



Recent Increase in Terrorist Attacks in Judea and Samaria

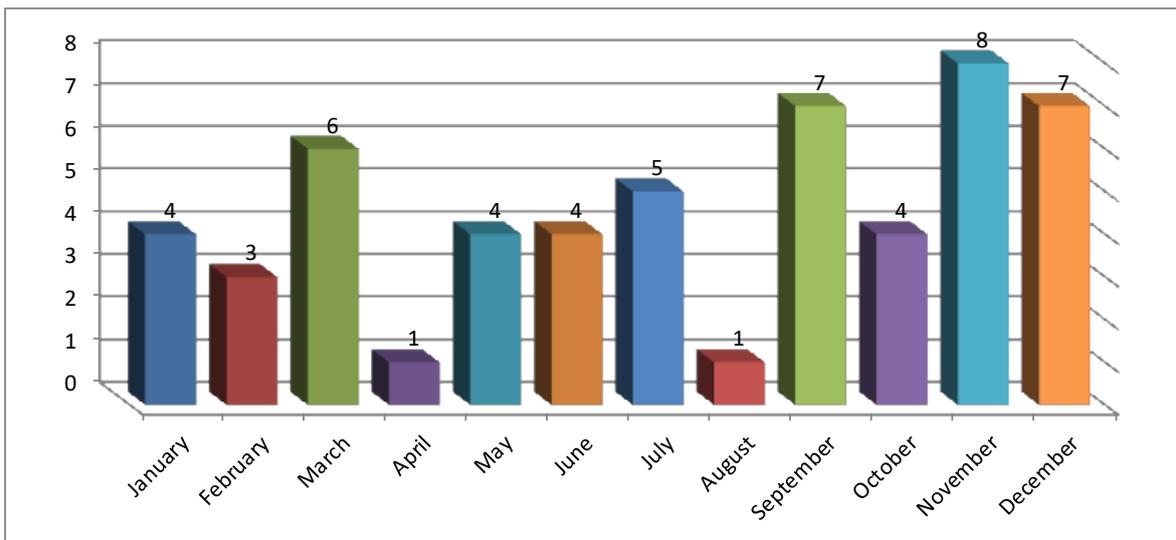
The situation on the ground

December 16, 2018

Overview

Since September 2018 there has been an increase in the number of significant terrorist attacks carried out in Judea and Samaria. Five adults were killed in the attacks, and a three-day-old baby, born prematurely because of his mother's injuries. During 2018 54 terrorist attacks were carried out in Judea and Samaria.¹ About half (26) were carried out in September-December (12 during the same period in 2017). Most of the attacks were **stabbing, vehicular and shooting attacks. Three were lethal shooting attacks, which took the lives of four adults and a baby.** However, despite the rise since September 2018, **there has been annual decline since the peak of popular terrorism, which began in September 2015.** Alongside the increase in terrorist attacks, the routine continues of stone- and Molotov cocktail-throwing, and the placing of IEDs in Judea and Samaria.

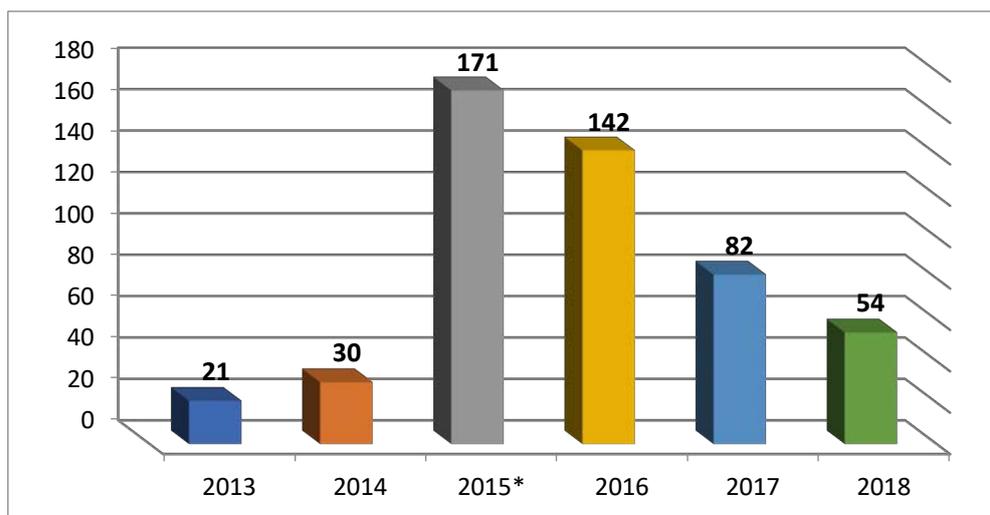
Significant terrorist attacks in Judea and Samaria during the past year²



¹ As of December 16, 2018.

² A significant attack is defined by the ITIC as involving shooting, stabbing, a vehicular attack, the use of IEDs, or a combination of the above. Stones and Molotov cocktails thrown by Palestinians are not included.

Significant terrorist attacks, annual distribution



*134 terrorist attacks were carried out during October-December 2015

► Most of the terrorist attacks in the recent wave were carried out as part of the "**popular resistance,**" i.e., **popular terrorism supported by Fatah and the Palestinian Authority (PA)**. However, **the recent attacks were more military-type than popular**. Shooting attacks have been carried out by an organized squad (or squads) which killed four adults and a three-day-old baby. In some instances military-grade weapons were used and the shooters were daring. **Hamas has been quick to claim responsibility**, although not all the shooting attacks were necessarily carried out by Hamas squads.

► **Hamas systematically incites an increase in the terrorism carried out in Judea and Samaria**. At the same time, operatives in Hamas' military wing invest efforts from the Gaza Strip, Turkey and Lebanon to establish a military infrastructure in Judea and Samaria through recruitment, transferring funds, training, smuggling weapons, etc. However, **the effective counterterrorism activities of the Israeli security forces, and to a certain extent of the PA security services**, have so far prevented popular terrorism from turning into institutionalized military terrorism, which could lead to a sharp increase in the quantity and quality of the attacks.



Hamas cartoons of expectations for an uprising in Judea and Samaria. Right: "The West Bank" (Palinfo Twitter account, December 15, 2018). Left: "The volcano of the West Bank" (Palinfo Twitter account, December 13, 2018).

► The head of the Israel Security Agency reported that **480 significant terrorist attacks were prevented during 2018. Five hundred and ninety "lone wolf" terrorists were located and neutralized and 201 Hamas terrorist squads were exposed.**³ Those are large numbers and indicate the extent of the activity under the radar (Israel Security Agency head Nadav Argaman, Knesset website, November 6, 2018).

Why has there been an increase in terrorist attacks during the past four months?

► It is unclear why especially the last four months have witnessed an increase in the number of terrorist attacks in Judea and Samaria, because the fundamental societal and political picture has not meaningfully changed since the beginning of the year. The Palestinian public continues to show little response to the intensive incitement of Hamas (and other terrorist organizations), and to the calls to join the demonstrations, rallies, riots and clashes with the Israeli security forces. Even the "return marches" in the Gaza Strip and the rounds of escalation, and the relocating of the American embassy to Jerusalem, did not bring the Palestinians in Judea and Samaria out into the streets or cause a significant increase in the number of significant terrorist attacks. What did bring them out was the social security tax

³ One of the networks exposed in September 2018 planned to carry out **mass attacks inside Israel**. To that end Hamas' military wing recruited operatives in Judea and Samaria. The military wing in the Gaza Strip trained them in making and placing IEDs and finding targets in Israel for the attacks. **Hamas exploited residents of the Gaza Strip who had permits to enter Israel for life-saving medical treatments in hospitals to pass messages to Hamas operatives in Judea and Samaria.** The network was exposed with the detainment of Wis Rajoub, from the town of Dura (near Hebron), who began carrying out the missions he received from Hamas' military wing. The use of Gazans who came to Israel for medical treatment was coordinated and directed by **Muhammad Abu Kweik, an operative in Hamas' military wing** (Israel Security Agency website, November 22, 2018).

law the PA is trying to pass, an internal Palestinian issue which has infuriated the Palestinians.

► **The following are three possible causes for the rise in terrorist attacks in recent months:**

- ◆ **Imitation:** The "success" of one attack inspires others. **In the past, one "successful" popular terrorism attack has led to a series of copy-cat attacks** (stabbing attacks, for example, where one follows another). **The lethal shooting attack in the Barkan industrial zone**, where the attacker managed to elude the Israeli security forces for nine weeks, may have been a catalyst. His success in killing Israelis and eluding the search for him led to a wave of sympathy and admiration, and may have also led to imitation attempts.

- ◆ **Hamas' successful establishing and handling a terrorist squad (or squads), especially in the region around Ramallah:** Since the wave of popular terrorism began Hamas has sought to encourage military-type attacks and turn them into the third intifada. **So far Hamas' efforts have failed because of the effective counterterrorism activities of the Israeli security forces, and to a certain extent, the activities of the Palestinian security services.** According to the IDF, **Hamas may be affiliated with the operatives who carried out recent attacks, especially the lethal shooting attacks in the Ramallah region.** The possible involvement of an established squad (or squads) may increase the quantity and quality of the attacks and the daring of the terrorist operatives, and add a new dimension to popular terrorism supported by Fatah and the PA.

- ◆ **The persistent weakening of the PA and the decrease in the level of security coordination with Israel:** The PA and Fatah are becoming weaker. Behind the scenes is the struggle over the inheritance of the leadership of the PA when Mahmoud Abbas passes away. In addition to its usual difficulties, the PA now has to face a social protest which makes it hard to control what happens in the Palestinian street. In addition, the PA's ability and motivation to continue **security coordination with Israel is on the decline.** In recent events the Palestinian public has turned its anger against the PA and its security services, calling them traitors and collaborators. The Palestinian public has accused the PA's security services of not preventing the Israeli security forces from

entering cities in Judea and Samaria, among them Ramallah, or from killing operatives, and of having violently restrained the riots against Israel's activities.

Appendix A

Terrorist attacks during the first half of December 2018

► On **December 14, 2018**, a Palestinian infiltrated into the community of **Beit El** and went to a guard post near the fence. He stabbed an IDF soldier manning the post, threw a rock at him and fled. **The soldier was critically wounded**. Two days later the terrorist gave himself up to Israel.



The scene of the stabbing attack in Beit El (Palinfo Twitter account, December 14, 2018).

► On **December 13, 2018**, Palestinians drove to a bus stop at the entrance to the community of **Givat Asaf (south of Beit El, near Ramallah)**. They killed two IDF soldiers and wounded a man and his pregnant wife. According to the initial investigation, they arrived in a vehicle. When they reached the bus stop one or two Palestinians got out and shot at the people standing at the bus stop. The car then drove off in the direction of al-Bireh.



The scene of the shooting attack at Givat Asaf (Palinfo Twitter account, December 13, 2018).

► On **December 13, 2018**, there was a vehicular attack in **al-Bireh**. **An IDF soldier was slightly injured**. The terrorist was shot and killed.

► On **December 13, 2018, a stabbing attack** was carried out in **the Old City of Jerusalem**. A Palestinian came from the direction of the Nablus Gate, took out a knife and tried to stab a man. When he was unsuccessful he ran towards two Border Policemen and a Border Policewoman stationed at the site. As they struggled with him he was shot and killed. A Border Policeman and the Border Policewoman were slightly injured.



Surveillance camera footage of the stabbing attack in the Old City in east Jerusalem (Arabs48, December 13, 2018).

► On **December 11, 2018**, a Palestinian driving a vehicle tried to escape from the Israeli security forces. He tried to run over Border Policemen securing an activity in **Idhna (near Hebron)**. As he drove away **he hit a Border Policeman, injuring him**. The Palestinian was shot and killed.

► On **December 11, 2018**, during the destruction of an illegally-built house in the region of the village of **Jiftliq, in the northern Jordan Valley**, a Palestinian tried to run over soldiers securing the location. The driver was slightly wounded and detained by the Israeli security forces.

► On the evening of **December 9, 2018**, there was a drive-by shooting at the bus stop at **the Ofra Junction (northeast of Ramallah)**. According to the initial investigation, a vehicle with two masked passengers drove from Ramallah to the bus stop at the Ofra Junction. The terrorist sitting in the back seat opened fire (from a military-grade weapon) at the people standing at the bus stop. The IDF force securing the site fired at the vehicle but it drove off. **Nine people were wounded in the attack, two of them critically**. On December 13, 2018, four days after the attack, Israeli security forces killed Saleh Barghouti, one of the two terrorists who carried out the attack. He was killed while trying to escape from the Israeli security forces north of Ramallah.



The scene of the attack (Right: Wafa, December 11, 2018); Left: WaelMasaeed's Facebook page, December 11, 2018).

Appendix B

► Alongside the attacks, and especially as a consequence of the counterterrorism activities of the Israeli security forces in Judea and Samaria, calls have been heard to escalate clashes with the Israeli security forces. Activists on the social networks began a campaign calling for business owners in Judea and Samaria to turn off their surveillance cameras to protect the lives of the "resistance" operatives [i.e., terrorist operatives] (Shabakat Quds, December 13, 2018). **On the ground there has been an increase in the number of riots in support of terrorist attacks during which rioters have clashed with the Israeli security forces.** There has also been an increase in the throwing of stones at Israeli vehicles in Judea and Samaria

The Palestinian Authority

► **Mahmoud Abbas' office** issued a statement saying that "the policy of breaking into cities" and the incitement against Mahmoud Abbas are what led to the violent activities. According to the statement, the office objects to violence, breaking into [Palestinian] cities and the terrorism of the settlers, and calls for stopping of the incitement (Wafa, December 13, 2018).

Yusuf al-Mahmoud, spokesman for the Palestinian national consensus government, claimed Israel was responsible for the escalation against the Palestinians and demanded the international community provide protection for the Palestinians (Wafa, December 13, 2018).

► PLO/Fatah activists said the following:

- ◆ **Saeb Erekat, secretary of the PLO's Executive Committee,** claimed the current "Israeli escalation" was part of a plan to destroy the PA and the Palestinian national project. He condemned the killing of Palestinians [i.e., terrorists] by Israel, calling it a "war crime" (Dunia al-Watan, December 13, 2018).

- ◆ **Mahmoud al-'Alul, deputy Fatah chairman,** condemned Israel's "crimes" and called on the Palestinians and Fatah operatives for a general mobilization to stand up to all the terrorist attacks carried out by the Israeli settlers (Wafa, December 13, 2018).

- ◆ **Hussein al-Sheikh, a member of Fatah's Central Committee,** said Mahmoud Abbas was holding intensive local, regional and international talks to stop the escalation in the West Bank (Palestinian TV, December 15, 2018).

Hamas

► **Hamas extended its sponsorship to the terrorists who carried out the attacks in Barkan industrial zone, Ofra and Jerusalem. Hamas' military wing claimed they**

were **Izz al-Din Qassam Brigades operatives**. Mourning tents were erected in the Gaza Strip and senior Hamas figures visited them. Hamas said the strength of the "resistance" in the West Bank would not weaken until Israel had been defeated and expelled from the Palestinian lands. Hamas called on the Palestinians in the West Bank to adhere to the viewpoint of the "resistance" (Hamas website, December 13, 2018). **Isma'il Haniyeh, head of Hamas' political bureau**, said that by their actions, those who had carried out the attacks had proved that the tradition of "resistance" existed in the West Bank. He said the "bad years" of the West Bank had ended and a new era had begun against Israel (al-Jazeera, December 13, 2018).

► **Hamas spokesman Abd al-Latif al-Qanua** praised the attacks and the Palestinian people, saying that the Jerusalem intifada [what Hamas calls the wave of popular terrorism in 2015-2016] continued. He said those carrying out the uprising in the West Bank would continue to snipe, kill, open fire and stab (al-Manar, December 13, 2018). **Hamas spokesman Hazem Qassem** said the West Bank would not lay down its arms until the Palestinians had been freed from Israel (Dunia al-Watan, December 13, 2018).

The Palestinian Islamic Jihad

► **Senior PIJ figure Ahmed al-Mudallal** said the recent series of attacks was a renewal of the "resistance," adding that the "resistance" had imposed a new equation on Israel. He called on Mahmoud Abbas to abandon the peace process and return Fatah to its belligerent roots (al-Aqsa, December 13, 2018).

► **PIJ spokesman Mus'ab al-Brim** said the rage of the Palestinian people and the intifada in the West Bank were not temporary, stressing that the Palestinian territories would only be a graveyard for Israel (Filastin al-Yawm, December 14, 2018).