

*Published in Al-Ghad Newspaper (Jordan), 20 July 2008*

**“ Hamas Under Palestine”: a message against violence... some found it biased**

A documentary film for the director stimulates a tough debate

Yousef Shayeb, Ramallah - The young director, Wafa' Jamil, said that she was not surprised by clamor and bustle which accompanied the presentation of her long documentary film, "Hamas Under Palestine", a few days ago, in the Ramallah Cultural Palace, though it exceeded the limits of debate to the point insults at those who differed in their opinion.

"The sensitive subject the film was talking about, and the tense internal situation in the Palestinian territories could push the militants in this or that party to more than this," commented Jamil.

Jamil monitors, through several characters whose views are expressed without opposition, what some described as "crimes of Hamas" in Gaza or what others call the military decisiveness since last June, when Hamas took control of the Gaza Strip. These are the terms which enemy brothers use about what has happened; each in his position as they see the situation.

In her previous films, Jamil focused on the Palestinian historical memory and the crimes of the occupation. But in this film, she depended on the scenes that were broadcast on a number of satellite channels, showing Hamas militia attacks by the Executive Forces in Gaza, against young men and children from the Fatah movement or other factions. However, the scene of suppression by the Palestinian security forces against the Annapolis Summit protest march in Hebron appears out of context in the film. This prompted some members of the audience to criticize the inclusion of this scene in the film, as if the film should remain one-sided.

Taghreed Abu Hamda, a human rights activist, who is against the Hamas Movement, was a central figure in the film "Hamas under Palestine." The director accompanied her for more than two years, during which she and others sought to form a strong force from civil society to call for national unity at a time when this unity was in question; it collapsed with the war in Gaza in June.

The director follows her during her discussion with the great Egyptian thinker, Mahmoud Ameen Al-Alem, a well-known communist, and to her

discussions with students, women, and targeted groups in a series of seminars and workshops, reflecting the groups' complete rejection "of the policy of Hamas to destroy the Palestinian national project." These workshops were attended by many participants and included some objecting voices, who spoke about corruption in the PNA during Fatah era and how it contributed to the arrival of "Hamas" to power, while others said that both options were bad.

It is interesting that the Egyptian thinker defended the Hamas Movement in the film and justified its actions in Gaza because he saw that Hamas movement was squeezed into a corner. He attacked the Palestinian National Authority as an affiliate of the United States and Israel, which led to the assassination attempt by 'Hamas' gunman of the Fatah leader, Abu Ali Shahin, also interviewed in the film. These two countries are primarily responsible for the ascent of "Hamas" to power. When both Bush and Sharon criticized the vote for Hamas and called for people to move away from them, it created a backlash among many. According to Shaheen, "Bush and Sharon are behind 60% of the votes that "Hamas" gained in the elections.

However, Shaheen disclosed that president Mahmoud Abbas was exposed to American pressures concerning the necessity of involving Hamas in elections though Hamas showed the opposite in front of the mass media citing the American-Hamas agreement within this context referring to a series of meetings between the two sides in Cairo in January 2002.

The second central figure is Salwa Hudeib, Deputy of the Ministry of Women's Affairs. The film was generous with the time given to the interviews with Mariam Saleh, the former Minister of Women's Affairs in the government of "Hamas" who dismissed the Christian employees from their posts and insulted them for religious reasons while also fighting unveiled Muslim women working there.

In a conversational setting, Hudeib spoke with her friends and Shaheen, about the criminal schemes of Hamas and the film also included several different analyses of this topic.

The visual artist, Marwan Al-Alan's tale was the most in depth but was employed it in the best way. The leader of the *Takfir and Hijra* Movement in Jordan for years, transformed into a secularist with honors, has appeared as a religious analyst for the ideology but not more, with some references to exciting stories, speaking about the difficulties of

transition away from the Brotherhood, which took years, and the loss of his wife after being accused by her family as an "apostate from Islam."

Al-Alan had several debates in the film, in which he talked about the ideology of the Muslim Brotherhood and " Hamas," asserting that because of their ideology, Hamas will not back down from the positions they have taken.

The film was documentation to the high percentage of Hamas crimes and the lower percentage of the corruption of the Fateh. The documentary film ends with a scene representing a woman with only her back visible (Wafa' Jamil herself) wearing a Palestinian flag, and pointing to the ballot box with a choose Palestine, and not Hamas or Fatah, in a clear national message to prevail over the party affiliations. This message, however, may not be reflected in 52-minute film.

Jamil rejects accusations of singleness of vision reflected in the film. She said, "It is true I am against the vote for Hamas at all and this is the point of view I think it's my right to believe but what I wanted to say is that no one, especially Hamas and Fatah is over Palestine. I dream of a way to protect the homeland from all divisions. I do not belong to Fatah, and I absolutely do not intersect with Hamas. I am a Palestinian and this is what I wanted to say without equivocation."

Jamil confirmed that she had tried to interview one of the known Hamas members in advance but had to abandon it because the member had been threatened with death by the leaders of " Hamas." In noting the absence of any representative of " Hamas" or who was able to convey their missing viewpoint in the film, she said that it is due to the belief that none of them will agree to let the camera accompany them to his office, home, or with his family for nearly two years, as was the case with others, and she believed that those who belong to " Hamas" have difficulty accepting that she is not religious, or in other words " Open." It demonstrated the fact that many of those who are close to " Hamas " dealt with her as if she is disbeliever or pagan, which made her to avoid thinking about interviewing any of leaders of" Hamas ", or their representatives.

Jamil refused to talk about the film as a " Fathawi" film, meaning it is biased to the Fatah side. She said that " Hamas Under Palestine" also criticizes Fatah and pointed to the scene of the security forces suppressing the anti-Annapolis march in Hebron and discussions with the Egyptian thinker, Mahmoud Al-Alem, criticizing Fatah and the PA.

Jamil added, "I was keen not to raise sedition. I reject the policy of being gagged. Although I was careful not to strongly compare what " Hamas" did to the children of Palestine, with Israeli occupation, I was not afraid to tell the truth and portray what actually happened. This is my right to do so."

Jamil added that some of the reactions frightened her and that there are some who fought her film, pointing out that a daily newspaper refused to publish advertisements about the film, while unidentified people tore the film posters down hours after they were hung in various places in the governorate of Ramallah and Al Bireh, although the poster carries the Map of historic Palestine.

The film will be presented in the various governorates of the West Bank and in Arab capitals and the world, as a film "against Palestinians killing Palestinians," as Jamil said. "It is directed to the ordinary citizen, not "Fatah and Hamas" and not for the favor of this or that, pointing out that I meant the name of the film, is that Palestine is above all, and this is reflected in the end," she concludes.