



News of Terrorism and the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict (March 7 – 13, 2018)

Overview

- ▶ This past week there were **three shooting attacks** at IDF posts in Samaria and the Benjamin region. No casualties or damage were reported. **A stabbing attack** at the Shuafat crossing and an IED attacks at the entrance to the military court in Samaria were prevented.
- ▶ In Judea, Samaria and the Gaza Strip demonstrations and riots continued. Various Palestinian groups continue urging the Palestinian public to participate in the demonstrations, but despite their efforts attendance at the events continues to be relatively low (a few hundred demonstrators in Judea and Samaria and a few hundred in the Gaza Strip).
- ▶ On March 13, 2018, an IED was exploded to attack a convoy in the Gaza Strip. In the convoy were Rami Hamdallah, the prime minister of the Palestinian national consensus government, and Majed Faraj, head of Palestinian General Intelligence. Mahmoud Abbas accused Hamas of responsibility. Hamas rejected the accusation and called on the ministry of the interior in the Gaza Strip to begin an investigation.
- ▶ Preparations continue for **the mass march to the border security fence in the Gaza Strip** ("the great return march"). The plan is to bring tens of thousands of people to sites near the fence and to erect a tent city for thousands of families to live in. So far the event is planned to last between March 30 (Land Day) and May 15 (Nakba Day), but the final dates have not yet been decided.

Attacks and attempted attacks

Shooting attack

- ▶ **This past week there were three shooting attacks targeting IDF posts in Samaria and the Benjamin region.** No casualties or damage were reported. The shooters were not caught. The IDF is examining the possibility that two of the attacks were carried out by the same terrorist squad (Ynet, March 10 and 11, 2018).

- ◆ On March 11, 2018, at around 23:00 hours, shooters opened fire at the IDF post between **the community of Psagot and the Palestinian city of al-Bireh (near Ramallah)**. Shell casings were found nearby.
- ◆ A short time later shots were fired at an IDF post **near the Bituniya crossing**. Shell casings were found nearby.
- ◆ On March 8, 2018, shots were fired at an IDF post **near Nablus**. No casualties or damage were reported.

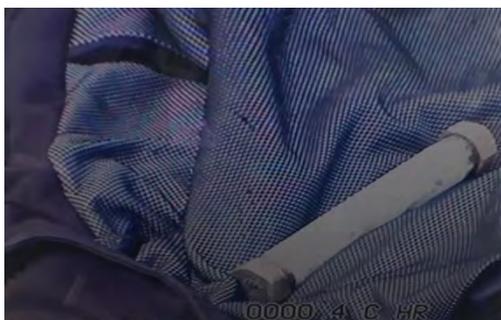
Prevention of terrorist attacks

- ▶ On March 9, 2018, Border Policemen prevented a **stabbing attack**. A Palestinian woman went to the **Shuafat crossing (north Jerusalem)**. A metal detector found a knife and a can of tear gas in her purse. She was detained for interrogation (Facebook page of Red Alert, March 11, 2018).



The knife found in the possession of the Palestinian woman (Palinfo Twitter account, March 11, 2018).

- ▶ Two Palestinians were caught outside the check post at **the entrance to the military court in Samaria** (Salem region), often a target for attacks. The two, both 16, from Jenin, were found with pipe bombs in the possession. They were detained for interrogation (Facebook page of Red Alert, March 11, 2018).



Two pipe bombs found in the possession of two Palestinians at the entrance to the military court in Salem (Israel Police Force, March 11, 2018).

Demonstrations, clashes and riots

► This past week demonstrations and riots continued in Judea, Samaria, east Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip. Palestinian groups continue urging the Palestinian public to participate in the demonstrations. In one instance the "national forces" in the Ramallah-al-Bireh area called on residents to create activities of "resistance to the occupation at all the friction points." They also called for the creation of new friction points "to confuse Israel and the settlers" (Shehab, March 10, 2018). **Despite the calls, only a few hundred Palestinians participated.**

► The more prominent events were the following:

- ◆ During clashes between Palestinians and the Israeli security forces in **al-Luban al-Sharqiya** (south of Nablus), two Palestinians were wounded by gunfire.
- ◆ In **the Bab al-Zawiya neighborhood of Hebron** there were riots in which Palestinians threw stones and Molotov cocktails at the Israeli security forces. The Palestinian ministry of health announced the death of **Muhammad Zayan Faze' al-Ja'abari**, 24, from Hebron, who had been wounded in the chest by IDF fire. According to people who knew him, al-Jabari had participated in many riots in Hebron during which he had been wounded more than once and had been detained a number of times (al-Quds and Safa, March 9, 2018).
- ◆ Riots were held by Palestinians from the village of **Bayt Urif** and residents of the nearby community of **Yitzhar (south of Nablus)**. An IDF force called to the site separated the sides and dispersed the rioters. During the clash a young Palestinian was killed. The IDF is examining the possibility that one of the soldiers fired live ammunition, killing the Palestinian (Ynet, March 10, 2018). The mukhtar of the village said the Palestinian who had been killed was **Amir Omar Shahadeh**, 19. The Hamas

movement claimed he was one of its operatives (al-Anadolu News and the Twitter account of the Amama website, March 10, 2018).



Death notice issued by Hamas for Amir Omar Shahadeh (Twitter account of the Amama website, March 10, 2018).

- Demonstrations were held in the **Gaza Strip** at a number of locations near the border security fence. Several hundred demonstrators participated. According to reports, two Palestinians were wounded in the leg by gunfire east of Khan Yunis (southern Gaza Strip) and another Palestinian had been wounded east of the al-Bureij refugee camp (central Gaza Strip) (Filastin al-Yawm, March 9, 2018).
- The Hamas women's movement held a rally in Gaza City for International Women's Day and to protest the Trump declaration. The chairwoman of the women's movement, **Rajaa' al-Halabi (wife of senior Hamas figure Yunis al-Astel)** said the only way to deal with Israel was "armed resistance" and not "peaceful resistance" (Hamas movement website, March 7, 2018).



Women's rally in Gaza City (Hamas movement website, March 7, 2018).



Demonstration in Rafah where American and Israeli flags and a picture of Donald Trump were burned. Swastikas were drawn on the flags (Filastin al-A'an, and Palinfo, March 7, 2017).

► Palestinians continued 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:

- ◆ **March 12, 2018** – Stones were thrown at an Israeli vehicle near **the village of Anata (northwest of Jerusalem)**. No casualties were reported. The vehicle was damaged (Facebook page of Red Alert, March 12, 2018).
- ◆ **March 11, 2018** – Palestinians threw rocks and stones at an Israeli vehicle **near Hizmeh (east of Jerusalem)**. A woman was injured (Facebook page of Red Alert, March 11, 2018).

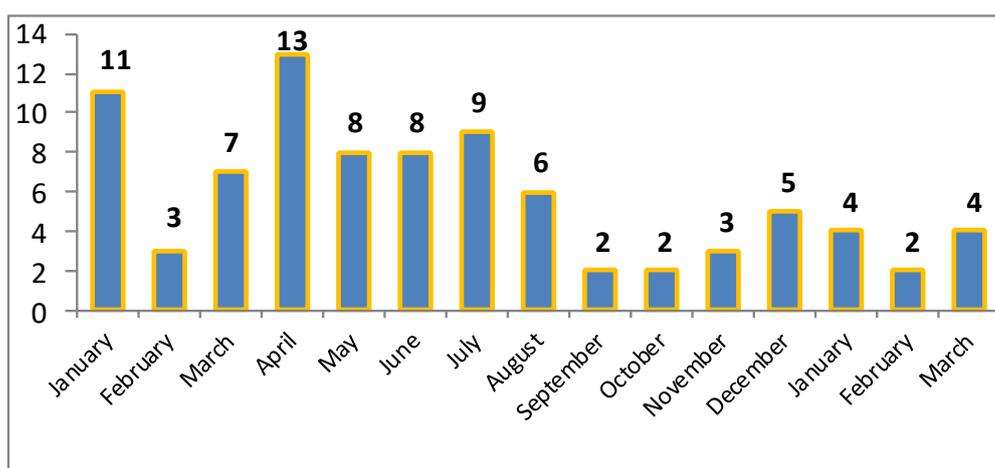


The vehicle hit by a rock near Hizmeh (Palinfo Twitter account, March 11, 2018).

- ◆ **March 10, 2018** – The Israeli security forces detained a number of Palestinians planning to riot at **the northern entrance to Jericho (Jordan Valley)** (Facebook page of Red Alert, March 10, 2018).

- ◆ **March 8, 2018** – A vehicle drove to the **Tapuah Junction (Samaria)** without license plates. Border Policemen detained the driver. A knife and a baseball bat were found in the vehicle. Another vehicle aroused the suspicions of the Border Policemen at the junction. The driver was examined and found to be in possession of a knife. (Facebook page of Red Alert, March 8, 2018).
- ◆ **March 7, 2018** – Stones were thrown at an Israeli vehicle near **Nil'in (north of Ramallah)**. No casualties or damage were reported (Facebook page of Red Alert, March 7, 2018).

Significant terrorist attacks during the past year ¹



Summary of terrorist attacks, February 2018²

- According to data from the Israel Security Agency, during February 2018 there was an increase in the number of terrorist attacks, with a total of **139 terrorist attacks** compared with **113 in January 2018**. Most of them (**121**) involved **Molotov cocktails**. In addition, there were nine IED attacks, two shooting attacks (light arms), two stabbing attacks and four acts of arson.
- **In Judea and Samaria there were 118 attacks** (91 in January), **20 in Jerusalem** (22 in January). In February 2018 there were no terrorist attacks inside the Green Line.

¹ 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.

² According to data from the Israel Security Agency. Incidents of stone-throwing are not included, but incidents involving Molotov cocktails are included.

Israel's South

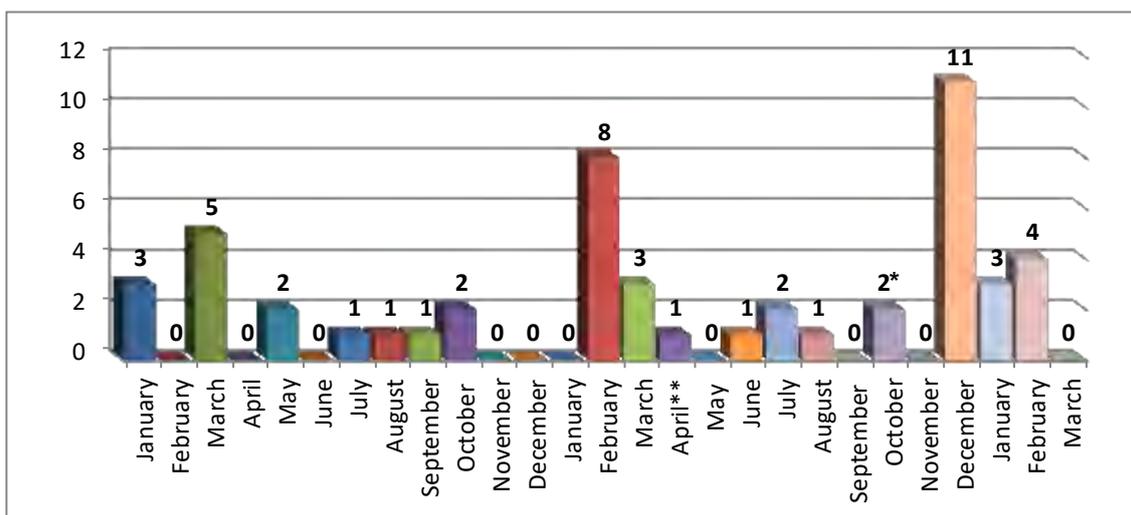
Rocket Fire Attacking Israel

- ▶ This past week no rocket hits were identified in Israeli territory.
- ▶ The Palestinians reported that a rocket fired at Israeli territory from the northern Gaza Strip blew up, killing **Ibrahim Farahat**, 29, from Beit Lahia, who was an operative in the military wing of the Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ). He was apparently killed by **a technical fault that occurred when the rocket was fired** (Facebook page of Red Alert, March 10, 2018). **Ashraf al-Qidra, spokesman for the Palestinian ministry of health**, said that in addition to the Palestinian who died two others had been wounded (Twitter account of Ashraf al-Qidra, March 10, 2018). The military-terrorist wing of the PIJ reported the death of Ibrahim Fathi Ibrahim Farahat, an operative in the Jerusalem Battalions' northern brigade (website of the Jerusalem Battalions, March 10, 2018).



Palestinian Islamic Jihad operative killed by a technical fault during a rocket launching (website of the Jerusalem Battalions, March 10, 2018).

Monthly Distribution of Rocket Hits in Israel since January 2016

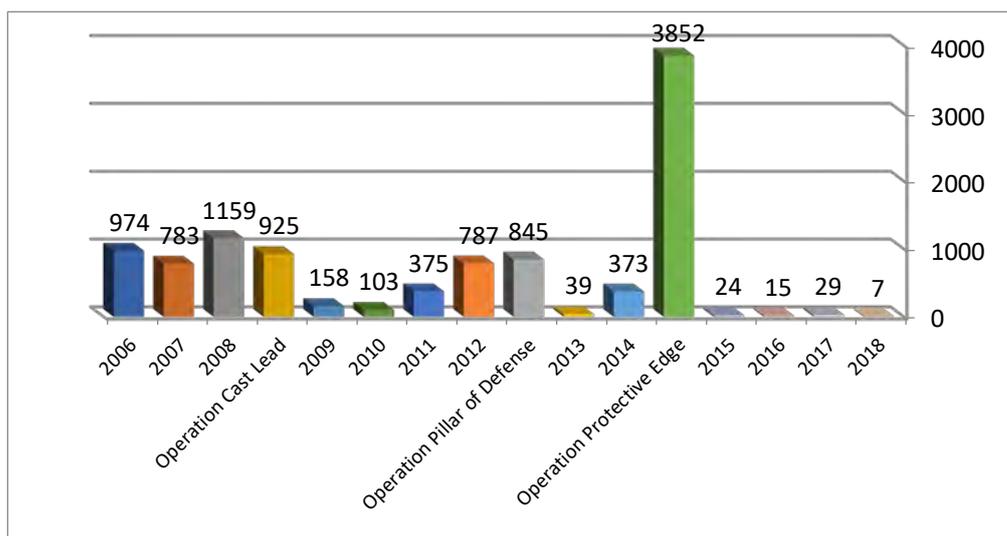


Notes:

* 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



Detention of Palestinians who crossed the border security fence

► On March 11, 2018, an IDF force detained two Palestinians who crossed the border security fence in the northern Gaza Strip into Israeli territory. One of them had a hand grenade and knife in his possession and the other had a knife. They were detained for interrogation (Facebook page of Red Alert, March 11, 2018).

Developments in the Gaza Strip

The electricity crisis

- ▶ This past week Egypt allowed the Rafah crossing to open for the passage of fuel tankers into the Gaza Strip. According to reports, 14 fuel tankers entered (Emad, March 11, 2018).
- ▶ According to **Zafer Melhem, chairman of the PA energy and national resources authority**, Egypt promised to increase the supply of electricity to the Gaza Strip and said that in the near future contacts would be held to put the plan into practice (Wafa, March 8, 2018; Arabi21, March 6, 2018).



Raw sewage spills into the sea because of the lack of fuel to operate pumping stations (Palinfo Twitter account, March 11, 2018).

The status of preparations for the "great return march"³

- ▶ Preparations continue for "the great return march." The Palestinian organizations announced the appointment of a committee responsible for organizing all the campaign's activities (al-Aqsa TV, March 7, 2018). **Ahmed Abu 'Aish, spokesman for the organizing committee**, said that in addition to the march, **a tent city would be erected. The plan is to have thousands of people and their families live in tents erected near the border security fence. They will live there between March 30 and May 15, 2018.** The organizers said the tent city would be erected at a distance of **no more than 500 meters** (3/10 of a mile) **from the fence** (al-Aqsa TV, March 11, 2018). **Abu Ratima, a march activist**, said that at this time **no definite date had been set** for the beginning of the march and that the final date would be determined by circumstances (alresala.net, March 11, 2018).

³Update on two previous ITIC bulletins dealing with the issue.

► **Muhammad Khalaf, coordinator of the march committee**, said preparations included **holding meetings to recruit the public for the march**. So far 13 committees have been appointed from various public sectors (including a women's committee, a youth committee, a legacy and culture committee, and a social media committee). He said the coordinating committee had issued a notice calling on all the residents of the Gaza Strip to participate in the protest, which would be held "peacefully" and whose objective was to realize the "right of return." The organizers of the protest said it was being supported by a number of Palestinian organizations, **Hamas among them**, but that there would no official presence of organization representatives (Reuters, March 8, 2018).

► **Khaled al-Batash, a senior PIJ activist** and coordinator of the national and Islamic forces in the Gaza Strip, held a press conference. He announced the establishment of the "national authority of the camp and march at the border," which, he said, would begin activities to realize the "right of return," the breaking of the siege on the Gaza Strip and the cancellation of Trump's decisions regarding Jerusalem and the refugees. Al-Batash said the authority had been established through a national consensus of Hamas, Fatah, the PIJ, the PFLP, the Palestinian People's Party and other groups (such as humanitarian rights organizations). He said activities would begin in the Gaza Strip and **Judea and Samaria** at the same time. He added that the activities were being carried out in coordination with **Palestinians abroad and Israeli Arabs** (Palinfo, al-Anadolu News and Quds Press, March 7, 2018).



The press conference. Second from the left is Imad al-Agha, senior Fatah figure; next to him is PIJ activist Khaled al-Batash; at the far right is Hamas activist Isma'il Radwan (Quds Press, March 7, 2018).

► **Isma'il Haniyeh, head of Hamas' political bureau**, said **Hamas would not be able to stop the tens of thousands of Gazans** from the northern, eastern, and southern Gaza Strip who would **protest the "siege" imposed on the Gaza Strip** (Palinfo Twitter account, March

9, 2018). **Talal Abu Zarifa, a member of the political bureau of the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine**, said the march carried an important message for the international community. The message was that it had to take responsibility for the Gaza Strip, which was suffering under the siege. He said the main message of the marches was that the "right of return" could not be revoked (Shehab, March 11, 2018).

The Palestinian Authority (PA)

Attempted assassination of Prime Minister Rami Hamdallah

► On the morning of March 13, 2018, **an IED was detonated, attacking the convoy of Rami Hamdallah prime minister of the Palestinian national consensus government, and Majed Faraj, head of Palestinian General Intelligence**. The two had gone to the Gaza Strip, entering through the Erez crossing, to participate in the inauguration of a sewage purification plant. The explosion occurred along the main road through the Gaza Strip near the town of Beit Hanoun in the northern Gaza Strip. Three vehicles were damaged by the explosion, one of them in Hamdallah's convoy. There are contradicting reports about the people hurt in the explosion. According to one report, no one was harmed. According to another, seven people were injured (Facebook page of Khaber Press, March 13, 2018).

► **Mahmoud Abbas' office strongly condemned the attempted assassination and placed full responsibility on Hamas**. According to the statement, those who carried out the attack were acting directly in the service of Israel, which wanted to perpetuate the internal Palestinian split (Wafa, March 13, 2018). **Mahmoud Abbas cut his visit to Jordan and short and returned to Ramallah** (Ma'an, March 13, 2018). Hamas expressed surprise at the PA's accusations and called on the ministry of the interior in the Gaza Strip to open an immediate investigation of the event (Palinfo Twitter account, March 13, 2018).



Right: One of the vehicles damaged by the explosion (Facebook page of Khaber Press, March 13, 2018). Left: The crater left by the explosion (Palinfo Twitter account, March 13, 2018).



**First pictures of the moment of the explosion
(Facebook page of Khaber Press, March 13, 2018).**

Emergency UNRWA meeting

► An emergency meeting is scheduled to be held in Rome on March 14, 2018 to discuss the agency's financial hardships. **UNRWA spokesman Sami Mushasha** said 90 countries would attend the meeting, which would be held with Swedish, Jordanian and Egypt sponsorship. He said he was optimistic about the its outcome because of the participation of many influential countries (Dunia al-Watan, March 11, 2018). **Rami Hamdallah, prime minister** of the Palestinian national consensus government, will head the Palestinian delegation to the meeting. **Riyadh al-Maliki, Palestinian foreign minister**, said the representation of high-ranking Palestinians proved that UNRWA's success and increasing its sources of financing were important to the Palestinian leadership (Dunia al-Watan, March 11, 2018).

Preparations for the conference of the Palestinian National Council (PNC)⁴

► The PLO's Executive Committee decided to convene the Palestinian National Council (PNC) on April 30, 2018. It is not known where the conference will be held because Hamas, the PIJ and the PFLP demand it be held beyond the PA's borders to ensure the largest possible number of participants.

► It is expected that during the conference new candidates will be chosen for key roles in the PLO (secretary general of the Executive Committee, PLO chairman). Some members of the PLO's Executive Committee will be replaced (al-Hayat, March 10, 2018). "Reliable sources" were quoted as saying that the conference's main objective is to choose a new leadership to reorganize and renew the PLO's legitimacy and to promote its status, in view of the internal

⁴The PNC is the PLO's legislative body which chooses the Executive Committee. It usually meets once every two years. The PNC has 740 representatives.

Palestinian split. According to the sources, the changes will support stability in the Palestinian political arena. It was also reported that a number of veteran members would leave the council (Safa, March 6, 2018).

► **Hamas and the PIJ** criticized the decision to convene the PNC. Hamas issued a notice calling the conference "a gross violation of the national consensus" and the internal Palestinian reconciliation (Hamas website, March 7, 2018). **Khalil al-Haya, a member of Hamas' political bureau**, said Hamas would not participate in the conference because the PNC's meetings had lost their legitimacy and the Council had not succeeded in changing the Palestinians' conditions (al-Aqsa, March 7, 2018). **PIJ spokesman Da'ud Shehab** opposed holding the conference on the grounds that it would have no value and bring no results (Shehab, March 7, 2018).

Detention of the chairman of the students' association at Bir Zeit University

► On March 7, 2018, the Israeli security forces detained the chairman of the students' association at Bir Zeit University **on suspicion of involvement in terrorist activities**. He was detained on campus during the school day. According to the Palestinians he is **Omar Kaswani, chairman of the student association and head of the Islamic Block** (the Hamas faction in the university).

► Bir Zeit University denounced so-called takeover of the university campus by IDF forces. The university claimed the IDF used live fire, and also denounced the detention of Omar al-Kaswani, chairman of the student association. The university demanded that the International Association of Universities, the Arab Association of Universities, the international community the UN and its agencies defend the academic institutions in the Palestinian territories (Wafa, March 10, 2018).

► The detention led to a series of condemnations from the PA and Palestinian organizations, which called for international intervention. Rallies were held to protest the detention carried out by Israel. The PA's minister of education held a press conference where he denounced Israel's activities against the Palestinian educational system and the "abduction" of the chairman of the student association. Hamas denounced the detention, claiming it was aggression against the university (al-Aqsa, March 8, 2018).



Right: Press conference held by the Palestinian minister of education (Wafa, March 12, 2018).
Left: Protest demonstration held by students at Bir Zeit University (Facebook page of the Islamic Block at Bir Zeit University, March 10, 2018).



Hamis cartoon criticizing the PA security forces following the detention of the chairman of the students' association at Bir Zeit University. The Arabic at the right reads, "PA security" (Flesteen, March 8, 2018).

Palestinian diplomatic activity to prevent Israel from becoming a member of the UN Security Council

- ▶ Israel is considering proposing its candidacy for the position of non-permanent member of the UN Security Council as part of the Western European block and other states. Elections will be held in June 2018. Germany and Belgium are also candidates, and to be chosen a majority of at least two thirds of the members of the General Assembly is necessary.⁵
- ▶ Despite the fact that Israel has not yet decided whether or not to propose its candidacy, **Palestinian efforts are already being made to undermine the Israeli move. Riyadh al-Mansour, the Palestinian representative to the UN**, said it was very important to prevent Israel from becoming a non-permanent member of the Security Council. He said in the near

⁵The Security Council is composed of five permanent members and ten member states chosen for a term of two years.

future Palestinians would pay visits to the African states, the Caribbean islands and South Africa to fight against Israel's efforts to recruit votes in the UN (Wafa, March 12, 2018).

The PA and Fatah continue glorifying the memory of terrorist Dalal al-Mughrabi⁶

► On March 11, 2018, a ceremony was held in the museum in the compound of the Yasser Arafat Institute in Ramallah.⁷ It marked the 40th anniversary of the death of Dalal al-Mughrabi and the operatives of the terrorist squad who carried out the Coastal Road Massacre in 1978, killing 35 Israeli civilians (including children). A speech was given by **Nasser al-Qudwa, a member of Fatah's Central Committee, who is also the chairman of the Yasser Arafat Institute**. He praised Dalal al-Mughrabi and thanked her and other operatives in her squad. He said that holding the event in the Yasser Arafat museum stressed the "wonderful link between the father [i.e., Arafat] and his daughter [i.e., Dalal al-Mughrabi]." Poems were read praising the terrorists who carried out the attack (Wafa, March 11, 2018).



Right: Nasser al-Qudwa gives a speech at the Yasser Arafat Institute in Ramallah with a picture of Dalal al-Mughrabi on a screen behind him. Left: Participants stand in memory of Dalal al-Mughrabi and the other terrorists in the attack at the beginning of the event (Palestinian TV Facebook page, March 10, 2018).

► The Fatah movement posted pictures of Dalal al-Mughrabi and a video glorifying her activity on its official Facebook page (official Fatah Facebook page, March 10, 11 and 12, 2018).

⁶For further information, see the March 23, 2017 bulletin, "Glorifying shaheeds who carried out deadly terrorist attacks and turning them into role models: Dalal al-Mughrabi, a Fatah terrorist who participated in the 1978 Coastal Road Massacre, as a case study."

⁷The Yasser Arafat Institute was established by a presidential edict issued by Mahmoud Abbas in 2007 to perpetuate the memory and legacy of Yasser Arafat. It is supported by the Palestinian government.



Picture of Dalal al-Mughrabi and the other operatives of the terrorist squad that carried out the Coastal Road Massacre (official Fatah Facebook page, March 12, 2018).