



## News of Terrorism and the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict (December 12 – December 18, 2018)

### Overview

► This past week events focused on four shooting, stabbing and vehicular attacks, three in the Ramallah area (one in the Old City in Jerusalem). The attacks reflect the rise in the number, quality and degree of lethality of the attacks carried out since the beginning of September 2018.<sup>1</sup>

The rise in terrorist attacks led the Israeli security forces to carry out intensive activities to locate terrorists, prevent more attacks and strengthen deterrence. The activities included the killing of Palestinian terrorist Ashraf Na'alwa, who murdered two Israelis in a shooting attack in the Barkan industrial zone. In addition, two suspects were detained in connection with the shooting attack at the Ofra Junction (northeast of Ramallah), and the houses of the terrorists who carried out attacks were destroyed.

► In the "return march" and mini-flotilla in the Gaza Strip the level of violence was relatively low despite the escalation in Judea and Samaria. Hamas spokesman say that the marches will continue until they have achieved their objectives, and threaten to renew the violence (such as the incendiary balloons and the night harassment groups) if their demands are not met (in view of what they see as Israeli delaying tactics).

► The IDF located a fourth Hezbollah tunnel near the Israel-Lebanon border. UNIFIL confirmed the existence of four tunnels, two of which crossed the border. However, UNIFIL avoids saying the tunnels were dug by Hezbollah.

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<sup>1</sup> For further information, see the December 17, 2018 bulletin, "Recent Increase in Terrorist Attacks in Judea and Samaria (The situation on the ground)."

## Judea and Samaria

### Terrorist attacks

- ▶ **This past week there were four shooting, stabbing and vehicular attacks in Judea and Samaria. Two IDF soldiers were killed** in the attacks. That led to additional security measures in Judea and Samaria, including constructing 120 concrete shields at about 20 bus stops in Judea and Samaria (IDF spokesman, December 14, 2018).
- ▶ The terrorist attacks were the following:
  - ◆ On **December 14, 2018**, a Palestinian infiltrated into the community of **Beit El**, went to the guard post near the fence and attacked the soldier manning the post. They struggled and the terrorist stabbed the soldier, then hit him with a rock. The soldier was critically wounded and the terrorist escaped. Signs at the scene of the attack indicated the terrorist was also wounded (IDF spokesman, December 14, 2018). Two days later the terrorist surrendered to Israeli forces.



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

- ◆ On **December 13, 2018**, there was a vehicular shooting attack at the bus stop near the entrance of **Givat Asaf (south of Beit El, near Ramallah)**. Two IDF soldiers were shot to death and a soldier and civilian woman were wounded. According to the initial investigation, the vehicle arrived at the site, one or two terrorists got out and shot at the people standing at the bus stop. The vehicle drove off in the direction of al-Bireh. A number of days later the Israeli security forces located the Kalashnikov used by the Palestinians, as well as the weapon taken from one of the soldiers during the attack (IDF spokesman, December 16, 2018).



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

◆ On **December 13, 2018**, a vehicular attack was carried out in **al-Bireh**. A Palestinian drove his car into an IDF force carrying out operational activities, slightly wounding one soldier. The terrorist was shot and killed (IDF spokesman, December 13, 2018). The terrorist was **Hamdan Tawfiq al-'Aridha** (Abu Firas), 60, from Ramallah. He was originally from 'Arabeh in the Jenin area and worked as a CPA (ramallah.news, December 13, 2018; Wafa, December 13, 2018).



**Right: Hamdan al-'Aridha (Hamdan al-'Aridha's Facebook page, August 21, 2018). Left: The scene of the attack (ramallah.news, December 13, 2018).**

◆ On **December 13, 2018**, there was a stabbing attack in **the Old City of Jerusalem**. A Palestinian who came from the direction of the Nablus Gate tried to stab a man nearby. When he was unsuccessful he ran towards two Border Policemen who were stationed at the site. During the struggle a Border Policeman and Border Policewoman were slightly injured. The terrorist was shot and killed.



Picture from a surveillance camera documenting the attack in the Old City of Jerusalem (Arabs48, December 13, 2018).

### IDF activity to locate terrorists

- ▶ After nine weeks of searching for **Ashraf Na'alwa**, the Israeli security forces shot and **killed him** in a short gunfight in the Askar refugee camp in Nablus. Na'alwa was the Palestinian terrorist who **killed two Israelis and wounded another in the shooting attack in the Barkan industrial zone** on October 7, 2018.
- ▶ After the killing of Na'alwa, **Bassem al-Agha**, the **Palestinian Authority (PA) ambassador to Saudi Arabia**, opened a mourning tent in the **Palestinian embassy in Riyadh**. People who came to offer condolences were received by the ambassador, Ashraf Na'alwa's brother and the embassy staff (Fatah Facebook page, December 15, 2018).



The mourning tent for Ashraf Na'alwa opened by the Palestinian ambassador to Saudi Arabia in the embassy in Riyadh. People who came to offer condolences were received by the ambassador, Ashraf Na'alwa's brother and the embassy staff (Fatah Facebook page, December 15, 2018).

► At the end of Israeli security force intelligence and operational activities, a number of suspects in the shooting attack at the Ofra Junction were detained (December 9, 2018). During the detention of **Saleh Omar Saleh al-Barghouti**, from the village of Qobar (northwest of Ramallah), he tried to attack the Israeli security forces and escape. He was shot and killed (Israel Security Agency, December 13, 2018).



**Right: Mourning notice issued by Hamas for the death of its "heroic jihad warrior" Saleh Omar al-Barghouti, who carried out the shooting attack at the Ofra Junction (Facebook page of the Amama website, December 13, 2018). Left: The notice issued by Hamas' military wing after the killing of Saleh al-Barghouti and Ashraf Na'alwa (Hebrew Twitter account of Hamas' military wing, December 13, 2018).**

► The Israeli security forces carried out extensive activities in Judea and Samaria to locate the other terrorists who committed the shooting attacks at the Ofra Junction and Givat Asaf. The forces operated in Ramallah and detained about forty wanted Palestinians suspected of involvement in terrorist activity. Thirty-seven of them were known Hamas operatives (IDF spokesman, December 14, 2018).

► During the security activity hundreds of Palestinians rioted near al-Bireh (in the Ramallah area). One IDF soldier was slightly wounded when hit in the face by a stone (Ynet, December 14, 2018). In addition, in Hebron Israeli security forces detained a vehicle near the Jewish community. There were two Palestinians in the car who had an Uzi submachine gun and another weapon, both loaded and cocked (Ynet, December 16, 2018).

### Destroying houses of terrorists and their families

► During the past week Israeli security forces destroyed a number of houses of Palestinians who carried out terrorist attacks. The activity caused outrage in the PA and Hamas. **PA spokesmen condemned the destruction of the houses and promised that the Palestinian leadership would rebuild them.**

► **Yusuf al-Mahmoud, spokesman for the national consensus government**, condemned the destruction of the terrorists' houses, claiming it was collective punishment and part of the Israeli escalation against the Palestinian people (Wafa, December 17, 2018). **Mahmoud al-'Alul, deputy Fatah chairman**, said destroying houses would not make the Palestinians change their positions, and the houses would be rebuilt (Palestinian TV, December 17, 2018). **Hamas spokesman Abd al-Latif al-Qanua** said that the Israeli decision to destroy the houses of Palestinians who had carried out attacks and expel their families reflected the "helplessness and frustration" of the Israeli leadership. He said their "crimes" would not prevent the [Palestinian] public from continuing to confront Israel (Abd al-Latif al-Qanua's Facebook page, December 17, 2018).

► The main activities of the Israeli security forces in destroying houses:

◆ On **December 16, 2018**, the Israeli security forces destroyed the first floor and basement of the house of Palestinian terrorist **Ashraf Na'alwa and his family in the village of Shuweika**, in the Tulkarm region (Na'alwa carried out the shooting attack in the Barkan industrial zone on October 7, 2018, killing two Israelis). During the IDF activity dozens of Palestinians rioted, burned tires, threw stones and Molotov cocktails, and shot fireworks (IDF spokesman, December 17, 2018).



**The destruction of the house of Palestinian terrorist Ashraf Na'alwa in the village of Shuweika (Palinfo Twitter account, December 17, 2018).**

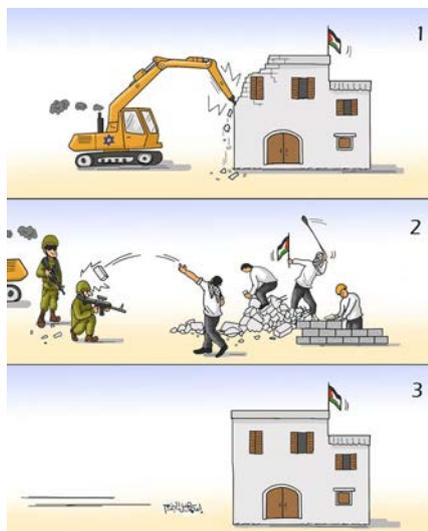
◆ IDF forces and the Civilian Administration destroyed a four-story building in the al-Am'ari refugee camp (near Ramallah) which belonged to **the family of Palestinian terrorist Islam Yusuf Abu Hamid** (on May 26, 2018, he threw a concrete block at the head of an IDF soldier, killing him). Dozens of Palestinians rioted during the activity, throwing stones. No casualties were reported (IDF spokesman, December 15, 2018).

◆



**The destruction of the house of terrorist Islam Abu Hamid in the al-Am'ari refugee camp near Ramallah (Wafa, December 15, 2018).**

- ◆ The commander of the IDF Central Command signed an order for the destruction of the house of **the terrorist who stabbed Ari Fuld to death at the entrance to a shopping mall in Gush Etzion on September 16, 2018** (IDF spokesman, December 16, 2018).
- ◆ On December 12, 2018, the Israeli security forces examined the houses of **the terrorists who carried out the shooting attack at the Sharona commercial complex in Tel Aviv in June 2016, killing four people**. Their houses were destroyed in August 2016 and rebuilt without permits. The IDF is considering destroying them again (IDF spokesman, December 12, 2018).



**Cartoon of Palestinian determination to rebuild the houses destroyed by the IDF in Judea and Samaria (Isma'il al-Bazam's Facebook page, December 17, 2018)**

### Other events on the ground

- In the wake of the recent events and the IDF activities in Judea and Samaria, many calls were heard for the Palestinian public to participate in the protest demonstrations and marches in Judea and Samaria and to confront IDF forces. Following the calls, Palestinians

rioted against the Israeli security forces at a number of locations, including Salfit, Nablus and Hebron. As a result, one Palestinian was killed and several Palestinians were wounded. The PA's security services suppressed a march to the presidential residence in Ramallah, and one in the region of Joseph's Tomb in Nablus.



**Palestinians try to destroy the security fence in the village of Bayt Sira near the community of Maccabim (Palinfo Twitter account, December 14, 2018).**

► The Israeli security forces continued their counterterrorism activities. Some of the activities were the following:

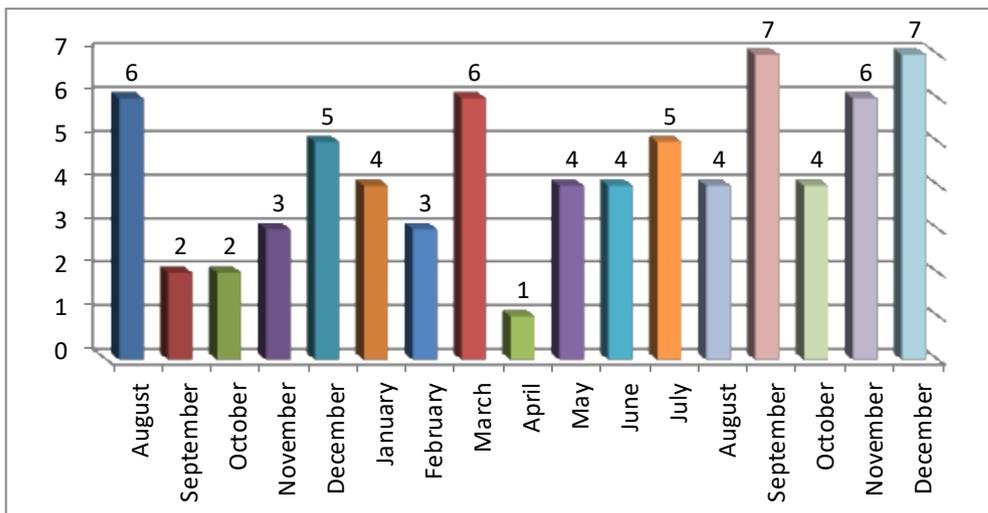
- ◆ **December 17, 2018** – An IDF force halted a Palestinian vehicle **near Givat Asaf (south of Beit El)**. One of the passengers had a knife in his possession (Red Alert Facebook page, December 17, 2018).
- ◆ **December 17, 2018** – Stones were thrown at a security vehicle **in Silwan, east Jerusalem**. No casualties were reported. The vehicle was damaged (Red Alert Facebook page, December 17, 2018).
- ◆ **December 17, 2018** – An improvised pipe bomb was thrown at a bus near **the village of Yabed (west of Jenin)**. No casualties or damage were reported (IDF spokesman, December 17, 2018).
- ◆ **December 16, 2018** – Rocks and stones were thrown at an Israeli vehicle at the **Luban al-Sharqia Junction (between Nablus and Ramallah)**. A woman sitting on the passenger side was seriously wounded.



**The vehicle hit by a rock which seriously wounded a woman (Rescue Without Borders in Judea and Samaria, December 15, 2018).**

- On December 16, 2018, during a night activity of Border Policemen on the outskirts of Ramallah a demonstration was held by about 50 Israeli settlers. Three Israelis were detained on suspicion of throwing stones at the houses of Palestinians. Two soldiers serving in the region tried to release them. The soldiers were suspended until an investigation is completed (IDF spokesman, December 16, 2018).

### Significant terrorist attacks in Judea and Samaria during the past year <sup>2</sup>



<sup>2</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.

## Israel's South

### The "return march" of December 14, 2018

► The 38<sup>th</sup> "return march" was held on December 14, 2018, with the theme, "The resistance is a legitimate right." **About 10,000 demonstrators participated**, gathering at the five traditional sites. Despite the escalation in Judea and Samaria the march was accompanied by a relatively low level of violence (the throwing of stones, Molotov cocktails and hand grenades at IDF soldiers). During the events an IDF force identified a number of Palestinians who crossed the security fence in the southern Gaza Strip and reached the earthworks near the fence. After an IDF force arrived they returned to the Gaza Strip (IDF spokesman, December 14, 2018).



**Demonstrators at the "return march" in eastern Gaza City wave pictures of Ashraf Na'alwa, the terrorist who carried out the shooting attack at the Barkan industrial zone, and of Saleh al-Barghouti, who carried out the shooting attack at the Ofra Junction (Supreme National Authority of the Great Return March Facebook page, December 15, 2018).**

► The spokesman for the ministry of health in the Gaza Strip reported that during "return march" events 75 Palestinians had been wounded (Ashraf al-Qidra's Twitter account, December 14, 2018). There were allegedly a number of media personnel among the wounded (Palinfo Twitter account, December 14, 2018).

► As they have every week, senior Hamas figures and march organizers attended the events. The spokesmen related to the events in Judea and Samaria. **Khalil al-Haya, a member of Hamas' political bureau**, praised the Palestinians killed in the West Bank, claiming the "resistance" harmed Israel (al-Aqsa TV, December 14, 2018). **Ahmed Bahar, deputy chairman of the Legislative Council**, said that despite Israel's advanced weapons, it was afraid of an "armed resistance" and of the joint operations room of the Palestinian organizations (Paltoday, December 14, 2018). **Suheil al-Hindi, a member of Hamas' political bureau**, said that if Israel employs delaying tactics the supreme national authority will make the decision to return to using measures Israel is familiar with. Those measures are aimed at sending

assertive messages **by means of the night harassment groups and incendiary balloons** (Palestine Online, December 15, 2018).



**Right: Ahmed Bahar at the "return march" in eastern Gaza City (Facebook page of the Legislative Council in the Gaza Strip, December 14, 2018). Left: Senior Hamas figure Khalil al-Haya at the "return march" in eastern Gaza City (Supreme National Authority Facebook page, December 15, 2018).**

► The Supreme National Authority held a press conference where **senior Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) figure Khader Habib** praised the Palestinians in the West Bank who were killed by IDF fire, stressing that the Palestinians would not be silent in the face of the blood that had been shed. He called for an escalation in the West Bank and for stopping the security coordination with Israel. He also said that the [so-called] non-violent marches on the Gaza Strip border would continue until all their objectives had been attained, especially breaking the "siege" of the Gaza Strip. The Supreme National Authority announced that the theme of the December 21, 2018 march would be "Loyalty to the heroes of the resistance in the West Bank" (al-Aqsa TV, December 14, 2018).

### **The protest mini-flotilla**

► **On the afternoon of December 17, 2018**, the 20<sup>th</sup> mini-flotilla was held near the northern border of the Gaza Strip. Its theme was "Loyalty to the West Bank and the victory of the resistance." **About twenty small boats participated.** As the same time, several hundred Palestinians held a demonstration on the shore (Ma'an, December 17, 2018). A spokesman for the ministry of health reported that two Palestinians had been wounded (Shabakat Quds Twitter account, December 17, 2018). During the events **PIJ spokesman Ahmed al-Brim** gave a speech praising the "resistance" in the West Bank and condemning normalization of relations with Israel (al-Aqsa TV, December 17, 2018)

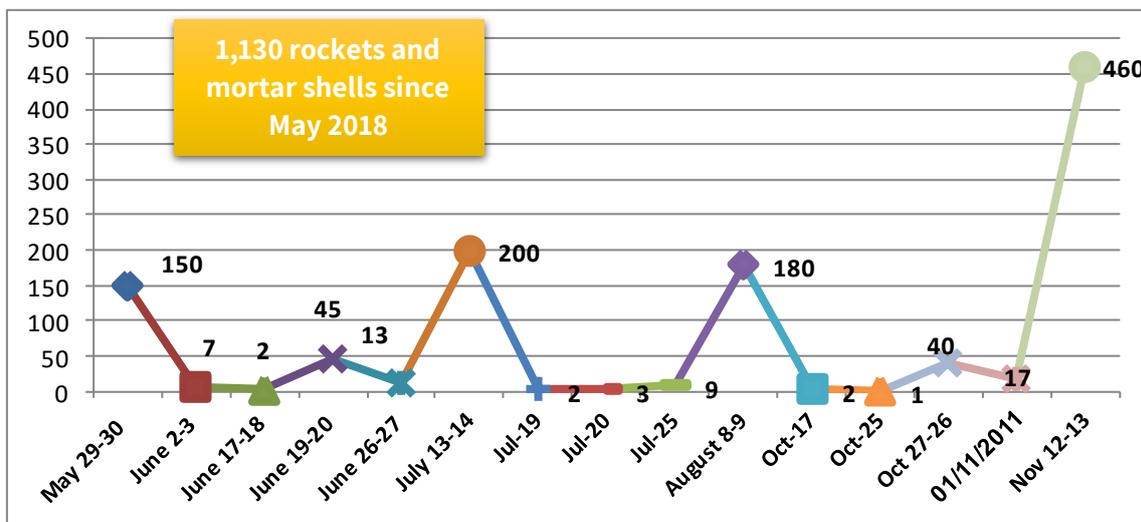


The weekly demonstration and mini-flotilla in the northern Gaza Strip (Facebook page of the Popular Front's information office in the northern Gaza Strip, December 17, 2018).

## Rocket Fire

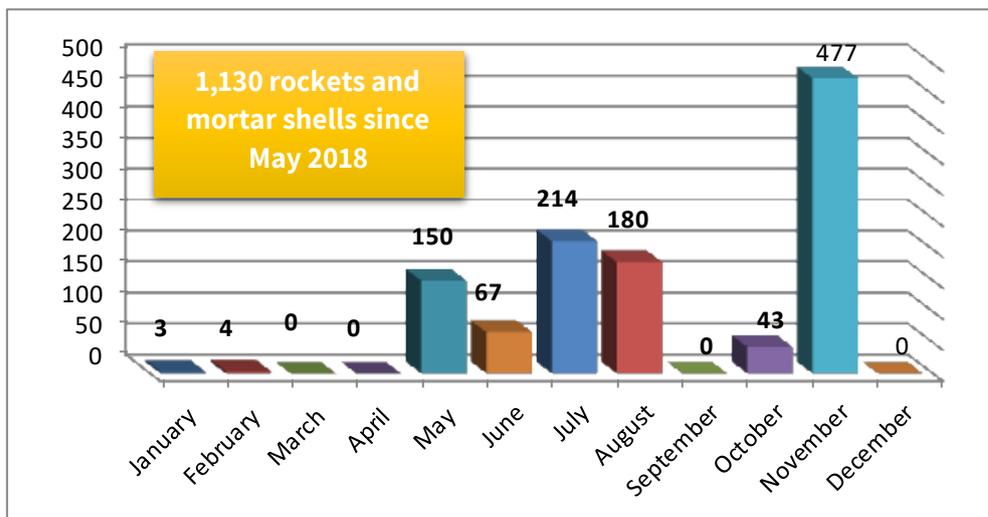
► This past week no rockets or mortar shells were launched at Israeli territory.

### Rocket and mortar shell fire during and between the recent rounds of escalation<sup>3</sup>

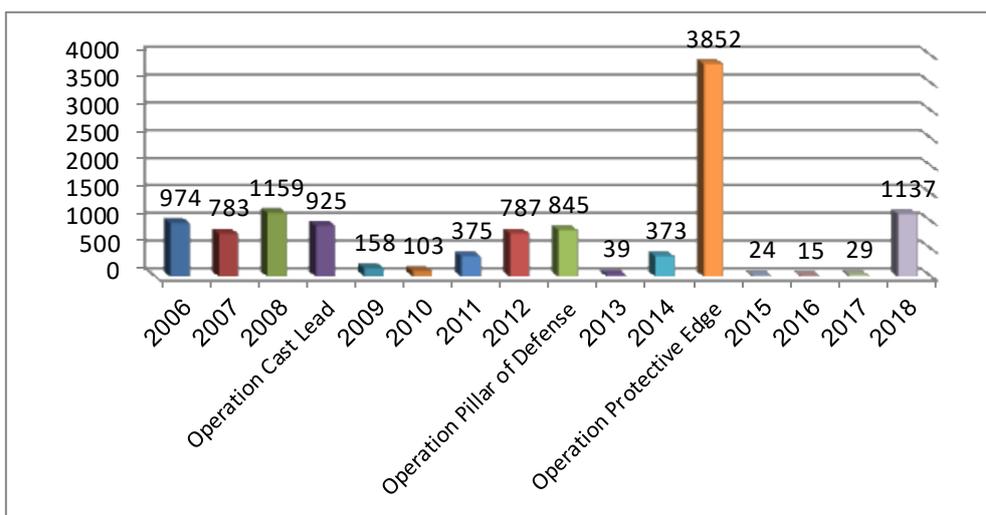


<sup>3</sup>The statistics do not include rockets that fell inside the Gaza Strip.

## Monthly Distribution of Rocket and Mortar Shell Fire since January 2018



## Annual Distribution of Rocket Hits



- On the afternoon of December 15, 2018, a Palestinian fishing boat sailed beyond the limits of permitted fishing waters off the Gaza Strip. The Israeli navy halted the boat. During the activity two Palestinians on the boat threw an object at the IDF force. One of them tried to take out a knife and stab the soldiers. The two Palestinians were detained (IDF spokesman, December 15, 2018)

## Developments in the Gaza Strip

### The 31st anniversary of the founding of Hamas

► In the Gaza Strip a mass rally was held on December 16, 2018 to mark the 31<sup>st</sup> anniversary of the founding of Hamas. Hamas issued a press release stating its principles: the liberation of Palestine and the establishment of an independent Palestinian state with Jerusalem as its capital, the return of the refugees to their homes and the release of the prisoners. It stated that the "return marches" were a unique popular model of the resistance to the occupation, but also stressed the "right" to resist the occupation [i.e., by military means] (Hamas website, December 14, 2018). During the rally a march was held, dedicated to the operatives of Hamas' military wing who had exposed the activity of the IDF's special unit in Khan Yunis. During the rally weapons were displayed, including rockets and anti-aircraft weapons. There was also a display of drones which they claimed were Israeli. Various other units were on display, such as the sniper unit and the elite *nukhba* unit.



The mass rally in Gaza City (Facebook page of photographer Anas Jamal al-Sharif, December 16, 2018).



**During the rally Hamas' military wing flew a drone which allegedly belonged to the IDF (Right: Izz al-Din Qassam Brigades Twitter account, December 16, 2018. Left: Palinfo Twitter account, December 16, 2018).**

► Senior Hamas figures and senior representatives from other Palestinian organizations were present at the rally, all of whom expressed support for Hamas. They claimed the rally was a show of strength that reflected the capabilities of the "resistance" [i.e., terrorist organizations]. During the rally **Isma'il Haniyeh, head of Hamas' political bureau**, gave a speech, whose main points were the following (al-Aqsa TV, December 16, 2018):

- ◆ **The "return marches"** – The marches have continued for eight months and have had three "strategic accomplishments:" they have influenced the Palestinian street in Judea, Samaria and Jerusalem; they have proved that the current generation adheres to the "right of return" and will not waive the right; they have put the issue of the siege of the Gaza Strip at the top of the regional and international priority list.
- ◆ **The Israeli operation in Khan Yunis** – The operation was a "security, military and political failure" for Israel. The "resistance," with its activities to counter the Israelis, proved that the land of the Gaza Strip was forbidden [to Israelis] and that anyone [i.e., any Israeli] who entered would be killed or taken hostage.
- ◆ **The rounds of fighting with Israel** – The rounds of confrontation were a turning point in the military struggle against Israel and today the "resistance" is in a position of power. The rounds of confrontation were important because the organizations in the Gaza Strip, by means of their joint operations room, revealed their military capabilities and the results of their weapons' developments.
- ◆ **The attacks in Judea and Samaria** – Haniyeh praised the residents of the West Bank and those who carried out what he called the "heroic actions." He did not deny the accusations that the new wave of attacks was directed from the Gaza Strip because the

accusations were a source of pride for Hamas. However, he stressed that Hamas was not directing the attacks in the West Bank. Those who carried them out, he claimed, belonged to all the Palestinian [terrorist] organizations operating on their own initiative without the need for direction from Hamas.

◆ **The internal Palestinian reconciliation** – Haniyeh called on Mahmoud Abbas to meet under Egyptian aegis to discuss the Palestinian issue and to make peace within the Palestinian house. **Note:** In response to Haniyeh's invitation, Fatah spokesman 'Atef Abu Sayif said first Hamas had to end the rift between them by fully honoring their agreements (Shehab, December 16, 2018).



**Right: Senior Hamas figures Isma'il Haniyeh (fourth from left and Yahya al-Sinwar (fifth from left) at the rally (Palinfo Twitter account, December 16, 2018). Left: Isma'il Haniyeh gives a speech (Palinfo, December 16, 2018).**

► The day before the rally, Hamas' military wing in the Khan Yunis district held a military display of its weapons and capabilities (Hamas website, December 15, 2018).



**Hamas military wing rockets. The banner on the truck reads, "artillery corps" (Izz al-Din Qassam Brigades Twitter account, December 15, 2018).**



Izz al-Din Qassam Brigades displays. Right: The sniper unit (Izz al-Din Qassam Brigades Twitter account, December 15, 2018). Left: Operatives (midankh Twitter account, December 15, 2018).

## Hamas activity in Judea and Samaria

► **Hamas operatives in Judea and Samaria held rallies in Nablus and Hebron.** Hamas' Islamic bloc in Bir Zeit University in Nablus held a rally with the theme "Resistance creates victory." Before the rally the Islamic bloc paraded through the campus, waving flags and shouting praise for the "resistance." **Senior Hamas figure Hassan Yusuf** gave a speech in which he said Hamas was determined to continue the path of "resistance" and to confront the "occupation" until the Palestinians had achieved their objectives and their freedom (Hamas website, December 12, 2018).



**The Hamas parade and rally at Bir Zeit University (Zuhdi Nakleh's Facebook page, December 12, 2018).**

► The PA security services tried to prevent events affiliated with Hamas. Many security services forces were deployed in Hebron and kept media personnel from covering the events (Palinfo Twitter account, December 14, 2018). According to a number of reports, they also attacked demonstrators. In Nablus security services operatives suppressed the march and allegedly shot at demonstrators (Shabakat Quds Twitter account, December 14, 2018). **Hamas spokesman Fawzi Barhoum** condemned the attempts of the PA security services to suppress the marches, claiming they disrespected the blood of the shaheeds and collaborated with Israel's "crimes" (Hamas website, December 14, 2018).



**Right: Suppressing the Hamas parades in Hebron. Left: Operative in one of the PA's security services wearing civilian clothes and carrying a gun during the dispersal of the parade in Nablus (Twitter account of the Amama website, December 14, 2018).**

## The Palestinian Authority (PA)

### Palestinian response to the Australian declaration recognizing west Jerusalem as the capital of Israel

► On December 15, 2018, **Scott Morrison, the prime minister of Australia**, declared that Australia recognized west Jerusalem as the capital of Israel. However, he said that as of now Australia would not relocate its embassy to Jerusalem. It would wait, he said, until after it had become practical and all the issues had been resolved. He also called for the establishment of a Palestinian state with a capital in east Jerusalem.

► The Palestinian reactions to the declaration were negative and critical:

◆ **Yusuf al-Mahmoud, spokesman for the national consensus government**, said the Australian declaration was a mistake and unacceptable, a fraud based on a mistaken interpretation of the political situation. He called on the countries of the world not to proceed to move their embassies to Jerusalem (Wafa, December 15, 2018).

## The Northern Front<sup>4</sup>

**The IDF continues Operation Northern Shield to locate Hezbollah tunnels on the Israel-Lebanon border. On December 15, 2018, IDF soldiers located a fourth Hezbollah tunnel crossing the border into Israeli territory.** The tunnel was booby-trapped on the Israeli side, and the IDF is studying its route (IDF spokesman, December 16, 2018). A UNIFIL spokesman said he had been informed **a fourth tunnel had been found**. He said UNIFIL was in contact with both sides to preserve stability in the region.



**The fourth Hezbollah terrorist tunnel exposed by the IDF, December 16, 2018 (IDF spokesman, December 16, 2018).**

- ▶ On December 17, 2018, UNIFIL Commander Stefan Del Col met with Lebanese President Michel Aoun, Prime Minister Sa'ad Hariri and the commander of the Lebanese army, Joseph Aoun. Beforehand UNIFIL issued an announcement stating that the agency has been monitoring developments relating to the discovery of tunnels.
- ▶ According to the announcement, UNIFIL's technical unit carried out a number of examinations along the Israel-Lebanon border (the Blue Line) to ascertain the facts. **UNIFIL has so far confirmed the existence of all four tunnels.** After further technical investigations conducted independently in accordance with its mandate, **UNIFIL at this stage can confirm that two of the tunnels cross the border, constituting violations of UN Security Council resolution 1701.** UNIFIL has requested the Lebanese authorities ensure urgent follow-up actions in accordance with the responsibilities of the Government of Lebanon pursuant to

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<sup>4</sup> For further information, see the December 18, 2018, bulletin "Operation Northern Shield on the Israel-Lebanon Border for the Destruction of Hezbollah Tunnels Penetrating into Israel (The situation on the ground, December 18, 2018)"

resolution 1701. (ITIC emphasis) (UNIFIL website, December 17, 2018). **The UNIFIL announcement does not state that the tunnels belong to Hezbollah.**