



**Iran Calls to Turn the Events of “International Quds Day”
on May 31, 2019, into a Show of Defiance Against
President Trump’s “Deal of the Century”
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Executive Summary

- ▶ The “International Quds [Jerusalem] Day,” is held each year since 1979 on the last Friday in the month of Ramadan, following a ruling of the leader of the Islamic Revolution, Ruhollah Khomeini. The event is intended to express the support for the Palestinian cause by Iran and the Muslim world and the “liberation of Palestine,” as well as to besmirch Israel, call of its eradication and defy the United States, the West and their Arab regional allies.
- ▶ The events of “Quds Day” are held annually in several focal points: **in Iran** (where the main events are held), **in Lebanon** (where Hezbollah leads the events), **in additional countries in the Arab and Muslim world, in Western countries** (including the United Kingdom and additional European countries), **and additional countries around the world.** In recent years, the processions included chants against U.S. allies in the region, and particularly Saudi Arabia, alongside the traditional chants and incitement against Israel and the United States.



**On the right: Quds Day rally in Iran in 2017 (ISNA, June 23, 2017);
On the left: Quds Day rally in Iran in 2018 (ISNA, June 8, 2017)**

Iran, which is facing increasing pressured from the United States, **wishes to turn “International Quds Day”, set to take place this Friday, May 31, 2019, to a show of opposition to the peace plan of President Trump, known as the “deal of the century.”**

On the eve of Quds Day, **Ramazan Sharif, the Spokesman of the Iranian Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC)**, declared that the slogan used for Quds Day rallies this year will be **“the defeat of the Deal of the Century and stabilization of the Palestinian Question.”** He lambasted the “deal of the century” and warned that its purpose is to eliminate Palestine. He added that the Palestinians have moved from using rocks to using rockets, emphasizing that the new generation of Palestinians is more committed than its predecessors to the **struggle against Israel.**

► It can be assumed that Iran instructed its proxies across the Middle East to make the opposition to the “deal of the century” the central theme in Quds Day events. In the Arab world, there are **two indications** for this coordination thus far:

- ◆ **Hezbollah:** On May 25, 2019, the Secretary General of Hezbollah, Hassan Nasrallah, gave a speech stating that **Hezbollah will mark the upcoming occasion with an emphasis on opposition to the “deal of the century.”** In the speech, broadcast on al-Manar TV on the occasion of the 19th anniversary of the IDF’s withdrawal from Lebanon, Nasrallah addressed the growing tensions between the United States and Iran and the reinforcement of U.S. forces in the Persian Gulf, claiming that the latest developments in the Gulf are an attempt to harm Iran and that these efforts are connected to the “deal of the century” of the Trump administration. Hezbollah’s leader **praised the unified position of the Palestinians against the economic summit in Bahrain**, and declared that the goal of the “deal of the century” is the elimination of the Palestinian question, and that the realization of the deal may open the door to settling the Palestinian refugees in Lebanon and in other countries. Nasrallah also praised the position of clerics in Bahrain who oppose holding the summit in their country. The central event planned for Quds Day in Lebanon is a **rally in the southern (Shia) district Beirut, in which Hassan Nasrallah is set to give a speech.**
- ◆ **Hamas: Senior Hamas official, Ismail Radwan**, announced that the March of Return protests planned for next Friday (May 31, 2019) will be held under **the banner of International Quds Day** (al-Aqsa TV channel, May 24, 2019). The Supreme National Committee of the Marches of Return issued an invitation to participate in the protests

held on May 31, 2019, **under the slogan of International Quds Day. The poster reads: “No to the deal of the century.”**



The invitation to participate in the “March of Return,” held on May 31, 2019, under the slogan “International Quds Day.” The banner also reads “No to the deal of the century” and the hashtag #toward_Jerusalem (The Facebook page of the Supreme National Committee of the Marches of Return)

The escalation between Iran and the United States and its regional allies, in parallel to the Trump administration efforts to advance the “deal of the century” and the upcoming summit to be held in Bahrain **are providing Iran with another opportunity to express its ideological and material commitment to the Palestinian issue**, emphasizing its leading role in the “Resistance Front,” and to respond to the U.S. strategy of “maximum pressure” applied against it. We assess that **Iran may exploit the occasion of Quds Day to score propaganda points against Israel**, the United States and its regional allies. It is possible that **Iran will try, among other measures, to encourage protests across Western countries and the Arab world.**¹ This will be done to convey an additional deterrent message to Israel, the United States, and Iran’s adversaries in the Persian Gulf, and to **bolster its position as the leader of the Islamic “Resistance Camp.”**

The Iranian Aspect

► This year, the events of Quds Day are held while the U.S. is promoting President Trump’s peace plan and at a time of increasing tensions between Iran and the United States in the Persian Gulf. As part of the efforts of the U.S. administration to promote the peace plan of President Trump for solving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, known as the “deal of the century,” the U.S. and Bahrain recently announced the convening of an “economic

¹ On June 2, 2019, a protest is set to be held marking International Quds Day in London. The protest is being organized by the Islamic Human Rights Commission (IHRC), a body that organized protests in London on the occasion of International Quds Day in recent years. The protest will begin at Marsham Street and end at Downing Street. In our assessment, similar events are set to be held in other Western countries.

workshop” in Manama, the Bahraini capital, on June 25-26, 2019. The workshop, titled “Peace for Prosperity,” is supposed to be the first stage of the peace plan. Ministers of finance and prominent businesspeople from across the Middle East and the world are set to attend the workshop, whose goal is to develop ideas with regards to investments and economic initiatives that would lead to prosperity for the Palestinians and the inhabitants of the region as a whole, which would be achievable after a peace accord. At a later stage, the American administration intends to also publish the political component of the “deal of the century,” which would deal with the core issues of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict that remain unresolved. Saudi Arabia and the UAE have already announced the intention to participate in the workshop. Senior Palestinian Authority officials, Fatah leadership and spokesmen for Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad rushed to express complete opposition to the economic workshop in Bahrain.²

► In recent weeks, in parallel to U.S. efforts to promote the “deal of the century,” tensions have escalated between Iran and the United States in light of tightening U.S. sanctions against Iran, in the form of canceling waivers previously given to a number of countries, which allowed them to continue exporting oil from Iran without being affected by U.S. sanctions; as well as new sanctions on Iran’s steel industry and the listing of the IRGC as a foreign terrorist organization. Following these moves, Iran began executing a more aggressive policy toward the United States and Iran’s regional rivals. American intelligence picked up indications that Iran intends to carry out an attack against American forces in the region through the use of Shi’ite militias in Iraq that are loyal to Iran; an attack on four commercial cargo ships in the Persian Gulf (May 12, 2019), which was carried out, according to U.S. intelligence assessment, on Iran’s behalf; an attack of unarmed aerial vehicles (UAVs) on Saudi oil installations (May 14, 2019), apparently by Houthi rebels in Yemen who enjoy Iranian support; the launch of a Katusha rocket toward the Green Zone housing the U.S. embassy in Baghdad (May 19), which was carried out, according to U.S. intelligence assessment, by one of the Shi’ite Iraqi militias supported by Iran; and an increasingly aggressive posture of the Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) faction in the Gaza Strip – the PIJ is

² See the report by the Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center from May 26, 2019, “Strong Palestinian Authority rejection of the upcoming American economic workshop in Bahrain.” Accessible online: <https://www.terrorism-info.org.il/en/strong-palestinian-authority-rejection-upcoming-american-economic-workshop-bahrain/>

the preferred Iranian proxy in the Palestinian arena, and it recently precipitated the latest round of escalation in the Gaza Strip, the fiercest of its kind since 2014.³

► On the eve of Quds Day, the **Spokesman of the IRGC, Ramazan Sharif**, announced that the slogan of the Quds Day processions this year will be: “International Quds Day: **the defeat of the Deal of the Century and stabilizing the Palestinian Question.**” During a press conference on the occasion of Quds Day, Sharif, who also serves as the chairman of the Intifada and Jerusalem Department of the Coordinating Council of Islamic Propagation, stated that **the Palestinians have moved from using rocks to using rockets** and that the new Palestinian generation is more determined than the generation before it to struggle against Israel, further claiming that this is one of the accomplishments of Quds Day. He argued that due to Palestinian resistance, the Zionists are no longer able to carry out their military activities in Gaza easily, and are forced to retreat.

► Sharif declared that Quds Day is a day of warning of the Islamic Ummah to some Arab countries, and particularly to Saudi Arabia and the UAE, with regards to the “fictional summit” in Bahrain. These countries are forewarned to avoid trampling on the Palestine issue and the rights of the Palestinian people while they play in the court of the Americans and the “Zionist regime.” He added that the “deal of the century” is linked to additional steps of the Trump administration, including the move of the U.S. embassy to Jerusalem and its recognition as Israel’s capital, refusal to accept the return of Palestinian refugees, and talk of establishing an “alternative homeland” to the Palestinians in Jordan and the Sinai desert. The “deal of the century,” according to Sharif, is aimed solely at eliminating Palestine.

► According to Sharif, the unanimous position of the Palestinians against the plan will lead to its demise, and that there are indications that an intifada will erupt in the West Bank, which raises the fears of the Zionists and the supporters of the “deal of the century.” This plan and any other step that does not guarantee the legitimate demands of the Palestinian people, and particularly the return of refugees and holding free elections to determine the fate of the Palestinians, will never be able to solve this big issue that concerns the Muslim world. The Islamic ummah will prove on Quds Day that the Palestinian question is alive and well, and that the “deal of the century,” whose only goal is to completely erase Palestine from the

³ See the publication of the Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center, Spotlight on Iran May 5- 19, 2019. Accessible online: <https://www.terrorism-info.org.il/en/spotlight-iran-may-5-19-2019/>

geography of the region and the Muslim world, will only lead to the failure and humiliation of those crafting the plan and supporting it.

► Sharif warned that making decisions regarding Palestine without paying heed to the Palestinians will lead in the near future for a new massive intifada, and that the West Bank too will turn to the path of resistance. The “deal of the century” will only bolster the determination of the Palestinian to resist and fight the “plots of the enemies of al-Quds” and increase the motivation of citizens of the world to support Palestine (Tasmin, May 28, 2019).



The Spokesman of the IRGC, Ramazan Sharif (IRNA, May 28, 2019)

► A few days prior, Ramazan Sharif assailed President Trump’s “deal of the century”, describing it as an American attempt to force the Palestinians to give up their values. In his speech, which preceded the Friday sermon in Tehran on May 24, Sharif proclaimed that President Trump must know that he can not force the Palestinian people and the Islamic ummah to renege on their support for Palestinian cause through the “deal of the century,” the transfer of the U.S. embassy to Jerusalem and recognizing Israeli sovereignty over the Golan Heights. He argued that the “deal of the century” attempts to eradicate Palestinian aspirations, attempts that have failed over the past 70 years. He added that Iran supported the liberation of Palestine since the first days of the Islamic Revolution and assisted the Palestinians in their struggle to return to their ancestral lands (ISNA, May 24, 2019).

► Ahead of Quds Day, **252 Iranian majlis members published a statement**, expressing their support for the “Palestinian Resistance” and called on Iranian citizens to participate in marches that day. The majlis members emphasized in the statement their opposition to the peace plan of President Trump and declared that the U.S. must know that the “deal of the century,” the move of the embassy to Jerusalem, the recognition of Israeli sovereignty over the Golan and the listing of the IRGC as a terrorist group are failed attempts, which will join

the dozens of previous failed plans by the United States concerning Palestine. The statement added that Saudi Arabia and other countries, including the UAE and Bahrain, need to know that establishing friendly relations with the “Zionist regime” casts “eternal shame” upon them, is clearly contrary to God’s edict and will inflame the hatred of the entire Islamic ummah against them. The “Zionist regime” must know that the countdown to its elimination has begun, and that its fate is destruction. The Resistance Front is stronger today than it has ever been in the past, the members of parliament argued. The majlis members emphasized Iran’s role under the leadership of Ali Khamenei in resisting the “plots” of the United States, the “Zionist regime” and its regional allies, chief among them being Saudi Arabia (Mehr, May 26, 2019).

► **The Speaker of the Majlis, Ali Larijani**, also emphasized in his speech ahead of Quds Day the need to resist the American peace plan. Larijani strongly condemned the countries that intend to participate in the economic summit in Bahrain. He remarked that the American plan, which he labeled “treacherous and evil,” ignores even the handful of Palestinian rights recognized in previous peace plans, and aims to increase Israel’s control of the West Bank, recognize the establishment of a Jewish state in Palestine and erase the rights of the Palestinians, who will be left without a say with regards to the fate of their land. Larijani emphasized that under the current conditions, there is particular importance in participating in Quds Day rallies, since marking the day serves as a “deafening cry” for the rights of the Palestinian people and support for it (Fars, May 26, 2019).