



News of Terrorism and the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict

(December 16 – 22, 2015)



Palestinian reactions of mourning to the killing of terrorist Samir Kuntar, attributed by Hezbollah to Israel. Left: A mourning tent for Samir Kuntar erected by the prisoners' committee of the Palestinian national and Islamic forces in the Gaza Strip. The banner and signs note the "struggle for the sake of Palestine" (Paltoday, December 21, 2015). Right: Palestinian leftists hold a march in Nablus (Facebook page of QudsN, December 21, 2015).

Overview

- This past week the current Palestinian terrorist campaign continued, primarily with stabbing and vehicular attacks in Judea, Samaria and Israel. There were two prominent attacks in Israel, one in the city of Ra'anana (carried out by a Palestinian present in Israel illegally) and the other in the city of Modi'in (carried out by a Palestinian construction worker who attacked his foreman with a hammer).
- Another rocket was fired from the Gaza Strip targeting the western Negev. It fell inside the Gaza Strip. A terrorist network called the Al-Saberin movement, affiliated with Iran and Hezbollah, claimed responsibility. An IED was detonated near the border security fence attacking an IDF patrol and a search revealed a number of powerful unexploded IEDs.
- Samir Kuntar, a notorious terrorist, was killed in an aerial attack near Damascus. Kuntar was a Lebanese Druze who headed a terrorist network in the northern Golan Heights. Hassan Nasrallah, the leader of Hezbollah, which had obtained Kuntar's release from an Israeli jail in an exchange deal, accused Israel of responsibility for Kuntar's death. **He promised Hezbollah would avenge him when, where and how it chose.**

Judea, Samaria and Jerusalem

Terrorist Attacks and Attempted Attacks

■ **December 20, 2015 – attempted stabbing attack:** A Palestinian woman went to an IDF security force checkpoint in **Hebron** and tried to stab a soldier. She was shot and wounded. She was **Madeleine Taleb Hareizat**, 22, from the village of Yatta, south of Hebron (Wafa News Agency, December 20, 2015).

■ **December 19, 2015 – stabbing attack**

- A Palestinian terrorist stabbed four passersby on a street in **Ra'anana**, a city in central Israel. He then escaped to a nearby street where he tried to enter a house but was attacked by the dog. He fled to the yard where he was apprehended by the Israeli security forces.
- The Palestinian media reported the terrorist was **Mahmoud Feisal Mahmoud Basharat**, 20, from the village of Tammun (north of Nablus). He was one of five children, a school dropout who **worked in Israeli illegally** (Facebook page of Tammun First, December 19, 2015).

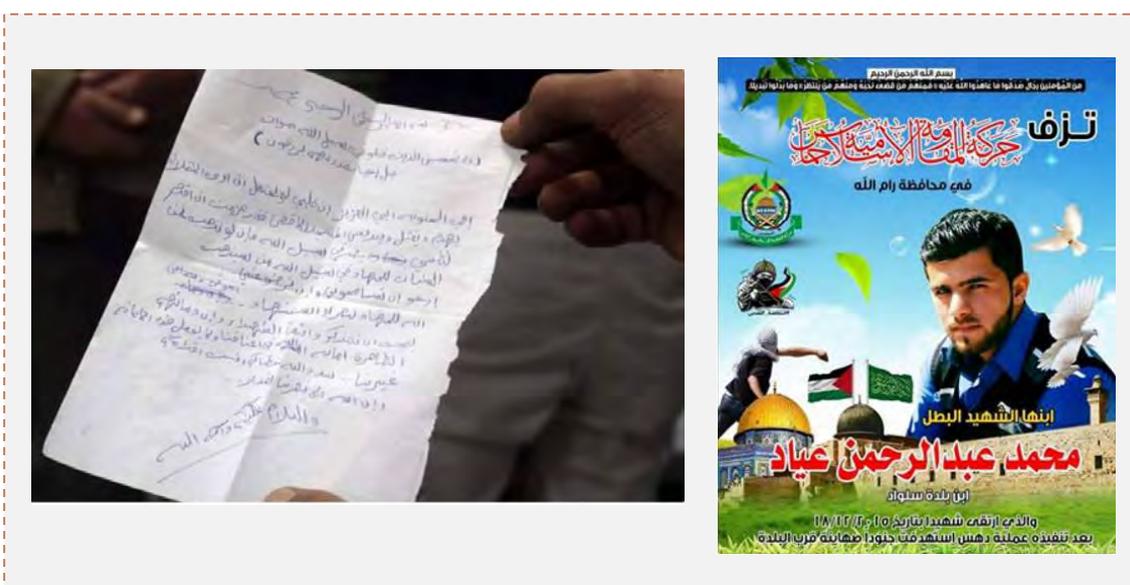


Mahmoud Feisal Mahmoud Basharat (Facebook page of Tammun First, December 19, 2015)

■ **The evening of December 19, 2015 – shooting attack:** Palestinians shot at an IDF guard post near the Qalandia refugee camp (near Ramallah). There were no casualties; the post was damaged. An IDF force arriving on the scene was also shot at. There were no casualties. There were five bullet holes in the IDF jeep.

■ **December 18, 2015 – attempted vehicular attack**

- A Palestinian tried to run over Israeli security forces during a riot in the village of Silwad (east of Ramallah). He was shot and killed.
- The Palestinian media reported he was **Muhammad Abd al-Rahman Ahmed Iyad**, 21, from the village of Silwad. He was a friend of **Anas Hamad**, who carried out a vehicular attack at the same location on December 4, 2015, and was shot and killed by IDF forces (Facebook page of PALDF, December 18, 2015). Muhammad Iyad returned to his village from the United States a few days before the attack to marry his fiancée. **His mother said he told her he wanted to become a shaheed**. Relatives distributed candy to people who came to the mourning tent to offer their condolences (YouTube, December 19, 2015).
- Muhammad Iyad left a will in which he stated **he had decided to sacrifice himself because he could not bear the "occupation"** (Felesteen, December 20, 2015). Hamas issued a death notice for him (Facebook page of PALDF, December 18, 2015).



Left: The will left by Palestinian terrorist Muhammad Iyad (Al-Watan TV, Ramallah, December 18, 2015). Right: The death notice issued by Hamas for Muhammad Iyad (Facebook page of PALDF, December 18, 2015).

■ **December 18, 2015 – attempted vehicular attack:** A Palestinian terrorist attempted to carry out a vehicular attack at the **Qalandia crossing**. He drove a car with Palestinian license plates from the direction of Qalandia to the roadblock, bypassing the line of waiting cars. He raced towards the police and soldiers, attempting to run them over, but drove into a concrete post. He got out of the car and ran, and when he did not heed calls to halt he was shot and wounded. He was **Jalal**

Shuman, 32, from Khirbat Abu Falah, northeast of Ramallah (Kinan, December 18, 2015).

■ **December 17, 2015 – attempted stabbing attack**

- During a routine IDF examination of Palestinian vehicles near the **village of Huwwara** (Nablus region), a Palestinian terrorist approached a soldier, holding a knife. He was shot and killed.
- He was **Abdallah Hussein Nasasra**, 15, from Bayt Furik (east of Nablus). On October 13, 2015, he posted a picture of a masked Palestinian throwing stones on his Facebook page. He wrote, "The dream of honor is not far off, either you live as a hero or you die as a shaheed."
- Hamas issued a death notice for him. The Fatah movement in the Nablus district also issued a death notice for him (Facebook pages of the Islamic Bloc at Al-Najah University, Nablus; Bayt Furik al-Yawm; and Hamas in Nablus, December 17, 2015).



Left: Death notice issued by Hamas for Abdallah Nasasra (Facebook page of the Islamic Bloc at Al-Najah University, December 17, 2015). Center: The death notice issued by the Fatah movement in the Nablus district (Facebook page of Bayt Furik al-Yawm, December 17, 2015).

Right: The picture Abdallah Nasasra posted to his Facebook page. The Arabic reads, "The dream of honor is not far off, either you live as a hero or you die as a shaheed" (Facebook page of the Islamic Movement in Nablus, December 17, 2015).

- **December 16, 2015 – attempted vehicular attack:** During extensive detentions carried out by the Israeli security forces in the **Qalandia refugee camp**, two terrorists who tried to carry out a vehicular attack were shot and killed. Three soldiers were (apparently) wounded by friendly fire.

- The Palestinians killed were:
 - ✓ **Ahmed Hassan Jahajha**, 23, from the Qalandia refugee camp. According to relatives he worked as a photographer for a wedding studio and as a photojournalist. He was in his second year of studying communications at the Modern Academic College in Ramallah. On his Facebook page he posted pictures from events that occurred in the Qalandia refugee camp (riots, funerals, rallies), as well as calls for violence and struggle.
 - ✓ Hikmat Farouq Hamdan al-Sarafandi, 29, father of three from Al-Bireh.
- Hamas issued death notices for the two terrorists. Ismail Haniya, deputy head of Hamas' political bureau, called the father of Hikmat al-Sarafandi to congratulate him on the attempted attack (Facebook page of Hamas in Nablus, December 16, 2015; Al-Arabi, December 19, 2015; Al-Quds, December 16, 2015; Facebook page of the Modern Academic College in Ramallah, December 16, 2015; Facebook page of Ahmed Jahajha; Resala.net, December 16, 2015).



Left: The death notice issued by Hamas for Hikmat al-Sarafandi (right) and Mahmoud Alian (left, killed during a riot near Beit El on November 11, 2015) (Facebook page of Hamas in Nablus, December 16, 2015). Right: The death notice issued by Fatah's Shabiba movement in the Modern Academic College in Ramallah for the death of Hikmat al-Sarafandi next to the death notice of Mahmoud Alian, both students at the college (Facebook page of the Modern Academic College, Ramallah, December 16, 2015).

- **December 15, 2015 – blunt instrument attack:** A Palestinian construction worker attacked his foreman and another Palestinian worker with a hammer at a construction site in the city of **Modi'in**. Both were seriously injured. Other workers overcame the

attacker. After an initial investigation it became apparent the incident was a terrorist attack. The attacker, a resident of Bayt Sira, had an Israeli work permit.

Riots, Clashes and Popular Terrorism

■ In the meantime demonstrations, protest marches, riots, and the throwing of stones, Molotov cocktails and pipe bombs continue in Judea, Samaria and Jerusalem. Some of the more prominent incidents were the following:

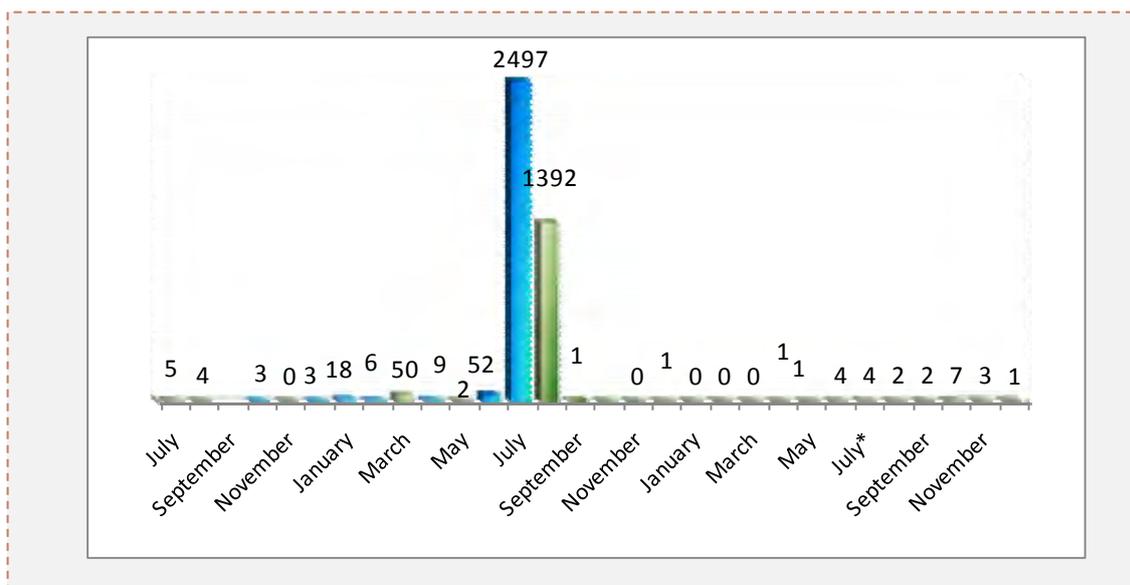
- **December 21, 2015** – Palestinians threw stones at a bus on the road between the Israeli community of **Adam** and the Palestinian village of **Hizma** (northeast of Jerusalem). A pregnant woman was treated for shock (Facebook page of Red Alert, December 22, 2015).
- **December 21, 2015** – During an Israeli security force operation in the **Dheisheh refugee camp** a Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) operative was detained. He was one of the ringleaders of the riots held in the camp. During the IDF operation a number of IEDs were thrown at the soldiers. There were no casualties (Facebook page of Red Alert, December 21, 2015).
- **December 21, 2015** – A young Palestinian woman aroused the suspicions of Israeli police in the **Jewish Quarter of the Old City of Jerusalem**. A knife was found hidden in her bag. She was detained and taken for questioning (Facebook page of Red Alert, December 21, 2015).
- **December 21, 2015** – An IDF force detained a Palestinian woman at a **junction in the Hebron region** after she took out a knife during a routine security check (Facebook page of Red Alert, December 21, 2015).
- **December 20, 2015** – Palestinians shot at an IDF guard post at a **junction in the Hebron region**. There were no casualties. A number of bullet holes were found in the post (Facebook page of Red Alert, December 20, 2015).
- **December 18, 2015** – Two IDF soldiers were injured during a riot in **the region of Anata, near Jerusalem**. The Palestinians reported a young man had been seriously injured in a riot near **Ramallah**. Another young Palestinian was wounded in a riot in **Halhul**, near Hebron (Facebook page of Red Alert, December 18, 2015).

Israel's South

Rocket Fire Attacking Israel

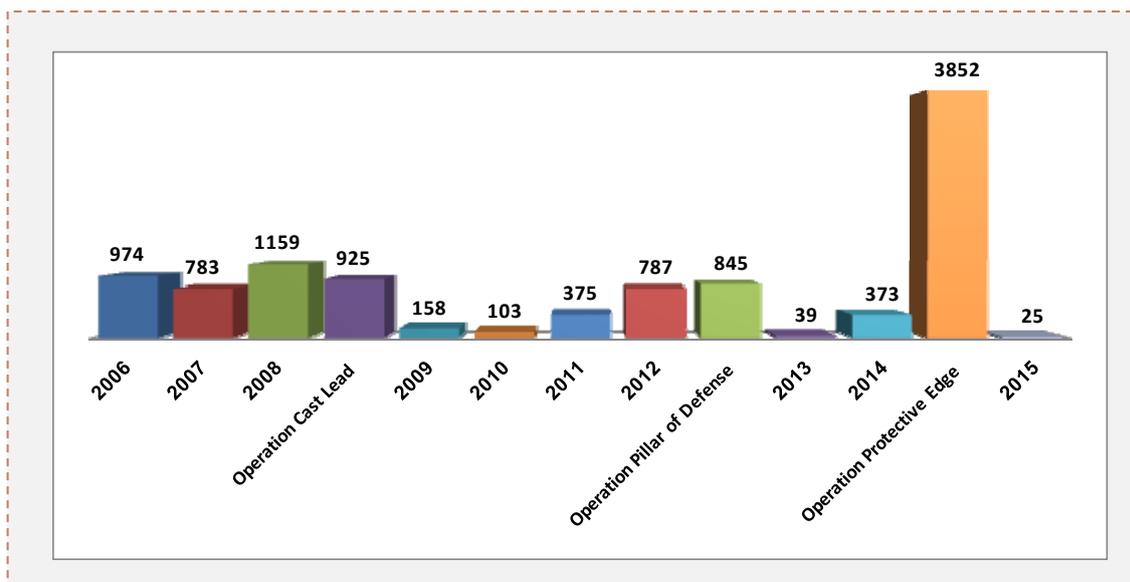
- On December 17, 2015, Palestinians fired a rocket at Israeli territory. It fell inside the Gaza Strip near the border security fence in the northern Gaza Strip.

Monthly Distribution of Rocket Fire (2014 – 2015)¹



*The data include the three rockets launched by ISIS's Sinai Province from the Sinai Peninsula in July by ISIS's Sinai Province.

Annual Distribution of Rocket Fire in Israel's South²



¹ As of December 22, 2015. The statistics do not include mortar shell fire or rockets which misfired and fell inside the Gaza Strip.

² The statistics do not include mortar shell fire or rockets which misfired and fell inside the Gaza Strip.

*Three of the rockets that hit Israeli territory in 2015 were launched in July by ISIS's Sinai Province.

IEDs along the Israel-Gaza Strip Border

- On December 16, 2015, Palestinians attacked an IDF patrol with an IED. The attack took place near the border security fence in the southern Gaza Strip. A search of the area revealed several unexploded, powerful IEDs. They were attached to a remote control device and could be detonated by cell phone. There were no casualties. It was the first time since Operation Protective Edge that a large-scale attack against IDF forces near the border security fence had been prevented. An IDF force responded with mortar fire at Khan Yunis. Israelis living near the border were asked to be on their guard (Ynet, December 16, 2015).
- A terrorist network called the Al-Saberin movement, affiliated with Iran and Hezbollah, claimed responsibility for detonating the IED. It was reportedly part of the "Jerusalem intifada" and a message for Israel because of its threats to the Gaza Strip (Website of the al-Saberin movement, December 18, 2015). The Al-Saberin movement is a terrorist network which began operating in the Gaza Strip more than a year ago. It is apparently affiliated with Hezbollah and Iran, which also apparently funds its operations in the Gaza Strip (Onlinejihadexposed.com, October 10, 2015).



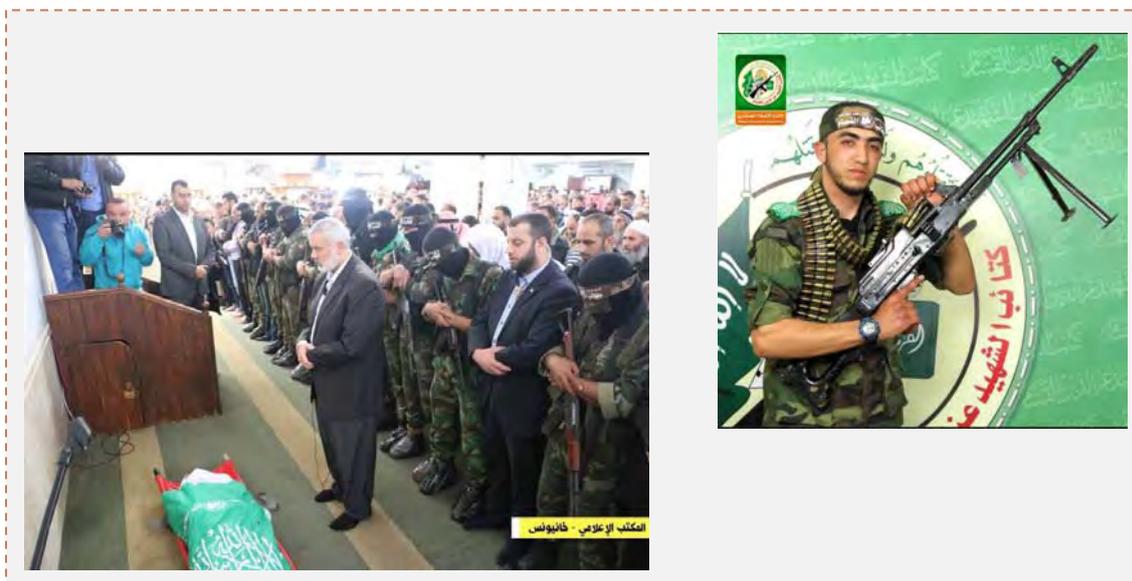
Claim of responsibility issued by the Al-Saberin movement (Website of the Al-Saberin movement, December 18, 2015)

Rioting near the Israel-Gaza Border

- Gazans continue rioting near the border security fence in solidarity with the Palestinian terrorist campaign in Judea, Samaria and Jerusalem, although there has been a significant decline in the number of rioters. Several Gazans were reportedly

injured. During a riot at the Erez crossing on December 16, 2015, **Palestinians threw pipe bombs at IDF forces**. The bombs exploded inside the Gaza Strip and there were no casualties.

■ On December 18, 2015, Hamas' military-terrorist wing announced the death of its operative **Mahmoud Muhammad al-Agha**, 24. He was killed by IDF fire during a riot east of Khan Yunis. His brother was killed during Operation Protective Edge (Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades website, December 18, 2015). **Ismail Haniya**, deputy head of Hamas' political bureau, said the American Secretary of State and other leaders had failed in their attempts to stop the intifada. He called on all Palestinians, Arabs and Muslims to support every aspect of the intifada (Safa News Agency, December 19, 2015).



Left: Ismail Haniya attends Mahmoud Muhammad al-Agha's funeral (Facebook page of PALDF, December 19, 2015). Right: Mahmoud Muhammad al-Agha, from Khan Yunis (Facebook page of the Shaheed Dr. Abdullah Azzam Mosque in Khan Yunis, December 20, 2015).

The Rafah Crossing

■ Despite intensive activities, a permanent arrangement to open the Rafah crossing has not yet been found. **Khaled al-Batash**, senior **Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) figure**, claimed Hamas, Fatah and the Palestinian national consensus government were responsible for the crossing's continuing closure (Samaa, date, 2015). **Yahya Musa**, senior **Hamas figure**, claimed Hamas was prepared to accept any initiative to end the crisis of the Rafah crossing, on condition it was for the good of the Palestinian people (Quds.net, December 16, 2015).

Justifying the "Jerusalem Intifada"

- **Ismail Haniya**, speaking at an Al-Quds Institution conference in the Gaza Strip, claimed geographical distance from Jerusalem did not prevent participation in the "Jerusalem intifada." He claimed Palestinians were now witness to the activities of the younger generation of Palestinians, who were rewriting history and restoring the honor of the Palestinian people.
- Haniya said the intifada was only beginning and called for its spirit to be strengthened and for an increase in the number of its participants and sites. He also called for the strengthening of national unity and greater collaboration with the international community (Al-Aqsa TV, December 18, 2015).
- In an interview **Mahmoud al-Zahar, a member of Hamas' political bureau**, claimed **the current events in Judea and Samaria were an intifada and not a popular awakening, as stated by Fatah**. He claimed no one had foreseen the beginning and therefore no one could know when and how it would end. He claimed **the intifada could develop far beyond throwing stones and stabbing and vehicular attacks** (Dunia al-Watan, December 17, 2015).

Hamas Delegation Visits Turkey

- **Khaled Mashaal**, head of Hamas' political bureau, **led a Hamas delegation to Turkey, where he met with Turkish President Erdogan**, the prime minister and other senior government figures. According to one report, **the meeting was held to inform Khaled Mashaal of Turkey's conditions for renewing relations with Israel**, including "lifting the siege" of the Gaza Strip (Daily Sabah, December 19, 2015). Senior Hamas figure **Mahmoud al-Zahar** claimed Hamas was waiting for Turkey's official position on normalizing relations with Israel and on its commitment to limit Hamas activities in Turkey (Radio Sawa, December 17, 2015).
- According to senior Hamas figure **Ahmed Yussuf**, the meetings were intended to establish Hamas as a "strategic ally" of Turkey as part of the Turkish agreement with Israel. He claimed Turkey had updated Hamas on developments in Turkey's relations with Israel (Al-Kofia Press, December 21, 2015). **Husam al-Dajani**, a political commentator from the Gaza Strip, said **Hamas was worried about losing its most important ally in the Middle East**. However, he said, normalized relations between the two countries could strengthen Turkey's position as a mediator with Israel on

issues like the release of prisoners, constructing an airport and seaport in the Gaza Strip, etc. (Ma'an News Agency, December 21, 2015).

■ **A source close to Hamas operative Saleh al-Arouri reported he had left Turkey a month ago.** According to the source, he left because of pressure from the American administration and Israeli government, which claimed he dealt with "resistance" [i.e., terrorist] activities in Turkey. The source also stated that Saleh al-Arouri now divided his time between Beirut and Doha. The source denied that Turkey had denied him re-entrance (Al-Quds Al-Arabi, December 20, 2015).³



Left: Khaled Mashaal with the Turkish prime minister (Anadolu News Agency, December 21, 2015). Right: Khaled Mashaal and Turkish President Erdogan (Anadolu News Agency, December 19, 2015).

The Palestinian Authority

Statements from Saeb Erekat

■ **Saeb Erekat, chairman of the PLO's Executive Committee,** said his expectations for 2016 were "sharper, clearer and more determined." He warned Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu that his current policies would have destructive consequences. He claimed the PA was fragile because the chairman needed permission from the "military sovereign" to travel from country to country or go to Jordan (Ma'an News Agency, December 17, 2015).

³ For further information about Saleh al-Arouri's activities in Turkey, see the August 4, 2015 bulletin, "Handling Hamas networks in Judea and Samaria from abroad as part of Hamas's effort to carry out terrorist attacks against Israel."

■ On another occasion **Erekat claimed the PA would begin formally cutting off its relations with Israel in the coming year.** He claimed implementing the decision this year had been delayed by the need to consult with the Arab and regional states. He said the Palestinians' intention was to end all ties, including security coordination (Al-Quds, December 17, 2015).

PA Attempts to Preserve Order and Security Stability

■ **Rami Hamdallah, prime minister of the Palestinian national consensus government,** met in his office with the heads of the Palestinian security forces to update them about security developments and activities to preserve law and order. He praised them for upholding the law, keeping order and preserving security stability in the PA territories (Facebook page of Rami Hamdallah, December 15, 2015).



Rami Hamdallah meets in his office with the heads of the Palestinian security forces (Facebook page of Rami Hamdallah, December 15, 2015)

Results of a Palestinian Public Opinion Poll

■ On December 14, 2015, the Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research, **headed by Khalil Shikaki,** issued the results of its quarterly public opinion poll, held between December 10 and 12, 2015. The total size of the sample was **1,270 adults interviewed from Judea, Samaria and the Gaza Strip.**

■ According to the results, two thirds continue to **demand the resignation of president Abbas;** a growing majority supports **return to an armed intifada;** and a growing majority continues to reject the two-state solution. **The “Oslo generation” of youth between the ages of 18 and 22 were found to be the most supportive of**

an armed intifada and stabbings and the least supportive of the two-state solution. If presidential elections are held today, **a Hamas candidate would win a clear victory against Abbas.**⁴

- Some of the findings were the following (ITIC emphasis throughout):
 - **46% regard armed activities as the most effective way** to achieve an independent Palestinian state alongside Israel; 26% are of the opinion that negotiations are the best way.
 - **66% support stabbing attacks against Israelis.**
 - **51% believe that Israel intends to destroy al-Aqsa Mosque** and the Dome of the Rock and replace them with a Jewish temple.
 - The poll showed **a decline in Mahmoud Abbas' status**: 65% of the public want him to resign; 31% want him to stay.

Mahmoud Abbas Visits Greece

■ Mahmoud Abbas headed a Palestinian delegation to Greece, during which he met with Greek President Prokopis Pavlopoulos. **While he was in Greece the Greek parliament confirmed to him that it was planning to recognize the state of Palestine.** All the political factions supported a proposal calling on the Greek government to promote measures to recognize the state of Palestine and its diplomatic efforts to renew the peace process (Wafa News Agency, December 22, 2015).

⁴ <http://www.pcpsr.org/en/node/623>

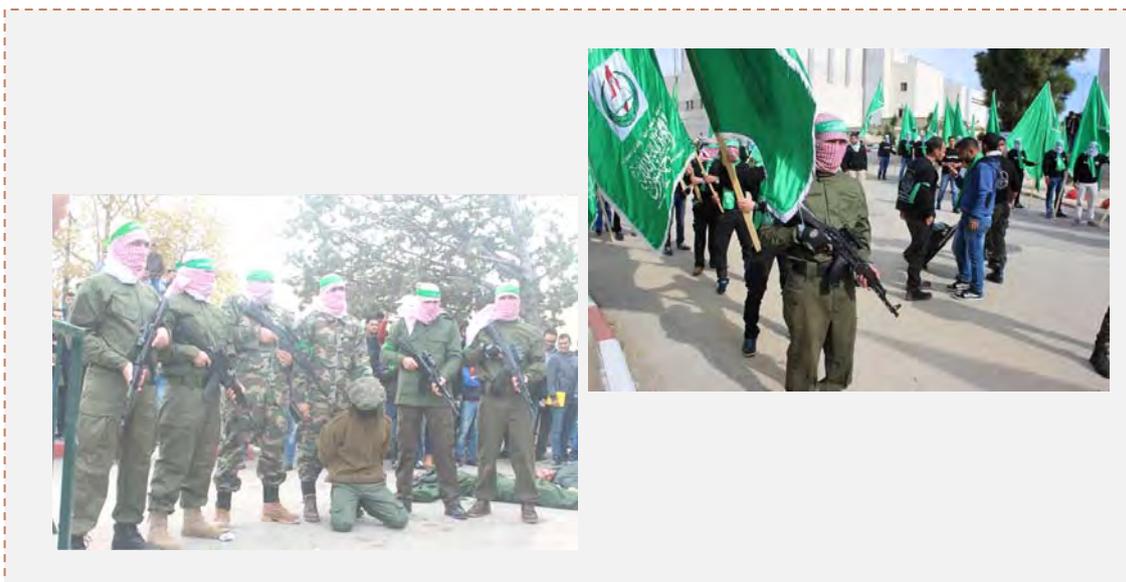


Mahmoud Abbas gives a speech before the Greek parliament (Wafa News Agency, December 22, 2015).

Display at Bir Zeit University Marking the Anniversary of Hamas' Founding

■ On December 16, 2015, the Islamic Bloc at Bir Zeit University held events to mark the 28th anniversary of the founding of the Hamas movement. **It held a "military display" in which masked, uniformed students with weapons⁵ marched waving Hamas flags.** The students also simulated killing and capturing IDF soldiers. **A speech given by Khaled Mashaal** was broadcast in one of the university auditoriums, in which he praised the activists of the [Hamas-affiliated] Islamic Bloc at the university (Facebook page of the Islamic Bloc at Bir Zeit University, December 16, 2015).

⁵ It is unclear whether the weapons were real or plastic.



Left: Simulations of killing an IDF soldier and taking an IDF soldier prisoner. Right: The military display held by Islamic Bloc activists at Bir Zeit University (Facebook page of the Islamic Bloc at Bir Zeit University, December 16, 2015).

The Northern Front

Notorious Terrorist Samir Kuntar Killed

■ On the night of December 19, 2015, there was an aerial strike on a building in Jaramana, near Damascus, killing and wounding a number of people. **Among those killed was Samir Kuntar, who handled a terrorist network in the northern Golan Heights.** The building served as a safe house and operations headquarters. Nine others were killed with him, at least some of them his aides and escorts. **Hezbollah accused Israel of carrying out the attack.**

■ **Samir Kuntar was a Lebanese Druze terrorist operative** who participated in a Palestinian Liberation Front (PLF) terrorist attack in the northern city of Nahariya in 1979. In the attack Danny Haran and his four year-old daughter Einat were murdered; two Israeli policemen were also killed. He was imprisoned in Israel and released in 2008 in exchange for the bodies of IDF reservists Eldad Regev and Ehud Goldwasser. Since his release he has become a kind of freelance entrepreneur for terrorist attacks. His activities **focused on the northern Golan Heights**, where he exploited his ethnic origins as a Druze. **According to the Israeli media he was handled by the Iranian Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps** (Haaretz, December 21, 2015).

■ Initially he operated for Hezbollah in the northern Golan Heights, but Hezbollah later replaced him with **Jihad Mughnieh**, the son of Imad Mughnieh, as commander of its terrorist activities in the Golan. In January 2015 Jihad Mughnieh was killed

along with several others in an aerial attack. In Western assessment, Samir Kuntar was in the final stages of planning and carrying out an attack against Israel. In September 2015 his name was put on the United States Department of State's list of terrorists and he was designated as an international terrorist (Walla, September 9, 2015).

Reactions

■ **Hezbollah rushed to officially accuse Israel of killing Samir Kuntar.** According to the announcement, the attack on "jihad fighter" Samir Kuntar proved there was no mutual understanding between Hezbollah and Israel and the conflict existed and would continue to exist with no relation to the fighting in Syria (Facebook page of Hezbollah's information office, December 20, 2015).

■ Several hours after the attack, on the evening of December 20, 2015, **a number of rockets were fired from south Lebanon into northern Israel.** Explosions were heard in the region of Nahariya. IDF forces searched the area to identify the site of the rocket hits (later found to the east of the city). According to the Lebanese media, three rockets were fired from the region of Ras al-Ein, south of the city of Tyre (NTV, December 20, 2015). The rockets were apparently fired by **Ahmed Jibril's Popular Front – General Command.** In response the IDF fired artillery at south Lebanon (IDF Spokesman, December 20, 2015).

■ On **December 21, 2015,** Hezbollah held a military funeral for Samir Kuntar in the southern suburb of Beirut, attended by senior Hezbollah figures. Nasrallah eulogized him, **praised his activities and blamed Israel for his death.** He said the message he had sent Israel after the death of Jihad Mughnieh was still in effect, and that Israel would be considered responsible for every Hezbollah operative killed. **He threatened that Hezbollah would respond when, where and how it pleased.**



Left: Senior Hezbollah figures at Samir Kuntar's funeral in the southern suburb of Beirut (PALDF forum, December 21, 2015). Right: Samir Kuntar (Al-Mayadeen TV, Lebanon, December 21, 2015).