

# The Red Minaret

Memoirs of

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# **Chapter Eleven**

***The Period 1997–1998***



## The Period 1997–1998

### *The Major Events of 1997*

In 1997, I left my office at the IAF headquarters, and established an engineering consultancy office in Wasfi al-Tell Street “Gardens.” After two years it was closed with red sealing wax, and its image was later exhibited on television stations. The detention of Hamas supporters continued in 1997, though at a slower pace than in 1996.

Two contradictory ideas emerged on the prospects of the Jordanian parliamentary elections that were due during the year; namely, to boycott or to participate in them. The overwhelming majority favored the former, and the MB Movement publicly opted for this course. Two factors were behind the boycott: first, the one-man one-vote system, and, secondly, the repercussions of the treaty of Wadi ‘Arbah, and its impacts on the Jordanian political scene, coupled with the infiltration of the Israelis in the affairs of Jordan. The focus of the MB Movement was to pursue alternative popular activities to engagement in the parliament, namely the intensification of our involvement in mosques, universities and philanthropic works. These fields were all closely watched by the government, and the role of the MB Movement in mobilizing them was sharply curtailed.

In May 1997, **Musa Abu Marzuq was released from detention** in the US, thanks to the effort of King Hussein, who instructed that Marzuq be allowed to return to Amman, Jordan, therefore averting the danger that he be handed to the Israeli enemy.

In September 1997, in particular two successful self-immolation operations were launched that primarily aimed to warn the Israeli enemy that the resistance would continue as long as Israel kept imprisoning Palestinian detainees, including Sheikh Ahmad Yasin. The first operation was undertaken by the Martyr Unit of the ‘Ezzedeen Al-Qassam Brigades, and the second was in Jerusalem.

### *Friction with the Intelligence Department*

On Thursday, 4/9/1997, in the midst of this security and media squeeze on Hamas, ‘Abdul ‘Aziz al-Rantissi, to whom I feel particular admiration, publicly affirmed the above operation and the necessity of releasing the detainees. I said to myself that since al-Rantissi, who had been a regular victim of the Israeli prison system, said this, then I should do likewise.



Two days later, on Saturday, I called the Reuters News Agency and a television station for an interview. Sulaiman al-Khalidi was present and the photographer was Khalid al-Ramhi. I emphasized the right of the Palestinian people to resist the Israeli enemy, and to respond to its massacres by launching self-immolation operations. I also added that by the latest operation undertaken two days previously the members of Al-Qassam Brigades had sent a clear message to the Israeli public that they would not sleep peacefully at night as long as there were Palestinian detainees in their prisons, whose relatives are not allowed to sleep peacefully at night.

On my return home just before 10 p.m., I, as usual, skipped through various television stations, including the Israel Broadcasting Authority (IBA) that broadcasts in English. It started its service by portraying my photo and broadcasting my message. I immediately felt that this would have its impact here in Jordan. Around 11:30 p.m., there was a knock on my door. When I enquired who was there, the answer was "It is (A.Th.) and (A.N.) who want to have a cup of coffee with you." I said it was too late at night, and if they want to have coffee with me, I would be in my office the following day. They kept insisting that I open the door, but I refused. I asked my son to contact two of the leading members of the MB Movement to tell them that Jordanian security was surrounding my house. But their response was negative, and so I instructed my son to open the door. Hence, accompanied by two of my neighbors, a group of security officers, led by (A.Th.) and (A.N.), entered my home. They searched the entire house, particularly the bedroom, and, of course, confiscated my two licensed pistols. An officer with the rank of first lieutenant asked me to sign a report. But I refused because the document recorded that they searched the house, and found in it an automatic pistol, and a written paper entitled, "How to Make Explosives." Staring at this individual, I said that this is a false testimony, and that he must not be part of it because anybody who does will tantamount to a heretic. The officer was shaken by this remark, looked on the ground in shame and did not insist that I sign. Then he asked the two youngsters who accompanied him to sign, but they said, "You have brought us to sign a statement that says no glass is broken, and not to sign on this report." However, they took them to the police station, brought their parents, and pressured them to sign.

After about three hours a car took me directly to the new building of the intelligence agency in Wadi al-Sayr. Upon my arrival, a senior officer arrogantly asked me, "Who do you think you are? How come that it took you three hours to come here?" I responded by saying "You have no right to arrest me. I did nothing wrong." While in the intelligence building, and as I was heading to the cells, (A.Th.) offered to take me by his car to my house if I agree to stop issuing declarations as the spokesperson of Hamas. I gazed at him, and said, "Take me

to the cell. That would be better.” The cell was about two meters and a half long and 170 centimeters wide, with an iron bed, sink, toilet and a door with a small opening to enable the guard to constantly watch me. They closed the door of the cell, and subsequently took me to another cell. I spent 15 days there during which I was completely cut off from the world. I used to ask the guard for the time of the prayer, and my only companion was the Qur’an.

During my detention I was interrogated several times. They tried to talk about organizational matters, but I refrained from being dragged to them, and we occasionally talked about political matters. I didn’t eat the prison food, instead I paid for the food that they bought me, which was largely very simple food. The head of the prison used to invite me daily for tea in his office where we talked generally, but neither on politics nor on my detention. One day, while I was in his office, dressed in the inmate’s uniform that I had resisted for four days, I came across two senior Jordanian officers. In their presence, I asked him to allow me to read a newspaper that he had, but he replied sharply: “I have no instructions.” So I told him, “I want to read the news of the old grotesque woman, has she left Jordan yet or not?” He asked “Who is this old grotesque woman?” I replied, “Madeleine Albright, the US Secretary of State, the one who is behind my detention.” The two officers laughed, but they did not comment.

Once I came across the deputy head of the prison and I told him, “You look like you come from one of the families of Irbid,” a town in which I lived for three years, and knew its families very well. But this remark visibly disturbed the man, whose expression dropped. Next day, the director asked me “What have you done to my deputy?” When I revealed what I said to the deputy, the director told me, “This is unbecoming of us.” The representative of the Red Cross also visited me. Near the end of my detention I was interrogated frequently but I was finally released on 21/9/1997. On my return home on Sunday evening, I discovered that many of the trade unions and popular organizations had planned a sit-in around my house in a show of solidarity, but had been prohibited from reaching their destination. For six days after my release, I received a flood of visitors, Brothers and friends. Khalid Mish’al, who had been abroad, visited me on Tuesday, three days after my release. He asked me about my experience in prison, and I gave him the details.

### ***Assassination Attempt on Khalid Mish’al***

On Thursday 25/9/1997, while still engaged in receiving well-wishers, Muhammad Nazzal phoned me to say that an assassination attempt was made against Khalid Mish’al, and that the Political Bureau will meet to discuss this



development. Subsequently, I learned that security forces had surrounded the the Islamic Hospital, and insisted on taking him to the King Hussein Medical Center, where I visited him on Friday morning.

Mish'al had been walking with two unarmed bodyguards, of whom one, Muhammad Abu Saif, an excellent sportsman, was fasting at the time. Opposite to Markaz al-Shamiyyah building in Gardens street, they met two people who appeared to be tourists. One of them attacked Mish'al, putting an instrument under his ear before they fled. According to one of the bodyguards, Mish'al suffered from nausea, and was rushed to the Islamic Hospital, where the doctors tried, unsuccessfully, to treat him. On the king's order, he was transferred to King Hussein Medical Center. Meanwhile, Muhammad Abu Saif ran after the two suspects, but a waiting car near al-Sarwat restaurant took them and they were driven away. Abu Saif stopped a private car, explained the situation and they chased after the assailants. Unaware that Abu Saif was behind them, the two suspects were dropped off and headed to al-Madina Street, while the car delivered the weapon to the Israeli embassy in al-Rabiyyah neighborhood. Abu Saif got hold of them, and a bloody fight took place for a while until both sides were completely exhausted. However, by a pleasant stroke of luck an officer of the Palestine Liberation Army (PLA), who was also a son of the commander of this army, named Badr Na'im al-Khatib, passed by. On knowing the story, in which Abu Saif reiterated that the two men were agents of the Mossad, the officer took the three of them to Bayader Wadi al-Sayr police station. I visited Abu Saif in the hospital where he was hospitalized for severe blows to his head that had needed several stitches. I admiringly asked him how could a man, who was fasting like him confront these two people. Smilingly, he responded by saying that *Allah* had given him this special strength.

On Friday, I went to visit Brother Mish'al at the King Hussein Medical Center, where he was in bad shape, almost dying, and breathing only through tubes. Many people visited him; his father and relatives, members of the MB Movement and a number of the Arab members of the Knesset.

I returned home on Friday afternoon to receive many visitors, amongst whom was Sheikh Ibrahim Zaid al-Kilani. He asked me about the condition of Mish'al, and he was very moved when I told him that he is seriously ill, and that the doctors said that it would be impossible to treat him without knowing the nature of the fluid that was put under his ear from the above mentioned instrument. He promised to help and asked me to get in touch with him on Friday evening. When I did, he told me that he asked Dr. Ashraf al-Kurdi, the minister of health, who said that specialists have the instrument, and that they will know, *Insha'Allah*, the nature of the fluid. On Saturday, I was unable to see Mish'al because visits

weren't allowed that day, but the following day, I managed to visit him. By then his condition had improved significantly; the machine for artificial breathing was removed, and by Monday, he was almost back to normal. I talked to him on many issues, and asked him in particular about the possibility that I resume my media activities. He gave me the green light, thus after a complete week of silence I gave my first press release to the Qatari news agency in which I condemned the latest criminal act of the Israelis that was undertaken by these two agents, and demanded that they be tried and imprisoned. After that, we would accept that they be exchanged for Sheikh Ahmad Yasin and all the other Palestinian detainees in Israeli jails. When asked by the same agency if such an exchange was possible, I explained that Mossad members are much more valuable to the Israelis than their soldiers. I added that in return for the release of two Israeli soldiers captured by the Ahmad Jibril in 1985, 1,200 Palestinian detainees were released from Israeli prisons. Meanwhile, before Mish'al regained his full consciousness, a member of the Political Bureau contacted al-Battikhi, and told him that Hamas would not accept the release of those Israeli agents unless and until they are swapped with Sheikh Ahmad Yasin and a significant number of the detainees. But al-Battikhi initially denied that they were Israeli agents, even claiming that they could not possibly be Jews as they were not circumcised, and may be pro-Zionist Christians. Unfortunately, al-Battikhi circulated these false rumors, and he was the one who provoked the Minister of Information Samir Mutawi' to assert that what had happened was nothing more than a skirmish between Mish'al's associates and two Canadian tourists.

Since this assassination attempt has taken place on Jordanian territory three years after the conclusion of Wadi 'Arbah treaty, King Hussein viewed it as an inappropriate violation of Jordanian sovereignty. He was so angered that he approached US President Clinton to say that Mish'al's life was on one side and the peace deal in the region, including the one with Jordan, was on the other side. However, the Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu moved quickly, and promised to send the antidote. There were rumors that a doctor staying in a hotel in Amman had it. It was given to Mish'al on Saturday, after his friends and relatives were ordered to leave the hospital, and when I visited him on Sunday, he was breathing normally. According to some persistent news at the time, Efraim Halevy, an Israeli close to King Hussein who had been formerly working for the Mossad, became the director of Mossad after the assassination attempt on Khalid Mish'al. It was said that he came to Jordan, saw King Hussein, and gave him the approval of Israel to swap Sheikh Ahmad Yasin with these agents. Subsequently, Jordan declared that it would receive Sheikh Ahmad Yasin, and he

actually arrived and was hospitalized at King Hussein Medical Center. Hence, the two agents were released and returned to Israel. Though elated by the release of the Sheikh, Hamas had hoped the deal to include the release of all Palestinian detainees in the Israeli prisons.

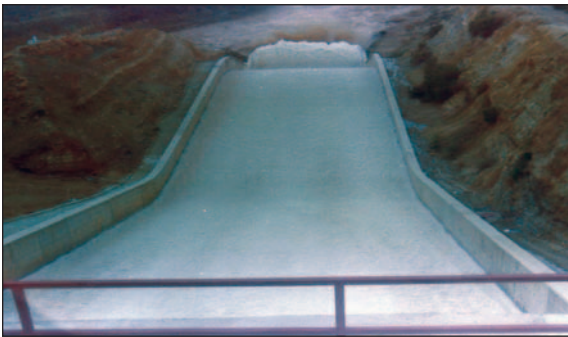
On arrival at the medical centre, Sheikh Ahmad Yasin was weak, frail and in poor health. He was given full medical care, and I had visited him several times; King Hussein and Yasir 'Arafat also visited him. The latter was reported to have said after seeing the Sheikh that they were in the same class. On one of my visits, I saw a blond Israeli Journalist named Smadar Perry, who worked for the *Yedioth Ahronoth* newspaper. I rushed to Sheikh Ahmad and told him of her presence and he refused to see her. On telling him of 'Arafat's claim that they were together in the same class, Sheikh Ahmad smilingly said, "We were not in the same class, nor in the same school." Sheikh Ahmad Yasin gave a press conference in which many questions were addressed to him. His responses were repeated by Muhammad Nazzal, a member of Hamas' Political Bureau who had a loud and strong voice. Subsequently, we bid the Sheikh and his bodyguard farewell, and he was taken by a helicopter to GS where he was received a hero's reception. His return to GS followed a long period of imprisonment dating back to 1989.

We hired the house of Ghazi Abu Smahah to receive Khalid Mish'al's visitors, who came in numbers and included many journalists. *Allah* blessed Khalid Mish'al with a new life, and his speeches and responses were made in such a loud and forceful voice that a journalist correspondent of AFP in Amman named Randa Habib, commented that his declarations had "become more forceful than those of Brother Ibrahim" (referring to me). Subsequently, in November 1997, and on the suggestion of Mish'al, I accompanied him and his father on a courtesy visit to King Hussein to thank him for his effort and honorable stand. With this move, Mish'al may have wanted to patch up my tense relations with the Jordanian regime that had arrested me two months previously. We went to the Royal Palace where we were enthusiastically welcomed by a tall general, and after a while the king joined us. He talked cordially with Mish'al, who, along with his father, gave speeches of thanks and appreciation to the king.



Jordanian and Yugoslav supervising engineers of King Talal Dam, 1973.

With the engineers of Jordan Valley Authority, King Talal Dam, 1977.



Chute spillway of King Talal Dam, 1978.

In front of the lake of King Talal Dam, 1978.



Rhodes Mosque, 1979.



Design and supervision of  
al-Razi housing project,  
1979.



Al-Razi housing project,  
Tla' al-Ali, 1980.



Al-Razi housing project,  
Tla' al-Ali, 1981.





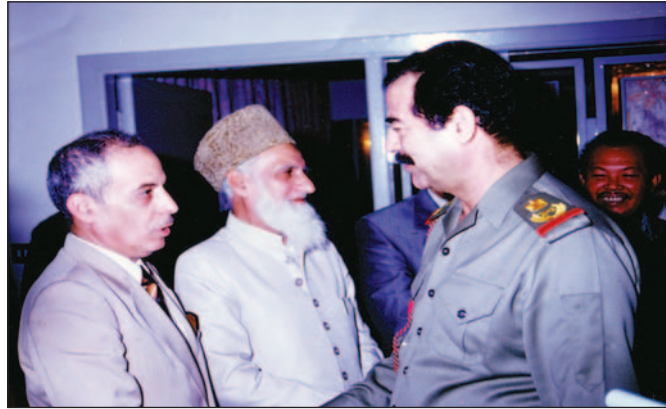
A building in al-Shmaisani area of Amman, designed and supervised by Ibrahim Ghushah, 1983.

A building designed and supervised by Ibrahim Ghushah, 1985.



Supervising the building of Dar al-Arqam Schools, 1985.

A delegation of leaders of several Islamic movements that went to Iraq, September 1990.



With Yasir ‘Arafat in the National Islamic Conference in Yemen, March 1991.

In a seminar at the Jordan Engineers Association, 1994.





At a congress of the Welfare Party in Turkey, October 1996.

With Erbakan at a congress of the Turkish Welfare Party, October 1996.



Hamas Spokesperson Ibrahim Ghushieh delivers a speech at a congress of the Welfare Party, October 1996.

At a congress of the Welfare Party with the late Mahir ‘Abdullah, October 1996.





Attending a lecture at the Jordan Engineers Association, Amman, 1997.



Conference for Defense of Jerusalem, Amman, 20–21/8/1997.



With Sheikh Ahmad Yasin while visiting Ahmad Jibril, Damascus, May 1998.



After meeting President Hafiz al-Assad with Khalid Mish'al, 'Isam al-Qadi and Abu Muhammad Mustafa, Damascus, 1998.



Arab ambassadors honoring Sheikh Ahmad Yasin, Damascus, May 1998.



Sayyid Hasan Nasrallah visiting Sheikh Ahmad Yasin, May 1998.



George Habash visiting Sheikh Ahmad Yasin, Damascus, May 1998.



At Salahuddine al-Ayyubi tomb with Sheikh Ahmad Yasin and Khalid Mish'al, Damascus, May 1998.



At a congress of Jama‘ah Islamiyyah in Pakistan, Islamabad, October 1998.



Receiving a memorial shield from Qadi Hussein the leader of the Pakistani Jama‘ah Islamiyyah, during the congress of Jama‘ah Islamiyyah, October 1998.



The honoring ceremony for Ibrahim Ghushesh after he returned to Jordan, 2001.



An Islamic March through Amman, 2002.



Ibrahim Ghusheh

## *Developments in Jordan During 1998*

One of the most important developments in 1998 was the negotiations of Wye River in America between the US on one side and the Syrians and the Palestinians on the other side. While negotiations with Syria failed, those with the Palestinians led to the conclusion of several treaties that supplemented the Oslo Accords. Meanwhile, in response to an invitation from the Pakistani Jama'ah Islamiyyah, the Political Bureau sent me in October 1998 to Islamabad, Pakistan to represent Hamas in a Congress of the Jama'ah, that was held in King Faisal mosque, a large mosque in Islamabad that has a magnificent architectural style. Hundreds of thousand of Pakistani members of the Jama'ah attended this Congress in which the leader Qadi Hussein delivered a speech that, inter alia, called for the support of the Palestinian issue, donations were collected at the event for the Palestinians. Many Muslim leaders addressed the congress, including Sheikh Ahmad Yasin who spoke via telephone. In response to the call of the organizers, I also gave a short speech. After the end of this congress, I attended a dinner given by the President of the International Islamic University in Islamabad, Dr. Ahmad 'Assal, a sociable and widely respected pro-Palestine Egyptian residing in Pakistan. While in Islamabad, I became acquainted with some of the promising and open minded youth of the Islamic movement, and had the pleasure of meeting an old friend, Sa'id al-Hlais, whom I had known since 1956 when he and I volunteered to defend Egypt against the Tripartite Aggression, and we subsequently worked together in Kuwait until my departure from the country in 1966. The youth organized a press conference for me in a hotel in Islamabad, in which I outlined Hamas' position towards the Palestinian issue in general and the decisions of Wye River in particular. Reuters News Agency disseminated what I said at this function worldwide.

On my return to Amman, I noticed that the Jordanian political arena had become increasingly tense, thanks in particular to al-Battikhi. I do remember that Khalid Mish'al had tried to go to Damascus, but on his arrival at the Jordanian border with Syria, he was compelled to turn back to Amman.

Meanwhile, a national gathering assembled in the headquarters of the MB Movement in Amman that was attended by some prominent national figures, including the great *mujahid* Bahjat Abu Gharbiyyah. Though Hamas was then banned from issuing public declarations, Mish'al asked me to represent him at this function. While sitting awaiting my turn to speak, I was told that the general-guide of the MB Movement wanted to see me. In front of several members of the Movement's Executive Bureau, he advised me not to deliver my speech because I may be detained immediately after departure from the premises. I told him I would have to speak as this was a binding decision of

Hamas, and I had been asked to do so by the head of the Political Bureau. I added that myself and Hamas bear the full responsibility for the decision. He reluctantly accepted, and I delivered my speech in which I explained Hamas' position towards the treaty of Wye River. In his subsequent speech, Bahjat Abu Gharbiyyah commended Hamas and its insistence on the legitimacy of the option of resistance.

As expected, I was **summoned next day to the GID**, where I met a certain (A.H.) who, notwithstanding my explanation, blamed me for attending and delivering a speech in yesterday's meeting. After a while, he took me to another official, and left me there all alone with him. The man was anonymous to me at the time, but I later knew that he was Sa'd Khair, the successor of al-Battikhi, i.e., the deputy director of the GID. I had a tense encounter with him in which he told me that my press releases from the headquarters of the MB Movement were a flagrant violation of the government's ban on Hamas' contact with the media, and added that I was embarrassing both the MB and the state of Jordan. I responded that I had not issued any release to the media but simply given a speech on the occasion. He argued that there were correspondents of television stations present, to which I responded by saying that I had not embarrassed Jordan, but, on the contrary, had served the country more than many other people as I had supervised over several years the construction of King Talal Dam, the biggest developmental project in Jordan. He asked me why I failed to understand the national interest of Jordan despite being the son of the Brother of 'Abdullah Ghushah, one of the most prominent men of Jordan. In response, I said to him, "I love Jordan, I love Palestine, and we in Hamas are very much concerned about the well being and integrity of Jordan as well as Palestine. We will never abandon this position," adding "You had signed this treaty which neither we nor the Jordanian people support." After these strong words, he allowed me to leave, and I never met him again even when returning to Jordan in 2001. However, during his time al-Battikhi was tried and sentenced in a serious corruption case in which he embezzled 17 million dinars from the public treasury.

During this period some **discrepancies between the policies of the leadership of the MB Movement and Hamas** started to emerge. A faction of the MB Movement advocated that the movement should look inwards to the affairs of Jordan and be primarily concerned with internal reform. Thus, it should refrain from being consumed with the Palestinian issue, and focus instead on socio-educational, philanthropic and environmental reforms. Alas, this faction incited the Movement's leadership against Hamas, particularly during 1999 when the authorities inflicted brutal strikes against it. This discrepancy between the leadership of the MB Movement and Hamas increased and one of

its repercussions was that Khalid Mish'al was barred from using the office that he occupied in the headquarters of the MB Movement.

Another development at that time was **the case of ('A.N.)**. After the occupation of Kuwait by the Iraqi army, this individual left Kuwait for Jordan. He was absorbed in to Hamas to work in the office of the then head of the Political Bureau, Musa Abu Marzuq, and was later seconded to be a liaison officer between Hamas and the Jordanian intelligence. However, due to his unbalanced character (some who knew him in Kuwait told me that his absorption in to Hamas was a mistake) a crisis erupted between Hamas' office, then recognized by the Jordanian government, and the Jordanian intelligence services. He was arrested and exposed to certain actions that I prefer not to reveal. He informed Khalid Mish'al about what had happened to him and the latter communicated this to the MB Movement who issued a declaration condemning the actions. But, on his release, he denied what he had said about his experience in detention, and claimed that he said what he said only on the demand of Khalid Mish'al. Mish'al explained his position to the Movement, and demanded that ('A.N.) submit evidence to support his allegation. But he did not.

Meanwhile, several articles were published in the Jordanian and foreign press against Hamas, revealing the real names of some of its secret cadres. On knowing that a particular individual was behind this dangerous press campaign, Hamas dismissed him from its ranks. But the MB Movement hesitated to do so, which further aggravated the gulf between the two movements.

The coordinated targeting of Hamas in the WB, GS and Jordan, which had been ongoing since 1996, reached its peak in 1999 with the arrest of the movement's head and the members of the Political Bureau in Jordan and their expulsion from the country. In 1998 a brutal campaign was conducted to liquidate Hamas' cadres and the leadership of its military wing 'Ezzedeen Al-Qassam Brigades in the WB. In March 1998, the second most important leader of Hamas in the WB after Yahya 'Ayyash and the expert in explosives, Muhieddine al-Sharif, was assassinated. I became well aware of the particulars of this crime as the Political Bureau had asked me and another Brother to study the reports sent from Ramallah in the WB on this case.

The media claimed that al-Sharif was killed as a result of an explosion that took place in the outskirts of Ramallah. But our investigations revealed that he was arrested by the PSS in Ramallah and died as a result of massive torture. To cover up this crime, the security services concocted the story of the exploded car. The reports that we received directly implicated certain individuals. The one who attacked al-Sharif belonged to a group in Nablus that was close to him. They pretended to be part of Hamas while, in actual fact, were well connected to the



PSS and the ISA. However, this group was later liquidated by the killing of one its members and the wounding of several others. This operation was conducted when al-Sharif couldn't get in touch with Hamas, since it was suffering harsh repression in the WB. We prepared a report on the particulars of the crime, to be publicly announced by the head of the Political Bureau, Khalid Mish'al. But the dissemination of this report was shelved on the advice of several Brothers in the interior, including Sheikh Ahmad Yasin, who feared that its publication may lead to a backlash of further repression against them in the WB and GS. However, this report remains available in the archives of Hamas.

The other important event during this year was the **assassination** in September 1998 of **two prominent leaders, 'Imad and 'Adil 'Awaddallah**. By then, there was seemingly mutual planning and security coordination between the PA and the ISA, which is now clearly openly maintained during the era of President 'Abbas. In this case, the coordination started with the PA's arrest of 'Imad in Jericho and his exposure to tremendous pressure. Subsequently, they seemed to have deliberately facilitated his escape from prison. On his arrival in Ramallah, he asked Hamas on the whereabouts of his Brother, 'Adil, which he, anyhow, seemed to have known, and had actually already been to his house in one of the villages of Hebron district, a development that the ISA and the PSS had specifically and anxiously awaited and wanted. Apparently, the ISA had transplanted, without 'Imad's knowledge, an apparatus in his body that gave signals and records of his conversation with his Brother 'Adil. For by then the media had suddenly reported that a security forces accompanied with dogs had forced its way in a house in a village of Hebron district and killed the Brothers 'Imad and 'Adil 'Awaddallah. The Israelis were the source of all this information, and the true details of the operation for which these two heroes were killed had therefore not yet been released. The two were buried, with hundreds of those killed during the first and second *Intifadah*, in the "Cemetery of Numbers" in al-Ghor, which the Israelis control to this day refusing to hand over the two bodies.

During this year, news was revealed of a cell, Sourif cell that had conducted for a year and a half, under the leadership of 'Abdul Rahman Ghunaimat who is currently detained in Israeli prisons, several self-immolation operations in the WB. The ISA thought that this cell was manned by fighters from the PFLP under the leadership of George Habash.

What was the story of this cell? It was composed of five individuals, two from a district under Israeli control and the three others from Hebron city (amongst whom was the leader of the cell, 'Abdul Rahman Ghunaimat). Four of them

were arrested having coordinated several self-immolation operations amongst which one was in Tel Aviv in which an Israeli soldier was killed.

Based on a report by ‘Abdul Rahman Ghunaimat to Hamas, smuggled from his prison cell, we know that the two Brothers were brutally tortured to reveal the place in which the Israeli soldier had been buried. They took them to the place, but no corpse was found, though they had actually participated in the burial in that very place with the other members of the cell. What happened was that the intelligent leader ‘Abdul Rahman Ghunaimat had changed the burial site, thus becoming the only person who knew the real location. After this failure, the Israelis sought the help of Jibril al-Rajoub, who was in charge of the PSS in the WB and the coordinator between the ISA, the Israeli army and the PA. Al-Rajoub arrested the three other members of the cell, including Ghunaimat, tortured them and threatened to hand them to the Israelis if they do not reveal the exact burial location of the Israeli soldier. After massive pressure and an undertaking from the PA not to hand them to the Israelis, they agreed. Ghunaimat records that Yasir ‘Arafat himself called him from GS to advise him to hand over the body of the Israeli soldier, and promised him a safe haven in the WB. The Brothers believed this trick and informed the PSS of the true location. The latter communicated this news to the ISA, which took the body and buried it according to Jewish rituals

After this incident, Jibril al-Rajoub ordered the three to come personally for trial by the PA in Jericho district. Two did go, but the third was prevented by his tribe in Hebron. Before their departure, they were assured by al-Rajoub that a group of the Palestinian security forces would accompany them and ensure that they would not fall in the hands of the Israelis. On their arrival in Jericho, they were told by security staff that the trial would be in Nablus, and they had to go there. They protested that there were many Israeli checkpoints on the way, but they were once more assured by the Palestinian security of a safe pass. On their arrival on the outskirts of Nablus, they were handed over by the Palestinian security forces to Major General ‘Uzi Dayan, Central Region Commander in the Israeli army. They are now detained in Israeli prisons. ‘Abdul Rahman Ghunaimat received eight life sentences.

Hamas never stopped the resistance for a moment in spite of the successive blows inflicted by the Israeli enemy and the Palestinian security forces. Shortly afterwards a hero of ‘Ezzedeen Al-Qassam Brigades, Salim Sursour, undertook two operations. He threw a hand grenade at a number of Israeli soldiers in Jerusalem, and moved from there to Beersheba where he threw many others on a large crowd of Israeli soldiers that assembled near a bus station, wounding 75. The latter operation coincided with the peak of ‘Arafat’s negotiations with the



Israeli enemy. He was so furious and confused that he described Sursour as an Israeli agent. The Palestinian people reacted to this allegation by saying that they want hundreds of such “agents.”

### ***Sheikh Ahmad Yasin's Tour***

In 1998, Hamas' Political Bureau organized a tour for Sheikh Ahmad Yasin to a number of Arab countries, where Khalid Mish'al accompanied him in some of these visits. Muhammad Nazzal played a major role in coordinating these visits, and I accompanied Sheikh Ahmad Yasin on three of them: Qatar in April, Yemen in May and Syria in late May.

In Qatar, Yasin was given a grand reception by the Emir, the government and the Qatari people, and was hosted in the best hotel in the country, the Sheraton, in which we were also hosted after our release from al-Juwaidah prison. I received the Emir of Qatar Sheikh Hamad at the Sheraton, where he jokingly said to its British manager that he wanted him to take care of Sheikh Ahmad Yasin and all the “terrorists” with him. The manager laughed with us. Yasin and his entourage had a meeting with the Emir and the top Qatari leaders who accompanied him. He was engaged in several official and public functions, including a popular congress in which he gave a talk that was well received by the audience. All the prominent scholars, notably Sheikh Yusuf al-Qaradawi, visited him. While in Qatar, Ahmad Mansur of the Arabic Aljazeera Channel introduced to me and Muhammad Nazzal the idea of his program “*Shahid 'Ala al-'Asr*” (Witness to History), and suggested that Sheikh Ahmad Yasin be the first interviewee of this program. Yasin commended the idea and accepted the invitation.

In Yemen, Yasin was enthusiastically received by President 'Ali 'Abdullah Salih, his government and the entire Yemeni people. He attended a huge congress that was attended by more than 20 thousand people in University Square in San'aa. I introduced Sheikh Ahmad Yasin with a short speech, and he spoke brilliantly on the first *Intifadah* and the role of Hamas in its success. He also met the leaders of the various Yemeni parties and factions.

From Yemen, we traveled to Syria, where Yasin received a grand reception from President Hafiz al-Assad, the government and the Syrian people. The Sheikh had a meeting in the presidential palace, which I, Khalid Mish'al, Musa Abu Marzuq, 'Imad al-'Alami and Abu Muhammad Mustafa attended. On the Syrian side were President Hafiz al-Assad, 'Abdul Halim Khaddam, Foreign Minister Faruq al-Shar' and some members of the national leadership of the Ba'th Party, amongst whom was 'Isam al-Qadi. The meeting continued for three

hours during which Yasin tried, on the request of some members of the Syrian MB Movement, to mediate between them and the Syrian government. Yasin spoke about the subject, but President Assad was so incensed that he angrily talked in detail about what the Syrian MB Movement did in Syria. The environment became tense, but, with his admirable diplomatic skills, Khalid Mish'al quickly changed the subject to the Palestinian issue. After this rescue operation, we talked about the sufferings and the hardship that Hamas experienced from the PA, while President Assad talked about his personal experiences with 'Arafat. Since the protocol requires that nobody should leave while in the presence of a president, I impatiently awaited the end of our meeting with President Hafiz al-Assad to rush to the toilet. 'Isam al-Qadi laughed and humorously said, 'Can't you wait? I said no. Al-Qadi said that Hafiz al-Assad, who had a surprising ability to control his urine, used this tactic in his meetings with US Secretary of State Warren Christopher, who becomes extremely uneasy. Their dialogue was called "the dialogue of extended bladders." On this occasion, I was told that Makarios, the first president of Cyprus, adopted this method in his meetings with the politicians and the leaders of the trade unions, whom he offers plenty of tea, coffee and soft drinks. Once he could see that they were irritated, he would take decisions to which they would have no option but to agree. I was also told that 'Arafat used to adopt a similar style, namely that he started his meetings with Fatah and the Executive Committee after midnight and they would continue until the early hours of the morning. He could afford this because he used to routinely sleep for two hours during the day. Thus, while all the others were half asleep, he remained wide awake and able to pass the decisions that he wanted.

Sheikh Ahmad Yasin was visited by the leaders of all the Palestinian factions, including George Habash, Nayef Hawatmeh, Abu Musa, al-Sa'iqa and the grandson of 'Ezzedeen Al-Qassam who resided in Damascus. The visit of the latter to Yasin was a highly emotional and historic event. Yasin also visited the Umayyad Mosque in Damascus and the nearby grave of the Muslim hero Salahuddine al-Ayyubi.





## This Book

This book is not merely the autobiography of Mr. Ibrahim Ghusheh, it is also a living testimony of the Palestinian and Jordanian Muslim Brothers' experience over a fifty years span.

Ibrahim Ghusheh was the official spokesman for Hamas during the period 1991–1999. His memoirs provide rich material and information published for the first time. These are the memoirs of a man who was present during the political decision-making of the Hamas Movement, especially in the first twelve years following its inception.

Ghusheh's memoirs are characterized by their clarity and candor. They bring to light many of Hamas' stands and viewpoints regarding a number of issues, which could be considered points of controversy among researchers, in particular during the period leading to *al-Aqsa Intifadah*.

Without a doubt, this book is indispensable for all those interested in Palestine studies and the contemporary history of the Palestinian issue.

# The Red Minaret

Memoirs of  
**Ibrahim Ghusheh**  
(Ex-Spokesman of Hamas)



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