



News of Terrorism and the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict

(March 22 – 28, 2017)



This past week Hamas accused Israel of being behind the killing of Mazen Fuqaha, a senior operative in the West Bank headquarters of Hamas' military wing. Left: The front page of Hamas' organ al-Risalah. Hamas threatens to change the "equation" with Israel (alresala.net, March 27, 2017). Right: Notice posted by Hamas threatening Israel. Khaled Mashaal says, "We accept the challenge. You will see a response you have never heard of" (Twitter account of Palinfo, March 27, 2017).

Overview

- In Judea and Samaria popular terrorism continues. This past week a Palestinian tried to stab a soldier and a female civilian south of Nablus. He was overcome and detained. In another incident IDF forces shot at Palestinians attacking them with Molotov cocktails in the Jilazoun refugee camp (north of Ramallah). One Palestinian was killed and three were wounded. The Facebook page of the Palestinian who was killed contained postings about his intention to die (...Bury me standing up...) and give his life "as a gift to the homeland."
- In the Gaza Strip a senior Hamas operative in the West Bank headquarters of Hamas' military wing was shot at close range and killed. He had been behind a series of terrorist attacks against Israel, sentenced to nine terms of life imprisonment and released in the Gilad Shalit prisoner exchange deal. Hamas rushed to accuse Israel of killing him. Khaled Mashaal, head of Hamas' political bureau, stated that if Israel wanted to change the "rules of the game" Hamas was prepared to accept the challenge. Other Hamas spokesmen threatened revenge.

Judea, Samaria and Jerusalem

Terrorist Attacks and Attempted Terrorists Attacks

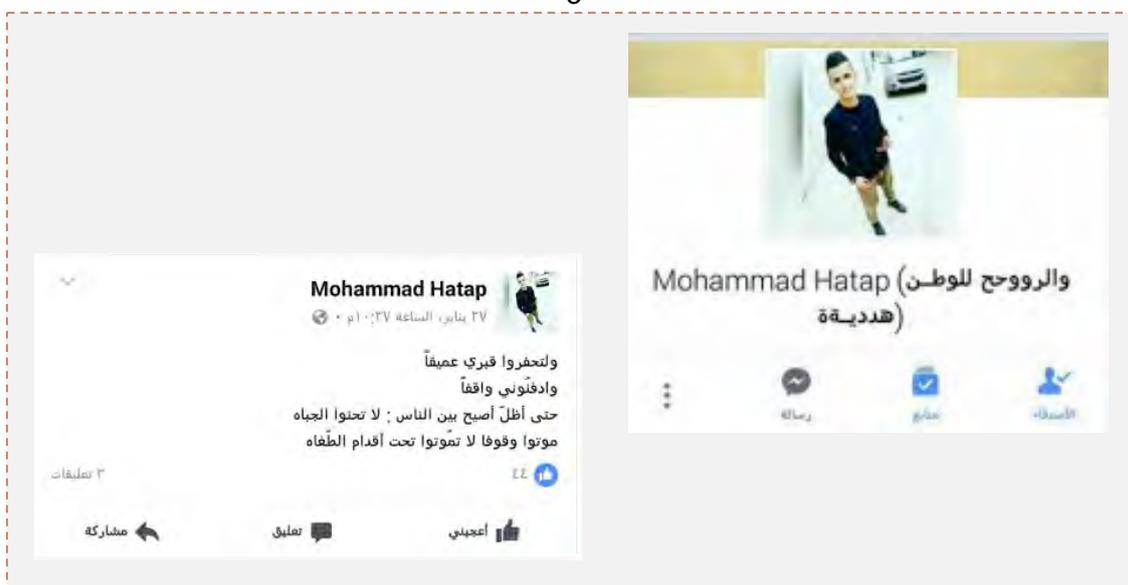
■ **March 27, 2017**, a Palestinian went to **Nablus' southern junction** and tried to stab an IDF soldier and a female civilian with a screwdriver. Soldiers at the junction called on him to halt, and when he did not obey they overcame him. There were no casualties. The Palestinian, 22, from Nablus, was detained.

IDF Forces Kill Palestinian Who Threw Molotov Cocktail

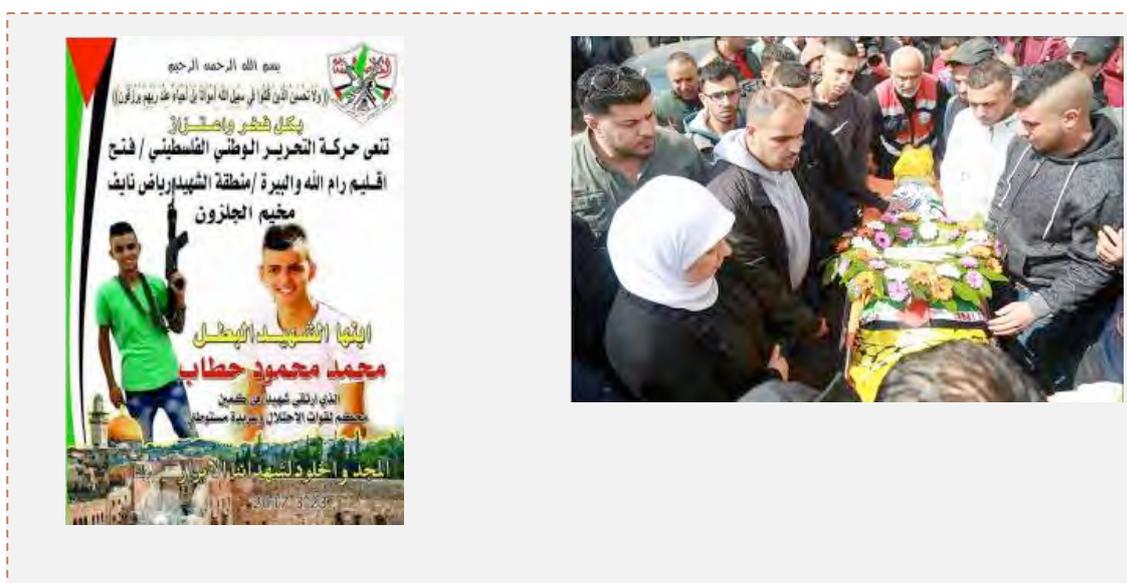
■ **IDF forces shot at Palestinians attacking them with Molotov cocktails in the Jilazoun refugee camp (north of Ramallah)**. One Palestinian was killed and three wounded. The Palestinian media reported the Palestinian killed was **Muhammad Mahmoud al-Hatab**, 17, from the Jilazoun refugee camp. **He belonged to the Shabiba movement** (Fatah's student organization). The Fatah movement's branch in the Jilazoun refugee camp issued a death notice for him (Facebook page of the Jilazoun refugee camp, March 25, 2017).

■ Muhammad al-Hatab's funeral was held in the Jilazoun refugee camp and attended by several hundred Palestinians, including senior figures. Calls were shouted to avenge his death and the deaths of other shaheeds, and to continue the path of the "resistance" [i.e., terrorism and violence] (Ma'an and Paltoday, March 24, 2017). Spokesmen for the Palestinian national consensus government as well as Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) condemned "Israel's crimes" (Wafa and Palinfo, March 24, 2017).

■ **The Palestinian social media reposted notices from Muhammad Hatab's Facebook page**. One from the end of January 2017 read, "Dig me a deep grave and **bury me standing up** so that I can shout to passersby not to lower their heads, to die erect and not under the feet of tyrants" (Twitter account of Paldf, March 23, 2017). Under his profile picture he wrote that **he gave his life as a gift to the homeland**. In October 2015 he wrote of his longing for his friend **Leith al-Khaldi**, from the Jilazoun refugee camp, who was killed by the IDF on July 31, 2015, in a riot north of Ramallah (official Facebook page of Fatah, March 23, 2017).



Left: Death wish posted by Muhammad Hatap on his Facebook page, January 2017. Right: Facebook profile picture of Muhammad Hatap (official Fatah Facebook page, March 23, 2017).



Left: Death notice issued by the Fatah movement's branch in the Jilazoun refugee camp (Facebook page of the Jilazoun refugee camp, March 25, 2017). Right: Layla Ghanem, governor of the Ramallah and al-Bireh districts, attends the funeral (Facebook page of Layla Ghanem, March 24, 2017)

Riots, Clashes and Popular Terrorism

■ In the meantime, demonstrations, clashes and riots continued, primarily involving the throwing of stones and Molotov cocktails. The Israeli security forces detained Palestinian suspects in Judea and Samaria and confiscated weapons. The more prominent occurrences were the following:

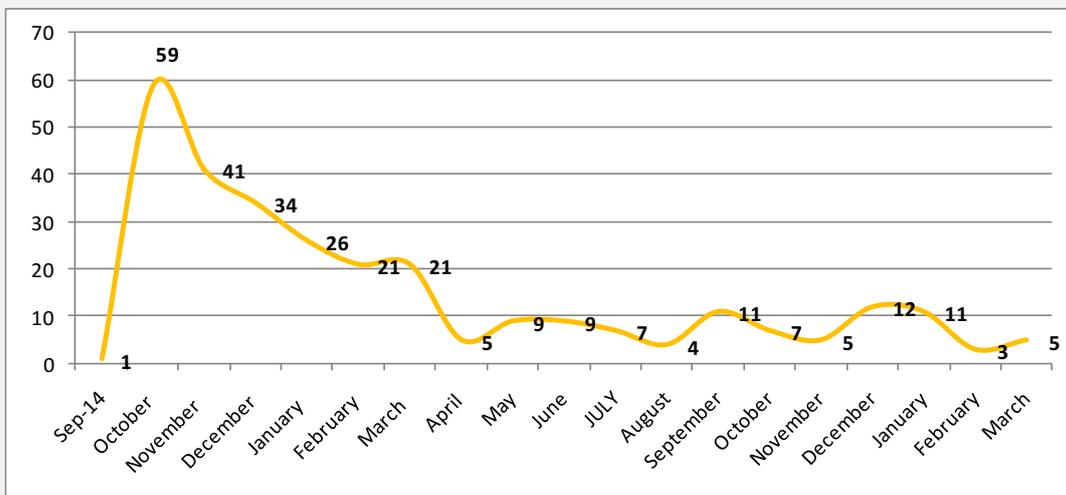
- **March 28, 2017** – Two Palestinians were detained after they threw Molotov cocktails at an IDF guard post **near Negohot in Mt. Hebron**. (Facebook page of Red Alert, March 28, 2017).

- **March 27, 2017** – Palestinians threw stones at an Israeli bus near **Beit Hagai in Mt. Hebron**. There were no casualties; the bus was damaged (Facebook page of Red Alert, March 28, 2017).
- **March 27, 2017** – An IDF soldier mistakenly drove a truck into **the village of Sa'ir (Gush Etzion region)**. Palestinians threw stones at the truck, wounding him. He was extracted by an IDF force (Facebook page of Red Alert, March 28, 2017).
- **March 27, 2017** – A Palestinian threw a Molotov cocktail at Border Policemen in **the region of A-Ram, east of Ramallah**. One Border Policeman was wounded (Facebook page of Red Alert, March 27, 2017).
- **March 26, 2017** – Palestinians threw stones at an Israeli vehicle **near Anatot (Benyamin region)**. There were no casualties; the windshield of the vehicle was damaged (Facebook page of Red Alert, March 26, 2017).
- **March 24, 2017** – Palestinians in a passing car threw a metal rod at an Israeli vehicle **near al-Moghaiyer (Benyamin region)**. There were no casualties; the vehicle was damaged (Facebook page of Red Alert, March 24, 2017).
- **March 23, 2017** – Four improvised IEDs were found in a bag at the **Bayt Furiq Junction (near Nablus)**. They were dismantled by police and IDF forces (Facebook page of Red Alert, March 23, 2017).
- **March 23, 2017** – Palestinians threw stones at an IDF force operating **near Tekoa in Gush Etzion**. An IDF soldier was wounded (Facebook page of Red Alert, March 23, 2017).



Israel vehicle damaged by rocks thrown by Palestinians near the village of Husan, west of Bethlehem (Facebook page of QudsN, March 26, 2017).

Significant Terrorist Attacks in Judea, Samaria and Jerusalem since September 2015¹



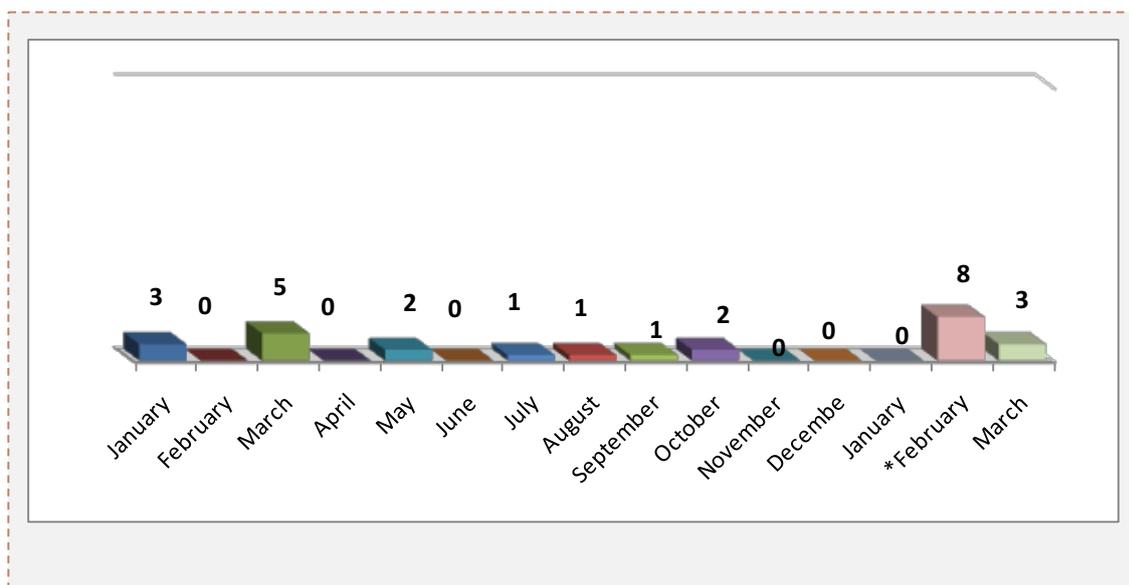
¹ A significant attack is defined by the ITIC as involving shooting, stabbing, a vehicle, the use of IEDs, or a combination of the above. Stones and Molotov cocktails thrown by Palestinians are not included.

Israel's South

Rocket Fire Attacking Israel

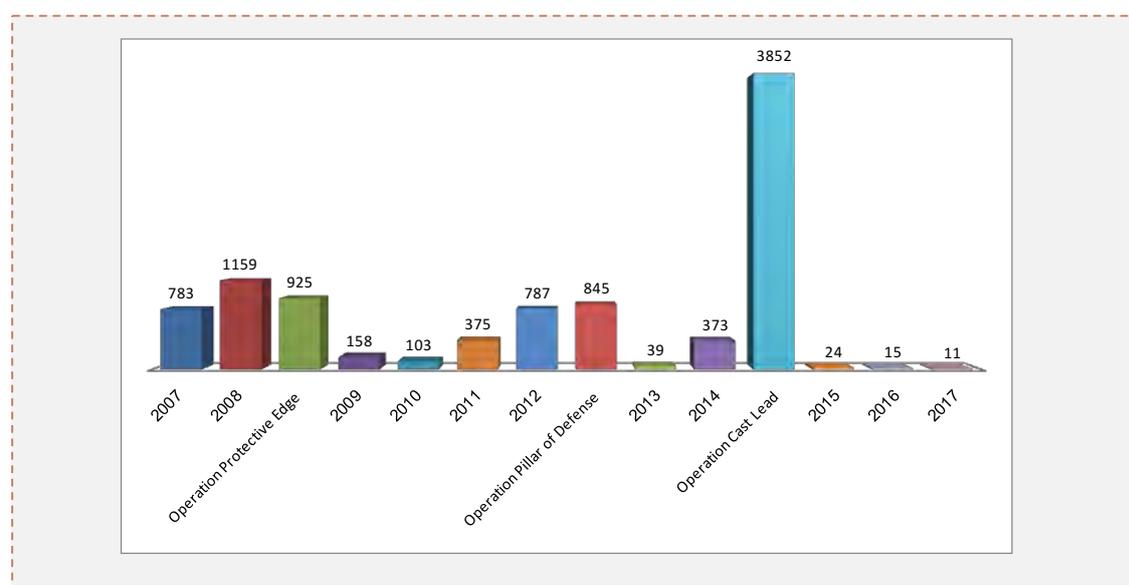
- This past week no rocket hits were identified in Israeli territory.

Monthly Distribution of Rocket Hits in Israel since January 2016



*Six of the rockets fired in February were launched from the Sinai Peninsula at Israeli territory, apparently by ISIS's Sinai Province.

Annual Distribution of Rocket Hits in Israel's South²



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

IDF Shoots at Suspects near the Border

■ On March 22, 2017, IDF forces shot at three Palestinians seen placing IEDs near the border security fence in the Rafah region. The Palestinian ministry of health reported the death the **Yusuf Sha'ban Abu 'Azra**, 16, from Rafah, and the wounding of two others by IDF fire east of Rafah (Palinfo, March 22, 2017). Palestinian sources claimed they were not military operatives. No organization claimed responsibility for the event. **Tareq Rishmawi**, spokesman for the national consensus government, condemned the "Israeli attack" that led to the young man's death (Ma'an, March 22, 2017).

Developments in the Gaza Strip

The Rafah Crossing

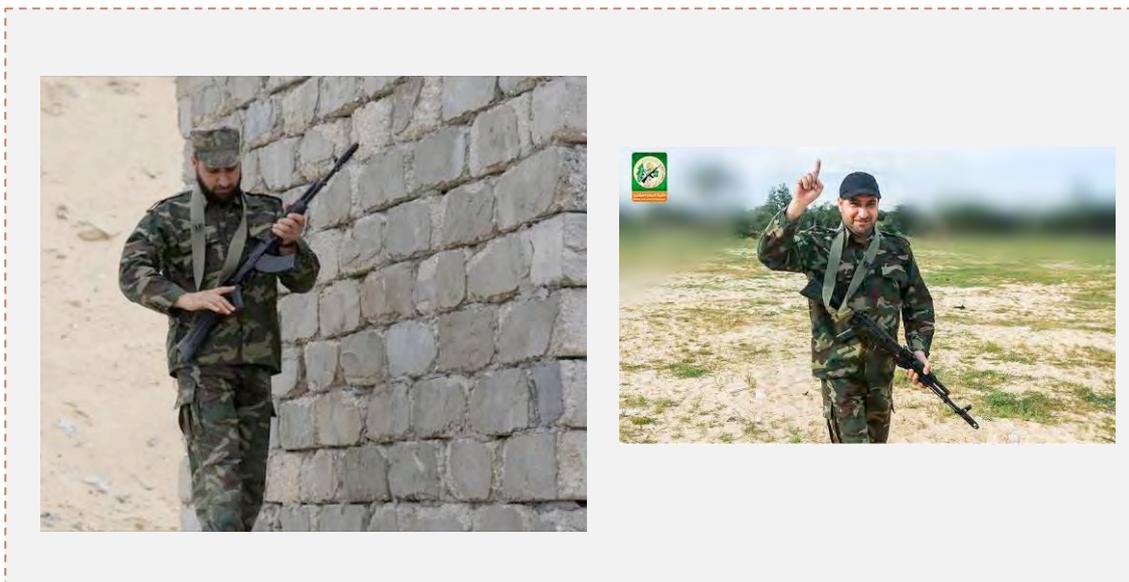
■ The Egyptians have begun enlarging the Rafah crossing. They began on March 15, 2017, and are expected to continue until June. New waiting rooms are being built to accommodate several hundred more people. Also under construction at the site are a hostel and mosque (Safa, March 24, 2017).

Senior Hamas Military Wing Terrorist Killed

■ The Hamas ministry of the interior in the Gaza Strip reported that **Mazen Fuqahaa, a senior terrorist operative released in the Gilad Shalit prisoner exchange deal, was killed in Gaza City**. According to the announcement, the security forces began an investigation into his murder. **Ayman al-Batinji, a spokesman for the Hamas police**, said that Mazen Fuqahaa was shot in the head four times at close range. The attack, he said, took place in a parking lot near his home (alresala.net, March 24, 2017). **Mazen Fuqahaa was a senior operative in the West Bank headquarters of Hamas' military-terrorist wing**. He lived in the Gaza Strip, having been deported there after his release from prison in the Gilad Shalit prisoner exchange deal.

■ Mazen Fuqahaa was born in Tubas, in northern Samaria, in 1979. He received BA in business administration from al-Najah University in Nablus in 2001. While he was a student he joined Hamas' military wing. In 2001 he was detained by the PA security forces, who claimed his name appeared on a CIA list of wanted terrorists. He was released during the second intifada after the IDF destroyed the Palestinian security forces' headquarters. Mazen Fuqahaa planned and carried out a number of terrorist attacks against Israel. They included a suicide bombing attack in southern Jerusalem

(2002), killing 19; and a suicide bombing attack in a bus in Meron (northern Israel, near Safed, 2002), killing nine. In May 2002 he was detained by Israel and **sentenced to nine terms of life imprisonment and 50 additional years**. In October 2011 he was released in the Gilad Shalit prisoner exchange deal and deported to the Gaza Strip (Twitter account of Palinfo, March 25, 2017).



Pictures posted by Hamas' military wing of Mazen Fuqahaa during military training in the Gaza Strip (Palinfo website, March 25, 2017; Facebook page of Shehab, March 27, 2017).

■ Hamas' military wing said in an statement that Mazen Fuqahaa had been killed near his home in the Tel al-Islam neighborhood in the southern part of Gaza City. The statement glorified his activities against Israel and the important role he played in planning and supervising a number of "heroic activities." **According to Hamas' military wing, Israel planned and carried out the killing. The military wing threatened Israel**, saying it would be sorry for the day it thought of imposing such an "equation" on the "resistance," warning that the "equation" would change and Israel would pay the price (Izz al-Din Qassam Brigades website, March 24, 2017).

■ **Iyad al-Bazam, spokesman for the Hamas ministry of the interior, said Hamas' security forces had begun investigating the killing.** He called on Gazans and the media to act responsibly, not spread rumors and use only authorized information. After Mazen Fuqahaa was killed, Hamas' ministry of the interior closed the Erez crossing between the Gaza Strip and Israel until further notice and announced that Gaza Strip residents were forbidden to leave, except for humanitarian issues. Gazan fishermen were also forbidden to go to sea. Gazans would also not be permitted to leave the Strip through the Rafah crossing, should Egypt decide to open it. According to Iyad al-Bazam **the steps were necessary to prevent those**

involved in the killing to escape (website of the Hamas ministry of the interior, March 26, 2017).



Hamas' ministry of the interior closes the Erez crossing (Facebook page of al-Risalah, March 26, 2017).

■ On March 25, 2017, the funeral of Mazen Fuqahaa was attended by senior Hamas figures, among them Ismail Haniyeh and Yahya al-Sinwar. After the funeral Hamas erected a large mourning tent in Gaza City. A mass protest march was also held in the Tubas region, Mazen Fuqahaa's birthplace, during which marchers demanded revenge (Twitter account of Palinfo, March 25, 2017). Rallies and demonstrations were held throughout Judea, Samaria and the Gaza Strip.



Left: Senior Hamas figures Yahya al-Sinwar (right), Ismail Haniyeh (center) and Rawhi Mushtaha (left) in the cortege of Mazen Fuqahaa's funeral (Facebook page of Shehab, March 25, 2017).
Right: Death notice for Mazen Fuqahaa issued jointly by Hamas' political and military wings (Hamas website, March 24, 2017).

Hamas Reactions

■ **Senior Hamas figures accused Israel of killing Mazen Fuqahaa and vowed they would avenge his death.** Hamas' military wing hung large signs throughout the Gaza Strip threatening Israel. At a memorial rally a **speech recorded by Khaled Mashaal, head of the Hamas political bureau,** was played. He said that **if Israel wanted to change the "rules of the game," Hamas was ready to accept the challenge. He added that it was a great challenge and an ongoing struggle, and that the entire Hamas movement, both its military wing and political bureau, were responsible for [answering] Israel's challenge.** He claimed it made no difference that the balance of force was not tipped in Hamas' favor, because the force of Hamas' will was greater than Israel's might and weapons. He said the Hamas leadership would continue its path of political and diplomatic activities, but at the same time continue the path of jihad (al-Aqsa TV, March 27, 2017).

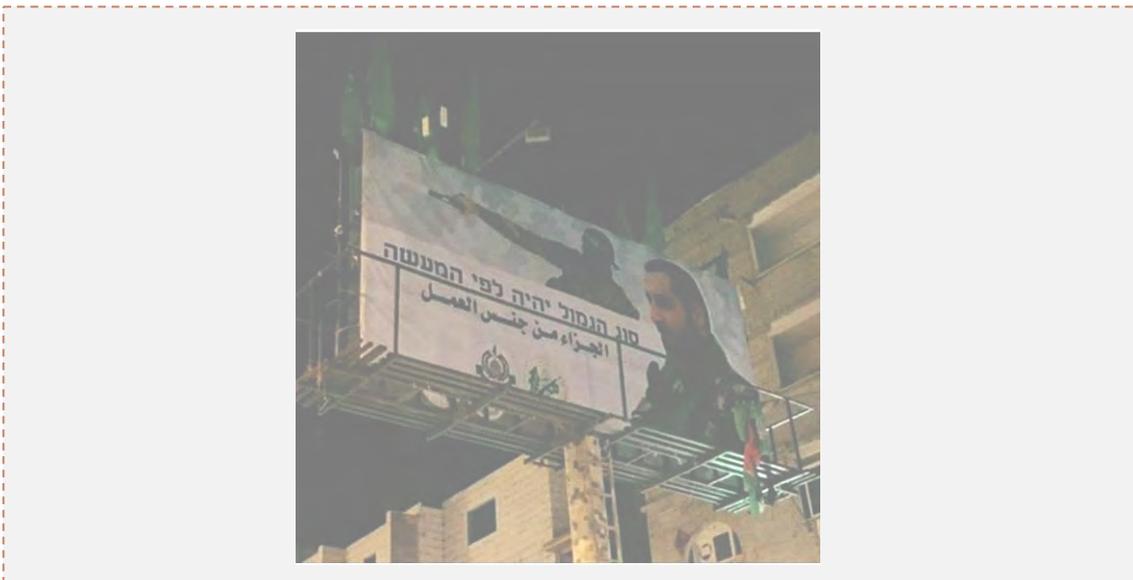
■ Some Hamas reactions were the following:

- **Khalil al-Haya, member of Hamas' political bureau,** said Israel was certain the killing would lead to the creation of "a new equation" that would benefit Israel. However, Israel was wrong because the Izz al-Din Qassam Brigades were prepared to respond immediately to the "terrible crime" Israel had committed. He also claimed the killing only brought the Palestinians in the West Bank closer to the Palestinians in the Gaza Strip (al-Aqsa TV, March 25, 2017).
- **Musheir al-Masri, senior Hamas figure,** said Israel had crossed "red lines" and that the Mossad's "fingerprints" were obvious. He promised that Mazen Fuqahaa's blood would not have been shed in vain and that the military wing would avenge his death. He also said Israel would be sorry for its attempt to change the rules of the game and that the response of the military wing would be deep within Israel, in due time (al-Aqsa TV, March 25, 2017).
- **Mahmoud al-Zahar, senior Hamas figure,** said there were many ways to retaliate and deter [Israel], and that Hamas would not accept such a crime. He said there was no lull agreement with Israel, only a ceasefire that could end at any time. He said in recent weeks Israel had tried to violate the ceasefire and that Hamas understood the messages Israel was sending by carrying out [military] exercises and calling up soldiers in the reserves (al-Ra'i, March 25, 2017).

- **Fathi Hamad, member of Hamas' political bureau**, threatened that Hamas' military wing would respond to the killing. He said that if the killing were not met with a response it might give Israel an appetite to continue killing senior operatives. Therefore, he claimed, Hamas had no choice but to respond in new ways (Felesteen Online, March 27, 2017).



Left: The Arabic reads, "The crime of the killing of released prisoner Mazen Fuqahaa," and on the rifle, "The arena of the response" (Facebook page of Felesteen Online, March 25, 2017). Right: Cartoon by Hamas-affiliated Omayya Joha threatening to blow up a bus in retaliation for the death of Mazen Fuqahaa. The rhyming Arabic reads, "[We will go] head to head and the roof of the bus will fly off" (alresala.net, March 27, 2017).



Sign hung by Hamas military wing in the Nuseirat refugee camp (central Gaza Strip) reading, in Hebrew and Arabic, that retaliation would be [meted out] according to [the nature of] the deed (Facebook page of Shehab, March 27, 2017).

Statements by Yahya al-Sinwar

■ To mark the 13th anniversary of the death of Ahmed Yassin, a delegation of Hamas leaders headed by Ismail Haniyeh and Yahya al-Sinwar paid a visit to the former home of Ahmed Yassin in Gaza City. A press conference was held where Yahya al-Sinwar said Hamas was continuing the path of its founder, Ahmed Yassin, "to realize the plan of liberation." He said that soon they would leave [the Gaza Strip] for al-Aqsa mosque and the occupied territories as "conquerors and victors" (Hamas media, March 22, 2017).



Hamas leadership delegation at the home of Ahmed Yassin in Gaza City (Hamas movement Twitter account, March 22, 2017)

Salafists Imprisoned for Rocket Fire

■ Hamas' military courts in the Gaza Strip sentenced to jail three Gazans affiliated with ISIS. They were detained after they fired rockets into Israel territory four months ago. It was the first time Palestinians were tried for firing rockets. They were given prison sentences of between five and seven months (al-Sharq al-Awsat, March 24, 2017).

Palestinian from Rafah Killed Fighting in the Ranks of ISIS in Syria

■ Palestinian sources reported that **Saleh al-'Arqan**, 25, from Rafah, was recently killed fighting in the ranks of ISIS in Aleppo. Reportedly, he was killed in an aerial attack carried out by the American-led coalition. He left the Gaza Strip several years ago and joined ISIS in Syria. His family erected a mourning tent in Rafah (Ma'an, Voice of Palestine, March 27, 2017).



Saleh al-'Arqan, a Palestinian from the Gaza Strip who joined ISIS in Syria (Sawt Fatah, March 27, 2017).

The Palestinian Authority

The PA in the International Arena

■ During a visit to European countries Mahmoud Abbas continued claiming the Palestinians adhered to the peace process and negotiations with Israel:

- At a joint press conference Mahmoud Abbas held with German Chancellor Angela Merkel, he claimed the Palestinian leadership adhered to the idea of a just peace based on the two-state solution with the 1967 borders. He said the Israeli occupation had to come to an end and there had to be a peace agreement. Such an agreement would end all the issues so Palestine and Israel could exist side by side (Wafa, March 24, 2017).
- At a joint press conference held with Federica Mogherini, high representative of the European Union for foreign affairs and security policy, Mahmoud Abbas claimed he was committed to working for a full and permanent peace with Israel, based on international agreements and legitimacy, and on the Arab peace initiative. He said the PA and the EU would maintain contacts to ensure the success of the efforts (Wafa, March 27, 2017).



Left: Mahmoud Abbas meeting with Federica Mogherini in Brussels (Wafa, March 27, 2017).
Right: Mahmoud Abbas and Angela Merkel hold a joint press conference in Berlin (Wafa, March 24, 2017).

■ **The UN Human Rights Council (HRC)** adopted four resolutions condemning alleged violations of international law carried out by Israel in Judea and Samaria, Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip. The HRC called on Israel to accept the Geneva Conventions and stop construction in the territories, and called on "states and firms to avoid both direct and indirect ties with the settlements."³ **Hamas spokesman Fawzi Barhoum** welcomed the resolutions and thanked the states that had voted for them. He demanded that the international community and human rights institutions stop the so-called [Israeli] occupation, defend the right of the Palestinian people and support the Palestinian cause (Hamas website, March 27, 2017).

³ <http://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/.premium-1.779326>