The Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) carries out another suicide bombing attack at the entrance to the shopping mall in Netanya, killing five Israeli civilians and wounding more than 50. The Iranian- and Syrian-sponsored terrorist organization carried out most of the suicide bombing attacks during the lull, intending to sabotage it and deteriorate the situation.

Overview

On the morning of December 5 2005, a PIJ suicide bomber from Tulkarm blew himself up at the entrance to the Sharon shopping mall in Netanya. It was the **fourth suicide bombing attack** carried out by the PIJ since the beginning of the lull. The organization has systematically worked to sabotage the lull and to promote itself as the leading terrorist group in the armed confrontation with Israel.

Lutfi Amin Abu Sa’ada, the suicide bomber, before the attack
(Al-Jazeera TV, December 5)
The PIJ is supported by **Iran**, which provides generous funding for the organization’s terrorist activities. **Syria**, despite international pressure, continues allowing the PIJ’s leadership, headed by Dr. Ramadan Shalah, to use it as a base from which to orchestrate its terrorist operations in the Palestinian Authority (PA)-administered territories. The suicide bombing attacks carried out by the PIJ during the lull were directly responsible for the **deaths of 19 Israeli civilians and the wounding of more than 160**.

Despite the condemnations of the suicide bombing attack expressed by the PA’s official spokesmen, in practice the PA avoids a direct confrontation with the organization, even though it is aware that the PIJ is sponsored by Iran and Syria and seeks to sabotage the lull to which the PA has committed itself.

**The suicide bombing attack in Netanya**

At about 11:30 a.m. on December 5 a suicide bomber blew himself up at the entrance to the Sharon shopping mall in Netanya. Four Israeli citizens were killed on the spot (a fifth died later in the hospital) and about 50 were wounded. Twenty-four of the wounded are still hospitalized, six of them in critical condition (December 6).

Before the suicide bomber detonated his explosive device, he aroused the suspicions of passersby near the mall (this was the third suicide bombing attack carried out at the Sharon mall since the beginning of the current violent Palestinian-Israeli confrontation¹). The suicide bomber (who had bleached his hair, perhaps in an attempt to mingle more freely among Israelis) was wearing a dark coat and carrying a large backpack. People who saw him appealed to police and security guards but they were unable to prevent him from blowing himself up close to the mall’s entrance.

¹ One occurred on May 18, 2001, when a suicide bomber tried to enter the mall. He roused the suspicions of the security guard at the entrance and blew himself up, killing five Israeli civilians. The other occurred on July 12, 2005, when a suicide bomber blew himself up on a crosswalk at the corner of the mall, killing five Israeli civilians and wounding about 40.
The site of the suicide bombing attack at the Sharon Mall in Netanya (Photos: Al-Jazeera TV, December 5, 2005)

The Israeli dead

- The five Israeli civilians murdered in the attack were:2

  - **Haim Amram**, 26, from Netanya. Worked as a security guard at the Sharon mall and was killed while trying to block the suicide bomber with his own body.

  - **Daniel Golani**, 45, from Nahariya. Was in the area on business. Survived by his wife and two daughters.

  - **Alexandra Garnitzki**, 65, from Netanya. Immigrated to Israel eight years ago. Survived by her husband and son.

  - **Keinan Tsomai**, 19, from Petah Tikva. Survived by his parents and two brothers.

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2 According to Haaretz and Ynet, December 6, 2005.
Eliyah Rozen, 38, from Bat Hefer. Survived by her husband and three children.

Andrei, Alexandra Garnitzki’s husband, mourning his wife (Photo: Gil Cohen, Reuters, December 6)

The suicide bomber

The suicide bomber was Lutfi Amin ‘Abd al-Latif Abu Sa’ada, 21, from the village of ‘Alar near Tulkarm. An announcement issued by the PIJ stated that he had carried out the attack in response to Israeli actions, especially the killing of organization commanders in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, the most prominent of whom was Luai Sa’adi. The announcement stressed that “the path of jihad and resistance [i.e., terrorist activities] would continue” (Ramatan News Agency, December 5).

Israeli measures taken in the wake of the suicide bombing attack

Shaul Mofaz, Israeli Minister of Defense, called meeting of defense personnel to evaluate the situation. After deliberations it was decided to impose a closure on the PA-administered territories and to minimize the number of vehicles on the road in the West Bank. It was also decided to increase preventive activities against the PIJ in the West Bank and Gaza Strip and especially to increase the detention of terrorist infrastructure operatives in Northern Samaria.

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3 Head of the PIJ terrorist infrastructure in the Tulkarm district, who was killed by IDF forces. For further information see our Special Bulletin “During an IDF operation in Tulkarm on October 23, Luai Sa’adi head of the Palestinian Islamic Jihad terrorist infrastructure in the Tulkarm district, was killed”
An appeal was also made to the government’s legal advisor to renew permission to raze the houses of suicide bombers.4

**Responses to the suicide bombing attack**

- The PA heads and spokesmen were quick to issue forceful condemnations of the attack. Abu Mazen, PA chairman, called a meeting of the commanders of the security forces in Ramallah and issued instructions to detain those involved in the attack and those responsible for it. He said the attack damaged Palestinian interests and that all possible means should be taken to stabilize security (PA News Agency, December 5).

- It can be assumed that Abu Mazen’s instructions were nothing more than lip-service in view of his policy of not directly confronting the Palestinian terrorist organizations. That includes the PIJ, which is actively working to undermine the lull, to escalate violence on the eve of Palestinian Legislative Council elections and in general to damage the PA’s interests.

- The terrorist-operative wing of Fatah expressed satisfaction with the attack in Netanya:
  - Zakariya Zubeidi, Fatah/Al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades commander for the Jenin district, was critical of the PA’s condemnation of the attack. He attacked “Israel’s cruel actions” and represented the attack as a reprisal (Ma'a News Agency, December 5).
  - Muhammad Hijazi, a Fatah/Al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades operative in the Gaza Strip, praised the attack. He issued a statement supporting “every form of Palestinian resistance” to Israel, and called for precautions to be taken against Israel’s targeted attacks (Dunia al-Watan, December 5).

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4 In accordance with a decision made by the Minister of Defense and the Chief of Staff, razing houses as a means of deterring terrorist attacks was stopped in February 2005. The decision was made after recommendations were made by a committee appointed to examine the issue of razing terrorist houses. However, the Minister of Defense and the Chief of Staff made it clear at the time that if circumstances were to change drastically, the policy would be reexamined.
In addition, several dozen armed Fatah/Al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades gunmen and PIJ operatives in Jenin organized a procession there to celebrate the murderous attack, during which a clash broke out between the marchers and the Palestinian security forces (Agence France-Presse, December 5).

**Praise for the suicide bombing attack from Radio Damascus**

Fayiz Qandil, a Radio Damascus commentator, noted that he had already stated that Israel’s “war crimes” would boomerang. He said that during the lull Israel carried out actions which had led to the suicide bombing attack in Netanya. The attack, he said, made Israel grasp the extent to which Palestinian youth wanted to liberate [sic] their land, especially Jerusalem (Radio Damascus, December 5). Such expressions of praise are part of the political and propaganda support the Syrian régime continues to give the PIJ operating from Syrian territory.

**American condemnation of the suicide bombing attack**

Adam Ereli, Deputy State Department spokesman, condemned the “vicious act of terror.” He said the Palestinian Authority “must take immediate steps to prevent these attacks, to end the violence, and to dismantle the infrastructure of terrorism.” He added that “the organization that claims responsibility for this attack is Palestinian-Islamic Jihad, and they have their headquarters in Damascus. So if anybody needed a reminder, this is it, that the Syrian government should take immediate steps to crackdown on this group and to inhibit its activities by shutting down Islamic Jihad offices and expelling its personnel.”
Appendix

Other suicide bombing attacks carried out by the PIJ during the lull.

The PIJ is has carried out the largest number of suicide bombing attacks during the lull. Of the total of five attacks, four were carried out by the PIJ (the fifth, in Beersheba, was carried out by Hamas, although the PIJ was quick to falsely claim responsibility for it as well). The four PIJ attacks caused the deaths of 19 Israeli civilians and wounded more than 160. They were planned and executed by the organization’s infrastructures in Samaria (the Tulkarm and Jenin districts).

The other PIJ suicide bombing attacks during the lull were the following:

At around 4 p.m. on October 26, 2005, a suicide bomber detonated about 5 kgs (11 lbs) of explosives near a fast-food stand near the Hadera market. In the attack five civilians were killed and more than 30 wounded, five of them critically. The suicide bomber was Hassan Ahmad Hassan Abu Zayid, 20, married, from the town of Qabatiya (a town south of Jenin known as a source of suicide bombers).

On July 12, 2005, Ahmad Sami Abu Khalil, from the village of ‘Athil north of Tulkarm, blew himself up on a pedestrian crossing near the same Sharon shopping mall in Netanya. In the attack five civilians were killed and more than 40 wounded. His original intention was apparently to blow himself up inside the mall but he was turned back at the last minute, possibly because of the security guards at the entrance.
He was a high-school student who had just finished his studies. The PIJ claimed responsibility for the attack. The suicide bomber was driven from his village to Taybeh and from there, with the aid of two Israeli citizens, he and his handler continued on to Netanya.

The suicide bombing attack at the Sharon mall in Netanya (Al-Jazeera TV, July 7, 2005)

On February 25, 2005, a suicide bomber blew himself up at the entrance to the Stage Club on the seafront promenade in Tel Aviv. In the attack five civilians were killed and 52 wounded. The PIJ claimed responsibility for the attack. The suicide bomber, ‘Abdallah Sa’id Ibrahim Badran, 23, was from the village of Dir al-Ghassoun in the Tulkarm district.

‘Abdallah Sa’id Ibrahim Badran in a video clip broadcast by Al-Jazeera TV. He harshly attacked the PA and threatened that the suicide bombing attacks would continue. (Photo: Al-Jazeera TV)

5 For further information see our Special Bulletin “Two Palestinian Islamic Jihad terrorist attacks intended to sabotage the so-called lull in the fighting”

6 For further information see our Special Bulletin “Profile of the Palestinian Islamic Jihad, perpetrator of a suicide bombing attack in Tel Aviv, February 25, 2005”