February 2, 2017

Palestinian Terrorism against Israel, 2016
Types and Trends and Data

Common types of terrorist attacks carried out in 2016. Left: Scene of a vehicular attack at the entrance to Kiryat Arba (Facebook page of Paldaf, June 24, 2016). Center: Shooting attack near Tekoa targeting an Israeli bus (Facebook page of QudsN, May 21, 2016). Right: Knife found in the bag of a young Palestinian woman apprehended while attempting to carry out a stabbing attack in Karmei Tsur (north of Hebron) (Photo courtesy of Gush Etzion spokesman's unit, February 9, 2016).

Introduction: The Main Types of Terrorism Used by Palestinians in Judea, Samaria, the Gaza Strip and Israel

1. Throughout 2016, Palestinian terrorists in Judea, Samaria and Israel continued carrying out various types of popular terrorism attacks (the so-called "popular resistance"). The wave of popular terrorism waned in April. After April, the average monthly distribution was greater than in previous years. On the other hand, along the Israeli-Gaza Strip border, the relative calm prevailing since the end of Operation Protective Edge (summer 2014), continued. That was manifested by the continuing decrease in the number of rocket attacks from the Gaza Strip in 2016. The number of rockets fired into Israel was the lowest since Israel's disengagement in 2005 and the takeover of the Strip by Hamas in 2007.
2. The following are the main aspects of Palestinian terrorism during 2016 in Judea, Samaria, greater Jerusalem and inside Israel:

A. **Popular terrorism continued to a great degree, even after the attacks waned.**
   The wave of popular terrorism, which peaked in October-December 2015 (with an average of about 45 significant attacks per month), consistently decreased until April 2016 (during which five significant terrorist attacks were carried out). However, between May and December 2016 popular terrorism attacks continued with between five and twelve significant attacks per month, more than the monthly average during the same months in previous years.

B. **The various types of attacks changed, as follows:**

1) **Stabbing attacks continued as the main type of popular terrorism attack** (61% of all the significant attacks carried out in 2016). Prominent over the past year were a stabbing spree on the seaside promenade between Tel Aviv and Jaffa, in which an American tourist was killed, and a stabbing attack in Kiryat Arba in which a 13 year-old girl was killed as she slept in her bed.

2) **There was a decrease in vehicular attacks as the wave of popular terrorism waned** (about 8% of all the significant attacks in 2016). However, the truck attack carried out on the promenade in Armon Hanatziv in Jerusalem in January 2017 was a reminder of how deadly such attacks can be, especially when carried out with heavy vehicles.

3) **There was a rise in shooting attacks** (23% of significant attacks in 2016). **The trend continued during January 2017.** Prominent were drive-by shootings carried out in three locations in Jerusalem (two people killed), and the shooting attacks in a pub in central Tel Aviv (two killed) and in the Sarona commercial-entertainment center in the heart of Tel Aviv (four killed).

4) **The number of people killed remained high despite the decline in the wave of popular terrorism.** In 2016, **17 Israelis were killed,** ten in shooting attacks and seven in stabbing attacks. Between the beginning of the wave of popular terrorism (October 2015) and the end of 2016, **47 Israelis were killed** (30 during October-December 2015).

C. **There was a decline in the number of Palestinians who participated in riots as the wave of popular terrorism waned.** That was true even during riots and clashes occurring during Israeli holidays when violence tends to increase (such as Passover and Jewish High Holidays in 2016, when many Israeli visited Jerusalem.)
D. Greater Jerusalem and the Hebron region continued as focal points for popular terrorism. Still prominent but somewhat less so were the regions of Gush Etzion and Ramallah. On the other hand, the regions of Nablus and northern Samaria, which played a central role in the second intifada, played a secondary role in the wave of popular terrorism and attacks in 2016. Most of the terrorists who carried out attacks came from towns and villages near the sites of the attacks.

E. Most of the terrorists who carried out attacks had a fairly similar profile. Most of them were male (82%), young, without a history of involvement in terrorist attacks or membership in terrorist organizations. In most instances they carried out the attacks alone, having reached the decision by themselves, spontaneously, and without instructions from a person or organization. Most of the attacks were carried out using cold weapons (cars, knives and other sharp objects), sometimes using light arms, usually improvised. They were motivated by nationalistic feelings combined with personal considerations (such as family problems, frustrations, the women by gender discrimination, the desire to escape from the problems of daily life by becoming shaheeds and going to paradise).

F. The failure of the military-type terrorism directed by Hamas and the other terrorist organizations to channel popular terrorism into an armed third intifada. Since the beginning of the wave of popular terrorism the Israeli and Palestinian security forces have repeatedly exposed terrorist networks, primarily of Hamas, planning to carry out showcase attacks, some of them inside Israel (including suicide bombing attacks in crowded urban locations, shooting attacks, and abductions to acquire bargaining chips to exchange for Palestinian prisoners in Israeli jails).

G. There were relatively few attacks and networks inspired or directed by non-Palestinian organizations (ISIS and Hezbollah). Palestinian terrorism in Judea, Samaria and Israel was for the most part carried out by Palestinians, and non-Palestinian organizations played a secondary role. A prominent ISIS-inspired attack was carried out in the Sarona commercial-entertainment center in Tel Aviv (four killed) by a terrorist influenced by ISIS ideology while in Jordan. In addition the Israeli security forces also exposed a number of Hezbollah cells handled from Lebanon and the Gaza Strip planning to carry out shooting and suicide bombing attacks.
3. Popular terrorism in Judea and Samaria received the support of Fatah and the Palestinian Authority (PA), evidenced by decisions reached at the 7th Fatah conference (November 29 – December 4, 2016). Mahmoud Abbas and the PA represent popular terrorism as a “peaceful popular resistance.” Behind the phrase hides full support for popular terrorism and violence, which during 2016 trickled into Israel. Hamas, as opposed to the PA, has repeatedly called for an increase in the scope of popular terrorism in a effort to turn it into established military-type terrorism.

4. There has been a continuing decrease in the scope of rocket fire from the Gaza Strip into Israeli territory, continuing after Operation Protective Edge (August 2014, during which rocket attacks peaked). Fifteen rocket hits were identified in Israeli territory during 2016, 24 in 2015. The year 2016 was the quietest year since the Israeli disengagement from the Gaza Strip in 2005 and the Hamas takeover in 2007. Hamas and the other terrorist organizations have exploited the relative calm to rebuild their military capabilities, including replenishing their rocket arsenals and constructing tunnels extending into Israeli territory.

5. The decline in rocket fire was a function of Hamas' policy of restraint, which it enforced on the rogue terrorist organizations more strongly and thoroughly than after previous IDF operations (on the Salafi jihadist organizations which occasionally challenged Hamas). The policy was the result of strategic considerations, the most important of which was the strengthening of Israel's deterrence after Operation Protective Edge and Hamas' desire to gain time to rebuild its military capabilities without significant interference from Israel. Other Hamas considerations are its desire to rebuild the Gaza Strip's civilian infrastructure (a secondary priority, however), the deterioration of Hamas' relations with Egypt (relations Hamas keeps trying to improve), and the cooling off of its relations with countries like Iran (a former strategic ally) and Saudi Arabia.
In ITIC assessment, most of the trends of Palestinian terrorism of 2016 will continue in the coming months. Popular terrorism (the so-called "popular resistance") will continue with ups and downs, with the support of Fatah and the PA. **Hamas and the other terrorist organizations will continue their efforts to establish terrorist networks in Judea and Samaria to have them carry out showcase attacks**, including attacks inside Israel. In the **Gaza Strip** Hamas will continue to be influenced by the factors that restrain its policies with Israel. However, certain scenarios may change those policies, for example, as a result of showcase terrorist attacks in Judea, Samaria and Israel, and Israel's subsequent responses; international events viewed as harming Palestinian interests (such as relocating the American embassy to Jerusalem); Israeli responses to rocket fire regarded by Hamas as disproportionate, and Israel's harming what Hamas considers its assets (its attack tunnels, for example).

**The Structure of the Study**

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Popular Terrorism in Judea and Samaria

Overview

1. The year 2016 marked a decline in the extent of Palestinian terrorism in Judea, Samaria and Israel. The wave of popular terrorism that began in October 2015 waned in April 2016. However, popular terrorism continued, and the average monthly distribution of popular terrorism was greater than in the years before the wave. In 2016 Palestinians carried out 142 significant terrorist attacks, as opposed to 171 in 2015, most of them (135) in October-December, the first three months of the wave of popular terrorism.

2. The wave of popular terrorism which began in October 2015 and continued into 2016 was manifested mainly by stabbing attacks, which became its trademark. However, there were also vehicular and shooting attacks, and attacks involving the throwing of stones, IEDs and Molotov cocktails. Most often the attacks were carried out by lone terrorists, most of them relatively young and not affiliated with established terrorist organizations. In many instances they were motivated by a combination of nationalistic Palestinian and personal considerations which played a major role (frustration, the thirst for revenge, acting as copycats, the desire to become a shaheed and reach paradise, the desire for fame and glory).

3. An examination of the trend of terrorist attacks in 2016 indicates that the wave of popular terrorism that erupted in October 2015 in the wake of an increase in violence during the Jewish High Holidays in September. It gradually waned until in effect it ended in April 2016. During the first three months of 2016 there were about 20 to 30 significant terrorist attacks every month, but the number dropped to five in April. Popular terrorism continued throughout the year, although to a lesser extent. Between April and December 2016 there were between five and 12 significant terrorist attacks a month, far below the October to December numbers, but higher than the monthly average of the three previous years.

4. Other aspects of Palestinian popular terrorism in 2016:

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1 The ITIC has defined significant attacks as stabbing and vehicular attacks, shooting attack throwing IEDs and combined attacks (for example, a combined vehicular and stabbing attack). The term "significant attacks" does not include the hundreds of monthly instances of thrown stones and Molotov cocktails. Such attacks endanger the lives of the residents of Judea and Samaria and the Israeli security forces, cause extensive property damage and disrupt daily life. Popular terrorism (or as the Palestinians call it, "popular resistance") is a Palestinian strategy decided on at the 6th Fatah conference in August 2009. It was reconfirmed at the 7th Fatah conference which took place in 2016.
a. There was a decrease in the number of terrorist attacks carried out inside Israel not including greater Jerusalem, which has its own unique features). During 2016 ten terrorist attacks were carried out inside Israeli territory, as opposed to 21 in 2015 (ten carried out in October to December, the first three months of the wave of popular terrorism).

b. The number of Israelis killed declined as the wave of popular terrorism waned, but its total for the year was high. In 2016, 17 Israelis were killed, ten in shooting attacks (the most deadly form of terrorist attack carried out in 2016) and seven in stabbing attacks. Between October 2015 and December 2016, 47 Israelis were killed, 30 during October to December 2015.

c. In 2016 there was an increase in the number of shooting attacks. Shooting attacks made up 23% of all the significant terrorist attacks carried out during the year. The number of shooting attacks was also high in January 2017. In 2016 shooting attacks accounted for the deaths of ten people, more than half of those killed during the year.

d. The decline of the wave of Palestinian terrorism was also manifested by the decline in the number of Palestinians who participated in riots. Riots and clashes were relatively limited, even those occurring during times when violence tends to increase (such as Passover and Jewish High Holidays in 2016, when many Israeli visited Jerusalem.)
Statistical Data

Significant Terrorist Attacks in 2016, Monthly Distribution

Significant Terrorist Attacks in 2015, Monthly Distribution

*Note: During 2015 there were 171 terrorist attacks (135 of them between October and December, the first three months of the wave of popular terrorism.)
Significant Terrorist Attacks from the Beginning of the Wave of Terrorism to the End of 2016, Monthly Distribution

Significant Terrorist Attacks between 2013 and 2016

*Note: Most of the attacks (135) were carried out between October and December.
5. During 2016 the Fatah movement held its 7th conference (November 29 – December 4, 2016). The conference decided to the so-called "popular resistance" strategy, which had been decided on at the 6th Fatah movement conference. That was done by representing the "popular resistance" to the international community as legal, unarmed and non-violent. However, an examination of the "popular resistance" in Judea and Samaria in 2016 and the preceding years proves that the term "peaceful popular resistance" is a euphemism for the popular terrorism and violence supported by Mahmoud Abbas, the PA and Fatah, and which trickles into Israel to this day.²

Mahmoud Abbas' opening speech at the 7th Fatah conference in Ramallah, where the policy of establishing and strengthening popular terrorism was decided (Wafa, November 30, 2016).

6. Therefore, Palestinian popular terrorism (the "popular resistance") of 2016 and the years before is a strategy Fatah and the PA have implemented since 2009. The PA and Fatah publicly support the terrorist attacks carried out as part of the "popular resistance." The PA gives financial backing to the Palestinians who carry out the attacks, including support for prisoners and the families of terrorists killed while carrying out attacks. The PA does not condemn the attacks and customarily accuses Israel of killing the terrorists who carry them out, representing them as "victims who are executed." Fatah often issues death notices for them and senior Fatah and PA figures sometimes attend funerals and visit mourning tents. The PA does not distinguish between attacks

targeting civilians or the Israeli security forces, or differentiate between shooting attacks and attacks carried out using cold weapons (knives, cars).

Left: Death notice issued by Fatah for the "heroic shaheed," Muhammad Sayid Muhammad Ali. To the left of the Fatah logo is a picture of Mahmoud Abbas, and to the right, of Yasser Arafat (Fatah-affiliated Facebook page, October 10, 2015). Right: Muhammad Sayid Muhammad Ali, a terrorist from the Shuafat refugee camp, stabs a Border Policeman near the Nablus Gate in the Old City of Jerusalem (Facebook page of QudsN, October 13, 2015).

7. On the other hand, the PA opposes turning the "popular resistance" into organized military-type terrorism of the kind preached by Hamas. The PA and its security services enforce their policies on Hamas and the other terrorist organizations through preventive activities, and by continuing security activities in coordination with Israel despite harsh criticism from Hamas.

Types of Terrorist Attacks

Distribution of the Types of Attacks

8. Stabbing attacks, the trademark of popular terrorism, were most widespread during 2016. The number rose significantly during wave of popular terrorism which began in October 2015 but continued after the attacks waned. During 2016, 61% of the attacks were stabbing attacks (87 of 142). Twenty-three percent were shooting attacks and 8% were vehicular attacks. Other types of attacks (IEDs, combined attacks) were a small portion of the overall number (about 8%).

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3 The statistics do not include the hundreds of stones and Molotov cocktails thrown every month. They also do not include the scores of shots fired at the Israeli security forces during counterterrorist activities in Judea and Samaria.
Statistical Data

Types of Terrorist Attacks Carried Out in 2016

![Bar chart showing types of terrorist attacks carried out in 2016.]

Types of Terrorist Attacks Carried Out in 2015

![Bar chart showing types of terrorist attacks carried out in 2015.]

*Note: Most of the attacks were carried out in October to December 2015.*
Types of Terrorist Attacks Carried Out in 2014

9. During 2016 Palestinians carried out 87 stabbing attacks, as opposed to 108 in 2015 (92 between October and December 2015). **Seven Israelis and 48 Palestinians were killed as the result of stabbing attacks.** Stabbing attacks were responsible for 61% of the total number of terrorist attacks carried out in 2016.

10. The great popularity of stabbing attacks is a function of how relatively easy they are to carry out, and of the copycat effect. They do not necessitate the acquisition of a weapon
because in most instances they can be found in any house. Any sharp instrument can be used, a knife, axe, screwdriver, and the like. However, the number of victims per attack is relatively small, while the chances the terrorist will die or be wounded are great (more than half of the terrorists who carried out or attempted stabbing attacks were killed).

11. There were two prominent stabbing attacks in 2016.

A. On March 8, 2016, a Palestinian from a village east of Qalqilya, in Israel illegally, went on a stabbing spree on the seaside promenade between Tel Aviv and Jaffa. He stabbed four people near the clock tower in Jaffa. From there he ran along the Herbert Samuel Promenade, attacking people along the way. He was chased by police who shot and killed him. An American tourist was killed and 11 other people were wounded.
B. On June 30, 2016, a Palestinian carried out a stabbing attack in Kiryat Arba. He crossed the fence and walked 150 meters into the community. He entered one of the buildings along the periphery and stabbed a 13 year-old girl to death in her bed. The night guards of Kiryat Arba broke into the house and shot and killed him.
Statistical Data

Stabbing Attacks in 2016, Monthly Distribution

87 attacks

Stabbing Attacks in 2015, Monthly Distribution

109 attacks, 92 of them during the first three months of the wave of Palestinian terrorism.
Stabbing Attacks between 2013 and 2016

*Note: Most of the stabbing attacks (92) were carried out between October and December 2015.

Vehicular Attacks

Notice from the Facebook page of Hamas in Nablus encouraging vehicular attacks. The Arabic reads, "Run away, my friend... This is not your land. Resist, oh son of Jerusalem. Resist, oh son of the [West] Bank. Run over the Zionists (Facebook page of the Hamas movement in Nablus, November 28, 2015).
12. Vehicular attacks are usually carried out by lone terrorists who do not belong to a terrorist organization. For the most part the attacks are spontaneous and do not require preparations, which makes them difficult to discover beforehand. Vehicular attacks are often carried out as part of popular terrorism, although they not as widespread as stabbing and shooting attacks. Prominent among terrorists who carry out such attacks are Palestinians from east Jerusalem who have blue Israeli identity cards, and therefore good access to Israeli population centers in Jerusalem.

13. During 2016, there were 11 vehicular attacks, 8% of the total number of significant terrorist attacks during the year. In 2015, there were 34 vehicular attacks (26 between October and December). Vehicular attacks targeted both Israeli civilians and Israeli security forces, including security forces manning the roadblock at the entrances to communities and border crossings. They also target Israelis waiting at bus stops near communities in Judea and Samaria.

**Statistical Data**

**Vehicular Attacks in 2016, Monthly Distribution**

[Bar chart showing monthly distribution of vehicular attacks in 2016, with a peak in June and a total of 11 attacks.]
14. **Prominent vehicular attacks in 2016 were the following:**

   a. **On June 24, 2016,** a Palestinian woman carried out a vehicular attack at a bus stop at the entrance to Kiryat Arba. She rammed into a parked Israeli vehicle, injuring two Israeli civilians. She was shot and killed by an IDF force.

   b. **On July 6, 2016,** a Palestinian terrorist deliberately drove into an IDF vehicle at the entrance to the community of Neveh Daniel in Gush Etzion. Four IDF soldiers were wounded. The Palestinian, who was from Bethlehem, was seriously wounded.

   c. **On September 16, 2016,** a Palestinian vehicle with a driver and female passenger sped towards a bus stop at the Elias Junctions at the entrance to Kiryat Arba. The vehicle drove towards three young Israelis standing at the bus stop. An IDF force at the location shot and killed the driver and wounded the passenger. Two of the boys were wounded.
On January 8, 2017 (a date beyond the period of this report) a Palestinian carried out a deadly vehicular attack in the region of the Armon Hanatziv promenade in Jerusalem. The Palestinian terrorist came from the nearby east Jerusalem neighborhood of Jabel Mukaber. He ran over a group of IDF soldiers with a truck, killing four and wounding 13. He may have been inspired by the ISIS-inspired vehicular attack in Nice or Berlin.
Shooting Attacks

16. In 2016 there was a significant rise in the number of shooting attacks, as opposed to the decline in stabbing and vehicular attacks. During the year Palestinians carried out 32 shooting attacks, or 23% of the significant attacks, and killed ten people. In 2015 there were 11 shooting attacks, five between October and December. In January 2016 there were eight shooting attacks, indicating a continuation of the attack.

17. Shooting attacks with light weapons can be carried out by shots fired from ambush, shots fired at groups of people, sniper attacks and drive-by shootings. Shooting attacks target both Israeli security forces and Israeli civilians, especially civilians driving on the roads in Judea and Samaria. Generally speaking shooting attacks are not spontaneous. They require preparations, which include choosing the location and target, and acquiring a weapon. They often involve more than one terrorist, as opposed to stabbing and vehicular attacks. Shooting attacks carry a relatively low level of risk for the terrorist and generally enable him escape.

18. Drive-by shootings were carried out in 2016 on roads in Judea and Samaria and also in Jerusalem. Prominent was a drive-by shooting spree carried out by a terrorist who struck in three different locations in Jerusalem on October 9, 2016. He began at the light railway station at the Ammunition Hill Junction, from there he drove to the Police Headquarters, and from there to the neighborhood of Sheikh Jarrah. He killed a woman.

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4 The statistics do not include shots fired at IDF forces engaged in counterterrorist activities in Judea and Samaria.
and a policeman, and wounded five people. Two women were wounded in a traffic accident caused by the shooting and three people were treated for shock.

19. The shooting spree in Jerusalem had several unique aspects. The shooter attacked at more than one location and used a standard M-16 assault rifle (not the usual improvised weapon). In addition, he was an adult with a long history of incitement to violence and terrorism, he openly identified with Hamas, and his motivation was mostly religious (solidarity with al-Aqsa mosque).

20. There were two exceptional shooting attacks in Tel Aviv in 2016:

A. On January 1, 2016, an Israeli Arab armed with a submachine gun opened fire at patrons sitting in a pub in Tel Aviv. He killed two people and wounding seven. He also shot at nearby businesses. He then fled the scene and took a taxi to the northern part of Tel Aviv. He killed the taxi driver, abandoned the vehicle and escaped. He was Nasha’t Milhem, 29, an Israeli Arab from the town of Arara. He was apprehended in the town after several days.
B. On June 8, 2016, two Palestinians carried out a shooting attack in the Sarona commercial-entertainment center in Tel Aviv. They used Carl Gustav improvised guns to shoot patrons in a restaurant and passersby. They killed our people and wounded seven, three of them seriously. The two terrorists, who were from the village of Yatta in the Hebron region and in Israel illegally, were apprehended. The attack was not spontaneous and needed extensive preparations (including acquiring the guns and clothing), and reaching the location. It was not a typical popular terrorism attack. One of the terrorists had been influenced by ISIS ideology while he was studying in Jordan, and was inspired by ISIS to carry out the attack.
**Statistical Data**

**Shooting Attacks in 2016, Monthly Distribution**

*Note: Five of the shooting attacks were carried out between October and December 2015.*

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**Shooting Attacks between 2013 and 2016**

*Note: Five of the shooting attacks were carried out between October and December 2015.*
Attacks Involving the Use of IEDs

21. During 2016 there were five IED terrorist attacks targeting civilians. A similar number was recorded in 2015 (all carried out between October and December 2015). In addition, dozens of IEDs were also thrown at Israeli security forces engaged in operational activities. IED attacks require planning, including preparing the IED, transporting it to the site of the attack, and a considerable amount of organization.

22. The most prominent attack was carried out on April 18, 2016, when an IED exploded on a number 12 bus in Jerusalem. A second bus, standing near the first, also went up in flames. Vehicles in the immediate area were damaged. Twenty people were injured. The terrorist was critically injured and died two days later. The attack was not characteristic of popular terrorism attacks carried out in 2016. It was planned as a suicide bombing attack and orchestrated by a network in Bethlehem affiliated with Hamas, the terrorist's place of residence.

Combined attacks

23. Combined attacks include at least two methods (such as a vehicular and stabbing attack or a vehicular and shooting attack). Of the significant attacks, their percentage is low; in 2016, three combined attacks were carried out. They usually involve more than one terrorist and sometimes require advance organization.
24. **The combined attacks carried out in 2016 are as follows:**

A. **On February 3, 2016, a combined shooting and stabbing attack was carried out in Jerusalem.** Three terrorists armed with rifles, knives and IEDs went to Jerusalem planning to carrying out an attack. Border Policemen spotted two of them near Damascus Gate in the Old City of Jerusalem. The terrorists aroused their suspicions and were asked for identification. One presented his identity card. The other drew his weapon and shot at the policemen. The first terrorist stabbed one of the policemen. The two terrorists were shot and killed. The third terrorist came from behind and opened fire. He wounded one of the policemen who nevertheless shot at him. A police officer who arrived at the scene shot and killed him. **One female Border Police combatant was killed in the attack, and another was seriously wounded.**

B. **On March 14, 2016, terrorists carried out a combined vehicular and shooting attack at the entrance to Kiryat Arba.** Two Palestinians tried to run over Israeli civilians who were standing at a bus stop near the Elias Junction at the entrance to Kiryat Arba. They also shot at the Israelis. An IDF soldier was wounded by gunfire. The soldiers guarding the junction shot and killed the terrorists. An improvised Carl Gustav submachine gun and a pistol were found in their possession. At that point, another Palestinian drove up and ran into an IDF officer, **wounding him and another soldier.** The terrorist was shot and killed.
C. **On October 29, 2016, a combined vehicular and stabbing attack was carried out near Ofra.** A Palestinian drove to an IDF checkpoint and tried to run over the soldiers who were standing there. The soldiers shot at him. He got out of his car and tried to stab the soldiers with a knife. The force shot at him again, seriously wounding him.
Left: Meat cleaver used to attack IDF soldiers (Facebook page of Silwad News, October 29, 2016).
Right: Ahmed Amin Hamed, the terrorist who carried out the vehicular and stabbing attack near Ofra
(Twitter account of Paldf, October 29, 2016).

**Attack Sites**

**Judea, Samaria and Greater Jerusalem**

25. In 2016 the largest number of terrorist attacks took place in greater Jerusalem (29 attacks) and the Hebron area (28). They were followed by the areas of Gush Etzion (18) and Ramallah (20). In contrast, the area of Nablus and northern Samaria, which played a key role in the second intifada, played a secondary role in popular terrorism during 2016. Geographical distribution of attacks:
26. For several years, greater Jerusalem has been a preferred location for terrorist attacks, but from the beginning of the wave of popular terrorism until the end of 2016, the number of attacks there rose significantly. In 2016, 29 attacks were carried out in greater Jerusalem, versus 47 attacks in 2015 (35 of which were carried out during the first three months of the wave of terrorism). Eleven attacks were carried out in the Jerusalem area in 2014, and three in 2013. The attacks were carried out in different locations. Prominent locations include Jewish neighborhoods bordering on the Arab neighborhoods (Armon Hanatziv, Pisgat Zeev, French Hill). Another prominent location is the Qalandia checkpoint, which is a point of daily friction between Palestinian residents of east Jerusalem and the Israeli security forces.

27. In ITIC assessment, preferring greater Jerusalem as a location for terrorist attacks is based on two factors:

A. Operational ease: it is easier for east Jerusalem residents to carry out attacks because their blue Israeli ID cards give them access to Jewish population centers and they are familiar with the city. The weak security control in the neighborhoods of east Jerusalem also makes it easier to carry out terrorist attacks.

B. The second factor is the frustration of the residents of east Jerusalem, and especially the younger ones, caused by the neglected urban infrastructure and economic difficulties. Moreover, these young people visit West Jerusalem and live near its residents, which means they are more exposed to the obvious disparity between their social situations. The Temple Mount is also a source of friction. However, in 2016, that friction decreased, as did the scope of incitement accompanying it, which had played a key role in the outbreak of the wave of terrorism.

28. The number of terrorist attacks carried out in Hebron is similar to the number of terrorist attacks in the Jerusalem region. Like Jerusalem, Hebron and its environs are in a state of political, social and religious unrest. There is considerable friction between the Palestinians and the Israeli population in and around Hebron. Hebron also contains an important holy site for Jews and Moslems (the Cave of the Patriarchs). In addition there is great considerable for Hamas in the Hebron region and the local residents’ inherent fundamental hostility toward Israel and the Jews.

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5 More than 30% of the young residents of east Jerusalem drop out of school because of the shortage of classrooms. Some work and some are unemployed. They feel they have nothing to lose, which radicalizes them religiously and nationally. Incitement is disseminated via social media, including ISIS’s campaigns calling on Moslems to kill Jews, further inflaming these feelings (Udi Dekel, The Strategic Situation in Jerusalem Demands a Change of Policy, INSS, October 20, 2015). According to media reports, there is a shortage of 3,000 classrooms in east Jerusalem, and more than 8,000 school-aged children are without any educational framework (Ma’ariv, October 13, 2015).
In the Heart of Israel

29. One of the characteristics of the wave of popular terrorism that began in October 2015 was the proliferation of attacks in cities and towns in the heart of Israel. Between October and December 2015, 20 attacks were carried out in the heart of Israel. The number dropped to 10 in 2016, but that is still greater than the number of attacks carried out in the heart of Israel in previous years (see graph). The attacks carried out in the heart of Israel in 2016 were deadly, resulting in eight fatalities (of the 17 people killed in attacks in 2016).

30. The three most prominent terrorist attacks in the heart of Israel were carried out in Tel Aviv. They were the shooting attack at a pub on Dizengoff Street in Tel Aviv carried out by an Israeli Arab (January 3, 2016, three people were killed, and seven wounded); the stabbing spree by a Palestinian in Israeli illegally on the promenade between Yafo and Tel Aviv (March 8, 2016, a US tourist killed and 11 people wounded); and the shooting attack at the Sarona commercial-entertainment complex in Tel Aviv (June 8, 2016, four dead and seven wounded).

**Attacks in the Heart of Israel, 2013-2016**

*Note: Including 20 attacks carried out between October and December 2015.*
Profile of the terrorists 

31. An analysis of 141 identified Palestinians who carried out attacks during 2016 indicates some similarities among most but not all of them. Most were men (about 82%) and were young (between 17 and 19 years of age, but there were also teenagers between 14 and 16 and adults in their forties and fifties). The vast majority had no history of involvement in terrorist attacks or prior affiliation with terrorist organizations. In most cases, they carried out the attacks on their own, as a result of a personal, spontaneous decision, without any instructions from handlers and sometimes without their families’ knowledge (as noted, there are several exceptions).

24. Most of the terrorists arrived at the scene of the attack from the Jerusalem and Hebron areas, the two leading regions in terms of the number of attacks. Thus it appears that most of them preferred to carry out the attacks near their place of residence. Therefore there is considerable overlapping between the most prominent arenas for attacks and the origin of the terrorists (though there are exceptions).

32. Regarding their motives, various studies have arrived at different conclusions, arising from different databases and sometimes also political biases. The conclusion of the ITIC’s study of the wave of popular terrorism (October 2015 to April 2016) is that most of the terrorists were motivated by Palestinian nationalistic sentiments. They belonged to a generation of young people who witnessed popular terrorism incidents carried out in Judea and Samaria in the years preceding the current wave of terrorist attacks. Their nationalistic motivation was greatly influenced by their education (formal and informal), which from infancy inculcated the narrative that the State of Israel does not have a right to exist and perceives violence and terrorism as the key component of Palestinian strategy. They were influenced by their families, the general atmosphere and anti-Israeli incitement in the media. Some of those who carried out attacks (mainly from Hebron and east Jerusalem) were also influenced by the continual friction with the Israeli security forces and Israeli civilians.

33. In addition to fundamental nationalistic motivation, personal considerations and spontaneity played an important role in the decision to carry out the attacks. Such considerations include family problems, personal frustration due to unemployment or the inability to find a suitable job, gender discrimination against women and the desire to

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6 The profile of the terrorists who carried out attacks was examined by the ITIC and published in several information bulletins in 2016.
escape from the daily hardships by becoming a shaheed and going to heaven. There is also a desire to avenge the deaths of family members or friends, or to follow the path of the shaheeds, who have become a role model (copycat attacks are pronounced among the young). All of the above explain why certain young people were willing to sacrifice themselves and carry out attacks in which their chances of dying were high. However, in ITIC’s assessment, that is an incomplete explanation and cannot be disconnected from the Palestinians’ lives and the Palestinian-Israeli conflict as a whole.

34. What was the weight of religion in the decision to carry out an attack? The wave of terrorism began to defend al-Aqsa mosque and Jerusalem. Subsequently, however, as a motive, the desire to defend Jerusalem and al-Aqsa mosque decreased. In ITIC assessment, in most cases the importance of the religious motive was not great. Based on an examination of photos and posts on the Facebook pages of some of the perpetrators of the attacks, it is evident that most of them were exposed to the modern world. That can be seen in their clothing, forms of entertainment and areas of interest. Most of them had a secular lifestyle and only a few were known to have been religious or to have expressed religious sentiments. However, non-religious young people did not hesitate to use religious terminology before they left for an attack, mainly dealing with the pleasures of heaven awaiting a shaheed.

Poster with a picture of a horse and a caption reading: “One day we will depart (from the world) without any possessions! ... Oh God... Lead us to heaven.” The poster was posted on Facebook by Qassem Jaber, who carried out the vehicular and shooting attack at the entrance to Kiryat Arba, on the day before the attack (March 14, 2016). Amir al-Juneidi, the other perpetrator of the attack, shared this poster on his Facebook page on the same day.
Status posted by Nihad Waked, who carried out a combined attack on February 14, 2016, near the town of Hinanit (stone throwing and shooting at the IDF force that arrived on the scene). The status was posted on September 15, 2015, on the eve of the wave of popular terrorism, when numerous violent acts were carried out in Jerusalem during the High Holidays. Nihad posted two pictures which read: “My greatest ambition is to be in your heaven, ruler of the universe” and “You’re asking me about happiness?! I’ll tell you about heaven that is waiting for those endowed with endurance” (Facebook page of Nihad Waked, September 15, 2015).

Involvement of the PA Security Services in the Attacks

35. In 2016, in several instances operatives from the PA security services were directly involved in carrying out attacks. It should be emphasized that these are unusual incidents and are not common among the security services. They have generally not played a direct role in popular terrorism and have continued their security coordination with Israel. In accordance with the PA’s policy, they have exposed networks and prevented terrorist attacks.

36. One prominent attack carried out by a security service operative was a shooting attack at a checkpoint near Beit El (January 31, 2016) in which three IDF soldiers were wounded. The terrorist was Amjad Jaser Al-Sukari (aka Abu Omar) from the village of Jama'in (west of Nablus). He was a bodyguard of Ahmed Hanoun, the Palestinian attorney general in Ramallah, and a first sergeant in the Palestinian police force. As such, he was licensed to carry a gun and was able to pass through the Israeli checkpoint without arousing suspicion.
37. Following are examples of the involvement of security service operatives in attacks:

a. **On February 16, 2016**, two Palestinians armed with M-16 clones fired at police near the Damascus Gate light railway stop. One of them was a **Palestinian national security service operative** who served in Hebron.

b. **On October 31, 2016**, there was a shooting attack at the northern entrance to Ramallah. A uniformed Palestinian, armed with a Kalashnikov assault rifle, arrived on foot at the checkpoint at the northern entrance to Ramallah. He **opened fire at IDF soldiers, wounding three, one of them seriously**. The terrorist was shot and killed by IDF soldiers. He was a **policeman in the Palestinian police, who served as a facility guard in Ramallah** (Facebook page of QudsN, October 31, 2016).
Organized Military-Type Terrorism in Judea and Samaria

Overview

38. Since the beginning of the wave of popular terrorism Hamas has sought to accompany it with military-type attacks that would turn the wave of popular terrorism into a third intifada. To that end, Hamas and other terrorist organizations set up military networks in Judea and Samaria, provided them with money and training and briefed them on carrying out showcase attacks in Judea, Samaria, and Israel (including suicide bombing attacks and abducting Israelis to use as bargaining chips).

39. Organized military-type terrorism is carried out by Hamas and other organizations. Planners of military-type attacks prefer the use of so-called “hot” weapons (small arms, IEDs, explosive belts) to cause as many casualties as possible. The attacks are planned and organized and lack spontaneity, a feature of many popular terrorism attacks.

40. Hamas, the PIJ and other terrorist organizations, which continue to maintain calm along the Gaza Strip border, tried to turn the so-called popular resistance into a third intifada that would include military-type attacks. On the other hand, the Palestinian security services uncovered the military networks, which represent a security risk to the PA as well, and thwarted Hamas’ efforts. The Israeli security services and the PA security services have repeatedly uncovered networks of Hamas and other terrorist organizations that planned to carry out terrorist attacks in crowded areas.
Sites of Hamas terrorist networks focused on Hebron, Nablus, Qalqilya and the regions of Jerusalem and Ramallah.

Poster on Hamas’ Facebook page. The Arabic reads, “The intifada continues and is going strong” (Facebook page of Palinfo, January 1, 2016). The knife symbolizes the popular resistance, the handgun symbolizes the military resistance.

41. In the absence of a Hamas general headquarters in Judea and Samaria, military terrorism was directed from the Gaza Strip or via Muslim and Arab countries such as Turkey, Jordan and Qatar. Terrorist operatives released in the Gilad Shalit prisoner exchange deal and deported to the Gaza Strip play a major role in recruiting and handling terrorist networks in Judea and Samaria. Operatives abroad and prisoners in Israeli jails are also involved in directing the military terrorism. Communication between the handlers and operatives on the ground took place via the Internet or by telephone. Some of the network operatives underwent military training in the Gaza Strip after being recruited. Some of them underwent theoretical training via the Internet.

42. In order to establish the military networks, there have been efforts (for the most part by Hamas) to smuggle money to operatives in Judea and Samaria. The money transfers were carried out mainly by couriers holding permits to enter Israel from the PA (for example, businessmen traveling abroad, merchants from the Gaza Strip, and Palestinians who enter Israel for medical treatment). In some cases, money was transferred during meetings abroad. Turkey and Jordan were the two countries of choice for money transfers. That was because of their geographical proximity to Judea and Samaria and the fact that it is relatively easy for couriers to create a suitable cover story to travel to them.
43. Hamas occasionally claimed responsibility for attacks carried out as part of popular terrorism, saying the perpetrators were Hamas operatives. However, such claims, which were intended for propaganda purposes, were groundless. On only a few occasions was it possible to determine that the terrorists were indeed affiliated with Hamas and operated under its direction. The most prominent attack carried out by a Hamas-affiliated squad in 2016 was the attack on a number 12 bus in Jerusalem, in which 20 people were wounded (April 18, 2016). The terrorist, Abdul Hamid Mohammad Abu Srour, a resident of the Aida refugee camp in Bethlehem, was a Hamas operative who participated in clashes with IDF forces and was detained for six months by the Palestinian security services.

The death notice published by Hamas for Abdul Hamid Abu Srour, claiming he was an operative in the military wing (Facebook page of Paldf, April 20, 2016). It is different from the "standard" posters Hamas usually issues in solidarity with terrorists who did not belong to any organization. Left: The terrorist wearing a military uniform (Facebook page of Gaza al-A'an, April 21, 2016).

44. The investigation of the bus attack revealed that it was planned as a suicide bombing attack and that the IED had been made by one of the squad members using available household materials. The investigation also revealed that a squad of six Hamas operatives was behind the attack, and that some of them had been imprisoned in Israel. The squad was formed in order to carry out a series of attacks in and around Jerusalem. The planned attacks included suicide bombing attacks, car bomb attacks and shooting attacks. The squad recruited operatives to carry out the attacks, including the terrorist who carried out the attack on the bus.
Rejoicing following the attack on the bus in Jerusalem. The poster reads: “How good. Blessed be he who blew up the bus this afternoon. How good. You haven’t seen anything yet. This is a drop in the ocean. [ululation of joy]!!” (Twitter account of Palinfo, April 18, 2016).

**Exposure of Terrorist Networks and Prevention of Attempts to transfer funds to Judea and Samaria**

45. In 2016, the Israeli security forces and the PA security services exposed many terrorist networks in Judea and Samaria, belonging to Hamas and other terrorist organizations. That prevented terrorist attacks due to take place in Judea and Samaria and in Israeli territory, including suicide bombing attacks and abductions. In addition, couriers who were transferring funds to finance terrorist activities in Judea and Samaria were detained.

46. The following are exposures of terrorist networks by the Israeli security forces between the beginning of the wave of popular terrorism (October 2015) until late 2016.

a. Exposure of a Hamas network in the Nablus region in late 2016:

1) The network operatives planned to carry out suicide bombing attacks in crowded sites in Haifa and Jerusalem, and shooting attacks in Judea and Samaria. More than twenty operatives were detained; most of them served various terms in Israeli jails for involvement in terrorist attacks and terrorist activities against Israel. The operatives were backed by a large network of supporters in various fields who assisted them to manufacture, acquire and hide the weapons, transfer of funds to finance the terrorist activity, and hide wanted operatives.

2) The detainees told their interrogators that between May and August 2016, they set up an explosives laboratory in Nablus, where they manufactured
about 7 kg (15.4 lbs) of TATP explosives. At the same time, the network operatives bought M-16 rifles to carry out shooting attacks (Israel Security Agency website, December 22, 2016).

Weapons and military equipment found in the possession of the Hamas network in Nablus (Israel Security Agency spokesman's unit, December 23, 2016).

b. **Exposure of a Hamas network in the Hebron area in late 2016**: The Israeli security forces arrested Hamas operatives from the village of Surif (west of Hebron) and from Hebron, who were planning to carry out various types of attacks, including shooting attacks and abductions to bargain for the release of Palestinian prisoners. In preparation for the terrorist attacks, they carried out surveillance of IDF forces in the Surif area. Large quantities of weapons and ammunition were found in their possession. One of the detainees was a merchant suspected of delivering some of the weapons to the network operatives (Israel Security Agency website, December 8, 2016).

c. **Exposure of a Hamas network in Hebron and Jerusalem in late 2016**: In December 2016, the Israeli security forces uncovered a Hamas network from Hebron and Jerusalem. The network operatives planned to carry out abduction and murder attacks for bargaining purposes, similarly to the abduction and murder of the three youths in Gush Etzion (June 2014). The network included three operatives from Jerusalem and three from Hebron. Interrogation revealed they were in an advanced stage of preparation, including a hideout for the abducted Israelis (Israel Security Agency website, January 7, 2016).
d. Exposure of a Hamas network planning to carry out a shooting attack near Hebron in November 2015: The Israeli security forces uncovered a Hamas network from Hebron. The operatives planned to carry out a shooting attack on a road near Hebron. The network was headed by the brother of the terrorist behind the abduction murder of the three youths in Gush Etzion. In preparation for the attack the operatives made several trips on a road near Hebron to find the best spot for shooting, and acquired weapons (Israel Security Agency, January 10, 2016).

e. Exposure of a large terrorist network of Hamas, operating in Abu Dis and Bethlehem in December 2015: A network 25 operatives, most of them students of Abu Dis University, was uncovered by the Israeli security forces in December 2015. The operatives, who were handled by Hamas's military wing in the Gaza Strip, intended to carry out suicide attacks in Jerusalem and other locations in Israel. The squad was headed by a Palestinian from the village of Yasuf, born in of Qalqilya, recruited by Hamas in the Gaza Strip and trained by its operatives to make explosive belts and IEDs. At the same time, the Israel Security Agency uncovered a Hamas squad belonging to the network of Abu Dis, which operated in the Bethlehem area. Some of its members, who studied at Abu Dis University, were recruited to serve as suicide bombers (Israel Security Agency website, December 23, 2015).
47. Following are several noteworthy exposures of money transfers by Hamas to Judea and Samaria through couriers:

   a. Detention of a Hamas courier of funds at the Tapuah Junction: On October 13, 2016, the Israeli security forces at the Tapuah Junction in Samaria detained a Hamas operative. He was carrying more than 100,000 Israeli shekels (almost $27,000) in cash and checks. According to a military source in the IDF Central Command, the money was intended for carrying out a terrorist attack (nrg, October 13, 2016).

   b. Detention of a Palestinian merchant from Gaza who was supposed to deliver money to Hamas operatives in Hebron: On August 31, 2016, Bashir Mohammad Younes Mostafa, a Palestinian merchant from the Gaza Strip, was detained at the...
Erez crossing. During interrogation he admitted to having transferred $50,000 from Gaza to Hamas operatives in Hebron. He also said an official in the Hamas crossings unit on the Palestinian side of the Erez crossing asked him to smuggle the money because he held a merchant’s license (Arabic-language Facebook page of the Israeli Coordinator for Government Activities in the Territories, September 1, 2016).

c. Detention of a resident of Qabatiya, Samaria, who was sent by Hamas to set up a military network in Judea and Samaria: Mahmoud Nazzal was a member of a faction that split from Fatah’s military wing. In 2007, he moved to Cairo for studies. There he joined the Hamas headquarters in the Gaza Strip and under Hamas direction, recruited Palestinian students from Judea and Samaria studying in Egypt. After recruitment they went to the Gaza Strip for military training, and were then sent back to Judea and Samaria to set up a military network. Mahmoud Nazzal was detained at the Allenby Bridge on his return from Egypt (Haaretz, March 8, 2016).

d. Detention of a Gaza Strip merchant who served as a Hamas money courier: The detainee, a resident of Beit Lahiya, had an entry permit to Israel for business purposes. He was asked by Hamas operatives to smuggle funds to Hamas in Judea and Samaria. The money was hidden in his shoes (Israel Security Agency, July 5, 2016).

e. Detention of a Jerusalem resident who served as a Hamas money courier: In August 2016, an indictment was filed against Sayf al-Din Abd al-Nabi, 39, from Jerusalem. According to the indictment, for many years he had known Zakaria Najib, a Hamas operative who had previously been sentenced to prison and released. The two met in Turkey while he was there on a business trip. Najib asked him to transfer funds to Israel for families of shaheeds and security prisoners. The two met several times during Sayf al-Din Abd al-Nabi’s business trips to Turkey. Abd al-Nabi received a total of $25,000, smuggled into Israel hidden on his person, and delivered the funds to their destinations.

Terrorism Inspired or Directed by non-Palestinian Organizations

ISIS

48. ISIS and the global jihad organizations did not play a significant role in the terrorist activity in Judea and Samaria. A prominent ISIS-inspired attack was the attack at the Sarona commercial-entertainment complex, Tel Aviv, where four Israelis were killed and 41 were wounded (June 8, 2016). One of the terrorists was influenced by
ISIS’s ideology while staying in Jordan for studies. He returned to his home in the village of Yatta, in the Hebron area, in January 2016, and decided to carry out the attack with his friend. However, the two were not officially recruited to ISIS and did not receive any support or instruction from its operatives.

49. Another prominent attack was the vehicular attack carried out by a truck driver who drove into a group of soldiers on the Armon Hanatziv promenade in Jerusalem (January 8, 2017). The ITIC does not have proof that the terrorist who carried out the attack was influenced by ISIS ideology. However, he might have been inspired by the vehicular attacks carried out by terrorists affiliated with ISIS in Nice and Berlin.

50. Other terrorist attacks planned by people influenced by ISIS were foiled. According to an indictment filed on March 18, 2016, against Mus’ab Alyan and Samir Abd Raboh, residents of the east Jerusalem neighborhood of Sur Baher, they were planning to carry out ISIS-inspired terrorist attacks. The following are details from their indictment:

a. Mus’ab Alyan began supporting ISIS when studying in a religious group, whose teachings included ISIS ideology. Subsequently he decided to join the ranks of ISIS and fight in Syria. In October 2015, he went to Jordan with an intention of reaching Syria. While in Jordan he was investigated by the authorities and deported back to Israel. When he returned he inquired about possibilities of traveling to Syria via Turkey or the Sinai Peninsula. During that time, Mus’ab Alyan followed ISIS’s activity on the Internet.

b. In late 2015, Mus’ab Alyan decided to make an IED and use it to attack Israeli security force vehicles in Jerusalem. To that end he turned to Samir Abd Raboh, who had the know-how and experience on making IEDs. During October 2015, they acquired materials required for making the IED and a cell phone to serve as a remote detonator (Haaretz and Walla, March 28, 2016).

Hezbollah

51. In January 2016, the Israeli security forces exposed a five-man terrorist network in Tulkarm. It was headed by Muhammad Zaghlul, a Palestinian from Tulkarm handled by Hezbollah in Lebanon. He was recruited through social networks by Jawad Nasrallah, the son of Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah. After his recruitment, he was handled by a Hezbollah operative in Lebanon whose codename was Fadi. His handlers asked Zaghlul to recruit additional operatives to the network and collect intelligence on various targets.
before carrying out attacks. The operatives were preparing for a shooting attack, and had a submachine gun in their possession which they planned to use for the attack.\(^7\)

52. In August 2016, the Israeli security forces uncovered several squads consisting of residents of Judea and Samaria who had been recruited by Hezbollah handlers residing in Lebanon and the Gaza Strip. The operatives were recruited through Facebook pages with anti-Israeli contents. After their recruitment, they received e-mail addresses and encryption software. The operatives were instructed by their handlers to carry out shooting and suicide attacks against Israeli targets. They were also required to assist in recruiting additional operatives.

### Terrorist Attacks from the Gaza Strip

#### Overview

53. The year 2016 has been the calmest year along the border between Israel and the Gaza Strip since Israel's disengagement (2005) and Hamas' takeover of the Gaza Strip (2007). The calm in 2016 continued the quiet prevailing between Israel and Hamas since the end of Operation Protective Edge. In 2015 and 2016 there was of a significant decrease in the scope of rocket fire at Israel (15 hits in 2016) and a decrease in border incidents. The relative calm was exploited by Hamas and the other terrorist organizations for activity to restore their military capabilities in preparation for the next confrontation with Israel.\(^8\)

54. Following is a graph of the annual distribution of rocket hits in Israeli territory (2006 – January 2017), showing the significant decrease in rocket fire targeting Israel in 2015-2016.

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\(^7\) For additional information, see the ITIC’s Information Bulletin from January 24, 2016: “Hezbollah Handled a Palestinian Squad in Tulkarm, Which Planned Terrorist Attacks.”

\(^8\) The current document does not deal with the military buildup of Hamas and the other terrorist organizations. Detailed information on this issue can be found in the ITIC’s Information Bulletin from September 14, 2016: “Two Years after Operation Protective Edge: Security along the Israeli-Gazan Border.”
The significant drop in the scope of rocket fire was a result of Hamas policy of restraint. Hamas enforced its policy on rogue terrorist organizations more strictly than after previous IDF operations (mainly on Salafist-jihadi organizations occasionally trying to challenge Hamas). The policy stems from a number of considerations. The most important are Israel's increased deterrence after Operation Protective Edge and Hamas’ desire to buy time to restore its military capabilities without significant interruption from Israel. Other considerations are Hamas’ desire to rebuild the civilian infrastructures (still secondary to the military buildup), the deterioration of Hamas’s relations with Egypt (which Hamas is trying to improve), and the deterioration of the relations between Hamas and countries such as Iran (formerly a strategic ally) and Saudi Arabia.

**Rocket Fire into Israeli Territory in 2016**

In 2016, the significant decrease in the scope of rocket fire into Israeli territory, which started after Operation Protective Edge, continued. During the year, a total of 15 hits were identified in Israeli territory in eleven incidents. In several other incidents, rockets were launched but fell inside the Gaza Strip (and are not included in the statistics). During 2016, no Israelis were killed as a result of rocket fire, and no significant damage was caused.
Rocket hits in Israeli territory in 2016

*Note: The figures do not include rockets that were launched at Israel and fell in the Gaza Strip.

57. Most of the rockets launched at Israel in 2016 **were short-range and fell in open spaces or near communities in the western Negev**. Most of the attacks were carried out by rogue organizations, mainly Salafist-jihadi organizations which occasionally try to challenge Hamas, mainly for internal political reasons (for instance, following pressure exerted on them by Hamas). **The wave of popular terrorism in Judea and Samaria, which Hamas tried to fan, had no impact on the policy of Hamas rocket fire from the Gaza Strip and did not cause an increase in the scope of rocket fire.**

58. Following are prominent incidents of rocket fire against Israel:

a. **On March 11, 2016, a volley of four rockets was fired.** The hits were identified in the western Negev. In March 2016 (an unusual month), a total of five rocket hits were identified, about a third of the annual number of hits.
Remains of one of the four rockets fired at the western Negev (Sha'ar Hanegev Regional Council spokesman's unit, March 12, 2016).

b. In 2016, two rockets fell in the city of Sderot: On July 1, 2016, a rocket hit was identified in an after-school activity center. Several people were treated for shock and the building was damaged. On August 21, 2016, a rocket hit was identified between two residential buildings. There were no casualties. In both instances, a Salafist-jihadi organization claimed responsibility for the attack.

A rocket hit in the city of Sderot, after it was fired from the Gaza Strip. The rocket fell between two residential buildings. There were no casualties and no damage was reported (Israel Police spokesman's unit, August 21, 2016)
Border clashes

59. In 2016 (and 2015), there were several incidents along the border between Israel and the Gaza Strip, which targeted IDF forces operating near the border. They included small arms and mortar fire at the Israeli security forces. In one incident an IED was planted. Between August 6 and late September 2016, there was a series of shooting incidents from the northern Gaza Strip at IDF forces engaging in routine security activities. There were no casualties among the Israeli security forces.

60. The most serious shooting incident in the two years since Operation Protective Edge was mortar fire in May 2016. The incident occurred after an attack tunnel was exposed by the IDF. The tunnel depth was about 30 meters (about 33 yards). It crossed the border in the southern Gaza Strip and entered Israeli territory. IDF forces worked to trace the route of the tunnel and destroy it. During this activity, IDF heavy machinery and forces entered the Gaza Strip in the area close to the border. Hamas claimed Israel had violated Palestinian sovereignty and the lull agreement that ended Operation Protective Edge in 2014.

61. That led to several days of exchanges of fire between Hamas and the IDF, even though both sides worked to contain the incidents and avoid escalation. Hamas operatives fired mortar shells at the forces working to locate the tunnel. A total of 16 mortar shells were fired over a period of several days in at least 12 incidents. The military wings of Hamas and the PIJ took the (unusual) step of claiming responsibility. In response, Israeli aircraft attacked Hamas terrorist targets, and tanks fired at Hamas targets in the Sajaiya area in the northern Gaza Strip.
Attacking targets in the southern Gaza Strip. Left: Debris from of an attack in the Gaza neighborhood of Zeitoun (Facebook page of Shehab, May 4, 2016). Right: IDF attack in eastern Rafah; according to the Palestinians, an agricultural area was attacked (Facebook page of PALDF, May 5, 2015).

62. Other border incidents include:

a. On January 23, 2016, Palestinians fired light arms at an IDF patrol near the border security fence in northern Gaza Strip. There were no casualties.

b. On April 8, 2016, an IED was detonated near an IDF bulldozer in the northern Gaza Strip. The bulldozer was carrying out routine activity to open the route close to the security fence. There were no casualties. Palestinian media claimed that an IDF bulldozer had been hit by the explosion of an IED after it had penetrated the Zeitoun neighborhood, east of Gaza City.

c. On August 31, 2016, a Palestinian sniper shot at an IDF engaged in routine security activities close to the border security fence in Netiv Ha'asara. The military vehicle was damaged.

d. On September 4, 2016, Palestinians fired light arms fire at an IDF force engaged in security activity close to the border security fence in the northern Gaza Strip. The IDF fired at the Hamas outpost in response.

e. On September 6, 2016, Palestinian fired light arms at an IDF force on a routine patrol close to the border security fence in the area of Netiv Ha'asara in the northern Gaza Strip. According to Palestinian reports, the IDF fired artillery at two Hamas outposts and an observation outpost of the PIJ’s a-Quds Battalions.
f. On December 19, 2016, Palestinians shot at an IDF force securing heavy machinery work close to the border security fence in the southern Gaza Strip. There were no casualties. The IDF forces responded with artillery fire at a Hamas outpost.

**Riots near the Border Security Fence and Attempts to Cross the Fence into Israeli Territory**

63. In 2016, Gaza Strip residents continued holding riots and demonstrations near the border security fence. The riots began shortly after the ceasefire ending Operation Pillar of Defense, and have continued until today, albeit with relatively low intensity. Most of the riots take place on Fridays, after prayers in the mosques, with the participation of several dozen Palestinians (as opposed to several hundred in the past). In several incidents, rioters were wounded by IDF fire. Hamas allows the riots, but is strict in containing them and preventing them from spinning out of control.
64. In 2016, attempts by Palestinians to infiltrate from the Gaza Strip into Israeli territory continued. In most cases, they were unarmed innocent civilians who had no connection with terrorist activities. Infiltration into Israeli territory usually takes place because of financial or mental problems.