



# News of Terrorism and the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict

(July 11 – 17, 2018)

## Overview



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- ▶ On July 14, 2018, there was a third round of escalation between the IDF and Hamas along the Gaza Strip border, worse than the previous rounds. In the wake of increasing Hamas violence during the "return marches," Israeli Air Force aircraft carried out three waves of aerial attacks on Hamas military targets. Hamas (and other terrorist organizations) launched about 200 rockets and mortar shells at Israel. The current round of escalation ended with a ceasefire, but Hamas and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) made it clear that the ceasefire does not include arson terrorism (which has in fact continued).
- ▶ In view of the worsening situation, Israel intensified its responses to arson terrorism. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu instructed the IDF to ramp up its response to the squads launching incendiary kites and balloons, that is, to attack them directly and not fire warning shots (which has been Israeli policy so far). Squads of launchers of kites and balloons have been attacked several times, as have Hamas posts near launching sites. In addition the Israeli defense minister announced fuel and cooking gas would not enter the Gaza Strip through the Kerem Shalom Crossing until July 22, 2018. The crossing will be open only for the passage of food and medicine, which will be authorized on an individual basis.
- ▶ **At this stage Israel's increased responses have apparently not deterred Hamas.** Hamas continues to organize and enable a high level of violence towards the IDF. Hamas' policy is to defend the squads launching incendiary kites and balloons with rocket and mortar shell fire. In ITIC assessment, Hamas apparently does in fact take into account that persisting with its policy of controlled terrorism may lead to a broad military confrontation, however, so far **it does not seem to be about to change the policy.**

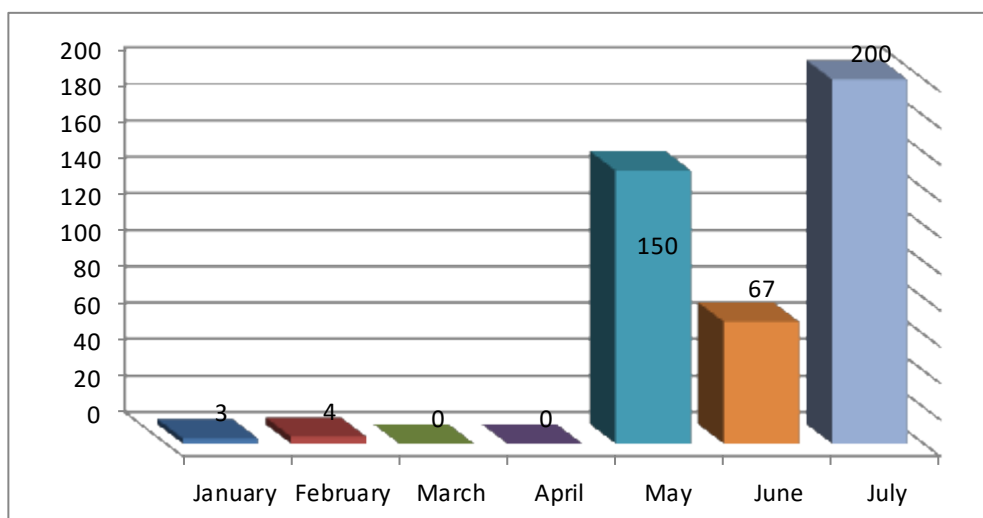
## Another round of escalation

- ▶ **On July 13 and 14, 2018, there was a third round of escalation, worse than the previous ones, in the region near the Gaza Strip border.** It began after the IDF carried out extensive aerial attacks in response to the wounding of an IDF officer by a hand grenade thrown during the "return march" on Friday, July 13, 2018. Israeli Air Force aircraft attacked Hamas military targets in three waves, beginning on the night of July 13, 2018, and continuing through the daylight hours of July 14, 2018.
- ▶ During the IDF attacks there were massive barrages of rocket and mortar shell fire at Israeli territory. **About 200 rockets and mortar shells were fired**, 37 of which were intercepted by the Iron Dome aerial defense system. A family of four in the southern Israeli city of Sderot was slightly wounded by shrapnel. Property damage was reported. In ITIC assessment, most of the shelling was carried out by Hamas and the PIJ (no individual claims of responsibility have been located). Senior Hamas and PIJ figures placed responsibility for the escalation on Israel, and emphasized their adherence to the equation of "an attack in return for an attack."<sup>1</sup>
- ▶ Both Hamas and the PIJ made it clear that **they would continue launching incendiary and explosive kites and balloons.** Therefore, despite the cessation of the rocket and mortar shell attacks, IDF forces remain on high alert. In addition, Iron Dome systems have been deployed in central Israel, signaling to Hamas that Israel is prepared for a broad confrontation.

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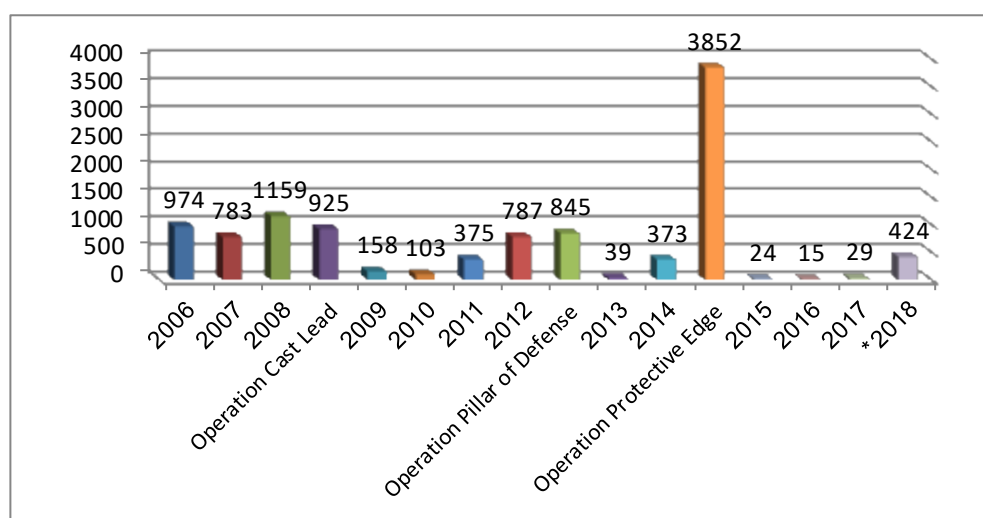
<sup>1</sup> For further information see the July 15, 2018 bulletin, "A third round of escalation, more severe than the previous rounds, with about 200 rockets and mortar shells fired at Israel. The shelling is a continuation of Hamas' policy of controlled violence creating escalation."

## Monthly Distribution of Rocket and Mortar Shell Fire since January 2018<sup>2</sup>



Minimum number of rockets and mortar shells fired in May, June and July. At this stage the ITIC cannot distinguish between rocket and mortar shell fire.

## Annual Distribution of Rocket Hits



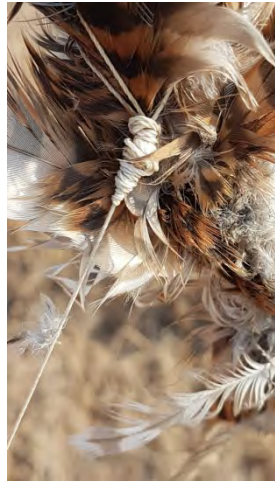
\* Approximate number of rockets and mortar shells launched in the three rounds of escalation.

## Arson terrorism continues

► Arson terrorism attacking Israeli territory near the Gaza Strip continues, instigated and directed by Hamas. During the escalation the launching of incendiary kites and balloons continued. On July 17, 2018, a balloon with an explosive device was found on **the grounds of a school in the western Negev**. No students were present at the time and the device was

<sup>2</sup> The statistics do not include rockets that fell inside the Gaza Strip.

neutralized. On the same day **an incendiary balloon landed in a kindergarten in the western Negev** while the children were in the yard. They were taken into the kindergarten and the balloon was neutralized. On July 16, 2018, the Israeli Nature and Parks Authority located a falcon in the western Negev harnessed to an incendiary device attached to a string. The string was entangled in the branch of a tree. It was the first use of live birds, apparently a creative idea to increase the efficiency of setting fire to Israeli territory.



**An "incendiary falcon" launched from the Gaza Strip entangled in a tree (Israeli Nature and Parks Authority, July 17, 2018).**



**Gazan women from the "daughters of al-Zouari unit" launch incendiary balloons at "return march" events on July 13, 2018 (Facebook page of the "supreme national authority of the return march," July 13, 2018).**



**Blazes set by incendiary balloons launched from the Gaza Strip  
(Palinfo Twitter account, July 16, 2018).**

## Israel intensifies its response to arson terrorism

► During a Cabinet meeting Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu instructed the IDF to put an end to arson terrorism. That meant ramping up IDF response to the squads launching incendiary kites and balloons and **attacking them directly, instead of firing warning shots, which has been Israel's method till now** (Prime minister's website, July 16, 2018). Implementing the new policy, the IDF carried out a number of attacks:

- ◆ **On July 15, 2018, four attacks were carried out on squads of balloon and kite launchers** (IDF spokesman, July 15, 2018). The Palestinian media reported IDF drones had attacked a squad of kite launchers and that there were a number of wounded (Shehab, Amama, July 15, 2018).
  - ◆ **On July 16, 2018, Israeli Air Force aircraft attacked two Hamas posts in the northern Gaza Strip.** They were located near a site from which incendiary balloons had been launched which caused fires in Israeli territory (Twitter account of the IDF spokesman, July 16, 2018). The Palestinian media reported attacks on an observation post east of Beit Hanoun (northern Gaza Strip) and a post east of the Jabalia refugee camp (Palinfo, July 16, 2018). **In response a number of rockets were fired at Israeli territory** (Palinfo, July 16, 2018). They apparently fell inside the Gaza Strip.
  - ◆ **On July 17, 2018, the IDF fired at a squad of incendiary balloon launchers** in the northern Gaza Strip. The Palestinians reported two wounded (Ynet, July 17, 2018).
- **On July 16, 2018, the Israeli defense minister's office announced new measures against the Gaza Strip: the Kerem Shalom Crossing will be closed to the entrance of fuel**

**and cooking gas until Sunday, July 22, 2018.** It will remain open for the entrance of food and medicines, which will be authorized on an individual basis. In addition, the fishing area off the Gaza coast will be limited to three miles from shore (Israeli media, July 16, 2018). The announcement was made after **Israel had previously decided on July 9, 2018 to prevent the passage of merchandise into the Gaza Strip with the exception of humanitarian goods (food and medicine). Israel also announced the cancelation of extending the fishing area to nine miles** (from six).

► Prior to Israel's announcement, **Egypt announced it was closing the Rafah Crossing** and returned buses to the Gaza Strip because of "a technical problem with the crossing's computer system" (Sama, July 16, 2018). So far there has been no announcement regarding the reopening of the Rafah Crossing, which, until it was closed, had been open for 80 consecutive days.

### **Worsening of "return march" violence (Friday, July 13, 2018)**

► The slogan of the Friday, July 13, 2018 "return march" was "100 days of the return march and support and loyalty for our people in Khan al-Ahmar." **About 10,000 Gazans participated in the events on Friday, more than on recent Fridays.** Riots broke out at a number of sites along the security fence.

► **The events which accompanied the "march" were particularly violent. Rioters threw hand grenades, IEDs and Molotov cocktails at IDF forces deployed near the fence and at the Karni crossing.** An IDF officer was wounded by a grenade (IDF spokesman, July 13, 2018). It was the most serious border incident since the "return marches" began on March 30, 2018. A group of Palestinians tried to sabotage the security fence but retreated without crossing into Israeli territory.



**Rioters drag the barbed wire near the security fence in eastern Khan Yunis (Facebook page of the "supreme national authority of the return march," July 13, 2018).**



**Senior Hamas figures Fathi Hamad and Isma'il Radwan, and senior PIJ figure Khaled al-Batash at the "return camp" in eastern Gaza City (Facebook page of the "supreme national authority of the return march," July 13, 2018).**

- ▶ **The Hamas-controlled ministry of health in Gaza reported the death of two demonstrators** and the minor wounding of 220, most of them from tear gas inhalation. Fifty-five were evacuated to hospitals. The social networks reported that among the wounded was **Majdi Hamad, the son of senior Hamas figure Fathi Hamad** (Twitter accounts of Hamas activist Adham Abu Salmiya, July 13, 2018; and Filistin Live, July 13, 2018). Also reported wounded was a nephew of Muhammad Deif, head of Hamas' military wing, whose name is also Muhammad Deif (Twitter accounts of Adham Abu Salmiya and Islam al-Halaq, July 13, 2018).
- ▶ In preparation for July 13, 2018, when the Gazans marked 100 days of "return marches," a spokesman for the ministry of health reported that during the "return marches" **137 Palestinians had been killed and 16,100 wounded** (wounds of various degrees, including tear gas inhalation). According to the ministry's claims, hospitals treated 8,400 of the wounded. Among the fatalities were 18 children, two women and two paramedics. Among the wounded were 2,600 children and 1,200 women (Facebook page of the ministry of health in the Gaza Strip, July 12, 2018). **However, the ministry's statistics do not distinguish between terrorist operatives (most of those killed) and ordinary civilians.**

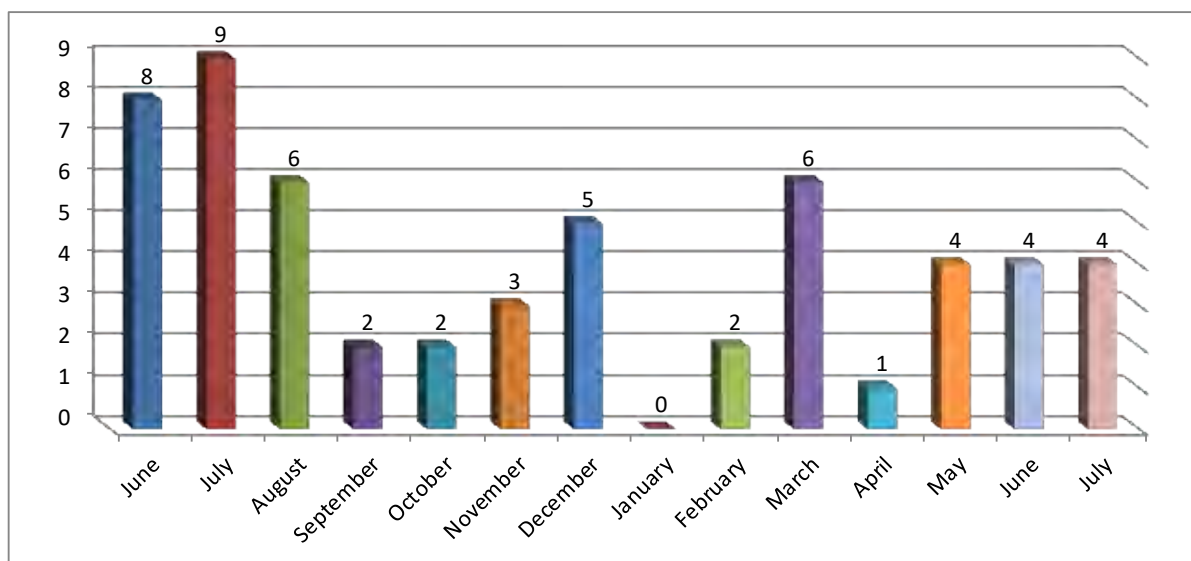
## Judea and Samaria

### Terrorist attacks

- ▶ **July 15, 2018** – A hand grenade was thrown from a passing car at an IDF force at **the entrance to Nablus (in Samaria)**. No casualties were reported. IDF forces carried out searches to locate the perpetrators (Facebook page of red alert, July 15, 2018)

► **July 13, 2018** – Masked rioters in **the area of Abu Dis (east Jerusalem)** burned tires, threw stones and shot fireworks. A pipe bomb was thrown at Border Policemen, one of whom was wounded by shrapnel (Ynet, July 13, 2018).

### Significant terrorist attacks during the past year <sup>3</sup>



## Developments in the Gaza Strip

### UNRWA deficit

► **Matthias Schmale, UNRWA director of operations in the Gaza Strip**, said in an interview that the salaries of UNRWA workers would be jeopardized if UNRWA's deficit continued. He said the new school year was at risk and that no decision had been reached, but it was possible its opening would be delayed. He said that Saudi Arabia, Qatar and the UAE had given \$150 million but he did not know if their support would continue (alresala.net, July 15, 2018).

### Hamas-Iran rally in Gaza

► On July 16, 2018, the sixth International Wet Gunpowder Award Conference was held in the Gaza Strip.<sup>4</sup> Its subtitle was "Resistance is not terrorism." The ceremony in Gaza was attended by senior Hamas and PIJ figures. At the same time as the ceremony in Gaza, a

<sup>3</sup> A significant attack is defined by the ITIC as involving shooting, a vehicular attack, the use of IEDs, or a combination of the above. Stones and Molotov cocktails thrown by Palestinians are not included.

<sup>4</sup> The Wet Gunpowder Award is an Iranian symbolic award that according to organizers is given to "ridiculous people whose chaffy [sic] character is evident to everyone and when this nature of theirs is accompanied with self-belief turns into an indefinite foolishness for them" (Wikipedia). Votes are cast by citizens of Iran, Syria, Lebanon, Palestine, Iraq, Yemen, Afghanistan and India. The three candidates for the award this year were Trump, Netanyahu and Nikki Haley.



similar event was held in Tehran, and recorded announcements from senior Iranian figures were played.

- ▶ Speakers noted the ties between the Palestinians and the Iranians. A video was shown on a giant screen of **a speech by Gholam-Hossein Gheybparvar, commander of the Iranian Basij (although previously it had been announced that a speech by Qassem Soliemani, commander of the Iranian Revolutionary Guards Corps' Qods Force would be shown).** Gholam-Hossein Gheybparvar praised the young people of the Gaza Strip for their ongoing struggle against Israel (al-Alam TV website and the Facebook page of journalist Muthana al-Najar, July 16, 2018).
- ▶ **Senior Hamas figure Isma'il Radwan** gave a speech in which he thanked Iran for its support of the "resistance" [i.e., Hamas and the other terrorist organizations]. He said that **Hamas adhered to all forms of "resistance," first of which is the "armed struggle."** He claimed it is **the "resistance's" right to arm itself with all possible forms of weapons to defend the Palestinians.** He accused Israel of "crimes against innocent children" during the "marches." He said **the "resistance" is the defender of the "return marches" and the Palestinians, and that Israel should not test its patience.** He said "the return marches will continue until they achieve their goals" (al-Anadolu News and Safa, July 16, 2018).



The rally in the Gaza Strip (Bawabat al-Hadaf Twitter account, July 16, 2018).



Sign from the award ceremony with pictures of the Israeli prime minister and the American president. The picture in the background is a baying wolf (al-Alam TV channel website, July 16, 2018).

## Hamas delegation visits Egypt

- ▶ A delegation of senior Hamas figures, led by **Salah al-Arouri, deputy chairman of Hamas' political bureau, arrived in Cairo on July 11, 2018**, at the invitation of Egyptian general intelligence. Other members of the delegation were Musa Abu Marzouq, Khalil al-Khaya, Husam Badran, Izzat al-Rishq and Rawhi Mushtaha (Hamas website, July 11, 2018). The declared objective of the visit was to try to restart the internal Palestinian reconciliation (al-Sharq al-Awsat, July 13, 2018).
- ▶ On July 12, 2018, the delegation returned to the Gaza Strip, having met with **Abbas Kamal, head of Egyptian intelligence** and senior figures of Egyptian general intelligence. After the meeting Hamas issued a statement saying that they had discussed a number of issues, including ways to improve conditions for the Gazans and to advance the internal Palestinian reconciliation (Hamas website, July 13, 2018).
- ▶ While the Hamas delegation was in Egypt, **Ziyad al-Nahleh, deputy PIJ chairman**, also visited Cairo at the invitation of the minister of intelligence. The PIJ said in a statement that the delegation held three meetings with the Egyptians, the most important of which was a meeting with the minister of intelligence. They discussed the humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip (al-Istaqlal, July 13, 2018).

## Hamas-organized summer camps in Gaza

- ▶ Hamas' central committee of summer camps held a press conference at the "return camp" in Khirbat Ikhza'a (east of Khan Yunis). At the press conference the opening of summer camps for 2018 was announced. Their slogan this year is "I return to my homeland." Amjad Mazid, chairman of the central committee, said the camps would last for a month and were

meant to strengthen the "concept of return" (Facebook page of the committee of the summer camps in Khan Yunis, July 14, 2018).

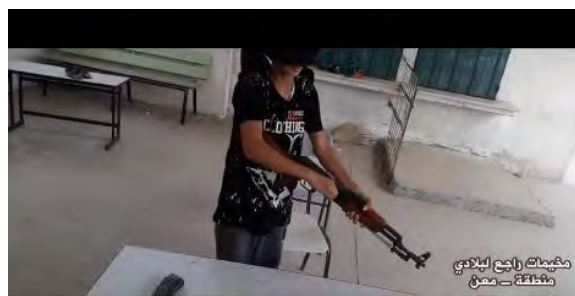


Right: Amjad Mazid (right), the organizer of the summer camps, at the press conference (Facebook page of the committee of the summer camps in Khan Yunis, July 14, 2018). Left: The logo of the summer camps, "I return my homeland." It shows a key (the symbol of the "return" of the Palestinian refugees) on a map of "greater Palestine" (Facebook page of Hamas' central committee of the summer camps, July 14, 2018).

► Pictures were posted on the Facebook page of the central committee of the summer camps showing children's activities, which include **military training** (as is usual in the summer camps every year).



Aspects of the "return marches." Right: Launching balloons with the slogan of the summer camps and the names of cities and villages occupied by Israel in 1948. The boy at the left holds a notice with the word "Jaffa" (Facebook page of the committee of the summer camps in Khan Yunis, July 14, 2018). Left: Using slingshots while hiding behind tires in the summer camp in the Ma'an region – Abu Obeida branch in Khan Yunis (Facebook page of the committee of the summer camps in the Ma'an region, July 15, 2018).



**Right: Training in disassembling and reassembling weapons (Facebook page of the committee of the summer camps in the Ma'an region, July 14 and 15, 2018). Left: Training in the simulation of abducting Israelis (Facebook page of the committee of the summer camps in Khan Yunis, July 14, 2018).**

## The Palestinian Authority (PA)

### Mahmoud Abbas visits Russia

► **Mahmoud Abbas** paid a visit to Russia during which he met with Russian President Vladimir Putin. He also held meetings with Arab ambassadors in Russia to discuss regional developments (quds.net, July 14, 2018).



**Mahmoud Abbas meets in Moscow with Russian President Putin (Wafa, July 14, 2018).**

### Palestinian demand to bring Israel to trial in the International Criminal Court

► **Riyadh al-Maliki, Palestinian foreign minister**, met in The Hague with Fatou Bensouda, the chief prosecutor of the International Criminal Court (ICC). During the meeting he reviewed alleged "Israeli activities against the Palestinian people," the continuing construction in the settlements and the issue of Khan al-Ahmar. **Al-Maliki demanded Bensouda open an**

**investigation into Israel's activities without delay.** He said the PA was prepared to give the ICC all the information it had in order to bring Israel to trial (Facebook page of the Palestinian foreign ministry, July 16, 2018).



**Riyadh al-Maliki, Palestinian foreign minister, meets in The Hague with Fatou Bensouda, the chief prosecutor of the ICC (Facebook page of the Palestinian foreign ministry, July 16, 2018).**

### **Protest against the issue of Khan al-Ahmar continues**

► The issue of Khan al-Ahmar continues to occupy the Palestinians. On July 16, 2018, the school year opened (earlier than usual) in Khan al-Ahmar with a ceremony held under the aegis of Rami Hamdallah, prime minister of the Palestinian national consensus government. The ceremony was attended by Sabri Sidam, the PA's minister of education, Walid 'Assaf, head of the "committee to resist the wall," and other senior figures. Sabri Sidam said that the early opening of the school year showed clear support for Khan al-Ahmar and its only school.



**Ceremony for the beginning of the new school year in Khan al-Ahmar under the aegis of Palestinian Prime Minister Rami Hamdallah, with the participation of Sabri Sidam, Palestinian minister of education (Wafa, July 16, 2018).**

## Reactions to the Irish Senate decision to boycott goods made in the Israeli settlements in Judea and Samaria

► The Irish Senate voted to forbid the import of goods manufactured in the Israeli settlements in Judea and Samaria. The law also forbade support for the "illegal settlements" (The Guardian, July 11, 2018). **The PLO, Hamas and the PIJ expressed satisfaction with the decision:**

- ◆ **Saeb Erekat, secretary of the PLO's Executive Committee**, praised Ireland in the name of the Palestinian people and the leadership for the vote of the Irish Senate. He said it would strengthen the "historic relations" between Ireland and the PA (Wafa, July 12, 2018).
- ◆ **Hamas praised the decision of the Irish Senate**, calling it a step in support of the boycott of Israel and the "settlement project." According to Hamas the decision emphasizes the right of the Palestinian people to the land [of Israel] and its holy places. Hamas called on the rest of the world to follow the Irish example (Hamas website, July 12, 2018).
- ◆ **PIJ spokesman Daud Shehab** praised the decision of the Irish Senate, calling it an important step in criminalizing Israeli policy (Filistin al-Yawm, July 12, 2018).