



News of Terrorism and the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict (August 23 – 29, 2017)

Overview

- ▶ This week there were no significant attacks in Judea and Samaria and no rockets were fired from the Gaza Strip. However the “routine” of demonstrations, clashes, and riots has continued this week.
- ▶ An investigation of the Israel Security Agency found that the shooting incident at the Temple Mount (14 July 2017) was carried out by a locally organized network, based in one of the mosques in Umm al Fahm. The weapons used by the terrorists were concealed inside a cabinet at that mosque. In the course of the investigation one resident of Umm al Fahm was arrested, suspected of having assisted the group that carried out the attack (for example assistance with shooting practice near Umm al Fahm).
- ▶ Abu Mazen met in Ramallah with an American delegation headed by Jared Kushner, advisor to the President of the United States. Arab media reported that the Americans asked for a four-month extension for the administration to form a peace plan and that Abu Mazen agreed. “Western diplomatic sources” reported that the delegation informed Abu Mazen that in the near future, prior to renewing the negotiations, the USA would work to strengthen the ties between the parties economically, security, and diplomatically.

Situation in Judea and Samaria

Riots and Clashes

- ▶ Riots continued throughout the week in Judea and Samaria. Stone throwing and the throwing of Molotov cocktails also continued. In a thwart and prevent activity by the Israeli security forces throughout Judea and Samaria, terror suspects were arrested and weapons and materials were seized. Following are the outstanding incidents:
 - ◆ **28 August 2017** - in the course of a routine operation by an IDF force, the force reached an observation point **northeast of Ramallah**. One of the soldiers noticed a suspicious object. The object exploded while it was being handled. There were no

injuries. A sapper investigation concluded that this was an **improvised pipe bomb** (Red Alert Facebook page, 287, August 2017).

- ◆ **28 August 2017** - stones were thrown at an Israeli vehicle near **Sinjil** (northeast of Ramallah). There were no injuries. The vehicle's windscreen was damaged (Red Alert Facebook page, 28 August 2017).

- ◆ **27 August 2017** - Palestinians set fire at three locations outside the perimeter fence at the village of **Telem** in the **Hebron region**. Firefighters doused the flames. There were no injuries (Red Alert Facebook page, 27 August 2017).

- ◆ **17 August 2017** - Israeli security forces arrested a Palestinian resident of Hebron, who had been planning an attack in the **Ashkelon area** (Red Alert Facebook page, 27 August 2017).

- ◆ **26 August 2017** - an IDF force arrested a Palestinian at the **Rimonim Roadblock** (Samaria) on suspicion of involvement in IED-manufacturing with intent to carry out attacks. The Palestinian was sent on for interrogation (Red Alert Facebook page, 26 August 2017).

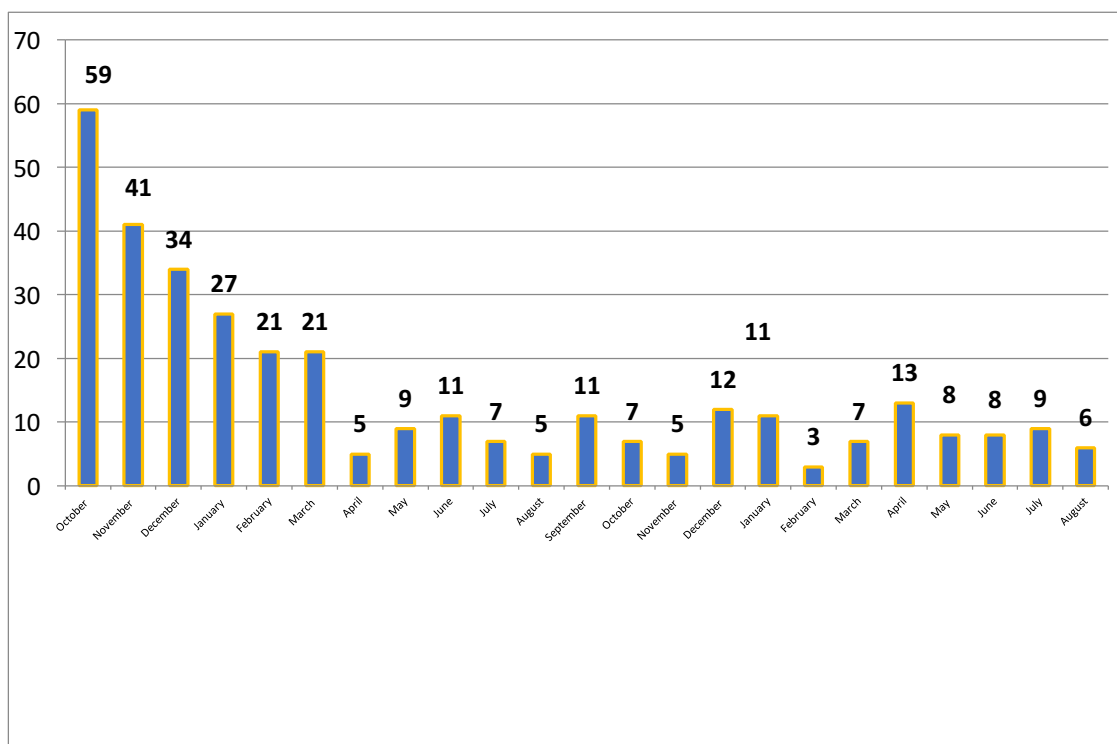
- ◆ **25 August 2017** - a Palestinian threw a Molotov cocktail at an IDF force during riots **in Hebron**. The IDF force fired shots in his direction and he was slightly wounded (Red Alert Facebook page, 25 August 2017).

- ◆ **25 August 2017** - stones were thrown at an Israeli vehicle near **Gittit Junction in the Jordan Valley**. The driver lost control of his steering and the vehicle collided with the guardrail. There were no injuries. The vehicle was damaged (Red Alert Facebook page, 25 August 2017).



The weekly demonstration at the Village of Qadum (PALDF Twitter account, 25 August 2017)

Significant Attacks in the Past 12 Months¹



Weapon smuggling into Judea and Samaria Prevented

► In an operation by Border Police soldiers and the Israeli Civilian Administration, **the smuggling of hundreds of weapon parts from Israel was foiled.** The security forces detained a truck for inspection at the Ein Yael crossing near Jerusalem. In the truck, the soldiers found hundreds of weapon parts in the trash, including parts of M-16 assault rifles, and other weapons. An X-ray of the vehicle discovered concealed compartments in which dozens more weapon parts were concealed. Initial interrogation of the truck driver found that **it was on its way to Kafr Idna in the Hebron area** (Channel 7, 23 August 2017). The weapon parts were apparently intended for assembling improvised weapons.

Further details on the shooting attack at the Temple Mount

► The investigation by the Israeli security forces of the shooting incident at the Temple Mount (14 July 2017), in which two policemen lost their lives, found that **this was a local terrorist network which took form at a Mosque in Umm al Fahm.** One of the terrorists was responsible for cleaning the mosque and served as Muezzin there. The investigation also

¹“Significant attacks” is defined by the ICT as involving shooting, stabbing, vehicular attack, the use of IEDs or a combination of the above. Stones and Molotov cocktails thrown by Palestinians are not included.

revealed that **the weapons used by the terrorists were concealed inside a cabinet at that mosque.**

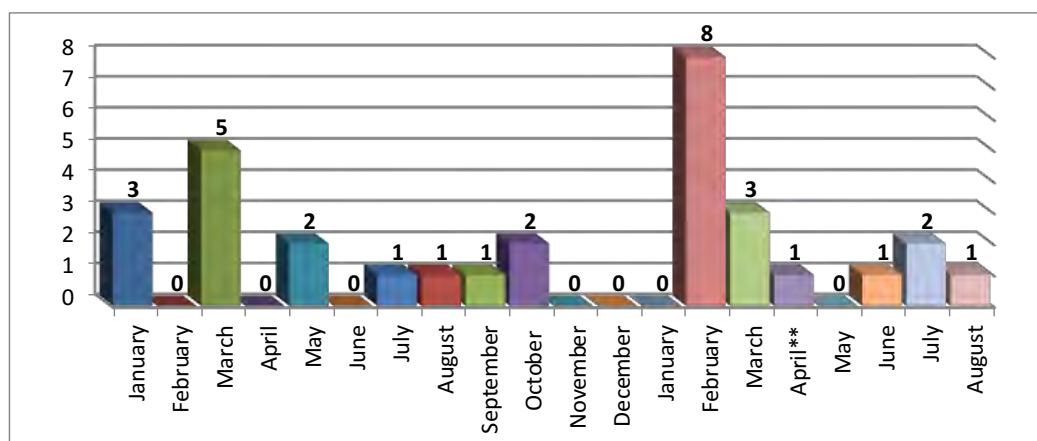
► As a result of the investigation, **Amjad Mohammed Ahmad Jabbareen** was arrested. He is 35 years old from Umm al Fahm. His interrogation found that he had been offered to join the attack but he refused and instead he **assisted the network members.** Thus for example, in preparation for the attack the terrorists held several firing exercises using the weapons in their possession in a mountainous area near Umm al Fahm, assisted by Amjad Jabbareen, who also took part in the practice. Amjad Jabbareen also transported them on the eve of the attack from the mosque to a marshalling spot from which they would ascend armed to the Temple Mount. He has been indicted for his involvement in the attack drawing (Israel Security Agency, 24 August 2017).

Israel's South

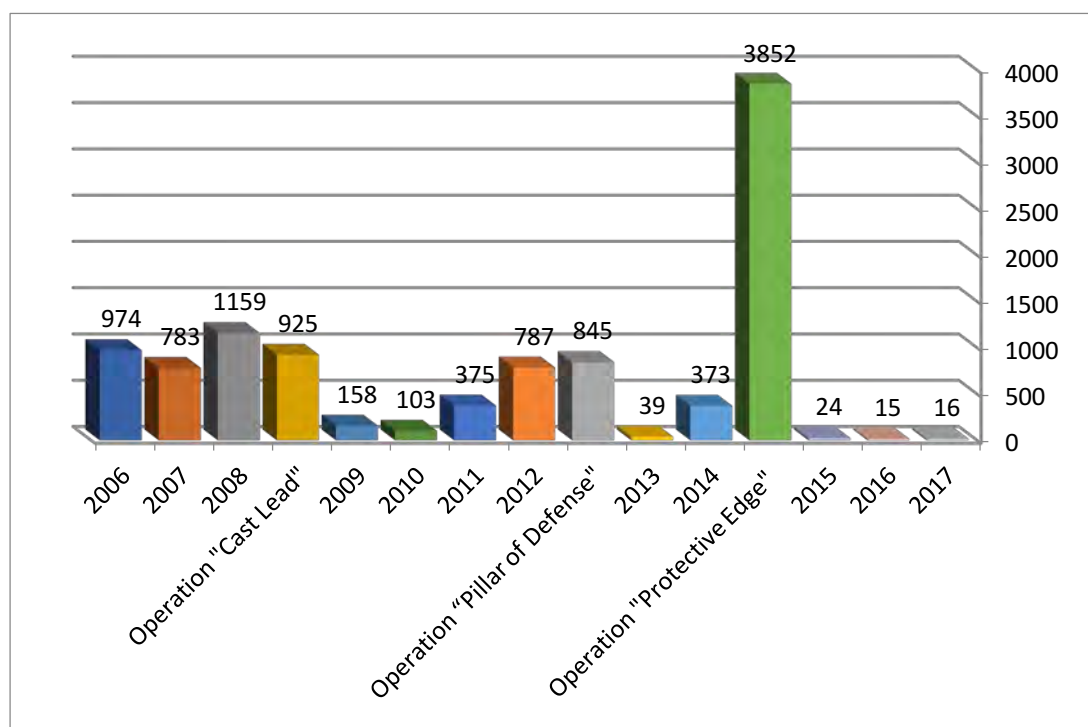
Rocket Fire Attacking Israel

► No rocket impacts were recorded in Israeli territory this week.

Monthly Distribution of Rocket Fire



Annual Distribution of Rocket Fire



Gaza Strip

Rafah Crossing

- **Salah Al Bardawil, member of the Hamas Political Bureau**, said that during the latest meetings between senior Hamas officials and Egypt's intelligence services, they declared that the **Rafah crossing would not be opened permanently until the security situation in the Sinai Peninsula stabilized** (Elresala.net, 22 August 2017).

Humanitarian Situation in the Gaza Strip

- **The Energy Authority in the Strip** announced that it has begun operating a third generator at the Gaza Power Station. This follows Egypt's delivery of sufficient fuel for its operation, in view of the understandings reached between Hamas and Egypt (Gaza Strip Energy Authority website, 26 August 2017). The Gaza Strip Electricity Corporation's PR manager said that as a result there would be a slight improvement in electricity deliveries. Beginning on the 27 August 2017, households would be receiving electricity for four hours, after which the power would be cut for 12 hours, and so on. This is instead of four hours of supply, which were followed by 16 hours of blackout (palsawa, 26 August 2017).

► **Robert Piper, UN coordinator for Palestinian Affairs**, said that \$2.5 million have been transferred from a joint UN humanitarian fund in an effort to address the most urgent needs of the Gaza Strip. The money will be used to supply medical equipment, solar panels and agricultural supplies (United Nations news website, 25 August 2017). In addition, Canada will be transferring a sum of \$25 million via UNRWA (Sputnik, 25 August 2017).



Cartoon describing the situation ahead of the Eid al-Adha Festival, due to begin on 1 September: the livestock markets are virtually empty this year as opposed to previous years. The traders report a drastic decline in the number of buyers (Elresala.net, 28 August 2017).

Continued construction of the buffer zone between the Gaza Strip and Egypt

► **Hamas is continuing to build the buffer zone between the Gaza Strip and Egypt.** In a press conference held after a tour of the members of the Security Committee of the Legislative Council in the area, **Tufik Abu Naim, Deputy Minister of the Interior and head of the Security Sector in the Hamas Administrative Council for managing the Strip's affairs, reported on the current state of the construction.** According to his report, the Minister of the Interior completed the first stage of grading the ground along the 12-kilometer-long border, and the second stage of laying the barbed wire fences has begun. He added that in the coming days works would be underway to set up lighting, security towers, and a system of security cameras (Anatolia News Agency, 23 August 2017; website of the Gaza Strip Legislative Council, 23 August 2017).



Right: the Security Committee of the Legislative Council visiting the buffer zone (Right: Anatolia News Agency, 23 August 2017). Left: Laying the barbed wire fences (Facebook page of Radio Saut Al Aqsa, 23 August 2017)

► The Ministry of the Interior and National Security in the Gaza Strip began extensive works in June 2017 on building the infrastructure for the buffer zone between the Gaza Strip and Egypt. The buffer zone is intended to strengthen the enforcement in the border area and to prevent smuggling and infiltration of terrorists into and out of the Strip. The buffer zone will extend for 12 km, from Kerem Shalom to the sea. Its width in (most places) will be 150-50 meters. An asphalt road will be built along the fence. The existing dirt barrier will be renovated, and a barbed wire fence will be built on it. Observation towers will be built along the separation zone and a network of lighting and monitoring cameras will be installed.²

In the Words of Yahya Al Sinwar

► **Yahya Al Sinwar, head of Hamas’s political bureau in the Gaza Strip**, held a press conference, which lasted two hours and was run by **Hamas spokesman Hazem Kassem**. Sinwar touched on several topics high on the current agenda. These are the main points of what he had to say (Safa, 28 August 2017).

- ◆ **Conflict with Israel: Hamas is not interested in war with Israel** “since our people want to recover” and Hamas are doing the best they can to prevent another outbreak of hostilities in the Strip. At the same time he stressed that Hamas does not fear war with Israel and is prepared for it.
- ◆ **Prisoner exchange: Hamas is prepared for immediate negotiations through a mediator** to discuss a prisoner swap. However Hamas stands behind the terms it set according to which 54 detainees must be released who had been released in the “Shalit

²For additional information, see ITIC’s publication on the buffer zone from 16 July 2017: “Hamas Constructs a Buffer Zone to Secure its Border with Egypt, in Response to a Demand from the Egyptian Regime”.

Swap” and were then re-arrested by Israel. This, in order to begin some sort of negotiation on the issue.

◆ **The state in the Strip and the Hamas regime: Hamas is working to improve government performance** and to resolve the issues such as the electricity shortage and the Rafah Crossing closure. Hamas even contacted all the different stakeholders on the issue except Israel. Hamas has set itself a strategic target of enabling the Strip residents to live a dignified life without giving up its national plans and the “resistance” (i.e., the terrorist path). Hamas is not interested in continuing to rule over the Gaza Strip and they are prepared to disband the national committee they set up. The disbanding will take place provided an apparatus will be set up to take its place. Disbanding the committee now would leave a vacuum, which would only exacerbate the problems in the Gaza Strip.

◆ **Relations with Egypt:** The visit by a Hamas delegation to Egypt brought about a **substantial breakthrough with the Egyptian people**. The Egyptians promised to open the Rafah Crossing but after taking a second look they said this would be difficult due to security reasons, however they promised that after the crossing would be renovated it would be re-opened.

◆ **Relations with other countries:** Despite the past tensions with Iran due to the Syrian crisis, those relations have got back on track. **Iran is providing a great deal of support to the Hamas military wing, with both money and weapons.** The assistance **from Qatar and Turkey** has prevented the total collapse of infrastructure in the Gaza Strip. Neither does Hamas rule out rehabilitation of its relations with **Syria** after the crisis there will be resolved. In this context he stated that the important thing is the timing, so as not to get embroiled in a “game of axes”. There are signs of a breakthrough in the Syrian stalemate, which will open a window for restoring the ties.



Press conference held by Yahya Al Sinwar (Facebook page of Elresala.net, 28 August 2017)

Rally Marking an anniversary of the fire in the Al Aqsa Mosque

- ▶ Even after the Temple Mount crisis has abated, **Hamas continues to fan the flames over the Al Aqsa Mosque**. Hamas organized a ceremony in the Jabaliya refugee camp commemorating the 48th anniversary of the fire in the Al Aqsa Mosque³. In a speech given by **Mushir al Masri, a Hamas senior official**, he said the ceremony was being held to demonstrate Hamas' victory for all Muslims in the world to see and he commended Raed Salah for the role he played for the Al Aqsa Mosque and for his sacrifice. Al Masri went on to say that normalization of relations with Israel would be tantamount to betraying Allah and his followers and that it is impossible to work for Al Aqsa while at the same time normalizing relations with Israel. He said also that the security coordination with Israel was a real threat to the liberation process (Al Aqsa, 21 August 2017).
- ▶ **Dozens of summer campers marched** in the Al Amal neighborhood in Khan Yunis. The camps were held under the supervision of the Hamas military wing⁴, in a military parade commemorating the anniversary of the burning of the Al Aqsa Mosque and also the anniversary of the killing of senior Hamas official Ismail Abu Shanab. At the end of the march, **Sheikh Bassam Abu al Rish, senior Hamas official**, gave a statement (Hamas website, 23 August 2017; Facebook page of the Khan Yunis Communication Network", 23 August 2017).

³On 21 August 1969 Michael Dennis Rohan, a young Christian Australian, set fire to the Al Aqsa Mosque and caused damage there. Rohan was tried but the court determined that he was mentally unfit to stand trial. He was deported from Israel and hospitalized until his death in 1995.

⁴These are the "Liberation Pioneers", training camps for young boys and adolescents, aged 15 or more, held by the Hamas military wing. They began taking place after Operation "Protective Edge" in 2014. Their outspoken aim is to train the core of the "Liberation Army".



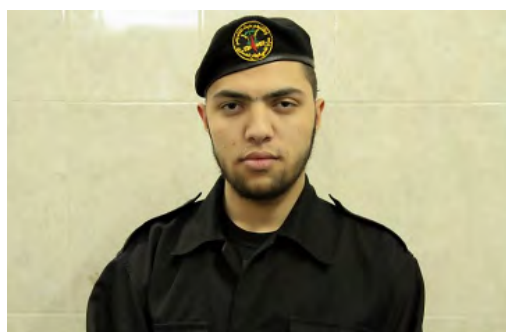
The parade in Khan Yunis (Hamas website, 23 August 2017)

Knesset Members' Ascent to the Temple Mount

► On 29 August 2017 two Knesset members visited the Temple Mount for the first time since October 2015. Their visit was held as a part of a pilot to examine whether it would be possible to allow Israeli elected officials to visit the compound. In response, **Fauzi Barhum, Hamas spokesman**, said Hamas objected to the decision made by the government of Israel to enable Knesset members to ascend to the Al Aqsa Mosque. He said the Israeli steps were a part of their policy of violating the holy places. Barhum called upon the Palestinian masses to defend the holy sites and blamed Israel for whatever consequences that decision may have (Hamas website, 28 August 2017).

Member of the Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) military wing killed

► The military wing of the Islamic Jihad in Palestine announced the accidental death of its military wing operative, who belonged to the Hittin Brigade of the Gaza Division. The deceased is **Samed Salah Hajjaj**, 25, of the Shijaiyah neighborhood in eastern Gaza City. According to the communique, he was killed from a bullet which hit him in the head during training at one of the military wing's positions in Gaza City (military wing website of the Islamic Jihad organization, 29 August 2017; PALINFO, 28 August 2017).



Samed Salah Hajjaj, military wing operative killed in a training accident (military wing website of the PIJ, 29 August 2017)

Palestinian Authority

American Delegation Visit to Restart the Peace Process

- ▶ On 25 August 2017 **Abu Mazen met with Jared Kushner, Advisor to the President of the United States, in Ramallah.** Kushner headed the American delegation. This was part of the American administration's efforts to find a formula, which would enable revitalizing the peace process. Also on the American delegation were **Jason Greenblatt, US Presidential special envoy to the Middle East and Dina Powell, Deputy National Security Advisor.**
- ▶ During the meeting, Abu Mazen brought up the Authority's position with emphasis on the two-state solution within the 1967 borders, dismantling of the settlements and accepting the Arab peace initiative. According to press reports, during the meeting Abu Mazen demanded guarantees from Kushner for the peace process, which would be the source of authority for the two-state solution and he demanded that the process would be bound by a timetable. Kushner responded that he would do his best to achieve this and that he would present the issue to the President of the United States (Asharq Al-Awsat. 28 August 2017).



Abu Mazen meeting with the United States delegation (Internet website of the American Consulate in Jerusalem, 25 August 2017)

- ▶ **Nabil Abu Rudeina, Abu Mazen's spokesman,** described the meeting as **businesslike,** having mostly dealt with the important issues. He said they agreed to continue the dialog with the intention of reaching a comprehensive peace (Wafa, 24 August 2017). **Nabil Shaath, Abu Mazen's advisor on foreign and international relations,** said the American delegation asked the Palestinian leadership for a three to four month extension to enable the administration of form a peace plan (Wafa, 28 August 2017). Palestinian sources also noted

that despite the unclarity as to the American position, **Abu Mazen had decided to accede to Jordan's King Abdullah and other Arab leaders and to give the United States the extension.** He therefore decided to postpone the moves planned by the Palestinian Authority against Israel in the UN Security Council (Asharq Al-Awsat, 28 August 2017).



Right: demonstration in Ramallah against the US delegation's visit, attended by Mustafa Al Barghouti, Amer Shehadeh of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), and Ramzi Rabbah of the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP) (Alwatan agency, 24 August 2017). Left: Khaled Mansour, member of the political bureau of the Palestinian People's Party at the demonstration, waving a caricature depicting Jared Kushner as Israel's pet (Asharq Al-Awsat, 25 August 2017)



Burning of an Israeli flag and a photo of President Trump during the demonstration (Facebook page of photographer Ismail Al Rimawi, 24 August 2017)

► **The Al Hayat reporter in Ramallah** reported quoting “Western diplomatic sources” that progress was made during the Abu Mazen- Kushner meeting, however this progress was not sufficient for renewing the negotiations. According to the sources, the American delegation informed Abu Mazen that in the near future, prior to renewing the negotiations, **the USA would work to strengthen the bilateral ties in the economic, security, and diplomatic arenas.** The Palestinian delegation demanded economic freedom of action for the Palestinians also in Area C, unrestricted imports and exports, and amendment of the economic agreements.

► The sources added that the American delegation was receptive to the two-state idea, although it made it clear that the cessation of construction work in the settlements was not

possible, since this would trigger the collapse of the Netanyahu government. The American delegation also agreed to comment on the fact that the goal in the negotiations is to reach a two-state solution, but refused to define the borders of the Palestinian state as being within the 1967 lines, saying only that the US would be leaving this issue to be agreed between the Israelis and the Palestinians (Al Hayat, 26 August 2017).

► Following Abu Mazen’s meeting with the American delegation, **the Fattah’s official Facebook page posted the following: “I will never stop (paying) pensions to the families of Palestinian prisoners and ex-prisoners, even at the cost of losing my job and my seat as President. I will continue to pay them to my last day”. Signed President Mahmoud Abbas, President of the State of Palestine**



The post on the Fattah’s official Facebook page, 26 August 2017

Abu Mazen’s Visit to Turkey

► **Abu Mazen paid an official visit to Turkey** during which he met with Turkish President **Recep Taif Erdogan**. In a press conference they gave at the end of the meeting Abu Mazen said they discussed several issues, among them the recent visit by the American delegation and the American efforts, led by the US President to revive the peace process. Abu Mazen expressed his willingness to reach an historic peace agreement under the auspices of President Trump.

► **President Erdogan** said that the establishment of a Palestinian state with East Jerusalem as its capital was vital for regional stability. He also said Israel had to put an end to the occupation and to its illegal settlement building, which put the two-state solution in jeopardy. Abu Mazen thanked the Turkish people for the position they took vis-a-vis the

security measures Israel took at the Al Aqsa Mosque and for their financial support and the launching of numerous projects in Judea and Samaria, such as hospitals, schools, and home-building, as well as the construction of an industrial zone in Jenin (Al Jazeera, 28 August 2017).



Abu Mazen at the press conference with the Turkish President (Wafa, 28 August 2017)

Start of the Schoolyear

► In a press conference held by **Rami Hamdallah, Head of the Government of National Accord**, marking the start of the school year, he emphasized the importance of education among Palestinian youth for shaping their Palestinian identity against the backdrop of repeated Israeli attempts to affect that image. He declared the government would continue to improve the education system and the curricula through **new content, educational initiatives, and supplying new teaching equipment**. He called on the Arab countries and on the international agencies to support the Palestinian education system, which has to contend with Israeli intimidation attempts (Palestinian television, 23 August 2017).



Cartoon marking the start of the schoolyear “First lesson... And the last lesson: Standing firm... Here” (Al Hayat Al Jadida, 24 August 2017)