

PLO-Fundamentalist Rift Seen in Occupied Territories

By Glenn Frankel
Washington Post Foreign Service

JERUSALEM, Sept. 5—A rift is developing between nationalist supporters of the mainstream of the Palestine Liberation Organization and Islamic fundamentalists in the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip over proposals to recognize and negotiate with Israel in an attempt to win an independent Palestinian state in the territories.

A document issued two weeks ago by the Islamic Resistance Movement, a new and influential underground fundamentalist group that is attracting Palestinian support, warns against such concessions, rejects any concept resulting in two states and says the only solution is to wage a jihad—an Islamic holy struggle—against Israel.

"The Islamic Resistance Movement considers the hand of Palestine to be an Islamic trust for all generations of Moslems. It cannot be given up in part or ceded; no one has this right," states the 40-page document, which the group described as its "covenant" and which it has been circulating throughout the West Bank recently.

"The only solution to the Palestinian problem is by jihad. All initiatives, conferences and proposals are a waste of time," it said.

Palestinian analysts say such rhetoric, coming as moderate PLO supporters weigh whether the organization should declare a government in exile and take steps to explicitly recognize Israel's existence in an attempt to win international support and initiate peace talks, is

meant as a warning not to make any concessions.

The document, coupled with denunciations of possible new peace moves by Palestinian leftists and pro-Syrian guerrilla groups, indicates that the PLO moderates once again appear isolated.

Palestinian unity has been one of the main features of the nine-month-old uprising in the occupied territories, a wave of unrest and violence in which the death toll has now reached 250 Arabs and three Israelis.

Nationalist and fundamentalist groups retain strong differences, the most important of which is the PLO's adherence to the goal of a democratic secular state for Palestinians against the fundamentalist call for an Islamic republic. For the most part, however, they were submerged dur-

ing the early months of the violence. But lately sharp differences have reemerged between some of the fundamentalists and Fatah. The Islamic Resistance Movement, known in Arabic as Hamas, or "Zeal," first asserted its authority in Gaza, where it organized day-long general strikes in its own name and without Fatah support.

Two weeks ago Hamas for the first time did the same thing in the West Bank, calling for and enforcing a general strike there to mark the 19th anniversary of a failed attempt by a deranged Australian tourist to torch the Al Aqsa mosque on Jerusalem's Temple Mount. The strike call was largely heeded, but not without friction, and fist fights between PLO and Hamas supporters were reported in Ramallah. PLO supporters in the West Bank

say Hamas' influence there remains limited. "They can call a one-day strike, but the PLO is there day after day doing the basic work," said one activist. Nonetheless, some PLO supporters have expressed fear that the new covenant indicates more hostilities with Hamas are inevitable.

"We need maximum unity right now and this kind of thing can only hurt us," said a Palestinian closely identified with Fatah.

Hamas is the underground wing of the Moslem Brotherhood, a traditional Islamic movement that has operated legally in the Gaza Strip for more than a decade with Israeli acquiescence. Israeli officials decided at the time that a strong fundamentalist presence would serve as a conservative counterweight to PLO influence in the area. That appeared to

be the case for many years, but in recent years fundamentalists influenced by Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini's success in Iran have become increasingly active in politics and forged practical alliances with their one-time nationalist rivals.

Now the rivalry may be returning. One of the Gaza Strip's best known fundamentalists, Ahmed Yassin, spiritual leader of the Moslem Brotherhood, had in the past year refused to directly criticize the PLO in interviews. But last week he reportedly took a more aggressive stance.

"The PLO is accepting now what it used to reject," he told Reuters. "I tell you, they are howing to Israel right now. The PLO is in a weak situation, just as its military wing was cut off in Lebanon. Its political wing will be cut off as well. The PLO will give more and more concessions under Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir's government. Israel will give nothing and the Palestinians will gain nothing."