Affluent and Well-Educated? Analyzing the Socioeconomic Backgrounds of Fallen Palestinian Islamist Militants

Erik Skare

Existing literature argues that the militants and suicide bombers of the Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas) and Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) come from relatively advantaged socioeconomic and educational backgrounds compared to the average Palestinian in the Occupied Palestinian Territories. Analyzing 2,448 martyr biographies from Hamas's military wing and PIJ from 1992 to 2012, I argue that these militants reflect Palestinian labor divisions and educational enrollment rates. There is thus little to suggest that Palestinian Islamist militants are recruited from any particular socioeconomic stratum within the wider population. I demonstrate that, instead, kinship and geographic clusters are more significant variables.

Do the socioeconomic backgrounds of Palestinians influence their decision to join militant Islamist movements? Existing literature suggests that the fighters and suicide bombers of the Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas, from the Arabic *Harakat al-Muqawama al-Islamiyya*) and the Islamic Jihad Movement in Palestine (or PIJ, for Palestinian Islamic Jihad) generally come from relatively advantaged socioeconomic and educational backgrounds compared to the average Palestinian in the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT).[1] For example, a 2003 article holds that Palestinian suicide bombers are "at least as likely to come from economically advantaged families . . . as to come from the ranks of the economically disadvantaged"[2] and have an overall higher education rate compared to the average Palestinian.[3] As Claude Berrebi suggested in 2007: "Both higher education and standard of living appear to be *positively* associated with membership in terror organizations such as Hamas or PIJ."[4]

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1. For example, see Claude Berrebi, "Evidence about the Link Between Education, Poverty and Terrorism among Palestinians," *Peace Economics, Peace Science and Public Policy* 13, no. 1 (Jan. 2007): 18–53. https://doi.org/10.2202/1554-8597.1101.

2. Alan B. Krueger and Jitka Malečková, "Education, Poverty and Terrorism: Is There a Causal Connection?" *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 17, no. 4 (Fall 2003), 141, https://doi.org/10.1257/089533003772034925.

3. Efraim Benmelech, Claude Berrebi, and Esteban F. Klor, "Economic Conditions and the Quality of Suicide Terrorism," *Journal of Politics* 74, no. 1 (Jan. 2012), 115, https://doi.org/10.1017/S0022381611001101.

4. Berrebi, "Evidence about the Link," 49.

HTTPS://DOI.ORG/10.3751/76.1.14

In this article, I analyze the martyr biographies of 2,448 militants who died between 1992 and 2012 from Hamas's 'Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades and PIJ in order to explore socioeconomic variations among the members of these two movements. Employing samples 7.5 and 15 times larger than any in the existing literature, I test the theory of there being a link between poverty, education, and Palestinian Islamist affiliation to assess whether Hamas and PIJ militants are, in fact, more affluent and well-educated. I find, instead, the militants reflect overall Palestinian society under occupation in terms of both education level and type of employment. More importantly, if the data do show anything about the militants' background, it is the presence of kinship and geographic clusters.

The question matters because it is not entirely clear why any given Palestinian Islamist would prefer membership in Hamas rather than PIJ or vice versa. Existing literature largely depicts the two movements as identical — and a study of their members' social background may potentially shed some light on mechanisms causing membership variations in the Palestinian resistance.[5] Moreover, the question of whether socioeconomic background influences the decision to join an Islamist militia and which to join matters because this study does not simply take the existence of these organizations as a given. Instead it focuses on existing structural conditions enabling or inhibiting recruitment efforts required to build and sustain them.

I provide an empirical base to analyze the differences in class backgrounds and geographical distribution of the two movements' fallen militants. Employing a variety of open-source data, I have constructed a dataset with each militant's geographic location, dates of birth and death, marital status, level of education and type of specialization, and type of employment. Using this dataset, I analyze the fighters' socioeconomic backgrounds according to these metrics to answer the question posed above. I also do a qualitative reading of the PIJ martyr biographies in order to assess potential recruitment structures when attempting to propose an alternative hypothesis for said membership variations.

This article begins with an explanation of how I gathered the data and generated the estimates on education level and type of employment, describing the groups that were excluded from the analysis. The following section analyzes the dataset and describes the socioeconomic background of Hamas and PIJ fighters who died or were killed from 1992 to 2012, arguing that they reflect overall Palestinian society under occupation in terms of education level and type of employment. Given this, there must be other variables that explain variations in Palestinian Islamist movement membership. I thus proceed to discuss the possible role of ideology, social relations, and geography in affecting membership choices before concluding.

DATA COLLECTION AND LIMITATIONS

As noted, I collected socioeconomic data from 2,448 Palestinian Islamist martyr biographies from Hamas and Islamic Jihad, encompassing both fallen militants and suicide bombers who died between 1992 and 2012. Of these, 1,540 were from Hamas,

5. For example, Khaled Hroub wrote that there were no "political or ideological differences" between Hamas and PIJ in the 1990s, see *Hamas: Political Thought and Practice* (Washington, DC: Institute for Palestine Studies, 2000), 125.

while 908 were from PIJ. All militants in the dataset were either killed or killed themselves in the Occupied Palestinian Territories and in Israel. The dataset starts in 1992 as this is the year that Hamas's militant wing, the 'Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades, was founded. It ends in 2012 simply to restrict the scope to a 20-year period.[6]

I gathered data based on eight categories: (1) home governorate, (2) neighborhood, village, or city, (3) year of birth, (4) year of death, (5) marital status, (6) level of education, (7) educational specialization, and (8) occupation or type of employment. While home governorates follow the official geographic boundaries of the OPT (e.g., Hebron, Jenin, North Gaza, Rafah, etc.), neighborhood is only applied for Gaza City areas like Shuja'iyya, Rimal, Sabra, etc. For smaller cities like Bethlehem or villages such as Silat al-Harithiyya or 'Anza, among others, the city/village is listed. Marital status is either married or unmarried. The level of education has five categories: elementary school (first to seventh grade), intermediate school (eighth to tenth grade), secondary school, university, or vocational program. I have listed vocational programs as a distinct category instead of secondary education insofar as it signifies a nonacademic form of education. Type of specialization lists either what type of vocational diploma the militant obtained (plumbing, electricity, automobile mechanics, etc.) or their area of academic specialization (Islamic law, journalism, or social sciences).

More than 1,000 martyr biographies were excluded from this analysis: 651 from Hamas and 525 from PIJ. The majority of these were left out because their subjects were killed before or after the period of analysis. However, I also excluded subjects under 16 years of age, as both movements laid claim to a small number of casualties in their early adolescent years. Since these were mostly civilian victims and not militants, the children — some as young as 3 years old — would be of little analytical value. Third, while I do refer to the fallen fighters as being from Hamas, I have excluded members of the movement's political wing from the dataset because it was sometimes difficult to determine their actual affiliation, as there were sometimes few additional sources to substantiate claims made in the martyr biographies. Militants from the Qassam Brigades, Hamas's military wing, on the other hand, participated in armed clashes covered and confirmed by media sources. Although it would be ideal to incorporate all fallen members of Hamas and to compare the political and military wings, the data of the former proved too unreliable. For PIJ, the fallen militants are almost exclusively militants in the traditional sense of the word, as the separation between the movement's military and political wings is not as clear as in the case of Hamas. Fourth, if actual membership in the movements was in doubt, the militants were excluded from the dataset. This could be the case if both Hamas and Fatah (a reverse acronym of *Harakat al-Tahrir al-Watani al-Filastini,* the Palestinian National Liberation Movement) claimed a particular fallen militant, for example.

Method of Data-Gathering

All martyr biographies were collected online using open-source material, and all information used in the dataset is publicly available. I employed two websites to collect data on PIJ. The first was the Mujhat al-Quds Foundation (literally, "the lifeblood of Jeru-

6. As 2022 progresses, I am planning to incorporate Palestinian Islamist militants killed since 2013 in order to eventually have a 30-year dataset.

salem"), a PIJ institution for the interests of "the families of the martyrs and prisoners of all Palestine" (*usar shuhada' wa-usra kull Filastin*).[7] The biographies were then compared with others on the website of PIJ's military wing, the al-Quds Brigades.[8] I also examined a seven-part Muhjat al-Quds Foundation–published series entitled *Mawsu'at shuhada' min Filastin* ("Encylopedia of martyrs from Palestine") to find missing information about the academic specialization of fallen PIJ militants.[9] For Hamas, I first assessed all fallen members listed by the movement's political organization, which included biographies from its military wing as well.[10] I then compared these with the martyr biographies published directly by the Qassam Brigades to fill in informational gaps and note differences.[11]

On Terminology

For both Hamas and PIJ, fallen militants are referred to in the sources as martyrs (*shuhada'*; singular, *shahid*), martyrdom-seekers (*istishhadiyyun*; singular: *istihhadi*), or both. Although the Palestinian fedayeen of the 1960s were considered national martyrs when killed in battle, their deaths did not necessarily include the same religious dimension as it did as once Islamist movements gained prominence in the Palestinian resistance movement. Rather, "in the Palestinian context the perception of fusion between the human sacrifice and [Palestinian] land is more prevalent than fusion with divine life."[12] While the concept of the martyr appropriated a passive meaning in the First Intifada (1987–93) as "a victim at the hands of the Israelis," the martyrdom-seeker *actively* carries out a mission by sacrificing him- or herself.[13] When suicide bombings began in the mid-1990s, suicide bombers started to be referred to as martyrdom-seekers and related attacks as "martyrdom-seeking operations" (*'amaliyyat istishhadiyya*).

7. Muhjat al-Quds Foundation, "من نحن؟" ["Who are we?"], updated October 29, 2019, www.almuhja.com/news27301a4.html.

8. For example, compare "دليل الشهداء: محمود صقر راغب الزطمة" ["Martyr index: Mahmud Saqr Raghib al-Zatma], updated September 9, 2018, www.almuhja.com/prson-1606.html and "الشهيد القائد: محمود صقر الزطمة" [The martyr commander: Mahmud Saqr al-Zatma], al-Quds Brigades, n.d., https://saraya.ps/martyr/32.

9. The full set covers fallen PIJ militants from 1985 through 2019, all of which are available on the Mujhat al-Quds Foundation website. For the volumes employed to fill in gaps in my dataset, see موسوعة شهداء من فلسطين، الجزء الأول (1985–2001) [Encyclopedia of martyrs from Palestine, part I (1985–2001)] (Gaza: Muhjat al-Quds, 2019); موسوعة شهداء من فلسطين، الجزء الثاني (2003–2002) [Encyclopedia of martyrs from Palestine, part II (2002–3)] (Gaza: Muhjat al-Quds, 2019); موسوعة شهداء من فلسطين، الجزء الثالث (2005–2004) [Encyclopedia of martyrs from Palestine, part III (2004–5)] (Gaza: Muhjat al-Quds, 2019); موسوعة شهداء من فلسطين، الجزء الرابع (2007–2006) [Encyclopedia of martyrs from Palestine, part IV (2006–7)] (Gaza: Muhjat al-Quds, 2019); موسوعة شهداء من فلسطين، الجزء الخامس (2011–2008) [Encyclopedia of martyrs from Palestine, part V (2008–11)] (Gaza: Muhjat al-Quds, 2019); موسوعة شهداء من فلسطين، الجزء السادس (2014–2012) [Encyclopedia of martyrs from Palestine, part VI (2012–14)] (Gaza: Muhjat al-Quds, 2019).

10. Although no longer on the Hamas website, an archived version of the searchable portal with biographies can be found at "الشهداء" ["The martyrs"] via the Internet Archive Wayback Machine at https://web.archive.org/web/20200227144628/https://hamas.ps/ar/martyrs/الشهداء (February 27, 2020).

11. See "واحة الشهداء" ["The martyrs' oasis"], 'Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades, last updated March 9, 2022, via the Internet Archive Wayback Machine at https://web.archive.org/web/20220424153540/www.alqassam.ps/arabic/شهداء-القسام (April 24, 2022).

12. Nasser Abufarha, *The Making of a Human Bomb: An Ethnography of Palestinian Resistance* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2009), 47.

13. Abufarha, *Making of a Human Bomb*, 77–78.

I have chosen to employ the term *fallen militant* and variants thereof. This is because, first, the terms *martyr* and *martyrdom-seeker* are heavily loaded with a number of normative and religious implications. Secondly, the terms are ambiguous insofar as neither Hamas nor PIJ sources differentiate between the two in practice, and a fallen militant is often described as both a *shahid* and an *istishhadi* in the same text.[14] Third, although the two movements do refer to suicide bombers as martyrdom-seekers (*istishhadiyyun*), it is unclear to what degree this term signifies a paradigm shift given the links to earlier Palestinian and Islamist discourses, literary traditions, and national/religious myths.[15]

Limitations

There are few information gaps on fallen militants from PIJ. Of the 908 PIJ militants I collected data on, information about the level of education was missing for 25 of them and professional information was missing for 55, together comprising less than 9 percent of the total. A larger information gap pertains to university specializations, as this information is missing for 46 out of the 233 PIJ militants (almost 20 percent) who commenced university studies.[16]

Although Hamas's martyr biographies are a rich source of socioeconomic information, a much smaller number of them provide information about employment. Thus, the occupations for 597 of the Hamas fighters (almost 39 percent) is unknown. This is not necessarily surprising. As they were soldiers and militants, a number of them presumably earned a salary through the Qassam Brigades. Another cause for this data lapse may be age. Considering that the majority of Hamas militants were killed in their late teens or early twenties, it is thus possible that they had not acquired any occupation and income. Consequently, many of the Hamas martyr biographies do not list any traditional employment, stating that a militant "worked" (*'amal*) within the ranks of the Qassam Brigades.

Despite this, I have not listed the Qassam Brigades as a specific type of employment when analyzing the dataset because it is possible that the verb *'amal* does not refer to paid income but to "practice" or "activity." It is also unclear whether "work" in the Qassam Brigades is listed as employment because this was a militant's *main* source of income or simply because there was an information gap when Hamas compiled the biographies. There is thus a danger of skewing the data representation if "work" in the Qassam Brigades is listed as one specific type of employment.

14. For example, al-Quds Brigades, "استشهادي من السرايا يخترق حصون العدو ويفجر نفسه بالحضيرة فيقتل 5 صهاينة ويصيب 40 آخرين" ["A martyrdom-seeker from the Brigades pierces through the enemy's fortresses and blows himself up in Hadera thus killing 5 Zionists and injuring 40 others"], September 2, 2010, https://saraya.ps/post/6723.

15. Erik Skare, *A History of Palestinian Islamic Jihad: Faith, Awareness, and Revolution in the Middle East* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021), 132-133.

16. The lack of information about academic specialization was most often the case if the fallen militant had to end their studies prematurely due to the intifadas, persecution from the Israeli army, or financial hardship. The biography of Muhammad Fawzi Abu Ni'ma (1976–2007), for example, notes that he "enrolled in university studies at the Islamic University of Gaza, but his family's economic situation prevented him from completing his studies." موسوعة شهداء من فلسطين، الجزء الرابع [Encyclopedia of martyrs from Palestine, part IV], 355.

There are also gaps in the Hamas martyr biographies' reportage of their subjects' education. Namely, 78 fallen Hamas fighters simply do not have information on their highest level of schooling. Furthermore, of the 677 who are reported as having attended university, 111 (or 16.4 percent) do not have an academic specialization listed. While these gaps are regrettable, they are less significant — but only to a degree — than the same figures for PIJ mentioned previously.

COMPARING THE NUMBERS

Educational Level

There are differences in the educational level of Hamas militants and those of PIJ, although fallen fighters from both movements appear to be well-educated. This generally high level of education is not surprising, as the Palestinian population is one of the best educated in the Middle East and North Africa with an adult literacy rate of 91 percent during the latter decade of the period under investigation.[17] Almost half of the Hamas militants, for example, had either finished or were enrolled at the university level, and nearly one-third had either only finished or had been enrolled at the secondary level (see Figure I). The educational attainment of the PIJ militants was nearly the inverse: just over one-fourth had either finished or enrolled at the university level, while almost half had either only finished or had been enrolled up to the secondary level. Militants from Hamas thus had an overall higher education level than those in PIJ, which is further accentuated when assessing militants who did not receive an education higher than the intermediate level — just over one-tenth of fallen Hamas militants compared to one-fifth of those from PIJ.

Based on the enrollment rates of their fallen fighters, there is little to suggest that a higher level of education is "positively associated" with membership in organizations like Hamas or PIJ, as Berrebi suggested.[18] In fact, these groups' members seem to either reflect the overall education level in the Palestinian population (as in the case of Hamas) or to deviate from it negatively (in the case of PIJ). The gross enrollment rate for higher education in the Occupied Territories, for example, was more than 41 percent for Palestinian males in 2007, which is approximately the same enrollment rate as for Hamas militants. Yet, fallen PIJ militants had, in fact, a significantly lower enrollment rate at slightly more than one-fourth.

The same applies to the secondary level of education. Little suggests that the fallen militants of the two movements had a secondary education enrollment rate above the Palestinian national average. On the contrary, the 2019 net enrollment rate for secondary education in the OPT was 83.2 percent, which was significantly higher than the combined percentage of PIJ militants who received secondary or university education (68.3 perent), albeit in an earlier period.[19] Although less pronounced in the

17. World Bank Group, "West Bank and Gaza: Education Sector Analysis; Impressive Achievements under Harsh Conditions and the Way Forward to Consolidate a Quality Education System," Policy Note, report no. 41043 (Sept. 2006): 6.

18. Berrebi, "Evidence about the Link," 30.

19. Palestinian Academic Society for the Study of International Affairs, "PASSIA Factsheet 2019: Education" (2019): 2.

case of Hamas, the comparable number for its fallen fighters' net enrollment rate was still 7.1 percentage points higher. Given that the gross enrollment rate for secondary education in the OPT was above 80 percent in 2006, one may confidently suggest that the enrollment rate of PIJ and Hamas militants is, in fact, lower than the average Palestinian population in the OPT. Lastly, approximately four percent of both movements' militants enrolled in vocational training, which matches the national average of less than five percent. There is thus nothing noteworthy about the number of fallen militants from both movements who pursued vocational training.

Figure I. The Highest Educational Enrollment of Fallen Hamas and PIJ Militants, 1992–2012

Education Level	Hamas	PIJ	National gross enrollment rate
Elementary	58 (3.77%)	37 (4.07%)	—
Intermediate	172 (11.2%)	190 (20.9%)	—
Secondary	495 (32.1%)	387 (42.6%)	>80% (2006)*
University	677 (44.0%)	233 (25.7%)	41.6% (2007)†
Vocational	60 (3.90%)	37 (4.07%)	<5% (2010)‡
Unknown	78 (5.06%)	24 (2.64%)	—

* The table includes those who proceeded on to university as well. World Bank Group, "West Bank and Gaza: Education Sector Analysis; Impressive Achievements under Harsh Conditions and the Way Forward to Consolidate a Quality Education System," Policy Note, report no. 41043 (Sept. 2006): 3.

† Félix Sánchez Broco and Jumana Trad, "Education in the Palestinian Territories," Centre for Middle Eastern Studies of the Foundation for the Social Promotion of Culture (Apr. 2011): 19.

‡ European Training Foundation, "Education and Business: Occupied Palestinian Territories" (2010): 5.

Figure II. Educational Enrollment Levels by Territory

Education Level	Hamas*		PIJ	
	West Bank	Gaza Strip	West Bank	Gaza Strip
Elementary	8 (3.38%)	50 (3.84%)	19 (7.31%)	18 (2.78%)
Intermediate	32 (13.5%)	139 (10.7%)	77 (29.6%)	113 (17.4%)
Secondary	85 (35.9%)	410 (31.5%)	100 (38.5%)	287 (44.3%)
University	86 (36.3%)	591 (45.4%)	59 (22.7%)	174 (26.9%)
Vocational	2 (0.84%)	58 (4.46%)	3 (1.15%)	34 (5.25%)
Unknown	24 (10.1%)	53 (4.07%)	2 (0.77%)	22 (3.40%)
Total	237	1301	260	648

* Two fallen Hamas militants from the Galilee were excluded from this table.

If we isolate the Gaza Strip and the West Bank when assessing educational enrollment levels of both movements, we see that there is a relatively equal distribution between the two regions in the case of Hamas (see Figure II). That said, a greater portion of Hamas militants in Gaza enrolled in university studies compared to their peers in the West Bank. There seem to be even greater discrepancies in the case of PIJ, as its fallen militants in the West Bank seem to have a lower level of formal education (although the number of university students seem to be similar, while a greater percentage in Gaza obtained a vocational diploma).

When assessing the academic specializations of the 677 fallen Hamas militants who commenced their university education (see Figure III), less than one-fourth of them engaged in religious studies (156, or 23.0 percent). The types of religious specialization were Islamic law (shari'a), principles of religion (*usul al-din*), principles of jurisprudence (*usul al-fiqh*), and the somewhat ambiguous Islamic studies (*al-dirasat al-Islamiyya*). Only 39 militants (5.76 percent) studied engineering, which includes chemical engineering, civil engineering, electrical engineering, industrial engineering, and simply engineering. If one adds computer sciences and electronics, then the number rises to 76 (11.2 percent). Hence, these numbers do not correspond with more sweeping data on Islamic radicals collected by Diego Gambetta and Steffen Hertog, who found that "engineers, relative to other graduates, are overrepresented among violent Islamic radicals by three to four times the size we would expect."[20]

Two qualifications are nonetheless required. First, information about the type of specialization for 111 of the Hamas militants (16.4 percent) is missing, and the actual number of engineers may be higher and thus correspond with Gambetta and Hertog's study to a greater degree. Second, these Palestinians were members of Hamas's militant wing, the Qassam Brigades, and it is possible that the political wing has a greater representation of engineers, which itself would be a significant finding if these numbers were available. Similarly, it should be noted that the leadership of Hamas's political wing is highly educated. One of the movement's cofounders, 'Abd al-'Aziz al-Rantisi (1947–2004), studied pediatric medicine, while another, Mahmud al-Zahhar (b. 1945), studied general surgery. Another, Isma'il Abu Shanab (1950–2003), was a civil engineer.[21] It is nonetheless unlikely that these Hamas leaders are indicative of the average education level of Hamas's political wing, as it is not unusual for the leadership of a group to differ from its overall membership base. Fat'hi al-Shiqaqi (1951–95), the first secretary-general of PIJ, was a pediatrician, while his successor, Ramadan 'Abdullah Shallah (1958–2020), obtained a doctorate in banking and economics from Durham University. Likewise, Anwar Abu Taha (b. unknown), a member of PIJ's political bureau, has a doctorate in political sociology.[22]

20. Diego Gambetta and Steffen Hertog, "Why Are There So Many Engineers among Islamic Radicals?" *European Journal of Sociology* 50, no. 2 (Aug. 2009), 212, https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003975609990129.

21. Adel Darwish, "Dr Abdel Aziz Rantisi," *Independent* (UK), April 19, 2004, www.independent.co.uk/news/obituaries/dr-abdel-aziz-rantisi-38342.html; "Profile: Hamas' Mahmoud Zahhar," *BBC*, January 26, 2006, https://bbc.in/3LuhVKC; Wolf Blitzer, "Who Was Ismail Abu Shanab?" *CNN*, August 21, 2003, https://cnn.it/3MAcVV9.

22. Skare, *A History of Palestinian Islamic Jihad*, 1, 153; "الجمهورية الإسلامية الإيرانية وقضية فلسطين" ["The Islamic Republic of Iran and the issue of Palestine"], Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies, January 17, 2011, www.dohainstitute.org/ar/ResearchAndStudies/Pages/art16.aspx.

Figure III. The 10 Most Common Higher Education Specializations among Fallen Hamas Militants, 1992–2012

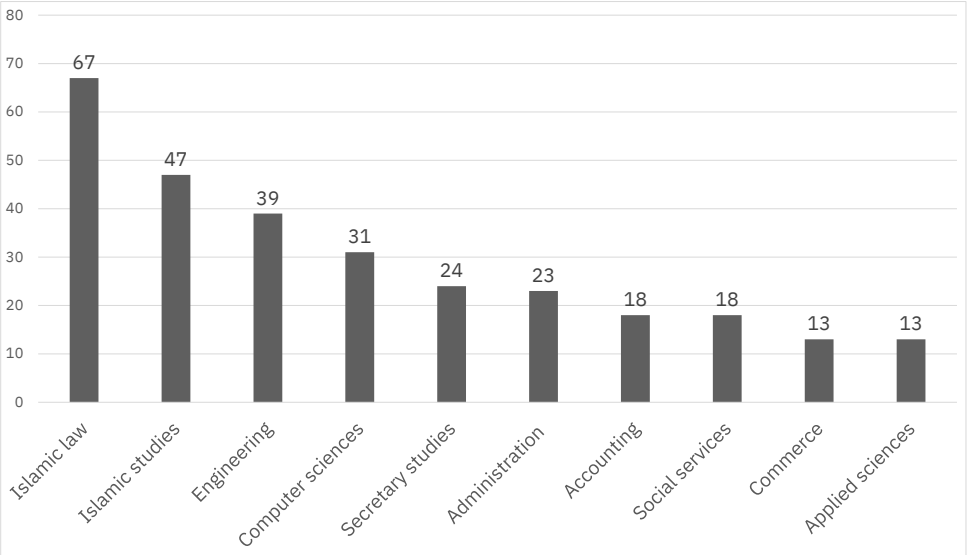
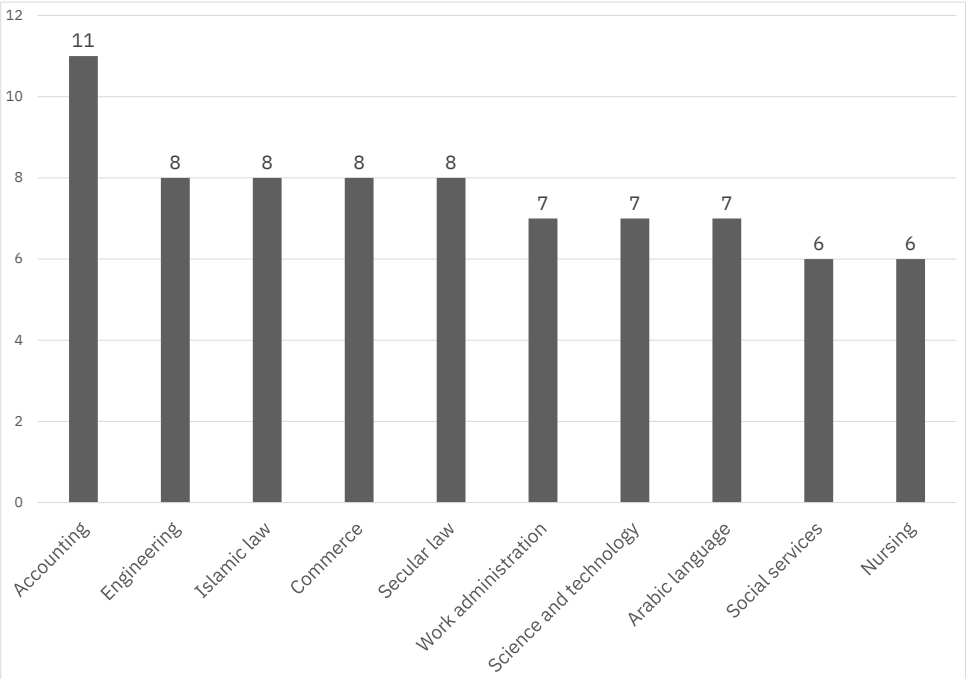


Figure IV. The 10 Most Common Higher Education Specializations among Fallen PIJ Militants, 1992–2012



We should be similarly cautious when attempting to draw conclusions about the types of academic specialization the PIJ militants preferred, as this information is missing for 46 of its 233 fallen fighters with university experience— nearly one-fifth (19.7 percent) — a larger, but comparable, gap than the data on the fallen Hamas militants. If the available numbers are representative for the movement, a minority of PIJ militants focused on subjects falling under a religious studies umbrella: apologetics (*da'wa*), Islamic education (*tarbiyya Islamiyya*), jurisprudence (*fiqh*), shari'a, and principles of religion as well as some without a specialization enrolled at their universities' faculties of Islamic law or Islamic studies. With 36 militants in these specializations overall, or 15.5 percent, this is a significantly smaller portion compared to Hamas. As Figure IV illustrates, far more fallen PIJ militants studied accounting. Further, only 16 fallen PIJ militants studied engineering (6.87 percent) — including the 8 on Figure IV who studied general engineering (*handasa*) and 8 others who studied electrical, agricultural, and mechanical engineering — and the number only rises to 20 (or 8.58 percent) if one includes students of computer maintenance (1), computer programming (1), and computer sciences (2). As with Hamas, engineering studies were thus also underrepresented in PIJ militants' academic paths.

PIJ and Hamas are quite similar regarding the most common study specializations among their fallen militants, as six specializations feature on both lists: accounting, engineering, Islamic law, commerce, administration/work administration, and social services. This is not particularly surprising if one accepts that the two movements are reflections of overall Palestinian society. As Figure V suggests, the most common field of study in the Occupied Palestinian Territories in 2019 among men in their twenties was business and administration studies,[23] which corresponds with the heavy representation of accounting among fallen PIJ militants in addition to concentrations in commerce, administration/work administration, and secretary studies. The relatively frequent rate of engineering students in the OPT reflects the fallen Hamas militants from the Qassam Brigades. If anything, the anomaly when comparing with Palestinian society is the lack of PIJ and Hamas militants studying computer sciences.

To summarize, there is little from the two movements' martyr biographies to suggest that PIJ and Hamas militants have a higher level of education than the rest of Palestinian society. On the contrary, while Hamas militants seem to reflect general education levels, those from PIJ are slightly worse off. Equally, the preferred study specializations of fallen PIJ and Hamas militants pursuing higher education largely reflect that of their peers in the rest of the OPT.

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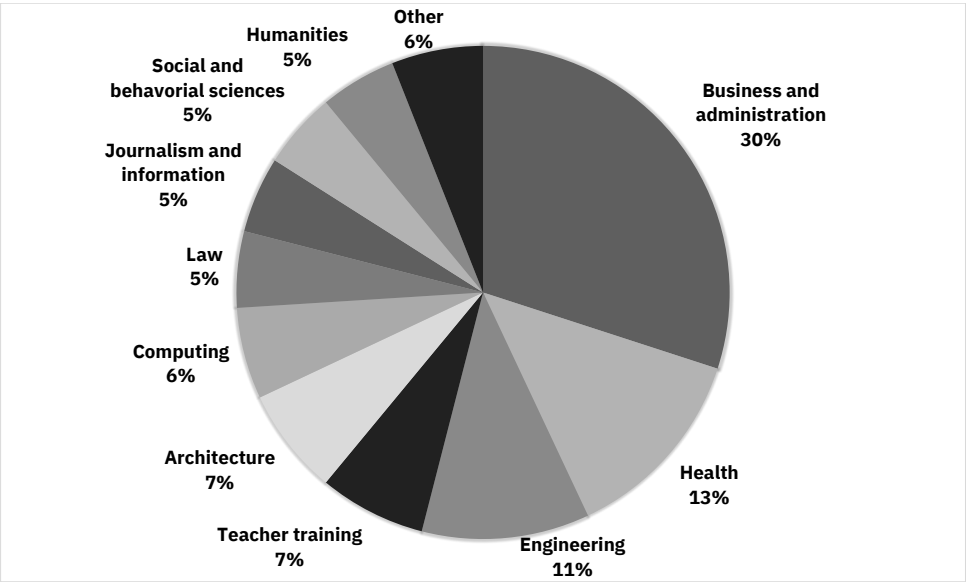
23. I am aware of the methodological limitations of comparing two different sets of categories, as Figures III and IV refer to specific *studies* (accounting, Arabic language, nursing etc.), while Figure V refers to *fields* of study, which incorporate several types of specializations. I would nevertheless contend that Figure V is helpful as it provides us with some basis of comparison in lack of more suitable statistical data. Moreover, although Figure V refers to fields of study in 2019, there are few indications that overall Palestinian study trends shifted dramatically the last decade. I thank the Palestinian Academic Society for the Study of International Affairs (PASSIA) in general, and Hind Husseini in particular, for providing me with the statistical data for the OPT.

Figure V. Academic Specializations among Palestinian Men with a Diploma or Bachelor's Degree, Ages 20–29 (2019)



Source: State of Palestine, Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, press release for the students who sit for the General School Certification Examinations "Tawjihi" of the academic year 2019/2020, July 8, 2020, www.pcbs.gov.ps/portals/_pcbs/PressRelease/Press_En_8-7-2020-tawjehi-en.pdf.

Types of Employment

It is difficult to say anything about the income levels of fallen Hamas and PIJ militants because the information is not, to this author's knowledge, publicly available. One approach to filling this gap is that of Claude Berrebi, who inferred fallen Islamist militants' economic status based on information about lifestyle factors including car models, foreign travel history, computer access, or type of employment.[24] Yet, that analysis was not based on any objective metrics and relied on educated guesswork — making the most out of limited information. I will thus avoid saying anything about the poverty level of the fallen militants in my sample as I do not believe it is feasible.

It should be emphasized that the high education level among both Hamas and PIJ militants does not equal a transition into specialized labor or increased social mobility. Tailors, farmers, and salesmen were among the 10 most common types of employment for the fallen Hamas militants between 1992 and 2012 (see Figure VI). Teachers were the only type of employment that can be categorized as skilled labor. This is more striking among PIJ militants, as there were no skilled labor jobs on the list of the most common professions among PIJ militants (see Figure VII). On the contrary, construction workers, salesmen, farmers, drivers, and electricians are prominently featured, with "unemployed" ranking third on the list.

24. See Berrebi, "Evidence about the Link."

Figure VI. The 10 Most Common Types of Employment among Fallen PIJ Militants by Territory, 1992–2012

Overall		West Bank		Gaza Strip	
Employment	**#**	**Employment**	**#**	**Employment**	**#**
Student	218	Student	67	Laborer	161
Laborer	190	Laborer	29	Student	149
Unemployed	85	Construction	18	Unemployed	75
Government	66	Government	17	Government	49
Tailor	30	Farmer	13	Tailor	27
Construction	30	Salesman	13	Driver	17
Salesman	27	Unemployed	10	Salesman	14
Farmer	22	Electrician	5	Construction	12
Driver	18	Shopkeeper	4	Farmer	9
Electrician	14	Mechanic	4	Electrician	9

Figure VII. The 10 Most Common Types of Employment among Fallen Hamas Militants by Territory, 1992–2010

Overall		West Bank		Gaza Strip	
Employment	**#**	**Employment**	**#**	**Employment**	**#**
Student	200	Student	24	Student	149
Police	106	Construction	16	Police	103
Executive Forces	83	Salesman	15	Executive Forces	83
Construction	52	Farmer	11	State Security	50
Salesman	49	Teacher	6	Construction	36
State Security	50	Carpenter	5	Tailor	34
Tailor	34	Government	5	Salesman	33
Farmer	29	Tile worker	5	Government	21
Government	26	Electrician	5	Teacher	17
Teacher	23	Auto Mechanic	3	Farmer	17

The picture we can draw from their fallen fighters is that of both Hamas and PIJ as relatively well-educated working-class movements.[25]

There are differences between the two movements, however. First, and most pronounced, is the predominance of government employees, police officers, and security personnel among Hamas's fallen fighters. This is to be expected given the movement's takeover of the Gaza Strip in 2007, assuming control of all institutional aspects of life and recruiting "its own personnel and [placing] people loyal to Hamas in key posts of power while also managing to significantly downsize the bureaucratic apparatus."[26] Furthermore, despite bureaucratic downsizing, public institutions are still the main source of employment in the Palestinian labor market due to the "very limited possibilities for private sector development."[27]

Second, a significantly higher portion of fallen Hamas militants had held skilled jobs than their PIJ counterparts, although skilled workers constituted only marginal numbers in either movement's martyr biographies. Of the 1,540 fallen Hamas fighters, only 67 (4.35 percent) had skilled jobs like accountant, therapist or banker, while only 6 of the 908 PIJ militants (0.07 percent) did, including a pediatrician, a director (*mudir*), two lawyers, and two engineers. Hamas's Qassam Brigades thus have a slightly different class composition than PIJ, as the latter has a lower level of education and more members in the traditional working class. Yet, as noted, this difference is negligible given the significantly low number of fallen militants hired in skilled jobs in both movements.

This economic class composition does not change significantly when we isolate the Gaza Strip and the West Bank in our assessment of the two movements. As Figures VI and VII show, the fallen PIJ militants in both the West Bank and Gaza were mainly employed in unskilled labor irrespective of region, although we see a greater percentage of students among the PIJ militants in the West Bank.[28] The same applies to the isolation of fallen Hamas militants, though it should be emphasized that the amount of fighters for whom there were no employment data was more than one-third in both the Gaza Strip (506 or 38.8 percent) and the West Bank (89 or 37.6 percent). Of those whose professions are listed in the martyr biographies, there is a predominance of members of the police, security forces, and executive forces in the Gaza Strip, while the economic class backgrounds of those in the West Bank remain relatively similar.

25. Here I categorize the working class as an economic segment of society depending on wage labor to survive, who do not own any means of production and do not acquire the surplus value creation of others. Admittedly, police and security forces are a more ambiguous category as they are a nonproductive force in the division of labor. While their social function is to keep law and order (i.e., to maintain the existing social order), there are nonetheless countervailing pressures, such as their work and life conditions, that give the police a contradictory place in contemporary class structures. For more, see R. Reiner, "The Police in Class Structure," *British Journal of Law and Society* 5, no. 2 (Winter 1978): 166–84. https://doi.org/10.2307/1409625.

26. Benedetta Berti, "Non-State Actors as Providers of Governance: The Hamas Government in Gaza between Effective Sovereignty, Centralized Authority, and Resistance," *The Middle East Journal* 69, no. 1 (Winter 2015): 16–17, https://doi.org/10.3751/69.1.11.

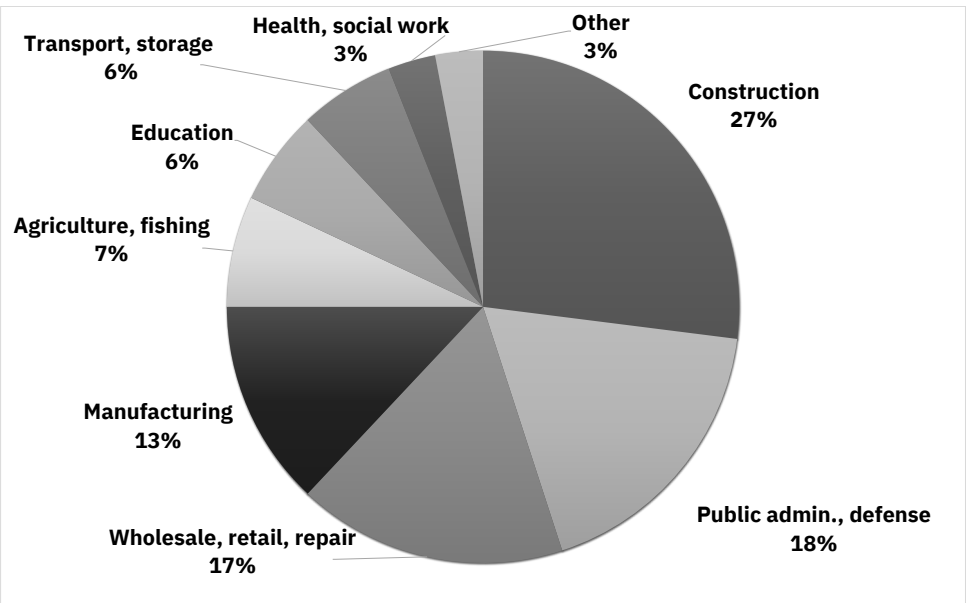
27. World Bank Group, "West Bank and Gaza," 6.

28. Some of the PIJ martyr biographies do not include any employment status, amounting to 25 of those from the West Bank (9.62 percent) and 30 from the Gaza Strip (4.63 percent).

As with the assessment of the fallen militants' level of education, little indicates that they differ markedly from the average Palestinian labor force in the Occupied Territories. Indeed, both Hamas and PIJ militants are likely to reflect the general division of labor in the OPT, with a mismatch between the type of jobs available and their level of education: "As in other countries in the region, an educated workforce is not correlated with economic productivity. There are important mismatches between education profiles and the labor market."[29]

The mismatch between education profiles and employment is reflected by the disparity between Palestinians' high rates of education and the distribution of occupations among fully employed men in the OPT in 2007 (see Figure VIII). Discounting the significant number of students among fallen PIJ and Hamas militants (and assuming these students were not engaged in wage labor during their studies), employment in construction and public administration/defense are heavily represented by both movements. However, while fewer PIJ martyr biographies list the construction sector specifically, it is possible that many of the significant number listed simply as "laborer" (*'amil*) (see Figure VI) worked in construction. In either case, Hamas and PIJ militants do not deviate radically from the overall Palestinian division of labor, and there is certainly little to suggest that members of these two movements are better off than the average Palestinian.

Figure VIII. Distribution of Jobs by Sector among Fully Employed Palestinian Men in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, 2007



Source: State of Palestine, Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, *Dissemination and Analysis of Census Findings: Labour Force Participation and Employment in the State of Palestine* (Ramallah: PCBS, 2020), 47.

29. World Bank Group, "West Bank and Gaza," 6.

DISCUSSING ALTERNATIVE HYPOTHESES: IDEOLOGY, GEOGRAPHY, AND KINSHIP CLUSTERS

If the fallen Palestinian militants of Hamas and Islamic Jihad between 1992 and 2012 did not, in fact, enjoy better socioeconomic backgrounds or have a higher level of education than overall Palestinian society, then there must be other variables explaining membership variations among the two movements as no specific economic or social class seem to prefer one or the other. In this section, I discuss alternative hypotheses.

At the onset, ideology appears to be a viable alternative to explain membership variations among Hamas and PIJ. As briefly summed up by PIJ's Anwar Abu Taha, the difference between the two movements is "that Hamas is a political movement that deals with the military field, while Islamic Jihad is a military movement that deals with the political field".[30] Similarly, a PIJ member in the Burj Barajneh refugee camp in Lebanon stated in an interview that he could never join Hamas as long as it participated in elections under occupation.[31] Yet another noted that he did not join Hamas because it (tacitly) accepted the framework of a two-state solution and negotiations with Israel. Further, he adamantly rejected Hamas's electoral participation and its attempts to "control the state" (*tasaytar al-dawla*), not simply because it legitimized a corrupt system but because it endangered the peace in the Palestinian arena as well. According to him, the only difference between Hamas and Fatah was consequently that the former was Islamic while the latter was secular, and he deemed Hamas a divisive force in Palestinian politics, potentially leading to strife (*fitna*).[32]

Indeed, these explanations are hardly surprising, as both PIJ and Hamas are political — and not primarily religious — movements. The ideologies of Hamas and PIJ, and their political choices on the ground, resonate differently in various segments of the Palestinian population.

There are nevertheless two reasons why I have not added ideology as a variable in the dataset. First, motivations can be fickle at the individual level,[33] and there are clear methodological limitations in interviewing Hamas and PIJ militants about their membership choices because they are already socialized into the structures, norms, and ideological positions of their movements. The cause for rejecting membership in one movement ("Hamas accepts a two-state solution") and the causal mechanism inducing membership in another are not equivalent. To illustrate this point, although one of the aforementioned PIJ members described why he rejected membership in Hamas today, he also admitted that, to begin with, he had become a PIJ member because his friends already were in the movement. He reflected that he would presumably have joined another faction if his friends had chosen differently. As he postulated, one "friend draws" another (*al-sahib sahib*).[34]

30. Interview by the author with Anwar Abu Taha, March 19, 2018, Beirut.

31. Interview by the author with PIJ member A, March 13, 2018, Burj Barajneh.

32. Interview by the author with PIJ member B, March 15, 2018, Burj Barajneh.

33. Thomas Hegghammer, "Should I Stay or Should I Go? Explaining Variations in Western Jihadists' Choice between Domestic and Foreign Fighting," *American Political Science Review* 107, no. 1 (Feb. 2013), 12, https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003055412000615.

34. Interview, PIJ member B, Mar. 2018, Burj Barajneh.

Second, it is difficult to quantify the ideological beliefs of individual members, as opposed to data like the number of university students or police officers. This is especially important because the sources employed in this study are not authored by movement members themselves but by the organizations they were active in. It is unlikely that the Hamas or PIJ would provide information for their militants' motivations that could be coded as driven by ideological sincerity or occurring despite ideological pragmatism. A solution for this impasse may be to assess another variable in the dataset: differences in the geographical distribution of the two movements.

The geographical distribution of the fallen militants in Hamas's Qassam Brigades and PIJ's Quds Brigades aligns with preconceived notions about the two movements on the regional level. That is, both Hamas and PIJ have a significantly greater presence in the Gaza Strip than in the West Bank (see Figure II). However, with 1,301 of its 1,540 fighters having hailed from Gaza, or 84.5 percent, Hamas is more tied to the enclave, while PIJ has a higher portion of fighters from the West Bank: 260 of 908 (28.6 percent).

These numbers are misleading, however, if one assesses the period of 1992 to 2012 without considering the geographical and political shifts that occurred in the OPT following the Palestinian legislative elections in 2006 and the subsequent "civil war" between Fatah and Hamas in 2007. Ever since, Gaza has been the primary theater of war in historic Palestine, with Israel ruling the West Bank in cooperation with the Fatah-run Palestinian Authority while carrying out major bombing campaigns in Gaza to thwart Hamas in 2008/9 and 2012 (as well as in 2014 and 2021). It is to be expected then that we see the unequal distribution between Gaza and the West Bank only reinforced when isolating the data before and after these events, with more than 90 percent of all fallen militants from both movements coming from the Gaza Strip after 2007 (see Figure IX).

Figure IX. Regional Distribution of Fallen Militants before and after 2007

Region	Hamas		PIJ	
	1992–2006	2007–12	1992–2006	2007–12
Gaza Strip	501 (69.2%)	800 (98.0%)	422 (63.5%)	226 (92.6%)
West Bank*	221 (30.5%)	16 (1.96%)	243 (36.5%)	18 (7.38%)
Galilee	2 (0.28%)	–	–	–

* including East Jerusalem

If the regional distribution of Hamas militants is similar, then they are distinct on the local level with clear geographical variations (Figure X). This is especially true within the West Bank, where PIJ has a greater presence to the north (especially in the Jenin and Tulkarm Governorates), while Hamas has a greater number of fallen militants from the south, especially in the Hebron Governorate (though a significant number of its West Bank casualties are from the Nablus Governorate in the north). In fact, it is striking that, where one of the two movements has a strong presence, the other is often marginalized. The exceptions are the governorates of Bethlehem, Salfit, and Jericho, which have a relatively equal distribution between the two movements. These findings are not particularly controversial, as all Palestinian factions vie for sympathy from the same population, and it is unreasonable to expect all factions to enjoy equal support in each district, city, village, or camp.

Figure X. Distribution of Fallen Militants by Governorate, 1992–2012

Region	Governorate	Hamas	PIJ
Gaza Strip	Gaza	499	208
	North Gaza	349	147
	Rafah	119	107
	Khan Yunus	165	104
	Dayr al-Balah	169	82
West Bank	Jenin	39	118
	Tulkarm	10	58
	Hebron	77	24
	Nablus	60	23
	Tubas	5	11
	Bethlehem	14	21
	Qalqilya	10	8
	Jerusalem	3	3
	Jericho	0	1
	Salfit	8	0
	Ramallah and al-Bira	11	1

What is striking about the data, however, is the prevalence of certain kinship clusters in the uneven distribution of fallen militants.[35] While PIJ had 58 militants in the Tulkarm Governorate from 1992 until 2012, half of these came from the villages of ʻAttil and Sayda alone, with five families constituting the overall majority. Similarly, two families dominate the PIJ military structure in the Tubas Governorate, encompassing some three-fourths of the movement's fallen militants, while another family is dominant in the Jenin Governorate.[36]

35. Palestinians can sometimes share the same surname without being related in any meaningful way. I have addressed this issue, first, by only counting fallen militants sharing surname within a specific and delimited geographical area. For example, if a fallen militant in Hebron and in Khan Yunus shared the same surname, they are not counted as being a part of the same cluster, since it is unlikely that they have any meaningful relation. Second, several martyr biographies cross-reference each other when fallen militants were close, worked together, or were in the same family. One PIJ martyr biography, for example, refers to 17 fallen fighters from the same family in Gaza City. See "قدمت 17 شهيدا من أبنائها.. عائلة «الدحدوح» احتضنت المقاومة وتوشحت نياشين الشهادة" ["Seventeen of its sons were presented as martyrs: The Dahduh family embraced the resistance and wore the medals of martyrdom"], al-Quds Brigades, October 1, 2009, https://saraya.ps/post/2191.

36. Admittedly, it is a difficult balancing act to provide sufficient details to highlight research findings, on one hand, and to respect the privacy of those analyzed in lines with ethical obligations, on the other. Because of the danger of reducing my argument to a mere list of Palestinian families (with individual members who are not affiliated to any of the two movements), I have chosen to anonymize them here. The exception is the Qawasma clan in Hebron, because its identification with Hamas is already publicly well known. For example, see Shlomi Eldar, "Accused Kidnappers Are Rogue Hamas Branch," *Al-Monitor*, June 29, 2014, www.al-monitor.com/originals/2014/06/qawasmeh-clan-hebron-hamas-leadership-mahmoud-abbas.html.

Similar kinship clusters are also found when assessing the fallen militants of the Qassam Brigades. The Qawasma clan, whose identification with Hamas is publicly well known, is the family with the most fallen militants in the Hebron Governorate. Similarly, another family represents half of all fallen Qassam militants in the Jenin Governorate city of Qabatiyya, and we find certain clusters in Gazan localities as well: in Bayt Hanun (North Gaza), Shuja'iyya (Gaza City), and Khan Yunus. Indeed, similar examples could be listed ad infinitum. If there is anything noteworthy about the martyr biographies' demographic data, it is the presence of certain kinship clusters and the uneven geographical distribution, not education or economic status.

This clustering in factional membership bases is not a new feature in the Palestinian resistance, as movements and groups have historically tapped into their ties with supporting clans in an attempt to gain their support.[37] Consequently, while the Dahduh clan has been described as synonymous with PIJ,[38] so has the aforementioned Qawasma clan in Hebron been perceived as synonymous with Hamas. The Halis family in Gaza has similarly enjoyed close ties to Fatah,[39] and various clans have been affiliated with political movements "through a combination of membership, party positions and support."[40] This is not to suggest that clan-faction alliances are fixed and constant, however. On the contrary, Palestinian clans have historically switched sides if they are offered a better deal from a rival faction and have more often than not been "prone to play off outsiders."[41]

I also do not suggest that one can reduce membership variations in the Palestinian Islamist resistance to tribalism, as if each individual militant in Hamas or PIJ were bound by their family's group decision. Presumably, these clusters are a symptom of other mechanisms at play that reinforces kinship as a relevant social network and recruitment structure. "Many barriers to the organization of insurgency exist,"[42] and clandestine militancy is expected to reinforce proximity — particularly if there are weak alternatives for recruiting new militants.

Indeed, this was the case for PIJ in the northern West Bank in the early 1990s. While the movement in Gaza enjoyed strong horizontal ties through the university sector and its mosque network, these ties were far weaker in the Jenin Govenorate because of a lack of access to similar spheres of recruitment.[43] Consequently, PIJ recruiters had to rely on their preexisting social networks which mainly consisted of relatives and

37. Abdalhadi Alijla, "Politics of Tribe and Kinship: Political Parties and Informal Institutions in Palestine," Instituto per gli Studi di Politica Internazionale *Analysis* no. 173 (May 2013): 7.

38. Skare, *A History of Palestinian Islamic Jihad*, 92.

39. Glenn E. Robinson, "Palestinian Tribes, Clans, and Notable Families," *Strategic Insights* 7, no. 4, http://edocs.nps.edu/npspubs/institutional/newsletters/strategic insight/2008/robinsonSep08.pdf.

40. International Crisis Group, "Inside Gaza: The Challenge of Clans and Families," *Middle East Report* no. 71, (Dec. 2007): 9.

41. Robinson, "Palestinian Tribes, Clans, and Notable Families."

42. Jeremy M. Weinstein, *Inside Rebellion: The Politics of Insurgent Violence* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 7.

43. Horizontal ties are relations that "link people across space and connect different geographic and social sites," and, if strong, "underpin collective action and interaction among geographically or socially mobile leaders." Paul Staniland, *Networks of Rebellion: Explaining Insurgent Cohesion and Collapse* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2014), 21.

close friends. The same applies to the Tulkarm Governorate, where the low education level of PIJ militants meant that the university was an unlikely source for meeting likeminded individuals and new recruits. Conversely, in Hebron, where PIJ militants had a higher level of education, many there met on and were recruited from university campuses. Kinship clusters are correspondingly far less prevalent in the southern West Bank,[44] and the movement's martyr biographies illustrate how kinship intersects with the class background and education levels of its militants.

Although kinship does not provide any final explanation to membership variations in the Palestinian Islamist resistance, it is a part of the answer. The discovery of these clusters is then consistent with the existing literature on the role of preexisting social networks as pathways for armed organization, whether among Jordanian jihadist milieu, German foreign fighters in Syria and Iraq, underground cells in Europe, or Iran's Basij militia.[45] As noted, this is not to reduce complex social phenomena to tribalism; rather, we must acknowledge that we cannot take organization as a given but instead have to focus on those structures enabling or inhibiting recruitment in general and insurgency in particular if we are to understand why one Islamist militant prefers Hamas while another prefers PIJ. As I have argued in this article, ideology cannot *alone* explain membership variations, and there is little to suggest that the class backgrounds and education levels of either movement's members differ from the average Palestinian.

CONCLUSION

Based on the martyr biographies provided by the two movements for their fallen fighters and suicide bombers, the militants of the Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas) and Islamic Jihad (PIJ) reflect the socioeconomic makeup of the wider Palestinian public in the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip. These movements' members appear to possess neither better educations nor more advantaged social backgrounds than the average Palestinian. Rather, differences between the two movements' fallen militants from 1992 until 2012 seem to be based on geography. This geographical distribution could possibly be based on kinship clusters, but more research must be conducted before one can provide conclusive remarks to this issue.

This article's main contribution is to offer the most elaborate socioeconomic data on Palestinian Islamist militants to date. These findings contribute to the growing scholarship on Palestinian Islamism, its socioeconomic foundation, and its role in violence. This article has also sought to add to the scholarly discussion on the link between education, poverty, and violence in national conflicts by demonstrating that

44. Skare, *A History of Palestinian Islamic Jihad*, 80.

45. For examples, see Henrik Gråtrud, "When Insularity Becomes a Problem: The Literature on Jihadism in Jordan," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* (2020): 8, 11, https://doi.org/10.1080/1057610X.2020.1723282; Sean C. Reynolds and Mohammed M. Hafez, "Social Network Analysis of German Foreign Fighters in Syria and Iraq," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 31, no. 4 (2019): 661–86. https://doi.org/10.1080/09546553.2016.1272456; Petter Nesser, *Islamist Terrorism in Europe: A History* (London: Hurst & Company, 2015); Afshon Ostovar, "Iran's Basij: Membership in a Militant Islamist Organization," *The Middle East Journal* 67, no. 3 (Summer 2013): 345–61. https://doi.org/10.3751/67.3.11.

the fallen militants of PIJ and Hamas reflect the socioeconomic makeup of Palestinian society under occupation. Last, this article has hypothesized that membership variations between the two movements can be accounted for by preexisting social networks that create kinship clusters, evident in the martyr biography data.

My findings are likely to differ slightly from the existing literature because, first, I have analyzed far more data. This does not merely pertain to a dataset that is 7.5 and 15.5 larger, but also because a far longer time span — twenty years instead of six — has been analyzed. Second, my findings presumably differ because I did not limit my data collection to suicide bombers but also included all fallen militants in PIJ and Hamas, whether killed in a violent clash or by a bomb from an Israeli warplane. Third, my methodological approaches have, to some extent, differed, as I had no intention of inferring the poverty levels of fallen militants but instead compared their listed jobs and academic specializations to overall Palestinian labor divisions.

I am not suggesting that socioeconomic status does not matter for membership choices among Palestinian Islamist militants on the individual level. Nor do I, as mentioned, suggest that ideology or political convictions are irrelevant. It would be unexpected if not one single militant joined the movement for economic reasons (either because of the salary or because their family would be compensated) or ideological sympathies. Yet, by analyzing the collection of martyr biographies from the Hamas's 'Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades and PIJ over the 20-year period of 1992 to 2012, little suggests that the socioeconomic status of these movements' fallen militants is significantly different from the broader Palestinian population on a macro level.

I predict three main objections to my findings. The first is the reliability of martyr biographies in general and the possibility that the socioeconomic backgrounds of the Qassam Brigades and PIJ have been altered to elevate the status of the two movements. I believe this is unlikely because the data from both movements offer a wide spectrum of employments. Thus, if there was an ideological or political inclination to alter the employment data of the fallen militants, then one would expect this spectrum to be narrower with a particular emphasis on one sector (the religious one, for example).

A second valid objection is the lack of socioeconomic data from the political wing of Hamas. I concur that it would be favorable to have access to this data, as it would presumably widen the socioeconomic spectrum analyzed in this article and highlight differences within the movement. It would also lessen the inherent bias in analyzing martyr biographies, as the majority of them were young men in their late teens and early twenties. Yet, although the data are partial, this is the most elaborate socioeconomic data sample on Palestinian Islamist militants to date, and it has already undermined existing claims in the scholarship.

Last, Palestinian society is deeply fragmented along geographical, political, economic, and cultural lines. Some may argue that one should analyze differences in broader institutions like, for example, education more carefully, considering the differences between government schools in the West Bank run by the Palestinian Authority, public schools in occupied East Jerusalem, and refugee camp schools run by the United Nations Relief and Work Agency (UNRWA), to mention just a few. It is also evident that the economic conditions vary substantially between the Gaza Strip,

with its unemployment and forced de-development,[46] and the West Bank. Nevertheless, I do not believe that this should factor too heavily in considering the lives of militants from Hamas Brigades and PIJ, since both were founded in the Gaza Strip and remain dominant there.

Although the aim of this article has not primarily been theoretical, it has identified important aspects to focus upon in order to develop a greater understanding of membership variations in the Palestinian resistance. The key component seems to be kinship clusters, which should receive more scholarly attention. The clashes between Gaza's Dughmush clan and Hamas in 2007, which caught Western attention as the backdrop for the abduction of a BBC reporter, are a case in point. As one Dughmush militant explained: "The Dughmush are all Fatah."[47]

46. See Sara Roy, *The Gaza Strip: The Political Development of De-Development* (Washington, DC: Institute for Palestine Studies, 1995).

47. Quoted in Crisis Group, "Inside Gaza," 14.