Overview

The ITIC’s annual study indicates that in 2018 there were two main trends prominent in Palestinian violence and terrorism: in the Gaza Strip there was a sharp increase in the level of violence and terrorism, after about three and a half years of relative quiet after Operation Protective Edge. One of the manifestations was 1,119 rocket and mortar shell hits in Israeli territory, the highest annual number in the past ten years (with the exception of Operation Protective Edge). In Judea and Samaria popular terrorism continued in its various forms, primarily stabbing, vehicular and shooting attacks. After popular terrorism peaked in 2015 its scope decreased, but in the last months of 2018 there was an increase in the number of attacks.

In addition, a large number of popular terrorism attacks were also prevented. According to the head of the Israel Security Agency, 480 significant terrorist attacks were prevented, that is, close to nine significant terrorist attacks were prevented for every one carried out. The preventive activities and detentions carried out by the Israeli security forces indicates, according to the head of the Agency, the great potential for terrorism simmering under the surface (Israel Security Agency head briefing of the Knesset Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee, November 2018).

The terrorism and violence carried out from the Gaza Strip received support from Hamas and the Palestinian Authority (PA): in the Gaza Strip Hamas decided on a new policy of controlled violence to exert pressure on Israel to promote the organization’s objectives (easing the Gaza Strip’s economic distress, opening the crossings, receiving payments for its officials) while avoiding a comprehensive military confrontation. In Judea and Samaria the PA and Fatah continued their support for the so-called "popular resistance," i.e., popular terrorism, but prevented Hamas from turning it into military-type terrorism that would lead to a mass uprising against Israel and destabilize the PA.
The following were some of the prominent characteristics of popular terrorism ("popular resistance") in Judea and Samaria in 2018.

In 2018 the multi-annual trend towards a decrease in popular terrorism attacks continued, with 55 significant attacks (82 in 2017). However, between September and December 2018 there was a rise in the number of attacks. They peaked in December, in which nine attacks were carried out. Twelve people, civilians and members of the security forces, were killed (18 in 2017). So far it is unclear to the ITIC why there was a rise during the last four months of 2018, and whether it marked the beginning of a new trend or was a temporary rise (which has happened several times in the past).

**Annual Distribution of Terrorist Attacks**

![Graph showing annual distribution of terrorist attacks](image)

* 134 attacks were carried out between October and December 2015, the first three months of a wave of popular terrorism. The other 37 attacks were carried out during the year before the month of October.

Towards the end of 2018 a number of shooting attacks were carried out which were more "military-style" and more organized (compared with the regular types of terrorist attacks). They were carried out by a squad or squads in the Ramallah region and claimed the lives of four people. In some instances military grade weapons were used and the terrorists exhibited a high level of daring. They fled the scene and

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1 Popular terrorism (the "popular resistance") is generally carried out by individuals but sometimes by squads. The terrorists are not directed or supported from outside, provided by the established terrorist organizations. The main types of population terrorism attacks are throwing stones, rocks and Molotov cocktails; and carrying out stabbing attacks, vehicular attacks, and sometimes shooting attacks.
were captured after a relatively long period of time, which indicated the amount of
their local support. Hamas was quick to claim responsibility for the attacks although
the terrorists who carried them out were not necessarily handled with Hamas.

*Given their stated policy of supporting popular terrorism,* the PA and Fatah
continued to indirectly encourage popular terrorism and the culture of the shaheeds in
various ways. For example by giving pensions and generous financial aid to the families
of shaheeds and terrorist prisoners; by helping rebuild the houses of terrorists that had
been destroyed by Israel; by glorifying terrorists who carried out attacks; by giving
political and media support to popular terrorism; by the participation of senior PA and
Fatah figures in the funerals of terrorists who were killed and condolence calls to the
mourning tents erected by the families; by glorifying terrorists and shaheeds in the
formal and informal education systems; and by naming streets, institutions and town
squares for shaheeds.

*Hamas failed in its attempts to export military-type terrorism to Judea and
Samaria, despite its many efforts (through incitement and handling terrorist
networks).* In ITIC assessment the main reason for its failure was the *effectiveness of
the Israel Security Agency and the Israeli security forces' counterterrorism
activities.* In addition, the PA security forces also carried out successful preventive
activities. Moreover, the Palestinian public in Judea and Samaria, busy with their daily
lives, did not go out into the streets en masse to participate in political protest
demonstrations and days of rage, in spite of the "return marches" in the Gaza Strip and
the relocation of the American embassy to Jerusalem (they reacted far more vigorously
and with greater anger to a PA law passed to increase the social security tax).

*Support from the population for terrorist operatives who carried out attacks:* in
2018 terrorists carried out shooting attacks and *managed to escape from the scene of
the crime and hide for a number of weeks or even months.* That proved that a
public support system exists in Judea and Samaria for terrorists who carry out
attacks, helping them evade the Israeli security forces. The ability of the terrorists to
evade the Israel security forces was admired by the Palestinian street and they became

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2 For further information, see the January 17, 2018 bulletin, "The PLO's Central Council and Mahmoud
Abbas call for the continuation and strengthening of [so-called] 'peaceful popular resistance' [i.e.,
popular terrorism]."
heroes and role models. In addition to popular support, the terrorists and their families received moral, media and practical support from Fatah and the PA.

The mourning tent opened in the PA embassy in Saudi Arabia for Palestinian terrorist Ashraf al-Na' alwa, who carried out the shooting attack in the Barkan industrial zone and was only captured after several weeks. Those who came to offer their condolences were received by the PA ambassador, the staff of the embassy and Bassem al-Na'alwa, Ashraf al-Na'alwa’s brother (Fatah Facebook page, December 15, 2019).

- The copy-cat phenomenon: after carrying out an attack the terrorists received a wave of sympathy and admiration, either because they caused many casualties or because they successfully evaded the Israeli security forces. The terrorists’ "successes" gave rise to the copy-cat phenomenon. The most prominent instance was when a Palestinian terrorist carried out a shooting attack in the Barkan industrial zone, killing two local Israeli workers, and evaded the Israeli security forces for nine weeks. That may have contributed to the increase in popular terrorism at the end of 2018, peaking in December.

- At the operative level the main characteristics of popular terrorism attacks in Judea and Samaria in 2018 were the following:

  - Types of attacks: stabbing attacks continued to be the most common type of attack. A total of 22 stabbing attacks were carried out in 2018 (46 in 2017). The second most common type was shooting attacks (13 in 2018, 20 in 2017). On the other hand, the number of vehicular attacks rose in 2018 (13 in 2018, 10 in 2017).

  - Lethality of attacks: in 2018 there were 12 civilian and security force member fatalities (five between September and December 2018) 18 in 2017. A total of 74 people.
(civilians and members of the security forces) were killed between the beginning of the wave of popular terrorism in October 2015 and the end of December 2018.

- **Main sites of the attacks**: most of the attacks (14) were carried out in the Ramallah region. In greater Jerusalem, which in the past was the preferred arena for terrorist attacks, **there were eight attacks** in 2018 (20 in 2017). **There was also a significant decrease in the number of attacks carried out inside Israel**, three in 2018, 11 in 2017.

- **The perpetrators of popular terrorism**: in 2018 most of the attacks were carried out by lone wolf terrorists with various motivations. In ITIC assessment, their motivation was mostly nationalist. Among those whose identities are known to the ITIC, **most (31) were men**, and only one was a woman. The profile of the terrorists was similar to that of previous years: **most of them were young men in their twenties, most of them without a criminal or security record. Most were not affiliated with the established terrorist organizations.**

- **In the Gaza Strip** there was a serious escalation in rocket attacks in 2018 after three and a half years of relative quiet following Operation Protective Edge. There was also a significant rise in the level of violence. The source of the escalation and violence was Hamas' policy of controlled violence, manifested in two ways:
  - **The "return marches,"** which began on March 30, 2018, **are violent in nature.** They have been accompanied by mass riots near the border fence; many attempts to break into Israeli territory; gunfire and the throwing of hand grenades and IEDs at IDF soldiers near the fence; and launching incendiary kites and balloons and drones carrying explosives. **Hamas has played a main role in the "return march" project,** although the Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) and other terrorist organizations have also participated in organizing and carrying out the marches. Most of the violent acts are carried out by Hamas operatives near the border with Israel. As a result **a large number of Hamas operatives (97) were killed during the marches (about 15% of all the fatalities).**
  - **Firing rockets and mortar shells at Israeli territory:**

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3 Inside Israel is defined by the ITIC as Israeli territory, excluding greater Jerusalem, which has its own unique characteristics.

4 For further information, see the June 27, 2018 bulletin, "Hamas' new policy towards Israel: from restraint and calm to controlled violence, creating escalation."
In 2018, for the first time since Operation Protective Edge, there was a significant increase in rocket fire at Israel. **There were 1,119 rocket hits identified in 2018 compared with 31 in 2017.** The rocket fire in 2018 was carried out in **six rounds of escalation between May and November 2018,** during which large quantities of rockets and mortar shells were fired.

- As part of its new policy, Hamas usually determined **when a round of escalation would begin and when it would end.** Most of the rockets fired at Israel in 2018 were short-range and fell in open areas or near communities and cities in the western Negev. However, there were also pre-planned direct hits on Israeli villages and cities. The IDF (usually the Israeli Air Force) responded to most of the fire by attacking targets belonging to Hamas, which Israel regards as responsible for everything that happens in the Gaza Strip. Between the rounds of escalation **Hamas calmed the situation on the ground and lowered the level of violence** to keep from getting dragged into a broad military confrontation. Thus, in the final analysis, the escalation of 2018 was carried out according to Hamas rules of engagement.

**Annual Distribution of Rocket Fire from the Gaza Strip**

> ITIC assessment for trends in terrorism and violence in 2019:

- **In Judea and Samaria two trends will continue, as follows:**
  - Hamas and the other terrorist organizations will continue their efforts to **establish terrorist networks in Judea and Samaria to attack Israel.** In 2018 Hamas’ efforts failed. Their success in 2019 will depend to a great extent on the
efficacy of the preventive activities of Israel's security forces, and to a lesser
degree on the PA's preventive capabilities. Given the weakening of the PA and the
war of inheritance being waged in Fatah, security coordination between the PA
security forces and Israel may be harmed. That might negatively affect the
preventive activities carried out by the PA security forces and their motivation.

- Popular terrorism will continue with PA and Fatah support (especially
  stabbing, vehicular and shooting attacks). The weakening of the PA and the
  possible disappearance of Mahmoud Abbas from the stage may lead to internal
tensions, some of which may be turned against Israel. Therefore, and given
the increase in popular terrorism in recent months, in ITIC assessment the multi-
annual decrease in the level of popular terrorism may be halted and popular
terrorism may become reach a higher level (the increase in popular terrorism
during the last four months of 2018 may be an indication of such a trend).

- In ITIC assessment, in the Gaza Strip the "return marches" will continue to generate
  violence and terrorism. Hamas regards the marches as its most effective leverage
  against Israel, and will continue to regulate the level of violence from the Gaza Strip in
  accordance with its considerations and interests. That means the violence from the
  Gaza Strip in general and along the border in particular will continue, with
  increasing and decreasing levels of violence, and attempts to create new methods
  of operation during the "return marches."

- Hamas may try to exert pressure on Israel (which may increase as the general
  elections in Israel approach). That may lead to additional rounds of escalation
during which the communities in the western Negev (and possibly more distant
  population centers) will be exposed to rocket and mortar shell fire. Hamas' policy of
  controlled violence does not seek a broad military confrontation with Israel, but the
  violence instigated by Hamas and the other terrorist organizations, and the worsening
  economic situation in the Gaza Strip, create a fragile, explosive situation with the
  potential to deteriorate into a broad military confrontation, even if neither side
  wants one.

The Structure of This Study

- Part One: Popular terrorism in Judea and Samaria
  - Overview
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- Stabbing attacks
- Shooting attacks
- Vehicular attacks
- IED attacks
- Other sorts of attacks

Main sites of the attacks:
- Nature of attacks in the leading sites
- Attacks in various sites
- Attacks inside Israel

Profile of Palestinians who carry out attacks

Lethality of popular terrorism

Preventing attacks and exposing terrorist networks:
- Overview
- Attacks prevented by ongoing security activity
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Demonstrations and riots
- Overview
- Stones and Molotov cocktails

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- Overview
- The "return marches"
- Attempts to attack IDF soldiers and to sabotage the infrastructure along the Gaza Strip border
- Arson terrorism
- Rocket fire at Israel
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Part Three: The involvement of ISIS or other jihadist organizations in terrorist activity in the Palestinian arena
- Judea and Samaria
- The Gaza Strip
- Israeli Ara
Part One: Popular Terrorism in Judea and Samaria

Overview

In 2018 popular terrorism (the so-called "popular resistance") continued, supported by Fatah and the PA. The number of terrorist attacks was smaller than 2017, continuing the trend begun after popular terrorism peaked in 2015 (See graph). During 2018 a total of 55 significant terrorist attacks were carried out. However, since September 2018 there has been a significant increase in the scope of the attacks. During the last four months of 2018 there were 23 terrorist attacks, an average of almost six per month. During December 2018, nine attacks were carried out. As in previous years, most of the attacks (22) were stabbing attacks. In 2018 popular terrorism attacks killed 12 people, civilians and members of the security forces, compared with 18 in 2017.

Annual distribution of significant terrorist attacks: continuous decrease since October 2015

*Of the 171 terrorist attacks carried out in 2015, 135 were carried out between October and December, the first three months of the wave of popular terrorism. The remaining 37 terrorist attacks were carried out before October 2015.

Most of the terrorist attacks in 2018 were part of the PA and Fatah's strategy of "popular resistance." However, towards the end of 2018 a number of terrorist attacks were carried out that were more "military-style" and more organized. There were shooting attacks

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A significant terrorist attack is defined by the ITIC as a shooting, stabbing or vehicular attack, an attack involving an IED or a combined attack. Incidents of the throwing of stones, rocks and Molotov cocktails are not included.
carried out by a squad or squads that claimed the lives of four people. In some instances the terrorists used military-grade weapons and the perpetrators showed great daring. They fled the scene and were caught only after a relatively long period of time (proof of the amount of local support they enjoyed). Hamas was quick to claim responsibility for the attacks although the terrorists who carried them out were not necessarily handled by Hamas.

**Monthly distribution of significant terrorist attacks, 2018**

![Bar chart showing monthly distribution of terrorist attacks in 2018 with peak in November and December.]

**Monthly distribution of significant terrorist attacks, 2017**

![Bar chart showing monthly distribution of terrorist attacks in 2017 with peak in April and August.]

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304-18
Types of attacks

In 2018 there were 22 stabbing attacks (46 in 2017), and 13 shooting attacks (20 in 2017). On the other hand, there was a slight increase in the number of vehicular attacks, 13 in 2018 compared with ten in 2017. According to the statistics of 2018, stabbing attacks were the most common type of attack, making up 40% of the total number. Shooting attacks and vehicular attacks both made up 24% of the total.⁶

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⁶ The statistics do not include attacks carried out during operational activities of the Israeli security forces (most of which were shooting and IED attacks). The hundreds of monthly incidents of stone, rock and Molotov cocktail throwing are also not included.
Distribution of types of attacks, 2018

- Stabbing, 22
- Shooting, 13
- Vehicular, 13
- IED, 4
- Other types, 3

Distribution of types of attacks, 2017

- Stabbing, 46
- Shooting, 20
- Vehicular, 10
- Combined, 5
- Hand grenade, 1

82 terrorist attacks
Relative percentages of types of attacks

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<th>Stabbing attacks</th>
<th>Shooting attacks</th>
<th>Combined attacks</th>
<th>Other</th>
<th>IED attacks</th>
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<td>5%</td>
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<td>56.1%</td>
<td>24.4%</td>
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Overview

**Stabbing attacks continued as the most common type of popular terrorism attack.** There was a decline in the number of stabbing attacks in 2018: twenty-two stabbing attacks were carried out, compared with 46 in 2017. In addition, there were many attempted stabbing attacks that were prevented when knives or other sharp instruments were found in the possession of Palestinians. That may indicate that one explanation for the decline in the number of stabbing attacks was the great efficacy of the Israeli security forces' preventive activities.

- **Four people were killed in stabbing attacks** (one third of the people killed by popular terrorism). Most of the stabbing attacks were carried out in regions where friction exists between the Israeli security forces and the local Palestinian population, especially at the
crossings and examination points. One stabbing attack was carried out in the Jezreel Valley in northern Israel (Afula, June 11, 2018). Some of the attacks targeted civilians and others targeted the security forces stationed at military posts and roadblocks.

The great popularity of stabbing attacks comes from the relative ease with which they can be carried out. They do not necessitate the acquisition of a specific weapon because in most cases sharp instruments are available in every home (knives, scissors, screwdrivers). In addition there is no need for special preparation. However, there are disadvantages as well from the perpetrators’ point of view: the number of victims is usually relatively small (compared with shooting or vehicular attacks) and the chances of dying or being wounded during the attack are great (most terrorists who carry out stabbing attacks are killed during the attack, only some are wounded or escape).

**Monthly distribution of stabbing attacks, 2018**

![Graph showing the number of stabbing attacks per month in 2018 with a peak in August and September.]

**Monthly distribution of stabbing attacks, 2017**

![Graph showing the number of stabbing attacks per month in 2017 with a peak in April and May.]

22 terrorist attacks

46 terrorist attacks
Between October and December 2015, when the wave of popular terrorism peaked, 92 terrorist attacks were carried out. The rest (17) were carried out between January and October 2015.

Prominent stabbing attacks

- **Near Ariel, February 5, 2018**: During the afternoon a terrorist went to the Ariel Junction in Samaria, approached an Israeli civilian who was waiting at the bus stop near the entrance and stabbed him. The civilian was mortally wounded and died in the hospital. The Palestinian was wounded by the car driven by an IDF officer but escaped. On March 18, 2018, he was detained in Nablus by the Israeli security forces.

- **The Old City of Jerusalem, March 18, 2018**: A Palestinian stabbed an Israeli civilian, mortally wounding him. The attack took place on Hagai Street in the Old City of Jerusalem. An Israeli policeman who was nearby shot and killed the terrorist. The civilian was taken to the hospital, where he died.
Right: The knife used in the stabbing attack on Hagai Street (Israel Police Force Facebook page, March 18, 2018). Left: Palestinian notice issued after the stabbing attack, referred to as the "Jerusalem attack" (Palinfo Twitter account, March 18, 2019).

Mishor Adumim (northeast of Jerusalem), April 8, 2018: A Palestinian approached an Israeli civilian standing near the gas station in Mishor Adumim and tried to stab him with a screwdriver. A man driving on the road passing the gas station saw the attempted attack, stopped his car and shot at the Palestinian, critically wounding him. The Palestinian was taken to a hospital.

Afula (northern Israel), June 11, 2018: A young woman standing at a bus stop was stabbed by a Palestinian and critically wounded. The Israeli security forces searched for the stabber, locating him after an hour. He was shot, wounded and apprehended by the security forces. He had a knife in his possession (Israeli media, June 11, 2018).
The community of Adam (near Ramallah), on the evening of July 26, 2018: A Palestinian armed with a knife climbed over the fence surrounding the community. He walked to a street and stabbed two passersby. One of the men was mortally wounded and later died. The other was seriously wounded. The terrorist tried to stab a third person, who shot and killed him.

The Old City of Jerusalem, on the afternoon of August 17, 2018: A Palestinian who had gone to pray on the Temple Mount walked to Hagai Street, near the Nablus Gate in the Old City. He saw a team of police stationed at the gate, approached one of them and tried to stab him with a knife. The Palestinian was shot and killed.
Right: Security camera footage of the Palestinian attempting to stab a policeman in the Old City of Jerusalem. Left: The knife used in the attempted attack (Israel Police Force's Facebook page, August 17, 2018).

Entrance to the shopping center at the Gush Etzion Junction, September 16, 2018: A man was stabbed and mortally wounded, dying later in a hospital. He resisted the stabber and managed to shoot and wound him before he collapsed. The stabber was detained by the security forces.


Nablus Gate, Old City of Jerusalem, Yom Kippur eve, September 18, 2018: A Palestinian armed with a knife went to the Nablus Gate, where a large number of Jewish worshippers had assembled. He approached one and tried to stab him, throwing him to the ground. He ran towards a group of Border Policemen and tried to stab them as well. He was shot and killed.

Hawwara (south of Nablus), October 11, 2018: Palestinian went to a bus stop near Hawwara and stabbed an IDF reserve soldier standing at the bus stop. The soldier was
seriously wounded. IDF soldiers shot at the stabber but he escaped. An Israeli woman standing nearby was wounded by shrapnel. The following day Israeli security forces detained the stabber.

The scene of the stabbing near Hawwara, south of Nablus (Shehab website, October 11, 2018).

Beit El (north of Ramallah), December 14, 2018: A Palestinian infiltrated the community of Beit El, went to an IDF post near the fence and attacked a soldier manning the post. During the struggle the terrorist wounded the soldier, hitting him with a rock. The soldier was seriously wounded and the terrorist escaped. Evidence at the scene indicated that the attacker had been wounded as well. Two days later he surrendered to the Israeli security forces.

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

Overview

Thirteen shooting attacks were carried out in 2018, compared with 20 in 2017. Between March and December three shooting attacks were carried out every month. Similar to the previous year, shooting attacks made up 24% of the total number of attacks. Shooting attacks, which are the most lethal type of attack, led to the deaths of five Israelis. The most prominent shooting attack was carried out in the Barkan industrial zone, where two people were killed and a third was wounded.

- Shooting attacks are carried out with light arms, either military-grade or improvised. There are various types of attacks: gunfire from ambush, gunfire aimed at a gathering of people, drive-by shootings and sniper fire. Shooting attacks are usually not spontaneous and need preliminary preparations (acquiring a weapon, collecting information), therefore they are usually carried out by more than one person.

- Many of the shooting attacks were drive-by attacks. In many instances the shooters fled the scene and sometimes even carried out other attacks (as happened in December 2018). Generally speaking, shooting attacks are carried out by local networks, but sometimes they may be carried out with the support of established terrorist organizations. Nevertheless, the PA and Fatah regard them as a part of the so-called "popular resistance," and the attackers receive recognition and support from the PA.

- Most of the shooting attacks (seven) were carried out in the Ramallah region, possibly by the same squad or squads. At least three shooting attacks targeted IDF posts (Nablus, al-Bireh, the Bitunia crossing). In many instances the shooters managed to flee. Some of them were not caught and some of them were caught after they had evaded the Israeli security forces for a relatively long period of time. A prominent example was the shooter from the Barkan industrial zone. The Israeli security forces searched for him for nine weeks until they found him (he had been aided and hidden by local supporters). The Palestinian street turned him into a hero and role model.

- Most of the shooting attacks (seven) in 2018 were carried out in the Ramallah region, possibly by the same squad or squads.

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7 The number of shooting attacks does not include events in which Israeli security forces were shot at during operational activities in Judea and Samaria. It also does not include events in which IDF posts were shot at.
Monthly distribution of shooting attacks, 2018

Monthly distribution of shooting attacks, 2017
Annual distribution of shooting attacks

* Note: During the last three months of 2015 five shooting attacks were carried out as part of the wave of popular terrorism. Six were carried out before the beginning of October 2015.

Prominent shooting attacks

- Entrance to the community of Givat Asaf (near Ramallah), December 13, 2018: A shooting attack was carried out using a vehicle. Two IDF soldiers were killed and a soldier and civilians were wounded. The investigation indicated that the vehicle arrived at the junction, one or two terrorists got out, and shot at the people standing at the bus stop. They then drove off in the direction of al-Bireh. A few days later the Israeli security forces located a Kalashnikov assault rifle used in the attack. A weapon that had been taken from an IDF soldier during the attack was also found. The Palestinian terrorists who carried out the attack were apprehended on January 7, 2019, at the home of a supporter.

The scene of the shooting attack at the entrance to Givat Asaf (Palinfo Twitter account, December 13, 2018).
Bus stop at the Ofra Junction (northeast of Ramallah), December 9, 2018: Two masked terrorists drove from Ramallah to the bus stop at the Ofra Junction. The terrorist sitting in the back seat, using a military-grade weapon, opened fire at the people waiting for a bus. The IDF force securing the bus stop opened fire at the car but it drove off. Nine people were wounded in the attack, two of them critically. On December 12, 2018, one of the attackers was shot and killed while trying to escape being detained.

Barkan industrial zone, October 7, 2018: A Palestinian who worked in a factory in the Barkan industrial zone (an area where Israelis and about 3,000 Palestinians work together) went to the site with an improvised Carlo submachine gun hidden in his backpack. He entered the factory and went up to the floor where the offices were located. He forced a worker to tie the hands of the receptionist and later shot her to death. He went into an office and shot a man to death. On his way out he shot and wounded another worker. He then fled. He was caught in the Askar refugee camp in Nablus nine weeks later.
Havat Gilad Junction (Samaria), January 9, 2018: An Israeli civilian was shot and mortally wounded in a drive-by shooting as he was on his way home in Havat Gilad. He was evacuated to a hospital, where he was pronounced dead. The shooters fired dozens of bullets and escaped under the cover of darkness. On February 6, 2018, the Israeli security forces killed one of the terrorists who had carried out the attack. An Israel Security Agency investigation determined that the squad had been involved in other attempted attacks and had planned to carry out more.

Vehicular attacks
Overview
Vehicular attacks continued as a common form of popular terrorism attack, although not as common as stabbing and shooting attacks. Vehicular attacks have the potential to cause many casualties (as opposed to stabbing attacks, whose level of lethality is relatively lower). They are usually carried out by lone wolf terrorists, are usually spontaneous and have no need of planning or previous organization, making them difficult to prevent. Weapons were found in some of the vehicles, which might indicate the terrorists were planning to carry out combined attacks.

During 2018 there was an increase in the relative percentage of vehicular attacks in popular terrorism. Thirteen vehicular attacks were carried out, compared with ten in 2017. Vehicular attacks made up 24% of significant terrorist attacks, compared with 12% in 2017. Four of them were carried out in December 2018, when the number of significant terrorist attacks peaked. Many vehicular attacks targeted IDF forces securing roads and junctions in Judea and Samaria. One was carried out inside Israel (in the northern Israeli coastal city of Acre), in which two members of the Israeli security forces were killed.
Monthly distribution of vehicular attacks, 2018

- 13 Attacks in total

Monthly distribution of vehicular attacks, 2017

- 10 Attacks in total
Annual distribution of vehicular attacks

*Note: During the last three months of 2015 there were 26 vehicular attacks during the wave of popular terrorism. Before October 2015 eight vehicular attacks had been carried out.

Prominent vehicular attacks

* Al-Bireh (near Ramallah), December 13, 2018: A Palestinian tried to run over soldiers during an IDF operational activity. One soldier was slightly injured. The terrorist driving the vehicle was shot and killed (IDF spokesman, December 13, 2018).

* The al-Aroub Junction (north of Hebron), November 26, 2018: A Palestinian drove into a group of IDF soldiers at the site. Two soldiers were slightly injured and one was seriously injured. The terrorist driving the vehicle was shot and killed (IDF spokesman, November 26, 2018).

The scene of the vehicular attack near the al-Aroub Junction, north of Hebron (Palinfo Twitter account, November 26, 2018).
The village of Husan (west of Bethlehem), June 23, 2018: A Palestinian rammed his vehicle into a foot patrol and hit four IDF soldiers (three of them women). He abandoned the vehicle and fled. The wounded soldiers did not have the time to use their weapons, and were evacuated to a hospital (IDF spokesman, June 23, 2018). During a security force operation to locate the Palestinian attacker, he surrendered. He claimed it was an "accident," not a vehicular attack (Ynet, June 24, 2018).

Near the community of Mevo Dotan (northwestern Samaria), March 16, 2018: A Palestinian terrorist saw a group of IDF soldiers standing near the side of the road near a pill box. He drove into the group and killed two soldiers. He continued driving and wounded two more soldiers.

Acre, March 4, 2018: An Israeli Arab from the town of Shfaram rammed into a pedestrian. He then drove to the train station and rammed into three more people. A Border Policeman, hit by the vehicle, shot and seriously wounded the driver. The Israel Police Force concluded it was a vehicular attack whose motivation was nationalist, and that the driver was deliberately targeting Israeli policemen and soldiers.
Scene of the vehicular attack in Acre, seconds before the attack on the pedestrian (QudsN Facebook page, March 4, 2018).

Other terrorist attacks

IED attacks, monthly distribution, 2018⁸

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⁸ In the absence of a systematic database, statistics regarding the throwing of IEDs at Israeli security forces during operational activities were not included.
Other types of terrorist attacks

- **Before dawn on May 24, 2018** an IDF force went to the al-Am'ari refugee camp near Ramallah to detain terrorist operatives who had been involved in shooting attacks. During the activity a number of Palestinians rioted and threw objects at the Israeli forces. **One of the Palestinians threw a slab of marble from the third floor of a building.** It hit the head of one of the soldiers, mortally wounding him, and he died two days later (IDF spokesman, May 24 and 26, 2018). The Palestinian who threw the marble slab fled and was detained about two weeks later in the al-Am'ari refugee camp.

- **On November 30, 2018**, two workers at the port of Eilat were attacked by a Jordanian worker armed with a hammer. They were seriously wounded. The Jordanian worker was employed by a manpower company at the port and the attack was carried out on his first day of work. Investigation indicated the attack was nationally motivated.
Overview

Most of the terrorist attacks (14) in 2018 were carried out in the Benyamin area (near Ramallah). Nine terrorist attacks were carried out the Hebron area, eight in the greater Jerusalem area, six in the Nablus region and five in Samaria. Three were carried out inside Israel. Apparently this past year the terrorists carried out more attacks in regions outside the larger cities, where there is a presence of Israeli security forces and Israelis from local communities.

Terrorist attack sites, 2018
Terrorist attack sites 2017

Attacks in the various regions

- In 2018 the Benyamin region (the area around Ramallah) was where most of the terrorist attacks were carried out, with 14 attacks (15 in 2017, which put it in second place). It is possible that some of the attacks were carried out by the same squad or squads operating in the area.

- In and around Hebron, which in the past was an area of friction between the Palestinian population and the Israeli security forces and settlers, there were nine terrorist attacks in 2018, compared with 14 in 2017.

- Greater Jerusalem, which in previous years was the preferred arena for terrorist attacks, in 2018 there was a decline in the number of attacks. In 2018 it was in third place with eight terrorist attacks (compared with 20 in 2017). In addition, in 2018 no terrorist attacks were launched from the Jerusalem region, compared with five in 2017 (Israel Security Agency head briefing before the Knesset, Knesset website, November 6, 2018).

Terrorist attacks inside Israel\(^9\)

- In 2018 there was a significant drop in the number of terrorist attacks carried out inside Israel. There were three attacks, compared with 11 in 2017, ten in 2016 and 21 in 2015. One attack was carried out by an Israeli Arab (vehicular attack in Acre), one by a Palestinian

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\(^9\) Inside Israel refers to Israel’s “inner” territory excluding greater Jerusalem.
from Jenin (stabbing attack in Afula) and one by a Jordanian citizen who worked in Israel (attack with a hammer in the port of Eilat).

The three terrorist attacks inside Israel were the following:

- **Acre, March 4, 2018**: An Israeli Arab from the northern town of Shfaram rammed into a pedestrian. He then drove to the train station and rammed into three people, two soldiers and one civilian. A Border Policeman, who was one of the victims, shot at the driver of the car, seriously wounding him. The Israel Police Force designated it a vehicular attack with a nationalist motivation and said the driver had deliberately tried to run over policemen and soldiers at more than one location.

- **Afula, June 11, 2018**: An 18-year-old girl was stabbed and critically wounded while waiting for a bus. A search for the stabber was undertaken. He was found an hour later, shot, wounded and detained by the Israeli security forces. He was from Jenin, staying in Israel illegally. A knife was found in his possession (Israeli media, June 11, 2018).

- **Eilat, November 30, 2018**: A Jordanian citizen working in the port of Eilat used a hammer to attack two Israeli workers. They received serious head wounds. The attacker was suspected of having carried out the attack because of a nationalist motivation.

### Annual distribution of terrorist attacks inside Israel

![Annual distribution of terrorist attacks inside Israel](image)

*Between October and December 2015 twenty terrorist attacks were carried out inside Israel, one before October 2015.*
Profile of Palestinian Attackers

Of the 55 terrorist attacks carried out in 2018, the ITIC has information about only 32 of the attackers (the others were terrorists who were detained and no information about them was made public, or who escaped from the scene of the attack). Most of them were Palestinians from Judea and Samaria. Exceptions to the common profile of terrorists were the Israeli Arab who carried out the vehicular attack in Acre and the Jordanian who attacked two workers with a hammer. As in past years, an analysis of the identities of the terrorists revealed that with one exception they were all men. Regarding the participation of women in terrorist attacks, many women are caught before they carry out an attack (mainly by the discovery of knives during routine security examinations at check posts).

Of the terrorist attacks carried out in 2018, the ages of only 26 attackers is known to the ITIC. As in previous years, most of the attackers (16 of them) were young men between the ages of 17 and 29. Seven were between the ages of 30 and 36. Most of the attacks were carried out by lone wolf terrorists who used easily available cold weapons (knives, other sharp instruments, vehicles). Most of the attackers did not belong to any established terrorist organization or network, and had no record of previous involvement in terrorism.
There are two other profile characteristics:

- **Motive:** In ITIC assessment, **most of the attackers had mainly nationalist motivation, while only a few had religious motivation** (during 2018 almost none of the significant events took place in locations that would give rise to religious sentiments). Some of the attackers **suffered from personal problems**.

- **The connection between the terrorist's place of residence and the location of the attack:** Most of the attackers chose a **location close to where they lived**, so there was a **large degree of overlap** between the two. Even when the terrorists escaped from the scene of the attack they mostly **hid near their homes** and where they **received support from the local inhabitants** (until they were caught).

### The Lethality of Popular Terrorism

Despite the declarations of Mahmoud Abbas (and others) that the "popular resistance" is "carried out by peaceful means," **popular terrorism continues to be lethal and claims the lives of victims every year.** During 2018 twelve people were killed in popular terrorism attacks, seven civilians and five members of the Israeli security forces (compared with 18 people killed in 2017).

- The most lethal form of attack in 2018 was stabbing attacks, in which five people were killed. **Shooting attacks killed four people and vehicular attacks killed two.** One of the victims of a shooting attack was a two-day old premature baby, born after his mother was
wounded. An IDF soldier was killed when a slab of marble was thrown at him from the roof of a building during an operational activity in the al-Am‘ari refugee camp.

**Monthly distribution of fatalities, 2018**

**Distribution of fatalities according to type of attack, 2018**
Preventing Terrorist Attacks and Exposing Terrorist Networks

Overview

Throughout 2018 the systematic incitement of Hamas and its affiliated media continued, calling on the inhabitants of Judea and Samaria to rise up against Israel and begin a new intifada. At the same time, operatives of Hamas' military wing in the Gaza Strip and abroad dealt with constructing a terrorist infrastructure in Judea and Samaria, recruiting operatives and transferring funds and weapons for terrorist attacks, including showcase attacks.
The successful counterterrorism activities of the Israel Security Agency, and to a lesser extent of the Palestinian security forces, have so far prevented popular terrorism in Judea and Samaria from becoming established military-style terrorism (which could lead to an increase in the scope and nature of terrorist attacks). In November 2018, Nadav Argaman, the head of the Israel Security Agency, briefing the members of the Knesset Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee, said that despite the apparent relative calm, the situation in the Palestinian arena was unstable during the past year. He said Hamas in the Gaza Strip, Turkey and Lebanon repeatedly tried to orchestrate terrorist attacks in Judea and Samaria. He added that the Israel Security Agency had prevented 480 significant terrorist attacks (nearly nine prevented for every one carried out). The Israel Security Agency also exposed and prevented 590 lone wolf attacks and 219 Hamas squad attacks. He added that the large number of squad and terrorist activities prevented could definitely indicate what was happening under the surface (Knesset website, November 6, 2018).

- Hamas was behind most of the three main types of attacks that were prevented:
  - **Stabbing attacks:** Most of the attacks were prevented by the Israeli security forces at the roadblocks, where terrorists were detained. That was because tools that could be used to carry out stabbing attacks were found in their possession.
  - **Exposure of terrorist networks through preventive intelligence activities.**
  - **Routine Israeli security forces' counterterrorism activities:** Such activities led to the discovery of large quantities of military-grade and improvised weapons, workshops and lathes for the manufacture of weapons. In addition, large sums of money for funding terrorism were confiscated.

- The most prominent countries from which terrorist networks were handled were Turkey, Lebanon and Jordan. Terrorist networks in Judea and Samaria were also handled from the Gaza Strip. One of the sites where Hamas recruits its operatives is the university campus, especially Hamas student associations. Preference is given to students studying engineering and technological subjects.

**Terrorist attacks prevented by routine security activity**

- In many instances during 2018 the Israeli security forces' routine security activities prevented terrorist attacks planned by Palestinians as part of popular terrorism (primarily stabbing attacks). The security forces found knives and other potential weapons in the possession of Palestinians (men and women) during routine security examinations at the
roadblocks and crossings. A number of Palestinian attempts to enter Israeli communities were also prevented. There were also many attempts to smuggle weapons into military prisons (especially the Ofer prison).

Some of the attacks prevented in 2018 were the following:

- **January 8, 2018**: A Palestinian woman went to an examination post near the Cave of the Patriarchs in Hebron. A knife was found in her possession. She had been detained in 2016 when she tried to enter the Cave of the Patriarchs with two knives. She was sentenced to a number of months in prison (Israel Police Force spokesman's unit, January 8, 2018).

  Right: The knife found in the possession of the Palestinian woman in 2018 (Israel Police Force, January 8, 2018). Left: The two knives found in the possession of the Palestinian woman in 2016 (QudsN Facebook page, November 1, 2016).

- **January 28, 2018**: The Israeli security forces detained a Palestinian from Bayt Furiq (Nablus region) who tried to enter the community of Itamar in Samaria wearing a uniform (not an IDF uniform). He was detained and taken for questioning. A Palestinian accompanying him fled. Several Molotov cocktails ready for throwing were found at the site (Red Alert Facebook page, January 28, 2019).
February 18, 2018: Border Policemen stationed at the entrance to the military courthouse in Samaria (where several terrorist attacks have been attempted) noticed a Palestinian who aroused their suspicions. They questioned him and he pointed at a bag he had hidden near their post. It held an improvised Carlo submachine gun. The suspect, a 19-year-old from Nablus, was taken for questioning (Red Alert Facebook page, February 18, 2018).

April 18, 2018: On the eve of Israel's Independence Day, a truck carrying Palestinian merchandise drove to the Reihan Crossing (near Jenin). It aroused the suspicions of the security inspectors. They searched the truck and found a powerful IED hidden in the roof. It was composed of several pipe bombs and weighed about ten kilograms.
(22 pounds). The truck driver was taken for questioning. In Israeli security assessment, it was planned to be detonated during the Independence Day festivities in either Netanya or Hadera, two large cities in central Israel (Haaretz, April 18, 2018).

The truck seized at the Reihan Crossing in whose roof a powerful explosive device was hidden. It was suspected that the device was going to be used in an attack during Israel’s Independence Day festivities (Israeli ministry of defense Facebook page, April 18, 2018).

♦ May 1, 2018: Border Policemen detained two Palestinian youngsters who went to the Salem military courthouse in northern Samaria. Three pipe bombs were hidden in their clothing and detonators were also found.

The three pipe bombs found in the possession of the two Palestinians (Israel Police Force, May 2, 2018).
Exposure of terrorist networks by the Israel Security Agency

Overview

In 2018 the Israel Security Agency exposed a large number of organized terrorist squads that were planning to carry out attacks, including showcase attacks. Most of the squads were handled by Hamas operatives in the Gaza Strip and abroad (Turkey, Lebanon and Jordan). Many of the squad recruiters in Judea and Samaria were Hamas operatives released in the Gilad Shalit prisoner exchange deal. In one instance a Palestinian student from Hebron was recruited by Iranian intelligence.

According to a report from the head of the Israel Security Agency presented to the Knesset Foreign Affairs and Security Committee on November 6, 2018, by November the Agency had prevented 480 significant terrorist attacks. Among them were 280 shooting attacks, 76 IED attacks, seven abduction attacks, six suicide bombing attacks and 101 "sacrifice attacks" (most of them vehicular and stabbing attacks).

The head of the Israel Security Agency added that the activities of 219 Hamas squads had been prevented during 2018 (compared with 148 in 2017 and 114 in 2016). That showed the extent of the potential threat from Judea and Samaria.

Some examples:

- **January 2018**: Hamas activity to transfer funds to Judea and Samaria through Turkey was discovered. A Turkish citizen was detained. He was interrogated and deported from Israel. The following week an Israeli Arab from the central Israeli city of Umm al-Fahm was detained on suspicion of involvement in transferring funds through Turkey. He had visited Turkey several times, where he was recruited to the ranks of Hamas. Before he was detained he had transferred €200,000 to Hamas operatives in Judea and Samaria, leaving the funds at drop sites. In addition, he had €91,000 in his possession. Both operatives had been recruited by Zaher Jabarin, a Hamas operative expelled to Turkey after being released in the Gilad Shalit prisoner exchange deal (Haaretz, February 13, 2019).
- **February 2018**: A terrorist squad was uncovered whose operatives belonged to the PIJ. They had been recruited in the Bethlehem region. They planned to carry out shooting attacks in the Gush Etzion region. Six Palestinians were detained during the
investigation. The squad operatives purchased explosives and asked terrorist organizations in the Gaza Strip for financing. When they were unsuccessful in their attempts to acquire explosives for an IED they decided to make a dummy IED to receive funds and recognition for their activity and to carry out other attacks. They also raised the idea of assassinating the Israeli defense minister by placing an IED on a road he customarily used, but they were deterred by the heavy security around him (Israel Security Agency, February 20, 2018).

**March 7, 2018:** The Israeli security forces detained Omar Kasawani, 24, from the village of Bayt Iksa (northwest of Jerusalem). He was chairman of the student association and head of the Islamic bloc (Hamas' student faction) in Bir Zeit University. He was detained on suspicion of involvement in terrorist activity. The investigation revealed that he had contacted a Hamas operative in the Gaza Strip and Hamas operatives in Turkey who had sent him money to promote Hamas activity at the university (Israel media, May 3, 2018).

**March 2018:** A network of Palestinian operatives was uncovered. The operatives came from the Gaza Strip, Judea, Samaria and east Jerusalem. They smuggled military-grade weapons from the Gaza Strip into Judea and Samaria. They were supported by a French citizen who worked as a driver at the French consulate in Jerusalem. Before they were caught he had smuggled about 70 handguns and two assault rifles to a Palestinian in Judea and Samaria, who sold them to arms dealers (Israel Security Agency, March 19, 2018).

Right: The employee of the French consulate in Jerusalem who smuggled weapons from the Gaza Strip. Left: The consular vehicle used for the smuggling (Israel Security Agency communications unit, March 19, 2018).
May 2018: A number of residents from the neighborhood of Sur Bahar (southeast Jerusalem) were detained. They had carried out terrorist attacks in the past and were planning to carry out attacks in Israel under the directions of Hamas operatives in the Gaza Strip. Investigation revealed that the squad operatives planned to attack Israeli security forces at a bus stop near the community of Oranit (near Rosh Ha'Ain, east of Tel Aviv). They recruited another operative and tried to buy weapons and carry out surveillance of the region they planned to attack. Two squad operatives had visited Turkey the previous year and met with two Hamas operatives who had been released in the Gilad Shalit prisoner exchange deal who were staying in Turkey. During the visit the operatives from Judea and Samaria received funds (Israel Today, May 1, 2018).

June 2018: A three-man terrorist squad of PFLP operatives was exposed. They planned to assassinate senior Israeli political figures, including Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Nir Barkat, who was the mayor of Jerusalem. They also planned to attack the American consulate in Jerusalem and a delegation of Canadians who were in Jerusalem to train PA security forces. The investigation revealed that the attacks had been planned by terrorist operatives abroad, among them an operative from Syria (Israel Security Agency spokesman's unit, June 5, 2018).

September 2018: A Hamas network was uncovered that planned to carry out terrorist attacks inside Israel. Hamas' military wing in the Gaza Strip recruited operatives in Judea and Samaria and trained them to make and place IEDs. They were instructed to locate potential sites and people in Israel as targets for terrorist attacks. Hamas exploited residents of the Gaza Strip who had permits to enter Israel for life-saving medical procedures in Israeli hospitals, having them transfer messages to the operatives. The activity of exploiting the residents entering Israel was coordinated and directed by a Hamas military wing operative in the Gaza Strip (Israel Security Agency website, November 22, 2018).

November 2018: A five-man terrorist squad was exposed. The squad planned to carry out terrorist attacks following directions from a Hamas operative in the Gaza Strip. The investigation revealed that the Hamas operative who was behind the squad's activity had been involved in the abduction and murder of Israeli civilian Sasson Nuriel in September 2005. The operative was deported to the Gaza Strip as part of the Gilad Shalit prisoner exchange deal and returned to terrorist activity. According
to suspicions, he instructed the squad operatives to recruit more operatives, set up a terrorist network and acquire rifles to carry out terrorist attack (Israel Security Agency spokesman’s unit, January 1, 2019).

▷ **An exceptional case was the exposure of a Palestinian who had been recruited by Iranian intelligence.** Muhammad Maharmeh, 29, from Hebron, who was studying computer engineering, was recruited by Iranian intelligence when he visited relatives in South Africa. His recruiter was a relative who was handled by Iranian intelligence and invested efforts to recruit operatives from Judea, Samaria and Israel for espionage and terrorist missions for the Iranians. Muhammad Maharmeh met with Iranian agents several times. Some of them came from Tehran especially to meet him. He received $8,000 in return for his activity (Israel Security Agency, January 4, 2018).

Right: Muhammad Maharmeh, recruited by relative Bakr Maharmeh (left), to establish a terrorist squad handled by Iranian intelligence (Panet, January 3, 2018).

▷ A terrorist squad of Hamas operatives was apprehended in April 2018. It was handled and funded by the Jabhat al-Nusra in Syria, an al-Qaeda-affiliated organization (which today calls itself the Organization for the Liberation of al-Sham):

- The squad, which was exceptional in size and the extent of its activities, operated in the region of Nablus, beginning in October 2017. It had more than 20 operatives, most of them affiliated with Hamas. Some of the operatives had a long history of terrorist activities. Their interrogation revealed that they were planning to carry out a series of terrorist attacks in Israel's main cities and in Samaria. They were found to possess IEDs (including one that weighed ten kilos), explosives, materials for making IEDs and digital media with instructions for manufacturing IEDs and explosives (Israel Security Agency, June 17, 2018).
According to the indictment handed down for one of the squad leaders, the idea to carry out the attacks was raised in a conversation with a Jabhat al-Nusra operative in Syria using the popular Telegram application (which the jihadist organizations frequently use). The operative in Syria offered him $100,000 in return for making an IED and using it to attack Israeli civilians or IDF facilities (Israel Security Agency, June 17, 2018).

Demonstrations and Riots

Overview

Alongside the popular terrorism attacks of 2018 there were demonstrations, protest events, riots and confrontations with the Israeli security forces in east Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria. **In most instances the confrontations were relatively less intense than in previous years.** In ITIC assessment that was because the IDF was cautious in its use of gunfire and because the PA (which supports popular terrorism) controlled the intensity of the events to keep them from being turned against the PA (mainly by Hamas) and from spinning out of control.

An examination of demonstrations and riots during 2018 indicated **the Palestinian public was relatively unresponsive to calls to participate in events.** That was true for the weekly demonstrations at the traditional locations of Bila'in and Ni'lin, and for ad hoc demonstrations and other events. There were usually a few thousand demonstrators and sometimes only hundreds or dozens. The demonstrations did not spin out of control even if the Palestinians considered the issue a matter of national importance, like the relocation of the American embassy to Jerusalem, or the events of the "return marches" and rounds of escalation in the Gaza Strip. Even on the Temple Mount, which is a focal point for riots, there was relative quiet, with the exception of one or two incidents. On the other hand, the issue that did bring the Palestinian public out into the streets en masse was the social security tax law the PA tried to pass. It was an internal Palestinian issue which enraged the public. That might be an indication of the Palestinians' order of priorities in 2018.
Expressions of anti-American sentiment at the demonstrations. Right: President Trump and Vice President Pence hanged in effigy (Palinfo Twitter account, January 20, 2018). Left: Muhammad al-Laham (center), a member of Fatah’s Revolutionary Council, photographed with the effigies in the background (Muhammad al-Laham’s Facebook page, January 27, 2019).

Stones, rocks and Molotov cocktails

- In 2018 Palestinians continued throwing stones, rocks and Molotov cocktails. The ITIC does not have systematic data about the number and locations of such attacks, but there are scores and in some instances hundreds every month. Palestinians throw stones, rocks and Molotov cocktails at three main types of targets:
  - The Israeli security forces engaged in security activities in the villages and cities in Judea and Samaria;
  - Israeli cars, buses and in some instances ambulances and firetrucks on Judea and Samaria roads;
  - Israeli security force positions, roadblocks and posts.

While the ITIC does not classify such incidents as significant terrorist attacks, they can kill and wound. A prominent example was the death of an IDF soldier, caused by a slab of marble dropped from the roof of a three-story house during an operational activity. In several instances civilians were wounded (most of them not seriously) by stones and Molotov cocktails thrown by Palestinians, and vehicles were damaged. Moreover, the constant throwing of objects disrupts the daily lives of the Israelis living in the communities in Judea and Samaria and interrupts Israeli security forces conducting their routine activities.
Right: Israeli vehicle damaged by a rock thrown near the village of Hamza, east of Jerusalem (Palinfo Twitter account, March 11, 2018). Left: Front windshield of bus shattered by stones thrown near the village of Hamza (Shehab Facebook page, April 23, 2018).

Part Two: Terrorism and Violence from the Gaza Strip

Overview

In 2018 there was a sharp rise in the level of violence and terrorism from the Gaza Strip, after three and a half years of relative quiet after Operation Protective Edge. While there was a decline in popular terrorism in Judea and Samaria relative to previous years, security in the Gaza Strip deteriorated as a result of Hamas' new strategy. The main catalyst was popular terrorism, which included riots near the border fence as part of the "return marches" (later accompanied by mini-flotillas and incendiary kites and balloons). Institutionalized terrorism was integrated into popular terrorism, led by Hamas and the PIJ. It was manifested by massive rocket fire at Israel (1,119 rocket and mortar shell hits in Israeli territory, the highest number of the last decade with the exception of Operation Protective Edge). However, both Israel and Hamas managed to contain the events to prevent them from turning into a broad military confrontation which neither side wants. However, the potential for a broad military confrontation exists because the situation is fluid and explosive.

- Hamas' implements its new strategy of "controlled violence," i.e., exerting pressure on Israel in controlled doses to promote Hamas objectives, such as economic support, projects to ease the economic distress of the local inhabitants and opening the crossings. A clear example was instituting the "return march" project which began on March 30, 2018 (which Hamas and the other terrorist organizations intend to continue).
- For foreign audiences the marches are represented as non-violent "popular activities," but in reality they have been accompanied by unprecedented violence. Along the Gaza Strip border Palestinians burn tires; throw stones, rocks and Molotov cocktails at IDF forces; sabotage and set fire to the crossings and security fence; and break through into the territory of the State of Israel. The marches have also been accompanied by the new tactic of launching kites and balloons with incendiary devices and IEDs attached to them, which set fire to vast territories in the western Negev (arson terrorism).

Since the IDF did not distinguish between rocket fire and mortar shell fire in its reports, the statistics for 2018 include both (as opposed to former annual statistics that included only rocket fire).
"Return march" violence was accompanied by military-style attacks carried out by Hamas, the PIJ and the other terrorist organizations. That included gunfire, placing IEDs along the border fence, the penetration of rioters into Israeli territory, throwing IEDs, hand grenades and other objects. The fragile, volatile, fluid situation created led to six rounds of escalation, during which massive barrages of rockets and mortar shells were fired at Israel. The rounds of escalation were carried out during the second half of the year (after May 2018). The period was characterized by rounds of escalation, between which situation returned to fluctuating levels of violence accompanied by "return marches."

The "return marches"

In ITIC assessment preparations for the "return march" project began in early 2018. The original intention was to organize mass "non-violent" protest marches which assemble at a number of focal areas in the Gaza Strip (the "return camps"), the Palestinians would march to the Israeli border and try to break into Israeli territory. The project was organized and led by Hamas and its collaborators, other groups such as the PIJ and Fatah operatives, and local social activists and journalists.

The demonstrations began on March 30, 2018 (the Israeli Arab Land Day). Since then marches have been held every Friday without exception, and have drawn large crowds (usually between 5,000 and 20,000 participants, with two peaks of about 40,000 participants). Between the Fridays there have been smaller demonstrations and events, such as the mini-flotilllas, which are accompanied by demonstrations and sometimes riots on the shore of the northern Gaza Strip near the Israeli border. The events are held to maintain the constant level of tension and violence between the Friday marches.

The violent events served the operatives of Hamas and the other terrorist organizations as opportunities to confront IDF forces, attempt to cross the security fence and sabotage the Israeli security infrastructure along the border and even damage the crossings where civilian merchandise enters the Gaza Strip. Under the cover of the marches and in the days between, terrorist operatives shot at IDF forces and tried to launch attacks against them. "Return march" violence and military attacks led to the killing and wounding of many Palestinians (most of them terrorist operatives, especially Hamas, who operated near the fence).

So far the "return marches" have peaked twice: once on March 30, 2018, the first march, and again on May 14, 2018, Nakba Day (and the day the American embassy was
relocated to Jerusalem). During the second peak on May 14, 2018 about 40,000 Palestinians gathered at 13 sites along the fence and rioted against IDF forces. IDF sources called the violence used by the Palestinians "unprecedented." The high level of violence on the Gazan side led to many Palestinian fatalities (mostly terrorist operatives, who were sent to the front lines and led the violence).

Right: Palestinians gather near the security fence. Left: Palestinians confront IDF forces near the security fence during the first "return march" (al-Risalah Facebook page, March 30, 2018).

Right: Palestinian rioters burn tires near the border security fence (Shehab Facebook page, April 20, 2018). Left: Giant slingshot used to hurl stones and rocks at IDF forces (al-Qabas, April 20, 2018).

Palestinian children and adolescents approach the border security fence and use a rope to pull at the barbed wire (al-Hadath, April 22, 2018).
Palestinian rioters who broke into the Gazan side of the Kerem Shalom Crossing and burned the security post (Palinfo Twitter account, May 4, 2018).

**Number of "return march" participants**

![Graph showing number of participants](image)

**Palestinian casualties (March 30, 2018 – January 14, 2019)**

- As of January 14, 2019, there had been 42 "return marches." They have all been particularly violent, with Hamas-regulated fluctuations in the level of violence. **The Palestinians paid a high price for the violence in terms of killed and wounded rioters and demonstrators, especially those on the front lines who confronted IDF forces.**
An ITIC study based on reports from the ministry of health in the Gaza Strip and other sources found that 187 Palestinians were killed between the first "return march" and the middle of January 2019. An analysis of the identities of the fatalities indicated that 150 of them (or about 80%) were affiliated with terrorist organizations. Most of them either belonged to or were affiliated with Hamas (96, or about 51%). Forty-five Hamas fatalities belonged to its military-terrorist wing (about 24% of the overall fatalities, about 47% of Hamas fatalities).11

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11 For further information, see January 16, 2019 bulletin "Examination of the list of fatalities in the "return marches" reveals that most of them are operatives of terrorist organizations, about half of whom affiliated with Hamas."
Attempts to attack IDF soldiers and sabotage the IDF security infrastructures along the Gaza Strip border

During the first months of 2018, before the "return marches" began, there were a relatively large number of attempts to attack IDF soldiers near the Gaza Strip. After the "return marches" began there was a substantial increase in the number of attacks carried out under their cover. That included placing IEDs, throwing stones and hand grenades, gunfire and sniper fire. Palestinians also frequently tried to enter Israeli territory, some of them to carry out attacks and some because of the economic distress in the Gaza Strip. The number of attempts to sabotage the IDF infrastructure along the border also increased, including damaging or destroying IDF engineering equipment, setting fire to abandoned IDF posts, and damaging the crossings where merchandise for the civilian population enters the Gaza Strip. In 2018 two IDF soldiers were killed in incidents in the Gaza Strip, one of them a lieutenant colonel.

The following prominent events occurred during 2018, most of them after the "return marches" began:

- **February 17, 2018**: An IDF force near the border approached the fence to remove a flag hung by Palestinians during a demonstration. When they reached the fence an IED attached to the flag was detonated by remote control. Four soldiers were wounded, two of them seriously.
- **March 1, 2018**: IDF forces neutralized an IED placed on the security fence in the southern Gaza Strip. According to the IDF spokesman it had been placed during a demonstration held two weeks previously, apparently, at the same time as the IED that was detonated on February 17, 2018.
- **March 15, 2018**: Between three and four IEDs were detonated near the security fence in the northern Gaza Strip when IDF forces were on patrol nearby. The forces were several hundred meters from the explosion. No casualties or damage were reported.
- **March 17, 2018**: An IED exploded near the security fence in the northern Gaza Strip. No IDF forces were present at the time.
- **March 24, 2018**: Four Palestinians entered Israel territory planning to destroy engineering equipment used by the IDF for the construction of the belowground barrier. The four, who came prepared with containers of gasoline, poured it on the
equipment and set it on fire. They caused a negligible amount of damage. They fled back to the Gaza Strip after they were seen by an IDF force (Israeli media, March 24, 2018).

Right: Four Palestinians cross the security force in the Gaza Strip on their way to set fire to IDF engineering equipment used to construct the belowground barrier against the tunnels.

Left: Smoke rising from the burning equipment (gazaalan.net YouTube channel, March 24, 2018).

- **April 8, 2018**: Three Palestinians crossed the border in the northern Gaza Strip and returned after a short time. IDF tanks fired at them. A search of the area later revealed they had placed two IEDs at the site (IDF spokesman, April 9, 2018).

- **April 11, 2018**: An IED was used to attack an IDF bulldozer during routine operations inside Israeli territory near the Gaza Strip border. In response IDF tanks fired at three observation posts near the Zeitoun neighborhood in Gaza City (Shehab, April 11, 2018).

- **April 12, 2018**: Israeli Air Force aircraft attacked a Hamas post. Hamas military-terrorist operatives fired anti-aircraft weapons at the aircraft. One of the bullets fired from the Gaza Strip hit a house in a community near the border. No casualties were reported (Ynet, April 12, 2018).

- **May 6, 2018**: A four-man squad approached the security fence, intending to enter Israeli territory. The squad was under IDF surveillance. After the Palestinians reached the fence and began sabotaging it, an IDF force arrived and shot and killed three of the terrorists. One of them had a bag containing a camera, an axe, wire cutters, an oxygen mask and gloves. Bottles of gasoline were also found (Israeli newspapers, May 6, 2018).
The equipment of the terrorist squad that tried to break into Israeli territory (IDF spokesman, May 6, 2018).

- **May 16, 2018**: IDF soldiers were shot at. No casualties were reported. An IDF tank returned fire. In response heavy machinegun fire targeted IDF soldiers and the southern town of Sderot. A number of bullets hit buildings in the town.

- **June 18, 2018**: Five Palestinians entered the Karni Crossing in the northern Gaza Strip in an attempt to destroy security infrastructure. An explosion occurred, killing one of the Palestinians and seriously wounding another (IDF Twitter account, June 18, 2018).

- **July 2, 2018**: An IDF force shot at four terrorist operatives who crossed the security fence in the southern Gaza Strip. The operatives had wire cutters and accelerants. They were planning to set fire to an abandoned IDF sniper post. An IDF force pursued them, firing shots. One terrorist was killed and other was critically wounded. A third was detained and taken for interrogation by the Israeli security forces (IDF spokesman's website, July 2, 2018).

- **July 6, 2018**: Several Palestinians approached the Karni Crossing to throw an IED at IDF soldiers. The IED blew up inside the Gaza Strip and wounded some of the Palestinians. No casualties to IDF forces were reported (IDF spokesman, July 6, 2018).
July 20, 2018: Under cover of "return march" activities in the southern Gaza Strip snipers shot at an IDF patrol. One soldier was killed. The IDF described the incident as the most serious since the end of Operation Protective Edge.

Attempts during the "return march" to break through the security force (Supreme National Authority Facebook page, August 17, 2018).

July 25, 2018: An IDF force was summoned to disperse a demonstration in the southern Gaza Strip. During the dispersal snipers fired at the soldiers. An IDF officer was seriously wounded (IDF spokesman, July 25, 2018).

August 7, 2018: An IDF force was shot at from a Hamas post near Beit Lahia (northern Gaza Strip). No casualties to IDF forces were reported. In response an IDF tank fired at the post from which the shots were fired (IDF spokesman, August 7, 2018).

The night of September 15, 2018: Several hundred Palestinians gathered at a number of locations along the security fence. During the riots pipe bombs and three hand grenades were thrown. No casualties to IDF forces were reported (Red Alert Facebook page, September 16, 2018).

October 12, 2018: During the "return march" events a group of about 25 Palestinians crossed into Israeli territory under cover of smoke from burning tires and improvised smoke-making machines. They used an IED to blow a hole in the security
fence and passed through. The break-in was carried out a few dozen meters from an IDF post manned by snipers. Three Palestinians ran to the post and two tried to climb up into it. They were shot and killed by IDF soldiers. The third remained on the ground. When an IDF soldier approached him he took out a knife and ran towards the soldier in an attempt to steal his weapon. The soldier struggled with him, freed himself, and shot and killed the Palestinian (article by Nir Dvori, Hadashot News, October 26, 2018).

Right: Palestinians cut the security fence east of al-Bureij (photographer Ahmad Khaled's Facebook page, October 13, 2018). Left: Knife found at the scene in eastern al-Bureij (IDF website, October 12, 2018).

◆ November 11, 2018: During an operational activity in the southern Gaza Strip carried out by an IDF special force, there was an exchange of fire between the soldiers and Hamas terrorist operatives. An IDF lieutenant colonel was killed and another officer was wounded. Seven terrorist operatives were killed, six of them operatives in Hamas’ military wing. Hamas responded to the event in two stages: first, 17 rockets and mortar shells were fired at the Israeli communities near the Gaza Strip. The following day Hamas initiated a rocket attack, unprecedented in extent, on the western Negev communities (see below).

◆ November 12, 2018: A Kornet rocket was fired from the Gaza Strip at an Israeli bus taking IDF soldiers to a location in the western Negev. As a result, one soldier was critically wounded. A few minutes before the rocket was fired the soldiers got off the bus for a briefing. The Kornet rocket was the opening shot of a massive rocket attack initiated by Hamas (with the participation of the other terrorist organizations) that targeted the western Negev.
Pictures from a video disseminated by Hamas and other terrorist organizations in the Gaza Strip documenting the Kornet missile attack on the Israeli bus (Palinfo Twitter account, November 12, 2018).

**Arson terrorism**

- Arson terrorism began as a local initiative at the third "return march" when the population seemed to be tiring of the marches. During the march on April 13, 2018, Palestinians launched a kite into Israeli territory with a Molotov cocktail attached to it. Once Hamas and the other terrorist organizations realized the psychological impact and material damage caused by the incendiary kites, they institutionalized and expanded the method. Thus it became one of the important tactics of Hamas' strategy of controlled violence against Israel. Incendiary kites and balloons are cheap, easily available and effective, and there is a relatively low level of risk to the launchers, as opposed to launching rockets and mortar shells or entering Israeli territory.

More than a thousand fires were caused and thousands of acres of agricultural fields, open fields, forests and nature preserves were burned, causing extensive ecological damage. Beyond the material damage, the fires disrupted the daily lives of the Israelis living near the Gaza Strip and lowered their morale. However, arson terrorism did not cause fatalities. It decreased around November 2018 following a round of escalation of rocket and mortar shell fire after which understandings were reached and Hamas stopped the launching of incendiary kites and balloons. Hamas recently threatened it would renew arson terrorism if its demands from Israel were not met.
The central role played by Hamas in organizing and carrying out arson terrorism: according to the IDF spokesman, arson terrorism is organized and orchestrated, in large part by Hamas military wing operatives. Most of the kites and especially the incendiary balloons were launched into Israel on orders and instructions from Hamas operatives. Many of the incendiary balloons were launched from Hamas observation posts near the Israeli border. According to the IDF spokesman, at the top of the command hierarchy dealing with arson terrorism is the sector commander of Hamas' military wing. He decides on launching incendiary kites and balloons into Israeli territory and also instructs operatives to prepare incendiary kites and balloons. In most instances they are manufactured in series of large quantities. Once prepared they are launched, some of them from Hamas observation posts and other Hamas positions near the border.

The Hamas media accompanied the launching of incendiary kites and balloons with a propaganda campaign of pictures, videos and postings to the social media. The campaign boasted of the damage the kites and balloons cause Israel. Reports in the Hamas media...
stressed that Hamas would protect the Palestinians launching incendiary kites and balloons and respond with rocket fire to any serious Israeli response. Thus Hamas coined the slogan "Rocket in return for rocket, blood in return for blood." All of the above contributed to the explosive situation in the Gaza Strip which in any case existed from the commencement of the "return marches."

Right: Hamas notice boasting of the fires caused by incendiary kites and balloons on June 27, 2018. The Arabic reads, "23 fires broke out in the settlements near the Gaza Strip since this morning [June 27] set by incendiary kites and balloons" (Palinfo Twitter account, June 28, 2018).

Left: Hamas notice boasting of the fires on June 16 set by incendiary kites and balloons. The Arabic reads, "24 fires near the Gaza Strip caused by incendiary kites and balloons" (Palinfo Twitter account, June 16, 2018).

Preparing incendiary kites east of Gaza City (Palinfo Twitter account, May 4, 2018).
In addition to the fires caused by the incendiary kites and balloons and the disruption of the daily life of Israelis living near the Gaza Strip border, arson terrorism contributed to the rounds of escalation in the Gaza Strip. After the increase in arson terrorism the IDF attacked targets belonging to Hamas and the other terrorist organizations, and carried out warning fire at Palestinians launching kites and balloons. Hamas then announced it would determine "rules of engagement" that would prevent strong Israeli reprisals and protect the kite and balloon launchers.

Rocket fire at Israel Overview

During 2018, for the first time since Operation Protective Edge, there was a significant increase in the number of rockets and mortar shells launched into Israeli territory. During the year there were 1,119 rockets and mortar shells hits, compared with 31 in 2017. There were six major rounds of rocket and mortar shells escalation between May and November 2018. Between the rounds of escalation Hamas calmed the situation on the ground to prevent being dragged into a large military confrontation.
Most of the rockets were short-range, in most cases landing in open areas or near the Israeli communities in the western Negev (sometimes there were direct hits on the homes of people living near the Gaza Strip and cities further away such as Ashqelon and Beersheba). In most cases the IDF responded strongly to the rocket fire with Israeli Air Force aircraft attacks on Hamas targets. That is because Israel regards Hamas as responsible for everything that happens in the Gaza Strip. The events indicated that as part of its strategy of controlled violence Hamas is determined to set new rules of engagement with Israel, and to dictate the timing, nature and type of ending of the rounds of escalation.

**Rocket fire 2017, monthly distribution**
Rocket fire from the Gaza Strip, multi-annual distribution

Six major rounds of escalation

- During the second half of 2018 there were six major rounds of escalation, in which rockets and mortar shells were mainly fired by Hamas and the PIJ:
  - **The morning of May 29, 2018**: Three barrages of about 27 mortar shells were fired at a number of Israeli communities near the Gaza Strip border. Most of them were intercepted by the Iron Dome aerial defense system (Israeli security forces, May 29, 2018). One man was injured by shrapnel and buildings were damaged. Another barrage was launched in the afternoon, during an IDF attack in the Gaza Strip. The shells targeted the communities near the Gaza Strip, and in several incidents the cities of Sderot, Netivot and Ashqelon. They were fired by the PIJ, which was later joined by Hamas. **One hundred and fifty rockets and mortar shells were fired.** The first round of escalation ended with an informal ceasefire after Egyptian contacts with Hamas and the PIJ.
The night of June 19, 2018: Hamas operatives launched about 45 rockets and mortar shells at Israel. Behind the escalation was an IDF attack on targets of Hamas and other terrorist organizations, carried out in response to the launching of incendiary kites and balloons. Hamas, which is responsible for arson terrorism, declared it had determined the "new rules of engagement" to prevent strong Israeli reprisals and to protect the Palestinians launching kites and balloons.

July 13-14, 2018: The third round of escalation began after the Israeli Air Force carried out extensive aerial attacks in response to the wounding of an IDF officer by a hand grenade thrown during "return march" events. During the round of escalation Israeli Air Force aircraft attacked Hamas military targets in three waves, beginning during the night and continuing into July 14. About 200 rockets and mortar shells were launched into Israeli territory. The Iron Dome aerial defense system intercepted 37. Four members of a family in Sderot were injured, incurring minor wounds. Their house was damaged. In ITIC assessment, most of the rockets and mortar shells were fired by Hamas and PIJ operatives.

August 8-9, 2018: A massive rocket and mortar shell attack was carried out against Israel. It ended in the afternoon on August 9, 2018. Main of events:

- Behind the fourth round of escalation was gunfire from a Hamas position near Beit Lahia (northern Gaza Strip). Given previous sniper fire attacks, the gunfire was interpreted by the IDF as sniper fire at an IDF force. In response an IDF tank fired a number of shells at the position from which the gunfire came,
killing two Hamas operatives. Hamas later announced that the gunfire was part of an internal demonstration and not aimed at the IDF force. **Hamas promised to retaliate for the killing of two of its military wing operatives within the equation of "a rocket in return for a rocket, blood in return for blood."**

- During the round of escalation about 180 rockets and mortar shells were fired. About 30 were intercepted by the Iron Dome aerial defense system. Unlike the previous rounds, the rate of rocket and mortar shell fire was greater and **aimed at the inhabited areas of the Israeli communities near the Gaza Strip. In addition, the range of rocket fire was increased and the southern cities of Ashqelon and Netivot were targeted, and one rocket was even launched at Beersheba.** Twenty-three wounded Israelis were evacuated to hospitals, one seriously wounded. Houses and industrial structures in a number of communities were damaged. The IDF responded by attacking about 150 targets in the Gaza Strip, most of them part of Hamas infrastructure and assets. After 24 hours of mutual attacks Hamas unilaterally decided to stop firing.

![Israeli security forces deal with rocket hit in the southern Israeli town of Sderot (Israel Police Force spokesman’s unit, August 8, 2018).](image)

**October 26-28, 2018:** After the Friday "return march" a massive attack of rocket fire began. During the night of October 26 and into the afternoon of October 27, 2018, about 40 rockets and mortar shells were fired into Israeli territory, targeting Sderot, communities in the western Negev and the Ashqelon coast. All the rockets were aimed at populated areas. The Iron Dome aerial defense system intercepted about 15 of them. The others fell in open areas (IDF spokesman, October 28, 2018). Two of the rockets fell inside the Gaza Strip. Seven Israelis were treated for shock. Others were injured while
running for shelter. Minor property damage was reported. The PIJ’s military wing claimed responsibility for the rocket fire.

The remains of the rocket found in yard of a school in the western Negev (local western Negev newspaper, October 28, 2018).

November 12-13, 2018: During an IDF special forces operation in the southern Gaza Strip seven terrorist operatives were killed, six of them from Hamas’ military wing. In retaliation Hamas initiated an unprecedented rocket and mortar shell attack on the Israeli communities of the western Negev, which later spread to Ashqelon and Netivot. Hamas and the PIJ launched about 460 rockets and mortar shells, 100 of which were intercepted by the Iron Dome aerial defense system. One Israeli was killed and about 100 were injured, most of them sustaining minor injuries. Direct hits to several buildings caused serious property damage. In response the IDF attacked about 150 Hamas and PIJ terrorist targets. In addition to the routine targets, the IDF attacked important Hamas targets in multi-story buildings (for example, Hamas’ al-Aqsa TV building in the center of Gaza City).

Right: IDF attack on the al-Aqsa TV building (QudsN Twitter account, November 12, 2018). Left: The ruins of the al-Aqsa TV building (Shehab Facebook page, November 13, 2018).
Rocket and mortar shell fire between the six rounds of escalation

Between the rounds of escalation two rockets were launched on October 17, 2018. One landed directly on a house in Beersheba. The other rocket fell into the sea off the coast of a central Israeli city. The size and weight of the rocket warhead that fell on the house in Beersheba caused extensive damage. A woman and her three children were in the house and managed to reach the security room in time. Seven people were treated for shock. It was the first rocket to hit Beersheba since Operation Protective Edge. According to the IDF spokesman, the type of rocket that hit the house in Beersheba is found only in the arsenals of Hamas and the PIJ.
Neutralizing tunnels penetrating into Israeli territory

Israel continues its efforts to locate and neutralize tunnels penetrating into Israeli territory built by Hamas and the other terrorist organizations in the Gaza Strip. During 2018 Israel located and destroyed seven tunnels. Four of them reached Israeli territory, one was an underwater tunnel and two were tunnels with routes inside the Gaza Strip, i.e., tunnels that had not yet crossed the border into Israeli territory. Since the beginning of the project Israel has neutralized 15 terrorist tunnels in the Gaza Strip. Some were destroyed on the ground with engineering equipment and others from the air by the Israeli Air Force.

- For Hamas and the PIJ, the tunnels are a strategic project, and since Operation Protective Edge they have invested considerable resources in building them (money, materials and manpower). They planned to use the tunnels to surprise Israel by penetrating into Israeli territory to attack or abduct IDF soldiers or civilians. The destruction of the tunnels is a severe military blow to Hamas and the PIJ, as well as a blow to their morale and image. Therefore they are looking for other ways and means to confront Israel.

- The following tunnels were located and destroyed in 2018:
  - January 14, 2018: The IDF reported it had neutralized a tunnel about a kilometer and a half long (almost a mile). It was dug in the southern Gaza Strip, passed through Israeli territory and passed through Egyptian territory. It crossed the border into Israeli territory and passed under the Kerem Shalom Crossing near the gas and fuel pipes that provide the residents of the Gaza Strip with energy. According to the IDF the tunnel endangered the ongoing vital activity of the Kerem Shalom Crossing, the only crossing though which tens of thousands of tons of civilian merchandise enter the Gaza Strip on a daily basis.
The night of March 17, 2018: In response to the placing of the IED, Israeli Air Force aircraft attacked a tunnel in the central Gaza Strip. On the morning of March 18, 2018 IDF forces destroyed another tunnel penetrating into Israeli territory. The tunnel was located in the Rafah area. (It had originally been built around the time of Operation Protective Edge and Hamas was trying to renew it.) The tunnel was neutralized from Israel territory through the injection of materials that prevented it from being used (IDF spokesman, March 18, 2019).

April 16, 2018: The IDF exposed and neutralized a Hamas tunnel penetrating about 20 meters into Israeli territory from the region of Jabalia in the northern Gaza Strip. The route of the tunnel was known previously and monitored by the Israeli security forces. The IDF spokesman reported that the tunnel, which was built after Operation Protective Edge, was about one kilometer in length and joined a network of tunnels.
inside the Gaza Strip. According to the IDF it would have been used to infiltrate terrorist operatives into Israel (IDF spokesman, April 15, 2018). Avigdor Lieberman, at the time the Israeli Defense Minister, said it was the longest and deepest tunnel exposed to date (Avigdor Lieberman’s Twitter account, April 18, 2018).

Right: Opening of a tunnel exposed establish of Jabalia. Left: The route of the tunnel (IDF spokesman’s website, April 15, 2018).

- **May 12, 2018**: The Israeli Air Force neutralized a Hamas attack tunnel in the northern Gaza Strip which was planned to enter Israeli territory near the Erez Crossing (which is used for pedestrian traffic, mainly Palestinians who leave the Gaza Strip for medical treatment). IDF forces monitored the construction of the tunnel for several weeks, and it was attacked before it reached Israeli territory (IDF spokesman, May 12, 2018).

- **May 19, 2018**: The IDF destroyed a Hamas tunnel in the Kerem Shalom Crossing region. The tunnel had two purposes: for smuggling weapons between the Gaza Strip and Egypt, and for terrorist attacks (IDF spokesman, May 29, 2018). It was the second tunnel destroyed in the Kerem Shalom Crossing area before crossing into Israeli territory.
June 3, 2018: The Israeli Air Force attacked, for the first time, an underwater tunnel in the northern Gaza Strip. It was supposed to be used by the divers of an elite Hamas force to enter Israel from the sea without being exposed. It was similar in structure to a drainage tunnel. Its entrance was hidden inside a structure that served as a Hamas post (about three kilometers south of the Israeli border). The tunnel extended tens of meters underground towards the sea and from there it was hidden in a channel at a depth of two or three meters below sea level. From there Hamas divers could enter the sea without being seen by Israeli surveillance (IDF spokesman, June 10, 2018).

October 11, 2018: IDF forces exposed a Hamas tunnel penetrating into Israeli territory in the region of Khan Yunis. It was destroyed by the Israeli security forces in an engineering activity inside Israeli territory. Before it was neutralized it was monitored by the IDF. The tunnel was supposed to be used in an attack inside Israel. According to the IDF, the tunnel had several branches and was built in a variety of construction
methods using a variety of materials. It was connected to the Gaza Strip telephone and electric networks.

Tunnel exposed by the IDF (IDF spokesman, October 11, 2018).
Part Three: The Involvement of ISIS or Other Jihadist Organizations in Terrorist Activity in the Palestinian Arena

Overview

In 2018 no organized network of ISIS or other jihadist organizations was found in Judea and Samaria. That would indicate that those organizations did not successfully establish themselves in Judea and Samaria or have a role in Palestinian terrorist attacks. That was primarily because ISIS’s Salafist-jihadist ideology does not attract most of the Palestinian public, which strives to fight Israel at home and not for the sake of foreign interests. ISIS also became less attractive because of its defeats in Syria and Iraq.

- In the Gaza Strip as well this past year there was no outstanding activity carried out by Salafist-jihadist organizations. In addition, the link between the Gaza Strip and the jihadists in the Sinai Peninsula also weakened, primarily because of the intensive anti-ISIS campaign of the Egyptian security forces. During 2018 no rockets were launched at Israel from the Sinai Peninsula (nine in 2017).

- During 2018 there were several cases of Israeli Arabs detained because of suspicion of contacts with ISIS. For example, the Israeli security forces detained a 27 year-old man from Taybeh on suspicion of supporting ISIS and planning to carry out an ISIS-inspired terrorist attack. The findings of the investigation indicated that during 2014 and 2015 his religious beliefs became radicalized and began to approach ISIS’s ideology. He saw ISIS materials on the Internet and considered joining the fighting in Syria. Some of the materials he saw dealt with the manufacture of explosives. He also tried to convince another man to join him in buying an M-16 assault rifle. He tired to convince friends to join him in carrying out shooting attacks in Jerusalem, a booby-trapped car bomb attack near the Taybeh police station, and a stabbing attack (Israel Security Agency, January 14, 2018).

- During January and February 2018 the Israeli security forces detained three Israeli Arabs from the central Israeli city of Umm al-Fahm, one of them a minor. They planned to carry out a shooting attack on the Temple Mount in Jerusalem, similar to the attack in July 2017 (in which two policemen were killed) also carried out by Israeli Arabs from Umm al-Fahm. The members of the squad also raised the idea of attacking synagogues or churches, attacking
the Israeli security forces, and carrying out stabbing attacks. During their interrogation two of them admitted to supporting ISIS’s ideology (Israel Security Agency website, February 27, 2018).