



# News of Terrorism and the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict (February 21 – 27, 2018)

## Overview



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### **Video of IED detonated on the border security fence, wounding four IDF soldiers, two critically**

- ▶ In Judea, Samaria and the Gaza Strip demonstrations and riots continue, although small in scope. The most serious event was in Jericho, where a Palestinian was killed during an Israeli security force activity. The IDF and the Palestinians have different versions of the circumstances. The Israeli media reported that the Israeli military police were investigating the Palestinian's death.
- ▶ During January and February 2018 the Israeli security forces detained three Arab Israelis from Umm al-Fahm. The three had planned to carry out a terrorist attack on the Temple Mount similar to the one carried out by residents of Umm al-Fahm in July 2017 which killed two Israeli policemen. Interrogation revealed that two of the Palestinians detained supported ISIS's ideology.
- ▶ The humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip continues to be serious. The chairman of the association of Gaza Strip municipalities announced a reduction of 50% of basic public services because of the shortage of water and of resources to employ sanitation and maintenance workers. He said that sewage would flow directly into the sea and that Gaza's beaches and port would be closed. **Surface currents are liable to bring Gazan sewage to Israel's shores, polluting them.**

### **Attacks and attempted attacks**

- ▶ On February 22, 2018, Palestinians rioted during an operational activity of the Israeli security forces in the Jericho region. About 50 Palestinians participated in the riot, throwing stones and Molotov cocktails at the Israeli security forces and burning tires. One of the rioters ran towards the Israeli forces holding an iron bar and the forces shot at him. The Palestinian

was not hit and continued struggling against the Israeli soldiers, who had to use force to detain him. As he struggled he tried to take a gun from one of the soldiers. A knife was found on his body (IDF spokesperson, February 23, 2018). He was later pronounced dead. He was **Yassin al-Suraydah**, 35, from Jericho.

► There are conflicting versions of his death. His family claims he was violently attacked by IDF soldiers who detained him and took him from his house. However, **footage from security cameras shows him holding an object with which he was apparently trying to attack the Israeli forces. However, the Israeli military police began an investigation into the circumstances of his death.** The autopsy performed by the Israeli forensic institute revealed **he died as a result of gunfire.** The autopsy also revealed signs of minor physical force (Ynet, February 22, 2018).

► In the wake of his death a general strike was called in Jericho and a protest march was held (Omama and Palinfo, February 22, 2018). **Yusuf al-Mahmoud, spokesman for the Palestinian national consensus government**, expressed the government's condolences and blamed Israel, claiming that it was a new "crime," added to the long list of "crimes" Israel had carried out against the Palestinian people (Wafa, February 22, 2018). **Saeb Erekat, secretary of the PLO's Executive Committee**, denounced the death and demanded the UN begin an investigation (Palestinian TV, February 22, 2018).

### **Riots, clashes and demonstrations**

► This past week demonstrations and riots continued in **Judea, Samaria, east Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip.** Most of them were in reaction to the decisions made by Donald Trump to relocate the American embassy to Jerusalem. The demonstrations and riots peaked on Friday, February 23, 2018, **held in about 14 sites in Judea, Samaria and the Jordan Valley, and attended by several hundred Palestinians.** The demonstrators clashed with Israeli security forces, threw Molotov cocktails and stones, and burned tires. Several rioters were injured. Despite the tense atmosphere after the death of the Palestinian in Jericho, and despite the calls on the social networks for Palestinians to take to the streets, the number of demonstrators was relatively small (Filastin al-Yawm, February 25, 2018).

► On February 22, 2018, Palestinian activists from the campaign for popular resistance to the fence and settlements expelled an American delegation from Ramallah. **The Americans had come to visit Dr. Khalil Shqaqi's Ramallah-based Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research**, which holds public opinion polls. The activists shouted defamatory

slogans and threw eggs. The Americans were rescued by operatives of the Palestinian security forces (Facebook page of QudsN, February 22, 2018).



**Palestinian activists expel members of the American delegation from Ramallah (Facebook page of QudsN, February 22, 2018).**

► **In the Gaza Strip riots were held** on February 23, 2018, **at five locations along the Gaza-Israel border, attended by several hundred Palestinians.** The rioters threw stones and Molotov cocktails at the fence and burned tires. The IDF reported that IDF forces had shot at two agitators who threatened them and tried to vandalize the fence. On February 23, 2018 the spokesman for the ministry of health in the Gaza Strip said that 22 Palestinians had been wounded by gunfire in clashes between IDF forces and Palestinians near the border security fence in the eastern Gaza Strip (Palinfo, February 23, 2018).

► In the central Gaza Strip Hamas organized a march ending in a rally in the Nuseirat refugee camp. **Isma'il Radwan, a senior Hamas figure,** said in a speech that there was no substitute for "the armed Palestinian resistance" and that the only way to liberate the holy places was through unity based on "armed resistance" [i.e., terrorism]. A rally was also held in the Jabalia refugee camp (al-Anadolu News and the Hamas movement website, February 23, 2018).

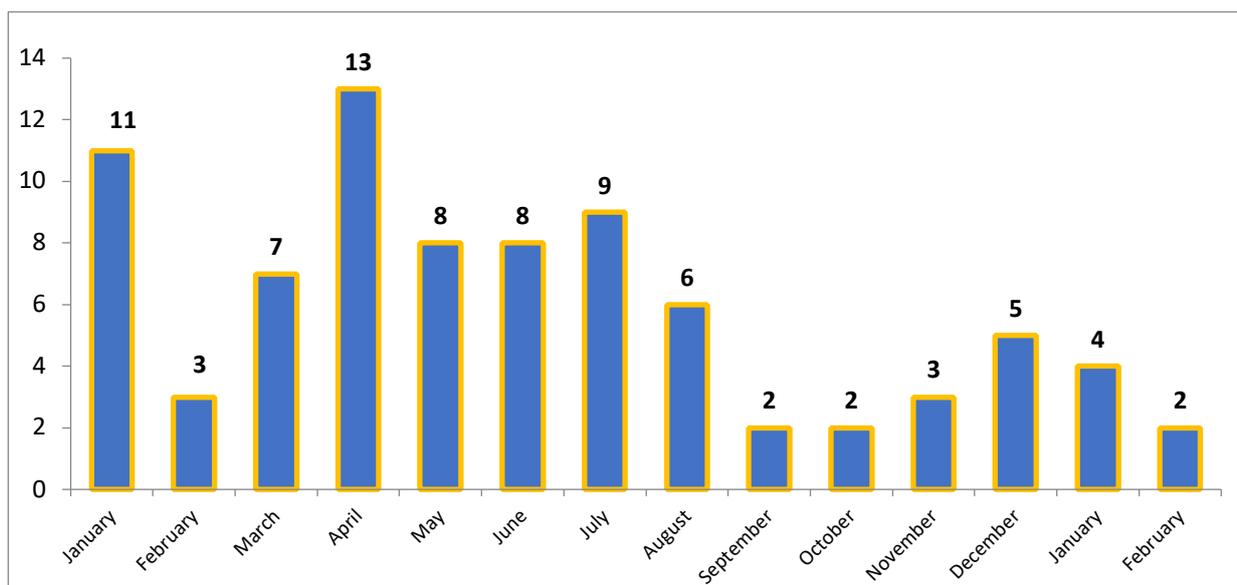


**Right: Hamas rally in the Nuseirat refugee camp (Hamas website, February 23, 2018). Left: Rally in the Jabalia refugee camp (Twitter account of alresala.net, February 23, 2018)**

► Palestinians continue throwing stones and Molotov cocktails at Israeli security forces and civilian targets. Israeli security forces carried out counterterrorism activities throughout Judea and Samaria, detaining Palestinians suspected of terrorist activity and seizing weapons. Prominent events were the following:

- ◆ **February 26, 2018** – Stones were thrown at an Israel vehicle on **route 443** (the road from Jerusalem to Modi'in). No casualties or damage were reported (Facebook page of Red Alert, February 26, 2018).
- ◆ **February 26, 2018** – A Molotov cocktail was thrown at a bus near **Na'ama in the Jordan Valley**. No casualties were reported (Facebook page of Red Alert, February 26, 2018).
- ◆ **February 25, 2018** – Stones were thrown at a vehicle near the **British Police Junction (northwest of Ramallah)**. No casualties were reported. A vehicle was damaged (Facebook page of Red Alert, February 25, 2018).
- ◆ **February 24, 2018** – A Molotov cocktail was thrown at an IDF post on the **Gush Etzion-Hebron road**. No casualties were reported (Facebook page of Red Alert, February 24, 2018).
- ◆ **February 23, 2018** – Three Palestinians who threw stones at Israeli security forces in the **village of Salem (Nablus region)** were wounded by IDF gunfire (Facebook page of Red Alert, February 23, 2018).
- ◆ **February 23, 2018** – Stones were thrown at vehicles at the **Yitzhar Junction (Samaria)**. No casualties were reported; the vehicles were damaged (Facebook page of Red Alert, February 23, 2018).

## Significant terrorist attacks during the past year<sup>1</sup>



### Prevention of a terrorist attack on the Temple Mount planned by ISIS-supporting Israeli Arabs

- During February 2018 the Israeli security forces detained three Israeli Arabs from the central Arab Israeli city of Umm al-Fahm, one of whom was a minor. **They planned to carry out a shooting attack on the Temple Mount in Jerusalem, similar to the one in July 2017** carried out by residents of Umm al-Fahm, in which two policemen were killed. They also raised the idea to synagogues and churches, attacking the Israeli security forces, carrying out vehicular attacks. Interrogation revealed that two of them supported the ideology of ISIS (Israel Security Agency website, February 27, 2018).

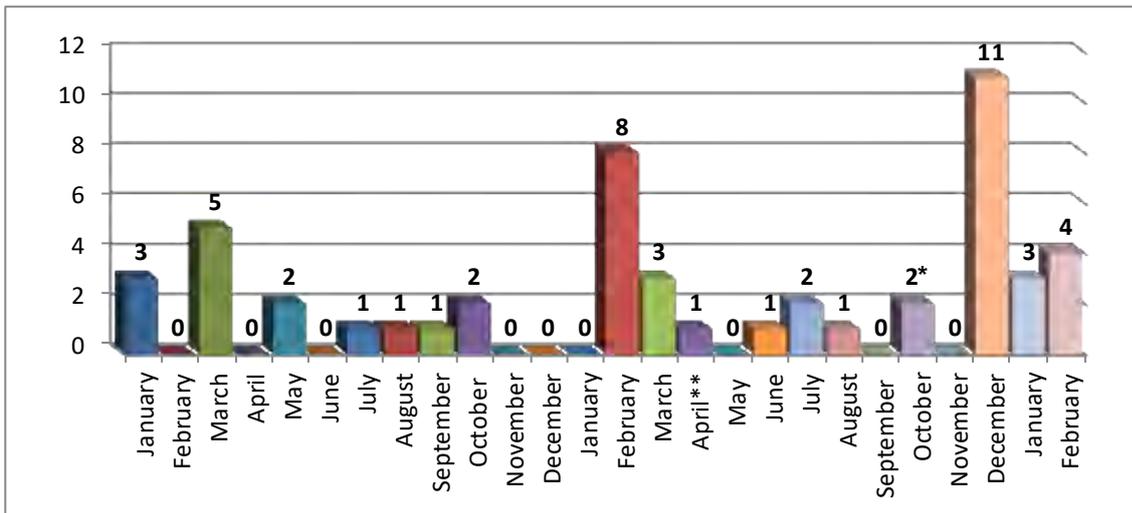
## Israel's South

### Rocket Fire Attacking Israel

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

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

### Monthly Distribution of Rocket Hits in Israel since January 2016

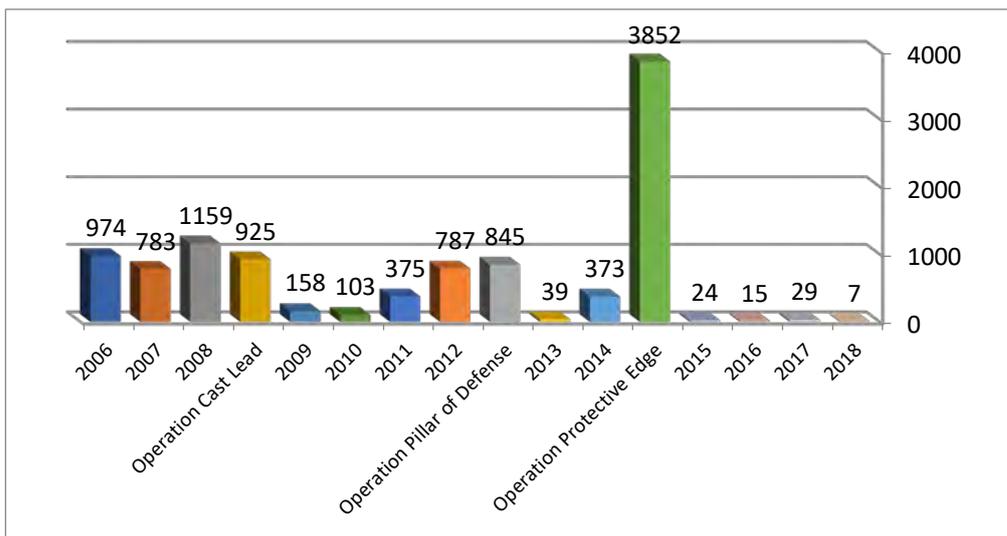


**Notes:**

\* 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



### Israeli navy fires at Palestinian fishing boat that left permitted fishing waters

► An Israeli naval boat identified a fishing boat off the coast of the northern Gaza Strip that **had left the boundaries of permitted fishing waters**. The Palestinians on board were ordered a number of times to not to go beyond the border but refused to obey. The Israeli

navy fired at the boat, critically wounding one of the fishermen. The Palestinians claimed he later died. The others were taken for interrogation.

- ▶ The Palestinian media reported the death of one fisherman and the wounding of two others. The Palestinian killed was **Isma'il Saleh Abu Riala**, 18 (Emad, February 25, 2018). **Hamas spokesman Abd al-Latif al-Qanua** denounced Israel's wounding of the fishermen, claiming it was "an ugly crime" for which Israel was responsible (Shehab, February 25, 2018). The fishermen's union announced a strike to protest the death of Abu Riala (Shabakat Quds, February 25, 2018).

## Developments in the Gaza Strip

### UNRWA's financial difficulties

- ▶ A UN spokesman reported that following the cuts in the agency's budget, **it has a deficit of half a billion dollars, in addition to the 2017 deficit of \$150 million**. He called on the donor countries to participate in a conference that would be held in Vienna in the middle of March 2018 under the auspices of the UN Secretary General (Dunia al-Watan, February 22, 2018).
- ▶ **Matthias Shamali, UNRWA director general**, said **the agency would be able to provide assistance only until June 2018**, because following the American decision the agency had only two thirds of its budget. He said UNRWA was making efforts to get financial aid that would ensure its services beyond June 2018. He appealed to the Arabs and international community for support (Dunia al-Watan, February 22, 2018).

### The humanitarian situation

- ▶ Given the humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip, **Mahmoud al-Zahar, a member of Hamas' political bureau**, asked all the parties in the Palestinian Legislative Council to call an urgent meeting to discuss the formation of a national rescue government. He said the national consensus government had not received a vote of confidence from the Palestinian Legislative Council and therefore was not legal. He accused the government and its prime minister, Rami Hamdallah, of corruption and demanded an investigation, claiming they had used illegally public funds (Safa, February 21, 2018).

### The crossings

- ▶ On February 21, 2018, **Egypt announced the Rafah crossing would open for four days** (Sama, February 21, 2018). Trucks carrying fuel for the power plant began entering the Gaza

Strip (Sama, February 23, 2018). Reportedly, on February 23, 2018, Egypt allowed the passage of 54 trucks carrying merchandise for the Gaza Strip, including trucks carrying diesel fuel and gasoline (Filastin al-Yawm, February 23, 2018).

► Close to the expected time of the reopening of the Rafah crossing, the Egyptian authorities suddenly announced they were closing it because of the security situation in the region (Portal Veto, February 22, 2018). In light of the sudden closing, the information division of the Rafah crossing announced there were 600 Palestinians in the Egyptian terminal who had not managed to cross. The Egyptian authorities allowed ten buses to leave the Rafah crossing for Egypt and transport the passengers (Filastin al-Yawm, February 22, 2018). According to **senior Hamas figure Isma'il Radwan**, the Egyptians promised the crossing would open when the situation in the Gaza Strip became stable, and also promised to send supplies to the Gazans (al-Mayadeen, February 26, 2018).

### **Hamas bypass around the Rafah crossing**

► A senior figure in the ministry of the economy in the Gaza Strip reported that for the first time, the Egyptian authorities had allowed merchandise to enter the Gaza Strip, **including concrete, lumber and other commodities**, directly **through the Salah al-Din Gate** (a side crossing which was formerly an IDF post). He added that even the diesel fuel that had entered the Gaza Strip from Egypt on February 18, 2018, had entered through the gate (Palestine Online, February 19, 2018). The daily newspaper al-Hayat reported that Egypt would take measures to ease the situation in the Gaza Strip, with the agreement of Israel and in coordination with Hamas. Limitations would be eased on the free passage at the Rafah crossing and merchandise would pass almost permanently through **the Salah al-Din Gate, which is controlled by Hamas** (al-Hayat, February 32, 2018).

► Hamas' magazine al-Risalah reported construction near the Rafah crossing under the supervision of the Hamas government, **to prepare the ground for the receipt of merchandise from Egypt**. It is the result of the refusal of the PA government's Rafah crossing authority to allow merchandise to enter through the crossing. According to the magazine, **bulldozers and other heavy equipment are building underground reservoirs for fuel from Egypt** (alresala.net, February 22, 2018).



**The Rafah crossing, according to Hamas' newspaper al-Risalah (alresala.net, February 22, 2018).**

### The supply of electricity

- ▶ The Gaza Strip electric company announced electricity is being supplied in cycles of four hours with electricity and a 12-hour hiatus. That follows the operation of one of the turbines on February 24, 2018, after four tankers of Egyptian diesel fuel entered the Gaza Strip through the Rafah crossing (Palestine Online, February 22, 2018).

### Public services

- ▶ Hospital sanitation and catering companies announced **they were suspending their strike after 15 days** to give "a last chance" to those responsible for finding a solution to the problem. The chairman of the general association of workers' unions in the Gaza Strip confirmed that the strike of the sanitation workers had been suspended after the ministry of health committed itself to resolving the issue during the next 15 days and to bring the issue before the next government meeting (Palinfo and Radio Sawt al-Aqsa, February 25, 2018).
- ▶ The chairman of the union of local municipalities in the Gaza Strip announced the implementation of an emergency program and a cut of 50% in the basic public services provided by the local councils. **That was because of the shortage of water and resources to continue the employment of sanitation and maintenance workers. He added that sewage would flow directly into the sea and the beaches and port of Gaza would be closed.** He warned an ecological catastrophe might result (alresala.net, February 21, 2018).



**Press conference held by heads of the local municipalities in the Gaza Strip (Safa, February 21, 2018).**

## Visit of a Hamas delegation to Egypt

- ▶ On February 22, 2018, **Saleh al-Arouri, deputy head of Hamas' political bureau**, went to Egypt along with Maher Saleh and Zaher Jabarin, both political bureau members. The three joined a Hamas delegation headed by Isma'il Haniyeh, head of Hamas' political bureau, who has been in Cairo since February 9, 2018. The following day Husam Badran, chairman of Hamas' international relations, also arrived in Cairo (Hamas website, February 23, 2018).
- ▶ An anonymous source reported that in addition to meetings with senior members of the Egyptian administration, the Hamas delegation would hold organizational meetings of the "internal" and "external" leaderships. The source added that Hamas' lengthy stay in Egypt was because many of the meetings are internal (Dunia al-Watan, February 23, 2018).



**Right: Hamas delegation in Egypt (Twitter account of the Hamas movement, February 22, 2018).  
Left: Meeting of Hamas' political bureau in Cairo (Twitter account of political bureau member Izzat al-Rishq, February 23, 2018).**

- ▶ While the Hamas delegation was in Egypt, **a delegation of senior Egyptian General Intelligence figures arrived in the Gaza Strip**. According to reports, the objective of the visit is to promote the implementation of the internal Palestinian reconciliation. The delegation, which includes senior Egyptian figures, is headed by **Sameh Nabil, who holds the Palestinian portfolio in Egyptian General Intelligence**. The delegation will meet with

representatives from Hamas, Fatah and the Palestinian national consensus government. The delegation was received by Tawfiq Abu Na'im, responsible for the security forces in the Gaza Strip (Dunia al-Watan, February 25, 2018).



**Ghazi Hamed and Tawfiq Abu Na'im receive the Egyptian delegation (al-Youm al-Sabaa, February 25, 2018).**

## Emergency exercise in the Gaza Strip

► The Hamas ministry of the interior in the Gaza Strip held an emergency exercise which lasted a number of hours. Its objective was to examine preparedness for emergency situations in the Gaza Strip. The security forces were deployed and there was heavy traffic of security vehicles (Facebook page of, the ministry of the interior in the Gaza Strip, February 21, 2018). According to **Iyad al-Bazam, spokesman for the ministry of the interior in the Gaza Strip**, the exercise was part of an annual program to examine preparedness for emergency situations (ministry of the interior in the Gaza Strip, February 21, 2018).



**The Hamas ministry of the interior in the Gaza Strip checks emergency preparations (Facebook page of the Hamas ministry of the interior in the Gaza Strip, February 21, 2018).**

## The Palestinian Authority (PA)

### Mahmoud Abbas' speech at the UN Security Council

► On February 20, 2018, an informal meeting of the UN Security Council was held to discuss "fifty years of the Israeli occupation of Palestinian lands." Mahmoud Abbas gave a speech. He

said that in view of the lack of forward movement resulting from the American decisions regarding Jerusalem and the continued illegal Israeli construction in the settlements, which violates Security Council resolutions, he was proposing a number of ideas.



**Right: Mahmoud Abbas speaks at the UN Security Council (Wafa, February 20, 2018). Left: According to a Hamas cartoon, Mahmoud Abbas' speech at the UN was a waste of time (Palinfo Twitter account, February 24, 2018).**

► **Mahmoud Abbas** said he was interested in forming a peace conference in 2018 with many international participants, among them member countries of the Security Council. He said the results of the committee had to be **the acceptance of Palestine as a full member of the UN**; mutual recognition of Israel and the Palestinian state; the establishment of an international mechanism for mediating the peace process and implementing the Arab peace initiative; agreement that Israel would not take unilateral measures; the revoking of the recognition of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel and of the relocation of the American embassy. He said all future negotiations had to be undertaken on the principle of the two-state solution and the rejection of partial or temporary solutions. He called for a freeze on the decision to recognize Jerusalem as the capital of Israel and for the issue to be resolved through negotiation (Palestinian TV, February 20, 2018).

► **Hamas** rejected the principles for the renewal of negotiations with Israel as presented by Mahmoud Abbas. According to Hamas, the speech did not reflect the national Palestinian position, which calls for the end of the Oslo Accords and refuses to return to negotiations with Israel. The speech was "an attempt to return to the failed peace process in the shadow of the harassment of the [Israeli] occupation" (al-Aqsa, February 21, 2018).

## Palestinian reactions to America's announcement it will open its embassy in Jerusalem in May

On February 24, 2018, the American Department of State announcement the **American embassy in Israel would be relocated to Jerusalem this coming May**. According to the announcement, the relocation would celebrate Israel's 70<sup>th</sup> independence day. Initially the embassy would be located in temporary premises which would be enlarged while a permanent structure was being found. **The American statement was met with a wave of enraged responses from the PA and Hamas**. In the Palestinian public discourse it was perceived as a continuation of America's pro-Israeli bias. An editorial in the newspaper al-Quds predicted the decision would lead to escalation and close the door to peace efforts (al-Quds, February 24, 2018).

► Some of the main responses were the following:

**Nabil Abu Rudeina, spokesman for Mahmoud Abbas**, said no unilateral step would contribute to peace or legitimize anyone. He said any step that was not coordinated with international bodies would lead to the failure of any attempt to reach an arrangement (Palestinian TV, February 23, 2018).

◆ **Saeb Erekat, secretary of the PLO's Executive Committee**, denounced the decision and the "provocative choice" of the date on which the Palestinians mark the *nakba*.<sup>2</sup> He called it a gross violation of international law and existing agreements (Wafa, February 23, 2018).

◆ **Hamas spokesman Fawzi Barhoum** said the American administration's decisions would not legitimize Israel's existence or change the equation or the desire of the Palestinian people to achieve their objectives (al-Mayadeen, February 24, 2018).

◆ **Khaled Mashaal, former head of Hamas' political bureau**, during a conference in Turkey, called on the United States to revoke its decision, which he said deserved only condemnation and **whose implementation had to be prevented**. He added it was a crime carried out by the United States. The Palestinians, he said, would not allow the crime to continue and **therefore would make it fail** (Safa, February 24, 2018).

◆ **The Palestinian Islamic Jihad's information office** issued a statement claiming that the American decision to relocate the embassy on Nakba Day continued the

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<sup>2</sup>Every year on May 15, Israel's Independence Day, the Palestinians mark Nakba Day. Nakba Day symbolizes the catastrophe visited on the Palestinians in the 1948 war.

aggression against the Palestinian people, and against the Arabs and against Muslims. According to the announcement, the decision was illegal and showed how America hurt stability and supported Israel's terrorism against the Palestinian people (Filastin al-Yawm, February 23, 2018).



Right: Hamas cartoon criticizing the weak response of the Arab League to the decision to relocate the American embassy in Jerusalem. The Arabic reads, "Embarrassing response of the Arab League to move the American embassy to Jerusalem" (Palinfo Twitter account, February 25, 2018). Left: According to a cartoon in the daily al-Quds, relocating the American embassy to Jerusalem means digging a grave for the peace process (al-Quds, February 24, 2018).

### The Fatah movement in Jenin gave material support to the family of terrorist operative Ahmed Nasr Jarar

► The Palestinian news agency Wafa (which is directly subordinate to Mahmoud Abbas' office) reported that **the Fatah branch in Jenin provided a house with all the necessary equipment for the use of the family of Ahmed Nasr Jarar, whose house was destroyed by the IDF.** According to Nur al-Dim Abu Rabb, Fatah secretary in Jenin, letting the family live in the house was meant to show "Fatah's national commitment" to the families whose houses had been destroyed by the IED (Wafa, February 24, 2018). **Ahmed Nasr Jarar was the senior operative in the terrorist squad that shot Rabbi Raziel Shevah to death** (January 9, 2018). Jarar was killed by the Israeli security forces in the village of al-Yamoun (in northern Samaria) on February 6, 2018. During the operation the family's house, in which he was hiding, was destroyed.



Ahmed Nasr Jarar's mother (right) thanks Fatah in Jenin for the house (YouTube, February 24, 2018). Left: Official Fatah Facebook page with a notice posted by Suheib Jarar, Ahmed Nasr Jarar's brother, thanking Nur al-Din Abu Rabb, Fatah secretary in Jenin, and his deputy, A'taa'Abu Armila, for the help the movement gave the family (Official Fatah Facebook page, February 24, 2018).

## Events marking the anniversary of the establishment of the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP)

- The Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP) in Abu Dis marked the 49<sup>th</sup> anniversary of its foundation with a march in which masked, armed operatives marched through the streets. Some of the operatives carried knives and axes (qassem.net, February 24, 2018).



DFLP operatives participate in the march (qassem.net, February 24; Twitter account of QudsN, February 23, 2018).

## The Palestinian ministry of culture revives songs of the first intifada

- ▶ **Ihab Bseiso, minister of culture in the Palestinian national consensus government,** signed an agreement endorsing a project for a revival of nationalistic songs sung by **Walid Abd al-Salam during the first intifada.** The agreement was signed with Samer Jaradat, a musician with a recording company in Ramallah. The songs will be recorded for a new album and accompanied by a tour of live performances. Bseiso emphasized the **importance of culture as a form of "resistance"** for founding the Palestinian narrative and putting it out in the world to oppose the Israeli narrative. He also stressed the uniqueness of the first intifada as the inspiration which laid the foundation for the "popular resistance."
- ▶ According to the singer **Walid Abd al-Salam,** songs like "We went out into the streets (and waved flags)" and "We want a homeland" were an important means for struggle and expressed different eras of the Palestinian struggle. He said 15 songs (of 70) would be reproduced in the project. Various writers wrote the songs, the most prominent of whom is Mahmoud Darwish (website of the PA ministry of culture, February 19; Rai al-Yawm, February 18 2018).



**The agreement was signed by Ihab Bseiso, Palestinian minister of culture (right), and Samer Jaradat, a musician with a recording company in Ramallah(website of the Palestinian ministry of culture, February 19, 2018)**