



## Senior Hamas figure Salah al-Bardawil: 50 of the 62 shaheeds of May 14 [about 80%] belonged to Hamas

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### Overview

**Salah al-Bardawil, a member of Hamas' political bureau**, told a newspaper that in the "most recent event" [i.e., May 14, 2018] **62 shaheeds were killed, 50 of them belonging to Hamas**. He added that in the events that took place before May 14 [i.e., since the beginning of the "great return march"] **50% of the Palestinians killed belonged to Hamas**. Those are the **official numbers**, according to Salah al-Bardawil. In addition, **Yahya al-Sinwar, head of Hamas' political bureau in the Gaza Strip**, admitted that **operatives from the Izz al-Din Qassam Brigades (Hamas' military wing) participated in the marches**. Salah al-Bardawil's exceptional remark came in answer to a question from the interviewer, who asked about criticism Hamas had received for sending people to die while Hamas "reaped the fruits." Those remarks illustrated yet again that the **rioters in the front line who tried to sabotage the security fence, attack IDF soldiers and penetrate into Israeli territory, were civilian-clad members of the terrorist organizations (primarily Hamas)**. They were guided by and operated under instructions from the Hamas leadership, which played a dominant role in the marches.



Salah al-Bardawil (right) during an interview where he admitted that 50 shaheeds who died on May 14 belonged to Hamas (Baladuna al-I'lamiyah, a local Gaza TV station, May 16, 2018)

## Salah al-Bardawil's Statements

► **Salah al-Bardawil, a member of Hamas' political bureau**, during a TV interview, was asked to respond to criticism of Hamas, according to which "people's children go to their deaths [while] Hamas reaps the fruits." Salah al-Bardawil's response was that during the "**most recent event**" [i.e., the riots of May 14] **62 shaheeds were killed, 50 of them from Hamas**. Thus, he claimed, **it could not be said that Hamas was "reaping the fruits" while it paid the highest price. The figures, he said, were official**. He added that in regard to previous events [i.e., between March 30 and May 14], it could be said that 50% of those killed belonged to Hamas (Baladuna al-I'lamiyah, May 16, 2018).

► **Yahya al-Sinwar, head of Hamas' political bureau in the Gaza Strip**, admitted that operatives of the Izz al-Din Qassam Brigades (Hamas' military-terrorist wing) **actively participated in the marches**, but he claimed they had not used weapons (al-Jazeera interview, May 16, 2018). **Mahmoud al-Rantisi**, a terrorist operative who had been imprisoned in Israel, spoke about his son, killed by IDF fire (May 14, 2018). **He said his son had participated in events of "the great return march" every Friday, and always marched in the front row**. He boasted that his son was a "**jihad fighter**" and an **operative in the *nukhba*** (Hamas' elite force) (al-Aqsa TV, May 15, 2018).

### The significance of the statements

► The aforementioned statements, especially that of Salah al-Bardawil, were **exceptional because until now Hamas has tried to obscure or hide its central role in the "great return march," which has been falsely represented as a popular initiative**. In ITIC assessment, their objective was to deflect harsh internal criticism of Hamas voiced because of the high number of casualties on May 14. **Revealing the high percentage of Hamas operatives killed was meant to show that it was Hamas that spearheaded the riots at the fence and attempts to penetrate into Israeli territory, and that it was Hamas that had sacrificed the largest number of shaheeds, not the Gazan civilian population**.

Given internal constraints, Hamas, in ITIC assessment, was prepared to pay the price of exposing its dominant role in the marches and the high number of its casualties. The remarks made by Salah al-Bardawil and the findings of the analysis of the ITIC (which has not yet been completed) **clearly contradict the false narrative that the Palestinians are marketing to the world, especially to the West, that the IDF carried out the indiscriminate "slaughter" of innocent, defenseless civilians.** The high number of Hamas operatives killed clearly shows that in most cases the IDF pin-pointed terrorist operatives, **mainly Hamas operatives. Hamas operatives spearheaded the riots and led the rioters who tried, unsuccessfully, to penetrate into Israeli territory, violate its sovereignty and ceaselessly attempt to attack IDF soldiers and harm Israeli civilians.**