



# News of Terrorism and the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict (August 16 – 22, 2017)

## Overview

- ▶ This past week there was a stabbing attack at the Tapuah Junction in Samaria. The terrorist, a 17 year-old Palestinian, was shot and killed. He posted a will to his Facebook page, calling it "The will of a shaheed," and bid goodbye to his family. Along the Gaza Strip border, Palestinians held "routine" riots.
- ▶ An ISIS-affiliated jihadist operative from the Gaza Strip **blew himself up at a Hamas check post en route to the Sinai Peninsula**. Hamas condemned the attack and warned it would find and punish anyone who violated the security of the Gaza Strip. On the ground, Hamas' security forces conducted operations in the southern Gaza Strip, among them taking control of several Salafi-jihadist posts in the western part of Rafah. A Salafist spokesman in the Gaza Strip denounced Hamas but admitted that the operative who had been killed and another operative **had been en route to the Sinai Peninsula to kill Jews and Egyptian border guards**.
- ▶ **Yahya al-Sinwar, head of Hamas' political bureau in the Gaza Strip**, held a closed meeting with political commentators and analysts. He said **Hamas has no interest in initiating a war with Israel**, but if Hamas has to fight it is prepared. He claimed **Hamas will surprise the enemy with new, high-quality weapons, with advanced precision, range and war heads**. Regarding the tunnels, he said Hamas built "tunnel cities" underground. **He thanked Iran for its ongoing support and called on all states to support Hamas**.

## Terrorist Attacks and Attempted Terrorists Attacks

- ▶ **August 19, 2017 – There was a stabbing attack at the Tapuah Junction in Samaria**. A Palestinian went to the junction carrying a bag. When he was told to go to the check post, instead of obeying he took out a knife and attacked one of the Border Policemen manning the post. He was shot and killed. The Border Policeman was slightly wounded. The Palestinian media reported he was **Qutaiba Ziyad Yusuf Zaharan**, 17, from 'Illar (northeast of Tulkarm).

► Postings to his Facebook page were open only to people who had friended him. **He wrote a will he called "The will of a shaheed," and bid goodbye to his family, writing that the *shahadah* called him and he had yearned for it for a long time.**<sup>1</sup> He begged his family's forgiveness and asked them not to mourn him, but to be happy he had become a shaheed. He also wrote, "praise to Allah who gives victory to the *mujahideen* [jihad fighters] and humiliates the accursed Jews" (Facebook page of QudsN, August 19, 2017). A few hours before the attack he changed the picture on his Facebook page to one of a funeral and said he desired a large, respectable funeral (Twitter account of Palinfo and Facebook page of Qutaiba Zaharan, August 19, 2017).



**Right: Death notice issued by the Hamas movement in Tulkarm (Facebook page of QudsN, August 19, 2017). Left: Picture posted to the terrorist's Facebook page a few hours before the attack. He wrote he wanted a funeral like the one in the picture (Facebook page of Qutaiba Zaharan, August 19, 2017)**

## The Situation in Judea and Samaria

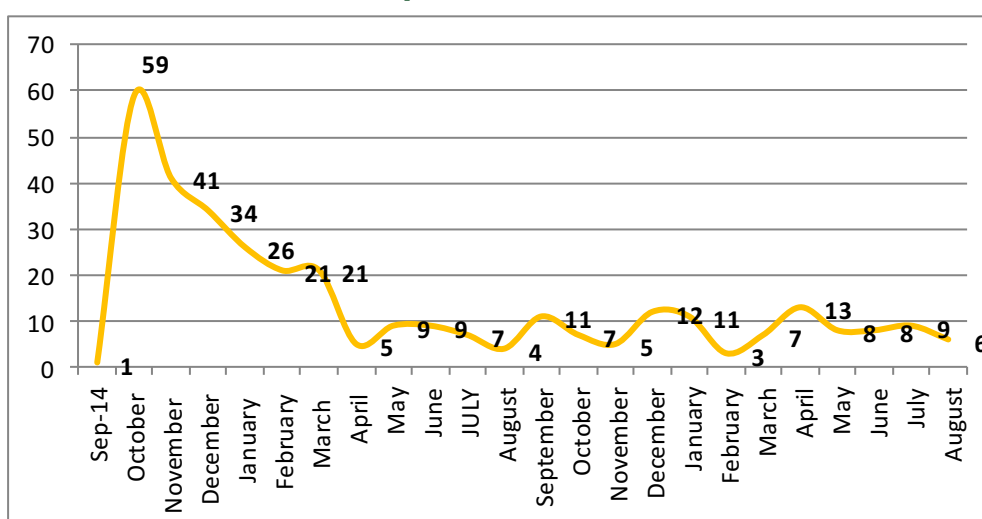
### Riots, Clashes and Popular Terrorism

► This past week Palestinians continued throwing stones and Molotov cocktails. The Israeli security forces carried out counterterrorism activities throughout Judea and Samaria, detaining Palestinians suspected of terrorist activity. Weapons and objects used in riots were seized. The more prominent occurrences were the following:

<sup>1</sup> *Shahadah*: Death as a martyr for the sake of Allah.

- ◆ **August 20, 2017** – Palestinians threw a Molotov cocktail at the security fence **on the road between Kiryat Arba and the Cave of the Patriarchs in Hebron**. There were no casualties (Facebook page of Red Alert, August 20, 2017).
- ◆ **August 19, 2017** – Israeli policemen in **Netanya** detained a resident of Tulkarm, 21 years old, who was in Israel illegally. He was found to be in possession of a knife and was taken for interrogation. He said he had been planning to carry out an attack (Facebook page of Red Alert, August 19, 2017).
- ◆ **August 19, 2017** – Palestinians threw a Molotov cocktail at the **security fence in Kiryat Arba**. There were no casualties and no damage was reported (Facebook page of Red Alert, August 19, 2017).
- ◆ **August 19, 2017** – Palestinians threw a pipe bomb at an IDF force operating in **the Jenin refugee camp (northern Samaria)**. There were no casualties and no damage was reported (Facebook page of Red Alert, August 19, 2017).
- ◆ **August 18, 2017** – The Israel Police Force detained a Palestinian from **Hebron** (who had previously lived in the Shuafat refugee camp) on charges of incitement to violence and posting support on his Facebook page for a terrorist organization. During interrogation he admitted he supported ISIS and that he had issued videos about ISIS activities in various countries, as well as videos of the murder of ISIS's opponents (Facebook page of Red Alert, August 20, 2017).

### Significant Terrorist Attacks in Judea, Samaria and Jerusalem since September 2015<sup>2</sup>



<sup>2</sup> A significant attack is defined by the ITIC as involving shooting, stabbing, a vehicular attack, the use of IEDs, or a combination of the above. Stones and Molotov cocktails thrown by Palestinians are not included.

## Exposure of a Conduit for Transferring Funds to the Families of Terrorist

► The Israeli security forces exposed a conduit for transferring funds from Hamas operatives in the Gaza Strip to the families of terrorists in Judea and Samaria. According to the Israeli security forces, the transfer of funds was implemented by Hamas operatives in the Gaza Strip with the objective of encouraging terrorism and providing financial backing for the families of terrorist operatives. One of the recipients of funds was the mother of Tareq Abu 'Irfa, from Ras al-Amoud, who was involved in the abduction and murder of Nachshon Wachsman in 1994 (Ynet, August 15, 2017).

## Palestinian Intelligence Operation Confiscates Weapons in the Suburbs of Jerusalem

► According to a report issued by Palestinian military intelligence in Ramallah and Jerusalem, its operatives conducted a "military operation in the suburbs of Jerusalem" to confiscate illegal weapons. Reportedly, an M-16 assault rifle and an improvised Carl Gustav submachine gun were seized (Facebook page of the public relations department of Palestinian Authority (PA) military intelligence, August 22, 2017). It is unclear exactly where the operation was carried out.



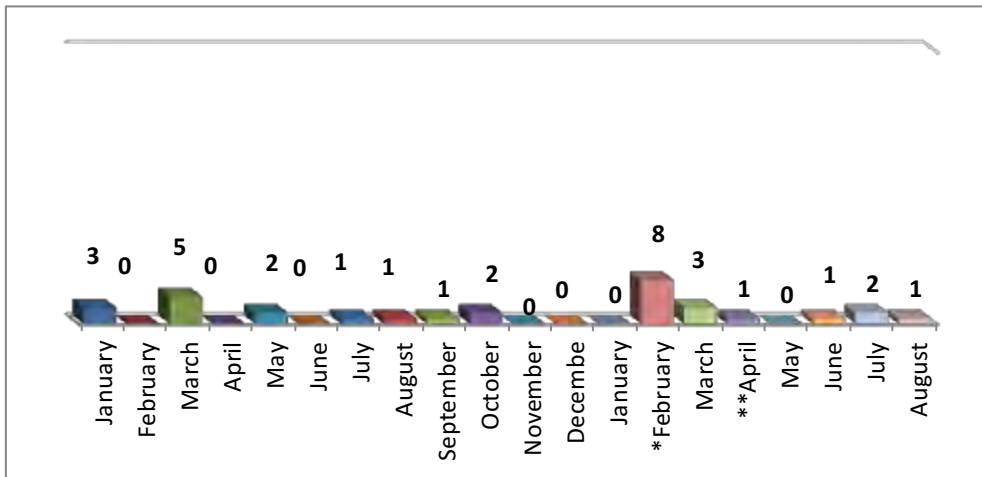
**Weapons seized during the operation (Facebook page of the public relations department of PA military intelligence, August 22, 2017).**

## Israel's South

### Rocket Fire Attacking Israel

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

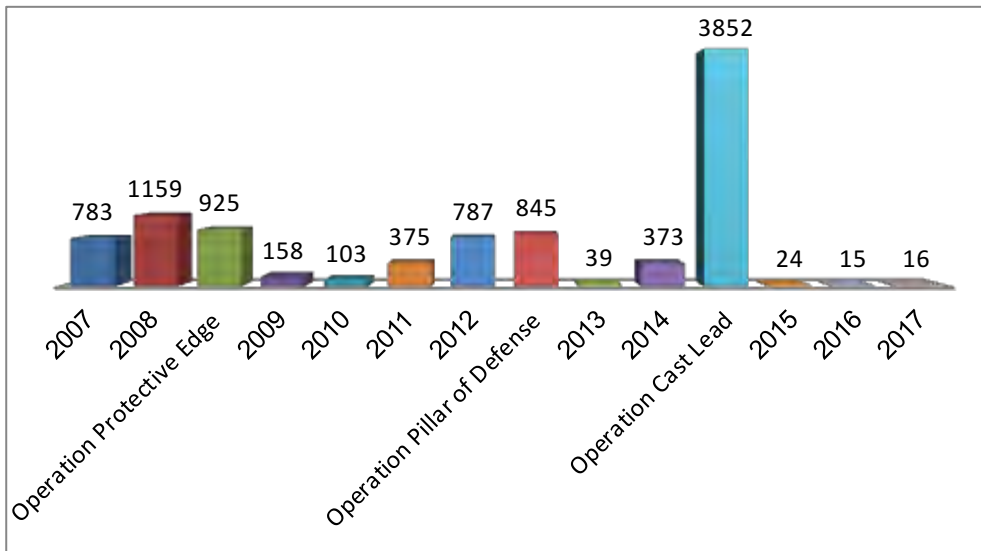
## Monthly Distribution of Rocket Hits in Israel since January 2016



\*Six of the rockets fired in February 2017 were launched from the Sinai Peninsula at Israeli territory, apparently by ISIS's Sinai Province.

\*\* The rocket fired in April was launched from the Sinai Peninsula by ISIS's Sinai Province.

## Annual Distribution of Rocket Hits in Israel's South<sup>3</sup>



## Riots along the Israel-Gaza Strip Border

- ▶ On **August 18, 2017**, dozens of Palestinians rioted along the Israel-Gaza Strip border. The riots were held at the usual friction spots: near the cemetery east of Jabalia, east of Gaza City, east of the al-Bureij refugee camp and east of Khan Yunis. According to reports, one Palestinian was seriously wounded east of Jabalia (Shehab, August 18, 2017).

<sup>3</sup> The statistics do not include mortar shell fire or rockets which misfired and fell inside the Gaza Strip.



**Riots east of Jabalia near the border security fence (Palinfo Twitter account, August 18, 2017).**

## Developments in the Gaza Strip

### The Rafah Crossing

► On August 18, 2017, the Rafah crossing was closed after having been open for four days, mainly to allow Gazans to leave for pilgrimages to Mecca. On the last day the crossing was open in one direction only, from Egypt to the Gaza Strip, to allow more than 1,000 Palestinians stranded in Egypt to reenter the Gaza Strip. According to the Palestinian crossings and border administration, during the days the crossing was open only 4% of the 30,000 Palestinians requesting permission for passage left the Gaza Strip. Most of them were pilgrims going to Mecca (Safa and Dunia al-Watan, August 18, 2017).

### Supply of Electricity to the Gaza Strip

► On August 18, 2017, it was reported that **a shipment of fuel from Egypt and had been delivered to the Gaza Strip through the Rafah crossing** (Twitter account of Khabar 'Ajel, August 18, 2017). The Gaza electric company said it now had **enough fuel to produce 113 megawatts of electricity, when the Gaza Strip needed 600 megawatts**. The power lines from Israel supply 70 megawatts and the power plant in the Gaza Strip produces 43 megawatts. The director of public relations for the Gaza Strip power plant said that **electricity to homes is now provided in cycles of four hours with and 12 hours without electricity**. He said it is possible that there may be 13-14 hours without electricity, because the power lines from Egypt have been inoperative for more than four days (Khabar website, August 19, 2017).

► The heads of the popular committees for refugee affairs in the refugee camps in the Gaza Strip held a press conference with the participation of Issam Adwan, head of Hamas' department of refugee affairs. They called on UNRWA to meet its obligation to the refugee camps and exert pressure on Israel to reconnect the power lines it had disconnected and

provide generators suitable for the demands of electricity in the refugee camps (Website of Hamas' department of refugee affairs, August 16, 2017).

### Humanitarian Aid for the Gaza Strip

- ▶ Kuwait donated the sum of \$2.2 million to UNRWA to improve the conditions of the refugees and provide them with basic services (Palinfo, August 19, 2017).
- ▶ **The Hamas-affiliated "authority for national activity for breaking the siege and reconstruction"** in the Gaza Strip reported the Egyptian authorities had prevented a **convoy of humanitarian aid from Algeria** from entering the Gaza Strip through the Rafah crossing. The convoy was bringing medicine and medical equipment for hospitals in the Gaza Strip. They said the Egyptians had not allowed the convoy to enter even though it had all the necessary authorization. The convoy is now returning to Algeria (al-Anadolu News, August 18, 2017).



Cartoons published in Hamas' Felesteen newspaper condemning measures taken by Mahmoud Abbas against the Gaza Strip. The inscription on the knife reads, "Gaza Strip".

### Terrorist Attack on the Egypt-Gaza Strip Border

- ▶ **On the night of August 16, 2017 an ISIS-affiliated terrorist operative from the Gaza Strip blew himself up when he and another operative attempted to infiltrate into the Sinai Peninsula.** The terrorist arrived at a Hamas check post in Rafah on the Gaza Strip border and detonated an explosive device. The explosion killed **Nidal Jumaa' al-Ja'afari**, 28, from Rafah, a senior operative in Hamas' military wing, and wounded several other operatives.
- ▶ The **Ibn Taymiyyah Media Center**, which is affiliated with the Salafi jihadists in the Gaza Strip, **claimed responsibility for the attack.** **ISIS's Sinai Province** issued a death notice for the operative. It claimed Hamas had "reaped the fruits of its killing and persecution of Salafist operatives in the Gaza Strip (Samaa News, August 17, 2017).

► According to the reports, the operative who blew himself up **was Mustafa Kalab**, 20, from the Tel al-Sultan neighborhood in the western part of Rafah, **a former operative in Hamas' military wing**. His family said that at the age of 14 he had undergone religious radicalization. He began to wear the type of clothing worn in Afghanistan. One of his brothers had gone to fight in Syria. Kalab had been detained a number of times in the past by Hamas' security forces (alresalah.net, August 20, 2017).



**Right: Nidal al-Ja'afari, senior Hamas military wing operative, killed in the explosion near the Rafah-Egypt border (Paldf Twitter account, August 17, 2017). Left: suicide bomber Mustafa Kalab (alresalah.net, August 20, 2017).**



**Death notice issued for Jamal Kalab by the Ibn Taymiyyah Media Center (Palinfo Twitter account, August 20, 2017).**

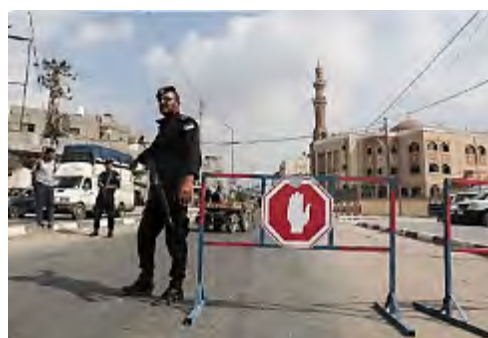
## Responses to the Attack

► **Hamas condemned the attack.** Its military wing said in an announcement that they would continue to take action against those who try to **"deflect the compass from jihad against the Zionists."** **Isma'il Haniyeh, head of Hamas' political bureau**, attended the funeral of the operative killed in the attack, held in Rafah (Paldf Twitter account, August 17, 2017). A Hamas spokesman in the Gaza Strip said **severe punishment has to be meted out to anyone wanting to impair security in the Gaza Strip**, and said that extremist ideology



serves only the [so-called Israeli] "occupation." **The family of the suicide bomber** issued a statement condemning the event and stressing that it disassociated itself from the suicide bomber and would not hold a funeral for him or erect a mourning tent.

► In response to the attack, **Hamas' security forces increased their presence in the southern Gaza Strip**. Security force operatives deployed on the main roads, in the main streets, around security headquarters and in areas near the border with Egypt (Safa, August 17, 2017). They also raided posts and strongholds of jihadist operatives, detained operatives and confiscated weapons (al-Youm al-Sabaa, August 18, 2017). Hamas' military wing took control of a number of military posts of the Army of Islam and the Unity of Allah Brigade in the western part of Rafah near the border with Egypt (Twitter account of Sinai News, August 19, 2017). **Ziyad al-Zaza, a member of Hamas' political bureau**, said Hamas had increased its military presence in Rafah and Khan Yunis, and installed cameras to monitor the border. He said Hamas kept the Egyptians informed about the progress of its investigation into the event, and that **the suicide bomber had been en route to Egypt** (al-Masri al-Youm, August 19, 2017).



**Hamas security forces raise their alert level in the southern Gaza Strip after the attack (Palinfo Twitter account, August 17, 2017).**

► **The Ibn Taymiyyah Media Center** said in an announcement that one of its operatives was responsible for the attack. The announcement included a condemnation of **Hamas for "trampling on the Salafists" in the Gaza Strip since it had taken control**. According to the announcement, **the operatives were en route to the Sinai Peninsula to kill Jews and operatives of the Egyptian border guards**. In addition, **they wore explosive belts** so they could blow themselves up instead of being detained by the Egyptian forces. Mustafa Kalab, said the announcement, had fled to the Sinai Peninsula after Hamas forced his family to disown him. The Ibn Taymiyyah Media Center also said Hamas was responsible for the

safety of the wounded operative it was holding (Ibn Taymiyyah Media Center, August 17, 2017).

► On August 21, 2017, there were a number of shots fired at Hamas posts in the Rafah region. In one instance masked gunmen rode a motorcycle. In addition, four passenger in a vehicle threw hand grenades and shot at a road block in the western part of Rafah. They were apparently Salafi jihadists attacking in response to the wave of detentions carried out by Hamas (Wafa, August 21, 2017).

► **After those events, Salah al-Bardawil, a member of Hamas' political bureau, was quoted as saying that Hamas would not permit rocket fire from the Gaza Strip targeting Israel because of the current circumstances and for the sake of the supreme Palestinian cause.** He said **anyone who tries to fire rockets would be considered as breaking the law and would be detained** (Note: In the past [jihadists have fired rockets at Israel in times of crisis with Hamas). Bardawil later denied having made the statement, saying remarks attributed to him by a number of websites belonging to the Palestinian Authority (PA) were "an invention" (Hamas movement website and al-Masri al-Youm, August 21, 2017).

### Yahya al-Sinwar's Statements

► **Yahya al-Sinwar, head of Hamas' political bureau in the Gaza Strip, held a closed meeting in his office with a group of political commentators and analysts.** He related to the following issues:

- ◆ **Fighting Israel:** Hamas, he said, has no an interest in initiating fighting against Israel, but if forced, it is prepared to fight. It is possible, he said, that the reports in the Israeli media about Hamas' military capabilities are correct. Hamas, he said, warned Israel not to do "anything stupid" against the Gaza Strip, noting that the "resistance" [i.e., terrorist organizations] have the capability to respond. **He thanked Iran for its ongoing support of the "resistance" and called on all states to support it** (Facebook page of Husam al-Dajani, August 16, 2017)

- ◆ **Military buildup:** Hamas, the Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) and the other organizations have replaced and improved what they lost [in Operation Protective Edge], and have added more. He claimed **Hamas would surprise the enemy with new, high-quality weapons, with advanced precision, range and war heads.**

Regarding the tunnels, he said **Hamas had constructed "cities of resistance" under the ground**, and not only one such city (Palestine Online, August 20, 2017).

◆ **Hamas-Egypt relations:** There has been a "strategic shift" in Egypt's position on Hamas, and Egypt seriously intends to relieve the siege. He met, he said, with **Khaled Fawzi, the Egyptian minister of intelligence**. The Egyptians, he said, are trying to resolve the crises in the Gaza Strip and will open the Rafah crossing after renovations are finished (Ma'an, August 17, 2017).

◆ **The humanitarian crisis in the Gaza Strip and opening the Rafah crossing:** Hamas is doing everything it can to end the crisis. He said Hamas agrees to buy electricity from Israel through a third party. He said they appealed to the PA leadership, saying Hamas would agree to dissolve its administrative committee if Mahmoud Abbas and the PA show serious intentions to reach a reconciliation. He said no answer has yet been received. **The Rafah crossing will open for the passage of merchandise and travelers a week or two after Eid al-Adha** (August 31 – September 4). He added that in the coming months there will be positive developments in dealing with the rates of poverty and unemployment.



**Yahya al-Sinwar meeting with Palestinian correspondents in the Gaza Strip (Hamas movement website, August 16, 2017).**

## The Palestinian Authority (PA)

### Preparations for the Visit of an American Delegation

► **A delegation of senior American figures is expected to visit the Middle East.** The White House announced that Donald Trump wanted talks to focus **on an effort to renew**

**the political process, the humanitarian crisis in the Gaza Strip and economic measures to strengthen the relations between the sides.**

► In preparation for the delegation's visit **Husam Zomlot, PA representative in the United States**, met in the White House with Jason Greenblatt, **special American envoy to the Middle East**. Zomlot emphasized that that Palestinian leadership is prepared to support the American president's efforts to resolve the conflict, and said that the Palestinian position supports an end to the "Israeli occupation," the establishment of a Palestinian state with Jerusalem as its capital and the reaching a permanent solution arrangement. He said agreement was reached about preparations for the meeting between the American delegation and Mahmoud Abbas, which would be held in Ramallah (Wafa, August 15, 2017).



**Husam Zomlot, PA representative in the United States, meets in Washington with Jason Greenblatt (Facebook page of Husam Zomlot, August 15, 2017).**

## **Renewal of Payment of Salaries to Some of the Prisoners**

► **The PA decided to renew payments to about 70 prisoners** whose salaries had been cancelled. They are prisoners released in the Gilad Shalit prisoner exchange deal who live in Judea and Samaria and those who were released in the deal and detained again by the Israeli authorities (70 of 277 prisoners released in the exchange deal whose salaries were cancelled). According to a spokesman for the prisoners, at this point salaries will not be paid to prisoners in the Gaza Strip. **Issa Qaraqe, chairman of the authority for prisoners' affairs**, confirmed Mahmoud Abbas's decision to renew paying salaries to **prisoners in Judea and Samaria, but not the Gaza Strip**. In response the prisoners said they would end their protests in Ramallah (which lasted for about two months). However, they would

continue to demand the renewal of payment to salaries to all prisoners and former prisoners (Palestine Online, August 15, 2017, al-Araby al-Jadeed, August 14, 2017).