



# News of Terrorism and the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict

(August 17 – 23, 2016)



Site of a rocket hit in the southern Israeli city of Sderot. The rocket fell between two houses. There were no casualties and no damage was reported (Israel Police Force spokesman's unit, August 21, 2016).

## Overview

- This past week terrorist events focused on the rocket attack targeting the southern Israeli city of Sderot. A Salafi jihadist network and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) issued separate claims of responsibility for the attack. In response Israeli Air Force aircraft attacked Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) targets in the Gaza Strip. The Israeli response was greater in scope and intensity than previous responses to Gaza Strip rocket attacks carried out since the end of Operation Protective Edge (July-August 2014).
- Israel and Hamas both made it clear that they did not want the hostilities to escalate. **A senior IDF officer** said the attack had been exceptional but "there was no intention to cause the situation on the ground to deteriorate" (Haaretz, August 23, 2016). **Hamas spokesmen** condemned Israel for trying "to create new equations." They claimed Hamas was committed to the lull, adding that if Israel's attacks continued there would be a "clear response" from Hamas.

## Israel's South

### Rocket Fire Attacking Israel

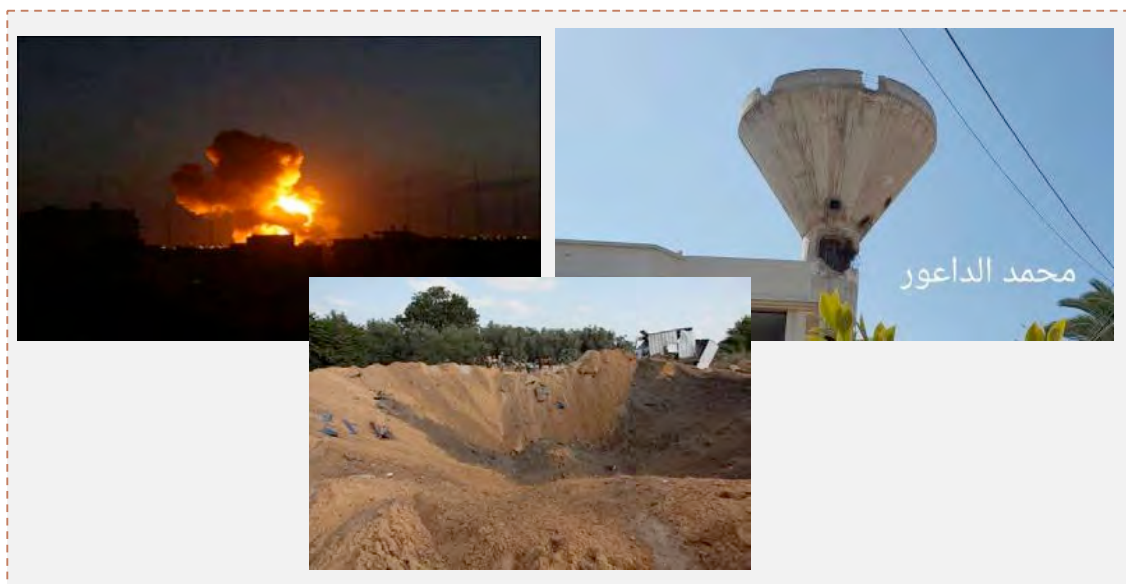
■ On the afternoon of **August 21, 2016**, a rocket hit was identified in Israeli territory in the southern city of Sderot. The rocket fell between two houses. **It was the third rocket hit identified in Sderot since Operation Protective Edge**. There were no casualties and no damage was reported. **A Salafi jihadist network called Aknaf Bayt al-Maqdis** claimed responsibility. The Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) also claimed responsibility, in response, according to its announcement, to the hunger strike of PFLP operative Bilal Kayed<sup>1</sup> (Twitter account of Gaza al-An, August 21, 2016).



The claim of responsibility for the rocket attack issued on the Salafi jihadist network's Twitter account.

■ In response to the rocket fire **Israeli Air Force aircraft attacked a number of Hamas and PIJ targets in the Gaza Strip**. In addition, the IDF fired mortar shells at Hamas targets in Beit Hanoun (northern Gaza Strip). **The Israeli response was greater in scope and intensity than previous responses to Gaza Strip rocket attacks carried out since the end of Operation Protective Edge**. There were **about 50 attacks**. According to Palestinian reports, among the targets were **posts, tunnels and observation points**. A number of Palestinians were also reported wounded, some of them suffering from shock (Twitter accounts of local residents, August 22, 2016).

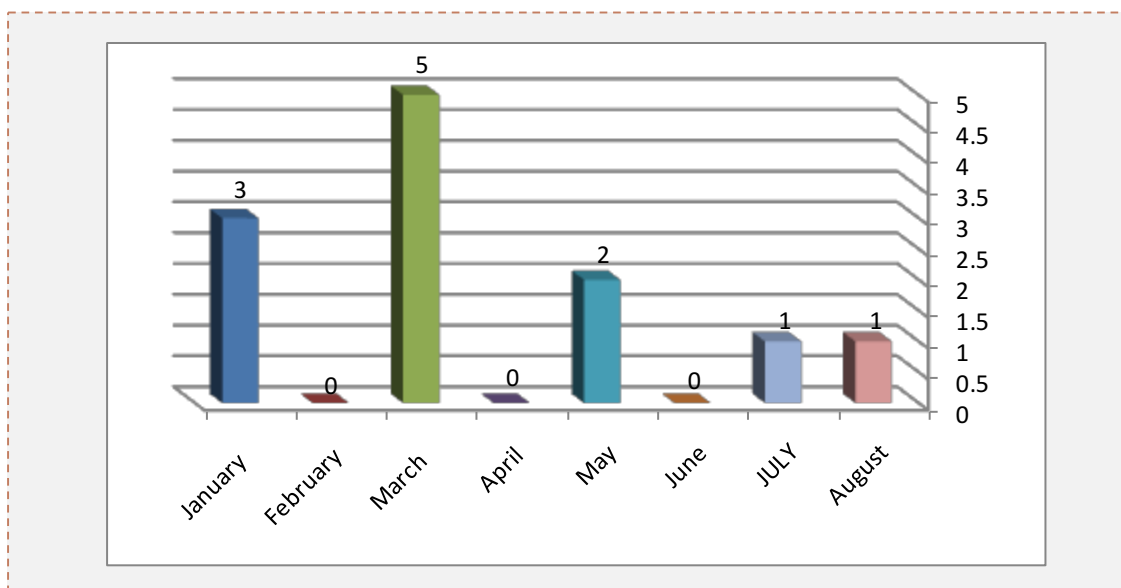
<sup>1</sup> Bilal Kayed is an administrative detainee, a PFLP terrorist operative who has been on a hunger strike for almost 70 days and has been hospitalized in Israel.



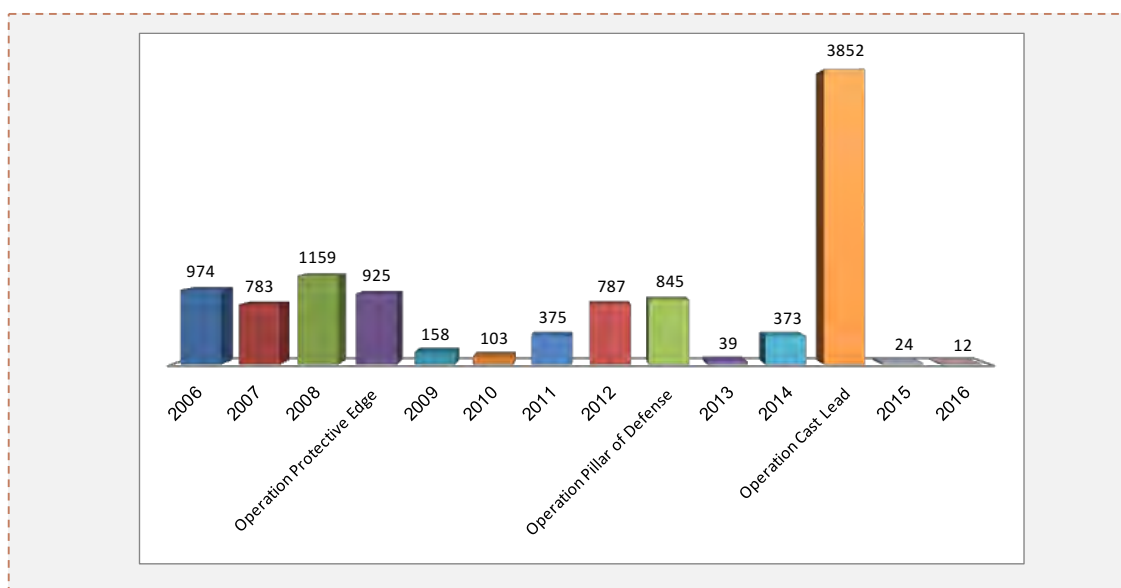
Palestinian media pictures of the IAF attack. Left: Night attack. Right: The water tower in Khan Yunis, which apparently doubled as an observation point (Facebook page of Quds.net, August 21, 2016). Bottom: Attack in the Beit Hanoun region (Facebook page of Shihab, August 22, 2016).

■ **Senior Hamas figures condemned Israel's response to the rocket fire but made it clear Hamas did not want the hostilities to escalate further. Hamas spokesman Sami Abu Zuhri** claimed Israel was responsible for the deterioration of the situation in the Gaza Strip. He claimed Israel continued its aggression against the Gaza Strip and the Palestinian people and was attempting "**to create new equations**" in the **Gaza Strip** (Hamas website, August 22, 2016). **Senior Hamas figure Mahmoud al-Zahar** claimed Hamas was committed to the lull "as long as Israel did not harm the Gaza Strip," but if the attacks continued Hamas' response would be decisive (Quds.net, August 22, 2016). **Senior Hamas figure Salah al-Bardawil** accused Israel of responsibility for a possible future escalation in the hostilities (Quds Press, August 22, 2016). **Hamas supporters used their personal Facebook and other social network pages to criticize those responsible for the rocket fire attacking Israel and called for them to be detained and tried in Hamas' military courts** (Shafa, August 21, 2016).

## Monthly Distribution of Rocket Fire, 2016



## Annual Distribution of Rocket Fire in Israel's South<sup>2</sup>



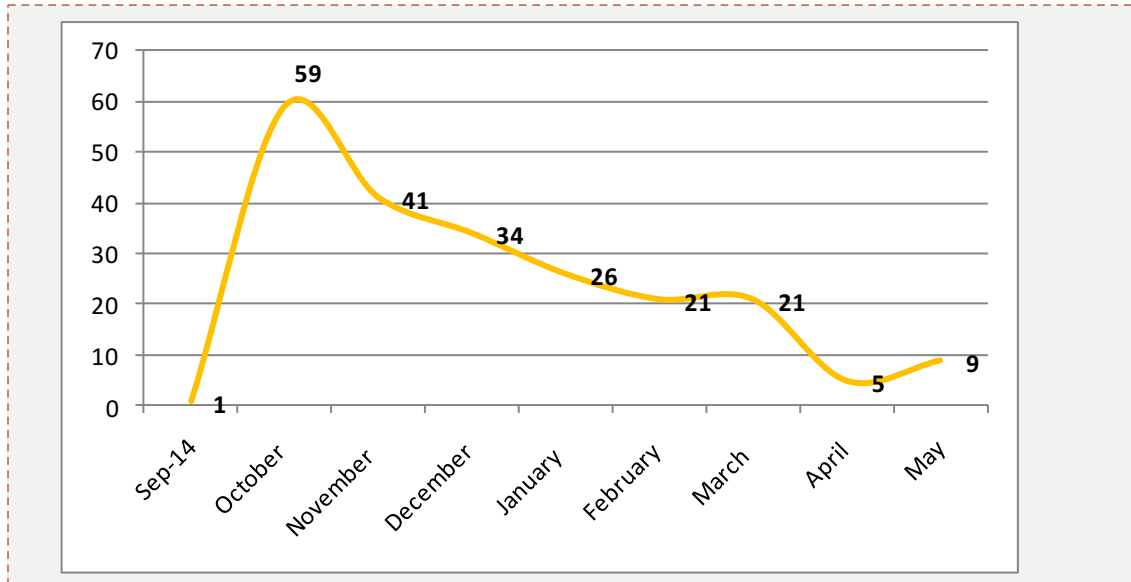
## Violence at the Border Security Fence

- On August 20, 2016, Palestinians approached the border security fence east of Gaza City and the al-Bureij refugee camp and threw stones at nearby IDF forces. According to Palestinian reports five people were injured (PNN, August 20, 2016).

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

## Terrorist Attacks

### Monthly Distribution of Terrorist Attacks in Judea, Samaria and Jerusalem



## Judea, Samaria and Jerusalem

### Riots, Clashes and Popular Terrorism

■ In the meantime, riots, the throwing of stones, Molotov cocktails and pipe bombs and light-arms fire continue in Judea, Samaria and Jerusalem.

■ The more prominent events were the following:

- **August 22, 2016** – On the night of August 22, 2016, several dozen Jewish worshippers entered **Joseph's Tomb near Nablus**. Their presence was unauthorized. Palestinians rioted and threw stones at them. The Israeli police were called to the site and extracted the worshippers (Spokesman for the Judea and Samaria police district, August 23, 2016). A 17 year-old boy was injured by stones Palestinians threw at a bus near Joseph's Tomb (Spokesman for Magen David Adom, August 22, 2016).

- **August 21, 2016** – Palestinians threw six pipe bombs at IDF forces operating near the **al-Far'a refugee camp (near Nablus)**. The soldiers responded by firing their weapons, wounding a Palestinian (Facebook page of Red Alert, August 21, 2016).

- **August 21, 2016** – Palestinians threw stones and Israeli vehicles five kilometers (three miles) **north of the village of Mehola in the Jordan Valley**. One of the drivers swerved to avoid the stones and hit one of the Palestinian attackers, who escaped (Facebook page of Red Alert, August 21, 2016).
- **August 20, 2016** – Palestinians attacked an Israeli police car at **a junction in the Hebron region**. There were no casualties and no damage was reported. One of the policemen fired his weapon and the attackers fled (Facebook page of Red Alert, August 20, 2016).
- **August 20, 2016** – Palestinians threw stones at an Israeli vehicle on **the Husan bypass road** (the road to Beitar, west of Bethlehem). One of the passengers incurred minor wounds. The vehicle was damaged (Judea and Samaria Rescue, August 20, 2016).
- **August 16, 2016** – Palestinians rioted against the Israeli security forces in the **al-Fawwar refugee camp (southern Hebron)** after an Israeli security force action in the camp. A 17 year-old Palestinian was killed and about 20 Palestinians were injured (PNN and Facebook page of Shihab, August 17, 2016; Wafa, August 19, 2016). **Hamas spokesman Sami Abu Zuhri** condemned the Israeli action in the refugee camp and stressed that such "crimes" would not break the spirit of the Palestinian people (Hamas website, August 16, 2016).



**A Palestinian in Bila'in holds stones to throw at an Israeli security vehicle (Facebook page of the village of Bila'in, August 16, 2016).**

## Transfer of Currency for Hamas Purposes

■ An indictment was handed down against **Saif al-Din Abd al-Nabi**, 39 years old, from Jerusalem. According to the indictment for years he was a long-time acquaintance of **Zakaria Najib, a Hamas operative** who was sentenced to jail in the past and released. **The two had met in Turkey when Abd al-Nabi was on a business trip.** Najib asked him to transfer funds into Israel and distribute them for Hamas purposes to the families of "martyrs" and security prisoners. After the initial meeting the two met in Turkey a number of times during Abd al-Nabi's business trips. Abd al-Nabi received **a total of about \$25,000**, which he transferred to Israel by hiding the money on his person, and then distributed the funds as requested.

## Developments in the Gaza Strip

### The Crossings – Recent Developments

■ The Israeli coordinator for government activities in the territories posted **data about the activities of the Kerem Shalom crossing between August 14 and 20, 2016.** According to the report, imports into the Gaza Strip included 97 tons of medical equipment, about 10,000 tons of food, 130 tons of agricultural produce, about 97 tons of building materials, 7.2 million liters of fuel and 1,400 tons of cooking gas (Arabic Facebook page of the Israeli coordinator for government activities in the territories, August 22, 2016). **Even after the rocket attack on Sderot, merchandise continued to enter the Gaza Strip through the Kerem Shalom crossing.**

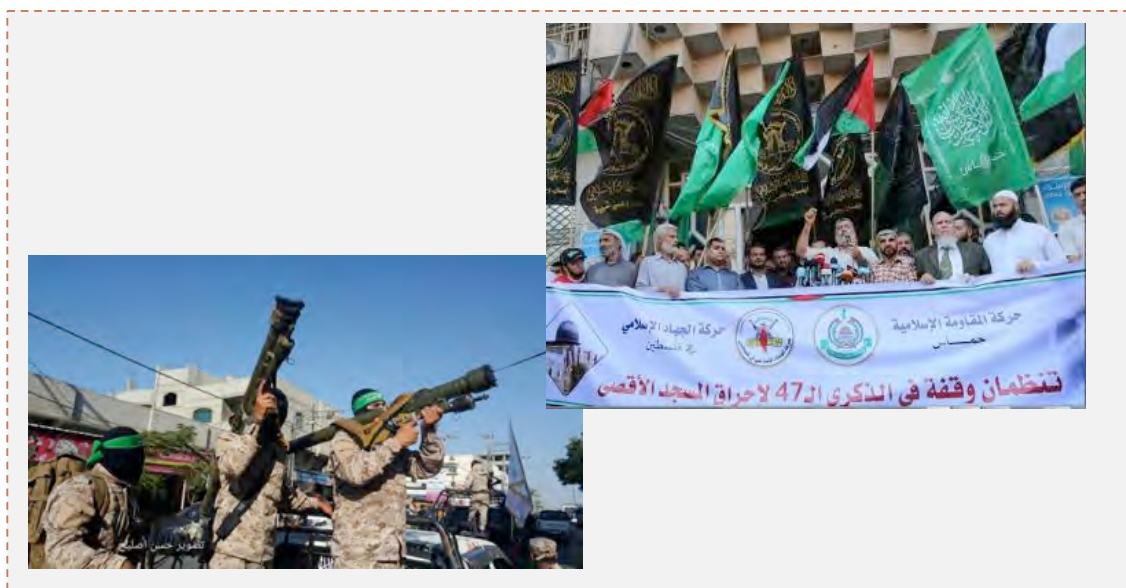
### The Gaza Strip Marks the 47th Anniversary of the Arson at Al-Aqsa Mosque

■ Hamas' military-terrorist wing marked the 47<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the arson at Al-Aqsa mosque<sup>3</sup> with a rally in Rafah which included a display of various Izz al-Din Qassam Brigades weapons. Izz al-Din Qassam Brigades spokesman **Abu Obeida** gave a speech where he claimed that Operation Protective Edge had changed the balance of terror with Israel and the Hamas' military wing would not stop preparing for the next round of combat with Israel. He also warned Israel not to do "anything stupid" in the Gaza Strip (Izz al-Din Qassam Brigades website, August 21, 2016). Hamas and the

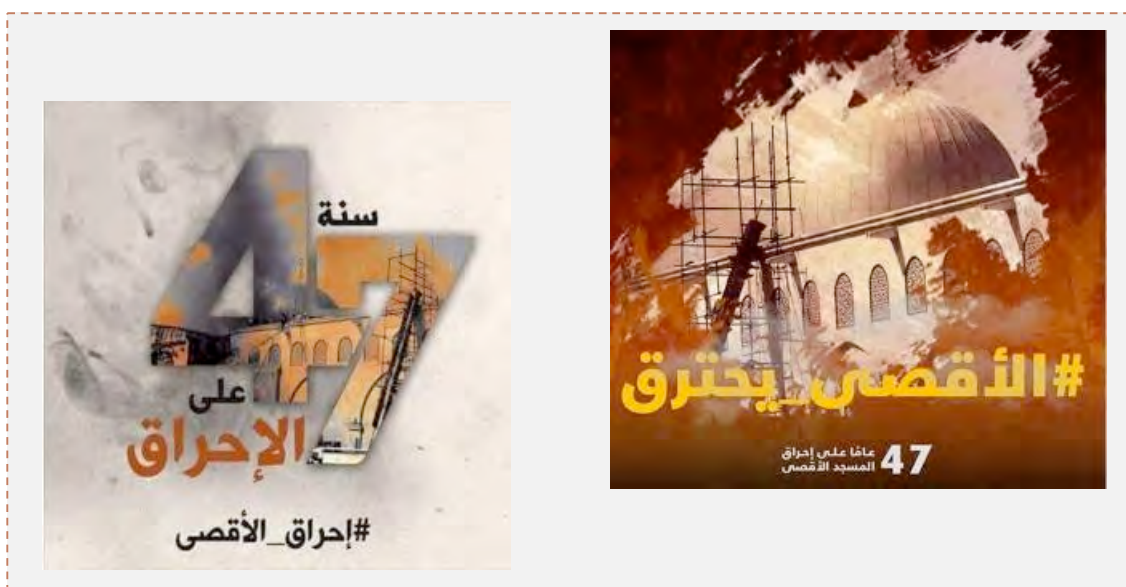
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<sup>3</sup> On August 21, 1969, **Denis Michael Rohan**, a young Christian from Australia, set fire to the pulpit of Al-Aqsa mosque, causing damage. He was detained the following day and during interrogation admitted lighting the fire. The Israeli court judged him insane and ordered him to be hospitalized in a psychiatric facility. In 1974 he was deported to Australia, where he died in 1995 (Wikipedia)

PIJ held a joint rally in Gaza City, attended by senior figures from both organizations (Paltoday, August 21, 2016).



Left: The Hamas rally in Rafah. Hamas terrorist operatives display rocket launchers (Facebook page of Quds.net, August 21, 2016). Right: The joint Hamas-PIJ rally in Gaza City (Paltoday, August 21, 2016).



Notices marking the 47th anniversary of the arson at Al-Aqsa mosque. Left: "47 years since the arson. The burning of Al-Aqsa mosque" (Facebook page of Paldf, August 21, 2016). Right: "Al-Aqsa burns. 47 years since the arson at Al-Aqsa mosque" (Facebook page of QudsN, August 21, 2016).

■ Senior Palestinian figures exploited the event to slander Israel and spread lies about the so-called "danger threatening Al-Aqsa mosque" in an attempt to renew tensions.

- The foreign ministry of the Palestinian national consensus government issued a formal condemnation of the so-called "crimes" carried out by Israel against Al-Aqsa mosque and Jerusalem, claiming no proper response had been

given. According to the announcement, Israel continues "using force" to "Judaize" Jerusalem (Al-Kofia Press, August 21, 2016).

- **Yusuf al-Mahmoud, spokesman for the national consensus government**, warned of the so-called "dangers" threatening Al-Aqsa mosque and called on the international community and the Arab-Muslim countries to intervene immediately to "rescue" the mosque (Wafa, date, 2016).

- **Senior Hamas figure Khalil al-Haya** claimed that no part of Al-Aqsa mosque should be given up. He claimed the Palestinians had an army of men eager to liberate Al-Aqsa mosque, Jerusalem and all Palestine. He claimed they would not give up the "path of resistance" [i.e., violence and terrorism] (Al-Watania al-Alam, August 21, 2016).

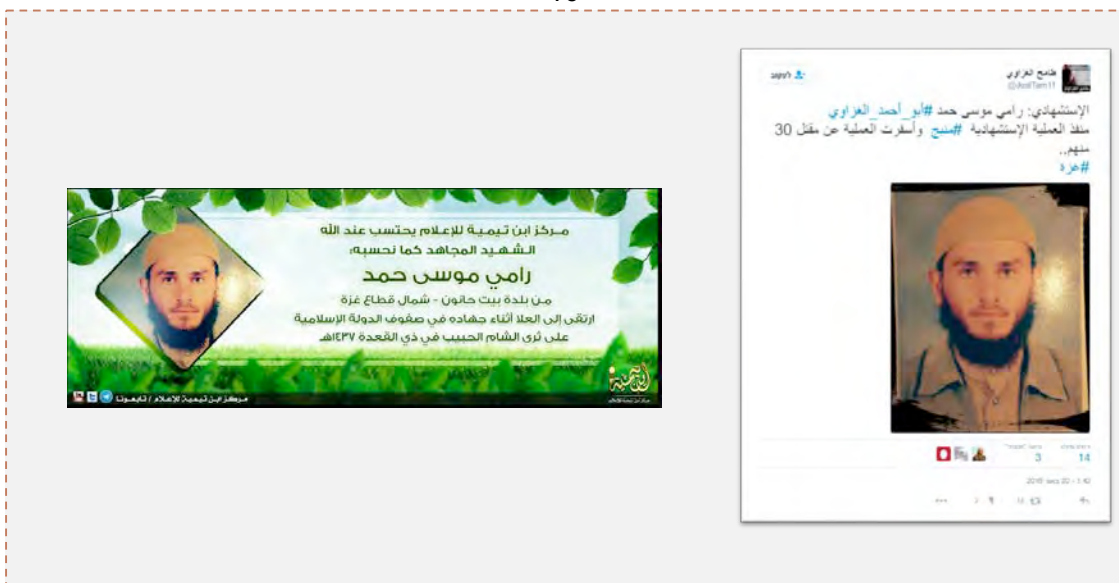
## Tunnel Exposed on the Egypt-Gaza Strip Border

- The Egyptian army reported it had exposed a tunnel with iron and reinforced concrete walls on the border between Egypt and the Gaza Strip (north of the Rafah crossing). The tunnel was discovered after it had been flooded. According to the report cell phones and drugs were found in it (Al-Karama Press, August 18, 2016).

## Deaths of Gazans in Syria

- Two Palestinians from Beit Hanoun were reportedly killed in Syria fighting in the ranks of ISIS:

- **Rami Musa Hamed, aka Abu Ahmed the Gazan**, was reported killed. He was in his 20s and died carrying out a suicide bombing attack against Kurdish SDF forces in the northern Syrian city of Manbij. His wife, who lives in Syria, reported his death to the family in Beit Hanoun. Rami Musa Hamed left the Gaza Strip for Syria five years ago. The Ibn Taymiyyah Media Center, affiliated with Salafi jihadists in the Gaza Strip, issued a formal death notice for him. The Facebook page of Beit Hanoun posted mixed reactions to his death. Some of them wished him a peaceful rest and some hoped he would go to hell. Others criticized him for preferring to fight in Syria to waging jihad for the sake of Jerusalem (Facebook page of Beit Hanoun, August 19, 2016).



Left: The formal Ibn Taymiyyah Media Center death notice for Rami Musa Hamed, aka Abu Ahmed the Gazan (Facebook page of the Ibn Taymiyyah Media Center, August 21, 2016) Right: Rami Musa Hamed, who attacked the SDF forces in the Syrian city of Manbij by detonating a car bomb (Twitter account of Tameh the Gazan, August 20, 2016).

- On August 23, 2016, **Rami Daoud al-Kafarneh**, aka **Abu Malik the Gazan**, was reported killed in the battles in the Aleppo in Syria. He was killed in an American attack on forces fighting the Kurds in Aleppo. He allegedly survived an Israeli targeted attack in 2011. He was reportedly imprisoned in Egypt and in the Gaza Strip in the past (Twitter account of @fadnt99, August 23, 2016).



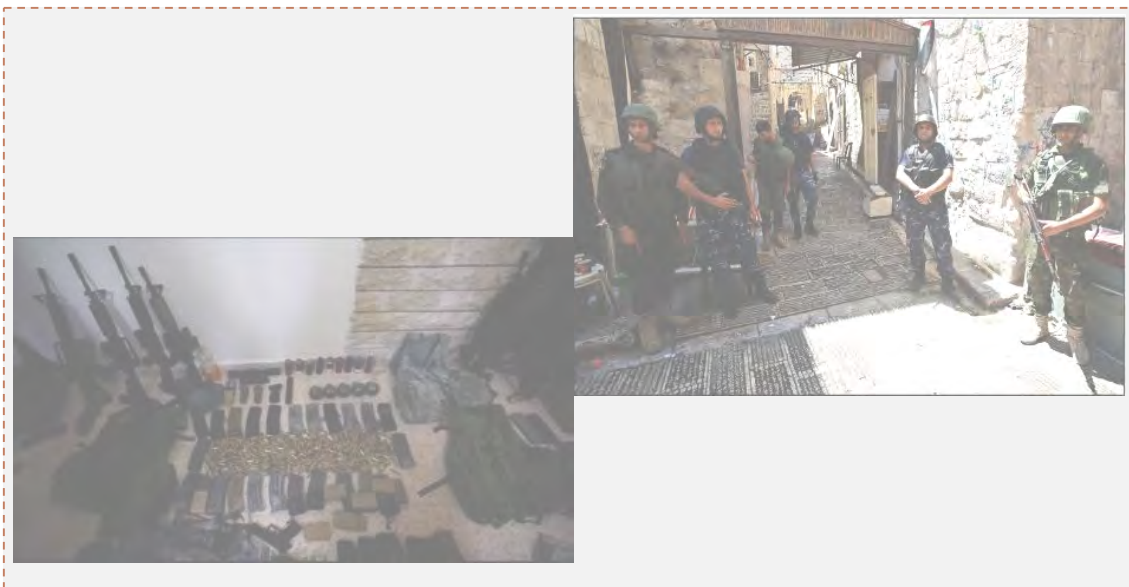
Left: The death notice for Rami Daoud al-Kafarneh issued by the al-Nusra al-Maqdisiya institution. Right: Al-Kafarneh in Syria (Twitter account of @fadnt99, August 22, 2016).

## The Palestinian Authority

### PA Security Force Activities in Nablus

■ On August 18, 2016, the Palestinian Authority (PA) security forces carried out a security activity in the Old City in Nablus to locate armed operatives. Armed Palestinians shot at them, killing two and wounding two others (according to Mahmoud Abbas, one of the men killed was an operative in the police special forces and the other in the general security service). Following the incident, **a large security force entered Nablus, killed two armed Palestinians**, wounded others and confiscated several weapons (Al-Quds, August 20, 2016). On the night of August 21, 2016, the PA security forces detained the two prime suspects in the shooting (Wafa, August 21, 2016).

■ According to **Adnan al-Damiri, spokesman for the PA security forces**, the action in the Old City of Nablus was part of an ongoing operation to end the possession of illegal guns by local Palestinians. He said the operation had been ordered by Mahmoud Abbas and Palestinian Prime Minister Rami Hamdallah. During the action the forces were shot at and returned fire, causing the deaths of the two Palestinians. He also reported that the PA security forces had seized a large quantity of weapons and ammunition held by illegal bodies in Nablus (Wafa, August 19, 2016).



Left: Weapons seized in Nablus (Facebook page of Paldf, August 21, 2016). Right: PA security forces deployed in the Old City of Nablus to ensure public order after the violence (Wafa, August 21, 2016).

■ **Rami Hamdallah, prime minister in the Palestinian national consensus government**, said in an interview that the PA had 31,994 security force personnel. He claimed there were 88,755 Palestinians involved in security, and that there was a

lack of manpower because a decision on cutbacks had been made. He added that the "Israeli occupation" was the main obstacle to security and stability in the Palestinian Authority (Al-Ayam, August 16, 2016).

## Reactions to the Israeli Defense Minister's Plan

■ The Israeli media reported that on August 17, 2016, **Israeli Defense Minister Avigdor Lieberman presented an overall plan for an Israel security policy in Judea and Samaria**. According to the plan there would be special conditions for 15 villages from which no terrorists had come and where life was conducted normally. They would receive resources for constructing hospitals and soccer fields, city master construction plans would be enlarged and industrial zones would be established. For regions from which terrorists did come, inspections would be tightened, work permits for Israel would be revoked and there would be more detentions.

■ In response, **Fatah spokesman Osama al-Qawasmeh** called the plan "laughable." He said the Palestinian people would always choose respect and not favors from Lieberman (Al-Mayadeen TV, August 18, 2016). **Ahmed Majdalani, a member of the PLO's Executive Committee**, called for resistance to the plan, saying that **anyone who cooperated with Avigdor Lieberman's plan would be considered a collaborator and a law-breaker** (Paltoday, August 20, 2016).

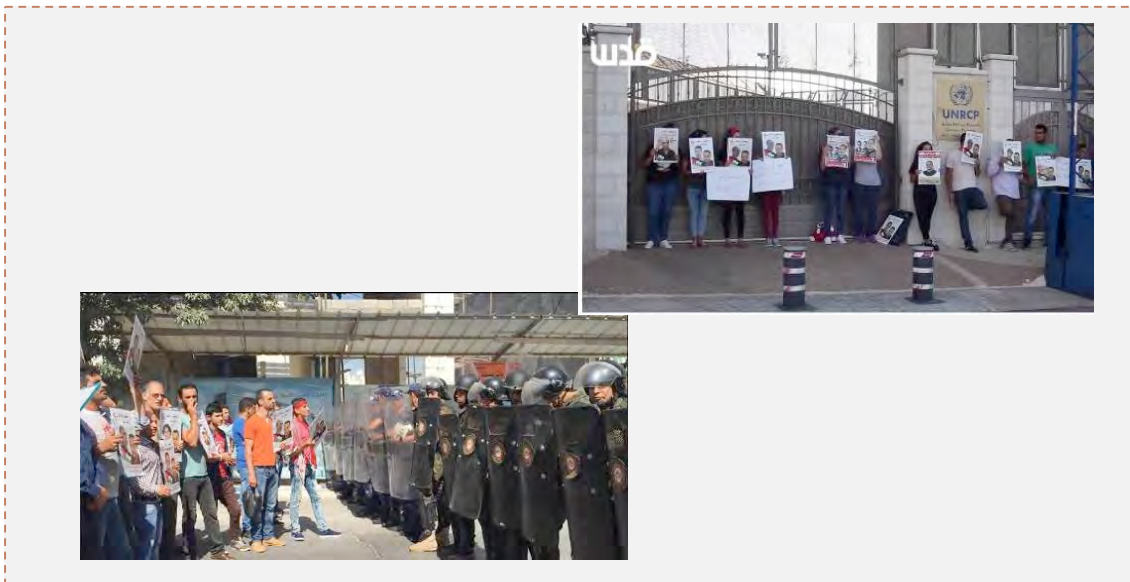
■ **An Internet survey** conducted by the Ma'an website in Bethlehem indicated that 72% of the web users regarded the plan as an empty threat of no value. On the other hand, 21% regarded it as a genuine threat (Ma'an, August 22, 2016).



Hamas cartoon. The Arabic reads, "Lieberman: I will use the carrot and the stick with the Palestinians..." (Facebook page of Paldf, August 18, 2016).

## Demonstration in Ramallah for the PFLP Operative on a Hunger Strike

■ Palestinians in Judea, Samaria and the Gaza Strip continued holding demonstrations in support of Bilal Kayed, a PFLP terrorist operative and administrative detainee **who has been on a hunger strike for almost 70 days**. During a demonstration held in front of the UN building in Ramallah approximately 30 demonstrators blocked the main entrance to protest what they called the UN's neglect of hunger striking prisoners. They waved signs protesting the silence of the international community (Ma'an, August 22, 2016). Other demonstrators tried to enter the Muqata'a (the PA governmental compound in Ramallah) but were prevented by the PA security forces. The PFLP condemned the PA security forces for suppressing the rally.



**Left: The PA security forces prevent Palestinian demonstrators from entering the Muqata'a in Ramallah. Right: Palestinian demonstrators block the entrance to the UN building in Ramallah (Facebook page of QudsN, August 22, 2016).**