



**Inclusion of minors in military activity against the IDF: Saadi Abu Salah, a 16-year-old boy who died when he was sent by Hamas to cut the border fence, belonged to the clan in Beit Hanoun whose members were involved in intensive terrorist activity, some of them as minors
(Update to previous publication by the ITIC)**

June 4, 2018

Overview¹

On May 14, 2018, at the height of the riots held during the “Great Return March,” **Saadi Abu Salah**, a 16-year-old affiliated with Hamas, was killed. Despite his young age, the youth was sent by Hamas to the front line of rioters near the border fence, together with a group of boys known as the “tire and fence-cutting unit.” These youths, including Saadi Abu Salah, were sent by Hamas **to cut the border fence**, in preparation for penetrating into Israeli territory, putting their lives at risk.



Right: Saadi Abu Salah with a group of youths sabotaging the security fence in the northern Gaza Strip (Shehab Facebook page, May 16, 2018). Left: Operatives of the “tire and fence-cutting unit” eulogize Saadi Abu Salah who, they say, excelled at burning tires and cutting through the fence (Shehab Facebook page, May 16, 2018)

► An examination conducted by the ITIC reveals that **Saadi Abu Salah** belonged to the clan in Beit Hanoun, in the northern Gaza Strip, **where several terrorists, both minors and adults, were born and raised.** Terrorists from the Abu Salah clan have been involved in extensive, diverse terrorist activity, including rocket fire into Israel. **Five of them were detained in an IDF operation in Beit Hanoun in 2008. They were convicted by Israeli courts and sentenced to lengthy prison terms.** The terrorist activity was carried out by the clan members **in the ranks of the PFLP and Hamas, and included minors (aged 14, 15 and 17).** Therefore, **Saadi Abu Salah, 16, who was sent by Hamas to cut the border fence, was**

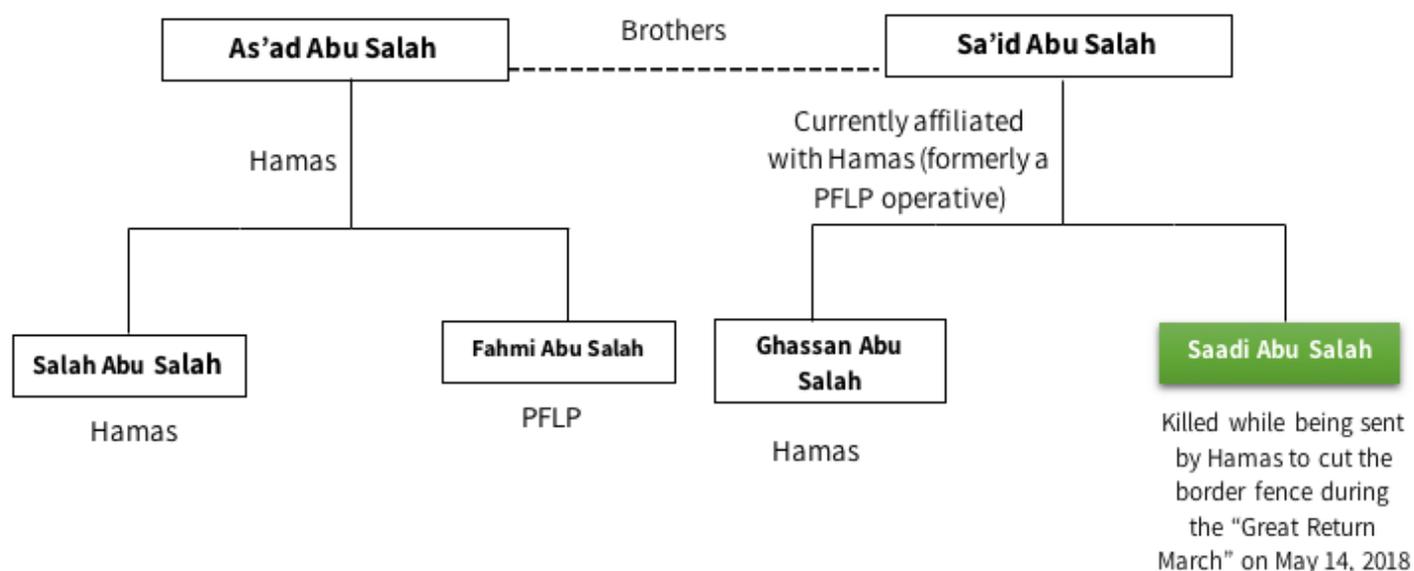
¹ See the ITIC’s Information Bulletin from May 27, 2018: “Hamas sends boys to their deaths in the “great return march:” the case of Saadi Abu Salah, 16, who died in an attempt to cut through the security fence on May 14, 2018.”

not an exceptional figure, but rather acted according to the accepted codes of behavior in his clan.

Involvement in terrorism by members of the Abu Salah clan

► **Two prominent figures** in the terrorist activities of the Abu Salah clan from Beit Hanoun in the northern Gaza Strip are **two brothers who are currently affiliated with Hamas**: the first is Saadi Abu Salah's father **Sa'id Abu Salah**, who was imprisoned in Israel and released in 2014. The second is Saadi Abu Salah's uncle **As'ad Abu Salah**, who was sentenced to 25 years in prison and released as part of the Gilad Shalit prisoner exchange deal in 2011. The sons of these two brothers (Saadi Abu Salah's brother and two of his cousins) **are still in prison in Israel because of their involvement in terrorist activities at the time they were minors. The three are**: Saadi's brother **Ghassan Abu Salah**, a Hamas operative; Saadi's cousin **Fahmi Abu Salah**, a PFLP operative; and Saadi's cousin **Salah Abu Salah**, a Hamas operative.

The five members of the Abu Salah clan who were detained in an IDF operation in Beit Hanoun in 2008





Right: Sa'id Abu Salah (center), Saadi's father, wearing a green Hamas scarf, at the memorial service for his son organized by Hamas (Hamas media unit in Beit Hanoun, May 17, 2018). Left: As'ad Abu Salah (second from left), Saadi's uncle, at the memorial service (Hamas media unit in Beit Hanoun, May 17, 2018).

The involvement of minors from the Abu Salah clan in terrorism: the case of Fahmi Abu Salah, Saadi's cousin



Two cousins of Saadi Abu Salah, who are imprisoned in Israel: Fahmi Abu Salah (left) with his brother Salah (right) (Facebook page of their father As'ad Fahmi Abu Salah, December 8, 2017).

- The involvement in terrorist activity of **Saadi Abu Salah**, a 16-year-old minor, **is not an exceptional case in the Abu Salah clan**. Another prominent example is the case of **Fahmi Abu Salah**, Saadi's cousin. Fahmi, born in 1987, **joined the PFLP in 2001, i.e., at the age of 14**. He began to operate **in a PFLP military squad**, and a year later, **at the age of 15, was officially recruited into the organization**. On March 19, 2008 (at the age of 21) he was detained by IDF forces and sentenced to 22 years in prison and given an 18-month suspended sentence (from the verdict handed down by the Beersheba District Court on July 12, 2012, Serious Crime 1065/08).
- **According to the verdict, Fahmi Abu Salah was involved in a series of attacks on behalf of the PFLP in 2001-2003, i.e., at the age of 14 and 15**. During these years, Fahmi

was involved in diverse military activity: **He fired at IDF forces using a sniper rifle and, on several occasions, planted IEDs** against IDF forces along with his father and operatives of the squad to which he belonged. **Fahmi, his father and his squad were also involved in launching rockets and mortar shells at Israel, including at the city of Sderot.** Fahmi concealed rockets in and near his home, transferring them to the operatives of his squad for the purpose of firing at Israel.

Because he was a minor, Fahmi Abu Salah was referred **to the Probation Service for a report.** The report states that Fahmi Abu Salah is the son of a family of 12, in which statements were made (inspired by the father) **“against the Israeli occupation and in favor of the need to harm the residents of the State of Israel.”** From the time he was a youngster, his father, who belonged to the PFLP at the time, included him in various military activities. Based on statements made by Fahmi Abu Salah, the Probation Service concluded that: **“The background of the actions stems from his upbringing, his father’s enlistment in the organization [PFLP], his family’s difficult financial situation, and the pressure on him as a youth to collaborate with the organization [the PFLP].”** The representative of the prosecution also noted that “even if part of the activity was carried out when he was a minor, even in adulthood the accused [Fahmi Abu Salah] did not change his ways, but **repeated his actions.**” According to her, when he was around 20-21, the accused, independently and unrelated to his father, **committed two attempted murders and was an accomplice to another attempted murder.** For all of these crimes, Fahmi Abu Salah was sentenced to **22 years in prison and was also given an 18-month suspended sentence** (from the verdict in Fahmi Abu Salah’s trial).



As'ad Abu Salah, Fahmi Abu Salah's father, demonstrating near the security fence in the northern Gaza Strip during the "Great March of Return" on Friday (June 1, 2018). His character inspired his sons to join terrorist organizations as operatives (Photo: As'ad Fahmi Abu Salah's Facebook page, June 2, 2018)

- Fahmi Abu Salah was not the only minor from the Abu Salah clan who was involved in attacks against Israel. Saadi Abu Salah's brother **Ghassan Abu Salah** and his cousin **Salah Abu Salah** were also sentenced to prison terms for their involvement in military activity. **Their activity began at the early ages of 17 and 15** (respectively) (from the verdict in Fahmi Abu Salah's trial).