

The Role of the Al-Aqsa Flood in the Development of the Resistance Movement's Struggle



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Abstract:

The Al-Aqsa Flood was a strategic surprise, marking a shift in the resistance's actions from a defensive to an offensive stance. This change stunned the occupation army and imposed a difficult and precarious situation on them simultaneously. As a result, the army altered its military plans and temporarily halted normalization projects in the region.

The Al-Aqsa Flood is an extension of the resistance's historical struggle, grounded in the rejection of Zionist occupation and its divisive policies. It also addresses the expansion of settlements in the Arab region, daily assaults on Palestinians, and the violations targeting Al-Aqsa Mosque.

Keywords: Al-Aqsa Flood; Resistance; Zionist Occupation; Genocide; Prisoner Exchange.

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Introduction:

The term "Al-Aqsa Flood" refers to the operation launched by the Palestinian resistance in the Gaza Strip against Israel on October 7, 2024, during which a number of resistance fighters infiltrated settlements around Gaza. The operation was claimed by Hamas and can be considered the largest attack on Israel in decades, targeting fortifications of the Israeli military. The name "Al-Aqsa Flood" is symbolic, reflecting a response to the ongoing violations carried out by the Zionist entity at Al-Aqsa Mosque and across all Palestinian territories.

Dr. Ibrahim Habib noted that the naming is linked to the concept of war, with the primary target being Al-Aqsa Mosque, which has been subjected to desecration and attempts at temporal and spatial division. Al-Aqsa Mosque is a unifying cause for both the Arab and Islamic worlds, and therefore, the name carries significant connotations that are widely agreed upon.

This research paper aims to shed light on the strategic thought of the resistance and its historical trajectory, culminating in the Al-Aqsa Flood operation. The paper highlights the significance of this operation in the context of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict.

The research question is as follows:

How has the Al-Aqsa Flood operation impacted the strategic path of the resistance's struggle?

This research relied on several methodologies to address the topic and clarify its components. The descriptive method was essential, especially with regard to the operation and its effects. The historical and comparative methods were also used when discussing the historical stages and the resistance's struggle since 1948, as well as comparing the Al-Aqsa Flood operation to other operations. Additionally, a comparison was made between the capabilities of the resistance and those of the Israeli army, along with the prisoner exchange process, which contains significant differences, particularly concerning humanitarian treatment.

1. The Struggle Path of the Palestinian Resistance:

The Palestinian resistance coincided with the early stages of Jewish migration to Palestine at the end of the 19th century. It intensified with the increase in migration and later transformed into political and military action, including revolts and demonstrations, particularly with the imposition of the British mandate. The comprehensive resistance continued after the establishment of the State of Israel and has not ceased to this day.

a. The Phase of Spontaneous and Unorganized Action (1917-1935):

This phase was characterized by:

- ❖ A lack of organization and the absence of political communication to unify the Palestinian ranks.
- ❖ A focus on demonstrations, conferences, and seminars.
- ❖ The submission of petitions and protest memoranda.
- ❖ Engagement in clashes with the Zionist entity.

b. The organized struggle during the period 1935-1948, characterized by:

- Armed defense led by Izz ad-Din al-Qassam.
- The development of awareness regarding the importance of armed resistance.
- The outbreak of the Great Arab Revolt (1936-1939).
- Organizing long-term strikes and boycotting British products.
- Rejecting work in British Mandate institutions.
- Armed combat in 1948 against the Zionist invasion of Arab land (Al-Atharbi A. M., 2024, p. 520).

c. The phase of Arab pressures to engage in peace negotiations, which began in 1969 and lasted until 1985, was characterized by:

The recognition of the Palestinian state by 131 countries following the 1967 aggression. As for the Arab countries, they moved towards recognizing the Palestine Liberation Organization and pressuring it to enter the political settlement process, with the hope of achieving comprehensive peace (Hilal, 2009).

This phase also saw the Battle of Karama on October 6, 1973, followed by the Al-Quds Intifada in 1987. Key features of this period included:

- The Arab setback and the tripartite aggression of 1967.
- The Battle of Karama and the Arab hope in October 1973.
- The beginning of the Al-Quds Intifada in 1987.
- The signing of the Oslo Agreement on September 3, 1993, for a false peace.

d. The Palestinian Uprising Phase:

Its spark ignited in 1987, marking the beginning of the Jerusalem Uprising, which continued until the Al-Aqsa Flood in 2023. This phase witnessed qualitative transformations that combined armed struggle, political action, and distinctive forms of struggle, including:

- Protests, demonstrations, and strikes

- The 1985 prisoner exchange between Israel and the Popular Front, involving 1,155 Palestinian prisoners in exchange for 13 Israeli prisoners
- The First Palestinian Uprising in 1987
- The 2011 Shalit prisoner swap deal (Al-Atharbi A. M., 2024, p. 522).

This phase reflected the serious direction of Palestinian resistance thinkers, emphasizing the necessity of rooting Palestinian identity through education and rehabilitation, whether for the children of the displaced or prisoners in jails. Palestinian studies indicate that the role of religious awareness reached a rate of 80-86%, which is the practical direction to preserve the identity of the Palestinian people.

In recent years, particularly in the second half of 2023, a total of 6,704 resistance operations were carried out in the West Bank, distributed as follows:

- Shooting operations: 19 (Al-Jaab, 2017, p. 363)
- Stabbing operations: 11
- Run-over operations: 2
- Shooting operations: 2
- Downing of reconnaissance planes: 9
- Jenin, Nablus, and Hebron are the cities with the highest frequency of these operations.

2. Context of the Al-Aqsa Flood Battle:

The Al-Aqsa Flood operation, carried out by Hamas in response to the ongoing attacks by the far-right government, the most extremist in Israel's history, which includes the most radical settlers against Palestinians in the West Bank and the continuous assaults on the Al-Aqsa Mosque, under the protection of Israeli security forces. The Israeli military had mobilized 30 battalions in the West Bank to deter any actions against these disruptive practices (Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies, 2023, p. 01).

The Al-Aqsa Flood operation holds significant strategic importance, as it establishes a shift in the reality that Israel has sought to impose in the Gaza Strip since its withdrawal in 2005. The operation led to the collapse of Israel's strategy in dealing with Gaza and the governance of Hamas over it. Additionally, it exposed the severe failure of various components of the military and security system upon which Israel relies to implement its strategy. This failure resulted in human losses that were twice the total casualties Israel sustained in the 1967 war, the majority of whom fell on the first day of the operation. The failure of the military system surpassed its failure in the 1973 October War and further undermined the

confidence of Israelis in their security system, as well as Israel's ability to protect its people, following the deaths and injuries of over a thousand individuals.

Perhaps the greatest failure lies in the inability of Israeli military intelligence (Aman) and the General Security Service (Shabak) to anticipate the operation or even gather information about it. Additionally, the fragility of the security wall between Gaza and Israel was exposed. This wall stretches along the length of the Gaza Strip, approximately 65 kilometers, with a depth of seven meters and a height of seven meters, despite being equipped with the latest electronic surveillance devices and observation towers.

3. Strategy of Palestinian Resistance during the Al-Aqsa Flood Battle:

Firstly, the strategy of the resistance movement is based on resistant action, struggle, and rejecting the status quo, as well as rejecting the Oslo Agreement for the political settlement of the Palestinian issue in 1993, due to its recognition of the occupation state's right to 78% of Palestinian land. It can be said that Hamas adopted a strategy of accumulating power, which involves utilizing its position as the governing authority in the Gaza Strip to strengthen both its civil and military capabilities during its 17 years of rule. However, this did not succeed in breaking the siege on Gaza, in addition to the weakness of the Arab and international positions regarding the crimes committed by the occupation. The question that arises here is: How did Hamas make such a decision in light of the imbalance of military power?

The answer to this question places us within the conceptual framework on which Hamas as a resistance movement is built from several perspectives:

It does not assume an equivalence of material forces, although it requires a certain degree of balance. André Beaufort, in his book *Introduction to Military Strategy*, pointed out that maximizing the moral factor and the long-term duration of the struggle against occupation is what liberation wars rely on to confront the imbalance in material power, which is typically in favor of the enemy.

On the other hand, the intellectual framework of Hamas is based on the legitimate foundation that does not require a balance of power, as it pertains to an external enemy. This does not contradict taking the necessary measures and planning for victory or martyrdom, which is known as achieving one of the two noble outcomes.

a. The media strategy of the Palestinian resistance during the Al-Aqsa Flood:

The forms of expression and the Palestinian media war against the Zionist occupation forces evolved with the development of media tools. During the First Intifada (the Stone Intifada) in 1988, it was limited to writing and drawing on walls, creating newspapers and magazines, satellite channels, and other forms of media expression (Chief of Staff of NATO).

With the development of imaging technologies, the widespread use of mobile phones equipped with cameras, and the proliferation of social media networks, the resistance exploited these technologies, relying on the idea that an image is the verse of this era, and that sometimes a single image can be more powerful than a thousand words.

From the very first day of the battle, the resistance made sure to document the field military operations:

- ❖ Broadcasting audio recordings from the overall commander of the Izz ad-Din al-Qassam Brigades, explaining the reasons and objectives of the battle.
- ❖ Capturing footage of operations carried out by the resistance in the settlements surrounding Gaza.

These messages aimed to convey several ideas, including:

Clarifying the objectives of the battle, chief among them being the release of prisoners and the restoration of rights, with the establishment of the Palestinian state being a key goal.

Addressing Global, Islamic, and Arab Public Opinion and Reminding Them of the Suffering of the Palestinian People

In this context, the official spokesperson of the Izz ad-Din al-Qassam Brigades, Abu Ubaida, emerged prominently, considering his organization as the strongest in the Gaza Strip, followed by the spokesperson of the Al-Quds Brigades, Abu Hamza. This presence was marked by a variety of messages, evolving with the progress of the battles:

- To the people of Gaza, as the popular base, praising their patience and steadfastness.
- To the people of the West Bank and the Arabs of 1948 territories, urging them to support the resistance through revolutionary actions in these regions.
- To Islamic Western countries, calling for their support.
- To the free people of the world, particularly non-Arab and non-Muslim individuals, urging them to demonstrate and denounce the Zionist genocide.
- To Arab leaders, the leaders of the occupation, and the Israeli public through the translation of recorded messages for the prisoners.

b. The Resistance Strategy through Prisoner Exchange:

After one year and three months of steadfastness and heroic resistance against an occupying army that committed all forms of crimes and genocide—an army skilled in killing but not in fighting—the Israeli army realized that the resistance movement, which had planned the Al-Aqsa Flood operation and

prepared itself for a prolonged battle, was capable of disrupting Israel's political calculations, as well as its intelligence operations. The resistance imposed its terms, one of which was a prisoner exchange deal in exchange for the release of Palestinian prisoners, the opening of crossings, and the entry of humanitarian aid. This was further facilitated by the immense pressure from the Israeli home front throughout the days of the war, particularly from the families of the prisoners, coupled with a lack of trust in Netanyahu's government, especially after several prisoners were killed in Israeli airstrikes. Moreover, the painful blows to the Palestinian resistance during the ground battle played a significant role in pushing towards the option of a prisoner exchange deal (Gharib, 2025).

The images of the prisoner exchange revealed a deep and rooted ideology of resistance. While Israel immersed itself in spreading inhumane images of Palestinian prisoners, barefoot and naked, the resistance gained respect and sympathy from a large segment of the Western public. This was achieved through the broadcast of images and videos showing the humane treatment of occupation prisoners-depicting them in clean clothes and good health-and the compassion extended to the prisoners upon their handover to the Red Cross (Jamal, 2024, p. 12).

4. The Impact and Repercussions of the Al-Aqsa Flood Battle on the Resistance:

Anyone reflecting on the repercussions of the Al-Aqsa Flood since October 7, 2023, can discern the emergence of latent directions within the region:

- First: The deepening role of popular movements at the expense of official institutions. The trajectory of the conflict is now determined by the decisions of popular movements, not by the resolutions of Arab summits, as was customary. This signifies stripping official institutions of their monopoly on decision-making, despite their repeated failures.
- Second: The emergence of fronts that were not part of the traditional Arab-Zionist conflict, such as Lebanon and Yemen, which have now become the backbone of the resistance. Previously, Lebanon was not included in what was known as the Eastern Front, but that front has now disappeared, leaving those who were once excluded from its calculations.
- Third: The technological gap between the two sides of the conflict remains wide but is gradually narrowing. Israel's long reach is no longer unparalleled, given the development of drones, local capabilities to produce them, advancements in missile range, and cyber penetration.
- Fourth: The shift in Israel's image from that of a victim to that of a rogue state, as revealed by all international public opinion surveys, is something that Israeli elites have started to warn about.

- Fifth: The practical actions of the resistance axis have stripped some of the theoretical proposals of their sectarian tendencies. Normalization no longer carries the same implications it once had in the context of the conflict in southern Lebanon, or the closure of the Red Sea to Israeli maritime trade.
- Sixth: New concerns have emerged within Israeli society, such as the fear of civil war and the possibility that Israel could become another Taiwan in the near future. The ongoing political instability in the region causes Israeli planning to continuously adapt to the aforementioned shifts, weakening the development of long-term strategies in favor of tactical responses.
- Seventh: Israel does not have a clear, viable solution to the Arab-Zionist conflict. It opposes the two-state solution, as it believes it would lose its strategic depth. It also rejects the one-state solution due to the demographic imbalance in favor of the Palestinians, as they are the majority, and their population growth rate surpasses that of the Jewish population. The autonomy solution would perpetuate the conflict, as it is rejected by active Palestinian forces. As for the forced expulsion solution, attempting to implement it would reshape the regional geopolitical map and ignite widespread internal conflicts, thus opening the door for the continuation of the struggle.
- Eighth: The gradual and somewhat slow growth of skepticism among Zionist elites regarding the effectiveness of the Zionist project is noteworthy. One can observe this in the writings of new historians, the fatwas of certain Haredim, and the warnings of former Israeli government officials. This shift has also extended to Jews worldwide, particularly in the United States (Abdel-Hay, 2025).
- Ninth: Israel's lack of governmental stability, with a rating of 1.29 out of a total of 2.5, and the increasing pace of mutual criticism between its leadership, along with the absence of charismatic leaders who command a popular base of respect, have led to a decline in the performance of managing the conflict compared to previous stages.
- Tenth: Religious movements on both sides of the conflict have grown at nearly the same time. Zionist religious groups began to hold a more significant role in decision-making since 1977, to the extent that the Labor Party, once dominant in Israeli politics, now holds only four out of 120 seats. During this period, political Islam has also grown, especially after the Iranian Revolution. This shift indicates that the official Arab stance aligns with the transformations in Israel and accepts the demands of the Zionist right. Meanwhile, within the Arab public sphere, movements opposing the Zionist project have flourished, which has tempted the official Arab side to draw closer to the Zionist side in order to protect itself from the consequences of the crises facing the Arab world (Abdel-Hay, 2023).

On the other hand, the Al-Aqsa Flood revealed several aspects within the Arab and Islamic world:

- The depth of official Arab commitment to normalization with Israel. When comparing the verbal and actual behaviors of the Arab regimes, it becomes clear that the verbal behavior is nothing more than hollow rhetoric, while the actual behavior penetrates the very traditions of the Arab public stance toward Israel.
- The decline in Egypt's status and role, regardless of this role, opened the door for smaller or weaker countries to appear as leaders.
- The increasing Arab involvement in international organizations at the expense of the continued decline of the Arab League's role. The Arab activity within the African Union, international legal organizations, or the eagerness to join BRICS, along with the open and covert connection to NATO, is an issue worth discussing. One may ask why there is such a push for building infrastructure that aligns with the India-Europe Economic Corridor and the Chinese Belt and Road Initiative, both of which increase Israel's strategic value as a link between Asian and European projects.

The Palestinian-Israeli confrontation marked a significant and unprecedented shift in the phenomenon of resistance and the struggle against Israeli occupation. It differs in form, content, and objectives from previous conflicts such as the 2006 war with Lebanon and the 2014 conflict with Gaza.

This round of the conflict represented a crucial transformation in the tools and tactics of struggle, as well as the level of performance. It also dealt a significant blow to Israeli power and its ability to subjugate the Palestinians, marking an important shift with strategic implications that are likely to evolve in the coming years. This development is driven by the resistance and the popular confrontations that support it, both within Palestine and internationally, including Arab, Islamic, and global solidarity.

The results of the confrontation represent a blow to the claims of Israeli military and intelligence superiority, which have been undermined by the leadership, willpower, and determination of the Palestinian resistance.

On the other hand, this confrontation revealed the fragility of Israel's internal front, showing that Israel lacks any strategic depth, and that Palestinian action is capable of weakening its strategic capacity, as well as its dominance or sovereignty over the military and security landscape.

The Palestinian resistance has demonstrated a renewed will, having fought multiple wars and hundreds of tactical operations against Israel in the occupied Palestinian territories. The confrontation also revealed that the Arab community in

Israel, with its deep Arab and Islamic roots, remains loyal to the Palestinian national project and is capable of delivering a strong blow to the occupation.

Moreover, the confrontation confirmed the strength of unity among the resistance factions in the field, whether in Gaza, the West Bank, or Jerusalem.

On the external front, the vitality of the Arab and Islamic nations, along with global conscience, became evident. These entities remain capable of support and influence as long as Palestinian action is unified and able to persist. There is a global Palestinian ability to mobilize by joining forces with human rights supporters, as was evident throughout the year of war. The United States and its universities were timely in dividing the pro-Israel camp worldwide, at least on the level of popular human rights movements.

It can be said that the Palestinian resistance has demonstrated the ability and strength to confront the occupation under four key conditions:

- Leadership unity
- Effective management and development of field capabilities in response to changing circumstances, in an escalating manner
- The availability of a united popular base and its unparalleled strength, which defies description. This base has been subjected to genocide, displacement, hunger, and enduring harsh weather conditions, both in summer and winter, often in tents when they are available.
- Regional and international official support, which has weakened the occupation's ability to incite the world, exposing its schemes and the lies and fascist terrorist tactics it promotes (Al-Atharbi A. M., 2024, p. 520).

While the Israeli occupation succeeded in destroying infrastructure, the homes of resistance fighters, and bombing towers, it failed to protect its military base and failed to achieve the objectives of the war.

The future of global behavior toward the Palestinian issue can be summarized in four points:

- The political stances of China and Russia will remain focused on emphasizing peaceful solutions and advocating for a two-state solution, with limited economic support for Gaza, UNRWA, and the Palestinian Authority.
- The call within the European Union for a two-state solution may intensify, potentially creating tension between Europe and Israel. The two-state solution will be re-discussed, as a resolution to this issue is essential, which will entice the Palestinian Authority, while also exploiting the exhaustion that has affected both society and the resistance.

- The Organization of Islamic Cooperation or individual Islamic countries will be unable to bring about significant changes in the international stance on the Palestinian issue. As for India, it will maintain its alignment with Israel, and Arab countries will not be able to influence this aspect.
- The international popular sympathy for the Palestinian cause will remain within its current limits (Abdel-Hay, 2025).

5. Trump's Policy in 2025:

The policy focuses on narrowing the influence and role of Hamas in Palestinian decision-making. It involves leveraging reconstruction funds and aid, linking them to political conditions that burden the resistance, and expanding the scope of the Abraham Accords toward Saudi Arabia. This also includes attempts to entice Iran with proposals to disengage from supporting the resistance axis by suggesting the possibility of lifting the economic blockade or returning to discussions on its nuclear program. Additionally, there is an effort to curb Israel's threats of military strikes and to allow for the development of relations between Israel and the Gulf States under Trump's leadership.

Psychologists suggest that 76% of his statements were either entirely or partially false. His pragmatic approach became the dominant force shaping his position on the Palestinian issue (Abdel-Hay, 2025).

Conclusion:

The Al-Aqsa Flood operation established a new phase with new equations, characterized by the latent potential of its strategic dimensions, particularly regarding the ability to penetrate Israel's security depth and its deterrent power, including its air defense lines, field defense, and radar systems. This positions the upcoming phase for any confrontation to potentially bring about strategic changes, which may be advanced, forming the natural accumulation toward expelling the occupation and defeating the Zionist project. The Al-Aqsa Flood demonstrated that peace negotiations and normalization agreements, in all their forms, failed to achieve the goals of the occupying power, and did not provide true protection against the Palestinian resistance, which proved its ability to fight, endure, and remain steadfast.

Moreover, the Al-Aqsa Flood laid the foundation for a new Palestinian reality, a new phase in the struggle with the occupation, a new approach in understanding and managing the conflict, and a stage for an open confrontation, if one may say, internationally through legal means.

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