



September 29, 2014

Hamas-affiliated media report: the Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades has begun establishing a "popular army" for the next confrontation with Israel.



Announcement of Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades training camps: "The popular training camps – we are all the resistance"

Overview

1. The Hamas-affiliated media recently reported that the Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades was planning to establish what it called a "**popular army**." According to the reports, the Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades was **recruiting as many civilian volunteers as possible, regardless of age**. They will be given basic military training, especially how to fire various types of weapons. The objective is to train them to act as an auxiliary force for Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades operatives in a future confrontation with Israel.
2. To that end, the Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades posted an announcement in the Abdallah Azzam mosque in the Al-Sabra neighborhood of Gaza City, and apparently in other mosques as well. **It requested all Gazan civilians to train as part of a "popular army" and to register with Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades representatives** (Qudspress.com, September 25, 2014). The Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades intend to hold training camps for the "popular army" throughout the Gaza

Strip with the slogan "We all [fight for] the resistance." Rounds of basic training are supposed to be held in weekly sessions and will be open to volunteers throughout the year. According to **Abu Mujahad**, the Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades' training commander, civilian volunteers will be trained in the use of all types of weapons, from light arms to hand grenades. He claimed that thousands of young Gazans had already signed up in the mosques for training. He added that the "popular army" would have a designated role in a future confrontation with Israel (Paltimes.net, September 27, 2014).

3. The military training will be given by Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades operatives and volunteers will be trained in groups by age: first those **14 to 20** years of age, then older volunteers and finally **mature and elderly adults**. According to a report, **1,800 young men in the Jabaliya refugee camp have already signed up**. The first round of training began on September 27, 2014, and will continue until October 4, 2014. The training is currently being held in the Tareq bin Ziyad mosque in Al-Shejaiya (PALDF, September 29, 2014).

4. According to the Facebook page of **Musa Abu Marzouq**, a member of Hamas' political bureau, he claimed that the so-called "rumors" that Hamas was planning to establish a "popular army" were untrue. However, he added that "Hamas is maneuvering between the approach that says we are part of this society and such a decision needs a national consensus; the fact that says we [live] in the society of resistance, we need a culture, concept and training for resistance to guard our people and protect our homeland..." (Facebook page of Musa Abu Marzouq, September 29, 2014).

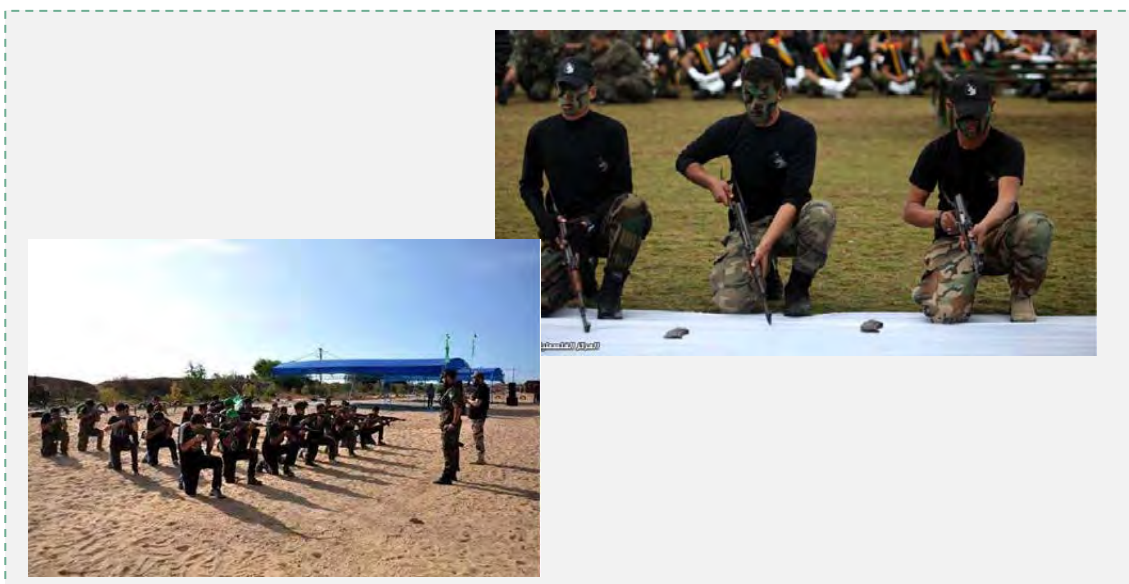
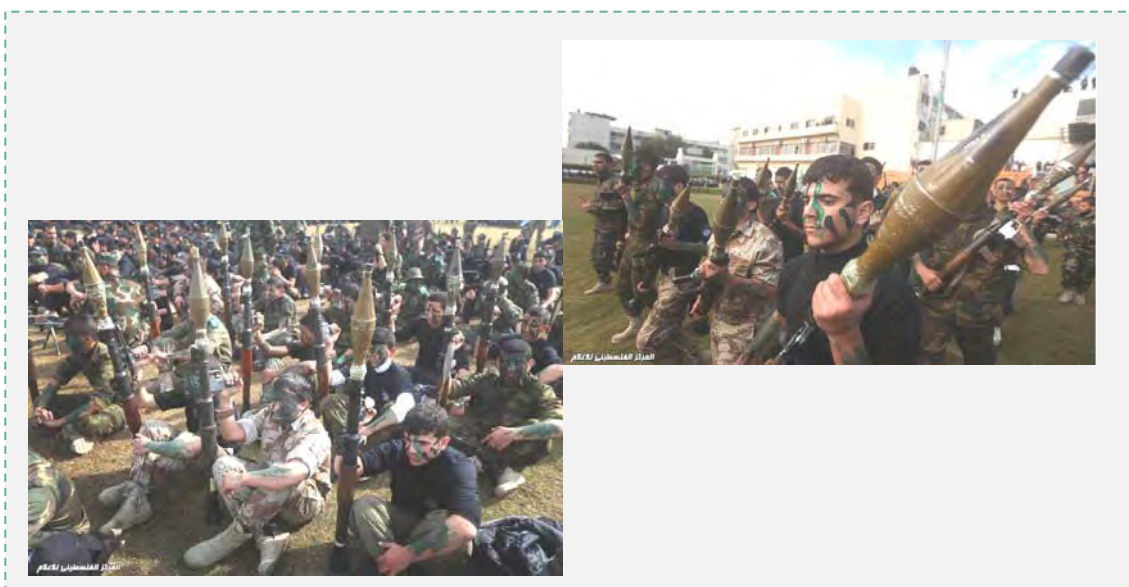
5. It is unclear at this point what the scope of enlistment in the "popular army" has been. Apparently there are signs on the ground (See pictures below), even locally, that it is not a matter of rumor (as claimed by Musa Abu Marzouq). In ITIC assessment, civilians are being trained for the "popular army" to preserve public support for Hamas in the Gaza Strip and to maintain solidarity with the Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades, as manifested during and after Operation Protective Edge.

6. If in fact thousands of Gazans enlist in the "popular army" and are trained to participate in future conflicts with Israel, it may become more difficult to distinguish between military-terrorist operatives and uninvolved civilians, including adolescents and the elderly. Among those Hamas wants to enlist are **adolescents under 18 and mature and elderly adults**. In addition, an examination of the names of Gazan casualties of Operation Protective Edge indicates the

inclusion of 15 and 17 year-olds in the ranks of Hamas and the other terrorist organizations, although the extent of their inclusion is unknown.¹

Pictures from the First Training Camp

7. On September 29, 2014, the Hamas forum PALDF posted pictures from the first training camp, currently in full swing. Most of the uniformed participants in the pictures are very young. Their instructors are military-terrorist operatives. They are being trained to use a variety of weapons, including RPG launchers, assault rifles, etc.



¹ For further information see the September 17, 2014 bulletin ["The War of Casualties: During Operation Protective Edge children and teenagers were exploited by terrorists as auxiliaries and operatives. The extent of the phenomenon is still unclear."](#)

