



May 23, 2016

Has the Wave of Palestinian Terrorism Reached an End?¹



Hamas death notice issued for Ahmed Riyadh Shehadeh, the Palestinian terrorist who carried out a vehicular attack near the village of Dolev, northwest of Ramallah (wounding three IDF soldiers, one of them critically). The inscription on the tire reads, "We brought you a vehicular [attack], the intifada continues."

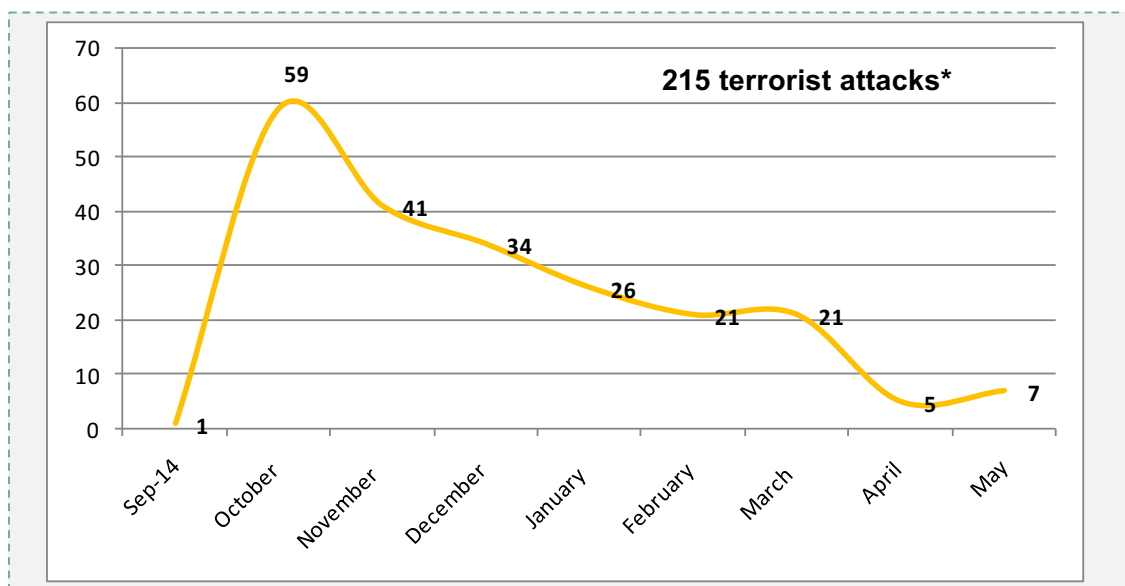
Overview

1. On September 13, 2015, the Palestinians began a wave of popular terrorism (called a "popular awakening" by the Palestinian Authority [PA]).² It began with riots on the Temple Mount and in Jerusalem during the Jewish High Holidays (second half of September 2015). It continued with a campaign of terrorist attacks which peaked in October 2015 (with 59 attacks). Since October the wave of terrorism has gradually waned, as shown by the following graph:

¹ Follow-up of the April 14, 2016 bulletin, ["Seven Months of Popular Palestinian Terrorism, The Current Situation."](#)

² The PA and Fatah call the current Palestinian terrorist campaign *al-habba al-shaabiya* ("popular awakening"), meant to suggest an association with the so-called "popular resistance," the policy adopted by the PA and Fatah. Hamas (and other terrorist organizations) call the terrorist campaign the **Al-Quds intifada** because the events that began in Jerusalem ignited the current wave of terrorism. Hamas expected they would spread and become a full-fledged military-type armed campaign like the second intifada (expectations which did not in fact materialize). The Israeli media sometimes call it the **"lone wolf intifada"** because many (although not all) of the attacks have been carried out by lone terrorist operatives without direction from the various terrorist organizations.

Monthly distribution of significant terrorist attacks³ in Judea, Samaria and Israel since the beginning of the wave of terrorism (September 14, 2015 – May 24, 2016)



*Note: Graph updated to May 22, 2016.

2. This study was written a little more than eight months after the beginning of the current wave of Palestinian terrorism. It continues the interim study carried out by the ITIC issued on April 14, 2016, which examined the first seven months of the wave of terrorism. The objective of the current study is to examine **whether or not the wave of terrorism has come to an end**. If it has in fact ended, that raises the question of **how to characterize the current terrorist attacks and in what context to view them**.

3. **The two main conclusions** that can be drawn from a comparison of the current wave of terrorism and the popular terrorism of the three years that preceded it are the following:

- a. **The current wave of Palestinian terrorism in its present format ended around April 2016**. That conclusion is based on **the significant decrease in the scope of the attacks** (from scores to a few attacks every month); **the change in the location of the attacks** (a significant decrease in the number of attacks inside Israeli territory, although attacks in greater Jerusalem continue); and **the decrease in the lethality of the attacks** (since March 8, 2016, when an

³ Significant terrorist attacks include stabbing, vehicular, and shooting attacks, and attacks combining two or more elements. The graph includes only attacks actually carried out, not those that were prevented. It also does not contain violent events in which Palestinians threw stones or Molotov cocktails.

American national died in a killing spree in Jaffa, no one has been killed). In addition, there has been **a decrease in the number of Palestinians participating in riots in Judea, Samaria and the Gaza Strip** (including during times prone to violent events such as Nakba Day, or the Passover holiday when many Israelis visited Jerusalem). All of the above resulted in **a decrease in public and media interest** in Palestinian terrorist activity, although interest rises when there are significant localized attacks.

b. **The wave of Palestinian terrorism has reached an end, but popular terrorism** (the so-called "popular resistance") **continues and is approaching the levels of recent years (following the Sixth Fatah Conference** held in August 2009). Therefore, **popular terrorism is far from over**, especially since the concept of "popular resistance" is an important factor in PA policy, which exploits it to promote its political, propaganda and legal campaigns against Israel. Popular terrorism is violent by nature, and **Mahmoud Abbas' claim that the "popular resistance" is "peaceful" and "unarmed" is baseless**. The **incitement** that accompanied the Palestinian terrorist campaign continues, **provoking and increasing frustration, rage and Palestinian nationalist motivation, especially among the younger generation** of Palestinians (who led the recent wave of terrorism).

4. **What will happen next?** In ITIC assessment, although the current wave of terrorism has ended, **popular terrorism originating from Judea, Samaria and east Jerusalem will continue**. In all probability it will continue to fluctuate, creating a pattern of waves of popular terrorism. The PA can be assumed to continue to support popular terrorism and sidestep condemning it, while at the same time **continuing its efforts to contain it and keep it under control**. **Hamas and the other terrorist organizations** will continue their efforts to breathe new life into popular terrorism and turn it into a third intifada. From Hamas' perspective, that means encouraging military-type attacks (including shooting attacks, abductions and suicide bombing attacks) alongside popular terrorism. Attempts may be made to carry out both popular terrorism and military-type attacks during the upcoming Muslim religious month of Ramadan.⁴

⁴ This year Ramadan begins on June 6, 2016, and is supposed to end on July 4. The dates may change according to the appearance of the new moon. The Jewish holiday of Shavuot begins on June 12 and Jerusalem Day falls on June 5, the eve of Ramadan.

Methodology

5. To facilitate an understanding of the current wave of terrorism and its political-operational context, **a comparison was made between the current wave and the popular resistance** of the three preceding it (2013, 2014 and January 1, 2015 – September 13, 2015). **During those years continuous, systematic terrorist activity was part of the "popular resistance" policy adopted by the PA and Fatah**, although it was far more limited in extent and different in nature from the terrorist attacks of the current wave of terrorism. The comparison between the terrorist campaign and the years preceding it is intended **to show the unique characteristics of the current campaign (both quantitatively and qualitatively), and to examine if and when such characteristics disappeared, or if and when they significantly decreased.**

6. The data regarding the terrorist attacks is based on a wide variety of open source information, primarily Israeli defense sources and institutions, as well as information appearing in the Israeli, Palestinian and Arab media. That information was used in preparing the interim report on the current Palestinian terrorist campaign with the addition of information since added. To examine terrorist attacks in previous years, use was made of the ITIC's weekly "News of Terrorism and the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict" bulletins and of dozens of other publications issued by the ITIC about various aspects of Palestinian terrorism. The ITIC's data and conclusions do not necessarily and fully correspond to those of other institutions, both security and civilian, dealing with terrorism, in Israel and abroad. The differences may be the result of different data bases, methodologies and points of view.

7. This document has **four appendices**:

a. **Appendix A** – The quantitative aspect: the extent of the current wave of Palestinian terrorism compared with popular terrorism during the three years preceding it.

b. **Appendix B** – The qualitative aspect: the types of attacks in the current wave of Palestinian terrorism compared with popular terrorism during the three years preceding it.

c. **Appendix C** – Locations of the attacks in the current wave of Palestinian terrorism compared with those carried out during popular terrorism attacks during the three years preceding it.

d. **Appendix D** – The number of people killed attacks in the current wave of Palestinian terrorism compared with those killed by popular terrorism during the three years preceding it.

Appendix A

The quantitative aspect: the extent of the current wave of Palestinian terrorism compared with popular terrorism during the three years preceding it (2013 – 2015)⁵

1. A comparison of the current wave of terrorism and the three years preceding it clearly **indicates a sharp increase during the current wave of terrorism:**

a. In **2013** there were between two and six significant terrorist attacks a month. In **2014**, a stormy year during which the number and seriousness of terrorist attacks increased,⁶ there were between one and four significant terrorist attacks a month, with an exceptional peak in November (11 attacks). In **2015** (until September 13, 2015) the number of attacks fluctuated between two and eight a month.

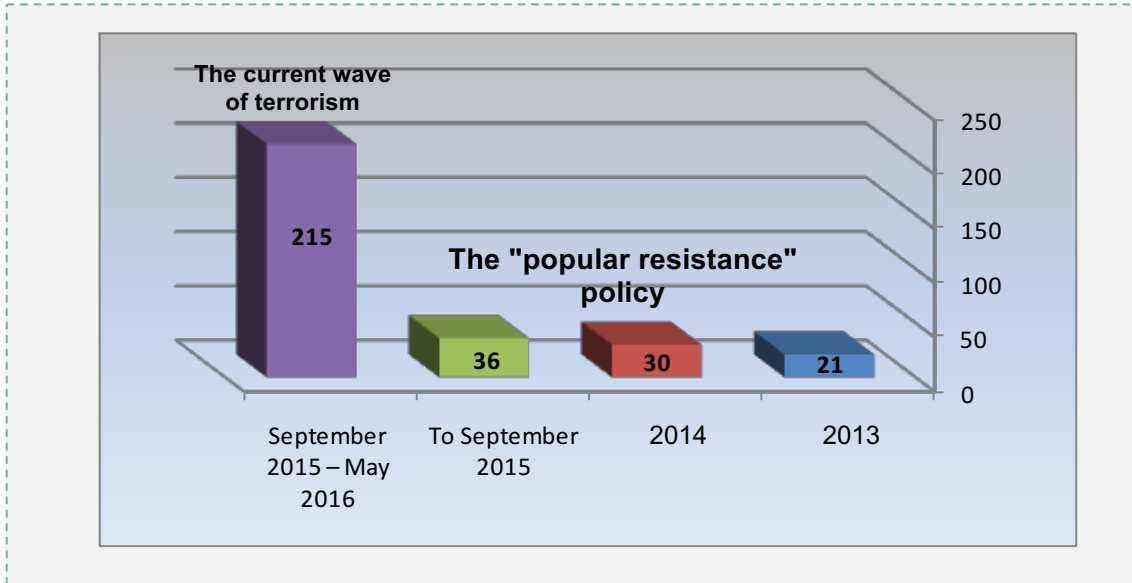
b. **During the current wave of terrorism there was a sharp increase in the scope of Palestinian terrorism.** It peaked in October 2015, when **59 terrorist attacks were carried out**, far more than in each of the three previous years. During the following five months, **there were far more monthly terrorist attacks than during the months of the previous three years** (between 21 and 41 attacks). **In April and so far in May 2016, there have been between five and six terrorist attacks a month, numbers approaching the attacks during the three years preceding the current terrorist campaign.**

c. The following graphs illustrate the trend:

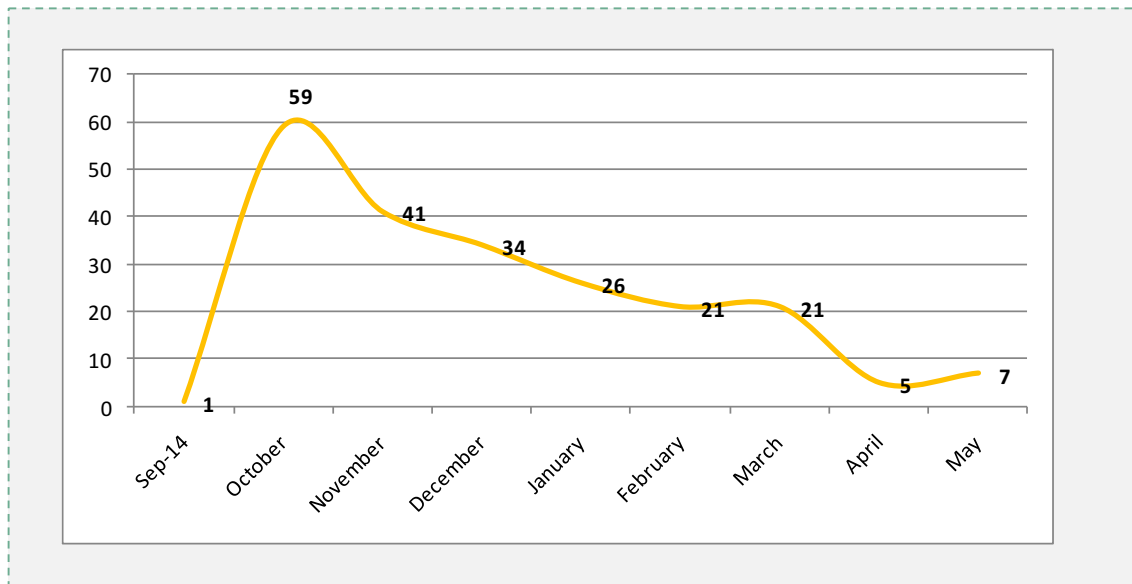
⁵ The data do not include the hundreds of incidents of the throwing of stones and Molotov cocktails every month.

⁶ 2014 was a year of intensive terrorist activity and there was an increase in both the number and lethality of the attacks. During that year there were several serious events: the abduction and murder of three yeshiva students in Gush Etzion in June; and Operation Protective Edge in July and August; and the murder of the Arab boy Muhammad Abu Kheir in July. Those events fomented violence and terrorism in Judea and Samaria. Nevertheless, **the extent of terrorist attacks in 2014 was far less than that of the current wave of terrorism.**

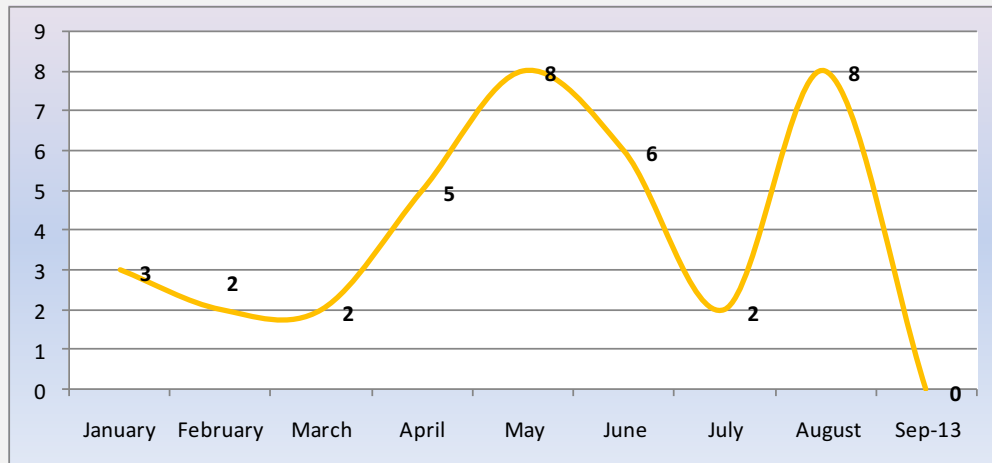
Rise in the number of significant terrorist attacks during the current wave of terrorism: annual distribution of significant terrorist attacks (from 2013 to May 22, 2016)



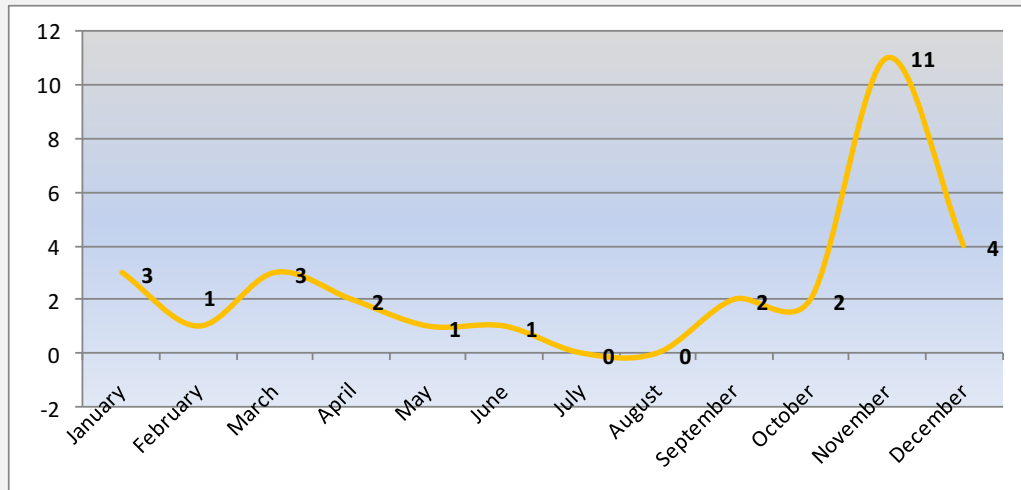
Monthly distribution of significant attacks during the current wave of terrorism



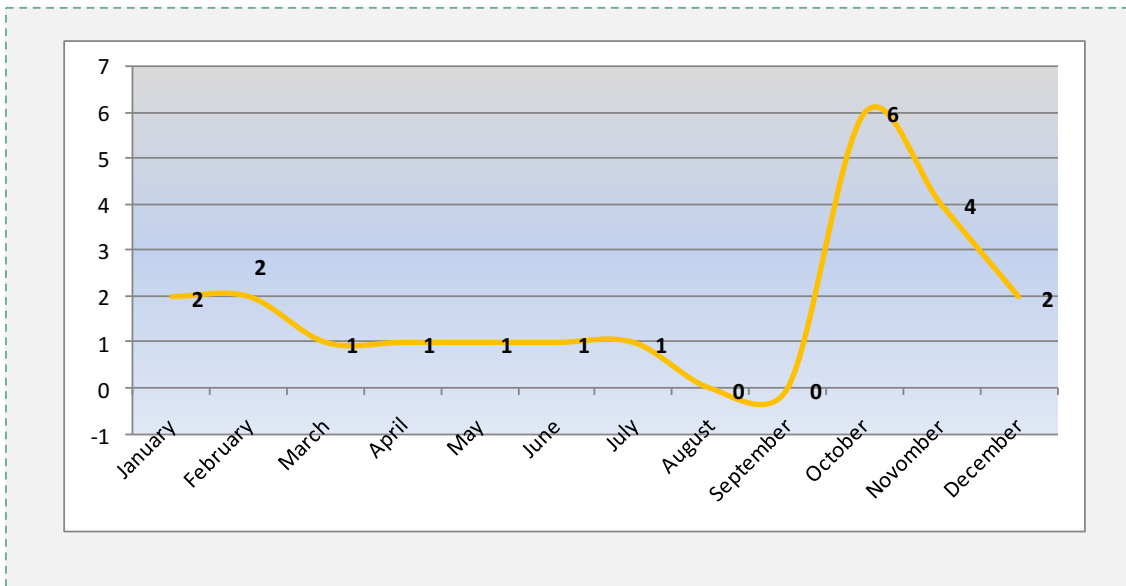
Monthly distribution of significant terrorist attacks in 2015 (before the beginning of the current wave of terrorism, September 13, 2015)



Monthly distribution of significant terrorist attacks in 2014



Monthly distribution of significant terrorist attacks in 2013

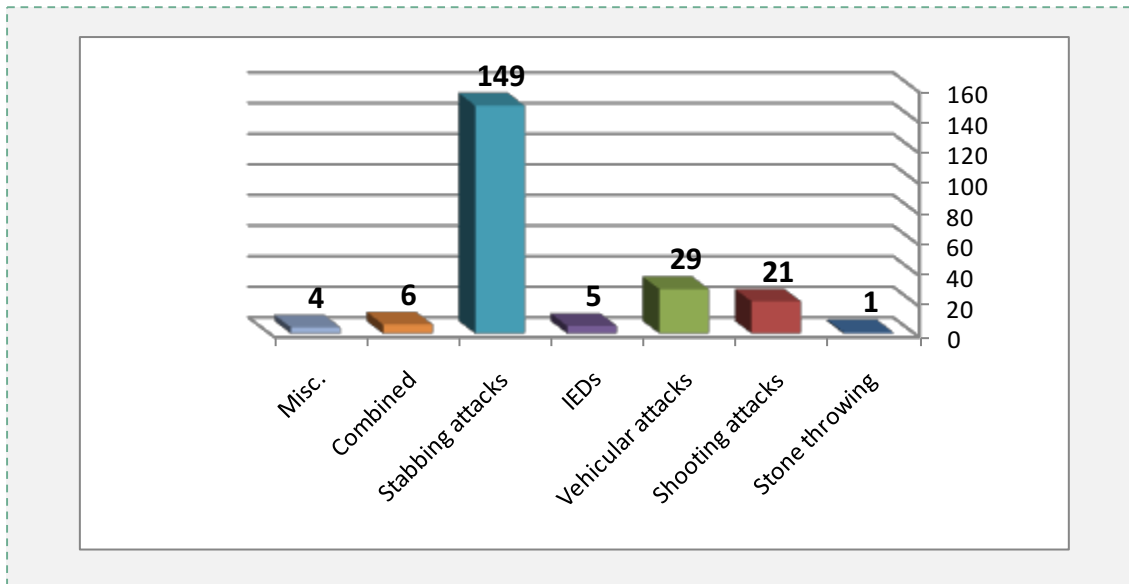


Appendix B

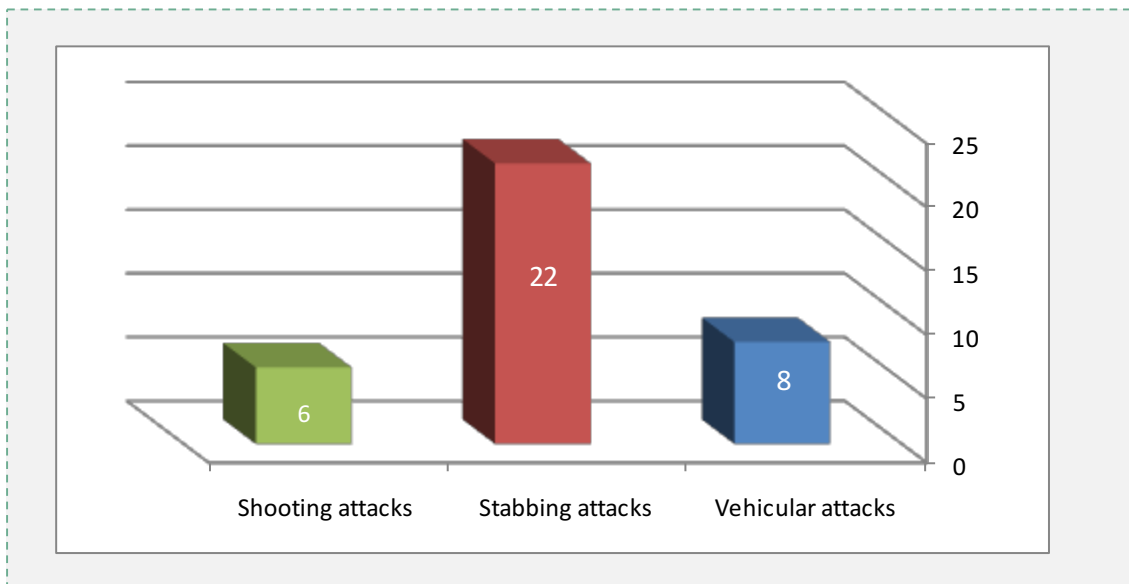
The qualitative aspect: the types of attacks in the current wave of Palestinian terrorism compared with popular terrorism during the three years preceding it (2013 – 2015)

1. The current wave of terrorism has been characterized by an **increase in the number of stabbing attacks** compared with other types (stabbings account for about 69% of the attacks. Second by a large margin are **vehicular attacks** (about 14%), **shooting attacks** (about 10%) and various other types (IEDs, combined attacks, etc.)
2. **Stabbing attacks were prominent during the three years preceding the current wave of terrorism**, compared with other types of attacks. **However, they have been more prominent than others during the current wave of terrorism** (in previous years stabbing attacks accounted for between about 30% or 60% of terrorist attacks, compared with the current 69%.) **If the current wave of terrorism wanes or comes to an end, the prominence of stabbing attacks may also decrease and other forms of attacks, especially shooting attacks, may become more prominent.**

Types of significant attacks during the current wave of terrorism⁷

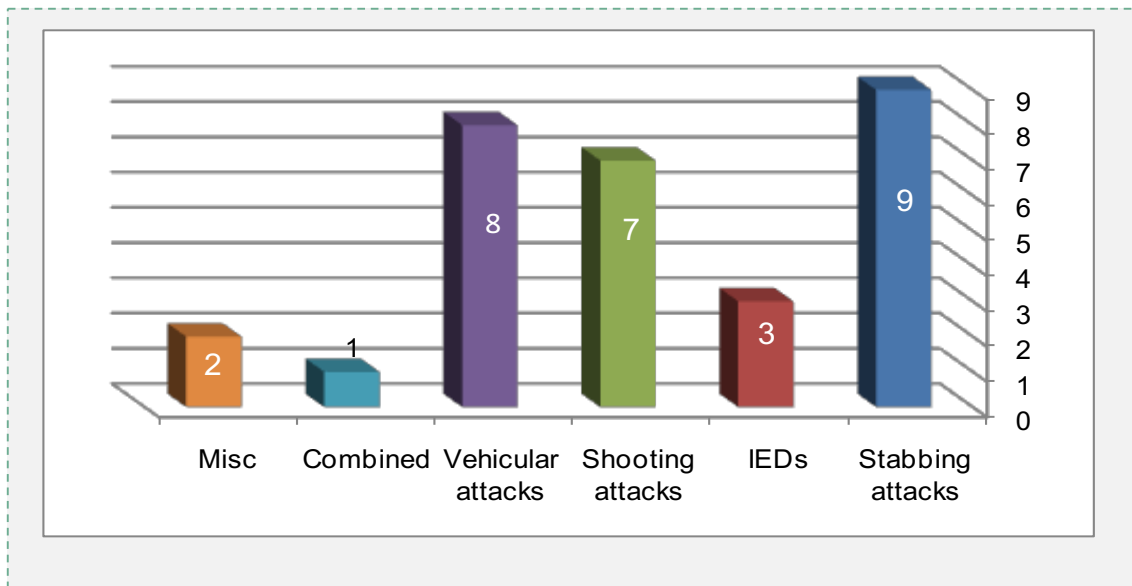


Types of attacks in 2015

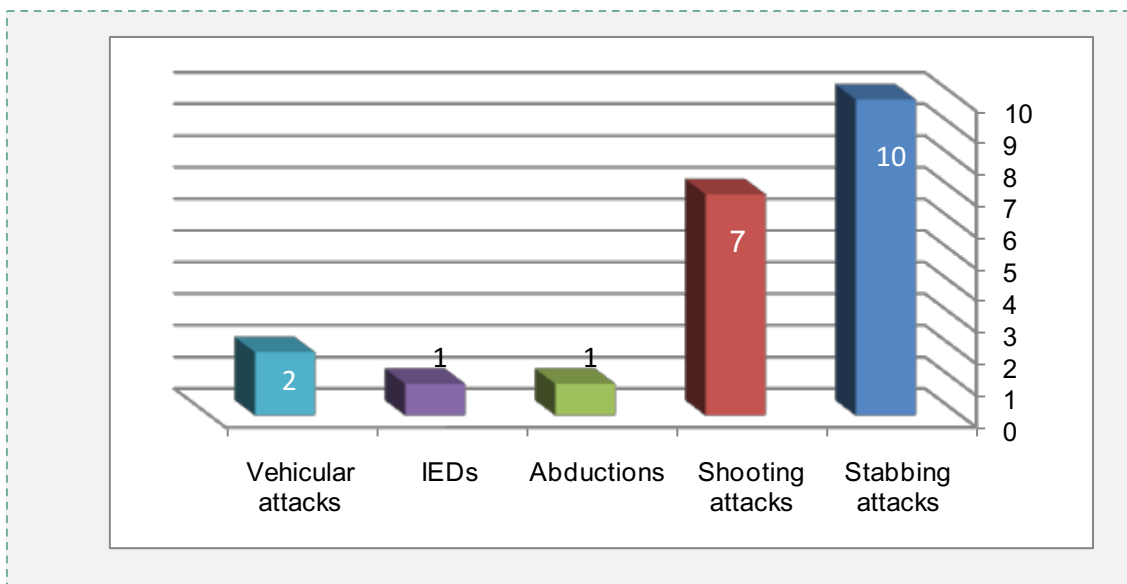


⁷ The graphs **do not represent** the throwing of stones and Molotov cocktails, with the exception of one instance in which a stone led to the death of an Israeli in southern Jerusalem (September 13, 2015). The shooting attacks represented in the graphs do not include the dozens of shooting attacks targeting Israeli security forces during operational activities.

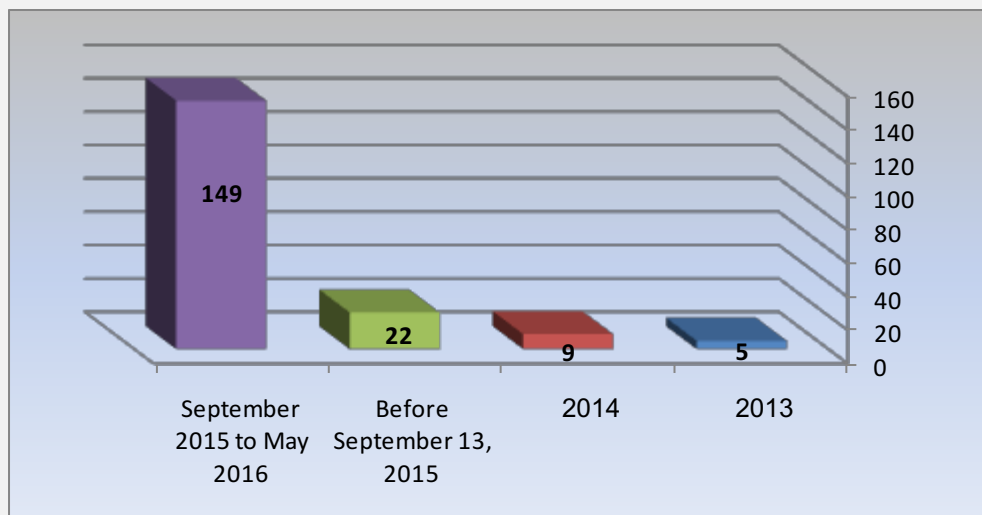
Types of attacks in 2014



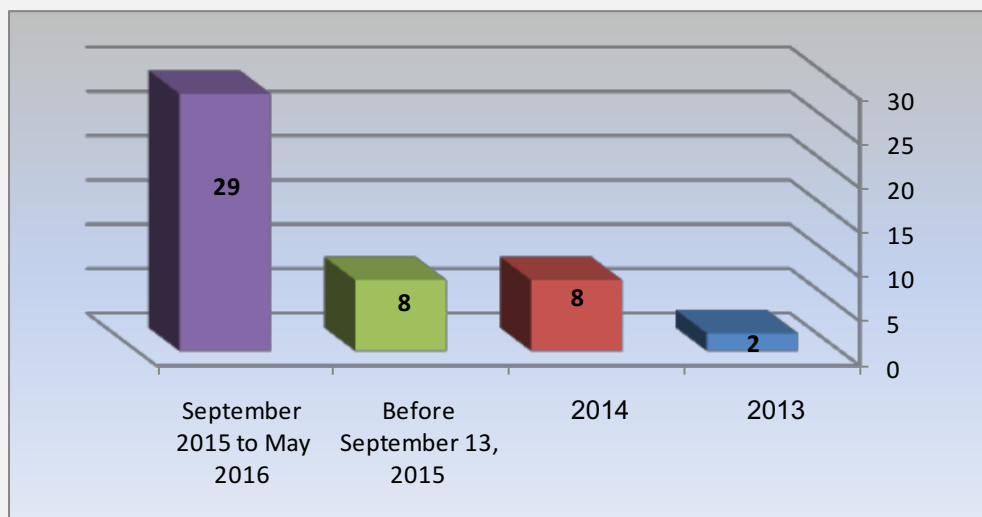
Types of attacks in 2013



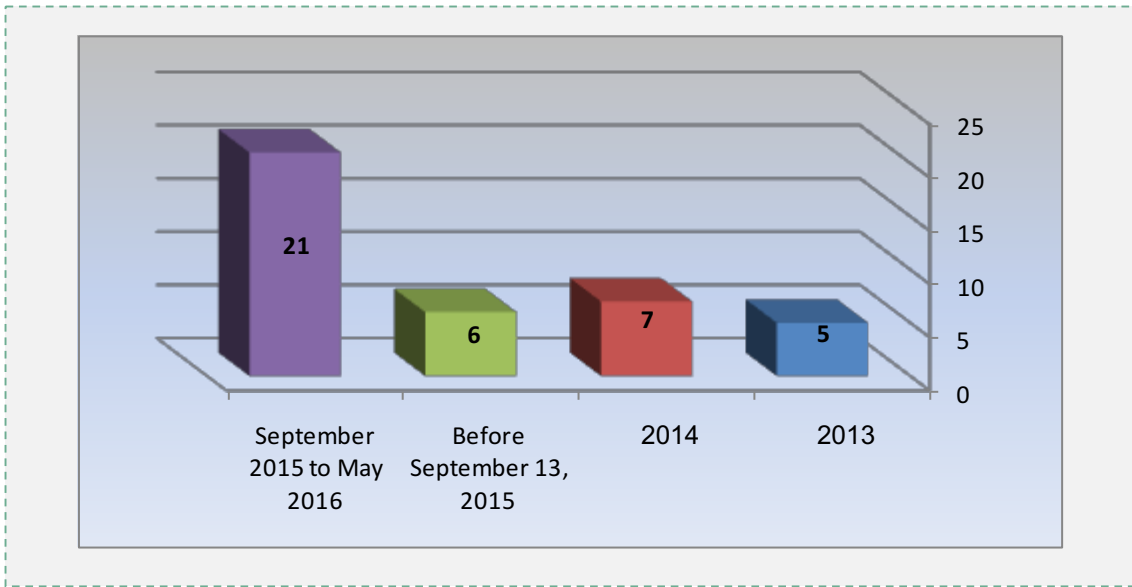
Annual distribution of stabbing attacks



Annual distribution of vehicular attacks



Annual distribution of shooting attacks

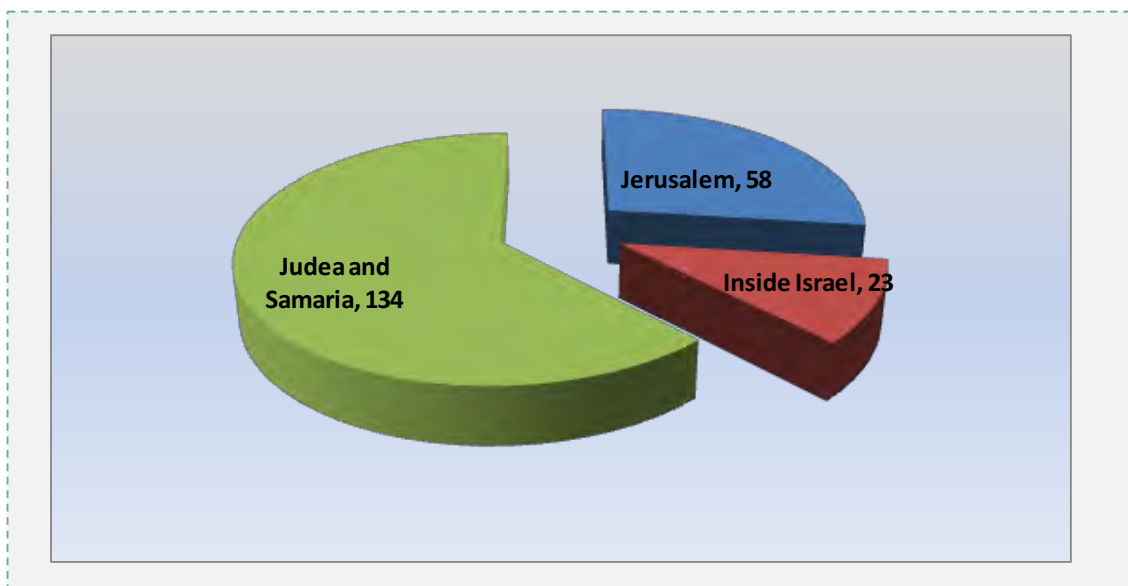


Appendix C

Locations of the attacks in the current wave of Palestinian terrorism compared with those carried out during popular terrorism attacks during the three years preceding it (2013 – 2015)

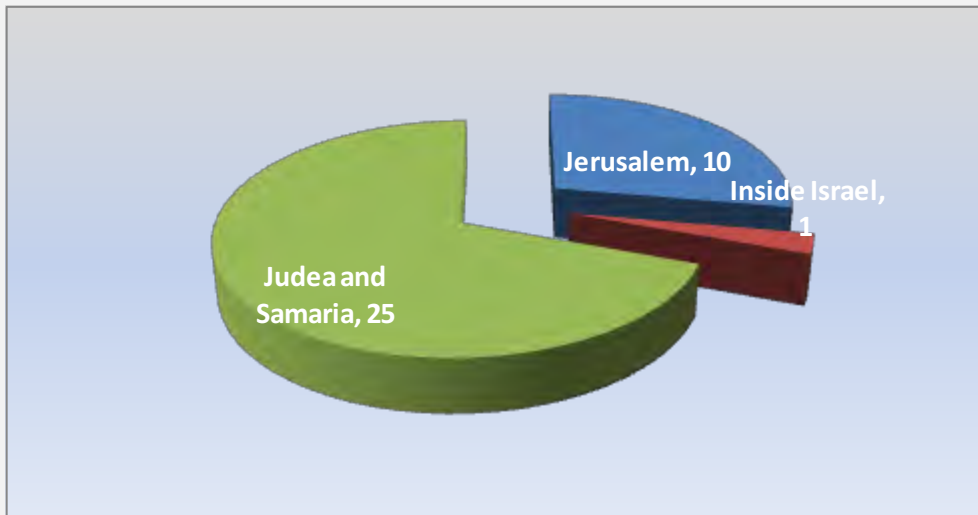
1. Throughout all the years of popular terrorism, Jerusalem has been the focal point for terrorist attacks. Quantitatively terrorist attacks in Jerusalem have been dramatically greater during the current wave of terrorism, a function of the general increase in the number of attacks. (There were 58 stabbing attacks in Jerusalem in the current wave of terrorism as opposed to ten in 2015, 11 in 2014 and three in 2013).
2. In the three years preceding the terrorist campaign almost no attacks were carried out inside Israel.⁸ However, during the current wave of terrorism there was a dramatic increase in the number of terrorist attacks carried out inside Israel (23 in the current wave, one in 2015, two in 2014 and three in 2013).

Locations of the terrorist attacks in the current wave of Palestinian terrorism

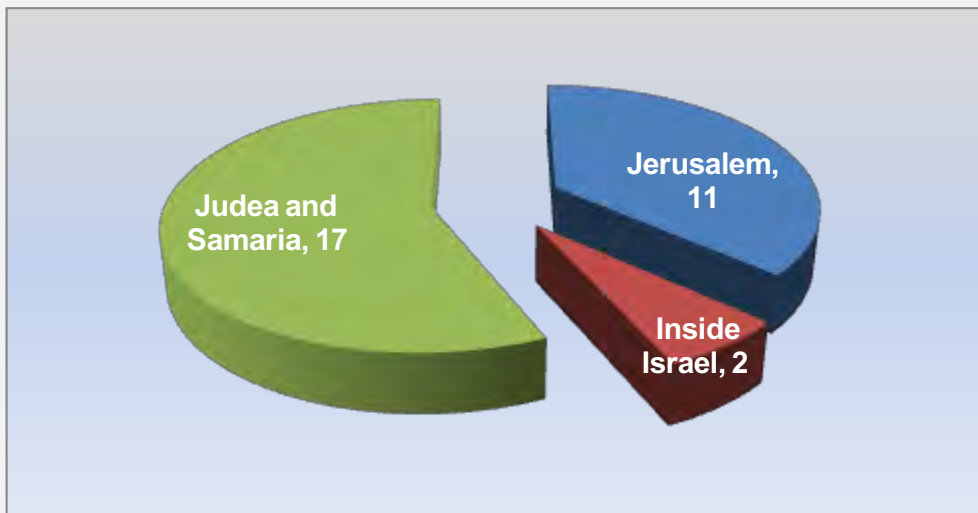


⁸ "Inside Israel" includes all the cities and towns not found within the borders of greater Jerusalem.

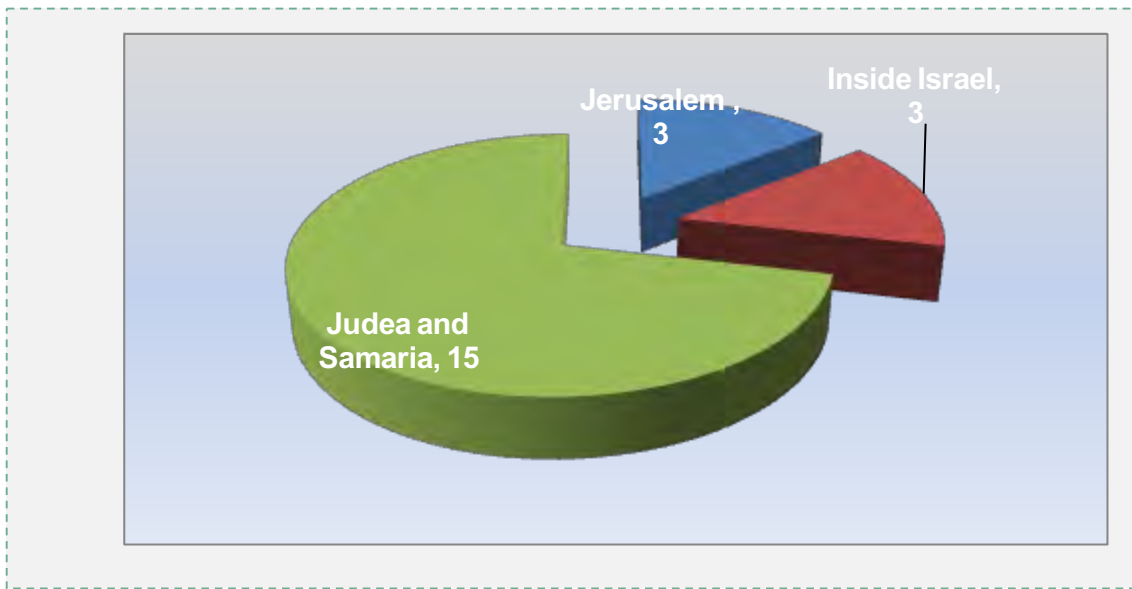
Locations of the terrorist attacks in 2015 (before September 13)



Locations of the terrorist attacks in 2014



Locations of the terrorist attacks in 2013



Appendix D

The number of people killed attacks in the current wave of Palestinian terrorism compared with those killed by popular terrorism during the three years preceding it (2013 – 2015)

1. **Thirty-five people were killed in the current wave of terrorism**, 29 civilians and 6 members of the Israeli security forces. **Most of them (16) were killed in shooting attacks**, the most lethal form of the current terrorist attacks. **Twelve were killed in stabbing attacks**, the most prevalent form of terrorist attack. Two were killed in vehicular attacks and one as a result of stones thrown by Palestinians. The overall number includes four who were killed by mistake when they were suspected of being terrorists or mistakenly shot by the Israeli security forces.

2. The number of people killed in the current wave of terrorism **has been significantly higher** than the combined number killed during the three years preceding it, **a direct result of the sharp increase in the number of terrorist attacks**. Therefore the waning of the current terrorist campaign during the past few months has brought with it **a decrease in the number of deaths (since March 8, 2016, when an American national was killed in a stabbing spree in Jaffa, no one has been killed)**.

Annual distribution of people killed by popular terrorism

