



News of Terrorism and the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict (January 10 – 16, 2018)

Overview

[Click for Video](#)

- ▶ This past week terrorist events focused on the murder of an Israeli civilian at the Havat Gilad Junction in Samaria. The PA did not comment. A senior Fatah figure wrote on his Facebook page that the "killing of a settler" was an "expected and natural response" to the American recognition of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel.
- ▶ This past week as well, riots continued in Judea, Samaria, east Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip, with relatively poor participation. During the riots three Palestinians were killed by Israel security force fire.
- ▶ The IDF exposed another tunnel (the fourth in the past months), 1.5 kilometers long (about .93 miles). It was dug from the Rafah region of the Gaza Strip into Egyptian territory, **passing under the Israeli Kerem Shalom crossing near the pipelines that supply the residents of the Gaza Strip with gas and oil.** According to sources in the IDF, the tunnel endangered the continued operation of the Kerem Shalom crossing.
- ▶ The PLO's Central Council decided to suspend recognition of Israel, cancel security coordination with it and void the economic agreements signed as part of the Paris protocol (part of the Oslo Accords). The council called for the adoption of the BDS movement and appealed to the entire world to impose sanctions on Israel, and to continue the so-called "non-violent popular resistance" (i.e., popular terrorism, including stabbing attacks, vehicular attacks, and occasional shooting attacks). The council asked the PLO's Executive Committee to implement the decisions.
- ▶ The keynote speech at the Central Council meeting was given by Mahmoud Abbas. It was bitter and aggressive, and lasted about two hours. Mahmoud Abbas severely criticized the United States and its president (using the Arabic curse, "may your house be destroyed") and calling for a reexamination of relations with Israel. He also called for the continuation of the so-called "non-violent popular resistance" (i.e., popular terrorism). However, he was careful

not to slam the door: he did not call for cancelling security coordination with Israel, or reneging on the Oslo Accords, or refusing political negotiations.

Terrorist attacks and attempted terrorist attacks

► **Shooting attack near Havat Gilad** – On the evening of January 9, 2018, a 35-year-old Israeli civilian was murdered at the Havat Gilad Junction in Samaria. He was shot in the neck and upper torso in a drive-by shooting as he was driving to his home to the community of Havat Gilad. He was mortally wounded and evacuated to a hospital, where he was declared dead. The terrorists who killed him, shooting dozens of bullets, escaped under cover of darkness. IDF forces searched the area for them.



Pictures from the scene of the shooting attack near Havat Gilad (psnews, January 11; Gaza Post, January 9, 2018).

► The PA did not formally comment on the murder. However, sources affiliated with Fatah and the AP expressed "understanding." For example, **Jamal Haweel, a member of Fatah's Revolutionary Council**, wrote on his Facebook page that killing an "Israeli settler" was "an expected and natural response" to the American recognition of Jerusalem, to the Likud decision to institute Israeli sovereignty over Judea and Samaria and to undertake procedures to promote a law making it possible to impose the death penalty for terrorists.

► **Hamas and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) welcomed and praised the terrorist attack. Hamas spokesman Fawzi Barhoum** issued a statement in the name of the Hamas movement praising the attack which, he claimed, was the result of the "violations of the Zionist occupation's against the Palestinians in Judea and Samaria, east Jerusalem and al-Aqsa mosque." He added that the attack stressed that the Palestinian compass pointed to Jerusalem and al-Aqsa mosque, and showed the adherence of the Palestinian people to the "resistance" to defend them at any cost (Hamas website, January 9, 2018). **Husam Badran, a member of Hamas' political bureau**, said the attack was the "natural response to the crimes of the occupation" against the Palestinian people and its holy places, and against the

historical right of the Palestinian people to Jerusalem (Palinfo, January 9, 2018). **Abu Obeida, spokesman for Hamas' military-terrorist wing**, called the attack the first practical response with fire, and said it was intended to remind the Israeli leadership, and those supporting it, that what they were afraid would happen was already happening (Twitter account of Abu Obeida, January 9, 2018).



**Right: Fawzi Barhoun praises the terrorist attack (al-Aqsa YouTube channel, January 11, 2018).
Left: Hamas cartoon reaction to the shooting attack near Havat Gilad, comparing it to a traditional pastry from Nablus, "sweet kanafeh" (Twitter account of Palinfo, January 10, 2018).**

► The PIJ also praised the attack, noting it "opens the door to intensifying the intifada and gives momentum to the Palestinian people to escalate its struggle" against American and Israeli decisions. **PIJ spokesman Da'ud Shehab** said the attack took place during the sixth week of the popular intifada, which began with the declaration of the American president. He said the campaign against Israel and the settlers had no time limit and **the settlers were targets for the "resistance"** (website of the Jerusalem Battalions, January 9, 2018).



**Ahmed al-Mudallal praises the terrorist attack
(al-Aqsa YouTube channel, January 11, 2018).**

► **Prevention of a terrorist attack at the Tomb of Joseph** – On January 16, 2018, when Jewish worshippers entered the Tomb of Joseph in Nablus to pray, the Israeli security forces guarding them found **an IED that was supposed to be detonated by a cell phone**. Palestinians also threw stones at the bus that brought the worshippers to the site. No casualties were reported. The bus was damaged.

Riots, clashes and popular terrorism

► This past week riots and demonstrations continued in Judea, Samaria, east Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip in response to the American president's declaration of Jerusalem as the capital of the State of Israel (December 6, 2017). **There were fewer participants as the trend decreases for Palestinians to take part in the events.** During the week and particularly on Friday, attendance was relatively poor.

► **Three Palestinians were killed by Israeli security force fire:** One in the village of **Burin (south of Nablus)**, who, according to the Palestinian media, was **Ali Omar Qino**, 17, from Iraq Burin, south of Nablus (Ma'an, January 11, 2018). A young Palestinian was killed **near the border security fence in the Gaza Strip** (Dunia al-Watan, January 11, 2018). According to the Palestinian media he was **Amir Abu Mus'aid**, 16, from the al-Maghazi refugee camp in the central Gaza Strip. On January 15, 2018, a Palestinian was killed during a riot in the **village of Burqin (near Qalqilya)**. The Palestinian ministry of health reported he was **Ahmed Abd al-Jaber Muhammad Salim**, 24 (Wafa, January 15, 2018).



Right: Palestinians riot in al-Bireh (near Ramallah) (Twitter account of Palinfo, January 12, 2018).

Left: Palestinians riot east of the al-Bureij refugee camp in the central Gaza Strip (Twitter account of Palinfo, January 12, 2018).

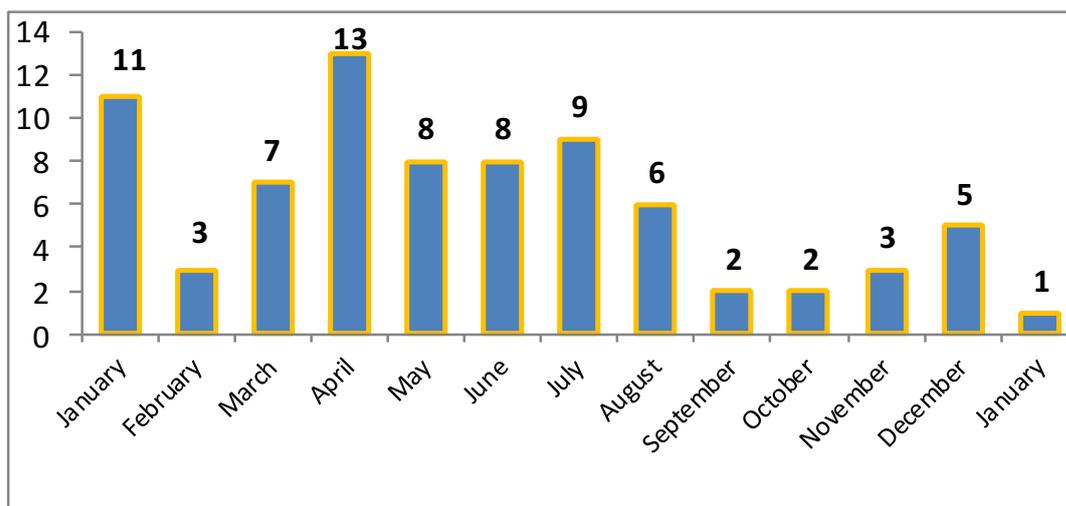


March and rally organized by the PIJ in Rafah. The keynote speech was given by Ahmed al-Mudallal, who praised the shooting attack near Havat Gilad, saying "This is the only option [the Palestinians have] to rid the West Bank of Israel, its soldiers and its settlers" (website of the Jerusalem Battalions and Twitter account of QudsN, January 12, 2018).

► In the meantime, this past week Palestinians continued throwing stones and Molotov cocktails at Israeli security forces and civilian targets. The Israeli security forces carried out counterterrorism activities throughout Judea and Samaria, detaining Palestinians suspected of terrorist activity and seizing weapons. The more prominent incidents were the following:

- ◆ **January 13, 2018** – Hundreds of Palestinians rioted at **the entrance to Nabi Saleh** (Ramallah region). They threw stones at the Israeli security forces and the nearby road, and shouted anti-Israeli slogans (Ynet, January 13, 2018).
- ◆ **January 12, 2018** – Marble-sized metal balls were thrown at a bus carrying school children **towards Hebron**. Bus windows were shattered. No casualties were reported (Facebook page of Red Alert, January 12, 2018).
- ◆ **January 11, 2018** – Stones were thrown at a vehicle on the road **between Anatot and Hizmeh traffic circle (north of Jerusalem)**, causing an accident. A young woman from Shuafat, who was in the car with her family, was slightly wounded (Facebook page of Red Alert, January 11, 2018).
- ◆ **January 11, 2018** – Stones were thrown in **the Muslim Quarter of the Old City of Jerusalem** near the Lions' Gate. A young man was slightly injured (Facebook page of Red Alert, January 11, 2018).
- ◆ **January 11, 2018** – The Israeli security forces detained three young Palestinian women near the **Cave of the Patriarchs in Hebron**. They were found to be carrying knives. They were 15, 18 and 23 years old, from the village of Aroub. They were detained for interrogation (Facebook page of Red Alert, January 11, 2018).

Significant terrorist attacks during the past year ¹



Taibeh resident detained on suspicion of supporting ISIS

- ▶ The Israeli security forces detained **Hassan Khaled Taher Sheikh Yusuf**, 27, from Taibeh, on suspicion of supporting ISIS and intending to carry out an ISIS-inspired attack. According to the findings of the investigation, during 2014 and 2015 he became more religious and at the same time grew close to ISIS. He surfed for ISIS-related items on the internet and even considered joining the fighting in Syria. One of the items he watched on the internet was how to prepare explosives. He also tried to convince another man to join him in acquiring an M16 assault rifle.
- ▶ In the summer of 2017, during the events protesting the installation of metal detectors on the Temple Mount, Hassan Sheikh Yusuf tried to convince friends to join him in carrying out terrorist attacks, including **a shooting attack in Jerusalem, a car bomb attack on the police station in Taibeh, and a stabbing attack**. The attacks were aborted because all the people he approached refused to collaborate with him, and he was afraid to carry them out alone (Israel Security Agency information, January 14, 2018).

Summary of terrorist attacks, December 2017

- ▶ During December 2017 there was a sharp rise in the number of terrorist attacks carried out in Judea, Samaria and Jerusalem. There were 234 attacks (compared with 83 in November 2017). Most of the attacks (219) involved Molotov cocktails, 12 involved IEDs, four were

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

shooting attacks carried out with light arms and two were stabbing attacks (one in Jerusalem). In Judea and Samaria there were 178 terrorist attacks (53 in November 2017). In Jerusalem there were 56 terrorist attacks (29 in November 2017). No attacks were reported inside Israeli territory (Israel Security Agency website. Incidents of stone-throwing are not included).

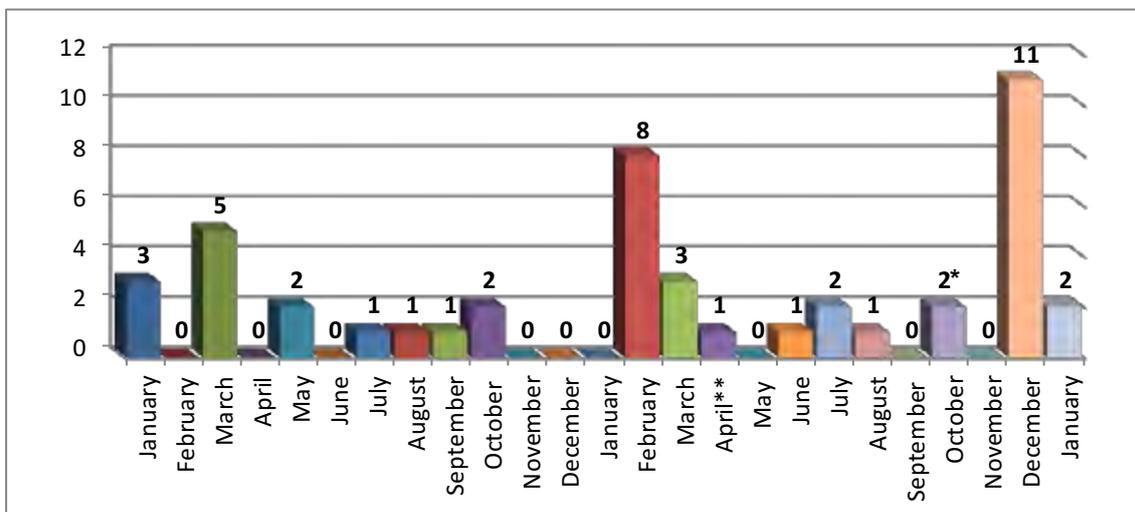
- ▶ In ITIC assessment the sharp rise in the number of attacks was caused by Donald Trump's December 6, 2017 declaration of American recognition of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel. After the announcement, the number of riots and attempted attacks increased.

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

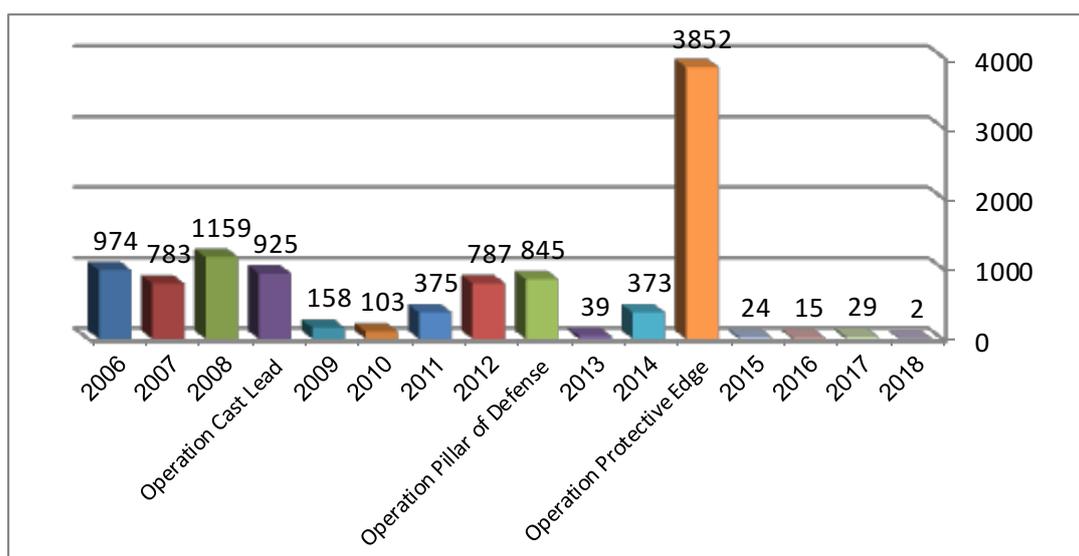


Notes:

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

** 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



IDF exposure of tunnel whose route passed under the Kerem Shalom crossing

- ▶ On the night of January 14, 2018, Israeli Air Force aircraft attacked in the eastern part of Rafah close to the Israeli-Egyptian border. At the same time, Israel announced the closing of the Kerem Shalom crossing. The following day the IDF completed its activity and announced that **a tunnel, 1.5 kilometers long (.93 miles) had been attacked.**
- ▶ The route of the tunnel crossed under the border security fence into Israeli territory and passed under the Kerem Shalom crossing near the **pipelines that supply the residents of the Gaza Strip with gas and oil.** Sources in the IDF reported that **the tunnel endangered the continued operation of the Kerem Shalom crossing, the only crossing for merchandise into the Gaza Strip.** Tens of thousands of tons of merchandise enter the Gaza Strip through the Kerem Shalom crossing every day. **It was the fourth tunnel invading Israeli territory exposed and attacked in the past two months.**
- ▶ The Palestinian media claimed the Israel attack had **damaged a "commercial tunnel"** [i.e., a smuggling tunnel] **near Kerem Shalom** (Twitter account of the Shehab News Agency, January 13, 2018). It was also reported that there were no casualties in the attack.



The tunnel, whose route passed under the Kerem Shalom crossing. It is the only entrance for merchandise into the Gaza Strip, through which thousands of tons of food, medical equipment and building materials pass every day (Facebook page of the IDF spokesman, January 14, 2018).



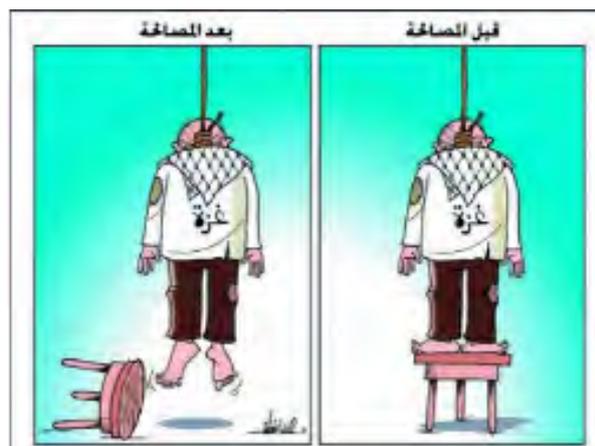
The route of the tunnel from the Gaza Strip into Egypt passing through Israeli territory under the Kerem Shalom crossing (Facebook page of the IDF spokesman, January 14, 2018).

The Internal Palestinian Reconciliation

Overview

► **The internal Palestinian reconciliation remains stalled.** Hamas demands Mahmoud Abbas lift the sanctions he imposed on the Gaza Strip. **Musa Abu Marzouq, a member of Hamas' political bureau**, said that in his opinion the reconciliation would not be implemented during the coming year and the Palestinian Authority (PA) would not fully function in the Gaza Strip. He also claimed Hamas had been flexible and had had a positive approach to the reconciliation (al-Risalah, January 8, 2018). On another occasion he said the reconciliation was in danger and that Fatah had to fulfill agreements regarding all the issues still pending. He added that Hamas had decided not to return to the status quo ante, and that as a movement it would examine all the possible options and appropriate steps so that the

residents of the Gaza Strip would not remain in their current situation (al-Quds, January 10, 2018).



Hamas cartoons about the death of the reconciliation. Right: The Gaza Strip, before and after (Felesteen, January 9, 2018). Left: Gazans carry the reconciliation's coffin (Felesteen, January 10, 2018).

Payment of employees' salaries

► Given the continuing differences of opinion regarding the transfer of collecting taxes in the Gaza Strip to the national consensus government, this past week Hamas began independently paying employees' salaries. The Hamas-controlled ministry of finance reported the beginning of payment of 40% of the salaries of Hamas employees in the Gaza Strip (Safa, January 9, 2018). The national consensus government blamed the Hamas employees' union of putting obstacles in the path of the reconciliation and of the national consensus government's role in the Gaza Strip.

Developments in the Gaza Strip

The humanitarian situation

► The Kerem Shalom crossing, which was temporarily closed when the existence of a tunnel running under it was exposed, **reopened on January 16, 2018**. It is the only crossing through which food, fuel and general merchandise enter the Gaza Strip.



**Trucks at the Kerem Shalom crossing with the renewal of its activity
(Twitter account of Palinfo, January 16, 2018).**

- ▶ **Muhammad Thabet, responsible for public relations of the electric company in the Gaza Strip**, said that Israel having increased the amount of electricity it supplied to the Gaza Strip, **Gazans now have electrical power in cycles of six hours with power and 12 without**. He said today electricity in the Gaza Strip stands at 190 megawatts, while it needs 500 megawatts (alresala.net, January 10, 2018). **The ministry of health in the Gaza Strip reported that the serious fuel crisis influenced the ministry's services** (Twitter account of Dunia al-Watan, January 11, 2018).
- ▶ **Institutions in the private sector in the Gaza Strip declared a general commercial strike** would be held on January 22, 2018, as the first in a series of steps caused by **the difficult economic situation in the Gaza Strip**. The chairman of the bureau for commerce and industry in the Gaza Strip announced at a press conference that the strike was "a last cry, **after the economic situation and living conditions in the Gaza Strip have become catastrophic** and reached zero, and we are close to an economic collapse." He appealed to Mahmoud Abbas, the Egyptian president, the UN secretary general, the European Quartet, international institutions and the leaders of the Palestinian organizations, **warning that "an explosion is coming"** (Palestine Online, January 15, 2018, and the Facebook page of the bureau of commerce and industry in the Gaza Strip, January 16, 2018).



Right: Press conference of the bureau of commerce and industry in the Gaza Strip (Facebook page of the bureau of commerce and industry in the Gaza Strip, January 16, 2018). Left: Palestinians in Rafah protest the economic hardships (Twitter account of QudsN, January 11, 2018).

Senior Hamas figure Imad al-Alami shot and wounded

► **Imad al-Alami, a senior figure in Hamas' political bureau**, was shot in the head and critically wounded. There were contradictory reports of the event, leading Hamas and ministry of the interior under its control to issue an announcement claiming his injury was the result of an accident that occurred at his home (Palinfo, January 9, 2018). Isma'il Haniyeh, head of Hamas' political bureau, and Yahya al-Sinwar, head of Hamas' political bureau in the Gaza Strip, visited al-Alami at the Shifaa' hospital in Gaza City and wished him a speedy recovery on their Facebook pages. Unofficial sources on Hamas' social networks claimed his injury was the result of an attempted assassination. Hamas strongly denied the claims.

The Palestinian Authority (PA)

PLO Central Council conference

Overview

► **On January 14, 2018, a festive conference of the PLO's Central Council began.**² It was held in the wake of the declaration made by the American president recognizing Jerusalem as the capital of Israel, which led to a serious rift of the PA's relations with the United States. **Hamas and PIJ representatives did not attend the conference, despite the fact that they had received invitations.**

² The PLO's Central Council today serves as **a consulting institution** when the Palestinian National Council cannot be convened. The council is supposed to provide recommendations **for the PLO's Executive Committee** regarding decisions.



Criticism that the American consul had been invited to attend the PLO's Central Council conference (Twitter account of Palinfo, January 14, 2018).

- ▶ The opening speech was given by **Salim Zanoun, chairman of the Palestinian National Council**. He criticized the United States, saying that it had lost the role of negotiator. He also said Jerusalem would only be the capital of Palestine and stressed the right of the Palestinians to "resist" the [so-called Israeli] occupation "in every legitimate way" (Palestinian TV, January 14, 2018).



Conference of the PLO's Central Council in Ramallah, chaired by Mahmoud Abbas (Wafa, January 14, 2018).

Concluding announcement

- ▶ On the second day a **concluding announcement** was issued, read by the chairman, Salim Zanoun. **The main points were the following** (Palestinian TV, January 15, 2018):
 - ◆ **Relations with the United States in the wake of its recognition of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel:** The council condemned and rejected the decision made by Trump to recognize Jerusalem as the capital of Israel and to order the relocation of the

American embassy to Jerusalem. **The council called for that to be prevented.** The council also determined that by making the decision, the American administration had lost its ability to serve as a negotiator and sponsor of the peace process, and **would not be a partner in the process unless Trump revoked his decision.** The council also noted its objection to Trump's policy to propose a plan or ideas that contradicted UN resolutions about a solution to the [Israeli-Palestinian] conflict. The council stressed the need to revoke the American Congressional decision of 1987 which designated the PLO as a terrorist organization, and the decision of the State Department to close the PLO's office in Washington.

- ◆ **The establishment of a Palestinian state:** The council noted that the independence of Palestine was the primary goal and that **the transition had to be made from autonomy to independence.** The interim period determined by the Oslo Accords was void. The council called on the international community to take responsibility based on UN resolutions for **the establishment of a Palestinian state with the 1967 borders and east Jerusalem as its capital.**

- ◆ **Recognition of Israel and agreements with it:** The council authorized the PLO's Executive Committee **to suspend recognition of Israel** until Israel recognized a Palestinian state with the 1967 borders, revoked its decision to annex east Jerusalem and stop the settlements [sic]. The council reiterated its previous decision (2105) **to revoke security coordination with Israel at all levels and to revoke the economic agreements signed as part of the Paris protocol.** The council asked the PLO's Executive Committee and the other Palestinian institutions to implement the decisions. **The council also stressed its refusal to recognize the State of Israel as a Jewish state,** and its refusal to accept any proposal or ideas for an interim solution or an interim period, including a "state with temporary borders."

- ◆ **The struggle against Israel** (the so-called "**non-violent popular resistance**):"³ The council noted its opposition to the [so-called] regime of "occupation and apartheid" Israeli was trying to perpetuate as an alternative to the existence of an independent Palestinian state, and also noted the determination of the Palestinians to use "all means" in its struggle to topple it. The council noted the right of the Palestinians to use

³ The term "non-violent popular resistance" relates to violent popular terrorism which includes, among other things, stabbing attacks, vehicular attacks and occasionally also shooting attacks.

"all forms of struggle against the occupation in accordance with international law, and **noted the need to continue the "non-violent popular resistance" to support it and strengthen its capabilities.**

- ◆ **Boycotting Israel:** The council voted to continue working with countries around the globe **to boycott the settlements in all spheres**, to publicize the UN database of companies operating in the settlements, **to adopt the BDS movement** and to call on the countries of the world **to impose sanctions on Israel** to curb its violations of international law and its "aggression" against the Palestinians.

- ◆ **Activities in the international arena:** The council voted to continue acting on the international level for the PA **to receive full membership in the UN**. The council called for **an appeal to be lodged with the International Criminal Court (ICC) regarding the settlements, the prisoners and the [so-called] "Israeli aggression" against the Gaza Strip**. It also called for the PA **to continue joining international organizations**, and appealed to the international community to take responsibility, based on the relevant UN resolutions, to end the "occupation" and enable the state of "Palestine" to achieve independence and realize full sovereignty over its land.

Mahmoud Abbas' speech

Mahmoud Abbas, chairman of the PA, gave a two-hour speech which was aggressive, bitter and full of frustration, but **did not say anything new**. He used the speech for a strong, blatant attack on Israel, the United States (including its president). He began with a (false and misleading) "historical review" claiming the State of Israel was a Western colonial settlement project of failed attempts to establish a Jewish state in the territory of "Palestine."⁴ He then **harshly criticized Donald Trump** and **called for a reexamination of relations with Israel**. He also called for the continuation of the so-called "non-violent popular resistance." Despite his harsh critical statements, **he was careful not to announce steps that would change the situation on the ground**. He was also careful not to slam the door on Israel, with methods such as revoking security coordination. (He also called for a continuation of negotiations with Israel, although without American mediation.).

⁴ Many Palestinian users of the social networks were critical of Mahmoud Abbas' "historical review," claiming he should have focused on the present and future "Palestine" rather on past events which were currently unimportant for the Palestinian public. Some of them claimed he knew nothing about the history of "Palestine."



Mahmoud Abbas gives a speech at the beginning of the PLO's Central Council conference (Felesteen YouTube channel, January 14, 2018).

► The main topics to which Mahmoud Abbas related were the following (Dunia al-Watan, January 14, 2018):

- ◆ **Israel and the political negotiations:** The Palestinian people, he claimed, are committed to the 1988 declaration of the two-state solution based on international legitimacy of a Palestinian state with the 1967 borders and east Jerusalem as its capital. Israel, he claimed, **had withdrawn from the Oslo Accords and therefore the Palestinian people had to reach a decision regarding the Accords.** According to the Accords Israel recognized the PLO as the only legitimate representative of the Palestinian people. However, the situation has changed and the PA no longer has authority. **The PA is working with the French government to establish an international committee** and adheres to negotiations with Israel to promote a political arrangement. The Palestinians do not call for war and want to reach an arrangement.
- ◆ **The United States:** Mahmoud Abbas announced that the Palestinians would not accept American mediation in the peace process "after the crime it committed against Jerusalem." He claimed the Palestinians believed in international sponsorship for promoting peace that would end the occupation, but **they no longer believed in American sponsorship of the process.** As to Donald Trump, he said that Trump also threatened to end support for the PA because it caused the negotiations to fail. "May your house be destroyed," he said to Trump, "when did we begin negotiations?" He also criticized **David Friedman, the American ambassador to Israel**, whom he represented as a "settler who opposed use of the term 'occupation,' " and said he would not agree to meet with him anywhere. **Mahmoud Abbas also criticized Nikki**

Haley, the American ambassador to the UN. He said the **PA would not agree to any American demand to stop paying salaries to the families of shaheeds [i.e., terrorists]** and would not be able to prevent the families of Palestinians who had been killed from appealing to the ICC in the The Hague.

◆ **The "popular resistance:"** Mahmoud Abbas claimed the Palestinian people were in favor of **non-violent demonstrations** and nevertheless Palestinians were killed and wounded. Thus the Palestinian people, who lived and protected their rights and supported the "popular resistance," could not be accused, because it was the most effective path they could take. The Palestinian people, he claimed, were the main victims of terrorism and therefore would continue their "peaceful popular resistance" [i.e., would continue popular terrorism, part of which included stabbing, vehicular and shooting attacks]. However, Mahmoud Abbas claimed that the **Palestinian people were committed to the struggle against terrorism everywhere.** He also said a blacklist had to be made of the companies operating in the settlements so they could be denounced in the international arena.

◆ **Jerusalem:** East Jerusalem is the capital of the Palestinian state, and without Jerusalem there will be no Palestinian state. Mahmoud Abbas said the Palestinians would not accept interim solutions or alternative solutions, such as Abu Dis [as the Palestinian capital].



The Arabic reads, "The speech and the situation on the ground." A Hamas cartoon response to Mahmoud Abbas' speech. Mahmoud Abbas babbles meaninglessly, while in reality Israel does whatever it pleases in Judea and Samaria (Twitter account of Palinfo, January 15, 2018).

Organizations that did not participate in the Central Council conference

- ▶ Hamas and the PIJ announced they would not participate in the Central Council conference. **Husam Badran, a member of Hamas' political bureau and head of the office of national relations**, said that after internal consultations, Hamas reached the conclusion that the circumstances would make it impossible for the council to carry out a responsible, comprehensive political examination. The council would also be unable make decisions that would fulfill the aspirations of the Palestinians and meet current challenges. Therefore Hamas had decided not to attend the conference (Hamas website, January 13, 2018). **PIJ spokesman Da'ud Shehab** said they had decided not to attend the conference, because, among other reasons, it was held in Ramallah, contrary to agreements reached at the preparatory conference held in Beirut on January 10, 2017 (al-Anadolu News, January 12, 2018).⁵
- ▶ **Senior Hamas figure Mahmoud al-Zahar** said Hamas had not attended the conference because it did not want to be partner to the crime of the Oslo Accords, and because the council did not represent the Palestinian people (al-Ghad, January 15, 2018).
- ▶ Other senior Hamas and PIJ figures criticized Mahmoud Abbas' speech. **Hamas spokesman Fawzi Barhoum** said the speech did nothing to advance the Palestinian people or the issue of Jerusalem. He demanded the council change its mistaken path and make "responsible decisions" appropriate for the Palestinian people. That, he said, would be done by **withdrawing from the Oslo Accords, ending security coordination with Israel, revoking recognition of Israel and supporting the "resistance" [i.e., terrorism]** (al-Mayadeen, January 14, 2018).

⁵ **Fatah spokesman Usama al-Qawasmeh** rejected the "unconvincing" reasons of Hamas and the PIJ. He said that their lack of participation disappointed the Palestinians and meant "running away from the campaign for Jerusalem and al-Aqsa," because their participation at the conference could have brought new momentum to the reconciliation (Wafa, January 15, 2018).



Hamas mocks the conference of Fatah's archaic old guard, ruled by Mahmoud Abbas (alresala.net, January 15, 2018).

Fatah prepares to escalate the "popular resistance"

Jamal Muheisen, a member of Fatah's Central Committee and responsible for Fatah's bureau of mobilization and organization in Judea and Samaria, was interviewed by the Voice of Palestine radio station. He said that in the coming days a meeting of the heads of the Palestinian organizations would be held **to discuss escalating the [so-called Palestinian] "popular resistance" and ensuring its continuation** in accordance with decisions made by the PLO's political bureau and Central Council. He said the "popular resistance" **needed to take active, supportive measures**. Such measures included preparing a comprehensive program to integrate all the sectors of the population not only in marches and protest rallies, but in supporting the firm stance of the Palestinians, strengthening solidarity and boycotting Israeli products (Ma'an, January 16, 2018).