and Mohammad Dahlan, a leader who was dismissed from Fatah, accused each other in the media, of being the responsible of Yasser Arafat death. Such conflicts influenced the Shabiba, which separated between supporting Abbas and Dahlan. Such a conflict would certainly affect the student election results. The Shabiba issued a statement requesting the cancellation of the elections and the approval of a national unity council based on proportional representation at Birzeit University (FYM in Birzeit 2014). At Polytechnic a statement was issued in the name of a group from the Shabiba announcing their secession from the official structure of the Shabiba and their forming of a new structure to express their rejection of the control that the security bodies had over the Shabiba. At Al-Quds University, the Shabiba made a similar proposal, namely to cancel the elections and establish a national unity council (FYM in Al-Quds University 2014). At the same time, the IB had already prepared itself for the elections

at all of these universities by organizing more than 100 activities over the previous year, including syndicates, services and political activities for the students of each university (Islamic Bloc in Birzeit 2014) such as book fairs, exhibitions, free transportations from the university to their cities and villages at the beginning of the holidays, organizing sports competitions, and revival of national and cultural events.

The IB has rejected the Shabiba's proposal to form a unity council instead of going through an election. Because of this rejection, another political crackdown began. Some houses of the IB's leaders were entered violently and their electronic devices, computers, and mobiles were confiscated, including some of the property of the members of the student council (Khaled 2014 (personal communication conducted by the author; Ibrahim 2014, personal communication conducted by the author). The IB issued a statement confirming its commitment to participate in the elections despite all obstacles:

> We announce with a spirit of persistence and challenge that we intend to participate in the students' Council elections for this year and we do hereby affirm that such crime will only increase our will and insistence to serve the students. Despite the dual chase by the occupation and Palestinian security bodies for the past year, the IB managed to perform more than 100 creative activities. Furthermore, IB Committees in the Students' Council, which were held by nine of the IB knights consecutively, had the leading role in the students' services (Islamic Bloc at Birzeit 2014).

In April and May 2014, the student elections were held at West Bank universities, and the IB increased its share of the vote. It won 47% of the seats at Hebron University, 45% at Polytechnic University, and 39% at Birzeit University. At al-Najah University, the elections were postponed until the first semester of the following year. Except for the FYM, all the student blocs boycotted Khaduri University elections, so the Shabiba won by default.27

Some scholars argue that there are factors that have worked against the IB, such as the lower voter turnout − a drop to 68 per cent, compared to 85 per cent in previous years − affected Hamas's chances to see success in the student elections of 2014. At Hebron University, Fatah won 21 of 41 seats, followed by Hamas with 19. At PPU, also in the city of Hebron, Fatah won 17 seats and Hamas took 14, out of 31 total. At Birzeit,

[27] See appendix no.3, which shows the results of the student council elections at Palestinian universities until 2016.

Fatah won 23 seats and Hamas took 20, out of a total of 51. Compared to previous years, the results show that the Hamas-affiliated Islamist bloc increased its vote in both Hebron and PPU while holding its ground in Birzeit. The Islamist bloc managed to gain ground in the elections even without having a supportive infrastructure in place in the West Bank after the 2007 elections (Obaid 2014a).

Nour Al-Fekr, a female Islamist student activist, depicts this stage of the IB's life in the following way:

> 2012 was the year of participation to end the boycotting stage, evaluate the status quo, identify the missing items and heal the consequences of boycotting. The year 2013 was the year of participation to rebuild what was destroyed during the boycotting years while keeping the previous result. The year 2014 is the year of participation to regain the balance and decrease the difference between the two competing blocs. The year 2015 will be the year of participation to regain control over the students' councils in the universities (Nour Al-Fekr 2014).

Table 4.3. Islamic Bloc Electoral Performance at Selected West Bank Universities (2012-2021)

University	2012	2013	2014	2015–2020 (avg)**	2021
Hebron University	-	44%	47%	46%	-
Polytechnic University (Hebron)	-	42%	45%	43%	-
Birzeit University	-	37%	39%	40%	49%
An-Najah University	-	N/A	Postponed	36% avg (2016–2020)*	Won
Khaduri University	-	N/A	Boycott (FYM default win)	~30% est.	N/A

The Islamic Bloc regained prominence in West Bank universities after a five-year suspension. Between 2013 and 2014, the group gained significant traction at Hebron (47%), Polytechnic (45%), and Birzeit (39%) as shown in Figure 4.4. Despite political and security pressure, the group managed to mobilize significant student support. The rise in vote share at Birzeit from 37% in 2013 to 49% in 2021 demonstrates the Bloc's continued relevance, especially as student councils became a political platform.

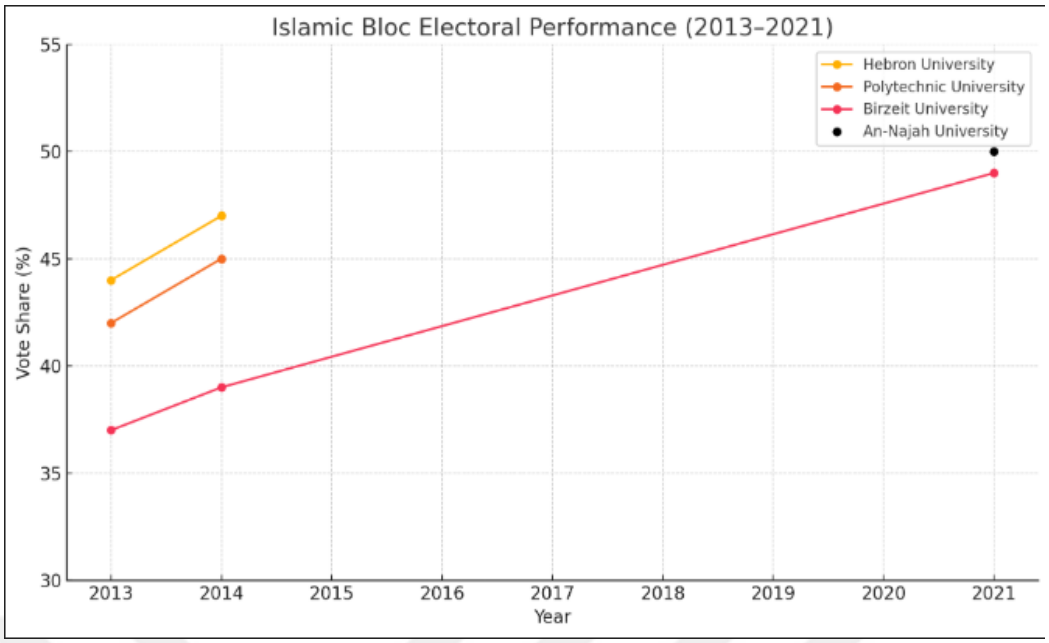


Figure 4.4. Islamic Bloc Electoral Performance Graph

4.6. Tufan Al-Aqsa and Beyond: The Islamic Bloc and the Politics of Survival (2023-)

According to the history of the Palestinian student movement and its effectiveness in Palestinian resistance since its inception, researchers and analysts had anticipated a significant role for the student movement, particularly the Islamic Bloc, in supporting the Palestinian resistance during the Al-Aqsa Intifada operation (Uddin, 2022). However, the role fell short of expectations. This underperformance is not only in comparison to the historical roles Palestinians have traditionally played but also in contrast to the impressive mobilization witnessed during the "Saif Al-Quds: Sword of Jerusalem" battle in 2021, when Palestinians across the board united behind the resistance against the aggression of the occupation (Glover, 2023).

This discrepancy prompts questions about whether the divergence in performance stems from subjective or objective reasons. It also invites a rapid analysis of the relationship between the student movement and Palestinian factions, especially those involved in the Al-Aqsa Flood battle, whether supportive, neutral, or even opposed to the strategy of armed resistance (Abukmeıl, 2022). The relationship between the student movement and Palestinian factions has played a crucial role in transforming

the student movement in the West Bank, as previously elaborated (Moghli, 2024). Four stages of this relationship can be identified following the Nakba of 1948: (1) the creation of the student movement by Palestinian factions, marked by a spirit of struggle and representation; (2) integration with Palestinian factions; (3) subordination to factions, institutions, and their agendas; and (4) separation from parent movements, dismantling, and marginalization of its roles (Manna, 2022).

Today, the student movement, national (e.g., the Fatah-affiliated Student Youth Movement) and Islamic (e.g., the Islamic Bloc affiliated with Hamas), has reached the fourth stage (Bajes, 2012). In the West Bank, most cadres of the Student Youth Movement have been absorbed into the Palestinian Authority's security apparatus, essentially acting as informants against their peers in opposing student frameworks. They have also, at times, repressed student activism under directives from security leadership in the West Bank, in line with preserving the political settlement project adopted by their parent movement (Moghli, 2024).

In contrast, in Gaza, most Islamic Bloc cadres were recruited into armed resistance, with their energies directed toward mobilization in support of the armed struggle. This focus became highly visible during the latest war. Still, it significantly weakened attention to unionist and academic engagement, diminishing its importance in Gaza, especially after Hamas took control of the Strip and began implementing its vision of armed resistance as the sole strategic path to end the occupation.

With the onset of the Al-Aqsa Intifada, the suspension of in-person university education in favour of online systems, and the loss of organizational infrastructure, it became difficult for student movements affiliated with Hamas, Islamic Jihad, and the Popular Front to rebuild their structures and regain their momentum. Meanwhile, the Fatah-affiliated Student Youth Movement adhered to the Palestinian Authority’s directive to keep the West Bank neutral and refrain from organizing solidarity events with Gaza (Bernstein, 2024).

As a result, nearly a quarter of a million students in Palestinian universities and colleges were effectively neutralized from participating in support activities for Gaza. Regarding the role of the Israeli occupation, it implemented the long-standing

“mowing the grass” strategy against the student movement, an old security tactic applied to the broader Palestinian national movement. It aims to keep the student movement under pressure and below the threshold of influence by targeting it with systematic security crackdowns and widespread arrests. This approach aims to prevent students from taking initiative, instil fear among them, and convince them of the futility of resistance.

Despite all efforts to neutralize the West Bank from resistance and, specifically, university students and members of the student movement during the period from the May 2021 “Sword of Jerusalem” battle until March 1, 2025, there were more than 4,374 shooting operations targeting Israeli occupation forces and settlers in the West Bank and Jerusalem. Additionally, 1,788 explosive devices were thrown or planted on bypass roads, in alleys, and in locations where Israeli forces were likely to be present. There were also 80 vehicular attacks and 149 stabbing incidents. Attempts were made to return to bombing operations using two booby-trapped cars and a bus explosion. Resistance fighters also succeeded in downing 42 reconnaissance drones and other aircraft used by the occupation to monitor and record the movement of resistance fighters (Hamdan, 2023).

As for popular resistance activities and protests, they amounted to 34,446 acts during the same period. These included 25,947 confrontations with Israeli forces, 3,859 repulsions of settler invasions in Palestinian villages and towns, 1,141 Molotov cocktails thrown at military jeeps or settlement perimeters near Palestinian villages, 2,987 demonstrations held either within Palestinian cities or at military checkpoints, and 165 nighttime disruption actions. The total toll of these resistance acts was the killing of 119 Israelis and the wounding of 1,694 as shown in Table 7.2 (Gray, 2025).

Table 4.4. Breakdown of Resistance Activities Involving Palestinian Youth and Students (May 2021-March 2025)

Type of Activity	Number of Incidents
Confrontations with Israeli forces	25,947
Repulsions of settler invasions	3,859

Table 4.4. (cont.)

Molotov cocktail attacks	1,141
Demonstrations (in cities or at checkpoints)	2,987
Nighttime disruption actions	165
Killing of Israelis	119
Wounding	1,694
Total incidences	**34,446**

Although these statistics are known, they cannot be officially attributed to the student movement or any Palestinian group or faction. The university student is the same young man involved in daily confrontations, the same masked individual throwing explosives at night, and the same armed activist in resistance battalions stationed in refugee camps—especially in northern West Bank areas and Jericho. Thus, these acts of resistance cannot be formally attributed to the student movement but rather to the Palestinian youth, who, by nature, are often university students. The intensity of resistance can be seen in Figure 4.5.

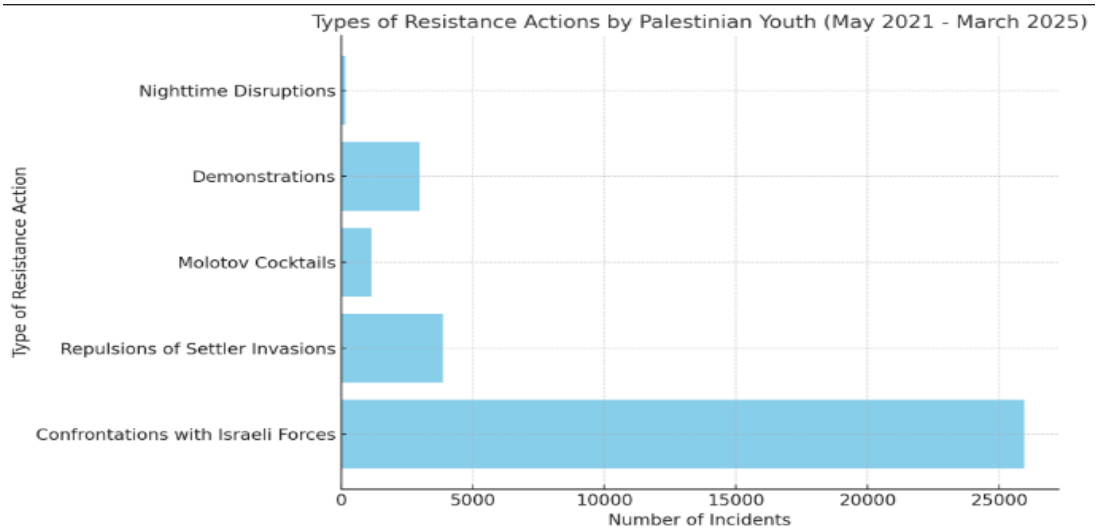


Figure 4.5. Intensity and Types of Resistance Action by Palestinian Youth and the Number of Incidents

During the war period from October 7, 2023, until early March 2025, the Islamic Bloc estimates that around 400 of its members, both male and female, were arrested,

including 40 female leaders and members of the student council and student conference. Although there is no precise official statistic for other student detainees unaffiliated with the Islamic Bloc, the most reliable estimates report that an additional 300 students from other student groups and independents were arrested in the same period. Furthermore, 20 students from West Bank universities were martyred during resistance operations or confrontations, including 6 from the Islamic Bloc and its supporters.

In Gaza, the entire higher education infrastructure was destroyed. All universities, academic staff, and students were indiscriminately targeted, with no distinction between student movement members and others. Unfortunately, there is no available data on student movement martyrs in Gaza, and it is nearly impossible to distinguish Islamic Bloc members directly involved in resistance activities among the dead, wounded, imprisoned, or those missing under rubble. Most of the armed cadres in Palestinian resistance groups, starting with Hamas, through Islamic Jihad, and including the Popular and Democratic Fronts, are young people enrolled in or graduated from universities. However, their involvement in resistance was not under the banner of the student movement but rather that of their parent organizations.

The Islamic Bloc participated in numerous protests, marches, and public demonstrations in the West Bank, organizing dozens of events with student participation, particularly at Birzeit University, Al-Quds (also known as Abu Dis), and An-Najah University. The Bloc also engaged in several strikes, most notably the June 2022 strike at An-Najah University following the assault by university security forces on a student sit-in protesting the dismissal of five Islamic Bloc students. This strike led to the university conceding to student demands, dismissing the security officers who had attacked them, including the chief of security, and reinstating the dismissed students.

Another sit-in at An-Najah took place in June 2023 and lasted five days over a union-related demand. The university complied with rescheduling exams for students who had missed them. The Islamic Bloc also held a sit-in after university security expelled students protesting political arrests. That protest lasted 26 days and ended with an

agreement not to target protesting students, to ensure freedom of student union activities, and to reject political arrests.

In December 2024, the Student Council at An-Najah University organized a sit-in demanding several measures in response to the conditions of war and genocide, including easier installment plans for tuition, reimbursement of insurance and internet fees, and activation of student health insurance. The sit-in lasted 25 days and ended with an Israeli raid on the university campus and the arrest of all participating students. Table 7.3 shows the summary of arrests and sit-ins.

Table 4.5. Student Movement Activity and Repression (Oct 2023-March 2025)

Incidence	Reasoning	Number of Arrests
Arrests (Islamic Bloc)	Total members arrested (male & female)	400
	Female leaders/members of student bodies arrested	40
Arrests (Other Groups)	Estimated students from other movements or independents	300
Student Martyrs (West Bank)	Killed in confrontations or resistance ops	20 total (6 from Islamic Bloc/supporters)
Student Martyrs (Gaza)	No confirmed data due to the total destruction of infrastructure	Unknown
Sit-ins / Strikes (West Bank)	An-Najah University sit-ins (2022, 2023, late 2024)	Multiple (5-day, 26-day, 25-day)
Birzeit Sit-ins	3 sit-ins to protest political arrests; all ended with mass arrests	3

At Birzeit University, the Islamic Bloc organized three sit-ins during the same period to protest political arrests. The Israeli occupation stormed the university each time, arresting all the participating students, including the student council president and female council members.

In terms of media suppression, the Islamic Bloc's social media pages were shut down dozens of times. Facebook imposed the strictest content censorship, followed by

Instagram, while Telegram was the least restrictive. The Bloc organized dozens of protest actions on and off campuses, in addition to solidarity human chains, protest marches, cultural and national seminars, and art exhibitions telling the stories of the Al-Aqsa Flood and the genocide (Bajes, 2012). One notable initiative from the Islamic Bloc and the student movement was the call to integrate Gaza students into West Bank universities to continue their higher education after the destruction of Gaza's universities. This initiative became a reality after being adopted by the Palestinian Universities Union.

The Islamic Bloc regularly visits the families of detained students to offer moral support, especially during holidays and public occasions. They offer symbolic gifts and honorary plaques, and they also follow up on the academic affairs of imprisoned students by contacting professors and notifying the relevant university departments, which then coordinate with public relations offices to assign legal representation and handle the cases of student detainees when necessary.

CHAPTER V

IDENTITY FORMATION AND FRAMING STRATEGIES IN THE ISLAMIC BLOC

Like many other social movement organizations, the IB has a set of values that it applies in answering its supporters' queries concerning their individual identity, self-achievement, and their envisioned achievements for society and themselves. Such queries and answers are considered an approach to connect individuals with each other as a group that shares a common belief, which is reflected in the answers to their questions. The development of the members according to a common strategy is one ultimate objective of the social movement.

The more the individuals believe in the proposed goals, tactics, and strategies, the more dedicated they become. As a result, the identity of each student belonging to the IB becomes a piece of the group's collective identity. Scholars of student movements noted that IB is one of the most stable and lasting student groups. It is considered to be the most organized power against "unacceptable repressive practices," as Ghayatha (2000) argues (125).

In this chapter, I will discuss the reasons for participation within the IB. I will also highlight the role of the framing process in mobilizing adherents. Furthermore, I aim to elucidate the most important aspects that signify the internal structure of the IB members on the micro level and its elements, which are similar to those on the macro level, by studying the following: IB affiliation mechanisms and standards; the IB's message as addressed to the different audience; the most prominent changes from its establishment in 1980, until the date of this study; the feeling of grievance which has been perceived to exist for many years by the IB's members; as well as the influence of this feeling on the support and acceptance of the IB at universities, and on the internal solidarity of the IB itself.

5.1. Becoming a Member: Pathways to Activism in the Islamic Bloc

As Klandermans (1997, 15-33) argues, there are three fundamental reasons why participation in movements is appealing to people. First, it is a tool of instrumentality, i.e., people try to improve their current situation, in which grievance and deprivation are also involved. Second, it is a means of identity formation as people tend to act as members of their own group and, as has been commonly argued, a strong identification within a group makes it more likely for members to participate in collective political action on behalf of that group. Finally, it expresses an ideology that people tend to give meaning to their surroundings by expressing their views and feelings.



Figure 5.1. One of the Founders of IB and His Family at Birzeit University

Source: The interviewee's archive

Majed Hassan, one of the founders of the Islamic Bloc at Birzeit University, and his wife, Nada Al-Jayousi, who helped establish the Bloc's female student sector, raised eight children, all graduates of Birzeit University. Every member of the family was arrested at various times due to their involvement in the Islamic Student Movement.

The reasons mentioned above are clearly insufficient to explain why individuals are willing to sacrifice years of their lives in prison, remain unemployed, or live under restriction orders to participate in a movement that offers no immediate improvement to their personal circumstances. However, it is significant that joining the Islamic Bloc (IB) and engaging in its activities allows participants to experience and affirm a shared sense of collective religious identity. An obvious example is the case of A. Malki explicitly pointed out that she became a member of the IB for several reasons, some of which were personal but most of which were related to the social impact of the IB. She believed that participating in the IB was a way to strengthen her religious beliefs by getting to know the "Islamic" way of life, and by approaching "political Islam," she believed she could express her political views in society. She also believed that participating in the IB would allow her to spread her Islamic beliefs and that this was easier than working alone, especially among university students (Malki in a personal interview with the author, January 2014).

This was not only Malki's opinion but also that of most of the interviewees in al-Kahlut's study (2009). He mentioned that religious motives have overshadowed all other reasons with most of the research interviewees, as most of them pointed out that the call to God and serving religion were the most important reasons for them joining the IB (al-Kahlut 2009, 203).

McAdams and Paulsen (1993, 674) have a different view on participation: they see it as a specific micro-structural analysis for participating in social movements. From their point of view, participation depends on four conditions: the occurrence of a particular attempt; the conceptualization of a tentative linkage between movement participation and identity; support for that linkage from people who normally serve to sustain the identity in question; and the absence of strong opposition from others on whom other salient identities depend.

According to McAdams' and Paulsen's fourth condition, the IB tried to reduce the effect of the strong opposition from other student movements, who used to accuse the IB of exploiting religious discourse and neglecting the role of female students in the syndicalistic action. In the last few years, starting in 2013, the IB created an awareness campaign that showed the support of female students coming from different religious,

and geographic, backgrounds. Furthermore, the IB asked students not to pay attention to the opposite propaganda about the IB and to witness the IB actions towards female empowerment (Islamic Bloc 2015).

However, participation in the organizational body of the IB, which is considered a social movement with an ideological trend, is not open to everyone. There are specific standards and qualifications that must be met by anyone who intends to join the IB. The first paragraph in the seventh article of IB's bylaws specifies the standards for accepting a student as a member of the IB:

> Any Palestinian has the right to participate in the IB if he/she fulfils the following conditions: 1. has a good moral character and biography and has not been convicted for a felony or misdemeanour involving moral turpitude and 2. Is attached to the objectives and principles of the IB and ready to comply with its decisions and bylaws. 3. Is approved by the IB governing body in his/her area ... 6. Is not a member of the community of another student or youth organization. (Bylaws of the IB 2004, article 7)

It is hard to believe that these standards were the only ones for accepting a student member of the IB, especially in Gaza universities, where IB members are committed to the IB from the time they are in school, as was shown in the first chapter. There are some researchers who believe that the movement chooses its members, and not the other way around, meaning that the movement's leadership studies the candidates for mobilization in the lower leadership ranks by investigating their personalities, the tendencies of their families, their ability to adapt to the movement's internal system, and their absolute obedience to the movement's directions and general approach.

After participation, or maybe in parallel with it, comes both commitment and solidarity. Commitment is a "person's willingness to carry out the requirements of a pattern of social action. It can be seen as an individual's identification with a collectivity that leads to instrumental, affective, and moral attachments that lead to investments in movement lines of activity." (Hunt 2009: 440). Solidarity refers to the strength of our loyalties and commitment to a movement's collective identity. "To what extent, people may ask themselves, is the collective entity worthy of personal sacrifice? And how much should it take priority over the needs and demands of everyday life, including survival?" (Gamson 1991, 45).

Some studies argue that the more the atmosphere of freedom increases and the more pressure on the individuals decreases, the higher the resulting levels of commitment are to the ideology of a group. Other studies, in contrast, support the opposite theory by saying that the higher the group's pressure on its individuals, the more those individuals become connected to the group and committed to its principles. Moreover, "they also stand together to protect the group's interests out of the feeling of grievance and the necessity of solidarity for the sake of the oppressed group" (Gamson 1991, 45).

I tend to support the second opinion based on the interviews that I have made with several IB leaders who all quoted the same line from Ahmad ibn Hanbal: "I would doubt the way if it was not for a large number of calamities." (Lafi in a personal interview with the author, September 2015; Qaddoumi; Barghuti; Malki in interviews with the author in 2014). They truly believe that the path of rightness is always accompanied by suffering and other obstacles.

There are general standards and controls for measuring the degree of commitment of IB leaders, members, and supporters. While some elements can be measured and analyzed, others are considered confidential and based on perception, meaning that they cannot be generally measured, such as the religious commitment of the individuals, or the sense of security awareness of the individuals and their families, including their "national" history and whether they support resistance against Israel.

One of the important variables in performing a study on any social movement is the personal commitment of the leaders themselves. As Braja Otta (2011) explained, there are five common characteristics for committed leaders: The first is assurance, which refers to an unshakable strength of conviction regarding the goals of the movement, i.e., the realization of movement objectives, as conviction of the attainability of the objectives and goals of the movement should be the ultimate goal in itself (Otta 2011, 187-189). The second is the ability to take risks, i.e., "the willingness to sacrifice kinship ties, social status and sometimes economic security for attaining the objectives of the movement" (ibid. 190). A third characteristic is charisma, which cannot be measured easily, as Otta mentions, which is why he ignores it. The fourth refers to commitment during the generation of events. Finally, there is the level of participation

or involvement in the organization, which may range from casual participation to being uncompromisingly involved in strikes demonstrations, and decision-making (ibid. 191).

There are determinants that play a role in realizing the objectives of the IB as a social organization, which is affiliated with the well-known political party, Hamas. Those determinants can be summarized in three main points. First, the IB and Hamas share the same major concepts and beliefs, which form the ideology of their supporters, and consequently also affect how they see themselves and the world surrounding them (Alma 2013; Zelkovitz 2015). This can be summarized in the term "Islamic Awareness" (al-Kahlut 2009, 169). The second determinant is "Movement Awareness," which is based on participation in social movement activities in general, and later in joining the IB itself. The third determinant is "Political Awareness", which refers to the major Palestinian political issues and concerns, e.g., Palestinian detainees in Israeli prisons, Al-Quds (Jerusalem) city issues, Israeli occupation violations and enforced restrictions on Palestinian citizens' movements, the concord between Hamas and Fatah, Israeli political arrests, and the firm security control and surveillance of IB supporters (al-Kahlut 2009, 169-178).

Activists among university students can sacrifice their money, self, and time to defend what they believe in. The Israeli occupation forces arrest student activists for being part of the Palestinian student movement in general, and especially for being members of the IB. However, despite its difficulty and drawbacks, the arrest process is a means of communication between the young leaders of the student movement and the older leaders still imprisoned. In this sense, the institution of prison shifts from a method of punishment to a means of communication and transfer of experiences between generations of resistance. It enhances the young leader's ways of thinking, which results in the bonding between young leaders from different youth movements (Khader 2008,127).

At various Palestinian universities, the IB cadre often consists of university students between the ages of 18 and 23, both at the leadership level and as its adherents and supporters. Furthermore, this group often carries out the planning and implementation of IB activities, without seeking help from external resources. However, at times, it

has invited the expertise of former students also known as "the elders"– who held leadership positions and were previously active in the IB body (Qaddoumi in an interview with the author in September 2015).

Creating cadres that are already committed to the IB prior to university admission, either through recruitment (in schools) by the Student Movement or the surrounding familial environment and through friends, is an important step to gaining supporters and promoting participation in IB activities at West Bank and Gaza universities. In the period leading up to 2007, recruitment or mobilizing at the pre-university stage took place at "religious circles" in mosques, also referred to as usra (families) in summer camps, and at classes for teaching the Quran. All of these were sponsored by Hamas, which took great interest in ensuring that all school-aged children were enrolled, so that it could become a pillar of political and ideological awareness for them, including the movement's principles. Thus, the IB planned to give students leadership expertise that would qualify them to fully engage in all facets of student work after their university admission. At this stage, then, the students' training would be complete, and they would be qualified to begin work. This took place in major West Bank cities such as Nablus, Ramallah, and Hebron (Shayma Hasan; Kholoud al-Masri; Isra Lafi in personal interviews with the author in 2015).

Furthermore, there was an extended presence of the IB within high schools. However, its work was not officially approved either by the Israelis or by the Palestinian authorities. The IB operated –somewhat irregularly– outside the official working hours of the school. Activist Shayma Hasan, the IB leader at Birzeit University between 2008 and 2012, recalls that, when she was a school child, the IB's presence at schools decreased significantly, especially following the Palestinian division. At that time student work was limited to simple activities such as distributing class schedule cards that featured the IB logo, in addition to distributing copies of a developmental and cultural magazine on students' seats prior to their first period. The school principal's office was not aware of these activities, Hasan confirmed (Hasan in a personal interview with the author in September 2015).

One of the measures taken by the IB to properly mobilize new leaders to join its ranks at universities was to establish the "Scholar Preparation" Academy during the years

2013 and 2014, aimed at female students. The academy aims to build the dawa and ideological mindset of the female members in the IB through the intensive use of lectures and the help of male and female lecturers from outside the university. Additionally, book readings and discussions, workshops, and other activities are also used (Hasan in a personal interview with the author in September 2015). Concerning male students, it holds true that those who get arrested prior to their university admission have an additional opportunity for intensive preparation and framing. The prison environment is quite fruitful concerning these tasks due to the efforts of Hamas prisoners, and their programs that work to achieve this. Hamas has its own political, representative body inside Israeli prisons —it does shura elections inside prisons. It also has many political, religious, and cultural seminars and workshops inside. University students who could not participate in such seminars and workshops outside prisons due to security restrictions, or due to lack of time, can easily meet with their political leaders and participate in such activities inside prisons. The large number of arrests among student leaders leads them to reflect upon experiences and to replicate them in a well-thought-out manner, by passing on experience of some of the obstacles that these leaders might face when they transition from life in prison to student work (Qaddoumi in a personal interview with the author in September 2015).

5.2. Building Resistance: Social Networks as Successful Recruitment

Social networks were shown to be crucial to the recruitment and participation of individuals in social movement activities, as Passy and Giugni (2000, 3) argue. They assume that individuals who have friends or acquaintances who are already involved in social movements are more inclined to participate (ibid. 4). They also focus on three specific functions of social networks, which are: (i) Socializing individuals to certain political issues by shaping their identities, and providing them with a social and political consciousness that allows them to come ideologically closer to a given political issue (ibid. 13); (ii) Bringing individuals who are willing to participate closer to an opportunity of mobilization, and thus recruiting new members, by bridging the gap between actors who are culturally close to a given political contention, and belong to the mobilization potential, and the opportunity to participate that is offered by a social movement organization (ibid. 17); and (iii) shaping individual perceptions, which are important for people to get involved, not only at the moment of deciding to

join a movement organization, but also throughout the entirety of their participation (ibid. 28).

Within universities, the IB sponsored alternative councils designed to support its social and political agendas. These included, inter alia, committees for culture, academics, and sport. The activities were carried out with complete separation of the sexes, as dictated by the strict interpretations of Islamic Law (Zelkovitz 2015, 161).

In the IB's Rules of Procedure, the following objectives are stated: youth and student involvement in the community; support for national and humanitarian issues, promoting the spirit of volunteerism among youth and student circles in the community; supporting the role of the Palestinian girl in Palestinian society, as well as emphasizing her public role, and legitimate rights (The Islamic Bloc Bylaws, Article 5, Items 5, 8, and 11). One of the social networking methods adopted by IB to increase communication between its members, supporters, and members of the community, was to assist in volunteer work. It provided Palestinian universities with valuable guidance in this regard, particularly Birzeit University, as it encouraged the spirit of volunteer work by suggesting that students must fulfill a 120-hour volunteering requirement to obtain their degrees and to graduate from the university. The IB developed this idea after demanding that everyone interested in joining its ranks must undertake no less than 120 hours of volunteer work that benefitted society, like helping farmers with picking olives, building homes for some Palestinians, cleaning the sides of streets, building mosques, and serving in libraries. The same amount of volunteer work was subsequently set by Birzeit University for all students. These activities included volunteering to assist during the olive harvest, building homes for families in need, planting trees, and cleaning public places.

The IB utilized student gatherings at volunteer events to spread its ideology and put out the call for collective action. Its students, also known as the Muslim youth, used to pick olives while reciting the Qur'an or Islamic chants. They took advantage of time spent on long trips to some Palestinian areas where they performed volunteer work, to inform students about the history of the region and its most prominent mujahidin (Muslim resistance fighters) (Abu Ayta in an interview with the author, December 2011).

The IB, furthermore, distributes grants to students via its student councils at all universities. It collects donations from everyone who is willing to give them and distributes them to needy students who apply for financial aid at the student councils. It also covers the tuition fees of some students who are unable to pay.

Generally speaking, field trips are ranked among the most important means of social communication and advocacy for the Muslim Brotherhood. These trips formed a prevailing pattern during the initial phase of the Islamic Bloc's formation, just like in that of the Muslim Brotherhood in Palestine. Before and after the establishment of the IB, MB members, who were not studying in the universities, organized regular field trips in the 1970s and the 1980s to Haifa, Jaffa, Jerusalem, Hebron, Jericho, and other places in Palestine (Abu Ahmad in a personal interview with the author, December 2011).



Figure 5.2. Students Come Leaders of Hebron University in 1986

Source: An interviewee's archive

This photo was taken on a field trip organized by the IB at Hebron University in 1986. From right: Ibrahim Hamed (later the leader of the Qassam Brigades in the West Bank and serving a 5,400-year prison sentence) - Ahmed Zeid (later a leader in the Islamic Movement in Ramallah) - Amjad Hassan (martyred as a university student) - Saleh al-Arouri (later the leader of Hamas in the West Bank, assassinated in 2024).

The IB set the following goals to be achieved through trips and camping activities: accustom participants to enduring physical, spiritual, psychological, and mental obstacles, as part of advocating for the jihad ideology; enhance participant relations and familiarize them with each other's capabilities; accustom participants to the fundamentals of Islamic work such as organization, patience, commitment, and cooperation, as well as teaching them about the history of the Islamic movements, and the Islamic Bloc; finally, introduce them to the geographic areas of the homeland and its historical significance (al-Kahlut 2009, 141).

Like other student blocs, at the beginning of each year, the IB offers student orientation sessions, where it welcomes new students and introduces them to the university and its facilities. In these sessions, it also announces its range of housing opportunities for male and female students who are interested and in need of this service and helps them choose appropriate housing units. These are under the supervision of either IB or the social committee within the Student Council. This activity is one of the first building blocks of the students' new social network at the university. Therefore, students are more likely to become involved with and join the ranks of the IB subsequently. The IB also visits student housing units and meeting spots in neighbouring villages. These visits are made on a regular basis—three to four times per school year. It is quite common to distribute gifts, advocacy booklets, brochures, or even electoral programs during these visits. In addition, discussing the students' views on certain academic issues, especially before an election period, is on the agenda.

The IB, at various universities, has been keen on carrying out the Ramadan Feast activity, where fasting students are provided with meals at a fast-breaking time. This activity is carried out by the Student Council, or by the IB itself if it did not win the chairmanship of the council that year. The Iftar (fast-breaking) project provides meals and drinks for all students at all student hostels in various provinces, every day of the Ramadan month, by arranging mass feasts that take place at mosques near the students' hostels.

The IB utilizes modern means of communication and networking to connect with students, such as the Internet. Internet technology has been available at Palestinian universities since 1992; however, originally, only professors had access to this service.

In 1998, the internet became available to students through the university's computer labs (Abu Warda 2011, 138). Student blocs kept up with the technological developments of the internet and websites, using it to spread their activities and promote their political, syndicate, and academic ideas. The IB created their own websites from 2003 until 2012 (ibid. 160). Moreover, the IB in Gaza runs an official website that encompasses all Islamic Blocs. The IB has also sent short messages by phone on several occasions, especially before the elections each year, and on special holidays such as the birth of the Prophet Muhammad, the anniversary of the founding of Hamas, and the beginning of university final exams, among other events. Likewise, since 2012, the Islamic Blocs have focused on creating a Facebook page, with tens of thousands of Palestinian followers, especially university students. In 2015, the Facebook page of the IB at Birzeit University had approximately 30,000 followers. The IB at Al-Najah University reached 15,500, the IB at the Polytechnic University 16,000, Hebron University 13,300, and the IB at the University of Bethlehem 3, 260 followers (Bajes 2016).

According to Muhammad Abu al-Rub, a media lecturer at Birzeit University, in his interview with Mohammad Ghaffri, the IB —at all West Bank universities— has been the most successful in utilizing social networks and social media to reach out to students during the school year. In fact, he believes that it was the key factor in deciding the outcome of Birzeit University's 2015 Student Council elections. In this, the IB prevailed over the Shabiba, winning 7 more seats. Abu al-Rub also believes that the IB used Facebook intelligently, where it utilized paid ads to manage its Facebook page. In contrast, he felt that the Shabiba used social media "foolishly" (Ghaffri 2015).

Nowar Thabet agrees with Abu al-Rub about the importance of the role of social media in mobilizing IB adherents. For Social Media utilization, Thabet argues, it has been an important means of mobilization since the beginning of its spread. It was effectively used by Islamic Blocs through creating official pages on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter, though it was a means of mobilization, propaganda and gathering in normal situations and especially in elections propaganda; it was used to promote election programs, announcements of propaganda progress and promoting IB achievements and what it has accomplished through the year. This includes gathering

followers on social media and updating data about the IB base, supporters and members. In addition, the IB has used social media to lighten and focus on important political and syndicate events, and also to respond to the rumours and accusations directed by other student blocs (Thabet 2017).

5.3. Culture as Resistance: Traditions, Narratives, and Symbolism

Cultural resources, as Edwards and McCarthy (2009, 126) explain, are "artefacts and cultural products such as conceptual tools and specialized knowledge that have become widely, though not necessarily universally, known". Music and songs, in addition to various books and literature, including magazines, newspapers, and publications, as well as films and videos, are among the cultural resources most used in the process of resource mobilization (ibid.).

In analyzing the mobilizing and framing of the Islamic Bloc (IB), it is crucial to recognize how poetry functions not merely as an artistic form but as a deeply political and ethical practice. As Ahmad (2009) argues in Islamism and Democracy in India, poetry plays a central role in shaping the moral and political subjectivity of Islamist activists. Focusing on the Jamaat-e-Islami Hind, he demonstrates how Urdu poetry, often recited in party meetings and public events, evokes themes of sacrifice, divine love, and historical injustice, helping to cultivate emotional solidarity and ethical commitment among members (pp. 185–188). This poetic expression, Ahmad suggests, constitutes a “counter-public” that challenges dominant secular-nationalist discourses and offers an alternative vision of justice rooted in Islamic ethics (p. 190). A similar function can be observed within the IB, where poetic mourning of martyrs, Quranic metaphors, and emotionally charged chants are central to the student movement’s discourse and mobilization. Poetry in this context is not ornamental, it is foundational. It acts as a political pedagogy, transmitting memory, grievance, and hope across generations. Like the Jamaat, the IB uses poetic forms to bridge the gap between private piety and public resistance, thereby creating a political aesthetic that is both affective and aspirational. Drawing on Ahmad’s analysis allows us to view the IB not simply as a syndicalist or factional actor, but as a producer of moral imagination through aesthetic and spiritual language.

Songs and music played a pivotal role in the political socialization of the Islamic Movement in Palestine, especially for the MB and later Hamas, which does not deem the use of music and singing unlawful "in terms of legitimacy" as a political rearing tool (Bajes 2015, 10). In the 1970s and 1980s, Nasheed (Islamic songs) were used in MB scouting trips, mosques activities, summer camps, and MB schools in Jerusalem, Ramallah, Hebron, and Nablus (ibid. 31).

Usama Hamdan, a member of Hamas' political bureau, described the effect of the songs on the first generation of Hamas by saying:

> What Abu Mazin [one of the most popular singers in the MB in Syria in the 20th century] has done was more important than a constitution; He presented the general idea [of the Islamic movement] and then brought the details of it to hearts and minds, mixing the emotional state with mind. That is the best way to introduce a noble idea (Hamdan 2013)

All the IBs at the various Palestinian universities had a choir of male students, singing Islamic Nasheed. These students would perform at festivals and concerts, organized by the IB, to spread and encourage the idea of the Islamic chant. These bands were often characterized by their modest resources and relied mostly on the efforts of individual students for training. They used melodies that focused on drums and tambourines, and which were devoid of instrumental music. The choir from al-Najah National University excelled in this aspect over the choirs from other universities. This is because (1) al-Najah National University had an art college including a music institute at that time, not like other universities in the West Bank and Gaza. So, there were some IB adherents who had studied music (2) The human, financial, and material resources of Hamas in Nablus are stronger and wider than in Ramallah or other cities. Al-Najah Choir recorded many audiotapes and took part in the Islamic Art Festival that was organized by the IB at al-Najah University for several years to encourage Islamic art (Bajes 2012, 52).



Figure 5.3. A Hymn Band Sings the Famous Anthem "We Challenge You, O Rabin" at the Islamic Bloc Festival at Al-Quds University in 1994

Source: Interviewee's archive

The target group of these festivals was not limited to college students; it extended beyond that, addressing various segments of society. One of the most prominent festivals, attracting tens of thousands of attendees from all the West Bank provinces, was the Islamic Art Festival hosted by the Islamic Bloc at al-Najah University. This annual festival was launched in 1994 and included the largest number of Islamic Nasheed bands in Palestine. It lasted for three consecutive days, under the supervision of a jury of professionals and academic experts (Bajes 2012, 56). This annual festival continued every year for six years until the Second Intifada started in 2000.

Most of the Nasheed in the Islamic Art Festival were political ones; the main subjects for these Nasheed were about Jerusalem, the martyrs, the refugees, the prisoners, and rejecting the Oslo agreements. The Islamic Art Festival, for six years, began with this song, “The Kataeb Nasheed” which was written by Abdel Hakim Abdeen, who was the General Secretary of the Muslim Brotherhood until 1948. The Muslim Brotherhood chose this anthem to be the anthem approved in its youth activities in Egypt and the Arab and Islamic world[28]:

The right is rallying its troops,
preparing for the interval position.
So, arrange battalions, O lions,
and pound the State of Falsehood (Israel).

The Jury has chosen al-Ghuraba (the strangers) band to win first place for three years, for their song "Of your wound you make a song":

Of your wound you make a song
—an amazing song—
*from the shore of your sea, Mohammad*29.
Eternity sings it for each martyr,
The song of great sorrow.
I bring my grief and light the light
toward our martyrs.
I hold my heart’s wounds and my nation’s wounds.
Who can quench the anger of my heart?
In the name of our orphans.
In the name of our bereaved.
For our rights.
For our Jerusalem.
For our martyrs.
Arise! The sorrow is great.

Other songs were also famous at this festival, such as "O Rabin[30], we challenge you":

We challenge you, certainly we do.
With our brigades, O Rabin, we challenge you.
Neither signing agreements nor borders will stop us!
We strive (do jihad) to liberate our homeland.

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[28] see: Ikhwan wiki, the official website of the history of Muslim Brotherhood. Accessed in February 20th, 2020:
https://www.ikhwanwiki.com/index.php?title=%D8%B9%D8%A8%D8%AF_%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AD%D9%83%D9%8A%D9%85_%D8%B9%D8%A7%D8%A8%D8%AF%D9%8A%D9%86

[29] Mohammad was a Palestinian singer whom Israeli military had killed in Nablus when he was fifteen years old.

[30] Yitzhak Rabin was the fifth Prime Minister of Israel. He was assassinated in 1995 by an Israeli ultranationalist named Yigal Amir. For the Palestinians, Rabin was responsible for many massacres. He was also the one responsible for what was called the "bone-cracking policy" in the First Intifada.

My grandfather's home is in Haifa.
How can I forget you, Jaffa?
O Barak[31]Hear us saying: We challenge you.

Islamic songs promoting participation in university elections are numerous, given the importance of universities as the mirror reflecting the political power balance, and due to the annual nature of these elections. Among the first songs that motivated students to participate in university elections was "The Banners of Victory Are Fluttering." After that, the band Al Ghuraba composed the Nasheed titled "The Banner of Your Victory is at Full Mast, O Our Bloc," which became very popular at different Palestinian universities in 2004.

Following the IB's absence from all West Bank universities, institutes, and colleges for a duration of four years, after the Palestinian division in 2007, and the ensuing consequences in both the West Bank and Gaza, the IB returned in 2012 to take part in events held at some West Bank universities, most notably Birzeit, Jerusalem and Hebron University. For this event, Hamas' most prominent Nasheed reciters collaborated with the IB in its electoral propaganda through a Nasheed composed specifically for the supporters and the advocates of the IB at those universities. Vocalist Abdul Fattah Ouinat composed a Nasheed titled "O Loyalty Bloc, We Have Come Back," which was primarily aimed at Birzeit University's IB. In the song, he mainly discusses the role that IB plays in accommodating students. He also mentioned IB student leaders, from Birzeit University, who had become resistance leaders, such as Yahya Ayyash and Ahlam Tamimi. In the same year, vocalist Abdul Rahman Qaryouti composed a Nasheed dedicated to the IB at the University of Jerusalem and called it "Eagle Eyes Never Sleep." It was focused on addressing the leaders of the resistance, who were also the leaders of the student movement at the university. It should be noted that, in general, songs for the purpose of motivating student participation in the elections do not differ much from political songs, except for a few sentences and phrases that relate to students and their interests, and with a clear overshadowing of the syndicate side with the political side. This can be attributed to the nature of student elections at Palestinian universities, which are most distinctly

[31] Ehud Barak was the Commander-in-Chief of the Israeli Defense Forces in 1991. He also served as the Prime Minister from 1999 to 2001.

characterized as political elections that reflect the popularity of each political faction outside the university through its supporters within it (Bajes 2015, 151).

The "circulating audio tape" was one of the oldest mobilizing methods of the IB, having been used from the end of 1970s, until the mid-1990s. It consisted of the distribution of several audio tapes among IB members. Each member listens to one tape, then passes it on to another member in exchange for the next tape, and so on, and so forth. This exchange continues until the maximum number of members has listened to the maximum number of tapes, at the lowest possible costs. These tapes often featured religious lectures, an Islamic song or chant, or verses from the Quran.

Public festivals are among the most prevalent methods used to attract the student masses. Since its inception, the IB has been keen on conducting public festivals during religious events, such as the birth of the Prophet Mohammad, Israa and Meeraj, in addition to various other national and political events, such as the commemoration of the founding of Hamas or the anniversary of the deaths of some of the IB's most prominent leaders.

The IB was equally interested in theatre, ever since its establishment at the beginning of the 1980s; it established male-only theatrical groups that addressed many sociopolitical issues in a playful and comedic manner. Female students attended the male-only performances, but they had their own acting groups that performed on special occasions, and at private girl festivals. IB's theatre played a role in sociopolitical critique. It sparked the interest of many student segments, even attracting university professors to attend their plays. The Birzeit University IB theatre group stood out from all other IB theatre groups at various universities, due to its boldness in addressing sociopolitical issues in a satirical and comedic manner.

At various times, the IB presented films in the university auditoriums, on its Facebook page, and distributed them on CDs. Most of these films were dedicated to the leaders of Hamas, martyrs, and prisoners, as well as leaders of student resistance operations.

One of the first methods of communication between IB and its base, and university students as a whole, was introductory brochures and cultural magazines. Initially,

magazines published by the IB at universities in the 1980s were generally compilations of Islamic material that bore the Muslim Brotherhood's ideology and were handwritten, such as al-Risala (The Message), which was published by the Student Council at Hebron University in 1982. It is noteworthy because it was the first magazine published by the IB at any university. There was also al-Muntalaq (The Premise) Magazine, issued by the IB at al-Najah University in 1984, which was adopted as the IB's official voice at universities. Other magazines included al-Sahwa al-Islamia (The Islamic Awakening) and al-urwa al-wuthqa (The Firm Tie), issued in 1984 by the IB at the Islamic University. Majallatu al-mara al-muslima (The Muslim Women Journal) and the al-wasaya al-ashr (Ten Commandments) were issued by the Moralization and Guidance Committee under the Female Student Council at the Islamic University (al-Kahlut 2009, 149-151; Bajes 2012, 51), al-sirat al-mustaqeem (The Straight Path) at Birzeit University, Nur al-Islam (The Light of Islam) was issued by the female students' sector at Bethlehem University, Shihab (Shooting Star), issued by the Islamic University's Student Council, and Biqlam talibat al-Jamia (Penned by Female University Students), issued by the Cultural Committee of the Female Student Council at the Islamic University.

Similarly, the IB publishes an internal magazine, dedicated to female students, titled Tathkirat al-duat (A Preacher's Reminder). The magazine contains organizational and educational themes as well as autobiographical stories of the Muslim Brotherhood in addition to the treatment of some problematic internal issues and attempts at finding solutions to them. It also contains instructions, issued by the female students' high command, and aimed at all other members and cadres of the Islamic Bloc (Al-Kahlut 2009, 151).

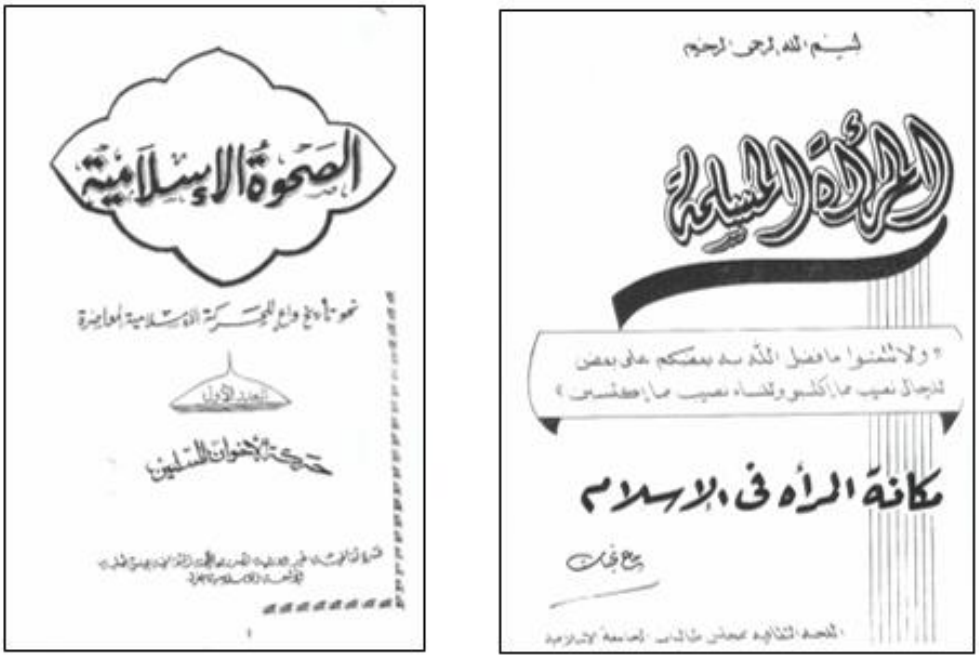


Figure 5.4. Magazines Issued and Published by the Islamic Bloc. To the Left: Al-Sahwa Al-Islamia (The Islamic Awakening), to the Right: Majallatu Al-Mara Al-Muslima (The Muslim Women Journal)

Source: The IB archive

In general, the Islamic Bloc at all universities puts out both internal and external publications, in addition to an annual magazine called al-Hasad (The Harvest) that lists all activities carried out by IB committees within the Student Council throughout the year, supported by photographs and statistics. Other publications include the electoral propaganda magazine, the IB newspaper, the Student Council's agenda (if headed by the IB), and cultural wall magazines that can be found in every faculty (Thabet 2014, personal communication conducted by the author).

The content of these magazines generally focused on several key issues: Palestinian student affairs were discussed on the first pages, followed by information technology articles and a brief message from the Islamic Bloc leadership aimed at its members and supporters. At times, magazines requested Islamic Bloc leaders to respond to student queries at West Bank and Gaza universities. Moreover, they incorporated some investigative journalism that dealt with the Palestinian streets, a corner dedicated to the biographies of martyrs or prisoners, as well as articles about ethics, and general,

as well as specific, attributes of IB members. Magazines also addressed school news and concluded with satirical articles that dealt with current political conditions or criticized certain social issues (Al-Kahlut 2009, 149).

Magazines issued by the IB further addressed Muslim affairs in various parts of the world, particularly in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Chechnya, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Iran. They also included poems by Islamic Movement poets like Muhammad Zubairi, Mustafa Sibai, Hashim Al-Rifai, Yousuf Al-Athm, Sayyid Qutb, Marwan Hadid, Abdul Rahman Al-Ashmawi, and Ali Ahmed Bakathir. Poems by the poets contained contemporary Fiqh (jurisprudence) issues, and other cultural and religious matters (Bajes 2012, 55). However, with the recent change in the IB's discourse (which materialized over the past few years), there was a shift in the way it dealt with events and information, tending to highlight Palestinian writers and poets more frequently.

The magazines' content was generally very similar, with only a few differences. The majority featured discussions concerning the Islamic awakening, the dissemination of Islamic ideas, and the opposition to other ideologies, specifically communism. Similarly, they listed the IB's achievements in terms of religious and spiritual awareness, as well as the aid provided to students in the form of grants, loans, general help for those in need, and the like. Newspapers issued by the IB were not periodic publications, they were rather seasonal and often limited to the election campaign periods. This policy had a defensive and promotional nature, rather than a cultural awareness orientation. Among the most prominent of these newspapers was Sawt al-Wafa (The Loyal Voic) , which was distributed by the IB at Birzeit University.



Figure 5.5. The Political Program of the Islamic Bloc at Birzeit University in 2006

Source: The IB archive

The political program begins with the verse "The best one you can hire is the strong and the trustworthy" to support the slogan raised by the Islamic Bloc since its founding, "Your vote is a trust".

For an internal call to Islam *da'wa*, the IB mosque committee at Birzeit University published a special magazine called "The Way" (Al-Tariq), which published articles about Islamic figures and intellectual themes. It has a special design and is distributed internally. Generally, cards and sometimes booklets, with Preaching subjects *da'wa* were distributed at college gates for all students each Thursday at noon, and they were often called "Thursday inspiration" (Nafahat al-Khamis).

Books, especially those that the IB considered appropriate based on their topics, are printed and distributed to students, either free of charge or at a minimum price. An example of the IB's work at Hebron University is a 1983 series of audio lectures by Dr. Ahmad Nawfal that was transcribed and turned into a book titled al-Tareeq ila Filasteen (The Road to Palestine). It also printed some books about the ideology of Dr. Abdullah Azzam, a booklet titled Afrah al-ruh (The Joys of The Soul) by Sayyid Qutb, a booklet entitled The Outstanding Student's Guide to Excellence, a brochure entitled Enhancing Self-Capacities and Developing Talent, and the book Forty issues of the History of the Palestinian Cause, which was published by the Birzeit University Student Council in 2006. The IB conducts several seminars and lectures on a range of political and religious subjects, as well as courses on interaction and Dawa (religious education) etiquette. One of the IB's most notable spiritual lecturers was Sheikh Bassam Jarrar, who wrote a book titled Zawal Israel 2022 (The End of Israel in 2022), based on numerical interpretations of Quranic verse. He was a regular guest at various universities, with lectures mainly focusing on two key issues: first, the refutation of communist ideas that became widespread among university students in the seventies and early eighties; second, the provision of spiritual education and answering some doctrinal issues raised by students (Bajes 2012, 56).

The Al-Aqsa satellite channel, a Hamas affiliate, broadcasted a 2014 documentary film about the Islamic Bloc entitled "The Green Bough." In it, much of the Islamic Bloc's activities carried out at West Bank universities throughout the academic year were highlighted. In addition, it offered a glimpse at the IB's brief history and the major challenges it must face in its syndicate work, through a series of interviews conducted with both former and current student work leaders from various universities, and through self-made video clips that students recorded during university activities held on campuses (Islamic Bloc in the West Bank 2014). The IB publishes short films and documentaries that address political detention on a regular basis, in addition to videos about military operations carried out by Palestinian university students, and young people, in general. These films are naturally politically, and promotionally oriented, more than literary, cultural, or sentimental. Moreover, they are broadcast on Hamas-affiliated channels, channels closely related to them, or on the IB's social networking sites. Thereby, a part of the target audience is excluded,

especially the students from other political parties, as many of them do not generally watch these channels.

It is worth mentioning that the technological committee of the Islamic Bloc used to create preaching, "dawa", animated films for their achievements, or even to dispute with other blocs of the university.

5.4. Framing Resistance: How the Islamic Bloc Constructs Its Narrative

As Robert Benford (2000) discussed in his study, there are three types of core framing processes, which vary in accordance with the tasks to be accomplished. Those processes are: diagnostic framing, prognostic framing, and motivational framing. By pursuing these core framing tasks, movement actors attend to the interrelated problems of "consensus mobilization" and "action mobilization" (Benford 2000, 615).

Diagnostic frames or "injustice frames" designate the ways in which movements identify the "victims" of a given injustice and amplify their victimization (ibid.). We can clearly see this type of framing in the development of the IB, especially at the earlier stages of its existence.

Prognostic framing involves the articulation of a proposed solution to the problem, or at least a plan of attack, and strategies for carrying out the plan. In short, it addresses the Leninist question of "what is to be done?", as well as the problems of consensus and action mobilization (ibid. 616). By these means, "headlines" or "keywords" of the IB's discourse can be analyzed to pin down the suggested solutions for the so-called economic, social, and political issues that the IB has to face as both a student and a social movement.

Finally, motivational framing is the rationale for engaging in ameliorative collective action, including the construction of appropriate vocabularies of motive (ibid. 617). In this way, the IB's mobilizing strategy can be analyzed by concentrating on the content of the data from publications and magazines issued by the IB at Palestinian universities, in addition to its electoral propaganda, speeches at festivals, and other social events.

The framing process is not always easy, clear, or uncontested, as Sidney Tarrow explains. This can be seen in the study of some samples and features of the framing process of the IB. First, movement leaders must compete with authorities, the media, and the market for cultural legitimacy. Second, movements much adapted to their societies' cultures can alienate their most militant supporters from the dominant values of society when they do not support existing power arrangements. Third, ordinary people often have their own reading of events that may differ from those constructed by their leaders (Tarrow 2011, 145).

Framing contests occur in face-to-face interaction and through a variety of media tools, such as newspapers, books, pamphlets, radio, and television. Different media tools have different abilities to convey information, evoke emotional responses, dramatize events, and focus attention (Zald 1996, 270). The media provides a widespread source that helps in forming consensus that movements could not easily achieve on their own, as they provide different standpoints for different actors in a conflict (Tarrow 2011, 149).

In Gaza, the framing among school-aged children seems more organized and complex. They try to ensure that students are prepared to take direct action in the ranks of the IB after university admission, starting with their freshman year. The IB's school division issues periodicals. The IB committee for framing in middle schools, for instance, issues "The Way," aimed at male students and "The Paths of Love," geared towards the female student group, while the Secondary School Committee issues the magazine "Believers' Generation" (al-Kahlut 2009, 148-151).

The IB's framing process is based on a group of methods through which it crystallizes its vision to solve the problems at universities and within the Palestinian community, as well as the Arab and Islamic world, as its vision is an extension of a movement that does not believe in borders or self- retreat. The most prominent trait of the IB's framing process, namely its political speeches at universities, is characterized by a group of distinguished features, the most important of which are discussed in the following sections.

5.4.1. Constructing the "Self" and the "Other": Identity, Exclusion, and Resistance

The speech of the IB in its early stages was characterized by an aggressive tone on some occasions, accusing “the others” of betrayal in a very violent religious tone, especially addressing communists and secular individuals, which was a reaction to what other movements did with reference to the preclusion of the IB members, their marginalization, and accusing their supporters of betrayal. An example is found in the contents of the IB speech held at the Birzeit University elections in 1985-1986: “Deeds not only words…we fulfil our promises…we are bearers of our responsibilities…others are only hypocrites: when all they say is merely lies…they do not keep their promises…they do not bear their responsibilities” (Islamic Bloc in Birzeit 1985). Another example is their statement at the al-Najah University elections in 1982, where they used the motto Wa Islamah (Oh Islam), referring to the incident of January 2, when the IB described its opponents as “communists and anarchists” and “opponents to Islam” (Islamic Bloc in al-Najah 1982). This incident was followed by a state of chaos “against Muslims” as the IB in al-Najah described, trying to hinder their activities out of “hatred and envy” (ibid.).

In this early stage, the political speech of the IB did not meet with a trend requesting resistance to occupation. The reason for this has already been explained in chapter three. However, the recognition and competition stage was marked by broad and clear support of Hamas and its military wing, which called for resistance against the Israeli occupation (Isaeed 2003: 81-82). The speeches then became more rational and political and were addressed to the Shabiba FYM.

The statement distributed by the IB at al-Najah University in 1995 is an example of changing frames. This statement included a sarcastic poem titled “al-Najah 95,” in which the IB criticized the Shabiba for firing guns at the university in celebration of the launch of Fateh. The statement included the following poetry:

Carry your luggage with your coffin as maybe
You receive gunshots; so be persistent and patient.
It is worth starting a march to support the celebration.
Who will die if we do not attend?
This is al-Najah, dead brother, and this is its status.
Disasters you are waiting for, so it's better to pass.
(Islamic Bloc at al-Najah 1995)

While in the final stages, it concentrated more on the IB's positive attitude towards its activities and the services provided for the students and its political opponents. An example of this is the poem that was issued by the IB's "Our Harvest" magazine in 2006, at Birzeit University. Its verses show the IB's policy in dealing with the students and other blocs:

We do not claim that we are angels from Heaven,
Or that we live without committing mistakes.
Or that we grieved the success alone,
Or that those who leave our way, will walk in darkness.
But we are from this country and its soil,
We strive to serve you with great loyalty.
(The Islamic Bloc in Birzeit 2006)

However, this does not mean that the IB's speeches, in any of its phases, were completely free of severe criticism of the others, or even aggression and hostility in some cases. One of the most prominent pieces of evidence is the IB's annual marketing campaign which took place at various universities, and the controversies that arose prior to the elections. Universities witnessed a state of verbal power struggles that led –in some cases– to the provocation of the Shabiba, which mostly responded to such criticism with physical violence, i.e., throwing stones and empty bottles as well as firing guns at universities such as al-Najah, Birzeit, Hebron, and Polytechnic.

Through her follow-up to the electoral propaganda for sequential years, Thabet (2017) noticed that the media discourse of the student blocs is framed and focused on a recent issue, especially on the political level, and the aspects of this issue are clear and well known to the students and connected to their reality. The media discourse connects the issue with the cultural and political norms and constitutes the role of the actor blocks in the propaganda event to persuade the student or alienate him of the methods and tools used in media discourse, based on the student's psychology and the extent of its interaction with the issue (Thabet 2017; 10). Moreover, the media discourse usually adopts a strategic framework that goes along with its plans and objectives towards

achieving victory, so it highlights its strengths in people, events and appearances. He mentions the achievements along with the failures of the other and criticizes his failures at the political level first and then the syndicated level. The blocs' propaganda is also based on the question of responsibility/syndicate / political/national: Who is responsible for? This question is linked to the actors inside and outside the university in the Palestinian area, specifying the events, people, legal determinants, behaviour of the university and the authority within it. There is no doubt that the events are presented in a highly competitive context, and the blocs may ignore important elements in the media message in order to fuel the conflict. It is worth mentioning that the message is measured here by profit, loss, victory and defeat. The media message sometimes goes beyond the ethics or the values, principles and beliefs of Palestinian society. On the other hand, according to some other blocs, the message depends on religious discourse, quotations, evidence and religious statements that support the media discourse and the objectives of this speech in a way that goes in line with the social and religious frames of the student. (ibid.; 11)

The media discourse of the student blocs is constructed with a strategy based on deliberate decisions, and diligence in spreading them amongst students in a certain form and content that contributes to the realization of their purposes. Propaganda also employs expressions, concepts, quotations, slogans, and theatrical and caricature forms of art that are compatible with the political, syndicate, and religious bloc. Thus, the media policy appears to be the result of the existing political situation, along with the available means of media provided by the social media platforms, ideological and cultural trends that it has control over, and the political framework to which it belongs, in addition to the space of freedom provided by the universities administration.

5.4.2. Faith, Politics, and Mobilization: Ideology in Framing Strategies

Ideologies and religious and political trends primarily affect the discourse addressing the students, the resulting institutional and organizational constraints and pressures, and therefore the external factors imposed by the authority and the university institution. Also, their impact is manifested in the background of the media message imposed by a set of shared principles among the whole Palestinian society, for they

are considered to be one of the components of the Palestinian culture, as are customs and traditions.

"I see that the religious influence of the speech of the Islamic Bloc has maintained its identity, but its procedural ways have changed. A member of the Islamic Bloc is aware that he has to follow diplomatic methods in order to attract students; consequently, he becomes more oriented towards objectivity and more diplomatic in dealing with some issues after he is accused of not accepting the other and considering the other as the hypocrite and himself as the honest. This is the new face of the movement discourse in general while it is trying to keep a distance in its relationship with others." (Thabet in a personal interview with the author, August 2018).

On the other hand, IB's political speeches include two main components. The first is the printed text that is distinguished using Islamic expressions, while the second component of the discourse is the intellectual content that reflects the students' aspirations concerning forms of political and social activities and events. Any activity –regardless of its objective– performed by the IB on campus is characterized using a religious theme, employing Quran verses and the sayings of the Prophet Mohammed. e.g., the IB's slogan used during elections: "Serving the student is a form of worship that we use to draw near to Allah" or other statements taken from Quran verses or sayings of the Prophet.

As time passed, the IB's political speeches evolved from using direct religious expressions that urged students to join and support their doctrine, to the use of a non-obligatory tone to invite students to join and be members. Still, it was necessary for students to join if they wanted to enjoy services provided to IB members, exclusively. This is reflected by the fact that the IB started to direct its speeches towards actions and practices, not solely basing them on its religious background.

In other words, the discourse of the Islamic Bloc has changed over time because of changing circumstances. The sharp tone used in directing the discourse to the political and syndicate levels, rather than the religious tone it previously adopted has become useful, and it no longer requires the student to join the Islamic Bloc to enjoy its services, instead granting these services to all as a form of worship drawing them near

to Allah. Moreover, the types of activities are no longer religious, as most of them are services, national and syndicate.

The Islamic Bloc wants to prove that its speech is directed at all, as well as its activities and services, without regard to the religious considerations of the students.

5.4.3. Discursive Resistance: The Role of Political Rhetoric in Mobilization

It can be observed that the majority of the IB's political statements and speeches used on different occasions always address an opponent. This opponent is usually the most prominent opposing political party of the IB, which is, first and foremost, the Shabiba FYM, followed by the leftists who are considered less competitive, although they socially stand on the other side and are aggressively criticized for their attitudes.

Furthermore, harshness can clearly be noticed in the IB's political speeches whenever they are directed towards its two major opponents. On the other hand, it adopts a very smooth approach when addressing ordinary university students, who are not affiliated with any political party, using friendly and kind statements such as: "Our Dear Students," "Our Beloved Students," or "Our Brothers."

If you want to label the media discourse of the student blocs for the year 2017, it would take the form of bias, emphasis on the option of resistance, criticism of the negotiation approach with the Islamic Bloc, focusing on the circumstances of Basil al-Araj[32] and the strike of dignity that was going on then. The propaganda begins to emphasize the Palestinian constants as the right to return, Jerusalem, and refugees, including the undiminished Palestinian borders and to emphasise holding onto a weapon and not handing it over, and not to recognize the Israeli entity as stipulated in the old and modern document of Hamas. In the second part of its propaganda, the Islamic Bloc mentions its achievements at the syndicate level in a slogan that it has used in its discourse throughout the years: "science, resistance, creativity" and "the service of the student is a form of worship to bring us closer to God". Both printed and electronic

[32] Basil al- Araj is a revolutionary and resistance Palestinian leftist activist, intellectual, researcher and pharmacist graduated from an Egyptian university. He is known for his writings and his views of the revolution and resistance. He was assassinated by the Israeli forces on 6 March 2017.

publications of the bloc have mentioned its various achievements, including the activation of the Student Council committees. The IB, as stated in its publications, prevents the raising of premiums, solves the problem of graduates with debts, provides free photography services, establishes exhibitions and academic seminars, medical days and sports, and supports student clubs, etc. On the other hand, speeches are delivered to criticize the Shabiba movement and its failure to activate its committees in the Student Council. They are also criticized for the lack of media activity in the Student Council, along with their media confusion through social media sites, the contradiction of its statements, and impersonation of the Islamic Bloc activities, in addition to the obvious fabrication of several videos for its own favour. The IB also criticizes the approach of the Palestinian Authority and its leadership, which insists on negotiations and normalization with the occupation, and it also criticizes the corruption and bribes of the Palestinian Authority and the concentration on Abu Mazen's visit to offer condolences in Peres, although he did not do the same regarding Palestinian martyrs. Not forgetting the Authority's attempt to undermine the Jerusalem Intifada and stop confrontations by arresting the students participating, while protecting and securing settlers in Palestinian areas.

It is notable in the propaganda of the Islamic Bloc at the University of Birzeit in 2017 that it shapes its messages and media speeches in different ways, and that it relies heavily on social media sites such as Facebook and Instagram, printed publications and graphics, as well as a comedic, sarcastic play. All of this conveys the same media content, and a framework reflecting the events of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, as well as Hamas and Fatah’s approaches towards it.

5.4.4. Shifting Priorities: From Islamic Solidarity to National Liberation

During its formation, the Islamic Bloc’s political speeches –especially those prior to the “First Intifada,” or the Uprising of 1987– were characterized by high public awareness of Muslim issues around the world. They made Muslim news from all over the world available by providing news updates in Al-Muntalaq magazine from international agencies and organizations such as the United Nations (UN), the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA),

the Red Cross, and other humanitarian organizations, mainly responsible for aiding and relief services in less developed countries.

This magazine was considered the official mouthpiece of the IB at different universities. However, it can be observed that this practice was no longer valid with the start of the so-called "Second Intifada" (or Al-Aqsa Intifada), due to the closure of universities and the deterioration of the academic level of students.

After the reopening of universities in 1992 and after the political situation was settled somewhat, the shallowness of the IB's political speeches started to show. It was no longer addressing Muslim issues around the world, except in a few, rare, cases. Distinct proof for this is the fact that the IB showed little concern when the US government announced the war in Afghanistan and in Iraq, as well as for the events of 9/11. All these issues were only occasionally addressed and dealt with in publications.

Such a regression could be attributed to many factors, among them the accelerating events at the onset of the Second Intifada, and the imposed restrictions on the Islamic Bloc's supporters by the Israeli occupation. Also, there were well-known military orders to penalize all political practices and activities of IB members, which later became penalties issued by the Palestinian security bodies.

Restrictions led to a state of fear concerning involvement in the IB's cultural and missionary activities, mainly on the Palestinian family level, and among those who were used to attending lectures at mosques. In addition to that, there was the quick pace of changing situations on the internal Palestinian political level and the numerous arrests of IB supporters. Nevertheless, the student movement, in general, was no longer interested in the cultural aspect, because of the demise of intellectual debates between the competing political parties, and the rise of the political debates following the "Oslo Agreement" instead.

In a study conducted in 2015 by a chief member of the Islamic Bloc, S. Tamimi, which was to be presented during the latest Islamic Bloc Student Conference, held in 2015 (a copy of which was obtained by the researcher), Tamimi defined the Islamic Bloc's discourse as the following: "The means used by the Islamic Bloc to convey its mission

and objectives to students as well as to its members." However, this definition is closer to the framing concept than it is to the discourse.

According to Tamimi (2015), framing has been divided into the following two levels: Internal: Discourse aimed at Bloc members, or taking place between members and Bloc leadership, as well as during internal meetings and activities. This includes their intercommunication and interpersonal relationships. External: Islamic Bloc discourse represented by the means used to deliver its principles and objectives, as well as its Islamic, political, syndicate, and cultural ideologies to university students.

Tamimi spoke of the nature of "framing" and the current means used by the Islamic Bloc in its discourse with university students. At times, she spoke critically of some of the methods used; other times, she proposed solutions for the current "framing and discourse" problems within the Bloc. She explains:

> Political Discourse: In its discourse, the Islamic Bloc tends to focus on political achievements more than syndicate and student achievements; though the latter garners greater attention from the student ranks. A Hostile Approach: The Bloc's electoral propaganda tends to be of a hostile and aggressive nature, provoking the opponents by focusing on their shortcomings and engaging in hostile debates, rather than emphasizing the strengths of each party. (Tamimi 2015).

Regarding IB activities, Tamimi considers them to be the most important method for communicating the Bloc's image to students; however, she criticizes them as "traditional and cliché" activities that students tend to experience frequently like free transportation and photocopying services. Despite their occasional uniqueness, students viewed them as "ordinary," as they are widely used by most other factions. As they fail to meet the growing and evolving student needs, students become more recipients of said activities and refrain from any concrete participation in them (Tamimi 2015).

Furthermore, Tamimi has criticized the activities' advertisement style as "having a traditional nature that may not be accessible to all students, in addition to the lack of an attraction force that might arouse the students' interest in these activities." Exemplifying what she means, she mentioned the use of the university's bulletin boards for activity announcements, the use of flyers, or the advertisement on the

Islamic Bloc's Facebook page. "The advertisement style is of crucial importance, as advertising through traditional slogans or ordinary designs will only reduce the students' interest in the activities. Ads were neither sponsored, nor was the activity information posted on the Bloc members' (and supporters') personal social network pages; thus, ads reached a much smaller number of students." (Tamimi 2015).

One of the key issues noted by Tamimi regarding the framing process is the existence of a stereotypical image of the Bloc, which is a huge barrier between Bloc members and fellow students. This barrier may very well be "imaginary," formed as a result of prior baseless assumptions that create a gap between the Bloc and university students (Tamimi 2015). Therefore, Tamimi proposed a number of procedures and regulations that may reduce the previously mentioned shortcomings of the Bloc's discourse and framing process and might increase the Bloc's opportunities to reach a wider range of students. She suggests that the Bloc should prioritize syndicate-related discourse, framing itself foremost as a student syndicate and Islamic movement, rather than foregrounding political agendas. Its communication style should reflect the Bloc's ethical principles, avoiding the rhetorical tactics of rival factions and steering clear of political provocation or condescension. Instead, the focus should be on articulating the Bloc's syndicate, ideological, and political strengths with integrity and respect. Tamimi also advises against engaging in direct confrontations with opposing groups, as such conflicts tend to damage the Bloc's image more than that of its rivals. Furthermore, she stresses the importance of addressing students intellectually—persuading both members and the broader student body that elections are merely a means to serve the student community, not an end in themselves. Finally, she recommends rethinking the Bloc's activities, moving away from traditional or formulaic formats toward more participatory and dynamic engagements. This, she argues, would help narrow the perceived distance between the Bloc and the student body, challenging the stereotypical image of the Bloc and fostering stronger connections with students.

Moreover, among the most important research findings are the discrepancies found in questionnaire answers given by second, third, and fourth-year university students. This can only indicate that students change their attitudes towards student groups according to the number of years spent at the university.

This chapter has examined how identity and narrative framing operate as central mechanisms in the Islamic Bloc's mobilization efforts. Through its framing of resistance, articulation of ideological belonging, and deployment of political rhetoric, the Bloc fosters a cohesive activist identity grounded in faith, nationalism, and opposition to the occupation. Yet, the identity factor alone cannot account for the organizational durability and sustained activism witnessed across different eras. To fully understand the power and limits of the Islamic Bloc's mobilization, we must now turn to the structural, material, and political resources that shape its capacity to act. The next chapter explores these dimensions—how the Bloc mobilizes human capital, funding, and institutional support, and how it adapts to repression and shifting political opportunities.

CHAPTER VI

LIMITS OF RESOURCE MOBILIZATION AND POLITICAL OPPORTUNITY

As microcosms of broader societal struggles, student movements often reflect the underlying tensions within a community's social, political, and cultural frameworks. In the Palestinian context, characterized by settler-colonial violence, fragmented governance, and enduring occupation, student activism serves not only as a means of political engagement but also as a vital form of social reproduction, resistance, and meaning-making. This chapter critically examines the limitations of Resource Mobilization Theory and Political Opportunity Structures by drawing on the lived experiences and mobilization strategies of the Islamic Bloc (IB) within Palestinian universities. It explores how young people, situated within political, religious, and kinship affiliations networks, transform everyday university environments into arenas of ideological struggle and social solidarity.

This chapter explores four key external factors that shape the effectiveness of the Islamic Bloc as a social movement within the framework of political opportunity structures. Drawing on social movement theory, it examines how the Bloc's capacity for mobilization is not only determined by internal dynamics, but also by its positioning within broader political and institutional contexts. First, the chapter investigates the Bloc's relationship with other student movements, focusing on both cooperation and competition as influencing factors. Second, it analyzes the general political mood among students, including prevailing ideologies, political engagement, and generational shifts. Third, it considers the sources of funding that sustain the Bloc's activities, highlighting how access to resources impacts organizational continuity. Finally, it discusses the role of political arrests and repression, and how these strategies limit, disrupt, or—paradoxically—stimulate the movement's visibility and resilience. Together, these dimensions provide a comprehensive understanding of the Bloc's external environment. This chapter reevaluates how resistance is mobilized,

sustained, and contested in the lives of Palestinian student activists living under occupation, emphasizing the relationship between structural constraints and cultural agency.

6.1. Alliances and Conflicts: The Islamic Bloc in the Broader Student Movement

The IB insists in its bylaws (2004) that it respects all other student movements from Palestinian universities. It "connects but does not divide, safeguards but does not dissipate, and appreciates every good word and sincere effort" (Bylaws of the Islamic bloc, Article 3, item 6). It also seeks to reform the Palestinian youth and student reality, as is mentioned on its website at Birzeit University, by leading the society and finding a formula to unify the student movement at all Palestinian universities and colleges. It "reaches out to all student blocs, so they can cooperate for the students' benefits and for the common goals of the student movement. … It does not have any hostile attitude to anyone except those who plotted on the doctrine of the Palestinians, their homeland, rights, sanctities and their bounty" (Islamic Bloc in Birzeit 2012). But in reality, the relation between the IB and PLO student blocs (Fatah, leftists, and communists) was not always as was mentioned in the bylaws; there has always been vast competition between them, and differences in political, social, and cultural visions, as will be shown in this section.

The early stage between 1980-1987, in which the IB formed its identity and tried to be noticed, was the most confrontational; the various movements refused to acknowledge one another's legitimacy and their arguments often ended violently, sometimes even in bloodshed. The relations between the IB and the rest of the student blocs at that time were formulated as a result of numerous accumulations of negative attitudes between the parties. 'Iyad Abu-hujair, one of the co-founders of the IB at Birzeit University, described how IB adherents formed a negative image for the other student movement adherents: "Because of the other student movements' rejection of the IB, IB members came to assume that the other parties were automatically their opponents" (Abu Hujair 2011, personal communication conducted by the author). The same point of view was assumed by the other parties, when their adherents felt that IB members refused to recognize the PLO as the only legitimate representative for the Palestinians.

On the 9th of January 1982, the IB in al-Najah University, who headed the student council at the time, organized a march and raised slogans such as "Allah is the greatest, not perversion nor atheism" in reference to four professors who were accused of insulting the divine and were dismissed from al-Najah University. The march was attacked, and the houses of IB students who staged the march were attacked too. Some IB leaders were tried by revolutionary trials and were ordered to leave Nablus. These incidents led to clashes that closed al-Najah University for months (Abu Ahmad 2011, personal communication conducted by the author).

IB in the West Bank and Gaza has issued a statement mentioning the reasons for such tension. IB stated that establishing a "united student committee" from PLO students as an alternative to the legitimate student council which is headed by the IB, in addition to insult statements, press bias toward the PLO students, and denying the fact that there is an Islamic movement with the wide number of active adherents, all these factors lead to this tension (The Islamic Bloc in West Bank and Gaza 1982).

At Birzeit University on 4 June 1983, the IB organized a march on the first anniversary of Israel's occupation of southern Lebanon. The march was launched from Birzeit mosque towards Birzeit University, but the University administration banned the participants from entering the university camp. So did the student council headed by PLO supporters, especially the leftists. PLO supporters have clashed with IB members and blockaded some IB female students inside the University cafeteria. Meanwhile, other members of the IB surrounded the University and asked to release the female students without any delay.

The University administration blamed the IB for these events, and so dismissed Abdullah al Saafin, the head of the IB at the time, but the IB asked for an investigation committee. The results of the investigation were published in 52 pages. The results were in favour of the IB. The report has condemned the University administration for being "careless" in protecting its students. Besides, the report has acquitted the IB from all charges, especially the prior intention to do clashes inside the University.[33]

[33] see appendix no. 7, that contains a copy from the last page of the investigation report in 1983.

On the same day in Gaza, the Islamic University went through a control conflict between the nationalists and the Islamists. On 4 June 1983 members of the Shabiba and leftists attacked the Islamic University. These clashes wounded more than 200 students from both sides. These clashes were also followed by another attempt to control the student council through elections, which also failed and ended when members of Shabiba assassinated the Islamic Professor Ismail al-Khatib, the University vice president, in the 17th, January 1984 (Jad 2008, 127; al Kahlut 2009, 126).

The situation at other universities was not different: there was daily friction between students supporting the PLO and those of the IB (Rabi‘ 2011, personal communication conducted by the author). PLO students rejected the idea of creating a new student bloc that did not recognize the PLO as the sole legitimate representative of all Palestinians. Besides, IB supporters were quite confrontational at some universities such as the Islamic University and Al-Najah University (Abu Hujair 2011, personal communication conducted by the author).

No sooner had the Palestinians heard about the Oslo agreements than the relationships between the different blocs and movements started to reshape in accordance with the new situation. The years 1993/1994 and 1994/1995 brought alliances between the IB and al-Qutub at Birzeit, al-Najah, Al-Quds, and Al-Quds Open University (Bajes 2012: 36). Both the Islamists and the leftists tried to ignore their ideological, social and cultural deference and concentrate on presenting their political consensus. But their alliance has not lasted more than one year. The differences between Islamists and leftists were more than the common political consensus.

During and after the Second Intifada, the IB tried to reduce the amount of tension between the students from both sides several times. As a gesture of goodwill, the IB in Birzeit withdrew from the university campus before the announcement of the election results in 2006/2007, when it knew that it had won the election. They did so, as IB leaders say because they wanted to avoid the kind of bloodshed which had taken place a few years prior (Thabet 2014, personal communication conducted by the author).

The historical trajectory outlined in this chapter shows how the Islamic Bloc navigated formative phases of growth, conflict, prohibition, and resurgence across four decades. Each period marked a transformation in the Bloc's strategies, leadership, and relevance within the broader student movement. From marginalization to dominance, and from prohibition to adaptation, the Islamic Bloc's path reflects the larger political and ideological shifts in Palestinian society. However, historical progression alone does not fully explain how the Bloc sustained its appeal or shaped collective action. The next chapter moves from historical analysis to the internal mechanics of meaning-making, focusing on identity formation and framing strategies. It explores how the Islamic Bloc constructs narratives of resistance, defines "self" and "other," and uses ideology, discourse, and symbolism to mobilize students and sustain engagement.

6.2. The General Political Mood and Its Role in Student Mobilization

The legitimacy of the Palestinian organizations, whether political, social, or student groups, significantly stems from the political orientations of these organizations. This was proven by the majority of studies and opinion polls conducted to explore students' tendencies and selection criteria for any given student bloc in the elections (Panorama 2003; Abu Warda 2011; Bajes 2012). An opinion poll conducted by the Palestinian Center for the Dissemination of Democracy and Community Development, Panorama reported that 29% of the students at Gaza universities, and 22% at West Bank universities, are members of Palestinian political movements (Panorama, 2003, 15). Another study, published in the Palestinian Public Policies Magazine, reported that a student's support for a Palestinian political faction, which is also supported by a student bloc up for election, is one of the most important factors (at 71.7%) affecting the students' selection criteria for student blocs running in elections. Also, the political program of each student bloc affects the selection criteria for that bloc at 64.5% (Fadel 1992).

Results of a study conducted by Amin Abu Warda also revealed that, for college students to visit a website (while on campus), the website's focus on the Palestinian cause and the abundance of, and easy access to, national news on that website is crucial (Abu Warda 2011, 184). Certain student groups have tried to establish themselves on the basis of pure student syndicate demands, without having any political background

or a clear position concerning either the political settlement process or the resistance. These groups were repeatedly unable to overcome the election threshold. On the rare occasions they did, they only lasted one legislative period of a year, to disappear soon after. This holds true for the following recent cases: the "Scientific Bloc" at al-Najah University, endorsed and promoted by Professor Abdul Sattar Qassem, the Birzeit University "Independent Bloc", led by student Nader Christo Nicola and established in 1995, the 1998 established "Change Bloc," as well as the 2006 established "Student Pole Bloc" (both at Birzeit University), in addition to the "Bikafi (Enough) Bloc" established in 2009 at the Islamic University.

According to the resource mobilization approach, these emerging groups lacked one or more of the five resources that must be available for any social movement to ensure its viability. The reasons for their lack of success or persistence can be summarized as (1) High politicization among university students, as previous studies have shown, and students 'lack of support for groups not with a clear political orientation, (2) the absence of grassroots for the ideas of these emerging student frameworks, in high schools before the university like the rest of the politicized student movements, (3) the lack of adequate support in several aspects: media, financial and infrastructure, and (4) some of these emerging student frameworks carry social ideas that are not accepted in public circles for students, most of whom are characterized by their coming from conservative environments.

Even though the IB presents itself as a student syndicate framework, its political and religious ideologies are well known, particularly to followers of student affairs. The IB adopts the same traditional political premises as Hamas. It calls for the return of the historical Palestinian land, "from the river to the sea," as being an Islamic Waqf (Lien) land, yet, at the same time, it supports Hamas' position to accept a Palestinian state on the Palestinian occupied territories of 1967, without recognizing Israel. Moreover, it demands the return of refugees to areas from which they were evicted, considers the "liberation of Palestinian prisoners" one of the Palestinian political fundamentals, and believes in taking all measures to achieve these political visions, including armed struggle (Islamic Bloc in Birzeit 2006, 1).

When various student movements introduce themselves during any activity, especially the election campaign, they never fail to mention the number of their martyrs, wounded, and captives, as well as the operations carried out by their members against the occupation. They then state the political views of the mother movement to which they belong ideologically and emphasize the significance of resistance in their political ideology (see the following YouTube resources in the bibliography: Fateh mediaps 2013; Khwaireh 2013; Qo6ob 6ollabe 2014; Islamic Bloc at Birzeit 2015). Likewise, when any student movement wishes to criticize other movements, it begins by accusing them of abandoning armed resistance. This is exactly what the IB does in its electoral propaganda, it accuses the Shabiba by saying it has abandoned the armed resistance, just like Fatah, its mother movement. In this case, the IB tries to reduce the value of the moral resources that the opponent adopts in an attempt to reduce their legitimacy among the students.

The IB strengthened its moral position by reminding the students that many of the IB's senior student leaders and symbols were either held captive or killed by the Israelis[34]. This has caused the Israeli army to increase the punishment of detainees who prove to be members of the Islamic Bloc (al-Kahlut 2009, 199).

During student blocs' electoral campaigns, male students often dress in military attire, especially when attending marches or rhetoric festivals that precede the elections, and during political and syndicate debates, which take place prior to the elections, as well. Likewise, pictures of martyrs, resistance fighters, and prisoners are posted everywhere as clear signs of the political positions adopted by the various student blocs (see the following youtube resources in the bibliography: Fateh mediaps 2013; Khwaireh 2013; Qo6ob 6ollabe 2014; Islamic Bloc at Birzeit 2015). All of these tangible manifestations of venerating resistant action and the usage of cultural symbols of martyrdom and sacrifice, exercised by the IB members in addition to the literature issued by the IB, which is addressed in the next section, make it easy to identify their political identity and ideological orientation, with regard to the Palestinian issue. This

[34] See appendix no.5, which contains a table illustrating the fate of the Islamic Bloc's most prominent leaders of student work, who were fated to do one of the following two things: political work in the mother movement (Hamas), or resistance work in the movement's military wing, i.e., the al-Qassam Brigades (Bajes 2012: 195- 201).

is an important tributary to their resource mobilization and polarization process in favour of these ideas, as is clearly reflected by the election results.

The political approaches of the different Palestinian parties may, or may not, be reflected by their student wings, though all the student movements use the same cultural symbols of martyrdom, sacrifice, and resistance. However, the students look at the contradiction between a student movement and its mother political party. The IB makes use of the contradiction between the Shabiba (FYM) discourse and their political party Fatah, to persuade students to choose the IB as their political representative in the Student Council elections.

6.3. Funding Resistance: The Role of Material and Institutional Support

Money, as Zelkovitz (2015) argues, was a central factor in the competition to "win hearts" on Palestinian campuses. Directing resources to the student arena enabled Hamas to develop a range of activities, including the publication of journals (Zelkovitz 2015, 171).

The IB's financial resources can be subsumed into four main categories: the IB members' monthly membership fee, which only covers a fraction of the bloc's financial needs; donations from institutions and companies affiliated with the Islamic Bloc or the Student Council Committees –supervised by the IB– that provide in kind and, at times, financial services to students; the headquarters and warehouses that universities provide to all student blocs that meet their requirements, which are used for storage and all kinds of activities; and, most of all, the parent movement, Hamas, which is the IB's main source of financial support. Funding received from Hamas is used to cover all the IB's costs and facilitate their activities such as festivals, exhibitions, and competitions, as well as to offer student grants, etc. What follows is a detailed breakdown of these four resources.

Historically, the IB has always relied on the resources of its mother movement, Hamas; not directly, but through the Hamas' wealthy members and entrepreneurs, such as the owners of economic, health, and service institutions. In 1997, those following the activities of the Al-Najah National University's Student Council (which was fully led

by the IB, and in particular, by the student Mohammed Sabha, who was later arrested and sentenced to 15 years in prison because he belonged to the Al-Qassam Brigades) must have realized that most services provided to students came as donations from institutions and companies owned by individuals affiliated to the movement. Among the Student Council's most striking activities was the "Fourth Medical Week," the distribution of food at student hostels, providing students with a health insurance card –in cooperation with the Islamic Union in Nablus– as well as a discount card (Student Council in al-Najah 1998).

The IB sometimes depended on self-funding through holding bazaars of homemade food provided by IB members, as well as organizing book and stationary exhibitions, in which they tried to sell the goods for cheap and affordable prices. In some cases, the profit is not for the IB, but for the needy student fund.

The report presented by the Israeli researcher, Alma, based on the testimonies of detained IB leaders, reveals that Hamas provides the IB with financial support via several IB leaders who have graduated from different universities. Alma says:

> Money intended to finance IB activities comes from the Hamas leadership in the region. Money is transferred to IB activists through activists working as links between the Hamas leadership and the IB. Hamas makes a great effort to conceal the link between the funds that the IB receives and those that the movement receives itself (Alma 2013).

Alma was not alone in this opinion. In fact, Zelkovitz endorsed her view regarding Hamas' support of the IB in his study published in 2015, which dealt with the Palestinian student movement. There, he says that "Hamas dedicated considerable effort to student recruitment. The movement's charitable organizations were mobilized, raising funds for scholarships. Activists of the IB also collected money wherever solidarity could be found" (Zelkovitz 2015, 171).

Regarding the infrastructure, i.e., buildings, offices, storage spaces, as well as electricity, every university provides a room and a storage area for each student bloc recognized by the university. Additionally, the IB can use the prayer rooms and mosques of the universities to perform daily activities such as prayers, religious and advisory lessons, and circles for teaching the Quran and its interpretation. They may

also use a small library in every university, containing books about the Muslim Brotherhood ideology –compiled and arranged by a special committee of the IB– which are available for lending (Qaddoumi in an interview with the author in September 2015).

6.4. Repression and Resilience: The Effects of Political Arrests on Student Mobilization

Eisinger (1973, 15) observes that protest is most likely to emerge in political systems that exhibit a combination of open and closed characteristics—a point discussed earlier in Chapter 1, Section 1.5. Such conditions influence not only the extent of contention but also its escalation to the level of the state, where the presence of new adversaries, the formation of potential alliances, and variations in institutional contexts can determine whether dissent expands or remains contained (Tarrow 2011, 205). Student movements operate within this dynamic as well. As Altbach (1992, 142) notes:

> Political systems in the Third World have not always been installed through the ballot box and they lack wide legitimacy; thus, they are more easily threatened by dissident movements of various kinds. A weak mass media and frequent limitations on free expression means that Third World regimes are generally out of touch with public opinion. Students often provide articulation for much more widely held views and concerns. Their movements are frequently the conscience of at least the educated segment of the population. (Altbach 1992, 142)

Based on the report submitted by the Israeli expert Anat, discussed previously, the Israeli authorities issued a military order on May 4, 1996, to ban the IB's syndicate activity from Palestinian universities and institutes, listing it as a banned political organization (Islamic Bloc in Birzeit 1996).

The Israeli intelligence established a special unit to investigate female IB members and advise them against affiliating with the IB to be spared from getting arrested (Farhat 2000, 86-87). A group of female IB members were arrested at Birzeit University and the University of Jerusalem. Another group from al-Najah University was called in for investigation. However, charges brought against the female detainees Ahlam Tamimi (arrested in 2001) and Yaqeen Samer (arrested in 2004) from Birzeit University were not due to their membership in the IB; rather, they were arrested on

other military-related charges, such as providing the IB with financial support, planning for military operations, or writing some statements against Israel on social media networks. The female IB members from Abu Dis University were detained on charges of providing their private hostel as a shelter for a group of wanted students on the run. The girls from al-Najah University, who were called in for investigation by either the Israeli intelligence agents or the Palestinian intelligence and preventive security apparatus, were investigated regarding their IB activity on campus, especially after the 2007 Palestinian division events (Lafi in a personal interview with the author, September 2015. 2015).

Israel follows a policy of exiling activist students from their universities through sentences issued in Israeli military courts, exiling students from their universities for different periods. For example, the expatriation of the students Nihad Salim and Asma Kadah from the University of Birzeit in 2017, and Bara'a Odeh from Al Quds-Abu Dis University in the same year. Odeh mentioned, "I was accused of my activities in the student movement and being a representative of the Islamic Bloc at Al-Quds University, and I was sentenced to six months of exiling from my university and surrounding areas, otherwise I will be held up in administrative detention for six months." Odeh added that he was one of a family composed of ten young brothers, all of whom were arrested by the occupation during their academic education and therefore all of them were delayed in graduating, the last of them finished his university degree in six years.

Ahmed Al-Ayesh is the Chairman of the Student Council of Birzeit University. Al-Ayesh was unable to return to his home for eleven months prior to the end of 2017 for fear of being arrested. "We used to protest inside the university," he added, "and sometimes we were hiding in the campus, but unfortunately the campus is no longer safe after the raid from the Israeli military, therefore we always tried to hide from the occupation and the Palestinian national security."

A report issued by the Right for Education Foundation mentioned the arrests of students by the occupation and the Palestinian authority which had happened to many students and caused them to delay their graduation by several years. Instead of spending four or five years in university, they may spend a much longer time because

some of the students spend ten years between university life and the Palestinian Authority's, or occupation's, prisons.

The Islamic Bloc spokesman at Birzeit University, Yasser Abu Rumaila, stated that the number of students arrested by the Israeli occupation prior to the end of 2017 was more than 90 students. He explained that in the same academic year of the sixteen activists of the student movements at the university who were arrested by the Israeli occupation, twelve of them were from the IB cadres, including the Secretary of the Cultural Committee in the Student Council, Asma Abdul Hakim Kadh (20 years).

Yasser Abu Rumaila, the IB spokesman at Birzeit University in 2017, said: "The arrests of students, especially members of the IB, intensified after we won a majority of seats in the Student Council. I remember the arrest of many students during the election campaign and festival. As well as the arrests that often occur by the Palestinian security members —that happen continuously— especially targeting IB leaders such as Ahmed al-Ayesh, the President of the Student Council, and Tawfiq Abu Arqoub, who was arrested at the university's door. In addition to Basil Fleyan, Tamer Nakhla, and Hussam Nasour (members of the current Student Council), this situation deprived the IB of its most creative cadres."

Arrests of the student movement's members continue, and increase during insurrections (Intifada), national outbursts, and national events. It has happened that most of the IB Student Council's members were arrested, and the students who replaced them were also arrested. Some committees that were managed by the IB replaced their members three times during one session due to arrests; it has also happened that about ten students —who were appointed to run four IB committees in the Student Council— were arrested during one session.

In 2017, the Palestinian Authority's security in the West Bank made 723 arbitrary arrests, and 1137 appeals without judicial authorization in most cases. In these cases, the motives for arrest were the social or political activity background of the victims or even the peaceful expression of their ideas. In particular, the number of arrested students reached 74 students last year, while the current number for this year is fourteen students (Thabet 2017).

The Palestinian parties, movements, and student movements share a broad interest in the Palestinian prisoners in all areas. However, according to a study published by the IB's "Awakening Movement" magazine in 2005, this interest increases exponentially when the reader knows that 80.5% of Hamas detainees imprisoned in Israel are, in fact, university students who are members of the IB (Al-Kahlut 2009, 174). Under the leadership of the Hamas Movement in Israeli prisons, lectures and courses were provided to the IB's imprisoned students, to support and develop their capabilities in a completely confidential manner. One important activity that the prisoners offered with regard to student work was a workshop titled "The Future of the IB in the Light of its Challenges", which took place in the Megiddo prison in 1999. During this workshop, the following four work fields were presented: the IB's relationship with other movements; its future in the light of the challenges; the organization and development of its work; and the necessity of increasing awareness regarding security issues in student work. The workshop concluded with a set of findings, coupled with statistics that were collected through questionnaires, personally prepared, in advance, by those prisoners (Islamic Bloc in Birzeit 1999).

The following are some of the resulting key statistics: 96.7% of IB student detainees believe that the IB should represent the student's interests as a whole, not limited to its members and supporters; 73.3% are in favour of separating IB activities from those of the Student Councils; 45% support the argument that the IB does not care enough for the syndicate and social issues; 90% support a proposal in which academic and syndicate issues are at the top of the IB's priorities; 95% are in favour of a rapprochement between the IB and the universities' management; and 71.7% are in favour of the IB's assimilation into The General Union of Palestine Students (ibid.).

Recommendations resulting from this workshop were considered, and the new IB leadership in Gaza, established through internal elections, attempted to communicate with the General Union of Palestine Students (GUPS), requesting to join the Union in 2002. However, the attempt failed due to the GUPS's refusal to accept the IB's request, since the IB refused to recognize the PLO as the sole and legitimate representative of the Palestinian people and accept its political choices (Al-Kahlut 2009, 136).

In Israeli prisons, Hamas leadership focuses on providing education on security matters to university students affiliated with the IB, particularly those arrested for the first time. Detainees are duly introduced to the means that the occupation employs to penetrate student work, as well as to the means that should prevent or reduce this penetration. This concern was also examined during the workshop. Also addressed were the most essential means and methods students must apply to detect any violation of the rules within the ranks of the student movement in general, and the Islamic Bloc in particular. This was done through several internal circulars distributed by the IB to its members, particularly the male members (Islamic Bloc in Birzeit Nd.d). Israeli security forces were not the only party seeking to arrest IB activists; the Palestinian security services have had the same mission, from the time of the Oslo agreement, until today.

The IB considers itself the front line of Hamas' effort to take over the Palestinian political arena. It has established its own cultural committees, playing host to political and cultural events, which were oriented toward the recruitment of new members. For this reason, the Palestinian preventive security forces began tracking IB members (Zelkovitz 2015, 170).

In 1997, in the presence of the Palestinian Authority, the IB tried to appear publicly as a licensed regulatory body, in order to be able to carry out its activities legally in the West Bank and Gaza Strip areas. It founded its official headquarters on Al-Thalathini Street in Gaza City, acquiring a license from the Palestinian Authority as a youth union, not a student movement. Following the license acquisition and the formation of regulatory and administrative bodies pertaining to the committees of the new establishment, it was eventually shut down two months later. Its properties were confiscated and members of its administrative body and Shura Council were arrested, including Ayman Taha and Sami Abu Zuhri (al-Kahlut 2009, 132).

Arrests in the ranks of IB activists and cadres that were led by the Palestinian security apparatuses have taken place since the mid-nineties. However, the Palestinian division had a more prominent impact on the student movement's path in Palestine, particularly in the West Bank. Palestinian security services launched a major campaign against Hamas' leadership and members, as well as its social and vocational institutions. The

campaign encompassed the IB and the Hamas' student wing at universities and caused the IB's forced absence. This happened after the bloody events on the campus of Al-Najah University in 2007, which resulted in the death of the student Mohammed Raddad, one of the IB's student members. Furthermore, security agencies confiscated the IB's archives at Birzeit University at the end of 2007. Following these events, the IB disappeared from West Bank universities, and it rarely took part in Student Council elections between 2008 and 2012 (Obaid & Bajes 2015, 3).

In 2009, the Union of Birzeit University Workers issued a statement condemning the arrest of two students who participated in the elections: "Despite the pride we feel, because the election process was fair and democratic, the arrest of two students who participated in this democratic process is an attack against and threat to the university, which is considered to be a place that safeguards democracy and serves as a symbol for intellectual and political pluralism" (RCHRS 2010, 24). In the same year, at Al-Najah University, seven student blocs issued a statement with several demands that focused on: 1) Prohibiting acts of political detention on the grounds of students' university activism; 2) Allowing students to carry out their activities like before, and in accordance with university laws and regulations; and 3) Allowing the different political blocs to present their premises once again (RCHRS 2010, 27).

The IB was –more than any other movement– subject to harassment and manhunts. Security pressures on the student movement increased to affect the Islamic League and the student wing of the Islamic Jihad, in addition to the Qutub, the student wing of the PFLP.

Student movements differed in the way they reacted to the blows against them; while the Islamic Association froze all activities and disappeared from the university scene, both the Islamic Bloc and the Student Pole were able to adapt to these security sweeps. Most student leaders, frequently arrested by the Palestinian Authority and Israel, resumed their work on university campuses. And so did the IB leaders, whose elite youth were able to restructure the Hamas organizational structure within and outside of the university realm. On October 29, 2012, the Israeli internal security agency "Shin Bet," in cooperation with the Israeli police, claimed that they managed to arrest about thirty Hamas activists in the central West Bank area, who had planned to restructure

the movement and resume its activities. Among those accused of being at the helm of the new Hamas Movement, were Murad Abu Baha and Musab Soroor, who had graduated from Birzeit University only a few months earlier (Maan News 2012).

The IB at Birzeit University was the first among the Islamic Blocs at West Bank universities to organize protests political arrests in 2012. It organized an "on campus" sit-in that lasted several days, demanding the release of detainees in Palestinian Authority prisons. This captured the attention of the media, human rights organizations, and civil society activists. These sit-ins quickly spread to the rest of the West Bank universities. According to a report issued by the Arab Association for Human Rights, in Britain, the number of political detainees held by the Palestinian Authority's security services between 2007 and 2012 had reached 13,271 prisoners (AOHR 2012, 11). In another report by the same organization, released on January 19, 2015, it indicated that more than 353 university students had been arrested in 2014 (AOHR 2015, 3). Moreover, according to a 2013 report issued by the Hamas information office, the movement claimed that 782 of their members were detained, a quarter of them being students (Obaid 2014). Even after the election, security crackdowns escalated. On May 7, 2015, Human Rights Watch accused the Palestinian Authority of launching a political arrest campaign aimed at students from Birzeit University for "their relationships with Hamas or for their views," noting that they were subjected to ill-treatment (Human Rights Watch 2015).



Figure 6.1. IB Leaders in a Sit-in at Birzeit University in 2014

Source: Safa, Palestinian Press Agency.

These sit-ins were held by a very small number of IB activists, between 6-10 students for each sit-in. Other student movements rarely participated in, or supported, these sit-ins. Shabiba does not consider these arrests to be political arrests. Instead, the Shabiba in Birzeit, represented by the head of the Student Council, distributed a statement on one of its Facebook pages in 2014, claiming that these students were arrested for "money laundering". The Qutub in Birzeit University has deprecated the political arrests in both the West Bank and Gaza, without participating in the sit-ins that were held in Birzeit, or other places in West Bank Universities. The following table shows the most prominent stages of sit-ins against political arrests at West Bank universities (Lafi in a personal interview with the author, September 2015):

Table 6.1. Places and Numbers of Sit-Ins Against Political Arrests at West Bank Universities

The year	The university	The city	The number of sit-ins	The number of days of sit-ins
2012	Birzeit	Ramallah	2	33
	Hebron	Hebron	2	34
	Khaduri	Tulkarm	1	3
2013	Polyticnic	Hebron	2	20
	al-Quds	Jerusalem	1	3
	Birzeit	Ramallah	1	14
2014	Birzeit	Ramallah	5	66
	al-Quds	Jerusalme	2	38
The sum			16	211

The IB and al-Qutub organized a sit-in at the University of Jerusalem at the beginning of December 2014. On November 24, 2014, the Student Pole at the University of Jerusalem mentioned on its Facebook page that security agencies had extended the detention of one of its members, Ayman Mahareik, for 15 days, that he was to appear in court after the end of the extension period, and that he was charged with incitement (Obaid 2014). The Islamic Jihad also denounced, on several occasions, the security campaign against it and its members. Most recently, on May 1, 2015, Khader Habib,

leader of the Palestinian Islamic Jihad Movement, issued a statement in which he clarified that many of the movement's members, including prisoners, freed prisoners, activists, and university students, were arrested on political grounds in the ongoing crackdown (Safa 2015). Political grounds, as defined by Hamas and Islamic Jihad, are the activities their members practice, such as providing financial support for charity, media, education, health care, and military actions against Israel.

This chapter has examined the external conditions that influence the Islamic Bloc's effectiveness as a student movement, with particular attention to four dimensions: inter-movement relations, the broader political mood among students, sources of financial support, and the impact of political repression. While earlier chapters focused on the Bloc's historical evolution, ideological framing, and identity formation, this chapter analyzed how external political opportunity structures either constrain or facilitate the movement's capacity for action. It revealed that the Bloc's resilience is not only rooted in its internal dynamics, but also shaped by shifting alliances, campus political climates, funding networks, and cycles of arrest and suppression. To synthesize these insights, the table below summarizes the main external factors and their influence on the Islamic Bloc's mobilization outcomes. This visual overview sets the stage for the final chapter, which reflects on the broader implications of these findings for student activism, resistance, and the future of the Palestinian student movement:

Table 6.2. Evolution of the Islamic Student Bloc in Palestine: Political Contexts, Grievances, and Electoral Outcomes (1980-2021)

Period	Political Opportunity Structure	International Context	Framing	Grievance	IB alliances and conflicts	Outcomes
1980–1987	- Islamic awakening. - Israel has not targeted the movement yet	- The success of the Iranian Revolution - The siege of Beirut and the PLO evacuation from Lebanon	Return to Islam and emphasis on collective identity distinctions العودة للإسلام حتى يعود الإسلام إلينا Your voice is trustworthy صوتك أمانة	Injustice faced by Muslims globally, then specifically by Palestinians	No alliances, and many conflicts	Formation of the Islamic Student Bloc, competing with PLO-affiliated student blocs
1987–1993	First Palestinian Intifada and a turn toward popular mass resistance Universities were closed by an Israeli military order	Gulf War II	"The Intifada continues until the land is free." الانتفاضة مستمرة حتى تعود الأرض حرة	Al-Aqsa Mosque massacre	No alliances, no conflicts	Intense competition between the Islamic bloc and the Shabiba; occasional alliances with the Palestinian Left
1993–2000	Oslo Accords: Not only did the Israelis view the Islamic bloc as a threat to the political process, but the PA also adopted that stance	Peace Agreements between Jordan and Israel Liberation of South Africa	"Holy revenge operations" عمليات الثأر المقدس Right, Power, Freedom حق، قوة، حرية	Ibrahimi Mosque massacre Injustice against opponents of the accords, especially the resistance groups	Few alliances, many conflicts	Significant rise and victories in most student council elections

Table 6.2. (cont.)

2000–2007	Second Intifada and turn toward armed struggle Israeli withdrawal from Gaza and targeting of the PA's security infrastructure by Israel	Liberation of South Lebanon and Israeli withdrawal 9/11 attacks, invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan	"Serving the student is a form of worship that we use to draw near to Allah." خدمة الطالب عبادة نتقرب بها إلى الله	Sharon's invasion of Al-Aqsa Mosque Arafat prohibits student elections in universities	Few alliances, few conflicts	Sweeping majority in student council elections
2008–2012	Hamas' takeover of Gaza and the PA dissolves Hamas structures in the West Bank. Gaza wars and "Great March of Return" Repression in the West Bank & Gaza Election cancellations	Arab Spring	"Yes, to a Safe Campus Life" نعم لحياة جامعية آمنة	Al-Aqsa raids and violations of Palestinian religious sanctities	No alliances, and many conflicts	Suspension of election participation and near cessation of union activities

The Islamic Bloc's (IB) mobilization across four decades in Palestinian universities emerged as a product of intertwined structural opportunities and culturally rooted agency, shaped by pivotal historical moments, institutional contexts, and shifting political alliances. Beginning in the 1980s, the IB capitalized on the transnational Islamic revival spurred by the Iranian Revolution and the vacuum left by the PLO's weakened presence after Israel's siege of Beirut in 1982. These structural conditions allowed the IB to frame itself as a defender of collective Islamic identity, emphasizing a "return to Islam" and justice for Palestinian grievances. Universities became critical spaces for mobilization, particularly as Israel's avoidance of direct confrontation with Islamic groups enabled the bloc to institutionalize its presence. By the late 1980s, the First Intifada's mass resistance provided a platform for the IB to merge religious narratives with grassroots activism, framing resistance as a sacred duty with slogans like "The Intifada continues until the land is free."

The Oslo Accords (1993–2000) marked a turning point, as the IB faced exclusion from formal political processes. Perceiving the Accords as a betrayal of Palestinian rights,

the bloc framed opposition through religious rhetoric, invoking “holy revenge” and critiquing compromises on justice. This period solidified the IB’s role as a counterweight to secular authorities, leading to significant electoral victories in student councils. Structural marginalization by both Israel and the Palestinian Authority (PA) pushed the bloc to deepen its roots in universities, positioning itself as a guardian of resistance ideals. The Second Intifada (2000–2007) further transformed the landscape: Israel’s destruction of PA infrastructure weakened secular rivals, while the IB reframed student activism as a form of worship, declaring that “serving the student draws us near to Allah.” Grievances like the Al-Aqsa Mosque massacre and Israel’s Gaza withdrawal amplified religious solidarity, enabling the IB to dominate student politics even as repression intensified.

Post-2007, Hamas’s takeover of Gaza and the PA’s crackdown on Islamist structures in the West Bank polarized student mobilization. The IB’s call for a “safe campus life” resonated amid Gaza’s wars and the Arab Spring’s setbacks, though PA-enforced election suspensions limited institutional gains. By 2014, the bloc adapted to structural repression by emphasizing “science, resistance, and creativity,” shifting toward intellectual and cultural resilience amid heavy bombardment and settler violence. Throughout its trajectory, the IB’s cultural agency—rooted in religious framing and moral legitimacy—proved central to its endurance. Phrases like “return to Islam” and transnational appeals to Muslim solidarity allowed it to counter secular narratives and adapt to repression. Alliances and conflicts further shaped its path: rivalry with secular factions spurred tactical innovation, while the PA-Hamas rift forced clandestine operations in the West Bank alongside dominance in Gaza.

Ultimately, the IB’s history reflects a dialectic between structural upheavals, wars, accords, and political fractures, and its agentive use of Islamic identity to reinterpret resistance. Its ability to anchor struggle in enduring cultural narratives, even as institutions and alliances shifted, underscores how student movements can navigate repression and maintain relevance. The bloc’s evolution from a religious student group to a political-cultural force illustrates the synergy of historical context and adaptive agency, offering a lens into the broader dynamics of Palestinian resistance.

This chapter demonstrates that the Islamic Bloc's (IB) mobilization cannot be understood solely through Resource Mobilization Theory or Political Opportunity Structures, as these frameworks often foreground structural resources and institutional openings while underestimating the depth of cultural, moral, and symbolic capital that the IB leveraged. Material resources, alliances, and political climates were crucial, but the Bloc's endurance and adaptability also derived from its capacity to construct a morally resonant narrative that interwove religious duty, political legitimacy, and nationalistic resistance. From its formative years in the 1980s to its dominance in the early 2000s, the IB repeatedly transformed university spaces into arenas of contested meaning by invoking martyrdom, sacred duty, and historical injustice, while maintaining visible acts of solidarity and organizational discipline. These practices reinforced internal cohesion, cultivated loyalty, and framed the student body as an ethically engaged collective, demonstrating that cultural and symbolic resources are central to sustaining mobilization in contexts of protracted occupation and political repression.

The historical trajectory of the IB illustrates the interplay of structural constraints and agentive adaptation. During the early clashes with Shabiba and leftist student movements, opposition was framed not as mere competition but as a moral struggle, signaling the movement's commitment to Islamic solidarity and resistance. These confrontations, whether violent or performative, were pivotal in forging a shared identity and historical mission, and they set the tone for decades of activism. The Bloc's ability to turn repression into legitimacy, through commemorations of imprisoned or martyred students, educational workshops, and social initiatives, demonstrates a sophisticated understanding of how structural constraints can be reframed as opportunities for deepening commitment, organizational knowledge, and resilience.

IB's strategic positioning within the broader student movement further underscores the importance of relational dynamics in resource mobilization. Alliances with leftist factions during Oslo, tactical withdrawals from elections to avoid violent escalation, and campus domination during the Second Intifada illustrate a flexible strategy that balanced confrontation with accommodation. These choices were not purely tactical; they reflected a deliberate alignment of political action with ethical and religious

narratives of resistance. Electoral outcomes across Palestinian universities provide a concrete record of this adaptive approach. For instance, the Bloc's electoral performance in 1992 demonstrated limited institutional openings but high symbolic legitimacy, while the successive victories in 1997 and 2000 reflected the consolidation of both material and moral authority. Even during periods of setback, such as the 2005 elections in certain West Bank campuses, the Bloc leveraged moral capital to maintain relevance, showing that legitimacy derived as much from principled positioning as from votes or resources.

Financial and infrastructural resources, including student fees, donations, and support from Hamas-affiliated networks, played a supporting but strategic role. These resources enabled the IB to sustain festivals, health services, and educational initiatives that enhanced its symbolic and social reach. Linking tangible support with moral and religious legitimacy allowed the Bloc to cultivate loyalty among students embedded in networks of kinship, ideology, and social obligation. In this sense, material resources functioned not merely as operational tools but as instruments for reinforcing moral authority, illustrating the interplay between ethics and pragmatics in the Bloc's mobilization strategy.

Repression by Israeli authorities and Palestinian security services further shaped the trajectory of mobilization. Arrests, surveillance, and exiles constrained organizational continuity but simultaneously created conditions for symbolic amplification. Prison workshops, clandestine coordination, and advocacy for detainees reinforced solidarity, legitimized resistance, and sustained internal networks. Across four decades, the IB demonstrates that repression can function as both a threat and a catalyst, compelling innovation in organizational structure, strategic planning, and symbolic communication.

In integrating historical events with electoral data and analytical reflection, the trajectory of the IB exemplifies a dialectical interplay between structural opportunity, material and cultural resources, and moral agency. Its enduring influence derives from the strategic alignment of ideological framing, ethical authority, relational maneuvering, and tangible resources. Electoral outcomes and historical milestones show how narrative legitimacy and moral resonance amplified institutional capacities,

ensuring continuity even amidst political fragmentation and violent repression. By embedding its activism in Islamic identity, historical justice, and resistance, the IB illustrates the necessity of including cultural and symbolic considerations in theories of mobilization. Palestinian student activism, as the case of the IB reveals, cannot be reduced to institutional openings or resource accumulation alone; instead, it thrives through the careful orchestration of ethics, strategy, and communal solidarity, offering a nuanced understanding of resilience, adaptation, and enduring influence in contexts of protracted struggle.

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION

This thesis provides the first full-length, in-depth academic investigation of the Islamic Bloc (IB) as a comprehensive case study, treating it not merely as an extension of Hamas or a factional student group, but as a distinct social movement organization with its own evolving identity, strategies, and internal dynamics. Uniquely, this research was conducted by a Palestinian scholar who worked closely with IB participants across different universities, allowing access to insider narratives, firsthand experiences, and organizational memory that had previously been underrepresented or altogether absent in scholarly literature. By combining narrative interviews, archival material, and participant observation across multiple campuses, the study generates an original and nuanced account of the IB's role in Palestinian student life, both as a representative body and as a cultural-ideological force.

Beyond its empirical contributions, the thesis makes a significant methodological and theoretical intervention in the study of student activism and Islamic movements. By adopting positioning theory, which focuses on how individuals position themselves and are positioned by others within discourse, the study foregrounds the voices of IB members in ways that go beyond the binary of victimhood and militancy often imposed by external analysis. It thus offers a fresh reading of the IB's trajectory as one marked not only by resistance and repression, but also by identity negotiation, moral agency, and discursive creativity. This multi-layered approach places the thesis at the intersection of social movement theory, political sociology, and critical identity studies, presenting a rare synthesis of insider perspectives and theoretical innovation.

The methodological approach taken in this thesis is both innovative and ethically attuned to the sensitivity of researching a politically marginalized and frequently securitized social movement. In contrast to earlier studies that relied either on historical-descriptive narratives or narrow institutional sampling, this thesis employs

a multi-sited ethnographic approach across several Palestinian universities, combining qualitative interviews, document analysis, and longitudinal engagement with the Islamic Bloc and its members. The reliance on unstructured, narrative interviews enabled participants to articulate their experiences on their terms, facilitating a dialogic rather than extractive research process. This allowed for the recovery of suppressed voices and the reconstruction of a counter-narrative to both official state discourses and externally produced academic representations, particularly those influenced by Israeli security paradigms.

Crucially, the research is underpinned by positioning theory, which offers a powerful lens for understanding how IB members articulate their political and moral agency within restrictive discursive environments. Unlike traditional identity theories that fix subjects within static categories, positioning theory allows for a more fluid and context-sensitive analysis of how individuals navigate multiple, sometimes contradictory, subject positions, as students, activists, Muslims, Palestinians, and organizational actors. This framework is especially valuable in the context of the Islamic Bloc, whose members often oscillate between public silence and private resistance, strategic ambiguity and ideological clarity, depending on political pressures and university policies.

The study also engages deeply with social movement theory, drawing from the political process model, framing theory, and resource mobilization frameworks to trace the conditions under which the IB mobilizes, adapts, or retreats. However, unlike many classical social movement studies that emphasize either structural conditions or organizational resources, this thesis insists on integrating cultural and affective dimensions, such as religious motivation, collective memory, and moral discourse, into the analysis. By doing so, it bridges the gap between structuralist explanations and the experiential realities of movement actors.

Moreover, this study challenges the dominant narrative that the Islamic Bloc functions merely as a student arm of Hamas. By tracing the IB's rhetorical and strategic divergences from Hamas, especially after 2007, and by emphasizing the localized nature of its framing processes, the thesis repositions the IB as an actor with its own internal debates, pragmatic decisions, and evolving discourse. This repositioning has

profound implications for how we understand factional dynamics, student political culture, and the broader ecology of Palestinian resistance.

Finally, the thesis advances the literature on student movements by complicating the simplistic division between developmental and political engagement. It shows how the IB integrates syndicalist concerns (tuition, services, elections) with ideological and moral goals (Islamization, resistance, solidarity), thereby functioning simultaneously as a representative body and a moral community. This dual character, while often seen as contradictory, is shown here to be the very source of the IB's adaptive resilience.

The history of the Islamic Bloc (IB) in Palestinian universities is deeply intertwined with the broader trajectory of Palestinian political life, marked by occupation, resistance, negotiation, and internal division. This thesis situates the IB not simply as a derivative of its parent organization, Hamas, but as a student-centered movement shaped by shifting political opportunity structures, transnational currents, and campus-based mobilization logics. Its trajectory reflects both continuity and change, resilience and rupture, as it adapts to the evolving dynamics of Palestinian politics.

The genesis of the IB in the early 1980s coincided with two major developments: the broader Islamic revival inspired by the 1979 Iranian Revolution, and the weakening of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) after Israel's siege of Beirut in 1982. In this historical vacuum, the IB emerged as a grassroots Islamic response to the secular-nationalist hegemony on Palestinian campuses. Drawing from the ideological and organizational infrastructure of the Muslim Brotherhood, the IB positioned itself as a moral and religious counterforce, articulating an identity rooted in Islamic values, educational commitment, and national liberation. Universities provided the ideal space for this emergence, not only because they were relatively autonomous, but also because Israel, in its early years of occupation, viewed Islamic groups as a counterbalance to the more radical leftist factions. This strategic tolerance allowed the IB to consolidate its organizational presence, run charitable and educational activities, and build a strong network of supporters on campus.

The First Intifada (1987–1993) marked the IB's first major moment of mass political engagement. The uprising galvanized youth across the West Bank and Gaza,

transforming universities into centers of resistance and ideological contestation. The IB framed its participation in the Intifada through a religious lens, emphasizing martyrdom, sacrifice, and moral obligation. Slogans such as “The Intifada continues until the land is free” and “Our pens and stones are weapons in the path of God” captured the dual nature of its mobilization: spiritual and political, educational and militant. The student elections during this period became a crucial arena for expressing broader political alignments, and the IB often found itself in competition with leftist and nationalist blocs. Despite these tensions, the IB was successful in institutionalizing its presence, developing internal leadership structures, and extending its influence beyond student council politics into campus culture, religious life, and public discourse.

The signing of the Oslo Accords (1993–2000) fundamentally altered the landscape of Palestinian politics, and the IB responded by reconfiguring its narrative. Perceiving the peace process as a betrayal of Palestinian rights and a surrender of core national principles, the IB rejected the Accords and framed its opposition through intensified religious rhetoric. This period witnessed the rise of discourses around "holy revenge," "steadfastness" (sumud), and unwavering resistance to normalization. The IB leveraged the disenchantment felt by many students toward the Palestinian Authority (PA), positioning itself as the authentic voice of the dispossessed. At the same time, the IB began winning significant victories in student council elections, particularly in universities like Birzeit, the Islamic University of Gaza, and Al-Najah. These successes were not merely electoral, they symbolized the IB’s growing ability to articulate an alternative moral and political vision that resonated deeply with its student constituency.

The Second Intifada (2000–2007) ushered in a new era of militarization, fragmentation, and intensified repression. The destruction of PA infrastructure by Israel and the collapse of negotiations created a vacuum that the IB and other Islamist groups sought to fill. During this period, the IB shifted its framing once again, presenting student activism as a religious duty. Slogans such as “Serving the student draws us near to Allah” and campaigns centered on Al-Aqsa Mosque and martyrdom culture infused its actions with theological legitimacy. Grievances related to occupation, settlement expansion, and the deaths of Palestinian civilians were framed

not only in nationalist terms, but also as religious obligations for resistance. The IB thus deepened its appeal among students disillusioned with secular politics, while also professionalizing its organizational capacity under conditions of occupation and fragmentation.

The 2007 internal Palestinian division, marked by Hamas's control of Gaza and Fatah's domination of the West Bank, introduced a new set of structural challenges. In the West Bank, the PA launched a systematic crackdown on Hamas-affiliated organizations, including the IB. This included mass arrests of student activists, bans on student elections in some institutions, and the dismantling of campus-based religious and charitable organizations. This era represents the most severe period of repression for the IB. However, the thesis shows that even under these circumstances, the IB adapted by operating underground, decentralizing its leadership, and shifting its discourse from confrontational resistance to more localized appeals, such as "safe campus life," "science and resistance," and "creativity under fire." The movement's ability to reframe its mission amid repression and still win student council elections in some universities demonstrates its strategic flexibility and ideological resilience.

The most recent turning point, the 2023 Tufan al-Aqsa war, has had a profound impact on IB's structure and future prospects. The Israeli campaign targeting Hamas-affiliated structures has intensified, with a particular focus on eliminating IB leadership and disrupting its campus networks. This "mowing the grass" strategy has succeeded in weakening the IB's ability to mobilize in the short term. Leadership decapitation, surveillance, arrests, and the closing of affiliated institutions have undoubtedly eroded their organizational infrastructure. Yet this thesis shows that the IB has not lost its social base. On the contrary, grievance levels have intensified, and religious identification has deepened, both of which are historically correlated with the resurgence of Islamic movements. The thesis argues that the very factors which have weakened IB's visible presence may be catalyzing new forms of solidarity and underground mobilization. The movement is currently in a moment of strategic pause rather than collapse.

Throughout these phases, the IB has demonstrated a remarkable ability to respond to structural shifts while maintaining a coherent ideological framework. It has reframed

its discourse with changing political opportunities, crafted messages that resonate with student grievances and aspirations, and adjusted its organizational strategies to survive waves of repression. Whether through electoral contests, cultural production, or grassroots services, the IB has remained a key player in shaping Palestinian student politics. Its historical trajectory, marked by both ruptures and continuities, offers a compelling case study in how Islamic student movements operate within, against, and beyond conventional political frameworks.

This thesis identifies and evaluates the Islamic Bloc's performance across four principal domains: religious (da'wa), syndicalist (student union engagement), political (ideological representation and electoral activism), and social (broader societal change). Each domain reflects a distinct dimension of the IB's multifaceted mission and reveals how the movement navigates tension between pragmatism and principle, ideology and adaptability, short-term constraints and long-term aspirations.

From a religious perspective, the IB has been most successful in promoting Islamic norms and cultivating a distinctly religious student identity on Palestinian campuses. Since its inception, the IB has engaged in da'wa activities ranging from Qur'anic study circles and collective prayers to the celebration of religious holidays and public moral discourse. Historical data, combined with narrative testimonies collected in this study, affirm a clear trend of "Islamization" in university life, particularly in the 1980s and 1990s, when the IB succeeded in reshaping the cultural environment of campuses like Birzeit and Al-Najah. The dramatic rise in the number of veiled female students, the normalization of religious dress and rituals, and the widespread acceptance of Islamic moral norms among student bodies testify to this achievement. The IB was thus not merely an electoral actor, but a cultural-religious force engaged in moral persuasion and collective identity formation. These successes continue to resonate today, even as formal structures are dismantled under repressive regimes, because they have left a deep social and cultural imprint.

In the syndicalist domain, the IB also achieved significant gains, particularly in its early decades. One of the Islamic Bloc's most enduring strategies has been its commitment to student services, academic assistance, and welfare-oriented initiatives. These include exam preparation booklets, tutoring services, scholarship facilitation,

and advocacy for student rights in university administration. These seemingly mundane tasks are politically meaningful: they embed the IB in everyday student life, reinforce its legitimacy, and translate ideological commitments into tangible benefits. In many universities, students have favored the IB precisely because of its efficiency and discipline in delivering these services. The IB's slogan, "We serve to resist," encapsulates this synthesis of syndicalist pragmatism and political mission. Even during periods of intense repression, the IB has often maintained its syndicated role, thereby sustaining its relevance and building trust among the student population.

The political domain, however, presents a more complex picture. On one hand, the IB has made notable political gains, particularly through student council elections in the 1990s and early 2000s. These victories reflect the resonance of IB's political ideology and its ability to mobilize support for an Islamist vision of national liberation. The IB's political rhetoric has consistently emphasized the indivisibility of Palestinian land, opposition to normalization with Israel, and defense of Islamic sacred sites, positions that have found support in a society experiencing occupation, fragmentation, and disillusionment with peace processes. However, the thesis finds that despite electoral success, IB has been unable to fully implement its political agenda. Its exclusion from formal student unions like the General Palestinian Student Union, the structural limitations imposed by university administrations, and its affiliation with Hamas, which is itself marginalized by the Palestinian Authority, have all impeded the IB's capacity to influence student politics beyond symbolic representation. The IB's political vision remains aspirational and ideologically potent, but structurally constrained.

The social dimension, especially the IB's engagement with broader social issues such as women's rights, economic justice, and student pluralism, remains its most underdeveloped and contested area. Although the IB has encouraged female participation within its ranks and celebrated the role of women in Islamic history and resistance, its institutional structures and public discourse have yet to fully reflect a gender-inclusive approach. Female members have articulated aspirations for greater leadership roles and broader engagement in student politics, yet their experiences reveal a disconnect between the IB's stated values and its internal practices. Likewise, while the IB has addressed some pressing economic concerns through syndicalist

initiatives, it has rarely adopted an explicit discourse on class struggle, labor rights, or social justice beyond religious charity. Its reluctance to confront deeply entrenched social problems head-on, whether due to ideological conservatism or fear of alienating conservative constituencies, has limited its ability to lead on progressive social issues.

Nevertheless, these uneven outcomes should not be interpreted simply as failures. Rather, they reveal the complex balancing act that defines the IB's strategic repertoire. The movement must constantly negotiate its identity as a religious organization within a secular university space, as a political actor under occupation and repression, and as a youth-led movement facing generational change and evolving student expectations. This thesis finds that the IB's ability to adapt, even when inconsistent or partial, is a marker of its resilience. For example, following the 2007 internal division and the PA's repressive policies, the IB reframed its discourse to emphasize cultural, educational, and scientific creativity, an effort to survive politically without overt confrontation. Similarly, after the Tufan al-Aqsa war, the IB has retained grassroots support even as its leadership was decimated, suggesting that its emotional and religious framing continues to sustain its base even in the absence of strong organizational infrastructure.

Another critical insight of this study is the shifting balance between social movement factors (such as collective identity, resource mobilization, and cultural framing) and grievance-based mobilization. While the IB once relied heavily on formal organization and structured leadership, recent developments, especially targeted Israeli attacks and PA crackdowns, have hollowed out many of these structures. However, this has given rise to a more grievance-driven model, where the experience of repression, humiliation, and martyrdom fosters renewed commitment. As this thesis argues, the weakening of organizational capability has paradoxically intensified the emotional and symbolic pull of the IB, making it more difficult to eradicate. This finding reinforces broader theories of social movement persistence under repression: movements do not disappear when their leaders are imprisoned or killed, they often mutate, go underground, and re-emerge in new forms when political opportunities shift.

Thus, the major findings of this thesis reveal a student movement that is far more than a factional actor or religious pressure group. The Islamic Bloc is a generationally rooted, ideologically driven, and tactically adaptive organization whose successes and failures reflect broader Palestinian struggles over identity, representation, and resistance. Its capacity to endure, despite political repression, organizational fragmentation, and ideological contestation, offers a compelling case for rethinking how we evaluate the vitality and significance of Islamic movements within contested societies.

The findings of this study point not only to the historical and present realities of the Islamic Bloc (IB) but also offer grounded insights into its future trajectory. Despite its organizational weakening during recent years, particularly in the aftermath of Tufan al-Aqsa and the intensification of Israeli and PA-led suppression, the IB retains the foundational components of a durable social movement. Its deep cultural roots, ideological coherence, emotional resonance, and resilient grassroots support suggest that its current phase is not one of decline, but of transformation.

The erosion of leadership structures due to the targeted arrests and surveillance campaigns that accompanied and followed Tufan al-Aqsa has temporarily impeded the IB's mobilizing capacity. Yet, this leadership vacuum is not permanent. As documented throughout this thesis, the IB has historically demonstrated an ability to regenerate leadership under repression, through informal mentorship, underground networks, and the cultural reproduction of political consciousness within student and community spaces. In fact, the intensification of grievance, religious conviction, and national humiliation in recent years is likely to fuel the emergence of a new generation of IB leaders, shaped by the post-2023 realities of armed conflict, student repression, and social polarization.

These emerging leaders will likely adopt a more flexible, hybridized model of resistance that blends traditional Islamic principles with the practical needs of contemporary student life and political struggle. Already, there are signs that this new cohort is distancing itself from rigid ideological formulations and embracing more localized, campus-sensitive discourses. This is not a break with the IB's past, but a return to one of its core strengths: the ability to recalibrate its language, tactics, and

alliances based on the specific sociopolitical landscape. In a context where centralized authority is either inaccessible or undesirable, decentralized, values-driven leadership may prove more effective and more difficult for adversaries to suppress.

In parallel, structural conditions are also likely to change. Political opportunity structures in Palestine, particularly within the realm of student politics, have historically been cyclical, shaped by broader political developments, international pressures, and grassroots shifts. While current conditions are deeply restrictive, they are not static. Any political thaw, institutional opening, or legitimacy crisis within the Palestinian Authority could rapidly create new spaces for student activism. Given the IB's entrenched cultural presence and moral legitimacy, it is well-positioned to seize such openings when they arise.

Importantly, this study also demonstrates that the IB's longevity does not depend solely on its organizational coherence or electoral performance, but on its ability to articulate grievances and moral visions in ways that resonate deeply with Palestinian students. This discursive strength, rooted in both religion and resistance, remains intact. Indeed, as collective grievance and religious consciousness continue to intensify, they are likely to serve not only as a basis for emotional solidarity but also as a springboard for renewed mobilization.

In sum, the Islamic Bloc's future lies not in returning to its former structure but in adapting to a new political and generational reality, one in which decentralized activism, emotionally charged discourse, and embedded cultural legitimacy will drive the resurgence of Islamic student politics in Palestine.

This thesis contributes substantively to the literature on Palestinian resistance, student movements, and Islamic mobilization by centering the Islamic Bloc (IB) as a dynamic social movement shaped by evolving political, cultural, and affective forces. Building on, yet distinct from, prior scholarship that has approached the IB through descriptive, institutional, or factional lenses, this research provides a longitudinal, multi-sited, and narrative-based account grounded in the lived experiences of IB members. It expands existing social movement theory by integrating positioning theory, enabling an

analysis of how IB participants construct and navigate their identities to political repression, organizational constraints, and social expectations.

Crucially, this study deepens understandings of subject formation in Palestinian activism by linking the IB's mobilization to broader processes of moral and ideological socialization. Here, it aligns with the insights of Iris Jean-Klein (2000), who demonstrated how Palestinian mothers, through "mothercraft," actively participated in national subject formation during the First Intifada. Similarly, this thesis shows how the IB is a product not only of political opportunity structures or formal alliances, but of extended social movement factories, homes, mosques, schools, and universities, where religious, moral, and political subjectivity is cultivated over time. The IB inherits and rearticulates the pedagogies of resistance initiated within the family and community, embodying a continuum between private moral authority and public political action.

This layered approach to understanding the IB's formation and transformation challenges the false dichotomy between the domestic and the political, and between personal faith and organized activism. It reveals the IB not merely as a reflection of Hamas's political program, but as a generator of political subjectivity rooted in culturally resonant practices and emotionally charged narratives. In doing so, the thesis builds bridges between feminist ethnography, social movement theory, and Islamic political sociology.

Ultimately, the study reaffirms the vitality and adaptability of Islamic student movements under occupation. Even amid organizational repression and leadership attrition, the IB's discursive, emotional, and spiritual foundations remain resilient. As a movement shaped as much by martyrdom as by mentorship, by prayer as by protest, and by mothercraft as by statecraft, the Islamic Bloc offers a profound case study of how identity, resistance, and belonging are continually reimagined under conditions of fragmentation and enduring struggle.

As this thesis has demonstrated, the Islamic Bloc (IB) has long existed at the intersection of student activism, religious identity, and national resistance. Yet the events unfolding after October 7, 2023, amid the devastation of Gaza, the

militarization of campuses, and the collapse of institutional life, demand that we reflect not only on political strategies or organizational continuity, but on deeper questions of subjectivity, endurance, and moral legibility under conditions that approach what Talal Asad terms a regime of annihilation.

In his recent intervention, Asad does not simply critique Israeli violence or the moral complicity of the West. He pushes further, asking what it means to live under a system that not only aims to kill or control but to negate the very meaning of life, memory, and resistance for Palestinians. He challenges readers to think about how Palestinians constitute themselves, ethically, spiritually, and politically, in a world where they are denied not only sovereignty but even the right to articulate grief and aspiration. This provocation opens a new theoretical lens through which to view the Islamic Bloc, not merely as a factional structure struggling to survive, but as a space of ethical reassembly under ongoing collapse.

This is especially crucial in the post-Tufan al-Aqsa period, when the destruction of Gaza's universities, the arrest and martyrdom of students, and the digital erasure of IB media infrastructure have nearly obliterated the organizational visibility of the movement. Yet what remains, rituals of care, collective sit-ins, messages of solidarity with Gaza students, cultural events mourning the dead and reaffirming faith, reveals a different kind of resistance. It is not the kind that aims to seize political power or negotiate recognition. Instead, it embodies what Asad calls non-sovereign subjectivity: the ethical practice of living in defiance of systems that deny one's humanity, not through declarations of universal rights, but through intimate, embodied, relational acts.

Throughout the fieldwork, this ethos emerged clearly. The IB students who organized a 26-day sit-in at An-Najah University after political arrests were not simply demanding procedural justice. They were performing the right to gather, to endure, and to re-member their community in the face of erasure. The same can be said of their symbolic visits to the families of detainees, their advocacy on behalf of imprisoned classmates, and their public mourning of fallen peers, all acts that echo Asad's call to attend not only to politics, but to the ethics of being. These practices sustain what he

describes as “life in the ruins,” an insistence on social continuity and moral personhood even when the apparatuses of the state (or the university) have collapsed.

This ethical orientation also reshapes how we understand martyrdom in the IB’s discourse. While political science often frames martyrdom as a tool of mobilization or as religiously charged propaganda, Asad’s, also Erkilet's (2015), readings urge us to view it as a sacrificial grammar, a way of giving meaning to death that cannot be assimilated by liberal categories of legality or human rights. For IB members, martyrdom is not simply about heroism or honor; it is about fidelity to a moral universe in which resistance is not a means to an end, but a condition of human dignity. It is this moral grammar that allows them to continue organizing, even under arrest, surveillance, and political suppression, because their work is not reducible to institutional survival. It is about maintaining coherence between what they believe and how they live.

This also complicates the notion of “success” and “failure” in resistance. The Islamic Bloc has undoubtedly lost much of its capacity to function as a formal student movement: its leadership is decimated, its media platforms suppressed, and its elections obstructed. Yet, as this thesis shows, its discursive and ethical resonance persists. It is precisely this persistence, this survival of moral community under siege, that aligns with Asad’s challenge to conventional political analysis. He reminds us that not all political life must culminate in sovereignty, and not all struggles must aim for control. Some forms of resistance aim to preserve ethical life, to keep intact the shared practices, values, and commitments that make collective identity possible. IB’s role today is closer to that of guardian of meaning than executor of policy.

In this light, the Islamic Bloc’s post-2023 condition is not one of irrelevance, but of metamorphosis. Its visible structures may be broken, but its members continue to participate in the subterranean work of rearticulating resistance: in anonymous acts of protest, in the informal circulation of poetry and prayer, in the defiant continuation of student rituals, and their quiet presence at checkpoints, funerals, and solidarity vigils. These forms of presence do not demand validation by liberal observers or formal political actors. They are addressed inward, toward the ummah, the martyrs, the families, and above all, to God.

This reframing is crucial as we reflect on what it means to speak of student movements in Palestine today. The university, once a site of contestation and intellectual formation, is now also a site of siege. Yet even here, the Islamic Bloc refuses to disappear. It has reorganized not merely in political terms, but in affective, spiritual, and communal ways, participating in what Asad might call a resistance of meaning. This resistance is not spectacular, but steady. It is enacted in daily gestures, remembered words, and sacrificial silence. It is what enables Palestinian students to continue imagining

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

LIST OF INTERVIEWEES

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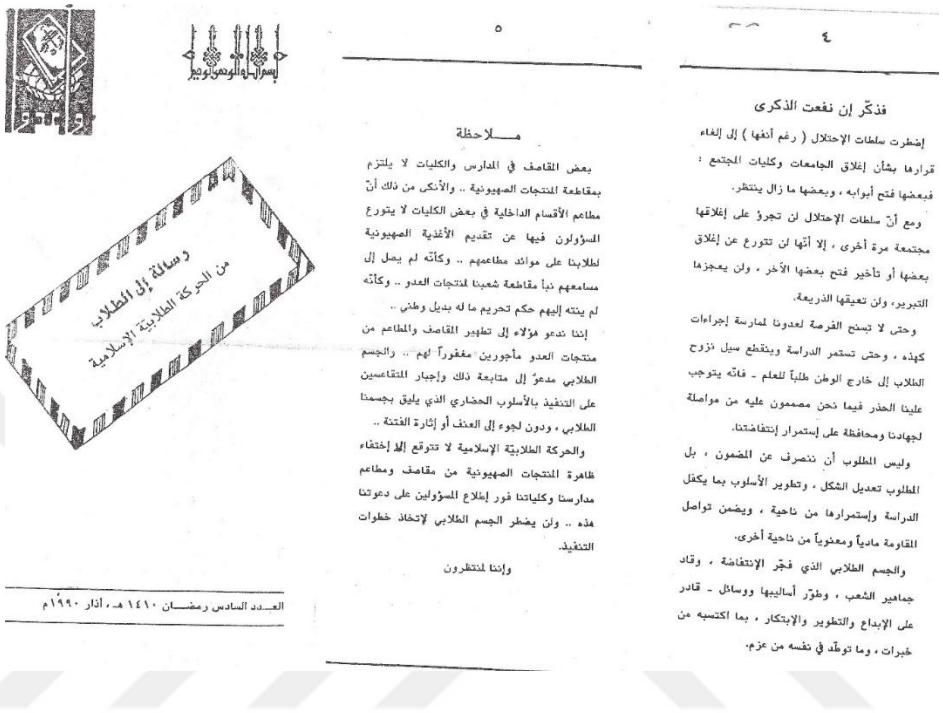
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APPENDIX B

A MESSAGE FROM THE ISLAMIC STUDENT MOVEMENT TO THE UNIVERSITY STUDENTS



رسالة إلى الطلاب
من الحركة الطلابية الإسلامية

العدد السادس رمضان ١٤١٠ هـ، آذار ١٩٩٠م

٥

ملاحظة

بعض المقاصف في المدارس والكليات لا يلتزم بمقاطعة المنتجات الصهيونية .. والأنكى من ذلك أنّ مطاعم الأقسام الداخلية في بعض الكليات لا يتورع المسؤولون فيها عن تقديم الأغذية الصهيونية لطلابنا على موائد مطاعمهم .. وكأنّه لم يصل إلى مسامعهم نبأ مقاطعة شعبنا لمنتجات العدو .. وكأنّه لم ينته إليهم حكم تحريم ما له بديل وطني ..

إننا ندعو هؤلاء إلى تطهير المقاصف والمطاعم من منتجات العدو مأجورين مغفوراً لهم .. والجسم الطلابي مدعوٌ إلى متابعة ذلك وإجبار المتقاعسين على التنفيذ بالأسلوب الحضاري الذي يليق بجسمنا الطلابي ، ودون لجوء إلى العنف أو إثارة الفتنة ..

والحركة الطلابية الإسلامية لا تتوقع إلا إختفاء ظاهرة المنتجات الصهيونية من مقاصف ومطاعم مدارسنا وكلياتنا فور إطلاع المسؤولين على دعوتنا هذه .. ولن يضطر الجسم الطلابي لإتخاذ خطوات التنفيذ.

وإننا لمنتظرون

٤

فذكّر إن نفعت الذكرى

إضطرت سلطات الإحتلال (رغم أنفها) إلى إلغاء قرارها بشأن إغلاق الجامعات وكليات المجتمع : فبعضها فتح أبوابه ، وبعضها ما زال ينتظر.

ومع أنّ سلطات الإحتلال لن تجرؤ على إغلاقها مجتمعة مرة أخرى ، إلا أنها لن تتورع عن إغلاق بعضها أو تأخير فتح بعضها الآخر ، ولن يعجزها التبرير، ولن تعيقها الذريعة.

وحتى لا تسنح الفرصة لعدونا لممارسة إجراءات كهذه ، وحتى تستمر الدراسة ويتقطع سيل نزوح الطلاب إلى خارج الوطن طلباً للعلم - فانّه يتوجب علينا الحذر فيما نحن مصممون عليه من مواصلة لجهادنا ومحافظة على إستمرار إنتفاضتنا.

وليس المطلوب أن ننصرف عن المضمون ، بل المطلوب تعديل الشكل ، وتطوير الأسلوب بما يكفل الدراسة وإستمرارها من ناحية ، ويضمن تواصل المقاومة مادياً ومعنوياً من ناحية أخرى.

والجسم الطلابي الذي فجّر الإنتفاضة ، وقاد جماهير الشعب ، وطوّر أساليبها ووسائل - قادر على الإبداع والتطوير والإبتكار ، بما اكتسبه من خبرات ، وما توطّد في نفسه من عزم.

Figure B.1. Statement by the Islamic Bloc Entitled "And Remind, for Indeed the Reminder Benefits."

Despite themselves, the occupation authorities have been compelled to revoke their decision to close universities and community colleges. Some institutions have reopened their doors, while others remain waiting. Although the occupation authorities may no longer dare to close all institutions collectively, they still do not hesitate to shut down some or delay the reopening of others. They will not lack justification nor be hindered by pretexts.

To prevent our enemy from exploiting such opportunities to carry out further closures to ensure the continuity of education and stem the outflow of students seeking education abroad, we must exercise caution in pursuing our commitment to continue the resistance and sustain the Intifada. The goal is not to abandon substance but to adapt form and develop strategies that allow educational processes to continue while ensuring that material and moral resistance persist.

The student body, which ignited the Intifada, led the masses and innovated its methods and tools, is fully capable of creativity, development, and renewal, fortified by its accumulated experience and unwavering resolve.

Note:

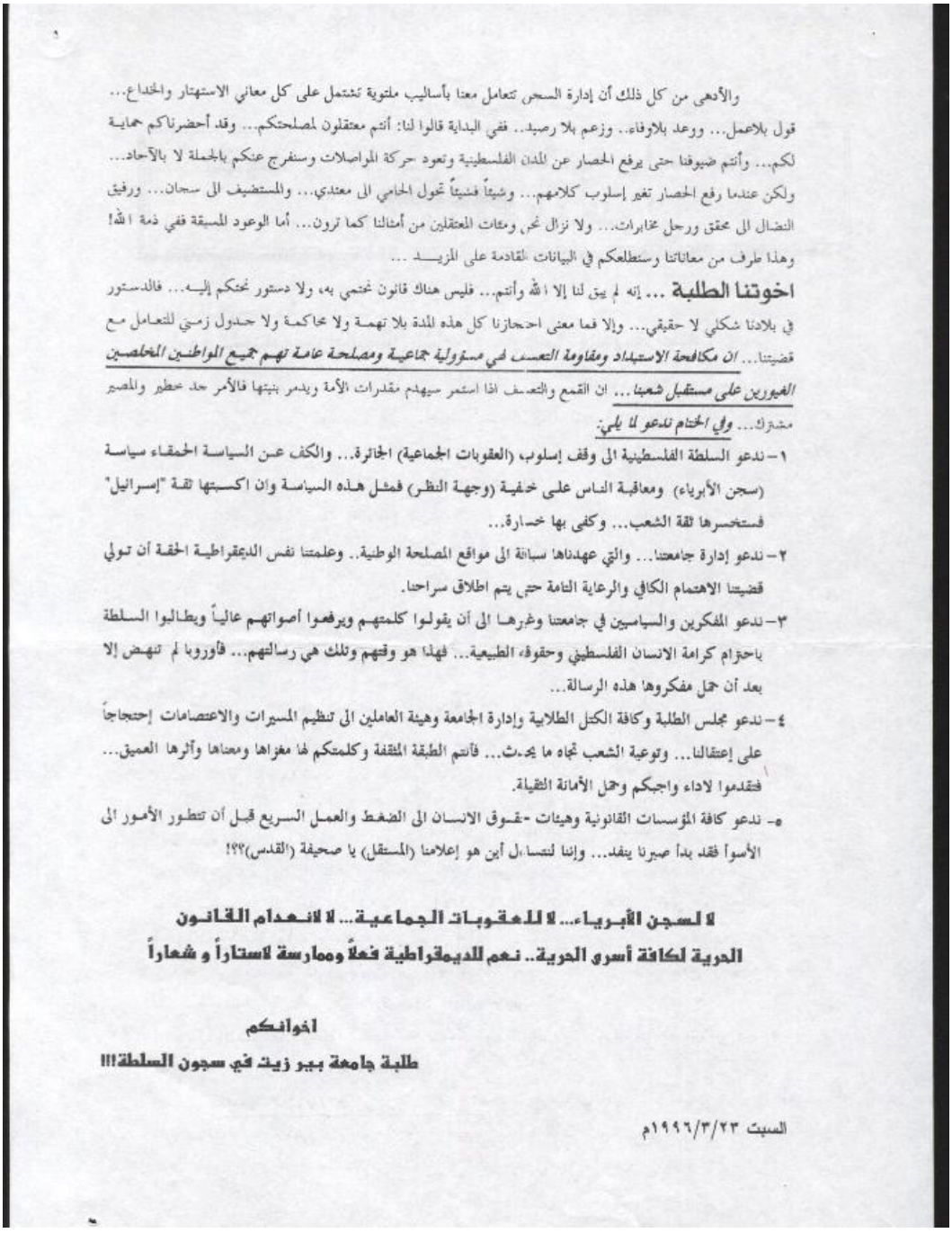
Some school and college cafeterias are not adhering to the boycott of Zionist products. More troubling still is that the dining halls in some college dormitories shamelessly serve Zionist products to our students. It is as if the news of our people's boycott has not reached them, or as if they are unaware of the religious ruling prohibiting consumption of such products when national alternatives exist.

We call upon those responsible to cleanse cafeterias and dining halls of enemy products—may they be rewarded and forgiven. The student body is called upon to monitor this issue and compel those who fall short to comply, using the dignified and civilized means that reflect the ethos of our student movement—without resorting to violence or causing discord.

The Islamic Student Movement expects nothing less than the immediate disappearance of Zionist products from all school and college cafeterias once officials are made aware of this call. It should not fall to the student body to take further action.

APPENDIX C

A STATEMENT OF THE PRISONERS OF BIRZEIT UNIVERSITY



والأدهى من كل ذلك أن إدارة السجن تتعامل معنا بأساليب ملتوية تشتمل على كل معاني الاستهتار والخداع... قول بلاعمل... ووعد بلاوفاء.. وزعم بلا رصيد.. ففي البداية قالوا لنا: أنتم معتقلون لمصلحتكم... وقد أحضرناكم حماية لكم... وأنتم ضيوفنا حتى يرفع الحصار عن المدن الفلسطينية وتعود حركة المواصلات وسنفرج عنكم بالجملة لا بالآحاد... ولكن عندما رفع الحصار تغير إسلوب كلامهم... وشيئاً فشيئاً تحول الحامي الى معتدي... والمستضيف الى سجان... ورفيق النضال الى محقق ورحل مخابرات... ولا نزال نحن ومئات المعتقلين من أمثالنا كما ترون... أما الوعود المسيقة ففي ذمة الله! وهذا طرف من معاناتنا وستطلعكم في البيانات القادمة على المزيـــد ...

اخوتنا الطلبة ... إنه لم يبق لنا إلا الله وأنتم... فليس هناك قانون نحتمي به، ولا دستور نحتكم إليـه... فالدستور في بلادنا شكلي لا حقيقي... وإلا فما معنى احتجازنا كل هذه المدة بلا تهمة ولا محاكمة ولا جدول زمني للتعامل مع قضيتنا... *ان مكافحة الاستبداد ومقاومة التعسف هي مسؤولية جماعية ومصلحة عامة تهم جميع المواطنين المخلصين الغيورين على مستقبل شعبنا*... ان القمع والتعسف اذا استمر سيهدم مقدرات الأمة ويدمر بنيتها فالأمر جد خطير والمصير مشترك... *وفي الختام ندعو لما يلي:*

١- ندعو السلطة الفلسطينية الى وقف إسلوب (العقوبات الجماعية) الجائرة... والكف عن السياسة الحمقاء سياسة (سجن الأبرياء) ومعاقبة الناس على خلفية (وجهة النظر) فمثل هذه السياسة وان اكسبتها ثقة "إسرائيل" فستخسرها ثقة الشعب... وكفى بها خسارة...

٢- ندعو إدارة جامعتنا... والتي عهدناها سباقة الى مواقع المصلحة الوطنية.. وعلمتنا نفس الديمقراطية الحقة أن تولي قضيتنا الاهتمام الكافي والرعاية التامة حتى يتم اطلاق سراحنا.

٣- ندعو المفكرين والسياسيين في جامعتنا وغيرها الى أن يقولوا كلمتهم ويرفعوا أصواتهم عالياً ويطالبوا السلطة باحترام كرامة الانسان الفلسطيني وحقوقه الطبيعية... فهذا هو وقتهم وتلك هي رسالتهم... فأوروبا لم تنهض إلا بعد أن حمل مفكروها هذه الرسالة...

٤- ندعو مجلس الطلبة وكافة الكتل الطلابية وإدارة الجامعة وهيئة العاملين الى تنظيم المسيرات والاعتصامات إحتجاجاً على إعتقالنا... وتوعية الشعب تجاه ما يحدث... فأنتم الطبقة المثقفة وكلمتكم لها مغزاها ومعناها وأثرها العميق... فتقدموا لاداء واجبكم وحمل الأمانة الثقيلة.

٥- ندعو كافة المؤسسات القانونية وهيئات حقوق الانسان الى الضغط والعمل السريع قبل أن تتطور الأمور الى الأسوأ فقد بدأ صبرنا ينفد... وإننا لنتساءل أين هو إعلامنا (المستقل) يا صحيفة (القدس)؟؟!

لا لسجن الأبرياء... لا للعقوبات الجماعية... لا لانعدام القانون
الحرية لكافة أسرى الحرية.. نعم للديمقراطية فعلاً وممارسة لاستاراً و شعاراً

اخوانكم
طلبة جامعة بير زيت في سجون السلطة!!!

السبت ١٩٩٦/٣/٢٣م



بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

اشهد يا تاريخ.... وانتبه يا شعب... أسرى وجهة النظر ؟!

اخوتنا في جامعة بير زيت.. جامعة الشهداء وصرح النضال الشامخ ومنار الفكر والديمقراطية..

نخاطبكم جميعاً طلابا وطالبات وإدارة وموظفين.. نحن إخوانكم الطلبة في سجون السلطة الوطنية!! لا نكاد نصدق ما نرى.. ولا نستوعب ما يجري لنا على أيدي أبناء شعبنا.. فبين عشية وضحاها فقدنا أغلى ما يملك الأنسان وسلبنا أسمى ما لدينا ألا وهو الحرية! فالحرية هي الحق المقدس والمطلب العادل الذي أقرته شرائع الأرض والسماء لكل مواطن شريف بريء... ومن أجل الحرية ناضل شعبنا نضاله الطويل...

لم نكن نتصور أن ننتقل بكل هذه السرعة والسهولة من ساحة الحرية الى زنزانة الاستعباد لنعامل معاملة الرقيق الذي يباع ويشترى... حيث صرنا ورقة للمساومة والمضايقة بايدي السلطة وقرباناً يقدم لدولة "إسرائيل"... و"إسرائيل" لا ترضى بالقليل..

لم نتوقع أن نرى من أبناء شعبنا الفلسطيني الأصيل أناساً في موقع المسؤولية ويتزعمون مسيرة النضال وفي نفس الوقت عندهم الاستعداد الكامل أن يتاجروا بابناء شعبهم وأن يأكلوا رغيف الخبز على عذاباتنا ويقبضوا رواتبهم لقاء معاناتنا...

وظلم ذوي القربى أشد مضاضة على النفس من وقع الحسام المهند

لم نكن نظن أن فلسطين الحبيبة تنتظر فجراً أسود من الكبت والقهر ومصادرة الحريات... فنحن يا إخوتنا نعتقل ونسجن لا على أي قضية قانونية... لا على عمل عسكري ولا نشاط تنظيمي... ولا حتى إنتماء حزبي مع أن الأصل حرية الأحزاب والقبول بالديمقراطية... كل ما في الأمر أن لنا وجهة نظر فيما يجري حولنا من أحداث... ولكل انسان له وجهة نظره الخاصة به وقناعاته الذاتية... فيا لله .. ليكم كيف العمل؟! وما سبيل الخلاص؟.. هل نقتلع أدمغتنا من رؤوسنا ونستبدلها بادمغة أسرى؟! هل ندخل مراكز غسل الأدمغة لنخرج في قوالب فكرية تحسب السلطة وتحظى برضاها.. هل نشرب دواء يساعد على إيقاف عملية التفكير لدينا فيما يحيط بنا من واقع؟... الله أكبر.. أمعي جاوز الظالمون المدى!

اخوتنا وزملاءنا.. تعودنا فيما مضى أن ينتزعنا الإحتلال من مقاعد الدراسة وأن يحول بيننا وبين مواصلة العملية التعليمية سعياً منه لتجهيل شعبنا وتعويق مسيرة تقدمنا... أما أن يحدث ذلك على أيدي سلطتنا الوطنية فأمر يحتاج الى تفسير... وان شعبنا يقف اليوم على مفترق طرق... فلنكن حذرين...

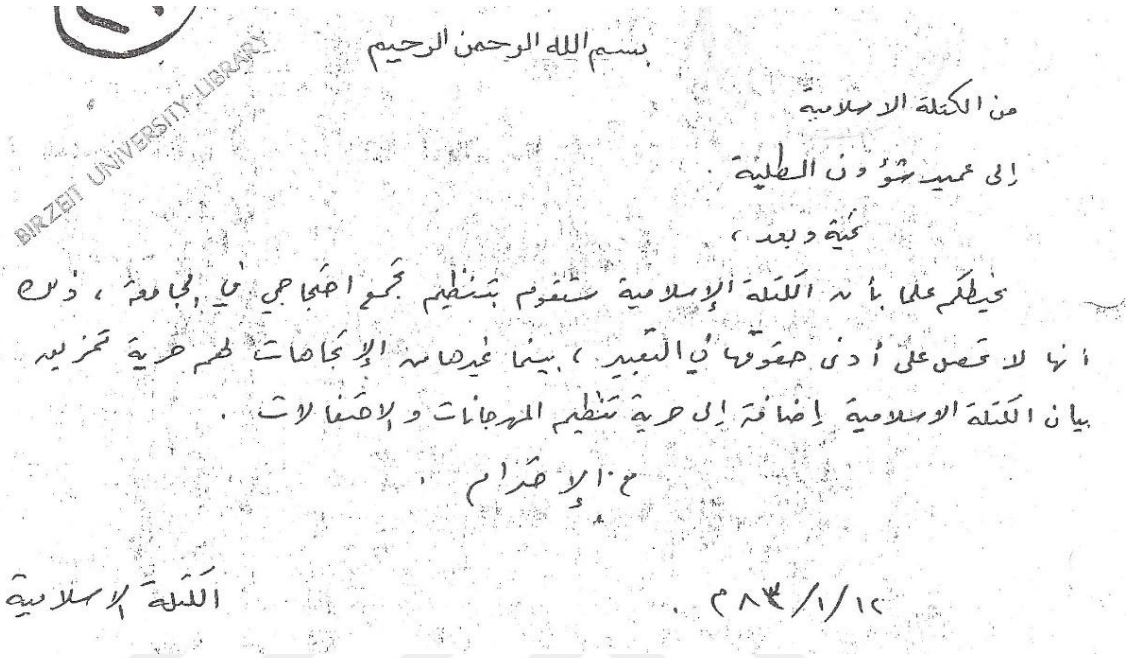
اخوتنا الأعزاء... وهكذا أصبحت سجون السلطة ويا للأسف مأوى للشرفاء بدل العملاء.. ومستودعا للأبرياء بدل الجناة... ومراكز لايقاع الظلم لا معاقبة الظالمين...

إن مطلبنا الأول والأخير هو حريتنا والإفراج عنا... لكننا مع ذلك نعاني هنا من نقص خطير في الغذاء كماً ونوعاً... فنظام التغذية السيء لا يأخذ بعين الاعتبار الحاجة الصحية لجسم الانسان... ونعاني من نقص الغطاء ومواد التنظيف... بل وحتى من أبسط متطلبات الحياة اليومية العادية فنشتري منها ما نستطيع شراءه...

Figure C.1. Statement of Birzeit University Prisoners in 1996

APPENDIX D

A STATEMENT FROM THE IB TO THE DEAN OF STUDENT AFFAIRS


BIRZEIT UNIVERSITY LIBRARY

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

من الكتلة الاسلامية

إلى عميد شؤون الطلبة

تحية وبعد ،

نحيطكم علما بأن الكتلة الإسلامية ستقوم بتنظيم تجمع احتجاجي في الجامعة ، ذلك
أنها لا تحصل على أدنى حقوقها في التعبير ، بينما غيرها من الإتجاهات لهم حرية تمزيق
بيان الكتلة الاسلامية إضافة إلى حرية تنظيم المهرجانات و الاحتفالات .

مع الإحترام ،

الكتلة الإسلامية

١٢/١/٨٣ م

Figure D.1. A Letter Sent to the Dean of Student Affairs at Birzeit University in 1983

From: The Islamic Bloc

To: Dean of Student Affairs

Greetings,

We would like to inform you that the Islamic Bloc will be organizing a protest gathering on campus, as it is being denied even the most basic rights to expression. Meanwhile, other groups enjoy the freedom to tear down the Islamic Bloc's statements and freely organize festivals and celebrations.

With respect,

The Islamic Bloc

January 12, 1983

APPENDIX E

FROM STUDENT LEADERS TO SOCIAL AND POLITICAL LEADERS

Table E.1. A Table Illustrating the Fate of the Islamic Bloc's Most Prominent Student Leaders

Name	Year of Student Action	Political or military action	Current situation
Birzeit University			
Abdul Halim al-Ashqar	1978	He ran for the Palestinian presidential elections in 2005	He was arrested in USA on charges of funding Hamas
Mahmoud Musleh	1985	He was arrested several times in the Israeli prisons and the Palestinian authority as well, he is one of the founders of the Islamic Charitable Society	Member of the Second Legislative Council
Jawad Abu Silmiyeh	1985	He was killed in the first march the Islamic bloc has participated in the West Bank in 1986	-
Saeb Dahab	1985	He was killed in the first march the Islamic bloc has participated in the West Bank in 1986	-
Saleh Talahmeh	1986	Assistant of Yahya Ayyash and Mohi al-ddin Sharif and companion Hassanein Rommaneh and Syed Sheikh Qassem	Assassinated in 2003
Islam Abu Armaileh	1987	A member of the military selected unit number zero	Assassinated in 1994
Yahya Ayyash	1987	He was the most wanted to the Israelis, nicknamed the engineer	Assassinated in 1996
Ibrahim Hamed	1991	Commander of the Qassam Brigades in the West Bank, one of the four whom Israel refused to release in the prisoner exchange	He was arrested in 2006 after a chase that lasted 10 years
Abdel Moneim Abu Ihmaid	1991	He was titled the hunter of Shin Bet, and was a member of the military selected unit number zero	Assassinated in 1994
Ayman Abu Halawa	1998	was arrested on charges of belonging to the IB in 1998, titled as the third engineer	Assassinated in 2001
Mahmoud Shuraiteh	1999	He was arrested in 1996 and sentenced eight months and was arrested the same year in prison in Jericho after he threw stones at Lionel Jospin	Sentenced to 7 life sentences, released in Tufan Al-Aqsa prisoner exchanges

Table E.1. (cont.)

Bilal Barghouti	2000	One of al- Qassam leaders in the West Bank	Sentenced to 16 life sentences
Walid Injas	2001	A member of the military Silwan cell which was formed in response to the assassination of Salah Shehadeh	Sentenced to 36 life sentences
An-Najah University			
Jamal Mansour	1980	Hamas leader in the West Bank and one of the deportees to marj al-zohour	Assassinated in 2001
Nasser al-Shaer	1982	Vice Prime Minister and Minister of Education and Higher Education in the tenth government	Professor in the Department of Islamic law at an-Najah University
Ismail Abu Shanab	1985	One of Hamas leaders and one of the deportees to marj al-zohour	Assassinated in 2003
Husam Badran	1986	One of the first Hamas leaders in Nablus was arrested six times, and an assassination attempt in 2002, one of the al-Qassam leaders in the West Bank. Sentenced to 18 years	Released in Wafa Al-Ahrar prisoner exchange in 2012, the spoke man of Hamas outside
Zaher Jabarin	1987	The head of the military cell that kidnapped soldier Toledano. Sentenced to life sentence and 35 years	Released in Wafa Al-Ahrar prisoner exchange in 2012, became the head of Hamas in West Bank
Mohammed al-Hanbali	1995	He was titled as the fifth engineer of al-Qassam Brigades	Killed an armed clash in 2003
Abdel Nasser Issa	1995	He was titled “the general of the IB”	Sentenced to 2 life sentences and 20 years
Amjad Hinnawi	1995	Commander of al- Qassam Brigades in the northern West Bank and wanted for Israelis for nine years	Assassinated in 2005
Moayyad Salahuddin	1996	He was arrested by the Palestinian Authority on charges of harboring Hassan Salameh	Killed in 2001 in a suicide bombing
Muhannad Tahir	1997	He was arrested by the Palestinian Authority in 1998, titled as the fourth engineer of al-Qassam Brigades	Killed an armed clash in 2002
Mohammed Sabha	1997	Arrest 8 times by the Palestinian Authority, a member of al-Qassam Brigades	Sentenced to 15 years
Mohammed al-Ghoul	1997		Killed in 2001 in a suicide bombing
Kareem Mafarjeh	1997	Headed a military cell in Bruqin	Assassinated in 2002
Ihsan Shawahneh	1997	Commander of the Qassam Brigades in the northern of West Bank	Assassinated in 2004
Qais Odwan	1999	Commander of the Qassam Brigades in Nablus	Assassinated in 2002

Table E.1. (cont.)

Hamed Abu Hijleh	1999		Killed in 2001 in a suicide bombing
Asim Raihan	1999		Killed in 2001 in a suicide bombing
Zakaria al-Kilani	1999	Participated in the marches start of Al-Aqsa Intifada, which he was killed in	Killed in 2001
Ahmed Abdel Gawad	2002		Killed in 2002 in a suicide bombing
Hebron University			
Abdullah Qawasmeh	1982	Senior commander of al-Qassam brigades. He was deported to Marj al-Zohour	Assassinated in 2003
Nizar Ramadan	1984	Member of the International Federation of Journalists. He was deported to Marj al-zohour	Member of the Legislative Council
Noureddine Sherida	1985	He was detained in both Israeli and Palestinian prisons more than once. One of the deportees to Marj al-Zohour	Principle of male Islamic school in Nablus
Saleh Aruri	1988	One of deportees to Marj al-Zohour. He was sentenced to 15 years in prison for founding al-Qassam Brigades in Hebron	Assassinated in Tufan Al-Aqsa war
Akram al-Atrash	1991	He was arrested three times and chased for two years, the leader of al-Qassam Brigades in the southern of West Bank	Assassinated in 2002
Jacob Edkidek	1991	He was detained in both Israeli and Palestinian prisons more than once.	Assassinated in 2001
Musa Dudin	1992	He led al-Qassam cells in Hebron, accompanied by Imad Akel, Sentenced to life sentence	Released in the Wafa Al-Ahrar prisoners exchange in 2012 and became the head of the prisoners file inside Hamas
Imad Jaber	1992	One of the deportees to Marj al-Zohour	-
Omar Shtayyeh		He was detained in both Israeli and Palestinian prisons more than once. One of the deportees to Marj al-Zohour	Chairman of the Council of the Municipality of Tel
Raed Misk	1995	Carried out a suicide attack in the settlement of Shmuel Henfe	Killed in 2003
Nabil Khater	1996	Participated in the events of “the tunnel” in 1996	Killed in 1996
Basil Qawasmi	2000	Activist in al-Qassam Brigades, was chased for more than a year and a half	Killed in 2003

Table E.1. (cont.)

Al-Quds University			
Name	**Year of Student Action**	**Political or military action**	**Current situation**
Mahmoud al-Khatib	1992	He was arrested after winning the legislative elections	Member of the Legislative Council
Adel Awad Allah	1985	Of the founders of the Hamas movement, coined the first statement of Hamas after the big hit in 1991, one of the most prominent leaders of al-Qassam in the West Bank	Assassinated in 1998
Nazih Abu Sabaa	1997	Commander in the al-Qassam Brigades in Jenin. One of the deportees to Marj al-Zohour	Assassinated in 2002
Anwar al-Zaboun	1991	The Prime of Reform Charity Association in Bethlehem. He was arrested after winning the legislative elections	Member of the Legislative Council
Mahmoud Abu Hannoud	1995	He was deported to Marj al-Zohour. Commander of the Qassam Brigades and recruit five suicide bombers in 1997.	Assassinated in 2003
Mohammed Barghouti	1994	The Minister of Labour in the tenth government and the Minister of Planning in the Government of National Unity	Lecturer at al-Quds University
Zuheir Farrah	1994	A member of the military selected unit number zero	Assassinated in 1994
Mohieddine sharif	1985	The second engineer in al-Qassam Brigades and the most wanted for the Israelis after the assassination of Yahya Ayyash	Assassinated in 1998
Salah Darwaza	1984	One of the most prominent leaders of the Qassam Brigades in the West and one of the deportees to Marj flowers	Assassinated in 2001
Raed Hamed	1995	He was detained in both Israeli and Palestinian prisons more than once.	Principle of male Islamic school in Ramallah
Islamic University			
Yahya Sinwar	1980	He is the founder of the first security apparatus in Hamas. The head of the leadership Supreme body of Hamas prisoners, sentenced to 5 life sentences	Released in Wafa Al-Ahrar prisoner exchange in 2012 and became the head of Hamas, then assassinated in Tufan Al-Aqsa war

Table E.1. (cont.)

Khaled Hindi	1983	One of Hamas leaders	Secretary of the Board of Trustees of the Islamic University
Abdelfattah Satari	1986	The military operations engineer in al-Qassam Brigades and a companion of Imad Akel. He was arrested by the Palestinian security services in 1998	
Mohammed Deif	1987	Commander of the Qassam Brigades in Palestine, Israel tried to assassinate him twice in 2002 and 2014	Assassinated in Tufan Al-Aqsa battle
Yahya Alebadseh	1985	Minister of Education in the government of Gaza, a member of the Legislative Council	Assassinated in Tufan Al-Aqsa battle
Ismail Haniyeh	1986	Senior leader of the Hamas movement and the Director of the Office of Sheikh Ahmed Yassin, one of the deportees to Marj al-Zohour, Prime Minister in the tenth government and the Government of National Unity, the head of Hamas	Assassinated in Tufan Al-Aqsa battle
Sami Abu Zuhri	1998	A spokesman for Hamas	Assassinated in Tufan Al-Aqsa battle
Ayman Taha	1997	Detained in both Israeli and Palestinian Authority prisons. One of the deportees to Marj al-Zohour	Assassinated in a war in Gaza in 2014
Abdul Rahman Hamdan		A member of the military selected unit number zero	Assassinated in 1994
Mushir al-Masri	1997	President of the General Conference of the IB and a spokesman for the Change and Reform Bloc	Member of the Legislative Council
Polytechnic University			
Nash'at Karmi	1998	The most wanted for the Israel army in the West Bank	Assassinated in 2010
Mounir Mari	2001	He formed the military group of "martyr Abbas Oweiwi"	Sentenced to 5 life sentences
Tariq Dofash	2002		Killed in 2002 in a suicide bombing
Fadi Dweik	2002	A member of the military group of "martyr Abbas Oweiwi"	Sentenced to 15 life sentences
Teachers Training Institute			
Mohammed Abu Warda	1997	The Palestinian authority sentenced him to life imprisonment for leading "the Holy revenge operations" in response to the assassination of Yahya Ayyash and then released after six years because of Israeli incursions; sentenced to 48 life sentences	Released in Tufan Al-Aqsa prisoner exchange in 2024
Said Siyam	1980	Senior leader of the Hamas movement, and one of the deportees to Marj al-zohour. He had the highest percentage of votes in the second Legislative Council elections	Assassinated in 2009

APPENDIX F

THE RESULTS OF THE STUDENT COUNCIL ELECTIONS

Table F.1. The Results of the Student Council Elections at Different Palestinian Universities from 1980 Until 2015

The academic year	Birzeit	An-Najah	Hebron	Islamic University	Bethlehem	Al-Quds	Polytechnic	Al-Azhar
1980	leftist	IB	IB	IB	leftist	-	-	-
1981	leftist	FYM	IB	IB	leftist	-	-	-
1982	leftist	IB	IB	IB	leftist	-	-	-
1983	FYM	FYM	FYM	IB	FYM	-	-	-
1984	FYM	IB	IB	IB	leftist	IB	-	-
1985	FYM	FYM	IB	IB	leftist	IB	-	-
1986	FYM	FYM	FYM	IB	leftist	IB	-	-
1987	FYM		IB	IB	leftist	IB	-	-
1991	FYM		IB	IB	FYM	IB	IB	-
1992	FYM	FYM	IB	IB	FYM	IB	IB	FYM
1993	IB+ leftist		IB	IB	FYM	IB	IB	FYM
1994	FYM	FYM	IB	IB	FYM	IB	IB	FYM
1995	FYM	IB	IB	IB	FYM	IB	IB	FYM
1996	IB	IB	IB	IB	FYM	IB	IB	FYM
1997	FYM	IB	IB	IB	FYM	IB	IB	FYM
1998	IB	IB	IB	IB	FYM	IB	IB	FYM
1999	IB	IB	IB	IB	FYM	IB	IB	FYM
2000	IB	IB	IB	IB	FYM	IB	IB	FYM
2001	IB	IB	IB	IB	FYM	IB	IB	FYM
2002	IB	IB	IB	IB	FYM	IB	IB	FYM
2003	IB	IB	IB	IB	FYM	IB	IB	FYM
2004	IB	IB	IB	IB	FYM	IB	IB	FYM
2005	FYM	FYM	FYM	IB	FYM	FYM	IB	FYM
2006	IB	IB	IB	IB	FYM	FYM	IB	FYM
2007	IB	IB	IB	IB	FYM	FYM	FYM	FYM
2008	FYM	FYM	FYM	IB	FYM	FYM	FYM	FYM
2009	FYM	FYM	FYM	IB	FYM	FYM	FYM	FYM
2010	FYM	FYM	FYM	IB	FYM	FYM	FYM	FYM
2011	FYM	FYM	FYM	IB	FYM	FYM	FYM	FYM
2012	FYM	FYM	FYM	IB	FYM	FYM	FYM	FYM
2013	FYM	FYM	FYM	IB	FYM	FYM	FYM	FYM
2014	FYM		FYM	IB	FYM	FYM	FYM	FYM
2015	IB			IB	FYM		IB = FYM	FYM

APPENDIX G

ETHICS COMMITTEE PERMISSION



T.C.
İBN HALDUN ÜNİVERSİTESİ
Sosyal ve Beşeri Bilimler Bilimsel Araştırma ve Yayın Etiği
Kurulu Başkanlığı



Sayı : E-71395021-050.04-39017 26.03.2024
Konu : Etik Kurul Kararı - Dalal Bajes
SALEM

İLGİLİ MAKAMA

Kurulumuza başvuran Dalal Bajes SALEM'in, "The Islamic Bloc (Al-kutlah al-Islāmīyah) in Palestinian Universities: Framing, Mobilization, and Political Opportunity" isimli projesi; amaç, araştırma türü, veri toplama araçları, süreç ve işlemler, veri analizleri dikkate alınmak suretiyle 15.03.2024 tarihinde değerlendirilerek 2024/03-06 karar numarası ile etik açıdan uygun bulunmaktadır.

Bilgilerini ve gereğini arz/rica ederim.

Prof. Dr. Alev ERKİLET
Başkan

CURRICULUM VITAE

Full Name:

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Education:

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2008 – 2010	MS in International Studies, Birzeit University, Palestine

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2024 – 2025	Ibn Haldun University, Istanbul
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2007 – 2011	The Islamic Secondary Girls School, Palestine

Publications:

1. Bajes, Dalal. 2024. “Ibn Khaldun's Theory of the Rise and Fall of Powers: An Approach to the Israeli Case.” *Noon Post* .https://www.noonpost.com/195449/

2. Bajes, Dalal. 2024. “The Islamic Movement in Palestine between Malcolm X Model and Martin Luther King Model.” *Noon Post*. https://www.noonpost.com/194275/

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