



Summary of Events Along the Gaza Strip Border

November 11, 2018

Overview

- ▶ On Friday, November 9, 2018, another "return march" was held in the Gaza Strip along the border with Israel. **The events took place after funds from Qatar had been taken into the Gaza Strip, for the salaries of Hamas employees. Ten tankers of fuel for also entered the Gaza Strip through the Kerem Shalom Crossing.**
- ▶ About 10,000 Palestinians participated in the Friday march. There has been a decrease in the level of violence, apparently because this week as well **Hamas kept demonstrators away from the security fence.** Nevertheless **the violence continued**, with Palestinians **throwing IEDs and Molotov cocktails at IDF forces and making a number of attempts to cross the security fence.** Several senior Hamas figures were present at the events and **declared the marches would continue.** The Supreme National Authority of the Great Return March announced that a march would also take place next week, with the slogan "Normalization is a crime and treason."

Thus in the current situation, Israel enables fuel and money from Qatar to enter the Gaza Strip in return for **a decrease in Hamas-sponsored violence, but not a complete cessation of violence.** In ITIC assessment, as long as the "return marches" do not stop, there will be a **fragile reduction in the violence from the Gaza Strip, occasionally accompanied by outbreaks of more serious violence.**

- ▶ In ITIC assessment, aid from Qatar **will not end the violence** from the Gaza Strip. That is because it does not genuinely meet the expectations of either side involved. As far as **Hamas** is concerned, the aid does not solve fundamental difficulties because it is limited in amount and time. As far as the **Palestinian Authority (PA)** is concerned, the aid from Qatar weakens its leverage with Hamas (payment of salaries), and the PA may try to put obstacles in the path of the deliveries. **Egypt** wants to continue leading the contacts between the sides and it is doubtful whether it will allow Qatar to play a significant role. As for **Israel**, delivering the funds to pay Hamas salaries created a problematic pattern of conduct. That is because

Hamas is **ready to decrease the level of violence** in return for gestures from Israel, but **in the future Hamas is liable to raise the level of violence** in the wake of difficulties on the ground or in the political contacts for an arrangement.

The "Return March"

- ▶ On Friday, November 9, 2018, the 33rd "return march" was held (since March 30, 2018). Its slogan was "The march will continue." Before the march the Supreme National Authority called for broad participation at the confrontation sites with IDF forces (Palinfo Twitter account, November 9, 2018). It also called for all necessary measures to be taken to prevent Israeli snipers from harming demonstrators. According to the Authority, its most important message was that **"the mass gatherings should be popular and peaceful"** (Filastin al-Yawm, November 8, 2018). **Senior Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) figure Da'ud Shehab** said that the Supreme National Authority had decided, unrelated to the Egyptian mediation, to limit losses among the demonstrators, which led to **the use of new methods to reduce the tension** (al-Quds al-Arabi, November 8, 2018).
- ▶ **More than 10,000 Palestinians participated**, gathering the five traditional sites along the Gaza Strip border. **Apparently this past week as well Hamas prevented rioters from approaching the security fence.** However, during the demonstrations there were **a number of violent events which included burning tires and throwing Molotov cocktails and IEDs at IDF soldiers.** In addition, **a number of Palestinians tried to cross the fence.** A spokesman for the ministry of health in the Gaza Strip reported that during the demonstrations one person was killed and 36 demonstrators were wounded by IDF fire (Ashraf al-Qidra's Twitter account and Shehab, November 9, 2018).
- ▶ **Senior Hamas and PIJ figures were present at the demonstrations.** Among them were **Yahya al-Sinwar**, head of the Hamas political bureau in the Gaza Strip; **Khalil al-Haya**, a member of Hamas' political bureau and senior PIJ figure **Khaled al-Batash.** **Mohammed al-Emadi, the Qatari representative, also visited the demonstration sites** (Shabakat Quds, November 9, 2018).
- ▶ The march organizers as well as senior Hamas and PIJ figures continue emphasizing that **the marches will continue "until they have achieved all their objectives."** Some of the main statements were the following:

◆ **Senior PIJ figure Khaled al-Batash** praised the Gazans who continue to go to the fence very Friday and make their voices heard. He said the marches would continue until all the objectives of the Palestinian people had been realized, including the return to the occupied lands and the "right of return." While he read his statement **Yahya al-Sinwar stood next to him** (al-Aqsa TV, November 9, 2018). That, in ITIC assessment, was to prominently illustrate the solidarity between the two organizations after the rocket fire unilaterally carried out by the PIJ.



Khaled al-Batash holds a press conference at the end of the November 9, 2018, "return march" (Supreme National Authority Facebook page, November 9, 2018).

◆ In an interview, Yahya al-Sinwar said that he participated in the activities near the fence because the "occupation fence" had to fall and would fall soon. He then claimed that **no agreement existed and that no understandings had been reached between Israel and Hamas**. He said Hamas was working with Egypt, Qatar and other countries, but reports about a lull agreement between Hamas and Israel were lies (al-Aqsa TV, November 9, 2018). On another occasion he said that **the way to talk to Israel was through the "resistance" [i.e., terrorism]**, and that the marches would continue for many months until they had achieved their objectives. However, he said they were going **to change the activities of the marches** (al-Mayadeen, November 9, 2018).



Yahya al-Sinwar (white shirt) and Khaled al-Batash in eastern Gaza City (Supreme National Authority Facebook page, November 9, 2018).

◆ Khalil al-Haya, a member of Hamas' political bureau, said the "return marches" had achieved some of their objectives, but they would continue until the "siege" of the Gaza Strip had been lifted completely. He said that during the past two weeks there had been an improvement in the supply of electricity. In addition, money from Qatar had arrived for Hamas employees working in the public sector, the wounded, the families of shaheeds and poor families. He said that nevertheless, Hamas would continue to exert pressure on Israel to completely end the "siege," and that it would be done through the "return marches," the Egyptian mediators, the Qataris and the UN. He emphasized that there was no new lull agreement with Israel, but rather understandings reached with Egypt, Qatar and UN representatives dealing with ratification of the 2014 ceasefire agreement (al-Andalou News, November 9, 2018).



Khalil al-Haya in the "return camp" in eastern Gaza City (al-Aqsa TV Twitter account, November 9, 2018).

► The Supreme National Authority announced a march would be held next week (November 16, 2018), and its slogan would be **"Normalization is a crime and treason"** (Dunia al-Watan, November 9, 2018). According to the daily newspaper al-Quds al-Arabi, the Supreme National Authority may not hold an organized mini-flotilla this coming Monday as it has every week for

the past three months. It may hold the mini-flotillas less frequently and not regularly (al-Quds al-Arabi, November 8, 2018).



Cartoon posted to a Hamas-affiliated website. The Arabic reads, "The return marches continue.." (Palinfo Twitter account, November 10, 2018).

Other Events: Attempts to Break into Israeli Territory

- ▶ On **November 8, 2018**, an IDF force identified two Palestinians near the security fence in the southern Gaza Strip. They reached the fence and **tried to sabotage it**. In response the force shot at them, killing one (Ynet, November 8, 2018).
- ▶ On **November 9, 2018**, a Palestinian crossed the security fence in the northern Gaza Strip and **went to the community of Netiv HaAsara (north of the Gaza Strip), where he set fire to a number of greenhouses**. He was apprehended by an IDF force summoned to the site. During interrogation he admitted **it was not the first time he had attempted to cross the fence into Israeli territory**.
- ▶ According to the IDF's initial investigation, IDF forces in observation posts saw him near the security fence in the northern Gaza Strip before he crossed into Israeli territory, and continued monitoring him during the event. After he had been identified IDF forces were summoned and encircled the area and other forces were deployed to isolate the nearby community. A search was conducted and the suspect was apprehended near a greenhouse at the end of a field, about a kilometer from the community. He was detained and taken for interrogation. While he was in Israeli territory he set fire to greenhouses (IDF spokesman, November 10, 2018).



A greenhouse the near northern Gaza Strip goes up in flames after it was set on fire by a Palestinian who broke through the security force (QudsN Facebook page, November 9, 2018).

Payment of Employees' Salaries

On November 8, 2018, **Mohammed al-Emadi, chairman of the Qatari Committee for the Reconstruction of Gaza entered the Gaza Strip, bringing with him \$15 million in cash.** The money earmarked for **the salaries of Hamas employees.** The money was brought into the Gaza Strip through the Erez Crossing under UN supervision and in coordination with Israel. The PA did not intervene (al-Quds, November 8, 2018). The following day the money was paid to employees of the Hamas administration through branches of the post office. The Qataris conditioned the payment on the cancellation of Friday as holiday and asked that the payments be made no later than Saturday. **In the meantime, ten fuel tankers carrying diesel fuel paid for by Qatar entered the Gaza Strip through the Kerem Shalom Crossing.**



Bringing \$15 million from Qatar to the Gaza Strip in three suitcases in the back seat of the vehicle of Mohammed al-Emadi (the chairman of the Qatari Committee for the Reconstruction of Gaza) (almowaten.net. November 9, 2018).

► According to the Palestinian media, **there are about 43,000 employees in the Hamas administration.** According to Palestinian reports, **the Qatari committee supervises paying 27,000 officials.** It was also reported that 5,000 civilian and military employees did not receive payment because Israeli refused to allow the transfer of money to them because of their membership in Hamas' military-terrorist wing. It was also reported that the salaries of other employees of the Hamas administration will be funded internally (al-Quds, November 9, 2018).



Paying salaries to Hamas officials at post office branches in the Gaza Strip. The sign on the wall at the left thanks Qatar's ruler, Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad (Facebook page of the Qatari Committee for the Reconstruction of Gaza, November 10, 2018).



Hamas' security forces guard the payment of salaries at post office branches in the Gaza Strip (Facebook page of the Qatari Committee for the Reconstruction of Gaza, November 10, 2018).

► Reportedly, there are a number of criteria to be eligible to receive the funds, including the following: employees who were not paid for July 2018 will receive 100% of their salaries and 50% of their salaries for the next five months; employees who did receive their salaries in July 2018 will receive 40% of their salaries for the current month and 50% of their salaries for the next five months. Employees who will not receive funds from Qatar (apparently among them

operatives in Hamas' security forces) will receive 60% of their salaries for the next six months, paid for by the local income of the Hamas administration (al-Quds, November 9, 2018).

► **Mohammed al-Emadi, meeting with representatives of the Palestinian organizations, said that Qatar would continue to donate \$15 million a month to pay salaries for the next six months.** Qatar will also donate \$10 million worth of fuel (Dunia al-Watan, November 9, 2018).¹ In the meantime the Qatari Committee for the Reconstruction of Gaza announced on its Facebook page that in the coming days it would begin distributing financial aid, giving \$100 to each of 50,000 needy families. According to the announcement, eligibility for the grant will be conducted through the website of the ministry of welfare in the Gaza Strip and the funds will be disbursed through the post office (Facebook page of the Qatari Committee for the Reconstruction of Gaza, November 9, 2018).

► According to Mohammed al-Emadi, Qatar is giving the aid to the Gaza Strip to advance the internal Palestinian reconciliation and strengthen the firm stance of the Palestinian people in the Gaza Strip. He said that after a lull had been achieved they would hold discussions with Israel ("the other factor") about a number of issues, including extending the Gaza Strip's fishing waters, establishing industrial zones and the issue of electricity (Wataniya, November 9, 2018).



Mohammed al-Emadi at a meeting of representatives of the Palestinian organizations in the Gaza Strip (Facebook page of the Qatari Committee for the Reconstruction of Gaza, November 10, 2018).

¹ It was reported that a number of Palestinian organizations, among them the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, Fada, the People's Party and the National Initiative boycotted the meeting, claiming Qatar was behind the normalization of relations with Israel (Dunia al-Watan, November 9, 2018).

Mohammed al-Emadi Attacked

► While in the Gaza Strip, Mohammed al-Emadi paid a visit to the power plant in the Gaza Strip and to the branches of the post office where the funds from Qatar were being disbursed. He also visited a "return camp" in eastern Gaza City. On two occasions (at a post office branch and in the "return camp") **young Palestinians threw stones at his car**. Hamas expressed regret over the incidents and said an investigation would be initiated and those responsible would be punished (al-Ittihad, November 9, 2018).



Mohammed al-Emadi (center) visits the Gaza Strip power plant (Facebook page of the Qatari Committee for the Reconstruction of Gaza, November 10, 2018).



Rioters attack Mohammed al-Emadi's convoy in the "return camp" east of Gaza City (al-Ittihad, November 10, 2018).

Efforts Continue for an Egyptian-Brokered Arrangement

► In addition to funds transferred to Hamas officials, **efforts continue to reach an arrangement through Egyptian mediation**. "Egyptian sources" reported that senior figures in Egyptian General Intelligence **invited the Hamas leadership to Cairo to continue talks about a lull with Israel and a reconciliation with Fatah**. According to the sources, Hamas accepted the invitation and said it was appointing a delegation of members of its political

bureau. The delegation will reach Egypt after Hamas decides on a unified position regarding the situation in the Gaza Strip. The sources revealed that the agreement which is expected to be signed by Israel and the Palestinian organizations in the Gaza Strip will include a two-year ceasefire – assuming that neither side violates the agreement (al-Araby al-Jadeed, November 10, 2018).

► Senior figures in Fatah and the PA reported that **Mahmoud Abbas agreed to the lull agreement in the Gaza Strip on the condition that it be based on the understandings of 2014** (the end of Operation Protective Edge), signed by the PA and Israel, and on the condition that it will not lead to a political agreement. **Ahmed Majdalani, a member of the PLO's Executive Committee**, said the Palestinian leadership is concerned about the indirect political implications of such agreements, but agreed to improve the humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip and prevent additional victims in the "return marches." "Senior Palestinian figures" said the Egyptian-brokered agreement between Israel and Hamas does not include Qatar's support in paying the salaries of Hamas officials, and the financial support is part of another agreement between Israel and Hamas, sponsored by Qatar (al-Hayat, November 9, 2018).