



# News of Terrorism and the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict

## (November 16 – 22, 2016)



**Abdallah al-Ashqar, aka Abu al-Muhtaseb al-Maqqdisi, a senior Salafi jihadist operative in the Gaza Strip and in ISIS's Sinai Province. He was detained by Hamas' security forces in the Gaza Strip on November 15, 2016 (al-Haq, April 12, 2013)**

### Overview

- This past week Palestinian popular terrorism continued, including an attempted stabbing attack at the Qalandia crossing (north of Jerusalem). A Palestinian terrorist tried to stab a security guard and struggled with him. He was shot and killed. Palestinians continued throwing stones at Israeli vehicles and at the Israeli security forces.
- The Hamas security forces detained Abdallah al-Ashqar, a senior Salafi jihadist terrorist operative in the Gaza Strip and in ISIS's Sinai Province. He was involved in dispatching a terrorist operative from the Gaza Strip to the Sinai Peninsula and his name is on the American list of designated global terrorists. After his detention Salafists in the Gaza Strip initiated a campaign threatening they would "destroy and burn" Hamas. In ITIC assessment, as in the past, the tensions in the Gaza Strip between Hamas and the Salafist-jihadists are liable to lead the jihadist networks to launch rockets at Israel to challenge Hamas.

## Judea, Samaria and Jerusalem

### Terrorist Attacks and Attempted Terrorists Attacks

■ On November 22, 2016, a Palestinian went to the Qalandia crossing (north of Jerusalem). He walked towards the guards securing the crossing, arousing their suspicions. One of the guards approached him and asked him to identify himself. When asked to take his hands out of his pockets, he took out a knife and tried to stab the guard several times. They struggled and the Palestinian was shot and killed. According to the Palestinian ministry of health he was **Jihad Muhammad Sayid Khalil**, 48, from the village of Bayt Wazan, west of Nablus (Ma'an, November 22, 2016).

### Riots, Clashes and Popular Terrorism

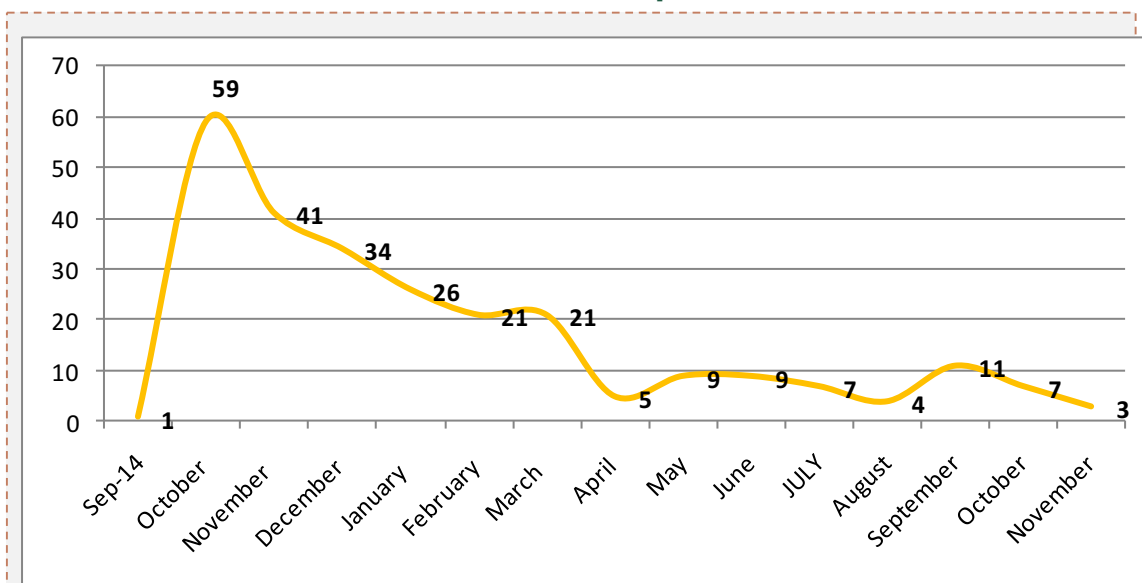
■ In the meantime, Palestinian popular terrorism continues. This past week Palestinians threw stones at Israeli cars and buses in Judea and Samaria. In some instances the vehicles were damaged. Palestinians also shot at IDF forces and threw Molotov cocktails at them.

■ The more prominent events were the following:

- **November 20, 2016** – Palestinians threw stones at an Israeli bus carrying IDF soldiers near **al-Ram in Benyamin** (north Jerusalem). Three soldiers incurred minor injuries. The windshield of the bus was damaged (Judea and Samaria Rescue, November 20, 2016)
- **November 19, 2016** – Palestinians shot at an Israeli police patrol car at the **al-Zayim roadblock near Jerusalem**. There were no casualties. The shooter escaped (Facebook page of Red Alert, November 19, 2016).
- **November 18, 2016** – A Border Policeman was injured when Palestinians threw stones during the weekly riot near **the village of Qadoum in Samaria** (Judea and Samaria Rescue, November 19, 2016).
- **November 18, 2016** – Palestinians threw an improvised hand grenade at Israeli security forces in the **Abu Dis area**. There were no casualties. A search was instituted for the terrorists (Facebook page of Red Alert, November 18, 2016).
- **November 18, 2016** – Palestinians threw stones at an Israeli vehicle in the region of **Sinjil in Benyamin** (northeast of Ramallah). The driver was injured and the vehicle was damaged (Facebook page of Red Alert, November 18, 2016).

- **November 17, 2016** – Palestinians shot at the community of **Yizhar (near Nablus)**. There were no casualties. A search was instituted to find the shooters (Facebook page of Red Alert, November 17, 2016).
- **November 17, 2016** – The Israeli security forces detained a Palestinian from Nablus at **the Tapuah Junction in Samaria**. An M-16 assault rifle was found in his vehicle. He was detained and taken for interrogation (Facebook page of Red Alert, November 17, 2016).
- **November 16, 2016** – Palestinians threw stones at an Israeli motorcycle at the **Givat Assaf Junction (near Beit El)**. The motorcyclist incurred minor injuries (Facebook page of Red Alert, November 16, 2016).

### Significant Terrorist Attacks in Judea, Samaria and Jerusalem since September 2015

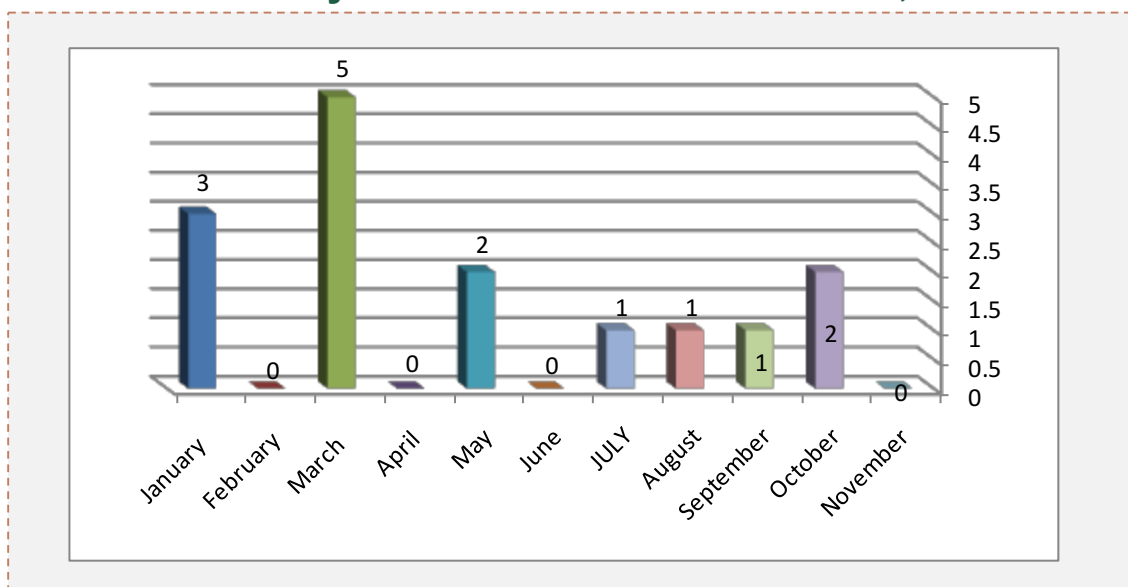


## Israel's South

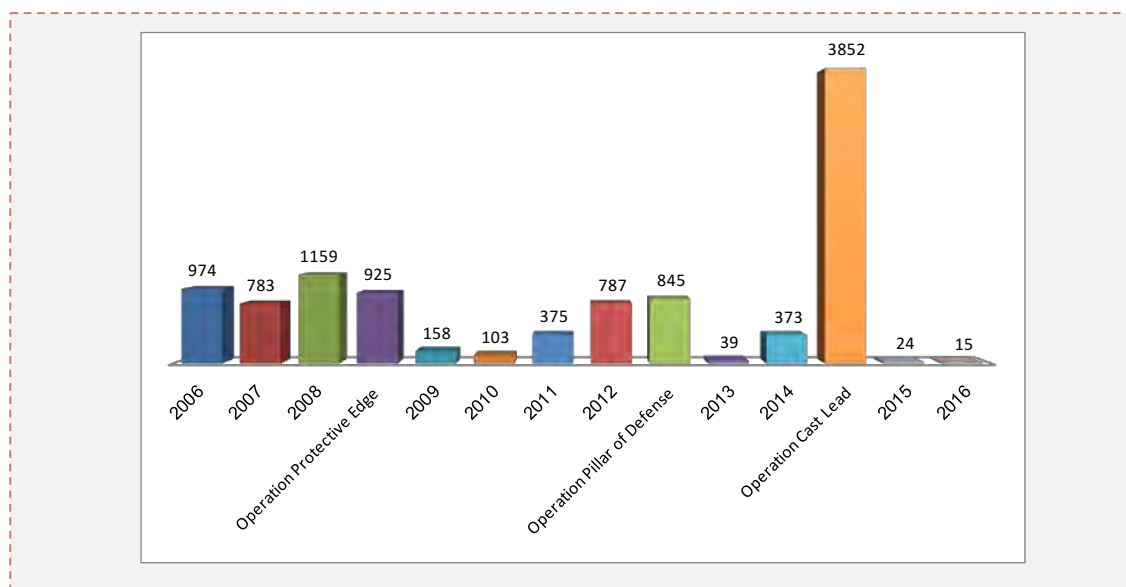
### Rocket Fire Attacking Israel

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

## Monthly Distribution of Rocket Fire, 2016



## Annual Distribution of Rocket Fire in Israel's South<sup>1</sup>



## Violence at the Border Security Fence

■ A number of violent incidents occurred along the Israeli-Gaza border this past week:

- **On November 17, 2016**, the Israeli security forces detained two Palestinians who infiltrated into Israeli territory in the **Kerem Shalom** area. When searched they were found to be carrying **two fragmentation grenades** (Facebook page of Red Alert, November 17, 2016). The following day **IDF forces found a pipe**

<sup>1</sup> The statistics do not include mortar shell fire or rockets which misfired and fell inside the Gaza Strip.

**bomb near the western Negev village of Re'im** (Facebook page of Red Alert, November 18, 2016).

- **On November 16, 2016**, several Palestinians crossed the border security fence in the region of **al-Bureij in the central Gaza Strip**. They threw stones at IDF soldiers, **seriously wounding two of them. The soldiers shot at them, killing one Palestinian and wounding four others.** The Palestinian media reported that the Palestinian who had been killed was **Muhammad Abu Saada**, 26, from the al-Bureij refugee camp, and that in the past he had participated in clashes near the border security fence. **He was apparently an operative in the Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades**, Fatah's military-terrorist wing, in the Gaza Strip (Facebook pages of Gaza al-A'an and Palinfo, November 18 and 19, 2016)



**Left: The funeral held for Muhammad Abu Saada, with the participation of armed Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades terrorist operatives (Facebook page of Gaza al-A'an, November 19, 2016). Right: Muhammad Abu Saada (Facebook page of Gaza al-A'an, November 18, 2016).**

- In an interview the Israeli coordinator for government activities in the territories, General Mordechai, said Hamas was responsible for the gatherings and violent incidents near the border security fence. He also said that anyone who tried to enter Israeli territory was risking his own life. He added that one of the two Palestinians who infiltrated into Israeli territory near Kerem Shalom on November 17, 2016, had planted an IED (Ma'an, November 18, 2016).

## Developments in the Gaza Strip

### Opening the Rafah Crossing and Strengthening Gaza's Economic Relations with Egypt

■ On **November 19, 2016**, the Gaza Strip was closed after the Egyptian authorities had opened it for five days (Website of the ministry of the interior in the Gaza Strip, November 18, 2016). During the days it was open 2,664 Gazans left for Egypt and 1,443 Gazans entered the Strip (Twitter account of Ajil from Gaza, November 20, 2016). One of the Gazans leaving the Strip was **Hamas spokesman Sami Abu Zuhri**, who received permission from the authorities to enter Egypt (Quds.net, November 17, 2016).



Gazans at the Rafah crossing on the fourth day it was open (YouTube, November 17, 2016).

■ **Abd al-Fatah Musa, spokesman for the ministry of economics in the Gaza Strip**, said that while the Rafah crossing was open the Egyptian authorities allowed **5,000 tons of cement** to be imported into the Gaza Strip. He said it was a positive step for rebuilding the Gaza Strip, especially in view of the "limitations" Israel placed on the import of cement (al-Anadolu News, November 19, 2016). On another occasion he said that the amount of cement was smaller than that imported into the Gaza Strip through the Kerem Shalom crossing during one day (watan.ps, November 20, 2016)

■ **Senior Hamas figure Musheir al-Masri** welcomed the steps taken by Egypt to ease the situation in the Gaza Strip. He said lifting the siege of the Gaza Strip was a humanitarian need. He also said Hamas wanted to develop and improve its relations with Egypt (Quds.net, November 19, 2016).

## Hamas Anti-Salafist Activities

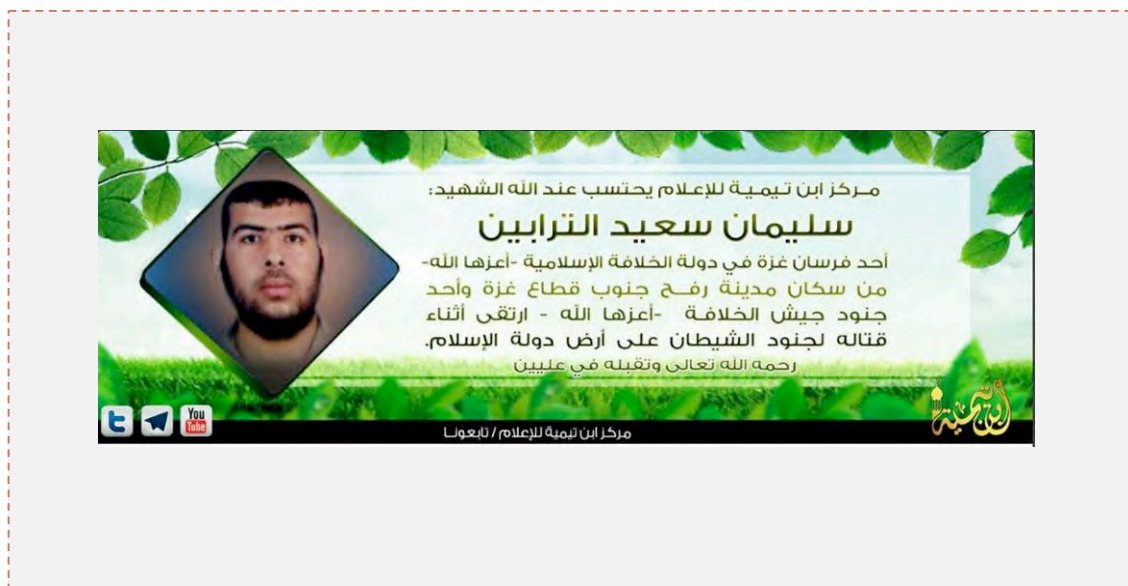
- Salafists in the Gaza Strip reported that on **November 15, 2016**, Hamas' internal security forces had detained **Abdallah al-Ashqar**, aka **Abu al-Muhtaseb al-Maqdisi**, a senior Salafi jihadist operative in the Gaza Strip and in ISIS's Sinai Province. He lived in the Nuseirat refugee camp, was born in Libya and graduated with a degree in engineering from the Islamic University in the Gaza Strip. He was involved in firing rockets from the Gaza Strip into the Sinai Peninsula. He was wanted by Israel because of his involvement in terrorist attacks and by Hamas for firing rockets into Israeli territory (npa-egypt, November 15, 2016). On **January 14, 2015**, his name was put on the American State Department list of global terrorists as heading **Mujahidin Shura Council of the Environs of Jerusalem (MSC)**, designated a **Foreign Terrorist Organization by the United States** (Website of the American State Department, January 14, 2015).
- His detention by Hamas led the Salafists in the Gaza Strip to threaten (via the social networks) that they would go from "electronic jihad to jihad on the ground." **One of them threatened that "black days" were waiting for Hamas and that the Salafists would "destroy and burn" Hamas.** They claimed every attempt made by Hamas to destroy the Salafists in the Gaza Strip would fail and that they would not be influenced by the death or detention of their leader.



Notice calling on Hamas to stop detaining Salafist operatives in the Gaza Strip (Twitter account of Tamah the Gazan, November 20, 2016).

## Gazan Killed in Mosul

- The Salafist-affiliated Ibn Taymiyyah Media Center in the Gaza Strip reported the death of **Suleiman Sayid al-Tarabin** from Rafah, who was killed in Mosul fighting in the ranks of ISIS (Ibn Taymiyyah Media Center, November 20, 2016).

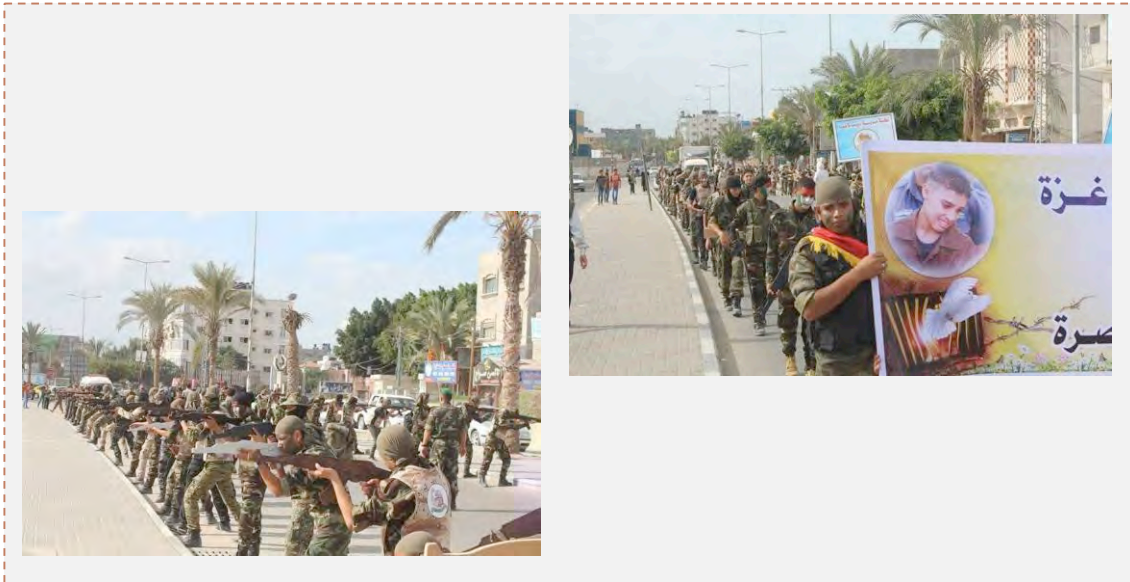


Death notice issued by the Ibn Taymiyyah Media Center for Suleiman Sayid al-Tarabin (Ibn Taymiyyah Media Center, November 20, 2016).

## Solidarity March Held for 13 Year-Old Stabber

- On November 17, 2016, pupils in the al-Futuwwa program of the ministry of the interior in the Gaza Strip (a semi-military program for most of the pupils in the Gaza Strip) held a march in the northern Gaza Strip in solidarity with **Ahmed Manasra**. He is a 13 year-old boy who, with his cousin, **carried out a stabbing attack in Givat Ze'ev (north Jerusalem) on October 12, 2015**. The march was held after an Israeli court sentenced him on October 7, 2016, to 12 years in jail (Facebook page of Gaza al-A'an, November 17, 2016).





Left: Students in uniform with wooden rifles demonstrate in support of Ahmed Manasra. Right: Students in uniform carry signs in support of Ahmed Manasra (Facebook page of Gaza al-A'an, November 17, 2016).

## The Palestinian Authority (PA)

### Preparations for the 7th Fatah Conference

- Preparations continue for the 7th Fatah conference, which will be held in the Muqata'a in Ramallah on November 29, 2016. Mahmoud Abu al-Hija, conference spokesman, said administrative and professional preparations had been completed. He said **1,400 representatives** would attend from Judea, Samaria, the Gaza Strip and abroad (Wafa, November 21, 2016).
- **Jamal Muheisen, a member of Fatah's Central Committee**, said Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) had been invited to attend the conference's opening session (Ma'an, November 21, 2016). According to the Twitter account of **Musa Abu Marzouq, a member of Hamas' political bureau**, the conference is a national issue for the entire Palestinian people and he would welcome the conference if it were seeking unity (November 21, 2016).
- Hamas agreed in principle that it would allow Fatah activists to leave the Gaza Strip to participate in the conference. Sources in Hamas promised to make it easy for them to leave once a list of names had been received (al-Quds, November 17, 2016). There would be about 400 Fatah activists (shasha.press). November 15, 2016). On November 21, 2016, it was reported that 37 Fatah representatives had already left the Gaza Strip for the conference (Safa, November 21, 2016).
- **Amin Maqboul, secretary of Fatah's Revolutionary Council**, said that the documents for the conference were ready. They dealt with the political program, the national construction program, changes in the internal bylaws and reports prepared

by members of the Central Committee. **Fahmi al-Zaarour, spokesman for the conference's preparatory committee**, said no significant changes would be made in Fatah's political vision or in the basic bylaws relating to fundamental principles and objectives, and the means of achieving them. That, he said, was because Fatah was of the opinion that an armed struggle was not the best path at the current time (Dunia al-Watan, November 16, 2016).

■ **Muhammad Ashtia, a member of Fatah's Central Committee**, said the 7<sup>th</sup> conference was important for all Palestinians and would provide validation for Fatah's principles. He said it would stress the principles of the **"pure popular resistance" according to the model of the first intifada, which was based on popular participation in the struggle** (Voice of Palestine, November 20, 2016).

## **Clashes between Armed Palestinians and PA Security Force Operatives**

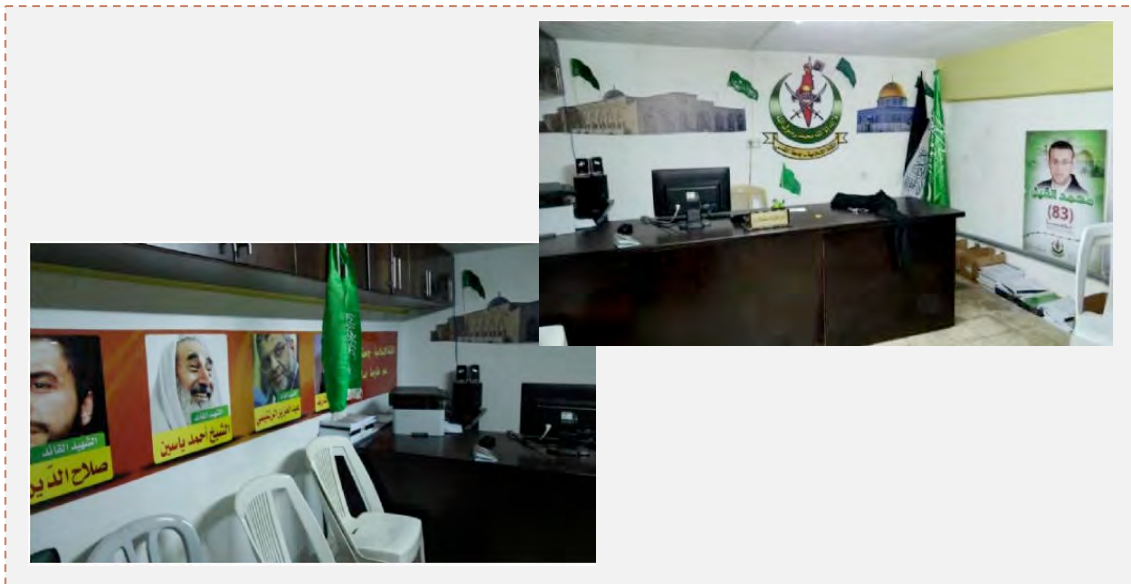
■ On the morning of November 16, 2016, armed Palestinians rioted against operatives of the PA security forces in the Old City in Nablus. A Palestinian woman was killed by a stray bullet and five other Palestinians were wounded. The clashed continued throughout the morning and noon. **Adnan al-Damiri, spokesman for the PA security forces**, claimed the armed Palestinians were operating under the aegis of Israel ("the occupation forces," i.e., the IDF). **Akram Rajoub, Nablus governor**, claimed the armed Palestinians had exploited the entrance of "the occupation forces" into Nablus to shoot at the governor's office building/residence in Nablus, which showed the shooting had been "a deliberate plot" (Ma'an, PNN, Facebook page of QudsN, November 16, 2016)



Left: The Old City in Nablus after the riots. Right: Clashes in the Old City in Nablus (Facebook page of QudsN, November 16, 2016).

## Preventing Hamas Student Organization from Holding Exhibition

- The Islamic faction identified with Hamas in al-Quds University in Abu Dis reported that IDF forces broke into an exhibition held in the university and destroyed the displays. The IDF also seized flags, broke into a storage room used by the faction and took its contents (al-Aqsa TV, November 9, 2016). The day before it was reported that PA general intelligence operatives had raided the exhibition and detained two members of the Hamas faction.
- The events at al-Quds University led to protests criticizing the IDF activity which ignored, they claimed, all international conventions and laws (Dunia al-Watan, November 20, 2016). Hamas spokesman **Husam Badran** condemned the actions of the PA security forces. He claimed the action illustrated the fear that **the Islamic faction would spread "the culture of resistance"** [i.e., the culture of terrorism] among university students and expose the "disgrace" of the security coordination between the PA and Israel (Hamas website, November 19, 2016).



Pictures of senior Hamas figures and operatives at an exhibition held by the Islamic faction at Abu Dis University before the IDF activity (asdaapress, November 19, 2016).

## Protests against the "Muezzin Law" Continue

- This past week protests continued against the proposed law prohibiting the use of public address systems in the mosques in Israel. Palestinians held a protest demonstration in the center of Nablus attended by Akram Rajoub, the district governor. Demonstrators held signs reading "The call of the muezzin will not be silenced," and later burned an Israeli flag (Wafa and the Facebook page of alresala.net, November 20, 2016)
- Hamas organized a protest demonstration in the Jabalia refugee camp. Demonstrators held signs protesting the law (Twitter account of Paldf, November 18, 2016). Palestinian websites, among them sites affiliated with Hamas, posted notices condemning the proposed law (Facebook page of QudsN, November 16, 2016).



Left: Palestinians burn an Israeli flag during a demonstration in Nablus. Right: Children in Nablus protest the "muezzin law," joined by Akram Rajoub, Nablus governor (Wafa and Facebook page of alresala.net, November 20, 2016)



Left: "The call of the muezzin will not be silenced. Allahu akbar. Allahu akbar" (Facebook page of QudsN, November 16, 2016). Right: March organized by Hamas in the Jabalia refugee camp to protest the "muezzin law" (Twitter account of Paldf, November 18, 2016).

## Results of Palestinian Poll

■ On November 15, 2016, the Palestinian Center for Public Opinion, headed by Nabil Kukali, issued the results of a public opinion poll. One thousand Palestinians 18 years and older from Judea, Samaria, Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip were polled. Some of the results were the following:<sup>2</sup>

- 70.0% of the Palestinians – to various degrees – do not trust Benjamin Netanyahu and his commitment to the two-state solution.

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.pcpo.org/index.php/polls>

- 53.5% oppose the return to direct negotiations with the Israelis after their denial of the French Initiative; 32.4% support it.
- 44% said they thought the French initiative of convening an international peace conference would fail, 18.7% thought it would succeed, and 37.3% said they didn't know.