Overview

The events of the “return marches” in the Gaza Strip have continued for 42 weeks. In most cases, these events are characterized by a high level of violence, resulting in casualties among the rioters, mainly among those in the front line confronting the IDF troops. According to the ITIC’s examination, based on reports of the Gaza Strip Ministry of Health in combination with other sources, since the beginning of the “return marches” on March 30, 2018, a total of 187 Palestinians were killed in those events. As for the identity of the fatalities (updated to January 16, 2019), 150 of them were found to be affiliated with Hamas or with other terrorist organizations (about 80%). Prominent among the fatalities are those belonging to Hamas or affiliated with it (96 fatalities, about 51% of the total number of fatalities). A total of 45 fatalities are operatives of the Hamas military wing (about 24% of the total number of fatalities, about 47% of the total of the Hamas fatalities).

Attempts to sabotage the security fence and even cross it into the Israeli side (Facebook page of the Supreme National Authority of the Return Marches, January 11, 2019). The examination of the list of fatalities shows that Hamas operatives are prominent among those in the front line of the confrontations.

- The findings of the ITIC's examination are essentially consistent with those of previous examinations carried out by the ITIC in the past (April-May 2017). Furthermore, these findings are consistent with past statements of two Hamas senior figures in the Gaza Strip:
Salah Bardawil stated that 50 out of the 63 shahids killed in the events of May 14, 2018 (about 81%) belonged to Hamas. He added that in the events that took place between March 30, 2019, and May 14, 2019, 50% of the fatalities were Hamas operatives. Yahya Sinwar, chairman of the Hamas political bureau in the Gaza Strip, said that on May 14, 2018, over 60 Hamas operatives were killed (Al-Mayadeen Channel on YouTube, May 21, 2018).

The large number of fatalities from the terrorist organizations on the front line demonstrates that the violence against the IDF near the border is not “popular,” as the false Palestinian propaganda wishes to convey. It is orchestrated by Hamas and significantly involves operatives of Hamas’s military wing or operatives affiliated with Hamas. It also shows that the IDF soldiers do not shoot indiscriminately at “innocent” demonstrators but instead, in most cases, target and hit specific terrorist operatives. It should be noted that the Gaza Strip Health Ministry, whose reports are used as a source for media outlets worldwide (as well as in Israel), does not provide information on the organizational affiliation of the fatalities, thus helping to convey a false idea of killing “innocent” demonstrators by the IDF.

Characterization of the identity of the fatalities of the “return marches”

Summary of the findings: Identities of the fatalities of the “Return Marches” (March 30, 2018 – January 14, 2019)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organization</th>
<th>Membership</th>
<th>Affiliation</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hamas</td>
<td>45 military wing and security force operatives</td>
<td>51 affiliated with Hamas</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fatah</td>
<td>6 military operatives</td>
<td>33 affiliated with Fatah</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PIJ</td>
<td>6 military operatives</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DFLP</td>
<td>1 military operative</td>
<td>1 affiliated with the DFLP</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PFLP</td>
<td>6 affiliated with the PFLP</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>187 fatalities</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
According to the ITIC's findings, 187 Palestinians were killed during the “return marches.” A total of 150 of them were identified by the ITIC as being affiliated with some organization, most of them operatives of Hamas or affiliated with it. Among the fatalities, 58 (about 31%) were identified as operatives of the military wings of the various organizations. As for 37 of the fatalities, no affiliation was found to any of the organizations, and they were possibly civilians taking part in the violent activity on the front line (near the fence).

Following are the details, divided into organizations:

- **Hamas**: 96 fatalities are affiliated with Hamas, 45 of them are operatives of its military wing.
- **Fatah**: 36 fatalities are affiliated with Fatah, six of them are affiliated with the Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades (Fatah’s military wing).
- **PIJ**: Six fatalities were identified as PIJ operatives, all of them operatives of the PIJ’s military wing. In comparison with Hamas and Fatah, the small number of fatalities from this organization, which is the second largest terrorist organization in the Gaza Strip, is outstanding. The reason for it is possibly an understanding of the PIJ that this is a Hamas project.

According to these findings, it is evident that during the “return march” demonstrations, operatives of the terrorist organizations in the Gaza Strip, especially Hamas operatives or Palestinians affiliated with Hamas, occupy the front line of confrontation vis-à-vis the IDF forces. In most cases, it is these operatives who throw hand grenades and IEDs at the IDF forces, and it is these operatives who approach the security fence and attempt to sabotage it or penetrate into Israeli territory. In addition, some of the operatives were also involved in attempts to carry out terrorist attacks during the demonstrations and hit the IDF troops deployed on the ground. On the other hand, the relatively small number of “ordinary civilians” without any organizational affiliation who were killed during the events of the “return marches” is conspicuous (usually, 5,000-10,000 Palestinians take part in the demonstrations). They are usually positioned in the back, in rear sites (“camps of return”), and they play a secondary role in the violent confrontations with the IDF forces near the fence.
Methodological notes

Following are several methodological notes on the manner in which information on the fatalities was collected and analyzed:

- **The number of fatalities refers to fatalities in the “return marches” only.** It does not include people who were killed in other events in the Gaza Strip which took place between the marches and were inspired by them.
- The information on the number of fatalities of the “return marches” is based on the Gaza Strip Health Ministry. Since the Health Ministry does not usually provide a breakdown of fatalities according to their organizational affiliation, **this information was collected from various websites and social networks (mostly local networks in the Gaza Strip).** There are various levels in the quality of information on which this examination is based, ranging from solid information (formal statements of the organizations on the death of their operatives) to circumstantial information.
- Referring to the identity of the fatalities, distinction was made between operatives of the various organizations. Inside the organizations, distinction was made between clear operatives of the organization, mainly operatives of the military wings or security services, and other members only loosely connected to the organization.

Previous examinations of the identity of the fatalities, made by the ITIC

This document is an update to previous examinations of the identity of the fatalities, made by the ITIC:

- **Initial Analysis of the Identities of Gazans Killed During the "Great Return March" on March 30 and April 6, 2018**
- **Analysis of the Identities of Gazans Killed During the “Great Return March”**
- **Findings of the ITIC’s examination of the identity of Palestinians killed in the events of the “Great Return March” (March 30, 2018 – May 15, 2018)**
Appendix

Several examples showing how the organizational affiliation of “return march” fatalities was determined

Following are several examples of various kinds of information on the basis of which the identity of fatalities in the “return marches” was determined:

❖ **Ahmed Hassan Abu Odeh** (on the media he was also presented under the name of Ahmed Oweidat)
  
  • **Personal details**: Aged 62, from the Al-Bureij refugee camp.
  
  • **Circumstances of his death**: Killed in eastern Al-Bureij on the “return march” of December 7, 2018 (Twitter account of Press Safenaz Ellouh, who presents herself as a reporter of the Amad website in the Gaza Strip, December 7, 2018; Al-Mashriq News, December 7, 2018).
  
  • **Organizational affiliation**: He was an operative of Hamas’s military wing. The Muslim Brotherhood movement, Hamas, and its military wing published a poster announcing the death of the military wing operative Ahmed Awad Hassan Abu Odeh (Al-Oweidat) Abu Awad (Palestine Live Facebook page, December 8, 2018). Ismail Haniya, head of the Hamas political bureau, arrived for a condolence call at the mourners’ tent (Palestine Live Facebook page, December 8, 2018).

❖ **Yahya Badr Mohammad al-Hasanat**
  
  • **Personal details**: Aged 37, resident of Al-Magharaqa, south of Gaza City (Facebook page of Dr. Ashraf al-Qudra, October 28, 2018).
• **Circumstances of his death:** Died on October 28, 2018, after being wounded in the “return march” of October 26, 2018 (Facebook page of Dr. Ashraf al-Qudra, October 28, 2018).

• **Organizational affiliation:** A Fatah network called “Fatah Knight Brigades” (Kataeb Fursan al-Fatah) published a notice stating that Al-Hasanat had served as a field commander in the organization (fursanfateh Facebook page, October 28, 2018).

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**Nassar Iyad Abu Tim**

• **Personal details:** Aged 19, from Bani Suheila (Madinat Bani Suheila Facebook page, October 27, 2018)

• **Circumstances of his death:** Killed in Khan Younes in the “return march” of October 26, 2018 (Facebook page of Dr. Ashraf al-Qudra, October 26, 2018)

• **Organizational affiliation:** Affiliated with Hamas. His body was wrapped in a green Hamas flag.
◆ Aish Ghassan Aish Sha’at
  • Personal details: Aged 23, from Khan Younes.
  • Circumstances of his death: Killed in eastern Khan Younes in the “return march” of October 26, 2018 (Facebook page of Dr. Ashraf al-Qudra, October 26, 2018)
  • Organizational affiliation: The Fatah branch in central Khan Younes published a notice stating that Sha’at was an operative of the movement (Facebook page of the Fatah branch in central Khan Younes, October 26, 2018)

◆ Abdallah Barham Suleiman al-Daghma
  • Personal details: Aged 25, from Abasan al-Jadida (Facebook page of Dr. Ashraf al-Qudra, October 12, 2018)
  • Circumstances of his death: Killed in an attempted infiltration into Israeli territory in eastern Al-Bureij refugee camp, in the “return march” of October 12, 2018 (Facebook page of Dr. Ashraf al-Qudra, October 12, 2018).
  • Organizational affiliation: Mohammad Dahlan’s faction in Fatah published a notice stating that Al-Daghma was their operative (fatehmedia65 Facebook page, October 12, 2018). He was reportedly the third killed in his family in anti-Israel activity, after his brothers Suleiman (DFLP operative) and Bassam (PIJ operative), killed in terrorist attacks in the years 2002 and 2010 respectively (website of Radio Sawt Al-Aqsa, October 13, 2018; Twitter account of Wael Abu Omar, October 13, 2018).
Notice published by Dahlan’s faction on the death of Al-Daghma
(fatehmedia65 Facebook page, October 12, 2018)

Mohammad Ashraf al-Awawdeh

- **Personal details**: Aged 26, from the Al-Bureij refugee camp (Facebook page of Dr. Ashraf al-Qudra, September 28, 2018).

- **Circumstances of his death**: Died of his wounds after being wounded in eastern Al-Bureij in the “return march” of September 28, 2018 (Facebook page of Dr. Ashraf al-Qudra, September 28, 2018).

- **Organizational affiliation**: The PFLP issued a death notice stating that he was its operative (PFLP website, September 30, 2018).

PFLP’s death notice on Mohammad Ashraf al-Awawdeh
(Facebook page of the PFLP’s information office in the Gaza Strip, September 30, 2018)
Mohammad Ghassan Abu Daqqah

- **Personal details**: Resident of Abasan al-Kabira (Facebook page of Dr. Ashraf al-Qudra, June 20, 2018).
- **Circumstances of his death**: Wounded east of Khan Younes on May 14, 2018. Subsequently removed to the Saint Joseph Hospital in the Sheikh Jarah neighborhood in Jerusalem, where he died of his wounds on June 20, 2018 (Facebook page of Dr. Ashraf al-Qudra, June 20, 2018).
- **Organizational affiliation**: He was an operative of the Hamas military wing. His body was wrapped in a Hamas flag and he was wearing a Hamas military wing headband (Facebook page of journalist Hassan Aslih, June 21, 2018; Safa Twitter account, June 21, 2018).

Hani Ramzi Affaneh

- **Personal details**: Aged 21, from Rafah (Facebook page of Dr. Ashraf al-Qudra, September 14, 2018).
- **Circumstances of his death**: Killed in the “return march” of September 14, 2018 (Facebook page of Dr. Ashraf al-Qudra, September 14, 2018).
- **Organizational affiliation**: He was a military operative in the Fatah (official Fatah Facebook page, September 15, 2018).
Notice published by the Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades – The Special Units on the death of Hani Ramzi Affaneh (Facebook page of the organization, September 15, 2018)

◆ Ahmed Yahya Atallah Yaghi

- **Personal details:** Aged 25, from the Sheikh Radwan neighborhood in Gaza City (Facebook page of Dr. Ashraf al-Qudra, August 3, 2018)
- **Circumstances of his death:** Killed in eastern Gaza City (Facebook page of Dr. Ashraf al-Qudra, August 3, 2018), near the Israeli IDF Karni outpost (Dunya Al-Watan, August 3, 2018; Amad, August 4, 2018).
- **Organizational affiliation:** The Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades / Nidal al-Amoudi Brigade announced that Yaghi was their operative (website of the Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades / Nidal al-Amoudi Brigade, August 3, 2018).
Ahmad Yahya Atallah Yaghi in the “return march”
(Facebook page of Abu Mahmoud Yaghi, August 4, 2018)

Photo from the funeral of Atallah Yaghi
(website of the Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades – Nidal al-Amoudi Brigade, August 4, 2018)

Mahmoud Nasser Shurab

- **Personal details:** Aged 20 or 19 (Facebook page of Dr. Ashraf al-Qudra, July 14, 2018).

- **Circumstances of his death:** Died on July 14, 2018, after being wounded in the “return march” of July 13, 2018, east of Khan Younes (Facebook page of Dr. Ashraf al-Qudra, July 14, 2018).

- **Organizational affiliation:** The PIJ’s military wing published a statement saying that Mohammad Nasser Mohammad Shurab was an operative of the Khan Younes Brigade in the PIJ’s military wing (PIJ’s military wing website, July 14, 2018).
Mohammad Nasser Shurab
(PIJ’s military wing website, July 14, 2018)