

The Story of the Palestinian Youth Revolution: The Lions' Den as a Model

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Abstract:

The purpose of these research papers is to chronicle the history of a youth group that emerged in the city of Nablus, Palestine, in the year 2022, known as the Lions' Den, which was able to engage in armed jihadist revolutionary activity.

Among the findings of our research, we note: first, the difference in vision within the group, and second, the difference in the mechanisms of confronting Zionist colonialism compared to what was prevalent in the Palestinian liberation movement at the time.

Keywords: Lions' den; revolution; youth; Nablus; Palestine.

First - Detailed introductions:

The city of Nablus and its special places of interest, mentioning the neighbourhoods of the old city, including Al-Yasmine, Al-Hablah, Al_Aatout, and Al-Qaysariyah. As for the state to which they belong, it is Palestine, in this blessed part of the land. A pure youth group was formed, organised within the framework of an armed revolutionary activity against the Zionist occupation. According to its members, it does not belong to any particular Palestinian faction or party, although it is in harmony and communication with them. Its members have adopted the name "The Lions' Den", although the media have given them other names, such as "Nablus Moons", "Guardians of the Old City" and "The Cubs". The most important thing in our discussion is that their members are united by a common goal: their love for their homeland, Palestine, and their desire to liberate it from the Zionist occupation.

The beginning of their appearance and activity was when this brave youth adopted the house of Mohammad Al-Azizi as the headquarters for their meetings, where they discussed a variety of conflicting ideas, from which emerged the set of principles they adopted, advocated and committed themselves to in the reality of their revolutionary activity. They also tried to spread them among the youth of Nablus and recommended the necessity of adhering to them in case of their martyrdom, in addition to calling for ensuring the continuity of "The Lions' Den" with its revolutionary ideas among the youth in the hope of liberating the homeland.

Therefore,

- What is the history of “The Lions’ Den”, its starting point, its objectives and its specific purpose, as it has become part of the history of the Palestinian resistance?

What has been presented is in the general context of the investigation, but there is still an urgent need to explain some details about the movement of the Den, as well as to elaborate on some focal points related to it, due to its importance in the history of the Palestinian resistance from its inception to the present day. Therefore,

- Who is The Lions’ Den?

- Who are its members?

- What are their starting points, references, ideas and objectives?

- What have they revived in the Palestinian struggle?

In order to answer these and other questions, we have decided to undertake this project, entitled:

The Story of the Palestinian Youth Revolution

The Lions’ Den as a model

Our subject will be somewhat different in terms of the nature of the material and the quality of its sources, since most of them consist of investigations of the Lions’ Den in television programmes, documentary films and tapes recorded by the fighting youth themselves before their martyrdom, in which they explain their principles, motives and broadcast their last wills. In the absence of previous studies, this is the first academic study of the Lions’ Den, and we are determined to complete it for several reasons:

Firstly, this project will be an important step in documenting the history of the Lions’ Den as a revolutionary youth movement with an intense armed activity that frightened the Israeli security and political establishment, thereby giving the Den its significance from this perspective, as it constituted an important stage in the history of the Palestinian struggle.

Secondly, this particular part has not been historically documented, as we have not read books or articles about this stage, which has made the list of sources and references we rely on to talk about the Lions’ Den stage scarce. We therefore hope that this effort will document an important part of the history of the Palestinian cause. Moreover, we believe that the Den represents a decisive turning point for an important and sensitive stage in the history of the Palestinian struggle during the Zionist occupation, where a youthful and powerful initiative injected new blood into the Palestinian resistance, in addition to involving young people and children in its ranks and educating them about the struggle to grow up as opponents of this occupation, in the hope of consolidating the foundations of the greatest event that will inevitably come in the history of occupied Palestine.

The objectives that we have set for ourselves in this project are to show the noble goals that these young people were striving for, and to write their

revolutionary history, which they created so that the cause would not die; because its early founders wanted it to be a continuous movement that would not be extinguished even after their martyrdom. Another aim is to be inclined towards the idea of the necessity of reviving the Palestinian resistance against the Zionist occupation by armed means and, finally, the necessity of continuing the Jihad movement for the sake of God in Palestine.

We also wanted to document and transmit information about the movement of the Lions' Den, to help keep pace with the event, even if what we present does not reach the level of the event itself.

In this way, we have endeavoured to put into words what they said, what they wanted and what they themselves sought to achieve, so that their efforts may not be lost, so that the trust they left on the shoulders of the living may be preserved, and so that their message, in which they believed and for which they sacrificed their lives, may be remembered, awaiting the continuity of the generations that followed them. Thus, our position with them and about them is against the erasure and oblivion of all the martyrs of Palestine in general and the martyrs of the Cave in particular. In this context, we recall a sentence by one of the Knights of the Cave, Wadea' al-Hawwah, before his martyrdom, when he said "As long as the Almighty is with us, my brother, do not worry. By Allah, even if the whole world were to gather against you, [their gathering] would be against nothing. What can the authorities do to us? Our voice will still reach the whole world, people who worked for God and God honoured them, our name will be written in the history books and will be taught, and you will say, 'Wadeea spoke'¹. This is the living history that will continue to circulate as long as generations remain, affirming the truth as it was found, for the sake of truth itself, which Zionist colonialism wanted to erase.

Our methodology is historical in nature, as we will systematically follow the events related to the Lions' Den (Areen al-Asoud) by researching information, collecting it from its original sources, and meticulously documenting and presenting it objectively. We will analyse the collected material to determine the principles, aims and objectives of this revolutionary youth movement, as well as its causes and effects since it became active in the first third of the 21st century. The data on this revolutionary movement is reliable, well documented and attributed to its originators.

The importance of this paper lies in the efforts of the Lions' Den, whose members have taken on the task of reviving a revolutionary youth spirit through unconventional methods on the jihadi front, after having been absent from the public eye for the past twenty years, as the citizens themselves acknowledge. The Lions' Den has changed the way of confronting the Zionist occupation, moving from the intifada (uprising) phase to the revolutionary phase and beyond. This shift is evidenced by the progression from throwing stones to using live ammunition, through the modernisation of weaponry and sustained

engagement with the occupation forces in various locations around Nablus, where the members of the Den have demonstrated the ferocity of their defence, the acumen of their attack and the strength of their resolve and steadfastness on the battlefield until their last breath.

In addition, the cave has revived ideas in the jihad arena that are distinct and different from what prevailed in its previous incarnation, ensuring the continuity of the struggle in the path of God until the liberation of the holy Palestinian lands from the Zionist occupation.

Second - The history of the Martyrs' Knights:

The Lions' Den was founded as an armed revolutionary group against the occupation in the house of Mohammad al-Aziz known as Abu Saleh. He was the first Knight of Nablus to be mentioned and is considered an icon of the struggle in the streets of Nablus. Al-Azizi used his house as a meeting place for the youth, where they would sit, pray, remember God and discuss the idea of Jihad in the way of God and the pursuit of martyrdom². In addition to studying the Palestinian struggle in terms of its mechanisms, results and consequences, until all those who attended the cave meetings hummed this tune. In the beginning, the members of the cave were only four elements, then other members joined, from "four young men at the beginning, and today they have reached dozens of young men"³. This led to the expansion of the Lions Den, which exceeded all expectations to include the broad popular base of the people of Nablus, who approved all the suggestions and opinions of the Den.

Its members are mostly young Palestinians, mainly from the old city of Nablus, the Al-Yasmenah, Al-Hablah and Housh Al-Aatout neighbourhoods, and the Qaysariyah. As for the most prominent leaders of the "Lions' Den" who were mentioned, we record the following names in the order of their martyrdom:

1. Ashraf Lambaaslout, born in 2001.
2. Muhammad Ad-Dakhil, born 21 February 2000.
3. Adham Mabrouka, nicknamed "Al-chichani" (the Chechen), a name given to him by foreigners when they saw him as a child, and also adopted by the martyr Amin Labbadeh.

The three were martyred together at the same time in the car to which they had been lured. Their car naturally stopped on the road due to the presence of a yellow car in front of them and another one to their right, creating a situation that besieged the comrades of the "cave". The Israeli soldiers suddenly got out of the cars, and in the absence of the honour of war and enmity, the Zionist occupation unleashed a barrage of bullets on the car, estimated at eighty bullets, which led to the immediate martyrdom of Ashraf, ad-Dakhil and Al-chichani a result of this aggression. According to media reports, this took place on 8 February 2022.

Adham Mabrouka's mother, commenting on the manner in which her son and the other members of the Lions' Den were killed, said: "The Zionists have a kind of wickedness and malice, and if these [knights] had not harmed their entity, they would not have murdered them in this way... it is one of their crimes..... [These knights] are the pulse of the revolution, they ignited a flame... and they managed to make the activity all over the West Bank, and after their assassination everyone woke up"⁴.

The way the Zionist occupation dealt with the members of the "Lions' Cave" through treachery and betrayal lacks the honour of enmity and war.

Despite the physical liquidation of these martyrs by the Zionist colonialism, the most important thing about the facts related to this Palestinian youth revolution is that the martyrdom of the three knights has strengthened the determination of the rest of the knights of the "Lions' Den" to take the decision to retaliate against the occupation by escalating and intensifying the armed confrontation operations, which resulted in the armed revolutionary activity that greatly hurt the Zionists.

4- Mohammad Al-Azizi was born on 22 August 1997.

5- Abdel Rahman Jamal Sulaiman Subh was born on 15 February 1994.

At around 2 a.m., the occupation forces suddenly surrounded the house of Mohammad Al-Azizi, known as Abu Saleh. The youths were gathered as usual, discussing various issues, when shouting was heard outside the house and the confrontation between the Zionist occupation and Al-Azizi, who was assisted in the operation by his friend Subh, began. They both took up arms and engaged the Zionist enemy, clearing the way for the rest of the youth to escape the imposed siege. They managed to protect the members of the cave from the occupation. This was the deed of the Knights, but Subh and Al-Azizi were martyred as a result of this cover-up. This happened on 24/7/2022 in the Jasmine neighbourhood after 2 am, following a violent and destructive bloody clash that lasted for 5 hours⁵.

6- Ibrahim Alaa Izzat Al-Nabulsi, born 13 October 2003.

7- Islam Subuh, born in 1999.

The Knights of the Cave continued their intense and armed activity against the Zionist occupation, carrying out the will of the martyrs and continuing their jihad for the sake of God. However, this time they lost Ibrahim Al-Nabulsi and Islam Subuh, who were martyred on the morning of 9/8/2022 after a violent and fierce clash that lasted from 6:30 a.m. until 10 a.m., when the Zionist occupation cowardly fired a shoulder-fired projectile at the place where the Knights were entrenched, leading to their immediate martyrdom⁶. Despite the disparity in the weapons used, the two martyrs fought the battle of the knights, not fearing the strength of the enemy and not surrendering when the occupation demanded their surrender. On the contrary, they continued to fight fiercely and vigorously until their last breath, and before their martyrdom they broadcast their testament,

stressing the need to continue the Jihad, to cling to arms and to protect the homeland.

8- Wadea Al-Hawah was born on 13 July 1993.

9- And five of his comrades were gathered with him in his house.

They were all martyred on 25/10/2022 through the use of drones by the occupation forces, as well as the use of guided missiles and an unmanned aerial vehicle that succeeded in entering Al-Hawah's home in the Al-'Aatout neighbourhood. This operation resulted in the martyrdom of Wadea' al-Hawwah and the five young men who were with him in his apartment⁷. And although the knight himself took precautions, such as using anti-aircraft fire and explosives that he had planted in certain places to harm the enemy, martyrdom was the fate of Al-Hawwah and some of the companions who were with him.

And after the martyrdom of Wadea' al-Hawwah, the "Lions' Den" expanded and reached a very wide popular incubator that included the city of Nablus and its villages. The Den continued its dynamism even after the martyrdom of its most prominent active poles, with activities including expanding the broad popular base in the cities and villages of Nablus, as well as calling on civilians and others to participate in the activities of the Den. The cave commemorated this in a statement on 9 October 2023⁸.

And although the Zionist occupation eliminated all active members of the Lions' Den, what we are talking about and documenting is the lasting impact they left behind to remind the living in all corners of the world of a journey and a legacy full of profound meaning, lofty goals and the noblest character befitting gallant knights.

Third - The foundations of the Palestinian youth revolution:

The members of the "Cubs of the Lion's Den" in Nablus were active within a pure youth group that carried out a revolution against the Zionist occupation, using different kinds of weapons and escalating the battlefield, so that the description of the event focused on the strong impact of the armed activity of the den on the occupation, to the point that the Arab media acknowledged it. In this context, we quote a saying that the "Cubs of the Lion's Den" had "violated the resting places of Israeli decision-making, security and politics"⁹.

It is from this point that the question of changing the mechanisms used by the members of the Lion's Den to confront the Zionist occupation was discussed in depth. Some important questions were raised: "Is the Cubs of the Lion's Den a new methodology of resistance? Is it a rebellion against the previous Palestinian factions in the traditional form?" [And here, specifically, Hafedh Abu Sabra answered this question by stating that] ...The Cubs of the Lion's Den group is a number of Palestinian cubs who have decided to come out from under the cover of the traditional factions, with a state of standing and saying no to the fait accompli that the Tel Aviv government is trying to impose on the Palestinians through its practices on the ground, in addition to what is related to the security

coordination and the indirect negotiations led by Hamas in Gaza and the security coordination in the West Bank. ... it is a rebellion against the reality of the Palestinian factions that have chosen to communicate with the occupation, whether through direct or indirect negotiations, or even those that have joined the authority and worked with the occupation agreements¹⁰.

This is not all, but the change in the mechanism is due to the awareness that the members of the cave had when they understood with certainty the strategies of the occupation and its implications, and the martyr Al-Hawwah built his own reading around this, where he believed that the Palestinian people “have become accustomed to siege and punishment, and that the exception for our people is to live a stable and dignified life, and that these events have revealed to the dreamers of economic peace and stability that this is a treacherous enemy that can push us back decades in a matter of moments, and that the exception for our people is to live a stable and dignified life, and that these events have revealed to the dreamers of economic peace and stability that this is a treacherous enemy that can set us back decades in a moment, but the occupation is delusional, the more the siege increases, the more our popular incubator will increase, Allah willing¹¹.

In the context of the notion of the exception that takes place in the occupied territories, where the Palestinian people do not live a stable and dignified life in their own land, the reaction of the Lions’ Den is, first of all, a natural but strong reaction to the occupation policy. Secondly, it is the Lions’ Den’s response to the policies adopted by some Palestinian factions at the time in confronting Zionist colonialism. Therefore, we find that the change has affected the mechanisms of confronting this occupation, and the Knights have chosen to use weapons as the best means to confront the enemy, using pistols, machine guns, hand grenades and explosives, the latter of which were made by the youth of the cave itself, including Muhammad Ad-Dakhil, who made the first explosive device himself and detonated it in an empty place at the age of sixteen.

The youth came down to the field with the revolution, where the Knights planted explosive devices in the locations of the military bases of the Zionist occupation, including Mount Ebal, Mount Gerizim in Nablus and the Mount of Olives west of Nablus. We also note the method of repeated attacks on the Israeli army, where they would plan the places from which they would attack this enemy in order to shower it with bullets, whether it was at security checkpoints or other places where the occupation was present, which leads us to add another matter, which is the clashes that took place between the members of the cave and the occupation, as they used to last for hours, to the extent that they were described as some of the fiercest and bloodiest clashes that had not been witnessed in Nablus for twenty years. Finally, the method of night guarding the old city of Nablus, where they would confront the occupation army with gunfire whenever it approached.

As a result of the change in the mechanisms of confronting the occupation, the activity of the Knights of the Lion's Den led to the death of Israeli leaders and soldiers.

The change in the mechanisms and methods of confronting the occupation, which witnessed a difference from the prevailing methods of confrontation in this particular period of 2022, has led to positive talk about this significant event in the history of the Palestinian struggle, as evidenced by the comment of the official spokesman of the Hamas movement, who said: "It is clear that we are in a new phase of the struggle against the occupation, the title of which is the ongoing confrontation in the cities of Al-Defa"¹².

In addition to the above, we can discuss another change that has affected the members of the Lion's Den, this time at the level of vision and goals. Specifically, the elements of the Lion's Den have rejected reconciliation and negotiation with the Zionist occupation. They believe only in the idea of Jihad for the sake of God, freedom for Palestine and victory over the enemy. These principles have now been activated at the level of some Palestinian resistance groups, regardless of the cover or name under which they operate.

The members of the Lion's Den have revived the calls for jihad and freedom, and their determination to pursue these goals has been strengthened, especially after the Zionist colonial power began to physically eliminate one by one the knights of the Lion's Den, especially after they rejected the occupation's threatening messages.

It is important to address the ideological basis of the Jihad movement on which the Lion's Den is based. It derives its legitimacy from the cumulative jihadi activities for the sake of God in Palestine by all the honourable ones who sincerely sacrificed for the liberation of the Palestinian land, from Izz al-Din al-Qassam to the martyr Amin al-Labad. Among these ideological references, we add Nayef Abu Shrah, also known as Abu Fathi, who was one of the founders of the Al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades. Ibrahim al-Nabulsi was so influenced by him and his path of jihad that he took his kunya (nickname) and became known as Abu Fathi Ibrahim Alaa Izzat al-Nabulsi. The list of martyrs from Nablus, not to mention all of Palestine, is endless. Therefore, we acknowledge that our efforts are focused on the goal of martyrdom and not on the enumeration of martyrs¹³.

In this way, the youthful spark of jihad has been rekindled within the Lion's Den, maintaining continuity with the previous icons of the Palestinian revolution and their ultimate sacrifice.

The armoured knights of the lion's den, their armed activity has a direct, explicit and well-defined discursive legacy that is still circulating on social media platforms to this day. Their aim in broadcasting and disseminating it was to use it to ignite the revolution and present their goals and objectives, as well as to call on the broad popular base of Palestinians to rally around their goals and

objectives in the lives of these mujahideen (holy warriors) for the sake of God, even after their martyrdom.

Among the most prominent texts that we rely on in our project are the recorded or written speeches of the knights Ibrahim Al-Nabulsi and Wadea' Al-Hawwah. Here are some of the key points of these speeches:

1.Revival of the Sunnah (Tradition) of Jihad for the Sake of God:

The youth of the Lions' Den adopted the call for Jihad for the sake of God in Palestine against the Zionist occupation. This position is based on the historical facts, which confirm that "the Arab element was present in Palestine before the arrival of the Jews... and among the facts worth knowing and considering is that the Arabs, in the great Islamic conquest, did not take Palestine from the Jews, but took it from the Byzantines, and it was empty of Jews to the extent that the Patriarch of the Christians in Jerusalem (Sophronius) ordered the Caliph Umar ibn Al-Khattab not to allow any Jew to reside in it"¹⁴. However, with the encouragement of Jewish settlement in Palestine, it was decided to gather them there, after they had been fragmented, displaced and scattered in many countries of the world, because "each Jewish community had its own civilisational discourse and folklore, emanating from its civilisational environment...". American Jews, Russian-Polish-German-English Jews... the Falasha Jews"¹⁵ from African Ethiopia. After settling in the Palestinian territories, they seized the land of the Palestinians, displaced them and usurped their rights, freedoms and dignity, which led to the idea of Jihad for the sake of God against this Zionist occupation.

The evidence for the emergence of the idea of jihad (holy war) in the way of God among the members of the [Lion's Den] is the testimony of Ibrahim al-Nabulsi's mother, where she said: "They said about their souls that they are a sacrifice for God and the Messenger of God..."¹⁶ And in other places we hear the leaders of the young men of the [Lion's Den] repeating a constant slogan on their lips, and this was before their martyrdom, which is contained in a single sentence, and the difference is only in the voice of the one repeating it. From this we quote the voice of Ibrahim al-Nabulsi himself when he repeats: "O Allah, [grant us] steadfastness, victory or martyrdom."¹⁷ To the extent that the author of the quote himself, in his last confrontation with the Zionist occupation in which he was martyred, loudly proclaimed with full force, steadfastness, determination and knightly courage: "God is the greatest, come to Jihad, come to Jihad"¹⁸.

One of the striking facts that must be pointed out is that the members of the [Lion's Den], in some of the photographs or audio recordings taken of them, were seen with their fingers raised in testimony.

And their conversations and discussions in the house of al-Azizi and others were partly about jihad in the way of Allah and their desire for martyrdom.

The idea of jihad is confirmed with the [Lion's Den], especially when the Zionists were desecrating the city of Nablus, wandering in it day and night, and

no one could deter or restrain them. The heroes of the [Lion's Den] decided to be the guardians of the Old City of Nablus against this unjust occupation. Their descent into the arena of jihad and their activity in the Old City had dire consequences for this occupation, including that "they prevented the occupation from entering the Old City, [and] prevented the occupation from approaching Joseph's Tomb. Al-Nabulsi and his companions, Muhammad ad-Dakhil and al-chichani, wanted to move and do something after the city witnessed an unnatural stagnation in which the Jews entered Nablus and roamed it as they pleased, day and night, desecrating the city. God has honoured these three by changing something, because they do not want anyone to enter their city, because it is forbidden to them [i.e. the Zionists], and they have done so successfully"¹⁹.

The idea of jihad itself comes as a revival of this tradition after its mention and activity had waned in Nablus. According to the statements of the residents of Nablus themselves, as reported on television and Arab media channels or in recorded documents, this jihadist movement in the cause of God, especially in the old city of Nablus, has not been witnessed on a similar scale for about twenty years. In the recording of an incident on the Al-Ghad channel showing a confrontation between a Nablus resident and the occupation forces, an eyewitness describes the confrontation that took place in the Al-Hablah neighbourhood of old Nablus and states that it lasted for a long time. Moreover, the commentary on the nature of this confrontation indicates that it was unprecedented in its intensity and violence, surpassing previous years. Specifically, since the Second Intifada, Nablus has not witnessed such an event since the year 2022²⁰.

Moreover, The call to Jihad in the cause of God was a result of the level of awareness reached by the youth of the "Lions' Den". Despite their young age, they were able to understand the implications and underlying messages of Israeli political discourses. This is evident in the text of "Alarm Bells", which reveals the idea of the ruling Likud party's rejection of the principle of "land for peace". It regards the occupied Arab land as a sacred right for Israel, on which it can build settlements as it pleases, in accordance with the words of the Torah: "The land on which your feet tread is yours. We do not know what their feet will tread on tomorrow and the day after tomorrow... The issue of the land must be closed forever. If the Arabs close this file and give Israel security, then in return Israel will give the Arabs peace, which is what Netanyahu came for - peace in exchange for security, not land. Because the land has come into permanent Israeli possession"²¹.

This reinforces the idea of jihad among the youth of the "Lions' Den" because they are aware of the underlying messages of Israeli political discourse. This has led the "knights" to overturn the balances in the occupied land, both in words and in deeds, because they are firmly convinced that the land belongs to the

Palestinians and that it can only be firmly grasped through jihad in the cause of Allah.

The members of the cave laid down conditions for jihad in the path of Allah, including a call to all honourable mujahideen. This call emphasised not to fire shots aimlessly in the air, but to direct them at the enemy, as the weapons are meant for the coffers of the Zionist occupation. This is why the members of the cave did not carry their rifles and machine guns openly during the day, as is shown by the journalistic confessions of these martyrs, with the Chechen as an example, whose mother testified that “his rifle was for the Jews, he did not carry it during the day”²².

If we pause for a moment on the issue of jihad in the path of Allah through the carrying of arms and the modalities and conditions of this, we can say that this choice among the resisters of “the Lions’ Den (Areen al-Asoud)” has proved that they have armed themselves with the consciousness of the gun and have been able to lead the Palestinian masses. Here, the momentum of resistance and armed struggle is escalating and intensifying, and the Palestinian youth has become more ready to confront the occupation²³.

One of the conditions of jihad is that the knights of the cave must renounce the idea of devoting themselves to God Almighty alone.

For this reason, throughout their jihad movement, they did not pledge allegiance to any faction or party, as the statement of al-Hawwah attests: “By Allah’s covenant, no faction has united us, but God has united us to be His soldiers fighting in His cause, and the word of truth will raise our voices and the banner of truth, which is that there is no god but God, and Mohammad is the Messenger of Allah”²⁴.

However, this does not mean creating a nucleus of conflict between the cave and the rest of the Palestinian factions and parties with different approaches in dealing with the Zionist occupation. On the contrary, they were in harmony with them and had a good relationship full of respect for the other who was different from them. This is because one of the foundations of the Lions’ Den (Areen al-Asoud) is the call for unity, the rejection of sectarianism and conflict, in order to avoid creating foci of division and internal strife among the Palestinians. One of the results of (Areen al-Asoud’s) awareness of this was that “it was one of the most important reasons for the Areen al-Asoud group to gain the support and backing of the Palestinian and Nablus street... [where they] rejected the factionalism and partisanship that had exhausted the Palestinian people since the Nakba”²⁵.

2- Fulfilling the continuity of the pacts and agreements between them:

The members of the cave made a pact among themselves about the necessity of continuing the armed struggle against the Zionist occupation. This was to be maintained in the event of the arrest or martyrdom of one of the knights, whereby the rest would be obliged to complete the journey and should not stop

or retreat until the continuity of the jihad became a characteristic and feature of the Lions' Den. This pact would remain in force even after martyrdom. According to the recorded tapes, since the beginning of the physical liquidation of the members and knights of the Lions' Den, they have become more determined and resolute in continuing the Jihad, following in the footsteps of the previous martyrs. This is testified to by Ibrahim al-Nabulsi himself, who declared: "I am walking on the path of the martyrs who are the companions of my path, those who were murdered by the Israeli forces... My dream and the dream of the entire Palestinian people is one... until our occupied lands are liberated"²⁶.

In the written journalistic dialogue with Wadea al-Hawwah two days before his martyrdom, he mentioned: "The testament of the martyr Mohammad al-'Azizi Abu Saleh was that we continue the journey after him"²⁷.

The pledge to follow the path of the previous martyrs among the knights remains in word and deed, especially after the martyrdom of Adham Mabrouka, Ashraf Lambaaslout, and Muhammad ad-Dakhil . The proof of this loyalty is that "Ibrahim al-Nabulsi, after the martyrdom of his comrades, was alone, but still wanted to rub the Zionist occupation's nose in the dust, so he did what no one else could do and fulfilled the will of his comrades"²⁸ through his jihad until he was martyred. One of his actions against the enemy was to attack them during a visit of the Jews to the tomb of Joseph (peace be upon him and our Prophet), which resulted in the death of a soldier and serious and severe injuries among the Jews, preventing the fierce knights from entering Nablus.

On the opposite bank, we find that the Knights have sent messages of recommendation to the people of Nablus and the Palestinian people, urging them to be faithful to the covenant of the martyrs by continuing the march after them. The commander of the Knights, Ibrahim Al-Nabulsi, said: "My advice to the people I live with is not to give up the resistance. Let the spirit of resistance continue in Nablus and in all of Palestine, God willing. I will remain a thorn in the throat of the enemy... and God willing, we will continue on this path until Palestine is liberated."²⁹ The best advice is what was said in the homeland and with the rifle, until it became the essence of the lion's den, repeated by children before the youth, as a declaration of the continuity of the revolution. Al-Nabulsi, according to his last recorded words published on social media before his martyrdom, said in his will: "I love my mother, protect the homeland after me, and I advise you... no one should leave the rifle"³⁰ .The emphasis on not leaving the rifle signifies the continuity of the revolution against the Zionist occupation, for in the continuity of jihad lies the glory of the homeland. This will spread among men and women, old and young, and will become a deep-rooted belief in the minds and hearts of the Palestinians in general and the people of Nablus in particular, at the level of their families, neighbours, friends and all the inhabitants of Nablus. The doctrine of the martyrs of the lion's den states: "The

pure blood of our sons will not be in vain, and the pure blood of our sons is the beginning of liberation, God willing. The banners of glory are high for these martyrs... our youth was an idea... and the idea does not die”³¹. The Covenant has become a conviction for every Palestinian who believes in the Palestinian cause.

3- The call for unity:

The members of the cave called for unity among the Palestinians - the people, the factions and the parties. This will only be achieved under one condition, which is the unification of the compass among them, where the end point for everyone is the liberation of Palestine from the Zionist occupation. This leads to the unification of the ranks among the Palestinians, both in terms of the means and the end. This proposal comes in the light of the existing divisions among the Palestinian factions, a phenomenon that is not new but has deep roots in the history of the struggle of the different Palestinian factions against each other. This crisis has become a crisis in search of solutions, and in this regard, George Habash has written a book to discuss the situation in his book “The Palestinian Crisis”, in which he speaks of “the mission that the Union of Palestinian Writers and Journalists is carrying out today and in this difficult period... to find a way out of the crisis that we are experiencing in the Palestinian revolution... in the Palestine Liberation Organisation... in the Fatah movement... and if I am not mistaken, in the entirety of the Palestinian revolutionary factions... I say this... out of my understanding of the magnitude of this issue and its importance, and out of my awareness of the necessity of the contribution of the Palestinian and Arab collective mind in providing the answer to the research question: “The Crisis of the Palestinian Revolution: the Roots and the Solutions”³².

As for the unity at the level of the objective, one of its objectives is to reject the division among the totality of the struggling forces in Palestine and to remind them of the need to unite under a banner whose supreme slogan is the liberation of the Palestinian territories occupied by the “Zionist enemy”³³. There is a second unity, the unity of the means to confront this occupation. It is known that in the history of the Palestinian struggle movement, since the end of the first intifada, and we add to this stage the post-second intifada, it began to know diversity at the level of methods of dealing with and confronting this Zionist colonialism.

The recognition of the difference in the mechanisms of dealing with the Zionist enemy and the methods of confronting it has created a crisis at the level of the Palestinian struggle arena. This is in the light of another recognition, which is the recognition of the results of adopting this path and the appreciation of its reflections on the ultimate goal of these Palestinian struggle movements, where the results were not satisfactory and did not achieve anything for the Palestinians, but rather slowed down and distanced the supreme goal of the Palestinian struggle, which is the exclusion of the goal of liberating the land.

And in the face of the increasing violation of the freedoms and rights of the Palestinians, with the continuation of the expansion of the Jewish settlements in the occupied territories, the immediate intervention of the youth of the Lion's Den was called for in order to bring about a rapid change in the Palestinian struggle movement. This was done through the rejection of all the methods and tools adopted by the Palestinian factions and political parties that did not achieve results in favour of the independence of the homeland, as well as the strengthening of the rejection with alternatives that were represented in opening the door to Jihad in the way of Allah and confronting the enemy with the language of bullets until Palestine is liberated.

The solutions to the crisis were not theoretical, but can be described as practical solutions when the knights descended on the ground of the field. At the same time, the cave reinforced its proposal with another parallel idea, based on the unification of the Palestinian factions and political parties into one entity in order to be a united hand against the Zionist occupation. At the very least, the idea of the support of the youth of the Den by the factions and parties was guaranteed, given the recognition of the principle of difference and the rejection of the strategy of disagreement.

The statement we have made is this excerpt from a press article which defines the unification of the members of the Den under one banner, away from factions, coalitions and parties.

The only thing that unites them is the goal. It states that the Lions' Den "was formed by armed men who follow several Palestinian factions, bringing together the Al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades, affiliated to the Palestine National Liberation Movement (Fatah); the Al-Quds Brigades, the military wing of the Islamic Jihad Movement; the Al-Qassam Brigades, the military wing of the Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas); and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine. It also includes former members of the Palestinian security services, but they refuse to be assigned to any particular faction³⁴. And among the additional evidence is the testimony of one of the members of the cave, especially after the martyrdom of the majority of its members, who said:"And we will continue the march after them, we will not leave the gun [the gunpowder]...We submit to God, the Lord of the worlds... We submit to Allah, the Lord of the worlds... We are here, the lion's den in Nablus, we have no political or organisational orientation, we are here walking under [the banner of] 'There is no god but Allah, Mohammad is the Messenger of Allah³⁵'".

Evidence that proves the coalition's attempts, despite different perspectives Among the additional evidence we can rely on to prove the coalition's attempts, despite the different perspectives among the entirety of the Palestinian factions and parties, is the audio message released by the Al-Qassam Brigades. It was a message of gratitude addressed to them by the late Al-Nabulsi before his martyrdom. In the message, Al-Nabulsi expressed his gratitude for the support

he had received from the Al-Qassam Brigades. The Brigades published the audio message on their website and it was then widely circulated on social media. In the message, Al-Nabulsi said: “My greetings to the Al-Qassam Brigades in Gaza and throughout Al defa. I salute you and thank you for the support you have given me. Your brother, Ibrahim Al-Nabulsi, Al-Qassam Brigades³⁶”.

From this audio text we can deduce the cohesion achieved by the strategy of supporting the Palestinian factions towards the “cave” [referring to the armed resistance], where the differences do not spoil the cause. We must not forget to mention the enormous efforts made by the leader of the cave, Ibrahim Al-Nabulsi, in the face of coalition attempts and the rejection of division, while respecting the factions despite the differences in their approaches. Evidence of this can be seen in Al-Nabulsi’s attempts to unite the ranks and promote cohesion between young and old fighters in Nablus. After his efforts to clarify the vision for the older fighters and remind them of the ultimate goal to which they must adhere, he worked diligently to resolve any differences between the young and old fighters first, and between the factions second³⁷. He wanted them to be one hand and one force, while respecting the differences and rejecting the discord among the Palestinian resistance circles. This meeting led to a reconciliation with the prominent militant Adnan Khader.

This logical and far-reaching thinking has generated widespread popular support among the people of Nablus, as evidenced by the Al-Ghad TV channel’s commentary on the purpose of the “Lion’s Den” in terms of uniting the different factions as both an end and a means, in the sense of “Why did Ibrahim al-Nabulsi enjoy all this popular support?”. And the sympathy on the ground in the old city, as well as through social media platforms... [because] this name has shone... and has formed a hope for hundreds of Palestinian youth who have collided with a reality without a political horizon and without a clear political stage... ... The Nablus battalion formed a resistance commitment of all factions and military wings... And perhaps the unifying factor that Ibrahim al-Nabulsi enjoyed, despite being from the Al-Aqsa Martyrs’ Brigades, was that he was accepted by Islamic Jihad, he was accepted as a member of Fatah, he was accepted as a member of Hamas, and this gave further support to the popular base of Ibrahim al-Nabulsi’s group in the city of Nablus in the northern Al-Defa Al Rarbia”³⁸.

This cave’s orientation towards unity is accompanied by another idea, which concerns the issue of the war against traitors. The jihadist arena in Nablus and all over Palestine has been affected by national treason, and the culprits are spies from among the Palestinian people who have chosen to become agents of the Zionists, working on their behalf while embedded among their fellow jihadists and activists. They have betrayed their homeland through the process of espionage, passing information about their comrades to the occupation, which

has facilitated the physical elimination of members of the cave. Through this behaviour they committed an unforgivable national betrayal.

In light of this, it was decided with the cave members to wage war against those who betrayed the homeland and to take fateful decisions against them, as they have become an imminent danger to Palestine. Unity has no meaning in the midst of the proliferation of spies in their ranks. As Al-Nabulsi said: "...and I advise all people that there must be a deterrent for spies"³⁹.

A contemplative examination of the activities of the youth movement, the Lions' Den in Nablus, confirms that its activities were not a mere activist indulgence or a muscular display, nor were they arbitrary. Rather, we can say that it was an achievement that embodied the past of the Palestinian armed revolution in a new garment, intertwining with it in two important aspects that need to be mentioned. The first is the intertwining with the history of the Palestinian revolution and its brave heroes, as evidenced by the historical testimony of Lieutenant General Mahmoud Shait Khatab under the heading "The Jihad of the Palestinians", where he says "I followed with ardent longing the news of the Palestinian revolution and the news of the heroic rebels... and before the Arab armies entered Palestine, I followed the jihad of its men in the Holy Land and eagerly received the news of the Palestinian mujahideen"⁴⁰.

The text closely examines crucial details in the history of the Palestinian revolution, establishing terms such as 'revolution', 'revolutionaries', 'heroes', 'jihad', 'mujahideen' and 'nationalism'. However, these terms have been deliberately obscured as part of a strategy to erase the facts. "The Lion's Den" emerges as a violent reaction to the dilution of the genuine Palestinian revolutionary effort, which lies between the brackets of the Palestinian cause and the intifadas, and before all else, the resistance.

Most of these concepts and their latent backgrounds, as well as their shameful failed consequences, have manifested themselves in the Palestinian arena after the first and second intifadas, appearing as signs and indications of submission and capitulation. Therefore, "The Lion's Den" is interwoven with the past of the Palestinian revolution against Zionist colonialism in Jerusalem, Jenin, Nablus and other parts of Palestine. Despite its short lifespan due to the physical elimination of its active members by Zionist colonialism, far from the honour of enmity, "The Lion's Den" was a revolutionary armed jihad movement led by courageous knights that emerged as a sprout from the womb of the ancient Palestinian jihad.

Second, "The Lion's Den" was able to benefit from the history of the jihadi movements in Palestine, especially their achievements and shortcomings.

It is the ability to learn from all the mistakes that have besieged the Jihad movement in Palestine, where "knowledge of the enemy and a rigorous critical review of the journey are two essential conditions for the crystallisation of a comprehensive confrontation strategy that rises to the level of the challenges

posed by the Zionist imperialist project⁴¹ .At the same time, “The Lion’s Den” must undertake a comprehensive review of the current Palestinian struggle, especially the post-Second Intifada phase, where “there is an urgent need for serious research related to the practice of struggle in order to understand the revolutionary truth, i.e, understanding the nature of our current historical reality in all its political, social and military aspects, the reality of the enemies of our nation and its progressive humanitarian goals, and the effective revolutionary ways to change this reality through our orientation towards the liberation of the land and the human being, and through the longing for our lofty liberation goals”⁴².

Fourth - Beyond the lions’ den:

The remnants of jihad, revolution and freedom for Palestine remain an open hope beyond the cave, a continuity that knows no end until this land is liberated, and this is God’s true promise. The proof of this begins with the words of the mother of the martyr Ibrahim al-Nabulsi, when she spoke of the continuity of the principles of the Cave and said “The youth have completed the march on the path of Ibrahim. Palestine is a birth, if Ibrahim goes, a hundred thousand Ibrahims will come until the liberation of Palestine, God willing... What follows is the continuity of the spirit of the ideas of the cave⁴³, as affirmed by the voice of a Palestinian woman at the height of her grief for the grandchildren she lost in the bombardment of Gaza, where she condensed the pain and disappointment into her immortal phrase, which was a message to Netanyahu, saying “I want to send a message to Netanyahu... All my children are a sacrifice for the homeland, all my children are a sacrifice for Palestine, and I am the first of them.”⁴⁴ The passion to go forward with the word in the face of the enemy and in this is a proof that the remnant of the cave continues to exist in all corners of Palestine even after the martyrdom of its members, but the spirit of this remnant has yet to reveal its hidden nature.

Conclusion:

Every research paper, no matter how long, must have an endpoint. Before we get to that endpoint, we precede it with a conclusion that summarises everything that has been discussed in the paper. Accordingly, we present the following findings:

- Despite their young age, the members of the Lions’ Den were able to establish a revolutionary jihadist movement in Palestine with its own foundations, principles and goals in the 21st century, specifically in 2022.
- The Lions’ Den movement, which was also known by other names, had many members, but its most active and influential fighters, who troubled the decision-makers of the Israeli entity, were Al-chichani, Ashraf Lambaaslout, Muhammad Ad-Dakhil, Islam Subuh, Al-Azizi, Ibrahim Al-Nabulsi and Wadea Al-Hawwah. They were targeted for physical elimination by the Zionist colonialism

because they made a significant difference on the battlefield and instilled fear in the Zionist entity.

- We note that the youth of the Lions' Cave laid new foundations for the contemporary Palestinian resistance movement in terms of mechanisms and methods of confronting the enemy. Their revolution against Zionist colonialism was exemplified when they led the armed activity in Nablus. Through the concentrated efforts of the Lions' Den members and their determination to continue the Jihad for the sake of God, the Lions' Den gradually moved from being in the hands of its members in Nablus to being embraced and supported by the wider Palestinian population.

- The principles and foundations adopted include the call for unity, unification of vision and compass, and concentration of power against a single enemy - the Zionists. To this end, they called for the cessation of firing even a single shot in the air, as the bullets would only be aimed at the chest of the Zionist enemy. They also called for the liberation of Palestine and tried to unite all the Palestinian factions despite the differences between the different groups and militias spread all over Palestine. It also called for the use of force to regain dignity, rights and freedom, and to eliminate the traitors who sell out the Palestinian revolutionaries to make it easier for the Zionist enemy to pursue and kill them.

The Lions' Den movement was able to become the new face of the Palestinian revolution, with a youthful spirit and new ideas that contrasted with the prevailing state of the Palestinian resistance at the time. This placed it between a defeatist present and a forgotten reference, revealing an unshakable truth - that the Lions' Den was closely linked to the ideological frameworks of past and present Palestinian jihadi movements that had been neglected, and thus the Lions' Den sought to revive their revolutionary, jihadi proposals.

- The Lions' Den examined the current state of the contemporary Palestinian resistance movement, particularly in the aftermath of the first and second intifadas, and sought to learn from its mistakes, avoiding its negatives and capitalising on its positives.

Despite the youth of its members, the Lions' Den was able to change the history of the Palestinian resistance from one of uprisings and resistance to one of revolution, and from the branding of its heroes as stone-throwers to that of gunmen.

Thus, we can identify the "Lions' Den" and its efforts to create an armed revolutionary jihad activity that destabilised the security and political situation of the Jews, which had been absent from the eyes, ears and minds of the Palestinians of Nablus for almost two decades.

Footnotes:

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