

Collectivindualism and Shadow Players: Palestinian Youth, Social Media, and Hamas’s Communications Strategies

HAREL CHOREV HALEWA
Tel Aviv University, Israel

This article explores the social and political processes that have made Palestinian social media an important arena for Hamas’s communications strategies and mobilization efforts. I argue that this arena derives its power from being a confluence point of two seemingly opposing forces: the quest of Palestinian youth for social and political alternatives to traditional sources of authority, including Hamas, and the strategy of Hamas to adapt to this trend among Palestinian youth by striving discreetly to frame the online discourse to compensate for the movement’s off-line obstacles while advancing its agenda.

Keywords: Palestinian social media, Palestinian youth, Hamas, individualism, collectivism, online strategies

In recent years, social media and information and communications technologies have impacted Palestinian society in diverse ways, affected by both global and domestic contexts. One global development is the process of power diffusion, in which old social and political hierarchies are losing their hegemony over various resources to new actors and sources of authority, many of which have emerged online. Particular factors of the Palestinian context are the Israeli occupation and the social, political, and geographical divisions among the West Bank, Gaza Strip, and Palestinian diaspora that result, inter alia, in powerlessness and immobility, which increase the importance of social media as a means of communication and political protest. Social media also provides Palestinians an essential space for discourse and organization due to their political vulnerability, which is caused not only by Israel but also by the authoritative rules of the Palestinian Authority (PA) in the West Bank and Hamas in the Gaza Strip. These factors and others are shaping the various ways in which social media impacts Palestinian society and how groups within it utilize this tool (Aouragh, 2011; Tawil-Souri & Aouragh, 2014).

While the effect of social media on Palestinians has different manifestations, one may argue that the sphere it created has become an important social space for Palestinians and a key arena for their domestic and foreign political struggles. Moreover, the expansion of social networking sites (SNS) contributes to a significant shift in power relations between Palestinian political organizations and society, creating more room for personal expression and action. An example of this may be found in the hundreds of “lone-wolf” individuals who have carried out attacks against Israelis since 2015, most of whom were not politically affiliated (Meir Amit Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center, 2016). This phenomenon

Harel Chorev Halewa: harel.chorev@gmail.com

Date submitted: 2018–06–19

Copyright © 2020 (Harel Chorev Halewa). Licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution Non-commercial No Derivatives (by-nc-nd). Available at <http://ijoc.org>.

raises questions about the reasons for these changing power relations as well as the ability of institutionalized political organizations to adapt to this change.

This article explores the changes in identity, perceptions, and social practices among Palestinians, particularly youth, that have made social networking sites an important arena for Hamas's communications strategies and mobilization efforts. The study suggests that Palestinian social media is a key sphere for public dialogue and activism, which attracts Hamas's discreet efforts to shape the online discourse to advance its agenda. These efforts reflect Hamas's adaptation to broad social and political changes as well as its utilization of SNS and information and communications technologies to compensate for difficulties the movement faces in the physical world.

The power of the Palestinian social media arena largely derives from the encounter between two processes. Pushing up from the bottom are young Palestinians who find in online communities a sphere that allows strong individual expression on a wide range of issues. However, in addition to offering their members a platform for personal action, online communities provide a solid sense of collectiveness as an alternative to the traditional collective sources of authority such as political organizations and even the family. This seemingly contradictory logic is, in fact, reconcilable (as described later) and represents a fusion of twin elements. I use the term "collectivindualism" to describe this new hybrid.

Concurrently, Hamas is leading top-down strategies that enhance social media's role as a principal arena for political mobilization. The movement does this both online and by incorporating online elements in off-line activities. With Israel and the Palestinian Authority systematically dismantling its infrastructure in the West Bank, Hamas cultivates cyberspace as an alternative sphere for political mobilization to offset its real-life weaknesses. This effort not only strengthens Palestinian social media but also, ironically, allows Hamas to quietly influence online discourse by exploiting young Palestinians' resentment of the establishment and their belief that cyberspace is free of the hegemony of political organizations.

This encounter between young people grouping together informally in online communities and Hamas's discreet attempts to influence their discourse and activities falls between two models of mobilization for collective action. One is the traditional collective action model, which is based on strong face-to-face familial, social, and organizational ties cultivated over a long period. This method employs direct recruitment, socialization, and training and dedicates resources to cultivating individual identity and loyalty to a group brand, as it were. These ties are organized in frameworks that tend to be formal and hierarchical (McAdam, McCarthy, Zald, & Mayer, 1996; Tilly, 2017; Tilly & Wood, 2015).

The second model emerged recently on the heels of social networking sites and information and communications technologies, which have become the agents of a new kind of collective action (Castells, 2011; Lim, 2013; Rheingold, 2007; Tilly & Wood, 2015; Vromen, Xenos, & Loader, 2015). According to this model, dubbed by Bennett and Segerberg (2012) as "connective action," technology has enabled people to seek and find content and causes of interest and to act on these interests as individuals rather than be mobilized from above through socialization, establishment agents, and other traditional actors of the collective action model. Not every personal cause succeeds in spurring connective action. However, certain ideas do become popular agendas thanks to social media, which provides a platform for recruiting users

from widely varying social and political backgrounds (Chorev, 2012) as well as dissemination on an unprecedented scale that obviates traditional organizations (Earl & Kimport, 2011).

Between the collective and connective action models lies a hybrid practice that is well suited to the Palestinian case. This practice combines actors from traditional organizations, who partly abandon political brands and the established recruitment and training means of the collective action model. These actors adopt connective mobilization methods that are based on intensive use of SNS and information and communications technologies, which allow forming non-hierarchical frameworks while employing soft power tactics of personal persuasion (Bimber, Flanagan, & Stohl, 2005). Thus, action frameworks based on relatively loose ties are created, replacing the tight and hierarchal ties that form the basis of the traditional collective action model. The hybrid practice reflects the distress of many organizations such as Hamas, which see declining membership and therefore turn to means of soft power alongside traditional means of mobilization. The hybrid practice offers these organizations the advantage of not having to forgo their agendas while providing means of advancing these with more contemporary and effective methods (Bennett & Segerberg, 2012).

The hybrid practice corresponds with the global process of power diffusion, in which social media helps remove obstacles barring access to the political arena (Nye, 2011, pp. xv–xviii). This process is not confined to state players but is also present in the erosion of other traditional hierarchies, including nonstate actors, family authorities, and local clerics, who have lost control of the flow of information (Campbell, 2010) to emerging online sources of authority (Barker, 2005; Braman, 2009; Spigelman, 2000). In this context, Hamas is neither a classic state power nor a classic nonstate power, but it is a key player in the traditional political hierarchies. Hamas is not the sovereign in the West Bank, but it is the ruler of the Gaza Strip, where it controls state-like resources (Berti, 2015; Bhasin & Hallward, 2013). For Palestinians, these elements mark Hamas as one of the two governmental alternatives, alongside the Palestinian Authority (Milton-Edwards, 2007). In other words, Hamas is an elite actor susceptible to the same power diffusion challenges.

This leads to me to suggest that Hamas's sophistication in the social networking arena demonstrates that power diffusion can be a bilateral process, as the hybrid practice offers. Traditional hierarchies can adapt to the power diffusion and offset it with a response that leverages new conditions and technologies.

This study draws on a wealth of primary sources obtained from daily monitoring of online Palestinian discourse and dynamics in 2015–2018, including approximately 100 social media pages from a wide range of online communities. The study's qualitative approach is anchored in modern Middle Eastern history, combined with ideas and digital tools from the field of network analysis (Estrada, Knight, & Knight, 2015). The first section explores the social and political changes among Palestinian youth and their search for online alternatives to traditional collectives and sources of authority. The second section examines the dynamic of the increasing centralization of the Palestinian SNS-based information sphere as well as the preference of young Palestinians for ostensibly nonestablishment sources of information. The third section analyzes Hamas's online strategies, which reflect its efforts to adapt to these current trends and use them to its advantage.

Bottom-Up: Antiestablishment, Identity, and the Emergence of Online Communities

As elsewhere, Palestinian SNS expanded at the expense of traditional media, which had played a role in previous conflicts with Israel as an effective means of disseminating political messages (Wolfsfeld, 2001). In 2016, there were approximately 3 million Internet users in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, representing 64% of the 4.7 million population. Half—about 1.5 million—of these Internet users used Facebook (Internet World Stats, 2017). Over half (56%) of these Facebook members—840,000 people—were between the ages of 13 and 24 (Taqrīr wa Sa'īl, 2016). In 2015, the 15–29 age group totaled 1.23 million ("Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics," 2016), suggesting that a majority of young people in the West Bank use Facebook. Smartphones are the primary Internet device, used by 90% of the West Bank Facebook members (Taqrīr wa Sa'īl, 2017).

For Palestinian youth, social media forms an alternative space that meets three main needs: It is a realm supposedly separate from established organizations; it provides a platform for alternative collectives attracting the increasingly individualized young generation, and it is a sphere that offers a social and national cohesion that is undisrupted by the real-life restrictions.

Nonaffiliation

SNS offer an alternative political discourse to the physical realm, where the established political system engenders deep frustration. Many young Palestinians perceive the Palestinian Authority as corrupt and inefficient. Most Palestinians no longer believe that a PA-supported two-state solution is feasible (Fatafta, 2018; Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research, 2015). In the last decade, however, Hamas's image has also diminished as a result of its violent takeover of the Gaza Strip as well as the failure of its armed "resistance" (*al-muqāwama*) agenda to provide a solution. The chronic deprivation of the Gaza Strip caused by the blockade Israel imposed in 2007 as well as severe economic sanctions imposed by the Palestinian Authority and Egypt have also taken a toll (Groisman, 2016; "Solution to the Gaza Electricity Crisis," 2017). This inability to advance a consensual vision sends young Palestinians in search of an alternative and has deepened their alienation from political organizations, giving rise to antiestablishment sentiment. According to one Palestinian research group, only 23% of the 269 Palestinians killed in various confrontations with Israeli civilians or security forces between October 2015 and December 2016 identified with a political organization, and over 60% were politically unaffiliated (Markaz al-Quds, 2016); the same trend was evident throughout 2017 (Meir Amit Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center, 2018). This establishment fatigue is also seen in Israeli prisons, where approximately 900 of the 6,500 Palestinian security prisoners refrain from affiliation with any political organization (Harel & Kubowitz, 2016). More than half of these 900 nonaffiliated prisoners were between 15 and 25 years old, and about 500 were arrested between October 2015 and June 2016, indicating this trend is quite new (Tzur, 2016).

Collective individualism

Many Palestinians interpret the antiestablishment attitude of youth as the extreme individualism of the "self-absorbed generation" (*al-jīl al-maṣlahjī*), which stands in contrast to the older generations' commitment to the community (Chorev, 2014). Sociologist Jamil Hilal (2014) confirms a growing trend

of individualism, particularly in the West Bank. He attributes this to the neoliberal economic structure that the PA adopted since 2005, which encourages personal interests. Hilal also suggests that the overall transition from a semiegalitarian underground organizational culture to a protostate hierarchy reduced collective commitment.

Undoubtedly, this is still a new and undertheorized issue, and any observations are preliminary and should be made with caution. It appears that relations between individualism and collectivism among young Palestinians are more complex and interwoven than they seem at first, as is often true for young adults globally (Lukes, 1973; Triandis, 2018). An example that challenges the notion of extreme individualization may be found in the wave of lone-wolf attacks that proliferated in late 2015 (Chorev, 2017). On one hand, the attacks seem to be a clear manifestation of individualism, as most assailants acted independently of the authority of family or political organizations. Many of them also acted on personal grievances or distress, such as vengeance for a lost loved one (Harel & Kubowitz, 2016). On the other hand, one may view their actions as the ultimate sacrifice on behalf of the collective, whether national, religious, or even familial.

These contradictory facets seem to reflect the opposing but reconcilable worlds that young Palestinians occupy simultaneously, expressing a hybrid perspective that I call collectivindualism. Despite the increasing nonaffiliation with political organizations and deepening individualism, young Palestinians do not entirely forgo belonging to a collective or collective commitment. The confrontation with Israel, for example, is central to the daily experience of many youths and clearly occupies their online discourse. At the same time, they seek alternatives to traditional social and political networks while demanding the freedom to choose collectives or communities that fit their personal standpoint. As detailed later in this article, many Palestinians find answers to this quest in online communities that allow mobility between available options. The local context is key to understanding the value of this mobility for Palestinian youth, whose real life is affected by the occupation and the fragmentation of Palestinian society, which render them politically vulnerable and immobile.

In other words, the mind-set of collectivindualism must be seen as a reaction to both the internal and external structural powers shaping young Palestinians' lives. The alternatives they find in online communities, many of which progress from discourse to action, largely support the conclusion that they tend to engage within the model of connective action based on shared ideas rather than the collective action of traditional organizations.

The collectivindualistic attitude was poignantly expressed in a Facebook post titled "Ten Commandments for Every Shahid" published by Bahaa 'Allyan in December 2014 and formulated as a will ('Allyan, 2014). A year later, 'Allyan, 23, was shot dead after he and another assailant killed four passengers on a Jerusalem bus. Four of 'Allyan's "commandments" cautioned political organizations against appropriating his death: "My death is on behalf of the homeland, not for your sake," he wrote. His resentment of the establishment was explicit: "Tell the PA that calm is in the hands of the people." A particularly important section demanded: "Do not sow hatred in my son's heart. If he were to discover his homeland and want to die for it—so be it, but not to avenge my death" ('Allyan, 2014). In this statement, 'Allyan asks that his son's individualism be respected. Moreover, he highlights the national collective but exempts his son from subordination to what is perhaps the strongest collective of all—the family, as

represented by 'Allyan himself. The viral spread of the post, which was liked by more than 39,000 users (Al-Quds City, n.d) suggests that 'Allyan's point of view is very popular among his generation. The case also marked another new phenomenon: the blurring of boundaries between the online and off-line worlds. 'Allyan became known as "the educated martyr" (*al-shahīd al-muthaqaf*) and inspired other assailants and various acts such as "reading-chains" ("The Martyr Bahaa 'Allyan," 2016).

The processes affecting young Palestinians are related to their particular circumstances, as discussed above, but also to wider global trends. A survey throughout the Middle East found this generation characterized by despair, alienation from the establishment, and individualistic aspirations (Burson-Marsteller, 2016). Such frustrations existed also prior to the Arab Spring and often reflected unemployment and related problems. Disillusionment with the Arab Spring exacerbated this despair (Hoffman & Jamal, 2012). The World Health Organization found similar trends among global youth. The members of Generation Z, mostly born between 1995 and 2009, express worries about economic insecurity and show political apathy and alienation toward the "establishment" of political, professional, and academic bodies as well as traditional media (Higgins, 2016). As in the Middle East, world youth appear demoralized about their future prospects (World Health Organization, 2016).

Both internationally and in Palestine, Generation Z is often associated with individualization (World Health Organization, 2016). However, young people have founded numerous protest movements in recent years in the Middle East and elsewhere, such as Youth Without a Future in Spain and Occupy Wall Street in the United States, indicating that they do, in fact, desire collective responsibility. The finding that Generation Z clamors for social ties, whether virtual or conventional (Hertz, 2016), is an additional expression of the collectivindualistic approach. Studies attribute young people's trust in virtual ties and information to their high digital literacy, which makes them feel comfortable online (Gasser & Palfrey, 2008; Prensky, 2001; Thomas, 2011). However, this same comfort often makes them oblivious to possible online manipulation. Boyd argues that young people trust virtual information sources that appear to be automated, such as Google's search engine, and prefer these over traditional information outlets, which are controlled by humans and therefore susceptible to bias (boyd, 2014, pp. 18–24, 183–192). Network theory suggests that the degree of trust in a given network increases with the number of iterations (Axelrod, 1984), which gives social networking sites a clear advantage.

Indeed, numbers suggest that most Palestinians find their online connections and information trustworthy. In 2015, 96% of Palestinian SNS members used social media primarily as a source of news (Taqrīr wa Sā'il, 2016)—a high figure relative to the United States, where 62% of social media users use it primarily for news (Gottfried & Shearer, 2016), and to Israel, where only 17% of Israelis use social media for news (Mohot Institute, 2016). Almost all (94%) of Palestinian users said social networks also provide the means of communicating with friends (Taqrīr wa Sā'il, 2016). These findings suggest that the main uses of SNS for Palestinians—news and social ties—are uses that are also relevant to political mobilization.

Online Communities and Subcultures

The impact of local and global circumstances on Palestinian society, the quest of young Palestinians for social and political alternatives, their collectivindualism and trust in virtual connections—all converge to

form the foundation for hundreds of online communities. These communities carry the benefit of bridging Israeli restrictions and the geographical and political divisions among Palestinian locations; in addition, they allow crossing the gender and social boundaries that exist in Palestinian society and the wider Middle East. Although the social networking sphere often reflects local aspects, it does provide an open space that emphasizes Palestinian national identity.

Online communities can bring together groups of friends, and they can provide platforms for civic involvement that offer alternatives to traditional social and political systems. Mobilizing for Palestine, for example, is an open community with approximately 16,700 members, primarily from the West Bank. Defined as a group for youth without party affiliation, it focuses on the human and national rights of Palestinians (Mutaharikīn lia'jal Filasṭīn, n.d.). The community Demand the Martyrs' Corpses requests that Israel return the bodies of assailants. Since most assailants were not politically affiliated, their families rely on public pressure to retrieve the withheld bodies, making this community a good example of an alternative to traditional systems (Ista'āda Jathāmīn al-Shuahadā', n.d.). Another group, Verification, is dedicated to confirming the reliability of news items. Its very existence attests to the mistrust of many Palestinians in news channels (Taḥaqquq, n.d.). Dozens of online communities revolve around local issues and identity, such as Longing for Nablus, which has more than 10,000 members ('Ushāq Nāblus, n.d.), and the Social Site of the Fawwār Refugee Camp (Mawq'a Mukhayyam al-Fawwār al-Ijtima'i, n.d.). Other groups are regional, such as Discussions of the Boys and Girls of Hebron and Ramallah (Niqashat Shabāb wa ṣabāya al-Khalīl wa Rāmallah), while others yet are supraregional and serve as general Palestinian online communities. The two most popular in this category are the Al-Quds News (Al-Quds al-Ikhabariyya, n.d.) and Shihab Agency, which describe themselves as news sites but in fact function as platforms for discussion and information.

Some online communities wield considerable power, as is evident in their ability to provide an effective infrastructure for connective action. Geared toward Palestinian youth, the Facebook community of the Qalandia Refugee Camp cultivates the idea of resistance to Israel and is not identified with any political organization. On November 16, 2015, and July 3, 2016, the community page initiated confrontations with Israeli troops planning to demolish the homes of three Palestinians who killed an Israeli. In a series of posts, organizers deployed the camp's youth to hold specific defense positions and recommended which weapons they should use (see Figure 1). On both nights, as the Israeli army entered the camp, the community operated as a war room and directed fierce clashes that resulted in the death of two Palestinians. These cases provided real-time evidence of the connection between the virtual and physical realms ("Bloody Night in Qalandia," 2015).

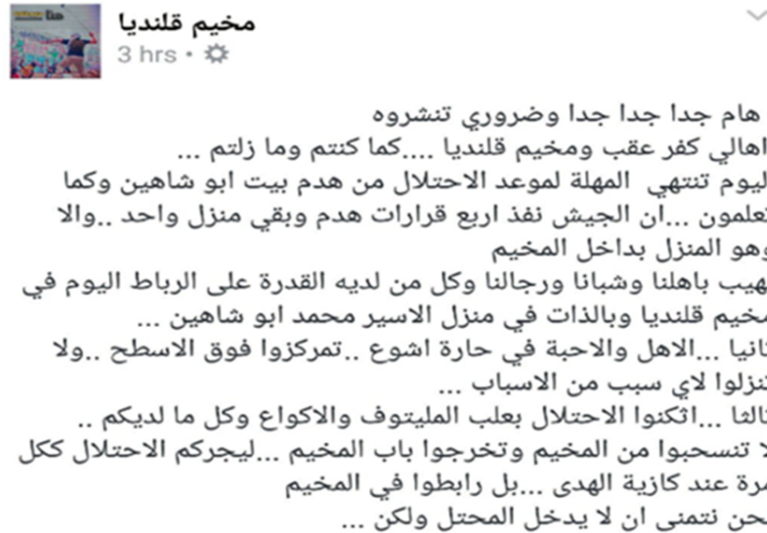


Figure 1. Mukhayyam Qalandiyya Facebook page, November 16, 2015.

A key factor in the appeal of online communities is the freedom to forge ties of genuine choice—a central element of collectivindualistic logic. Social networking sites allow adolescents to manage their impressions and adapt them to the particular context of each online community (Sunden, 2003). Erikson (1958) and Goffman (1967) highlight the importance of community to adolescents' development of self-identity through a process of identifying with the communal narrative and values. Especially relevant to the Palestinian case is Hammack's (2008) observation that members of weakened groups are more motivated to identify with their community's narratives as a defense mechanism against a perceived threat to the group identity, which is key in shaping an individual identity. Indeed, the alternatives online communities offer young Palestinians cannot be understood without the local context, in which they experience powerlessness as a result of Israeli restrictions and the divided and authoritarian Palestinian sphere.

The collective with the most influence on an individual is not necessarily the family but rather a proximate community that one finds relevant (Berndt, 1992). In the Middle East, family is traditionally a strong source of authority. However, given the ongoing individualization processes, one must consider the possibility that new alternative sources of authority, including virtual ones, are tempering familial influence. Based on these conclusions, online communities have inherent advantages as an alternative space. First, they are frequently assembled by young peers, the strongest influence framework for that age cohort (boyd, 2014; Harris, 1998, p. 365). Second, they offer focal points for discourse and connective action that form an attractive alternative to the weakened conventional political frameworks.

Occasionally, these focal points reflect the emergence of influential subcultures from within the online communities. One example is the formation of subcultures that support lone-wolf assailants and come complete with an inner language that reflects perceptions, symbols, and pseudo-ritual codes. These online subcultures fill the assailants' desire for legitimacy for their actions, thus largely replacing traditional sources

of authority, especially political organizations (Chorev, 2017). Mahmud Ibrahim, who was killed on March 13, 2017, after stabbing two police officers in Jerusalem, belonged to such a community. Based on conversations stored on his smartphone, Israeli police arrested 18 Palestinians who belonged to the same WhatsApp group named The Road to Heaven. This online community was mainly used for sharing religious content; however, these 18 members formed a subgroup that encouraged lone-wolf attacks ("Israel Police Force," March 18, 2017).

Centralization and Preference for Nonestablishment Information Sources

The advent of satellite television in the 1990s broke the monopolistic control that authorities in the Middle East held over information. Rather than obviate information brokers entirely, however, this development gave rise to new ones in the form of the pan-Arab satellite channels. The Internet dealt a further blow to the traditional hierarchies' control over vertical information channels. This regional manifestation of the global power diffusion has affected not only Arab regimes but also lower-level information brokers. These include local imams, who lost their authority to online clerics (Barker, 2005; Braman, 2009; Spigelman, 2000), and family elders, whose long-standing assets of knowledge and experience have been circumvented by the all-knowing "Sheikh Google."

With the expansion of social media, several theorists predicted it would create a decentralized information sphere with access to diverse narratives (Diamond & Plattner, 2012; Howard et al., 2011; Howard & Hussain, 2013; Shirky, 2011). However, similar to the global online sphere, Palestinian cyberspace underwent a process in which a small number of major hubs (or "gatekeepers") in the form of popular Facebook pages with an extremely high following gained control over large swaths of the information arena. Major hubs grow because of the interest they generate and the dynamic of their growth. Once a hub gains momentum, it grows at a disproportionate rate compared with the regular nodes (a dynamic known as the power law) as more and more links join the well-connected hub (Buchanan, 2002). Their size allows major hubs to control the flow of information and determine what content is spread and which is rejected (Barabási, 2002; Barabási & Albert, 1999). These traits allow major hubs to shape the media agenda—a clear manifestation of political power (Barzilai-Nahon, 2008).

A Palestinian research group identified four hubs currently dominating the Palestinian SNS-based information sphere, and they are all Facebook pages. Ranked by popularity in 2016, these are: Shihāb, with 1.32 million Palestinian followers; Al-Quds al-Ikhbariyya, with 1.29 million; the Jerusalem newspaper *Al-Quds*, with 1.08 million; and Filastīn TV, with 1.01 million (Taqrīr wa Sā'il, 2016, 2017). Trailing behind are many smaller pages with several hundred thousand Palestinian followers each. Surprisingly, some of these smaller pages, unlike the major hubs of Shihāb and Al-Quds al-Ikhbariyya, belong to professional, internationally recognized news agencies such as Ma'an, with 889,000 Palestinian followers—approximately 400,000 less than the two major hubs. In an arena with just 1.5 million Facebook users, this is a significant difference (Taqrīr wa Sā'il, 2016, p. 28).

The finding that Palestinians use SNS primarily for news may not be particularly important if users turned to professional outlets. However, the above ranking reflects a hierarchy of trust that clearly favors sources that describe themselves as independent (see the next section). As noted, most (56%) Palestinian

Facebook users are under 25. Coupled with the antiestablishment sentiment currently prevalent among youth, we can conclude that this preference is typical of young people. We can further conclude that, although the traditional media moderators' power has eroded, new ones have replaced them. Therefore, the question of who controls these new major hubs is extremely important.

Top-Down: Hamas's Online Strategies

Hundreds of Palestinian SNS platforms that describe themselves as politically independent are in fact managed by interested parties. A network analysis and systematic monitoring of the discourse on such sites finds Hamas the foremost employer of such action, which reflects awareness of changes in identity and political affiliation among young Palestinians. Recognizing the preference for independent news sources, Hamas has discreetly established several online platforms, taking care to cultivate a supposedly independent appearance. The analysis offered here suggests that this strategy reflects the hybrid practice in which traditional organizational actors utilize connective mobilization practices. Thus, Hamas is able to frame the agenda throughout Palestinian cyberspace and promote its goals online while circumventing its off-line weaknesses.

Hamas's Continued Ambitions to Control the Message

A digital network analysis of Hamas's formal websites in the past decade shows that the movement recognized the potential of online outreach even prior to the expansion of social media. Apparently emulating Hezbollah's online strategy, Hamas created—particularly after wresting control of the Gaza Strip in 2007—a system of websites that display as a distinctive cluster within the overall Palestinian cyberspace: "a state within a state" (Ben-David, 2012; Weimann, 2006; Zanini, 1999). On one hand, Hamas websites showed innovation and rich content and were far more popular than the brochure-like Palestinian Authority websites. However, while PA websites offered many links to outside websites, Hamas retained control over the information on its platforms by tightly monitoring content and avoiding hyperlinks to external sites. Most content published mirrored other Hamas websites and included virtually no information from other sources. The combination of these characteristics and the popularity of its websites gave Hamas an advantage over the Palestinian Authority in framing the agenda in the burgeoning Palestinian cyberspace (Ben-David, 2012, pp. 72–101).

From "a State Within a State" to the Leading Actor in Palestinian Cyberspace

The expansion of social media offered Hamas the opportunity to emerge from the shadows of its virtual "state within a state" and become the leading voice in Palestinian cyberspace. As noted, youth generally perceive the two major hubs Shihāb and Al-Quds al-Ikhbariyya as reliable, independent sources of information (S. Abulaban, personal communication, March 8, 2016). It should be noted, however, that perception regarding Shihāb appears to be changing since June 2017, when PA president Mahmoud Abbas ordered blocking West Bank access to the agency's website, accusing it of affiliation with Hamas ("This Is How Ramallah Explained," 2017). Indeed, careful monitoring reveals that both pages in fact promote Hamas. The Shihāb domain name is registered in Gaza, although it does not declare connections to Hamas (Shihāb, n.d.). Before Abbas's order, only scant references to Shihāb in the Arab press identify it as "close to Hamas."

However, an item from 2012 in the Hamas magazine *Al-Risālah* disclosed the tight connection and stated that Shihāb reports directly to the Al-Aqsa Media Network of Hamas (*Al-Risālah*, 2012). Other than this incidental report, it is difficult to find any other Hamas source that acknowledges its ties to Shihāb.

A semiotic and textual analysis of content on Shihāb reveals that it uses the same terminology as platforms openly identified with Hamas, such as Palestine.online or Moqawamah.press. For example, official Hamas outlets call the wave of lone-wolf attacks in 2015–2016 “*Intifaḍat al-Quds*.” Israeli cities are defined as “occupied” (*Ḥaifa al-muḥatīla*) or as a “settlement” (*mustawṭanat Tal Abib*), and all Israelis are referred to as “settlers” (*muṣṭawṭinīn*). This terminology is part of the framing effort designed to inculcate the delegitimization of Israel and is consistent with Hamas’s rhetoric. By contrast, the Fatah-dominated PA’s channels referred to the same wave of attacks as an “uprising” (*habbah*) rather than an *intifāḍa*, which has come to be recognized as a Hamas term and as implicit encouragement for undermining the Palestinian Authority by destabilizing the West Bank. Al-Quds al-Ikhbariyya shows similar characteristics. According to the Whois website, it is registered in Gaza, where Hamas does not allow free uncensored content, and employs the same terminology prevalent on Shihāb. Several Fatah officials contend that Hamas controls both pages and, along with *Al-Risāla*, uses them to foment “civil war” (“Sites of Hamas and Dahlan,” 2016).

A network analysis of the Netvizz and Gephi applications of Shihāb and Al-Quds al-Ikhbariyya provides additional evidence. The analysis shows that both sites avoid hyperlinks to external sources that offer non-Hamas perspectives. As noted, this centralized control was typical to Hamas’s online strategy also prior to the expansion of social media. Additionally, both pages regularly promote campaigns initiated by Hamas (see below). Hamas appears to make conscious compromises in order to obscure its involvement. The two hubs include a noticeable amount of light, popular, and “spontaneous” content. This suggests a calculated willingness to concede social and religious principles in order to prioritize the movement’s political struggle against the PA and Israel. In 2015, Al-Quds al-Ikhbariyya established Sharik Quds (n.d.), a subsidiary page featuring light content for teenagers, indicating the desire to reach a broader population. It shortly became one of the 10 most popular Palestinian pages on Facebook, with a global following of more than 2.6 million (the number of Palestinians among these is unknown).

In January 2017, there were more than 100 public Facebook pages as well Twitter, Instagram, and Snapchat accounts openly or implicitly affiliated with Hamas (“After ‘Be Like Ayash,’” 2017). The low-profile strategy is evident in other ways Hamas uses the Internet, such as the Al-Quds application, which is not related to the conservative Jerusalem newspaper by the same name, or Al-Quds al-Ikhbariyya. The application can be dormant for months. However, when its Hamas administrators sense potential escalation, it comes to life and sends subscribers push notifications, such as that sent on November 5, 2014: “Demonstrators in Abu Dis throw Molotov cocktails at the occupiers” (see Figure 2). The messages are phrased as if reporting events, but subscribers are actually being informed of the location of demonstrations and instructed what to bring if they want to participate. The application does not advertise its link to Hamas, but the inside menus reveal it to be an extension of Hamas’s Al-Quds TV.



יום ד' נוב 05, 2014-18:18

عاجل: مراسل القدس: متظاهرون في أبو
ديس يلقون الزجاجات الحارقة على قوات
الاحتلال

Figure 2. Al-Quds application, November 5, 2014: "Demonstrators in Abu Dis throw Molotov cocktails at the occupiers."

On November 16, 2014, a Palestinian bus driver named Hassan Ramūnī was found hanged on the grounds of an Israeli bus company in Jerusalem. The Israeli coroner ruled his death a suicide, but rumors spread that the man had been murdered by "settlers" (Baḥibak yā Nāblus, 2014). The rumor appears to have been published first on the Hamas application Al-Quds TV, and it flourished in an already loaded atmosphere of deep mistrust between Israelis and Palestinians. Four months earlier, a Palestinian teenager from Jerusalem was brutally murdered by Jews to avenge the murder of three Israeli teenagers. Palestinian news agencies, including those affiliated with the PA, adopted Hamas's charge that Ramūnī had been murdered (Al-Risāla, 2014), most without mentioning at this critical moment the Israeli claim that he had committed suicide (Al-Quds, 2014b; Efraim, 2014).

This incident offers evidence of Hamas's online strategy for political mobilization in general and of the relations between online and off-line actions in particular. Immediately after the rumor began to spread, riots erupted in Jerusalem's Arab neighborhoods. By morning, 30 Arab bus drivers had resigned from the Israeli bus company and another 120 went on strike, disrupting public transportation (Dvir, 2014). Thirty-six hours after Ramūnī's death, the heated atmosphere peaked grimly when two Palestinians murdered four Israelis in a Jerusalem synagogue. Hamas and Islamic Jihad welcomed the attack as a "natural response" to the "murder" of Ramūnī and called for additional revenge (Al-Quds, 2014a; "Tūtar shadīd fi al-Quds," 2014).

Contrary to the mistaken belief that social media is egalitarian and liberated from hegemony (Nahon, 2016, pp. 39–55), the incident underscores Israel's difficulty to communicate its version to the Palestinian information sphere. The rumor thrived on a fertile ground of preexisting beliefs, which made it easier to embrace disinformation. Even today, the suicide narrative is virtually absent from Palestinian discourse. In a meeting with the author 18 months after Ramūnī's death, students at Al-Quds University

recalled the incident well but were surprised to hear the Israeli ruling of suicide, which they heard for the first time (S. Abulaban, personal communication, March 8, 2016).

However, Israel was unable to communicate its version not only due to underlying mistrust but also because of the structure of the Palestinian information arena. Both online and traditional hubs were key in the viral dissemination of this rumor, in a process that typically intensified homophilic tendencies (Doerr, Fouz, & Friedrich, 2012; Nekovee, Moreno, Bianconi, & Marsili, 2007) and seclusion by blocking the external Israeli narrative. The information spheres of many societies—often religious ones—are sheltered from external narratives. Studies note that, although new technologies threaten some communities' way of life, they do not shun these but rather customize them to their needs, including controllable seclusion (Barzilai-Nahon & Barzilai, 2005; Bruce, 1998). By the same token, perceived Israeli threats to their national and religious identity lead to closing the Palestinian information sphere, too.

Online Campaigns

Many of the symbols and viral hashtags from the 2015–2016 wave of lone-wolf attacks originated in the Hamas-controlled Gaza Strip, even though most assailants hailed from the West Bank and a minority from Israel. The most popular icon—a young person wearing a helmet shaped like the Dome of the Rock, pulling a slingshot, with the hashtag #Intifāḍat Al-Quds—was created by a Facebook member known as “Khaleel.” When violence began in October 2015, “Khaleel” posted the icon in a forum hosted by Shabakat Filasṭīn l'ḥuwār, a page openly affiliated with Hamas (Paldf, n.d.). He added that it was his own illustration and titled it “The Symbol of Intifāḍat Al-Quds” (Paldf Forum, 2015). Hamas swiftly adopted the symbol and used it on official posters; before long, the illustration became a widely recognized element of the design Hamas employed to brand the scattered attacks as an “intifada” (Wikālāt ṣafah, 2016).

This branding was also achieved by online and off-line campaigns in which Hamas promoted hashtags related to the organization's agenda against the Palestinian Authority and Israel. In 2016, Hamas launched the #Shukrān ḥamās (Thank you Hamas) campaign to tout its accomplishments in the Gaza Strip, the real message being that they surpass those of the PA. In response, Fatah issued a video showing the hardships of Gaza and mocking this so-called achievement of Hamas. Against Israel, Hamas promoted the hashtag #Intifāḍat Al-Quds, which was used mostly to manage the mobilizing discourse supporting lone-wolf attacks. In October 2015, the Al-Rāy News Agency, which is directly affiliated with Hamas's public relations division in Gaza, reported that the division “calls for participation in the Twitter campaign on behalf of Jerusalem, using the hashtag #Intifāḍat Al-Quds beginning at 7 p.m.” (“Al-I'lām taṭlaq ḥamala,” 2015). Other reports included pictures of senior Hamas officials Ismail Raḍwān and Ahmad Baḥar launching the campaign, holding a sign showing the hashtag (“Gaza: The Launch,” 2015).

One hundred fifty days into the violent outbreak, Hamas launched the hashtag #intifāḍa150 and invited the public to participate in the campaign. The movement's public relations division (“Hamas Eastern Gaza,” 2016), opened a situation room to coordinate the tweets calling for “continuing the intifada and supporting it against Israel's crimes” (Assabeel, 2016). Various Hamas platforms promoted the campaign, including Al-Quds al-Ikhbariyya and Shihāb, which urged the public to spread the hashtag. The same hubs also promoted additional Hamas campaigns, such as the #`Amaliyat Ramaḍān hashtag saluting an attack by

two gunmen in Tel Aviv on June 8, 2016 (Shihāb, 2016a), and the first anniversary of the “Al-Quds Intifada” (Shihāb, 2016b) in October 2016.

In 2016, Hamas began printing hashtags and other online features on posters of martyrs. This cross-platform move blurs the borders between the online and off-line realms. After Muşbaḥ Abu şbaiḥ killed a woman and a police officer in Jerusalem on October 9, 2016, Hamas launched the hashtag #Asād Al-Quds (Lion of Jerusalem). It was printed on a large banner hung on the assailant’s home, along with his picture and a Facebook post he wrote before the attack, instructing his followers to protect the Al-Aqsa Mosque (Berger, 2016).

In January 2017, multiple Hamas platforms, both declared and veiled, simultaneously began spreading the hashtag #kūn mithal ‘Ayāsh (Be like ‘Ayāsh) to honor the anniversary of the death of Yiḥyā ‘Ayāsh, who engineered the bombs that killed more than 100 Israelis and was assassinated by Israel in 1996. The campaign demonstrated Hamas’s use of SNS to promote martyrdom, first online and then in real life. In response, Facebook Inc. closed 120 pages and accounts directly or indirectly associated with Hamas, despite the movement’s protests (“After ‘Be Like Ayash,’” 2017). A year later, Facebook again removed similar pages after a campaign praised Ahmad Jarār, a Hamas activist who was killed by Israel after killing an Israeli (Al-Markaz al-Filasṭīnī lil’īlam, 2018). Facebook did not explain shutting down these particular accounts. However, reports of Israeli and U.S. complaints to the company about pages supporting the killing of Israelis suggest this may have been the case (Greenwald, 2017).

Indeed, Hamas is proactive in shaping the discussion by creating hashtags, symbols, and discourse. When such campaigns succeed, this illustrates the dynamic described by Nahon and Hemsley (2013), who argue that a viral phenomenon requires an encounter between bottom-up forces—in this case, mostly young users—and top-down players expressing the interests of an elite (pp. 94, 139).

Conclusions

The Palestinian social networking arena serves as a collective alter ego of sorts, where online communities form an alternative space and organizational platform for connective actions—as happens in other global societies. These communities help young Palestinians reconcile the seeming contradiction between their individualism and their interest in a collective by choosing communities that fit their personal agendas. Although online, these alternatives to the long-standing social and political frameworks have practical consequences in real life.

Despite the differences between the off-line reality and online alter ego, the latter is a faithful representation of the recent processes Palestinians have experienced, and it reflects reaction to their local context as well as to global trends. Undoubtedly, the particular circumstances fuel the economic hopelessness that plagues Palestinian youth. However, such concerns are shared by their generation worldwide. Alienation from political organizations also reflects particular Palestinian frustrations, but the same mistrust of political and other institutions also prevails globally. The Palestinian preference for nonestablishment media reflects both local processes and global phenomena. Social networking sites and

information and communications technologies play a key role in all these shifts, supporting the argument that Generation Z is distinctly defined by technology.

The changes described above represent bottom-up processes. Invariably, these are amplified when they meet elitist, top-down efforts, even if not consciously. In the Palestinian arena, Hamas utilizes SNS as a strategic means for political mobilization to compensate for its practical off-line difficulties in the West Bank as well as to cope with the global process of power diffusion of traditional hierarchies. With a sophisticated understanding of the complex reality and trends, Hamas systematically constructs and promotes a successful online infrastructure. Carefully obscuring its involvement, Hamas has gained control of the powerful virtual hubs of information. In keeping with the power law dynamic, these hubs grow even stronger and gain more influence over information, discourse, and agenda. Thus, Hamas effectively controls the controllers of information and blurs the boundaries between virtual and physical to target its internal and external enemies.

Hamas's online-related strategies reflect a de facto adoption of the hybrid practice of connective mobilization tools, which allows young Palestinians freedom of independent action while simultaneously allowing Hamas to influence their discourse. From a theoretical perspective, these strategies show that power diffusion is not unilateral and that traditional hierarchies can adapt to this global shift and even leverage it with a sophisticated response to promote their agendas. The specific West Bank circumstances intensify the impact of these efforts. Social networking sites currently serve as the principal moderator of Palestinians' external relationships, especially with Israel. Unlike previous generations, few young Palestinians have any acquaintance with Israelis other than soldiers and settlers.

References

- After "be like Ayash" Facebook launches a campaign to close dozens of pages of Hamas. (2017, January 6). *Duniyā al-Waṭan*. Retrieved from www.alwatanvoice.com/arabic/news/2017/01/06/1006523.htm
- Al-I'lām taṭlaq ḥamala l'ltughīd 'alā hashtāq #intifaḍat_al-Qud [The media has launched a campaign to distribute the hashtag #intifaḍat_al-Quds]. (2015, July 27). *Al-Rāy*. Retrieved from <http://alray.ps/ar/post/141257>
- 'Allyan, B. (2014, December 12). The Ten Commandments for any Shahid [Facebook status update]. Retrieved from www.elnnews.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/448.jpg
- Al-Markaz al-Filaṣṭīnī lil 'ilām [The Palestinian Information Center]. (2018, February 22). *Learn about the most prominent Palestinian pages banned by the Facebook #Fbfightspalestine* [Facebook video file]. Retrieved from <https://www.facebook.com/palinfo/videos/1627955683907167/>
- Al-Quds. (2014a, November 17). Head of the Institute of Forensic Medicine, Dr. Saber al-Aloul, handed over the first report of the "autopsy of the martyr" [Facebook photo update]. Retrieved from

- <https://www.facebook.com/alqudsnewspaper/photos/a.10151745375892984.1073741882.109321962983/10152505340617984/?type=3&theater>
- Al-Quds. (2014b, November 17). Yusef Hassan al-Ramouni, 32, from Jerusalem, was killed after being hanged by settlers [Facebook photo update]. Retrieved from <https://www.facebook.com/alqudsnewspaper/photos/a.10151745375892984.1073741882.109321962983/10152503965452984/?type=1&theater>
- Al-Quds al-Ikharīyya. (n.d.). Timeline [Facebook page]. Retrieved from www.facebook.com/QudsN/?fref=ts
- Al-Risālah*. (2012, December 2). Retrieved from <http://alresalah.ps/ar/index.php?act=post&id=63804>
- Al-Risālah*. (2014, November 17). Retrieved from <http://alresalah.ps/ar/index.php?act=post&id=103555>
- Al-waṣāyā al-ʿAshar liʿay Shahīd [Ten commandments of any martyr]. (n.d.). *Al-Quds City*. Retrieved from <http://alquds-online.org/index.php?s=3&cat=8&id=5774>
- Aouragh, M. (2011). *Palestine online*. London, UK: I. B. Tauris.
- Assabeel. (2016). Retrieved from <http://assabeel.net/فلسطين/انتفاضة-القدس/item/161043-17-150-مليون-متابع-لتغريدات-انتفاضة>
- Axelrod, R. (1984). *The evolution of cooperation*. New York, NY: Basic Books.
- Bahibak yā Nāblus. (2014, November 17). Yusef Hassan al-Ramouni, 32, from Jerusalem, was killed after being hanged by settlers [Facebook photo update]. Retrieved from www.facebook.com/nabluslover/photos/a.140998402625313.26196.140797212645432/811550152236798/?type=1&theater
- Barabási, A. (2002). *Linked: The new science of networks*. Cambridge, MA: Perseus.
- Barabási, A., & Albert, R. (1999). Emergence of scaling in random networks. *Science*, 286(5439), 509–512.
- Barker, E. (2005). Crossing the boundary. In M. Hojsgaard & M. Warburg (Eds.), *Religion and cyberspace* (pp. 67–85). London, UK: Routledge.
- Barzilai-Nahon, K. (2008). Toward a theory of network gatekeeping. *Journal of the Association for Information Science and Technology*, 59(9), 1493–1512.
- Barzilai-Nahon, K., & Barzilai, G. (2005). Cultured technology. *The Information Society*, 21(1), 25–40.
- Ben-David, A. (2012). *Palestinian border-making in digital spaces*. Ramat Gan, Israel: Bar Ilan University.

- Bennett, W. L., & Segerberg, A. (2012). The logic of connective action. *Information, Communication & Society, 15*(5), 739–768.
- Berger, G. [@galberger]. (2016, October 9). On the “wall” of the terrorist’s home in a- Ram, the post which he posted on his wall was hung in large print [Tweet]. Retrieved from <https://twitter.com/galberger/status/785188276969889793>
- Berndt, T. J. (1992). Friendship and friends’ influence in adolescence. *Current Directions in Psychological Science, 1*(5), 156–159.
- Berti, B. (2015). Non-state actors as providers of governance. *Middle East Journal, 69*(1), 9–31.
- Bhasin, T., & Hallward, M. C. (2013). Hamas as a political party. *Terrorism and Political Violence, 25*(1), 75–93.
- Bimber, B., Flanagin, A. J., & Stohl, C. (2005). Reconceptualizing collective action in the contemporary media environment. *Communication Theory, 15*(4), 365–388.
- Bloody night in Qalandia. (2015, November 16). *Al Jazeera*. Retrieved from <https://www.aljazeera.net/news/reportsandinterviews/2015/11/16/ليلة-دامية-في-مخيم-قلنديا/>
- boyd, d. (2014). *It’s complicated*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Braman, S. (2009). *Change of state*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Bruce, L. (1998). *Shattering the myth*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Buchanan, M. (2002). *Nexus*. New York, NY: W. W. Norton.
- Burson-Marsteller. (2016). *Inside the hearts and minds of Arab youth*. Retrieved from www.arabyouthsurvey.com/pdf/whitepaper/en/2016-AYS-White-Paper.pdf
- Campbell, H. (2010). *When religion meets new media*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Castells, M. (2011). *The rise of the network society* (Vol. 12). Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley.
- Chorev, H. (2012). The spring of the networked nations. *Levantine Review, 1*(2), 120–139.
- Chorev, H. (2014, February 10). Intifada, now? *Tel Aviv Notes, 8*(3). Retrieved from <https://dayan.org/content/tel-aviv-notes-intifada-now>
- Chorev, H. (2017). Palestinian social media and lone-wolf attacks. *Terrorism and Political Violence, 1*–23.

- Diamond, L., & Plattner, M. F. (Eds.). (2012). *Liberation technology*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Doerr, B., Fouz, M., & Friedrich, T. (2012). Why rumors spread so quickly in social networks. *Communications of the ACM*, 55(6), 70–75.
- Dvir, N. (2014, November 23). The suicide driver and delays. *Ynet*. Retrieved from <https://www.ynet.co.il/articles/0,7340,L-4595242,00.html>
- Earl, J., & Kimport, K. (2011). *Digitally enabled social change*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Efraim, O. (2014, November 18). Aharonovitch: "The pathologist who determined that the driver committed suicide changed his mind under the pressure of the PA." *Ynet*. Retrieved from <https://www.ynet.co.il/articles/0,7340,L-4593365,00.html>
- Erikson, E. H. (1958). *Young man Luther*. New York, NY: Norton.
- Estrada, E., Knight, P. A., & Knight, P. (2015). *A first course in network theory*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.
- Fatafta, M. (2018, December 18). Neopatrimonialism, corruption, and the Palestinian authority. *Al-Shabaka*. Retrieved from <https://al-shabaka.org/summaries/neopatrimonialism-corruption-and-the-palestinian-authority-pathways-to-real-reform/>
- Gasser, U., & Palfrey, J. (2008). *Born digital*. New York, NY: Basic Books.
- Gaza: The launch of the campaign Twitter #Jerusalem_Uprising. (2015, October 27). *Filastīn al-Yawm*. Retrieved from <https://paltoday.ps/ar/post/252030/غزة-انطلاق-حملة-التغريد-على-هاشتاق>
- Goffman, E. (1967). *Interaction ritual*. New York, NY: Pantheon.
- Gottfried, J., & Shearer, E. (2016, May 26). *News use across social media platforms 2016*. Washington, DC: Pew Research Center. Retrieved from <http://www.journalism.org/2016/05/26/news-use-across-social-media-platforms-2016/>
- Greenwald, G. (2017, December 30). Facebook says it is deleting accounts at the direction of the U.S. and Israeli governments. *The Intercept*. Retrieved from <https://theintercept.com/2017/12/30/facebook-says-it-is-deleting-accounts-at-the-direction-of-the-u-s-and-israeli-governments/>
- Groisman, M. (2016, February 22). Suicide wave hits Gaza strip. *The Jerusalem Post*. Retrieved from <https://www.jpost.com/Arab-Israeli-Conflict/Suicide-wave-hits-Gaza-Strip-in-light-of-citizens-gloomy-day-to-day-life-445704>

- Hamas eastern Gaza launches an electronic campaign. (2016, February 28). *Duniyā al-Waṭan*. Retrieved from <https://www.alwatanvoice.com/arabic/news/2016/02/28/877267.html>
- Hammack, P. L. (2008). Narrative and the cultural psychology of identity. *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, 12(3), 222–247.
- Harel, A., & Kubowitz, Y. (2016, June 9). No longer just “isolated attacks.” *Haaretz*. Retrieved from <http://www.haaretz.co.il/news/politics/.premium-1.2971894>
- Harris, J. R. (1998). *The nature assumption*. New York, NY: Free Press.
- Hertz, N. (2016, March 19). Think millennials have it tough? *The Guardian*. Retrieved from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/mar/19/think-millennials-have-it-tough-for-generation-k-life-is-even-harsher>
- Higgins, K. (2016, November 28). Post-truth: A guide for the perplexed. *Nature*, 540(7631), 9. Retrieved from https://www.nature.com/news/post-truth-a-guide-for-the-perplexed-1.21054?WT.ec_id=NATURE-20161201&spMailingID=52887839&spUserID=MTU5ODk5NjE2Mjk0S0&spJobID=1048432263&spReportId=MTA0ODQzMjI2MwS2
- Hilal, J. (2014, May 19). What’s stopping the 3rd Intifada? *Al-Shabaka*, pp. 1A–6A.
- Hoffman, M., & Jamal, A. (2012). The youth and the Arab Spring. *Middle East Law and Governance*, 4(1), 168–188.
- Howard, P. N., Duffy, A., Freelon, D., Hussain, M., Mari, W., & Mazaid, M. (2011). *Opening closed regimes: What was the role of social media during the Arab Spring?* (Working Paper 2011.1). Project on Information Technology and Political Islam, University of Washington.
- Howard, P. N., & Hussain, M. M. (2013). *Democracy’s fourth wave?* Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press on Demand.
- Internet World Stats. (2017). *Usage and population statistics: Middle East*. Retrieved from <http://www.internetworldstats.com/middle.htm#ps>
- Israel police force spokesman’s Jerusalem unit. (March 18, 2017). *Israeli police arrested 18 Palestinians who belonged to the WhatsApp group named “The Road to Heaven”*. Retrieved from www.facebook.com/officerswarroom/posts/689000424604978/
- Ista’āda Jathāmīn al-Shuahadā’ [Demand the martyrs’ corpses]. (n.d.). Timeline [Facebook page]. Retrieved from www.facebook.com/groups/436498876544695/
- Lim, M. (2013). Framing Bouazizi. *Journalism*, 14(7), 921–941.

Lukes, S. (1973). *Individualism*. Oxford, UK: Blackwell.

Markaz al-Quds. (2016, December 17). Intifaḍat al-quds tusajil al-shahīd al-269 [The al-quds intifada reached to its 269 martyr] [Facebook status update]. Retrieved from <https://www.facebook.com/alqudscenterpal/photos/a.402301626623216.1073741828.191611517692229/602189769967733/?type=3&theater>

The martyr Bahaa 'Allyan. (2016, August 6). *Al Jazeera*. Retrieved from <https://www.aljazeera.net/news/alquds/2016/8/6/الشهيد-بهاء-عليان-الكشاف-المثقف-صاحب-الوصايا-العشر>

Mawq'a Mukhayyam al-Fawwār al-Ijtima'ī [Social site of the Fawwār refugee camp]. (n.d.). Timeline [Facebook page]. Retrieved from www.facebook.com/groups/1504287576566155/

McAdam, D., McCarthy, J. D., Zald, M. N., & Mayer, N. Z. (Eds.). (1996). *Comparative perspectives on social movements*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Meir Amit Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center. (2016, March 22). *The social networks as a source of inspiration and imitation for terrorist attacks*. Retrieved from <https://www.terrorism-info.org.il/en/20978/>

Meir Amit Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center. (2018, March 18). *Popular terrorism in Judea, Samaria and Jerusalem during the first two and half months of 2018 continues to have a high degree of lethality, continuing the trend of 2017*. Retrieved from <https://www.terrorism-info.org.il/en/popular-terrorism-judea-samaria-jerusalem-first-two-half-months-2018-continues-high-degree-lethality-continuing-trend-2017>

Milton-Edwards, B. (2007). Hamas: victory with ballots and bullets. *Global Change, Peace & Security*, 19(3), 301–316.

Mohot Institute. (2016, March 13). *A survey on digital media*. Tel Aviv, Israel: Author.

Mutaḥarikīn lia'jal Filasṭīn [Mobilizing for Palestine]. (n.d.). Timeline [Facebook page]. Retrieved from www.facebook.com/mit7arken/

Nahon, K. (2016). Where there is social media there is politics. In A. Bruns, G. Enli, E. Skogerbo, A. O. Larsson, & C. Christensen (Eds.), *Routledge companion to social media and politics* (pp. 39–55). New York, NY: Routledge.

Nahon, K., & Hemsley, J. (2013). *Going viral*. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press.

Nekovee, M., Moreno, Y., Bianconi, G., & Marsili, M. (2007). Theory of rumour spreading in complex social networks. *Physica A*, 374(1), 457–470.

- Nye, J. S. (2011). *The future of power*. New York, NY: Public Affairs.
- Paldf. (n.d.). Timeline [Facebook page]. Retrieved from www.facebook.com/paldf.pal
- Paldf Forum. (2015, October 13). *Re: The symbol of Intifāḍat Al-Quds* [Blog message]. Retrieved from www.paldf.net/forum/showthread.php?t=1179827
- Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research. (2015, October 6). *Survey Research Unit*. Ramallah, Palestine: Author. Retrieved from <http://www.pcpsr.org/sites/default/files/p57e%20Full%20text%20%20English%20designe.pdf>
- Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics announces the main results of the Youth Survey 2015. (2016, March 17). *Duniyā al-Waṭan*. Retrieved from www.alwatanvoice.com/arabic/news/2016/03/17/887158.html
- Prensky, M. (2001). Digital natives, digital immigrants part 1. *On the Horizon*, 9(5), 1–6.
- Rheingold, H. (2007). *Smart mobs*. New York, NY: Basic Books.
- Sharik Quds. (n.d.). Timeline [Facebook page]. Retrieved from www.facebook.com/sharekquds/?fref=ts
- Shihāb. (n.d.). Timeline [Facebook page]. Retrieved from www.facebook.com/ShehabAgency.MainPage/?fref=ts
- Shihāb. (2016a, June 8). Israeli occupation forces arrest the shooters in Tel Aviv, which resulted in the injury of about 10 Zionists. #Operation_Ramadan [Facebook status update]. Retrieved from <https://www.facebook.com/ShehabAgency.MainPage/posts/1419681311407618>
- Shihāb. (2016b, September 30). #Jerusalem_Uprising [Facebook photo album]. Retrieved from https://m.facebook.com/story.php?story_fbid=1572331969475884&substory_index=0&id=179609608748134
- Shirky, C. (2011). The political power of social media. *Foreign Affairs*, 90(1), 28–41.
- Sites of Hamas and Dahlan. (2016, December 4). *Al-Maktab al-ī lāmī al-Filasṭīnī* [The Palestinian information office]. Retrieved from <http://fatehmedia.eu/archives/44110>
- Solution to the Gaza electricity crisis. (2017, January 16). *Al-Ayām*. Retrieved from www.al-ayyam.ps/ar_page.php?id=11c9b767y298432359Y11c9b767
- Spigelman, S. L. (2000). *Islam and Internet: The correlation between Islamic religion and Internet diffusion*. Boston, MA: John F. Kennedy School of Government.

- Sunden, J. (2003). *Material virtualities*. New York, NY: Peter Lang.
- Tahaquq. (n.d.). Timeline [Facebook page]. Retrieved from www.facebook.com/pg/Check.Pal/about/?ref=page_internal
- Taqrīr wa Sa'īl 2015, al-Tawāṣul al-Ijtima'ī fī Filasṭīn [Media report 2015, the social media in Palestine]. (2016). *Social Studio Group*, 11.
- Taqrīr wa Sā'il 2016, al-Tawāṣul al-Ijtima'ī fī Filasṭīn [Media report 2016, the social media in Palestine]. (2017). *Social Studio Group*, 13.
- Tawil-Souri, H., & Aouragh, M. (2014). Intifada 3.0? Cyber colonialism and Palestinian resistance. *Arab Studies Journal*, 22(1), 102–133.
- This is how Ramallah explained the reasons for blocking 11 websites. (2017, June 16). *Ma'ān*. Retrieved from <http://www.maannews.net/Content.aspx?id=911480>
- Thomas, M. (Ed.). (2011). *Deconstructing digital natives*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Tilly, C. (2017). *From mobilization to revolution*. London, UK: Routledge.
- Tilly, C., & Wood, L. J. (2015). *Social movements 1768–2012*. London, UK: Routledge.
- Triandis, H. C. (2018). *Individualism and collectivism*. London, UK: Routledge.
- Tūtār shadīd fī al-Quds [A new tweet in Jerusalem]. (2014, November 19). *Rāy al-Yawm*. Retrieved from www.raialyoum.com/?p=180682
- ʿUshāq Nāblus [Longing for Nablus]. (n.d.). Timeline [Facebook page]. Retrieved from www.facebook.com/3sha2.nablus/?fref=ts
- Vromen, A., Xenos, M. A., & Loader, B. (2015). Young people, social media and connective action. *Journal of Youth Studies*, 18(1), 80–100.
- Weimann, G. (2006). *Terror on the Internet*. Washington, DC: U.S. Institute of Peace Press.
- Wikālāt ṣafah [Safah Agency]. (2016, January 31). Hamas mourns the martyr Amjad al-Askari #Jerusalem_Uprising [Tweet]. Retrieved from <https://twitter.com/SafaPs/status/693819300759625729>
- Wolfsfeld, G. (2001). The news media and the second Intifada. *Harvard International Journal of Press/Politics*, 6(4), 113–118.

World Health Organization. (2016). *World health statistics 2016: Monitoring health for the SDGs*. Geneva, Switzerland: Author. Retrieved from www.who.int/gho/publications/world_health_statistics/2016/EN_WHS2016_TOC.pdf?ua=1

Zanini, M. (1999). Middle Eastern terrorism and netwar. *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, 22(3), 247–256.

Tzur, M. (2016, July 3). *Channel 10 News*. Retrieved from www.ifat.com/InfoBuzzerItemPage/?resourceId=7178746&appUser=0