



News of Terrorism and the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict (October 17 – October 23, 2018)

Overview

- ▶ The "return march" events of this past Friday, October 19, 2018, were relatively less violent because Hamas was concerned about a response to the rocket fire attacking Israel. However, the rioting continues, including attempts to cross the security fence, the use of IEDs near the fence, the continuation of the mini-flotillas accompanied by demonstrations and riots on the shore, and the continuing arson terrorism (including balloons with explosives attached to them).
- ▶ Thus despite the prevention of a military escalation after the rocket fire attack, the **situation on the ground may still deteriorate** as a consequence of the methodical violence orchestrated by Hamas. During visits of mediators from Egypt, Hamas leaders repeatedly declared that the "return marches" would continue until the "siege" of the Gaza Strip had been lifted.
- ▶ In **Judea and Samaria stabbing attacks continue**. This past week a Palestinian stabbed an IDF soldier with scissors near the Cave of the Patriarchs in Hebron. The terrorist, who came from Hebron, was shot and killed. In addition, stabbing attacks were prevented in Har Adar (near Jerusalem) and the Nablus area. Palestinians continued throwing stones and Molotov cocktails at Israeli vehicles on the roads in Judea and Samaria.

Israel's South

The "return marches"¹

- ▶ The "return march" of October 19, 2018 (the 30th since March 30, 2018) had as its slogan, "Together, the Gaza Strip rises up and the West Bank joins it." About 10,000 Gazans participated (vs. 15,000 the previous week). According to the IDF spokesperson, as opposed to previous weeks, most of the Gazans remained behind and did not approach the security

¹ For further information, see the October 21, 2018 bulletin, "Summary of the Events on the Gaza Strip Border."

fence. However, there were still **instances of Gazans throwing IEDs and hand grenades at the IDF forces**. There were also **at least three attempts to cross the security fence**. The Gazans who tried to cross the fence returned immediately to the Gaza Strip (IDF spokesperson, October 19, 2018). No Israeli casualties were reported. The ministry of health in the Gaza Strip reported 130 Gazans wounded.



The "return march" in the central Gaza Strip (Facebook page of the Supreme National Authority of the Great Return March, October 20, 2018).

► The events gave the impression that Hamas at least partially lowered the degree of violence in the riots this past Friday. Sources within the IDF said it was the least violent riot since they began in March, and that Hamas had restrained the violence. According to the sources, very few hand grenades and IEDs were thrown at IDF forces. Security sources assessed that Hamas stationed armed operatives along the fence to keep the level of violence under control (Ynet, October 19, 2018).

► Nevertheless, **the Hamas leadership has stressed that the marches will continue, thus the potential for escalation remains**. Hamas spokesman **Taher al-Nunu** said Hamas had "bargaining chips" that enabled it to exert pressure on Israel, but that the use of each one required national Palestinian coordination, planning and tactics. He said the most important one was the Palestinian people, who could operate in many ways, including an "armed resistance" if all the organizations agreed (al-Ghad, October 21, 2018).

Other Events

Attempts to penetrate into Israeli territory

► Despite the relatively low level of violence at the Friday march, during the week Gazans attempted to cross the security fence. On October 21, 2018, an IDF force saw a number of Gazans who had crossed the border in the northern Gaza Strip and threw several IEDs near

the fence. The forces shot at them and they fled back into the Gaza Strip (IDF spokesperson, October 21, 2018). Another attempt was carried out on the morning of October 22, 2018. (Radio Sawt al-Aqsa, October 22, 2018).

Mini-flotillas

► **On October 22, 2018, the 13th mini-flotilla sailed towards Israel's naval border.** About 20 small boats set sail from the Beit Lahia shore (Radio Sawt al-Aqsa, October 22, 2018). **The mini-flotilla was accompanied by a demonstration on the beach, in which about 5,000 Gazans participated. During the demonstration rioters threw IEDs and hand grenades at IDF forces.** Several rioters tried to approach the security fence but returned to the Gaza Strip. The ministry of health in the Gaza Strip reported that about twenty people had been injured in the demonstrations north of Beit Lahia (Twitter account of Ashraf al-Qidra, October 22, 2018).



Right: The weekly mini-flotilla (QudsN Facebook page, October 22, 2018). Left: Palestinians carrying tires arrive at the site of the weekly activity (Safa, October 22, 2018).

Arson terrorism

► In the meantime, **the launching of incendiary kites and balloons continues, including balloons with explosives attached to them.** It also continued after the Israeli political-security cabinet decided to intensify the IDF's countermeasures. On October 20, 2018, Israeli police demolitions experts were summoned to a community in the western Negev to neutralize a balloon with a suspicious object attached to it. In the afternoon Israeli Air Force (IAF) aircraft attacked a squad launching incendiary balloons in the southern Gaza Strip (IDF spokesperson, October 20, 2018). On October 22, 2018, five fires were caused by incendiary balloons in communities near the Gaza Strip.



Right: A fire in a community to the northeast of the Gaza Strip set by an incendiary balloon (QudsN Facebook page, October 23, 2018). Left: A fire in the western Negev set by an incendiary balloon launched from the Gaza Strip (Palinfo Twitter account, October 23, 2018).

Rocket and mortar shell fire

- On October 17, 2018, two rockets were launched at Israel from the Gaza Strip. **One hit a house in the southern Israeli city of Beersheba.** The other fell into the sea **off the coast of one of the cities in central Israel.** So far it is unclear which organization launched the rockets. The rocket in Beersheba caused extensive damage because of the size of the warhead. A woman and her three children, who were sleeping when the rocket hit, managed to reach the house's security room. Seven people were treated for shock.
- It was the first rocket to hit Beersheba since Operation Protective Edge (2014). So far it is not clear which terrorist organization carried out the rocket fire. The IDF spokesman reported that the type of rocket fired is in the arsenals of only Hamas and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ).



Right: Firing rockets from the Gaza Strip (video from the Facebook page of photographer Abd al-Rahman al-Kahlut, October 17, 2018). Left: The house in Beersheba that took a direct hit (Palinfo Twitter account, October 19, 2018).

- So far it is unclear which terrorist organization was responsible for the rocket fire. The joint operations room of the Palestinian resistance organizations, the coordinating body for the

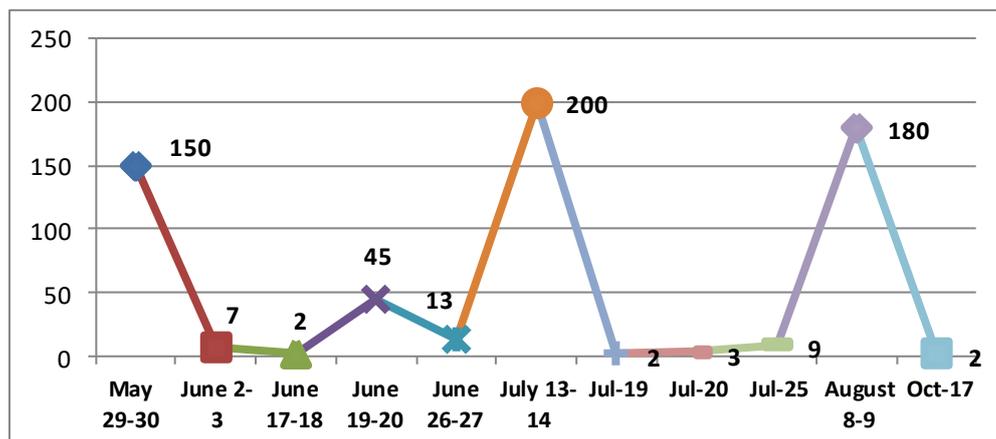
terrorist organizations in the Gaza Strip, **rushed to issue a formal condemnation of the rocket fire** (Hamas military wing website, October 17, 2018). **Musa Abu Marzouq, a member of Hamas' political bureau**, said the security forces in the Gaza Strip were still looking for whoever had launched the rockets, and that they would be detained (Filastin al-Yawm, October 21, 2018).

► However, despite denials of involvement from both Hamas and the PIJ, Israel announced it regarded the rocket fire as a serious event and said Hamas was responsible. **In response IAF aircraft attacked more than twenty Hamas targets.** Following the rocket fire the Israeli government political-security cabinet held an ad hoc meeting. The Israeli media reported that the cabinet decided to change the rules of engagement in view of the violence along the Gaza Strip border and the arson terrorism. According to reports, the cabinet instructed the IDF to **gradually intensify its response and employ a policy of zero tolerance towards any violation.** However, the cabinet also decided that efforts would continue to reach an arrangement through the mediation of Egypt and Nikolay Mladenov, the UN envoy to the Middle East.



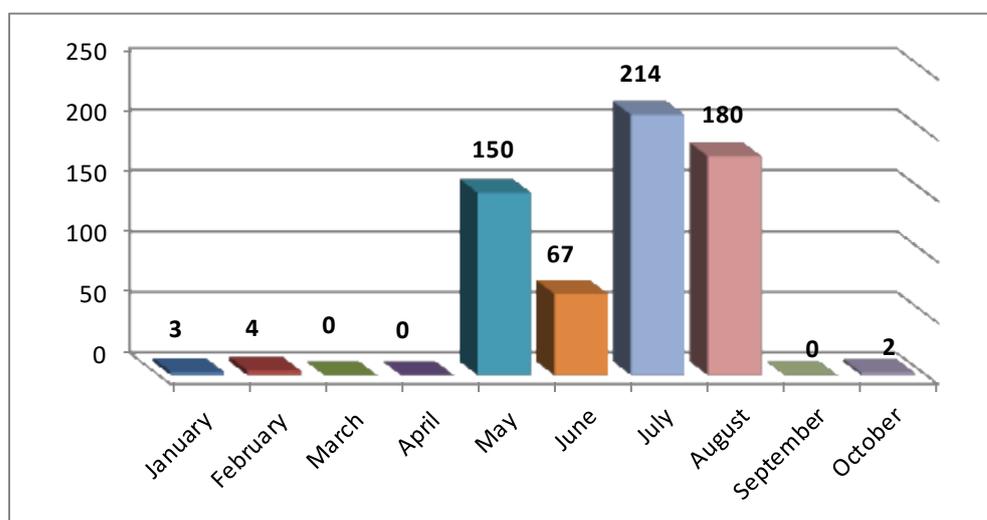
The commander of the national security forces in the Gaza Strip and his deputy visit a national security force post after the IDF attack (Facebook page of the national security forces in the Gaza Strip, October 17, 2018).

Rocket and mortar shell fire during and between the recent rounds of escalation²



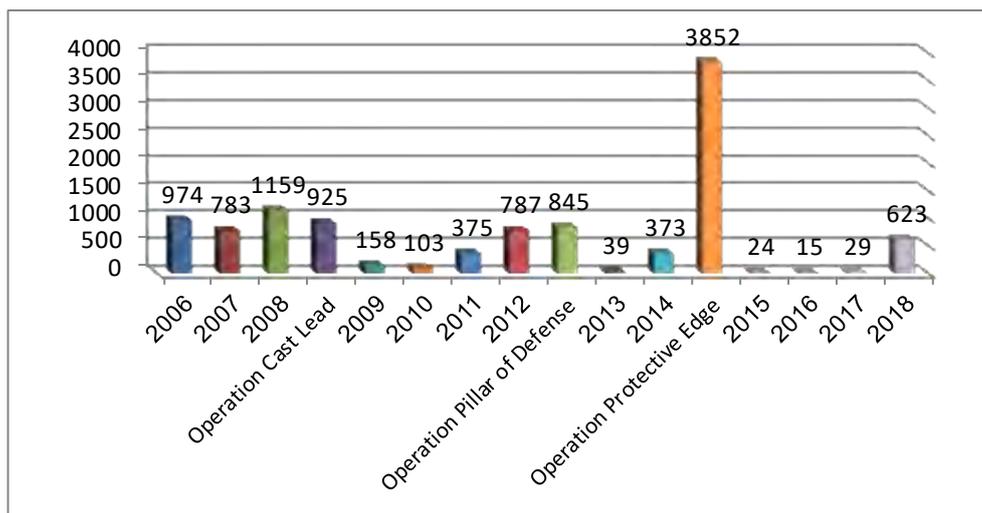
Minimum number of rockets and mortar shells fired in May, June and July. At this stage the ITIC cannot distinguish between rocket and mortar shell fire.

Monthly Distribution of Rocket and Mortar Shell Fire since January 2018



² The statistics do not include rockets that fell inside the Gaza Strip.

Annual Distribution of Rocket Hits



Judea and Samaria

Attacks and attempted attacks

- On October 22, 2018, a Palestinian stabbed an IDF soldier using a pair of scissors near the Cave of the Patriarchs in Hebron. The soldier was slightly injured. The soldier struggled with and also shot at him. Other soldiers in the area shot and killed the terrorist.
- The Palestinian media reported that the stabber was **Mu'amar Arif al-Atrash**, 42, from Hebron, father of seven. One of his children is in prison in Israel (QudsN website, October 22, 2018). Hamas sent its condolences to the family (QudsN Twitter account, October 22, 2018).



Mu'amar Arif al-Atrash
(QudsN Facebook page, October 22, 2018).

Other events on the ground

- The search continues for Ashraf Na'alwa, the terrorist who carried out the shooting attack on November 7, 2018, in the Barkan industrial zone, killing two people and wounding a third.

The Israeli security forces distributed a flysheet in the Tulkarm region warning local residents not to provide the terrorist with aid (Palinfo, October 17, 2018).



Right: The flysheet distributed by the IDF in the Tulkarm area warning residents not to give the terrorist any aid (Palinfo Twitter account, October 17, 2018). **Left:** Hamas-affiliated cartoonist Omayya Joha glorified the terrorist with a drawing whose caption reads, "Ashraf Na'alwa...keep him in sight" (Shehab Facebook page, October 22, 2018).

► In Judea and Samaria there was an increase in the number of stones thrown at Israeli vehicles. Israeli security forces carried out counterterrorism activities throughout Judea and Samaria, detaining Palestinians suspected of terrorist activity, confiscating funds used to finance terrorist activities, and seizing military grade and improvised weapons. The more prominent events were the following:

- ◆ On **October 22, 2018**, a Palestinian was detained by the Israeli security forces after he came from Hawwara. A knife was found in the trunk of his car. During his initial interrogation he said he was planning to carry out a terrorist attack (Rescue Without Borders, October 22, 2018).
- ◆ On **October 22, 2018**, three Molotov cocktails were thrown at vehicles on **the Jerusalem-Gush Etzion** road near al-Khader. No casualties or damage were reported (Rescue Without Borders, October 22, 2018).
- ◆ On the night of **October 22, 2018**, unknown persons vandalized about twenty cars in **the village of Marda (northeast of Ariel)**. They punctured tires and spray-painted Magen Davids and Hebrew graffiti on some of them. The Israeli police are investigating the event as a hate crime carried out by Israelis (Ynet, October 22, 2018).
- ◆ On **October 20, 2018**, the Israeli police detained a Palestinian in his twenties in **the community of Har Adar** (near Jerusalem). A knife was found in his possession.

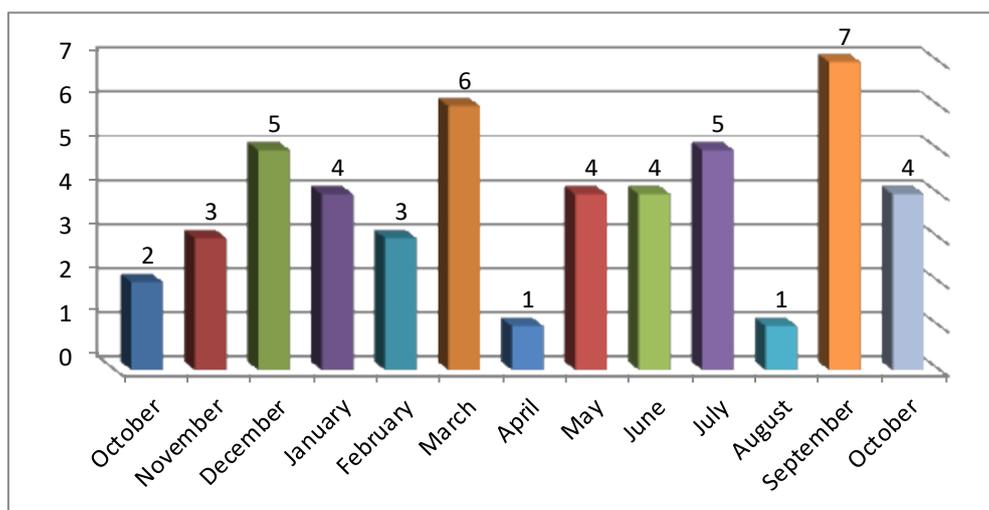
According to the initial interrogation, he was planning to carry out a stabbing attack. He came from the nearby village of Qatana and had apparently crossed the security fence and entered the community. A security guard saw him and called the police.



The knife found in the possession of the Palestinian detained in Har Adar (Shehab Facebook page, October 20, 2018).

- ◆ On **October 20, 2018**, two IEDs were thrown at IDF forces from Beit Furiq (Nablus region) at a nearby junction. No casualties were reported. The IEDs did not explode and were neutralized by the Israeli security forces (IDF spokesperson, October 20, 2018).

Significant terrorist attacks in Judea and Samaria during the past year³



³ 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.

Developments in the Gaza Strip

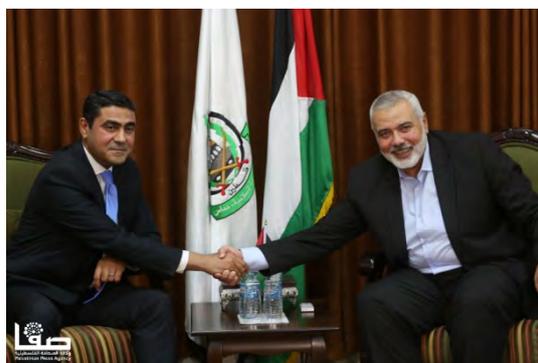
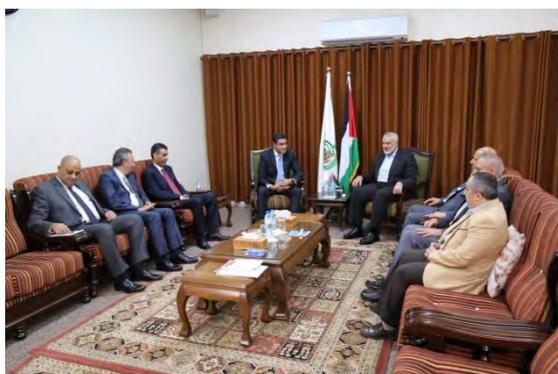
Egypt continues efforts to reach an arrangement

► Egypt, through members of its general intelligence, continues its efforts to promote an arrangement in the Gaza Strip and an internal Palestinian reconciliation. On October 16, 2018, a delegation of senior Egyptian General Intelligence personnel entered the Gaza Strip through the Erez Crossing. The delegation was led by **General Ahmed Abdel Khalaq**, who holds the Palestinian file. The delegation came to prepare for the visit to the Gaza Strip of Egyptian Intelligence Minister Abbas Kamel (Palinfo, October 16, 2018).

► The Egyptian delegation, which was in the Gaza Strip on the day the rockets were launched at Israel, left, and Abbas Kamel cancelled his visit (al-Ghad, October 21, 2018). During its short stay in the Gaza Strip, the Egyptian delegation met with Hamas figures to prevent a deterioration of the situation on the ground following the rocket fire. According to Palestinian sources, contacts were held with Palestinian, Israeli and international figures and succeeded in preventing an escalation (al-Hayat, October 18, 2018).

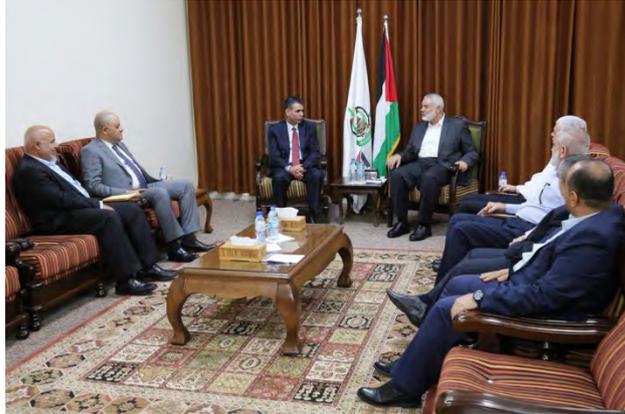
► On October 18, 2018, another Egyptian security delegation arrived in the Gaza Strip, again headed by Ahmed Abdel Khalaq. They met with Isma'il Haniyeh, head of Hamas' political bureau, and other Hamas leaders. From the Gaza Strip they went to Ramallah to meet with Majed Faraj, head of Palestinian General Intelligence. According to the media, the Egyptian delegation demanded a reduction of the tension along the border, especially during the "return marches." They demanded that the rioters refrain from clashing with IDF soldiers.

Hamas demanded a complete lifting of the "siege" of the Gaza Strip before the demonstrations stopped (al-Akhbar, October 19, 2018).



The Egyptian General Intelligence intelligence delegation meets with Isma'il Haniyeh (Palinfo Twitter account, Safa Twitter account, October 18, 2018).

► On October 22, 2018, after meetings held in Ramallah, the delegation paid a return visit to the Gaza Strip. Another meeting was held with Isma'il Haniyeh; also present was Yahya al-Sinwar, head of Hamas' political bureau in the Gaza Strip (Safa, October 22, 2018).



The Egyptian security delegation headed by Ahmed Abdel Khalaq (third from left), who holds the Palestinian file in Egyptian General Intelligence, meets with the Hamas leadership (Palinfo Twitter account, October 22, 2018).



The Gazans prevent Israel from squeezing the trigger and initiating another round of fighting in the Gaza Strip (Isma'il al-Bazam's Facebook page, October 17, 2018).

► Senior Hamas figures made statements about the Egyptian delegation and a possible arrangement with Israel:

- ◆ **Khalil al-Haya, a member of Hamas' political bureau**, said the Egyptians had stressed they were not bringing messages from Israel to Hamas. He said the Palestinians had made it clear to the Egyptians that they wanted the siege lifted and that the "return marches" would continue as "popular activities" (al-Aqsa, October 18, 2018).
- ◆ **Musa Abu Marzouq, a member of Hamas' political bureau**, said the Egyptians were interested in having the internal Palestinian reconciliation agreement implemented before the arrangement, but they would not impose it as a condition

(Filastin al-Yawm, October 22, 2018). On another occasion he said the two issues were interdependent but being dealt with separately (Ma'an, October 22, 2018).

◆ **Hamas spokesman Taher al-Nunu gave a series of interviews.** He said the meeting with the Egypt delegation had discussed Egypt's efforts to support the Palestinians and protect them from "any insane behavior or new Israeli adventure" against the Gaza Strip. He added that they supported the Egyptian efforts and were working hard to end the "siege" and reconfirm the ceasefire with Israel [i.e., the ceasefire achieved after Operation Protective Edge]. He said the issue of reconfirming the ceasefire depended on a general national consensus. When understandings had been reached, he said, they would be declared openly.

► Taher al-Nunu also said that they were not afraid of aggression. If Israel did "something crazy or stupid," it would find itself facing the "resistance," led by the Izz al-Din Qassam Brigades [Hamas' military-terrorist wing]. As to the "return marches," he claimed the Egyptian delegation had not demanded they stop, claiming there was a national consensus to continue them, while stressing that they be "popular, not violent" (al-Ghad channel, October 18; al-Aqsa TV website, October 19; Palestine Online, October 21, 2018).

The Palestinian Authority (PA)

PA diplomatic activity in the UN

► The UN General Assembly voted by a large majority for **the Palestinian legation would head the Group of 77 (G77), an important bloc of developing countries**, including China. The Palestinian legation received 146 votes, including those of Germany, France and Britain. The UN General Assembly vote gave "Palestine" the "rights and capacity" to head the organization (UN website, October 17, 2018).

► That means the Palestinians will be able to function like a full UN member state. It is another step towards recognition of the Palestinian legation as a member state. **Rami Hamdallah, prime minister of the Palestinian national consensus government**, said the PA had won another victory in the current UN session by winning more rights (Dunia al-Watan, October 17, 2018). **Riyadh Mansour, PA representative to the UN**, called it a victory for the PA and proof that most of the countries of the world believed in the Palestinians' ability to take on important responsibilities (al-Araby al-Jadeed, October 17, 2018).

Khan al-Ahmar

► Despite the fact that the Israeli Supreme Court rejected the appeal of the residents of Khan al-Ahmar against their evacuation, **Israel decided to delay evacuating the village to try to exhaust negotiations and proposals that had been made.** The PA said it was satisfied with the Israeli government's decision. According to **Walid 'Assaf, chairman of the Commission Against the Wall and Settlements**, Israel's decision was a function of the "firm stance" of the Palestinian people. He said it also indicated Israel's surrender to international pressure, and its concern over suits brought against it in the International Criminal Court (ICC) in The Hague. He said **the protests would continue until the final revoking of the Israeli government's decision to destroy the village** (Facebook page of the Commission Against the Wall and Settlements, October 21, 2018).



Prime Minister Rami Hamdallah (center) visits the village of Khan al-Ahmar, sitting next to Walid 'Assaf (left), chairman of the Commission Against the Wall and Settlements (Palestinian TV YouTube channel, October 18, 2018).

Reactions to the closing of the American consulate in east Jerusalem

► Mike Pompeo, the American Secretary of State, announced the **merging of the American embassy in Jerusalem and the consulate general in east Jerusalem into a single diplomatic mission.** He said the United States would continue to conduct a full range of reporting, outreach, and programming in the West Bank and Gaza as well as with Palestinians in Jerusalem through a new Palestinian affairs unit inside American embassy in Jerusalem. He said there would be no change in American policy regarding Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and the Gaza Strip (website of the United States Department of State, October 18, 2018).

► **The PA denounced the decision.** The Palestinian foreign ministry said in an announcement that the decision reflected the American tendency to continue its war on the Palestinian

people. It said the ministry intended to pursue all the necessary legal and political steps to protect east Jerusalem as the eternal capital of the state of Palestine and as occupied Palestinian territory (Wafa, October 18, 2018).

► **The PA leadership denounced the decision:**

- ◆ **Saeb Erekat, secretary of the PLO's Executive Committee**, called the decision "unilateral and irresponsible." He said it was meant to satisfy a group in America that subscribed to the ideology of Israel's right wing (Wafa, October 18, 2018).
- ◆ **Ahmed al-Majdalani, a member of the PLO's Executive Committee**, said the decision was one of the steps implemented by Donald Trump to exert pressure on the Palestinian people and its leadership. He added that the Trump administration was trying to Judaize Jerusalem and eliminate all Palestinian presence in it.
- ◆ **Riyadh al-Maliki, Palestinian foreign minister**, said the decision reflected the American desire to continue its "cruel war" against the Palestinian people and was a serious blow to international law and UN resolutions. He said the Palestinians would take all possible legal, political and diplomatic steps to protect east Jerusalem (Wafa, October 19, 2018).

Struggle over Palestinian textbooks in east Jerusalem

► The center for textbooks of the PA's ministry of education issued a post dealing with locating "counterfeit and distorted" textbooks in east Jerusalem. According to the ministry's claim, the books are distributed by Israel in order to change Palestinian national identity, part of what the ministry calls "Israel's war on Palestinian educational institutions." The center called on the Palestinian public to beware of the Israeli books and carefully examine textbooks by calling the center. If such books are found, the center calls on the public to burn and destroy them. **The center indicated its intention to embarrass Israel through political, diplomatic and media channels to expose the so-called "forgery" of Palestinian textbooks.** The center also announced it would provide schools in Jerusalem with free textbooks (Facebook page of the ministry of education in Ramallah, October 18, 2018).



Examples of textbooks allegedly distributed by Israel (Facebook page of the ministry of education in Ramallah, October 18, 2018).



Examples of original Palestinian textbooks bearing the PA logo (Facebook page of the ministry of education in Ramallah, October 18, 2018).