



**The Meir Amit Intelligence  
and Terrorism Information  
Center**

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**Ahmed Jibril's organization (PFLP-GC) blamed the PA, Fatah, and Saudi Arabia for the violent clashes in Al-Yarmuk refugee camp.<sup>1</sup> The PA and Fatah strongly condemned Jibril's "crimes", while PA media blamed the Syrian regime for the incident. Hamas, recognizing its dependence on Syria, tried to play both sides of the fence.**

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**Ahmed Jibril at a press conference convened by the terrorist organizations in Damascus on June 8. He blamed the Palestinian Authority, Fatah, and Saudi Arabia for the violent clashes in Al-Yarmuk refugee camp and denied that members of his organizations had opened fire on the demonstrators. On his right is Moussa Abu Marzouq, deputy chief of the Hamas Political Bureau (aljazeera.net, June 9).**

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<sup>1</sup> This is a follow-up on our June 7, 2011 Information Bulletin: ["Following the Naksa Day events, there was strong internal Palestinian criticism of Ahmed Jibril's organization \(PFLP-GC\), affiliated with the Syrian regime, and of other pro-Syrian organizations. They were blamed for cynically sending young Palestinians to their deaths to serve the interests of the Syrian and other regimes \(possibly Iran\). PFLP-GC and PFLP-Habash operatives were attacked by relatives of the slain Palestinians during funerals held in Al-Yarmuk refugee camp near Damascus. The PFLP-GC headquarters were torched."](#)

## Overview

1. **A major internal Palestinian dispute surfaced** when some five people were killed and nearly 20 injured **in the violent clashes that took place in Al-Yarmuk refugee camp** following Naksa Day.

2. **The dispute arose between the PA/Fatah, which positioned themselves as protectors of the Palestinian national interests, and PFLP-GC and other pro-Syrian terrorist organizations that are Assad's regime proxies. These organizations are perceived as helping the Syrian regime take advantage of the Palestinians** for its own purposes to shift public attention away from the escalating domestic crisis.

3. **The two sides exchanged harsh accusations:**

a. **The PA leadership and Fatah strongly condemned the shooting of Palestinian demonstrators in Al-Yarmuk camp by armed PFLP-GC squads.** The PA referred to the incident as **"a crime of collective, indiscriminate slaughter"**, while Fatah spokesmen said that **the PFLP-GC should be banned from the PLO.** Al-Hayat al-Jadeeda, a newspaper affiliated with the PA, accused the Syrian regime, "which is now enduring its final moments", **of an attempt to shift public attention away from the domestic crisis to the Israeli-Syrian border.**

b. **Top-level spokesmen on behalf of the PFLP-GC and other pro-Syrian organizations** convened a press conference in Damascus **during which they made false allegations against Abu Mazen and Mohammed Dahlan, as well as "Saudi elements", saying they were behind the violent clashes in the refugee camp.** It was allegedly part of a "plan" to hit Syria and the "resistance" and advance the interests of the U.S. and Israel. Ahmed Jibril promised that "those who were tempted and arrested" would soon make a media appearance to come forward with a public confession.

4. **On its part, Hamas maintained a low profile with regard to the incident.** While Moussa Abu Marzouq did attend the press conference in which Ahmed Jibril condemned the PA and Fatah,<sup>2</sup> his comments on the incident **were much milder than Ahmed Jibril's.** On the other hand, Felesteen, a newspaper published by Hamas in the Gaza Strip, demanded an investigation to find out who was responsible for opening fire on "the youngsters of Al-Yarmuk"; however, it also **avoided pointing the finger at the PFLP-GC.** In addition, the newspaper **called to take a neutral stance on the incident in Syria and warned against falling "into the trap of civil war".**

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<sup>2</sup> He can be seen sitting to Ahmed Jibril's right at the press conference convened by the Palestinian organizations in Damascus, looking away from the microphones (see photograph on the cover page of the Information Bulletin).

5. It is our assessment that the low profile maintained by Hamas and its hesitant (and at times contradictory) reactions indicate that **the movement is facing a serious dilemma: on one hand, Hamas is ideologically affiliated with the Muslim Brotherhood, which struggles to topple the Bashar regime, and desires to avoid being too closely associated with the weakening Syrian regime;** on the other, Hamas is dependent on the Syrian regime and its military, political, and media infrastructures located in Damascus. As a consequence, Hamas must be cautious.

6. **It's our assessment that Hamas' basic dilemma is all the more heightened by the Al-Yarmuk refugee camp incident, in which the efforts made by the Syrian regime to divert public attention from the domestic crisis (for which purpose it makes use of Syrian proxy Palestinian organizations) came into sharp contrast with national Palestinian interests—interests which the PA and Fatah have positioned themselves to represent.**<sup>3</sup>

## **The violent clashes in Al-Yarmuk refugee camp— update**

7. According to a report by Al-Jazeera TV, **five people were killed during the violent clashes in Al-Yarmuk refugee camp**, three of them belonging to the PFLP-GC. The victims included **Nasser Mubarak, a member of the PFLP-GC central committee.**<sup>4</sup> According to a previous Al-Jazeera report, about 20 people were injured in the clashes (we believe that the number of 5 fatalities reported by Al-Jazeera is more plausible than 14, the number reported by Fatah; also see below).

8. A **New York Times** article featured eyewitness accounts stating that angry Palestinians attacked the PFLP-GC headquarters after the funerals of the seven people killed on Naksa Day. **Mohamed Rashdan, 25, an eyewitness who lives near the headquarters, said that the attackers began to throw stones at the headquarters.** Then, he said **"the building guards began to shoot at us."** He added that all the shooters were Palestinians and that there were no Syrian security men among them.<sup>5</sup>

9. Mohamed Rashdan went on to say he believed that the Palestinian demonstration at the Israeli-Syrian border (on Naksa Day) was organized **to serve the interests of President Assad**, and that the demonstration (at the border) had nothing to do with seeking justice for

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<sup>3</sup> See our April 11, 2011 Information Bulletin: ["Hamas has found itself in a predicament over the clash between its solidarity with Muslim Brotherhood elements in Syria interested in toppling the regime, as well as with Sheikh al-Qaradawi's attack on Bashar al-Assad, and its dependence on the assistance provided by the Assad regime to its infrastructure and terrorist activity"](#).

<sup>4</sup> [aljazeera.net](#), June 9, Damascus.

<sup>5</sup> Isabel Kershner, **"Fighters Shoot Protesters at a Palestinian Camp in Syria"**, The New York Times, June 7.

Palestinian refugees and displaced Syrian residents of the Golan Heights. Many residents of the Al-Yarmuk refugee camp **blamed the Popular Front for organizing the border protest “to help Syria run away from its local crisis.”** Mohamed Rashdan added, **“they [PFLP-GC] got us involved in Syria’s local crisis... and that is why we were so angry at the killing of our brothers and sons.”**<sup>6</sup>

## **Reactions from the PFLP-GC and other pro-Syrian organizations**

10. Senior spokesmen on behalf of the PFLP-GC made far-fetched, unsubstantiated **allegations against the PA and Saudi Arabia**, saying they were behind the recent violent clashes in Al-Yarmuk refugee camp:<sup>7</sup>

a. **Ahmed Jibril blamed Abu Mazen and senior Fatah official Mohammed Dahlan** for the incident, **accusing them of being in league with the U.S. and Israel. Jibril also accused “Saudi elements” of financing the group responsible for the Al-Yarmuk violent clashes.** He said that the “factions” (i.e., the pro-Syrian proxy organizations) would soon invite the media to a press conference to present “those who were tempted and arrested to give a confession [and describe] how they received the money from Saudi Arabia and other elements”.<sup>8</sup> Jibril denied that the guards at the PFLP-GC headquarters in Al-Yarmuk refugee camp (Al-Khalisa building) fired on the demonstrators. Another senior PFLP-GC official Anwar Raja also blamed PA elements based in Ramallah for the clashes in the refugee camp, threatening that they would pay the Palestinian people for the crimes they committed against them.<sup>9</sup>

b. **During a press conference held at the torched PFLP-GC headquarters on June 8, the pro-Syrian terrorist organizations in Damascus (“the factions”) condemned the “crime of aggression”.** They said that the incident was part of a plan that compromises Syria and the “resistance” and advances the interests of Israel and the U.S. An announcement read by Khalid Abd al-Majid, chairman of the Palestinian organizations in Damascus and head of a minor organization called the Popular Struggle Front, referred to the incident as “an attempt to harm the path of resistance and the unity of the Palestinian people.” **The announcement accused “PA elements in Ramallah” of being responsible for the “plan” to hit Syria and the “resistance”, and for the incident in Al-Yarmuk refugee camp.**<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> aljazeera.net, June 9, Damascus.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Palestine-info (quoting Quds Press), June 7.

<sup>10</sup> aljazeera.net, June 9, Damascus.

## The reaction of the PA and Fatah

11. On June 7, the PA leadership issued an announcement condemning the shooting of Palestinian demonstrators in Al-Yarmuk camp by armed PFLP-GC squads during the funeral of shaheeds killed on Naksa Day. **The PA leadership referred to the incident as a “crime of collective, indiscriminate slaughter”** and expressed its opposition to “this criminal, cowardly act, which contradicts the very basic Palestinian national traditions.” According to the announcement, the PA will conduct an investigation of the incident, make the results available to the public, and hold those involved fully accountable, as an organization and as individuals.<sup>11</sup>

12. A correspondent for the Al-Quds al-Arabi newspaper reported that **the Fatah Prisoners Affairs Central Office in Ramallah issued an announcement demanding that the PLO expel the PFLP-GC** because its members had fired on Palestinian refugees during a demonstration held in front of the organization’s headquarters in Al-Yarmuk refugee camp on June 6. According to the announcement, **“Ahmed Jibril’s mercenaries rushed to kill our people in cold blood, in service of the devil,” and caused the deaths of 14 Palestinians** [note: a number we believe to be exaggerated]. **Azzam Abu Bakr, chairman of the Fatah Prisoners Central Office**, threatened that “this serious crime will not go unpunished, and the pure blood will not be lost [...]” He demanded that Ahmed Jibril (“that murderous criminal”) be banned from the PLO and called for **“the establishment of an investigative committee against him and his mafia.”**<sup>12</sup>

13. Articles in Al-Hayat al-Jadeeda, a newspaper affiliated with the PA, strongly condemned the PFLP-GC and the Syrian regime. For example:

a. **Yahya Rabah** (Al-Hayat al-Jadeeda, June 9) wrote that after nearly 40 years of strict discipline on the Golan front, **the Syrian regime, which is now enduring its final moments, gave an order to prepare “an arena of blood” on Naksa Day “to shift public attention away from the domestic crisis to its Syrian-Israeli border”**. After the bloodshed on the Golan there was a lot of anger directed at the Palestinian organizations involved in organizing the incident. The masses that gathered in Al-Yarmuk refugee camp “were called to hold non-violent mourning processions to the PFLP-GC headquarters, **but they came under fire from dozens of PFLP-GC members** who turned the scene into one of bloodshed. **The leaders of the organizations in Damascus**, Yahya Rabah added, **are currently in conflict not only with their own people but also with the revolution against the Syrian regime that is sweeping across Syria.**

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<sup>11</sup> WAFA, June 7, 2011, Ramallah.

<sup>12</sup> Al-Quds al-Arabi, June 9, Ramallah.

b. **Adel Abdel Rahman** (Al-Hayat al-Jadeeda, June 8) accused the supporters of the Syrian regime of **conspiring with Bashar Assad's regime to lead the Palestinians** to the Golan front and leave them "as prey for the Israelis." Their purpose was **to cover up the massacre of the Syrian people by the Syrian regime and divert attention from the crimes committed by the Assad Jr. regime** against the masses of the Syrian revolution. Adel Abdel Rahman added that Jibril's crime **unveiled the ugly face of the "mercenaries" who collaborated with the Syrian regime and Hezbollah in the murder of the heroic people of Syria**, and exposed their estrangement from the Palestinian people and their national choice.

c. **Adli Sadeq** (Al-Hayat al-Jadeeda, June 7) wrote it is small wonder that **Ahmed Jibril sides with those who support the tyrannical and corrupt regime** and forces himself on the Palestinian scene **on the recommendation of the Assad regime, "which holds the Syrians by their throats."** The author of the article called on the PLO to document the crimes on the internal scene of the national movement just as it documents "the crimes of the [Israeli] occupation", and name "the heads of crime and treachery" so it is clear that they serve no purpose, be it reconciliation or participation in national dialogue. Adli Sadeq concludes by saying that **"Syria's great tyrants", along with such "dwarf puppets" as Jibril, "will end up in the garbage bin of Palestinian and Syrian history."**

## Hamas

14. **So far Hamas maintains a low media profile** with regard to the recent events in Al-Yarmuk refugee camp, in an attempt to avoid becoming overly involved in the media turmoil that broke out following the clashes between the PA and Fatah on one hand and explicitly proxy Syrian organizations such as the PFLP-GC on the other.

15. **Moussa Abu Marzouq, deputy chairman of the Hamas Political Bureau**, took part in a press conference convened by the pro-Syrian organizations in which they slammed the PA and Fatah. While he did join the proxy Syrian organizations that condemned the PA and Fatah, **he kept a soft tone**. He expressed his "regret" over the announcement released by the PLO, which mentioned the "factions" (i.e., the proxy Syrian organizations) while ignoring the "Palestinian people". He made careful attempts to speak up for the proxy Syrian organizations, saying that the "factions" fought in the name of the Palestinian people and did not abandon them. He claimed that the "factions" had issued no calls to take part in the June 5 processions, coordinated with the Syrian authorities. He also called on the PLO to carefully

examine the number of people killed in the conflict in Al-Yarmuk refugee camp before making announcements on the issue.<sup>13</sup>

16. On the other hand, **an article published on June 9 in Felesteen, a newspaper affiliated with Hamas, took a slightly different approach to the incident.** The blood of 12 shaheeds in Al-Yarmuk refugee camp, the article said, could not have been spilled for nothing. **The author, Hamas-affiliated Issam Shawer, demanded an urgent response to the question of who opened machinegun fire on the youngsters of Al-Yarmuk refugee camp, why they committed the crime, and who is behind it** (even though the culprits are clearly operatives of the PFLP-GC). He went on to say that the calls against the Palestinian factions go against national unity **but do not justify “the ugly massacre”**, whoever may be responsible for it.

17. Issam Shawer concluded the article by saying that the tragic events in Al-Yarmuk refugee camp are “a sign of bad things to come, and a far-reaching plot against the Palestinian presence in Syria.” He called for a **“policy of restraint” under which a “neutral stance” should be taken on the incident in Syria, and warned against falling into the trap of civil war.**

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<sup>13</sup> aljazeera.net, June 9, Damascus.