



# News of Terrorism and the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict

(January 4-10, 2017)



Encouragement for terrorist attacks following the vehicular attack in Jerusalem that killed four IDF officers. Left: Cartoon by Imad Baalbaki changing the Fatah Movement's motto, "Revolution until victory" into "Running over [Israelis] until victory," which will lead to the liberation of Palestine (mapnews.com, January 9, 2017). Right: "Jerusalem attack" (Cartoon page of Abu Mahjoub, January 9, 2017).

## Overview

- At the focus of terrorist events this past week was a vehicular attack on the promenade in Armon Hanatziv in Jerusalem, carried out with a truck. Four IDF officers were killed. The terrorist was shot and killed. He came from the east Jerusalem neighborhood of Jabel Mukaber, which has been a source of many terrorist operatives. Using a heavy truck to increase the number of casualties may have been inspired by the attacks carried out by ISIS supporters in Nice and Berlin, and by the ISIS campaign calling on its supporters abroad to carry out vehicular, stabbing and arson attacks.
- The Palestinian Authority and Fatah, which support the "popular resistance," of which vehicular attacks are considered a legitimate part, avoided condemning the attack or responding to it. After the Turkish prime minister and deputy prime minister condemned the attack, Fatah used its official Facebook page to reply (in Turkish and Arabic) that "the Palestinian resistance is not terrorism..."

## Judea, Samaria and Jerusalem

### Terrorist Attacks and Attempted Terrorists Attacks

- On the afternoon of **January 8, 2017**, a Palestinian drove a truck from Jabel Mukaber towards the Armon Hanatziv promenade in Jerusalem. Seeing a group of Israeli soldiers getting off a bus, he veered out of his lane, **accelerated and ran over them**. He then put the truck in reverse and hit more soldiers. Several IDF soldiers shot and killed him. **Three female officers and one male were killed, and 13 were wounded**. Three are in critical condition and one is in serious condition.



**Left: The claim of responsibility issued by the network calling itself "the groups of shaheed Bahaa Alian." It was posted on the QudsN Facebook page with a notice stating it had not been verified (Facebook page of QudsN, January 9, 2017). Right: The truck used in the vehicular attack (Facebook page of QudsN, January 8, 2017).**

- The Palestinian terrorist who carried out the attack was **Fadi Ahmed Hamdan al-Qunbar**, 28, married with four children, from **Jabel Mukaber in east Jerusalem**. His family said he had been a truck driver for the past year and a half. His family members and neighbors claimed he had no political affiliation and did not tend towards religious extremism. (Quds.net, January 9, 2017). Hamas, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) and a network (apparently fictitious) calling itself "the groups of shaheed Bahaa Alian"<sup>1</sup> claimed Fadi al-Qunbar as an operative. Salafi jihadist sources embraced Israeli Prime Minister Benyamin Netanyahu's assertion that he had been inspired by ISIS. **So far the ITIC has not received verification that Fadi al-Qunbar had been handled by any Palestinian or jihadist**

<sup>1</sup> Bahaa Alian, from Jabel Mukaber, and another Palestinian terrorist carried out an attack on a number 78 bus in Jerusalem in October 2015, killing three people

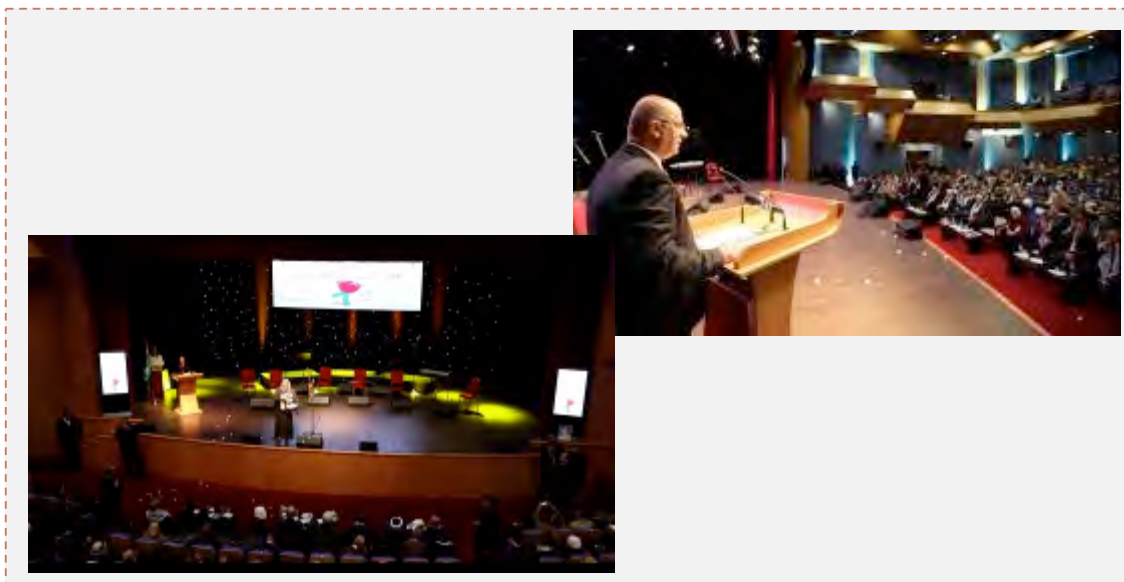
**terrorist organization.** It is reasonable to assume that the claims of responsibility were issued to make media capital of the attack's "success" (familiar from past terrorist attacks).<sup>2</sup>

■ **Ahmed Bahar, deputy chairman of the Palestinian Legislative Council,** telephoned the family of the terrorist, claiming his action was "the revival of the intifada" (Safa, January 9, 2017). **Khaled al-Batash, a senior Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) figure,** expressed admiration for the attacker who, he claimed, had acted in the name of the Arab nation and Islam to resist the "occupation" and kill [Israeli] soldiers. He said the action should be a wake-up call for Palestinians living in various cities in Israel, such as Arara, Beer Sheba, Ramle, Umm al-Fahm and others, to "struggle" against Israel (Paltoday, January 9, 2017).

■ **A Palestinian Shaheed Day event was held in Ramallah** and attended by **Rami Hamdallah, prime minister** of the Palestinian national consensus government, and other senior Fatah figures. During the event the **mother of Muhammad Shamasneh** (who carried out a stabbing attack on a number 185 bus in Jerusalem on October 12, 2015) went up on stage and sprinkled rosewater, calling on the audience to "**salute the shaheed Fadi Qunbar, the driver of the intifada truck.**" She went up on stage while Rami Hamdallah was sitting in the audience in front of her (Facebook page of QudsN, January 9, 2017). Hamdallah gave a speech where he said **the Palestinian shaheed had become a global symbol of liberation and freedom.** He praised the Palestinian shaheeds, calling them defenders of their country and its national identity (Wafa, January 9, 2017). However, he did not specifically refer to the vehicular attack on the Armon Hanatziv promenade.

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<sup>2</sup> For further information, see the January 9, 2017 bulletin, " Vehicular Attack in Armon Hanatziv in Jerusalem."



Left: The mother of terrorist Muhammad Shamasneh sprinkles rosewater and calls for a salute to "shaheed Fadi Qunbar" (Facebook page of QudsN, January 9, 2017). Right: Rami Hamdallah speaking at a Palestinian Shaheed Day event (Wafa, January 9, 2017).

## Terrorist Killed Who Tried to Carry Out Stabbing Attack

■ On January 9, 2017, during an IDF activity to detain wanted Palestinians in the Fara refugee camp in the northern Jordan Valley, a Palestinian armed with a knife ran towards them shouting "Allahu akbar." The soldiers ordered him to halt but he continued running towards them. He was shot and killed. At the same time, Palestinians fired shots and threw IEDs at the soldiers. The Palestinian media reported the death of **Muhammad Subhi al-Salekhi**, 33, who had served a term of three years in an Israel jail (Ma'an and the Facebook page of QudsN, January 9 and 10, 2017).



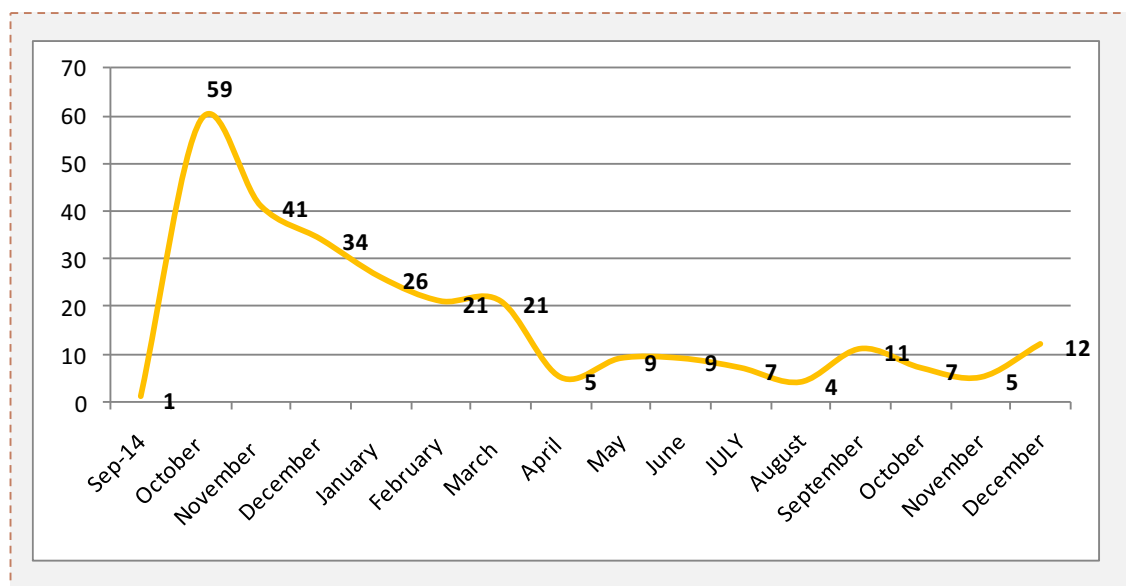
Muhammad Subhi al-Salekhi (Facebook page of Quds, January 9 and 10, 2017).

## Riots, Clashes and Popular Terrorism

■ In the meantime, routine popular terrorism continued unabated (riots and clashes). Palestinians threw dozens of Molotov cocktails, improvised IEDs and stones. The more prominent occurrences were the following:

- **January 9, 2017**– Palestinians threw two improvised IEDs at IDF forces operating in **Jenin**. There were no casualties (Facebook page of Red Alert, January 9, 2017).
- **January 9, 2017**– Palestinians threw stones at an Israeli vehicle on **the Husan detour road near Beitar**, shattering the front windshield (Facebook page of Red Alert, January 9, 2017).
- **January 8, 2017**– Palestinians threw stones at Israeli vehicles near **the Faduel interchange, close to the Oranit crossing**. There were no casualties; the vehicles were damaged (Facebook page of Red Alert, January 8, 2017).
- **January 8, 2017**– Palestinians threw stones an IDF force **near A-Ram, close to Ramallah**. One IDF soldiers was injured (Facebook page of Red Alert, January 8, 2017).
- **January 6, 2017**– Palestinians threw stones at an Israeli vehicle near **the Ma'aleh Shomron Junction**. There were no casualties; the vehicle was damaged (Facebook page of Red Alert, January 6, 2017).
- **January 5, 2017**– Palestinians threw three Molotov cocktails at Israeli vehicles on the road near **Beit U'r al-Tihta on road 443 between Jerusalem and Tel Aviv**. There were no casualties (Facebook page of Red Alert, January 5, 2017).

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



### Terrorist Statistics for December 2016<sup>3</sup>

■ During December 2016 the number of terrorist attacks in Judea, Samaria and Jerusalem was similar to that of November 2016. A total of 97 attacks were carried out (93 in November). Most of them (67) involved Palestinians throwing Molotov cocktails. Nineteen involved IEDs, here were nine light arms shooting attacks and two stabbing attacks. Six people were wounded, two civilians and four members of the Israeli security forces.

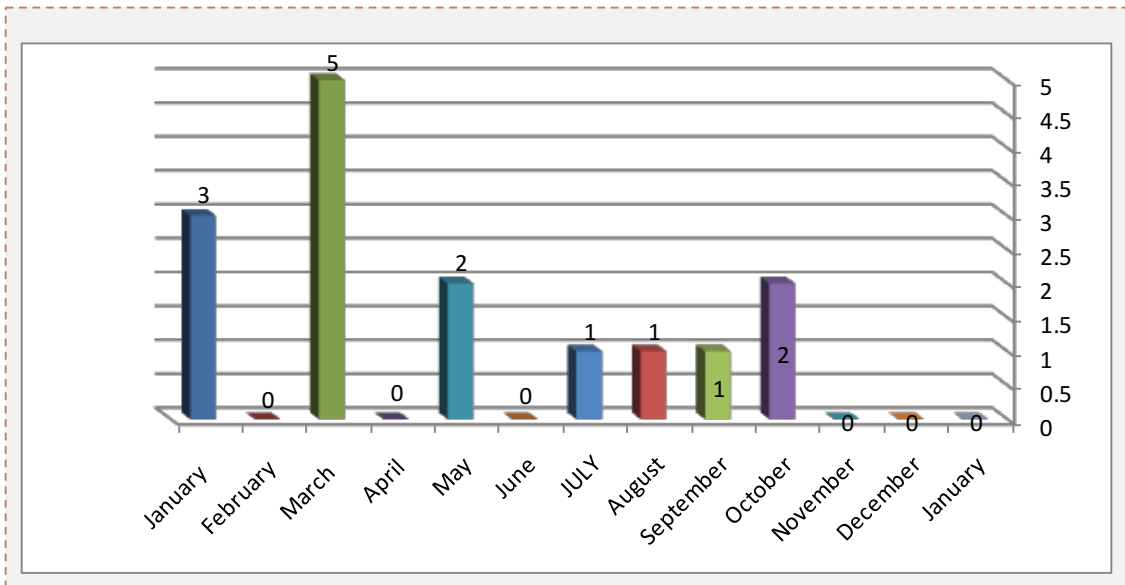
## Israel's South

### Rocket Fire Attacking Israel

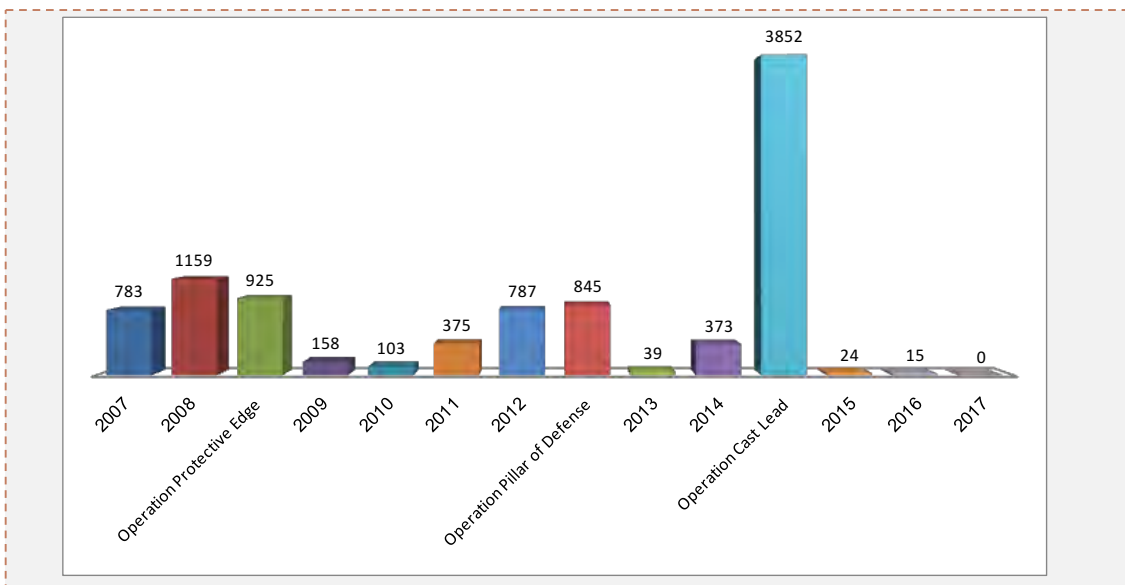
■ This past week no rocket hits were identified in Israeli territory.

<sup>3</sup> Based on the Israel Security Agency website. The scores of stone-throwing attacks are not included in the statistics.

## Monthly Distribution of Rocket Fire, 2016



## Annual Distribution of Rocket Fire in Israel's South<sup>4</sup>



## Smuggling Network Exposed

- During December 2016 the Israeli security forces exposed a network in Judea and Samaria that smuggled items needing special authorization to enter the Gaza Strip. The network is suspected of smuggling hundreds of cameras, drones and communications cables into the Gaza Strip, some of which were intended for Hamas' military use. The contraband items were hidden inside various household appliances (Israel Security Agency website, January 9, 2017).

<sup>4</sup> The statistics do not include mortar shell fire or rockets which misfired and fell inside the Gaza Strip.

## Developments in the Gaza Strip

### Closing Hamas Facebook Pages

■ **On January 6, 2017, Facebook closed more than 90 pages and 30 private accounts belonging to or affiliated with Hamas.** Most of them were **dedicated to the memory of arch terrorist Yahya Ayyash,**<sup>5</sup> as part of a campaign launched with the hashtag #be\_like\_Ayyash to mark the 21<sup>st</sup> anniversary of his death. **Hamas condemned the action,** claiming the pages had been closed in compliance with a request from the "Zionist occupation," an example of cooperation between Facebook and the government of Israel.

- **Hamas spokesman Husam Badran** said closing the pages and accounts was a continuation of Facebook's coordination with Israel. He said the pages and accounts had the right to express their positions, and demanded that the Palestinian Facebook page operators seriously consider alternatives because Facebook worked against the Palestinian people (Hamas website, January 6, 2017).
- **Hamas spokesman Hazem Qassem** said Hamas condemned the closing of the accounts, calling it "an Israeli theft." He said the objective had been to damage the "resistance" narrative of the Palestinian people and prevent it from making its voice heard (al-Aqsa, January 7, 2017).
- **The Palestinian Journalists Syndicate** also condemned the act and demanded Facebook retract its decision, stop collaborating with the Israeli occupation and its crimes against the Palestinian people, and restore the accounts that were blocked. The Syndicate also called on Facebook to close "pages of Israeli terrorists" (al-Ra'i, January 7, 2017, Facebook page of Palinfo, January 4 to 6, 2017).

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<sup>5</sup> **Yahya Ayyash, aka "the engineer,"** was one of the founders of Hamas' military-terrorist wing and one of its most prominent operatives. He was behind suicide bombing attacks in the 1990s that killed dozens of Israelis. The Israeli security forces killed him with a booby-trapped cell phone on January 5, 1996.



Examples of #be\_like\_Ayyash hashtags not closed by Facebook  
(Facebook page of Palinfo, January 4 and 5, 2017).

## Construction of the Muhammad al-Zoari Square

- On January 7, 2017, a picture was posted showing construction on a square in Deir al-Balah in the central Gaza Strip. It will be dedicated to the memory of the engineer **Muhammad al-Zoari** (Twitter account of Palinfo, January 7, 2017). On December 15, 2016, Muhammad al-Zoari was reported killed in a drive-by shooting in eastern Tunisia. He had been an Izz al-Din Qassam Brigades operative since 1991. Hamas employed him to develop drones and paragliders. He often went to Lebanon and Sudan, and also shared his knowledge with Hezbollah.



Construction of the Muhammad al-Zoari Square in Deir al-Balah  
(Twitter account of Palinfo, January 7, 2017).

## The Palestinian Authority

### Reactions to the Verdict of Elor Azaria

■ The verdict of the court charging Elor Azaria with manslaughter for the killing of a Palestinian terrorist led to **a wave of reactions from Palestinians. Most of them expressed lack of faith in the Israeli judicial system, claimed a fictitious trial had been held and called for an international investigation of the so-called "Israelis crimes."** A lot of the criticism was directed against the conviction of manslaughter and not premeditated murder. Senior Palestinian figures exploited the events to reiterate their claims that the State of Israel and IDF soldiers were "criminals and the executioners" of the Palestinians.

■ Some of the reactions were the following:

- **Yusuf al-Mahmoud, spokesman for the national consensus government,** said Israel had convicted the soldier of manslaughter for one reason only, the video of the event which had been disseminated around the world. He said the crime committed by the soldier was one of hundreds of crimes and executions carried out on the ground by IDF soldiers against the Palestinians in PA territory. He claimed that hundreds of senior Israeli figures had supported the soldier as soon as he was detained, and that "proved" the blatant incitement of the government of Israel (al-Quds, January 4, 2017).
- **The PA's foreign ministry** said in a statement that from the minute the video documenting the "shaheed's execution" was made public the Israeli government and its branches attempted to circumvent the International Criminal Court and escape legal responsibility by "staging" the soldier's detention and trial. With the exception of a few isolated voices, claimed the statement, most Israeli officials, led by the prime minister, defended the murder and even tried to enlist radical right organizations and the radical right Israeli public to raise money to fund a campaign to find the soldier innocent.
- **Muhammad al-Alul, a member of Fatah's Central Committee,** called for an activation of the international judicial system to defend the lives and rights of the Palestinians. He added that the crime of the execution of Abd al-Fatah al-Sharif in Hebron was just one of the crimes and violations carried out every day by the soldiers of the "occupation" against the Palestinians (Dunia al-Watan, January 5, 2017).

■ The family of the terrorist held a press conference attended by hundreds of local residents and media personnel. A spokesman for the family called the conviction of Elor Azaria of manslaughter "ridiculous" and said the family planned to appeal to the International Criminal Court in The Hague to try the soldier in an international court on the charge of "murder in cold blood" (Ma'an and QudsN, January 4, 2017).



Rally held by the family of Palestinian terrorist Abd al-Fatah al-Sharif in the center of Hebron (Ma'an, January 4, 2017).

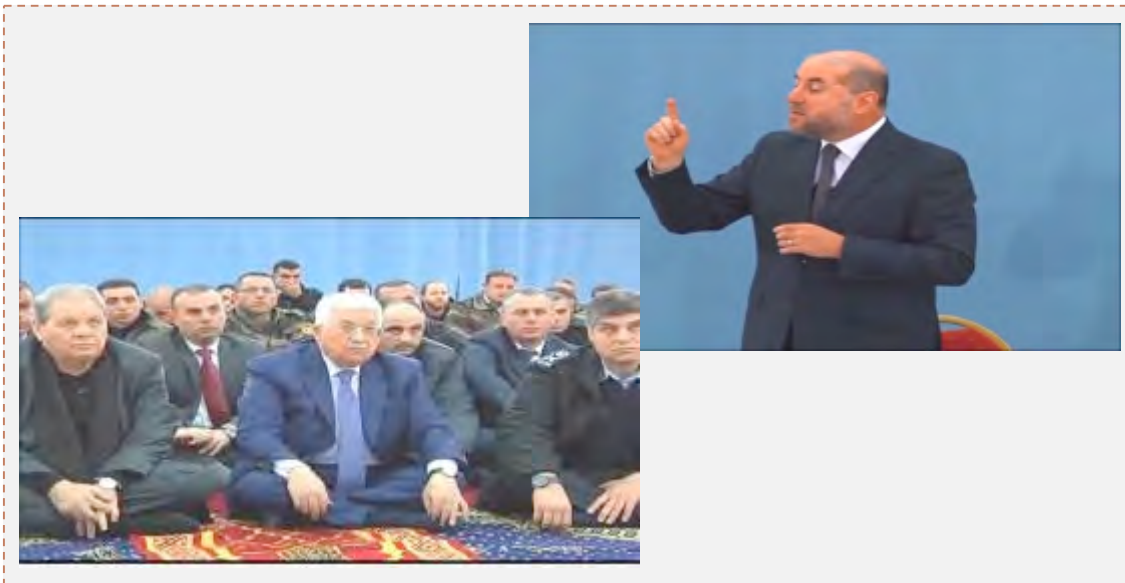
## Palestinian Responses to Possible Transfer of American Embassy to Jerusalem

■ The election of Donald Trump raised the possibility of **moving the American embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, leading Palestinians to protest**. Palestinians have called on him **to take the idea off his agenda**. The Palestinian media reported that the PA had instructed preachers in the mosques to focus their Friday sermons on condemning the possibility.

■ **Mahmoud Abbas** sent a communiqué to Trump calling on him not to move the embassy because, he claimed, it would have **a destructive effect on the peace process, the two-state solution and regional security and stability**. He also sent a communiqué to heads of state around the globe, among them the presidents of Russia, China, France and the EU, demanding they prevent such a move (Wafa, January 9, 2017).

■ In a recent Friday sermon attended by Mahmoud Abbas and other senior Palestinian figures, **Mahmoud al-Habash, Mahmoud Abbas's advisor for religious affairs and Islamic connections**, warned that **moving the embassy might lead the situation to deteriorate "to places no one wanted to reach."** He claimed such a

step was **"a declaration of war on Muslims"** and that the Muslim and Christian worlds objected to it. He called it political recklessness, saying Jerusalem had to remain open to all the faithful (PNN, January 6, 2017).



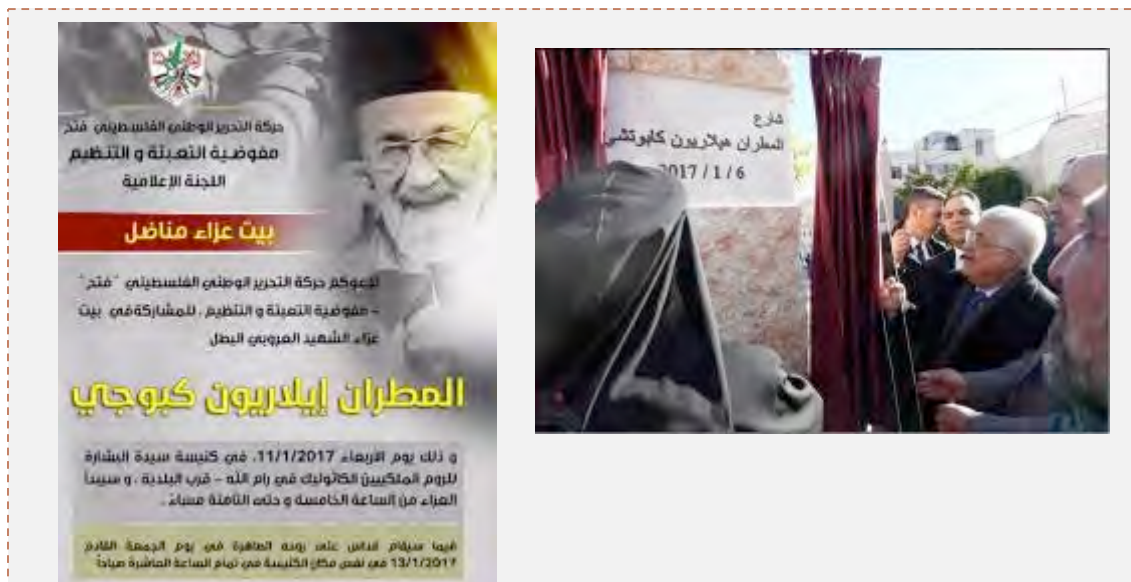
Left: Mahmoud Abbas and senior Palestinian figures listen to the sermon of Mahmoud al-Habash. Right: Mahmoud al-Habash, Mahmoud Abbas's advisor for religious affairs and Islamic connections, delivers the Friday sermon at the al-Tashrifat mosque in the Muqata'a in Ramallah (YouTube, January 7, 2017).

■ **Saeb Erekat, secretary of the PLO's Executive Committee**, meeting with international figures, called "attempts" to move the American embassy to Jerusalem "the overturning of and incitement against international law and UN resolutions." He said moving the embassy **would encourage violence** and create more tension (al-Fajr al-Jadeed, January 7, 2017). Interviewed by Palestinian TV, he said that if the United States did move its embassy to Jerusalem, **the PA would find itself having to make fateful decisions**, because it would mean the United States recognized the [Israeli] annexation of Jerusalem. He called on Trump not to take a step that would **destroy the peace process** (Ma'an, January 9, 2017).

■ **Hana Issa, a member of Fatah's Revolutionary Council and a professor of international law**, said moving the American embassy to Jerusalem would **ignite a regional religious war**. He added that it was a violation of international law (Facebook page of Fatah, January 7, 2017).

## Mahmoud Abbas Present at Naming of Street for Archbishop Hilarion Capucci in Beit Sahour

- During a visit Mahmoud Abbas paid to Bethlehem for the Christmas holidays he was also present at the naming of a street in Beit Sahour for Archbishop Hilarion Capucci.<sup>6</sup> During the ceremony Mahmoud Abbas praised Capucci's contribution to the Palestinian cause, saying that with his death the Palestinians had lost a national warrior who had sacrificed a great deal for the sake of his second homeland, Palestine.
- The Fatah Movement's Facebook page posted an announcement stating that a mourning tent would be erected to the memory of Capucci and that a memorial mass would be held for him. Fatah, said the announcement, invited the public to participate in the events (Facebook page of Fatah, January 7, 2017).



Left: Fatah invitation to attend the memorial events for Archbishop Hilarion Capucci (Facebook page of Fatah, January 7, 2017). Right: Mahmoud Abbas at the ceremony opening Archbishop Hilarion Capucci Street in Beit Sahour (Wafa, January 6, 2017).

<sup>6</sup> On January 1, 2017, Archbishop Hilarion Capucci died at the age of 94. Between 1965 and 1974 he was the Greek Orthodox archbishop of Caesarea. In 1974 he was caught by the Israeli security forces smuggling weapons in his vehicle for Fatah operatives, exploiting his diplomatic status. He was sentenced to a term of 12 years but in 1978 the Pope asked Israeli President Ephraim Katsir to secure his release. Upon his release he was deported. In 2010 he participated in the Mavi Marmara flotilla. While on a visit to Rome in 2013, Mahmoud Abbas awarded him the "Star of Jerusalem" medal.