



July 7, 2013

Popular Committees Activists in Judea and Samaria Plan a New Wave of Popular Resistance Anti-Israel Activity Using "Creative New Tactics"¹



Abdallah Abu Rahma, senior popular committees leader in Judea and Samaria, interviewed by the Paltoday website, says "surprises" are planned for the Jewish settlements, the roadblocks and the security fence, especially for the settlement of Beit El (Abu Rahma interviewed by Al-Falastinia TV, January 13, 2013).

Salah al-Khawaja, senior popular committees figure, interviewed by the Voice of Palestine Radio, says the popular resistance activists are looking for creative ways to initiate a direct confrontation with the Israeli security forces (Picture from Al-Falastinia TV, July 4, 2013).

Overview

1. Statements made recently by prominent figures in the *popular committees against the fence and settlements* reflect the organization's intention for a new wave of **defiant anti-Israeli activities**. They are as part of the so-called *popular resistance*, which have recently become routine and are not extensively reported by the international media (For a short summary about the popular committees see Appendix 1). To that end they will exploit the anniversary of the anti-Israel legal opinion on the fence handed down by the **International Court of Justice in The Hague** on July 9,

¹ Update for the May 20, 2013 bulletin ["The Popular Resistance Committees and its built-in violence."](#)

2004 (See Appendix 2). They are planning, they said, **to use "creative ways" to initiate direct confrontations with the Israeli security forces.**

2. **The main points of the statements** were the following:

1) **Salah al-Khawaja**, senior activist in the popular committees and a prominent popular resistance activist in Judea and Samaria, was recently interviewed by the official Palestinian Authority (PA) radio station. He said that eight years had passed since the advisory opinion was handed down in The Hague, but apparently international organizations had done nothing to implement it and force Israel to stop its "daily aggression against the holy places and Palestinian territories." He said that for several weeks **activists had been working to organize new activities for the "side roads, dirt roads, roadblocks, established settlements and settlements under construction."** He said the objective of the activities was **to initiate direct confrontations with the so-called "forces of occupation" [i.e. the Israeli security forces] as a way to escalate the popular resistance in creative ways** (Voice of Palestine, July 3, 2013).

2) **Abdallah Abu Rahma**, prominent popular committees activist and a leading popular resistance activist in Judea and Samaria spoke about a campaign called "Country, be strong,"² which would be joined by all the popular committees in coordination with the youth movements. The objective of the campaign, he said, was "to resist the occupation in every way." **He said at the center of their activity was the Jewish settlement of Beit El, because it was a symbol of the settlements and because, he claimed, it was where decisions regarding land expropriation were made.** As to the nature of the activities, **he said that in the near future there would be various "special, surprising" activities throughout Judea and Samaria near the settlements, the roadblocks and the fence.** He said that **in view of events in Egypt and the Arab world in general, the Palestinians had to be united and carry out "a daring intifada against the occupation"** (Paltoday website, July 3, 2013).

3. In our assessment such remarks reflect the feeling among popular committees activists that the weekly demonstrations and riots against the security fence have become routine and do not attract attention in Judea and Samaria or beyond its borders (and cannot compete with the dramatic events unfolding in Egypt). **Therefore, they feel a need to blow new life into the popular resistance, and**

² The name of the song sung by the Palestinian contestant that won the Arab Idol singing contest.

to that end want to exploit the anti-Israeli advisory opinion handed down by the International Court of Justice in The Hague. They may want to exploit such a "success" to attack Israel in the international arena, as part of the delegitimization campaign currently being waged against Israel.

Appendix 1

The Popular Committees Against the Fence and Settlements

1. The so-called *popular resistance* is a main component of the policy used in **Judea and Samaria by the PA and the local popular committees**. It has been well integrated into the political, economic, propaganda and legal campaign being waged by the PA against Israel. It creates a continual source of tension monitored and controlled by the PA. It can be used to exert pressure on Israel to an extent and scope corresponding to developments in the peace process and perceived as legitimate by the international community.

2. To struggle against the security fence and the settlements, the Palestinians established about 30 *popular committees* (a term borrowed from the first intifada) as well as a Popular Struggle Coordination Committee based in Ramallah. The PA and Fatah also organized and institutionalized a public system to protest various issues, such as the prisoners. Popular committees activities are attended by students from the universities and colleges in Judea and Samaria, members of youth movements, Palestinian terrorist operatives (especially from Hamas, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine and Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine), NGO activists affiliated mainly with the Palestinian left (especially Mustafa Barghouti's National Initiative), foreign (especially Western) pro-Palestinian activists who are sent to Judea and Samaria for designated periods of time, and far leftist Israeli activists.

3. **Salah al-Khawaja is a popular committees activist in Ni'lin and a prominent popular resistance activist in Judea and Samaria**. He belongs to the National Initiative, a Palestinian leftist party belonging to the PLO and headed by Mustafa Barghouti (who plays an important role in fomenting the popular resistance and in the delegitimization campaign being waged against Israel). Al-Khawaja participates in anti-Israeli campaigns such as the BDS and the GMJ (Global March to Jerusalem) campaigns. He was a member of the GMJ coordinating committee in both 2012 and 2013.



Salah al-Khawaja (Nuqta, August 1, 2012)

4. **Abdallah Mahmoud Muhammad Abu Rahma** lives in the village of Bila'in. He heads the local popular committee and is considered one of the leaders of the popular resistance. Between 2009 and 2011 he was imprisoned in Israeli a number of times for involvement in violence against the Israeli security forces. During the past year he has extended his activity beyond the local protest in Bila'in.



Left: Abdallah Abu Rahma confronts an Israeli Border Policemen at one of the demonstrations in Bila'in against the security fence (Al-Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, February 10, 2012). Right: Abu Rahma heads a group of Palestinian activists blocking one of the main roads in near Ofra (north of Ramallah) in Judea (Ramallah Land forum, November 19, 2012).

Appendix 2

The International Court's Advisory Opinion on the Security Fence

1. On **December 8, 2003**, the UN General Assembly voted to request an advisory opinion from the International Court of Justice (ICJ) in The Hague regarding the legal consequences of the construction of a "wall" built by Israel, "the occupying power, in the occupied Palestinian territory." The court accepted written statements from various countries and also heard oral claims. Israel refused to recognize the authority of the court to rule on the issue, did not use its right to send a judge to the court and did not present oral claims (but rather sent written statements, most of which dealt with the authority of the court to rule on an internal Israeli issue). The United States was also extremely critical of the court and with 22 other countries submitted a written opinion that the fence was a political issue and not a legal one.

2. On **July 9, 2004**, the ICJ issued **an advisory opinion**. It noted Israel's statement that the "barrier" was only a temporary security measure. However, it also noted its concern that the route of the "wall" would create a situation on the ground leading to the de-facto annexation of territories and would influence the determination of the future Israeli-Palestinian borders. As to the legality of the "barrier," according to international legal and humanitarian standards, Israel's claim that the Fourth Geneva Convention did not pertain to Judea and Samaria was not relevant because Israel had declared it applied the Convention's humanitarian articles to the Palestinian territories. **Therefore, it was the ICJ's advisory opinion that the "wall" supported the settlement project and violated Article 49 of the Convention.**³ The ICJ also gave its opinion regarding the legality of the "wall," in light of international law and human rights, stating the "wall" violated various rights of the Palestinians which were anchored in conventions signed by Israel.⁴

3. **The ICJ ignored, almost completely, the security aspect of constructing the fence, whose main objective was initially to stop the suicide bombing attacks carried out against Israel in the second intifada.** It called on Israel to stop the construction, to dismantle those sections built on territories beyond the Green Line and to pay reparations to Palestinians who had been harmed by the construction of the fence. The advisory opinion had 14 votes in favor and one against, that of an American

³ Note: Article 49 refers to the protection of civilian persons in time of war.

⁴ <http://www.icj-cij.org/docket/files/131/1671.pdf>

judge. The EU adopted the advisory opinion, as did the Arab states and a number of human rights organizations.

4. **Palestinian organizations and activists** participating in the delegitimization campaign regard the advisory opinion as a political, propaganda and legal victory, and seek to force Israel to carry it out. **The government of Israel was severely critical of the advisory opinion and accused it of being one-sided.** It also stated it would continue constructing the fence according to the principle of self-defense. **In 2005, following instructions from the Israeli Supreme Court, the State's Attorney drafted a document setting down the reasons for its rejection of the ICJ advisory opinion.**