



News of Terrorism and the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict (December 13-19, 2017)

Reactions to Trump's Declaration – Overview

- ▶ It is approximately two weeks since the Trump recognition of Jerusalem as the capital of the State of Israel, and demonstrations of rage continue in the Palestinian arena, although with less intensity than what some of the Palestinians hoped for. Demonstrations and protest meetings continue in the Arab and Muslim states, especially Jordan and Turkey (where last week a meeting of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation was held).
- ▶ The main characteristics of the Palestinian reactions are the following:
 - ◆ **Demonstrations and riots** have been held in dozens of locations in Judea, Samaria, east Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip (near the border security fence). The Palestinian rioters throw stones and Molotov cocktails. The demonstrations and riots **peaked over the weekend** (especially on Friday after the prayers), and waned in the following days (from many thousands of participants over the weekend to several hundred during the week).
 - ◆ **Rocket fire**: Since Trump made his declaration, **close to 30 rockets have been fired from the Gaza Strip at Israel. At least 11 fell in Israeli territory** (according to the Israeli media and Israeli security sources, **between 14 and 16 rockets fell in Israel**). **That is rocket fire unprecedented since Operation Protective Edge three years ago**. The rockets were fired by so-called "rogue" terrorist organizations that operate in the Gaza Strip without claiming responsibility for rocket fire. Hamas does not participate but its efforts to prevent rocket fire **have been ineffective** (as opposed to the period before the Trump declaration). Israel responded by attacking Hamas targets, regarding Hamas as responsible for events in the Gaza Strip.
 - ◆ **Significant terrorist attacks**: Popular terrorism attacks continue in Judea and Samaria (stabbing and shooting attacks) **similar in scope to those of recent months**. Hamas repeatedly calls for increasing the scope of the attacks (the "Jerusalem intifada"). So far Hamas has not been successful in translating popular **anger at the Trump declaration into extensive popular terrorism**, as it would like.

- ◆ **Inciting riots and terrorist attacks:** The PA and Fatah keep popular outrage alive and encourage demonstrations and riots, but try to keep the situation under control (successfully so far). Hamas repeatedly calls for turning the demonstrations and riots into military-style terrorist attacks, so far without success.
- ◆ **Palestinian Authority (PA) political and propaganda activity:** The PA conducts intensive political activity in the UN and with Arab, Muslim and Western countries in an effort to turn the clock back and make Trump's declaration meaningless. Its main activities included refusing to recognize the United States as a mediator in the negotiations; appeals to the UN Security Council and General Assembly; and joining international organizations. The more extreme voices in Fatah say the Oslo Accords have lost all validity, calling on the PA to cut relations with the United States and to ramp up the so-called "popular resistance" [i.e., popular terrorism]. They also said that "other forms of resistance" [i.e., military-type terrorism] are legitimate.
- ◆ **The internal Palestinian arena:** The PA's extensive political and propaganda activity has **deflected attention away from the internal Palestinian reconciliation**. The reconciliation is still stalled and even issues agreed on in theory have not been put into practice (transferring authority to the national consensus government).

Terrorist Attacks and Attempted Terrorist Attacks

- ▶ **Stabbing attack near Ramallah:** On December 15, 2017, a Palestinian armed with a knife and **disguised as a media correspondent** approached Israeli security forces at a traffic circle north of Ramallah. He stabbed and seriously wounded a Border Policeman. The Palestinian was shot by Israeli security forces. When his coat opened **an explosive belt could be seen strapped to his body**, and the soldiers shot and neutralized him. The explosive belt proved to be **fake**. The terrorist died in the hospital.
- ▶ The Palestinian ministry of health reported that the terrorist was **Muhammad Amin 'Aqal**, in his twenties, from Bayt Ula, northwest of Hebron (Wafa, December 15, 2017). He was studying law at the Modern University College in Ramallah. Friends and relatives claimed he customarily participated in "popular activities." **Since the Trump declaration he participated in "popular activities" clashing with IDF soldiers** (Palestine Online, Marah Radio in Hebron, December 16, 2017). He left a handwritten "will" in which he consoled his family and asked them to keep his mother from crying.



Right: Death notice issued by the Fatah branch in the region of Beit Ula (Facebook page of Bayt Ula Mubasher, December 16, 2017). Left: The "will" the terrorist wrote before carrying out the attack (Facebook page of Fatah, December 16, 2017).

Riots, clashes and popular terrorism

► This past week Palestinians continued holding riots and demonstrations to protest the Trump declaration of America's recognition of Jerusalem as the capital of the State of Israel. The demonstrations and riots increased after a senior American administration official stated that the Western Wall would eventually be part of Israel. Demonstrations and riots were held **in dozens of locations in Judea, Samaria, east Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip**. Participants clashed with Israeli security forces, threw Molotov cocktails and stones, burned tires and shot fireworks. **As during the previous week, the riots peaked over the weekend and waned in the following days.**

► **Friday, December 15, 2017, was declared "a day of rage."** After the Friday prayers several thousand Palestinians demonstrated in Judea, Samaria and east Jerusalem. One individual was reportedly killed and several were wounded. Along the Gaza Strip border several thousand Palestinians clashed with IDF forces at a number of sites. They threw stones, burned tires and tried to vandalize the border security fence. Two Palestinians were killed in the clashes, one of whom was an amputee (whose death was exploited by the Palestinians for propaganda purposes). Forty Palestinians were reported wounded (Twitter account of the Shehab News Agency, December 15, 2017).



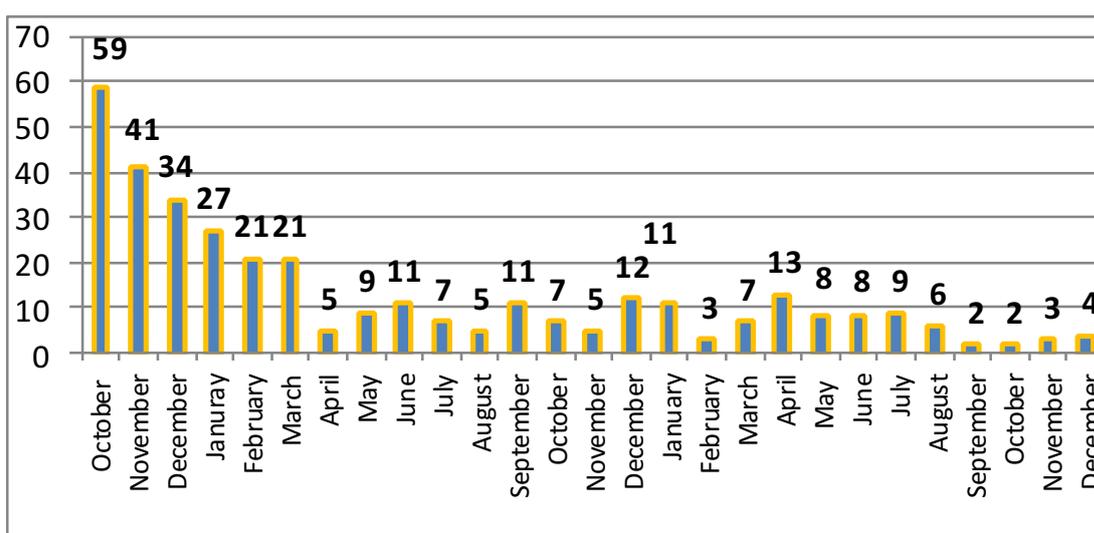
Demonstrations in Hebron to protest the decision of the American president to recognize Jerusalem as the capital of Israel. Trump is represented by a toy stuffed pig (Wafa News Agency on YouTube, December 13, 2017).

- ▶ The more prominent occurrences over the week were the following:
 - ◆ **December 17, 2017** – A number of Molotov cocktails were thrown at an IDF post in **Halhul (north of Hebron)**. No casualties were reported.
 - ◆ **December 17, 2017** – The Israeli security forces stationed at **a check point at the entrance to the military court in Samaria** stopped a Palestinian from Jenin who aroused their suspicions. What was apparently a pipe bomb was strapped to his body, and another IED was found in his coat. He was detained and taken for interrogation (Israel Police Force spokesman's unit, December 17, 2017).
 - ◆ **Night of December 16, 2017** – There were clashes in **several locations in east Jerusalem** (including Issawiya and A-Tor) after senior officials in the American administration said the Western Wall would eventually be declared part of Israel. The Israeli security forces detained several rioters.
 - ◆ **December 16, 2017** – The Jerusalem police department detained seven Palestinians who were involved in riots, throwing stones and shooting fireworks at the Israeli security forces (Facebook page of Red Alert, December 17, 2017).
 - ◆ **December 15, 2017** – Palestinians threw stones at Israeli security forces in **Qalqilya**. A Border Policeman was slightly injured. An Israel civilian was hit in the head by stones thrown near the **Hizmeh roadblock in Benyamin** (Facebook page of Red Alert, December 15, 2017).
 - ◆ **December 13, 2017** – Several dozen settlers entered **the village of Burin** after villagers allegedly threw stones on the nearby road. The settlers threw stones at the Palestinians and their houses. IDF forces arrived and removed the settlers from the village. No casualties were reported.

Terrorist Attacks, November 2017¹

► During November year there was an increase in the number of attacks carried out in Judea, Samaria and Jerusalem. There were **a total of 83 attacks** (68 in October 2017). **Most of them** (72) were attacks involving **Molotov cocktails**. There were 53 attacks in Judea and Samaria (50 in October) and 29 in Jerusalem (17 in October). Inside the Green Line there was one **stabbing attack** (in the southern city of Arad on November 30, 2017). **One IDF soldier was killed** (in the stabbing attack in Arad) and **two civilians were injured** (in a vehicular attack at the Gush Etzion Junction on November 17, 2017).

Significant terrorist attacks during the past two years²



Abduction prevented during the Hanukkah holiday

► **The Israeli security forces prevented an abduction in Samaria that had been planned for the Hanukkah holiday.** During October and November 2017 a Hamas terrorist squad from the village of Tal (near Nablus) was exposed. Its operatives were planning **to abduct a soldier or civilian from a bus station at one of the main junctions in Samaria near Nablus.** The activities of the squad were **directed and financed by Hamas' military headquarters in the Gaza Strip.** The objective of the attack was to promote negotiations for **the release of security prisoners in Israeli jails.**

¹ According to a report from the Israel Security Agency. The dozens of instances of stone-throwing are not included in the report.

² 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.

► The squad was headed by **M'aad Ashtia**, a Hamas terrorist operative born in 1991, who acquired weapons and recruited other operatives to the squad. With him were **Muhammad Ramadan and Ahmed Ramadan**, both born in 1998, who were recruited by Ashtia and agreed to carry out the abduction. The squad operatives were in contact with Omar Asida, an operative in Hamas' military-terrorist wing and a member of Hamas headquarters in the Gaza Strip. The squad's plan was to **disguise themselves as Israeli settlers** and give a ride to a potential victim. They collected information about roads, bus stops and the main junctions. They also investigated possible safe houses in the Nablus region where the abductee could be hidden. When the terrorists were detained they had in their possession a handgun, an electric shocker and pepper spray (Israel Security Agency website, December 13, 2017).

Israel's South

Rocket Fire Attacking Israel

► This past week a number of rockets were fired from the Gaza Strip at Israel. Since the Trump declaration of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel, **almost 30 rockets have been fired at Israel, at least 11 of which fell in Israeli territory.**³ So far no organization has claimed responsibility for the rocket fire.

► Rocket fire and hits this past week were the following:

- ◆ On **December 17, 2017, two rockets** fired from the Gaza Strip landed in Israeli territory. **One fell near a residential dwelling in a community in the western Negev in the Ashqelon region.** No casualties were reported. Damage was reported to the building and nearby cars. Another rocket fell in an open area.
- ◆ On the evening of **December 15, 2017**, a rocket was fired and fell in **Beit Hanoun**, in the northern Gaza Strip, hitting and damaging a residential building.
- ◆ On **December 13, 2017, three rockets were fired at Israeli territory.** Two were intercepted by the Iron Dome aerial defense system near **the southern city of Sderot.** Another rocket fell in the **western Negev.** Three Israelis were injured in Sderot as they fell while running for shelter. Two others went into shock. No casualties were reported. Another rocket launched from Beit Hanoun fell inside the Gaza Strip and damaged a

³ According to the Israeli media and Israeli security sources, between 14 and 16 rockets fell in Israel. The ITIC data is based on the daily tally of individual rocket hits. It does not include the mortar shell fire or hits.

classroom in the Ghazi al-Shwa school in **Beit Hanoun** (Facebook page of the Israeli coordinator for government activities in the territories).

- ◆ On **December 12, 2017**, a rocket was fired from the northern Gaza Strip and fell in **an open area** near the border security fence. There were no casualties and no damage was reported.

Israel's response

► In response to the rocket fire Israeli Air Force aircraft attacked terrorist targets belonging to Hamas, which Israel regards as responsible for events in the Gaza Strip. According to the IDF spokesman, **since December 7, 2017, about 40 targets have been attacked** (Facebook page of IDF spokesman, December 18, 2017)

- ◆ In response to the rocket fire targeting Sderot, on December 14, 2017, Israeli Air Force aircraft attacked terrorist targets in the Gaza Strip. The IDF reported that the targets included training sites and weapons stores. The Palestinian media reported that the attacks also included posts of Hamas' naval police, and Hamas posts to the west and south of Gaza City and in Deir al-Balah (Dunia al-Watan, Shehab and Palinfo, December 14, 2017). A spokesman for the ministry of health in the Gaza Strip reported that three civilians had been slightly injured. There were also reports of damage to houses (Izz al-Din Qassam Brigades website and Palinfo, December 13, 2017).



**Damage caused by the Israeli Air Force attack
(Facebook page of Shehab, December 13, 2017).**

- ◆ In response to the rocket fire on December 17, 2017, Israeli Air Force aircraft attacked six Hamas terrorist targets in the Gaza Strip. The targets included a military installation used for training, buildings and other terrorist facilities. The Palestinian

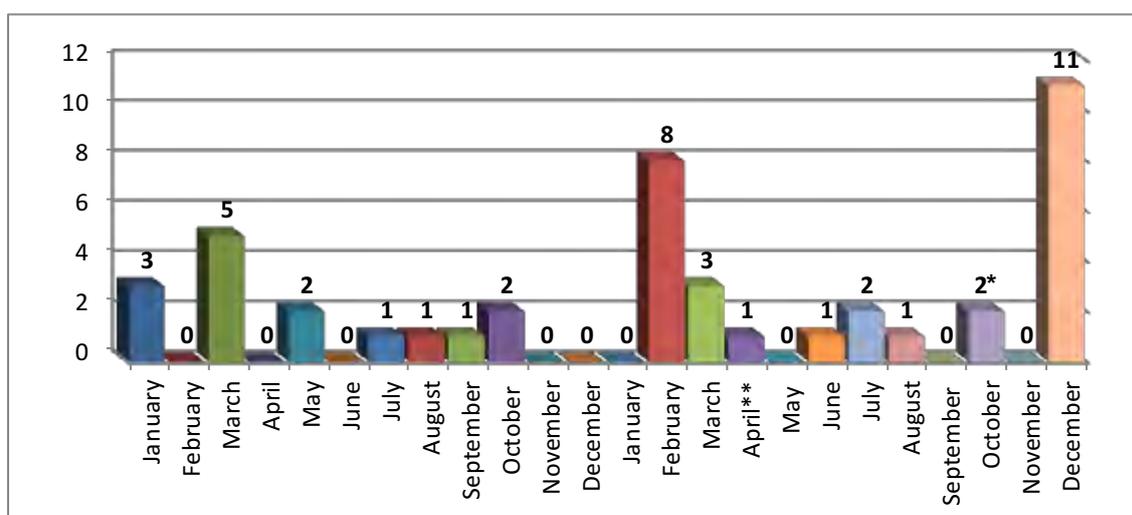
media reported that a Hamas naval post and a post northwest of Beit Lahia were attacked. Reportedly there were no casualties but a number of houses were damaged (Twitter account of 'Ajel Ghaza al-'An, December 17, 2017).



Right: Attack in the northern Gaza Strip (Twitter account of Hamas' military wing, December 18, 2017). Left: Attack on the al-Waha post in the northwestern part of Beit Lahia (Twitter account of the al-Quds channel, December 18, 2017)

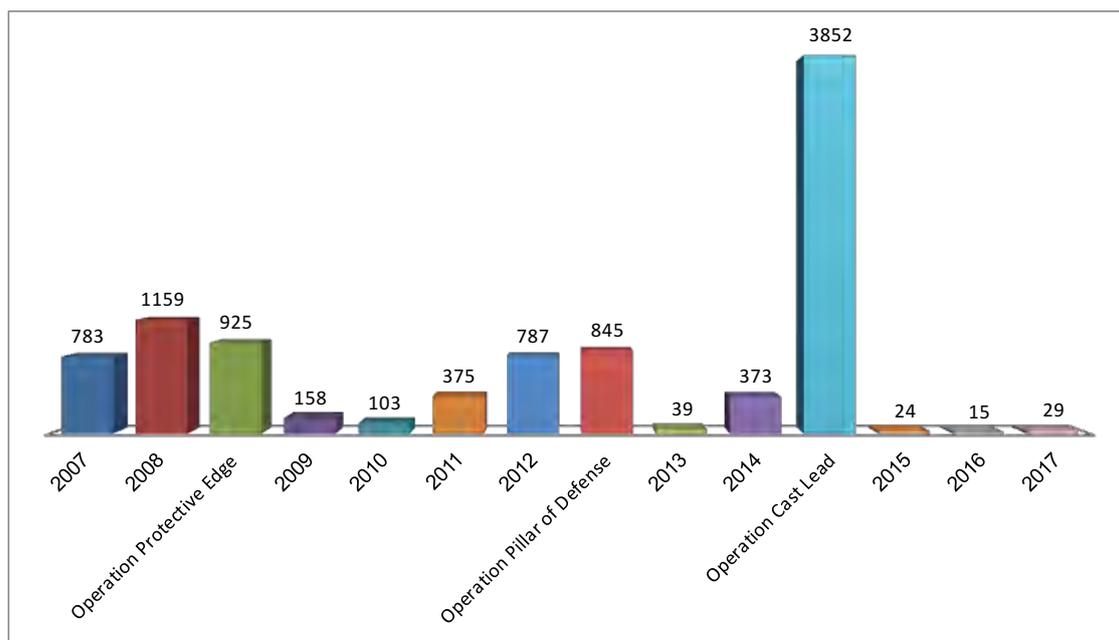
► **After the rocket attacks on December 14, 2017, Israel closed the Erez crossing and the Kerem Shalom crossing. After two days the Erez crossing was reopened for humanitarian aid.** General Yoav Mordechai, the Israeli coordinator of government activities in the territories, warned Hamas a number of times that if it did not enforce its control over the operatives firing rockets at Israel, Israel's response to Hamas would be deadly and lead to another war in the Gaza Strip (al-Munaseq, the Arabic Facebook page of the Israeli coordinator of government activities in the territories).

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 Hits⁴



The Internal Palestinian Reconciliation

Transferring authority to the national consensus government

► **As of now the process of transferring authority to the national consensus government has been frozen.** National consensus government employees who arrived for work at the Palestinian ministry of culture in the Gaza Strip were expelled by Hamas workers and told they could not come to work until the issue of employment had been settled (Ma'an, December 17, 2017). The ministry of culture issued a statement criticizing the aggressive behavior of the armed Hamas operatives who did not let the PA employees return to work, as had been agreed. The ministry argued that such behavior would make it impossible to implement the agreements already reached by Fatah and Hamas, and harmed the reconciliation process. The ministry of culture demanded that such practices be stopped so that the process of uniting PA and Hamas employees could continue (Wafa, December 17, 2017).

⁴ The statistics do not include mortar shell fire or rockets which misfired and fell inside the Gaza Strip.

Developments in the Gaza Strip

The humanitarian situation

- ▶ On December 16, 2017, **the crossings authority** announced that the Rafah crossing would open for passage in both directions (Wafa, December 16, 2017). However, traffic was relatively light (only about 500 people a day). When the crossing opened trucks bringing fuel began entering the Gaza Strip (Facebook page of Dunia al-Watan, December 16, 2017). The PA embassy in Egypt announced the crossing would remain open until Tuesday, December 19, 2017 (Wafa, December 18, 2017).
- ▶ **Muhammad Thabet, spokesman for the electric company**, said the Egyptian power line was once again supplying electricity to the Gaza Strip. He said two cables were still out of commission and it was not known when they would be in use again (alresalah.net, December 16, 2017). On another occasion Thabet said electricity would be supplied in cycles of four hours with a 12-hour hiatus (Dunia al-Watan, December 18, 2017).

Events marking the anniversary of Hamas' founding

- ▶ Hamas held a festive mass rally to celebrate the 30th anniversary of its founding. The rally was dedicated to Jerusalem. Senior Hamas figures attended, as did three ministers from the national consensus government: the minister of labor, the minister of housing and public works, and the minister of women's status (Dunia al-Watan, December 14, 2017). Hamas issued an official statement saying Jerusalem was the eternal capital of Palestine and the decisions of the American president to recognize it as the capital of Israel and relocate the American embassy to Jerusalem were worthless. Hamas praised those at the forefront of the fighting in Jerusalem and thanked them for their sacrifice in fighting Israel. The announcement also stated that Hamas would continue the path of "resistance" until all Palestine had been liberated (Hamas website, December 13, 2017).



Right: Hamas rally in Gaza City marking the 30th anniversary of the movement's founding (Palinfo Twitter account, December 14, 2017). Left: Senior Hamas figures at the rally (Hamas Twitter account, December 14, 2017).

- ▶ Senior Hamas figures gave speeches, saying the following:
 - ◆ **Isma'il Haniyeh, head of Hamas' political bureau in the Gaza Strip**, said steps to force Trump to revoke his decision were not limited to words. He claimed the Palestinian people were capable of frustrating the Trump decision even if it cost lives. He said there were three paths for action: a powerful, honest internal Palestinian reconciliation, **establishing strong regional alliances**, and **continuing the intifada and "resistance" activities** (al-Aqsa TV, December 14, 2017).
 - ◆ **Senior Hamas figure Isma'il Radwan** thanked Hamas' military wing, which, he said, had proved the "Israeli occupation" had no place in Palestine. He called on the PA to stop its security coordination with Israel and to withdraw from the Oslo Accords (al-Aqsa, December 14, 2017).
 - ◆ **Hamas spokesman Hazem Qassem** said the will of the Palestinian people to sacrifice itself and continue the intifada made it necessary for a plan based on basic principles. He said the deaths of the demonstrators in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank had exposed the truth about the "crimes of the [Israeli] occupation." He said the American decision encouraged Israel to continue its aggressive policies. He called on Hamas operatives to continue their activities using every "necessary means" to achieve their goals (Hamas website, December 15, 2017).
- ▶ Senior Hamas figures used other forums in the Arab-Muslim world to condemn the American declaration and promote the "resistance" [i.e., the path of terrorism]:
 - ◆ **Isma'il Haniyeh** said in a recorded announcement played at a demonstration in Turkey that the issue of Jerusalem touched the entire world, not just Muslims. He stressed that **there was no such thing as "the State of Israel" and therefore**

Jerusalem could not be its capital. He said the Palestinians would sacrifice themselves for Jerusalem and continue the intifada for the sake of restoring it (al-Aqsa TV, December 17, 2017).

◆ **Senior Hamas figure Maher Salah**, speaking at a rally for Jerusalem held in Lebanon, said the American decision was a declaration of war against Muslims and America would be responsible for the consequences. **He praised the "jihad operatives" for their activities against Israel**, which included throwing stones, carrying out suicide bombing attacks, firing rockets and flying UAVs. He also said that what was about to happen would be worse. He called for the pursuit of the Israeli leadership and "war criminals" and for the support of the BDS movement, for the delegitimization of Israel and for opposition to any normalization of relations (al-Aqsa TV, December 17, 2017).

◆ **Husam Badran, a member of Hamas' political bureau**, gave a speech at a protest demonstration held in Qatar, in which he called for continued clashes in Judea, Samaria and Jerusalem **to inspire a mass intifada of the Palestinian people**. That, he said, would confuse Israel and the international forces supporting it. He praised the "resistance" and the shaheeds (Hamas website, December 17, 2017).

Two Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) terrorist operatives killed

► The PIJ's military-terrorist wing, the Jerusalem Battalions, issued a formal statement of the deaths of two of operatives of the engineering unit of its northern Gaza Strip brigade. According to the announcement, the two were killed during a "jihad mission" in the northern Gaza Strip, and not as initially claimed, in an Israeli targeted killing (website of the Jerusalem Battalions, December 12, 2017). The Palestinian media reported that the two had been killed when there was an explosion on their motorbike (Palinfo, December 12, 2017).



Right: The remains of the motorbike (Palinfo, December 12, 2017). Left: The crater caused by the explosion (Safa, December 12, 2017).

The Palestinian Authority (PA)

Continuing Political Activity and Incitement after the Trump Declaration

Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) conference

- ▶ In response to the American declaration of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel, leaders and ministers of 48 countries **met in Istanbul for an emergency meeting of the OIC**. Its theme was "freedom for Jerusalem." The meeting was called to discuss the implications of the declaration and how to deal with them.
- ▶ **Mahmoud Abbas** claimed the American decision violated international and UN decisions, especially Security Council resolutions the United States had voted for in the past. He claimed that in the wake of the declaration, the entire world had witnessed the wave of violence in the Palestinian territories and around the globe. **He again stressed that the Palestinians did not regard the United States as a mediator in the peace process between Israel and the Palestinians; and that the Palestinian people would not accept the United States as sponsoring the process because its decisions were unfair and biased towards Israel.** He said the PA **would call on the international community to act against Israel, and would appeal to the UN for full membership.**
- ▶ **The meeting ended with an official declaration of the OIC that east Jerusalem was the capital of Palestine**, and called on the world for recognition. It also said the declaration of the president was one-sided and illegal, called on the United States **to cut its participation in the peace process**, and **on the UN Security Council to reexamine Jerusalem's legal status** (Arabia, December 13, 2017).



Right: The opening session of the emergency meeting of the OIC in Istanbul (al-Araby al-Jadeed on YouTube, December 13, 2017). Left: Mahmoud Abbas delivers a speech at the OIC conference in Istanbul (Facebook page of Mahmoud Abbas, December 13, 2017)

Proposed UN Security Council resolution

- ▶ **Riyad Mansour, the PA representative to the UN**, with support from and in coordination with Egypt, the Arab representative in the UN Security Council, proposed a resolution **revoking the Trump declaration** (al-Arabiya al-Hadath, December 15, 2017). The draft copy proposed by Egypt on December 16, 2017, called on the countries around the globe not to locate their diplomatic missions in Jerusalem, in accordance with Security Council Resolution 478. The proposition "affirms that any decisions and actions which purport to have altered, the character, status or demographic composition of the Holy City of Jerusalem have no legal effect, are null and void and must be rescinded in compliance with relevant resolutions of the Security Council." The proposed resolution did not specifically mention the United States or Donald Trump (Reuters, December 16, 2017).
- ▶ On December 18, 2017, the resolution was debated in the Security Council. **The United States vetoed the resolution while the 14 other members voted in favor**. Mahmoud Abbas' office condemned the veto. **The Palestinian foreign minister called for an emergency meeting of the General Assembly** (al-Jazeera, December 18, 2017). Despite the American veto the **PA plans to continue its political campaign**, which currently centers on **an appeal to the UN General Assembly to pass a resolution similar to the one proposed to the Security Council**, and to **join international organizations**. On the ground, the PA continues encouraging popular protests ("days of rage").



American veto in the Security Council (al-Quds, December 19, 2017).

- ▶ Senior PA figures said the following:
 - ◆ **Mahmoud Abbas**, speaking at a meeting of the Palestinian leadership, said the Trump declaration about Jerusalem had **no legal validity** and that most of the countries of the world objected to it. He said the **Palestinians would no longer allow**

the United States to act as mediator in the negotiations, and that the Palestinians would take diplomatic and legal measures against the declaration. He said the Palestinians were currently investing efforts to get the resolution passed in the General Assembly and gain **a permanent seat in the UN** (Palestinian TV, December 18, 2017). At the meeting **he signed 22 international agreements as part of the PA's activities to join 22 international organizations** (Wafa, December 18, 2017).

- ◆ **Rami Hamdallah, prime minister of the Palestinian national consensus government,** said the American veto was the continuation of America's bias towards Israel. He said they would never cede Jerusalem or bargain about its Arab nature. He said they would continue using all non-violent means (Wafa, December 19, 2017).

- ◆ **Nabil Shaath, advisor to Mahmoud Abbas for foreign affairs and international relations,** said the Palestinian leadership would continue taking steps to enlist international support against Israel and the United States (Voice of Palestine radio, December 8, 2017) .

- ◆ **Nabil Abu Rudeina, spokesman for Mahmoud Abbas,** said the American veto contradicted international consensus and violated international and Security Council decisions, and expressed solidarity with the [Israeli] occupation and its aggression. He said the **Palestinians would continue to lead at the UN and all international institutions** (Wafa, December 18, 2017).

Additional remarks by senior White House officials

► A senior White House official said at a news briefing that the White House could not "envision any situation under which the Western Wall would not be part of Israel." However, he said, as the president said, "The specific boundaries of sovereignty of Israel are going to be part of the final status agreement."⁵ It was also noted that the American vice president, Mike Pence, would visit the Western Wall during an official state visit (so far representatives of the American administration have made only private visits). The remarks led to strong reactions from the Palestinians:

- ◆ **Nabil Abu Rudeina, spokesman for Mahmoud Abbas, said the PA would not accept any change in the borders of Jerusalem which were determined in 1967.** He claimed the American position proved it could no longer be a mediator in the peace process (Wafa, December 16, 2017).

⁵ <https://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-5057461,00.html>

- ◆ **Fatah spokesman Usama al-Qawasmeh** said **the Western Wall was part of al-Aqsa mosque and was located on Palestinian land occupied in 1967**. He said he was supported by a decision of a British court from 1929, according to which the Western Wall was a Muslim site, and by UNESCO decisions stating that all of Jerusalem was Muslim and the Jews had no historical or religious connection to the city. He said Fatah would never agree to changes in the borders of east Jerusalem or the borders of Palestine determined in 1967 (al-Mayadeen, December 17, 2017).
- ◆ **PIJ spokesman Da'ud Shehab** said the Western Wall was part of al-Aqsa mosque and one of the most important sites in the city for Muslims (Filastin al-Yawm, December 17, 2017).



American Vice President Mike Pence expelled from the Church of the Sepulcher. Santa Claus says, "We won't open the door of our church to a pro-Zionist" (Palinfo Twitter account, December 14, 2017).

The PA appointed a member of the Assembly of States Parties⁶ of the International Criminal Court

► **The PA was appointed a member of the Assembly of States Parties of the International Criminal Court in The Hague. Riyad Mansour, Palestinian representative to the UN,** said the decision was another step in reinforcing the foundations of the State of Palestine in the international arena, and thanked the member countries for their solidarity with the Palestinians. According to the Palestinian delegation to the UN, the appointment showed the trust of the ICC member states, despite the fact that the PA had only been a member of the ICC for a short time (Wafa, December 16, 2017).

⁶ The Assembly of States Parties of the International Criminal Court is the ICC's management oversight and legislative body. It elects the president, determines the budget, and can replace a judge if the need arises.

Fatah incitement to violence

- ▶ Interviewed by the al-Najah channel (which belongs to al-Najah University), **Mahmoud al-'Alul, deputy chairman of the Fatah movement**, said **the Oslo Accords had lost their validity** and that the PA no longer had any ties to Israel. He said the American declaration about Jerusalem was an opportunity for the PA to cut its relations with the United States, which was pressuring the Palestinian to accede to Israel's demands. He said **the Palestinian people were always in confrontation with Israel, even though the nature of the confrontation changed from time to time**. He said Fatah had not ruled out any "resistance" option [i.e., also military-type resistance] that was legitimate for an occupied people. He said the policies of the Palestinian leadership currently took two directions: a popular uprising against Israel on the one hand and an appeal to the UN and its Security Council on the other (the al-Najah channel, December 15, 2017).
- ▶ In the wake of the interview, **General Yoav Mordechai, the Israeli coordinator** of government activities in the territories, **accused Mahmoud al-'Alul of incitement to violence and terrorism** (Facebook page in Arabic of the Israeli coordinator for government activities in the territories, December 16, 2017). Fatah reacted with anger to what they called his "threats."



A notice from Fatah's bureau of organization and mobilization. Above the picture of Mahmoud al-'Alul the Arabic reads, "Israel is a terrorist state," and below, in white, "and we aren't afraid of it" (official Fatah Facebook page, December 16, 2017).