



News of Terrorism and the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict

(May 22 – 29, 2019)

Overview

► On May 24, 2019, the return march was held in the Gaza Strip with a relatively small number of participants (about 4,000 Palestinians). Because of the prevailing heatwave, participants were called on to stay in the tents and covered areas. Nevertheless, **violence continued, including the throwing of IEDs, an attempt to cross the border fence and the launching of incendiary balloons.**

► About three weeks after the end of the recent round of escalation, **incendiary and IED balloons have been launched into Israeli territory almost on a daily basis** (with an awareness of their greater potential for causing fires in the current very hot weather). Thus a number of fires were set in Israeli territory near the Gaza Strip during the past week. The Sons of al-Zawari unit, which deals with launching IED and incendiary balloons, threatened that **the campaign against Israel (i.e., launching incendiary and IED balloons) would continue until the implementation of the understandings, central to which is "the full lifting of the siege on the Gaza Strip."**



[Click for Video](#)

► Following the strong rejection of the Palestinian Authority (PA) of the economic workshop planned for Bahrain, senior PA figures began **a diplomatic and media campaign to clarify the Palestinian position and prevent the participation of representatives from the Middle East and around the globe.** Prominent to the campaign were the visits of Mahmoud Abbas to Qatar and Jordan. In addition, **Saeb Erekat, secretary of the PLO's Executive Committee,** held talks with representatives from Russia, China, Britain, Germany and France (and others). He was also interviewed by Arab and Western media, and had an op-ed published in the *New York Times*.

►The themes of the return march of this coming Friday (May 31, 2019) will be **"Global Jerusalem Day"** and **"No to the deal of the century."** Behind the themes is **Iran's call** to turn the events of Global Jerusalem Day into a demonstration of rejection of the "deal of the century."

Judea and Samaria

Events on the ground

►In Judea and Samaria Palestinians continued throwing stones and Molotov cocktails at Israeli security forces and civilian targets. Israeli security forces carried out counterterrorism activities throughout Judea and Samaria, detaining Palestinians suspected of terrorist activity and seizing military grade and improvised weapons.

►The more prominent events were the following:

◆**May 28, 2019** – Three Molotov cocktails were thrown at the Israeli community of **Giv'on Hahadasha, south of Ramallah**. No casualties were reported. Molotov cocktails were also thrown at the Gush Etzion Junction. No casualties were reported (Rescue Without Borders in Judea and Samaria, May 28, 2019).

◆**May 27, 2019** – Molotov cocktails were thrown at a forest grove near **Pisgat Ze'ev (north Jerusalem)**, causing a fire (Israel Fire and Rescue Services, Jerusalem district, May 27, 2019).



Fire caused by Molotov cocktails thrown at a forest grove near Pisgat Ze'ev (Palinfo Twitter account, May 27, 2019).

◆**May 27, 2019** – Stones were thrown at the **northern entrance to Jericho**. No casualties were reported (Rescue Without Borders in Judea and Samaria, May 27, 2019)

◆ **May 22, 2019** – The front windshield of an Israeli bus was damaged by stones thrown by Palestinians near the Israeli community of **Emanuel, south of Qalqilya** (Israeli media, May 22, 2019).



Front windshield of a bus damaged by stones thrown south of Qalqilya (Palinfo Twitter account, May 22, 2019).

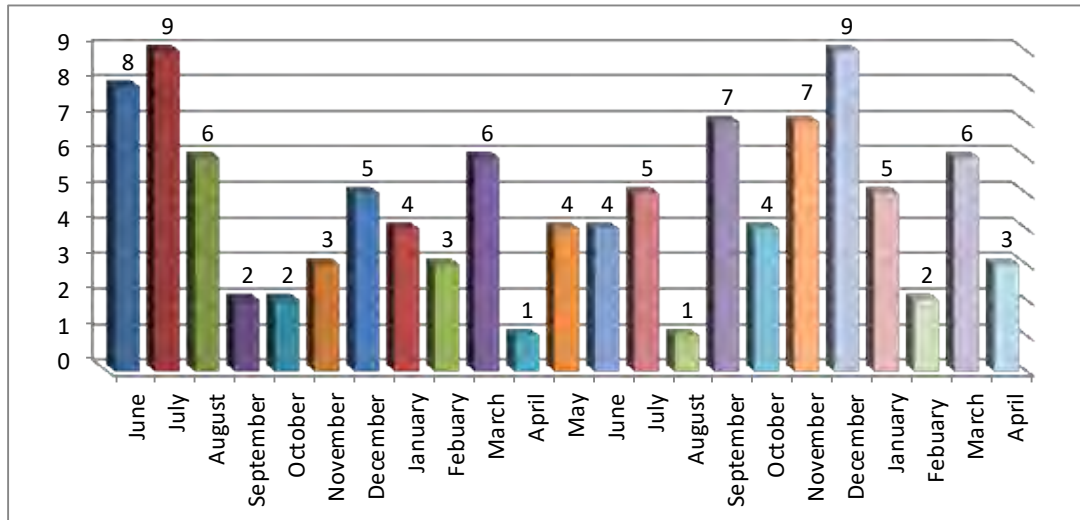
◆ **May 21, 2019** – A Molotov cocktail was thrown at the security fence of the Israeli community of **Psagot, east of Ramallah** (Rescue Without Borders in Judea and Samaria, May 21, 2019).

◆ **May 21, 2019** – A Molotov cocktail was thrown at an IDF force near the village of **Teqoa, southeast of Bethlehem** (Rescue Without Borders in Judea and Samaria, May 21, 2019).

Prevention of ISIS-inspired suicide bombing attack

► The Palestinian preventive security forces reported the detention of **Alaa' al-Bashir**, from the village of Jinsafut in the Qalqilya region. A "Palestinian source" reported that **Bashir, who is affiliated with Salafist organizations, was detained after she was recruited by ISIS to carry out a suicide bombing attack in Israel, using an explosive belt.** According to the source, during **interrogation she confessed to contacting ISIS operatives in Syria and the Gaza Strip using the Telegram phone application.** They used the Internet to send her instruction booklets for making large IEDs. The source also reported **she had expressed willingness to use an explosive belt to carry out a suicide bombing attack** (Ynet, May 26, 2019).

Significant terrorist attacks in Judea and Samaria since June 2017¹



Israel's South

The return march of May 24, 2019

► On May 24, 2019, the 59th return march was held in the Gaza Strip with the theme "Mercy and solidarity." **About 4,000 Palestinians participated**, relatively fewer than in recent months, because of the regional heatwave. The Supreme National Authority of the Great Return March issued an announcement calling on Palestinians to stay in the tents and covered areas of the return camps and to stay out of the sun. They also called on Palestinians not to bring children to the activities because of the heat (Ma'an, May 24, 2019; al-Araby al-Jadeed, May 24, 2019).

Nevertheless, this past week there were **expressions of violence. Rioters approached the border fence and tried to break through it, and threw IEDs at IDF forces.** In addition, **incendiary balloons were launched, setting fires in Israeli settlements near the border** (see below). A spokesman for the Palestinian ministry of health in the Gaza Strip reported that on May 24 medical teams at the first aid stations in the return camps treated 16 Palestinians for injuries caused by tear gas grenades and rubber bullets (Ashraf al-Qidra's Twitter account, May 24, 2019).

¹A significant attack is defined by the ITIC as involving shooting, a vehicular attack, the use of IEDs, or a combination of the above. Stones and Molotov cocktails thrown by Palestinians are not included.



Rioters pull at the barbed wire fence near the border in eastern Rafah (Palestine Post Facebook page, May 24, 2019).

►Senior Hamas figure Isma'il Radwan said the theme of the return march of this coming Friday, May 31, 2019, would be **Global Jerusalem Day** (al-Aqsa TV, May 24, 2019). On the invitation to participate was written "**No to the deal of the century.**" In the background was the call of Iran to turn the events of Global Jerusalem Day on May 31, 2019, into a demonstration of rejection of the American "deal of the century."



Invitation to participate in the return march of May 31, 2019, whose theme will be "Global Jerusalem Day." The Arabic reads, "No to the deal of the century" #To_Jerusalem (Supreme National Authority Facebook page, May 27, 2019).

Statements from senior figures

►Senior Hamas figure Isma'il Radwan said in a speech at the return march that the march sent a clear message to Israel that the return marches would continue "peacefully" until they achieved their objectives, i.e., until the siege of the Gaza Strip was fully lifted, **until the realization of the "right of return" and until the failure of the "deal of the century"** (al-Aqsa TV, May 24, 2019).

►Senior PIJ figure Khaled al-Batash said that return march participants sent the message that the marches would continue until they had achieved their objectives. He added that no one could force worthless solutions on the Palestinians, saying that the only solution is the

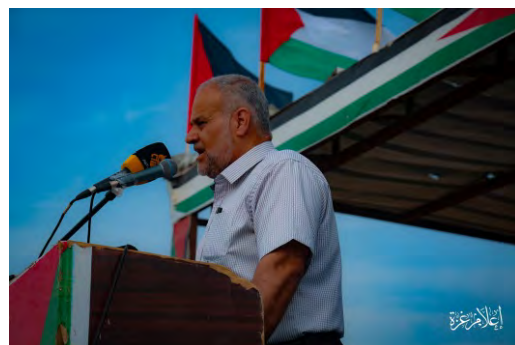
withdrawal of the "occupation" (i.e., Israel) from "Palestine" and the return of the Palestinians to their lands.

► **Khalil al-Haya, a member of Hamas' political bureau**, attending activities in eastern Gaza City, said the Palestinians were determined to continue the return marches and breaking the siege until they achieved their objectives. He also claimed **the Palestinians are united in their boycott of the conference in Bahrain and in their activity against the "deal of the century" and the "plans for destruction [of the Palestinian cause]"** (al-Mushraq News, May 24, 2019).



Senior Hamas figure Khalil al-Haya at an event for solidarity with Palestinians wounded in the return marches. The event was held at the return camp in eastern Gaza City (Supreme National Authority Facebook page, May 24, 2019).

► **Senior PIJ figure Khader Habib** gave a speech in eastern Gaza City where he said that the return marches would continue until they achieved their objectives. He said the "resistance" [i.e., terrorism and violence] in all its forms was the only option that would lead to uprooting the "occupation" (i.e., Israel) from the Arab world and restoring "Palestine" to the Arab-Muslim bosom. He added that the "resistance" would not end unless the occupation was expelled from the land of "Palestine" (Dunia al-Watan, May 24, 2019; Paltoday, May 24, 2019).



Senior PIJ figure Khader Habib (right) and senior Hamas figure Isma'il Radwan (left) give speeches at the return camp in eastern Gaza City (Supreme National Authority Facebook page, May 24, 2019).



**Relatively low Palestinian attendance in eastern Khan Yunis
(Palestinian Post Facebook page, May 24, 2019).**



**A relatively small number of demonstrators en route to the return camp east of the al-Bureij
refugee camp (Palestine Post Facebook page, May 24, 2019).**

Launching incendiary and IED balloons

► Even after the ceasefire reached at the end of the most recent round of escalation, **incendiary and IED balloon arson terrorism continues. The following events occurred during the past week:**

- ◆ **May 27, 2019** – Palestinian terrorist organizations launched incendiary balloons into Israeli coastal territory from the northern Gaza Strip. No damage was reported (Israeli media, May 27, 2019).
- ◆ **May 26, 2019** – An incendiary balloon was launched from the northern Gaza Strip at the Israeli community of Sdot Negev. A fire broke out and was extinguished by firefighters (Israeli media, May 26, 2019).
- ◆ **May 24, 2019** – Three fires were set in Israeli territory near the Gaza Strip by incendiary balloons (Israel Fire and Rescue Services, Southern District, May 24, 2019).
- ◆ **May 24, 2019** – Two terrorist operatives from the balloon unit were wounded when an IED drone exploded after falling near them inside the Gaza Strip (Israeli media, May 24, 2019).

◆ **May 23, 2019** – Incendiary balloons launched from the Gaza Strip landed in Israeli territory near the Gaza Strip and caused five fires. The Israel Fire and Rescue Services extinguished all the fires (Israeli media, May 23, 2019).

◆ **May 23, 2019** – An IED-carrying drone was launched from the northern Gaza Strip, landing near the border fence. No casualties or damage were reported (Israeli media, May 23, 2019).

◆ **May 22, 2019** – Six fires in the western Negev set by incendiary balloons from the Gaza Strip (Israel Fire and Rescue Services, Southern District, May 22, 2019).



Extinguishing fires set by incendiary balloons from the Gaza Strip (Palinfo Twitter account, May 23, 2019).



Right: Fire in the western Negev caused by an incendiary balloon launched from the Gaza Strip (Palinfo Twitter account, May 24, 2019). Left: Fire in Israeli territory near the Gaza Strip border (Facebook page of the Sons of al-Zawari unit in Khan Yunis, May 23, 2019).

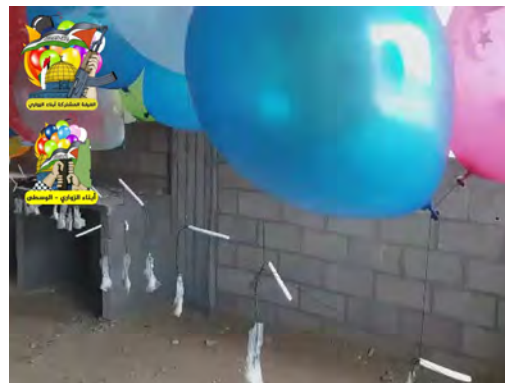
► On May 25, 2019, the Sons of al-Zawari unit in Khan Yunis, which launches incendiary and IED balloons, issued an announcement from the joint operations room of the Sons of al-Zawari unit. It stated that **the campaign they were waging against Israel would continue in every possible way until the implementation of the understandings that had been reached. The central one was the full lifting of the siege of the Gaza Strip.** The announcement called for humanitarian assistance not to be offered to Israel (a reference to

the wave of fires in Israel during the past week) and even offered a veiled condemnation of the PA and Egypt for the aid they had given Israel (Facebook page of the Sons of al-Zawari unit in eastern Khan Yunis, May 25, 2019).

►In addition, the Sons of al-Zawari unit in Khan Yunis posted to its Facebook page the claim that Hamas had updated Egyptian General Intelligence about the return to activity of Night Harassment Units, the incendiary balloon units and the tire burning units, and about the escalation of all the "rough" measures along the security fence. That, they claim, is because of Israel's delay in implementing the understandings of the lull. Two videos were uploaded documenting the preparation of explosives for launching with balloons (Facebook page of the Sons of al-Zawari unit in eastern Khan Yunis, May 25, 2019).



Preparing IEDs for launching
(Facebook page of the Sons of al-Zawari unit in Khan Yunis, May 25, 2019).

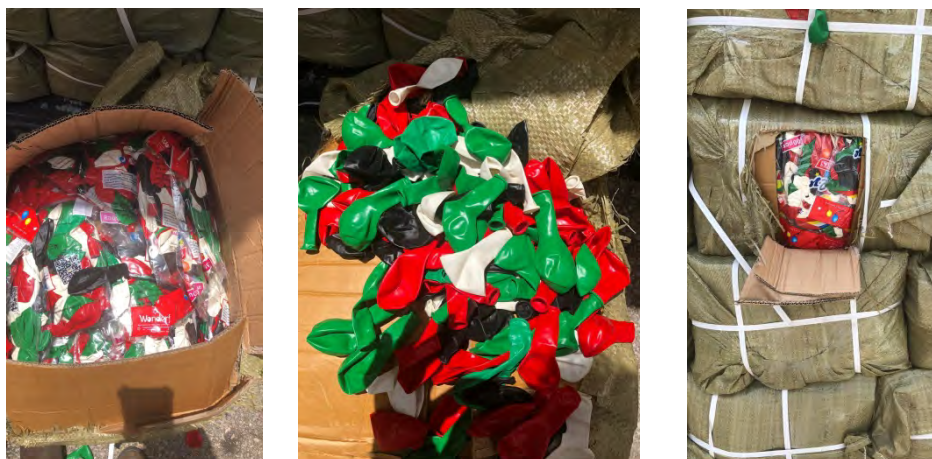


The Sons of al-Zawari unit (in the central Gaza Strip) published pictures of balloons ready for launching into Israeli territory. Written on the balloons is a dedication to the Algerian people
(Facebook page of the Sons of al-Zawari unit in Maghazi, May 26, 2019).

Prevention of smuggling balloons

►On May 19, 2019), the customs authorities at the southern Israeli port of Ashdod prevented hundreds of balloons with the colors of the Palestinian flag from being smuggled directly to a Palestinian in Hebron, after which they would gradually be transferred to the Gaza Strip. In

addition, an Israeli businessman **is suspected of having exploited his Israeli citizenship** to avoid security examinations. The suspect avoided declaring the final destination of the shipment of balloons (website of the Israeli customs authority, May 23, 2019).



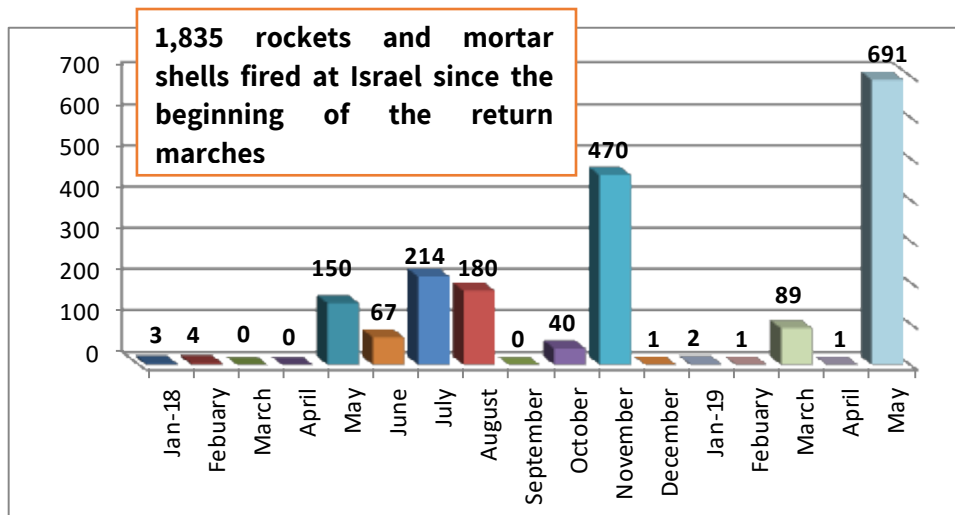
Cartons of balloons with the colors of the Palestinian flag seized by the customs authorities in Ashdod, consigned to Judea, Samaria and the Gaza Strip (website of the Israeli customs authority, May 23 2019).

Rocket Fire

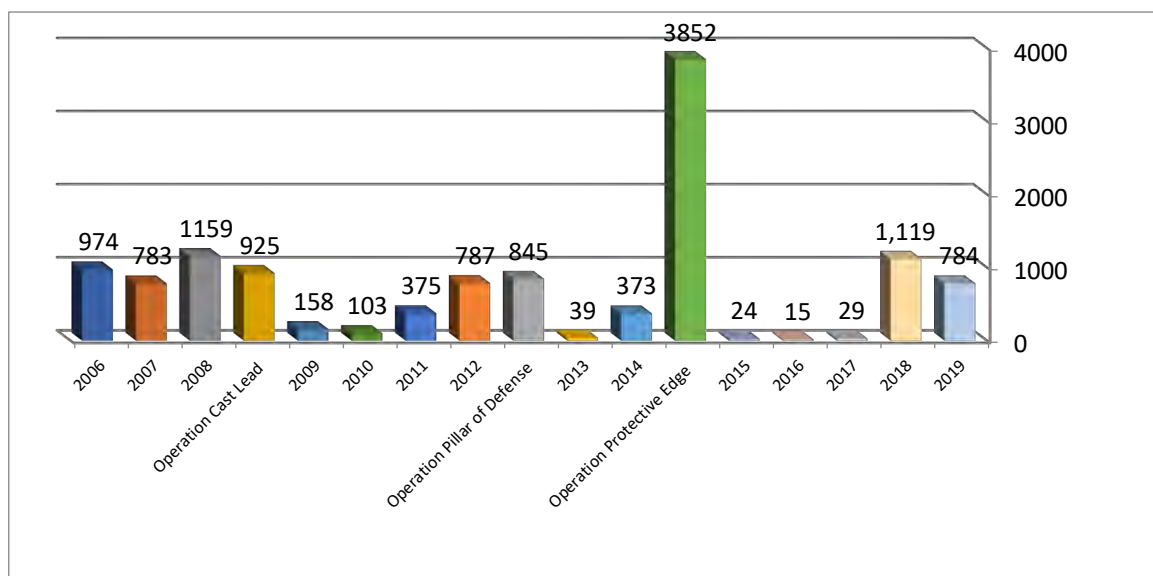
Rocket and mortar shell fire

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

Monthly Distribution of Rocket and Mortar Shell Fire since January 2018



Annual Distribution of Rocket Hits



Developments in the Gaza Strip

Collapse of terrorist organization tunnel in the northern Gaza Strip

► On the night of May 23, 2019, **a terrorist organization tunnel in the northern Gaza Strip partially collapsed**. According to a report, four terrorist operatives were wounded, one of them seriously (Ma'an, May 24, 2019). According to other reports, **the operatives belonged to the Jerusalem Brigades, the military-terrorist wing of the PIJ** (Amad, May 24, 2019; the Gaza Post website, May 24, 2019). The social networks reported that the event occurred in Beit Hanoun (Jabalya Camp Facebook page, May 24, 2019). The PIJ's Paltoday website reported that "two civilians" were injured, one of them seriously, when a tunnel collapsed in the northern Gaza Strip (Paltoday, May 24, 2019).

Hamas bans distribution of al-Hayat al-Jadeeda in the Gaza Strip

► **DhiYa al-Din al-Madhoun, the Hamas attorney general in the Gaza Strip, banned the distribution of the official PA organ al-Hayat al-Jadeeda**. That was because of the claim that the paper published "incitement" encouraging violence and civil war, and calls for attacks on public assets and private property. **The real reason for the ban is probably the prominent coverage al-Hayat al-Jadeeda gave the popular protest against Hamas.**² Al-Hayat al-Jadeeda followed the events of the popular initiative called "We want to live," and

² For further information, see the March 17, 2019, bulletin, "Protest Demonstrations against Hamas in the Gaza Strip because of Economic Distress."

the paper's most prominent headline was the slogan chanted by the demonstrators, "**Get out, Hamas, get out!**" That enraged Hamas, which controls the Gaza Strip by force (al-Hayat al-Jadeeda, May 27, 2019).

►The Palestinian Journalists Syndicate in the PA issued an announcement warning Hamas not to continue its measures against the PA's official media institutions, *al-Hayat al-Jadeeda* and Palestinian TV. Such measures, said the Syndicate, included a takeover of the offices of Palestinian TV's satellite channel and preventing the Palestinian TV crews from working in the field (Wafa, May 27, 2019)



The *al-Hayat al-Jadeeda* article that angered Hamas: "Get out, Hamas, get out!" (Safa, May 27, 2019).

The Palestinian Authority (PA)

PA activity to prevent the economic workshop in Bahrain

On May 27, 2019, Mahmoud Abbas gave a speech in Ramallah where **for the first time he responded publicly to the economic workshop planned for Bahrain**. He said anyone who wanted to resolve the Palestinian issue had to begin with the political aspect and not "by selling illusions of billions [of dollars]," which the Palestinians do not agree to. He added that "our cause is progressing step by step, and if Allah so wills it, we will achieve a Palestinian state with Jerusalem as its capital." "**The 'deal of the century' or the deal of disgrace, should go to hell, if Allah so wills, and the economic program being worked on for next month to [try to] sell us illusions should also go to hell**" (Wafa, May 27, 2019).

►Following the American announcement, senior PA figures held a series of diplomatic meetings with Arab leaders and diplomats around the globe, accompanied by a media campaign. In ITIC assessment, its objective is to clarify the Palestinian rejection of the economic workshop and prevent representatives from the Middle East and around the globe

from participating. Prominent were Mahmoud Abbas' visits to Qatar and Jordan. During his visit to Jordan he held a meeting with the king of Jordan and the president of Iraq.



Mahmoud Abbas meets with the king of Jordan. Next to Mahmoud Abbas are Saeb Erekat, secretary of the PLO's Executive Committee; Hussein al-Sheikh, chairman of the general authority for civilian affairs; and Majed Faraj, head of Palestinian general intelligence (Wafa, May 23, 2019).



Mahmoud Abbas meets with the king of Jordan and the president of Iraq (Wafa, May 23, 2019).

► Saeb Erekat, secretary of the PLO's Executive Committee said that following instructions from Mahmoud Abbas, on May 23 and 24 talks would be held with representatives from **Russia, Egypt, Jordan, the Arab League, the UN, China, Britain, Germany and France**. Behind the talks is the rejection of the proposed economic workshop in Bahrain (Saeb Erekat's Twitter account, May 23, 2019). In the meantime, Saeb Erekat wrote an op-ed for the *New York Times* called "Trump doesn't want Peace. He wants Palestinian surrender." (New York Times, May 22, 2019). He was also interviewed on May 24, 2019, by al-Araby TV, the English-language Saudi Arabia newspaper *Arab News* and the Hezbollah-affiliated al-Mayadeen TV station in Lebanon.



**Saeb Erekat interviewed by al-Mayadeen TV correspondent Nasr al-Laham
(al-Mayadeen TV website, May 25, 2019).**