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# Social Service Provision by Minority Religious Organizations: A Case Study of the Islamic Movement in Kafr Qassim

**RANA ESEED**

*School of Social Work and Social Welfare, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Mt. Scopus, Jerusalem 91905, Israel*
*email: rana.eseed@mail.huji.ac.il*

## Abstract

This study examines what motivates an organization representing a religious-national minority to provide social services. The case study for examining this issue is the Islamic Movement in Palestinian society in Israel, and specifically its social activities in the town of Kafr Qassim. The article analyzes the factors leading to the development of the movement's various services in the town by tracing their historical development and current offerings. This case study analysis is informed by two theoretical bodies of knowledge: the development of NGOs and the development of faith-based organizations. The data is based upon 17 semi-structured in-depth interviews with the heads of all the social services, social activists and municipality representatives in Kafr Qassim, where the movement was established. Some of the interviews also include tours and observations of actual services provision. Additional sources include archival documents, such as the organization's regulations and work plans. The findings identify three main factors in the development of minority religious organizations: government failure in providing services (necessary factor) and religious ideology and mobilization of political support as secondary factors. All three are grounded in the ongoing conflict between the Palestinian minority group and the state.

**Keywords:** Faith-based organizations (FBOs); Social service provision; Government failure; Palestinian society; Islamic Movement; Israel

Over the past three decades, a growing number of scholars and researchers have turned our attention to religion as a significant factor in processes of shaping socioeconomic and political policies. In particular, the key role of religious faith in people's lives and its importance to the promotion of welfare, wellbeing and mental health has been increasingly recognized (e.g. Attar-Schwartz *et al.*, 2017; Jawad, 2009, 2011; Hackney and Sanders, 2003; Warden *et al.*, 2017).

This recognition informed attempts to study religion in the specific context of welfare service provision and the role played by faith-based organizations (FBOs), initially among Christian and Jewish communities in North America and Europe (Cnaan *et al.*, 2002), and subsequently in Islamic communities,

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particularly migrant communities in Europe (Adamson, 2005). This was followed by growing interest in the role of FBOs in Arab or Islamic countries, such as the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, Hamas in Gaza, and Hezbollah in Lebanon (Clark, 2004; Jawad, 2009; Roy, 2011; Wiktorowicz, 2004), particularly in terms of their influence on social policies in those countries (Jawad, 2009). In Israel, however, FBOs were hardly studied, whether in Jewish or Palestinian society. The few studies that examined the relation between FBOs and the Israeli welfare state focused primarily on Shas – an ultraorthodox Jewish political party with extensive educational and social welfare services (see Tesler, 2000; Zehavi, 2012).

There is extensive literature on the role, modus operandi, and uniqueness of FBOs compared to secular organizations, as well as the methodology of studying them (Bielefeld and Cleveland, 2013; Clarke and Ware, 2015; Cnaan and Curtis, 2013; Heist and Cnaan, 2016; Schneider, 2013). Some studies discuss their role in providing social services such as education, health, culture and charity. There is also extensive literature on the unique role of FBOs relative to (other) NGOs (Clarke, 2011), stressing either their similarities (Clarke, 2006) or differences (Berger, 2003). Clarke and Ware (2015) propose a third approach, according to which FBOs have unique characteristics but at the same time, share social contents and purposes with other civil society organizations and NGOs, particularly welfare and charity.

The present study adopts this approach in reference to the case of the Islamic Movement in Palestinian society in Israel.[1] Accordingly, it refers to the movement as an FBO with some similarities to NGOs, so that analyzing it is informed by the literature on both. The objective of this study is to understand the factors that motivate an FBO (in this case, the Islamic Movement that has both religious and political aspects) to provide social services to an indigenous ethnic minority (in this case, the Palestinians in the town of Kafr Qassim, Israel).

## The Context of the Present Study

### Palestinian Society in Israel

The Palestinians comprise 20.8% of Israel's population; most are Muslims (82.1%) and the remainder comprises Christians (9.4%) and Druze (8.4%) (Israel Central Bureau of Statistics, 2016). The members of this indigenous minority became citizens upon the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948. However, they have since experienced processes of marginalization and discrimination on different levels, not the least in the welfare area. Studies indicate that institutional discrimination of ethnic groups by the welfare state reinforces structural racial inequality (Quadagno, 1994); in the case of the Palestinians, this discrimination has been prolonged and continuous (Rosenhek, 2002). Cnaan (1985) explains the differential social services for Jews and Palestinians by what he calls "the enemy

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factor": throughout the years, the Jewish state and society have considered Palestinian society as an enemy, leading to reduced investments in social services for that society. The resulting discrimination in welfare and other social spheres – primarily the labor market – drove Palestinian families to material deprivation. For example, according to the recent National Insurance Institute Poverty Report (Endeweld *et al.*, 2016), the poverty rate among those families is 53.3%, as opposed to 13.8% among Jewish families. Similarly, according to Ministry of Welfare data (2006), government support of local social services in Palestinian municipalities is 30% lower than the Jewish. Thus, although the Palestinians have never been completely excluded from the welfare state, they have always remained on its margins (Adalah, 2011; Lewin and Stier, 2002; Rosenhek, 2002; Rosenhek and Shalev, 2000).

Several third-sector organizations compensate for this discrimination and resulting gaps by providing social services. The literature on Palestinian civil society has referred to the particular role played in this regard by the Islamic Movement (Gidron *et al.*, 2004; Payes, 2003), with some arguing that it provides services to compensate those for whom the government fails to provide or provides insufficiently (Aburaiya, 2004; Ali, 2004). Jamal (2008, 2017) supports this argument by claiming that the socioeconomic discrimination and inequality of Palestinian society in Israel are responsible for the development of Palestinian civil society organizations. Such voluntary organizations benefit the state in saving resources, while others are seen as a threat to its authority. The Islamic Movement organizations, in particular, are seen as a threat to Israel's liberal values (Jamal, 2017).

### The Kafr Qassim Case Study: Background

Despite being physically located in central Israel, like other Palestinian towns Kafr Qassim belongs to the country's social periphery.[2] According to the Israel Central Bureau of Statistics (2015), it is home to 21,400 people, nearly all of whom are Muslim Palestinians. Similarly to the Palestinian population in general, Kafr Qassim's inhabitants are predominantly young, with 46.4% under the age of 19. Wages are extremely low: in 2014, the average monthly wage in Kafr Qassim was only 1,130 GBP, compared to a national average of 2,066. Accordingly, like the great majority of Palestinian municipalities, Kafr Qassim is rated low in the Israeli Socioeconomic Index (3 out of 10) and high in the Peripherality Index (7 out of 10). As most other Palestinian towns in Israel, Kafr Qassim is a traditional community, with different levels of religious devotion. Many if not most locals observe Islamic commandments, including prayers, fasts, religious dress, *zakat* and charity, and the entrusting of personal properties to the *waqf*.

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### The Islamic Movement

The title Islamic Movement (IM) might be misleading. The reader might think it is a social movement, and indeed some of its activity falls under that rubric. The case of the IM in Israel is unique, however, because it operates in several spheres: political (including local and national electoral participation); social and religious (faith-based). Based on Jawad's typology of religious welfare organization in Middle Eastern and North African countries, the IM might be recognized as a popular political movement, a mass organization with a populist character expressed through discourse on social justice and active involvement in social welfare provision.

The current study is focused on the social aspect of the IM in Israel, and more precisely, its organized social welfare provision. There are many classifications and typologies of FBOs available (Clarke, 2006; Jawad, 2009; Sider and Unruh, 2004). A combination of Sider and Unruh's (2004) typology of FBOs and Jawad's typology of religious welfare organizations in Arab countries is appropriate for characterizing the social activity of the IM in Israel.

The IM's organizations range between two categories in Sider *et al.*'s (2004) typology. The first is faith-centered organizations, which refers to FBOs that are strongly connected to the religious community through funding sources and affiliation, and require the governing board and most staff to share the organization's faith commitments. The second category, faith-affiliated organizations, refers to FBOs that retain some of the influence of their religious founders but do not require staff to affirm religious beliefs or practices, with the possible exception of some board members and executive leaders Some researchers (e.g. Berger, 2003) refer to these FBOs as similar to civil society organizations without any uniqueness, while others (e.g. Jamal, 2017) claim that these FBOs are unique compared to other NGOs. This study adopts Clarke and Ware's approach (2015), which refers to the social organizations of the IM as FBOs with unique characteristics but at the same time, share social contents and purposes with NGOs.

In terms of its social activity, the IM in Israel bears some similarities to other Islamic movements in the Arab world, such as the Muslim Brotherhood, Hamas and Hezbollah, especially in terms of the positive value of local grassroots social action (Jawad, 2011). However, there are significant differences in the sociopolitical context in which each movement and its social organizations have developed. Most of the limited literature on the IM has addressed its political aspect, to the relative neglect of the social aspects that are the focus of the present study. As a first step to understanding the role and the development of IM in the sphere as social services, the current study will focus on the factors that led the IM in Israel to provide social services. Next, following a brief historical overview of the local movement and some

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background on FBOs in general, the study will examine the activity of the movement's Southern Branch in Kafr Qassim in the welfare sphere as well as in the Israeli political system on both the local and national levels.

### *Historical overview*

There are four milestones in the development of the IM in Israel as a welfare service provider. The first was the renewal of contacts with religious educational institutions in the West Bank after its occupation in the 1967 war,[3] following which the late Sheikh Abdullah Nimar Darwish began holding meetings with youngsters in Kafr Qassim to teach religious values (Aburaiya, 2004). The second was the establishment of the *Usrat al-Jihad* (Jihad Family) nucleus in the mid-1970s, designed to oppose the Zionist state by violent means in order to spread the religious word among the Muslim population in the Occupied Territories (Ali, 2004; Peled, 2001). By the late 1970s, after a short-lived attempt to carry out terrorist attacks, the IM decided to become part of mainstream Palestinian society in Israel by declaring that it would act within state law, a decision that is in force to this day (Peled, 2001). Following that decision, the movement entered the municipal sphere and began providing cultural, educational and welfare services in various Palestinian towns (Aburaiya, 2004).

In the early 1990s, the IM reached its third milestone. Its rapidly growing political power was manifested in the election of multiple mayors from within its ranks. This growing power enabled it to provide a large variety of state-like social services such as daycare and youth community centers. Others argue that due to the generally adverse socioeconomic and political situation of the Palestinians in Israel in those years, their growing sense of discrimination, and the state's continued inability to improve their conditions, the IM compensated for the health, and education underinvestment and benefitted from that politically (Ali, 2013; Ibrahim, 1990; Mustafa, 2013).

The fourth and last milestone is the split in the IM in 1996, on the eve of the parliamentary elections held after Yitzhak Rabin's assassination the previous year. The movement split into a Northern Branch led by Sheikh Raed Salah and a Southern Branch led by Sheikh Abdullah Nimar Darwish, whose activities are at the focus of this article. At the time of the split, the names referred to the residential areas of the two leaders in central Israel (Rosmer, 2012). Researchers disagree over the reason for the split (Aburaiya, 2004; Ali, 2004; Peled, 2001; Rosmer, 2012). Many argue that the split was caused by the fact that the Northern Branch believed that Palestinian participation in the elections threatened the movement's religious values and would lead to the Israelization of Palestinian society. Darwish, on the other hand, believed that participation would promote the objectives of the movement and Palestinian society in general.

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While both branches continued operating legally, using the limited tools made available to the Palestinian minority by the Israeli democracy (Aburaiya, 2004; Ali, 2004; Rosmer, 2012), the Northern Branch was considered more "extreme", and was eventually outlawed in late 2015. Prior to being outlawed, it too provided extensive social services that are outside the scope of the present article (the author has a paper about it in press).

### Factors Associated with FBO Social Service Provision

The current study adopts Clarke and Ware's (2015) approach to the social organizations of the IM as FBOs that have unique characteristics and yet share social contents and purposes with NGOs. It combines two theoretical bodies of knowledge: the factors associated with the development of NGOs with particular reference to those representing minorities and the factors related to the development of FBOs with particular emphasis on Islamic organizations. The combination of these bodies of knowledge leads to the identification of three major factors relevant to the present case study: the (conflictual) relations between the state and the minority group resulting in deficient service provision, using these services as a means to mobilize members, and a means to implement religious values and ideology.

#### *State-minority relations*

The first set of factors, which seems rather obvious, has to do with the type of relations between the minority and the state. Is the majority group in conflict with the minority group? Does this lead to conflict between the state and minority? Does this, in turn (despite well-developed welfare systems in democracies such as Israel), result in the state's failure to provide services to minority members and/or municipalities?

The point of departure of government failure theory is the structural limitation familiar from classical economics: the state's inability to provide sufficient amounts of public goods to all members of the public, whether paid for or not (Salamon and Anheier, 1996; Salamon *et al.*, 2017). Weisbrod (1988, 1998) suggests that heterogeneous societies present a challenge to the state in providing for the social needs of the minority, because the latter tends to provide services according to majority-group preferences, leaving the minority neglected and government failure in place. In response, the minority turns to NGOs for social services. Accordingly, the higher the social heterogeneity in a given state, the greater the service-provision role of the third sector (Flanigan *et al.*, 2014). Moreover, several scholars suggest that minority group members will be willing to bear the cost of service provision for other group members: inter alia, because of strong within-group social and solidarity (Becker, 1957; Jamal, 2017; Vigdor, 2004).

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Compounding the state's complex service-provision role in heterogeneous societies is its frequently conflictual if not hostile attitude to minorities, particularly indigenous ethnic ones. Intergroup conflict and state oppression often result in deficient services that lead members of the same group to compensate by serving others from their group (Flanigan *et al.*, 2014).

Although FBOs in Arab countries where the state provides little social protection usually do not represent minorities, their relation with the state is important, suggesting reasons for their development that are relevant in the present context as well. For example, Jawad (2009) suggests that, in Lebanon, FBOs serve to legitimize the provision of state social services and make them acceptable to broad sectors of society. Nevertheless, despite the positive impact of those organizations on the developing discourse in sociopolitical rights in Lebanon, they are rooted in sociopolitical networks that promote hierarchic power structures such as kinship or sectarian alliances, rather than a civil society discourse. Similarly, in Egypt, social FBOs have been developed by the middle class in response to the weakening of the state, to provide for both middle and lower class needs (Clark, 2004).

#### *Political support*

The second set of factors is political. The literature refers to political mobilization as part of the social activities of NGOs, as in a charity designed to recruit new members or to bring existing members closer to the organization's political agenda. FBOs that represent political movements can also include political agendas in their service provision.

Despite their political agenda, some studies show that FBOs provide services without distinctions between group and non-group members. Cammett (2014), for example, argues that Lebanese FBOs tend to serve the entire population rather than only their members if this serves their purpose of gaining political power. Conversely, Roy's (2011) study on Hamas as a political movement shows that, in Gaza, social services are provided to the entire population rather than exclusively to Hamas supporters. She also argues that such service provision is not designed to increase the movement's political capital. In a similar vein, Wickham (2003) describes the FBOs belonging to the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt as forming a parallel Islamic welfare state, without advocating for any political agenda. Rather, they view their welfare activities as part of the overall goal of social education according to Islamic Law.

#### *Religious ideologies*

The third set of factors refers to the uniqueness of FBOs as being inspired by religious values. For the IM in Israel in particular, these factors could be divided into two intimately related content worlds: service provision itself as a devotional act and the desire to promote religious education. The studies on the

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relation between Islam and social services focus on three major elements: *zakat* (obligatory almsgiving), voluntary charity, and the historical role of the *waqf* (charitable religious trust) (Clark, 2004; Jawad, 2009).

The idea that "Islam is the solution" is common to many Islamic movements worldwide, and particularly to movements in the Middle East and North Africa, such as the Muslim Brotherhood and Hamas (Clark, 2004; Göçmen, 2013; Peled, 2001; Rosmer, 2012; Wickham, 2003). In the social context, this means Islam and its values are the solution for socioeconomic and political problems. In Egypt, for example, FBOs establish parallel institutes such as hospitals to provide for existing social needs, thereby asserting their superiority over the state and challenging not only its ability to provide for the poor masses but also the very *raison d'être* of the secular state (Clark, 2004; Wickham, 2003). Similarly, in Lebanon, FBOs are central in compensating for the government failure in providing social services (Jawad, 2009).

In discussing FBOs' social service provision role in these and other Arab countries, examining their attitudes to the states is essential, since they perceive it as a secular entity. In Egypt, for example, the establishment of FBOs by the middle class was a response to the weakening of the state, designed so serve the needs of this class, as well as of the poor (Clark, 2004). In compensating for government failure, these alternative organizations manifest Islam's superiority and power over the state, challenging not only its welfare deficiencies but also the very logic of the modern, Western secular nation-state, representing the formation of an (Clark, 2004).

With the exception of Israel, most Middle-Eastern countries lack resources and have underdeveloped welfare systems that often fail to meet the populations' needs; hence the growth of FBOs providing social services is not surprising (Clark, 2004; Flanigan and Abdel-Samad, 2009; Jawad, 2009; Wickham, 2003). As opposed to previous studies on such Arab countries, the present study examines the role and development of FBOs in Israel, where, despite the shrinking of the welfare state over the past decades (Doron, 2007; Gal, 2017; Rivlin, 2011), significant social protection is still provided. Nevertheless, given Israel's unique context as reviewed below, welfare provision is ethnically differentiated and discriminatory of Palestinian citizens (e.g. Rosenhek, 2002). Moreover, given this discrimination and the related emergence of significant Palestinian NGOs in recent years, particularly those related to the IM, the relative paucity of studies on that important phenomenon is a lacuna that needs to be filled (for exceptions, see Gidron *et al.*, 2004; Jamal, 2008, 2017; Yishai, 1998).

## Method

To understand the causes behind the development of social services provided by FBOs, the present research uses the case study method. This method contributes to revealing the specific factors (Stake, 2000) motivating the development of welfare

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services by the IM in Kafr Qassim, as well as the way these services are provided. Kafr Qassim was chosen as a test case because, as we have seen, the IM emerged from this town, and its activities (including social services) are most developed there, providing an overview of an entire array of Islamic FBOs in a single town.

In the present study, interviews are essential for collecting data; their aim is to learn about the development of the IM as a provider of social services from the perspective of its leaders, managers and grassroots activists. The findings reported below are based on 17 in-depth semi-structured interviews (1–3 hours in length) conducted in two rounds, in March-July 2016 and in May 2017. These included the heads of Islamic organizations that provide social services in Kafr Qassim, leaders and activists in the IM elsewhere, as well as municipality representatives directly involved in local welfare services. The interviewees were identified by a contact person, a senior activist in the Southern Branch, who was needed in order to facilitate the contacts, particularly with those interviewees who had concerns and reservations about the study, given the current political and social circumstances in Israel. Most of the interviewees were men (14 out of 17).

Most of the interviews were recorded and transcribed. Some of the interviewees, mostly women, refused to have the interviews recorded; in these cases, they were summarized manually and shown to the interviewees for their approval. These interviewees' names are not disclosed below and only their initials are used. In some cases, the interview meetings included tours and observations of the work processes in the organizations: the Muslim Woman Forum, Daycare Centers, Quran Academy, and Rescue and Assistance Committee. Additional sources included archival documents, such as the organization's regulations and work plans.

The analytic process consisted of two stages. First, the interview materials were analyzed, which included open coding and mapping of the main emerging themes. At this stage, ten primary categories emerged, some of which not directly related to the research questions. These categories included the role of women, major historical events, importance of religious texts, financial mobilization, social exclusion, and political activity. The second stage included analysis of the written material based on the three stages of skimming, reading and interpretation (Bowen, 2009). Integration of the findings of the interview analysis and the archived materials revealed the three main themes relevant to the central research questions.

## Findings

### The Islamic Movement and Its Social Services

The IM started out in Kafr Qassim in 1972. Most of its leaders and nationwide organizations emerged there. Moreover, between 1989 and 2008, and since 2013, its mayor has been an IM representative.

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Eight FBOs associated with the IM are active in town: the Muslim Woman Forum (est. 1979); Daycare Centers (1982); Association for the Orphans and Needy (AON; 1982); *Al-Sirat* art and culture company (1987); Rescue and Assistance Committee (RAC; 1991); the Community Night Watch (1991); *Al-Kalam* student association (2013); and the Quran Academy (2015). In terms of their formal status, the organizations are divided into NGOs that are registered independently, such as the AON, and organizations that are local branches of the movement's national organizations, such as RAC and the Quran Academy.

The most important of these organizations is the AON. Established in 1980, it began operating locally, and, by 1990, it was formally registered as an NGO. This NGO coordinates the diverse social activities of the IM in Kafr Qassim, including daycare centers for children aged three and four, RAC and AON, and is responsible for funeral arrangements. It is also responsible for "seasonal" projects such as charity events during Ramadan, volunteer camps in town, and student scholarships.

## Why does the Islamic Movement Provide Social Services?

### *Lack of service provision by the state*

The religious welfare organizations that emerged in Kafr Qassim were groundbreaking, in that they had not been preceded by any secular government or non-governmental alternative. One of the first services provided by the IM was daycare centers. At first, in 1982, this activity was voluntary. Note that at the time, and unlike Jewish municipalities, there were no daycare centers in Kafr Qassim. Historically, in the pre-statehood period, daycare centers in Jewish communities were operated by NGOs such as the Women's International Zionist Organization (WIZO). This tradition continued after the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948, with the state assuming some responsibility for funding and oversight, but not for actual service provision. Conversely, no such services – government or non-government – were offered in Palestinian municipalities. This government failure was the main cause behind the establishment of this service by the IM.

Active under the supervision of the AON, the daycare centers employed women either active in or supportive of the religious awakening brought to Kafr Qassim by the movement. In 1982, there was one group of 15 children and volunteers without professional training. Today, the movement boasts 17 groups with a total of nearly 600 three- and four-year olds – about 70% of the town's children at this age, cared for by 56 professional staff members. Apart from these, only four privately owned daycare centers operate in Kafr Qassim.

The lack of service provision by the state also includes poor police protection. The Israel Police employs few Palestinians, and its relations with Palestinians in Israel in general are characterized by mutual hostility and tainted by incidents of police violence against civilians.[4] At the same time, Kafr Qassim, like many other

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Palestinian municipalities, suffers from extremely high rates of violent crime.[5] The IM's Community Night Watch was established in 1991 to meet this gap and has been operating continuously ever since.[6] Unlike similar voluntary services operating in Jewish municipalities, the local night watch does not coordinate its activities with the police. As with the daycare centers, this is a clear case of government failure, as a police station was opened in Kafr Qassim only in 2015.

Note that, as opposed to the troubled relations between the IM and state bodies, it maintains good relations with the municipality, which is not seen as hostile but as a legitimate arena for promoting sociopolitical rights – a position not shared by some radical factions within and outside the movement. In the case of the relations with the municipality, the IM's organizations operate in collaboration and complement rather than substitute for social services.

### Religious ideology

This plays a key role in the motivation for establishing the social services in Kafr Qassim and in their provision. This factor may be divided into two categories. First, the idea that Islam is a way of life that encompasses all spheres. This means that Islamic values should be made part of all daily activities, rather than being limited to the observance of religious commandments. This is illustrated in the following statement by the former head of the IM: *We believe that Islam is a way of life and that the Islamic Movement is a comprehensive project of redemption relevant to all spheres in life, both material and emotional. The social services are part of this activity* (Ibrahim Saror, May 2016).

The second category relates to religious values and commandments. The movement's activities in this regard promote the observance of Islam. This includes the educational services in the daycare centers, the Quran Academy and the *Al-Sirat* company. The latter, for example, was established in order to perform in social events organized by the movement, as well as private occasions such as weddings. The songs and plays are informed by Islamic values and performed according to religious precepts (such as gender separation). The director stated: *In our theater, there is no mixing of men and women in the same play. Our plays are performed by men and boys* (Waleed Amer, May 2016). The company not only adheres to Muslim precepts in the strict sense, but also performs voluntarily, thereby promoting the Islamic value of charity.

Religious ideology is also central to the daycare operations. These are designed, among other things, to educate children on the values of Islam from a young age. The daycare teachers are not only professionally trained, but also religious, as are the contents of daily activities, which stress the study of prayers, Quran verses, religious songs, etc. According to the director of the daycare centers, *The children are taught to pray, such as the food prayer, the sleep prayer, this is central to our curriculum, where the religious aspect is emphasized* (Maisa Obida, May 2016).

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Finally, the Muslim Woman Forum both espouses and instills religious values by being completely based on volunteering and donations. One of the main projects described in an interview with three of the forum's founders and one of its present activists was the teaching of basic literacy to older women through the study of the Quran. This project has the dual purpose of promoting literacy and enabling women to understand and apply the religious teachings of the scripture.

*The political aspect*

The political aspect of service provision by the IM, although rarely referred to directly in the interviews, cannot be ignored. Over the years, the movement has clearly gained significant political power thanks to its extensive service provision in town, as indicated by popular support for its candidates in municipal elections. According to one of the movement's national and local leaders,

> *Local inhabitants can see who is active in town and work to promote it . . . . People trust us and we are pioneers. We led the municipality continuously from 1989–2008, and in 2013, we won again by a landslide after the people had tried a different candidate and missed us . . . . The people's trust and support are invaluable to us* (Safwat Freej, April 2016).

In a previous interview, Sarsor suggested that this accumulation of political power was a natural response, but that it was not intentional:

> *We managed to get to the people through service provision, unrelated to politics. We did not take advantage of people's weakness or poverty to succeed in politics and translate it into votes. This was not the objective, but it certainly was a natural development* (Sarsor, May 2017).

In addition to direct support of IM representatives in municipal elections, there were two other manifestations of the locals' political support: their volunteering in social activities and donations to movement organizations. For example, the Muslim Woman Forum has been active for 33 years on a purely voluntary basis and funded exclusively by local donations. The forum includes the five founders, 15 board members selected by forum members, fifty educators who provide the workshops and activities after a three-year training, and 500 supporters and volunteers (interview with the forum's founders, May 2016).

The movement's repeated victories at the polls have obviously had a significant effect on the relations between its social organizations and the municipality. This is manifested in the nature of the services provided in Kafr Qassim in general, as suggested by one of the movement's leaders:

> *When it comes to private schools, we have a problem in Kafr Qassim. Because the mayor has been a movement representative almost throughout the years, we treat the municipal schools as if they were ours, and the mayor has no interest in allowing private schools to compete with the municipal ones . . . . A great many of the school principals belong to the Islamic Movement* (Safwat Freej, April 2016).

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The close relations between the movement and the municipality are also manifested in the scope and funding of some of its services. A prime example is the Community Night Watch that has no parallel in any other Palestinian municipality in Israel. It could not have operated without using municipal resources, including the town system of surveillance cameras and offices in the municipality buildings, let alone the political support required to maintain this service in the face of the Israel Police's opposition.

A third aspect in which this political cooperation is manifested is coordination of welfare provision for the needy. Welfare departments in Israel no longer support the needy financially on the local level. Therefore, to meet local needs, Kafr Qassim's Social Services Department often directs the needy to the AON, which also consults with the department on allocating its own funds. This reciprocal relationship is facilitated by the fact that the director of the AON, Mohamad Ameer, is also the deputy mayor. In an interview held on May 2016, he said that when the department employees are contacted by families that need financial assistance, these employees refer the families to the AON. *And when we want to distribute the* zakat *funds to the needy families, we confer with them in order to see if there are any new needy families.*

## Discussion

The study's objective was to understand the factors leading an FBO to provide social services to members of an ethno-religious minority. To do so, the case study of the Southern Branch of the Islamic Movement (IM) in the Palestinian town of Kafr Qassim in Israel was examined.

The study approached the IM as a unique FBO that combines elements of civil society, similar to the model proposed by Clarke and Ware (2015). In the case of the movement, the process of establishing its social service organizations included classic characteristics and factors influencing the development of civil society organizations (government failure and political motivations) as well as FBO's more specifically (religious ideology). Clearly, the factors leading the IM to provide social services to the Palestinian population in Israel are similar to those reported in the literature with regard to civil society and faith-based organizations. Nevertheless, the findings of the present case study suggest the need to emphasize the *combination* of those two areas.

The key factor necessary for the establishment of the IM's social services in Kafr Qassim was government failure and, more broadly, the lack of public social services provided to the rest of Israeli society, a factor central to the establishment of NGOs elsewhere in the world (Salamon and Anheier, 1996; Salamon *et al.*, 2017; Weisbrod, 1988, 1998). Flanigan *et al.* (2014) suggest that, when the state fails to provide services to minority groups, in particular, group members will provide for their own. A prime example from this case study is the

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daycare centers that had to be established given the lack of provision by either the state or Jewish civil society organizations, and would not have been established if not for the local women's initiative. Importantly, however, these daycare centers are now subsidized by the state.

As suggested in the literature on the development of NGOs, in the present case the challenges posed by sociocultural heterogeneity to social service provision are central. The state has a tendency to allocate services according to the needs of the majority group, which motivates the minority group to develop social services tailored to its cultural, religious and ethnic characteristics (Weisbrod, 1988, 1998). Note that in this particular case, however, welfare services were not only not adapted to the Palestinians' needs, but were often simply lacking, as part of the overall discrimination of this minority in Israel.

In addition to this first factor of government failure, two others have played into the development of FBO social services in Kafr Qassim. The first is religious ideology. Similarly to other FBOs, particularly Islamic ones, and as suggested in previous studies, the idea that religion is a way of life that provides comprehensive solutions, including for socioeconomic problems, is central to service development (Ali, 2004; Clark, 2004; Göçmen, 2013; Peled, 2001; Rosmer, 2012; Wickham, 2003). This is manifested in the IM's twofold mission in Kafr Qassim: to provide for needs in all spheres of life and to educate for Islamic values, particularly among women and children. This education includes both values in the broadest sense that may be shared by other civil society organizations, such as volunteering and funding by donations. It also includes the teaching of religious commandments as the content of social organizations' activity. The organizations are established to inculcate religious values and their continued existence is supported by those values. In these respects, the present findings echo studies of other Islamic organizations in the Arab world (Clark, 2004; Jawad, 2009).

The third and final factor is the political. When discussing NGOs and FBOs, particularly those with an explicit political agenda such as the IM in Israel, we cannot ignore the motive of recruiting support by those benefitting from the services. The interviewees who participated in the present study did not refer to political recruitment explicitly as a major motive, but did suggest that it is indirectly involved in ensuring the continued provision of social services. As suggested by the findings, two processes co-occur: social services are provided as a tool for recruiting political support, and political power, once attained, is employed to support and expand the movement's social activities. Specifically, the IM's political power in Kafr Qassim ensures financial support by the municipality. The two processes are reciprocal and form a virtuous circle.

To conclude, although the findings of the present case study cannot be generalized to the motives of other Islamic FBOs in providing social services, it contributes to the study of the IM's motives in Israel, and to a certain extent in other

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countries with a significant Muslim minority. The study sheds light on the role of Islamic FBOs in an ethnocratic nation-state involved in an intractable conflict.

### Limitations and Future Directions

Kafr Qassim was selected as the case study since the town played a key role in the development of the IM and the return to Islam among the Palestinians in Israel in general. To obtain a fuller picture of the movement's development and its social services in particular, other towns should be examined where it is less established. Nevertheless, the current findings are clearly indicative of the factors and motivations involved in the growth of Islamic FBOs in Israel and their uniqueness in representing an ethno-religious minority subject to ongoing institutional discrimination in the Jewish majority state.

The latter aspect is important in limiting the generalization of this study's findings to FBOs in general, as the ongoing conflict between the state and its Palestinian minority is irrelevant to Islamic FBOs in the Arab and Western world. Another aspect that affects generality is the fact that the IM is not purely an FBO: the NGOs it operates are formally registered and partly subsidized by the state and at the same time, it participates in both local and national elections. Accordingly, the services it provides are representative of a social, religious and political agenda at the same time. This multi-faceted nature of the IM suggests the need for examining similar movements and developing appropriate theoretical models in future studies of social service provision such as hybridity organizations theory (Billis, 2010).

In addition, future studies can examine, for example, whether adequate and universal – as well as culturally adjusted – state provision of social services to the Palestinian population would have made the IM's social service provision redundant. On the practical level, what is the state's desirable relationship with the social services currently provided by the IM? This question is important not only for researchers but also for policymakers in Israel, as well as in other welfare states that are becoming increasingly multicultural.

Although the typology of FBOs was not an objective of the present study, it was necessary for understanding its context. Such an understanding raises a question for future studies. The typologies known to us in the Western world are usually based on Christian FBOs. In addition, we have Jawad's (2009) unique typology of FBOs in the Middle East, which certainly contributes to our understanding of Islamic organizations providing social services. Combining the two typologies may shed additional light on the IM in Israel, but a future study is still required in order to fully align the FBO typologies to the sociocultural and political context of FBOs in Palestinian society in Israel, both Islamic and Christian.

Finally, while government failure as a necessary motivation for the social activities of FBOs has been extensively studied, future studies can examine the other two factors suggested by the present findings: political recruitment and

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religious ideology. Specifically, in the case of the IM in Kafr Qassim it appears that the two maintain a reciprocal, mutually supportive relationship in that religiously motivated social services pave the way to municipal power, which in turn is used to expand those services and strengthen the FBOs' religious influence. This circle should be examined more systematically in future studies.

## Notes

1 In what follows, "Palestinians/Palestinian society in Israel" refer to Palestinians citizens of sovereign Israel, excluding Palestinians in East Jerusalem who have residency status only and Palestinians in the rest of the Occupied Territories who have no citizenship rights whatsoever.

2 It is also highly symbolic in the history of Palestinian citizens due to the massacre of 47 of its inhabitants by the Israel Border Police in 1956.

3 The 1967 war enabled Palestinians in Israel and the now-Occupied Territories to renew family and social contacts. The latter had maintained contact with the rest of the Arab world and its emerging Islamic movements, particularly the Muslim Brotherhood. Consequently, they took part in the regional religious revival among the Palestinians in Israel (Aburaiya, 2004).

4 In June 2017, Muhammad Taha was shot to death while demonstrating outside the police station in Kfar Qassim, after the police had detained a member of the local security service.

5 Despite being only 20.8% of Israel's population, Palestinian homicide victims represented 40% of the total in 2007-2013 (Ali, 2004).

6 In 2008-2013, when the mayor was not a representative of the movement, this service was suspended.

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