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The (Semi) State's Fragility: Hamas, Clannism, and Legitimacy

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Abstract: This article shall ask how Hamas, as a non-state actor, negotiated legitimacy with the clans in a fragmented and factionalized tribal society in the Gaza Strip from 2007–2011. An important factor that shapes the extent of power of rebels and non-state actors in limited statehood areas (LSA) pertains to the negotiation of power these rebels develop with clans in certain areas or times. Rebel governance is a complex and multidimensional concept shaped by the pre-existing particularity of the rebel, its identity, level of factionalism, the former structure of administration, and the extant political institutions. This paper will discuss Hamas as a contemporary case of rebel governance in war and post-war times, which has resulted in a special case of fragile governance. Based on ethnographic research on Hamas and insights from political theories of identity and governance, this paper suggest that tribal factionalism led to violence and played a major role in shaping the governance structure and mechanisms through political affiliation, informal judicial mechanisms, and as a part of the social network which resists government authority. This paper shall propose that Hamas used two paths of negotiations with clans: a coercive power (violent), and by mobilizing individuals of these clans and families as part of the informal judicial system (*U'rf*). This research aims to contribute to the understanding of rebel governance in general, and Hamas in particular, showing how struggle over legitimacy is shaped and negotiated, and why Hamas could be considered a special case in the study of rebel governance.



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1. Introduction

We did not expect that. Public administration of the Gaza Strip is extremely difficult. We are walking on the edge of a knife. We are a resistance movement but also a government. We were caught from the beginning between the fire of clans, and the siege of Ramallah and the occupation.¹

This article analyzes the negotiation process of power and legitimacy between Hamas and clans within the Palestinian community in Gaza in a time of fragility and uncertainty. Understanding this complex and dynamic relationship between clans and rebels, specifically in the case of Gaza, is vital to understand how and what brings order in society under the rebels' rule. It is similarly important as the internal dynamics further affect the external strategies when dealing with rebels and the communities under their control.

In the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, the overlapping loyalties, factionalism, and the former authorities' reliance on informal institutions (managed by the clans), have created an invisible sense of competition between tribes and a governing structure which is fragile. This not to say that there is a strong competition in the form of a prolonged and continuous fight, but rather a silent struggle which provides tribesmen with privileges and resources, determining who legitimizes whom. Therefore, tribes were, and are still, competitors to Hamas's rule in the Gaza Strip, particularly within the judicial system and in their capacity to influence Hamas members from powerful tribes and the wider society.

While there are many who have examined rebel governance and how rebels and non-state actors interact with local communities, their research has primarily focused on

the ways in which states and international organizations negotiate power and authority with the rebels so as to ensure order (Hurd 2008; Clark 2008; Arjona et al. 2015; Arjona 2014). Contrary to the academic orthodoxies that associate rebels with warlordism in general, as well as with non-state actors in the MENA, rebels often rely upon local legitimacy within their societies; in fact, authors of many studies have shown that Hamas has established a professional and well-institutionalized security force (Brenner 2016; Sayigh 2011).

This paper shall provide empirical and theoretical findings on rebel governance and non-state actors' governance, contributing to the emerging field of study on rebel governance in general and the Middle East in particular. The driving question is how Hamas negotiated legitimacy in fragile semi-statehood/limited statehood area with clans in the Gaza Strip. The words clans and tribes will be used interchangeably; however, clans here refer to extended families carrying the same name, while tribes can be a coalition of clans based on blood, or intermarriage or historical ties. As this Special Issue focuses on state fragility, conflict and grievances, this article examines how one main pillar that led to state fragility concerns Hamas as a rebel group: a lack of having legitimacy (Kivimäki 2021). This paper shall draw upon the political sociology theory of identity, primary sources data from the author's extensive observations, and ethnographic research on Hamas and its administration in the Gaza Strip, as well as more than two dozen interviews from the Gaza Strip, among them with Hamas's activists, members of the Qassam, academics, Hamas police officers, civil society organizations, professionals, and clan leaders. I suggest that the relationship between Hamas clans is not based on social services provision alone, as many have suggested, but more importantly on a lengthy negotiation process using coercive and non-coercive strategies. I will also suggest that the factionalism and fragility of formal institutions has led to violence whenever rebels or non-state actors assume power. In other words, the legitimacy of Hamas and its government comes from diverse sources that range from service provision, Islamic identity, coercion, reform, anti-corruption, and struggle against the occupation.

To present these findings, in this article I will first explain clannism in Palestine, and the clans in the political life from the first Intifada and the establishment of the PA, until Hamas took over the Gaza Strip in 2007; serving to illustrate clannism and how it has been used as a tool to create loyalists and manipulate society, thus maintaining order. Next, I shall explore the relevant literature on rebel governance, order, and legitimacy. In the latter sections, I focus on how Hamas used coercive power and an informal judicial system (*Lijan Islah*) to gain legitimacy within the clans. The two main cases I have studied are those of the Helles clan from Shejaia and the Dougmoush clan from Sabra area, both selected as they represented the most powerful families in the Gaza Strip with political affiliation to Fatah.

Clans are a crucial element of Palestinian society, where they are considered essential for social cohesion and solidarity, as well as a seat of power with which political parties seek to engage. In the Gaza Strip, clans form a network of power, particularly in the absence of formal institutions, and a fragile political system. When the Palestinian Authority was established by the Palestinian Liberation Organization, Yasser Arafat formed a separate department, the Clans Affairs Commission, affiliated with his office, to keep clans' loyalty. Arafat, the chairman of the PLO, rewarded many tribal leaders with various positions while dividing other clans to keep them under his control (Alijla 2013).

According to Mustafa Ibrahim, a Palestinian journalist and human rights activist, "The Palestinian Authority strengthened the role of the clans and their authority. It provided them with the legitimacy and a capacity to meet, organize, and even interfere in policy-making, which should only go through constitutional legal authorities such as the parliament". (Mustafa 2019)

In that sense, the fragmentation and fractionalization of the clans led on the long run to the fragility of the whole semi-statehood of the PA.

Although clans had stronger power and authority before 2000, they had more during the second Intifada because of the loss of wages for thousands of Palestinian workers in

Israel along with the Israeli strategy concerning the weakening of formal institutions of the Palestinian Authority, and the fragmentation of the Palestinian political system. This caused people to turn away from the police in order to seek conflict resolution from clans (Sayigh 2011, pp. 75–83), who further provided a social welfare network for laborers who lost their jobs. As the formal institutions and security apparatuses weakened, many clans overlapped with criminal groups. In Shejaia, a member of a famous clan killed a member of a smaller clan in front of the police station. The police could not act, and the judicial system could not find a witness, as hundreds feared for their lives if they provided testimony².

Clannism and its manifestations continued as a competitor to the Palestinian Authority and its security forces, with many Palestinian security leaders employing bodyguards from strong clans, providing these families with weapons and (il)legal protection. After Hamas assumed power, the clans continued to present a challenge, echoing Fatah's inability to confront and extinguish clan violence, and that this "was not an option for Hamas at all".³ In contrast to Fatah, Hamas was more successful in dealing with clans, ending their abilities to lawlessly use violence in the society. In special operations, Izzedin Al Qassam brigades continued to provide support to Hamas's security forces when needed, particularly against clans in Shejaia, Sabra, and Khan Younes. Indeed, one of the major successes of Hamas security forces and its governance structure since 2007 has been its strategy of response to clans and extended clan structures in Gaza (Sayigh 2011, pp. 62–67). However, that resulted in there being no single authority in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, leaving it with weakened legitimacy and a fragile capacity to create order.

This article contributes to the literature on factionalism and its problems for governance, especially in the cases of limited statehood areas or rebel governance. As far as the author is aware, there have not been such studies focusing on factionalism within the rebel governance literature. Besides that, this research provides empirical evidence that many existing political science studies (such as on the conflict in intrastate theory) can be applied to the cases of rebel governance or limited statehood areas.

This research uses the process-tracing method and historical narrative. It is the best method to capture the historical narrative in a very complex area and within the context of rebel governance and legitimacy theories. The aim is to capture a causal mechanism and explain the decision process within the negotiation process within the problem of legitimacy (Falleti 2006). The research used a snowball mechanism with interviewees, meaning they introduced the author to others within their network, confirming the historical narrative of the same story from several sources and from the news outlets, archives, and personal observations of the author during that time in the Gaza Strip.

This paper starts by examining the concepts of rebel governance, order, and legitimacy in the case of Hamas. The next section discusses the case of security chaos and clannism in Gaza society before 2007. The third section provides insight on the use of violence against clans and how Hamas tried to acquire legitimacy using coercive power, while the last section examines how Hamas used informal institutions in a fragile and fragmented society to acquire legitimacy.

2. Rebel Governance, Order, and Legitimacy

Rebel governance as a field of study has recently emerged with a focus on non-state actors in civil war and limited statehood areas. Many of these studies focus on the issues related to the violence of non-state actors, such as ISIS in Iraq and Syria, the Taliban in Afghanistan, Hamas in Gaza, and Hizballah in Lebanon, while ignoring an important aspect of the life of these groups or externally identified rebels, particularly their acquisition of legitimacy and how they negotiate this with their surrounding environment. However, there are other studies that focus on legitimacy, but in general with no focus on the Middle East (Heydemann 2018; Al-Jabassini 2019; Florea 2020; Gilbert 2020; Furlan 2020).

Rebel governance can be defined as the mechanism by which order is created in an identified geographical area, under the control of a specific rebel group (or a number of

rebel groups), enabling it to govern and meet its own goals, practice its authority, and create a form of order with direct or indirect negotiable legitimacy (Worrall 2017, p. 711).

The above definition has two important factors: the creation of order and meeting goals. Examining the order and goals of Hamas as a rebel group after 2007 will show how its rule depends upon order. The challenge for Hamas was to create order amid factionalized and fragmented parts of the society. Therefore, the creation and negotiation of this order, through both formal/informal mechanisms and violent/non-violent tools, will revolve around Hamas's acquired legitimacy. Legitimacy, in this case, is "the generalized perception or assumption that the actions of an entity are desirable, proper, or appropriate within some socially constructed norms, values, beliefs and definitions" (Suchman 1995).

Rebels are part of the process of order, but they are not alone, as there is the society, norms, values, and beliefs. Therefore rebels (Hamas too) are not in complete control of order; there is a need for them to be in contact, negotiation, and interaction with many ordering forces. As part of the ordering process (imposing order) in Gaza, Hamas has been forced to interact with a range of forces at all levels. Locally it must deal with clans, political parties, extremist groups, armed militias, civil society organizations, and youth initiatives, and on a national level, with Fatah, the Palestinian Authority, and its different sets of departments and ministries, while regionally and internationally, it is faced with Israel, Qatar, Egypt, Turkey, the UN, and other international organizations.

Since 2011, there have been three waves of protests erupt in the Gaza Strip. These protests were led by youths who were not satisfied by the status quo of political division, and the worsening living conditions in the Gaza Strip, particularly the lack of access to electricity, water, and employment. These protests were named "*Bidna Na'eesh*", which means "we want to live", and "*Bikaffi*" which means "enough is enough" (Manasra 2019; Yaghi 2019; Al-Ain 2019). The waves of protests were a manifestation of Hamas's failure as a rebel group to meet the needs of youth who constituted more than 40% of the whole population. Hamas's de facto police have used extensive force and violence against youths and participants in these protests.

These protests, and Hamas's subsequent reaction, raised questions about the legitimacy of Hamas as a rebel group and its governance structure. The well-known writer Majed Kayali argued, "It seems that Hamas has exploited the democratic elections to assume power; meaning, democracy for one time, one vote" (Kayali 2019). In this article, I argue that Hamas as a rebel group has negotiated legitimacy and order in society in a dynamic way, shifting and evolving through time and circumstances. I also argue that fragmentation and factionalization/politicization of the clans in Palestine could lead to more violence.

When Hamas took over the Gaza Strip, its legitimacy was questioned both locally and internationally. In the eyes of its members, sympathizers, and even legal experts, Hamas's government was the legitimate ruler. Hamas's presence and ending of the security chaos was wanted and welcomed. The questioning of legitimacy is explained by two factors. First, the way in which Hamas took over the Gaza Strip, where a paramilitia, rather than a formal part of the Palestinian Authority, took power and ousted the Palestinian Authority forces, and second, whether the legitimacy of Hamas's government was considered legal under basic Palestinian law.

As Hamas won the elections and Ismael Haniya was the prime minister, his dismissal by Abbas in June 2007 should have afforded him the opportunity to lead a caretaker government until a new government could be formed and a confidence vote in the PLC ensued. However, Abbas announced a state of emergency, dismissed Haniya's government and appointed Salam Fayyad as the new prime minister. The Arab and international community recognized Fayyad's government as the legitimate one, while internally, Hamas's government and its legitimacy was disputed among all ranks of society. Based on the above argument, Hamas did not declare itself as a rebel group but as legitimate, dubbing itself "the resistance government".

A determinant that supports the argument of Hamas as a rebel group in the Gaza Strip is the absence of accountability mechanisms. There is a complete absence of institutions that can hold Hamas and its individuals accountable for the use of violence, extrajudicial executions, torture, financial assets, the budget, tax, and elections, among many other institutional state functions.

Hamas has inherited a structure of governance that is deeply penetrated by the informal institutions of cultural and societal norms; in many cases, such as the judicial system (*Muslaha*), these informal institutions have surpassed the more formal fragile establishments. In such cases, the capabilities of Hamas's governance to order and reorder is limited and coercive, shaped and affected by the extant factors and forces. Therefore, Hamas has been successfully negotiating its legitimacy and authority over the Gaza Strip, both regionally and internationally, securing itself as the de facto ruler; thus, succeeding in structuring order in society according to its vision and objectives. As the article reveals later, the fractionalization of the society and fragmentation of the judicial and security system leads to political violence.

One of the main challenges of Hamas after 2007 was to restore order. Indeed, as one of its senior leaders argued:

When we took over the Gaza Strip, social order was our main target. We wanted to do that job. We have been advocating for that in elections, mosques, streets, and *Diwans*, and we wanted to deliver social order and end *Al-Falatan Al-Alamni*.⁴

Order is not just a political tool through which a rebel state may exercise its coercion or authority; it can further impact economic relations (Migdal 1988), shared norms (Worrall 2017), or even the institutions of any given society. In this paper, I see order as a set of overlapping economic, societal, and shared norms which form the structure of the whole society. In Gaza, the clans have their own moral code which influences the wider structure of order in the society, affecting economic relations, social life, and political order.

In the wake of the 2007 takeover, Hamas used excessive violence against two main components of the structure, namely the previous Fatah-dominated institutions and the familial/tribal structure of clans, to deconstruct their authority. Although violence is an exceptional tool, it can also be an integral part of the process of establishing cultural order (Worrall 2017). Hamas used indiscriminate violence at the beginning of its de facto rule, but after restructuring, developing a set of rules, and ensuring a higher level of professionalism (including the separation of the *Izzedin Al Qassam* from the civil police), it started to use discriminative and calculated violence, predominantly against clans and Islamist extremists (Sayigh 2011).

By violence, I mean the authoritarian practices of illegal and arbitrary imprisonment and torture, rather extreme violence that results in severe causalities and causes fractures within the social fabric. In this sense, the violence used by Hamas was targeting individuals and groups of individuals (clans, for instance) in order to shape their behavior in submitting to Hamas as the singular ruler, or to take control of a particular area (Kalyvas 2006) and thus eliminate no-go zones for the Hamas police (Sayigh 2011). However, the dilemma that many would argue faced Hamas would be that such violence has to be undertaken in accordance with the local practices in order to be effective.

Hamas has worked in two different ways to make the use of violence practicable; the first is avoiding using military officers and fighters to act in their own living areas, avoiding tribal clashes and future revenge (to maintain social order as far as possible); and the second is mobilizing members of large *Hamula*/clans to become members of Hamas and act as mediators between their clan and the de facto government. In Shejaia, Hamas brought Jabalia's police and *Izzedin Al Qassam* fighters of Northern Gaza to act against the Helles clan. Concurrently, they mobilized members of the Helles tribe to negotiate the surrender of their clan and end the conflict. This was partially successful but did not stop Hamas from using extreme violence, killing more than a dozen members of the clan (AbedRabo 2008).

According to a Hamas police officer who worked in Gaza in 2008, with the minister Saed Siyam,

We had to act; we were forced to use violence and restore order. But I can tell you that we were afraid of the social response. So we decided to bring police and Qassam from the north to avoid future killings and revenge in the same neighborhood, especially in Shejaia. At the same time, we asked Hamas members from the same clan to act, convince their clan to surrender and hand over the wanted individuals. At the end, we were forced to also attack and kill, as they [the Helles clan] were targeting us too. We had no choice but to use calculated violence.⁵

Order in Gaza under Hamas simultaneously developed in two ways. The first was the lack of mass protesting against Hamas's de facto rule, interpreted as the recognition of it (Hamas) as the legitimate ruler, thus exchanging civilian freedom and rights for the provision of security and services. In such a way, Hamas was able to use coercive power. The second was using mosques, meaning the internalization of norms and values which produce order. In the second mechanism, Hamas operates in Gaza through its members who are locals and have been connecting, mobilizing, and building social networks through mosques and social welfare organizations. Post-2007, it had an inbuilt socialization mechanism which allowed it (Hamas) to use coercive power to bring order and ensure legitimacy when needed.

When Hamas exercised its power, it recognized legitimacy as a crucial element to bring order. To gain legitimacy, Hamas linked local ordering (imposing order by Hamas through understanding the local fabric of the society) practices and the newly built structure of governance to ensure that it derived strength from these practices (such as the *Lijan Islah* of clans), and further challenged opponents who used these processes to undermine Hamas's legitimacy. Indeed, Hamas built its legitimacy in different forms and across different intervals (times) based on the circumstances—the provision of services, the struggle against the occupation (Zionist enemy in their terms), and its willingness to share power with Fatah—as well as moral legitimacy, such as the use of “goodness”, anti-corruption, a reform agenda, and Islam as an identity. As a senior Hamas leader argued:

Our legitimacy is derived from the people themselves. From mosques, from families, from people who we serve in our schools and clinics. We have given a lot and we proved that we are not corrupt like Fatah. But the main legitimacy comes from our sacrifices and resistance against the enemy [Israel].⁶

After 2007, Hamas worked hard to maintain its legitimacy using a combination of these strategies, aware that any diminishing of its legitimacy would affect the ability to govern properly. After 2014, Hamas's legitimacy started to be questioned following severe corruption within its ranks and the diminishing capacity to provide services and secure order as clans clashed and unrest started to increase. Hamas subsequently imposed high taxes which led to an increase in basic goods prices, causing people to challenge its capacity to maintain order. Therefore, many youth-led groups took to the street protesting Hamas's inability to administer properly, calling for reconciliation with Fatah and using cries such as “*Biddna Ine'sh*”, which means “we want to live”. This was met with an iron fist and the arrest and torture of hundreds of youths (DW 2019; BBC 2019).

3. *Al-Falatan Al Amni* and the Troubling Clannism

Hamas won the Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC) election in January 2006. Hamas's manifesto in the election campaign was “Change and Reform”, which used the widespread corruption and the damaged reputation of the Palestinian Authority led by Fatah as a strategy to gain traction among the Palestinians (Milton-Edwards 2007). Hamas's success in the elections paved the way for it to assume power for the first time. Ismael Haniya, Hamas's then leader, was nominated to form the government and in his first media statement, he asserted that his government would work with no delay to end “*Al-Falatan Al*

Amni”, meaning the security chaos which Gaza had suffered for many years (Aljazeera 2007).

Hamas’s government had not only an internal challenge but also enormous international and regional obstacles ahead. The economic and political sanctions imposed upon Hamas resulted in fractionalization within both Palestinian political institutions and society. The challenges were not only political but also financial, as public sector employees did not receive salaries due to the siege. Hamas was unable to secure enough budget funds to cover operational and bureaucratic expenses as well as the salaries of the employees who were mostly affiliated with Fatah. According to a senior Hamas activist,

We had many challenges, inside Gaza and outside. We felt everyone was trying to stop us from doing anything. We decided to work simultaneously on both sides [internal and external] with very limited resources and trying to make the government work.⁷

However, Hamas was mostly focusing on the internal issues because it was suspicious of Fatah’s next move. As soon as Hamas won the elections, Fatah leaders warned Fatah-affiliated government employees against cooperating with Hamas (Watan 2016). These obstructive efforts, along with the denunciation of the electoral defeat, manifested in Fatah-affiliate rejection of following the instructions of Hamas ministers, particularly within the security apparatus, presenting Hamas with the urgent challenge of security chaos. Since the start of the second Intifada, many of Fatah’s leaders, such as the head of the Military Police apparatus, had adopted a policy of mobilizing individual members of big clans as mechanisms of protection and influence. Fatah’s provision of power, weapons, and societal connections to members of big clans constituted an overlap between clans, criminal groups, and the security apparatus. As a result, two parallel fragile institutions were created; one loyal to Hamas and another to Fatah, which eventually led to violence.

According to a Hamas security officer,

Before Hamas won the elections and formed the government, we knew that Fatah had its security apparatus of criminals and criminal networks from big families. Many of Fatah’s leaders used them as a tool to act against their rivals in Fatah and Hamas too. For example, S. B. was a member of the Death Unit of the Preventive Security, which killed many Hamas members but also insulted the chief commander of the police.⁸

In 2004, the Death Unit established by one of Fatah’s leaders, Mohamed Dahlan, stormed the headquarter of the Palestinian Police in West Gaza, attacking and insulting (by putting his head in the toilet) the chief commander of the Police, Gazi Al Jabali, as a response to his efforts to end the security chaos. Many have called the act a competition between security lords (heads of security) to prove who held power. Indeed, Al Jabali had no kind of clan protection as he was one of the Palestinian leaders who returned with Yasser Arafat in 1993, named by many Palestinians as “Al’Adeen” (Osama 2004). This kind of behavior was widespread among the Palestinian leadership.

Hamas did appreciate the value of members of powerful families, particularly those with criminal records and who were willing to repent. These individuals were targeted by the “Da’wa” branch of Hamas, which invited them to “return to God” and work with them as an Islamic movement for redemption. The use of Islam and Islamic teaching was not an arbitrary move to mobilize former criminals, rather a well-calculated step to strengthen Hamas’s military and violent actions against its rival Fatah when needed. The authority of extended families was so powerful that it affected the decision-making of the judicial system as well as the security apparatus. In many cases, the *Diwan* of a clan could hold more power than the headquarters of the police or a security agency. According to a senior Hamas activist,

The idea that we needed clan support began in early 2004. It was the beginning of us having strength and being able to breathe after a decade of oppression. So, there was an indirect decision to recruit and mobilize members from powerful

families, who also have active and senior members within the PA and its security apparatus.⁹

4. The Iron Fist: Hamas's Coercive Power

The creation of order is a complex process that interconnects and varies depending upon the situation, actors, and the different authorities that exist in society. When a rebel group tries to create order in society after taking over a territory, it finds other competitors. Those competitors leave the comfort zone of not being in power in a fragmented society and start to compete with others such as rebels and already existing political and socioeconomic structures, as well as the norms and traditions of society. In cases where tribalism and clans exist, the authority and legitimacy of Hamas was questioned by these actors, as many of them were affiliated with other political groups; thus, it was necessary for Hamas to use coercive power and authority to impose its sociopolitical order in the early days. The tribal factionalism created a competitor to the formal and fragile political system, which was unable to control it violently. However, the semi-state or quasi-state security apparatus of Hamas was new on the scene and wanted to prove itself. Although Hamas had built a network with clans, it was able, and indeed forced, to use its violent capacities in many areas across the Gaza Strip. In the early days of Hamas in power, it faced groups such as gangs and previous disreputable members of Fatah security with links to drugs and torture. Hamas's Izzedin Al Qassam used its extensive and extreme violence against clans. According to a senior Hamas security officer,

When we took over the Gaza Strip, we knew that there would be resistance from local groups, political parties, and most importantly from clans in areas such as Shejaia, which is famous for strong and extended families with powerful authority and weapons.¹⁰

To achieve their goals, rebels need to engage with the civilian population to exercise their control and gain legitimacy, as they will not be imposing their authority in a vacuum. We understand Hamas as a rebel/non-state actor in a broader spectrum along with other actors in society, particularly clans. In other words, the moves and actions of other groups provided constraints and opportunities for Hamas to react and interact to achieve its goals and exercise its coercive power. After June 2007, Hamas took no actions but rather waited in what Richards called a state of "no peace–no war", where no dichotomous conflict or peace exists (Richards 2004).

The use of violence was flexible and in a continuous process of negotiation with the different societal actors; therefore, there was a need to maintain the idea of using the violence against clans as a tool to meet the threats that endangered the order Hamas was trying to impose. As Hamas moved forward and started to be a service provider, the idea of negotiation and using both coercive power and soft tools was increasing (Heger and Jung 2017). However, as the governance of Hamas was not clear and not stable, these negotiations were also not stable. As traditional authorities who own the ethical codes in Gazan society, clans needed to negotiate and engage with Hamas as a rebel group and the governing body in the Gaza Strip, which had newly acquired the authority of violence. As one *Mukhtar* and clan leader told me,

When Hamas took over the Gaza Strip, we were in the *Diwan*, and all were talking about it. There was a feeling that they wanted to take our weapons and revenge on our sons who worked in the security and were part of Fatah. However, some of us took the initiative and invited one Hamas leader to the *Diwan* and told them that we would try to keep the order and continue to work on *Islah* [reconciliation]. We did not want any confrontation with them as we knew they were waiting on any mistake to crush us.¹¹

Crushing traditional internally embedded norms and informal institutions such as the clan was an option, especially after Hamas was able to take over the territory and begin to establish its form of order. The use of violence was not the only tool on Hamas's table;

clans were still the linchpin that holds the network of informal institutions in place. The emergence of clans goes back to the traditional culture in Palestine, during the British mandate and later the Israeli settler colonialism, while in the second Intifada and the aftermath of weakened formal institutions, and during the political fragmentation, the role of clans took on a greater importance than before. As in most Arabic countries and communities, regimes and authoritarianism build on vertical chains of kinship ties, consciously exploited by the rulers (Sharabi 1988); Hamas, as with its rival Fatah, is no exception. It needed clans and needed to gain the clans' legitimacy, not least to avoid breaking the rules of the transitional norms with a violent confrontation from the start.

A senior Hamas and community leader confirmed that, arguing,

Hamas knows that clans are important in the society. They are part of the social fabric, and without them, the society will break down. But at the same time, we needed to limit their power and authority and put an end to the powerful families, and their weapons, who used violence against smaller families. At the same time we needed to be legitimate in their eyes.¹²

In an interview, Khalil Abu Shamala, director of the Al-Dameer Association for Human Rights in Gaza, stated, "any takeover or molding of this [tribal] system will most certainly affect the core of social relations in Gaza, especially when we take into consideration Hamas's increasing Islamization of the law" (Cunningham 2010). This was confirmed by a Fatah leader in Gaza who agreed that Hamas sought to negotiate power and legitimacy from the first day of taking over the Gaza Strip.

We received the deputy head of the Al Qassam at our house. He met with a Fatah leader and the elders. As both the biggest clan in the area and considered one of the most affiliated with Fatah, they asked the most senior Fatah leader to take the lead and participate in [power sharing]. He refused the offer, but a Hamas military leader asked if the clan could take a side and not make troubles in the coming months, and they will be imposing new order.¹³

Clearly, Hamas knew that violence had limits in a factionalized and fragmented society, so it needed to use other means, and to immediately begin renegotiating its power and legitimacy with the clans rather than wait until the formation of the new order. Initially, Hamas used violence to contain and control its rivals (Fatah), and then a critical issue emerged in the negotiation of power within Hamas as an authority: there was an internal discussion on whether to strip powerful families of their weapons or adopt the strategy of wait and see. Many hardliners, such as Mamhoud Al-Zahar, were in favor of the strategy of "*Kasr Anf*", meaning to "break their nose" as a metaphor to make clans surrender and break their pride as powerful families. Other senior leaders, particularly from the Izzedin Al Qassam, were against this strategy in the first days. They feared that many members of the military wing would not be happy with this strategy, and Hamas would lose more than it gained.

The use of violence and coercion is high in such a case and lasts as long as the coercion is effectively applied, but seeking sustainable legitimacy is more appealing than the use of violence. This was evident when the Hamas police and its Executive Force, established to be under the full control of Hamas's Minister of the Interior during the first government, avoided extensive clashes with the Al-Masri clan in Beit Hanoun, Northern Gaza, after the death of one of its members who worked at the Palestinian Intelligence Agency. The Al-Masri clan, known to be affiliated with Fatah, killed a member of the Al-Kafarna clan who worked for the Executive Force of Hamas (Addustor 2007). Similarly, when Hamas tried to disarm and seize governmental cars owned by some families in Shejaia, Northern Gaza, Khan Younes, and Rafah, military clashes erupted, forcing Hamas to pull back and not confront clans at that stage (Alittihad 2007).

Interestingly, the process and negotiations were different in the Sabra area when the Dougmoush clan turned to global Jihadism. Many members of this clan are also part of *Jaish Al-Islam* (Army of Islam) and previously collaborated with Hamas in military operations

against Israelis, including the kidnapping of Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit. In August 2006, *Jaish Al-Islam* kidnapped two Fox News journalists, Steve Centanni and Olaf Wiig, holding them in the Dougmouh clan area (ABC 2006). Embarrassingly for the Hamas government, the PA paid money for *Jaish Al-Islam* to release the two journalists after they (symbolically) converted to Islam. In December 2006, two members of the Dougmouh clan were shot dead by Hamas's affiliate clan, the Al-Deiry. In response, the Dougmouh clan killed three members of the Al-Deiry clan who were senior militants of Gaza and close to Hamas hardliner Mahmoud Al Zahar (PalInfo 2007). These clashes and criminal acts deepened the fragmentation among clans in Palestinian society and strengthened the attachment of tribes to political parties, leading to a higher level of factionalism.

On 12 March 2007, *Jaish Al-Islam* kidnapped the British journalist Alan Johnson. Although they demanded the release of international terrorists, their real demands were millions of US dollars and the release of ten members of the Dougmouh clan. This was a challenge to Hamas, Hamas's unity government, and the PA. In previous cases, Fatah and the PA paid the ransom, but this time, they warned Hamas to face this challenge alone (Lafi 2007; Al-akhbar 2007).

When Hamas took over the Gaza Strip in June, *Jaish Al-Islam* and the Dougmouh clan started to open channels for negotiations. Alan Johnson's release would be an event that could provide international legitimacy for Hamas as a governing body, which could, in turn, provide security. As a result, it formed a committee of religious scholars to rule and issue a joint Fatwa to end the conflict and release Johnson. According to a journalist who followed the issue closely,

Hamas wanted international legitimacy and at the same time wanted to non-violently neutralize the Dougmouh clan and *Jaish Al-Islam*. The only solution was to use Islamic Sharia as a means to achieve that. Mumtaz Dougmouh [Leader of *Jaish Al-Islam*] was more into solving it peacefully as he knew that no one would support him if Hamas decided to eliminate him.¹⁴

This account was confirmed by a senior Hamas leader,

There was one option: negotiations. First to avoid clashes with *Jaish Al-Islam*, as then we would be faced by a wave of criticism from our own members, questioning how we could kill an Islamic group member. Second, because we [Hamas] wanted to gain legitimacy internationally and prove that we are able to handle such cases that previous security [Fatah] was not able to solve. And third, that there was no room for clashes with a clan like Dougmouh. We were just taking over the Gaza Strip and we were building our offices and security. It would not help.¹⁵

However, that was not the case with all families. Depending on the circumstances and sequences of events, Hamas was able to neutralize some families who were actively acting against Hamas in June 2007, amid the military clashes between Hamas militants and the PA security forces. On 12 June, Hamas surrounded the Bakers clan neighborhood, asking all men to gather in the mosque, subsequently arresting dozens and assassinating six (Miftah 2007). According to one member of the Bakers clan,

They attacked us from all sides and asked all men to leave and be inside the mosque. They searched our houses. We were 300 in the mosque, all men. Later they killed six men and one woman.¹⁶

Clearly, there was reasoning behind the decision to engage with the Bakers, and when a Hamas militant was asked about the clan, he stressed that,

The clan was part of the security [group] of the Fatah militia that killed many Hamas activists. They had attacked the [nearby] house and office of Hamas's leader, Ismael Haniya. They were clearly part of the fight, and we had the chance to act at that moment.¹⁷

These four different cases show that Gaza clans were trying to send a message to Hamas that, to govern Gaza, clans had to have an influence and clans are as important as other parts in the governing and ruling process. However, Hamas could not use violence in all these instances as it may have harmed its local and traditional legitimacy, as well as attracting disapproval from its own members. The opportunity to negotiate power, use violence, and neutralize was a carefully calculated strategy by Hamas leaders to avoid loss.

In the last week of July, events took a new direction when Hamas accused Fatah activists of detonating a bomb, killing several of its top military leaders from the Shejaia area, namely Hassan AlHelou, Ammar Musabeh, Iyad AL Hayya, Osamal Alhelou, and Nidal Almubayed (KUNA 2008). On 2 August, Hamas accused Fatah activist and military leader Zaki AlSakani of plotting the killings of the Hamas leaders before escaping to the Helles clan's area in Shejaia (Maan 2016). This incident was the perfect opportunity for Hamas to use violence against clans in the Shejaia area, since families who were affiliated with Fatah created a no-go zone in the eastern part of Gaza, undermining Hamas's legitimacy to some extent. According to a senior Hamas leader,

As of April 2008, we felt that there were some no-go zones for us under tribal and clan names. Shejaia, a tribal society, closed narrow streets, held meetings, and organized events under clan titles and we could not intervene as it was under the clan name. There were some warnings for us, and it undermined our legitimacy. It had become normal that someone would tell us [Hamas leaders], "*Tshataro A'ala Al Shejaia*" [be courageous enough to take Shejaia clans down and make them surrender].¹⁸

The Helles clan is numbered in thousands of men, well-trained in using both light and heavy weaponry. Living in the eastern part of Gaza, they have always been affiliated with Fatah, with hundreds of members working in the PA police and security apparatus. What is more, the Fatah leader in Gaza was from the same clan. As one of its leaders said,

We are a clan who live on the eastern borders of Gaza near the occupation. We are a big clan, and we need to protect ourselves from Israeli incursions. We have weapons and they are used only against the occupation. Israel has killed dozens from our clan since 2002 and we are part of the wider resistance of the Palestinians.¹⁹

During ethnographic research and observations, Hamas leaders, along with academics and other civil organizations, disagreed with the narrative of the clan leader. They argued that militarization and factionalization within clans was normal in Shejaia families since the establishment of the Palestinian Authority. They stocked weapons, had conflicts, and many of their members committed crimes. As one researcher argued,

'Clans have weapons and they used them as a show of power and competition as to who is stronger. It was a norm so that they acquired more positions in the PA in a clientelist way.'²⁰

Clearly, clans were not just a part of traditional structure, but also of the political parties and their militarized branches, which led to the fractionalization and fragmentation of the clans and within the clan themselves. On 2 August 2008, Hamas decided to take a step forward and use violence. It surrounded the area of East Shejaia for three continuous days of military clashes, resulting in the deaths of eight of the Helles clan and three Hamas police officers, while more than 130 were injured (Rabbo 2008; Alquds 2008). The brutal and extremely violent eradication of the most powerful clan in eastern Gaza opened the door for Hamas to ask clans to surrender and hand over their weapons.

In the second week of September 2008, three of the Dougmoush clan killed police personnel while a patrol car was passing through their neighborhood, subsequently fleeing to their security quarter in the Sabra district. As a result, Hamas's forces encircled and besieged the district, checking IDs and names of people who entered and exited the area. The Dougmoush clan anticipated a similar conclusion to that of the Helles clan, and Hamas

intensified its forces around the area. The Dougmoush proposed to hand over three members to Hamas's security forces, but Hamas's de facto Minister of the Interior rejected the offer, refusing to negotiate with the clan. On 16 September, Hamas's security forces, along with its military wing, attacked using rocket-propelled grenades, machine guns, and snipers, killing ten members of the clan, one child, and a police officer, and leaving 40 wounded (ALRiyad 2007). The clan was accused of being affiliated with Fatah, while many were also members of *Jaish Al-Islam* (Addustor 2008).

In a statement, Hamas's security forces said,

The [Hamas] police will not consider anyone to be above the law, [regardless of] clans, political affiliation, or social status. (Safadi 2008)

This statement and campaign against one of the most powerful families in east Gaza, coming less than a month after the first campaign against the Helles clan, was a clear message ending the negotiation with clans. It was understood that coercion would be used to impose the rule of law and end clannism in the region.

According to a senior Hamas leader,

The campaign on Dougmoush clan assured us that it was the time to take the power of the clans down and ensure they were not endangering our order anymore. When we ended the Dougmoush security quarter and the security chaos, we gained legitimacy of the people, and by that, the way was [open] ahead of us to act against clans in a violent way.²¹

After Hamas took control over the Gaza Strip, one of the most important factors in the negotiation process between the clans of Gaza was the anticipation of violence. In the first few months, Hamas avoided clashes with big, powerful clans affiliated with Fatah. From 14 June 2007 until September 2007, Hamas imposed the main element of social order—ending security chaos, "*Al Falatan Alamni*"—which provided it with partial legitimacy from the public. After Hamas built its security apparatus, opportunism as a strategy to neutralize clans was a rising possibility. Yet it waited for the clans to initiate the violence or break the new rules of the game. Coercive power was primarily used to end the domination and authority of the clans, and then further used to seek legitimacy as the ruler of the Gaza Strip in their eyes, particularly after the legal processes of arrests and trials that many clan members now faced. The end of clan militarism and factionalism provided such a sense of power that many other clans reached out to clan members within Hamas to secure visits to security and police headquarters or even liaise with them in social affairs. As one Hamas police officer argued,

After September 2008, we had many clan heads [*Mukhtars*] visit, to coordinate and collaborate with Islah committees and the police.²²

5. The Carrot and the Stick: Parallel Institutions

Scholars who have studied rebels stress that they need to have a governance arrangement that maintains a reciprocal relationship between them and the local communities (Mampilly 2012). Hamas has had very sensitive relations with the powerful and most influential clans and, although it has benefited from these clans (particularly the medium-sized) to win the elections, considered them a threat to its de facto formal institutions and legitimacy.

As Weber noted, "social order by virtue of sacredness is the oldest . . . universal type of legitimacy" (Weber 1968), and there was a need for those clans living under the control of Hamas to obey it based on traditional sanctity. That is why Hamas later adopted, notably after the assassination of its Interior Minister, a new strategy of gaining legitimacy through providing services, creating new structures to include clans, and efforts to divide and conquer powerful families affiliated with Fatah and the previous authorities.

In 1987, the Palestinian leadership called upon the local population in the Gaza Strip and West Bank to boycott the local court and Israeli administration. In the midst of the first

Intifada, Palestinians refrained from complying with the Israeli military courts, instead resorting to other methods of conflict resolution, such as traditional mediation (Terris and Inoue-Terris 2002). Customary laws flourished during the first Intifada even though young political leaders tried to undermine their authority. These political leaders had more loyalty to their political affiliation than to tribal politics, unhappy with clan chiefs accused of corruption (Terris and Inoue-Terris 2002). Hamas was also dissatisfied with the degree of control that clan heads had, particularly when these clan leaders did not behave and judge according to Sharia law (Zilberman 1996). The prevalence of customary laws within informal institutions stood as a barrier to Hamas increasing its political and judicial influence. For Hamas, clans were more fragmenting than a uniting factor in the society, while for Fatah, clans were seen as an unaccepted alternative to the revolution or the liberation movements that could be exploited by the occupation.

Clans in Palestine undermine the democratic governance and the rule of law but also work as problem-solvers, customarily disputing resolutions as well as imposing informal forms of social order. Because accusations of corruption frequently tarnished the formal courts under the Fatah-led Palestinian Authority (1994–2007), the *Mukhtars* (clan chiefs) became one of the only functioning judiciaries in Gaza during the “*AlFalatan Al Amni*.” When Hamas took power, it tried to undermine the power of clans, gaining more legitimacy from the public and affiliated clans as the only authority in the Gaza Strip.

Hamas’s Ministry of the Interior established a “Clans and Public Relations” department responsible for coordinating and collaborating with clans and providing official certificates to new *Mukhtars*. The start of the new policy was to create a parallel set of institutions to those that had existed before, appointing new *Mukhtars* from small families and providing them with stamps to issue formal certificates. In later stages, new *Mukhtars* from powerful and big clans were appointed besides the already active ones, but these posts were given to younger members, those affiliated with Hamas, or Islamists to compete with the other old *Mukhtars*. The strategy was to divide and conquer big clans, and in 2009 alone, Hamas replaced more than 630 *Mukhtars* and appointed more than 70 new (Sayigh 2011). According to a Hamas senior police officer,

We knew that getting complete legitimacy from the previous political regime and its affiliated clans will be difficult. Therefore, we moved to create our own legitimacy by appointing new *Mukhtars*, in most families including the most powerful families which were affiliated with the PA previously.²³

Hamas increased the numbers of affiliated *Lijan Islah* (reconciliation committees). During the time of the PA, there were not more than a dozen *Lijan Islah*, supervised by the Ministry of *Awqaf* and Religious Affairs, along with the Ministry of the Interior. Although Hamas rejected customary law and informal conflict resolution during the first Intifada and the Fatah-led PA, it came to accept the practice of *Lijan Islah* in a strategy to gain legitimacy of the clans. In 2008, Hamas’s de facto government established the General Administration for Tribal Affairs and Social Reconciliation, appointing Abu Nasser Al-Kujuk (Hamas affiliated) as the head of the newly established department (Brenner 2016). The customary tribal law (*U’rf*) is the main pillar of the clans’ conflict resolution strategy, which was rejected by Hamas because it does not follow Sharia and Islam. The *U’rf* is also a principle of informal institution that keeps social cohesion and solidarity within the community on the basis of integrity and the honor of the clan. As a clan leader argued,

The *U’rf* is based on the principle that few elders and wise men have the authority and mandate over the whole clan.²⁴

When Hamas took over the Gaza Strip, as a strategy to gain legitimacy within clans and families and to avoid increasing pressure on the formal judicial system, it accepted the *U’rf*, but within its own framework. A new legal and Islamic framework (booklet) was prepared by a leading Hamas Islamic scholar, Marwan Abu Ras, with all leading members of these committees being Hamas clerics or members of Hamas. Hamas’s *Lijan*

Islah were also competitors and parallel institutes to those formed and active under the PA's commission of Tribal Affairs. As the head of PA's *Lijan Islah* affirmed,

The *Lijan Islah* of Hamas were part of a strategy to create parallel institutes to the existing PA. They started with the formal institutes, such as ministries and police, and now they want to legitimize themselves through the clans and the *U'rf*.²⁵

By the end of 2014, there were more than fifty committees (*Lijan Islah*) and more than 600 certified mediators who were members thereof (Balousheh 2014). The members had to be approved by the head of Hamas's Ministry of the Interior, who is a member of Hamas and senior cleric within its Da'wa committee. However, Hamas police, as the formal authority and the one that can execute imprisonments and fines, worked closely with the *Lijan Islah* of Hamas, ignoring the *Lijan Islah* affiliated with the PA. This created a rift in the society when it came to conflict resolution. While clans could choose between the two different *Lijan Islah* based on their political affiliations, the more complex the case, the more people would lean toward engaging Hamas's *Lijan Islah* as they had the power to coordinate with the police as a formal institution²⁶.

As pragmatic as it could be, Hamas's seeking of legitimacy and preservation of social order through clans remains an important means for its rule in the Gaza Strip. It was crucial for both Hamas and the clans to share power within limited and clear borders. Though Hamas was aware that factional loyalty is important to its members, it discovered that a clan's identity could help in securing partial legitimacy and maintaining social order with minimum resources. In this manner of negotiation, and without having to confront clan leaders affiliated with Fatah and the PA, Hamas provided clans with their power but under the parameters of its supervision, authority, and framework. Newly appointed clan *Mukhtars*, mediators, and members of *Lijan Islah* were mostly affiliated with Hamas, and respectful of members of society in general, which helped Hamas to avoid public confrontation or criticism. Factionalism of clans led to violence in Palestinian society, and Hamas tried by two strategies to maneuver and maintain informal control, by neutralizing clans, but also trying to unify them through formal mechanisms.

6. Conclusions

This paper examines how tribal fractionalization leads to violence in fragile and limited statehood areas. The findings support the introduction of this Special Issue, and that the level of fragmentation and factionalism could predict the development of violence (Kivimäki 2021). It argues that sub-national factionalism, exemplified by tribalism, interacts with conflict between political parties, leading to higher probabilities of violence. It contributes to the emerging scholarship on rebel governance and non-state actors in fragile and limited statehood areas.

When Israel withdrew from the Gaza Strip in 2005, it provided an opportunity for Hamas, as the Palestinian Authority miscalculated its capacities to govern the Gaza Strip after Israel pulled its troops from the center of the territory (keeping them on the borders). This paper provides new empirical evidence to support Fearon and Laitin's theory of intra-war (Fearon 2011). When the PA could not provide protection to small families and individuals (as well as financial support amid a heightened level of unemployment), Hamas and clans provided a safety net for them. Later, when Hamas took over the Gaza Strip, clans became a new threat to Hamas.

Hamas serves as a contemporary case for rebel governance with an undoubted capacity to continue its power in a very tribal society where the authority of the state is often challenged by factionalized clans and political parties. It is, therefore, important to examine the complex negotiations of power and legitimacy between the different actors that provide Hamas as a rebel group with the broader and ordered space to govern the Gaza Strip. To achieve long-lasting order, legitimacy, and exercise of power as a rebel group, and with limited resources but with a degree of stable internal relations, the order that Hamas has tried to impose is dynamic and multi-layered, particularly with the clans. This study is important in helping to understand the dynamics of legitimacy in rebel-controlled areas,

especially in the Middle East, where the clan is an entrenched part of society. In line with Kalyvas' argument, the case of Hamas shows that rebels are embedded within the daily life and practices of society through clans, extended families, and mosques, which generates a strong network that supports and serves the legitimacy of Hamas (Kalyvas 2006).

The article argues that there has been an ongoing negotiation and renegotiation of power between Hamas and various actors in the community. However, with the clan, there was a rollercoaster of a negotiation process that started peacefully, then became violent, and latterly renegotiated its legitimacy with the clans using their de facto authority and informal judicial system (*Lijan Islah*). Mobilizing the informal institutions of *Lijan Islah* is a depiction of a fragile state in a limited statehood area. The informal institutions are usually used when the formal institutions are weak or cannot do their job effectively.

Hamas's style of governance reveals that it was driven towards creating a new bureaucratic machine similar to that which had previously existed under the Palestinian Authority and parallel to the ones managed by the Palestinian Authority in the West Bank. Hamas created a meaningless structure of a state in the image of a sovereign "state", built around its ability to provide security using harsh measures and its capacity to create and expand upon its network of informal institutions as tools with which to impose its measure within and around clans. In the aftermath of June 2007, the transition regime kept the same pattern of control and negotiation with the public by building a framework that reflected Islamism, sacrifices, reform, security, and unity. Through this framework, Hamas worked consistently to create legitimacy among the local institutions, either those previously existing (pre-2007) or the new ones created to strengthen its capacity and provide an image of legitimacy among the society of Gaza. For Hamas, the critical factor has been to prevent political challenges to its de facto rule while at the same time maintaining social cohesion and legitimacy.

Hamas used two strategies to negotiate and manage fragmentation of the clans over public orders designed to establish its legitimacy: the first was using coercion, and the second was using the informal institutions of the tribal judicial system, although Hamas did not use coercion directly after it took over the Gaza Strip, rather waiting for the clans to make the first move. This finding is in line with Barakat and Fakhri's findings in this volume that political stability needs a strong judicial system and anti-corruption mechanisms, which in our case led to more fragmentation in Palestinian society (Barakat and Ali 2021).

The two cases of clans and how Hamas acted towards them suggests that Hamas was able to acquire social legitimacy through clan members, *Mukhtars*, and attempts to change the structure of the informal judicial system by creating a parallel one, thus diminishing the role of the PA-affiliated system, while pushing towards fostering its own informal judicial system that was partially formalized and supervised by the MoI. As two different judicial systems competed and tried to enforce their norms amid weak formal and strong judicial systems, the society became prone to more violence as Hamas tried to use coercion, and clans tried to enforce their own norms.

Clearly, Hamas's strategy to legitimize itself in a fragmented and fragile society relied upon bringing together the mosque, security apparatus, reconciliation committees (*Lijan Islah*), local Hamas activists, and emirs of the neighborhoods. This reflects a deep understanding of the society and the importance of using coercive functions and the social control of securitization. The article argues that this benefited Hamas in gaining legitimacy through a complex set of passive and active negotiation and renegotiation processes, particularly when used at the right time.

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Notes

- 1 Interview with senior Hamas leader A, Gaza January 2020.
- 2 Interview with clan's leader in Gaza, March 2020.
- 3 Interview with Hamas security officer A, March 2020.
- 4 Interview with senior Hamas leader B, East Gaza, February 2020.
- 5 Interview with Hamas Police Officer B, January 2020.
- 6 Interview with Senior Hamas leader A, Gaza, January 2020.
- 7 Interview with Hamas activist, Gaza, March 2020.
- 8 Interview with Hamas Police officer B, January 2020.
- 9 Interview with senior Hamas Activist, February 2020.
- 10 Interview with Hamas Police officer C, Gaza, February 2020.
- 11 Interview with Clan's leader, Khan Younes, March 2020.
- 12 Interview with senior community leader/Member of Hamas, Jabaliya, February 2020.
- 13 Interview with Fatah leader, Gaza March 2020.
- 14 Interview with a Journalist, Gaza March 2020.
- 15 Interview with senior Hamas leader B, Gaza, February 2020.
- 16 Interview with member of Baker's clan, March 2020.
- 17 Interview with member of Baker's clan, March 2020.
- 18 Interview with senior Hamas leader C, Gaza, March 2020.
- 19 Interview with Fatah leader, Gaza March 2020.
- 20 Interview with researcher, North Gaza, February 2020.
- 21 Interview with senior Hamas leader D, Shejaia, March 2020.
- 22 Interview with Hamas Security officer A, Gaza March 2020.
- 23 Interview with Hamas Police officer B, Gaza, January 2020.
- 24 Interview with clan leader, Gaza March 2020.
- 25 Interview with head of PA Lijan Islah Committee, March 2020.
- 26 There has been intense debate between 2008 and 2010 about the Lijan Islah, which the researcher followed closely. Note: All names have been removed for safety reasons upon the interviewees' requests.

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