



## Palestinian Responses to Donald Trump's Declaration that the United States Recognizes Jerusalem as the Capital of Israel (updated December 10, 2017)

December 10, 2017

▶ Trump's declaration of United States recognition of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel led to **calls from the leaders of the Palestinian Authority (PA) and Fatah for protest demonstrations**. The leaders of Hamas and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ), however, **called for a renewal of the armed campaign against Israel. Their calls ignited a wave of riots and clashes with the Israeli security forces in Judea, Samaria, Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip**. The clashes peaked on December 8 and 9, 2017, when riots were held in **dozens of locations in Judea, Samaria, Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip. Protest demonstrations and riots were also held in Wadi Ara, in the center of Israel. Two demonstrators were killed by IDF forces near the border security fence in the Gaza Strip**. Several hundred Palestinians were wounded during the riots.

▶ **On December 9, 2017, a number of rockets were fired from the Gaza Strip into Israeli territory. Two of them fell in the southern city of Sderot; one hit a kindergarten**. Another rocket was intercepted by the Iron Dome aerial defense system. There were no casualties but the kindergarten building was damaged. Responsibility for the rocket fire was claimed by a network calling itself "The unity of Allah" (in ITIC assessment a Salafi jihadist organization). In response to the rocket fire the IDF attacked Hamas terrorist targets in the Gaza Strip. Two Hamas operatives were killed.

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▶ Examination of the events so far indicates **that the response of the Palestinian people in Judea and Samaria to the calls of their leaders was relatively unimpressive, with the participation of a few thousand Palestinians who demonstrated and rioted in dozens of locations every day**. Clashes with the Israeli security forces were of **relatively low intensity**. That was the result of both the strict procedures followed by the Israeli security forces for opening fire and because of the PA's interest to keep the demonstrations from spinning out of control. According to the Israeli media, there was continual security coordination between the PA security forces and the Israeli security forces, which contributed to keeping the riots from spinning out of control (Ynet, December 10, 2017).

► On December 10, 2017, there was **a stabbing attack** at the entrance to the main bus station in Jerusalem. The Palestinian terrorist who carried out the attack was from Nablus and staying in Israel illegally. He posted the following to his Facebook page: " We will march along the path of Allah to fly [our] flag...And dedicate power to al-Aqsa [mosque], and blood will flow from us..." In ITIC assessment, **Palestinian protest is also liable later to be expressed in more significant terrorist attacks.**

► According to Palestinian sources, **the PA has not withdrawn from the peace process, but rather from American mediation. Riyadh al-Maliki, the foreign minister in the Palestinian national consensus government,** said the Palestinians would not withdraw from the peace process but **the United States would not serve as a mediator. Nabil Shaath, advisor to Mahmoud Abbas for foreign affairs and international relations,** said the PA would be willing to participate in the peace process only if it had **international, not American, sponsorship** (al-Arabiya al-Hadath, December 8, 2017).

#### **Demonstrations and clashes between Palestinians and the Israeli security forces**

► **Clashes between Palestinians and the Israeli security forces began on December 7, 2017, with the Palestinian declaration of a "day of rage." The clashes and riots peaked on December 8, 2017, after the Friday prayers.** On Saturday, December 9, the clashes continued, but with lower intensity. There were **simultaneous riots and clashes** in dozens of location:

- ◆ **Judea and Samaria:** On December 7, 2017, the PA declared a general strike and there were riots and clashes at several locations. They peaked on December 8, 2017. **Several thousand Palestinians rioted in more than 30 different locations, including Hebron, Tulkarm, Qalqilya, Bethlehem and Nablus.** They burned tires and threw Molotov cocktails and stones at the Israeli security forces. According to a report from the Red Crescent, 63 Palestinians were injured. Several dozen Palestinians were detained. **In Hebron, Fatah and Hamas held an unusual joint demonstration, where Hamas flags were waved in public.** Hamas flags were also visible in other locations in Judea and Samaria. On December 9, 2017, riots and clashes were less well-attended, with about **one thousand participants.**



Right: Riots at the north entrance of al-Bireh. Left: Riots and clashes in Qalqilya (Wafa, December 8, 2017).



Riots in Bethlehem (Wafa, December 9, 2017).

◆ **East Jerusalem:** After the Friday prayer on December 8, 2017, thousands of Palestinians gathered on the Temple Mount where they shouted anti-Israel slogans and burned Israeli flags. Thousands of Palestinians also held marches from the Temple Mount. Several dozen Palestinians blocked Salah al-Din Street (the main street through east Jerusalem) for a number of hours and threw stones at Israeli policemen. There were clashes at the Nablus Gate. Four policemen were injured.



Demonstration at al-Aqsa mosque (Wafa, December 8, 2017).

◆ **The Gaza Strip:** Several thousand Gazans rioted in **several locations along the border with Israel**. They threw stones and burned tires and taunted the IDF forces.

Two Palestinians were killed by IDF fire (Shehab, December 9, 2017). Several dozen Palestinians were wounded. The following day demonstrations and riots were renewed, but they were relatively limited. Among the demonstrators were many school children (Palinfo, December 9, 2017).



Right: Burning the American and Israeli flags (Twitter account of QudsN, December 6, 2017). Left: Burning pictures of the American president (Palinfo Twitter account, December 6, 2017).



Hamas-organized march in the northern Gaza Strip on December 8, 2017 (Hamas website, November 8, 2017).



Riots in the eastern Gaza Strip, December 8, 2017 (Wafa, December 8, 2017).

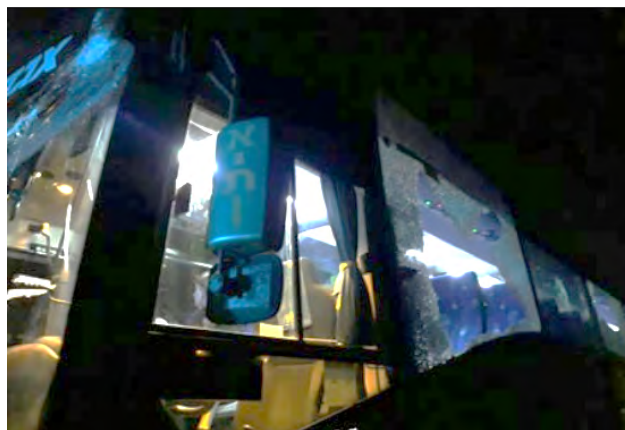


Right: Student demonstration in Rafah (Palinfo Twitter account, December 10, 2017). Left: Joint Hamas-Palestinian Islamic Jihad march (Hamas website, December 8, 2017).

- ◆ **Inside Israel:** The demonstrations spread to the territory inside Israel. There were demonstrations in **Jaljulia, Kafr Qassem and Umm al-Fahm. About 200 people participated.** Some of the demonstrators threw stones at passing cars. Three Israelis were wounded. The road through Wadi Ara was closed when dozens of masked rioters threw stones at police cars, buses and a motorcycle. A number of Israelis were injured.



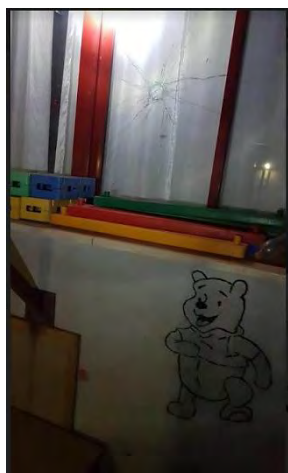
Demonstration in Wadi Ara (Right, Awtar website, left, Bukra website, December 9, 2017).



Bus attacked with stones on the Wadi Ara road (Panet, December 9, 2017).

## Rocket fire

► **On Friday evening, December 8, 2017, a number of rockets were fired from the Gaza Strip into Israeli territory. Two of them landed in the southern city of Sderot.** One of them hit a parking lot, damaging several cars. **Remains of another rocket were found later in a kindergarten.** It damaged the building. Another rocket was intercepted by the Iron Dome aerial defense system. **A Salafi jihadist network called "The brigades of the unity of Allah" claimed responsibility for the rocket fire.** According to the network, the rocket fire was in retaliation for Trump's decision to recognize Jerusalem as the capital of Israel (Twitter account of ics news , December 8, 2017). An organization calling itself "The battalions of Shaheed Abd al-Qader al-Husseini" also claimed responsibility for the rocket fire (Dunia al-Watan, December 8, 2017).



**Kindergarten in Sderot hit by rocket fire from the Gaza Strip  
(Israel Police Force, December 8, 2017)**

► **In response to the rocket fire Israeli Air Force aircraft attacked six Hamas military targets in the Gaza Strip.** The Palestinian media reported they included **a post of Hamas' military-terrorist wing in the northern Gaza Strip** (Twitter account of Khaber A'ajel, December 8, 2017), **a post of its military-terrorist wing in Khan Yunis** (Palinfo Twitter account, December 9, 2017), **a post in Jabalia** and **a post in the central Gaza Strip** (Twitter account of Shehab, December 9, 2017). Killed were **Mahmoud 'Atel**, from Sheikh Radwan, and **Muhammad al-Safadi**, from the Daraj neighborhood in Gaza City, **two operatives of Hamas' military wing** (Palinfo, December 9, 2017). According to a report from the ministry of health, **more than 15 Palestinians were wounded in the attacks** (Twitter account of the spokesman of the ministry of health in the Gaza Strip, December 8, 2017).



**Hamas terrorist target attacked by the IDF (al-Wataniya YouTube channel, December 9, 2017)**

- ▶ In response to the attacks, **Musheir al-Masri, a Hamas member of the Palestinian Legislative Council**, said Israel continued to carry out "crimes" against the Palestinian people. **He claimed Israel would be responsible for the consequences of its "escalation and aggression" against the Palestinian people. He added the United States would be responsible for the "historic crime" against Jerusalem** (al-Aqsa, December 8, 2017). **Hamas spokesman Fawzi Barhoum** said the fact that Israel attacked "resistance" posts was another crime against the Palestinian people. He said Israel was responsible for the consequences of the escalation (Hamas website, December 9, 2017).
- ▶ **General Yoav Mordechai, the Israeli Coordinator of Government Activities in the Territories**, sent a message in Arabic to the residents of the Gaza Strip and to Hamas on the al-Munaseq website. **He warned against escalation and blamed Hamas.** He said so far IDF forces had exhibited restraint in recent events along the Gaza Strip border, but Israel could not overlook the rocket fire at Sderot. **He warned that continuing rocket fire was liable to lead to a harsh, painful response from Israel.**

### **Stabbing attack in Jerusalem**

- ▶ **On December 10, 2017, a Palestinian carried out a stabbing attack at the entrance to the central bus station on Jaffa Road in Jerusalem.** According to initial reports, the terrorist went to the main entrance, stabbed a security guard and fled. The guard was critically wounded. The terrorist was detained by a civilian and policeman and taken for interrogation. He was Yassin Abu al-Qaa'ra, 25 years old, from Nablus. He was staying in Jerusalem illegally. Several hours before the attack he wrote on his Facebook page that "**We**

will march along the path of Allah to fly [our] flag...And dedicate power to al-Aqsa [mosque], and blood will flow from us...Our flag is cheap for our homeland and for the sanctity of our al-Aqsa [mosque]"

- ▶ Following the attack a Hamas-affiliated Twitter account posted the following notice, with the title "The first report of good news." The notice calls for more attacks.



Right: Security camera video of Palestinian stabbing an Israeli security guard at the entrance to the central bus station in Jerusalem (Facebook page of QudsN, December 10, 2017). Left: "The first report of good news." Notice after the stabbing attack at the central bus station in Jerusalem (Nur al-Watan, Hamas-affiliated Twitter account, December 10, 2017)

### Statements by senior Palestinian Authority (PA) figures

- ▶ The PA continues strongly protesting to the United States while engaging in intensive diplomatic activities with regional and Western countries. **Saeb Erekat, secretary of the PLO's Executive Committee**, said **the PA would end its relations with the American consulate [in Jerusalem]**. **Nabil Shaath**, advisor to Mahmoud Abbas, said the [Palestinian] leadership had not yet decided whether or not to receive American Vice President Mike Pence, who has a state visit planned for the middle of December 2017 (al-Arabiya al-Hadath, December 7, 2017).
- ▶ However, PA spokesmen made it clear the PA was not withdrawing from the peace process. **Riyad al-Maliki, foreign minister in the Palestinian national consensus government**, said **the Palestinians would not withdraw from the peace process but the United States could no longer be a mediator**. **Nabil Shaath, advisor to Mahmoud Abbas**, said the PA was willing to participate in the peace process but only if it were held with **international sponsorship, not with the sponsorship of the United States** (al-Arabiya al-Hadath, December 8, 2017).



► **The Fatah movement announced that escalation against Israel would continue even increase.** The announcement called on the Palestinian public to **consider the coming days as "days of rage."** Fatah also called for Friday, December 15, to be marked as a day of general struggle, including after the Friday prayer (Ma'an, December 9, 2017).



Cartoon from al-Hayat al-Jadeeda, the PA's organ, December 6, 2017

### Statements by senior Hamas figures calling for a new intifada

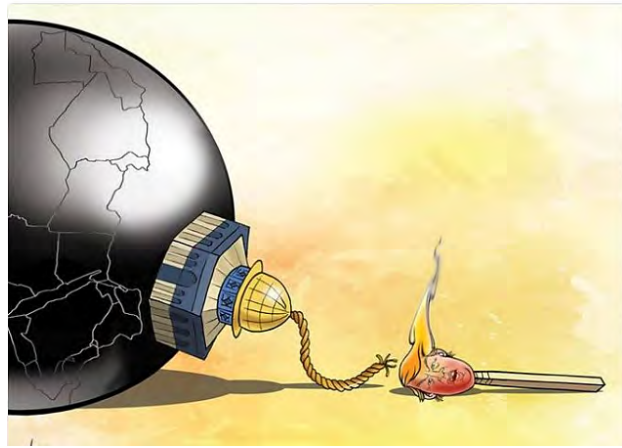
► Senior Hamas figures exploited the events to call for a new intifada and to accelerate the internal Palestinian reconciliation process to be able to act jointly against Israeli and American policy. The main statements were the following:

- ◆ **Isma'il Haniyeh, head of Hamas' political bureau,** gave a speech following the American declaration, in which he said a new strategy had to be devised to deal with the "conspiracy against Jerusalem." He said changes had to be made in the Palestinian order of priorities, and first of all to announce that **the peace process was dead and buried, once and for all.** He said the current situation **demanded that the Palestinians accelerate the reconciliation processes, reorganize their leadership and determine a new strategy against Israel and the United States.** He claimed the **only way to deal with Israeli and American policy was to ignite a new intifada** (which he called "Freedom for Jerusalem and the [West] Bank"). He said Hamas would ignite it (al-Mayadeen, December 7, 2017).



**Isma'il Haniyeh, head of Hamas' political bureau, gives a speech in the Gaza Strip calling for a new intifada (Facebook page of Shehab, December 7, 2017).**

- ◆ In another interview Haniyeh expressed his appreciation for the Palestinian public's response to Hamas' call to take action on the declared day of rage. **He said the day of rage was the beginning of the intifada.** He claimed that what united the Palestinian people was intifada, "resistance" [i.e., terrorism and violence], and political resistance. He said **all the Palestinians were prepared to devise a comprehensive strategy to make Trump's plan fail.** He also praised the PA for cutting off ties with the United States (al-Quds TV, December 8, 2017).
- ◆ **Khaled Mashaal, former head of Hamas' political bureau,** praised the Palestinian people for their uprising. He said he hoped **the Palestinians would make the United States revoke its decision.** He said if there was a national consensus the Palestinian people could **turn the intifada into the first stage of the end of Israel's existence,** and that a strategy for a national struggle should be devised on that basis (al-Jazeera, December 8, 2017).
- ◆ **Khalil al-Haya, a member of Hamas' political bureau,** called on the Palestinian people to take to the streets, claiming it was **the beginning of a renewed intifada** called "**Jerusalem's Freedom.**" He claimed it was a new stage that demanded a new strategy to struggle against the American decision (Dunia al-Watan, December 9, 2017).



Right: Cartoon from a Hamas website indicating that Trump's speech is liable territorial integrity ignite a world war (Palinfo Twitter account, December 9, 2017). Left: Cartoon from Hamas-affiliated Safa website. The Arabic reads, "Jerusalem...[is a] red line" (Safa, December 6, 2017).

## Threats from the Izz al-Din Qassam Brigades, Hamas' military-terrorist wing

► Hamas' military-terrorist wing's Twitter account in Hebrew posted a series of notices threatening Israel:



01 – The enemy will pay a high price for his aggression, treachery and crime against our people (Izz al-Din Qassam Brigades)

02 – Let the enemy be afraid, and very careful, and know he will pay a high price for violating the laws of war with the resistance in Gaza. In the coming days time will prove the enemy made a terrible mistake (Izz al-Din Qassam Brigades)

03 – Let the enemy's leaders understand that they are waging a conflict against the resistance in a stupid way. We promise we will make them bite their fingers [sic] and be sorry for their stupid assessment of the silence of the resistance and the way it wages battles (Izz al-Din Qassam Brigades)

### Statements by senior PIJ figures

► **PIJ spokesman Daoud Shehab** called on the Palestinian public to **escalate the Jerusalem intifada**, and strengthen and escalate the resistance, especially in the West Bank. **Senior PIJ figure Khaled al-Batash** said his organization, along with the other organizations, would **escalate the Jerusalem intifada and the armed struggle throughout Palestine** (al-Mayadeen, date, 2017).