

**Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center
at the Center for Special Studies (C.S.S)**

**The Leading Palestinian Terrorist Organizations
(Extended Edition, August 2004)**



**Fatah (Tanzim / Al-Aqsa
Martyrs' Brigades)**



**Hamas (Izzedine al-Qassam
Battalions)**



**Palestinian Islamic Jihad
(Jerusalem Battalions)**



**The Democratic Front for
the Liberation of Palestine**



**The Popular Front for the Liberation
of Palestine (The Martyr Abu 'Ali
Mustafa Battalions)**



**The Popular Front for the
Liberation of Palestine – General
Command**



**The Popular Resistance Committees
(The Salah al-Din Brigades)**

Fatah – The Palestinian National Liberation Movement **(Tanzim / Al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades)**

1. Fatah was established in Kuwait by **Arafat** in the early 1960s. Since its inception it has operated in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip and is considered the leading organization in the Palestinian national effort. Its influence became even stronger when in 1969 Arafat became the leader of the PLO.



2. **Tanzim** (The Organization) is the group within Fatah which dominates activities in the field and at the popular level. Tanzim was established in 1983 and operated underground until 1991. Its aim was to reorganize Fatah in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip and was responsible for its day-to-day activity (security, politics, information/propaganda, social issues, etc.). Tanzim activists spearheaded Fatah operations in the first violent confrontation (the so-called *intifada*) (1987-1993) and led the events which resulted in the Oslo accords and the establishment of the Palestinian Authority.
3. During the “Oslo years” Fatah operatives were integrated into official Palestinian Authority (PA) institutions. Arafat, however, was careful to appoint those close to him from “outside” (“the old guard”) to key positions in PA institutions and in the security forces, to the great displeasure of those who had led the first violent confrontation. There was much bitterness among Tanzim operatives who wanted to preserve their image as “revolutionary,” which in their opinion was the source of their status.

4. When the current violent confrontation broke out (September 2000), Fatah operatives in the PA-administered territories who supported the PA, and most of whom worked for the Palestinian Security Services, began taking an active part in terrorist activities against Israel. Initially they confined themselves to shooting attacks and planting side charges to blow up soldiers and Israeli civilians in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. **They claimed responsibility for the attacks using the name Al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades, which during the current violent confrontation has become the generic name for all Fatah field operatives.**




Al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades

5. As the violent confrontation gathered steam, Fatah terrorist activity **was upgraded and its members became more involved in the activities of other Palestinian terrorist organizations, relying for funding on both the PA and external sources, especially Hezbollah and Iran.** That allowed many operatives a certain amount of license, currently (Summer 2004) expressed as anarchy in the PA-administered territories. In addition, independent terrorist factions broke away from Fatah, both ideologically and organizationally, such as the Popular Resistance Committees in the Gaza Strip, led by Jamal Abu Samhadana.

6. The four years of the recent confrontation (beginning September 2000) led to the disintegration of the organization's structure and its weakening in the eyes of the local Palestinian population, and caused internal strife between warring factions. Thus the "middle generation" increased its protests against the "old guard" and the "outsiders," demanding a larger share of key positions within PA institutions.
7. Fatah operatives are responsible for many terrorist attacks, **among them suicide bombing attacks within Israel:**
 - a. A suicide bombing attack in **Jerusalem** (March 2, 2002); 11 Israeli civilians murdered.
 - b. A suicide bombing attack in **Jerusalem** (April 12, 2002); 6 Israeli civilians murdered.
 - c. An infiltration into **Kibbutz Metzger** (November 10, 2002); 5 Israeli civilians murdered.
 - d. Double suicide bombing attacks in **Beit Shean** (November 28, 2002); 6 Israeli civilians murdered.
 - e. Double suicide bombing attacks in **Tel Aviv** (January 5, 2003); 22 Israeli civilians murdered.
 - f. A suicide bombing attack on a **Jerusalem** bus (January 29, 2003); 11 Israeli civilians murdered.
 - g. A suicide bombing attack on a **Jerusalem** bus (February 22, 2004); 8 Israeli civilians murdered.

- h. Double suicide bombing attacks in cooperation with Hamas at the **port of Ashdod** (March 14, 2004); 14 Israeli civilians murdered.

Hamas – the Islamic Resistance Movement

1. Hamas was established in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank on Muslim Brotherhood foundations in 1987, at the beginning of the first violent confrontation. It reflects the decision of the radical Islamists, headed by the late Ahmad Yassin, to add a Palestinian national aspect to the *da'wah* (changing Palestinian society by means of indoctrination, preaching and education, the modus operandi of the Muslim Brotherhood). That aspect **advocates the destruction of the State of Israel as their main goal and perpetrates acts of terrorism against Israel as the primary tool for advancing that goal.**
2. According to Hamas ideology, **the Palestinian problem is basically religious and therefore cannot be solved by any political compromise.** Hamas claims that the land of Palestine, “from the [Jordan] river to the [Mediterranean] sea” is consecrated **to Islam** and none of it can be given up, especially Jerusalem. Thus Hamas denies the possibility of any political settlement with Israel and objects to any and all agreements between the PA/PLO and Israel, and totally rejects the Oslo accords. For that reason, Hamas has refused to accept the authority of and to join the PA.
3. **Terrorism is one of the main tenets of Hamas ideology.** As far as Hamas is concerned, as long as Palestinians (within Israel and the territories) live under the “occupation” they are obliged to oppose it through a *jihad* (holy war), that is, **an uncompromising armed insurrection against Israel.** However, Hamas also recognizes the

necessity of temporary tactical cease-fires (*hudnas*), especially to avoid confrontations with the PA (and with the Arab countries and the international community), which might adversely affect its status and image.


4. The late **Sheikh Ahmad Yassin** was the founder of Hamas and its spiritual leader. The person currently in charge of its day-to-day activities is the chairman of the Hamas Political Office, **Khaled Mashal**, who has held the post since 1996. The Hamas leadership is geographically divided. The **“internal leadership”** is situated in three centers: the Gaza Strip, the West Bank and Israeli prisons. There is the **“external leadership,”** made up of Palestinian Muslim Brotherhood members who joined Hamas after its founding, and those from **“the inside,”** who were expelled from the PA-administered territories. **That branch of the leadership is located mainly in Syria** (after having been ousted from Jordan in 1999) and also has representatives in various Arab countries, such as Lebanon.

5. Hamas reaches decisions on matters of principle through dialogues among the various leaderships, **although the “external leadership” has the most influence and authority.** Its position is **usually more extreme and intransigent** as a result of the influence exerted on it by Syrian and Iran and the support they receive from those sources. In any case, the “internal leadership” had its wings severely clipped by Israel’s targeted killings of its senior members (particularly in the Gaza Strip) and by the arrest of many of its members in the West Bank.

6. Hamas has an operational-terrorist infrastructure (**Izzedine al-Qassam Battalions**) in the Gaza Strip, the West Bank and abroad. Most of those active in the West Bank are directed by the “external leadership,” although its power base is in the Gaza Strip, where it even founded a militia called the **People’s Army**.
7. During the current violent confrontation, which began in September 2000, **Hamas has been the leading organization in the armed insurrection and responsible for an enormous number of terrorist attacks**. They were perpetrated in the PA-administered territories and Israel, none abroad. Hamas policy is sometimes determined by political expediency (thus at a certain point the movement agreed to a temporary cease-fire, which was not honored).
8. **Some of Hamas’s more prominent attacks against Israel include:**
 - a. The kidnapping and murder of Israeli soldiers **Avi Sasportas** (February 16, 1989), **Ilan Sa’adon** (May 3, 1989) and **Nissim Toledano** (December 13, 1992).
 - b. The kidnapping of **Corporal Nachshon Waxman** (October 9-14, 1994). Waxman and **Captain Nir Poraz** were killed in an exchange of gunfire.
 - c. A suicide bombing attack on the **Number 5 bus in Tel Aviv** (October 19, 1994); 22 Israeli civilians murdered.
 - d. Two suicide bombing attacks on the **Number 18 bus** in Jerusalem (February 25 and March 3, 1996); a total of 47 Israeli civilians murdered.

- e. A suicide bombing attack at the **Dolphinarium in Tel Aviv** (June 1, 2001); 21 Israeli civilians murdered, most of them teenagers.
- f. A suicide bombing attack at the **Sbarro Restaurant in Jerusalem** (August 9, 2001); 15 Israeli civilians murdered.
- g. A suicide bombing attack at the **Park Hotel in Netanya** during the Passover Seder (March 27, 2002); 30 Israeli civilians murdered. The attack resulted in Operation Defensive Shield.
- h. A suicide bombing attack in **Rishon Le'tzion** (May 7, 2002); 16 Israeli civilians murdered.
- i. A suicide bombing attack at a **major intersection in Jerusalem** (June 18, 2002); 19 Israeli civilians murdered.
- j. A suicide bombing attack on the **Number 2 bus in Jerusalem** (August 19, 2003); 23 Israeli civilians murdered. The attack brought the temporary “cease fire” [*hudna*] to an end.

The Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ)

1. The PIJ has an extremist Islamic ideology which calls for the destruction of the State of Israel as a means of bringing about an Islamic revolution in the Arab world. The PIJ was formed in the middle of the 1970s around a nucleus of Palestinians studying at Zagazig University in Egypt. Their leader was a medical student named **Fathi ‘Abd al-Aziz al-Shqaqi**.
2. The founders despaired of the idleness of the Muslim Brotherhood and were eager to emulate the radical *jihad* movements which flourished in Egypt at that time. They wanted to found an Islamic Palestinian organization which would unite radical Islam with uncompromising Palestinian nationalism, an alternative to the Fatah/PLO’s “secular” brand of nationalism.
3. Shqaqi and his followers returned to the Gaza Strip in the early 1980s, impressed by the Islamic revolution in Iran (1979). He and Sheikh ‘Abd al-Aziz ‘Odah founded the Palestinian Islamic Jihad, **which is under Iranian patronage**. Recruiting supporters in the mosques and universities, the organization established its infrastructure, including terrorist cells. Over the years a number of factions broke away from the PIJ, none of them of any importance.
4. The PIJ was prominent during the first violent confrontation (1987-1993). After the Oslo accords, to which they objected fiercely, the PIJ perpetrated suicide bombing attacks as a means of sabotaging any effort to come to a solution. On October 26, 1995, Shqaqi was killed

in Malta and **Dr. Ramadan Shalah**, one of the organization's founders, was appointed to replace him.

5. During the current violent confrontation, the PIJ joined Hamas and Fatah to perpetrate terrorist attacks against Israel, using the organization's operational-terrorist infrastructure (**Jerusalem Battalions**). The organization has opposed various cease-fire agreements but agreed to join the *hudna* (temporary cease-fire) under prime minister Mahmud Abbas (Abu Mazen) as part of an inter-organizational agreement.




Jerusalem Battalions logo. An obvious resemblance to the Hezbollah logo.

6. Prominent PIJ terrorist attacks against Israel include:
 - a. Two car bombs which exploded at the **Beit Lid intersection** (January 22, 1995); 21 Israeli soldiers murdered.
 - b. A suicide bombing attack on **a bus in Wadi 'Ara** in the northern part of Israel (March 20, 2002); 7 Israeli civilians murdered, 30 wounded.
 - c. A suicide bombing attack on a bus at the **Yagur junction** near Haifa (April 10, 2001); 8 Israeli civilians murdered, 15 wounded.

- d. A car bomb with a single terrorist exploded next to a bus at the **Megiddo junction** in the northern part of Israel (June 5, 2002); 17 Israeli civilians murdered, 50 wounded.
- e. A car bomb with two terrorists exploded next to a bus at the **Karkur junction** near Hadera (October 21, 2002); 14 Israeli civilians murdered, 50 wounded.
- f. A shooting attack near **Hebron** (November 15, 2002); 12 Israeli civilians returning from prayers killed, 16 wounded.
- g. A suicide bombing attack at the **Maxim Restaurant in Haifa** (October 4, 2003); 21 Israeli civilians murdered, including 6 members representing 3 generations of the same family, 60 wounded.

The Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestinian (PFLP)

1. The PFLP was founded on December 11, 1967 with the union of two left-wing Palestinian organizations. Its leaders were Wadi' Haddad (who later became responsible for terrorist operations) and **George Habash**, the general secretary. The PFLP is a Marxist organization which advocates armed insurrection. It perpetrates show-case, media-oriented attacks, **particularly the hijacking of planes**, to bring the Palestinian cause to public attention.
2. In 1971, under the leadership of Habash, the organization took a more pragmatic line. Nevertheless, the PFLP never agreed to recognize Israel and left the PLO after the acceptance of the “Stage Strategy” (June 1974) as adopted in Cairo by the Palestinian National Council. Although the PFLP continued its pragmatic line, it however is still opposed to the Oslo accords and is critical of the Palestinian Authority, despite the fact that it made its peace with Arafat and returned to the ranks of the PLO.
3. In May 2000, George Habash resigned as general secretary because of failing health and was replaced by **Abu Ali Mustafa**. Mustafa directed the organization to perpetrate terrorist attacks against Israel. He was killed in a targeted attack on August 21, 2001 in Ramallah and replaced by **Ahmad Sadat**. Sadat directed the assassination of **Rehavam Ze'evi, Israeli Minister of Tourism** (October 17, 2001). In the wake of Israeli and international pressure Sa'adat was arrested by the Palestinian Authority and is today in “custody” in Jericho. The PFLP's political leadership resides in the PA-administered territories

and Syria, and a small operational-terrorist wing in the PA-administered territories (the Shaheed Abu ‘Ali Mustafa Battalions).




Abu ‘Ali Mustafa Battalions logo

4. During the current violent confrontation the PFLP called for an armed insurrection and perpetrated a number of terrorist attacks despite the fact that its operational-terrorist wing is smaller than those of the other Palestinian terrorist organizations. It is party to the inter-organizational dialogues but refused to participate in the *hudna* when Abu Mazen was prime minister.
5. Some of its more prominent attacks include:
 - a. The **hijacking of an ElAl plane** (July 23, 1968); 16 prisoners were released.
 - b. **Hijacking of 3 planes belonging to Western countries** (September 6, 1970): Three commercial airliners were hijacked and blown up after the passengers were evacuated. An attempt to hijack an Israeli (ElAl) airliner was foiled. Three days later another Western plane was hijacked as well.
 - c. The **assassination of Rehavam Ze’evi** (October 17, 2001).

- d. A suicide bombing attack at the West Bank village of **Karnei Shomron** (February 16, 2002); 3 Israeli civilians murdered, 25 wounded.

- e. A suicide bombing attack at a bus station at the **Geha junction** in Tel Aviv (December 25, 2003); 3 Israelis murdered.

The Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP)

1. The Popular Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PDFLP) was founded on February 22, 1969, when it split from the PFLP, changing its name shortly thereafter to the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP). Since its inception it has been led by **Naif Hawatmeh**. The DFLP, which belongs to the PLO, initially had a radical Marxist-Leninist ideology and cooperated with other radical left-wing organizations (some of them underground). It supports armed insurrection against Israel and began its terrorist activities in 1973. Since the terrorists were expelled from Lebanon (1982) its position has become somewhat more pragmatic and usually similar to that of Fatah.
2. Hawatmeh and other senior members of the DFLP are based in Syria, but the organization has senior political figures in the PA-administered territories and maintains a small operational-terrorist wing in the Gaza Strip.
3. During the current violent confrontation the DFLP has confined its activities to a small number of terrorist attacks in the Gaza Strip, but has participated in various internal Palestinian dialogues. Its most prominent terrorist attacks against Israel include:
 - a. Terrorist attack on the northern border town of **Ma'alot** (May 15, 1974); 25 Israeli civilians murdered, many of them children.

- b. Attack on a private home in the town of **Beit Shean** (November 19, 1974); 4 Israeli civilians murdered.

- c. A wagon rigged with a bomb which exploded in **Jerusalem** (November 13, 1975); 7 Israeli civilians murdered.

The Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine – General Command (PFLP-GC)

1. The PFLP-GC was established in April 1968 by **Ahmed Jibril**, mostly around a nucleus of former Syrian army officers. They joined the PFLP but split from it after an internal struggle with George Habash and other PFLP leaders.



2. Since its inception the PFLP-GC has advocated armed insurrection. Although the organization has no particular ideology, it has certain Marxist characteristics. In April 1977 the organization split when a pro-Iraqi faction left because of the PFLP-GC's pro-Syrian orientation.
3. In June 1974 the PFLP-GC joined the PLO although it opposed the latter's political initiatives. In 1983, however, encouraged by Syria, it joined the organizations contesting Arafat and Fatah; therefore its membership in the PLO was suspended in 1984.
4. The PFLP-CG, under Syrian influence, opposed the Oslo accords and advocated the continuation of the armed insurrection during the 1990s. Because their opposition is similar to that of Hamas, the two organizations were drawn to one another and today often coordinate their positions.
5. The organization's operational-terrorist infrastructure and bases are located mainly in **Syria and Lebanon** (including Ein Saheb, which was attacked on October 5, 2003). Its attacks usually come from over

the Lebanese border and its presence in the PA-administered territories is minimal. Its attacks against Israel include:

- a. Blowing up a **Swissair plane** (February 21, 1970); 47 murdered.
- b. An attack on a bus of children from **Avivim**, a moshav near the Lebanese border (May 21, 1970); 12 Israeli children murdered.
- c. An attack in **Kiryat Shmonah** in the far north of Israel (April 11, 1974); 18 Israeli civilians murdered.
- d. The **kidnapping** of 3 Israeli soldiers in 1982 who were exchanged on May 20, 1985, for 1150 Palestinian prisoners.
- e. **“The night of the hang-gliders”** (November 25, 1987); 6 Israeli soldiers murdered.

The Popular Resistance Committees (PRC)

1. The **PRC** is a **terrorist organization** active in the Gaza Strip. The organization was founded in September 2000, at the beginning of the current violent confrontation, by former **Fatah and Palestinian Security apparatus** members. Its ranks also include **ex-Hamas terrorists**, some of whom were wanted by Israel and who joined the Palestinian Preventive Security apparatus, and operatives who belonged to the **Palestinian Islamic Jihad and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestinian**.



2. The organization was **founded** by a Rafah resident, **Jamal Abu Samhadana** who formerly belonged to Fatah/Tanzim. He split with Fatah and founded the PRC and is its leader. Since its inception it has been attacking Israel, and thanks to the funding it has received has grown from modest beginnings into an organization responsible for the murders of at least 10 Israelis. Abu Samhadana was wounded during the violent confrontation while attempting to assemble an explosive device.
3. The PRC (and its operational-terrorist wing, the Salah al-Din Brigades) is **responsible for a large number of attacks** against Israelis in the Gaza Strip, both civilians and soldiers. Some of its more prominent attacks include the following:
 - a. Large explosive charges meant for Israeli tanks which **killed three Israeli soldiers** on February 14, 2002; **three more** on March 14, 2002; and **one** on September 5, 2002.

- b. Attacks on **civilian targets in the Gaza Strip**: a side charge was detonated as a bus full of children passed near **Kfar Darom** on November 20, 2000, killing two; shots were fired at a bus carrying airport workers near the **Rafah terminal** on October 8, 2000, wounding 8 Israeli civilians; shots were fired at a car on the road from **Kerem Shalom** to the Rafah terminal, killing the woman driver. **Akram Salameh 'Atia Said**, a member of the PRC who was sentenced to 24 years in prison (See below), admitted during interrogation to having planned to perpetrate a suicide bombing attack at **Kfar Darom**.
 - c. **Mortar attacks on Israeli targets in the Gaza Strip, including civilian villages**, some within a very short period of time: three on the same day (April 28, 2001) against moshav **Netzer Hazani** (five young people wounded, one of them seriously); one (April 29, 2001) against the village of **Kfar Darom**; and one (May 7, 2001) against the village of **Atzmona**.
4. In the past the organization attempted to set up operations in the West Bank as well. In January 2002, **Akram Salameh 'Atia Said** was sent by Jamal Abu Samhadana from the Gaza Strip to the West Bank to shoot at Israeli civilians and soldiers. He infiltrated through the fence at Kissufim, went to Lod and from there to Ramallah. He was arrested on February 25, 2002, convicted and sentenced to 24 years in prison.
5. The PRC was apparently the organization behind the attack on the American convoy at **Beit Hanoun** in the northern part of the Gaza Strip (October 15, 2003). Two side charges were detonated, blowing up a vehicle and **killing three security personnel** who were

accompanying the American cultural attaché. So far the Palestinian Authority has avoided a serious investigation of the incident.

6. PRC terrorists have various weapons at their disposal: small arms, explosives (commercial and homemade), mines, hand grenades and anti-tank rockets and mortars. The PRC has recently (July 2004) begun launching homemade Nasser 3 rockets at Israeli villages close to the Gaza Strip. The weapons are obtained by smuggling (usually **through tunnels between Rafah and Egypt**). In addition, they purchase from arms dealers and manufacturers or produced independently.