News of Terrorism and the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict
(January 18 – 24, 2017)

Overview

- On January 24, 2017, there was a shooting incident at a roadblock near the community of Ofra, carried out using an improvised weapon. There were no casualties. The two shooters were apprehended. In the Gaza Strip, Hamas demonstrated its governance and capabilities with military displays of power.

- In view of the possible relocation of the United States embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, senior Palestinian Authority (PA) figures continue their campaign of threats. Some of them have tried to make it a religious issue, courting the support of the Arab and Islamic countries and international institutions. The Palestinians warn of “dire consequences” if the move is carried out, including revoking the PA's recognition of Israel and undertaking activity to suspend Israel's membership in the UN. The PA claims relocating the embassy would harm not only the Palestinians but all Arabs and Muslims around the globe. The Jerusalem municipality announced it would issue building permits for neighborhoods in the city, which led to another storm of angry reactions.
Terrorist Attacks and Attempted Terrorists Attacks

- **January 24, 2017** – A Palestinian vehicle broke through an IDF roadblock near the community of Ofra (the Benyamin region). Shots were fired from the car. An IDF force chased the vehicle and apprehended both driver and passenger. An improvised weapon was found in the vehicle. There were no casualties and no damage was reported (IDF spokesman, January 24, 2017).

- **January 17, 2017** – A Palestinian threw stones near the Menashe crossing near Tulkarm. He then took out a knife and tried to stab IDF soldiers manning the crossing. He was shot and killed. The Palestinian media reported he was Nadal Daoud Mahadawi, 44, father of five, from the village of Shuweika (north of Tulkarm). He was married to an Israeli woman from the village of Jatt and had a residence permit for Israel (Palinfo and Quds, January 17, 2017).

Riots, Clashes and Popular Terrorism

- In the meantime, rioting, the throwing of stones and Molotov cocktails and public disturbances continued. The more prominent occurrences were the following:

  - **January 23, 2017** – Palestinians threw an IED attached to a gas balloon at an IDF force near Mevo Shiloh (the Benyamin region). The IED exploded. Two IDF soldiers were wounded (Facebook page of Red Alert, January 23, 2017)
• January 22, 2017 – Palestinians threw stones at a bus on the road between Hizma and Anatot (the Benyamin region); the bus was damaged (Facebook page of Red Alert, January 22, 2017)

• January 21, 2017 – The Israeli security forces apprehended three Palestinians from Beit Fajjar on suspicion of throwing Molotov cocktails at the community of Migdal Oz in the Gush Etzion region. The car they used in the attack was also seized (Ynet, January 22, 2017).

• January 20, 2017 – Israeli security forces stopped a Palestinian vehicle at the Elias Junction (near Kiryat Arba). Weapons were found in the car. The driver and passengers were taken for interrogation (Facebook page of Red Alert, January 20, 2017)

• January 20, 2017 – Palestinians threw stones at an Israeli vehicle near Tekoa (Gush Etzion). There were no casualties; the vehicle was damaged. In another incident Palestinians threw stones at an Israeli bus near the community of Efrat (Gush Etzion). The bus was damaged (Facebook page of Red Alert, January 20, 2017)

• January 18, 2017 – Palestinians threw stones at vehicles on the road near Azoun in Samaria. One man was injured. The front windshield of his vehicle was damaged (Facebook page of Red Alert, January 18, 2017)
Significant Terrorist Attacks in Judea, Samaria and Jerusalem since September 2015

Israel's South

Rocket Fire Attacking Israel

- This past week no rocket hits were identified in Israeli territory.

Monthly Distribution of Rocket Fire, 2016
Hamas-Egypt Relations

Hamas continues its efforts to improve relations with Egypt. A Hamas delegation headed by Ismail Haniyeh, deputy head of Hamas' political bureau, arrived in Cairo for a visit. The delegation was supposed to meet with Khaled Fawzy, director of Egyptian General Intelligence, to discuss various issues dealing with improving bilateral relations. According to Palestinian sources, Egypt imposed a number of conditions for renewing relations, among them the extradition of 15-20 wanted persons, supervision of the border the Gaza Strip-Sinai Peninsula border, and the cessation of weapons smuggling (al-Hayat, January 18, 2017).

Hamas Terrorist Operative Killed in Tunnel Collapse

Hamas' military-terrorist wing reported the death of Yusuf Issam al-Agha, 22, an Izz al-Din Qassam Brigades operative, who was killed when a tunnel collapsed in the Khan Yunis region (southern Gaza Strip) (Twitter account of Ajel from Gaza, January 20, 2017). Hamas' military wing recently reported that during 2016, 21 of its operatives were killed in tunnel collapses (alresala.net, January 1, 2017).

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1 The statistics do not include mortar shell fire or rockets which misfired and fell inside the Gaza Strip.
Hamas Security Forces' Officer Training Course Ends

On January 22, 2017, a graduation ceremony was held in Gaza City for officers who completed a Hamas national security training course. Among those attending were Tawfiq Na'im, commander of Hamas’ security forces, Ahmed Bahar, deputy chairman of the Palestinian Legislative Council, and other senior figures. The graduates put on a military display which included simulations of storming an IDF post and releasing Palestinian prisoners from an Israeli jail (Website of the ministry of the interior in the Gaza Strip, January 22, 2017).
Parade Held by Hamas' Elite Nukhba Military Unit

On January 19, 2017, the nukhba, Hamas' elite military-terrorist unit, held a parade in the region of the Nuseirat refugee camp in the central Gaza Strip. Uniformed operatives displayed weapons and dogs (al-Ra’i and the Facebook page of Shehab, January 19, 2017). The Nuseirat refugee camp was one of the main locations for the demonstrations protesting the electricity crisis in the Gaza Strip. The parade was apparently meant to demonstrate Hamas' governance in the wake of the protests.

The Palestinian Authority (PA)

Addition Palestinian Reactions to the Possible Transfer of the United States Embassy to Jerusalem

The possibility that the United States will move its embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem continues to enrage Palestinians. Over the weekend demonstrations were held in a number of locations in Judea and Samaria (among them Hebron, Nablus, al-Bireh, Ramallah). The demonstrations drew a few hundred Palestinians. They held signs and shouted "Jerusalem is the key to peace and war" (QudsN, January 19, 2017). During a demonstration in Bethlehem Palestinians burned a picture of Donald Trump (Twitter account of Palinfo, January 20, 2017).
Senior Palestinian figures continue their media campaign to enlist Arab, Muslim and international support. Sean Spicer, White House spokesman, said the United States the issue of relocating the embassy was only in the early stages of discussion (Reuters, January 22, 2017). Other comments included the following:

In the PA:

- At the weekly government meeting, Mahmoud Abbas said the Palestinians would use every political and diplomatic means at their disposal and would appeal to the Arab and Islamic states to oppose the relocation of the embassy. He warned that making such a move would destroy the peace process and have destructive effects on regional security and stability (Ma'an, January 17, 2017). Mahmoud Abbas met with Jordanian King Abdallah in his palace to discuss various issues, including the implications of the relocation of the American embassy. After the meeting Mahmoud Abbas said that if the embassy was in fact relocated to Jerusalem, the Palestinians would decide on certain steps (Jordanian News Agency, January 22, 2017).

- Riyad al-Maliki, foreign minister in the Palestinian national consensus government, said the Palestinian leadership was working at every level to change the decision (Wafa, January 19, 2017).

- Saeb Erekat, secretary of the PLO's Executive Committee, interviewed by the Israeli website Ynet, said that if the Americans did move their embassy to
Jerusalem, the Palestinians would revoke their recognition of the State of Israel and act to have Israel suspended from the UN. That, he claimed, was because the PLO could not continue to recognize Israel if it annexed Jerusalem (Ynet, January 23, 2017).

- **Jibril Rajoub**, a member of Fatah's Central Committee, said relocating the American embassy to Jerusalem was a declaration of war against Muslims and that it would lead to regional instability (Walla, January 23, 2017).

- **Sheikh Muhammad Hussein**, the mufti of Jerusalem, in his Friday sermon in a PA mosque, said the move was dangerous and would have serious consequences. He claimed that relocating the American embassy would harm not only the Palestinians, but all the Arabs and Muslims around the globe (Shasha News, January 20, 2017).

**Hamas and other terrorist organizations:**

- **Sami Abu Zuhri**, Hamas spokesman, called on the American administration to withdraw from its "dangerous step," which challenged Muslim sensibilities. He claimed Jerusalem was part of the Islamic covenant and any decision by the United States to relocate its embassy to Jerusalem would give Israel legitimacy in Jerusalem (Twitter account of Sami Abu Zuhri, January 23, 2017)

- **Musheir al-Masri**, senior Hamas figure, claimed the ideal response to the move would be to revoke agreements and the Palestinian recognition of Israel. He called the move "crossing a red line and a crime," and said Hamas would counter it at every level (Shihad, January 22, 2017).

- **Taysir Khaled**, a member of the PLO's Executive Committee and of the political bureau of the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine, warned of the dangers inherent in Trump's declaration to relocate the embassy. He claimed it was like Ariel Sharon's visit to the Temple Mount in 2000, which led to the outbreak of the second intifada. He said that if the decision were implemented, the Palestinians would have to stop talking and start taking action (Dunia al-Watan, January 18, 2017).
Palestinian Responses to the Israeli Decision to Build 566 Residential Units in Jerusalem

The Jerusalem municipality authorized building permits for 566 residential dwelling units in the Jerusalem neighborhoods of Pisgat Ze’ev, Ramot and Ramat Shlomo. It also authorized building permits for 105 residential dwelling units in east Jerusalem for Palestinians. Granting the permits led to a storm of Palestinian reactions calling for international interventions:

- **The PA’s foreign ministry** issued a notice condemning construction in the settlements and Jerusalem. It appealed to the new American administration to intervene immediately to stop the construction and to act rapidly for peace through negotiations (Foreign ministry website, January 20, 2017).

- **Nabil Abu Rudeina, spokesman for Mahmoud Abbas**, condemned the Israeli decision, claiming the sites were located on occupied Palestinian land. He claimed the decision challenged UN Security Council Resolution 2334. He demanded the Security Council take immediate action to end Israel’s extremist policies, which, he claimed, caused the failure of the two-state solution (Watania, January 22, 2017).

- **Saeb Erekat, secretary of the PLO’s Executive Committee**, claimed the international community was responsible for Israel’s "arrogance" because it had not brought it to trial for violating the Palestinian’s human rights. He demanded that the UN and the countries that voted in favor of Resolution 2334 take immediate steps to enforce the resolution (Shams News, January 22, 2017).

- **Hamas** said the decision was a dangerous escalation whose objective was to Judaize Jerusalem. Hamas warned the American administration not to continue its policies and called for the escalation of the so-called Jerusalem intifada (al-Aqsa, January 20, 2017).
Cartoon by Hamas-affiliated Omaya Joha showing Israel building in Jerusalem thanks to support from Trump. The Arabic reads, "Israel confirms the construction of 566 settlements [i.e., residential units] in Jerusalem (alresala.net, January 23, 2017).

Palestinians Establish Bab al-Shams Outpost

- On January 20, 2017, several dozen Palestinian activists went to an area between Jerusalem and Ma'aleh Adumim and established an outpost they called Bab al-Shams. It was a protest against Israel's decision to annex Ma'aleh Adumim to Israel and to the intention of the American administration to relocate its embassy to Jerusalem. The activists erected a tent. IDF forces evacuated the activists from the site and detained several of them (PNN, January 20, 2017).

Palestinian activists at the Bab al-Shams outpost (PNN, January 20, 2017).
One of the tactics of the so-called "popular resistance" is to establish outposts. It was employed prominently in 2013 and 2014. The objective of establishing outposts is to challenge Israel and to lead to confrontations between Palestinians and the Israeli security forces. The Palestinians choose a site in Judea and Samaria and several dozen activists usually go there in the dead of night. They erect a number of tents and/or structures which become a fait accompli by the next day. Such events receive backup from senior Fatah and PA figures who often visit the location. Such events are also widely covered by the official Palestinian media.