



The "Great Return March": Demonstrations of April 27, 2018, and continuation to be expected

April 29, 2018



Palestinians cutting the security fence near the Karni crossing
(IDF Spokesperson's Office, April 27, 2018)

Incidents on Friday, April 27

Overview

On Friday, April 27, 2018, the fifth Friday of the demonstrations of the "Great Return March," **riots took place along the Gaza border with Israel. An estimated 10,000 Palestinians participated in the incidents in five focal points. The events of last Friday included many acts of violence, the most serious of which was an attempt to break through the fence and penetrate into Israel in the Karni crossing area.** In view of the **blatant attempt to violate Israel's sovereignty, the IDF spokesperson announced a new policy of response, in which every violent activity would be met with violent activity against Hamas.** As part of this policy, Israel Air Force aircraft attacked six targets of Hamas's naval force.

- ▶ The acts of violence on the last Friday came into expression in several ways: **throwing stones and rocks; throwing IEDs and hand grenades** at IDF soldiers; **flying kites** over Israeli territory with burning objects attached to them (some of the kites caused fires in Israel and extensive damage); **sabotaging the security fence** along the border and the barbed wire close to it (including two incidents of setting fire to the fence, pulling the fence and attempts to cut it). The Palestinian media reported that groups of Palestinians managed to reach the barbed wire east of Ikhza'a in several points **and drag part of the fence** (Amad, PALINFO, April 27, 2018).
- ▶ The peak of the events was **in the area of the Karni crossing** (the main crossing for transferring goods from Israel to the Gaza Strip), when **several hundred demonstrators tried to break through the fence and reach Israeli territory.** The rioters got close to the

fence, threw hand grenades and Molotov cocktails, threw stones, and tried to set fire to the fence. The IDF forces responded according to procedure and halted the penetration attempts (IDF spokesperson, April 27, 2018).

► Four demonstrators were killed in the incidents of April 27, 2018, **three of them affiliated with Fatah**. An examination by the ITIC revealed that another fatality (April 13, 2018), **the media person Ahmad Abu Hussein, was a member of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP)**. In total, **45 Palestinians were killed so far, 36 of whom (about 80%) belonged to or were affiliated with the terrorist organizations operating in the Gaza Strip**, mainly Hamas and Fatah.

Violence caught by the camera

Attempt to break through the fence near the Karni crossing



Palestinian crowd approaching the security fence east of Gaza, near the Karni crossing, in an attempt to break through and penetrate into Israel (Al-Wataniya, April 27, 2018)



Right: Palestinian crowd gathering near the security fence (close to the Karni crossing). Left: Several rioters approaching the security fence to sabotage it and penetrate into Israel. Bottom: Palestinians trying to sabotage the fence (IDF spokesperson, April 27, 2018)



Palestinian crowd close to the security fence east of Khan Younes (WAFA, April 27, 2018)



Palestinian crowd east of Khan Younes dragging the fence and then cutting it (PALINFO, April 27, 2018)

Additional acts of violence caught by the camera



Right: Rioters deploying a large slingshot to throw stones near the security fence (Shehab Facebook page, April 27, 2018). Left: Palestinian rioters sabotaging the security fence east of Jabalia (PALINFO Twitter account, April 27, 2018)



Right: Rioters approaching the security fence and provoking the IDF soldiers. Left: Confrontations between rioters and IDF forces near the security fence east of Jabalia (PALINFO Twitter account, April 27, 2018)



Fire in one of the Israeli towns in the area surrounding the Gaza Strip, caused by a kite with a Molotov cocktail from the Gaza Strip territory (PALINFO Twitter account, April 28, 2018)

Change in the IDF response policy

Following the riots of the Palestinian crowd at the Karni crossing, **the IDF decided on a new response policy. According to this policy, every violent activity against Israel will be met with violent activity against Hamas in the depth of the Gaza Strip (Israel perceives Hamas as the party controlling the Gaza Strip, including the violent provocations against the IDF).** Based on this policy, in response to breaking through the fence in the area of the Karni crossing, **Israel Air Force aircraft attacked six targets belonging to Hamas's naval force** (IDF Spokesperson's Office, April 27, 2018).

► The Palestinian media reported an attack on the Naval Police in west Gaza City (Dunya Al-Watan, April 27, 2018) and an attack on an outpost in west Deir Al-Balah (Shehab, April 27, 2018). **In addition, two ships were reportedly attacked. According to the reports, the Palestinians prepared the two ships to greet the flotilla planned to break the "siege" of Gaza** (PALINFO, April 27, 2018). Hamas media reported on four people wounded (PALINFO, April 27, 2018).

► **According to Hamas spokesman Fawzi Barhoum's statement** in response, Hamas holds Israel responsible for the results of its escalation activity in the Gaza Strip. According to Barhoum, the scope and timing of the attack reflect Israel's "confusion and frustration," which prevent it from coping with the new rules set by the Palestinian people (Hamas website, April 28, 2018).

Hamas senior leaders stirring up the crowd and the rioters

► **Hamas and PIJ senior leaders were present at the sites of the demonstrations and stirred up their audience with calls and speeches.** Ismail Haniya visited the confrontation zone east of Rafah (Al-Aqsa, April 27, 2018). Haniya, with PIJ leader Ahmad al-Mudallal beside him, **stirred up the audience by calling, "Millions of shahids are marching to Jerusalem."**

► In his speech, Ismail Haniya called Rafah "the fortress of the South" and said that Rafah had sacrificed many shahids and had taken part in creating "strategic equations." He greeted the various "units" of the rioters, including **"the tire unit," "the fence-cutting unit,"** and **"the kite unit."** **According to Haniya, the March of Return embarrassed Israel and will continue "until the liberation"** (Al-Aqsa, April 27, 2018).



Message of violence: Chairman of Hamas's Political Bureau Ismail Haniya throwing stones at IDF forces during his visit to the march in east Rafah (PALINFO Twitter account, April 28, 2018)

► **Yahya Sinwar**, the head of Hamas's Political Bureau in the Gaza Strip, arrived at the site of the demonstrations in Al-Bureij. He also **stirred up the marching Palestinians with the calls "In spirit and blood, we will redeem Palestine."** In his speech, he thanked the participants for their sacrifice. According to him, the Palestinians will continue until their goals are achieved (Al-Aqsa, April 27, 2018). **Fathi Hamad, member of Hamas's Political Bureau**, arrived at the gathering area east of Jabalia (Al-Aqsa, April 27, 2018).



Yahya Sinwar, Hamas leader in the Gaza Strip, visiting the "March of Return" in east Khan Younes (Shehab Facebook page, April 27, 2018)

Encouraging the population to continue the marches

► It seems that the population's readiness to take part in the marches **is decreasing from one week to the next.** In order to maintain the momentum of the marches until their planned peak on May 15, **Hamas encourages the population to come to the sites of the demonstrations. Hamas also offers them logistic assistance.** This week, Hamas sent buses to try and increase the number of participants (Filistin Al-Youm, April 28, 2018). In

addition, trucks carrying tires arrived at the demonstration site before the beginning of the demonstrations (Dunya Al-Watan, April 27, 2018).



**Children preparing sandbags as a cover and protection for the demonstrators
(Shehab Facebook page, April 27, 2018)**

Continuation to be expected

- ▶ Hamas and the other organizations are trying to continue and preserve the demonstrations on this level at least until May 15, 2018 (Nakba Day). Nakba Day is supposed to be the culmination of the Friday demonstrations. This Friday, May 4, 2018, has been declared the Friday of “Palestine laborers facing the siege.”
- ▶ According to **Hamas’s spokesman Hussam Badran**, Hamas is working in collaboration so that events would also take place in the West Bank, in Lebanon, and in Western countries. **He further said that even after May 15, the peak day, the marches would not stop, but continue** (Al-Aqsa, April 26, 2018).

Appendix

Distribution of the identity of the fatalities of the “Great Return March”

► According to the Palestinian Health Ministry, **three people were killed in the demonstrations of Friday, April 27, 2018, and 883 were wounded by IDF fire or from inhaling smoke during the confrontations.** On the next day, a 15-year-old youth who was wounded in the incidents near the border fence died of his wounds (Al-Aqsa Channel; Ashraf al-Qudra’s Twitter account, April 27, 2018). Three of the four demonstrators who have been killed **were affiliated with Fatah.** In addition, the press photographer Ahmad Abu Hussein, wounded on April 13, 2018, died of his wounds. **A total of 45 Palestinians were killed in the marches so far, 36 of whom (about 80%) were terrorist operatives or affiliated with terrorist organizations.**¹ Following are details about the new fatalities.

► Khalil Na’im Atallah

- ◆ **Personal details:** 22 years old, from the Daraj neighborhood in Gaza City.
- ◆ **Circumstances of his death:** On April 27, 2018, he was wounded by IDF fire in east Gaza (Dunya Al-Watan, April 27, 2018).
- ◆ **Organizational affiliation: Affiliated with Fatah.** According to an announcement released by Fatah, **he is “the son of the [Fatah] movement,”** i.e., a member of Fatah (Facebook page of the Fatah branch in the northern Gaza Strip, April 28, 2018). **His body was wrapped in Fatah’s yellow flag,** and yellow flags also flew during the funeral. **Ahmad Hiles, member of the Fatah’s Central Committee** and one of the Fatah leaders in the Gaza Strip, attended his funeral (Facebook page of the Fatah branch in the northern Gaza Strip, April 28, 2018). Ismail Haniya also came to make a condolence call at the mourning tent in Gaza (PALINFO Twitter account, April 28, 2018).

¹ For a detailed document specifying the identity of the fatalities, see the ITIC’s Information Bulletin from April 25, 2018: “Analysis of the Identities of Gazans Killed During the “Great Return March.”



Right: Ahmad Hiles (second from the right, in a grey suit) at the funeral of Khalil Na'im Atallah in Gaza (Facebook page of the Fatah branch in the northern Gaza Strip, April 28, 2018). Left: Ismail Haniya making a condolence call at the mourning tent in Gaza (PALINFO Twitter account, April 28, 2018)

► Abd al-Salam Bakr

- ◆ **Personal details:** 29 years old, from the Khan Younes refugee camp.
- ◆ **Circumstances of his death:** He was killed by IDF fire east of Ikha'a in east Khan Younes (Ashraf al-Qudra's Twitter account, April 27, 2018).
- ◆ **Organizational affiliation: Affiliated with Fatah.** According to a Fatah announcement, **he is “the son of the [Fatah] movement,”** i.e., a Fatah member (Facebook page of the Fatah branch in the northern Gaza Strip, April 28, 2018).



Death notice published by Fatah, commemorating the deaths of the “two heroic shahids, members of the movement”: Abd al-Salam Bakr and Khalil Na'im Atallah (Facebook page of the Fatah branch in the northern Gaza Strip, April 28, 2018)

► Mohammad Amin al-Muqid

- ◆ **Personal details:** 21 years old, from the Sheikh Radwan neighborhood in Gaza (Quds Network, April 28, 2018).
- ◆ **Circumstances of his death:** He was wounded on April 27, 2018, by IDF fire east of Gaza (QUDSN Facebook page, April 28, 2018).

◆ **Organizational affiliation:** Affiliated with Hamas. Hamas banners and death notices were hung in the mourning tent for him in Gaza. Ismail Haniya came to make a condolence call at the mourning tent in Gaza (PALINFO Twitter account, April 28, 2018).



Ismail Haniya making a condolence call to the mourning tent in Gaza. Hamas death notices and banners were hung in the tent (PALINFO, April 28, 2018)

► **Azzam Hilal Oweida**

- ◆ **Personal details:** 14 years old, from Khan Younes (Al-Mayadeen, April 28, 2018).
- ◆ **Circumstances of his death:** Died of his wounds from IDF fire east of Khan Younes on April 27, 2018 (Wafa, April 28, 2018).
- ◆ **Organizational affiliation:** Unknown. His body was wrapped in Fatah flags, and yellow Fatah flags flew during his funeral (PALINFO Twitter account, April 28, 2018). However, Fatah did not publish a death notice.



The body of Azzam Hilal Oweida wrapped in Fatah's yellow flag. Yellow Fatah flags flew during the funeral (PALINFO Twitter account, April 28, 2018)

Summary of the identities of the fatalities of the “Great Return March”

Organization	Membership	Affiliation	Total
Hamas	9 military wing and security force operatives	9 affiliated with Hamas	18
Fatah	2 military operatives	11 affiliated with Fatah	13
PIJ	1 military operative		1
DFLP	1 military operative	1 affiliated	2
PFLP		2 affiliated	2
Without organizational affiliation			9
Total			45 Palestinians killed