



**Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center
at the Israel Intelligence Heritage
& Commemoration Center (IICC)**

February 11, 2008

A group called “Army of the Nation, Jerusalem” is yet another global jihad offshoot in the Gaza Strip. Since the Hamas takeover of the Gaza Strip, there has been an increase in the propaganda and terrorist activities carried out by radical Islamic groups associated with Al-Qaeda and the global jihad.



Right: the emblem of Army of the Nation, Jerusalem. The inscription reads: “There is no other God but Allah and Muhammad is the Prophet of Allah” (the *Shahada*). The flagpole is a sniper rifle held by a hand emerging from an open book (probably the Quran). Left: some of the group’s masked, armed, and uniformed operatives at a press conference in Khan Yunis (source: the group’s website, January 2008).

Overview

1. Following the Hamas takeover of the Gaza Strip (June 2007) and against the backdrop of the fast process of Islamization,¹ there has been an increase in the propaganda (and, at times, operative) activities of small Islamic groups associated with Al-Qaeda and the global jihad (see Appendix for details). One of those terrorist groups is **Army of the Nation, Jerusalem**,² which operates in the northern and southern Gaza Strip. **Such terrorist groups, in fact, are the vanguard force of the global jihad vis-à-vis Israel.**

2. The Army of the Nation group was officially established some two years ago. According to Abu Hafs, one of the group's leaders, it operated in secret for several years before its establishment (Al-Ayyam, January 12). The group, which considers all Muslims to be part of the greater nation of Islam, defines itself as a **purely Islamic organization, and thus avoids embracing Palestinian national characteristics**. Hamas and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad, on the other hand, portray themselves as Islamic organizations but also wish to achieve national Palestinian goals. *Bayt al-Maqdis*, the last component of the group's name, comes from the name of the city of Jerusalem as it appears in Islamic texts and is probably meant to emphasize the group's Islamic aspect (Jerusalem being the third most important place for Islam, after the cities of Mecca and Medina in the Arabian Peninsula).

3. Recently, one may observe in the Gaza Strip a process in which groups associated with the global jihad are becoming **publicly active**. This process reflects **the trend of religious Islamic extremism** currently prevailing on the Palestinian scene, and particularly in the Gaza Strip. The ideology of the global jihad penetrates into the Gaza Strip mostly **through Internet websites** associated with global jihad groups. The spread of extremism is also accompanied by **terrorist activity** aimed both against Israel as well as Palestinian and Western elements in the Gaza Strip, perceived by radicals as offensive to Islam.

4. The breach of the Palestinian-Egyptian border fence and the mass pouring of Palestinians to Sinai and back to the Gaza Strip make it easier, in our assessment, for global jihad elements based in the Sinai Peninsula to strengthen their hold of the Gaza Strip. It should be mentioned that recently, **Abu Abd al-Rahman al-Ansari**, the group's information chief in the Gaza Strip, called upon jihad warriors across the globe to take advantage of the breached border **in order to get to the Gaza Strip** (the global jihad associated Al-Hisba forum, January 24). Strengthening the hold of global jihad elements in the Gaza Strip **poses a**

¹ See our Information Bulletin: ["Since Hamas took over the Gaza Strip, it has intensified its activities to impose an Islamic social code. Hamas is careful not to represent it as a step toward establishing a radical Islamic state. The process is just beginning but indicates an increase in the Islamization of the Gaza Strip"](#) (September 7, 2007).

² Originally *Jaysh al-Ummah*, *Bayt al-Maqdis*. *Bayt al-Maqdis* is one of the Arabic names for Jerusalem, literally meaning "temple".

challenge to the Hamas movement, which still prefers not to suppress the activity of global jihad elements in the Gaza Strip by force.

Overview of the group's ideology

5. Most of the information about the group is based on interviews with **Abu Hafs al-Maqdisi**, who refers to himself as one of the group's leaders. In the interviews, in which he frequently uses Islamic terminology, he emphasizes two main principles espoused by the group:

a. **Liberating the land and the holy places through armed struggle**: "...the Army of the Nation considers itself part of the jihadic Islamic movement, whose goal is to establish the rule of Allah in Palestine and liberate the lands of Al-Isra' and Al-Mi'raj,³ to take up jihad as way to pull the nation out of its humiliation and backwardness..." (Al-Ayyam, January 12, 2008).



The beloved Palestine is crying—they killed my sons, burned my land, and defiled my holy places (the group's website)

b. **Replacing the “infidel secular democracy” and moving closer to Islam by instating Islamic religious law**. “We come from a purely Islamic worldview and consider ourselves to be part of the Muslims across the globe, including America, India, and China; if Palestine should be liberated, our **war of jihad** will continue **until the law of Allah is imposed in the entire world**” (interview granted by Abu Hafs al-Maqdisi, one of the group's leaders, to Al-Ayyam).⁴

³ **The land of Al-Isra' and Al-Mi'raj** refers to the territory of Palestine. It is Arabic for “the night journey and the ascension to heaven”, i.e., the journey undertaken by Prophet Muhammad from Mecca to Jerusalem on a magnificent steed known as Al-Buraq. The use of this term reflects the intention of the Army of the Nation to introduce the Islamic justification for the armed struggle against Israel, focusing on the liberation of the holy places, mainly Jerusalem, because of their importance to Islam.

⁴ Another interview was granted by Abu Hafs al-Maqdisi to a Christian TV channel in Virginia, USA.

6. According to Abu Hafs al-Maqdisi, the group has “thousands of operatives” from the Gaza Strip, Judea and Samaria, and even Israel. He says that most of the group’s operatives are warriors who acquired combat experience while being members of the terrorist-operative wings of the various Palestinian terrorist organizations, such as the Al-Quds Brigades of the Palestinian Islamic Jihad, the Abu Ali Mustafa Brigades of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), and Fatah’s Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades. We believe that the number of operatives mentioned by Al-Maqdisi is exaggerated. It may be assumed that most of them are located in the Gaza Strip, which currently serves as a convenient setting for the activity of global jihad elements.

7. A propaganda clip released by the group has similar characteristics to propaganda clips of global jihad organizations. The clip, aiming to encourage the recruitment of youngsters, shows some 35-40 of the group’s operatives as they undergo military training and sing songs of jihad. The training includes small arms, machine guns, rocket launchers, and bombs. Parts of the clip were filmed in Beit Hanoun, in the northern Gaza Strip (CBN, November 8, 2007).



A frame from the clip showing Army of the Nation operatives on military training (found on the group’s website since July 2007, one month after the Hamas takeover of the Gaza Strip)

8. The group’s operatives describe themselves as “**jihadic salafis**”,⁵ whose goal is to instate the rule of Islam across the entire globe. They declare that their purpose is **to kill Jews** (particularly by attacking the State of Israel), **Americans, and Christians**, and to die as martyrs. **The group claimed responsibility for several incidents of rocket fire** on western Negev population centers, such as the Al-Qa’qa rocket⁶ fired on Sderot (Maan News Agency, November 20, 2007).

⁵ **Salafism** (Arabic: *Salafiyyah*) is an Islamic school of thought that views the first generations of Muslims as examples of how Islam should be practiced. In recent decades, Salafism has come to refer to a radical political worldview held by extremist Islamic elements active on the regional and international scene.

⁶ **Al-Qa’qa** rockets were formerly fired from the Gaza Strip by the Popular Resistance Committees (August 24, 2006) and by an organization known as **Jund Allah** (April 27, 2005). The rockets are named after Al-Qa’qa bin Amru al-Tamimi, one of Prophet Muhammad’s most well-known companions (*sahaba*). His brilliant military tactics earned him a special status in Islam, and he is still revered even now as an exemplary military commander.

Propaganda

9. On January 9, 2008, Army of the Nation held a press conference in Khan Yunis in which it revealed itself **for the first time** to inter-Arab media. At the press conference, Army of the Nation spokesmen protested against President Bush’s visit to the Middle East and even threatened to assassinate him. In a show of strength, Army of the Nation operatives paraded in uniform and with Kalashnikov rifles and RPG-7 launchers. The operatives wore black headbands with the text “**Jaysh al-Ummah**” or red headbands (symbolizing blood, i.e., willingness for martyrdom) with the inscription “**Asbat al-Mawt**” (the [red] headband of death).⁷



Army of the Nation operatives at a press conference in Khan Yunis (the group’s website)

Red headbands which reads “Asbat al-Mawt”



A black headband which reads “Jaysh al-Ummah”

Typical uniform worn by Army of the Nation operatives (the group’s website)

⁷ ‘**Asbat al-Mawt**—according to Islamic tradition, this headband was worn by Simak bin Aws bin Kharshah (Abu Dajana), another one of Prophet Muhammad’s companions, during his battle against the infidels. A great Muslim warrior, he is believed to have bodily defended Prophet Muhammad from the infidels’ arrows. Abu Dajana was killed in battle and became a martyr.

Army of the Nation's Internet website



The homepage of the group's website (www.alamanh.net). The large text on the bottom reads: "The Jihadic Bayt al-Maqdis Network". The Internet is used as an important means of conveying messages and spreading the ideology of global jihad organizations.

10. Similarly to other terrorist groups associated with the global jihad, Army of the Nation operates a website at www.alamanh.net. Among other things, the website provides information on the group's concepts and worldviews, ideological articles, pictures, and clips. The website also publishes claims of responsibility for the group's activities, including launching RPG rockets, mortar bombs, and Al-Qa'qa rockets on **Sderot and other Israeli towns and villages**. According to Abu Hafs, the website was opened about a year ago but was shut down by the Americans. The website promises that a forum for web surfers will be opened soon. **The website is serviced by a company based in Cairo.**



Claims of responsibility for shooting attacks that appear on the group's website

11. Due to the importance of the Internet as a means for reports, conveying messages, and spreading ideology, the group intends to develop its website. Published recently on the first page of the website was a wanted ad, inviting people from all Muslim countries to become reporters for the website. According to the ad, candidates should be:

- Sunni Muslims reflecting the overall Islamic consensus.

- b. Knowledgeable in Islamic law and culture.
- c. Able to provide accurate, faithful reports.

Army of the Nation's holiday poster



Still shots from a video clip showing Army of the Nation operatives on training

Photographs of Al-Qaeda's September 11 terrorist attacks

A holiday poster produced by Army of the Nation on the occasion of the month of Ramadan. The title reads: "Army of the Nation sends its best wishes to the Muslim nation and to the people of *murabitun*⁸ [i.e., the Palestinian people] as the blessed month of Ramadan is upon us"

⁸ **People of *murabitun***—referring to the Palestinian people living inside Palestine, being a garrison of sorts that is in a constant state of alert for a possible military action, i.e., jihad for the liberation of the holy sites of Islam in Jerusalem.

Appendix

Other terrorist groups associated with the global jihad that operate in the Gaza Strip

Army of Islam

12. In the course of the past year, there has been an increase in the activities of groups associated with the global jihad **in the Gaza Strip**. The most visible example for the penetration of an ideology of a terrorist group associated with the global jihad is the **Army of Islam**, headed by **Mumtaz Dughmush**, which is in fact an Al-Qaeda branch in the Gaza Strip.



13. Since the official announcement of its establishment (June 2006), the Army of Islam adopted ideological worldviews and patterns of action associated with the global jihad. Among the group's most prominent actions is **the terrorist attack in Kerem Shalom (June 2006) which led to the killing of two IDF soldiers and the abduction of IDF soldier Gilad Shalit**. The group won international attention following the abduction of British journalist Alan Johnston (March 2007) and his release following pressure exerted by Hamas (July 2007).⁹

Mumtaz Dughmush (right) with one of his operatives (Hamas forum, January 24, 2007)

⁹ See our Information Bulletin: [“The Army of Islam, a radical Islamic Palestinian terrorist group in the Gaza Strip, claimed responsibility for the abduction of British journalist Alan Johnston. In exchange for his release, they demand the release of global jihad operatives, particularly Sheikh Abu Qatada \(a Jordanian of Palestinian descent, held prisoner in Britain\)”](#) (May 20, 2007).

Other groups

14. Lately, a group calling itself **“Fath al-Islam in the Land of Ribat”**¹⁰ claimed responsibility for firing on Kibbutz Yad Mordechai (the global jihad’s Ana al-Muslim forum, January 12). It is a terrorist group operating in Lebanon and is a branch of the global jihad. It was headquartered in the Nahr al-Bared refugee camp in northern Lebanon, where it was suppressed by the Lebanese army (September 2007). Recently, it started claiming responsibility for terrorist attacks perpetrated from the Gaza Strip (mostly firing rockets and mortar shells). Other minor groups that operate in the Gaza Strip and are associated with the global jihad are **Abu Rish Brigades—Sword of Islam** and **The Jerusalem Jihad Warriors Movement**.

15. It should be noted that not only Israeli sites are targeted by groups associated with the global jihad in the Gaza Strip, but also sites in the Gaza Strip associated with the West. For some time, groups associated with the global jihad have been attacking Internet cafés across the Gaza Strip. Furthermore, during President Bush’s visit in Israel and in the Palestinian Authority (January 9-11, 2008), a group calling itself **“Army of the Believers—the Al-Qaeda Organization in Palestine”** claimed responsibility for two attacks on the American International School in Gaza.¹¹

¹⁰ **Ribat** is Arabic for “borderland”. It is an Islamic term referring to the territory known as Palestine, the location of Temple Mount, Islam’s third holiest site. Since that area is occupied by Israel, it is perceived as an area where the Palestinians are a garrison of sorts whose role will be to take part in the coming jihad for the liberation of the holy sites of Islam in Jerusalem.

¹¹ See our Information Bulletin: [“The “Army of the Believers—the Al-Qaeda Organization in Palestine” has claimed responsibility for two attacks on the American International School in Gaza during President Bush’s visit to the Middle East. Other sites in the Gaza Strip associated with the US and Western culture have had to face similar problems”](#) (January 14).