



# News of Terrorism and the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict (December 6 – 12, 2017)

## Overview

- ▶ The wave of Palestinian riots and clashes with the Israeli security forces continues in Judea, Samaria, Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip, although less intensively than during the peaks of Friday and Saturday (December 8 and 9, 2017). The Palestinian media provide a platform for calls to riot. Fatah calls for continuing "days of rage" against Israel, and Hamas continues to incite an armed uprising (the "Jerusalem intifada"). In the meantime, in recent days there were **three serious terrorist attacks: a stabbing attack** in Jerusalem (in which a security guard was seriously wounded) and **two shooting attacks**, one at an IDF post near Ramallah, the other at a bus near Ofra,
- ▶ In a riot held at the entrance to Ramallah, **masked Palestinians were photographed getting out of a Red Crescent ambulance**, which had apparently transported them to the site. According to IDF sources **it was not the first instance** of Palestinians using ambulances to transport rioters or as hiding places. The Palestinian Red Crescent denied the IDF accusations.

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- ▶ This past week several rockets were fired at Israel, **at least five of which landed in Israeli territory**. Two rockets landed in **the southern Israeli city of Sderot**, one in a parking lot and the other **in a kindergarten**. A rocket was also fired at **Ashqelon** and was intercepted by the Iron Dome aerial defense system. The IDF responded to the rocket fire by attacking attacks Hamas military targets with aircraft, tanks and Israeli naval vessels.
- ▶ **This past week another tunnel penetrating into Israeli territory was exposed. It was dug by Hamas**. It entered Israeli territory deeper than the Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) tunnel previously exposed and blown up. According to the IDF spokesman, IDF forces monitored the tunnel's construction with a "unique capability" combining technology, intelligence and operational capabilities. The tunnel was neutralized because it was nearing completion.

## Terrorist Attacks and Attempted Terrorist Attacks

► **Bus attacked near Ofra:** On the evening of **December 10, 2017**, Palestinians shot light weapons at an armored Israeli bus. The attack was carried out near the **community of Ofra** (Binyamin region). No casualties were reported. The front windshield of the bus was damaged. IDF forces searched the area and found 11 shell casings (IDF spokesman, December 10, 2017).



**Right: The windshield of the bus (Facebook page of QudsN, December 10, 2017). Left: Shell casings from the attack on the bus (Facebook page of Shehab, December 10, 2017).**

► **IDF post near Ramallah attacked:** On the evening of **December 10, 2017**, Palestinians shot at an IDF post near the **Jilazoun refugee camp** (Ramallah area). No casualties were reported. Israeli security forces searched the area and found shell casings (Ynet, December 10, 2017).

► **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**. The terrorist went to the main entrance, stabbed a security guard, critically wounding him, and fled. The terrorist was detained by a civilian and policeman and taken for interrogation.



**Right: Security camera photograph of a Palestinian terrorist stabbing an Israeli security guard at the entrance to the central bus station in Jerusalem. Left: "The first report of good news," a notice posted after the stabbing attack in Jerusalem (Nur al-Watan, a Twitter account affiliated with Hamas, December 10, 2017)**

- ◆ The Palestinian media reported the terrorist was **Yassin Abu al-Qara'a**, 25 years old, from the al-Far'a refugee camp north of Nablus (Watan TV channel, December 10, 2017). He is allegedly affiliated with Fatah. His father is **a retired general who served in the Palestinian Authority (PA) security forces**. Other members of the family are also officers in the Palestinian security forces (nnpres, December 11, 2017).
- ◆ Several hours before the attack Abu al-Qara'a posted the following notice to his Facebook page: "We will march along the path of Allah to fly [our] flag...And dedicate [our] power to al-Aqsa [mosque], and blood will flow from us...Our blood is cheap for you, our homeland, and for the sanctity of our al-Aqsa [mosque]."
- ◆ Fatah's official Facebook page posted a picture and information about the terrorist. Many Palestinians responded with **sympathy and admiration for the attack**, saying, "May your hands be blessed, oh hero," and "A thousand blessings."



**Right: Palestinian terrorist Yassin Abu al-Qara'a, who carried out the stabbing attack. Left: Encouragement for stabbing attacks on Fatah's Facebook page (Facebook page of Fatah, December 10, 2017).**

- **Senior Hamas figure Abd al-Rahman Shadedd** praised the attack, saying Palestinians would not neglect the defense of Jerusalem (Palinfo Twitter account, December 10, 2017). **A Hamas-affiliated Twitter account posted a call for more attacks, headed "The first report of good news."**

### Riots, clashes and popular terrorism

- The Trump declaration of recognition of Jerusalem as the capital of the State of Israel **led to a wave of riots and violence in Judea, Samaria and Jerusalem ("days of rage")**. The violence peaked on Friday and Saturday, December 8 and 9, 2017, when dozens of demonstrations and riots were held in Judea, Samaria, east Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip, as well as in Wadi Ara in central Israel. Palestinians threw Molotov cocktails, stones and rocks, and burned tires. Riots and public disturbances continued, with Palestinians clashing with the Israeli security forces in a number of locations in Judea, Samaria and east Jerusalem, but the events were relatively more limited.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> For further information see the December 10, 2017 bulletin, "Palestinian Responses to Donald Trump's Declaration that the United States Recognizes Jerusalem as the Capital of Israel."



**Right: Burning the Israeli and American flags during a demonstration in Yatta, south of Hebron (Facebook page of QudsN, December 11, 2017). Left: Students in Tulkarm burn pictures of Trump and Netanyahu (Twitter account of QudsN, December 10, 2017).**

- ▶ The more prominent occurrences were the following:
  - ◆ **December 11, 2017** – During a riot in **A-Tor in east Jerusalem** a Palestinian was wounded by Israeli security force gunfire (Facebook page of Red Alert, date, 2017).
  - ◆ **December 10, 2017** – During a riot near **Tekoa (Gush Etzion)** Palestinians threw stones at Israeli security forces, slightly wounding an IDF soldier (Facebook page of Red Alert, December 10, 2017).
  - ◆ **December 10, 2017** – A mother driving to Jerusalem with her two children was ambushed by two masked Palestinians near **Gush Etzion**. One of them threw a stone that broke a headlight. Another stone hit the windshield and another one of the doors. One of the passengers, a nine-year-old girl, was wounded.
  - ◆ **December 9, 2017** – Masked Palestinians threw stones at an Israeli bus and police patrol car in **Wadi Ara**. The road was closed to traffic. Stones shattered the windows of a bus driving to Tel Aviv. The driver and two women passengers were slightly injured.
  - ◆ **December 7, 2017** – **The Gilboa crossing, north of Jenin**, was closed following riots.

### **Rioters transported by Red Crescent ambulances**

- ▶ On December 11, 2017, Palestinians rioted at the entrance to Ramallah. Hundreds of rioters threw stones and Molotov cocktails at Israeli security forces, and burned tires. IDF forces **documented masked Palestinians getting out of a Red Crescent ambulance which had apparently brought them to the participate in the riot**. IDF sources reported it was not the first time Palestinians used ambulances in connection with riots. According to the report, the ambulances, whose function is to evacuate the wounded, have often transported and

hidden rioters (website of the Israeli Coordinator of Government Activities in the Territories (COGAT), December 11, 2017).

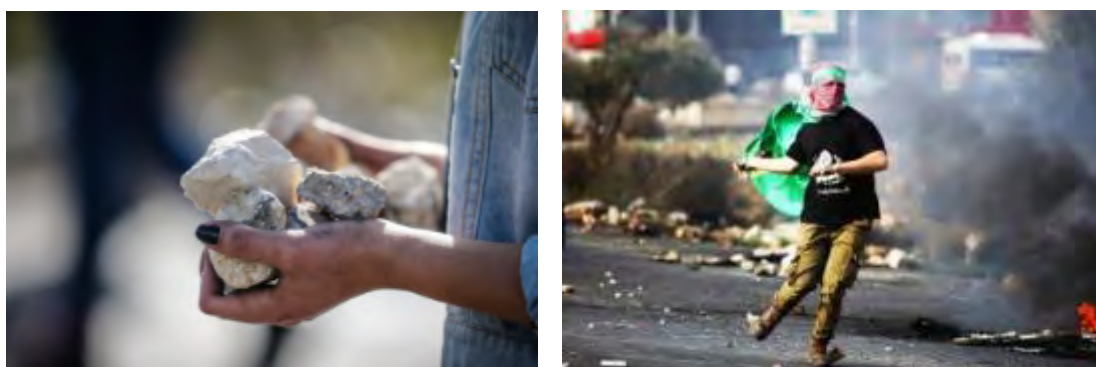
► In response to the report, **the Palestinian Red Crescent denied the accusations.** According to the Red Crescent, the Palestinians in question were demonstrators who had been evacuated for on-site treatment after having been wounded. The organization claimed it preserved neutrality and gave humanitarian assistance wherever necessary (Ma'an, December 12, 2017).



**Palestinian Red Crescent ambulance serves as transportation for rioters (Facebook page in Arabic of the Israeli Coordinator of Government Activities in the Territories, December 11, 2017).**

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**Palestinians riot against Israeli security forces at the north entrance to Ramallah. Right: Palestinian throws a Molotov cocktail (Facebook page of QudsN, December 11, 2017). Left: Rocks and stones for throwing at IDF forces (Wafa, December 11, 2017).**

### Nasrallah encourages the Palestinians

► A mass demonstration was held in Lebanon in support of the Palestinians, broadcast live by the Palestinian media. Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah gave a speech. He joined

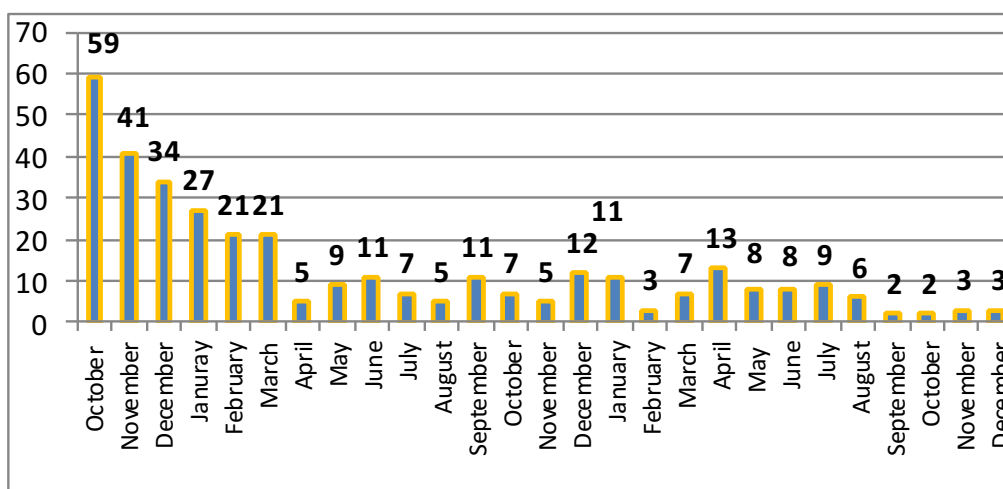
Hamas' call for an armed campaign and **stressed that the best response to the United States' declaration was a "third Palestinian intifada."** He demanded the PA stop negotiations with Israel and called for the Arab states to condemn normalization with Israel. He promised he would again devote all his time to the Palestinian cause.

► **Abbas Zaki, a member of Fatah's Central Committee**, thanked Nasrallah for his speech, saying the Palestinians "would not disappoint him or the Arab nation" (almayadeen.net, December 11, 2017). **Senior Hamas figure Ismail Radwan** praised Nasrallah's call for all the forces of the "resistance" axis [Iran, Syria and Hezbollah] to formulate a unified strategy (al-Mayadeen, December 11, 2017).



Speech given by Hassan Nasrallah, Hezbollah secretary general, broadcast live on the Hamas-affiliated Shehab website (Facebook page of Shehab, December 11, 2017).

## Significant Terrorist Attacks in Judea, Samaria and Jerusalem during the Past Two Years<sup>2</sup>



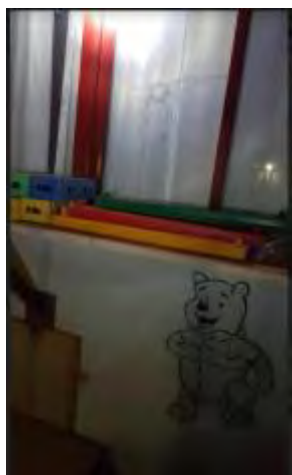
<sup>2</sup> A significant attack is defined by the ITIC as involving shooting, stabbing, a vehicular attack, the use of IEDs, or a combination of the above. Stones and Molotov cocktails thrown by Palestinians are not included.

## Israel's South

### Rocket Fire Attacking Israel

► During the past week several rockets were fired from the Gaza Strip at Israel. Several rocket hits were identified in Israeli territory. The Iron Dome aerial defense system intercepted two rockets:

- ◆ On the evening of **December 8, 2017**, a number of rockets were fired from the Gaza Strip at Israel. One landed in **a parking lot in the southern Israeli city of Sderot**, damaging several cars. The remains of another rocket were later discovered **in Sderot in a kindergarten**, where it damaged the building. A third rocket was intercepted by the Iron Dome aerial defense system. Several other rockets were fired but fell inside the Gaza Strip. A Salafi jihadist network calling itself the Brigade of the Unity of Allah claimed responsibility for the rocket fire. The network claimed the rocket fire was a response to the American decision to recognize Jerusalem as the capital of the State of Israel (Twitter account of ics news, date, 2017).



**Rocket fired from the Gaza Strip hits a kindergarten in the southern Israeli city of Sderot (Israel Police Force, December 8, 2017).**

- ◆ On **December 10, 2017**, an attempt was made to fire rockets into Israeli territory. Two rockets blew up in an open area inside the Gaza Strip (Facebook page of Red Alert, December 10, 2017).
- ◆ On the evening of **December 11, 2017**, a rocket was fired from the northern Gaza Strip at the southern Israeli city of **Ashqelon**. The Iron Dome aerial defense system intercepted the rocket. A rocket fired earlier in the day fell in an open area in the



western Negev near the border security fence in the southern Gaza Strip. There were no casualties and no damage was reported.

## IDF response

► In response to the rocket fire IDF forces attacked military targets belonging to Hamas, which Israel regards as responsible for everything that occurs in the Gaza Strip.

◆ In response to the rocket fire on December 8, 2017, Israeli Air Force planes attacked **six Hamas targets**. The Palestinian ministry of health reported that more than 15 Palestinians had been wounded (Twitter account of the Palestinian ministry of health, December 8, 2017).



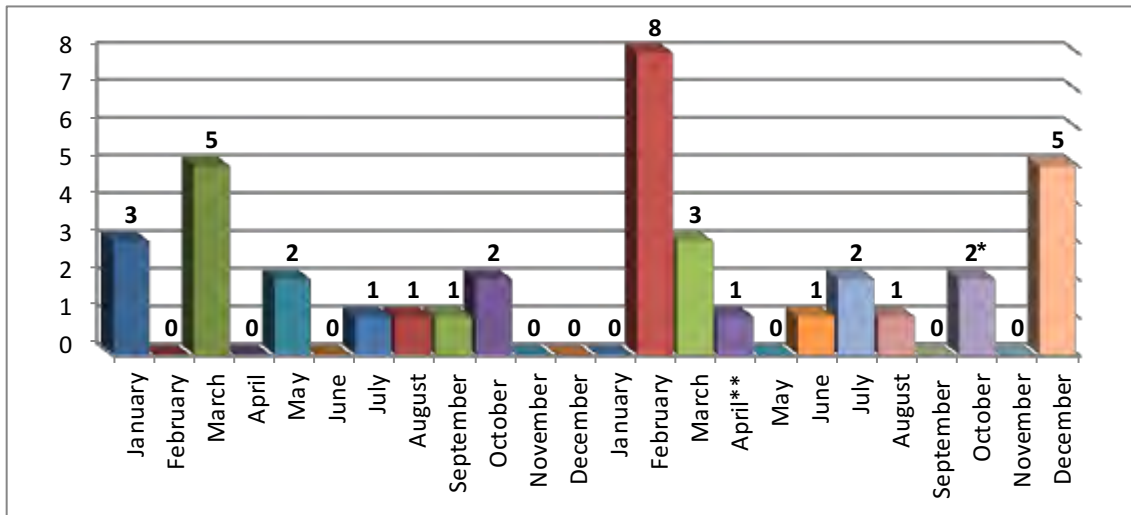
**Hamas terrorist target attacked by the IDF  
(al-Wataniya YouTube channel, December 9, 2017).**

◆ On December 10 and 11, 2017, **IDF forces responded by attacking Hamas military targets with tank fire, aerial fire and fire from Israel naval vessels**. The attacks reportedly destroyed facilities for the manufacture of weapons, weapons launchers, and other facilities (IDF spokesman, December 12, 2017). The Palestinian media reported that a surveillance position and post of Hamas' restraint forces east of Khan Yunis were attacked (Palinfo, December 11, 2017).



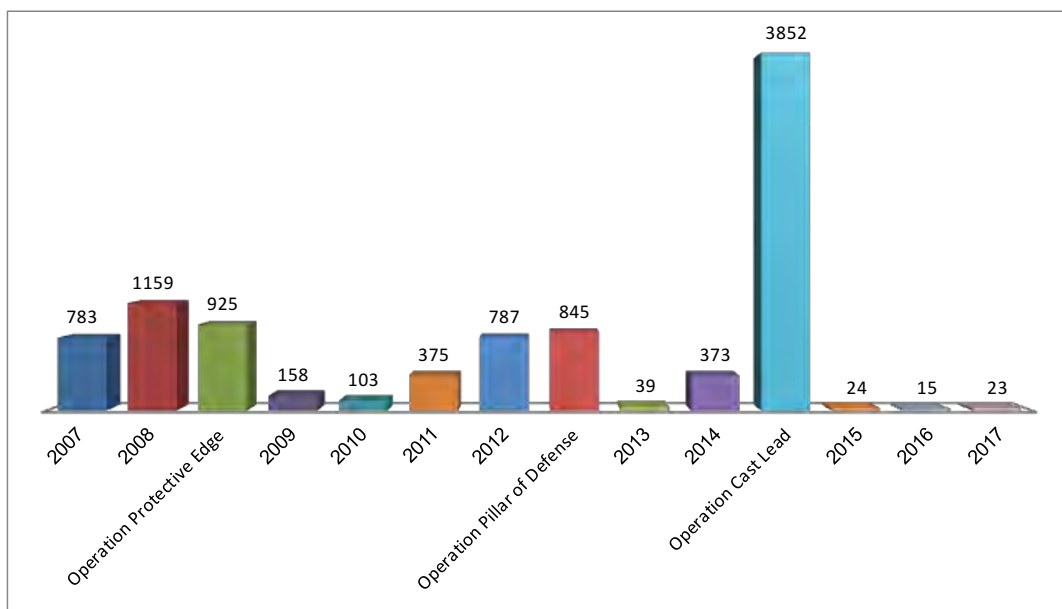
**Hamas post attacked by the IDF east of Khan Yunis in response to rocket fire into Israel (Palinfo  
Twitter account, December 12, 2017).**

### 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 South<sup>3</sup>



### Clashes near the Israel-Gaza Strip Border

► On December 8, 2017, several thousand Gazans rioted in locations along the border with Israel. They threw stones, burned tires, and taunted the IDF forces. Two rioters were killed by IDF gunfire (Shehab, December 9, 2017). Several dozen Palestinians were wounded. Many

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

school children joined the rioters (Palinfo, December 9, 2017). The riots continued on the following days but with a relatively limited the number of participants.



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

### **IDF exposes Hamas tunnel penetrating into Israeli territory**

► As part of the Israeli security forces' efforts to locate tunnels penetrating into Israeli territory, IDF forces exposed **a tunnel into Israeli territory near the Gaza Strip border**. The tunnel, which began in the Khan Yunis region, **belonged to the Izz al-Din Qassam Brigades, Hamas' military wing**. IDF forces had followed the progress of constructing the tunnel by means of a **"unique capability" combining technology, intelligence and operational capabilities**, locating it before it crossed the border. On the night of December 9, 2017, **the decision was made to neutralize the tunnel, which was already in an advanced stage of construction**.

► In IDF assessment, when the tunnel was neutralized there were no Hamas operatives inside. **It was the second terrorist tunnel exposed in recent weeks** (On October 30, 2017, a PIJ tunnel was exposed inside Israeli territory.). According to the IDF spokesman, **the Hamas tunnel penetrated deeper into Israeli territory than the PIJ tunnel**. According to reports, no weapons were found in the tunnel. The IDF spokesman noted that for Hamas tunnels are of great importance and it invests considerable resources in building them (IDF spokesman, date, 2017).

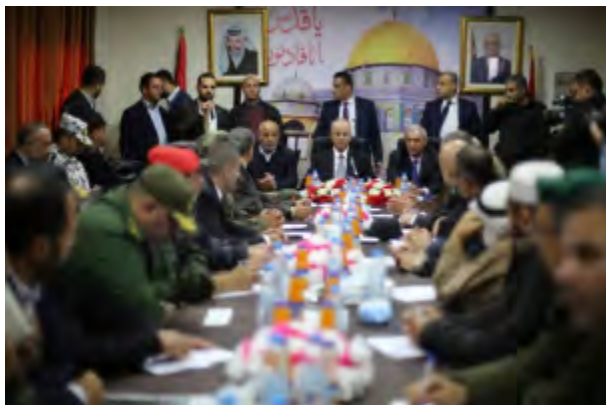


**Hamas terrorist tunnel exposed by the IDF penetrates into Israeli territory from the region of Khan Yunis (Facebook page of the IDF spokesman, December 10, 2017)**

## The Internal Palestinian Reconciliation

### The transfer of authority to the Palestinian national consensus government

- ▶ On December 11, 2017,  **Hamas spokesman Abd al-Latif al-Qanua claimed the national consensus government had received authority for all the governmental offices and institutions, including the crossings, and that everything was under the control of Prime Minister Rami Hamdallah.** He said there was nothing currently delaying the reconciliation process. He also quoted **Azzam al-Ahmed, a member of Fatah's Central Committee,** who said that all problems and obstacles had been removed and that all authority had been transferred to the national consensus government (al-Arabiya al-Hadath, December 11, 2017).
- ▶ **Mamoun Abu Shahla,** Palestinian minister of labor, said that in light of the progress made in the reconciliation process, in the near future the PA would lift the sanctions imposed on supplying electricity to the Gaza Strip, and the status quo ante would be restored (Ma'an, December 10, 2017). **Despite the declarations, apparently the transfer of authority to the national consensus government has not yet been completed.**



**Right: Rami Hamdallah (seated at the head of the table) meets with Hamas and Fatah representatives in the Gaza Strip (Palinfo, December 7, 2017). Left: Meeting with the heads of the security forces in the Gaza Strip (Facebook page of Shehab, December 7, 2017).**

► A number of ministries reported they had **begun rehiring employees who had been employed before 2007** (when Hamas took control of the Gaza Strip). For example, **Jawad Awad, minister of health**, said he had decided to rehire 512 members of the professional staff who stopped working in 2007, and that he would examine integrating them into the staffs of hospitals and medical centers (Shehab, December 10, 2017). The ministry of transportation announced it had rehired 35 employees as part of implementing the reconciliation process (Safa, December 10, 2017). The ministry of education announced it would begin making plans to build a hundred new schools in the Gaza Strip (Wafa, December 6, 2017).

► **Salah al-Bardawil, a member of Hamas' political bureau**, said **Hamas had dismantled its administrative committee and transferred all its authority to the national consensus government**. He claimed that on December 10, 2017, the government was supposed to pay the November salaries of more than 40,000 workers in the Gaza Strip. In addition, he said, it was supposed to renew the supply of electricity to the Gaza Strip. He said that at the most recent meeting, Fatah had asked for an extension to get approval from Mahmoud Abbas to implement decisions regarding salaries and electricity, and that the extension would end on December 10, but that as yet no answer had been received (Shehab, December 10, 2017).

► **On December 10, 2017, Hamas stopped transferring taxes it had collected to the bank account of the national consensus** government's ministry of finance. According to sources in the Gaza Strip, that was done in retaliation for the government's not lifting the sanctions imposed on the Gaza Strip. According to **Hamas spokesman Abd al-Latif al-Qanua**, Hamas was angry at the delay in paying its workers' salaries after all the taxes collected had been transferred to the Bank of Palestine, from which salaries are paid. He confirmed that on

December 10 Hamas had stopped transferring local tax funds to the bank, and said Hamas would not renew the transfers until the government met its commitment to pay salaries (Dunia al-Watan, December 10, 2017; al-Hayat and al-Masry al-Youm, December 11, 2017)

► **In the meantime, the workers' union in the Gaza Strip announced a general strike for December 12, 2017, to protest the non-payment of salaries.** All schools, government offices and institutions will be closed. The union held a press conference where it accused Palestinian government employees of harming the residents of the Gaza Strip and its employees. The union warned that if the government continued conspiring against the workers, the union would call for a stop to the establishment of the government in the Gaza Strip (Palinfo Twitter account, December 10, 2017).

## Developments in the Gaza Strip

### Iran promises support for Hamas and other terrorist organizations

► **Isma'il Haniyeh, head of Hamas' political bureau**, held a telephone conversation with **Hassan Rouhani, the president of Iran**, about the American president's declaration that the United States recognized Jerusalem as the capital of the State of Israel. Rouhani called the declaration "aggression against the Palestinian people and the nation of Islam." He said that Jerusalem was Palestinian both politically and religiously. He called for a struggle against Trump's declaration, and urged the adoption of a united Arab-Muslim position supporting the Palestinian position and for an intifada. Haniyeh said they expected clearly-worded decisions would be made during the Islamic summit meeting which will be held in Istanbul on December 13, 2017 (Hamas website, December 11, 2017).

► **Qasem Soleimani, commander of the Iranian IRGC's Qods Force**, held a telephone conversation with the **commanders of the military-terrorist wings of Hamas and the PIJ**. He said Iran supported the various "resistance" groups [i.e., the Palestinian terrorist organizations]. He said all the regional "resistance" groups [i.e., the regional terrorist organizations supported by Iran, especially Hezbollah] supported them on the issue of al-Aqsa (ISNA, December 11, 2017).

### Hamas plans events to mark its 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary

► Hamas is planning a rally to mark the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of its founding. The rally will be the most important of the events to be held in al-Katiba Square in Gaza City on December 14, 2017. Its theme will be, "Our decision is the resistance [i.e., terrorism], and unity is our

choice." **Asraf Abu Zayid**, responsible for Hamas' public activities unit, said Hamas had decided the day would be the day of enlistment for Jerusalem and al-Aqsa (website of Hamas' public activities unit in the Gaza Strip, December 9 and 11, 2016).



**The logo issued to mark the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of Hamas (website of Hamas' public activities unit, November 27, 2017).**

► According to Hamas, the date would be marked with a number of pre-events. Among them was a press conference in front of the house of the late Ahmed Yassin, who founded the movement, and a march of Hamas' military wing operative that would end in front of the house of Muhammad Deif, the military wing's commander (Hamas movement website, December 5, 2017). In the northern Gaza Strip Hamas announced activities would begin with a march of military wing operatives in Beit Hanoun to the house of Salah Shehadeh, former military wing commander (Izz al-Din Qassam Brigades website, December 7, 2017).



**Right: Izz al-Din Qassam Brigades terrorist operatives march in Khan Yunis (Izz al-Din Qassam Brigades website, December 5, 2017). Left: Rally in front of the house of Muhammad Deif in Khan Yunis, with the participation of his children (Hamas website, December 5, 2017).**



Event held in Beit Hanoun (Izz al-Din Qassam Brigades website, December 7, 2017).

## The Palestinian Authority (PA)

### Political activity following Trump's declaration

- **The PA continues sending strong messages to the American administration while carrying out assertive diplomatic activities with regional and Western countries.**

Mahmoud Abbas headed a delegation of senior Palestinian figures to Egypt for a meeting with Egyptian President El-Sisi (Abdallah, King of Jordan, was supposed to join the meeting, but cancelled) (al-Watan, December 10, 2017). At the meeting they discussed ways of dealing with the implications of the United States' declaration and various measures to take at the Arab and international levels (Facebook page of the spokesman for the Egyptian president, December 11, 2017). The delegation also met with Ahmed Abu Gheit, secretary general of the Arab League, who provided an update on the pan-Arab efforts being invested in the issue of Jerusalem (Wafa, December 11, 2017).

- **Senior PA figures claim that all contacts with the United States have been completely cut off: Azzam al-Rahman, a member of Fatah's Central Committee,** said all contacts had been completely cut off. He said Mahmoud Abbas would not meet with American Vice President Mike Pence when he came for a visit on December 19, 2017. He added that Mahmoud Abbas would not meet with any senior American figure (al-Arabiya al-Hadath, December 7, 2017). **Nabil Shaath, advisor to Mahmoud Abbas for foreign affairs and international relations,** said relations between the United States and the PA had "reached an end." He added that the Palestinian leadership had also decided to close the PLO's office in Washington (Dunia al-Watan, December 12, 2017).

**Ahmed Majdalani, a member of the PLO's Executive Committee,** said there were **three areas in which the Palestinians could deal with Trump's declaration:** in the **political sphere** through the UN and international agreements to reinforce the status of Palestine; in



the **legal sphere** by accelerating the suits lodged by the Palestinians; and in the **popular sphere**, through non-violent activities in the Palestinian territories and among Palestinians abroad, along with supporting and strengthening the campaign to boycott Israel (Dunia al-Watan, December 6, 2017).

► In the meantime, senior Palestinian figures still say **they have not withdrawn from the peace process**, but emphasize that the United States can no longer serve as a moderator. **Nabil Shaath, advisor to Mahmoud Abbas for foreign affairs and international relations**, said the Palestinian leadership would leave any peace process brokered by the Americans. He stressed that the leadership would not allow the United States to serve as a broker because it had shown it was unfit for the role (Dunia al-Watan, December 12, 2017).

### Incitement for the continuation of clashes

► In the Palestinian media, incitement continues for violent clashes with the Israeli security forces. The official Fatah Facebook page posted notices with the hashtag "JerusalemRage" calling for clashes and more expressions of rage against Israel and for the sake of Jerusalem and al-Aqsa mosque (Facebook page of Fatah, December 11, 2017). **Hamas** also continues using its websites to encourage violence, for example, a notice reading "Rise up and rebel#JerusalemIntifada" (Palinfo Twitter account, December 12, 2017). The QudsN Facebook page, considered the dominant Palestinian medium (claiming to have 6 million followers), changed its background picture to a picture calling for and encouraging continued violence for the sake of Jerusalem (Facebook page of QudsN, December 11, 2017).



Official Fatah movement Facebook page with notices calling for riots to continue for the sake of Jerusalem. Right: "#JerusalemRage. The rage will continue." Left: "Rage for the sake of al-Aqsa [mosque]" (Facebook page of Fatah, December 11, 2017).



Incitement on the dominant Palestinian media website. The Arabic reads, "For the sake of Jerusalem#Jerusalem [is] our capital" (Facebook page of QudsN, December 11, 2017).



Hamas notice reading, "Rise up and rebel#JerusalemIntifada" (Palinfo Twitter account, December 12, 2017)