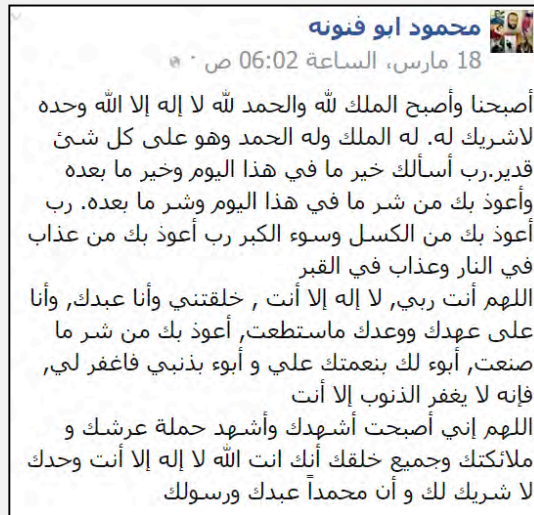




News of Terrorism and the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict

(March 16-22, 2016)



Message posted to Facebook by Mahmoud Abu Fanunah who, with two friends, attempted to carry out a stabbing attack at the Cave of the Patriarchs in Hebron on March 18, 2016). It was posted a few hours before the attack and hints at the terrorist's intention to become a shaheed, asking Allah for protection (Facebook page of Mahmoud Abu Fanunah, March 18, 2016). Similar messages were posted by other Palestinians before they carried out terrorist attacks.

Overview

- The Palestinian terrorist campaign that began more than six months ago continues with increasing and decreasing intensity. Prominent this past week were three stabbing attacks, one at the Cave of the Patriarchs in Hebron (often the scene of terrorist attacks), one at the entrance of the city of Ariel on the trans-Samaria highway and one at the Gush Etzion Junction (also a preferred site for terrorist attacks).
- With the deterioration of Hamas-Egypt relations after Egypt accused Hamas of involvement in the assassination of the Egyptian attorney general, Hamas sent a delegation of its senior figures to Cairo. The Egyptian media reported that Hamas had been required to commit itself not to provide refuge in the Gaza Strip for jihadist operatives and not to dig tunnels that harmed Egypt's national security. There are contradictory versions of the outcome of the talks but apparently there were no practical results.

Judea, Samaria and Jerusalem

Terrorist Attacks and Attempted Attacks

■ **March 19, 2016 – stabbing attack:** A Palestinian went to the roadblock near the **Cave of the Patriarchs in Hebron**. Arousing the suspicions of the Border Policemen at the roadblock, he was asked for identification. He presented his identification and then took out a knife and stabbed one of the policemen in the head, inflicting minor wounds. Another Border Policeman shot and killed him. The Palestinian media reported the terrorist was **Abdallah Muhammad A'eid al-Ajlouni**, 17, from Hebron (Facebook page of Paldf, March 19, 2016). He studied automotive engineering at the Palestinian Polytechnic University (PPU) in Hebron. Fatah's Shabiba youth movement at the PPU issued a death notice for him (Twitter account of Fatah, March 19, 2016).

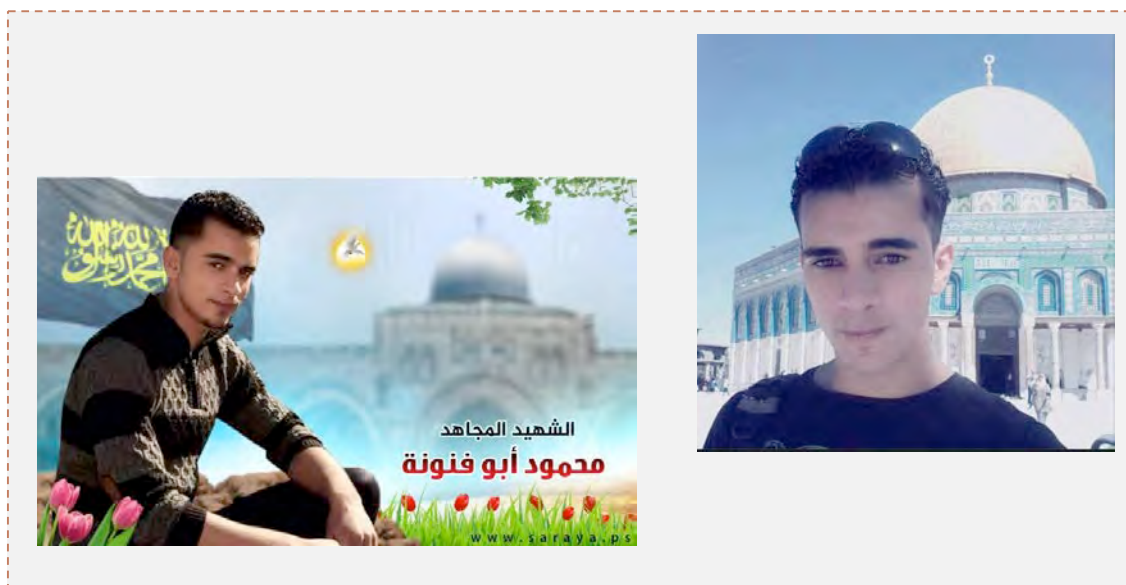


Left: Banner mourning the death of Abdallah Muhammad Ajlouni carried during his funeral (PPN, March 19, 2016). Right: Abdallah Muhammad Ajlouni's Facebook profile picture, which he posted the day before the attack (Facebook page of Abdallah Muhammad Ajlouni, March 18, 2016).

■ **March 18, 2016 – stabbing attack:**

- Three Palestinians went to the **Gush Etzion Junction** and tried to stab Israeli soldiers. One of them was shot and killed by an IDF force. The other two were detained and taken for questioning. The Palestinian media reported that the terrorist who was killed was **Mahmoud Muhammad Ahmed Abu Fanunah**, 21, from Hebron, a **Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) terrorist operative**. His father was Muhammad Ahmed Abu Fanunah, a senior PIJ figure in the Hebron region, who is **currently in administrative detention** (Wbpalestine.com, March 18, 2016).

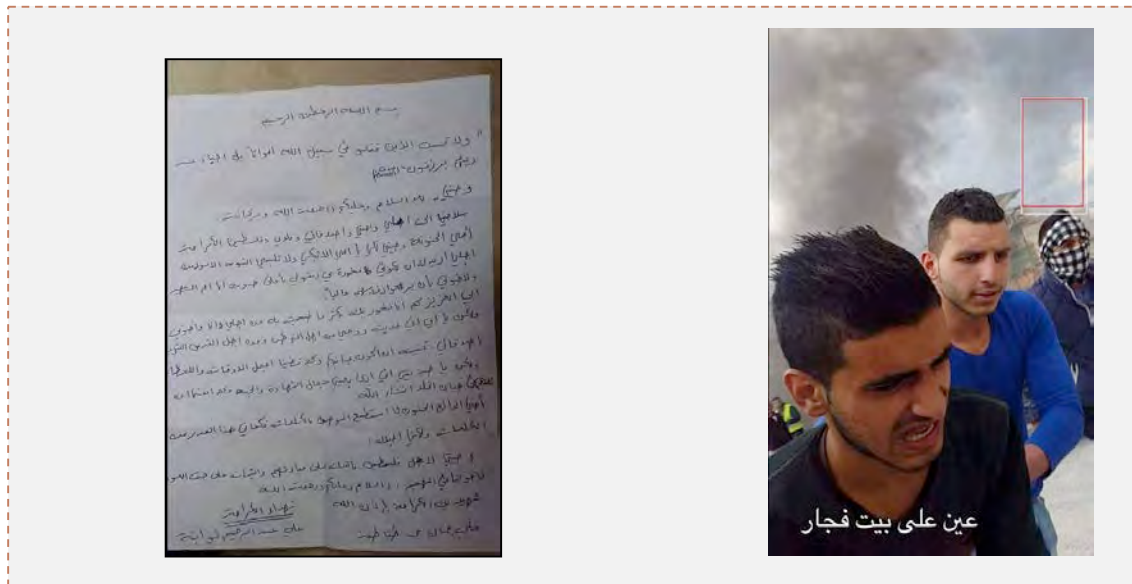
- A few hours before the stabbing attack Abu Fanunah posted a message on his Facebook page praising Allah and asking to be protected in his shadow. He asked Allah to forgive him and save him from the tortures of hell and the punishments of the grave. **Apparently he hints at his intention of becoming a shaheed** when he says he sees **those who carry the throne** [of Allah] and **the angels** (Facebook page of Mahmoud Abu Fanunah, March 18, 2016).



Left: The notice commemorating Mahmoud Abu Fanunah issued by the PIJ's military-terrorist wing (Website of the Jerusalem Battalions, date, 2016). Right: Mahmoud Abu Fanunah on the Temple Mount (Facebook page of Paldf, March 18, 2016).

■ March 17, 2016 – stabbing attack:

- A female IDF soldier who got off a bus at **the entrance to the city of Ariel** on the trans-Samaria highway was stabbed in the neck by two Palestinian terrorists. An IDF force shot and killed them. The soldier was seriously wounded. The Palestinian media reported that the terrorists were **Ali Abd al-Rahman al-Kar Thawabta**, 20, and **Ali Jamal Muhammad Taqatqa**, 19, both from the village of Beit Fajjar south of Bethlehem (Facebook page of Paldf, March 17, 2016).
- The two terrorists left a **joint hand-written will** in which they told their friends and families that **they were carrying out the attack for the sake of Al-Aqsa mosque and Jerusalem**. They asked them to be proud of them for sacrificing themselves for the sake of the homeland. They also asked that all the [Palestinian] principles, including the so-called "right of return," be examined for their brothers in the dispersal (Filastin24, March 17, 2016).



Left: The joint will left by the two Palestinian terrorists (Facebook page of Paldf, March 17, 2016). Right: Ali Taqatqa (right) and Ali Thawabta participating in a riot (Facebook page of Beit Fajjar, date, 2016).

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. The Israeli security forces prevented a number of terrorist attacks.

■ The more prominent events were the following (including terrorist attacks that were prevented):

- **March 20, 2016** – The house of Ibrahim Dawabsha in the village of Duma was set on fire. He was the only witness to the arson of the house of the Dawabsha family. His house was partially burned and two residents were injured by smoke inhalation. The Palestinians claimed the fire at Ibrahim Dawabsha's house was arson and said Israel was responsible (Wafa, March 21, 2016). Israel rejected the claim of a nationalist motive for the fire.
- **March 18, 2016** – Palestinians threw stones at IDF forces in the **village of Nil'in**. A stone hit a Border Policeman in the head (Facebook page of Red Alert, March 18, 2016).
- **March 18, 2016** – Two Palestinians who were driven to the **Sha'ar Binyamin industrial zone** (south of Ramallah) aroused the suspicions of Israeli security forces, who stopped the car. The Palestinians were found with knives in their possession. They said they had come "to kill Jews." The driver of the car escaped (Facebook page of Red Alert, March 18, 2016).

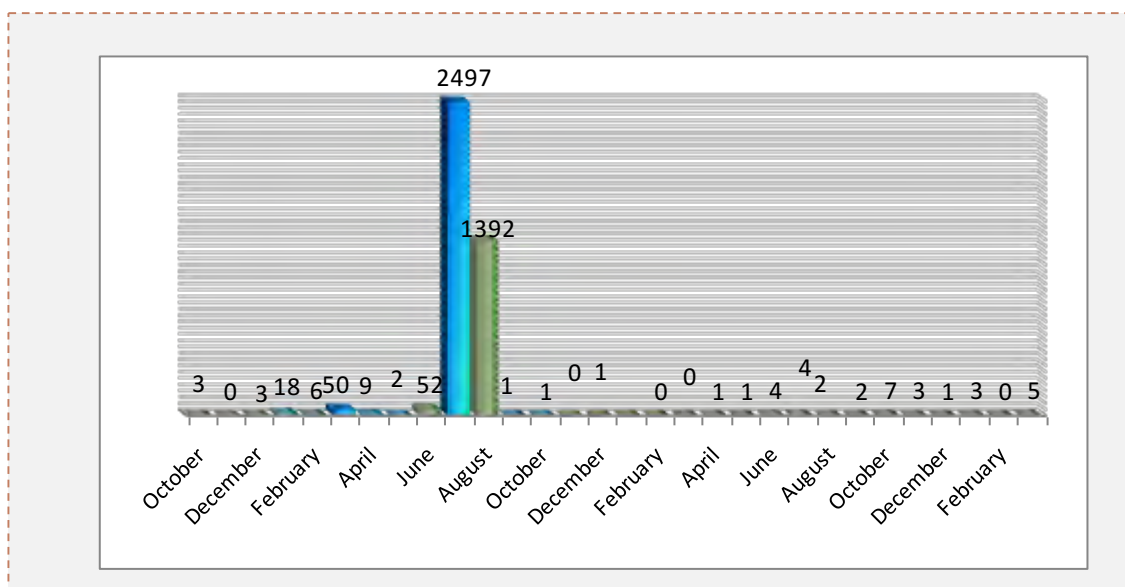
- **March 16, 2016** – Border Police surveillance of the **Shuafat refugee camp** identified a Palestinian attempting to cross the border security fence without passing through a security checkpoint. He was detained and a knife was found in his possession. He was a 14 year-old Palestinian.
- **March 16, 2016** – During an Israeli security force activity in the village of Al-Sawahra, southeast of Jerusalem, a lathe used in the manufacture of weapons was seized.

Israel's South

Rocket Fire Attacking Israel

- This past week no rocket hits were identified in Israeli territory.

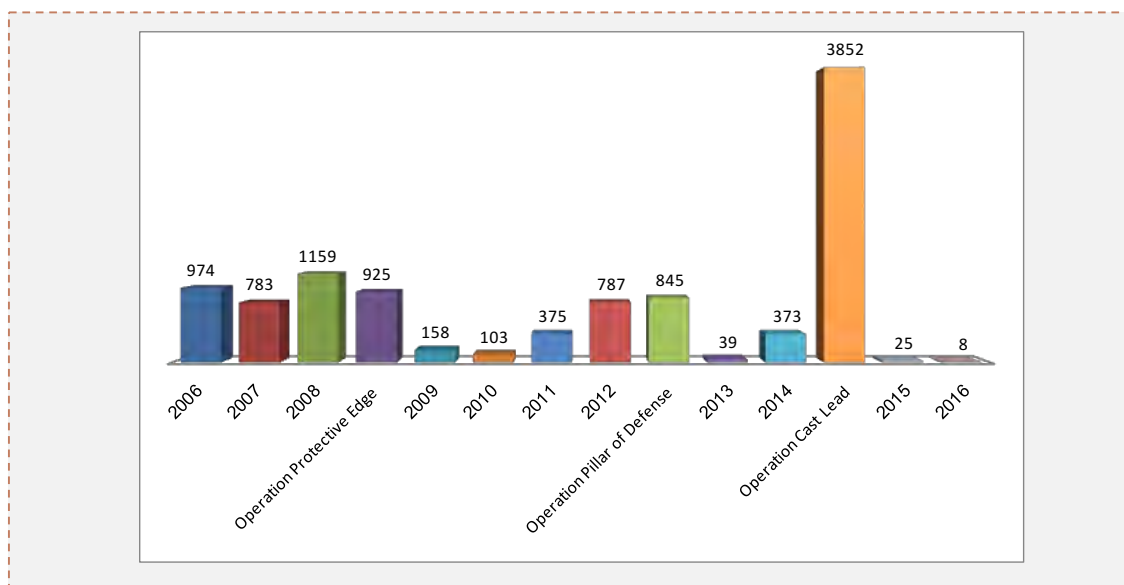
Monthly Distribution of Rocket Fire (2014 – 2016)¹



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

¹ As of March 22, 2016. The statistics do not include mortar shell fire or rockets which misfired and fell inside the Gaza Strip.

Annual Distribution of Rocket Fire in Israel's South²



Developments in the Gaza Strip

The Rafah Crossing

■ Egyptian sources reported that there were difficulties involved in opening the Rafah crossing, caused by the security situation in the northern Sinai Peninsula. The report came after the terrorist attack carried out by ISIS's Sinai Province in the region of El Arish (Al-Kofia, March 21, 2016).

Tunnel Collapse

■ Another tunnel collapsed in Khan Yunis. Seven operatives of Hamas' military-terrorist wing were injured, one of them critically. Hamas forces made an effort to rescue them (Al-Quds, March 19, 2016).

Hamas' External Relations

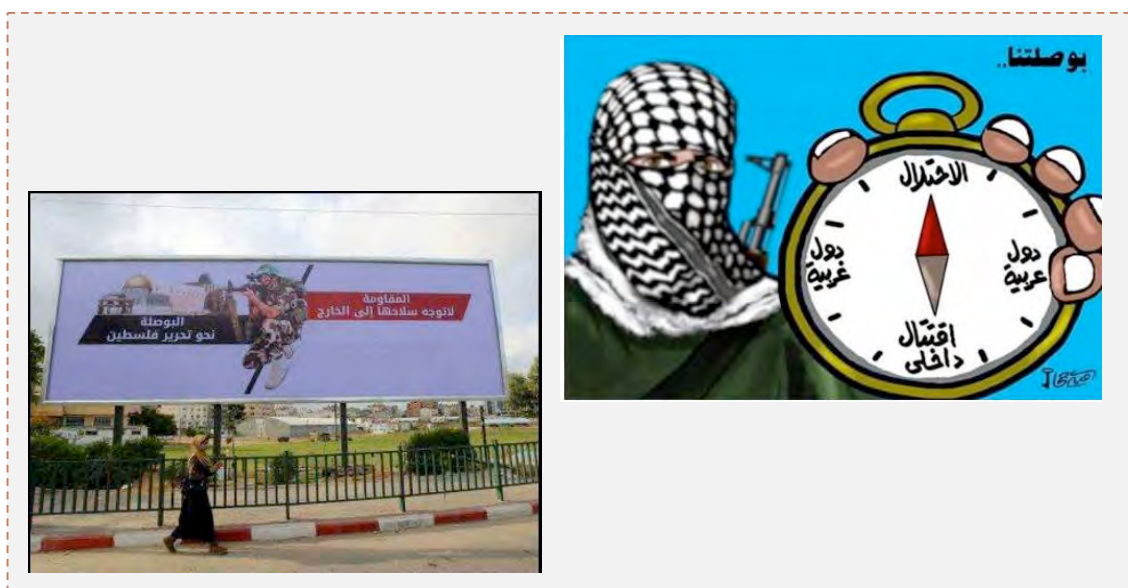
Egypt

■ The Hamas delegation to Cairo ended its visit to Egypt after three days of talks with senior figures in Egyptian General Intelligence. Reports of the success of the talks are contradictory. Egyptian sources claimed the talks had failed while Hamas sources tried to broadcast optimism, describing the talks as "responsible and transparent." An article about Hamas-Egypt relations quoted a "highly-placed Egyptian source" as saying the Hamas delegation had concluded a written agreement with the Egyptian authorities. According to the agreement, **Hamas had to commit not to provide refuge in the**

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

Gaza Strip for jihadist operatives or dig tunnels harming Egypt's national security. There is no verification that Hamas agreed to the terms.³

■ **Senior Hamas figure Ismail Radwan** claimed the visit of the delegation to Cairo was a **positive development** but **denied an agreement had been signed** (Dunia al-Watan, March 21, 2016). **Hamas spokesman Husam Badran** denied that during the visit Egypt had asked the Hamas delegation to cut off relations with Iran and Hezbollah (Paltoday, March 21, 2016). The Hamas media issued a cartoon drawn by **Omayya Joha** illustrating Hamas focusing on its main objective, i.e. the struggle against Israel, and not the Arab or Western countries. A sign was hung in the center of Gaza City reading, "The resistance does not aim its weapon outwards. Its compass points to the liberation of Palestine" (Facebook page of Paldf, March 21, 2016).



Left: The sign hung in the center of Gaza City: "The resistance does to aim its weapon outward. Its compass points to the liberation of Palestine." Right: Omayya Joha's cartoon, "Our compass." North is "the occupation," and east, south and west are "the Arab states," "the internal struggle" and "the West" (Facebook page of Paldf, March 20 and 21, 2016).

Iran

■ According to reports, the Hamas delegation that visited Tehran in January 2016 met with **Qasem Soleimani, commander of the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps' Qods Force**. During the meeting Soleimani said both Iran and Hamas wanted a strong "resistance" in Palestine. He said that over the past years many mistakes had been made, some by Hamas and some by Iran. However, he said, both knew the

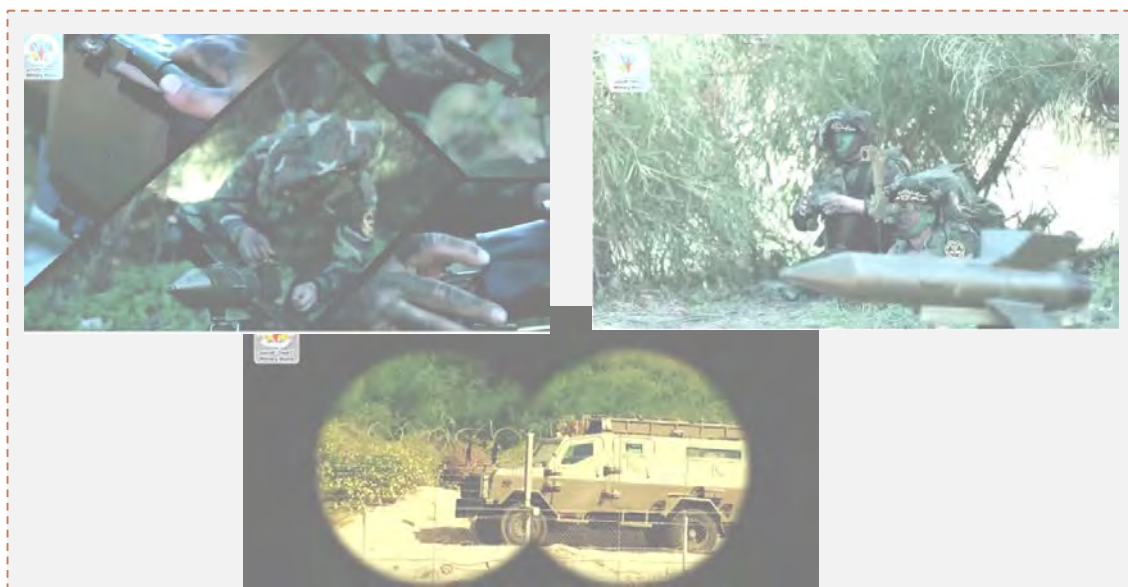
³ For further information about Hamas-Egyptian relations, see the March 20, 2016 bulletin, "[Hamas as a Supporter of Anti-Egyptian Terrorism: Hamas-Egyptian relations deteriorated following the Egyptian accusation of Hamas involvement in the 2015 assassination of the Egyptian attorney general. Egypt is also aware of Hamas' collaboration with ISIS's Sinai Province in its terrorist campaign.](#)"

"resistance" was in danger and **the only country supporting it was Iran** (Al-Mayadeen, March 17, 2016).

■ **Hossein Sheikh al-Islam, advisor to the chairman of the Iranian parliament (Majlis) for international affairs**, welcomed the visit of the Hamas delegation to Tehran, saying the door was open to any Hamas delegation. He criticized the Palestinian Authority's (PA) position regarding Iran's financial contribution to the families of shaheeds.⁴ He said the Iranians distinguished between Fatah, which they "respect," and the PA and Mahmoud Abbas, both "not respected" (Alresala.net, March 16, 2016).

PIJ Video

■ The PIJ issued a video called "We will show you the horror of the shadow," **intended to signal a threat to Israel**. It shows PIJ terrorist operatives positioning an anti-tank missile launcher. **They aim it at an IDF vehicle near the border security fence whose passengers are officers**. According to the video PIJ military-terrorist operatives can hit the vehicle (Website of the Jerusalem Battalions, March 15, 2016).



Pictures from the video (Website of the Jerusalem Battalions, March 15, 2016).

⁴ For further information about Iran's support for the families of shaheeds, see the March 2, 2016 bulletin, "[Encouragement for the Palestinian Terrorist Campaign through Financial Support: Iran announces its intention to provide funds for the families of Palestinian shaheeds and families whose houses were demolished by Israel.](#)"

The Palestinian Authority

Public Opinion Poll

■ The results of a poll of Palestinian public opinion held by the **Jerusalem Media and Communications Center** were the following:⁵

- **Support for the continuation of the intifada:** 55.9% support its continuation, 41% oppose it. Most of the supporters (75.8%) were from the Gaza Strip, and 51.6% from Judea and Samaria.
- **Security coordination with Israel:** 48.2% were in favor of ending it, while 42.4% were in favor of continuing it.
- **Level of trust in Hamas:** 16.5%, down from 22% last year.
- **Level of trust in Fatah:** 35.3%, up from 34% last year.
- **Views of ISIS in Judea, Samaria and the Gaza Strip:** 82.1% had a negative opinion of ISIS's activities compared to 6.1% who considered ISIS's activity positive. Similarly, 52.1% believed ISIS harmed the Palestinian cause while just 2.8% claimed ISIS served it.

PA Activity with International Organizations

■ On March 14, 2016, the members of the Permanent Court of Arbitration in The Hague voted in favor of having the "state of Palestine" join the Court. The proposition was carried by a majority of 57 countries; 24 countries abstained and there were no votes against it. A large number of countries, including the United States, were absent from the vote. Israel and Canada were present but abstained. The Permanent Court of Arbitration arbitrates territorial conflicts and issues of sovereignty, human rights, international investment and international and regional trade.

■ In Amman, Jordan, a Palestinian delegation met with a delegation from the International Criminal Court (ICC). According to a senior Palestinian, the objective of the meeting was to determine the legal steps to be taken against Israel. He claimed after the meeting that the ICC's attorney general was supposed to decide which of the issues raised (the settlements, destruction of buildings, confiscation of lands, Jerusalem, Hebron, etc.) were suitable for deliberation by the ICC (Safa, March 20, 2016). At the final meeting, **Saeb Erekat, chairman of the PLO's Executive**

⁵ <http://www.jmcc.org/documentsandmaps.aspx?id=870>

Committee, demanded the members of the ICC delegation take serious action to end the situation in which "Israel evades punishment" (Safa, March 21, 2016).

The Battle for Hearts and Minds: Palestinian Media Encouragement for the Current Terrorist Campaign



[Picture] [Caption] Cartoon from Hamas' Facebook page according to which security coordination with Israel hinders the continuation of terrorist attacks [i.e., the Al-Quds intifada] (Facebook page of Paldf, March 18, 2016).



Hamas cartoon relating to deliberations in the Israeli Knesset regarding the death sentence for terrorists. It encourages stabbing attacks. The Arabic reads, "the Knesset deliberates executing those who carry out attacks..." (Twitter account of Palinfo, March 21, 2016).