



Terrorism as Self-Help: Accounts of Palestinian Youth Incarcerated in Israeli Prisons for Security Violations

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Abstract

Adopting and expanding Black's conception of terrorism as self-help, this study examines how Palestinian youth become involved in security violations. Based on an analysis of in-depth interviews conducted with 10 Palestinian youth incarcerated in Israeli prisons, their experiences are described, including the aftermath of arrest and imprisonment. Their accounts are complemented by interviews with six wardens and correctional officers overseeing the prison's youth wings, a review of military court transcripts from proceedings leading up to the youth's incarceration, and observations of participants' daily prison routines. The data detail pathways and recruitment processes, motivations, rewarding aspects of participation, and the costs incurred as a result by participants and their families. Security violations are analyzed as self-help responses to collective grievances and personal problems. The theoretical and policy implications of the findings are discussed.

Keywords

Palestinian youth, security violations, terrorism, self-help, Israeli military court, youth wings of Israeli prisons

In conflict zones around the world, children are commonly victims of terrorism, but also perpetrators. Persons under the age of 18—legally “minors,” hereafter referred to as “children,” “youth,” and “adolescents”¹—have participated in insurgencies, wars,

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and terrorist operations across Africa, Asia, and the Middle East. They have served as camouflaged guerrillas or uniformed soldiers (Peters, 2005), and more recently as terrorists, including suicide bombers (Berko & Erez, 2005; Human Rights Watch [HRW], 2004; Venhaus, 2010). United Nations (UN) conventions prohibiting the use of minors in armed conflicts notwithstanding (United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner [UNHROHC], 1990), many government forces, paramilitary organizations, rebel groups, and terrorist organizations recruit and employ children in military functions and operations—even those younger than 15 (Singer, 2005a, 2005b).

The rise of the child terrorist (Bloom & Horgan, 2015; Gray & Matchin III, 2008) has raised questions about radicalization and recruitment of children, and their role in terrorism. Whereas the use of children as soldiers² has been examined extensively (Rosen, 2005, 2007; Wessells, 2006), there is little research on children in terrorism (Ben-Yehuda & Levin-Banchik, 2011; Roberts, 2015; Weinberg, Pedahzur, & Hirsch-Hoefler, 2004), or security violations by Palestinian youth in particular.³ Palestinian terrorist organizations such as Hamas, Islamic Jihad, and Fatah have regularly recruited and employed children (HRW, 2004; Times of Israel Staff, 2015).

Applying and expanding Black's theoretical framework of terrorism as a form of "unilateral self-help" (Black, 2004b, p. 9), this article examines how Palestinian adolescents become involved in security violations, risk factors in their journeys from recruitment to hostilities, subsequent arrest and incarceration, and reflections on the experience. It suggests that children's participation in terrorism can be attributed to a confluence of factors that produce violent radicalization more generally⁴: personal and collective grievances or needs, networks and interpersonal ties, political or religious ideologies, and enabling environments or support structures (Hafez & Mullins, 2015). However, compared with their adult counterparts, for youth, the salience of each factor is further magnified by the lack of alternative means for exerting social control; the subversive act may then "serve as a cry for help from people who are less capable of attracting legal attention without it" (Black, 1983, p. 41). As this study suggests, the pursuit of security violations as self-help is motivated by collective grievances as well as personal problems.

The article proceeds as follows: It first reviews extant research, government reports, and media communications addressing the motives, vulnerabilities, and environments that lead Palestinian youth to terrorism, techniques terrorist organizations use to recruit youth, and the benefits of involving children for such purposes. Following a discussion of the theoretical framework, research setting, and methodology, the findings are presented in an account-based analysis. The conclusion outlines policy implications regarding youth involvement in militant activities.

Palestinian Children in Terrorism: A Review

The Palestinian–Israeli conflict over a disputed territory represents a "'chronic' grievance" (Black, 2004b, citing Senechal de la Roche [1996], 13), underlying terrorism in Israel. The local contexts and the lived realities of Palestinian youth create vulnerabilities and motivations for involvement in collective action (Black, 2004b; Boxer et al.,

2013; Crenshaw, 1986). Palestinian youth who have experienced hardships (e.g., destruction of homes, loss of family members or close friends, displacement) would be more likely to seek retribution and revenge (Erez & Berko, 2014; Masten & Narayan, 2012; McCauley & Moskaleiko, 2008; Somasundaram, 2002). Children, however, may engage in terrorism for other reasons, including thrill and excitement (Berko & Erez, 2007; Katz, 1988; Venhaus, 2010), or the material advantages and economic support that terrorist organizations offer. For adolescent males, interactions with adults and participation in adult activities also provide ways to enhance their status, sense of self-worth, and manliness (Berko & Erez, 2005; Crenshaw, 1986).

Palestinian children are continuously exposed to incitement by Palestinian political (e.g., government leaders), cultural and religious (e.g., mosques, sermons), educational (e.g., schools, textbooks), and social institutions (e.g., mass communication, social media). Impressionable minds are inculcated with an ideology that bestows social recognition, praise, and rewards on those who join the cause (Hafez, 2006). In Palestinian cities, posters of *shaheeds* (martyrs) appear on the walls of schools, and streets or parks are named in their honor (Hafez, 2006; McCauley & Moskaleiko, 2008, p. 428). Palestinian television repeatedly broadcasts songs that glorify those who engage in martyrdom (Homeland Security Institute, 2009). Afterschool programs, summer camps, and organized leisure activities for children are used to instill hate, militant values, the desire to become *shaheeds*, and readiness for combat (Homeland Security Institute, 2009). Personal sacrifice for the cause is promoted (Mozes & Weimann, 2010; Weimann, 2008) as children are taught how to use weapons, wear explosive suicide belts, and simulate capturing Israeli soldiers or killing civilians (Booth & Eglash, 2014; Chasmar, 2014; Homeland Security Institute, 2009).

Terrorist organizations use a range of methods to persuade youth to join their ranks, from promises of kinship, material well-being, adventure, honor, or salvation, to coercive threats such as disclosing family dishonor (Berko, 2007).⁵ Similar to adults, recruitment of children can involve “several techniques, including pep talks, group pressure, and extrications of personal and public commitments from which the candidate will find it difficult, if not impossible, to turn back” (Moghadam, 2003, p. 69). Ideological or religious slogans are invoked and accompany recruitment methods (Brym, 2007, p. 41; Grimland, Apter, & Kerkhof, 2006), and recruiters leverage shared personal or collective grievances to convince youth that revenge is merited or required (McCauley & Moskaleiko, 2008, p. 416). Organizations offer disadvantaged Palestinian adolescents material conditions and benefits that youth facing dire conditions cannot otherwise attain. Assurances of financial welfare for children and their families help in securing agreement to participate in terrorism, including martyrdom (Berko, 2012).

Enlisting children provides practical, tactical, and strategic benefits to insurgent groups and terrorist organizations (Erez & Berko, 2014; Homeland Security Institute, 2009; Rosen, 2005). Children’s physical, mental, and cognitive development renders them vulnerable to manipulation and successful recruitment.⁶ The tendency of children to respect and obey authoritative adult figures, often with little or no recompense, is particularly pronounced in traditional Arab/Palestinian society, where age is a

critical consideration in social hierarchy (Erez, Ibarra, & Gur, 2015). For example, children have unwittingly obeyed requests to transfer explosives or commit suicide bombings (Cosgrove-Mather, 2004; Dudkevitch, 2005; Harel, 2004; Reynolds, 2004),⁷ sometimes unaware their recruiters could remotely detonate a device they were transporting (Daraghmeh, 2004; Dershowitz, 2005, pp. 75-88).⁸ Their naiveté regarding the true nature of their role serves the larger purpose of the mission by reducing the likelihood they would exhibit signs of stress that arouse suspicion.

Children can effectively fulfill certain operational roles and functions, in part because they are less likely to garner attention or invoke surveillance by authorities, and due to their size. Palestinian terrorist organizations have employed children as lookouts, messengers, spies, recruiters, and to dig tunnels (e.g., for smuggling, attacking, storage, shelter; Pelham, 2012, p. 23). Children are also used to take pictures, smuggle weapons, serve as “human shields” (Bargu, 2013; Butler, 2015)⁹ or suicide bombers (Erlanger, 2004), provide a “cover story” (e.g., family traveling to an event), or guard meeting locations and operations (Homeland Security Institute, 2009, pp. 15-20). The participation of children in subversive activities, such as throwing stones and Molotov cocktails, has symbolic value, emphasizing the pervasiveness of the conflict, and attracting media attention. Filming soldiers involved in skirmishes with or arresting children generates images that evoke public and international moral outrage.¹⁰

In sum, Palestinian children are pushed toward involvement by the conflict and context in which they are raised, and pulled into terrorist activities by the allure of material benefits and other gratifications they expect to receive, and by adults who value their pliability and minimal consideration of long-term consequences.

Theoretical Framework

Initially applied to crime (Black, 1983), terrorism has been theorized as a form of self-help (Black, 2004a, 2004b). In the context of crime, perpetrators believe they have been aggrieved by the victim, and resort to crime as self-help to exert social control. Historically, self-help was the only recourse to resolve perceived grievances (Black, 1983, pp. 34-35), although violent reprisals outside the boundaries of the law are still pursued (e.g., homicide, gang activity, lynching). In these cases, aggrieved perpetrators may feel that the personal injustice they suffered would not be addressed by authorities, making it necessary to pursue their own version of justice.

Terrorism, by contrast, amounts to self-help attempts to correct a “highly moralistic” grievance at the collective rather than the personal level (Black, 2004a, p. 17). Repeated and “unilateral self-help by organized civilians who covertly inflict mass violence on other civilians” (Black, 2004b, p. 10), terrorism often involves selecting targets perceived as having “collective liability” (Black, 2004b, p. 10), such as civilians “in otherwise peaceful settings” (p. 11)¹¹ or representatives of the source of the grievance, such as soldiers (Black, 2004a). Both crime and terrorism reflect institutional failures to address grievances, where aggrieved parties resort to violence as social control.

The social geometry of terrorism involves differences in status, power, access to law, and other features of social distance, both cultural and relational, between people

and groups (Black, 1976, 2004a). Violence is upward (against a superior), and addresses vulnerabilities attached to social location in a contested social space (Black, 2004a, p. 16). In the Israeli–Palestinian context, a “conflict structure” has emerged between individuals, communities, and societies, whereby the social distance generates substantial risks for violence: “Strong ties among the aggrieved and a lack of ties to their adversaries make a highly moralistic, explosive, and lethal combination” (Black, 2004b, p. 13).¹² When “a demand for political independence or a return of disputed territory” (Black, 2004b, p. 13) underlies a conflict, the emerging collective grievance is bound to be addressed through quasi-warfare (Black, 2004a, p. 16)—as is the case in the Israeli–Palestinian conflict.

The social ecology of Palestinian society suggests a convergence of multi-level risk factors¹³ leading to grievances, both collective and personal: individual vulnerabilities, familial hardships, economic necessity, peer group pressures or rewards, a pervasive nationalistic ideology, and an enabling environment (Atran, 2010; Berko & Erez, 2005; Horgan, 2008; McCauley & Moskaleiko, 2008; Moghaddam, 2005; Post, 2009; Stern, 2003, 2010). As individual, familial, communal, and societal influences coalesce, children who grow up in conflict zones, where violence is normalized (Masten & Narayan, 2012), are likely to join the fight for a unifying cause, or mobilize it to address various grievances. Participation under such circumstances is a rational choice (McCauley & Moskaleiko, 2008, p. 417).

The interviewees in this study, born in the late 1980s through the mid-1990s, grew up in the social, cultural, and political context that promotes terrorism. Their accounts, described in the data section, reveal the progression from radicalization to violence or related activities. The data suggest that involvement in security violations may stem from a range of motives—sheer ideology, retaliation for the death of a loved one in military action, or for various personal gains (e.g., avoiding mistreatment at home, improving school performance, enhancing social status with peers)—all carried out as “self-help” (Black, 1983, p. 34, 2004a, p. 10, 2004b).

The Present Study

Research Context

Palestinians of all ages who have perpetrated both criminal and security-related offenses in the Palestinian territories are commonly tried by the Israeli military court. Detained or incarcerated Palestinian security offenders are housed separately from the criminal population, either in designated prisons or within special wings of general prisons. Security violators under the age of 18 are tried and housed separately from adults. Youth receive priority on military court dockets, with court officials making special attempts to expedite their processing. Investigatory protocol places restrictions on the interrogations of children, such as prohibitions on nighttime questioning, and allowing their parents to be present during proceedings. A special military judge¹⁴ exclusively handles youth cases, becoming familiar with the circumstances that bring Palestinian adolescents to court. Relative to adults convicted of comparable offenses,

youth receive more lenient penalties. A mandatory presentence report prepared by a specialized probation officer is submitted to the judge prior to sentencing.

During the data collection period—from 2003 to 2007—the average yearly number of Palestinian youth in Israeli prisons for security offenders was 130.¹⁵ Detained and incarcerated adolescents were housed in three youth wings of a prison located in central Israel. These sections of the adult prison were adapted to house security prisoners who were minors. They included a playground, yard, youth club (e.g., television, games), educational center, library, and special programs geared toward youth focusing on learning through social interactions, entertainment, and sports.

At the time of the study, roughly eight out of 10 Palestinian youth imprisoned for security violations were between 14 and 16-and-a-half years of age, with the rest between 17 and 18. A quarter of the adolescents were convicted of offenses such as stabbing Israeli soldiers or citizens, throwing Molotov cocktails or other explosives, transporting (willingly or unknowingly) explosives in backpacks, bags, or on belts, and serving as (failed) suicide bombers. About half were imprisoned for throwing stones or cement blocks at people or moving cars that involved serious harm or the potential for such harm.¹⁶ The remainder were convicted of other violations, such as entering Israel illegally, often in connection with subversive activities. First-time young security offenders served an average prison sentence of 6 months. Overall, for all incarcerated adolescents, the average time served was between 1 to 2 years.¹⁷ Most of the imprisoned youth were released while still minors, and serious offenders serving relatively longer sentences were transferred to the adult prison for security offenders upon turning 18.

Method, Data Collection, and Procedures

The study used a mixed-methods approach that incorporated insights gleaned from in-depth interviews, official court documents, and observations. Firstly, open-ended interviews were conducted with male detainees housed in the youth wings of the Israeli prison for security violations that resulted or had the potential to result in serious harm ($N = 10$).¹⁸ Approval to interview Palestinian security violators was obtained from the institutional review board and the ethics committee of the Israel Prison Service. Data collection was then adapted to the “informal” social structure (Sykes, 1958) of the youth wings: Recruitment proceeded by first obtaining the “endorsement” of two youth who were “spokespersons” for their respective wings.¹⁹ Interviewees were then selected according to the perceived seriousness of their offense (high, medium, low), judged by the offense details and the penalty imposed as recorded in the prison and court files. Efforts were also made to include representatives of both youth wings of the prison, as each was loosely associated with a different organization in Palestinian society—Fattah and Hamas.²⁰ The resulting sample included youth from the two wings who committed offenses with various levels of seriousness: recruiting for or attempting to carry out suicide bombings; involvement in the chain of activities leading to these attacks, such as possession or transportation of weapons; and throwing stones, cement bricks, or other objects that resulted in injury or had the potential

for serious harm. The participants' age ranged from 15 to 17-and-a-half, and all had served at least 3 months of their sentence. All youth recruited to participate agreed to be interviewed individually.

The interview began by asking participants to tell their life story, with open-ended or probing follow-up questions. Topics included interviewees' personal and family background, upbringing, school and social experiences, social networks, leisure time and after school activities, accomplishments or problems they wished to discuss including how they ended up in prison, and any other issues they wanted to broach. Interviews lasted about 3 hours and were conducted in a designated place in the prison (e.g., the prisoners' club, library) in Arabic, Hebrew, or a mixture of both languages.

Secondly, interviews were conducted with correctional and administrative staff members ($N = 6$) at different levels of the prison hierarchy who were assigned to or responsible for the Palestinian youth wings or detention areas in the military courts. Interviewees included the two wardens in charge of the youth wings, and the officers they recommended for interviewing. The latter interacted with and were familiar with the personal circumstances of the youth, their legal cases, needs, and concerns, as well as those expressed by their families. These officers had also supervised the youth at different phases of the security violation process—a security officer working in each of the youth wings, the chief warden of the prison that houses these wings, the warden/commander of another prison adjacent to the military court that contains a youth wing, and the commander of the detention area where youth are brought prior to their court appearance. The interviews with the six practitioners were also open-ended, and addressed general patterns in pathways of Palestinian youth to prison; reactions, grievances, and other concerns the youth have while incarcerated; and interactions they have with officers, fellow inmates, or family members. The interviews lasted between 1 and 2 hours, with follow-up questions for clarification.

The interview data were examined inductively to identify themes and subthemes (Charmaz, 2006). Paralleling the narratives provided by interviewees, a temporal approach was taken to organizing the relevance of statements, describing pathways, risk factors (individual, familial, communal, societal), motivations and justifications for involvement, recruitment processes and patterns, family reactions, and prison experiences. Commonalities and variations were identified and recorded. Transcripts of the interviews with correctional staff were likewise analyzed for relevant comments on such processes, patterns, or circumstances. The merit of such an approach is that it demonstrates the salience of general theoretical concepts in inductively derived data, and vice versa.

Thirdly, transcripts of the military court cases addressing the security violations of the youth in the sample were reviewed. The "official records," together with the correctional officers' interviews, helped to corroborate the factual details of interviewees' statements, contextualize the accounts, and formulate the analysis.

Lastly, informal observations took place while waiting for interviewees to become available,²¹ between scheduled interviews, and in the military court area. Observations focused on social interactions among imprisoned youth, with prison staff, and with their family members²²; they occurred throughout the wings, as the youth socialized in the

prison yard, kitchen and dining areas, classes, sports activities, as well as in military court corridors, while awaiting their court appearances, or during and following trials.

Findings

The salience of the political conflict with Israel in Palestinian everyday life, coupled with a prevailing and all-encompassing ideology of resistance or jihad, framed and justified the adolescents' security violations. Concurrently, the narratives reveal underlying personal, familial, and communal needs and vulnerabilities that motivated the subversive activity, transforming it into self-help measures in furtherance of their own ends, or in response to the failure of other forms of social control to address their grievances.

Pathways to Terrorism: Recruits and Volunteers

Six interviewees (#1, 3, 4, 6, 8, 10) agreed to participate in subversive activities after being approached by either adult men associated with terrorist organizations—the *shabab* (“guys”)—or by their young proxies (i.e., same-age friends, classmates, relatives). Their reasons for agreeing were promised or expected material and socio-psychological benefits, retaliation for loss or injustice, and religious-based gratifications, as discussed below.

The interviewees indicated that the *shabab* waited around high schools or places where adolescents congregated, providing students chances to spend time with adults involved in terrorism—who were described by one interviewee as men aged 22 to 25 years. Once youth started spending time with the *shabab*, they were approached with requests to carry out “military” missions, and were offered tangible and intangible benefits for their cooperation. Military missions included transporting weapons, throwing Molotov cocktails at Israelis, and providing support services for terrorist activities (e.g., as lookouts or human shields, smuggling explosives or weapons through checkpoints, recruiting other children, accompanying operatives on missions to provide a cover, or as *shaheeds*). Benefits offered for participation included items such as designer clothes, money, cigarettes, *nargila* (hookah), as well as training with weapons and chances to mingle and spend time with adult terrorists. Socializing with wanted terrorists—the ultimate symbol of masculinity—was a privilege for teenagers in search of role models and manly identities, as illustrated by one youth's experience (#10): “from age 14 I saw the *shabab* carrying and hiding weapons, and I also wanted to have weapons because I love it. I admired them, and said to myself, ‘why am I not like them?’” Likewise, being seen by peers carrying weapons for adult operatives, or sitting together around a table drinking coffee or smoking hookah, increased one's status. When approached by the *shabab*, this interviewee (#10) described feeling proud to be around them and play with their weapons, but also fearful to refuse their requests to carry out a mission because “they carried weapons.” Several participants boasted that the *shabab* discussed military ideas with them about “doing things against Israel,” with one (#6) pridefully noting that “it was a secret group.” Others

characterized the *shabab*'s request as an opportunity, such as one recruit (#3) who wished to become a martyr and stated, "I always wanted to be a *shaheed* because since the [second] *intifada* they [Israelis] demolish homes, destroy families, and kill children. So I decided to do it."

Of the four individuals who initiated their involvement in terrorism (#2, 5, 7, 9), two wanted to conduct "military operations" in retaliation for loss or harm that they or their families sustained.²³ One interviewee (#7) who volunteered to be a *shaheed* relayed:

I went to the *shabab* ("guys") and told them I do not want to live because my friends and my cousin got killed . . . I told them if they do not let me go on *istishhad* (martyrdom), I will do it on my own, although I did not know how to do it.

A second volunteer (#9) was also motivated by retribution and a sense of injustice, explaining that he wished to carry out *istishhad* "because children are being killed." The warden of the youth wings confirmed that youth expressed these sorts of motivations:

Youth involvement often is related to vengeance . . . I do not hear them talking about the greater Palestine or the occupation, but rather "my brother was killed," or "they burnt my house."

The other two interviewees who perpetrated security violations on their own (#2, 5)—one went to a checkpoint with a school bag packed with a homemade explosive, the other threw stones at soldiers—wanted to resolve personal problems, as discussed in the following section.

The Lure of Involvement: Benefits, Social Status, and Resolving Problems

Social and financial marginalizations were identified as factors that pushed candidates to become involved in security violations. Recruiters offered youth money, material luxuries, or financial support for their families. One interviewee (#10) explained that "the *shabab* bought us cigarettes and promised us it will be ok if we join," while others described the range of operations for which they could receive pay: shooting *kassam* missiles, providing support to operations, or becoming *shaheeds*. Some cited the pay scales of various terrorist organizations; for example, the Islamic Jihad was paying 50 New Israeli *Shekels* (NIS; about \$12 United States Dollars [USD]) for *istishhad*, according to one interviewee (#6), while another (#3) reported that he received 100 NIS for his (failed) suicide bombing. Two interviewees (#8, 9) described being elated when adult recruiters offered to provide for their parents if they committed *istishhad*.

Youth from both intact and "broken" families discussed the influence of material benefits in their decision to cooperate. The youth with divorced parents²⁴ or polygamous families (#1, 3) reported special economic hardships: in such cases, the father lived with a new or younger wife, leaving his first wife and her children on their own.

Being abandoned by the father, the youth not only felt rejected and alienated, but had to eschew school to pursue employment and support the family (i.e., the mother and siblings). Meager resources or the inability to acquire “luxuries” likewise increased the need to generate income, and thus the motivation to participate. All but one participant had four to seven siblings, and whatever wealth the family had was likely to be shared. Four of the interviewees (#1, 4, 8, 9) dropped out of school between the ages of 12 and 15 to support the family. One youth (#10) observed that fathers who did not give their children money motivated them to accept the recruiters’ offers. By contrast, as families of prisoners are financially supported by the organizations, the adolescent whose father spent years in prison for terrorist activities (#5) recounted that his family never suffered from lack of money; thus, his primary motivation was nonmaterial—he wanted to be recognized as virile.

Social and psychological benefits played a critical role in engaging with terrorism for youth in search of a masculine identity, social status, and sense of belonging. An interviewee with a speech impediment (#3) was known among his peers to be timid and insecure. He described how the *shabab* approached him and promised to help his parents financially if he would become a suicide bomber. He also relayed how proud he was to be in the company of weapon-toting adult recruiters, and enthusiastically welcomed the offer. Other interviewees (#1, 4, 5, 6, 10) described how they felt “manly” by accepting offers to get involved, or were pleased that their peers recognized them as “a man.” Youth with familial histories of terrorist involvement (#5, 6) noted that such activity is the ultimate measure of manhood. Carrying a necklace with a picture of his *shaheed* cousin, one (#5) boasted about receiving honor (*sharf*) because his extended family produced several *shaheeds*: “I am a hero; everyone who has many *shaheeds* in his family is more of a man.” Several youth (#6, 7, 8, 9) noted that they were against women perpetrating suicide bombing, because this activity is reserved “for men only.”

Interviewees discussed problems within the families, particularly abusive relationships between father and son. Abuse and mistreatment stemmed from school performance or spending time with “bad company,” as one youth (#10) described:

I learned from my friends bad things—cigarettes, [promiscuous] girls. I was spoiled by my mother. I was told to be wary of the *shabab* . . . every day I had fights with my father; my father kept telling me “do not go with this friend,” and to spite him I went with this friend.

Another interviewee (#2) had conflicts in school with fellow students, performed poorly, and was eventually suspended. Fearing that his father—a physician—would punish him for low grades, he threw stones at Israeli soldiers, expecting to be arrested and removed from home. He boasted to his schoolmates that the Israeli security services were looking for him, before turning himself in to authorities. He explained his decision:

I have heard for a long time that it is easier to pass exams in the prison. And I was afraid that I will fail my matriculation exams because I do not understand anything the teachers

talk about. So, the other day I told my parents I am going to school, and instead I went to a gasoline station and bought “benzene” [gasoline] and put it in my bag and went to the checkpoint . . . When I was asked to open my bag, I showed them the explosive bottle so that they will arrest me.

The prison warden confirmed the factual aspects of these stories, including the academic angle:

Many youngsters in prison come from dysfunctional families. Some of the youth say that the prison is good for studying; here you can complete your studies, with quiet time and good food. In the outside they have an unemployed father and a “broken” family, so in prison they have some peace time, and a clear head to study.

Court transcripts showed that defense attorneys listed their clients’ poor academic performance as factors in their decisions to commit security violations; at the time, it seemed to be general knowledge that “in prison the exams are easier, as they do it with open books. On the outside, it is with closed books” (#10).²⁵

Youth who were held in high regard among peers were enlisted to recruit other youth. One academically successful interviewee (#1) refused an offer to carry out a self-sacrifice suicide mission (*istishhad*), stating that “If they would have asked me to steal from houses, I would do it; but to do *istishhad* is frightening.” He explained:

I did not want to leave my mother and I was also afraid of the act itself; whoever blows himself up is blown into thousands of pieces. Even just thinking about it is scary.

Instead, he agreed to recruit fellow youth, citing the material, social, and religious benefits and acclaim such activity entailed. As retold by this interviewee, the adult recruiters justified their pursuit of minors by telling him: “You [and your friends] are only children. So, regardless of what you do, nothing much will happen to you. At most you will get two years in the prison.” This interviewee began looking for candidates to become *shaheeds*. He described how he enticed individuals, particularly low performing schoolmates or other marginalized or vulnerable children, promising them material assistance and religious-based rewards, but also using threats, such as tarnishing the resistant candidate’s family honor: “It is enough if I say that his sister is rendezvousing with men, or that someone from the [potential recruit’s] family is a collaborator [with Israel].”

Religious-based advantages and benefits often accompanied material and social motivations. For example, recruiters told children that they would receive honor and respect in paradise, be able to spend time with the prophet and his companions, and allow 70 of their relatives to reach paradise directly, being spared the torture of the grave. They would also meet other *shaheeds*, be able to drink alcohol, and be granted access to 72 beautiful virgins. The youth were often sexually inexperienced; one interviewee (#3) commented that he believed he would have sex for the first time in paradise, following detonation. Several interviewees, including those indicating revenge

as their primary motive, expected ancillary religious benefits. In the words of one participant (#7):

I wanted to leave this world and go to paradise. There everything is good; you have everything: peace, virgins. I do not need much, just do not want to have problems.

Following jihad, the general belief, as expressed by one youth (#3), was that “Whatever is forbidden in this world is allowed in paradise: girls, beers[.]” Although the interviewees’ narratives did not indicate that they were religious—one youth (#1) explicitly stated that he prayed only when his grandfather forced him to do so, while another (#3) boasted he had never fasted on Ramadan—religious motivations often became enmeshed with pubescent curiosities regarding sexuality. All interviewees mentioned, in one way or another, the tangible benefits and gratifications of paradise that participation would entail.

Familial Responses to Adolescent Involvement in Terrorism

In Palestinian society, although terrorism is considered a respected activity for adults, families generally do not support their children’s involvement.²⁶ Interviewees relayed that their parents were not aware of their subversive activities; the youth did everything in their power to conceal their participation. In the words of one adolescent, “The person who goes on a suicide mission may contact someone to pray for him. He will definitely not consult his parents.” None of the interviewees thought that their parents would welcome or remain neutral upon learning about their terrorist activities, and, if asked, did not disclose their activities. One interviewee (#3) described behavioral changes once he decided to embark on a suicide mission: “I stopped going to school, avoided trips with family and friends, and was ready to participate for God and the *shaheeds*.”

Families demonstrated strong disapproval once they suspected or discovered their children were engaged in “military activities.” Most of the youth noted that suspected involvement in militant activities was met with threats of violence, or the father’s use of physical means to prevent them from associating with known terrorists or leaving home unsupervised. One interviewee (#5) noted, “my father told me to guard my tongue and shut my mouth so that no one will [manipulate me] and send me to *istishhad*.” Another (#10) described how his father had beaten him with a rubber pipe when he went with the *shabab*, while the son of a physician (#2) conveyed how his father used violent means to compel him to focus on his studies and stop his involvement in terrorism. An interviewee (#9) elaborated on what followed his security-related arrest:

My parents were very angry at me; my mom yelled at me. She loves me very much. I am her gift. After I was arrested, I saw my mother in court and she is sick and crying all the time, blaming me for what happened.

The fathers of some interviewees (#5, 6) were also engaged in terrorism, generating unique concerns stemming from their familiarity with downstream consequences of

such involvement. These fathers made special efforts to monitor their children and observe their comings and goings. One interviewee (#5) described how his father warned him: “If I will know you are involved in military activities, I will kill you.” He added,

When my father saw me throwing stones on the IDF soldiers, he beat me up and said, “Do not do that; just go to the *madrassa* (school). You should live only for school.” My father wanted me to become a dentist and wanted to send me to Russia to study dentistry. He paid me money when I brought [home] good grades to encourage me to study.

The father was extremely angry and frustrated following his son’s arrest; those involved in terrorism are unable to visit family members in prison due to being classified as a “security risk” by the Israeli authorities, compounding their exasperation.

During prison visits between parents and children, prison wardens and correctional staff observed tension stemming from the circumstances that led to incarceration; officers described the parents’ anger and frustration, and overheard them cursing the recruiters, or “bad company,” that caused their children’s entanglement. However, efforts to preclude involvement were seemingly directed at the youth. For example, several youth and personnel described a contemporaneous Palestinian media report about a father who shot his son in the legs to prevent him from participating in subversive operations. A military court officer summarized the sentiments of the legal staff toward the parents whose children had been arrested:

Kids are kids. They are often victims of things that are bigger than them . . . The legal team here feels sympathy toward the parents, who seem totally helpless . . . In the military courts the parents get an opportunity to talk and be listened to . . . But we do not have many options, it is either releasing or imprisoning the minors . . . In many cases, the Palestinian Authority, for political reasons, does not cooperate in finding rehabilitative channels; so it is either prison or nothing.

Parents’ frustrations, disappointments, and concerns with the path their children chose—or were pressured to follow, often against parental advice—were also echoed in the youths’ retrospective evaluation of their path, as the following section demonstrates.

Youths’ Reactions to Their Recruitment, Involvement, and Arrest

Interviewees reported feeling good about their actions, and many were proud about “being a man” and having contributed to the national Palestinian cause. Beyond national pride, youth noted that their participation provided personal gratification, excitement and adventure, insider status in a closed group, self-importance, and a sense of belonging. The youths commonly characterized their involvement as performing “part of the work,” and some (#4, 5, 10) expressed that they felt special, manly, or proud about participating in the mission that landed them in prison. One interviewee (#3) described the subcultural nature of their involvement:

I am not the only one that has done it [participated in terrorism], all my friends have done it and no one is sorry about doing it; they all have their head up and do not regret what they have done—this is something usual for them.

According to the interviewees, terrorist involvement was a “normal” feature of their daily lives, part of the local youth culture.²⁷ None expressed remorse or regret about participating in their security violations. An interviewee (#5) summarized his view on involvement in militancy: “Everyone must give something to the *mokawama* [resistance].” Another (#3), despite his parents’ anger and his mother’s hospitalization following (and perhaps stemming from) his arrest, proclaimed “I am not sorry about what I did.” Indeed, there were some fond memories: one interviewee (#6) described how he and his friends enjoyed playing “hide and seek” with the soldiers who tried to stymie their subversive activities.

Despite the interviewees’ expressed satisfaction with their violations, in reflecting on how and why they got involved, many directed anger toward those who enlisted them. In retrospect, several interviewees felt that they were deceived or exploited by the recruiters. One interviewee (#8) said that many children were “easy prey” due to their family’s economic situation, which precluded receiving allowances or spending money for things that children might want; another (#10) suggested his fathers’ lack of monetary support led to his own involvement in terrorism; and a third (#1) described how his father neglected him, and therefore he had to get money from the recruiters, whom he felt used him. Interviewees also felt misinformed about the level of compensation they were promised, and the punishment they would receive following adjudication, resulting in, as one interviewee (#10) put it, “serving more time for less money,” or, as another (#1) stated, “I was told that I will get two years and I got twenty.”²⁸ This youth also felt abandoned by the recruiters, who never visited him in prison and did not pay his mother the promised sum of money. Interviewed wardens had also heard this complaint. Another interviewee (#3) described how his mother shared his sense of exploitation:

My mother is not the only one who needs to be angry and sad [about my incarceration]. She takes it as normal. But she feels I was exploited. At the same time she thinks that it is God’s will that it happened and she goes by God’s will.

Several interviewees expressed additional reasons to disdain adult recruiters, including their hypocrisy and use of religious grounds to persuade youth to participate in operations. One interviewee (#5) spoke about adult recruiters who do not include their own children in military activities, commenting:

Everyone has his own life; why shouldn’t he [the recruiter] send his own child instead of sending me? His son will go to study as he has money; his [other] son is [a] doctor and has a Mercedes.

A wing warden described how young inmates frequently voice this grievance, noting “The youngsters tell us, ‘they [Palestinian leaders] send their children to study abroad

and do not send their family members to perpetrate terrorist acts.” Others accused religious leaders and dignitaries of misinformation or even deception. One interviewee (#1) noted,

I hate these religious notables; they have complications with themselves and the religion, because they only explain what is convenient for them . . . There are things that are not mentioned in the Quran but they still prohibit them, for instance, smoking. It is not written in the Quran that it is prohibited. I smoke[d] from age fifteen.

The lessons of their legal entanglement, coupled with maturation, afforded youth additional insights into their experiences, resulting in an emergent ambivalence, if not outright resentment, about their involvement in “military work.”

Prison Experiences and Post-Release Plans

Compared with Palestinians who serve time for criminal offenses, youth (and adults) incarcerated in Israeli prisons for security offenses were proud of their imprisonment, and distanced themselves from the criminal population. Correctional personnel described how young security offenders conducted themselves differently from their criminal counterparts, exhibiting greater discipline, cleaner language, politeness, and respect toward authority. A warden of the youth wing relayed how he often chided unruly young security offenders, “Do not behave like the criminals,” reinforcing the belief that security offenders hold relatively higher social status in their own eyes, and those of their peers and the Palestinian society at large.

The young age of the interviewees was a salient factor that shaped their carceral experience. This was evident to wardens who observed their interests, social interactions, dress and appearance,²⁹ sexual behavior,³⁰ the way they spent leisure time, and their complaints (at times sarcastic) or comments about what they missed. One warden noted that when he asked a young inmate why he returned to prison, the adolescent (#8) responded, “Because I like the Cornflakes [cereal] here.” Another warden described the routine requests and grievances he often heard among youth:

The complaints we hear from the kids are, “there are not enough television channels,” “there are only two Ping-Pong tables,” or “the rice is mixed with zucchini.”

The interviewees’ young age was strongly reflected in the way they longed for their families; all described how they missed their homes and parents, especially their mothers. In the words of a young detainee (#3):

When I go to the trial I just want to see my mother. But I cannot talk to her there, so I am not sure I want to go there . . . my mother went [through a lot so] I was afraid that my mother would die of a heart attack.

Another youth (#5) commented, “I love my mother the most, and I miss mostly her and her cooking.” Interviewed adolescents (#3, 6, 8) regretted not being able to attend

family events, including weddings, engagements, or funerals. Being on their own, without parental guidance, the young inmates often consulted the prison wardens about how to navigate aspects of their daily affairs. They sought advice about personal problems or concerns related to their incarceration, and appealed to wardens to resolve internal disagreements or disputes among their ranks. But the warden's advice was not a substitute for their family, whose absence from their daily lives remained a constant hardship for young inmates accustomed to living with large extended family.

To compensate for their loneliness and isolation, incarcerated youth sought social networks and support groups to help them "survive" their prison existence. Family provided a natural connection: One young interviewee (#7) with a relatively long sentence noted, "I am looking forward to becoming 18 years old so that I can move to the adult wing and be with my cousins there." Besides relatives, support networks in prison reflected Palestinian adolescents' tribal identities, village neighborhood, or geographical locations. The tendency to gravitate toward persons with shared identity or origins, however, could at times produce conflict, for instance, when the wings' spokespersons—the leaders of a particular wing—treated fellow villagers or relatives preferentially. Conflict among families or social groups outside the prison sometimes spilled over into the prison, creating tensions among young inmates. In one case, violence erupted among the imprisoned youth who became aware of an altercation between respective kin in their hometown.

With ample time in prison to reflect on the aftermath of their terrorist involvement and lessons learned, interviewees began thinking about their future. They spoke about opportunities they missed because of their involvement, such as an aspiring performer who could not travel to Europe with his dance troupe (#10). Several youth felt they had done their share, and did not wish to continue with "military activity" once released from prison.³¹ A youth whose father was a senior officer in a major terrorist organization (#5) elaborated,

I do not want to do *istishhad*, I am almost 18 and all my life is ahead of me . . . Seventeen months of my life [in prison] is enough. Now I want to go to the university . . . My father wants to send me overseas so that I study . . . I do not want *istishhad*, I want [to] stay alive.

In discussing life beyond prison, interviewees expressed a desire to live "normal" lives: resuming schooling (#5, 6), following career plans they had prior to incarceration (#10), or having a family (#3, 10). One youth (#10) discussed what his future wife would look like:

[She will be t]he virgin of paradise, who will think exactly like me. She should not think differently than me, she should love the same things I do and should hate the same things I do. She should never argue with me about anything.

Overall, imprisonment was portrayed as a detour from their plans, yet the benefits outweighed the drawbacks: it provided a respected record that, upon return to the community, would enhance their social status, without creating difficulties with reintegration.

Discussion

The interviews identify the pathways that lead Palestinian youth to commit security violations. Grievances rooted in the Israeli–Palestinian conflict loom large in the narratives, motivating some to engage in violent retaliation. The data also reveal how the conflict serves as a background for a penumbra of activities reflecting terrorism-like involvement that youth use to resolve everyday problems.

The narratives confirm the convergence of multi-level risk factors that tipped the balance in favor of involvement in hostilities. They included personal vulnerabilities, troubled home/familial lives, economic necessity, and problems in school. Anticipated benefits included improved social status, enhanced masculinity, sexual pleasure, material gains for themselves and their families, and an afterlife (“*janna*”) devoid of restrictions. Youth—in school, on the street, or in other “ungovernable space” where “capable guardians” (Felson & Cohen, 1979) are unable to shield them—may be exposed to recruiters (peers or adults) who look for young “volunteers,” leveraging children’s needs, wants, or hardships to manipulate and propel them toward militancy.

Children offer terrorist organizations attractive attributes and strategic advantages, rendering them vulnerable to recruitment. The data show that adolescents possess an array of personal traits that adults can exploit. Some youth are targeted because they can be easily manipulated (e.g., low self-esteem, socially marginalized); others are recruited because they are strong, assertive, good students, and respected among peers. Personal characteristics may influence the purposes for which terrorist organizations approach youth for participation; for instance, whether they are asked to become *shaheds* or recruiters.

Youth participation in “soft” resistance activities³² may be rooted in context-specific motivations as much as or more than in ideologies, with the latter providing honorable justifications for acts where ulterior motives may exist (e.g., escape difficult home circumstances, desire for thrills, or be arrested to gain an advantage in schooling). Except for those who claimed their motives were vengeance or retaliation, youth rarely offered religious or nationalistic ideologies as independent explanations or sufficient reasons to make them cross the line (see Brym, 2007; Stern, 2003, 2010); in several instances, they provided a culturally appropriate justification for attaining personally desirable ends. Aware of adolescents’ needs and wants, terrorist organizations and their proxies utilize enticements and persuasion couched in ideological terms; when these fail, recruiters may resort to threats or coercion to secure participation. In some cases, youth wanted to save face, or felt they had reached a point of no return.

The data suggest that when risk factors converge with available opportunities, engagement in subversive activities may provide a personally, culturally, socially, and politically appropriate solution for adolescents’ personal or situational problems. For Palestinian school-age children who face familial mistreatment, school performance problems, or lack social recognition or economic means, involvement in terrorism offers an opportunity to overcome everyday hardships, while in the process gaining rewards: self-worth, respect from peers, personal gratification, a sense of belonging, fun and excitement, and material benefits. These solutions seem particularly attractive

when terrorist organizations minimize the perceived risk of punishment if arrested, promising adolescents that, by virtue of their age, they will receive a lenient sentence.

Palestinian parents, the interviews suggest, objected fiercely and responded harshly to their children's terrorist involvement. Parents used various means to dissuade their children from engagement, including rewards for doing well in school ("the carrot"), violent persuasion ("the stick"), or both. Adolescents knew well that their parents, even those themselves involved in terrorism, were opposed to their participation, and concealed or lied about their activities. Following their child's arrest, parents were seen expressing deep displeasure about their children's actions, and anger at the "bad company" that led them to their downfall. Personal and familial circumstances thus place Palestinian youth in a tenuous position—organizations that need young operatives may resort to pressures or threats to get them involved, while their family may use similar means to deter them from partaking.

The data suggest that the interviewees' views and assessments of their pathways to and experiences with terrorism may change over time, as retrospective interpretations are influenced by proximate and distal factors. Thoughts of pride, social recognition, and honor dominate adolescent minds and impact choices they make in an environment that exalts resistance and sacrifice for the cause. Later, they expressed misgivings and regrets about the aftermath of their involvement. The prison experience is particularly significant in this respect; while spending time in Israeli prison may entail some tangible and symbolic benefits for Palestinians (Hajjar, 2005), youth imprisonment is associated with hardships, not the least of which is separation from and chastisement by one's family and support networks.

Prison time allows young inmates to reflect on their experience, and evaluate the implications of their actions. While interviewees were proud of contributing to the Palestinian national cause, and expressed no regrets, in retrospect many realized that their recruitment was tainted with deception, misinformation, and unfulfilled promises, and came at a high personal cost. Adolescents noted the pain they caused their parents, particularly in single-mother homes where they were desperately needed. They also lamented missed opportunities for personal advancement.

Policy Implications and Conclusion

The findings have several policy implications regarding intervention. Granted that all acts of hostility are ideologically framed or justified, a distinction should be made between youth engaging in "soft" or "subcultural" (Cohen, 1955) militant activities (e.g., spontaneous stone throwing or having fun in challenging soldiers' orders) versus engagement in "hard core" terrorism—organized, well-planned, adult-led violent operations. Though both may involve harm for victims, the latter is of greater concern to parents and families. For prevention purposes, the risk factors that bring adolescents to such involvement, or make them vulnerable to recruitment, should be addressed. If political, educational, and societal actions condemned rather than glorified children involvement in terrorism, and programs targeting youth that incite or exalt violence were curtailed, youth could be guided to resolve everyday problems in less

conflict-oriented ways that also provide honor or reprieve. At the familial-level, giving help and material assistance to those struggling to provide for their children should minimize the lure of benefits that terrorist organizations can offer to susceptible youth.

Parents, including those who subscribe to the ideology underlying terrorism, do not want to lose their own children or see them incarcerated; they can thus serve as important allies. Involvement may be prevented by mobilizing and guiding parents (or other guardians) in how to monitor children's school and leisure activities, identify signs associated with inordinate stress, and minimize exposure to manipulative pressures from adult recruiters or their proxies (classmates, friends, or relatives). Parents are in position to explain the short- and long-term risks of participation in militancy. The mother, who is often the most beloved and meaningful person in the lives of Palestinian youth, and who suffers substantially from seeing her children become casualties of the conflict (Shalhoub-Kevorkian, 2003), is critical in prevention efforts. Single parents should in particular receive additional financial and social support to diminish the pressure their children might feel to provide for the family.

As long as the conflict continues,³³ prevention efforts must be sought. For instance, fellow adolescents who have expressed disillusionment with their terrorist involvement following release from prison could be enlisted to dissuade at-risk youth from joining subversive activities, providing effective experience-based perspective on the loneliness of imprisonment and missed opportunities. A concerted effort to disassociate militancy from youthful notions of masculinity may also help reduce motivation. Youth programs could emphasize the predatory tactics of recruiters or present role-playing scenarios in which resistance to such guiles is recognized as indicative of courage, wisdom, and mental fortitude.

The use of youth in terrorism is a subject of scholarly and political debate on domestic and international levels; it is also a concern for the international community and organizations for the protection of children, including Israeli and Palestinian leadership. Institutional abuse of children, as the recruitment of children for terrorism has been labeled (Rosen, 2005, 2007), can be reduced by addressing risk factors, for example, by providing legitimate jobs, constructive leisure activities, educational programs that instill civic values, sports, and mentoring. Establishing alternative means of achieving social status, masculine identity, prestige, and "honor" might increase hope for the future and attenuate the need for terrorist involvement.

Questions regarding how to approach children who participate in terrorism and define their responsibility when they cause death and injury challenge legal scholars, social scientists, and human rights activists (e.g., Somasundaram, 2002). While some observers view children in terrorism as innocent victims, and others consider them persons fully responsible for their actions (Rosen, 2005), the overlap between offending and victimization among the young participants is apparent. The omnipresent and all-encompassing incitement and glorification of violence in Palestinian society and the conflict structure with Israel add complexity to considerations of minors' responsibility.

Finally, it has been argued that variations in local contexts produce disparate answers to the issue of responsibility. The history and lived realities of regional conflicts affect the ways in which children volunteer or are recruited, how their loyalty is

maintained, the level and type of compulsion exerted, and alternative options to achieve desired ends, such as social status, material sustainability, or personal advancement (Erez & Berko, 2014). Regardless, the data confirm a key observation in the study of terrorism—that participants are disturbingly normal within their own cultural and historical context (Post, 2009). An awareness of the contextual “normality” of Palestinian youth engaged in terrorism, and its self-help function for addressing both collective grievances and personal problems, may provide fruitful directions for research and policy that address youth involvement in terrorism in different circumstances, or in other parts of the world.

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Notes

1. In Israel and internationally, persons under the age of 18 are legally “minors” (UNHROHC, 1990). In the Occupied Palestinian Territories, however, only those under 16 are considered minors (HRW, 2004).
2. The term *soldier* often applies to wars and not terrorism. The conceptual overlap, and differences between the two (e.g., number of participants, purpose, targets, tactics, sponsors, applicable rules), have been discussed extensively in the literature (e.g., Rosen, 2005). Here, we focus on children involved in security violations, defined *infra*.
3. In Israel, involvement in what we herein describe as terrorism, and analyze as “self-help” (Black, 1983, 2004b), is legally defined as security violations involving: “A prisoner who was convicted and sentenced for committing a crime, or who is imprisoned on suspicion of committing a crime, which due to its nature or circumstances was defined as a security offense or whose motive was nationalistic” (Baker, 2009, p. 66, citing Israel Prison Service Directive of May, 2000). Security violations generally entail participation in activities related to national security that involve, or have the potential to result in, serious harm.
4. See, for example, gangs (Decker & Pyrooz, 2011) or skinheads (Blazak, 2001).

5. Family dishonor may involve actual or suspected violations of modesty by female family members (e.g., premarital sexual relations, adultery, being seen with a man who is not a blood relative), which at times may lead to honor killing. For men, dishonor commonly involves suspected or actual collaboration with Israel.
6. For example, the frontal lobes of the brain, which help control “executive functions” implicated in demonstrating self-control and considering the future ramifications of decisions, continue to mature until the early-to-mid 20s (see generally Giedd & Rapoport, 2010; Gur, 2005; Matsuzawa et al., 2001).
7. For example, 15-year-old Hussam Abdo (Cosgrove-Mather, 2004; Reynolds, 2004).
8. For example, 11-year-old Abdullah Quraan (Associated Press, 2004; Daraghmeh, 2004; Dershowitz, 2005, pp. 75-88).
9. A distinction can be made between involuntary and voluntary human shields (Bargu, 2013, p. 277). While involuntary human shields rely on the deterrent effect of potential allegations of war crimes that could stem from civilian casualties, voluntary human shields can be a *modus operandi* that is “regarded as part of a war effort, an apparently defensive object that has been transformed into a weapon” (Butler, 2015, p. 234).
10. See, for example, a profile of Ahed Tamimi (Fischer, 2016).
11. Collective liability stems from status or “social location” (Black, 2004a, p. 10), rather than specific actions an individual has committed. The collective liability attributed to Israelis who are targets of terrorism is “most apparent during a war, revolution, or riot” (Black, 1983, p. 38), terms that can describe the ongoing Israeli–Palestinian conflict more generally, and in specific periods of time and places (e.g., intifadas, war in Gaza, demonstrations at checkpoints in the West Bank).
12. Black elaborates on local conditions that make terrorism more likely, all of which exist in the Israeli–Palestinian context: “Terrorism thrives in small, island-like, close-knit, and homogeneous units of larger organizations. These small groups are mainly brotherhoods of young men, often weakly connected to primordial families and largely segregated from women and children” (Black, 2004b, 13). However, access to children—and women (Berko & Erez, 2007)—is sought to achieve tactical advantages.
13. For a discussion of risk factors in juvenile delinquency, see Bronfenbrenner, 1977; Loeber & Farrington, 2001; Wasserman et al., 2003. The analogy to juvenile delinquency is useful because, within Palestinian families, much of the relevant behavior is permissible, if not laudable, when conducted by adults, but not by minors; parents of involved youth find it particularly unacceptable, as discussed *infra*.
14. All military judges are licensed lawyers. Some are recruited to hear cases as part of their reserve military service; others are members of the professional military legal team. During the period of the research, a female judge with the rank of major presided.
15. The total number of Palestinian security offenders detained in Israeli prisons during the study period varied from 3,002 (or 24% of the Israeli prison population) in 2003, to 8,933 (or 40% of the prison population) in 2007. Variations are attributed to the ebb and flow in terrorist activity. Until 2008, persons younger than 18 were not tried separately from adult violators, so data on the average number of youth incarcerated during the research period ($n = 130$) were obtained from the Israel Prison Service.
16. Throwing stones can constitute an act of terrorism, particularly when directed at people and cars, a common method that has caused serious injuries and fatalities in the Palestinian territories. Cars were either directly hit, or drivers startled, causing accidents, injury, and death; in some incidents overturned cars have ignited in flames, causing burns or fatalities (Hasson, 2015; Lazaroff, 2013).

17. In one notable exception included in this study and discussed in the “Findings” section, a Palestinian youth who recruited children for suicide bombing got a 20-year sentence.
18. A review of the legal cases of youth in prison at the time suggested that the sample well represents the backgrounds and experiences of a sizeable proportion of all those incarcerated. Discussions with the wardens and legal professionals who try the cases supported this judgment, as they noted the recurrence of categories of pathways, motivations, and offense types among Palestinian youth involved in security violations.
19. The “approval” of the spokespersons was needed before other wing members would agree to be interviewed. Spokespeople represent their respective group within the prison wing. In Israeli prisons, each group (e.g., Hamas, Islamic Jihad, Fatah) has a “spokesperson” serve as a leader who presents the group’s collective concerns to prison authorities. In the adult population, all contact with the authorities is facilitated by the spokespersons—adult prisoners who circumvent this process face serious consequences. Within the youth wings, detainees sometimes contact the prison warden directly for advice or comfort, but in general communication is subject to the spokesperson’s approval. Spokespersons’ approval was obtained after explaining the social science nature of the interviews, that is, focus on life histories and personal experiences rather than security violations. Following their interviews, the spokespersons conveyed to the wing inmates their “approval” and “permission” for others to be interviewed. Speaking with researchers without the spokesperson’s blessing may be viewed as a violation of group norms, and may amount to “collaboration” with Israelis. For more on the use of spokespersons in research, see Wiebel, 1990; Wright, Decker, Redfern, & Smith, 1992.
20. The placement of Palestinian security prisoners in wings aligned with either Fatah or Hamas is more pronounced among adult Palestinian prisoners, and less so in the youth wings, where many prefer to spend time with relatives or others from their village, rather than those who share their ideological conviction.
21. In some cases, interviewees asked the interviewer to wait in the youth wing for an hour or more because they wanted to view the entirety of a television program, or had discovered a new study group that met at the time scheduled for the interview.
22. During these hours, and as word spread that some inmates were being interviewed for a study, some youth approach the interviewer to relay their stories and experiences. Such conversations were not included in the current study. Their comments did not introduce original issues, that is, beyond those reflected in the statements of those who were interviewed.
23. Retribution is also a prominent reason for more recent terrorist attacks, including the new wave of Palestinian terrorism involving many “lone wolves” (e.g., Levy, 2016). Individual actors can still be terrorists (Black, 2004b, p. 11).
24. A divorcee in Palestinian society generally has a lower status than a married woman, often being blamed for the divorce (e.g., Erez, Ibarra, & Gur, 2015). This blemish reflects on her offspring. Children in single-mother households often internalize these views, feeling inadequate or inferior, and predisposing them to succumb to temptations that potentially will enhance their honor, such as participation in terrorism.
25. In consultation with the Palestinian authorities, the Israel Prison Service has since eliminated the option of prison study for adolescents and adults in an effort to reduce the “attractiveness” of prison to Palestinian youth. Young inmates now organize their own study groups as they work toward receiving degrees from Palestinian educational institutions after leaving prison.

26. For instance, the myth that Palestinian mothers rejoice in their child's death as martyrs has been dispelled by Shalhoub-Kevorkian (2003), who provides evidence of their grief, sorrow, and inability to mourn because of orders by the Palestinian leadership. Research has also documented how parents and family members are upset to see their female offspring in prison (e.g., Berko & Erez, 2007).
27. Detailed descriptions of this culture, including beliefs and hopes held by youth, have been reported in newspaper articles that contain similar statements made by Palestinian youth, some as young as 12 (Booth & Eglash, 2014; Shalaan, 2014).
28. This exceptionally severe penalty was imposed on the studious interviewee who recruited his classmate and relative for suicide bombing missions. In imposing a 20-year prison and 3-year conditional sentence, the court stated that, "although the youngster expressed regret, it is clear that the tears he sheds were crocodile tears, and his remorse disingenuous . . . the defendant described in court the parade of *Shaheed* posters on the walls of Nablus [West Bank], but he was sure to spare his own life while sending two youngsters to their death. In such a horrible crime the defense of being a minor would not help."
29. Imprisoned security violators wore jeans and tee shirts, used hair gel, and adapted fashions and styles popular in both Jewish and Arab Israeli teenager subcultures.
30. According to prison staff, young security violators occasionally have homosexual encounters in their prison cells, behavior common among the criminal population (both young and adult) but taboo among adult security prisoners. Prison staff relayed cases in which suspected adult homosexuals were burnt with cigarettes or boiling plastic melted down from containers of yogurt, severely beaten, or murdered. Prison authorities accommodate homosexual inmates' requests to be separated from other security offenders. In the youth wings, wardens place three detainees in a cell to prevent such behavior; they also allow adult security prisoners to mentor youth about how homosexuality is unacceptable and diminishes their status.
31. It is conceivable that some interviewees did not disclose their intended plans regarding involvement in terrorism, though their disappointment with past involvement and plans for self-improvement suggest their responses were genuine. Plans, however, may change once they are released and return to their "normal" environment. In addition, prisons are known to be fertile grounds for forging relationships with known terrorists that may continue upon release, making it possible that some youth would graduate into adult terrorism and make it a "career."
32. For example, throwing stones in demonstrations or at soldiers, or possessing (but not necessarily intending to use) weapons or explosives.
33. According to Black (2004b, p. 17), "The intermingling of peoples and cultures, electronically and otherwise, inexorably destroys most of the differences now polarizing populations and collectivizing violence." Peaceful social interactions between two conflicting groups will reduce social distance and the need for self-help social control through terrorism.

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