



News of Terrorism and the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict (November 22-28, 2017)

Overview

- ▶ This past week there were no significant terrorist attacks carried out in Judea, Samaria and the Gaza Strip.
- ▶ In the realm of internal Palestinian affairs, talks were held in Cairo by the Palestinian organizations ("the meeting of the factions"). At the meeting strong disagreements rose between Hamas and Fatah. The main argument was over Fatah's accusations that so far **the Palestinian national consensus government has not received full authority for the Gaza Strip** and that local organizations interfere in the ministerial affairs and in the justice system.
- ▶ **Salah al-Bardawil, a member of Hamas' political bureau**, said "the meeting of the factions" had ended with **a worthless announcement and no practical measures taken**. The Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) also expressed dissatisfaction with the results of the meeting.
- ▶ In light of the above, an Egyptian security delegation arrived in the Gaza Strip this past week. Its main objectives are to monitor the transfer of authority to the national consensus government and to advance the faltering reconciliation agreement.

Terrorist Attacks and Attempted Terrorist Attacks

- ▶ On **November 26, 2017**, a Palestinian carried out a drive-by shooting targeting an IDF post **near Ramallah**. No casualties were reported (Facebook page of Red Alert, November 26, 2017).

Riots, clashes and popular terrorism

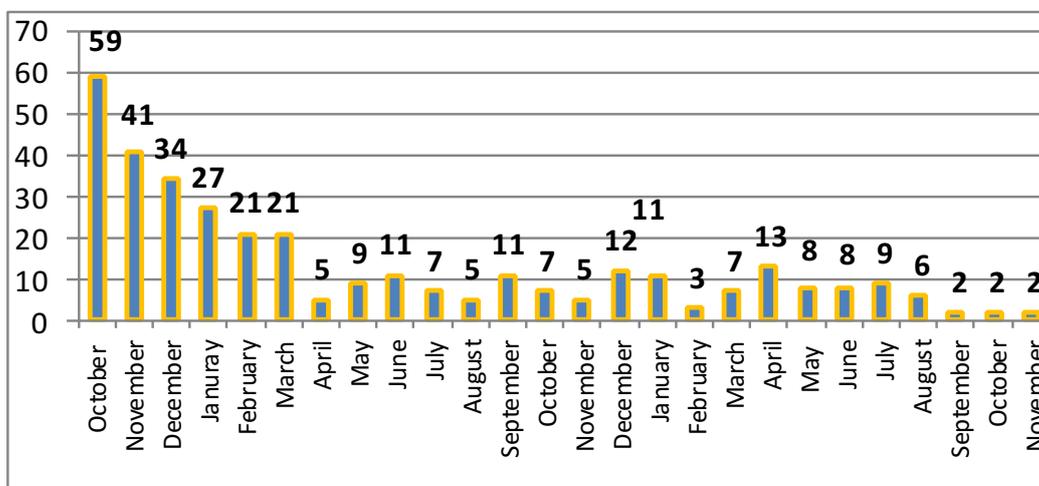
- ▶ This past week Palestinians continued throwing stones and Molotov cocktails. The more prominent occurrences were the following:
 - ◆ **November 27, 2017** – The Israeli security forces detained a Palestinian at a checkpoint near the Cave of the Patriarchs in Hebron. He was found to be in possession of a knife (Facebook page of Red Alert, November 27, 2017).



The knife found in the possession of the Palestinian near the Cave of the Patriarchs in Hebron (Israel Police Force, November 27, 2017).

- ◆ **November 26, 2017** –The Israeli security forces detained a Palestinian at a checkpoint **near the Cave of the Patriarchs in Hebron**. He was found to be in possession of a knife (Facebook page of Red Alert, November 26, 2017).
- ◆ **November 25, 2017** – Palestinians threw stones at an Israel vehicle **near Anata in the Benjamin region**. No casualties were reported; the car was damaged (Facebook page of Red Alert, November 25, 2017).

Significant Terrorist Attacks in Judea, Samaria and Jerusalem during the Past Two Years¹



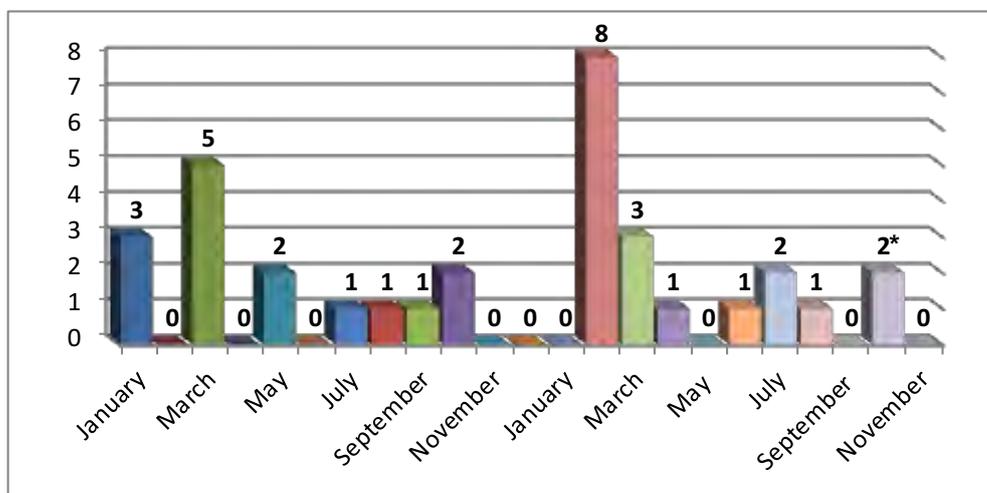
¹ A significant attack is defined by the ITIC as involving shooting, stabbing, a vehicular attack, the use of IEDs, or a combination of the above. Stones and Molotov cocktails thrown by Palestinians are not included.

Israel's South

Rocket Fire Attacking Israel

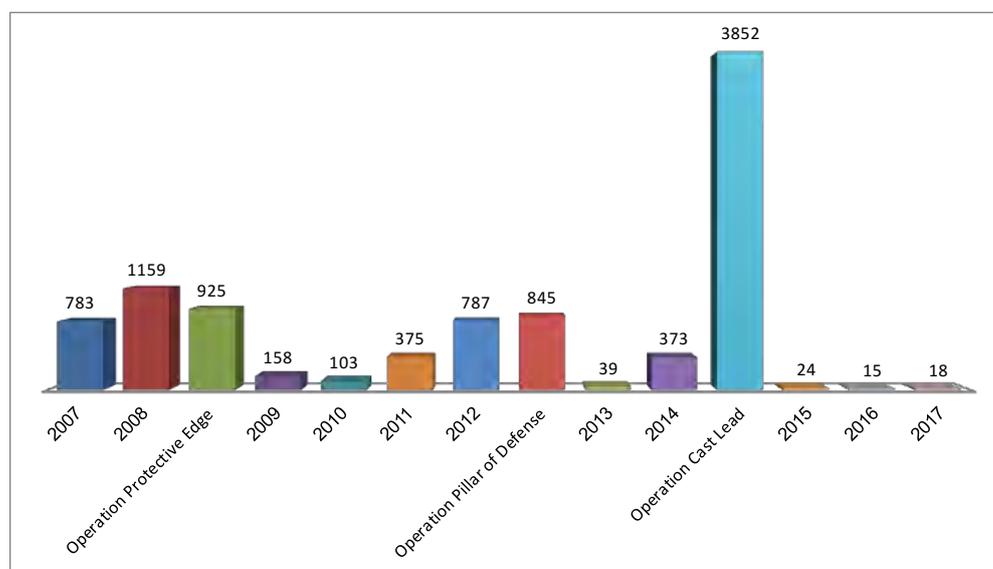
- This past week no rocket hits were identified in Israeli territory.

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. In April a rocket was launched from the Sinai Peninsula by ISIS's Sinai Province. In October 2017 two rockets were fired from the northern Sinai Peninsula by ISIS's Sinai Province. They fell in an open area in the western Negev.

Annual Distribution of Rocket Hits in Israel's South²



² The statistics do not include mortar shell fire or rockets which misfired and fell inside the Gaza Strip.

The Internal Palestinian Reconciliation

An Egyptian security delegation arrives in the Gaza Strip

► On November 25, 2017, **an Egyptian security delegation** entered the Gaza Strip through the Erez crossing. Its members included **Khaled Samy, the Egyptian representative in Ramallah, and senior Egyptian General Intelligence officer General Hamam Abu Zeid**. The delegation met with **Ziyad Abu Amro, deputy Palestinian prime minister**, and later with **Yahya al-Sinwar, head of Hamas' political bureau in the Gaza Strip** (Ma'an and the Palinfo Twitter account, November 27, 2017). The objectives of the delegation are to monitor the transfer of authority to the Palestinian national consensus government and to advance the faltering reconciliation agreement.



An Egyptian security delegation accompanied by Tawfiq Abu Na'im (right) on its arrival in the Gaza Strip. Abu Na'im is responsible for the security forces in the Gaza Strip (Ma'an, November 27, 2017).

Summation announcement of the Palestinian organization talks in Cairo ("the meeting of the factions")

► On November 21 and 22, 2017, representatives of the Palestinian organizations met in Cairo for a marathon meeting which was sometimes characterized by tension. Representatives of most of the organizations demanded that Mahmoud Abbas and the Palestinian Authority (PA) **lift the sanctions imposed on the Gaza Strip**. They stressed that the demand was not linked to the transfer of authority over the Gaza Strip to the PA. On the other hand, Fatah representatives focused on **the demand of the national consensus**

government for full authority over the Gaza Strip, and refused to lift the sanctions beforehand (al-Quds, November 23 and 24; (al-Hayat, November 22, 2017).

► At the end of the deliberations the organizations issued a joint statement, marked by the lack of both operative steps and a time table. The main points of the statement were the following (al-Quds al-Arabi, November 23, 2017):

- ◆ **A stress on the adherence of the organizations to strengthening national unity** for the sake of the Palestinian struggle to establish an independent state. The state would have Jerusalem as its capital and full sovereignty over all the territories occupied in 1967. It would also ensure the "right of return" of the Palestinian refugees, in accordance with UN General Assembly Resolution 194. In addition, the announcement expressed support for the Fatah-Hamas reconciliation agreement, and called for its precise implementation.
- ◆ **A call for elections for the office of the president, the Palestinian Legislative Council and the Palestinian National Council, by the end of 2018 at the latest.** The announcement gave Mahmoud Abbas the authority to determine the date of the elections after consulting with all the Palestinian factions in power. The announcement also called for a more rapid reorganization of the PLO, the only legitimate representative of the Palestinian people, in accordance with the 2005 Cairo Agreement. It stressed the rule of law and the preservation of security and stability in accordance with the 2011 reconciliation agreement, and called for all the factions in the Palestinian Legislative Council to renew the Council's regular activity.
- ◆ **A condemnation of the steps taken by the American administration against the PLO office in Washington** to exert pressure on the Palestinian leadership to surrender to American demands; objection to interim solutions **and refusal to recognize Israel as a Jewish state and objection to other programs that could harm the rights of the Palestinians.**
- ◆ **Support** for the steps taken by the Palestinian leadership to join international institutions and conventions in order **to bring the issue of "Israel's crimes" before the International Criminal Court in The Hague; support for the decision to continue to take care of the families of shaheeds and prisoners.**
- ◆ The participants agreed to renew deliberations at the beginning of February 2018. Their goal will be to complete plans for practical measures to implement all decisions

in accordance with the Egyptian leadership, and to receive its sponsorship for all steps taken (al-Quds al-Arabi, November 23, 2017).



The "meeting of the factions" ends in the headquarters of Egyptian General Intelligence in Cairo (Twitter account of QudsN, November 21, 2017).

Main reactions to the "meeting of the factions"

► Hamas:

- ◆ **Saleh al-'Arouri, deputy head of Hamas' overall political bureau and Husam Badran, a member of the political bureau**, both said they hoped the transfer of authority to the national consensus government would be completed by the end of November 2017 in time for the Hamas-Fatah meeting which is supposed to be held on December 1, 2017. According to **Husam Badran**, at the meeting Hamas demanded the appointment of a committee composed of all the organizations to monitor the issue. Fatah, he said, opposed, and **then Egypt decided to send its own representatives** (al-Quds, November 24, 2017).

- ◆ **Salah al-Bardawil**, a member of Hamas' political bureau, said **the meeting had ended with a worthless announcement and no practical measures, and that the summation announcement was unclear and "pale," and could not be implemented in the foreseeable future**. He claimed **they had not been allowed to discuss the Rafah crossing**, and that the issue concerned the Egyptian side, which had its own security considerations. He revealed that Majed Faraj, head of Palestinian General Intelligence, had told the Hamas movement that **there were American pressures and Israel threats to stop the transfer of tax funds, which made it impossible for the PA and Fatah to make progress**. He added that American pressures had caused the PA to evade its responsibility to the reconciliation and it had

therefore formulated such a "pale" and unclear announcement to keep from angering the United States and Israel³ (Sputnik, November 24, 2017).

► **Ziad al-Nakhleh, head of the PIJ delegation** (and the organization's deputy secretary general) said, before leaving Cairo for Lebanon, **he opposed what had been written in summation about the Palestinian state**. He reportedly refused to be interviewed, and "looked angry". Many attendees reported that the PIJ delegation had reservations about the way the meeting dealt with certain issues (al-Quds, November 24, 2017). **Khaled al-Batash, senior PIJ figure, also expressed dissatisfaction with the results of the meeting**, saying they were insufficient and did not provide solutions for "popular aspirations." However, he added that the meeting was a step in the direction of restoring unity, which would take time, and it was necessary to adhere to the 2011 reconciliation agreement and lift the "punishments" inflicted on the Gaza Strip (quds.press, November 24, 2017).

Senior Fatah figures claim the national consensus government has not received full authority in the Gaza Strip

► After "the meeting of the factions" **senior Fatah figures reported that the national consensus government had not received full authority over the Gaza Strip**. **Azzam al-Ahmed, a member of Fatah's Central Committee**, spoke at length about the matter. He said:

- ◆ The government will be able to begin its operations in the Gaza Strip after the various organizations, which have no connection to the government, **allow it to operate and do not interfere with the workings of the ministries, the authorities and the judicial system**. Despite the fact that Hamas has disbanded its "administrative committee," **a "parallel government" still exists in the Gaza Strip which wants to control the ministers**, which Fatah rejects outright (Arabi21, November 24, 2017).
- ◆ In a radio interview held in the Gaza Strip, Azzam al-Ahmed said the problems facing the national consensus government in the Gaza Strip are manifested by its inability to direct the ministries and institutions in the Gaza Strip. He said several ministers had made decisions but **senior figures in the Gaza Strip prevented them from being implemented**, claiming the source of their authority was unclear. He said the factions

³ Salah al-Bardawil later issued an announcement in which he apologized for his "emotional remarks," claiming they had been recorded secretly and that he had been referring to the first announcement and not the summation (Arabi21, November 23, 2017).

had agreed at the meeting that the government would control the Gaza Strip, as every legal government controls every in the world. He said that there was **a parallel government functioning in the Gaza Strip, and called on everyone to support the national consensus government in fulfilling its duties.**

◆ Azzam al-Ahmed added that the electricity crisis in the Gaza Strip had been discussed for five hours at the meeting and that everyone had agreed **the government would not be able to provide services before authority had been transferred to it.** He said Mahmoud Abbas had ordered that 100 dunams [about 25 acres] in the Gaza Strip be transferred to the electricity authority so that it could **build a new power station,** and that the water authority had **begun building a desalination plant.** Regarding the Rafah crossing, he said **the decision to open it was fundamentally Egyptian** and motivated by Egyptian security considerations. Regarding the "weapons of the resistance," he said that **there were no "weapons of the resistance" or "weapons of the PA," but only one, united set of Palestinian weapons. He added that the issue of security was complex and had not arisen at the meeting** (Sawt al-Quds radio, al-Quds and pssawa, November 23, 2017).

► **Additional statements from Fatah figures:**

◆ **Mahmoud al-'Alul, deputy chairman of the Fatah movement,** told Radio Palestine after the meeting that the measures carried out in the Gaza Strip so far to transfer authority to the national consensus government were **procedural and not essential.** He said a meeting of Fatah's Central Committee had noted that the **first steps of the reconciliation program had not yet been completed,** that is, the first steps relating to transferring authority to the national consensus government so that it could conduct life in the Gaza Strip, **including the matter of the crossings.** He added that Fatah had decided that the steps had to be completed in order, and that another attempt had to be made to complete the transfer of authority to the government in the Gaza Strip (al-Quds, November 26, 2017).

◆ **Hussein al-Sheikh, a member of Fatah's Central Committee,** was interviewed by Palestinian TV and said that the transfer of authority to the government in the Gaza Strip was lagging behind schedule, and that **so far only 5% of the process had been completed.** He said that there were administrative, financial and security problems. **Regarding administration, he said, objected to ministers' rehiring employees who**

had worked in the ministries before 2007, despite the fact that it had been specifically stated in the reconciliation agreement signed on October 12. **Regarding finances**, so far, he said, there has been no serious, effective tax collection by the national consensus government. **Regarding security**, no progress has been made in the Gaza Strip and there has been no transfer of authority over the crossings because there is no security. As to Hamas' declarations regarding "**the weapons of the resistance**," al-Sheikh said that the weapons are not a matter for an organization or faction, because there will be only one set of weapons, one authority and one law (Wafa and Ma'an, November 26, 2017).

Hamas responses to Fatah accusations

► On November 27, 2017, **Khalil al-Haya, a member of Hamas' political bureau**, held a press conference where **he again criticized the Fatah movement for continuing to discuss transferring authority to the national consensus government**. His main points were the following:

- ◆ The statements made by senior Fatah figures during the past two days were not encouraging and showed that **there were those who opposed the reconciliation**. He said Hamas was not sorry for what it had done for the sake of the reconciliation and it would continue along the same path. He called on everyone to again discuss the reconciliation and unity, and called on Fatah not to surrender to pressure. **Regarding employees in the public sector**, he said it had been agreed with Fatah that the subject of civilian workers would be dealt with through the appointment of a committee of three of whose members would be from the Gaza Strip and its decisions would be made through general agreement. He added that the government, after 40 days of delays and procrastination, had not included members from the Gaza Strip in the committee. He called on the committee to begin its work.
- ◆ Khalil al-Haya, relating to the employees in the public sector who had been appointed since 2006, said that the continuation of their employment was a red line for Hamas. He said they had legal rights that no one could ignore. **He demanded that everyone stop talking about the "weapons of the resistance," adding that the issue was not "one specific red line" but "all the red lines together."** He again insisted that the weapons of the "resistance" not be harmed and that the issue was not on the agenda for discussion. **The weapons, he claimed, were a source of power for**

the Palestinians, and would be moved to the West Bank to fight the "occupation" until it ended. He added that "our weapons are in our hands. Either we liberate Palestine with them or we will die with them" (Hamas website and Palinfo, November 27, 2017).



Khalil al-Haya, a member of Hamas' political bureau (center), at a press conference in the Gaza Strip held to report on the internal Palestinian reconciliation and the latest round of talks in Cairo (Palinfo Twitter account, November 27, 2017).



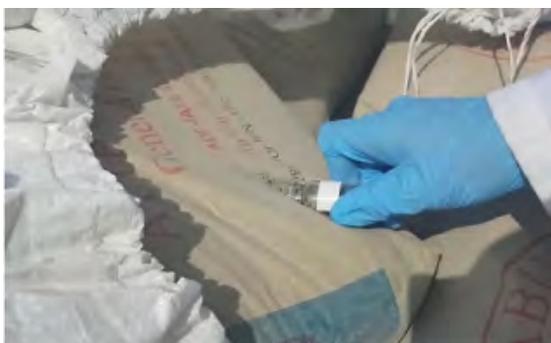
Right: Cartoon criticizing Mahmoud Abbas and Hamas for the delay in implementing the reconciliation agreement in the Gaza Strip while Gazans continue to suffer. The Arabic reads, "I'm in no hurry," and "Neither am I..." (Facebook page of Isma'il al-Bazam, November 21, 2017).
Left: Mahmoud Abbas is strong when it comes to reconciliation talks with Hamas, but weak in negotiations with Israel (Facebook page of Alaa' al-Lakta, November 24, 2017)

Developments in the Gaza Strip

Smuggling of materials for manufacturing explosives prevented

► On November 22, 2017, the Israeli Ministry of Defense announced that a new chemical testing laboratory had been established by the Israeli crossings authority at the Kerem Shalom crossing. It had, for the first time, prevented the smuggling of **several tons of**

materials for the manufacture of explosives en route to terrorists in the Gaza Strip. A truck carrying a cargo of **motor oil** aroused the suspicion of the security inspectors. Samples of the oil were tested in the laboratory and were identified as not motor oil but rather a **dangerous substance used in the manufacture of explosives** (Twitter account of the Israeli Ministry of Defense and Ynet, November 22, 2017).



**Explosives seized at the Kerem Shalom crossing
(Ministry of Defense Spokesman's Unit, November 22, 2017).**

Detention of Hamas terrorist operative who crossed the border security fence into Israeli territory

- ▶ At the end of September 2017 **Ahmed Majdi Muhammad Obeid**, 23, was detained while crossing the border security fence into Israeli territory. **Ahmed Obeid was a Hamas terrorist operative** from the Fajaiya east of Gaza City. Interrogation revealed he was recruited to Hamas in 2013. He underwent military training and participated in military exercises in the fields of anti-tank weapons, engineering and sniper fire. He participated in digging tunnels near where he lived and was an operative in Hamas' "restraint force" (which secures borders).
- ▶ His interrogation revealed **much information about the activities in Hamas tunnel system in the Gaza Strip**, both tunnels for attacking Israel and tunnels for fighting IDF soldiers inside the Gaza Strip. **The interrogation of Ahmed Obeid exposed once again Hamas' use of tunnels to conduct terrorist attacks against the State of Israel** (Israel Security Agency website, November 23, 2017).



**Ahmed Obeid, the detained Hamas operative
(Israel Security Agency website, November 23, 2017).**

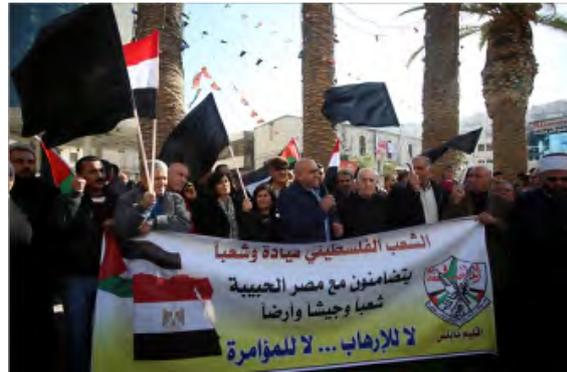
Palestinian reactions to deadly attack on mosque in the Sinai Peninsula

► On November 24, 2017, a mass-killing attack was carried out at a Sufi mosque in the village of al-Rawda in the Bir al-Abd region (about 80 kilometers west of El-Arish). It was the deadliest terrorist attack in Egypt's history, killing 305 people. **It was widely condemned by the entire political spectrum** in the Palestinian arena:

- ◆ **The Palestinian Authority:** Mahmoud Abbas' office issued a statement condemning the attack and announcing Palestinian support for Egypt, its government and people in their struggle against terrorism (Wafa, November 24, 2017).
- ◆ **Hamas:** Hamas issued a statement condemning the attack. It said that **attacking mosques, worshippers and shrines was in violation of every monotheistic religion and all human values** (Hamas movement website, November 24, 2017). **Isma'il Haniyeh**, chairman of Hamas' external political bureau, called the head of Egyptian General Intelligence to express his condolences (Hamas movement website, November 24, 2017).
- ◆ **The PIJ: Da'ud Shehab, PIJ spokesman,** issued a statement condemning the attack and saying it served the "Zionist enemies of the [Arab] nation" (Arabi21, November 24, 2017).
- ◆ **The Gaza Strip:** Members of the al-Sawarka tribe to which most of the victims of the mosque attack belonged, erected two mourning tents, and on November 26, 2017, the National and Islamic Forces in the Gaza Strip erected a mourning tent in the Square of the Unknown Soldier in Gaza City. In addition, there was a blood drive for the sake of the wounded (Ma'an and al-Sharq al-Awsat, November 26, 2017)



Right: Al-Sawarka mourners in the Gaza Strip (Safa, November 25, 2017). Left: Blood drive in the Gaza Strip for the victims of the attack (Twitter account of QudsN, November 25, 2017).



Right: Solidarity demonstration with Egypt held in Nablus with the participation of Akram Rajoub, the governor of the Nablus district (Wafa, November 26, 2017). Left: The mourning tent erected in the Square of the Unknown Soldier in Gaza City (Qawm website, November 26, 2017).

The Palestinian Authority (PA)

The United States retreats from its plan to close PLO office in Washington

► On November 17, 2017, the United States announced its intention to close the PLO's office in Washington following a Palestinian attempt to prosecute Israelis in the International Criminal Court (ICC) in The Hague. The implementation of the decision was delayed, according to the Americans, following a clarification of the issue between the United States and the Palestinians.

► **On November 24, 2017, the American State Department suddenly announced it was backtracking from its decision to close the office**, and would allow it to remain open, with certain limitations. Edgar Vasquez, spokesman for the State Department, said the U.S. had "advised the PLO Office to limit its activities to those related to achieving a lasting, comprehensive peace between the Israelis and Palestinians." He added that even those restrictions would be lifted after 90 days if the United States determined the Israelis and

Palestinians were engaged in serious peace talks. Vasquez claimed the original position had never been intended to create leverage or impose pressure, but that the mission closing stemmed from a little-noticed provision in American law. He said the actions were "consistent with the president's authorities to conduct the foreign relations of the United States" (Washington Post, November 25, 2017).⁴

► **Palestinian sources** told the London-based newspaper al-Sharq al-Awsat that **pressure from the Arab states and negotiations with the PA leadership held led the American administration to revoke its decision to close the PLO office in Washington** (al-Sharq al-Awsat, November 26, 2017).

⁴https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/us-backtracks-on-decision-to-close-palestinian-office-in-dc/2017/11/24/705f7e7c-d175-11e7-a87b-47f14b73162a_story.html?utm_term=.bab6defd076b