

# The Red Minaret

Memoirs of

**Ibrahim Ghushah**

(Ex-Spokesman of Hamas)



Al-Zaytouna Centre for Studies & Consultations



# **Chapter Nine**

*The Period 1992–1993*



## The Period 1992–1993

### *Membership of the Preparatory Committee of the IAF*

1992 was a year that witnessed major events amongst which were my appointment to represent Hamas in the preparatory committee of the IAF. I immediately took this post, and had already attended many of the sessions of this body. The first was well attended by most of the Islamic forces and some independent Jordanian personalities. Salafis, Sufis and the Tabligh movement were all represented, and among the attendees were some dignitaries such as Kamil al-Sharif, Hamdi al-Tabba', Laith Shubeilat, Ra'if Najm, 'Izzat al-'Azizi and Yusuf Mubaideen. With Dr. Muhammad Abu Faris, Kamil al-Sharif and 'Izzat al-'Azizi, I participated in a sub-committee that wrote the first draft of the fundamental internal law of the IAF. There were two views within the MB Movement on the composition and orientation of the Front. While some wanted it to be dominated by the Brotherhood by having 70% of its membership, others, including myself, were satisfied with 50%. However, when it was decided that the majority should go to the Brotherhood, some of the representatives of other organizations as well as a group of independents became less enthusiastic for the idea itself than they were at the preliminary sessions. Nonetheless, the IAF was eventually formed with a sizable majority for the MB Movement; in fact, it had effectively become the political arm of Movement and some of the independents. Subsequently, laws were issued to the effect that anyone who belonged to a Jordanian party should not have any organizational relationship with any other organization. Thus, being the spokesman of Hamas, I resigned from the IAF. However, I continued to be physically present at its headquarters, which benefited the Islamic Resistance Movement Hamas in a number of ways. First, I had the opportunity to be in close contact with many people, including 26 members of the Jordanian parliament, which gave me the chance to update them on daily basis on the latest developments in the Palestinian issue, which furnished them with fresh, documented information that enabled them to confidently talk on all the relevant issues. Another benefit was that I established contacts in the media with journalists, news agencies and, subsequently, television stations, as well as parties and factions, which were all vehicles to reach the world community. My presence in the IAF continued until 1997, after which I established my own consultancy office that was, however, closed down in 1999 as we will explain later. Incidentally Hamas had a number of other offices: one for Khalid Mish'al, another for Muhammad Nazzal, Hamas' representative in Jordan, and a third for



Musa Abu Marzuq, while the office of 'Izzat al-Rishq was in the premises of the magazine *Filastin al-Muslima*. However, all these offices were closed down during the 1999 strike.

### *Skirmishes with Fatah in GS*

**In July 1992 Fatah launched a serious attack on Hamas in GS that aimed at its total liquidation.** By June 1992 Yitzhak Rabin had succeeded Shamir as the prime minister of Israel, and this coincided with the ongoing secret negotiations that had ultimately led to the Oslo Accords, signed in Washington on 13/9/1993. During this period Fatah attacked a consolation hall of the relatives of Dr. Muhammad Saqr, the president of the Islamic University, which developed in to a violent engagement throughout the GS for three days amid total media blackout. While deliberating with the PFLP, a member of its delegation told me of important events in GS that he did not quite spell out, and added that they had approached Fatah enquiring about the events but they totally denied their existence. However, it soon became evident that Fatah's motive was to crush Hamas in GS once and for all. Nonetheless, under the leadership of 'Abdul 'Aziz al-Rantissi, Hamas faced this potential calamity with determination and steadfastness, in which one of its members was killed and hundreds were wounded. With limited means compared to Fatah's huge armament and facilities, Hamas managed to foil the attempt, and it controlled a number of the refugee camps. It was only then when Hamas appeared to have the upper hand that Fatah offered the option for the two organizations to work together to stop the bloodshed. Knowing that Hamas is ideologically an offshoot of the MB Movement, Fatah sent a delegation to the latter's General-Guide in Jordan Muhammad 'Abdul Rahman Khalifah requesting his mediation. But Abu Majid declined to play this role, though he offered to put the delegation in touch with me. Subsequently, an engagement between Fatah and Hamas delegations took place in Abu Majid's office. Hamas' delegation was composed of me, 'Izzat al-Rishq and Ziad Abu Ghneimeh, while its counterpart was headed by Muhammad Jaradah and included Ghazi al-Husseini and Khalid Musmar, in addition to Abu Majid and some key personalities, such as Birgis al-Hadid. The sole agenda was to stop the bloodshed. However, I explained to the intermediaries what had exactly happened and who started the troubles, which was useful as some of them were in the dark as to the sequence of events as a result of Fatah's hegemony over the media. We finally agreed on a compromise formula whereby Hamas undertook to instruct its members in GS to stop the bloody confrontation, while Fatah would admit that the Islamic Resistance Movement Hamas is a national Palestinian faction. Jaradah and I signed this agreement,

and communicated it to the Brothers in the interior. But, the next day, I read in a newspaper that Najib al-Ahmad (father of ‘Azzam al-Ahmad), the director of ‘Arafat’s office in Amman, had issued a press release stating that Fatah and ‘Arafat did not recognize this agreement. Nonetheless, a number of influential Fatah leaders and subjects, who were extremely concerned that the conflict might spread to Jordan, approached me to say that they supported the agreement. A day or two later, Sheikh As‘ad Bayyoud al-Tamimi launched another attempt to stop the violence over a working dinner that he gave in his house in Jabal al-Hussein, and to which he invited some key personalities from Fatah and Hamas, including myself, Kamil al-Sharif and Salim al-Za‘nun.

### *The Events of Marj al-Zuhur*

The direct spark for these dramatic events, in which 415 Palestinian educators, politicians and Du‘at (Islamic preachers) were forcefully expelled from their land, was the capture by ‘Ezzedeen Al-Qassam Brigades of the Israeli Sergeant Nissim Toledano in Lod. They offered to free him in return for the release of Sheikh Ahmad Yasin, and the written offer was forwarded by ‘Ezzedeen al-Sheikh Khalil (who was killed three years ago in Damascus at the hands of the *Mossad*) to the Red Cross in Beirut to hand to the Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin. But, as usual, the latter refused the demand of releasing Sheikh Ahmad Yasin at 9 p.m. in return for the release of the Israeli soldier. Hence, Toledano was killed, and his body was found on 17/12/1992 on the road from Jerusalem to Jericho. In retaliation, the furious Rabin ordered the arrest of 385 members of Hamas and 15 from the PIJ, of whom some were taken from prisons and others from their own homes. In total 415 Palestinians were sent blindfolded and handcuffed to the freezing mountainous region of southern Lebanon, Marj al-Zuhur. These prisoners later revealed that the trip took 10 hours during which no food or drink was given to them, and they never knew where they were or where they were being taken to. However, on their arrival at Marj al-Zuhur, they elected ‘Abdul ‘Aziz al-Rantissi to be their spokesman, established for themselves a camp and insisted they should stay there until their return to their land.

At this juncture, an important question poses itself, namely, who helped Yitzhak Rabin to select these members by name and location? No doubt, the Israel Security Agency—ISA (*Shabak*), has a role in this, but equally there must have been some Palestinian agents who gave names to the Israelis. The blow

to Hamas was unprecedented, as the elite leadership was expelled from the interior. Rabin assumed that this strike would end Hamas once and for all. But this ordeal soon turned out to be a gift from *Allah*. Thanks to the persistence of those deportees who, irrespective of the severely cold climate and great hardship, insisted on staying in their camp from which they addressed the whole world on the cruelty and inhumanity of the Israelis. For over two months, the main item on the news was the group of Marj al-Zuhur. Hamas had, of course, kept in touch with them, and provided them, through Syria and Lebanon, with some help. For the sake of history, I should record that the Syrian regime and the Lebanese government both played an honorable role by securing food and facilitating contacts with the deportees. Marj al-Zuhur had, thus, become a symbol of dignity for a group of Palestinians with whom the Arab and Muslim nations had interacted positively. After three months or so, the media attention on Marj al-Zuhur waned.

### *Meeting with ‘Arafat and the Relationship with Fatah*

Despite the differences and the grudges, the Hamas leadership in Amman decided to seek a meeting with Yasir ‘Arafat in order to make use of the international connections of the PLO to rally global support to secure the return of the expelled Brothers. Moreover, Yasir ‘Arafat could not afford to decline cooperation on an issue that was a rallying call for all Palestinian factions and the entire Palestinian people. Through the Palestinian embassy in Amman, we sent a message to ‘Arafat requesting to meet and he agreed. But we insisted on a formal and written invitation from him personally, refusing to engage with the delay tactics of the Palestinian embassy that told us that the air tickets were ready for us to travel. We finally received a handwritten message from ‘Arafat inviting us for a meeting with the Palestinian leadership in Tunisia.

This was my first visit to Tunisia. Hamas’ delegation was headed by Musa Abu Marzuq and composed of ‘Imad al-‘Alami, Muhammad Nazzal and myself among others. We arrived at Tunis airport, where we were received by some Fatah officials who hosted us in a house. Nasr Yusuf and ‘Abdul Mun‘im Abu Sardanah visited us to say that ‘Arafat was busy, and that we may spend two days touring the country’s tourist attractions. At this juncture, I showed Nasr Yusuf ‘Arafat’s message, and told him that we did not come to Tunisia for sightseeing but to see ‘Arafat. If he was not available, we would return to Amman. An hour later he returned to say that we could see ‘Arafat that night... and we actually did!

During our three-day stay in Tunisia, we had three meetings with ‘Arafat and his aides, and we discussed three burning issues: First, the expulsion and the return of the brothers, Secondly, support and intensification of the *Intifadah*, and thirdly, the issue of the PLO and the incorporation of Hamas in to it. Surprisingly, the so-called meeting of the Palestinian leadership was loosely delivered and open to about 40 people, representatives of the factions, members of Fatah Central Committee, some members of the PLO Executive Committee and some independent personalities. Moreover, it was highly undisciplined as people kept coming and going. On noticing that everyone was writing during the deliberations, I turned to ‘Arafat to say, “You also write Abu ‘Ammar, are these the minutes of the session?” He said they were, and I asked for a copy when he finished his note taking. He replied that each person should write his own minutes. This reflected the lack of discipline at meetings of the Palestinian leadership, and betrays the fact that they were artificial, with decisions taken in closed rooms. Even before the beginning of the session, ‘Arafat bitterly confronted Taysir Khalid of the DFLP, which I interpreted as warning message for us to “behave,” otherwise he would do likewise to us. Thus, I told him that it was unbecoming that he would treat Taysir Khalid in this manner, and he should apologize. We do not accept this manner of factional interactions and ‘Arafat cooled down a little.

The Brothers put the issue of the expulsion on the table, which had at that juncture led to the suspension of negotiations in Washington. One of the Brothers present said that those expelled persons should return, to which Mahmud ‘Abbas responded by asking us whether we would agree to the resumption of negotiations in exchange for their return. Having a strong hunch that by this remark Mahmud ‘Abbas wanted to drag us to the negotiations, I immediately stated that we did not agree to negotiations, but as for the return of those deportees, this was a duty that every Palestinian should undertake.

During this session I noticed that the group of Mahmud ‘Abbas, Hassan ‘Usfur and Ahmad Qurei‘ were laughing with each other to which ‘Arafat had remarked sharply, calling them a “gang” and telling them to shut up. Since the confidential negotiations of Oslo between the PLO and the Israelis had by then already started, ‘Arafat’s phrase “gang” seemed to reflect his internal conviction, but, of course, nobody that time paid attention to the phrase at the time.

A committee composed of Yasir ‘Abd Rabbuh of the PLO and ‘Imad al-‘Alami of Hamas was formed to draft the final communiqué of the discussions. After six hours of tense bargaining, no agreement was reached, notwithstanding the attempt of the master manipulator ‘Abd Rabbuh to carry with him the alert and firm representative of Hamas, al-‘Alami. Finally two different statements were

issued: one reflecting the view of Hamas and the other that of the PLO and Fatah. The failed Tunis meeting came to an end, though it was agreed that another one be arranged in due course.

Two incidents that took place towards the end of 1992 worthy of recording here. The first occurred during a meeting of the Palestinian leadership in Tunis. When the name of the MB Movement was mentioned, ‘Arafat attacked them, to which I (being then a member of Hamas delegation in this meeting) furiously responded, “It is unbecoming that you attack the Muslim Brotherhood, particularly so as the founding cadres of Fatah were from this movement, so you are the last one who should do this.” He paused for a moment, and then acknowledged that what I had said was correct. He pointed to a photo of some martyrs (a photo of Fatah’s early martyrs hung on the wall), stating that they were all from the MB movement. The MB movement should always be spoken of with respect by Fatah in recognition of their dedication and discipline.

The second incident took place during a discussion between Hamas and Fatah delegations on the 1992 violence in GS. Fatah’s delegation was led by al-Tayyib ‘Abdul Rahim and included ‘Abbas Zaki, Marwan al-Barghouthi, ‘Adnan al-Damiri (from Tulkarem) and a representative of Nablus. The other delegation was composed of both Hamas and the MB Movement, and included the head of the Jordanian Islamist bloc of MPs, Ibrahim Khraisat (as the head of the delegation), Muhammad Abu Faris and Sheikh ‘Abdul ‘Aziz Jabr, while from Hamas was Muhammad Nazzal and myself, in addition to a Hamas member from Jerusalem Jamil Hamami, who was a guest in Amman. In this encounter, a prolonged discussion took place on the events of GS, when, as usual, Fatah tried to hold Hamas squarely responsible for the bloodshed. But the information that we have proves that it was Fatah that was instrumental in the outbreak of these confrontations. Incidentally, earlier and by sheer chance we obtained a written message from ‘Arafat to the General-Guide of the MB movement, on which a member of this encounter, namely ‘Adnan al-Damiri, wrote to ‘Arafat words to the effect that nothing would work with the MB except liquidation. While this individual was uttering a futile speech on the Brotherhood and national unity, Muhammad Nazzal exhibited this message, which led to resounding shock, while al-Damiri’s face turned yellow then red out of embarrassment. During the numerous meetings that we had with Fatah, Marwan al-Barghouthi exhibited more extremism than ‘Abbas Zaki. He focused on the negative aspects of the first *Intifadah*, like the strikes and their negative impact on the Palestinian economy, which indicated that he was for the stoppage of the *Intifadah*. However, after Oslo, Marwan al-Barghouthi would enter Palestine to become one of Fatah’s leaders who had been particularly influential during the second *Intifadah*.

On the invitation of the Federation of Student Islamic Societies, I visited London in 1992 for the second time. On my arrival at Heathrow airport on an ordinary visa issued in Amman, the immigration officer inspected my passport and realized that all the countries that I traveled to were on the “terrorist list.” She asked me to stand aside for a while during which she consulted her bosses. After half an hour she stamped the visa and allowed me to enter; she must have ascertained that both my visa and letter of invitation were genuine. Another encounter with the Muslims in Britain was a three day visit to a camp in Leicester of some Brothers of the Pakistani Jama‘ah Islamiyyah. Several issues were presented in this meeting, including the Palestinian issue, the Iraqi-Kuwaiti crisis, the Madrid Conference and others. It had been my second and last visit to Britain.

### *The Khartoum Dialogue with Fatah, 1993*

After our return to Amman, both  **Hamas and Fatah received an invitation from Hassan al-Turabi to resume dialogue in Khartoum.** Hamas delegates were headed by Musa Abu Marzuq and myself along with Muhammad Siyam, ‘Imad al-‘Alami and others came too, while Fatah’s delegation was led by ‘Arafat, and included Salim al-Za‘nun, Nasr Yusuf, Abu Ali Shahin, Muhammad Dahlan, Sa’ib al-‘Ajiz and others. However, ‘Arafat sat beside al-Turabi and delegated al-Za‘nun to be head of Fatah’s delegation. In 1991 Hamas was subjected to intense pressure to join the PLO to disguise Fatah’s ulterior motive of joining the Madrid Conference as a popular move on behalf of all the Palestinian people. ‘Arafat intensified this pressure on Hamas in the 1993 Khartoum dialogue in an attempt to claim that his decision to sign the Oslo Accords represented the wish of all the Palestinian factions. Thus, on this occasion, he employed to the full his expertise in intimidation and emotional blackmailing to terrorize and confuse Hamas, by saying, inter alia, that you (Hamas) are going down the drain and we will never forget or disregard the noble cause of the numerous “martyrs” that we presented. In response to this intensive campaign of abuse, I told him, “Abu Ammar, since you choose to attack us so extensively even before we join the PLO; surely your smear campaign will be much more brutal once we have joined.” And I added that “our position is as it is, there is no change of mind whatsoever, either we have 40% if no elections are conducted, or there should be elections.”

As he was utterly desperate for our recognition of the PLO, ‘Arafat exhibited fury and anger, though most of it was affected. Our Sudanese hosts, specifically Hassan al-Turabi, Ibrahim al-Sanusi and Yasin (‘Umar) al-Imam, met separately

with Hamas delegates in an attempt to persuade them to join the PLO. Amongst their rationale was that since the whole world recognizes the PLO, you should do likewise. But we refused to succumb to this pressure. For the sake of history, I will record here that Musa, ‘Imad and myself were adamant and blunt in refusing the suggestion of the Sudanese. ‘Arafat and Salim al-Za‘nun left Khartoum and the final communiqué, which was drafted after their departure and signed by Hassan al-Turabi and Abu Marzuq for Hamas and Nasr Yusuf on behalf Fatah, spelled out the contradicting positions of Fatah and Hamas. The Khartoum dialogue was over.

### *Rules Governing Hamas’ Status in Jordan*

Following a decision by the Jordanian government to grant Musa Abu Marzuq and ‘Imad al-‘Alami permission to stay in Jordan and to allow Hamas to have its Political Bureau in Amman, Marzuq, ‘Imad and myself had a meeting with the Jordanian Prime Minister Zaid Ibn Shaker **and his Deputy Thuqan al-Hindawi**. The premier described his government’s desire to have a working relationship with Hamas, which he emphasized by asking me if the government ever restrict my activity as a spokesman (of Hamas), to which I responded: “Not at all. All facilities have been extended. We are keen to maintain the status quo in Jordan.” Subsequently, we, (i.e., Musa Abu Marzuq, Muhammad Nazzal and myself, and probably ‘Imad al-‘Alami) met the **Director General of the GID Mustafa al-Qaysi**, who sometimes invited his deputy Samih al-Battikhi to attend such encounters. We talked about the mechanisms of our work in Jordan, and the limits of what we should and should not do. No formal agreement was made, just a “gentlemen’s agreement,” with a few issues jotted down including our permission to conduct political and media activities in Jordan, but emphasizing that we should not interfere in the country’s affairs, nor to launch military operations from its territories. Thus, Hamas opened its Political Bureau in Khalda, Amman, and has worked along agreed bases since early 1993, and until later developments triggered a change in the equation.

### *Launching of Hamas’ External Contacts*

The ordeal of the deportees in Marj al-Zuhur in early 1993 (of whom many at the time of writing in 2007 had either been killed or were in Israeli detention) had encouraged Hamas to decide to approach, if feasible, European governments and the US to use their influence in the UN Security Council and other bodies to secure their return on the ground that their expulsion is in the

first place was contrary to the Fourth 1949 Geneva Convention. In my capacity as spokesperson, I was tasked with conducting these contacts. I contacted the American embassy in Amman requesting a meeting with an American official. The response was positive, and the political counsel at the American embassy, a cautious, slim and rather short man, came to the IAF office. After extending the appropriate greetings and courtesy, including customary cup of coffee, I briefed him on the issue of Marj al-Zuhur, and requested that he inform his government that we look forward to its attempts to secure the return of those expelled to their country, as what Rabin had done was in absolute contradiction of Geneva and the UN treaties. He listened attentively, and promised to communicate this request to the American government via his ambassador. This was the first contact between Hamas and an American official.

After less than a month, the above American official took the liberty to contact me requesting a visit. I welcomed his initiative, and I received him at the IAF headquarters. We, of course, talked about the measures to be taken to repatriate the deportees of Marj al-Zuhur. But he switched the discussion to the issue of negotiations, which he strongly supported, and argued that it was the interests of the Palestinian people that Hamas participate in them, and agree to the peace initiative, including the Madrid Conference (by that time the Oslo negotiations were not yet been on the table). I explained to him Hamas' position on the issue of the peace settlement, which was based on the conviction that the whole of historic Palestine is the legitimate home of the Palestinians, and added that we did not distinguish between the territories occupied in 1948 and those annexed in 1967; all of them are Palestinian. Though rejecting our argument, he understood the logic of our position.

Subsequently, we contacted several embassies in Amman, including the British embassy, whose ambassador welcomed us and invited us to his house in the Zahran district. Since I normally do not see these foreign dignitaries alone, I took 'Izzat al-Rishq and Muhammad Nazzal with me to the British ambassador's house. Incidentally, in all our dialogues with the British, we found them to be more understanding than the Americans of the Palestinian issue. No wonder; they are the ones who bear the responsibility for the founding of the "Zionist state" and the consequential calamity of expulsion and forceful migration of the Palestinian people from their country. However, on that occasion, the ambassador, who was accompanied by one of his aides—the political counselor—was quite hospitable and courteous offering us soft drinks and coffee. Then, in an advisory tone, he questioned our refusal to accept the UN resolutions at a time when all states had accepted them. In response to this, I reminded him that the UK itself had rejected some of them, such as

Resolution 181 which dealt with the partition of Palestine. Initially he insisted that his government accepted this resolution, but, on the advice of the advisor, he quickly retreated as he embarrassedly realized that the UK had at the time actually abstained from voting on 181. He added that the Palestinians were extremely weak, and should therefore negotiate with the overwhelmingly powerful Israel on their terms. I confronted this by saying that, in spite of the devastating defeat suffered by the British at the hands of the superior forces of Hitler in the battle of Dunkirk, and their withdrawal to the UK, the British government refused Hitler's offer of negotiations. Though the German air force continued to bombard the UK for two years, occupying much of Europe, the British did not use their weakness as a pretext to compromise with the Germans. Instead they fought, on the basis that they could never conclude a deal with a country that had committed so many atrocities and occupied so much of the continent. This, I protested, was our position. Admittedly, we were currently weaker, but we would be stronger in time. During this lengthy dialogue, we also presented to the ambassador the issue of the expelled Palestinians to which he responded in the usual cool English manner; saying simply that he would study the matter and communicate with his government.

Among those who visited me in early 1993 was the German ambassador to Jordan, whose attitude on the Palestinian issue was similar to that of the Americans. While with the ambassador in his office, the German consul dropped by to invite us for a cup of coffee in his office. Thus, after the end of our encounter with the ambassador, we went to the consul's office where he introduced himself as being from East Germany, which had by then been united with West Germany. He expressed his support to Hamas' struggle against Israel, even adding that the Germans had suffered a lot from the Jews, and that he was ready to extend to us all possible help.

In an encounter with the Italian ambassador, he frankly and explicitly told us that his country was so weak that it was unable to have a policy of its own. It simply followed whatever the Americans said and did.

The lady ambassador of Norway took the initiative and visited me in my office, where I welcomed her, and we discussed several issues, including the case of the expelled Palestinians. By that time, we were aware of a propaganda campaign, primarily organized by 'Arafat's people, portraying a negative image of Hamas in many countries including Arab states. This was demonstrated during a visit that the same Norwegian ambassador had paid to me, with her counterpart in Cairo, two years later, after the conclusion of the Oslo Accords. Since this treaty had provided for the stationing of unarmed observers in Hebron, of whom some were Norwegians, the ambassador was genuinely concerned that

they could be attacked by Hamas and she appealed for my help in this matter. I assured her that, if sent, these observers would not be exposed to any danger from Hamas, as the movement resists and attacks the Israeli occupiers only.

After a second encounter with the political counsel of the American embassy in Amman, I asked to meet the ambassador himself. But the embassy said that they would send the same counselor to see me. I insisted on seeing the Ambassador who, I argued, routinely met representatives of movements far less important than Hamas. Once again they apologized but I refused to change my position. This was the last contact between the US and Hamas, as by the end of March 1993, the State Department issued a decree that prohibited contacts with Hamas.

### *Oslo Accords*

**Preparations for Oslo** started confidentially conducted by Ahmad Qurei<sup>4</sup>, Hassan ‘Ufur and an individual from al-Kurd family, who were all under the direct supervision of Mahmud ‘Abbas, who, on his part, had direct contact with ‘Arafat. As is the case in similar situations, the preparations for Oslo meetings started with encounters between academics from both sides. Thus, Israeli academics had several sessions with their Palestinian counterparts, including Faisal al-Husseini and Hanan ‘Ashrawi. Subsequently, further discussions were conducted in Norway. They were revealed in August, 1993 and the Oslo Accords were concluded in a major celebration at the White House on 13/9/1993. **Oslo entered the Palestinian arena**, though the Palestinian people, represented by many of their political forces, including Hamas, adamantly rejected it. It was also opposed by a number of Arab states, notably Syria. Even King Hussein of Jordan was initially infuriated by the news of this treaty, though he changed his position 48 hours later. Like other concerned experts, I found this treaty to be basically a security arrangement, as it focuses on the **building of a large, strong and effective Palestinian police force**, whose prime aim was to stop the first *Intifadah*, and to repel any operations against Israel. This was what had actually been applied on the ground, while the major issues—the withdrawal of Israeli forces, Jerusalem, Israeli settlements, borders, water and the Palestinian refugees—were shelved for some unspecified time in the future.

Amongst the Palestinians who objected to Oslo Accords was Hani al-Hassan, who described it as “dangerous,” as rather than postponing the major issues, it should have settled them once and for all, and to have set a timetable for the withdrawal of Israeli forces from Palestinian territories. During my second visit

to Marj al-Zuhur towards the end of 1993, and just before the return of the deportees to Palestine (my first visit was early in 1993), I delivered a speech in the camp in which I enumerated the numerous negative aspects of the Oslo Accords, and argued that it included within its terms and clauses were the seeds of its failure. One of the deportees (Bassam Jarrar) told a member of the visiting Hamas' Political Bureau that it seemed that I was very confident that this treaty would fail.

A deep and shrewd comment on the Oslo Accords was made at the time by President Assad, who said that each article of this treaty needs a treaty to explain it. However, 'Arafat and his Fatah organization, as well as some leftist forces, including the Communist Party, strongly supported the treaty. I recall that a lecture delivered on the subject by one of the prominent leaders of the latter party, Ishaq al-Khatib, described the Oslo Accords as an obligatory passageway to the Palestinian state.

### *The Palestinian Ten-Faction Coalition*

We had succeeded in establishing the ten Palestinian factions in Tehran in October 1991, with whom we continued to exchange views throughout 1992 and 1993. By the end of 1993, these dialogues had reached to a successful conclusion by the formation of a coalition of these factions in Damascus on 1/1/1994: Hamas, PIJ, PFLP-GC, PFLP, DFLP, al-Sa'iqah, Fatah al-Intifadah and others. Being in Damascus at the time, I had been one of those who enthusiastically pressed for this coalition as we could not stand alone against the Oslo camp. However, in this coalition agreement, Hamas recorded its reservations about the absence of an Islamic dimension in the Palestinian National Charter. Since neither we nor PIJ were at the time members of the PLO, we insisted on reserving our right to request, sometime in the future, the restructuring of the PLO and the revision of the Palestinian National Charter in such a way that would include an Islamic dimension alongside the national dimension.

In the beginning of 1993, two months after our meeting with Fatah in Khartoum, 'Arafat sent us, through Nasr Yusuf and two Fatah members, **an ultimatum** that they delivered during a meeting in the IAF office. 'Arafat's message was brief; namely that Hamas could either agree to join the PNC and recognize the PLO as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people or be decisively dealt with in battle. Nasr Yusuf added some boastful claims about the Fatah movement and its pioneer role in the national struggle. In a heated exchange with Nasr and his colleagues, we made it clear to them that

we refused ‘Arafat’s threats and would never change our position. As for their claim that Fatah was the one who fired the first bullet, we told them that the struggle had started much earlier, in 1920, 1921, 1929 and during the Palestinian revolution of 1936. Moreover, the MB Movement, to whom we belong, had actively participated and lost many martyrs in the 1948 war, long before the foundation of Fatah. Additionally, the first cadres of Fatah itself were diehard supporters of the MB Movement.



## 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.

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