

Ramallah Center for Human Rights Studies (RCHRS)
Tolerance in the Palestinian Authority Territories

Biannual report covering the period
1/7/2008 – 31/12/2008

Part 1: Theoretical Framework

Introduction

It seems that the need to disseminate and consolidate the culture and values of tolerance in the Palestinian society has become now, more than ever before, a necessity and an urgent task. Moreover, transforming this culture and values into a societal conduct is not less important. Dealing with this culture as an abstract intellectual concept detached from the actual human behavior is not beneficial. Behavior patterns preceding, accompanying and following the series of conflicts between the Fateh and Hamas movements, the last few years, have proved the need to take rapid steps to spread and plant a culture of tolerance in the Palestinian society. The conflict, in addition to the absence of judiciary and security roles of the Palestinian Authority in the wake of Operation Defensive Shield, carried out by Israeli occupation forces against the infrastructure of the Palestinian Authority, has led to a decline in the levels of tolerance among the Palestinians. This does not imply that the Palestinian society was tolerant at all times, it does not mean that it was not in need of such culture and values, but that the intensity of the conflict, and the tragedies that have accompanied it have made it a more urgent matter than before.

The importance of exhibiting tolerant behavior assumes more prominence after tragic events suffered by nations and peoples; absence of tolerance allows for absence of restrictions on conflicting parties, makes them deploy inhuman acts and extreme use of violence without any ethical or legal restrictions. This is what happened when the conflict intensified between Fateh and Hamas in Gaza Strip, and during the retaliatory actions in the West Bank in the wake of the decisive military victory by Hamas. There were executions of fighters captured by their opponents committed in the streets; some were kidnapped and executed, political opponents were shot dead and, in some cases, shooting aimed at causing damage or disability to opponents. If the two parties to the conflict had shown a certain level of tolerance, these acts would not have been committed.

The absence of tolerance deepens the gap and increases hatred between conflicting parties, even when confrontations reach an end; it makes it difficult to get conflicting parties to sit together to resolve their differences. This is what is happening in Palestine today. A year has passed since the decisive military win by Hamas in Gaza Strip, but the two parties to the conflict still refuse to deal with each other. [this is now obsolete. They reached some sort of agreement. Maybe the text needs reviewing by the writers]

The Ramallah Center for Human Rights Studies (RCHRS) started giving due attention to the issue of tolerance several years ago. Following its work in this field, the RCHRS has noted that during the last two years, and with the recent developments in Palestinian human rights standards, especially tolerance is in serious jeopardy. Tolerance in the Palestinian society has badly deteriorated. The center was accordingly obliged to think of developing its work in this area, adding a new task to

its others, namely monitoring the situation of tolerance within the Palestinian society, especially its levels among the different religious, political, social and cultural components, in order to assess and evaluate the situation compared to previous periods, to warn against its escalation, to correct the situation and to provide recommendations that would improve the level of tolerance in Palestine.

Thus emerged the idea of producing a semi-annual report on the state of tolerance in PA territories by RCHRS. Issuing such a report has not been an easy task for the following reasons:

- A report like this is considered a unique endeavor by all standards, in Palestine, the countries of the region and even in the countries of the world. Hence, exercising our own judgment, will play a big part in issuing the report; the center will need to search for possible ways of measuring the state of tolerance in a given geographical area involved. The report shall be subject to future improvement and changes.
- Despite the amount of literature published on tolerance, including by the United Nations and its specialized organizations, such as UNESCO, which defines the concept of tolerance, its requirements and conditions, duties and responsibilities of individuals, states and governments, no agreement has been reached on indicators and specific tools for measuring tolerance. Tolerance cannot be measured by precise measures that can be codified and calculated according to mathematical formulas because it falls under human sciences, subject to judgment.
- Although the concept of tolerance has been internationally defined, and its general determinants and framework have been drawn, by being part of the human rights components, it intersects with those rights, particularly with civil liberties. Hence, we must follow the common thread to tolerance and those human rights which tolerance is a part of.
- Perhaps the professional and cumulative experience of RCHRS in the field of tolerance, gained through the center's work during the last decade, has been one of the factors encouraging the production of this report, which carries a degree of experimentation regarding indicators and parameters, and even with regard to cases examined in the report, hoping that it will be a starting point for the creation of future measurement indicators.

Definition of tolerance concept

Tolerance is a social phenomenon which has experienced intensification and developments and suffered setbacks as a result of many political, social, economic, cultural and intellectual conditions affecting peoples and nations. Therefore, the concept of tolerance is still controversial and debated, which makes the process of defining it, clearly outlining it, separating it from other concepts a difficult task. A number of researchers attribute this to the manifold uses of the concept in politics, religion, culture and philosophy, to the development in use of the term and, sometimes, to the fundamental difference between the historical use of the concept of tolerance and its human rights interpretation.

Many believe that the concept of tolerance is based on a vertical relationship between two tolerant individuals, i.e., a person who gives up his right to another

person, which implies that there is a moral difference between the two. This gives a negative connotation to the concept, makes it equivalent to grace and generosity. The gravity of this concept lies in its subjugation to desires and moods; when a person wishes to do so, he tolerates, when not he becomes intolerant. The concept, from a human rights angle, is based on the idea of acceptance of others who are religiously, politically, racially and sexually different, and respect of their rights and human dignity. To simplify the meaning, tolerance means accepting the differences of the others, whether in religion, politics, race or sex; it means allowing others to be what they are without forcing them to abandon their differences; it means that there should be no discrimination against them because they are different. Thus, the relationship is a horizontal one; it is an interactive relation governed by laws and not just by morality.

The concept of tolerance that we will adopt in this report is the concept contained in the Declaration of Principles on Tolerance adopted by the 28th session of UNESCO General Conference, (Paris, November 16, 1995), for two reasons:

- § This definition of the concept of tolerance as contained in the declaration has summarized all definitions contained in the cultures of different peoples and nations and was drafted by UNESCO representatives;
- § The declaration has transformed the concept of tolerance from a historic into a human rights concept, and made it one of the basic human rights standards.

The Preamble of the Declaration of Principles on Tolerance has specified the legal grounds upon which it has relied. These are: the United Nations Charter, the constitution of UNESCO, adopted on November 16, 1945, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol and regional instruments, the the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the Convention against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, the Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance Based on Religion or Belief, the Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities, the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action of the World Conference on Human Rights, the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action adopted by the World Summit for Social Development, the UNESCO Declaration on Race and Racial Prejudice, the UNESCO Convention and Recommendation against Discrimination in Education.

These international legal references in the preamble of the declaration have created a clear link between tolerance and human rights. They have transformed the concept of tolerance from a moral into a human rights concept, stressing its moral dimensions in the international law. These laws set by the international community, despite their high moral aims, have sought to codify the conditions and requirements of their achievement. The above references are not mentioned for the sake of going into details; rather, it is hoped they will help reach certain determinants to be used as measurements and indicators of tolerance in this report.

The modern concept of tolerance is based on human rights values and is an inherent part of these rights. The declaration has drawn the link between tolerance, human rights, democracy, peace and social justice, between their existing relations. It has linked the principles of tolerance to a set of international conventions and agreements related to human rights. By doing so, it has elevated tolerance from moral concept to one of legal value, which needs to be protected by the international community.

In its definition of the meaning of tolerance, the Declaration of Principles on Tolerance in its article 2 has includes the following elements:

1.1 Tolerance is respect, acceptance and appreciation of the rich diversity of our world's cultures, our forms of expression and ways of being human. It is fostered by knowledge, openness, communication, and freedom of thought, conscience and belief. Tolerance is harmony in difference. It is not only a moral duty, it is also a political and legal requirement. Tolerance, the virtue that makes peace possible, contributes to the replacement of the culture of war by a culture of peace.

1.2 Tolerance is not concession, condescension or indulgence. Tolerance is, above all, an active attitude prompted by recognition of the universal human rights and fundamental freedoms of others. In no circumstance can it be used to justify infringements of these fundamental values. Tolerance is to be exercised by individuals, groups and States.

1.3 Tolerance is the responsibility that upholds human rights, pluralism (including cultural pluralism), democracy and the rule of law. It involves the rejection of dogmatism and absolutism and affirms the standards set out in international human rights instruments.

1.4 Consistent with respect for human rights, the practice of tolerance does not mean toleration of social injustice or the abandonment or weakening of one's convictions. It means that one is free to adhere to one's own convictions and accepts that others adhere to theirs. It means accepting the fact that human beings, naturally diverse in their appearance, situation, speech, behavior and values, have the right to live in peace and to be as they are. It also means that one's views are not to be imposed on others.

From the above, it is clear that the concept of tolerance includes the following factors:

1. Acceptance, respect and appreciation of diversity of our world's cultures;
2. Recognition of the universal human rights and fundamental freedoms of others;
3. Tolerance is the key to human rights, political pluralism and democratic culture;
4. Practice of tolerance means accepting that one is free to adhere to one's own convictions and accepts that others adhere to theirs. It also means that one's views are not to be imposed on others.
5. Rejection of social injustice.

Within the international community's efforts to stress the legal perspectives of tolerance, the Declaration of Principles on Tolerance has specified the duties of the state in implementing the conditions of tolerance. In Article 2, the declaration has specified these conditions as follow:

2.1 Tolerance at the State level requires just and impartial legislation, law enforcement and judicial and administrative process. It also requires that economic and social opportunities be made available to each person without any discrimination. Exclusion and marginalization can lead to frustration, hostility and fanaticism.

2.2 In order to achieve a more tolerant society, States should ratify existing international human rights conventions, and draft new legislation where necessary to ensure equality of treatment and of opportunity for all groups and individuals in society.

2.3 It is essential for international harmony that individuals, communities and nations accept and respect the multicultural character of the human family. Without tolerance there can be no peace, and without peace there can be no development or democracy.

2.4 Intolerance may take the form of marginalization of vulnerable groups and their exclusion from social and political participation, as well as violence and discrimination against them.

Tolerance in local legislations

"Tolerance" was not a word mentioned in the Basic Law of the Palestinian National Authority (Temporary Law) or in any other Palestinian legislation. However, the Basic Law expressly provided for the protection of fundamental human rights in many of its articles. It has stipulated that "the governing system in Palestine shall be a democratic parliamentary system based on political and party pluralism" (article 5). It also stipulated that "all Palestinians are equal under the law and judiciary, without discrimination because of race, sex, color, religion, political views, or disability" (article 9). And in article 10 it stated that "basic human rights and freedoms shall be binding and respected. The Palestinian National Authority shall work without delay to join regional and international declarations and covenants which protect human rights".

These texts, as well as the declaration made by President Yasser Arafat before his return from Tunisia to Palestine, saying that the PLO is committed to international human rights treaties and conventions, obligate the Palestinian Authority to respect all norms of international human rights law. Abiding to these rules, protecting them and putting them into practice would mean advance towards establishing the values of tolerance within the society, and between the society and the state.

Claims that the Palestinian National Authority is not qualified to be party to these treaties and covenants do not exempt it from its commitment to their rule. Neither does the international community exempt armed groups (the military arms of the Palestinian factions) of their duty to adhere to those treaties and conventions in their behavior toward their members, toward other forces in the society and in their relations with the state.

Tolerance and prejudice

The contraction of margins of tolerance in a society leads to the danger of prejudice and to the spread of a culture based on hatred, malice, abhorrence and denial of others and their rights, while expressing the new culture through behavior. The natural substitute of the absence of tolerance, the setback in its culture and in the reduction in the margins of tolerance lead to prejudice. Thus, declarations, treaties and international human rights covenants tended to draw a dialectical link between tolerance and prejudice. The more the society is tolerant the less prejudice and violence exist, and when the society resorts to violence, the space of tolerance becomes less significant.

UNESCO, in the preamble to the Declaration of Principles on Tolerance, has referred to the rise in acts of intolerance, violence, terrorism, xenophobia, aggressive nationalism, racism, anti-Semitism, exclusion, marginalization and discrimination directed against national, ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities, refugees, migrant workers, immigrants and vulnerable groups within societies, as well as acts of violence and intimidation committed against individuals exercising their freedom of opinion and expression - all of which threaten the consolidation of peace and democracy, both nationally and internationally, and are obstacles to development. UNESCO *emphasized* the responsibilities of member states to develop and encourage respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms for all, without distinction as to race, gender, language, national origin, religion or disability, and to combat intolerance.

The preamble of the declaration has specified the manifestations of intolerance in forms of extremism, acts of violence and terrorism, hatred and aggression, racism and exclusion, marginalization and discrimination and intimidation, and drew the link between them and consolidating peace and democracy at the national and international levels, and the obstacles they form in the path of development.

A culture of non-violence

Spreading a culture of non-violence is no longer an intellectual luxury today; it has become an urgent need to end cycles of violence between individuals, society and state, and at the level of the entire international community. Violence in the simplest form means the use of force to achieve legitimate or illegitimate goals. Here we must distinguish between violence used to infringe upon the rights of others, used to obtain gains in internal conflicts or to resolve internal conflicts, and violence people are forced to use to fight aggression. The use of violence by states to stop a similar act of violence, such as opposing external aggression, or the use of violence by the peoples to liberate their homelands is considered legitimate.

The culture of violence, accumulated through education, from the family, tribe, clan, political party, ideological theories, or from religious ideology or other ideologies, plays a key role in transforming peaceful social conflicts into violent ones. Perhaps, this transformation is the most serious issue facing peace. Resorting to violence, as much as it is an inhuman behavior, destroys the social fabric of the society and its liveliness, puts achievements at risks, and increases the level of discord between the conflicting individuals and groups alike. Therefore, the alternative to the culture of violence is a culture of tolerance, which opens the door wide to building a society based on respect for the right to life; a society which renounces violence and

achieves equality without discrimination, respects human rights, social justice, solidarity and, consequently, leads to the acceptance of others, regardless of whether one agrees or disagrees with them.

Perhaps the most prominent virtue of tolerance is the suffering endured by tolerant people in accepting those who are different from them; tolerance carries a great deal of suffering. Tolerance means accepting differences as they are, not as we want them to be. Those who are different from us may have their own language, customs and behavior, different from ours. If we tolerate them, it means that we acknowledge their right to be different, even if this acknowledgment causes us suffering.

Parameters of tolerance

Developing indicators to measure the state of tolerance in a society seems to be a difficult task, not only because it is part of human sciences tasks, but because tolerance is a new concept in the Arab culture. From the literature of international community, and based on the Declaration of Principles on Tolerance, we will try to derive some parameters of tolerance. These parameters are in no way definitive, but open to amendment and development. They may contribute to setting up a structure to help us prepare the report on the status of tolerance in the Palestinian society. These parameters will serve as headings of the report on tolerance. They are as follows:

Religious tolerance

Religious tolerance is not limited to coexistence of different religions, in the sense that each religious group has the freedom to practise its own religious rites, and to abandoning religious intolerance vis-à-vis other religions; it goes beyond that, to mean acceptance of diversity and different interpretations within the same religion. Despite the fact that followers of all religions stress that all religions emphasize virtues, righteousness and fairness, and that they all call for fraternity, compassion, charity, and recommend safety, peace, harmony, coexistence and dialogue, we find voices within these religions inciting against other religions or other sects within the same religion. Religious intolerance, and its subsequent sectarian and ethnic intolerance, is the worst form of intolerance, and the source of all kinds of extremism and fanaticism. The gravity of this form of intolerance stems from the sacred nature it assumes using religious texts to incite hatred against others who are different, inciting simple-minded believers who follow the sacredness of the text without having the capacity to interpret it.

The religious rhetoric in the Palestinian society, often based on single-sided and partial understanding of religious text, has in many cases led to positions which fed hatred and rancor, giving unrealistic perceptions and unfair and inhuman interpretations of many facts. This rhetoric has often adopted a negative view of the society, describing it as deviation, ignorance, debauchery, disobedience, corruption and decadence. This negative view has been, and still is, the justification given for the existence of these movements within the society. These movements believe that the society has lost its way and it should be redirected to the righteous path; it is rebellious and must be punished, corrupt and should be reformed, and morally degenerated and must be saved.

Political tolerance

The absence of political tolerance is one of the most serious problems suffered by peoples and nations, because politicians aspire to reach power and authority and they have the tendency to monopolize this power and authority. This inhuman tendency causes conflicts that might reach the level of crimes against humanity. The absence of political tolerance has brought many disasters to the peoples and nations of the earth. Arab people have paid a high price because of the absence of political tolerance. The recognition of the principle of political pluralism and the consolidation of a political culture based on accepting differences in opinions, making such differences a natural right of all citizens and the belief in peaceful circulation of power through ballot boxes would help put an end to violent and intolerant tendencies in the society.

Acknowledging the right to freely organize in political parties, freedom of belief and of being different, of religious, political and cultural pluralism means recognizing and acknowledging that people have different perceptions, different ways of thinking and different ways of acting. Article 1 of the Declaration of Principles on Tolerance (paragraph 3) stresses that "tolerance is the responsibility that upholds human rights, pluralism (including cultural pluralism), democracy and the rule of law. It involves the rejection of dogmatism and absolutism and affirms the standards set out in international human rights instruments". Hence, tolerance in the cultural domain is part of tolerance in other domains, except that it stresses the possibility of coexistence even if there are cultural differences. For that reason, differences between states' cultures should not be used to justify conflicts and hostilities.

Tolerance in politics means recognition of others, whether minority or majority, and of their right to work, organize and promote their political ideas, away from any suppression or pressure exercised against them. The prevailing pattern of political culture is considered restrictive to tolerance; when a culture advocates coping with existing realities, the probability of political intolerance increases, and vice versa. When the individual feels he is more politically effective, and hence less excluded, he tends to be more politically tolerant because political effectiveness leads to greater political participation and this participation in turn contributes to the promotion of political tolerance. Some researchers have made a link between intensification of ideological conflicts in the society, thus the realization of the fact that there is a greater political danger, and tendency towards political intolerance. In times of political tensions and serious ideological conflicts, individuals' and groups' awareness of political dangers increases, leading to high rates of political intolerance.

With these parameters in mind, some of the concepts of political intolerance could be specified as follows:

- § Lack of objectivity, generalization and simplification.
- § Basing oneself on a set of stereotypes, ready-made classifications, sharp and polarizing judgments.
- § Arises in a cultural and social context which leads to its adoption to a certain extent
- § Directed against a particular group or persons by virtue of their membership in the group.

Social and economic tolerance

The most prominent social determinants, according to researchers, are education, age, religion, social status and living in urban areas. All these factors are positively linked to tolerance, with the exception of religion. Some researchers have made a positive link between being religious and regularly visiting worship places, and intolerance, regardless of the type of religious sects and streams; the difference is only in the degree of this relationship.

Social tolerance is the explicit recognition of the right of members of a certain society to have different tribal, ethnic, language and religious affiliations, provided that these affiliations do not impact on peoples' belonging to one nation and one state. The quest to establish this principle in some countries suffers some difficulties, but in the Palestinian society, it may seem less acute. At the level of tribal fanaticism, it is clear that Arab societies, including the Palestinian, suffer from such fanaticism; this is a reality which poses a great danger, especially when tribal values, rather than civic values, gain more respect and govern the behavior of people. The first set of values will have serious, dangerous consequences on the concept of tolerance; they force the individual to choose between two: either you are with me or against me; in times of conflict, national loyalty and social tolerance become some kind of fiction.

Societal perception of women is one of the most important elements of tolerance. Women still have low status, and they cannot reach that of men!! They have "less reason and less religion"!! Thus, they have little creativity in the various fields of life. They are weak beings who cannot successfully work or assume senior leadership position requiring hard work. The result is contempt for women and lack of tolerance toward them, thus rejection of women's work. Moreover, the laws in many countries in the region discriminate against women, particularly with regard to inheritance and punishment under the pretext of the so-called honor crimes.

International human rights conventions and agreements have made a link between achieving social justice and peace, on the one hand, and lack of social justice and violence, on the other. Article 2 (paragraph 1) of the Declaration of Principles on Tolerance draws the link between guaranteeing justice and the impartiality of legislation, law enforcement, judicial and administrative process, and economic and social opportunities that have to be made available to each person without discrimination, and between hostility and fanaticism. Article 1 (paragraph 4) of the declaration stresses that tolerance does not contradict respect for human rights. It does not imply tolerating social injustice or abandonment or weakening of one's convictions.

The report of the UN Economic, Social and Cultural Organization, Social Development Commission, in its 38th session (New York, February 8-18 and March 14-17, 2000) stressed that social integration is a prerequisite for creating harmonious, peaceful and inclusive societies for all people. The promotion and protection of all human rights and fundamental freedoms, promoting a culture of peace, tolerance and non-violence, respect for cultural and religious diversity, the elimination of all forms of discrimination, achieving equal access to productive resources and participatory governance are important elements for social integration. The lack of access to education, persistence of poverty, unemployment and inequitable access to opportunities and resources causes social exclusion and marginalization.

There are two levels of social tolerance: a state level – a tolerant state toward its citizens does not discriminate between them on any basis; individuals and groups level – tolerant individuals and groups recognize diversity, accept it and use peaceful means to resolve their differences with people who are different from them.

Freedom of belief and the right to be different

Freedom of belief and the right to be different are the cornerstone principles and values of tolerance. If this condition exists, other conditions for tolerance will also exist. Article 1 (paragraph1) of the declaration states that "tolerance is respect, acceptance and appreciation of the rich diversity of our world's cultures, our forms of expression and ways of being human. It is fostered by knowledge, openness, communication, and freedom of thought, conscience and belief".

Paragraph 4 of the same article states that "one is free to adhere to one's own convictions and accepts that others adhere to theirs. It means accepting the fact that human beings, naturally diverse in their appearance, situation, speech, behavior and values, have the right to live in peace and to be as they are. It also means that one's views are not to be imposed on others."

International conventions and agreements have stressed this right. Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights stipulated that "everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion".

Article 19 of the Universal Declaration stipulates that "everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference".

Differences in religion, and differences in opinion, have led to devastating conflicts throughout history. In search of the roots, emergence and evolution of the concept of tolerance, we discover that it has started to be shaped in the wake of bloody wars between the supporters of Catholic and Protestant supporters in Europe. This emphasizes the important role of faith in identifying societies' trends toward tolerance, or intolerance and violence.

Part Two: Tolerance in the Palestinian Authority territories

Religious Tolerance

"Islam is the official religion in Palestine. Respect and sanctity of all other heavenly religions shall be maintained." (Article 1, paragraph 1, the amended Basic Law of the Palestinian National Authority).

"Freedom of belief, worship, and performance of religious rituals are guaranteed, provided that they do not violate public order or public morals." (Article 18 of the amended Basic Law of the Palestinian National Authority).

Mobilizing religion

Religion in the Palestinian society plays a major role in shaping the opinion of the vast majority of the society's members. When the Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas) came at the forefront of resistant movements and political activism in the Palestinian territories, at the end of 1980s, challenging the Palestinian Liberation Organization in the representation of the Palestinian people, the use of religion in the Palestinian political rhetoric increased as a form of competition between the components of the political system in the Palestinian territories, and as a catalyst and mobilization element. The rhetoric of the Palestine Liberation Organization forces became similar to that of Hamas in some cases, having the same tone in others. In subsequent years, the religious nature (Islamic and Christian) has become officially established in the framework of political and national coordination. Some carry the name of Higher Committee of National and Islamic Forces, others Islamic-Christianity Front.

The use of religion in politics did not stop at that point. At times of political conflict and polarization, almost all the components of the Palestinian political system resorted to the use religion, albeit to varying degrees, in their political rhetoric. Even secular components of this system resorted to the use of religion in their rhetoric, through the use of "Bismillah", Qoranic verses, the Hadith, by praying in a mosque or attending a martyr's funeral. The secular political component, or writers and intellectuals who are considered secular, did not hesitate to use religious rhetoric to challenge the one used by Islamists. Our main concerns regarding such practices stem from the way these forces used religion, relied on it, adopted it in order to influence the mood of the people, compete with the political Islamic stream and playing the game according to the rules of these streams, especially as Islam is not part of their dogma or political ideology.

In this context, and in the wake of the decisive military gain in Gaza Strip by Hamas, on June 14, 2007, Fateh and other Palestinian forces members of the PLO took a new step, further in exploiting religion in the conflict, with the aim of embarrassing Hamas. The Fateh Movement attempted to bring people to pray in the courtyards of mosques during Friday prayers in the Gaza Strip, as part of its struggle with the Hamas, which in turn used excessive force to disperse demonstrations that were organized after each Friday prayer. The discharged government banned holding Friday prayers outside mosques in order to put an end to demonstrations organized after these prayers.

Hamas has incessantly proceeded with focusing on the Islamic religion during the six-month reporting period. While the Ministry that oversees religious affairs in the Palestinian Authority (PA) whether in the West bank or in the Gaza Strip bears the name of the Ministry of Endowments and Religious Affairs, the Ministry's understanding of this function in the deposed Government is exclusively restricted to Islam, despite the fact that hundreds of Palestinian Christians live in Gaza. On July 7, 2008 Dr Taleb Abu Sha'r, the Minister of Endowments and Religious Affairs in the deposed Government emphasized that the mission of disseminating and memorizing the Holy Qur'an in our Homeland is one of the greatest missions to which his ministry gives great importance. He declared that during a gathering organized by the department of women working on the project of inculcating the Holy Qur'an. Abu Sha'r went on to say that "the projects of inculcating the Holy Qur'an are amongst the most important, and the Ministry attaches great importance to it in accordance with the Prophet's recommendation: "the best amongst you are those who memorize the Qur'an and inculcate it". Dr Abu Sha'r praised the female supervisors and inculcators: "you are performing a great deed. It is the best job humans can spend their lives doing" adding that "working on inculcating the Holy Qur'an is worthy of great spirits and elite."

In an honoring ceremony for the outstanding students at various school levels organized by Hamas in Sheikh Radwan area, in the Mosques of Isra' and Iman Square on August 4, MP Muhammad Faraj al-Ghool, Head of the Committee on Legal Affairs in the Legislative Council delivered a speech. "Palestine is about to celebrate the graduation of a constellation of Hafiz (knower of the Qur'an by heart, formerly an honorific title) totaling more than 4000 Hafiz in Gaza Strip outnumbering those of many a great Arab country. This shows the awakening, pride, and greatness of the Palestinian people."

On August 6, 2008, were launched the activities and tests of the 8th Aqsa local contest in memorizing and interpreting the Holy Qur'an for Hجري year 1429, (2008 AD) under the sponsorship of the deposed Minister of Endowments Dr. Taleb Abu Sha'r. 1929 students, of which 729 males and 1200 females, from all the the districts of Gaza participated in the contest. Abu Sha'r declared that this contest is an achievement under the conditions of the blockade imposed on the Palestinian people in the Gaza Strip, and a challenge to the harsh conditions they go through. He made it clear that his ministry attributes great importance to the Holy Qur'an and those who serve it, and to the Aqsa local contest specifically, for which it has allocated considerable cash prizes in appreciation and encouragement for the winners. The cost of the contest and prizes amounted to approximately \$90,000. He alluded to the fact that the Aqsa contest aims at caring for the Holy Qur'an, inculcating it, and learning to reciting it. It also aims at raising a Qur'anic generation, animating the competitive spirit in memorizing the Holy Qur'an, and linking the Muslim people to their major cause which is al-Aqsa. He also alluded to the Holy Qur'an being the constitution of the Umma (Nation) sent down by God for its betterment. It is the divine law sent to guide the inhabitants of Earth.

During a visit to the headquarters of the Ministry of Endowment and religious affairs and the Grand Mosque of Omar, on September 9, 2008, Ismail Haniyya, the deposed Premier, emphasized the support of his deposed cabinet to this Ministry and his backing to all of its programs and projects. He presented a grant of \$30,000 to promote the Radio of the Holy Qur'an, and insisted that the Ministry of Endowment is not a marginal ministry to daze people and stuff their mouths or to back mosques into a corner, but a very important ministry. The deposed Premier also said that his

cabinet knows that this Ministry shoulders a very grave responsibility, because it cares for the Palestinian person and his make-up, looks after the mosques, and protects the holy sites and especially al-Aqsa.

On September 17, 2008, Hamas honored 30 Hafiz of the Holy Qur'an in the al-Satre al-Gharbi region in Khan Yunis, in a ceremony that was organized in Asda' Media City. The students who received this honor were young people who finished memorizing the complete Holy Qur'an during two months in the context of the Qur'anic campings project implemented by the Association of the House of the Holy Qur'an and the Sunna. Equally honored were several students who memorized some parts of the Holy Qur'an. MP Dr. Yunis al-Astal, delivered a speech in which he praised the status of the Hafiz in their society, and with their Lord, and he enumerated their merits, and exhorted them to continue reviewing what they memorized to reach the stage of full mastery. Dr al-Astal affirmed that Hamas "spared no effort to create a unique Qur'anic generation, raised in the circles of Qur'anic recitation, and willing to serve their religion and homeland."

Upon reading this religious discourse, we see that the said Ministry's understanding of its role is limited to the Islamic religion exclusively, and that there is an emphasis on memorizing the Holy Qur'an. Even the deposed Head of government, when talking about the role of this Ministry, said that it "looks after the mosques, and protects the holy sites and especially al-Aqsa". However, and granting the sublime status of the Aqsa Mosque in the eyes of Muslims generally, and Palestinians particularly, no mention was made of the Christian holy sanctuaries like the Church of the Saint Sepulcher in Jerusalem, or the Church of Nativity in Bethlehem, even when the speech alluded to protecting the Palestinian holy sites. The Palestinian Government, no matter its form or color, represents all Palestinians, and is mandated to protect their interests and all the means of their livelihood and their private and public possessions.

Fatah also continued keeping up with Hamas in exploiting religion on the same arena. On September 26, 2008, Fatah organized in the Qalqilya region a ceremony to honor female students who memorized the Holy Qur'an, thru the women committee in that region under the title "God's Beloved". Coordinator of the women committee in the region, Hanan Hasanein, said that this celebration comes on the eve of the Feast of Fitr and commended the girls' commitment in attending the session and making the best use of it. The session's supervisor, Iqbal Abu Saleh, said that the session, which has been organized since several months in cooperation with Fateh, focuses on the age group 7-12, and "covers many aspects, chief of which is memorizing the Holy Qur'an, and abiding by the rules of good recitation."

Within its coverage of the violations perpetrated by the Internal Security Service of the deposed Government in Gaza Strip, the Palestinian News Agency Wafa focused on violations relating to religious issues, attributing them to Hamas as a political party and not to the government formed by Hamas. On September 27, 2008, Wafa reported that the Hamas affiliated militias stormed the mosque of Ahl al-Sunna in Khan Yunis city, assailed the praying people and battered them". On the same date, the said agency reported that Hamas affiliated militias interrupted the evening prayers of a group of people in the neighborhood of the Nuwayri Restaurant in Nusayrat, battered and insulted them, then kidnapped Ahmad Nuwayri, the owner of the restaurant, after shooting under the praying people's feet."

On October 6, 2008 the same agency reported that " Hamas militias took over the mosque of al-Nasr in the Beit-Hanoon city in the north of Gaza Strip, forced the muezzin to hand in the keys at gunpoint. They even threatened him not to deliver the call for prayers anymore, and appointed another muezzin and an imam of their own."

On October 14, 2008, elements of the Hamas Movement seized the marriage records from 15 authorized officials in various southern districts under the pretext of being affiliated to Fateh, after Hasan al-JuJu, the man appointed by Hamas as judge in Gaza, issued orders to oust these officials.

During the reporting period, the two governments in Gaza Strip and the West Bank used, in an unprecedented move, the issue of the Muslim pilgrims travel to Saudi Arabia to perform the Hajj Muslim religious duty, in a way that resulted in preventing hundreds of such prospective pilgrims from performing this religious ordinance for this year. While the West Bank acting government declared that all measures related to the journey of the Gazan pilgrims to Saudi Arabia are completed, the deposed Gazan government denied that. The manipulation of the Gazan Hajj issue started when both governments recorded the names of would be Gazan pilgrims for this year. The West Bank acting government coordinated, through the Ministry of Endowments and Religious Affairs, the requirements of their journey with the Saudi Arabian authorities. When the time of the journey from Gaza through the Rafah border passage between Palestine and Egypt drew near, the Egyptian Government opened the passage for several days. However the deposed government linked the travel of the pilgrims registered in the West Bank to the travel of those registered with the deposed Ministry of Endowments and Religious Affairs, and prevented them from leaving Gaza Strip. It even used excessive physical force to bring them back to their homes after staying many days in the said passage.

The Ministry of the Interior in the deposed government justified this move saying that the Gaza Strip pilgrims registered with the Ramallah government do not hold valid passports or visas to enter the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia; therefore they can not travel through the Rafah border passage. This was refuted by Fateh representative MP Majed Abu Shmaleh who commented, "All the necessary transactions for the Hajj trip were completed and full coordination was underway for their exit through Rafah border passage, and that lot casting was performed duly and legally. A complete list of their names was made available to our brothers in Egypt and Saudi Arabia to facilitate their journey and stay, therefore there is no obstacle for their trip except Hamas' move to prevent them from going through the Rafah passage, which is the border point assigned for the journey of the Hajj." Abu Shmaleh further explained, "It is neither logical nor moral to let political wrangles interfere with religious rituals, and prevent the pilgrims from visiting Mecca. It is equally unacceptable to set checkpoints in the streets to prevent the pilgrims from heading to the Rafah passage and to threaten and batter them". He described these comportments as "appallingly odd especially when coming from a movement that considers itself Godly, and claims to rule in the name of God". He wondered, "How could they block people who are seeking God's mercy and forgiveness from heading His way?" On the other hand Taleb Abu Sha'r, the Minister of Endowments and Religious Affairs in the deposed government declared that "his ministry will allow the pilgrims registered through Ramallah to pass only with all those registered with his Ministry", describing the registration through the Ministry of Endowments in Ramallah as illegal.

In the same vein, engineer Ihab al-Ghusayn, the official spokesperson of the Ministry of Interior in the deposed government, declared, "The Ramallah government let political bickering interfere with the issue of Hajj pilgrims, since it stole the Gaza Strip quota". He pointed out that months ago the minister of Endowments in the deposed Government had called upon all parties, and "specifically the Ramallah government to put political bickering aside when it comes to the issue of Hajj pilgrims, and to consider it as a purely Islamic ritual free of any political give and take. A common national and Islamic agreement could be reached around this issue, at least." Al-Ghusayn added that the Ministry of Endowments held a legal lot casting for 19,000 prospective pilgrims, and in this same open legal procedure, witnessed by a host of religious scholars, ministers, and MPs, the public, and the owners of Hajj travel agencies, chose 2200 pilgrims. This Hajj campaign was dubbed the Campaign of National Unity, which unfortunately was politicized by the Ramallah government. The minister of Endowments in the Ramallah government headed to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, in a manner unfamiliar for an official since the beginning of Palestinian Authority, and stole Gaza's quota of pilgrims and redistributed it in an illegal way." The same minister further pointed out that "after the operation of lot casting, the Ramallah government came out overnight with a list of names which we have no idea how they were gathered, and which included hundreds of members of security apparatuses who quit the Gaza Strip since a year or more after the take over. The list also included names of deceased persons, in addition to a number of individuals picked by Fatah officials in the Strip." Al-Ghusayn blamed the responsibility of what is taking place in the Gaza Strip "on the Ramallah government, and its head President Abu Mazen, since he is the one who pressures continuously the Arab Republic of Egypt to close the Rafah passage."

Using religion to serve political objectives is not limited to Fateh and Hamas. This use has gone further to reach Hizb al-Tahrir (the Party of Islamic Liberation in Palestine). In the aftermath of Hamas' victory in the 2006 legislative elections, Hamas formed a government. A state of siege was imposed on the Palestinian people, to be followed by an internal Palestinian crisis. Ever since these developments took place, observers noticed the launching by the Hizb al-Tahrir party of its activities on the Palestinian territories, a move to project itself as an alternative to the sort of political Islam presented by the Hamas movement. The pace of these activities was to escalate noticeably during the second half of this year especially when it held certain events to commemorate the abolition of the Islamic Caliphate. While the Tahrir party was allowed to organize these events in Gaza Strip, it was prevented from so doing in the West Bank.

In the aftermath of the financial crisis that raged through a great number of world economies, the Tahrir party launched a series of lectures in various districts of the West Bank on the Tahrir Islamic vision to solve this world economic crisis. The Palestinian security apparatuses in the West Bank moved swiftly to prevent a number of these activities. On November 25, 2008 the Tahrir party issued a virulent press release accusing the Palestinian Authority of breaking into a number of lounges, cultural centers, and mosques used by the said party to deliver its lectures on the world economic crisis and the solutions it suggests based on the Islamic regime it seeks to implement in the Caliphate state. Under the title "The Jewish entity kills and besieges the Palestinian people in Gaza, and the Palestinian Authority wages war on Islam and represses the Palestinian people in the West Bank in conformity with the orders of Dayton the American" we read:

"While the forces of occupation and the gangs of settlers have declared open season on Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza, and sealed off the Strip, blocking the provision of foodstuff, medicines, water, electric power, and rampaged the territories, the security apparatuses of the repressive Authority are breaking into Palestinian houses, arresting people in their homes, on the streets on behalf of the occupying forces. They stormed the lounges, cultural centers and mosques to stop people from listening to the lectures delivered by the party a month now in Palestine. These lectures aim to show the radical solutions to such crises based on the Islamic tenets held in the Caliphate state. In the face of the world economic crisis provoked by the ugly capitalistic democracy, in the face of this Jewish barbaric war on Palestinians, and to the hateful demagogic Authority we say: Arab rulers in general, and Egypt's rulers in particular, are all accessories to the crime of blockading Gaza and of killing, expelling, and starving the Palestinian people.

He who is after a lost dignity, and a weedy power, ought not to abide by the orders of the enemies of the Umma, be they Jews or Americans, nor chase his own fellow countrymen to suppress them, throw them in jails, and torture them. He should not erect himself a foe of Islam and Muslims, nor prevent the advocates of Islam from performing their duty of holding high the banner of Islam and its call. Therefore, the Palestinian Authority must stay clear from the activities of the Hizb al-Tahrir party, and any peaceful activity that exalts the status of Islam. If this Authority has the slightest degree of diffidence then let it try protecting its people from the rampaging settlers who assail people mornings and evenings! Did the Americans and the Jews create, train, and arm this Authority to protect people or to hunt down Muslims and war against Islam?"

This political exploitation of religion did not help in expanding the realm of tolerance in the Palestinian society; it rather created the exact opposite. Among the most prominent social determinants of tolerance that appealed to researchers are education, age, religiosity, social status, and city dwelling. All these factors correlate positively with tolerance except religiosity. Researchers have suggested a positive correlation between religiosity, regular frequentation of places of worship, and fanaticism, irrespective of the kind of religion, religious community, or sects. Differences are only a matter of degree.

Monotheistic religions assert the sameness of their origin. They insist on saying that they command goodness; call for brotherliness, righteousness, mercy, and beneficence; recommend calmness, peace, convivial coexistence, and dialog. Despite all these claims, their adherents incite against each other, or against a different doctrine within the same faith, or go covertly or overtly to some extremes in writing the different other off as an infidel. Despite the admission that the room for religious tolerance in the Palestinian territories is much wider than that of political tolerance, nevertheless numerous mosque preachers miss no Friday oration without libeling the faithful of other creeds, or those who differ from them within the same Islamic religion. Using the mosque to disseminate the culture of hatred of the different only makes the fanatic more fanatic, it even increases the number of fanatics, and this is totally opposed to the values of tolerance.

During the security campaign waged by the security apparatuses of the deposed government against the Doghmosh family in Hayy al-Sabra, east of Gaza city on September 15, 2008, ten members of the said family were killed. Consequently, Jaysh al-Islam (The Army of Islam) issued a press release in which it threatened punishment in retaliation for those who were killed during the fight between the said

apparatuses and the Doghmosh family. In the release published by Ma'an Press Agency on September 25, 2008 we read: "Punishment is a right that must be exacted, and it is not attached to the murderer alone, the sentence of the helper is the same as the sentence of the perpetrator according to most imams." The Jaysh statement went on to declare, "That being the executors of the blood feud, they proclaim their willingness, acceptance, and acquiescence in a Shar'i Tribunal [Islamic Law] that will judge according to God's Book [Qur'an] the Tradition of His Messenger to give their rights to whom they belong." Further ahead we read, "In addition, we proclaim full reprieve and general pardon for all and anyone who gave the order to, or took part in this massacre if Hamas declares the implementation of the Shari'a [Islamic Law]."

When we read these pages on the exploitation of religion in political action, and its negative influence on the values of tolerance in the Palestinian society, we find a political Islamic discourse opposing another Islamic discourse or action, despite their common reference to the same intellectual authority. The discourse of Jaysh al-Islam argues against the discourse of Hamas based on their common intellectual authority. The Army of Islam referred to the sequence of incidents and the unraveling of truths concerning the massacre perpetrated by Hamas' leadership and regular members against the fasting mujahideen [freedom fighters] in Ramadan. "We resort to God seeking His assistance and support to make the bare truth available to anyone who is after it." The statement also mentioned that The Army of Islam has revived the process of Mubahala [i.e. cursing the party who is lying]. They set a time for this process between the leaders of this Army and the leaders of Hamas for a period of three days "but we did not receive an answer to this day, which means undoubtedly that the party who refrains from Mubahala is the party of falsity." The statement went on to say, "we believe that democracy is a religion (sic) other than the religion of Islam, we also believe that secularism and democracy are idols that we must disbelieve. To those who think that democracy is good to rule Gaza, we say, we are ready for Mubahala. We believe that legislation is a divine prerogative; humans have no right to legislate. We even believe that to legislate beside God is idolatry. To those who think that humans have the right to legislate or to vote we say we are ready for Mubahala. We believe that passing judgments according to the Palestinian positive Law, and referring to Palestinian Constitution, and international resolutions, and the UN are blasphemous, and to those who think these are right we say that we are ready for Mubahala".

The statement went on, "We have long warned against Hamas' war on the Salafi way (Islamic reform movement), some people accused us of being extremely judgmental. Let those who doubt ask themselves what justifies Hamas' hunting down the followers of the worthy ancestors while those who were yester casting anathema on Hamas and embracing the doctrine of the Khawarij, and who today are embracing the Shiite doctrine, are out of harm's way, free to do what they will. Moreover, why those who worship no god but Allah are thrown in prison cells, and why are Sunni Imams expelled from their mosques? All this proves that Hamas' war is a systematic one based on rejecting any Islamic project following the worthy ancestors, and accepting all other straying doctrines such as the Sufi and the Shi'a, and the like. If Hamas has won its war against the libertines, then why is it spying on Jaysh al-Islam? Why launch this campaign against it? One time a booby-trapped car, another time a donkey with a booby-trapped cart with a tag on them bearing the words Jaysh al-Islam. All these accusations prove the idiocy of their security apparatus, and the shallowness of their thinking. Jaysh al-Islam does never put at risk the sacrosanct possession of Muslims or their weaknesses. All their spying actions on Muslims are

proofs of their intention to wage war on everything related to Jaysh al-Islam, and that is what their head affirmed on a TV channel, the war on Jaysh al-Islam is not an improvised one, but one lasting for four months. This belies the narrative of Hamas government claiming that this is not a war on Hamas."

The statement also said: "The Committee of Advocacy and Mass Action, and the mosques families played an effective role in inciting Hamas followers against the advocates of the Salafi way. If [Fatah] preventive security agency killed because of the beard while it is a duty, Hamas kills because of long hair and Sunni dress - i.e. because of following the Sunna [the Prophet's way]. That appeared a few months ago in the fatwa (formal legal opinion in Islamic Law) of their leaders in which they accused the al-Qaida and Jaysh al-Islam of killing the innocent and shedding the blood of Muslims, of intellectual pollution, and doctrinal stringency. Nevertheless, it was the entire contrary. Their fatwa exceeded the boundaries of reason and logic when it allowed the perpetrators of the massacre to abstain from fasting as if they were taking part in one of the Prophets campaigns. Did these fatwa allow them to smoke, and accuse chaste women of fornication? They even went as far as lying to God and His Prophet in the memorandum issued by the ministry of interior claiming that "they did nothing displeasing to God and His Prophet, and that they are rather fighting the dissemblers the way the Prophet fought them".

About the Qassam Battalions, it said, "they are of three types, the first, a small group whose guns are constantly aimed at the Jews. The second is a group who belongs in substance and in form to Hamas, and implements their policies without thinking like machines. The third is an opportunistic group that takes advantage of events, they know no shame when their pockets are filled with money, nor do they heed disgrace even if they go to hell. All this appeared clearly in the series of robberies of the Mujahideen's arms, and the monies of Muslims who have no link with Jaysh al-Islam. Hamas surpassed itself in stealing the equipments of a Salafi Radio aiming to disseminate Islam according to the doctrine of the worthy ancestors." The statement ended with these concluding words: "Hamas perpetrated acts devoid of the minimal ethics of war. Neither Islam justifies its misdeeds, or the blasphemous law according to which it rules. Were it not for our rejection of the Palestinian Law, and the UN and its resolutions, we would have tried it before the International Law, so that the infidel would see, even before the Muslim that they committed a real massacre. But we believe in God and call upon Him to take vengeance from everyone who took part, even with a word, or with heart's consent, in this misdeed."

This type of Islamic political discourse reflects the highest degree of rejecting the other, even if the other is an adherent of the same religion. We made it a point in this report to quote the major part of this discourse to show the extent to which it is opposed to the values of tolerance and acceptance of otherness. From this discourse, we conclude to the following:

1. Rejecting the other, even if affiliated to the same intellectual authority;
2. Rejecting the other who is affiliated to a different ideology, and labeling him as an infidel, even if this rejection was couched in the form of personal creed, and left the door open for dialog and intellectual controversy. This is clear from the statement's saying, "we believe that democracy is a religion (sic) other than the religion of Islam, we also believe that secularism and democracy are idols that we must disbelieve. To those who think that democracy is good to rule Gaza, we say, we are ready for Mubahala. We believe that legislation is a divine

prerogative; humans have no right to legislate. We even believe that to legislate beside God is idolatry. To those who think that humans have the right to legislate or to vote we say we are ready for Mubahala. We believe that passing judgments according to the Palestinian positive Law, and referring to Palestinian Constitution, and international resolutions, and the UN are blasphemous, and to those who think these are right we say that we are ready for Mubahala"

3. The statement accused Hamas of fighting the Salafi way, "some people accused us of being extremely judgmental. Let those who doubt ask themselves what justifies Hamas' hunting down the followers of the worthy ancestors while those who were yester casting anathema on Hamas and embracing the doctrine of the Khawarij, and who today are embracing the Shiite doctrine, are out of harm's way, free to do what they will. Moreover, why those who worship no god but Allah are thrown in prison cells?
4. The statement claimed that Hamas' war is a systematic one based on rejecting any Islamic project following the worthy ancestors, and accepting all other straying doctrines such as the Sufi and the Shi'a, and the like."
5. The statement accused "the Committee of Advocacy and Mass Action, and the mosques families of playing an effective role in inciting Hamas' followers against the advocates of the Salafi way".

On September 28, 2008 the journalist Toufic Abu Khosa, a Fatah cadre, wrote an article on the webpage of Ma'an Agency, under the title of "Khomeinian Hamas", in which he discussed Hamas' relationship with Iran. In the article published after Hamas and Islamic Jihad organized a mass demonstration in commemoration of what they call al-Quds' Day –according to the writer– which falls on the last Friday of the month of Ramadan, Abu Khosa used attributes such as (the rule of Malali); (Persian money, Persian financing); (the head of the rebellious movement Khaled Mash'al). Alluding to Hamas' leadership he said, "This lot competed in pleasing the Waliy Faqih Ali Khamenei. As an example, the political correspondent of the Iranian Faris News Agency reported that Ismail Haniya expressed, in a letter to the Iranian leadership, his wish that the leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Ali Khamenei and Ahmadi Nijad say the prayer of Deliverance in al-Quds, and called God to preserve them. Haniya, reportedly, concluded with a dithyrambic praise of the Great Ayatollah Khomeini.

In reference to the statement of Jaysh al-Islam, Khosa wrote, "A statement issued by the so-called Jaysh al-Islam confirmed what is taking place within the ranks of the rebellious movement as regards Iran. He referred to those who were yester casting anathema on Hamas and embracing the doctrine of the Khawarij, and who today are embracing the Shiite doctrine, are out of harm's way, free to do what they will." In another spot, Jaysh al-Islam's statement asserted that Hamas' war on it "is a systematic one based on rejecting any Islamic project following the worthy ancestors, and accepting all other straying doctrines such as the Sufi and the Shi'a, and the like."

The exploitation of religion did not stop at these limits, but went further to reach cultural, artistic, and social activities. On July 10, 2008, Dr. Yunis al-Astal, a leader of the Hamas movement, considered what he called the reception of shameless groups in Ramallah "a great treason of God, religion, and the Palestinian people. This makes these people similar to traitors, spies, and agents, even if they talk our tongue and look like us." In a statement bearing his name, and handed out after a festival of dancing and singing in Ramallah, Al-Astal said, "It is a source of inexhaustible wonder to see these continuous festivities, chief of which the impudent

celebration late in the evening of Wednesday July 9, 2008 in Ramallah while the occupation is continuing the policy of ethnic cleansing against the Palestinian people, especially in the West Bank." He pointed to the concurrence of the festivities with the criminal actions of occupation in Nablus where they closed a market that is the main source of livelihood for hundreds of families and thousands of individuals. The Israelis also penetrated into a number of areas, killing one person and causing numerous injuries, taking detainees, and damaging properties." According to the MP, an ex-president of the Ifta' (formal legal opinion in Islamic Law) committee in the Islamic University, "the greatest crime of those belonging to the Authority of the Muqata'a, who provided security and protection to those impudent jesters, is that they pretend to have a history of struggle, and that the appeasement that was negotiated between the occupier and the resistance in Gaza is national treason." He continued, "Therefore, we find that some of them buy a rocket from a Palestinian faction and hires someone to fire it in order to subvert the appeasement, and prolong the blockade, the famine, and the affliction, while they dance with their stooges on the wounds and sufferings." He also added, "The secret is that they are safe and secure from hunger, because of the constant flow of salaries and support while they are sleeping in their homes. They are even secure from the manhunt by the occupation because their rockets fall in empty areas, and sometimes explode on the spot, because they are not meant to inflict harm upon the enemy, but rather to give him pretexts to close off the passages and perpetuate the blockade on Gaza."

The relationship with other religions

After the military settling of the situation in the Gaza Strip, Palestinian Christians did not hide their concern over potential harassment by certain Islamic fundamentalist groups. Their worries intensified after the looting and setting on fire of the school of the Rosary Nuns and the church of the Latin Convent in Gaza immediately after the military settlement. The killing of a thirty one year old young man on October 8, 2008, exacerbated these fears.

Despite the fact of dealing with these crimes as sporadic individual incidents, not expressing a manifestation of hostility toward Palestinian Christians; however, fears of increasing attacks against them and against their private and common possessions were legitimate, especially after these attacks targeted many internet cafes, beauty parlors, and other premises that are thought to contravene the Islamic religious precepts.

During the reporting period, many attacks have targeted Christians' properties. On July 12, 2008, unidentified elements stole the bells of the Greek Orthodox Church in Tulkarem. Dawud Mitri, the responsible of the Church said that he reported the robbery to the Palestinian police. Mitri clarified that the bells were three, 60 kilograms each, two of which were stolen. Captain Maarroof al-Barbari, the director of the police force in the district of Tulkarem told Ma'an News Agency that the Palestinian police are investigating the incident seriously. He considered the incident immoral, and occurring in the context of robberies of iron and copper in the district, and threatened the perpetrators with severe punishment. The Church is the only one in Tulkarem. Built some 150 years ago, it was burnt completely in 2006, during the wave of disapproval that took place in response to the offensive caricatures of the Prophet.

On October 14, 2008, unidentified elements set ablaze two cars, the first belongs to the ICRC, and the second to YMCA in Qalqilya. The Muhafiz of Qalqilya, Rabih al-

Khandaqji, declared after the incidence that the security forces operating in the district arrested a group of Hamas activists who perpetrated the arson. On the other hand, Hamas retorted that these "allegations are pure lies". In a statement broadcasted by Ma'an News Agency, on October 14, 2008, Hamas spokesman, Fawzi Barhoom said, "This move comes in the context of a certain trend in Fateh followed by some who have reached high posts in the Palestinian Authority and who seek to provoke conflict within the members of the Palestinian people and between different factions and communities. They do so to gratify their desires and whims, please the Americans and Israelis, get the politicized money, and serve as a tough staff against the Palestinian forces of opposition chief of which is Hamas." Barhoom further maintained that the first to be harmed is this trend bent on subverting and destroying the opportunities of Palestinian common agreement. Hamas insisted on their respect of the Christian Community who live with them on a par under the blockade and aggression in the West Bank and Gaza. Everyone testifies to the good relationship with them in all Palestine. Their leaders and responsible figures also testify to that in Gaza and the West Bank and Jerusalem, and everywhere in Palestine." Barhoom went on to confirm that any attempt to provoke conflict between Hamas and the Christian community is doomed to failure."

On a different tone, local media dealt with the offensive caricatures of the Prophet Muhammad with utter disapproval and condemnation. The same media outlets focused on the Palestinian Christians' attitude toward these caricatures as far as the symbol abused is Islamic and the abusers belong to the Christian West. After the renewed publishing of these offensive pictures during last August (2008), Al-Risalah Gazan Newspaper published by the Khalas Islamic party, highlighted the declaration of Member of the Palestinian Legislative Council, Husam Taweel. "In addition to the position that we have as Christians in the Strip as regards all the events and developments taking place in the world, last of which was the republishing of the offensive pictures, we have expressed our disapproval and condemnation within a mass demonstration."

On the other end, and in the same report, Sheikh Ra'ed Salah, the head of the Islamic Movement inside the Green Line, declared, "despite the difference in faith between us and the Christians, the feeling of belonging to and love of this homeland unites us all. We live within the same geography, our houses are next-door and we know the news of each other more than we know the news of our brethren that are distant from us; hence the firm relationship between the Muslim and Christian families that live in all the Palestinian cities.

Salah went on, "the hard political circumstances through which we go affects us both; the violations perpetrated by occupation do not differentiate between Christian and Muslim, or between the Holy Places of both. This is what we and the whole world witnessed when the occupying forces surrounded the church of Nativity in Bethlehem for days on end, without caring much to whom it belongs. In this attitude, we see the extent of Islamic-Christian convivial coexistence in Palestine. The community of aim, cause, and destiny made our brethren the monks and the workers in the church lend a helping hand to their brethren the resistance fighters who were in the church then. They proved that fighting oppression and repression and occupation is not monopolized by one community to the exclusion of others, as long as they all belong to this homeland and live on its soil.

Two models of the image of Christians and Christianity in the local media.

On September 5, 2008, Ma'an News Agency published an article by Muhammad Khodr Qursh, titled "The Sunnite, The Shiite, The Catholic and the Orthodox" in which he tried to answer the question why do we, the members of this generation, have to bear the burden of the schism between the Eastern and the Western Church. By "we", the author meant the Arab and Muslim East in the first place, "because the West is not religious in general, and does not attach any importance to all Prophetic biographies."

"If the Holy Qur'an, the Gospel, and the Bible are revealed by God, what then is the reason of this enmity and mutual aversion especially between the Jewish religion, on the one hand, and Christianity and Islam on the other? As to us, we differentiate completely between Palestinian and Arab Christianity, with the exception of a group of Maronite Christians in Lebanon, the likes and followers of Antoun Lahad and Samir Jaja', and the Western colonizing Christianity. The first fought and continually stood against, or even pioneered Arab and Palestinian struggle against colonization, occupation, and foreign rule regardless of its color, whether Ottoman, British, French or American. These are the self-evident fundamentals of militancy. Palestinian Islamism for us is similar to Palestinian Christianity. There is no difference between them except for the amount of services each provides to the homeland; as the Prophet said: the only difference between an Arab and a non-Arab is in piety."

On the same day, Abu al-Harith/Palestine wrote a retort to the "The Sunnite, The Shiite, The Catholic and the Orthodox" in which he drew a very divergent picture of Christians and Christianity. He rejected the plea for God's mercy made by Qursh for the late patriotic nationalist leader George Habash, and reminded his coreligionist that Habash was "Nasrani"[the old Islamic appellation of Christians] communist, Marxist...etc of the same cocktail of erroneousness and blasphemy."

In his retort, Abu al-Harith mentioned several issues related to Christianity and Christians of which we select the following:

- Look, God bless you, to the Torah [probably the Bible] and how many versions it has, each different from the other. So has the Gospel.
- Your saying that man does not choose his religion is right, in principle, when he is still not an adult. However, when he reaches majority he has the duty of searching for truth and the true religion and the true path, in accordance with the Prophet's saying "each new born baby is born with the *fitra* (spontaneous faith), and his parents make him a Jew, a Christian, or an adherent of Mazdaism. The most appropriate, and right, is to adhere to Islam according to the Prophet's Companions and their followers until Judgment Day.
- Concerning your wondering about mutual aversion and hatred between the three (motheistic) religions you ought to read the Qur'an and see how full it is of Verses that explain the reason of the polytheists', the Jews', and the Nasara's (Christians) enmity for Muslims.
- As to your enumerating the kinds of occupation and colonization, and subsuming the Ottomans and their Caliphate Islamic State under these kinds, considering it an occupying force, it is a pity that we (and you) still consider the Great Ottoman Islamic State, an occupier, exactly as the Crusaders, the Orientalists, and the secularists and their followers told us.

After reading these two media discourses we notice the following:

- Qursh presented a realistic image of Christianity and Christians in his article. He meant to differentiate the leanings of Oriental Christians, the sons of this land, and the leanings of Western Christians. Oriental Christians have always participated in defending the homelands they live in as genuine nationals, including their opposition to the Crusaders' campaigns that had a colonizing rather than a religious character. They even were leaders of some militant factions in the contemporary phase of Palestinian national liberation.
- Abu al-Harith jumped on the opportunity of retorting to Qursh's article and exploited this in an unjustified manner. He intentionally raised points of difference between the two religions with the aim of preferring one to the other.
- Despite the points of difference between the Islamic and the Christian religions, which are recognized by both religions, the points of agreement are overwhelmingly numerous. Why did he not mention them?
- Given that he is talking history, then why did he not mention the long centuries of convivial coexistence between the faithful of both religions?

On November 22, 2008, Ma'an News Agency published an article under the title "Political normalization in the auction market of the dialogue between religions" by member of the Media Office of Hizb al-Tahreer in Palestine, Ala' Abu Saleh.

As a preliminary Abu Saleh wrote, "The idea of the dialogue between religions has acquired much publicity in our days. It won the hearts and minds of the rulers and ulemas (doctors of faith) that go along with rulers and adapt to their policies. Those labeled "moderates" advocate it mornings and evenings. But this is a Western malignant idea meant to lead Muslims astray from the straight path of rightness, and misguide them away from the true religion."

He went on, "the concepts that these conferences on dialogue seek to consecrate revolve around three aims. First, the equality of all religions and the absence of superior precedence of one religion compared to the other. Second, accepting the other as he is and getting to know him un-judgmentally, but rather perceiving him for what he has unconditionally, and third, interact to find a higher civilized alternative through inspiration gained from what is common to all civilizations and religions.

The writer proceeds then to prove how unrealistic these aims are. "From the standpoint of the Islamic Law there is no room for the dialogue between religions except by calling upon their followers to embrace Islam through wisdom, good preaching, and sound arguments. This is because the religion that God revealed to his Prophet Muhammad is the only right religion, and that is why Islam called the followers of other religions to adopt monotheism exclusively, and to embrace Islam in light of proofs and arguments, without any coercion or compulsion. Truth and falsity cannot meet according to Islam, how then could they be equal. As to exploring the other un-judgmentally, this is against the Qur'an's way of addressing others. For it diligently calls to refute other creeds, expose their falsity, and pass its judgment on them. Moreover, as to the interaction in order to reach a civilized alternative (a religion), we think that the texts already mentioned invalidate the other thesis and affirm the rightness of Islam. Considering Islam as the only religion to the exclusion of others is enough to disprove this claim."

The religious discourse of Hizb al-Tahreer rejects the religious other completely. It is the right of any party to object to the dialogue of religion, but it is no one's right to declare that he exclusively holds the complete truth. Some might be tempted to

claim that this discourse derives from the Holy Qur'an. However, there are many, from among the Islamists themselves, who think that this is only one interpretation of the Qur'anic text, and that the Qur'an admits of another interpretation.

Second: Political Tolerance

Palestinians shall have the right to participate in the political life individually and in groups. They shall have the following rights in particular: 1.To form, establish, and join political parties in accordance with the law. 2.To form and establish unions, guilds, associations, societies, clubs, and popular institutions in accordance with the law. 3.To Vote and nominate for election, representatives among them by ballot in accordance with the law. 4.To hold public office and positions in accordance with the principle of equal opportunities. 5.To conduct special meetings without the presence of police members, and to conduct public meetings, processions, and assemblies, within the limits of law (article 26 of the Palestinian Authority Amended Basic Law.)"

We have pointed out in the conceptual framework of this report that political tolerance means recognizing others, regardless of being a minority or a majority, as well as recognizing their rights to work, organization and promote their ideas freely without being oppressed or pressured. We have also attempted to define the concept of intolerance as a kind of rule which lacks objectivity, characterized by generalization or simplifications; a kind of rule based on a set of stereotyping and ready made judgments based on sharp stances that are specially taken to mobilize and polarize people. It emerges in a certain cultural and social context which implies it and is directed towards a certain group or persons as members of the group.

In analyzing the state of political tolerance in the Palestinian Authority territories, it seems that the above mentioned elements will be present when we analyze the Palestinian political rhetoric that has prevailed in the period covered by this report. The will also be present when we analyze the practices of relationship between the different components of the Palestinian political system.

The military takeover in Gaza Strip has created an internal rift in the relationship between the two major parties in the country with each party controlling a separate geographic area. Hamas has full control over the Gaza Strip, while Fateh and the Palestinian security apparatus, most of whom are members or supporters of Fateh, have full control over the West Bank and governing it under the name of the Palestinian Authority apparatuses. The new reality made each party discard the other party and attempt to exclude it. This was the case in Gaza as well as in the West Bank. The conflict between the two sides was not only limited to the two factions, but has also manifested itself on the whole political system components with each suffering much harm from this party or the other.

The roots of political intolerance in this phase of the Palestinian people history can be attributed to moments that followed the victory of Hamas in the legislative elections held in January 2006; when Hamas Movement felt that Fateh is working to overthrow its government. The national unity government, which was formed in the wake of the Mecca agreement, to bridge the rift between the two groups, has not succeeded in bringing about any change in the status of tolerance between the parties. This failure has led to a military confrontation between the two movements during the first half of June 2007 in the Gaza Strip and to Hamas full control over the Gaza Strip.

In the aftermath of the military takeover in Gaza, Hamas continued chasing Fateh movement leaders, cadres and supporters as well as closing Fateh institutions in

Gaza Strip. Likewise, Fateh took similar procedures in the West Bank with its members committing a series of revenge acts against Hamas leaders, cadres and institutions. Kidnapping and murder fuelled by the political and factional violence prevailed for a period of time but these acts stopped when the Palestinian security apparatuses in the West Bank took the responsibility of pursuing Hamas elements, arresting and investigating whether they are members of the Executive Force of the deposed government and searching for arms. The year 2008 started under such conditions.

Manifestations of Political intolerance

1. Intolerant rhetoric:

If we examine the political rhetoric of the two parties to the conflict we can say that the most prominent feature which has prevailed in the second half of 2008, was the lack of objectivity, generalization, repetition, stereotyping and ready made judgments. The two parties have entered into a reconciliation dialogue initiated by Egypt, but the same rhetoric continued. A detailed examination of the Palestinian political discourse during this period will not be of any added value. And it is for this reason that we will only give two examples on the kind of rhetoric used by the two parties.

On 12/11/2008, the Palestinian Information Center published an interview with Dr. Ismail Radwan, one of the Islamic Resistance Movement "Hamas" leaders, and a spokesman of the movement. The interview focused on the speech delivered by President Mahmoud Abbas before the Palestinian Central Council meeting at that time. Radwan described Abbas's speech as being "narrow-minded, factional, non-patriotic adding that such a speech is not something for a President of the Palestinian Authority to be proud of!". He said that Abbas's rhetoric is "provocative against the Palestinian people encouraging occupation to continue its siege on Hamas and the people of Gaza Strip who are resisting this occupation; this speech proves that Abbas is not qualified to be the president of the Palestinian Authority!" "Abbas has accepted to be part of a failed project. He has entered into futile negotiations and linked his destiny to such a project," reiterated Radwan. He condemned "the testimony made by Abbas which justifies crimes committed by Bush, who supports the Zionist enemy against the Palestinian people." He considered such a testimony as "stabbing the Palestinian resistance in the back."

In his reply to a question related to President Abbas who accused Hamas of aborting the Yemeni initiative and the Egyptian dialogue efforts, Radwan said that "these are false accusations, slander and lies; they will not deceive our Palestinian people who are struggling against occupation" adding that "everybody knows who was behind aborting the Yemeni initiative and Sana' Declaration even before the ink has dried." "Everybody has watched the TV debate between Azzam al-Ahmad, Nimer Hammad and the Leaders of Fateh. The debate has revealed Fateh's real intensions." "With regard to Cairo negotiations, it was Abbas who aborted them when he refused to release imprisoned resistance members and Hamas members and supporters in the occupied West Bank," Radwan added.

On 13/11/2008, just hours after the violent attack launched by Saeed Siyam, the deposed Minister of the Interior, on President Mahmoud Abbas, holding him responsible for the state of divide in Palestine, Ahmad Abdul-Rahman, spokesman for

the Fateh Movement said: "The Palestinian people refuse the military takeover of Hamas and do not accept that it continues specially with Hamas becoming a blackmailing, theft and tunnels gang." He added that "the words of Siyam have no political, ethical, patriotic or Islamic value in a modern Palestinian society; he is nothing but a gangster." "These gangs of thieves will be abandoned by the people, and will not be acknowledged by the nation; in Islam and in history they will be deemed unethical; they are a black mark on the Palestinians history and the people will clean this mark sooner or later."

Abdul-Rahman questioned the legitimacy Hamas claims saying "is it the coup legitimacy? What does Hamas have to offer to the people other than killing every patriotic Palestinian who stands against its coup?," he added. "No member of the legislative council in Gaza Strip has any legitimacy under Hamas rule and no value for a legislative council commission nor to Bahr because they all lost their legitimacy after the coup," he reiterated. "What legitimacy or democracy are they talking about?" "They should get out of our lives instead of claiming that they can confer legitimacy on whoever they want." They should be put in a trial dock no matter how long it takes to do so; we wanted to turn the black page of their coup, crimes, the killing of citizens and freedom fighters but they insisted on their wrongdoings and transgression, and therefore the future of these people and of Ahmad Bahr and Saeed Siyam would not be the Legislative Council, but also in the dock; they are nothing but murderers who order murder; they have killed in one day 13 persons of Hallas family," added Abdul-Rahman.

2. Exclusion

Both movements, (Fateh) in the West Bank and the (Hamas) in Gaza, adopted exclusionary policies. In the West Bank, Fateh Movement used the security forces, formed of Fateh members to pursue Hamas members and tighten the grip on them and suppress any activity they do. In the Gaza Strip, Hamas Movement used the executive force of the deposed Ministry of the Interior and Martyr Izz el-Deen al-Qassam Brigades, the armed wing of the movement for similar acts. The two movements committed the same acts of arrests, torture and persecution; the two prevented peaceful demonstrations, even in major national events; the two closed media outlets which express views different to theirs.

(See: Ramallah Center for Human Rights Studies (RCHRS) second report on "Freedoms and human rights in the Palestinian National Authority Territories", covering the period from 1/7/2008 to 31/12/2008; a report issued parallel to this one).

In a move aimed at cracking down on the deposed government, the Palestinian government in Ramallah stopped sending passports to the Gaza government. On 5/7/2008, the Interior Ministry of the deposed government accused caretaker government in Ramallah of using passports as part of its "political pressure measures" by depriving Gaza Strip from its share of these passports. In a statement issued end of November 2007, the interior ministry said that the quantity of passports in Gaza was 11500. In that day Ramallah stock was exhausted and Saeed Siyam, the Minister of Interior, sent 5000 passports to the West Bank because the 2500000 passports under printing were not yet printed. The quantity was sent in two lots: the first 2500 passports were sent on 11-25-2007, and the second quantity was sent on 3/12/ 2007. By sending these quantities, Gaza's stock was

exhausted. When the ministry of interior in the West bank received the 20000 copies of passports, a quantity of 1000 passport was sent to Gaza! Another 10000 passports were sent out of the 230000 passports received by the West Bank ministry. The last lot sent was in May 2008, i.e Gaza Strip has only received 11000 passport out of 250000 passports. Gaza should receive 40% of the quantity, i.e. one hundred thousand passports. The interior ministry accused Ramallah government of refusing to send to Gaza its share of passports saying that "the Israeli occupation coordinated, more than five times, with the Authority to facilitate the entry of these passports but Ramallah government was delaying the process." The deposed ministry accused the West Bank ministry of disconnecting the joint database since some time saying that such a procedure will ease fraud. It also added that there is no archive on Gaza people in the West Bank and vice versa and the paper archive should be used when issuing identity cards and passports because information does not exist in the computerized database.

3. Exclusion at career level

Exclusion from job placement falls within the framework of economic rights. The two governments have resorted to exclusion from jobs based on the ongoing conflict between Fateh and Hamas and this is the reason why we have included this topic under the heading of political tolerance. Exclusion from career opportunities, which took the form of exclusion from jobs prior to the eruption of the conflict between the two movements, is not a new phenomenon. From the day of its creation, the PA has given priority and special attention in its employment policy to Fateh members, especially when it comes to higher posts, most notably in the security services of an intelligence nature (Preventive Security, General Intelligence, Military Intelligence). It must be noted that political Islamic movements' cadres did not accept become part of the prevailing quota system, unlike some leftist Palestinian parties until the day when Hamas won the legislative council elections and formed a government of national unity. Many members of the Executive Force formed by the Interior Ministry of Hamas' first government were integrated into the security forces. The system of job quotas also became part of civil employment after the formation of the national unity government.

Following Hamas' seizure of power in the Gaza Strip, the caretaker government in the West Bank and the deposed government in Gaza Strip undertook a series of arbitrary decisions against public officials who oppose them. At a time when the security forces in the West Bank played a role in stopping the promotion of a number of employees affiliated with Hamas, from among ministries and civil institutions staff, the deposed government in Gaza Strip took several decisions to dismiss staff affiliated with Fateh. Employees in the West Bank and Gaza became victims of the conflict between the two movements, regardless of their affiliations.

The two Palestinian governments in Ramallah and Gaza continued their employment exclusion policy threatening employees who do not fully obey their orders of being dismissed. With the start of the new school year 2008-2009, the general secretariat of Palestinian teachers union, close to Fateh, announced a full strike for 5 days in all government schools in the Gaza Strip, a strike to start on the first day of the new school year. The strike was organized to protest what was described as arbitrary decisions taken by Gaza Government Ministry of Education such as transferring a number of school headmasters and teachers, arresting others and attacks on some school guards and confiscating school keys they have. In its turn, Gaza ministry of interior internal security issued a circular to all headmasters and headmistresses in

government schools threatening to take all necessary legal procedures against everybody who disturbs the educational progress.

During the days of the strike, Gaza government criminal investigation department police arrested Muhammad Yousef Abu Shawareb and Muhammad Shihdeh al-Bayoumi, the headmasters of Kamal Adwan Secondary School for boys and Abu Yousef al-Najjar Secondary School who live in Canda, Rafah province. The police also arrested Shihta Abu Zurayq, the headmaster of Hayel Abdul Hameed Secondary School in Bait Hanoon. The three were arrested because they participated in the strike.

On 26/8/2008, Dr. Muhammad Asqoul, the minister of education in the deposed government said the ministry has decided not to allow teachers and headmasters who participated in the strike to join their schools after the strike. He added that the ministry will decide later on the period of time these shall be prevented from joining their schools. In a press conference held at al-Karmel School in the center of Gaza which was attended by a number of the legislative council members, Asqoul added that: "The ministry has given those who went on strike the opportunity to return to their schools but they didn't." However, Asqoul said that there is a chance that the ministry abandons the decision upon a request made by the acting president of the Legislative Council, Dr. Ahmad Bahar."

Fahmi al-Za'areer, spokesman of Fateh, accused Hamas of "kidnapping and dismissing headmasters and teachers who went on strike because they refused to obey Hamas transfer of teachers and headmasters orders and of practicing an exclusion policy against them only because of their political affiliations."

In a step which contradicts the Palestinian law, the Palestinian Ministry of Higher Education in the West Bank sent letters to tens of male and female teachers supporters of Hamas ending their contracts with the ministry as of 14/10/2008.

According to the information available to the Center, the ministry of higher education in Ramallah has sent letters on 14/10/2008, to tens of teachers who were appointed during the school year 2006-2007 informing them that their contracts have been ended and that they shall not continue working for the ministry as of the date of the letter. The reason stated for such a procedure was that "concerned authorities" did not approve their appointment. A number of teachers affected by this decision said that they went to the ministry in Ramallah to meet with the minister but the bureau chief asked them to go to the general civil service bureau being responsible for the decision. When they went to the bureau, they were told to go the ministry because the bureau only deals directly with ministries and not with staff.

Furthermore, the Center has received information that more than one hundred and fifty male and female teachers who were appointed by the Ministry of Higher Education during the period that followed the formation of Hamas government in 2006, have received letters signed by the Minister of Education and Higher Education, Lamees al-Alami, which stated that: "With reference to the civil service letter number 104231 dated 9/9/2008, and given the fact that the competent authorities did not approve your appointment in the ministry of Higher Education, you are kindly requested to deliver whatever documents that belong to the ministry and stop working as of that date of this letter ". It should be noted that the teachers affected by this decision were recruited during the academic year 2006 2007,

particularly during the months of April and September 2006, and a number of them has already obtained approval from competent authorities.

Suspension of employees' salaries

The negative impact of the Palestinian political divide has additional consequences on the public sector employees whose salaries were suspended by the Palestinian government in Ramallah under the pretext of their abidance by the decisions of the discharged government in Gaza Strip. The problem began after Hamas took control of the strip. At that time, the caretaker government in Ramallah attempted to suspend the salaries of hundreds of employees, particularly the employees of the ministries of health and education. During the period covered by this report, the Palestinian government in Ramallah continued its policy of suspending the salaries of public sector employees, in an arbitrary manner. The reason behind this policy is the sharp political division afflicting the society and the entire Palestinian political system.

On 1/9/2008, an informed source of the security committee, which examines employees' payroll, said that "on the occasion of the holy month of Ramadan, and upon a request made by the trade unions supervising the strike and the movement's offices, the committee decided to examine the payroll which were issued and to postpone a final decision with its regard until all mistakes are corrected." "The committee will take into consideration the unintended mistakes made during the first days of work, after which legitimacy has been respected," the source added. He continued saying that: "The committee will also look into the cases of teachers whose salaries were suspended from among those who went into strike." The source added that, with respect to newly appointed teachers and staff by the Ministry of Education in Ramallah, the decision of their appointment has entered into effect and any violation will lead to their dismissal. "The committee has stressed that it is only obliged to pay the salaries of those who obey the legitimate authority orders," the source said.

On 28/8/2008, public sector employees announced the start of an all-out strike in all governmental facilities in the Gaza Strip, in response to a call by the Palestinian Syndicate of Public Employees. Thousands of public sector employees joined the strike which was supported by the Government in Ramallah. The government threatened to sack those who did not join the strikers, or to deprive them of their salaries. Subsequently, Gaza Government took similar measures such as arresting dozens of education sector employees, as well as threatening to dismiss those who participate in the strike and accused them of bringing damage to the education system in Gaza.

On the same day, the Palestinian health ministry in Ramallah issued a statement on the strike in Gaza Strip saying that: "The Palestinian ministry of health, upon the directives of President Mahmoud Abbas, and HE Prime Minister Dr. Salam Fayyad, was keen not to allow health institutions to be part of the political polarization in order to enable them provide health services to the people who are suffering in Gaza. This is despite the provocations and the putschists procedures turned hospitals and health centers into military camps and who arrested, dismissed, excluded and humiliated health institutions' workers. The Ministry of Health was also keen to respect its commitments to its employees and patients; it has continued to pay the salaries of employees, deliver medicines and medical equipment and also continued the

development of health facilities in the Strip despite the Israeli siege and the procedures taken by the putschists. The Ministry of Health understands the reasons for workers strike in the Gaza Strip who want to preserve their professional dignity and that of their patients and citizens and to stop the futility of those newly appointed by the coup authority to replace qualified people authority appointed by the coup in dozens of sites of scientific skills. These appointments have endangered people's life and will lead to the collapse of the health institution in Gaza."

On 29/8/2008, the health ministry of the deposed government said that a number of doctors and nurses were involved in sabotage acts targeting x-ray equipment and medical operations which are extremely expensive and unavailable in the market. The deposed ministry added in its statement that "these doctors and nurses have destroyed more than 500 liters of kidney dialysis solution in al-Shifa, Nasser and the European hospitals, a solution very difficult to import under the current siege conditions, closure of borders, the disruption of electricity generators and the theft of medicines which are sold in the black market and to private pharmacies, as well as numerous destructive acts of vandalism violation ethics and religion. " The deposed ministry denounced the "unexpected" calls for strike, calling upon all staff to go to work and discard "poisonous calls" for strike that do not serve the interests of the country but create internal Palestinian divides." The statement added that "we will not allow the strike because the Palestinian people need all kind of care to enable them resist aggression and Israeli siege.

On 30/8/2008, the nurses' union in the Gaza Strip, announced that it will not participate in the strike and called upon nurses to go to their work places. In its statement, the union said that it will continue to support everybody who goes to work and will abandon those who do not perform their duties and do their job. The statement added that the union will not support those who will be legally pursued stressing that it will "lift the cover on every person who does not respect the union and its legitimacy." "All people appreciate the great role we are doing, working day and night to provide patients with care and to alleviate their suffering," added the statement. "The nurses' union is real and legitimate representative of nurses and no one has the right to speak in its name."

Increased hostilities among students

The conflict between the two movements (Fateh) and (Hamas) has had its impact on Palestinian university students and the students' affiliated with the two movements. The margins of tolerance narrowed down specially between youth blocs affiliated with Fateh and between their fellow youth of Hamas Islamic bloc.

§ On 4/8/2008, Bir Zeit University closed its doors when clashes broke out between students from the Fateh Youth bloc and the Islamic movement bloc affiliated with Hamas. Dr. Abdul Karim Abu Khashan, Dean of Students Affairs at the university, said that the university administration evacuated the university premises from students and formed a committee to look into the circumstances leading to the clashes. Ayman Abu Aram, member of the Islamic bloc at Bir Zeit University said that "six students from his bloc suffered bruises after being attacked by Fateh Youth for no reason." "The Youth Movement has repeatedly removed the posters of the Islamic bloc in the university," he added. "The have provocatively asked us to condemn what is going on in Gaza," said Abu Aram. Dia' Qindah, head of the students council of Bir Zeit and representative of Fateh Youth refuted these

accusations and said that the coordinator of the Islamic bloc has "provoked Fateh Youth when the latter was organizing an event in response to events in Gaza." For its part, the Islamic bloc, accused the security forces and Fateh Youth of attacking members of the Islamic bloc in the university and detaining more than 20 of its members. In a statement issued by the Islamic bloc, Mahmoud Abbas was considered fully responsible for the attacks on the bloc members.

- § On 24/8/2008, acts of violence erupted between Hamas supporters and those of Fateh in Al-Azhar University in Gaza City. In the morning hours, a number of the Students' bloc supporters, Hamas students' bloc, occupied one of the university's halls which is used as premises of the evening diploma programme by the student's union. Supporters of the bloc hanged pictures on the university's wall and distributed statements in violation of previous administrative orders of freezing the activities of all students' groups inside the university. In response, a number of students, from among them a number of the Fateh Youth bloc, removed the pictures and tried to take back the hall from the Islamic bloc supporters. This has led to acts of violence between the two parties and a group of militants wearing civilian clothes immediately intervened storming the university from three entrances and indiscriminately assaulting students. The university administration ordered students to evacuate the university in order to avoid further escalation of violence and police forces intervened to evacuate students.

After these events, the two movements (Fateh and Hamas) exchanged accusations with each holding the other responsible for violence in Al-Azhar University. Fateh said that members of Hamas and al-Qassam broke into the university and assaulted teachers and students while Hamas claimed that the university's administration and students attacked Hamas students with knives. Asharf al-Ghafri, a spokesman of the Islamic bloc, al-Azhar University in Gaza, said that the university's administration and Fateh Youth attacked the bloc's students with knives and three students were injured in the assault. "Students were assaulted and attacked by knives because they practiced their democratic rights inside the university like all other youth group," added al-Ghafri. The bloc said that "the board of trustees of al-Azhar university and its administration are fully responsible for the regrettable acts of violence." Al-Ghafri called on the police of the deposed government to intervene and "prevent" those who went beyond their limits from attacking the sanctity of students.

For his part, Fahmi al-Za'areer, a spokesman of Fateh said that "Hamas gangs and al-Qassam Brigades, stormed Al-Azhar University, wreaked havoc, assaulted male and female students and took over the university's resources, those of the students' council and damaged the furniture." "Hamas does not respect Palestinian universities in the Strip, and always violates their sanctity; it is always attacking Al-Azhar University to spread fear among Fateh Youth," he added.

- § On 26/8/2008, an explosive device planted in a room on the fourth floor of "al-Kateebah building" used as Human Sciences College by Al-Azhar University, to the of Gaza City, exploded but caused no injuries because student took their exams and left the college before the explosion.
- § On 14/10/2008, around 100 students from the Islamic bloc (of Al-Azhar University and other universities) gathered outside the gates of Al-Azhar University, broke into the university chanting slogans against the university's

presidency and other academic figures. This was followed by a stun grenade which exploded inside the university campus, and a large number of students destroyed the iron gates of the university presidency building, tearing the photos of late President Yasser Arafat. Students also broke into the university board of trustees office and destroyed its contents, then went to the colleges deans' offices and threatened some of them of further escalation. In a subsequent development, Faeh Youth clashed with the Islamic bloc students and a number of students suffered from bruises. The Islamic bloc students distributed a statement attacking the university deans' council. The statement mainly attacked Dr. Jaber al-Daour, Vice-President for Administrative and Financial Affairs and Dr. Riad al-Ayleh, Dean of Student Affairs. It called upon the Minister of the Interior, to open corruption files in the university.

- § On 16/10/2008, Al-Azhar University witnessed acts of violence carried out by a number of the university Islamic bloc students (the student wing of the Islamic Resistance Movement - Hamas). Students organized a sit-in in front of the university, stormed its gate, threw stun grenades, and occupied a number of its buildings vandalizing some of their contents. Based on these developments, the university presidency called the police, who came to the scene and evacuated all students from the university. These events erupted when the university administration suspended 11 students, including a number of students from the Islamic bloc for two years in the wake of the violence in the university which erupted on 8-24-2008, and which was accompanied by clashes between Fateh students and Hamas and followed by attacks on a number of the university administration members and its students, necessitating the formation of an inquiry commission by the university administration who ordered suspension.
- § On 24/11/2008, a number of students from the Islamic bloc, who were later identified as affiliated with the security forces in Gaza, opened fire in the air inside the campus of Al-Azhar University College, Graduate Studies, in Gaza City, to disperse a number of students gathering from all blocs to protest against the administration's decision to exempt a number of university bloc's students from the university fees.
- § On 25/11/2008, acts of violence erupted inside al-Aqsa University campus, Khan Younis branch, between Fateh Youth and the Islamic bloc Youth of Hamas who were organizing a celebration to honor a distinguished female students in the university courtyard. Acts of violence have evolved rapidly to hand fighting and throwing stones and chairs. Police intervened and began to evacuate students. A female eye witnesses said that female students have been beaten and the police intentionally and indiscriminately hit all of the students sitting in the celebration place using rods and rifle batons. Thirteen students have been injured as a result of violent acts, police attacks and from stones thrown at them.

Third: Social Tolerance

Introduction:

At a time when the Palestinian civil society is struggling to improve the social contract (laws) conditions and to base it on concepts of citizenship regardless of race, color, sex, religion, social ethnicity, or anything other than citizenship, to accommodate for the interests of all the Palestinian society component, Hamas movement, which controls the Gaza Strip, took a very dangerous step on the level of creating new legal system in the occupied Palestinian territories. Members of the movement's Legislative Council, who held their meetings in the Gaza Strip, endorsed approved the draft "Penal Code" after a second reading. The draft law submitted by the deposed government, headed by Ismail Haniyeh, to the Council is an "Islamic law penal" which aims at applying the Holy Qoran law in the way perceived by those who proposed the law and their interpretations of it. Deputy Ahmad Abu Halabieh, Head of the Legislative Council Legal Committee, denied reports about the council's approval of an Islamic Penal Code saying that "news disclosed by the media are not true and no related laws were approved; the council has discussed some of the code's provisions in a workshop held for this purpose and other provisions will be discussed in future workshops gathering official and civil society organizations as well as human rights organizations because we are keen to involve all segments of society in the discussions around the law before submitting it to the Legislative Council for approval." It should be noted that Deputy Abu Halabieh had announced, immediately upon Hamas victory in the Legislative Council elections in 2008, that his movement will work towards the Islamization of the Palestinian society by enacting laws derived from Islamic code.

Regardless of the realistic or constitutional possibility of enacting and applying the draft law, it is considered a step backward compared to existing laws in the Palestinian territories. These laws, criticized by the Palestinian civil society organizations for containing inhumane penalties such as capital punishment, are still more advanced compared to the newly discussed penal code. Amidst the existing political rifts in the Palestinian territories, and the on-going conflicts between the Palestinian government in Ramallah and the one in Gaza, it seems that it is more likely that the new law will be endorsed. From a constitutional point of view, and with the end of President Mahmoud Abbas term as president of the Palestinian National Authority in 9/1/2009, Hamas may appoint Dr. Ahmad Bahar as vice-president of the legislative council for sixty days term because Dr. Aziz Dweik, the current president of the council, is serving a sixty days sentence in Israeli occupation prisons and hence approve the draft law. Realistically and in the long run, Hamas could win both the presidential and legislative elections, and thus become in full control of all legislative authority aspects, and can then pass any number of laws that it desires.

The new draft penal code categorizes penalties into two: "major" and "secondary" penalties. Major penalties are: the execution of the law of God, the law of retaliation, blood money (al-diyeh), punishment not stipulated by the Shariah (al-ta'zir), capital punishment, imprisonment and fines. The secondary penalties include: dismissing employees, confiscating property, closure and genocide. The code stressed that there should be "no pardon given in applying the law of God." Moreover, "in the case of murder, penalties cannot be dropped except if they were pardoned by the victim or his/her guardian."

In the chapter on "blood money" the legislator stipulated that "blood money" is hundred camels for a life or their equivalent in cash, an amount to be specified by the Shariah court in consultation with concerned authorities." Furthermore, at a time when the Palestinian civil society organizations are exerting efforts to abolish the death penalty in domestic law, article 59 of the penal code to legalize death penalty. Moreover, flogging (al-Jald) penalty was stipulated in a number of draft law's articles. Article 84 of the draft law stipulated that: "Every Muslim who drinks alcoholic beverage, possesses or produces them will be punished by forty lashes." It also stipulated that: "Every person who drinks alcoholic beverages and intimidates people, upsets or disturbs them, drinks it in a public place or goes drunk to a public place, will be punished by not less than forty lashes and shall be imprisonment for a period of no less than three months". The flogging penalty was also stipulated for "gambling, ridiculing people's religious beliefs, debauched and scandalous acts in violations of public morality, defamation, and for the use of insulting language and curses" offenses. The code also stipulated that "theft crime is punishable by amputation of the thief's right hand from the wrist."

The draft code contains a number of serious violations to minimum human rights standards, as well as a series of inhuman punishments such as execution, flogging, and the amputation of the hand. It is worth mentioning that all of these penalties violate the international human rights law, specifically the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (1984) as well as UNESCO's Declaration of Principles on Tolerance.

Social tolerance

The deteriorating security situation and the armed conflict between Fatah and Hamas movements have had their negative impact on social tolerance. During the armed conflict period, and throughout the period that followed, taking the law by hand has been widely spread and the crime rate within the Palestinian society increased, specifically in relation to murder crimes. This part of the report reviews acts of murder committed under the pretext of the so-called "honor crimes", revenge, personal conflicts and domestic disputes. The number of these acts is a clear indication of the deterioration levels of social tolerance.

1. Intolerance toward women

The reports of many women-related, and women's rights NGOs, point to increasing rates of offences against women, through killing, injuring, and/or threatening with slander. Despite the legislations aimed at abolishing discrimination against women, the dissemination of equalitarian culture and concepts, the efforts made, and the practical measures taken in that direction by the official establishment and the NGOs in order to improve tolerance regarding women, yet all these steps fail to do justice and remain, notwithstanding many positive achievements, insufficient in giving women all their rights. Furthermore, some of the established legislations remain deficient in protecting women from the worst violations of their rights, and need drastic amendments. More alarming is the fact that the social perception of women is generally still negative; it did not rise above the traditional view of the place and status of women in social activity, and their civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights.

On the official level, the Basic Law of the Palestinian Authority, and a number of laws that were enacted under the Palestinian Authority, and more specifically, the labor law, and the civil service law, guaranteed women's equality with men, in order to protect them from gender-related discrimination and violence. However, these laws remain by and large formal as long as their practical monitoring and enforcement is wanting; as long as the necessary procedural by-laws that put them into force are absent—not to mention the existence of other discriminatory laws against women. The most inhumane crimes that affect women in the Palestinian society are homicide based on the so-called "family honor". The laws in force in the areas falling under the Palestinian Authority's jurisdiction protect those convicted with such crimes under what is called the 'attenuating excuse'.

Both the Jordanian penal law number 16 which is still in force in the West Bank, and the 1936 Palestinian penal law number 74 in force in Gaza, include several penal statutes stipulating the infliction of consequences on those who commit violent crimes against women. These consequences increase in severity according to the type and nature of the crime, be it murder or criminal intent, physical abuse in all its forms, crimes that place life or health in jeopardy, crimes against morality, crimes related to the marital bond, or family commitments such as giving a minor in marriage, or fraudulent marriage, deprivation of liberty, kidnapping, libel and defamation. All these have been considered by the law, and commensurate consequences have been stipulated. However, the law does not stipulate sufficient and deterrent consequences for those who commit crimes under the pretence of honor. The laws in force in Palestine do protect such offenders, when it acquiesces in the so-called attenuating excuse in the case of the so-called crime of honor, either through article 18 of the penal law of Gaza, or article 34 of the penal law in force in the West Bank.

Accepting the so-called attenuating excuse in due judicial process of cases of murder under the pretence of "family honor" is practically an encouragement for those who commit such crimes. Despite the rejection of the Palestinian civil society of these crimes, there are other reasons behind such misdeeds, not the least of which the demand by a woman of her rights of inheritance, for example, or of choosing her husband, or opposing her parents in some situations that are perceived by them to be embarrassing—so they resort to killing the woman and disparagingly accusing her of dishonoring the family.

The report published by the Palestinian police information office reflects intolerance against women in the Palestinian society. This becomes evident when we examine the number of complaints made by women in the different Palestinian provinces during the month of August 2008.

The report stated that the number of cases filed by women amounted to 208: 80 cases of abuse, 32 cases of insults and humiliation, 23 theft cases, 14 cases of threats, 13 attacks on other people's property, 2 cases of rape and attempted rape cases in addition to other cases. The police report said that: 167 cases were committed inside people's houses, 20 in the workplace and 21 cases in the streets. Additionally, the report mentioned that 128 cases happened in rural areas, 71 were reported in the different districts and cities, and 9 cases in refugee camps.

It is noteworthy to mention that the largest number of women's complaints were reported in Salfit Governorate with 34 cases, followed by Hebron where 33 cases were reported, 26 in Qalqilya, and 24 in Ramallah. The lowest number of cases

reported was in Tubas and Tulkarem (7 in each). The report noted that 133 cases were filed by women in the age group below 40 years old and 75 cases were filed by women in the age group 40 and above.

During the period covered by the report homicide under the pretext of the so-called "family honor" continued. On 13/7/2008, Col. Ramadan Awad, Hebron district police chief, said that the police have arrested a Hebron citizen on charges of killing his sister and burying her. The police chief said that the perpetrator is 43-year-old and has admitted killing and burying his 22-year-old. Ramadan said that the body was exhumed from the cemetery and sent to the Forensic Medicine Department to determine the cause of death. The offender confessed his crime and told the police that there was a quarrel between him and his sister during which his sister hit her head against the wall and fell dead. Meanwhile, Palestinian security source, who preferred to remain anonymous told Maan News Agency that the crime may have been committed under the pretext of the so-called "family honor."

On 16/8/2008, security services found the corps of a girl from Jerusalem murdered and buried in the city of Jericho. The security sources said that the girl carries Jerusalem identity card and is 24 years old. She disappeared 2-weeks before her body was found by the Palestinian security services.

On 30/8/2008, 23-years old female resident of the town of Khan Younis was found dead. According to the Center's information, the girl's father (64 years old) killed his daughter under the so-called "family honor" and buried her in an abandoned room in his house. Police dug the room and found the body; the hands and legs were chained and the mouth was sealed with adhesive tape. The police arrested the girl's four brothers and her father to investigate reasons for the girl's murder.

On 21/12/2008, the information office of Jenin police, said that the province's police opened an investigation into the killing of a girl in Jenin refugee camp. Col. Miqdad Suleiman, deputy chief of Jenin police, said that the police are investigating the death of 28-years-old girl resident of Jenin camp. He added that the girl's brother surrendered himself to the police claiming that he killed his sister.

2. Killing for reasons related to family or personal feuds

With the deteriorating state of security in areas under the control of the Palestinian Authority and the availability of arms to ordinary citizens without any strict legal constraints, taking the law into their own hands became a common practice for awakening old buried family feuds or resolving personal differences or even in family spats. The absence of accountability after the destruction of Palestinian Authority headquarters by the Israeli occupying forces, and the failure of Palestinian security forces to access territories marked as B areas by the Israelis, coupled with the internal armed struggle, all helped in reinforcing the practice of taking the law into their hands.

§ On 1/7/2008, a Palestinian citizen was killed in a bomb attack targeting "Al-Jazeera" café located in the Press Syndicate building, in al-Rimal area, Gaza city center. According to security sources in Gaza, unknown assailants detonated a bomb in "al-Jazeera" cafe, in Gaza City, killing at least one citizen, and causing extensive damage to the place itself. In its statement, a group called "Ansar al-Sunna," claimed responsibility for the bombing targeting "Al-Jazeera" cafe, and

said that the assailant died during the attack. The group said that "its son, martyr Jihad Mahmoud Hajileh has carried out the attack to enforce the propagation of virtue and prevention of vice, because the coffee shop was a place used by Satan's followers and by atheists". Ansar al-Sunna statement vowed that the group will not tolerate any person trying to spread obscenity among Muslims.

- In another incident that took place on 3/7/2008, Imad Abdel-Hamid Musalam al-Faruokh, a 40-year-old taxi driver from Hebron district, died of multiple stab wounds near Salfit. According to Salfit Palestinian police, preliminary investigation revealed that the driver was stabbed when he was driving across the agricultural road between Rafat and Deir Ballout towns. Later, General Adnan al-Damiri, director of the police public relations and information, announced that a 23-year-old suspect has been arrested. He added that preliminary investigations with the suspect have revealed that murder was caused by a quarrel over the 300 shekels taxi fair from Jenin to Salfit that the driver has claimed. Investigations have further revealed that a sharp tool was used in the attack.
- On 4/7/2008, 29-year-old Rabah Abdul Fattah Khalaf, was stabbed and killed in a fight in Kafr Abboush village, south of Tulkarem province. Major Ma'arouf al-Barbari, Tulkarm district police chief, said that the police have managed to arrest three suspects involved in the murder of Khalaf. He added that "there are investigations into the events surrounding the death of Khalaf."
- On 10/7/2008, 51-year-old Mahmoud Abdul-Razzaq al-Badawi, a resident of Iktaba suburb died east of the city suffering serious burn injuries. Al-Badawi's nephew and his daughter's fiancé poured gasoline on him and lit him on fire a week before his death. Medical sources of Dr. Thabet Thabet government hospital in Tulkarem, said that al-Badawi passed away after a week long suffering from serious burns.
- On 13/7/2008, the Palestinian police found a citizen's body in front of his house. The body bore several stab wound. Police information office said that Jericho police was informed about the body of 29-year-old Muhammed Ahmad Abdel-Hadi Irmayleh which was found in front of his house with several stab wounds in al-Dyouk al-Fawqa area. The information office added that "the investigation department immediately went to the crime scene to investigate the death circumstances."
- On 27/7/2008, Kamel Abu Hassira died after suffering knife wounds during a family dispute in Gaza city, five days before his death. A member of Abu Hassira's family said that Abu Hassira said that he died from injuries caused by a sharp tool used in a family feud.
- On 31/7/2008, a person dressed in civilian clothes shot dead 27-year-old Karam Muhammed Oudeh al-Masri, a resident of Jourat Allout in Khan Younis. Al-Masri was walking in Jamal Abdul Nasser Street in the center of Khan Younis when he was shot in his head and fell dead.
- On 3/8/2008, 50-year-old Zaal Ibrahim Salah, from al-Oqban village in Bethlehem province died after being hit with a sharp object during a family dispute related to old hostilities between family members. Bethlehem police arrested the offender and a number of his brothers and they are still in custody.

- On 9/8/2008, 22-year-old Mahdi Ramadan Dana' from Hebron died after being shot several bullets during a family dispute over a computer. The perpetrator was arrested.
- On 26/8/2008, 27-year-old Waela Mahmoud Al-Halabi, from al- Bureij in the central province of the Gaza Strip, died after being shot several bullets in her neck during a dispute between two families.
- On 27/8/2008, the police public information office announced that 40-year-old Bassam Abdel-Karim Azmouti, a resident of Khirbet Aba in Jenin province died in the Arab Specialized Hospital in the city of Nablus. The information office said that Azmouti was admitted to the hospital on 20/8/2008 in a very critical condition. He was suffering from skull fractures and internal hemorrhage in the brain. Azmoui was severely beaten by his brother-in-law.
- On 1/9/2008, 45-year-old Rafe' Yousef Masoud Nasasrah, a resident of Beit Furik town, east of Nablus city, was stabbed to death during a family dispute. On 1/9 evening hours, Nasasrah's children fought with other children from the same town. The children's fight led to a more serious one between three of the town's citizens who used knives in their fight. Masasrah suffered many serious injuries, and was stabbed in his heart. The other two citizens were also stabbed but were able to escape.
- On 5/9/2008, 21-year-old Khalid Muhammad Nofal al-Sa'ada, was killed in Halhoul town, north of Hebron. Local sources told the Maan News Agency that the victim's aunt's husband has shot him after a fight which erupted between the two and led to serious injuries. Khalid was then taken to hospital but did not survive injuries.
- On 15/9/2008, 30-year-old Raed Awad Shaker al-Natsheh, from Hebron, died after suffering several knife stab wounds during a family dispute in Wadi Al Kata. Two other persons are still in critical health conditions. Hebron governmental hospital doctors said that Natsheh arrived to the hospital suffering from wounds in his back caused by a sharp object that led to his death. For its part, the police information office said that a 22-year-old suspect was arrested upon an order issued by the general prosecutor.
- On 24/9/2008, Palestinian medical sources announced the death of the 18-year-old Mustafa Ibrahim Subuh. Mustafa died from injuries suffered during a family dispute in the Nusseirat refugee camp, in the center of Gaza Strip. Medical sources of al-Aqsa Martyrs hospital said that Subuh died after being seriously wounded during a family dispute. His body was taken to al-Shifa Hospital in Gaza to examine the forensic evidence surrounding the case.
- On 25/9/2008, 44-year-old Iman Salim Barabrah, from Beitunia town, and member of the national security service, was shot dead by a member of the city's preventive security in a dispute between the two. In the morning hours of that day, an armed civilian descended from a government Preventive Security Service vehicle, and shot Barbarah when she was standing in front of a boutique store in the post office street in the center of Ramallah. Iman suffered several fatal gunshot wounds in different parts of her body.
- On 6/10/2008, Fawzi Ajjour, owner of a currency exchange shop in Gaza city was found dead. Ajjour was decoyed by a thief who took him to his house, killed him

and buried his body in the house. Ajjour disappearance was reported on 4/10/2008.

- On 14/10/2008, 19-year-old Ahmad Muhammad Suleiman Abu Hassira, al-Daraj district resident, was seriously injured with a bullet in the abdomen while trying to resolve a family feud in Gaza City. Hours after his injury, Abu Hassira passed away. Izz el-Deen al-Qassam issued a statement condoling the death of Abu Hassira and saying that he was one of its members in al-Daraj district.
- On 27/10/2008, the body of 35-year-old Abdel-Rahman Numan Abdel-Rahman al-Issa, from the town of Sanour, was found in the marshlands of al-Sodour in the northwest of the town. The body was found mutilated, stabbed with a sharp object in the neck and head, and shot with several bullets in the chest.
- On 25/12/2008, the body of 13-year-old Wisam Fawzi Abdel-Hafiz Ikbariah, was found "rotting" in the area between the suburbs of Shweika and Iktaba, north of Tulkarem. Ikbariah disappeared on 16/12/2008 and his parents said that he was last seen at an internet club in the Shweika suburb. The family added that since then he did not return home.

People Injured in Family Disputes

- § On 17/7/2008, 17 people were injured in a fight between two families in Bethlehem city. According to sources in the city, a fight broke out between two families in al-Karkafa Street, downtown Bethlehem. During the fight, guns and clubs were used, and bricks were hurled leaving at least 17 people injured. Among the injured people are some women, girls and young men, who were taken to Beit Jala's government hospital, the Arab Society hospital in Beit Jala, Beit Sahour clinic, and to the charitable Makased hospital in Jerusalem.
- § On 20/9/2008, the police and the Palestinian security forces in Hebron were able to stop a family dispute in al-Shoyoukh town northeast Hebron city. Five people were injured in the dispute including the son of a family that has attempted to resolve the conflict. The police information office said that "the clashes erupted between the Hasasneh and al-Ayaydeh families because of old hostilities between the two families. A member of al-Halayqa family was stabbed while he was settling the dispute between the two families. The victim was taken to the National Hospital in Hebron for treatment." The office added that "the dispute also resulted in the injury of four members of al-Ayaydeh family who were taken to al-Mizan specialized hospital for treatment; their injuries were described as moderate to superficial."
- § On 2/10/2008, two citizens were shot and injured in a dispute that broke out between two families in Rafah. Sixty-year-old Ibrahim Muhammad al-Arja, was injured with a bullet in his right leg, and his 20-year-old son, Daif-Allah al-Arja was shot in his left thigh. In retaliation, members of al-Arja family attacked the gunman and seized his pistol before the police arrived at the scene.
- § On 3/10/2008, a fight broke out between Hadayed family members near the house of former 63-year-old MP Rafat al-Najjar, in Jourat Allout in Khan Younis. Guns and locally manufactured explosives were used during the fight. When the fight was still going on, the neighbors, MP al-Najjar and his family members and friends interfered to resolve the dispute. While all these people were gathering, a big number of the Palestinian police arrived and started shooting in the air

assaulting and beating the crowds. The house of Ra'fat al-Najjar became part of the fight when the police attempted to enter by force to arrest al-Hadayed family members claiming that they are hiding in the house. Relatives of al-Najjar tried to prevent police from entering the house but the police assaulted them. It was then that Ra'fat interfered, but the police pushed him and so he fell on the floor. While still on the floor, policemen continued to insult and humiliate MP Najjar. His son, 18-year-old Othman, upon seeing his father on the floor, tried to stop the police and clashed with them. He then escaped inside the house, but the police continued chasing him. Fifty-eight-year-old Siham Abdul-Hamid Zaqout, the wife of Ra'fat, has attempted to stop the police from entering the house but she was also beaten. Fifty-seven-year-old Jihad, Siham's brother, who was visiting her when the dispute started was beaten and the police entered the house and searched it without finding the persons they were searching for.

- § On 6/11/2008, an employee of an exchange shop opposite to the district office in Bethlehem was seriously injured after being stabbed. The owner of the shop said that the employee, member of family in Bethlehem was sitting in the shop when a security officer from another family working for a maintenance company came in to fix the security cameras in the shop. After a while, the two started a fight but the reasons were not clear. The security officer took out his knife and stabbed the employee several times. The shop owner added that the employee was taken to Beit Jala government hospital for treatment, but his health conditions were very critical and the hospital sent him to Hadassah Hospital in Israel.

Attacks on private property

Numerous businesses and private premises were targeted by attacks that were categorized as expressions of hostility against the activities of these businesses. These attacks were predominantly focused in the Gaza Strip. Among these attacks, we list the following:

- § On 7/7/2008, unidentified persons burnt Khalid Salah's car in Gaza city. Salah was one of the persons who took refuge in the Nativity Church in Gaza after which he was deported to Gaza. Commenting on the incident, Salah said that "he was surprised to see the police and the people gathering around his Mitsubishi Super Lancer car, which was parked next to al-Noor tower in Tal al-Hawa, Gaza City." "The car was destroyed as a result of the fire," added Salah. "The deposed government police will investigate into the incident and I have already gave my testimony," he said stressing that he has no enemies in Gaza. Thirty-three-year-old Khalid Salah, from Al Khodor town south of Bethlehem, was forcibly deported to the Gaza Strip in May 2002 after the siege on the Nativity Church.
- § On 13/11/2008, four students set fire to their school in Nablus city. The fire spread and burnt the entire administration room, the corridor, the school counselor's room and led to the disruption of the school classes. Informed sources said that Abdul Hamid al-Sayih School for boys, located in Rafidia west of Nablus, burst into flames. Nablus municipality fire department interfered quickly and extinguished the fire, confining the risk of full damage. Educational sources of Nablus' Ministry of Education said that "the Palestinian police arrested four students; two who are still studying at the school and another two who have dropped out. The four are suspects of setting fire to the school for "unjustifiable

childish" reasons. The sources said that the school provides education to 525 students and employs 22 teachers adding that classes were disrupted because of the fire. Estimated losses are believed to be more than 50 thousand shekels.

- § On 14/11/2008, masked men burst into the wedding hall of Bilal Khalil Abu Rejayleh, in Abu Rejayleh Street, Khuza'a town, east of Khan Yunis. The offenders assaulted people to disperse them and broke the hall's chairs. The masked men, who were later joined by another group of masked gunmen wearing military uniforms, opened fire on sound and video equipment and attacked al-Nawras Popular band. Some of the assailants fired bullets in the air while others smashed the windows of the groom's father's car, a member of the band's car as well as another vehicle which belongs to one of the guests. Khalil Atwa Abu Rejayleh, the groom's father said that he saw a number of masked men wearing Martyr Izz el-Deen al-Qassam head bands. Abu Rejayleh added that he contacted the internal security service many times and also Bani Suhayla police station to request help but nobody came to stop assailants; "they only came in the day that followed the attack," said Abu Rejayleh. Hammad al-Raqab, a spokesman for Hamas in Khan Yunis, in an interview with one of the Center's researchers denied the movement involvement in this act.
- § On 18/11/2008, unidentified persons set fire to Victor Asaid's car. Asaid is the mayor al-Zabadah southeast Jenin. Commenting on the incident, Asaid said that at around twelve thirty after midnight, he heard a strange sound, when he went out to see what happened, he was surprised to see his car, parked in front of the house, bursting into flames. "I immediately called my family and neighbors to help me extinguish the fire," added Asaid.

Conclusion, Results, Recommendations

Conclusion:

The concept of tolerance took shape in the Europe after decades of bloody religious wars between Catholics and Protestants. The concept developed since then until it took its human legal dimension, and became an integral part of human rights. There are differences in the circumstances of its emergence in Europe and those of its promotion in the Palestinian society today. However, calling for it seems of vital importance in a society with a plurality of religions, ideologies, ideas and opinions; in a society that has witnessed an unfinished internal armed struggle; and a society where the clan and its notions still form a major component of culture and behavior.

This certainly does not mean that advocating it must be linked to the existence of internal strife. In this sense, calling for it in normal conditions also seems necessary to avoid the surfacing of any cycle of violence in the future, for divergences in viewpoints might eventually result in an intolerant society, with all the dangers this entails for the social fabric. On the preceding premises the Ramallah Center for Human Rights studies, and shortly after its founding, introduced tolerance into its main programs.

Even in apparently stable societies, and advanced nations, tolerance is also needed. Tolerance implies equality in rights and obligations. Hence comes the necessity of linking the attainment of tolerance to the existence of the state of right and the rule of law. The existence of such a state guarantees equality of rights and freedoms for all members of society such as freedom of expression of ideas and beliefs, without exceptions of any creed, philosophy, or religion. It also guarantees the absence of all sorts of discrimination in doing justice to all.

The necessity of a tolerant state of law in safeguarding tolerance does not preclude the role of civil society as a building bloc of the modern state. An important condition and component of a tolerant state is the existence of a consistent and robust civil society, informed by a legal culture, capable of impartially monitoring the violations of citizens' and political opponents' rights and freedoms by state institutions, and of confronting any encroachment on individual or groups' rights.

Results:

This report on tolerance in the areas under Palestinian Authority control is the first of its kind. Despite the fact that the reporting period stretched nominally from January first to June 30, 2008, the Ramallah Center for Human Rights Studies was compelled, in some sections of this report, to refer to certain events that took place before months of the nominal reporting period, in order to present an integrated image of the events that occurred in the first half of 2008. In light of the cases of intolerance that the Palestinian Authority areas witnessed during this period, the results reached by this report are:

First: the state of religious tolerance

- 1) There is a ritualistic recognition by religious leaders of religious tolerance toward the so called revealed religions. However, tangible incitement against other religions, especially in Friday orations, against other religions, cannot be

ignored. Most importantly these bigoted calls are full of wholesale generalizations that do not take into consideration the rights of citizenship of all members of society without discrimination.

- 2) A number of acts of violence against church possessions and church-related premises such as schools and libraries were reported, especially in Gaza Strip.
- 3) The exploitation of religion in political practice has produced a political discourse lacking in tolerance toward the different other, even if he is a coreligionist.
- 4) The religious discourse, more particularly the fundamentalist one, is devoid of any form of tolerance with regard to non religious ideological leanings. It even considered them most threatening for religion.

Second: the state of political tolerance

- 1) The authoritarian and overbearing autocratic leanings, coupled with the pushy quest of depriving others of any share in power have resulted in a heavy-handed form of political despotism, with the attending condition of intolerance for the politically different, and of denial of their rights.
- 2) The exclusion and marginalization of political opposition went on unabated both in the West Bank and Gaza Strip; and so did the violation of its right to organize and operate.
- 3) Excessive use of force against peaceful acts of dissent organized by the opposition has become the daily conduct of the security apparatuses. The risk is that this might lead to the dissemination of the culture of violence.
- 4) Widespread political use of exclusion from office, replacement, and salary cuts by both parties to the conflict is in glaring contradiction to the simplest canons of human rights.

Third: the state of social tolerance

- 1) No improvement in the state of tolerance towards women. Intolerance vis-à-vis and discrimination against women went on unabated; and so did their exposure to violence, killing, and deprivation of civil, political, social, and economic rights.
- 2) The judiciary was not spared from the fallout of the armed conflict between Fatah and Hamas. It was even directly affected, or paralyzed, by the struggle for power; its jurisdiction and prerogatives were usurped. It goes without saying that such a situation is really tempting to anyone who might consider taking the law into his hands. The absence of legal authorities to settle differences, establish, and protect rights might drive some contending parties to seek means other than the judicial ones to attain their rights. The ultimate outcome of this situation might drive society to resort to violence, and expand the culture of intolerance.
- 3) The spread of confusion and mayhem is steadily getting coupled with more and more people taking the law into their hands. The report recorded scores of cases in which firearms were used in family spats and personal wrangles, and which resulted in deaths and injuries.

- 4) The reporting period witnessed an increase of murders in retaliation.

Recommendations

The areas controlled by the Palestinian Authority have witnessed during the period covered by this biannual report numerous cases of intolerance, whether on the level of state institutions or society. This fact necessitates warning against the attending risks, and suggesting recommendations to fight it and contain its consequences.

Based on its cumulative experience with tolerance, and on the results of the present report, the Ramallah Center for Human Rights Studies recommends the following:

- 1) Taking immediate action to root out all aspects of violence and intolerance on both the official and popular levels. This involves fighting the causes which resulted in these events whether they are political, economic, social, or cultural.
- 2) As long as the essence of tolerance is the right to be different, it is imperative to emphasize this right and to respect its exercise.
- 3) The application of tolerance requires the broadening of the ambit of public liberties, foremost of which the freedom of belief, be it religious or otherwise, the freedom of opinion and of expression, the freedom of organizing trade unions, and peaceful gathering, and political plurality. Hence the necessity of converting all this tangibly on the legal and legislative levels, as well as on the level of legal and legislative implementation.
- 4) These demands cannot be realized apart from reconsidering the processes of civic education, and adopting programs that promote the culture of tolerance inside the family first, and then at school and college later.
- 5) The previous recommendation cannot be fulfilled without a basic adjustment of the educational system, primarily in the elementary levels, in a manner that emphasizes the development of a culture of tolerance within the student body. Improving teaching curricula and methods in conformity with these goals is a must.
- 6) Partisan education and indoctrination have enormously contributed to generate the various aspects of political intolerance. It is imperative to eradicate all forms of fanatic partisanship and incitement against the politically retarded in order to widen the sphere of tolerance.
- 7) The programs aimed at disseminating the culture of tolerance must do justice to women. In order to empower women in the process of disseminating this culture and instilling its values in their offspring, all forms of discrimination against women must be abolished, because all such discrimination violates women's inalienable rights.
- 8) Make the most of religious discourse in disseminating the culture and values of tolerance, calling for disallowing all ways of incitement against difference, and disapproving religious and ideological extremism.
- 9) Steering the various media in the most effective ways to promote a public opinion averse to extremist leanings no matter their type or color, and encourage dialog and acceptance of difference.

10) Promoting the interest of civil society organizations in the dissemination of the culture and values of tolerance; fighting all aspects of fanaticism and discrimination; and redirecting the performance of authorities toward safeguarding human rights.

**Biannual Report on "Human Rights and Freedoms"
in the Palestinian Authority Territories
1/7/2008 - 31/12/2008
Summary**

Violations against the right to life right to life and physical safety

During the second half of 2008, 42 Palestinian citizens were killed, including four children and one woman, as compared to the first half of the same year with eleven Palestinians being killed. Furthermore, 39 Palestinian citizens were killed in the Gaza Strip, including 22 members of two families: the Doghmosh and the Hallas, who were killed in two major security campaigns prepared against them by the internal security service of the deposed government Ministry of Interior. In addition to the above violations, political factions' gunmen killed three more citizens, including a child and a woman in the West bank. This brings the total number of Palestinians who were killed during the year 2008 to fifty-three: forty-nine were killed in the Gaza Strip and four in the West Bank. This number does not include those people who died as a result of family disputes, personal conflicts, or for "family honor" reasons. The number of those is documented in another report parallel to this one issued by the Center on the state of tolerance in the Palestinian National Authority territories. Moreover, this report does not include the number of people who have died as a result of arms misuse.

Deaths due to torture and cruel, inhuman, degrading conditions, neglect and the use of violence are considered a form of murder punishable by the law. During the period covered by this report, one person detained at the headquarters of the Palestinian security services died, compared to two death cases reported in the first half of the year, bringing the total number of citizens who died in custody during the year 2008 to three cases: two in the West Bank and one in the Gaza Strip.

Five death sentences were issued during the period covered by this report: three in the West Bank, and two in the Gaza Strip; a life imprisonment sentence has been commuted into a death sentence; a death verdict against three prisoners has been ratified in the Strip compared to three such verdicts issued during the first half of this year which brings the number of death verdicts issued during 2008 to a total of nine. No death verdicts were issued during 2007 and none of the verdicts were implemented until the issuance date of this report. It should be mentioned that death sentences in the Palestinian National Authority territory, according to the Palestinian Basic Law, become effective only when approved by the President of the Palestinian National Authority.

Arbitrary arrests, abductions and ill-treatment

Acts of arrests by the Palestinian security services of the two governments continued in the Palestinian West Bank and the Gaza Strip. In this regard, the Center has noticed that most of the arrests came in the framework of reactions. For example, the internal security service of the deposed government ministry of interior launched an arrest campaign against a number of Fateh Movement leaders and cadres in the Gaza Strip following the car bomb which exploded on the coastal road in Gaza City on 25/7/2008. The arrest campaign targeted a number of Fateh cadres and leaders in Gaza. Immediately, the Palestinian security forces in the West Bank launched a similar campaign and arrested a number of Hamas cadres and supporters. The Center has also noticed that the Palestinian security forces in the West Bank are re-

arresting Hamas cadres who were detained by the occupation forces and imprisoning them immediately after their release from the occupation prisons.

Arrests in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, were not limited to leaders, cadres and supporters of the two movements, but have also targeted the leaders, cadres and supporters of other political movements. On the eve of a call by the Islamic Liberation Party for organizing conferences and marches in memory of "the Abolishment of Caliphate" in July, the Palestinian security forces in the West Bank launched an arrest campaign against the Islamic Liberation Party's members and supporters. In the Gaza Strip, arrests also reached leaders, cadres and supporters of parties that were not even part of the conflict.

Although there is no accurate information on the number of people arrested during the period covered by this biannual report, yet the continuous arrest campaigns have raised the number of detainees, from among the members of the two movements, to more than 1000; a number of detainees were released but then re-arrested and sometimes new members were detained. However, with the issuance of this report, Hamas Movement sources announced that there are six hundred of its leaders, cadres and supporters detained in the West Bank while Fateh sources mentioned that around 300 of its members and supporters are detained in the Gaza Strip prisons. Likewise, the period covered by this report has witnessed tens of unlawful and false arrests. These arrests were committed without obtaining the necessary warrants from the specialized authorities. Dozens of people were detained for long periods of time without being charged. There were also numerous complaints of torture and ill-treatment in prisons. Yet, despite strong evidence of torture in many cases, security services in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, continued to officially deny torture and abuse.

Violations of the right to freedom of opinion and expression

The period covered by this report, namely, the second half of 2008 (from 1/7/2008 until 31/12/2008) witnessed further illegal actions directly affecting the right to freedom of opinion and expression, and constituted a major setback to the practice of these freedoms. These violations have manifested themselves in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip alike in attacks and closure of media offices, preventing them from doing their work, arresting and detaining journalists and reporters and shooting at them while covering various events.

While the deposed government in the Gaza Strip has attempted to resort to the judiciary to prosecute journalists and the Palestinian media, the security forces of the caretaker government in the West Bank ignored the numerous judicial decisions to release detained journalist. These procedures are indicative on the decline in the margins of freedoms in the West Bank and in Gaza Strip alike.

Furthermore, during the same period, twenty-seven people were reported to be arrested: eighteen in the West Bank and nine in the Gaza Strip, compared to sixteen arrest cases in the first half of the year: 11 in the West Bank and five in the Strip. This brings the total number of arrested people during 2008 to forty-three cases: twenty-nine in the West Bank, and fourteen in the Gaza Strip. Moreover, violations such as aggression against journalists while carrying out their professional duty, storming their homes, and/or preventing the distribution of newspapers, have also been reported. Of these attacks, four took place in the West Bank, and ten in the Gaza Strip, compared to seven attacks in the first half of the year: one in the West

Bank and six in Gaza Strip. This brings the total number of abuse cases to a total of twenty-one attacks, including five in the West Bank, and sixteen in the Gaza Strip.

Violation of the right to peaceful assembly

During the period covered by this report, many violations to the right to peaceful assembly were reported both in the West Bank and in the Gaza Strip. These violations did not only limit the two movements' (Fateh and Hamas) rights to peaceful assembly of in areas under their control but have also limited the rights of other parties and, in some cases, the rights of the public. In the West Bank, many activities carried out by the Islamic Liberation Party in Palestine were suppressed. Additionally, a demonstration organized by the people of Bethlehem in protest of cutting off water supply for long weeks was also suppressed.

Within the same period covered by the report, the Center documented twelve violations to the right to peaceful assembly, including six violations in the West Bank, five of which targeted the activities of the Islamic Liberation Party, and six in the Gaza Strip, compared to twenty-two violations reported in the first half of the year, of which only three were in the West Bank and the rest in the Strip. This brings the total number of violations against the right to peaceful assembly during 2008 to a total of thirty-four violations: nine in the West Bank and twenty-five in the Gaza Strip.

Attacks on public and private institutions and charities

During the period covered by this report, the two governments: the caretaker government in the West Bank and the deposed government in the Gaza Strip, and their security forces, continued to target public and private institutions and charities. Despite the fact that the number of attacks in the Gaza Strip were higher than those in the West Bank, both governments did not attempt to keep these institutions away from the on-going conflict between the two. Accordingly, civil society organizations, in an unprecedented way, have become the target of attack by both parties, since the beginning of the conflict between the Fateh and Hamas movements. Attacks against civil society organizations, particularly in the Gaza Strip, have intensified following the car bomb which exploded on the coastal road in Gaza city on 25/7/2008 and resulted in killing five members of the Hamas Movement and a child who was spending a summer holiday in Gaza and its beach.

After the aforementioned incident, Hamas Movement accused Fateh, without having any evidence, of standing behind the car bombing. As a result, the security services of the deposed Government in the Gaza Strip began to attack Fateh movement organizations and closing and confiscating the possessions of several organizations. These procedures have also targeted a number of the Palestine Liberation Organization and other factions. In the West Bank, the security forces of the caretaker government launched revenge acts raiding and closing down many of Hamas Movement organizations, confiscating the possessions of many of them and taking full control of others.

Furthermore, and in an unprecedented move, the ministry of interior in the caretaker government in the West Bank started interfering in the executive councils of numerous civil society organizations. This intervention has manifested itself in depriving general assembly members of their right to nominate themselves to become board members, the dismissal of all member of the board and the

appointment of new board members not from among the general assembly members.

During the period covered by the report, two hundred thirty five civil society organizations in the West Bank and Gaza Strip were targeted: twenty in the West Bank and two hundred fifteen in Gaza Strip, compared to twenty-two attacks in the first half of the year, of which only two occurred in the West Bank and twenty in the Gaza Strip. This brings the number of attacks during 2008 to two hundred fifty seven attacks: twenty-two in the West Bank, and two hundred thirty-five in Gaza Strip.