



News of Terrorism and the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict

(January 11 – 17, 2017)



Left: The Fatah movement thanks the peace conference in Paris. The Arabic reads, "Thank you France, thank you [François] Hollande. (Facebook page of the Fatah movement, January 15, 2017). Right: French President François Hollande delivers the opening speech (al-Nahar al-Jadeed, January 16, 2017).

Overview

- The electricity crisis in the Gaza Strip brought masses of protesters into the streets (one held in the Jabalia refugee camp had thousands of demonstrators). Qatar and Turkey promised aid (money and fuel) to help Hamas cope with the immediate problem, although it will not fundamentally solve the problem.
- The crisis illustrates Hamas' difficulty in coping with the challenges of governance in the Gaza Strip, and its inability to cooperate with the Palestinian Authority (PA), even over vital services for the population. However, Hamas' security forces have proved themselves effective in controlling the situation and so far have managed to contain the protests.
- Senior Palestinian figures have initiated a campaign threatening mainly the United States, in the wake of the possibility that America will relocate its embassy to Jerusalem. One of the Palestinians' main claims was that such a move would "ignite the region" and "open the gates of hell in the Middle East and the world." Mahmoud Abbas said it would make the United States ineligible to play a role in resolving the conflict, destroy the two-state solution and lead the PA to examine possible responses, including retracting Palestinian recognition of the State of Israel.

Judea, Samaria and Jerusalem

Detention of Palestinian Who Attempted Vehicular Attack

■ On January 11, 2017, during an IDF activity in the **al-Fawwar refugee camp** (south of Hebron), a Palestinian attempted a vehicular attack. There were no casualties. The Palestinian media reported the Israeli security forces had detained a Palestinian, claiming he had tried to run over a Border Policeman on the road between the town of Dura and the al-Fawwar refugee camp (Shasha News, January 11, 2017).

Riots and Clashes

■ In the meantime, routine popular terrorism continued unabated (the throwing of stones and Molotov cocktails). The more prominent attacks were the following:

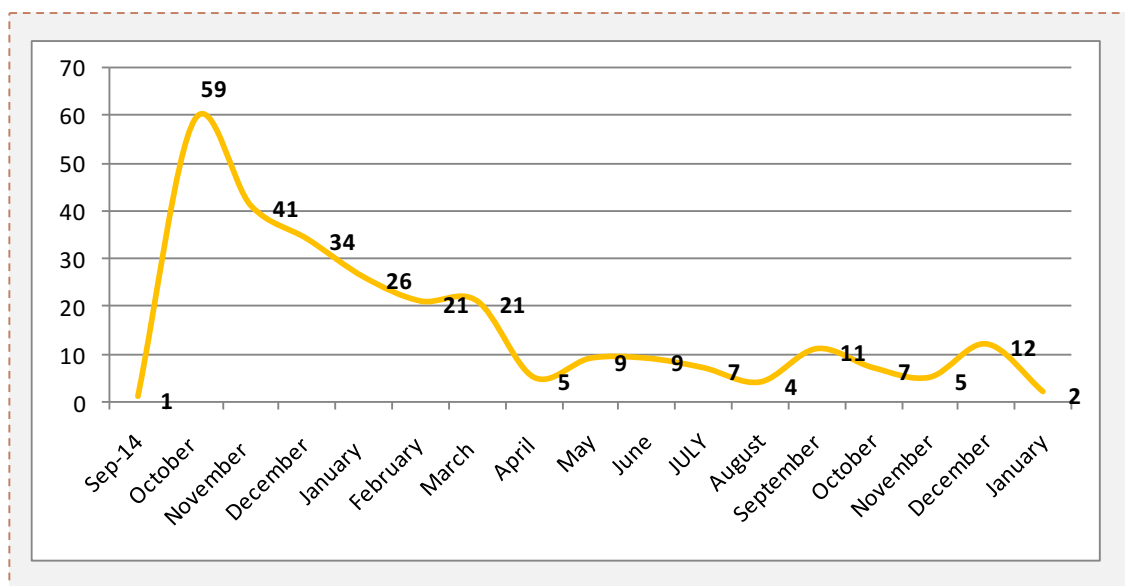
- **January 17, 2017** – Palestinians threw stones at Israeli vehicles **on route 443 near the Ofer military camp**. There were no casualties. The vehicles were damaged (Facebook page of Red Alert, January 17, 2017).
- **January 16, 2017** – Border Policemen operating in **A-Tor** detained a Palestinian bus passenger who looked suspicious. Initial investigation revealed that he lived in Judea and Samaria and did not have an entry permit for east Jerusalem. During his interrogation the police began to suspect **he had come to east Jerusalem to carry out a stabbing attack** targeting Israeli security forces near the Nablus Gate in the Old City of east Jerusalem (Jerusalem Police spokesperson's unit, January 17, 2017).
- **January 16, 2017** – A Palestinian who clashed with IDF forces in a riot **near Tekoa in Gush Etzion** and threw stones at the soldiers was shot and killed. (Facebook page of Red Alert, January 16, 2017). The Palestinian media reported him as **Qusay al-Amur**, 17, a Fatah operative (Facebook page of the Fatah movement, January 16, 2017).



Left: Death notice issued by Fatah in the Bethlehem region for Qusay al-Amur. Right: Qusay al-Amur (Facebook page of the Fatah movement, January 16, 2017).

- **January 15, 2017** – Israeli security forces sealed a weapons workshop that was exposed in **Hebron** three weeks ago. It was discovered at the beginning of December 2016 in a large underground chamber in a residential house in **Hebron's southern industrial zone**. The workshop produced hundreds of weapons (Ynet, January 15, 2017).
- **January 12, 2017** – Palestinians threw stones at a car and truck near **Beit Hanina in east Jerusalem**. One man was injured; the vehicles were damaged (Facebook page of Red Alert, January 12, 2017).
- **January 11, 2017** – Palestinians threw a pipe bomb at IDF forces on **the Husan detour near Beitar (west of Bethlehem)**. There were no casualties (Facebook page of Red Alert, January 11, 2017).
- **January 11, 2017** – Israeli policemen stopped an Israeli truck **at the Beqaot crossing** which was driving in the direction of Nablus. It was found to contain 14 tons of fertilizer, which is also used to making explosives and not allowed into Judea and Samaria. The truck was confiscated and the driver detained for questioning (Civilian administration spokesperson's unit, January 11, 2017).

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



Hamas Terrorist Operatives Detained near Ramallah

■ On the night of January 15, 2017, in a joint Israeli security force operation, **13 Hamas operatives were detained near Ramallah**. One of them was **Ahmed Mubarak, a Hamas member of the Palestinian Legislative Council**. The forces confiscated money, vehicles and Hamas propaganda materials. The operation was carried out after **the Israeli security forces exposed a Hamas network of about 120 operatives**. The network operated in the region of Ramallah and in effect **served as the local Hamas headquarters**. **Ahmed Bahar, deputy chairman of the Palestinian Legislative Council**, condemned the detention of Ahmed Mubarak, claiming it was a clear violation of parliamentary immunity (Quds.press, January 16, 2017).

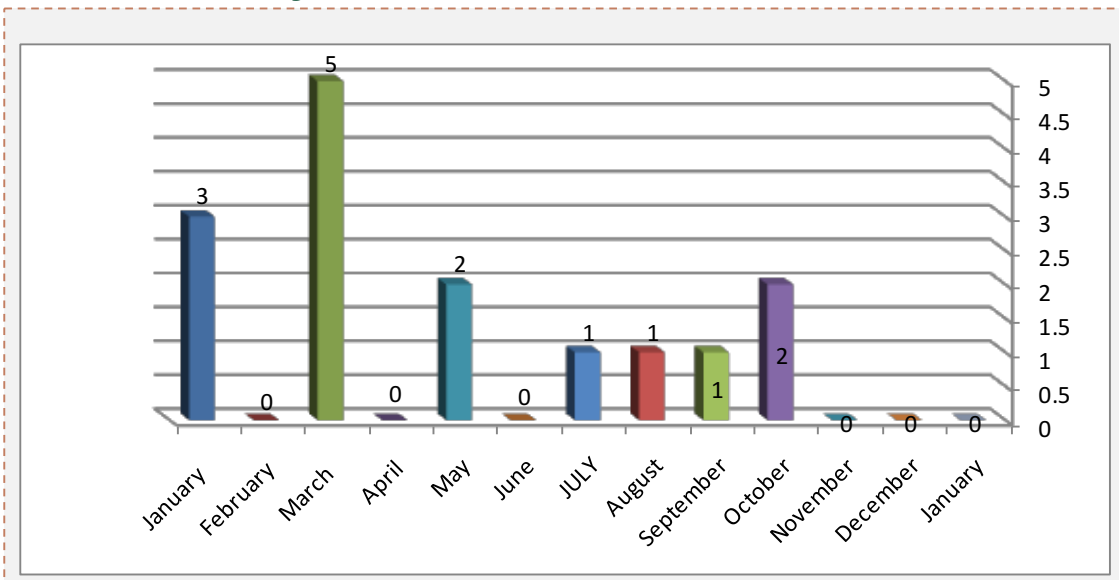
■ The objective of the network exposed in the Ramallah region was to strengthen Hamas in Judea and Samaria, and to achieve the goal it also engaged in the *da'wah* (Islamic indoctrination), providing economic support for prisoners and the families of terrorists, and supporting a Hamas student cell. The network also distributed Hamas propaganda and organized mass demonstrations. **Its activities were financed by Hamas sources abroad and by Hamas in the Gaza Strip** (Israel Security Agency media unit, January 16, 2017)

Israel's South

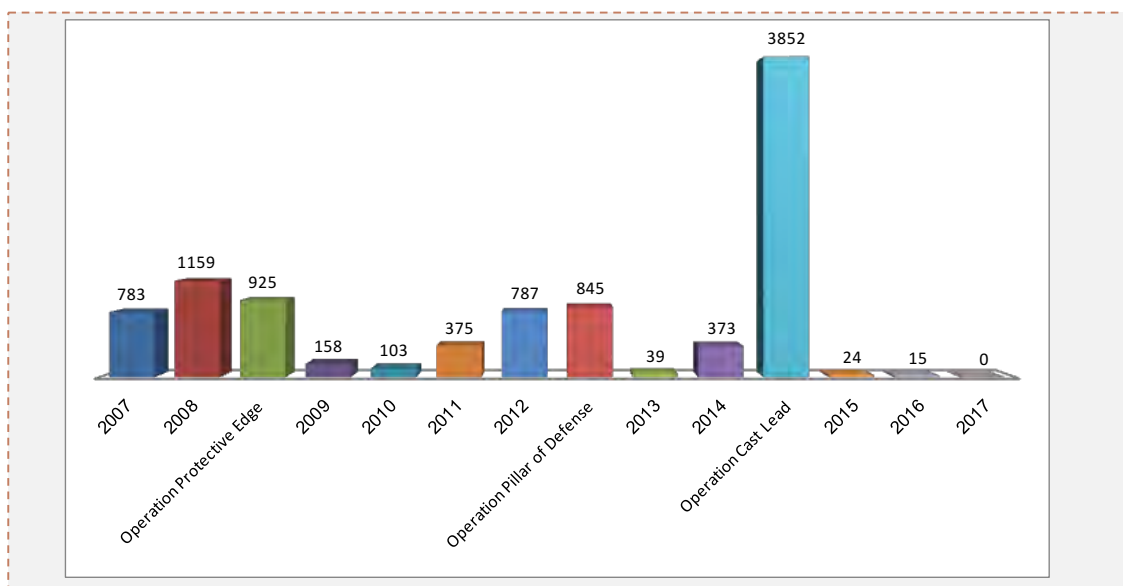
Rocket Fire Attacking Israel

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 South¹



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

Palestinians Shoot at IDF Force in the Southern Gaza Strip

■ Palestinians opened fire at an IDF force maintaining the border security fence between Israel and the Gaza Strip in the southern Gaza Strip. There were no casualties. A military vehicle was damaged. In response an IDF tank fired at and destroyed a Hamas post near the source of the shots (Ynet, January 15, 2017).

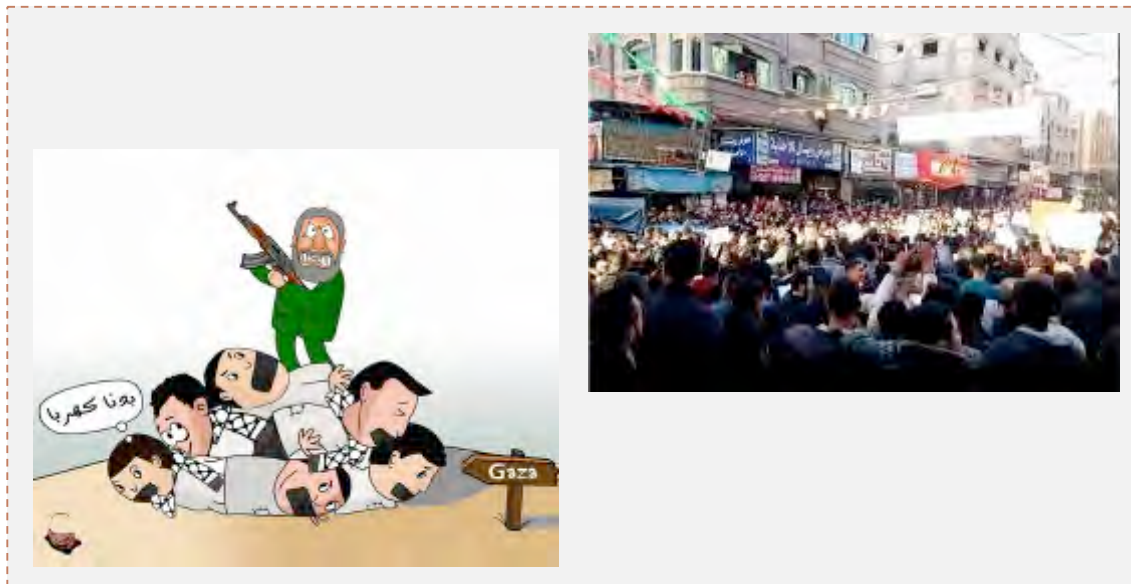
Developments in the Gaza Strip

The Electricity Crisis

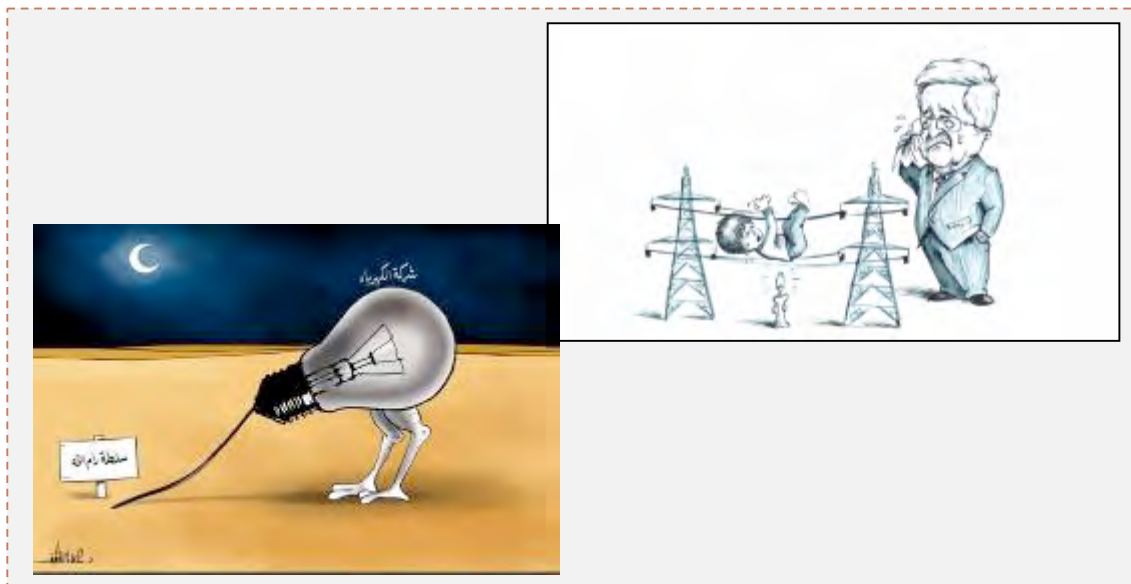
■ **The electricity crisis in the Gaza Strip recently worsened**, and Gazans currently have electricity for only about three hours a day. The crisis is apparently the result of several factors, including the increase in consumption due to the winter cold; a problem with the power lines from Egypt, which supply 11% of the Gaza Strip's electricity; the completion of a number of infrastructure projects which require electricity; and a rise in the price of fuel, which made it more expensive to operate the power plant.

■ The situation resulted in **mass protests throughout the Gaza Strip** (one in Jabalia had thousands of demonstrators). Some of the demonstrations were harshly dispersed by Hamas' security forces and their organizers detained. Hamas rejected the claims of civilians and claimed Mahmoud Abbas and the national consensus government were responsible for the crisis. **Hamas spokesman Fawzi Barhoum** stressed the right of the public to protest, but said it could not create "anarchy in [the Gaza Strip's] security" and disturb public order. **Senior Hamas figure Fathi Hamad** urged the demonstrators to move to Egypt or the West Bank if life in the Gaza Strip was unsatisfactory. He added that Hamas would use all its power to suppress the protests (Facebook page of Watan, January 14, 2017).

■ The crisis led Hamas and the Palestinian Authority to exchange mutual accusations. **At its weekly meeting, the Palestinian national consensus government blamed Hamas for the ongoing shortages of electricity in the Gaza Strip**. The PA claimed Hamas was determined to take control of the electric company and the Palestinian energy and natural resources authority, and did not allow them to perform their functions (Wafa, January 10, 2017).



Left: Cartoon criticizing Hamas for suppressing the protest demonstrations. The Arabic reads, "We want electricity" (Facebook page of Sahem, January 15, 2017) Right: Thousands of Gazans demonstrate in the Jabalia refugee camp (Facebook page of QudsN, January 12, 2017).



Hamas cartoons blame Mahmoud Abbas and the PA for the electricity crisis in the Gaza Strip (alresala.net, January 12, 2017).

- The crisis raised claims that there was a connection between Hamas' use of electricity the tunnels and its shortage in the public sector. In response **Abu Obeida, spokesman for Hamas' military wing**, claimed the tunnels were one of the "greatest creations of the Palestinian resistance" in response to Israel's military arsenal and the closure of the Gaza Strip. He claimed building the tunnels had caused the "resistance" many sacrifices, and strongly rejected any attempt to link the "resistance" to the lack of electricity (Twitter account of Abu Obeida, January 12, 2017).

■ To find an immediate arrangement for the electricity crisis, **Ismail Haniyeh, deputy head of the Hamas political bureau**, consulted with the emir of Qatar. The emir promised him that over the next three months **Qatar would transfer \$12 million to buy fuel for the power plant** (Gaza al-A'an, January 15, 2017). In addition, **Turkey promised to send 15 million liters (almost four million gallons) of fuel** to the Gaza Strip. Both are supposed to arrive shortly (Safa, January 16, 2017). The aid from Qatar and Turkey may be able to provide Hamas with a short-term solution but it cannot fundamentally end the crisis.

■ **In conclusion**, the crisis illustrates **the difficulties Hamas has in dealing with the challenges of governance in the Gaza Strip**, one of which is the uninterrupted supply of electricity to the Gazans. It has also led the local residents to strongly protest against Hamas and again shows that **Hamas and the PA are incapable of cooperating**, even on issues that relate to the daily life of the population. However, as far as can be seen, the Hamas enforcement agencies still function effectively, and so far Hamas has successfully contained the protests and prevented them from spinning out of control.

The Palestinian Authority

Palestinian Reactions to the Paris Conference

■ On January 15, 2017, a peace conference organized by France was held in Paris. Seventy countries sent representatives, most of them foreign ministers. **There were no representatives from either Israel or the PA.** The conference's final summation confirmed that **a negotiated solution of two states, existing side by side, was the only way an enduring peace could be achieved.** It stressed the importance of both sides' commitment to a solution to the conflict and to taking immediate steps that would bring an end to continued acts of violence and ongoing settlement activity.² The announcement noted that the solutions would be in accordance with the relevant Security Council resolutions, including Resolution 2334, and with the principles formulated by John Kerry, the American secretary of state, on December 18, 2016 (Website of the French foreign ministry, January 15, 2017).

■ Responses from a number of senior Palestinian figures were the following:

² <http://www.jewishpress.com/news/breaking-news/full-text-paris-peace-summit-joint-declaration-january-15-2017/2017/01/15/>

- **Mahmoud Abbas, PA chairman**, called on Israel to stop construction in the settlements. He said the PA was prepared to renew negotiations to revitalize the peace process within an international framework and with a defined time table. He called on all states around the globe that had not yet recognized the Palestinian state to do so, and to monitor the implementation of Security Council Resolution 2334 (Watan, January 15, 2017).
 - **Nabil Abu Rudeina, spokesman for Mahmoud Abbas**, said the Palestinians' many recent achievements had proved the failure of Israel's policies and the victory of the Palestinian cause. He said that was shown by the global consensus over resistance to construction in the settlements and support for the two-state solution (Wafa, January 16, 2017).
 - **Riyad al-Maliki, foreign minister of the national consensus government**, said the foreign ministry would monitor the implementation of the conference's conclusions that Israel stop building in the settlements so that a Palestinian state could be established and officially join the UN (Watan, January 15, 2017).
 - **Saeb Erekat, secretary of the PLO's Executive Committee**, stressed the need to end the "Israeli occupation" and the right of the Palestinian people to establish an independent state. He also noted the importance of the two-state solution, thanked all the countries that attended the conference and called on them to recognize the Palestinian state immediately (Watan24, January 15, 2017).
- While senior PA figures tried to represent the results of the conference as an achievement, senior Hamas figures mocked the conference, its results and its final statement:
- **Senior Hamas figure Mahmoud al-Zahar** said he found it hard to believe an international conference would bring any benefit to the Palestinian cause (Quds.net, January 15, 2017).
 - **Hamas spokesman Hazem Qassem** said Hamas viewed the conference as "a waste of time" that copied previous failed peace conferences. He called on the PA to focus on the internal Palestinian reconciliation instead (al-Anadolu News, January 15, 2017).
 - **Hamas spokesman Fawzi Barhoum** said the Paris conference was an attempt to renew the "absurd negotiations" that would give the "Zionist entity" the

legitimacy to remain in the territories of Palestine. He said the Palestinian people had to stand fast by their principles and focus on the path of "resistance" to defend themselves (Hamas website, January 16, 2017).

- **Hamas spokesman Abd al-Latif al-Qanu'** said Hamas did not have much hope that an international conference held for the sake of the Palestinian cause because Israel did not honor its conclusions. He added that any negotiations with Israel were a "waste of time" (al-Aqsa, January 14, 2017).

Responses to Possible Relocation of American Embassy to Jerusalem

■ Senior PA figures continue dealing with the possibility that the American embassy will be moved to Jerusalem. They said the following:

- **Mahmoud Abbas** said he had appealed to the American president-elect not to relocate the American embassy in Jerusalem, because, he said, such a step would make the United States ineligible to play a role in resolving the conflict and destroy the two-state solution. He added that if the Americans did relocate their embassy, there were a number of possible responses which would be discussed with the Arab states, including **the possibility of retracting Palestinian recognition of the State of Israel.**

- **Rami Hamdallah, prime minister of the national consensus government,** demanded that the institutions of the international community stand up to the threat of the new American administration to relocate its embassy. He warned that if the United States did relocate it, **there would be a significant deterioration of regional security** (Safa, January 11, 2017).

- **Saeb Erekat, secretary of the PLO's Executive Committee,** sent a communiqué to Russian President Putin asked Russia to intervene and prevent the American embassy from being relocated. Interviewed by the RT channel in Arabic, he said that moving the embassy to east Jerusalem meant annexing Jerusalem to Israel (YouTube, January 12, 2017).

- **Fatah spokesman Osama al-Qawasmeh** issued an announcement threatening that it would **"open the gates of hell in the Middle East and the world."** He also said that it would put a lid on any possibility for regional peace and stability, because east Jerusalem was the capital of the Palestinian state (Ma'an, January 14, 2017).

- **Muhammad Hussein, the mufti of Jerusalem and the PA**, warned the incoming administration that relocating the embassy could "**ignite the region**" (alresala.net, January 12, 2017). In his Friday sermon in al-Aqsa mosque, he said relocating the embassy was "**aggression against the entire Muslim world**" and was liable to have consequences "that only Allah knew." He said it was an attack on all the conventions and UN Security Council resolutions, and that Muslims would not silently accept it (YouTube, January 13, 2017).



Muhammad Hussein, the mufti of Jerusalem and the PA, delivering the Friday sermon in al-Aqsa mosque (YouTube, January 13, 2017).

- **The weekly riot in Kafar Qadoum** was also exploited for a protest. Demonstrators held signs reading that relocating the embassy to Jerusalem was "a despicable crime" (Wafa, January 13, 2017). On January 16, 2017, Gazans demonstrated in the center of Gaza City. The held signs reading "Jerusalem is a red line" (Facebook page of QudsN, January 16, 2017).



Left: Protest demonstration in Gaza City (Facebook page of QudsN, January 16, 2017). Right: Residents of Kafar Qadoum protest the relocating of the American embassy to Jerusalem (Wafa, January 13, 2017).

Palestinian Legation Opened in the Vatican

■ **Mahmoud Abbas** paid a visit to the Vatican and met with the Pope. He also participated in the ceremony opening the legation of Palestine in the Vatican City. He told newspaper correspondents that he called on all the nations of the world to follow the Vatican and recognize the state of Palestine. He called on the states to participate in realizing peace (al-Wataniya, January 14, 2017).



Mahmoud Abbas opens the Palestinian Authority legation in the Vatican (Wafa, January 14, 2017).

Memorial to the Hamas Terrorist Engineer Killed in Tunisia

■ In **Deir Ghassaneh**, a town northwest of Ramallah, a sign was hung naming a street for **Muhammad al-Zoari**, a Hamas terrorist engineer who was killed in Tunisia (Twitter account of Palinfo, January 15, 2017).³ Hanging the sign might have been a local initiative.



Sign hung in the town of Deir Ghassaneh (northwest of Ramallah). It says the street has been named for Muhammad al-Zoari, a Hamas terrorist engineer killed in Tunisia (Twitter account of Palinfo, January 15, 2017).

³ On December 15, 2016, it was reported that Muhammad al-Zoari, 49, an engineer from the city of Sfax, in eastern Tunisia, had been killed in a drive-by shooting. He came from a religious family in Tunisia. In 1991 he moved to Syria and joined Hamas' military-terrorist wing. He dealt with developing drones and paragliders. He often went to Lebanon and Sudan and also shared his knowledge with Hezbollah.