



September 7, 2015

Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) twice managed to secure the release of its administrative detainees, accomplished through long hunger strikes accompanied by threats of undermining the lull in the Gaza Strip. They employed a policy of brinkmanship that has potential for future deterioration.



Picture disseminated by the Jerusalem Brigades, the PIJ's military-terrorist wing, of administrative detainee Muhammad Allan, a PIJ terrorist operative who went on a long hunger strike. The Arabic reads, "The jihad fighter prisoner Muhammad Allan, on a hunger strike since June 6, 2015" (Facebook page of the Muhjat al-Quds Foundation in the Gaza Strip, August 19, 2015).

Overview

1. During the past few months two PIJ terrorist operatives from Samaria, **Muhammad Allan** and **Khader Adnan**, went on long hunger strikes in order to force Israel to release them from administrative detention. Their overall objective was to pressure Israel into abandoning the use of administrative detentions, an important tool in its war on terrorism.
2. In **two instances the PIJ threatened to end the lull in the Gaza Strip**, by implication rocket fire, if the hunger-striking administrative detainees died. **In both instances Israel ended the detention when the hunger strikes reached a critical point** and there was clearly a genuine danger to the lives of the detainees. **In both instances the end of the administrative detention was perceived by the PIJ as a "victory,"** and the threats were considered as having forced Israel to the yield to the

demands of the hunger strikers. The "victory" also boosted the PIJ's prestige in the Palestinian arena.

3. In ITIC assessment the PIJ has an interest in continuing the lull in the Gaza Strip without challenging Hamas policy. However, since the PIJ is more belligerent than Hamas, and does not share the considerations of governance which restrain Hamas, **its willingness to maintain the lull less rigid than that of Hamas**. The use of the lull as a bargaining chip to promote its interests is, in ITIC assessment, **an example of PIJ brinkmanship, which has a potential for future deterioration**.

The Hunger Strike of Muhammad Allan

4. **Muhammad Allan** was a **PIJ** administrative detainee from the Nablus area. He demanded to be released and held a 65-day hunger strike. On August 14, 2015, after 59 days, he lost consciousness, putting him in a life-threatening situation. Following the decline of his condition, and concern that continuing the hunger strike could cause irreversible brain damage, the Israeli Supreme Court temporarily suspended his administrative detention. **Following the Supreme Court ruling he ended the strike and is apparently recovering**.

5. On **August 14, 2015**, when his condition deteriorated, the Jerusalem Brigades (the PIJ's military-terrorist wing) issued an announcement threatening Israel. It said that the Jerusalem Brigades [in the Gaza Strip] hereby **announced that if administrative detainee Muhammad Allan died they would respond with force and end their commitment to the lull** (Jerusalem Brigades website, August 14, 2015).



The Jerusalem Brigades announcement threatening Israel it would end the lull in the Gaza Strip (Jerusalem Brigades website, August 14, 2015).

6. Following the deterioration of Muhammad Adnan's health and the PIJ's threats, **the Israel Air Force deployed Iron Dome aerial defense systems in Ashdod and Beersheba, two large cities in southern Israel.** The deployment was the result of a concern that the PIJ would carry out its threats and fire rockets into Israeli territory. However, the tension in Israel's south declined a few days later with the temporary suspension of the administrative detention and the end of Adnan's hunger strike.

7. **Ramadan Abdullah Shallah**, the PIJ secretary general, claimed in retrospect that if **Muhammad Allan or Khader Adnan had died, the "PIJ would have responded."** He claimed "the enemy saw the steps [we were taking] and understood we were serious." He claimed **the lull was not sacred, and "if the enemy plays with the lives of the Palestinian people, we will violate the lull."** He added that the **Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades** [Hamas' military-terrorist wing] **had no objection to [the PIJ's] firing rockets.** However, he claimed, **the Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades asked to be informed beforehand so they could take precautions** [against an Israeli response]. Ramadan Shallah also claimed the **PIJ regarded the lull agreement** [signed] **in Cairo as a temporary step meant to relieve the suffering of the Palestinian people.** He claimed the PIJ did not "have a problem" about discussing how to establish the lull, but, he said, **"the lull is not sacred"** (Almayadeen, August 28, 2015).



Ramadan Shallah, PIJ secretary general, claims that if one of the hunger strikers had died, the PIJ would have violated the lull and responded by firing rockets fire Israel (Lebanese TV channel Al-Mayadeen, posted on YouTube, August 28, 2015).

8. The PIJ interpreted the affair as a **"victory" forcing Israel to make concessions because of the threat of rocket fire**. The PIJ represented it as a "victory" for Muhammad Allan, the "will of the Palestinians," and the "path of resistance" [i.e., the path of terrorism).

The Hunger Strike of Khader Adnan

9. The affair of Muhammad Allan was the second time in two months **the PIJ tried to impose its will on Israel regarding the release of its administrative detainees**. On June 22, 2015, the Palestinian media reported that the condition of administrative detainee **Khader Adnan** had deteriorated. Khader Adnan was a PIJ terrorist operative from the Jenin region who had been on a hunger strike for approximately fifty days. The PIJ said in a statement that Israel was fully responsible for his life. PIJ spokesmen threatened that if Khader Adnan died, the PIJ would end the lull in the Gaza Strip:

1) At a rally in the Gaza Strip, **Khaled al-Batash**, a senior PIJ figure in the Gaza Strip, claimed that if Khader Adnan died in an Israeli jail the PIJ would violate the lull. In that case, the Israeli enemy would be forced [to deal] with the organization's response (Samaa, June 26, 2015).

2) **Ahmed al-Awri**, PIJ spokesman in Judea and Samaria, claimed that **if Khader Adnan died, the lull in the Gaza Strip would be cancelled**. He called the death of Adnan "a red line" that could not be crossed without a response (Ma'an News Agency, June 22, 2015).

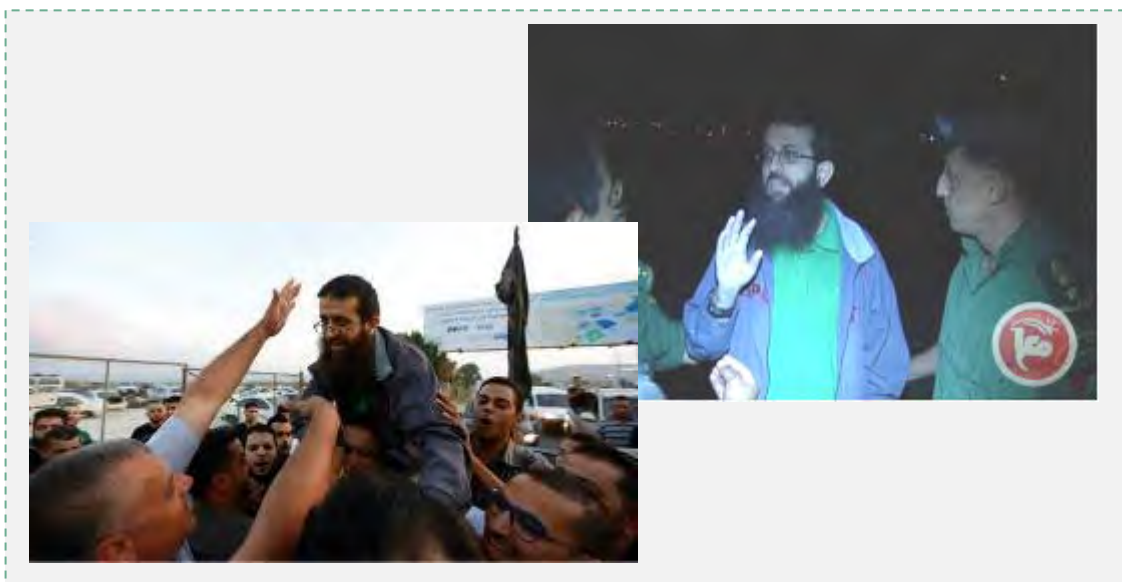
3) After the affair of Muhammad Allan, **Ramadan Abdullah Shallah**, PIJ secretary general, claimed that **"when the life of Khader Adnan was in danger, the Jerusalem Brigades raised the level of alert."** He added that **if Adnan or Allan had died, the PIJ would have responded** (Almayadeen, August 28, 2015).

10. **In the end, an arrangement was reached with Israel that led to the release of Khader Adnan after a 56-day hunger strike.** His lawyer and wife reported that according to the arrangement he would end his hunger strike and be released on July 12, 2015. PIJ-affiliated sources described the arrangement as a "victory" for the prisoner and a "surrender" for Israel. PIJ leader Ramadan Shallah spoke on the phone with the family and praised the "victory" (Facebook page of QudsN, June 28, 2015). Palestinians in the Gaza Strip, Judea and Samaria celebrated his release.



Left: Relatives of Palestinian prisoners at their weekly rally in front of Red Cross headquarters in the Gaza Strip note the "victory" of Khader Adnan (Paltoday, June 29, 2015). Right: Candy in a box bearing the picture of Khader Adnan (Facebook page of PALDF, June 29, 2015).

11. **On July 12, 2015, Israel released Khader Adnan.** Upon release he stated his medical condition was good. He claimed **his release exposed Israel's weakness and fragility.** He called for his hunger strike to be used to leverage the struggle of the Palestinian people in general and the Palestinian prisoners in particular (Ma'an News Agency, July 14, 2015).



Left: Khader Adnan received by local residents in Arabeh, his home village, south of Jenin (Facebook page of PALDF, July 12, 2015). Right: Khader Adnan at a reception held by Palestinian coordination and liaison figures upon his release by Israel (Ma'an News Agency, July 12, 2015).

12. **Khader Adnan immediately defied Israel.** The day after his release he was detained by the Israel Police Force when he went to the Temple Mount to pray, although the release arrangement forbade him from entering Jerusalem. In addition, he paid a number of visits in east Jerusalem, including to **Samer al-Issawi, a Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP) operative**, who also conducted a long hunger strike, leading to his early release.¹

The "Irish Method" of Hunger Strikes vs. the "Palestinian Method:" An Article by Nasser Laham, Ma'an News Agency Editor-in-Chief

13. After what was perceived the Palestinians as the "success" of Muhammad Allah's hunger strike, **Nasser Laham**, editor-in-chief of the popular Palestinian news agency Ma'an wrote an article entitled "The Palestinians use the 'Irish method' against the Israeli occupation" (August 20, 2015). The article examines **the lessons to be learned by the hunger strikes of Palestinian prisoners and detainees.**

¹ **Samer al-Issawi**, 35, DFLP operative. Convicted in 2000 of involvement in shooting attacks against Israelis and sentenced to 30 years in prison. He was released in the Gilad Shalit prisoner exchange deal. A year after his release he was detained and imprisoned for violating the terms of his release. In August 2012, a month after he was imprisoned again, he began a hunger strike to protest the conditions of his imprisonment. His hunger strike lasted for eight months and he was hospitalized. His hunger strike made him a symbol for the Palestinians and his strike caused protests in Judea and Samaria. In Israel concerns were raised that his death would ignite a wave of rioting. In December 2013 an arrangement was reached whereby he would be released in return for ending his hunger strike. In June 2015 he was detained by the IDF in Issawiya because according to the military prosecution, since his release he had returned to "full terrorist activity."



Nasser Laham (Facebook page of Nasser Laham, September 3, 2015)

14. The main points of the article were the following:

- 1) The hunger strikes of the [so-called] political prisoners² take two forms: **one is the "Irish method,"** in which an individual declares a hunger strike and persists until he dies, at which point another prisoner begins a hunger strike. **The other is the "Palestinian method,"** in which all the prisoners collectively declare a hunger strike and persist until their demands, or some of them, are met.
- 2) In recent years there have been several individual Palestinians who used the "Irish method:" [The names of **Samer al-Issawi**, **Khader Adnan** and **Muhammad Allan** a one DFLP and two PIJ operatives noted above, were mentioned as using the "Irish method."] It would now seem that the "Irish method" is becoming more prevalent among the Palestinian prisoners, despite its difficulties and the dangers it entails. That is because of the difficult conditions in which the prisoners live and the new Knesset [Israeli parliament] laws which have "made [hunger strikes] necessary, and not a matter of choice."
- 3) In the past two years the PIJ, the DFLP and the PFLP have raised the level of the struggle to unprecedented heights. Many observers were skeptical about the use of individual hunger strikes (the "Irish method") and called for adherence to "the path of collective struggle." However, a series of prisoners, among them Samer al-Issawi, Khader Adnan and Muhammad Allan, "convinced Palestinian society that **their path was effective.**"

² Nasser Laham, and the Palestinians in general, customarily represent Palestinians terrorist operatives in prison or held in administrative detention as "political prisoners."

4) Various other Palestinian sectors (students, the security forces, women's organizations, workers, etc.) should "**look for other more rapid and more successful ways**" to struggle against Israel. That would "**cause a crisis for the occupation,**" as in South Africa in the 1980s.

15. **Ma'an** is a Bethlehem-based Palestinian news agency founded in 2005, and is **one of the Palestinians' most popular media outlets**. It has correspondents stationed throughout Judea, Samaria and the Gaza Strip. Ma'an's editor-in-chief is **Nasser Laham**, who was born in Bethlehem's Dehaishe refugee camp. He has a BA in psychology from Bethlehem University, an MA in journalism and communications from The Hague University and a PhD in psychology. He speaks Arabic, English and Hebrew, is close to senior PA figures, and has interviewed Mahmoud Abbas and accompanied him abroad.

16. On September 1, 2015, recently-released PIJ operative **Khader Adnan** was a guest at the Ma'an offices in Bethlehem. He was received by Nasser Laham, who praised Adnan's "firm stance" and struggle while in jail. Adnan thanked him for the media support he had received from Ma'an (Ma'an News Agency, September 1, 2015).



Nasser Laham (right), Ma'an's the editor-in-chief, and Muhammad Faraj (right) manager of the Ma'an satellite TV channel. They hosted senior PIJ operative Khader Adnan (center) in their offices in Bethlehem (Ma'an News Agency, September 1, 2015).

17. **Nasser Laham's article may indicate the beginning of learning lessons from the recent hunger strikes held by the PIJ administrative detainees.** The main lesson is the use of what is referred to as the "Irish method," that is, **focusing on the individual hunger strikes of carefully chosen prisoners or administrative detainees.** If the method is adopted, in all probability it will be backed up by **violence in Judea and Samaria and/or threats of violent reprisals from the terrorist organizations in the Gaza Strip, with the objective of forcing Israel to meet the demands of the hunger strikers.**