



News of Terrorism and the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict (July 25-31, 2018)

Overview

- ▶ This past week terrorist events focused on the stabbing attack in the community of Adam (near Ramallah). A local resident was killed and two others were wounded. The terrorist was from the village of Kobar (northwest of Ramallah), also home to the murderer of three members of the Salomon family (July 2017). During Israeli security force activities in Kobar local residents rioted, throwing rocks and Molotov cocktails at the forces.
- ▶ In the Gaza Strip snipers again shot at an IDF force, wounding an officer. In response IDF tanks shot at Hamas military posts, killing three military wing operatives. In retaliation **nine rockets and mortar shells** were fired at Israel. **Both the IDF and Hamas contained the events, avoiding another round of escalation.**
- ▶ The Friday July 27 "return march" was attended by about 7,000 Gazans. Violent activity included throwing pipe bombs and Molotov cocktails at IDF forces; a hand grenade was also thrown. After a temporary decrease **there was an increase in incendiary balloons**, which caused between two and 15 fires a day.
- ▶ Attempts continued to reach an agreement to stabilize the ceasefire and prevent the situation from deteriorating, with **Nikolay Mladenov, the UN envoy to the Middle East, and Egypt both holding rounds of talks with Hamas.** On the agenda were a number of interrelated issues, including stabilizing the ceasefire for an extended period of time; improving the economic situation and easing the closure of the Gaza Strip; and promoting the internal Palestinian reconciliation. So far no breakthrough has been achieved.

Stabbing Attack in the community of Adam

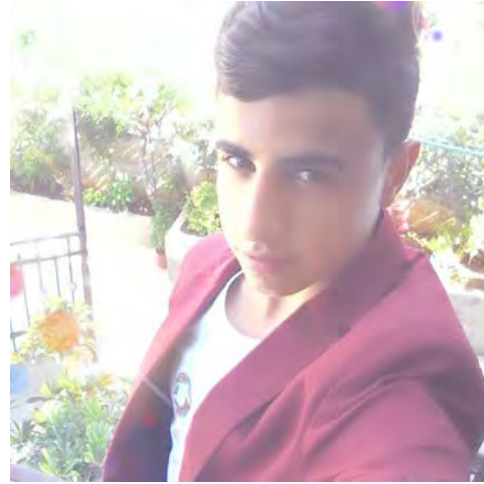
- ▶ **On July 26, 2018, a Palestinian terrorist carried out a stabbing attack in the community of Adam** (near Ramallah). **He killed one local resident and wounded two others.** At 20:50 hours the terrorist, armed with a knife, climbed over the community's security fence and walked through a playground. From there he went to one of the community's main streets where he stabbed three pedestrians. One was mortally wounded

and later died in the hospital. Another was seriously wounded. The third, who was a civilian, was slightly wounded. He drew his gun and shot and killed the terrorist. Large numbers of security forces arrived and searched the area for other terrorists who might have also entered the community.



The scene of the stabbing attack in the community of Adam (QudsN website, July 26, 2018).

► The Palestinian terrorist who carried out the attack was **Muhammad Tareq Dar Yusuf**, 17, from the village of Kobar (northwest of Ramallah). The murderer of the Salomon family also came from Kobar (killing three members of the family on July 21, 2017). About an hour before the attack Muhammad Tareq posted a "will" to his Facebook page. In his "will" he criticized the Palestinian Authority, calling the leadership "traitors and cowards, who sold the blood of the shaheeds" because, he claimed, they suppressed the "resistance" and did nothing at a time when the Palestinian people were struggling in Gaza and Jerusalem (QudsN Facebook page, July 26, 2018).



Right: Muhammad Tareq Dar Yusuf, the terrorist who carried out the stabbing attack (Safa Facebook page, July 26, 2018). Left: The "will" the terrorist posted to his Facebook page an hour before the attack (QudsN Facebook page, July 26, 2018).

► After the attack, Israeli forces carried out a security activity in the village of Kobar. They blocked the entrance and carried out searches, confiscating incitement material and funds for financing terrorist activities. During the activity about 150 Palestinians rioted, burning tires and throwing rocks, Molotov cocktails and paint bottles at the Israeli forces, who responded with riot control measures. During the night security forces entered Kobar for more extensive activities, interrogating the terrorist's family and confiscating their work permits for Israel. Four were taken for further interrogation (IDF spokesperson, July 27, 2018).

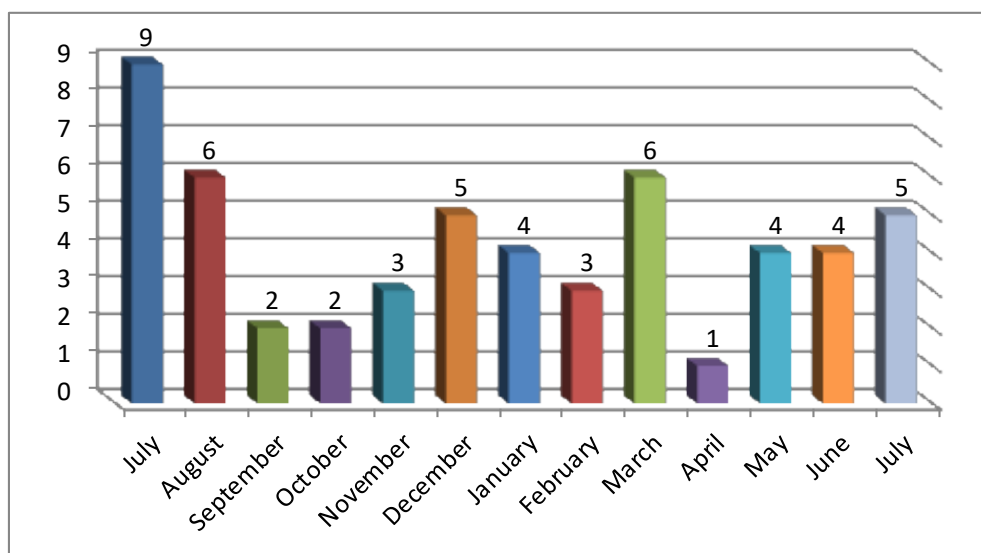


Riots during IDF activities in the village of Kobar, the home of the terrorist who carried out the stabbing attack (QudsN website, July 27, 2018).

► So far the PA has not issued a statement relating to the attack in the community of Adam. The Palestinian news agency Wafa (directly subordinate to the office of Mahmoud Abbas) issued a short report about the event based on Israeli sources (Wafa, July 26, 2018). Hamas and the other terrorist organizations praised the stabbing attack:

- ◆ **Hamas spokesman Fawzi Barhoum** praised Muhammad Tareq Dar Yusuf and said Hamas welcomed his "daring act." He said the Jerusalem intifada continued using every possible means, and that the West Bank was ready to avenge the blood of the shaheeds and deter Israel (Hamas website, July 27, 2018).
- ◆ **Husam Badran, a member of Hamas' political bureau**, called on the Palestinians to continue their "heroic activities" to stop Israel's "aggression" and to participate in the popular intifada, which would take place at al-Aqsa mosque and in all the Palestinian territories (Shabakat Quds Twitter account, July 26, 2018).
- ◆ **Hamas spokesman Abd al-Latif al-Qanua** welcomed the stabbing attack in Adam, calling it the "natural reaction" to Israel's "crimes" in the West Bank, Jerusalem and Gaza. He said it sent the message to Israel that attempts to break the will of the Palestinian people and destroy the "resistance" would fail. He also said the Palestinian people would continue the "return marches" and that all options were open to the "resistance," both a [so-called] "peaceful struggle" and an armed struggle (al-Aqsa TV, July 27, 2018).

Significant terrorist attacks during the past year ¹



¹ 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.

Judea and Samaria

Clashes on the Temple Mount

► After the main prayer on Friday, July 27, 2018, dozens of Palestinian worshippers on the Temple Mount began rioting. They threw stones and shot fireworks at the Israeli security forces. Israeli security forces entered the Temple Mount compound and removed them. A number of Palestinians barricaded themselves inside al-Aqsa mosque, and several hours later the Israeli police removed them as well. Four Israeli security force operatives sustained minor injuries. Twenty-four rioters were detained. After the riots, the Israeli police closed some of the gates leading to the Temple Mount compound, including the Lions' Gate. The gates remained closed for a number of hours (Israeli media, July 27, 2018). The riots were apparently held to mark the anniversary of the installation of metal detectors on the Temple Mount.²



Clashes on the Temple Mount. Palestinians hold fireworks launchers (Shehab Facebook page, July 28, 2018).

- The events led to a wave of furious reactions:
 - ◆ **Mahmoud Abbas** gave a speech at a meeting of the PLO's Executive Committee in which he said that Israel's actions against al-Aqsa mosque were intolerable and that a serious protest had to be held to stop them (Wafa, July 28, 2018).

² On July 14, 2017, three Israeli Arabs carried out a shooting attack on the Temple Mount, killing two Israeli policemen. In the wake of the attack the Israel Police Force closed the Temple Mount compound. It was opened after metal detectors had been installed and led the Palestinians to riot and refusing to enter the Temple Mount compound. On July 24, 2017 Israel's security cabinet decided to remove the metal detectors.

- ◆ **The Palestinian foreign ministry** issued a statement condemning the Israeli "crime" and calling on the residents of east Jerusalem to rise up and defend al-Aqsa mosque (Wafa, July 27, 2018).
- ◆ **Hamas spokesman Fawzi Barhoum** said the "break-in" into al-Aqsa mosque reflected Israel's racism and the magnitude of its injustice towards the Palestinian people. He called on the residents of Jerusalem, the West Bank and all Palestinians to stand up to Israel and rise up with all their force and do their national duty to defend the Palestinian lands and the holy sites (Hamas website, July 27, 2018).
- ◆ **Izzat al-Rishq, a member of Hamas' political bureau**, said the "wild attack" carried out by IDF soldiers against the worshippers in al-Aqsa mosque was methodical state terrorism and a failed attempt to create facts on the ground (Twitter account of Izzat al-Rishq, July 27, 2018).

Other events in Judea and Samaria

- ▶ On July 30, 2018, Israeli security forces operating in Judea and Samaria detained 20 wanted Palestinians suspected of involvement in terrorist activities. Among them were five Hamas operatives from Qalqilya and four Palestinians involved in incitement activity on Hamas' al-Quds channel (designated as a terrorist organization and outlawed in 2017). The forces also acted against Hamas' student bloc in Hebron University. Incitement materials were confiscated, as were transmitters, "technological equipment" and vehicles. During the activity Palestinians rioted and the security forces responded with riot control measures to disperse them (IDF spokesperson, July 30, 2018).
- ▶ On the evening of July 30, 2018, Israeli security forces operated in the Dheishe refugee camp (southwest of Bethlehem) to detain Palestinians suspected of terrorist activity. Local residents rioted, throwing stones and Molotov cocktails at the forces. A Border Policewoman incurred minor wounds (Ynet, July 31, 2018).

Israel's South

Sniper fire targeting an IDF force and the IDF response

- ▶ On July 25, 2018, an IDF force dispersed a riot near Kissufim in the southern Gaza Strip (near where an IDF soldier was killed by sniper fire the previous week). **During the activity a sniper shot at the force, wounding an IDF officer.** Examinations carried out by the Israeli

security forces indicate it was apparently the same sniper. **In response IDF tanks attacked seven posts of Hamas' military wing along the border** (IDF spokesperson, July 25, 2018).

► According to a report from Hamas, an attack damaged a post belonging to the "defenders of the border area" unit in the eastern Gaza Strip (Hamas military wing website). **According to the Hamas-controlled Gaza Strip ministry of health, three operatives of Hamas' military wing were killed in the attack and another was seriously injured** (Twitter account of Ashraf al-Qidra, July 25, 2018). One of those killed, Muhammad al-'Are'ir, worked in the tunnel unit of Hamas' military wing, and was wounded while digging a tunnel six years ago (Hamas military wing website, July 28, 2018).



An observation post attacked by the IDF (Palinfo Twitter account, July 26, 2018).



The three Hamas terrorist operatives killed in the IDF attack. Left to right, Muhammad al-'Are'ir, 'Abada Farawna, Ahmed al-Basus (Twitter account of Hamas' military wing, July 28, 2018).



Isma'il Haniyeh, Khalil al-Haya and other senior Hamas figures at the funeral held for the three operatives of Hamas' military wing (Twitter account of Hamas' military wing, July 26, 2018).

- Following the attack Hamas threatened it would not remain silent while the IDF attacked, and that Israel would pay a high price. Hamas called on all the [terrorist] organizations to unite and raise their level of alert to maximum (Hamas military wing website, July 26, 2018).

During the night nine rocket and mortar shell launchings were identified. The Iron Dome aerial defense system intercepted one launching. No casualties or damage were reported.



Notice from Hamas' military wing announcing an increase in the level of alert and threatening that Israel will pay a high price in blood for its "crimes" (Hamas military wing website, July 26, 2018).

- **Hamas spokesman Fawzi Barhoum** said the "Israeli escalation" against the Gaza Strip and the deliberate attack on "resistance" fighters exposed Israel's intention to kill and confirmed that the Israel leadership is "criminal." He said the "resistance" would not abandon its duty to defend the Palestinian people and would respond to every [instance of] aggression (Twitter account of Fawzi Barhoum, July 25, 2018). At the funeral held for the three operatives **Fathi Hamad** repeated Hamas' "equation" of "a **shelling in return for a shelling and blood in return for blood.**" He threatened Israel, saying Hamas' finger would remain on the trigger (al-Aqsa TV, July 26, 2018).

Other events

- ▶ **On the evening of July 28, 2018**, an IDF force was shot at from the northern Gaza Strip. No casualties were reported. In response Israeli Air Force aircraft attacked an observation post in northern Gaza . On the night of July 28, 2018, Palestinian sources reported that Israeli Air Force aircraft had attacked a group of Palestinians near the security fence in northern Gaza.
- ▶ **On the afternoon of July 27, 2018**, Israeli Air Force aircraft attacked a squad of incendiary balloon launchers in the northern Gaza Strip (IDF spokesperson, July 27, 2018). No casualties were reported.
- ▶ **On July 24, 2018**, Israeli Air Force aircraft attacked a squad of incendiary balloon launchers in the northern Gaza Strip. Three Palestinians were injured. The balloons set fires in the Nahal Oz region.

The Friday, July 27, 2018 "return march"

- ▶ The theme of the Friday, July 27 "return march" was "our shaheed children." About **7,000 Gazans** gathered at sites along the border fence. Some of them were holding signs with **the picture of Muhammad Tareq Dar Yusuf, the terrorist who carried out the lethal stabbing attack in the community of Adam on July 26**. The demonstrators also prepared a display of a mock "cemetery" with "graves" for the children killed during the "return marches" in recent months.



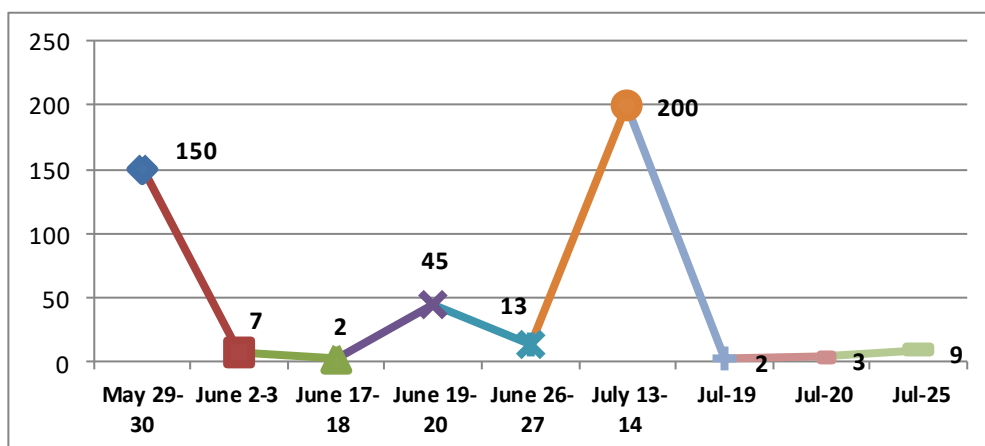
Right: Sign, praising the terrorist who carried out the attack in the community of Adam, carried at the "return march" in eastern Jabalia (Facebook page of the "supreme national authority of the return march," July 28, 2018). Left: Display at the mock "cemetery" of the children killed during "return marches." The children hold pictures of the the Israeli prime minister and the American president, both with the caption "killer" (Safa Facebook page, July 27, 2018).

- ▶ **During the riots** Gazans threw stones and burned tires. They threw pipe bombs, Molotov cocktails and a hand grenade, which fell inside the Gaza Strip, at IDF forces (Ynet, July 27, 2018). During the riots IDF forces identified a number of suspicious Gazans who approached the fence, sabotaged it and returned to the Gaza Strip (IDF spokesperson, July 27, 2018).
- ▶ A spokesman for the Gaza Strip ministry of health reported that during the July 27, 2018 "return march" two Palestinians were killed and 246 were wounded. Of them 139 were evacuated to hospitals (Facebook page of the ministry of health in the Gaza Strip, July 27, 2018). On July 28, 2018, a spokesman for the ministry of health reported that one of the wounded Gazans had died (Facebook page of the Gaza Strip ministry of health, July 28, 2018). Among the wounded was the daughter of Ayman Nofal, a commander in Hamas' military wing. According to reports, she was seriously wounded while participating in a "return march" east of Gaza City (Paldf Twitter account, July 27, 2018).

Rocket and mortar shell fire

- ▶ During the night of July 25, 2018, nine rocket and mortar shell launchings from the Gaza Strip were identified. The Iron Dome aerial defense system intercepted one of them. No casualties or damage were reported.

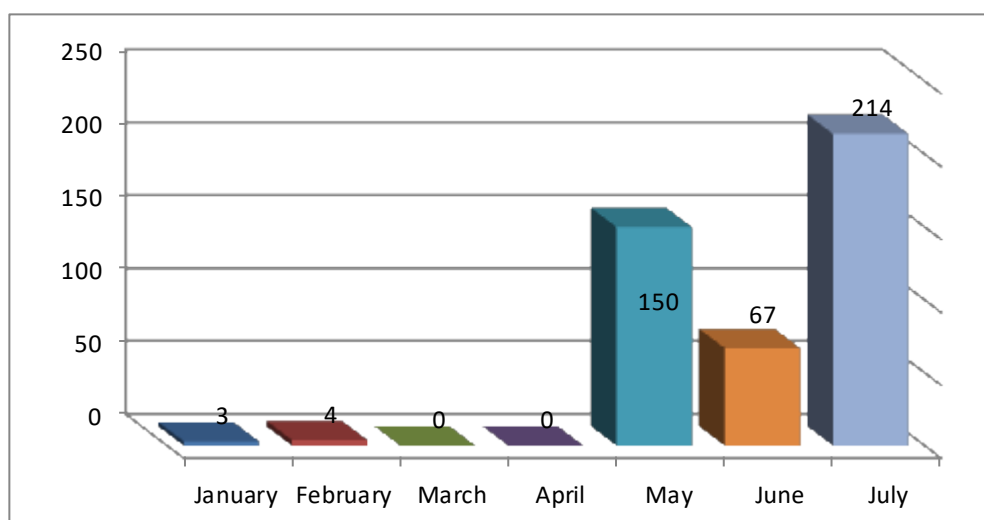
Rocket and mortar shell fire during and between the recent rounds of escalation³



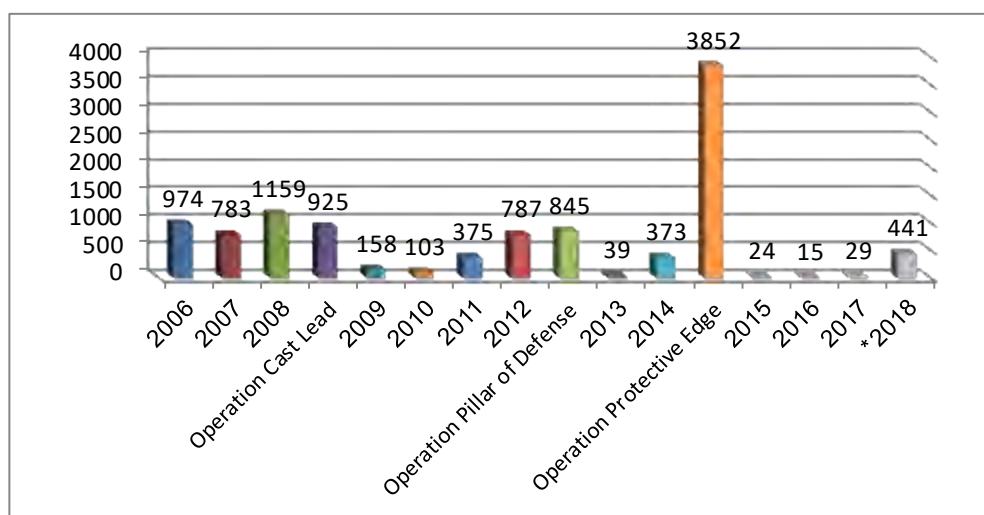
The statistics for May, June and July 2018 reflect the minimum number of rockets and mortar shells fired. At this stage the ITIC cannot differentiate between rocket fire and mortar shell fire.

³ The statistics do not include rockets that fell inside the Gaza Strip.

Monthly Distribution of Rocket and Mortar Shell Fire since January 2018



Annual Distribution of Rocket Hits



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

Arson terrorism

► After a temporary drop in arson terrorism, **incendiary balloon launchings were renewed**, resulting in a number of fires near the Gaza Strip. According to Israel's Fire and Rescue Services' spokesman's unit, this past week firefighters dealt with between two and 15 fires a day. On the evening of July 30, 2018, firefighters were called to a residential neighborhood in the **southern Israeli city of Beersheba** where **a balloon was found** with a suspicious object attached to it. A police examination found it to be an incendiary balloon

(Israel Police Force spokesman's unit for the Negev, July 30, 2018). According to the police the balloon came from the Gaza Strip.



Incendiary balloon launched from the Gaza Strip which landed in a residential neighborhood of Beersheba (Facebook page of QudsN, July 30, 2018).

- ▶ According to data from Israel's firefighting services, as of July 30, 2018, **1,200 fires** were caused by incendiary balloons or kites. **So far more than 7,400 acres have been burned, 3,000 of which were nature preserves.**

Two Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) terrorists killed

- ▶ The Gaza Strip ministry of health reported **the death of two young Palestinians in the Israeli attack on eastern Jabalia on the night of July 28, 2018** (Facebook page of the spokesman of the ministry of health, July 29, 2018). **The Palestinian media reported they were killed when an Israeli drone fired a missile at a group of Palestinians near the cemetery east of Jabalia as they were launching incendiary balloons into Israeli territory** (Dunia al-Watan and quds.net, July 29, 2018).
- ▶ However, eye witnesses reported that the two were killed when **a locally-manufactured rocket exploded** as they were trying to launch it from eastern Jabalia (Agence-France Presse, July 29, 2018). The PFLP and its military wing issued death notices claiming the two had died while fulfilling their "duty to the struggle" (PFLP website, July 29, 2018).



Ayman al-Najar (right) and Muhannad Hamouda, the PFLP fatalities (Facebook page of PFLP information bureau in Gaza, July 29, 2018). The funeral held for them in Jabalia was attended by operatives from the PFLP's military wing (PFLP website, July 29, 2018).

Attempts to reach an agreement

- ▶ **Nikolay Mladenov, the UN envoy to the Middle East** continues his efforts to stabilize the ceasefire in the Gaza Strip and **prevent the situation from deteriorating**. To that end he held a number of meetings with senior Hamas figures led by Isma'il Haniyeh, head of Hamas' political bureau. At the meetings they discussed conditions **for a lull in the Gaza Strip and initiatives Mladenov has been promoting in recent weeks to improve the humanitarian situation**. Isma'il Haniyeh also held a phone conversation with Abbas Kamel, head of Egyptian General Intelligence, who is currently in the United States. They discussed recent developments in the Gaza Strip (Dunia al-Watan, July 26, 2018).
- ▶ According to Palestinian sources, Mladenov is leading efforts in two areas: **a long-term ceasefire and support for the Egyptian-led efforts for an internal Palestinian reconciliation**. Regarding the ceasefire, he proposed a ceasefire in return for incentives such as increasing the limit imposed on fishing waters, opening the crossings and advancing projects in the Gaza Strip. In the Gaza Strip it was reported that the Hamas leadership is not happy with Mladenov's proposals, which it considers insufficient (Kan TV channel, Israel, a report by Gal Berger, July 29, 2018).
- ▶ To promote the negotiations led by Mladenov, **a senior Hamas delegation**, headed by **Khalil al-Haya and Rawhi Mushtaha** arrived in Egypt for **another round of talks with the Egyptians** (Dunia al-Watan and Filastin al-Yawm, July 30, 2018). They will discuss economic initiatives in the Gaza Strip, the payment of salaries to government officials in the Gaza Strip and freedom of the seas, and apparently the promoting of the internal Palestinian reconciliation.

Developments in the Gaza Strip

The humanitarian situation

► The electric company in the Gaza Strip announced a new schedule after repairs had been made to some of the power lines. According to the announcement, electricity will now be supplied in cycles of four hours with 16-hour hiatuses (alresala.net, July 26, 2018).

Extensive reductions in UNRWA activities in light of its difficult financial situation

► In a speech given by Nikolay Mladenov at the beginning of a meeting of the UN Security Council, he said that UNRWA needed \$217 million to continue its activities for the coming year (UN website, July 24, 2018). UNRWA announced that broad cuts would be made as part of the agency's recovery program. Its objective is to overcome its financial deficit following the American decision to cut its support for UNRWA by \$300 million. It was reported that a series of measures would be taken (UN website and Shehab, July 25, 2018), including the following:

- ◆ **Reducing support for social programs** in the refugee camps to 1,000 recipients of food coupons.
 - ◆ **Ending financial allotments** to about 7,000 Palestinians.
 - ◆ **Reducing the activity of its infirmaries.**
 - ◆ **Firing employees.** The representative of UNRWA employees in the Gaza Strip announced the agency's intention to fire about 1,000 of its employees in the Gaza Strip. One hundred twenty-five were fired and the rest will work part-time till the end of the year (apparently those in the Cash-for-Work program).
 - ◆ **Education.** According to Jamie McGoldrick, UN coordinator for humanitarian affairs in the Palestinian territories, due to financial difficulties the school year in UNRWA schools in the Gaza Strip will apparently not begin in August as planned.
- In the wake of the UNRWA decision protests were held in Judea, Samaria and the Gaza Strip in solidarity with the employees who were fired. The UNRWA staff union announced the beginning of a struggle and an unlimited strike of 13,000 agency employees and their families. The union also announced the closing of all the main centers in the Gaza Strip (Filastin al-Yawm, July 25, 2018). Fatah spokesman 'Atef Abu Saif said UNRWA's decision is

part of a larger program to "eliminate" the Palestinian cause and will lead to economic deterioration in the Gaza Strip (Dunia al-Watan, July 26, 2018).



UNRWA employees protest the measures taken by the agency, including firing workers, because of the budget deficit (Paltoday channel, July 29, 2018).

Turkish civilian support for the Gaza Strip

► TIKA, the Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency, has established the **Palestine-Turkey Friendship Hospital in the Gaza Strip at a cost of \$62 million**. It will begin operating at the end of 2018 and is expected to be **the largest hospital in the Gaza Strip**. In addition, TIKA is building 320 dwelling units in the Gaza Strip (al-Anadolu News, July 27, 2018).

The Palestinian Authority (PA)

Meeting of the PLO's Executive Committee

► On July 28, 2018, the PLO's Executive Committee held a meeting chaired by Mahmoud Abbas. Its final summary announcement condemned the decision of the American Congress to stop foreign aid to the PA until the PA stopped paying salaries to the prisoners, the wounded and the families of shaheeds. It also condemned Israel's decision to deduct the funds for the salaries from the tax money Israel collects for the PA. The announcement stressed that the PA would continue "meeting its commitments" to the families of the shaheeds, prisoners and wounded (Wafa, July 28, 2018).



Mahmoud Abbas chairs a meeting of the PLO's Executive Committee (Wafa, July 28, 2018).

Upcoming speech by Mahmoud Abbas in the UN General Assembly

► According to Saeb Erekat, secretary of the PLO's Executive Committee, **Mahmoud Abbas is planning to give a "historic and fateful" speech at the UN General Assembly's annual session in September 2018.** It will deal with defining the PA's security, political and economic connections to Israel, the American peace proposal ("the deal of the century"), the situation in the PA and the PA's resistance to Benjamin Netanyahu's strategy. Saeb Erekat also said after the UN General Assembly session Mahmoud Abbas would hold a meeting of the PLO's Central Council to make "crucial decisions" (Palestinian TV, July 29, 2018).

Continuing condemnations of Israel's Nation State Law

► The PA continues to condemn the Nation State Law passed by the Israeli Knesset. **Mahmoud Abbas** gave a speech at a meeting of the PLO's Executive Committee in which he referred to laws the Knesset recently passed, particularly Nation State Law. Mahmoud Abbas said the Palestinians would not accept the law and would work to have it repealed (Wafa, July 28, 2018). **Saeb Erekat** held a meeting in Khan al-Ahmar with diplomats and foreign correspondents, where he said that the Nation State Law was the worst law passed since the establishment of the State of Israel, because it did not define Israel's geographic boundaries and gave the right of self-determination only to Jews, while non-Jews did not have the right to decide their destinies. He also claimed the law would lead to "massive ethnic cleansing" because it legitimized the destruction of Palestinian villages and the appropriation of land in the center of Judea and Samaria to give the land to settlers. He said the PA was preparing to appeal to the International Criminal Court about the law (Wafa, July 26, 2018).

► Interviewed by Palestinian TV, Saeb Erekat said **97 letters had been sent to states and international institutions with a detailed explanation of the implications of the Nation State Law for the Palestinian people** and the threats it posed for them. He also said that Mahmoud Abbas had asked Riyadh Mansour, the PA representative to the UN, to bring a copy of the Nation State Law to the UN's legal department to examine whether it was in accordance with Israel's commitments to the UN charter (Palestinian TV, July 29, 2018).

The Battle for Hearts and Minds

The flotilla to the Gaza Strip

► **On July 29, 2018, the *al-Awda* approached the Gaza Strip. It was the first of the boats sailing from Europe to violate the closure of the Gaza Strip.** When the boat reached a distance of 60 miles from the coast, the Israeli navy made contact and warned it not to approach the Gaza shore. When the boat did not obey **the Israeli navy took control, with no resistance, and towed it to the southern Israeli port of Ashdod.** According to the IDF spokesperson, the boat was captured in accordance with international law. The IDF made it clear to the passengers that they were violating the closure of the Gaza Strip and that humanitarian aid for Gaza could be delivered through the port of Ashdod (IDF spokesperson, July 29, 2018).



The *al-Awda* at sea a short time before it was halted by the Israeli navy (Facebook page of Ship to Gaza – Sweden, July 29, 2018).

► Reactions to the event:

- ◆ **Isma'il Haniyeh**, head of Hamas' political bureau, praised the solidarity of the activists participating in the fifth Freedom Flotilla Coalition. He condemned the acts of "Israeli aggression" against the boat and the act of "piracy" of the soldiers of the

"occupation" (Hamas movement website, July 30, 2018). **PIJ spokesman Da'ud Shehab** said Israel had carried out an act of "piracy and state terrorism," and it showed Israel did not want to end the siege on Gaza. He claimed Israel had violated international law and had committed a war crime against Gaza (Ma'an, July 29, 2018).

◆ **Zaher Birawi**, chairman of the "international committee for breaking the siege on Gaza," condemned the detention of the activists and "Israel's aggression" against the boats. He said it was an act of piracy that violated international law and was aggression against unarmed activists who were not a threat to the "occupation state." **He called on the countries whose citizens were on the boats [of the flotilla] to exert pressure on Israel** in order to protect the activists and ensure their return home.

◆ Zaher Birawi added that the Freedom Flotilla Coalition's legal team would do everything necessary to ensure the passengers' safety and the return to their countries of origin. He also called on international humanitarian rights organizations to exert pressure on Israel to make sure the boats were transferred to Gazan fishermen and that the medicines and medical equipment they brought were turned over to the health authorities (Facebook page of the "international committee for breaking the siege on Gaza," July 29, 2018).

◆ **Adham Abu Salmiya**, spokesman for the "authority for lifting the siege on the Gaza Strip," said in an interview that in the wake of the events the authority would deal with Israel's actions with the help of the legal committee in the Gaza Strip and the Freedom Flotilla Coalition's legal committee, which documents every everything that occurs on board the boats. He also said that **24 hours after the *al-Awda*, the *Huriya* is supposed to arrive**, and that it is currently sailing to the Gaza Strip as planned. He said there were 36 activists from 15 countries aboard, including media correspondents (Paltoday, July 29, 2018).



Adham Abu Salmiya, spokesman for the "authority for lifting the siege on the Gaza Strip," holds a press conference in the port of Gaza after the al-Awda was halted by the Israeli navy (al-Arabi al-Jadeed, July 29, 2018).

Ahed Tamimi released from an Israeli jail after serving an eight-month sentence

- ▶ On July 29, 2018, Ahed Tamimi (and her mother, Nariman) was released from an Israeli jail after having served a term of eight months for attacking an IDF soldier. Tamimi was turned into a national symbol of the Palestinian struggle against Israel. After her release the Palestinian public and senior PA figures held a series of receptions and ceremonies for her. As soon as she was released she paid a visit to the grave of Yasser Arafat in the *muqata'a* in Ramallah, and from there went to a reception in the office of Mahmoud Abbas.
- ▶ Mahmoud Abbas met with Ahed Tamimi and called her an example and role model for the Palestinian national struggle for freedom and independence. According to Mahmoud Abbas, the "non-violent popular struggle" of Ahed Tamimi and the villagers in Nabi Saleh proved the determination of the Palestinian people to struggle for their land. He also claimed the "non-violent popular resistance" was the best weapon against the "arrogance of the occupation" (Wafa, July 29, 2018). **Saeb Erekat** said the reception Mahmoud Abbas held for Ahed Tamimi sent a message to the entire world (Palestinian TV, July 29, 2018).



Mahmoud Abbas receives Ahed Tamimi in his office (Wafa, July 29, 2018).