

**Adel Salama<sup>1</sup>**  
Malaya University  
Malaysia

Overview paper

<https://doi.org/10.54561/prj1701109s>

Date received: August 20, 2022

Date accepted: November 12, 2022

**Sharifah Hayaati Syed Ismail al-Qudsy<sup>2</sup>**  
Malaya University  
Malaysia

**Osman Rasip<sup>3</sup>**  
Malaya University  
Malaysia

**Amer Abdulwahab<sup>4</sup>**  
Malaya University  
Malaysia

## THE PALESTINIAN ISSUE IN THE MEDIA DISCOURSES OF TERRORIST ORGANIZATIONS

### Abstract

This article examines the extent to which the Palestinian issue is exploited to promote cross-border terrorist movements. The analytical descriptive approach is employed to explore the evolution of the terrorist organizations, and trace the ideology, means, and content of their media discourse. The article reveals that the extremist groups utilized the value, sanctity, and nobility of the Palestinian issue to influence Arab and Islamic societies in an attempt to give legitimacy and credibility to their presence, media discourse, and terrorist acts; disseminate their extremist ideologies; rally support and recruit new elements, and emotionally influence the public perception. The article also concluded that these terrorist organizations refrained from targeting the Israeli occupation and opposed the Palestinian national narrative about the national and political nature of the Palestinian struggle.

**Keywords:** terrorism, extremism, media discourse, ISIS, Al-Qaeda, Palestinian issue

- 1 Adel Salama is a Research Candidate at the Academy of Islamic Studies, University of Malaya. He is a Political Officer at the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, specialized in the Palestinian Israeli Conflict. Contact E-mail: [adelsalameh@yahoo.com](mailto:adelsalameh@yahoo.com)
- 2 Sharifah Hayaati Syed Ismail al-Qudsy is an Associate Professor of Islamic Political Science at the Academy of Islamic Studies of the University of Malaya. She holds this position since 2007. Contact E-mail: [sashsiaq@um.edu.my](mailto:sashsiaq@um.edu.my)
- 3 Osman Rasip is a Senior Lecturer at the Academy of Islamic Studies at the Academy of Islamic Studies of the University of Malaya. Contact E-mail: [osmanrasip@um.edu.my](mailto:osmanrasip@um.edu.my)
- 4 Amer Abdulwahab Murshed received his Ph.D. from International Islamic University Malaya. He is a Senior Lecturer at the Academy of Islamic Studies of the University of Malaya. Contact E-mail: [almurshed\\_19@yahoo.com](mailto:almurshed_19@yahoo.com)

## Introduction

The rapidly growing phenomenon of terrorism and terrorist groups, whether in terms of the extent, form, means used, the type of those responsible for it, or the motives and reasons that feed it, requires a considerable amount of attention, study, and analysis, especially after it has become a threat to the international community with all its internal, economic, social, political structures or even religious and spiritual values.

Terrorist groups around the world have been able to use the media as an effective weapon to reach the minds and hearts of the target population and influence public opinion in their warfare, by adopting an integrated media strategy that employs the Internet as a universal instrument for disseminating and promoting their ideologies, recruiting new elements through various electronic tools, and employing it professionally by using (12) international languages.<sup>5</sup>

Since the Palestinian issue and what it represents of existential conflict and historical human grievance remain unresolved, and the religious and spiritual status embodied by Jerusalem as a result of the eternal attachment of Muslims to the blessed Al-Aqsa Mosque, this issue has been exploited as one of the most important factors to attract Arab and Islamic attention, solidarity, support and sympathy. This central issue has also been employed as an attractive media and propaganda material by terrorist groups that have taken Islam as their slogan and are far from Islam and its true teachings. The holy sites, the purification of the Al-Aqsa Mosque, the killing of the Jews, and other propaganda slogans. In addition, some terrorist and extremist groups have attributed their name as evidence of their connection to the cause of Palestine, Jerusalem or the *Mujahideen*, although they have never had anything to do with the cause of Palestine and have not done anything about the Israeli occupation, rather, this case was used to promote its crimes and organized terrorism against Arab and Islamic countries or other countries around the world.

Many scholars have considered the Palestinian issue among the most influential motives for joining new supporters and fighters in terrorist organizations. For example, when United States President Donald Trump announced his plan to move the American embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem in 2017, Al Qaeda called for Muslims to move to Jerusalem.<sup>6</sup> In the same token, Israeli-Palestinian tensions could result in IS and AQ stepping up their rhetoric and recruitment efforts in other regional theaters, notably South or Southeast Asia, without necessarily calling for attacks on the State of Israel.<sup>7</sup>

The last two issues of *Al-Naba*, the weekly newsletter of the Islamic State (IS),

5 Evgeny N. Pashentsev and Darya Yu Bazarkina, ISIS Propaganda on the Internet, and Effective Counteraction, *Journal of Political Marketing*, Vol. 20, No. 1, 2021, pp. 17-33.

6 Mohammed Muqtar Qandil, "How Terrorist Groups Use Jerusalem", Washington Institute for Near East Policy (WINEP), January 25, 2018. Available at: <https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/how-terrorist-groups-use-jerusalem> (accessed May 8, 2022).

7 Mohammed Siyech, Suraj Ganesan, "Jihadist Groups Exploiting the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict", <https://www.mei.edu/publications/jihadist-groups-exploiting-israeli-palestinian-conflict> (accessed on May 8, 2022).

entitled, *"The Road to Jerusalem"*. ( Kyle Orton, 2022)<sup>8</sup> (Petter Nesser, 2004)<sup>9</sup> argued that the rhetoric of Al-Qaeda towards Palestine is employed as a useful lightning rod through which al-Qaida can tap into the emotional attachment of Muslims and Arabs worldwide. Indeed, the issue provides al-Qaida with a powerful rhetorical tool for radicalization, recruitment, and fundraising, while neither the liberation of Palestine nor the attack on Israel is central topics".<sup>10</sup> (Barak Mendelsohn, 2022) documented and archived through the Global Terrorism Research Project approximately 206 visual and readable media archives for terrorist organizations directly or indirectly related to the Palestinian issue.<sup>11</sup> That is why this article attempts to answer questions pertaining to the impact of the Palestinian cause on the growth and spread of global terrorist organizations, the repercussions of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict on the media discourse of these movements, and its role in creating a state of solidarity among non-Palestinians that inspires them to take up arms and join extremist terrorist groups.

The importance of this research lies in addressing a conceptually complex and ambiguous issue that has not received an objective and in-depth academic study despite it being addressed in some informal discourses and discussions about the causes of international terrorism, given the important political implications of this topic, with regard to combating terrorism and other approaches States and their vision towards the issue of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict.

### **Terrorism, extremism and the behavior of extremist terrorist groups**

Terrorism and extremism have constituted one of the most important and prominent problems and challenges that threaten national, regional and international stability, by igniting different types of conflicts and evoking the most painful historical moments in human civilization. Terror attacks has continued to evolve since the September 11, 2001 and increased globally to 5,226 in 2021.<sup>12</sup>

The activities of organized terrorism are varied and include overlapping operations of organizing, financing, planning, and implementation policies, in addition to a communication policy to promote their propaganda which includes (radicalization, incitement to terrorism, recruitment of new elements, and the ideological mobilization with a specific narrative to convince them to commit criminal and terrorist acts. Recently, (Derrick, et. al.) conducted a case study entitle: *Terrorist Attacks*

8 Kyle Orton, "Islamic State Comments on the Gaza War and Escalates in Afghanistan", available at: <https://kyleorton.co.uk/2021/05/22/islamic-state-gaza-war-jerusalem-afghanistan-pakistan-kashmir-india-africa/> (accessed on August 11, 2022).

9 Petter Nesser, "Jihad In Europe: A Survey of the Motivations for Sunni Islamist Terrorism in Post-Millennium Europe", Norwegian Defense Research Establishment (FFI/Report), Kjeller, 2004, pp. 32, 36-37, 48, 54, 57, 60, 65.

10 Matthew Levitt, "Israel as an Al-Qa'ida Target- Sorting Rhetoric From Reality", The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, October 30, 2009. Available at: <https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/israel-al-qaeda-target-sorting-rhetoric-reality> (accessed August 10, 2022).

11 "Global Terrorism Research Project", available at: <http://gtrp.haverford.edu> (accessed August 10, 2022).

12 "Global Terrorism Index 2022: Measuring the Impact of Terrorism", available at: <http://visionofhumanity.org/resources> (accessed July 29, 2022).

in the Middle East: A Counter-Terrorism Medicine Analysis and concluded that a total of 41,837 attacks occurred in the Middle East from 1970-2019 accounting for 24.9% of all terrorist attacks around the world with a total of 100,446 deaths were recorded with 187,447 non-fatal injuries.<sup>13</sup>

Despite the interest of the international community in the serious consequences of terrorist acts and its commitment to unite efforts to confront them through many agreements, resolutions and recommendations issued by international organizations, especially the United Nations, the definition of terrorism has, yet, to face many difficulties due to the difference in attitudes, perceptions, and interests from which countries proceed towards addressing this phenomenon which threatens international peace and security. It can be said that the only constant in the subject of terrorism is that it has become one of the deadliest means of coercion and violence in a way that goes beyond all laws, norms and regulations. Therefore, terrorism can be defined, after a deep literary review, in the use or threat of illegal violence and the practice of internationally criminal acts, whether by individuals, groups, or even states, as a means of inciting terror, panic, and instability in societies and states, with the aim of obtaining information or material gains, or political, religious, ideological, or social goals espoused by the terrorist group.

In this context, the *Arab Observatory for the Affairs of Terrorist and Extremist Movements* has defined the phenomenon of terrorism as each of the acts or actions that aim to spread fear and terror in the hearts of individuals, groups or states, to achieve goals that are outside international laws and norms. Therefore, the Observatory has categorized terrorism into five main types<sup>14</sup>:

(1) *Individual terrorism*: an act or action committed by a specific individual in a way that contradicts the prevailing laws, norms, values, and social traditions, honor crimes, revenge, and others.

(2) *Religious - and sectarian terrorism*: It is terrorism that is based on adopting the methods and practices of intellectual terrorism, psychological pressure, defamation and humiliation, physical violence, individual or collective atonement, fatwas for wasting the blood of a person, group, or sect for religious or sectarian reasons, and it adopts methods of sabotage, threats, abuse, torture, slaughter, and other forms.

(3) *Unorganized mass terrorism*: It is carried out by unorganized gangs to achieve special goals using methods of sabotage, looting, and armed robbery.

(4) *Organized mass terrorism*: It is terrorism practiced by organized groups that are financed and supervised by institutions, bodies, intelligence services, or states, to achieve political, religious, or sectarian goals.

(5) *International terrorism*: terrorism that is practiced by one or more countries by harnessing all their diplomatic, military, and intelligence capabilities and energies to achieve political goals, to seize gains or wealth of other countries, and it takes

13 Derrick Tin, Saleh Fares, Mobarak Al Mulhim, and Gregory Ciottone, *Terrorist Attacks in the Middle East: A Counter-Terrorism Medicine Analysis*, *Prehospital and Disaster Medicine*, Vol. 3, No. 1-5, 2022.

14 Ziyad Mansour, Al Irhab Byna al-Tarikh wa al Tashkhis, *Lebanese Journal of National Defense*, No. 100, 2017.

many forms such as diplomatic pressure, economic blockade, use of military force, targeting infrastructure facilities, the systematic killing of civilians, the organized political assassination, the unjustified siege.

The opinion has settled on saying that the psychological element of the terrorist crime is manifested in the very purpose of terrorism, which is the use of terror and extreme dread to achieve political goals of any kind, as it is possible to summarize the behavior of these groups and currents with an extremist tendency in the following points:

(1) The roots of extremist and armed groups such as the Islamic State "ISIS" and other groups are usually due to the power vacuum, or the absence of the government or any central authority, such as the cases of Iraq and Syria, and their weak spread sometimes, as in the Arab countries.

(2) These groups work by influencing the minds of citizens, taking advantage of the state of society's preoccupation with the successive life crises and the illogical king, and they provide emotional solutions through simple empty slogans that dispel feelings and emotions and claim that they have solutions.

(3) These dangerous groups carry a message that attracts marginalized groups and exploits their weaknesses to convince them that they are adopting and defending their grievances and rights, and claiming that they are right and others are wrong.

(4) These organizations exploit religion to satisfy their chaotic tendencies, as they believe that they are waging a war in which everything is permitted; then they distort religious texts, use them outside their context, and destroy what contradicts or opposes them to justify the killings, torture and brutality that they perpetrate.

### **The Palestinian issue in the media discourses of terrorist groups<sup>15</sup>**

Terrorist organizations have worked on some major issues, especially those that attract Arab and Islamic sympathies with them, to achieve some of their goals related to recruitment, mobilization, and financial support, in an attempt to raise their ability to operate on the ground and launch attacks. For example, the terrorist organizations took advantage of the clashes that took place in May 2021, between Israel and "Hamas" against the backdrop of the Sheikh Jarrah neighborhood crisis, in an attempt to reposition and adopt the "Palestinian cause" as a major issue in the political discourse of these organizations, which were in rush to issue press releases that reached about 30 statements, including the statement of Al-Qaeda organization entitled: "Love, honor, and support for our people in Palestine." And the special issue of an-Nafeer al-Qaida newsletter, entitled "Al-Aqsa in the Protection of the

15 Deena al-Moqadam, "Terrorism Will not Liberate Palestine", May 22, 2021. Available at: <https://www.mobtada.com/opinions/1050947/%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A5%D8%B1%D9%87%D8%A7%D8%A8-%D9%84%D9%86-%D9%8A%D8%AD%D8%B1%D8%B1-%D9%81%D9%84%D8%B3%D8%B7%D9%8A%D9%86> (accessed August 14, 2022).

Grandchildren of Al-Bara' bin Malik" and others.<sup>16</sup>

These extremist groups also used the Palestinian cause as a strong pretext in order to attract and recruit individuals to be affiliated with, but with regard to the mentality, ideas and strategies of these terrorist groups in dealing with the Palestinian cause, this issue ends there, because they use it only as a tool for recruitment and mobilization. As the concept of war on Islam and Muslims deepens far beyond the Palestinian issue to recruitment and ideologically training the terrorists to shift the direction from Israel to other countries, where these groups work to target them according to the scope of their work, but with the passage of time these terrorist groups ignore the issue of Palestine as a slogan only.<sup>17</sup> These terrorist organizations always proceed from the principle of "exploiting the environment and reorganizing and crystallizing themselves within the framework of the Palestinian cause, especially if organizations such as Al-Qaeda, the Islamic State "ISIS" and some other organizations operating in the Arab region want to regain control of the scene. Here we find the extent to which it uses this central issue in its media discourse in order to influence individuals' ideas and solicit their sympathy and then attract and recruit them to achieve its terrorist goals.<sup>18</sup>

### **The issue of Jerusalem and Palestine on the media agenda of al-Qaeda**

Although the main focus of al-Qaeda in its media discourse is on the occupation or influence of the United States in the Islamic countries, the issue of Palestine has appeared prominently in most of the media statements and political discourses of al-Qaeda since its inception. For example, the statements made by Osama bin Laden since 1990 included references to Al-Aqsa Mosque, the city of Jerusalem, or the Palestinian cause, thus stirring religious and political ties and feelings between Muslims and Arabs around the world<sup>19</sup>

They can be included here, so we will suffice with some examples only to deduce the political view of Al-Qaeda. An example of this is what Osama bin Laden, the leader of Al-Qaeda, promised a few days after the events of September 11 (2001), in which he stated: *"To America, I say only a few words to it and its people. I swear by God, who has elevated the skies without pillars, neither America nor the people who live in it will dream of security before we live it in Palestine..."*. Whereas he threatened the United States of America, using the Palestinian cause as a pretext and justification for this threat, and it is noticeable that this media behavior is repeated when events related to the Palestinian cause develop, as these groups release many and more

16 Muhammad Qandil, "Trends in terrorist activity in 2022: growth or decline?", Trends Research and Advisory Consulting, available at: <https://trendsresearch.org/ar/insight/trends-of-terrorist-activity-in-2022/> (accessed August 10, 2022).

17 "How the media turned into a weapon for terrorist groups", *Al-Ahram Gate*, October 27, 2018. Available at: <http://gate.ahram.org.eg/> (accessed September 2, 2022).

18 Ghassan Abu Hussein. "ISIS Media Discourse: Dabiq Electronic Magazine as a Model: Content Analysis", Unpublished Master Thesis, Middle East University, Department of Information, Oman, 2017.

19 Asaf Maliach, Bin-Laden, Palestine and al-Qaeda's Operational Strategy, *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 44, No. 3, 2008, pp. 353-375.

warning and threatening statements.<sup>20</sup>

Al-Qaeda also issued a visual version entitled "Jerusalem is but a bride its dowry is our blood", on 5/9/2016, for Hamza, son of the former leader of Al-Qaeda, Osama bin Laden, on the need to consider the Syrian state as one of the most important countries and to emphasize on Syria as the main gateway to liberate the Palestinian territory. In addition to many basic and basic literature that includes many speeches and writings related to the Palestinian cause and uses them to promote its agenda and its illusory goal to liberate Palestine and Jerusalem, which this organization adopts in the media as propaganda material to attract and recruit new elements.<sup>21</sup>

In 2013, Thomas Heigmer and others in their study titled "*Palestine Effect: The Role of the Palestinians in the Transnational Jihad Movement*," concluding that Palestinian ideologues of transnational jihad are few in number compared to their more nationally focused counterparts, even though the liberation of Jerusalem was one of the pillars on which the group was promoting, adding that "Palestine effect" thus appears to be a primarily motivational mechanism".<sup>22</sup> This confirms the extent of this terrorist organization's interest in using the Palestinian cause through its policies, media strategies and political discourses, to attract, mobilize and recruit individuals under this pretext.<sup>23</sup>

In this context, al-Zawahiri said in 1996, "The Palestine issue is at the top of the list in his speeches, and that all Arab and Islamic regimes, including the Palestine Liberation Organization, have lost their credibility simply because they accept the authority of the United Nations and the legitimacy of Israel." Bakker, E., & Boer, L. (2007)<sup>24</sup> This proves that these terrorist organizations have been trying to extend a hand to steal the Palestinian banner to legitimize themselves among the Arabs and other peoples.

In light of the Deal of the Century, Al-Qaeda issued a statement calling on Muslims all over the world to head towards Jerusalem to confront this decision. The Islamic State "ISIS" also issued many threatening statements and publications that revolve around this issue, as it issued an informational article entitled "Bait al-Maqdis, its guardians are but the pious"; during which the Organization positioned itself as the defender and fighter for all Islamic countries, not only Jerusalem"<sup>25</sup>. As Abu Musab al-Zarqawi announced in April 2003 through his first televised speech entitled

20 Mohammed Qandil, "How Terrorist Groups Use Jerusalem", Washington Institute for Near East Policy (WINEP), January 25, 2018. Available at: <https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/how-terrorist-groups-use-jerusalem> (accessed August 30, 2022).

21 Video message from al-Qa'idah's Hamzah Bin Usamah Bin Laden: "Jerusalem Is a Bride and Our Blood Is Her Dowry", *Jihadology*, May 9, 2016.

22 Thomas Hegghammer and Joas Wagemakers, *The Palestine Effect: The Role of Palestinians in the Transnational Jihad Movement*, *Die Welt des Islams*, Vol. 53, 2013, pp. 281-314.

23 Ghassan Abdel Rahman Abu Hussein, "The media discourse of the Islamic State", published master's thesis, Middle East University College of Mass Communication, Jordan, 2017.

24 Edwin Bakker and Leen Boer, "The evolution of Al-Qaedaism Ideology, terrorists, and appeal", 2007. Available at: [https://www.dingendael.org/sites/default/files/2016-02/20071200\\_cscp\\_csp\\_bakker\\_boer.pdf](https://www.dingendael.org/sites/default/files/2016-02/20071200_cscp_csp_bakker_boer.pdf) (accessed September 10, 2022).

25 Pieter Ostaeyen and Tore Hamming, "Jihadists Respond to Trump: 'In al-Quds we meet'", *The International Centre for Counter-Terrorism*, The Hague (ICCT), February 2, 2018.

“This is a communication to the people,” in which he said: “We are fighting in Iraq and our eyes are on Bayt al-Maqdis.” This speech was repeated through an audio recording of the spokesman for the “Islamic State” organization “ISIS”, in January 2020, Abu Hamza Al-Qurashi entitled: “God Destroyed Them Completely, and a Similar Fate Awaits the Disbelievers”. He began a new phase embodied in “fighting the Jews and recovering what they stole from the Muslims... “O soldiers of the caliphate everywhere,” he said, “below you are the settlements and markets of the Jews. So make them a testing ground for your weapons: our chemical-bearing rockets”.<sup>26</sup>

Numerous analyzes and academic articles on the relationship between the Palestine question and al-Qaeda have focused on the links and motivational influences.<sup>27</sup> The researcher Mohammed Al-Sawafi argues that “propaganda and psychological warfare are part of the organization’s main strategies and that it largely relies on them to achieve its goals, including recruitment of extremists, protecting the organization from annihilation by stirring the spirit of fighting and sentiment of “jihad” among its members and affiliates, nothing could be more effective than fighting the “usurper Jews” who occupy the Islamic holy sites, in addition to regaining the loyalty of some factions that have not pledged allegiance to the organization, given that all Islamist groups and factions unanimously agree on the idea of “jihad” against the Jews, and the liberation of Al-Quds, particularly those who espouse armed struggle”.<sup>28</sup> He also argued that such a video recording comes with a “strategy that could also be a transparent attempt to garner sympathy for the organization by threatening to target Israel without making any real shift in its ideology, which primarily focuses on fighting the “near enemy”. This could also mean some propagandistic operations against the “far enemy” to achieve specific tactical objectives”. This article reviewed and considered what was conducted by Thomas Hegghammer and Joas Wagemakers in compiling the various studies and placing them in a special issue of the International Journal for the Study of Contemporary Islam “Die Welt des Islams”, from which the following conclusions can be drawn:<sup>29</sup>

The number of Palestinians who joined al-Qaeda is very few compared to other nationalities, whether at the level of fighters or theorists. Through the media discourses of Al-Qaeda, we find that he has placed the Palestinian issue as the third most important issue regarding the declaration of jihad against America in one of his most important ideological statements, which was in 1998.

The choice of words and the precise definition of terminology regarding the Palestinian cause, confirms that the focus on the Palestinian cause is purely religious and ideological.

The pace of talk about the Palestinian issue and its inclusion in the media dis-

26 English statement published by Abu Hamza Al-Qurashi January 2020 via the groups official media channel al-Hurr Media. Available at: [https://archive.org/details/2\\_20210710\\_20210710\\_1324](https://archive.org/details/2_20210710_20210710_1324) (accessed September 4, 2022).

27 Thomas Hegghammer and Joas Wagemakers, *The Palestine Effect: The Role of Palestinians in the Transnational Jihad Movement*. . .

28 Muhammad Khalfan Al-Sawafi, “ISIS and Israel: Implications and outcomes of shifting positions”, March 19, 2020. Available at: <https://trendsresearch.org/insight/isis-and-israel-implications-and-outcomes-of-shifting-positions/> (accessed September 1, 2022).

29 Ibidem.



course of Al-Qaeda was increasing in proportion, especially in times of political unrest, whether in the West Bank or Gaza Strip. Just as these points apply to al-Qaeda, they also apply to ISIS, as it is a natural extension of al-Qaeda, which confirms the existence of a degree of opportunism in dealing with the Palestinian issue.

### **The Palestinian issue in the media agenda of the Islamic State “ISIS”**

The importance of using the Palestinian issue in the media policy of the Islamic State “ISIS”<sup>30</sup> can be discussed by identifying the way and how this terrorist organization addresses the Palestinian issue from one side, and also the reasons that motivate it to talk about it on the other. This terrorist organization has worked clearly to include field developments on the level of the Palestinian cause in its speeches and media publications and has begun to promote any operations carried out by the Palestinians as part of its jihadist ideology. This section will address the way ISIS deals with the Palestinian cause in its policies, strategies and media discourses on its platforms, whether digital or regular platforms, as it is noticeable that terms such as the Palestinian issue, Palestine, Jerusalem, and Aqsa Mosque, Beit al-Maqdis are abundantly used in most of the publications, statements and repeated media discourses of these terrorist groups. The main and optimal use of the Palestinian cause is to get a religious or emotional influence the cause may have on the targeted groups in order to attract and recruit them.<sup>31</sup>

We may find that the position of the Islamic State “ISIS” towards the Palestinian cause and the Al-Aqsa Mosque did not receive much attention by researchers and analysts. However, Dutch-Palestinian researcher Samar Batrawi “concluded in a study that the Islamic State position was no different from that of al-Qaeda, as it often appeared on the scene under the names Bayt al-Maqdis (a reference to the al-Aqsa mosque) or Ard al-Masra (Land of Jerusalem). She also documented the Islamic State’s publication of several media publications, most of which contain references to the Palestinian cause and call for the support of Palestine and work to liberate it and fight the Jews, addressing the mujahideen in Palestine and the Arab citizens in order to entice them to wage jihad for Palestine and the Al-Aqsa Mosque and to demand that they return terror to the Jews through the formation of a large Islamic army.”<sup>32</sup>

On the other hand, the media discourse of the Islamic State “ISIS” did not adopt an interest in the Palestinian cause and the liberation of Palestine only, but went beyond directing shares of criticism to the Palestinian factions operating inside Palestine and tried through its media machine and many visual and print publications

---

30 ISIS is an acronym for the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant. The organization has been calling itself the Islamic State since 2014. Jihadi Salafism is a term that expresses the ideology of Salafist groups that adopt a return to what they believe is true Islam, and take the jihadist path towards that.

31 Samar Batrawi, “Understanding ISIS’s Palestine Propaganda”, available at: [https://al-shabaka.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/Batrawi\\_Commentary\\_Eng\\_Mar2016.pdf](https://al-shabaka.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/Batrawi_Commentary_Eng_Mar2016.pdf) (accessed September 3, 2022).

32 Ibidem.

to address the Palestinian citizens to incite them against these national factions, and not to expect them to achieve victory over the Jews and liberate the land and man through their slogans, which he described as empty.<sup>33</sup>

In one of the video recordings, the Islamic State "ISIS" sent a message against the Palestinian organizations, in which the speaker clearly says: "Do not expect victory from Fatah or from Hamas... Do not pay any attention to them, and do not look at them, for their statements and slogans are empty." There was good in it, and they brought you nothing but humiliation, shame, and destruction. So trust in God, and seek God's help."<sup>34</sup>

The media strategy of the Islamic State "ISIS" was not satisfied with directing criticism shares of the Palestinian factions operating inside Palestine, but went beyond that to criticizing everyone who considers the Palestinian cause to be an issue of a national and national character, and that whoever considers it as such is working to remove this issue from the main framework. It has a purely religious and ideological nature. These organizations are trying to portray the existing conflict with the Jews as a religious conflict and not a national, national or political conflict or a struggle over land, homeland, borders, and occupation.<sup>35</sup>

It should be noted that the deal of the century announced earlier by former US President "Donald Trump" which included the transfer of the US embassy to the city of Jerusalem, has led to the emergence of many critical reactions to it, especially by these jihadist or terrorist groups, whether they are organizations major or sub-groups belonging to extremist terrorist organizations. For example, 'Mujahideen Youth Movement' or 'Movement of Striving Youth') issued a statement in which it called on all Muslims in all places to sacrifice and jihad for the sake of Jerusalem, whether with their lives or money. Has indicated also through the statement that the movement is working to provide all means and provide preparation and support for those who desire jihad through the establishment of training camps concerned with training in martial arts.

As for other groups, such as The Sawaed Misr (Arms of Egypt) terrorist movement, commonly known as "Hasm", we find that they, too, have issued many statements that included reactions about US President Donald Trump's decision regarding the Palestinian issue and Jerusalem, where they called for the necessity of activating the Palestinian uprising in the face of the Israeli occupation, taking advantage of this to market itself and its actions in the State of Egypt, where this movement confirmed through its statements on the most important, supreme and distant goal is the liberation of Jerusalem and Palestine and martyrdom for its sake, but before that Egypt must be liberated from Hako and its president, as it described it.

On the other hand, the Syrian (HTS or the "Organization for the Liberation of the

33 Samar Batrawi, "What ISIS Talks About When It Talks About Palestine And Why We Should Worry", available at: <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/israel/2015-10-28/what-isis-talks-about-when-it-talks-about-palestine> (accessed September 3, 2022).

34 "Palestine in ISIS's media discourse", *Watan News Agency*, March 31, 2016. Available at: <https://www.wattan.net/ar/news/168343.html> (accessed September 5, 2022).

35 Ibidem.

Levant”) issued a statement regarding the announcement of the Deal of the Century and the transfer of the Israeli embassy to Jerusalem, through which it expressed its support for the Palestinian cause as it is the most important and supreme issue for all Muslims in the world, stressing that the road to Jerusalem passes through Throughout all the Sunni Syrian cities, it exploited the legitimacy of the Palestinian cause to justify its terrorist actions against the Syrian citizen and the army.<sup>36</sup> In spite of the false use of the Palestinian cause by the media machine of these terrorist organizations and groups through multiple publications and media discourses as one of the goals they are working to achieve in a strict emotional language, we conclude from this that the positions of these organizations regarding Trump’s speech and other events and matters, were mainly in order to achieve other goals in accordance with the interests of every terrorist organization in the first place.<sup>37</sup>

By following up on the media discourses of the Islamic State “ISIS” since its inception, we find that the media discourses of the organization are based on four main issues in its talk about Palestine: (1) The Gaza Strip, (2) The city of Jerusalem, (3) Operations against the occupation, especially stabbing and ramming operations, and (4) Internal Palestinian politics.<sup>38</sup>

Where this terrorist organization issued many statements and press releases via the Internet to talk about these four elements. The researcher Samar Batrawi came up with a total number of materials indicating that “at least 29 online statements to these issues since May 2015; Gaza was mentioned in 19 messages, Jerusalem in 18, and 15 messages discussed the stabbing attacks, the latter all published in October 2015. When it comes to internal politics, Hamas is mentioned in every message, while Fatah and the Palestinian Authority (PA) feature 15 times”.<sup>39</sup>

## **The basic Palestinian issues of interest in the media discourses of ISIS**

### *The Gaza issue*

One of the most important justifications for framing ISIS in the Palestinian cause is the Gaza Strip, and the living conditions experienced by the residents of the Strip as a result of the unjust Israeli siege on it, as it focused on Her media discourse on the fate of the citizens residing in the Gaza Strip, where ISIS focused in its media discourse on two main points, which are criticism of the practices of the Israeli occupation, whether at the level of the stifling siege imposed on the Gaza Strip or at the level of Israeli aggressions and repeated wars; and directing criticism shares to the Palestinian factions operating in the Gaza Strip. As we find that the media discours-

36 Majed Kamel Mirza, “Communication messages of the terrorist organization ISIS against Iraq”, unpublished master’s thesis, University of Baghdad, College of Mass Communication, 2016.

37 “Palestinian Information Center”, available at: <https://www.paldf.net/forum/showthread.php?t=407388> (accessed September 5, 2022).

38 Rashid Khalidi, *Palestinian Identity: The Construction of Modern National Consciousness*, Columbia University Press, 1997, p. 35.

39 Ibidem.

es of ISIS did not discuss the fate of the Palestinian residents in the Gaza Strip for the sake of the same or the same fate, but as a means of criticizing Israel and benefiting from its media propaganda to gain more individuals, frame them and recruit them.

### *The issue of Jerusalem*

The words and terms chosen by the organization towards Jerusalem are of importance and an attractive political nature, as they describe the city of Jerusalem in Jerusalem. It gave this name to one of its states in the Levant in Iraq due to its religious and sanctity importance to Arabs and Muslims, so we find that the name of the house of Al-Maqdis is the most frequently used name in its media discourse, which means Al-Aqsa Mosque or the Temple Mount. It has many religious connotations derived from the hadiths of the Prophet . ISIS also uses religious symbolism associated with Jerusalem, through its use of images of Al-Aqsa Mosque and the Dome of the Rock in its visual publications and press releases.

### *The issue of operations against the Israeli occupation*

The operations carried out by the Palestinians against the Israeli occupation are among the most recent issues discussed by the Islamic State organization "ISIS" in its media discourses related to the Palestinian cause. "ISIS" takes advantage of these operations to market its narrative in these operations through: Praising these operations and considering them as an important means for the liberation of Palestine and the Al-Aqsa Mosque, and this is evidence of the failure of the peaceful paths pursued by the Arab and political elites and the Palestinian leadership; Calling the Palestinians in general and the people of Jerusalem in particular to adopt these operations and carry them out as a religious duty towards Palestine and Jerusalem, through visual publications issued by the organization; It issued some videos that criticize the Palestinian leadership and give advice to the Palestinians about carrying out attacks by launching stabbings, running overs and stabbings to specific places on the body; The message of ISIS against the Palestinian factions was manifested, and this came in many visual versions by directing its talk to the Palestinians not to wait for victory from their factions, as they carry empty slogans; The Work to distort the Palestinian cause through visual publications that confirm that the conflict with the Israeli occupation is a purely religious conflict, and calls for religious fanaticism, not considering that the Palestinian cause is an issue of a homeland stolen by the occupation.<sup>40</sup>

We also find that the view adopted by the Islamic State "ISIS" towards the Palestinian cause through its media agenda aimed at fighting the Palestinian factions

40 See, for example: Wael J. Haboub, Demystifying the Rise of Hamas, *Journal of Developing Societies*, Vol. 28, No. 1, 2012, pp. 57–79; Asher Susser, "The Rise of Hamas in Palestine and the Crisis of Secularism in the Arab World", Crown Center for Middle East Studies, 2010, p. 56; Meir Litvak, The Islamization of the Palestinian-Israeli Conflict: The Case of Hamas, *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 34, No. 1, 1998, p. 172.

and distorting the Palestinian cause and transforming it from a national issue to a conflict issue of a religious nature. It is also manifested in criticizing the Palestinian national and Islamic leaders more than criticizing Israel per se. To name a few, ISIS has threatened Palestinians twice; The first, when the organization threatened the people of the Gaza Strip, and the second, when the Palestinians of Jerusalem threatened Christians with slaughter if they did not leave their city.

Perhaps it is appropriate to note that the Taliban movement is not considered among the terrorist organizations classified globally, but is being dealt with as a violent armed Islamist political organization that seeks to establish an Islamic emirate in Afghanistan and implement Islamic Sharia in it. During its rule in Afghanistan, Taliban did not receive significant international diplomatic recognition, and faced many criticisms as a result of its exaggerations and strictness in the application of Islamic law, as well as accusations of campaigns of murder, oppression of women, violence against civilians, racial discrimination and embracing al-Qaeda, etc.

Taliban adopts a traditional political stance toward the Palestinian cause. For example, the movement published a press statement on May 9, 2021, during the Israeli aggression on the Gaza Strip, in which it said: "It condemns in the strongest terms these atrocities and expresses its support for the Muslims of Palestine, and calls on Islamic countries, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, the United Nations and the entire international community to stop these atrocities." Perpetrated by "Israel" and preventing it, and defending the rights of the oppressed Palestinians.<sup>41</sup> The Taliban movement, in a statement issued on January 29, 2020, condemned also the deal of the century announced by former US President Donald Trump, and considered it a blatant attack on the rights of the Palestinians, and affirmed its support for the oppressed Palestinian people, who consider this plan a conspiracy and a foolish proposal, and called for together on preventing this unjust conspiracy<sup>42</sup>.

In view of the foregoing, it can be emphasized the danger of these jihadist or terrorist organizations using the Palestinian cause in their speeches and media publications, in an attempt to legitimize and justify their criminal operations, which greatly helps them to recruit and attract more terrorists, especially while experiencing a noticeable decline in their presence indicating the near end of these terrorist groups. This requires urgent, proactive and coordinated efforts by the media to adopt a joint communication strategy to enhance awareness and clarify the extent of the danger of the propaganda related to these terrorist organizations which have nothing to do with the liberation of Palestine or the Palestinian cause or confronting the Israeli occupation.

---

41 "What is the position of Taliban from the Palestinian question", Al-Khanadiq, available at: <https://alkhanadeq.com/post.php?id=1161> (accessed September 7, 2022).

42 Ibidem.

## **Palestinians' Resistance to Using Al-Qaeda and "ISIS" The Palestinian Issue in the Media**

Literature review showed the existence of an invisible separation between the academic studies conducted by writers in the Arab and Islamic world on the Palestinian-Israeli conflict and those dealing with terrorist movements because this topic is very sensitive. Given the possible repercussions on the moral, intellectual and political perspectives from which all parties proceed toward the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. Since the Palestinian people do not want to be stigmatized with a direct or indirect relationship with these terrorist movements. The Palestinians realize that the Palestinian cause, with its entity and details, has never been and will never be on the media agenda of terrorist organizations and jihadist groups to contribute to its solution and achieve their goal of ending the Israeli occupation and establishing their Palestinian state and liberating the city of Al-Quds and the blessed Al-Aqsa Mosque. It seems that they are certain that the cause of Palestine and Al-Quds is always used as a tool and media material that these extremist groups consume to benefit from their political symbolism and religious status in the minds of Arabs and Muslims, with a view to promoting the legitimacy of its existence, its media discourse, and its terrorist strategies.

Therefore, the Palestinians are greatly striving to confront the narrative of the Islamic State organization "ISIS" and confront the use of the Palestinian cause in their media discourse, and expose its false media strategy to the world. Recent opinion polls conducted by many civil centers and organizations in Palestine showed that (88%) of the Palestinian citizens condemn the existence of "ISIS", while (77%) of them support the war against this organization, due to their explicit belief It is clear that this organization has apparently exploited the Palestinian cause to achieve maximum benefit from it in attracting its supporters without offering anything in the field against the Israeli occupation. Eventually, the Palestinians believe that the "ISIS" organization is no different from the Israeli occupation, which practices ideological extremism.<sup>43</sup>

## **Conclusions and Recommendations**

With the escalation of developments in the Palestinian territory that brought the Palestinian cause back to the forefront of Arab and international media attention in recent years due to the practices of the Israeli occupation and the crimes it commits against the Palestinian people, we did not notice a voice for these terrorist groups and their supporters in criticizing or targeting the Israeli occupation. This is consistent with the conclusions of other studies that refute these terrorist organiza-

---

43 Ibidem.

tions' use of the Palestinian cause in the media only to achieve their own goals.

Although the Islamic State "ISIS" and al-Qaeda have expressed, in more than one media statement, their intention to attack the State of Israel and call its affiliates and members to target Israelis and Jews everywhere, these media slogans have not been translated into actual attacks against Israel, its citizens abroad, or Jews in general. The Palestinian issue has never been and will never be on the media agenda of terrorist organizations and jihadist groups in order to garner support for them, but it is evidently exploited the value, sanctity and nobility of this central issue so as to influence Arab and Islamic societies in an attempt to give legitimacy and credibility to their presence, media discourse and terrorist acts, disseminate their extremist ideologies, rally support and recruit new elements, and, emotionally influence the public perception.

The Palestinian people, with all their official and popular components, are also working to resist the misuse of al-Qaeda and the Islamic State "ISIS" for the Palestinian cause and exploiting it in order to achieve its terrorist goals. The Palestinian people are also aware of the dangerous role of these terrorist groups in distorting the Palestinian cause from being a national political issue to a religious one.

The ill-intended efforts of terrorist organizations to contain the Palestinian cause within the existing grievances, rights and political issues, and its attempts to adapt them in their media discourse to achieve their terrorist goals, contribute to harming this prime issue by stigmatizing the Palestinian struggle and the legitimate political aspirations with terrorism and "demonizing" it directly or indirectly.

The media strategy of terrorist groups also opens the doors for other terrorist groups to try to reformulate the Palestinian narrative and the foundations of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict according to their agenda and political goals by portraying the conflict as ideological and religious and denying the national political, human and legal rights of the Palestinian people. Confronting this false use of the Palestinian cause by terrorist organizations is not only a moral duty but has national, regional, and international strategic importance and impact. All international parties should work to address root causes, as well as ideological and media strategies, lifting the media and religious cover on these terrorist groups, and missing the opportunity for them to employ this central issue in accordance with their poisonous agenda.

## References

Abu Hussein Ghassan Abdel Rahman, "The media discourse of the Islamic State", published master's thesis, Middle East University College of Mass Communication, Jordan, 2017.

Abu Hussein Ghassan. "ISIS Media Discourse: Dabiq Electronic Magazine as a Model: Content Analysis", Unpublished Master Thesis, Middle East University, Department of Information, Oman, 2017.

al-Moqadam Deena, "Terrorism Will not Liberate Palestine", May 22, 2021. Available at: <https://www.mobtada.com/opinions/1050947/%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A5%D8%B1%D9%87%D8%A7%D8%A8-%D9%84%D9%86-%D9%8A%D8%AD%D8%B1%D8%B1-%D9%81%D9%84%D8%B3%D8%B7%D9%8A%D9%86> (accessed August 14, 2022).

Al-Sawafi Muhammad Khalfan, "ISIS and Israel: Implications and outcomes of shifting positions", March 19, 2020. Available at: <https://trendsresearch.org/insight/isis-and-israel-implications-and-outcomes-of-shifting-positions/> (accessed September 1, 2022).

Bakker Edwin and Leen Boer, "The evolution of Al-Qaedaism Ideology, terrorists, and appeal", 2007. Available at: [https://www.clingendael.org/sites/default/files/2016-02/20071200\\_cscp\\_csp\\_bakker\\_boer.pdf](https://www.clingendael.org/sites/default/files/2016-02/20071200_cscp_csp_bakker_boer.pdf) (accessed September 10, 2022).

Batrawi Samar, "Understanding ISIS's Palestine Propaganda", available at: [https://al-shabaka.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/Batrawi\\_Commentary\\_Eng\\_Mar2016.pdf](https://al-shabaka.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/Batrawi_Commentary_Eng_Mar2016.pdf) (accessed September 3, 2022).

Batrawi Samar, "What ISIS Talks About When It Talks About Palestine And Why We Should Worry", available at: <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/israel/2015-10-28/what-isis-talks-about-when-it-talks-about-palestine> (accessed September 3, 2022).

Haboub Wael J., Demystifying the Rise of Hamas, *Journal of Developing Societies*, Vol. 28, No. 1, 2012.

Hegghammer Thomas and Joas Wagemakers, The Palestine Effect: The Role of Palestinians in the Transnational Jihad Movement, *Die Welt des Islams*, Vol. 53, 2013. <https://doi.org/10.1163/15685152-5334P0001>

Khalidi Rashid, *Palestinian Identity: The Construction of Modern National Consciousness*, Columbia University Press, 1997.

Levitt Matthew, "Israel as an Al-Qa'ida Target- Sorting Rhetoric From Reality", The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, October 30, 2009. Available at: <https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/israel-al-qaeda-target-sorting-rhetoric>



ric-reality (accessed August 10, 2022).

Litvak Meir, The Islamization of the Palestinian-Israeli Conflict: The Case of Hamas, *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 34, No. 1, 1998.

Maliach Asaf, Bin-Laden, Palestine and al-Qaeda's Operational Strategy, *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 44, No. 3, 2008. <https://doi.org/10.1080/002632008>

Mansour Ziyad, Al Irhab Byna al-Tarikh wa al Tashkhis, *Lebanese Journal of National Defense*, No. 100, 2017.

Mirza Majed Kamel, "Communication messages of the terrorist organization ISIS against Iraq", unpublished master's thesis, University of Baghdad, College of Mass Communication, 2016.

Nesser Petter, "Jihad In Europe: A Survey of the Motivations for Sunni Islamist Terrorism in Post-Millennium Europe", Norwegian Defense Research Establishment (FFI/Report), Kjeller, 2004.

Orton Kyle, "Islamic State Comments on the Gaza War and Escalates in Afghanistan", available at: <https://kyleorton.co.uk/2021/05/22/islamic-state-gaza-war-jerusalem-afghanistan-pakistan-kashmir-india-africa/> (accessed on August 11, 2022).

Ostaeyen Pieter and Tore Hamming, "Jihadists Respond to Trump: 'In al-Quds we meet'", The International Centre for Counter-Terrorism, The Hague (ICCT), February 2, 2018.

Pashentsev Evgeny N. and Darya Yu Bazarkina, ISIS Propaganda on the Internet, and Effective Counteraction, *Journal of Political Marketing*, Vol. 20, No, 1, 2021. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15377857.2020.1869812>

Qandil Mohammed Muqtar, "How Terrorist Groups Use Jerusalem", Washington Institute for Near East Policy (WINEP), January 25, 2018. Available at: <https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/how-terrorist-groups-use-jerusalem> (accessed May 8, 2022).

Qandil Mohammed, "How Terrorist Groups Use Jerusalem", Washington Institute for Near East Policy (WINEP), January 25, 2018. Available at: <https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/how-terrorist-groups-use-jerusalem> (accessed August 30, 2022).

Qandil Muhammad, "Trends in terrorist activity in 2022: growth or decline?", Trends Research and Advisory Consulting, available at: <https://trendsresearch.org/ar/insight/trends-of-terrorist-activity-in-2022/> (accessed August 10, 2022).

Siyech Mohammed, Suraj Ganesan, "Jihadist Groups Exploiting the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict", <https://www.mei.edu/publications/jihadist-groups-exploiting-israeli-palestinian-conflict> (accessed on May 8, 2022).

Susser Asher, "The Rise of Hamas in Palestine and the Crisis of Secularism in the

Arab World”, Crown Center for Middle East Studies, 2010.

Tin Derrick, Saleh Fares, Mobarak Al Mulhim, and Gregory Ciottone, Terrorist Attacks in the Middle East: A Counter-Terrorism Medicine Analysis, *Prehospital and Disaster Medicine*, Vol. 3, No. 1-5, 2022. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1049023X22000358>

“Global Terrorism Index 2022: Measuring the Impact of Terrorism”, available at: <http://visionofhumanity.org/resources> (accessed July 29, 2022).

“Global Terrorism Research Project”, available at: <http://gtrp.haverford.edu> (accessed August 10, 2022).

“How the media turned into a weapon for terrorist groups”, *Al-Ahram Gate*, October 27, 2018. Available at: <http://gate.ahram.org.eg/> (accessed September 2, 2022).

“Jerusalem Is a Bride and Our Blood Is Her Dowery”, *Jihadology*, May 9, 2016.

“Palestine in ISIS’s media discourse”, *Watan News Agency*, March 31, 2016. Available at: <https://www.wattan.net/ar/news/168343.html> (accessed September 5, 2022).

“Palestinian Information Center”, available at: <https://www.paldf.net/forum/showthread.php?t=407388> (accessed September 5, 2022).

“What is the position of Taliban from the Palestinian question”, *Al-Khanadiq*, available at: <https://alkhanadeq.com/post.php?id=1161> (accessed September 7, 2022).

**Адел Салам, Шарифа Хајати Сајед Исмаил ал-Кудси, Осман Расип,  
Амир Абдулвахаб**

## **ПАЛЕСТИНСКО ПИТАЊЕ У МЕДИЈСКОМ ДИСКУРСУ ТЕРОРИСТИЧКИХ ОРГАНИЗАЦИЈА**

### **Сажетак**

Овај чланак истражује до које мере је палестинско питање коришћено за промоцију терористичких покрета. У раду се користи аналитичко дескриптивни приступ како би се истражила еволуција терористичких организација, пратио развој идеологије, средстава и садржаја њихових медијских дискурса. У раду се долази до закључка да екстремистичке групе користе вредност и светост палестинског питања како би утицале на арапска и исламска друштва у покушају да легитимизују своје постојање, медијски дискурс и терористичке нападе, али и да шире своју идеологију, регрутују нове чланове и емоционално утичу на јавност. Поред тога, у раду се закључују и да се ове организације суздржавају у таргетирању израелске окупације и да се противе палестинском политичком наративу о природи палестинске борбе.

**Кључне речи:** тероризам, екстремизам, медијски дискурс, ИСИС, Ал Каида, палестинско питање