**The Army of Islam**

Name

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The Army of Islam is a militant group in Palestine that is believed to be actively engaged in terrorism. The group was originally founded in 2005 in Gaza, Palestine (UNHCR, 2018). Geographically, the group's operations are mostly in the Gaza Strip, although it has been able to carry out attacks in Egypt and Israel. The group's ideology is mainly based on jihadist teachings that rationalize extreme violence. In 2011, its members, for example, carried out a bombing in a church in Egypt that led to the deaths of 23 people. Other acts of terror carried out by the organization include kidnappings that are often targeted at foreigners who can be exchanged for its arrested leaders.

The group was generally founded by former members of the larger Hamas terror group as a militant group that intended to fight more aggressively for what it described as the freedom of the Palestinian people. The group mainly operates in the Gaza Strip but has factions in Egypt and Israel who are also its primary targets. Since it started operations, the group has carried out a series of attacks on both Israeli and Egyptian governments, including kidnappings and bombings that target civilians. Due to its heinous acts, the Army of Islam was noted as a terror organization by both the United States and the UNHCR. The organization generally appears to be made up of volunteers and is not affiliated with any state or government.

The group identifies its main motive as being the defense of the Palestinian people as well as the protection of Islam from what it believes is corruption. Religion plays a key role in its operations. Jihadist teachings that rationalize violence are often used by members to recruit as well as justify heinous acts committed against civilians and foreign governments (US Department of State, 2011). While earlier on in its operations the group supported Hamas, it later withdrew its support based on the view that Hamas was not aggressive in its approach. Hamas also moved to limit the Army of Islam’s operations in Gaza due to what it stated were its overly aggressive methods. The group hopes to improve the ability that Gaza has to defend what it believes is its nationalism. In addition to its attacks on civilians, the group also carries out militant training in the Gaza area.

The activities of the organization are relevant to the United States due to the impact they can have on both the relationship between Palestine and Israel and the stability of the entire Middle East region. Since its activities mainly target Israel, the group has the potential to escalate ongoing disagreements about territory between the two countries. This would mean the US would likely get involved due to its close bilateral ties with Israel. The US also has numerous commercial interests in Israel and Egypt that could be threatened by the organization. It is therefore important for the US to monitor the activities of the organization and take active measures to hinder its growth.

The Army of Islam is generally a terror organization that operates in Gaza. The group is responsible for a number of terror attacks that targeted Egyptian and Israeli civilians. While originally it was affiliated with the larger Hamas terror group, it currently operates independently after disagreements on how operations should be organized. Religion is generally a major aspect of its ideology. Jihadist teachings that rationalize extremism are used to recruit members as well as carry out heinous attacks targeting civilians. The actions of the group can have a lasting impact on how Israel relates to Palestinians and, consequently, the overall stability of the region.

**References**

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US Department of State. (2011). Designation of Army of Islam Leader Mumtaz Dughmush. https://2009-2017.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2011/08/170593.htm