



The Al-Aqsa Flood Pioneers A new youth movement established by Hamas in Lebanon to attack Israel

December 28, 2023

Overview¹

- ▶ On December 4, 2023, the Hamas movement announced the establishment of a new youth movement in the Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon called the Al-Aqsa Flood Pioneers, which will constitute, according to Hamas, a "vanguard resistance force which will take part in the liberation of Jerusalem and al-Aqsa Mosque." In practice, the movement will serve as an organizational framework for ideological recruitment, and will train young Palestinians in the refugee camps in Lebanon preparing them to be Hamas terrorist operatives who will attack Israel from the Lebanese border, following the model of youth movements of other terrorist organizations.
- ▶ In the wake of reservations from many people in Lebanon, including government officials, regarding the establishment of the movement, Hamas tried to minimize its importance and represent it as an "ideological," non-militant social movement, but apparently the Lebanese public was not convinced. Their reservations stem mainly from a concern that it will soon become a state within a state, as Fatah was in south Lebanon from the late 1960s until 1982 (the First Lebanon War), in an area dubbed "Fatahland," and turn into another armed militia operating alongside Hezbollah and the "resistance axis"² from Lebanon.
- ▶ According to Lebanese sources, Hamas announced the youth movement's establishment without coordinating with the Lebanese authorities, for whom it constituted an infringement of the Lebanese government's sovereignty and represented the country in a problematic light, especially given the current hostilities between Hezbollah and Israel, which intensified significantly after the outbreak of the war in the Gaza Strip. Another reason for the Lebanese government's dissatisfaction is Lebanon's dependence on aid from Western and moderate Arab countries for its severe political and economic crises and its desire to portray itself

¹ Click <https://www.terrorism-info.org.il/en> to subscribe and receive the ITIC's daily updates as well as its other publications.

² Iran, Syria, Hezbollah, the Palestinian terrorist organizations, the Shi'ite Houthis in Yemen and the pro-Iranian militias in Iraq.

in the eyes of the Western world as a free, pro-Western, sovereign country, which does not want fighting and terrorism emanating from its territory.

► Hezbollah's argument that it was not aware of the establishment of the movement is unlikely, since everything that happens in south Lebanon is under the organization's control. In ITIC assessment, Hezbollah is fully aware of the movement's existence and may even have been party to its establishment. For Hezbollah, the movement will provide an additional reservoir of Sunni terrorist operatives who can be recruited to fight against Israel and will give it a further grip on the Palestinian refugee camps.

Further Information

► On December 4, 2023, in the midst of the war in the Gaza Strip and the tensions in the north, the Hamas movement in Lebanon announced the establishment of a youth movement called the Al-Aqsa Flood Pioneers, named for Operation al-Aqsa Flood, the name Hamas gave to the terrorist attack and massacre its operatives carried out on October 7, 2023, in which approximately 1,200 Israelis were murdered and 240 were kidnapped.

► In a formal notice, the "Islamic resistance movement Hamas in Lebanon" announced the establishment of the Al-Aqsa Flood Pioneers, claiming it has been established "for religious reasons" and reliance on the "words of Allah" in the Qur'an to encourage jihad,³ **"in an effort to have our people and our young people participate in 'resisting' [attacking] the 'occupation' and to benefit from their energy and scientific and technical abilities."** Later, a call was directed to the Palestinian men and young people in Lebanon to "join the vanguard of the 'resistance'" and participate in the "liberation of Jerusalem" and al-Aqsa Mosque to create a better future for the Palestinian people (X account of a researcher named Anwar Malik and al-Wataniya, December 4, 2023). Clearly, the objective of the movement is to attack Israel, and naming it after a massacre of Israeli citizens indicates its nature and the ideology it intends to inculcate.

³ Qur'an Surah al-Anfal, verse 60: "And prepare against them all the power you can muster, and all the cavalry you can mobilize, to terrify thereby God's enemies and your enemies, and others besides them whom you do not know, but God knows them. Whatever you spend in God's way will be repaid to you in full, and you will not be wronged." The verse is often used by the Muslim Brotherhood, of which Hamas is an offshoot, and other Islamist elements to encourage jihad.



The social network announcement of the establishment of the Al-Aqsa Flood Pioneers (Anwar Malik's X account, December 4, 2023)

► Three days after the announcement, Hamas began distributing flyers calling on the Palestinian youth in the Ein al-Hilweh refugee camp near Sidon to act in three designated centers. The name of the youth movement and its logo appeared at the top of the flyer, and below it was the call to "Participate as pioneers of the resistance project " (Al-Aqsa Flood Pioneers). The flyer also gave information about the registration centers and their hours of operation (mrym_aljr's X account, December 7, 2023).



The flyers announcing the opening of the registration centers for the "Pioneers of the Al-Aqsa" movement (mrym_aljr's X account, December 7, 2023)

► The logo designed for the youth movement is virtually a duplicate of the one Hamas chose for Operation al-Aqsa Flood. Both feature a terrorist operative wearing a keffiyeh and an Izz

al-Din Qassam Brigades headband and holding an assault rifle in one hand and a Qur'an in the other, to emphasize Hamas' religious outlook. The youth movement logo reads, "Al-Aqsa Flood Pioneers," and the other, "Operation al-Aqsa Flood." The predominant color is green, associated with both Hamas and Islam.



Right: Al-Aqsa Flood Pioneers logo (Mrym_aljr's X account, December 7, 2023). Left: Operation al-Aqsa Flood logo (Wikipedia)

► Sources in Hamas claimed the inspiration for establishing the youth movement was the "great support that Hamas received" following Operation al-Aqsa Flood and the desire of many to join its ranks, especially in Lebanon. According to the sources, Hamas has a presence in 12 Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon. They emphasized that the Al-Aqsa Flood Pioneers movement was not only military, anyone who wanted to could contribute in other ways such as through the media, politics, charity, guidance and education. They claimed their objective was to integrate as many Palestinians as possible into the movement (al-Sharq al-Awsat, December 4, 2023).

► However, there is considerable evidence regarding the movement's mission to indicate that it is another aspect of the terrorist organizations in Lebanon, which operate among children and adolescents, training them to join the ranks of their military-terrorist wings when they are older. The idea has been put into practice by the youth movements of Hezbollah (Imam al-Mahdi Scouts)⁴ and ISIS (Lion Cubs of the Caliphate). Hamas in the Gaza Strip has a similar framework which operates summer camps every year, where the next

⁴ For further information, see the July 2019 ITIC report, "[The Imam Al-Mahdi Scouts Association: Hezbollah's youth movement which indoctrinates youth with Iranian radical Shiite Islam and serves as a source of youngsters who join Hezbollah.](#)"

generation of the movement's terrorist operatives are indoctrinated and receive military training.⁵

►Despite Hamas' insistence that the youth movement project is more than military, there is abundant evidence to the contrary. For example, **Palestinian journalist Abd al-Bari Atwan** stated the movement had the potential to be very large, claiming that many of the 250,000 Palestinian refugees living in Lebanon would join it. He said it would be armed and have precision missiles, weapons and "brains" and work in coordination with Hezbollah, which would train its forces. He added that the proximity of south Lebanon to the Galilee would help the "liberation of Palestine" in south Lebanon, and defined the event as "the beginning of a new dawn of 'resistance' [Palestinian terrorism] from Lebanon" (Abd al-Bari Atwan's YouTube channel, December 5, 2023).⁶

►A Palestinian boy from the Ein al-Hilweh refugee camp who joined the movement stated that "We are on the path to liberate our lands from the Zionists." He spoke at an event organized by Hamas in Sidon, apparently in the Ein al-Hilweh refugee camp, while wearing a mask and a headband of the nukhba, the Izz al-Din Qassam Brigades' elite unit whose terrorist operatives participated in the attack and massacre on October 7. Other boys stood next to him wearing hats and headbands of the Izz al-Din Qassam Brigades' nukhba and of the Jerusalem Brigades, the Palestinian Islamic Jihad's military-terrorist wing, with the shahada, the Islamic profession of faith on it ("There is no god but Allah and Muhammad is his prophet"), the motto of the global jihad movement.

►A Palestinian boy who was at the event said that joining the movement included learning religious values and training. A Palestinian man who attended claimed that everything should be channeled to "resisting" [attacking] the "occupation," preparing to stand firm and attack (X account "We remember the 2006 war and it will not be repeated, December 12, 2023).⁷

⁵ For further information, see the August 2023 ITIC report, " [Hamas summer camps in the Gaza Strip.](#)"

⁶ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LazXAhmv8NA&t=19s>

⁷ <https://twitter.com/TenzkrWmaTen3ad/status/1734602987350212688>



A boy who joined the Al-Aqsa Flood Pioneers
 (X account of "We remember the 2006 war and it will not be repeated," December 12, 2023)

Lebanese Criticism of the Establishment of the Hamas Youth Movement

- ▶ Lebanese politicians, public figures and many citizens, especially members of the Sunni and Christian communities, protested the establishment of the movement, called on Hamas to retract the announcement and warned that they would not allow a repeat of Lebanon's bitter experiences of the late sixties and the seventies, when Fatah waged its "struggle" against Israel from territory it controlled (Fatahland) inside Lebanon. According to the politicians, the Lebanese people support the right of the Palestinians to conduct their "struggle," but they are not willing to have it conducted from Lebanese territory, as the Lebanese people are not prepared to bear the results of the fighting at their expense or to have their sovereignty compromised.
- ▶ **Gebran Bassil, the leader of the Free Patriotic Movement**, stated that he strongly opposed the establishment of a Hamas youth movement, adding that any armed action in Lebanese territory constituted an infringement of Lebanese national sovereignty. He said Lebanon had the right to become strong through "national resistance" to defend itself, but if a Hamasland was established in Lebanese territory with the goal of attacking Israel, Lebanon would be weakened (al-Nashra, December 5, 2023).
- ▶ **Samy Gemayel, chairman of the Phalanges Party**, said the place of the Al-Aqsa Flood Pioneers was in "Palestine", not Lebanon and that they would not return to the past (Samy Gemayel's X account, December 4, 2023).



Text of Samy Gemayel's post (Samy Gemayel's X account, December 4, 2023)

► **Camille Chamoun, a member of the Lebanese parliament and head of the Free Nationalist Party**, said that Lebanese sovereignty was being violated and Hamas had not received permission from anyone to establish a youth movement. He said they should learn from history and not repeat their mistakes, otherwise it was impossible to know what it would lead to (MTV, December 6, 2023).

► Criticism was not heard only from Christian politicians, it was also heard from Sunni politicians. **For example, Ashraf Rifi, a member of the Lebanese Parliament and former minister of justice**, criticized the Hamas announcement in a series of posts to his X account. He emphasized that the establishment of the Al-Aqsa Flood Pioneers in Lebanon was a serious mistake which they demanded be reversed, since it brought back memories of things that must not be repeated. It harmed the Palestinian issue and worked for the good of the "resistance axis," which had made capital out of it. In another tweet, he stated that the struggle for the liberation of "Palestine" had its place "in the occupied land." All the Lebanese, he wrote, supported the Palestinian people in their "struggle" to establish an independent Palestinian state (Ashraf Rifi's X account, December 5, 2023).

► **Khalil al-Hillu, a Lebanese political science and strategy researcher**, noted that initial steps are always small and neutral, and then, at any given moment, when the circumstances change, it is possible to switch to military[terrorist] activity. Therefore, the current step is very dangerous, exposing Lebanon to greater risk of being attacked by Israel than its current risk (X account of "We remember the 2006 war and it will not be repeated," December 12, 2023).

► A Lebanese group operating in the X Network under the name "We remember the 2006 war and it will not be repeated" criticized the establishment of the Hamas youth movement and published a number of cartoons criticizing Hamas. In one Hamas is represented as a cigarette lighter igniting the matches representing Hezbollah, while Lebanon is likened to a

dry haystack (X account of "We remember the 2006 war and it will not be repeated," December 12, 2023).



The cartoon

(X account of "We remember the 2006 war and it will not be repeated," December 12, 2023)

► A cartoon was published showing a Hamas terrorist operative and an IDF soldier exchanging fire with a bleeding cedar of Lebanon between them (X account of "We remember the 2006 war and it will not be repeated," December 12, 2023).



The cartoon

(X account of "We remember the 2006 war and it will not be repeated," December 10, 2023)

Hamas and the Criticism in Lebanon

► Given the criticism leveled at the establishment of the youth movement, Hamas was forced to clarify the situation and even apologize. **Ahmed Abd al-Hadi, the Hamas representative in Lebanon**, said that the announcement about the establishment of the movement had been "misunderstood," and they had no intention to establish a military organization, but rather to establish a general "resistance" [anti-Israeli terrorist] project. He denied that their goal was to take over the Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon and gave assurances that they had no intention of establishing a Hamasland and there was no need to be concerned.

He claimed the Al-Aqsa Flood Pioneers was not a military movement whose objective was to recruit operatives and train them to join the ranks of the "armed resistance," but rather a grassroots framework designed to recruit young Palestinians. He also claimed that the inspiration for it was born of Operation al-Aqsa Flood, when Hamas noticed that young Palestinians were flocking to it, and they decided to absorb them and build their personalities with respect to national, religious, moral and physical points of view. He claimed their goal was to attract young people and work to integrate them into "community service programs and charity activities." Abd al-Hadi added that he expected the Lebanese to "understand" and claimed Hamas respected Lebanese sovereignty and law, and would never do anything to harm Lebanon's security, as Hamas' history testified. He reiterated that there was no need to worry about the existence of the youth movement because it would not harm Lebanon or have a negative effect on the Palestinians (al-Nashra website, December 5, 2023; Aljazeera.net, December 4, 2023).

► **Senior Hamas terrorist Osama Hamdan** claimed Hamas policy was clear, members of the movement did not interfere in Lebanon's internal affairs, but were connected to all political and societal elements Lebanon. He added it was a "cultural and ideological recruitment program" designed to attract Palestinian youth to keep them from following ideas that might not be in line with the interests of the Palestinian issue and the "resistance" to Israel (al-Jazeera Mubasher YouTube channel, December 5, 2023).

► **Rifat Marra, a member of the political bureau of Hamas**, claimed that it was a framework of "popular mobilization" and not a military organization or a "warlike" body, but designed to utilize the energies of the Palestinian youth in the service of the Palestinian issue (Agence France-Presse, December 5, 2023).

► Following the clarification by the Hamas movement, **Najib Mikati, the Prime Minister of the interim government of Lebanon**, also commented on the issue. He said that the announcement of the establishment of the movement was completely unacceptable and that they would not agree to it. He also added that the relevant parties had stated that the movement had not been established for military operations (al-Nashra, December 5, 2023).

► The publication of Hamas' clarifications did not prevent public criticism from continuing. Lebanese journalists and commentators offered various hypotheses regarding the Hamas and Hezbollah's goals for establishing the movement, and claimed that one of them was to divert public attention from the issue of Hezbollah's weapons and the demand to implement

Resolution 1701, which prohibits the organization's presence in south Lebanon. They also claimed that establishing the movement was also an attempt to strengthen Hamas' grip on the refugee camps in Lebanon in preparation for their becoming a seat for the Hamas leadership after the war. It was also claimed that the movement was established to mobilize Sunni support for Hezbollah and to attract "resistance" fighters [terrorist operatives] to fight against Israel from south Lebanon (MEMRI, December 13, 2023).

Hamas-Hezbollah Coordination?

- ▶The Lebanese newspaper al-Nashra's website stated that Hamas had not coordinated publicizing the establishment of the movement with Hezbollah and that there had been "brisk contacts" between the Hezbollah and Hamas leaderships after the publication (al-Nashra's website, December 5, 2023).
- ▶However, it seems that Hezbollah is definitely involved in the process but wants to downplay so that it can later claim that it is not related to the new network's activity when it attacks Israel from south Lebanon, thus fending off internal Lebanese and international criticism.
- ▶**Samir Geagea, chairman of the Lebanese Forces Party**, as well as other sources in Lebanon, claimed that Hezbollah was behind the announcement of the new movement, since it was clear to everyone that no organization could operate in south Lebanon without Hezbollah's approval. **Ayat Yazbek, a member of the Lebanese Parliament**, also stated he did not believe that Hezbollah, which is affiliated with the Iranian regime, did not know that such a body had been established south of the Litani River. He said the only reason for its establishment was to give Hezbollah new ploys with which to deceive the international community. In addition, it was an attempt to embarrass the Lebanese government (MEMRI, December 13, 2023; (X account of "We remember the 2006 war and it will not be repeated," December 12, 2023).
- ▶According to the Lebanese website al-Mayadeen, Hezbollah has recently been working to attract the Sunni population that sympathizes with Hamas and to invest in it to gain Sunni support for its activities. According to the report, given the establishment of the Al-Aqsa Flood Pioneers, Hezbollah has taken action to establish new groups called Youth of the United Arenas to promote activity against Israel in south Lebanon. It is possible that some of

Hamas' military-terrorist operatives will leave the Gaza Strip, and in such a situation, the Al-Aqsa Flood Pioneers will let them enter Lebanon, and at a later date the movement will become a base for military-terrorist activity against Israel and the south Lebanon region will become the Resistance Axis Land (al-Medan, December 5, 2023).

►Other sources in Lebanon, including **journalist Ali Hamada**, claimed that the youth movement was established to strengthen Hamas' influence in the refugee camps, which it plans to use as its new strongholds once it has been removed from the Gaza Strip (al-Nahar, December 7, 2023).