



Solving a series of shooting attacks in the Ramallah area revealed they were carried out by two senior figures in the PA's Commission for Detainees and Ex-Detainees. One was Zakaria Zubeidi, who was deeply involved in terrorism during and after the second intifada.

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Overview

The Israeli security forces recently **revealed the identities of the terrorists who carried out shooting attacks targeting Israeli buses in the Ramallah area. The perpetrators were two Palestinians who held senior positions in the Palestinian Commission for Detainees and Ex-Detainees (officially subordinate to the PLO but in practice a PA institution).** One of the terrorists was **Zakaria Muhammad Abd al-Rahman Zubeidi**, a senior Fatah al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades operative and an iconic figure of the second intifada. He was included in the "wanted Palestinian terrorists amnesty agreement" (2007)¹ but nevertheless returned to terrorist activity. The other was **Tarek Barghouth, a lawyer from east Jerusalem**, a member of the Israeli Bar Association who has represented terrorist operatives in Israeli courts. At the same time he is also employed by the PA Detainees Commission, where he apparently became acquainted with Zakaria Zubeidi. **Both Fatah and the Detainees Commission issued condemnations of Israel for detaining the two.**

¹ **The "wanted Palestinian terrorists amnesty agreement" (July 12, 2007)** was meant to reduce the number of Palestinians involved in terrorism and at the same time to encourage moderate groups in the PA opposed to Hamas. As part of the plan, which did not include all the terrorists in Judea and Samaria, it was decided to freeze the active preventive activities of the Israeli security forces against 170 wanted Fatah operatives in Judea and Samaria. The conditions would be that they committed to abandoning the path of terrorism, surrender their weapons, and comply with a series of limitations that would be imposed on them for a trial period of three months. The agreement was coordinated with the Palestinian security services to enable them to promote its implementation through persuasion and enforcement.



Right: Zakaria Zubeidi at the hearing for the extension of his detention, at an Israeli military court (al-Ra'i, May 28, 2019). Left: A selfie of Zakaria Zubeidi and the lawyer, Tarek Barghouth, who was his partner in carrying out terrorist attacks (Watan TV, February 27, 2019).

► Zakaria Zubeidi and Tarek Barghouth were detained on February 27, 2019. According to information from the Israel Security Agency investigation and the indictment against them:

◆ **A number of shooting attacks targeting Israeli buses on the roads in Judea were carried out by the two:** One attack was carried out on **November 7, 2018**, and a similar one on **January 5, 2019**. A shooting attack was attempted on **December 27, 2018**, and **failed**. Tarek Barghouth confessed to shooting at an Israeli police patrol car near Jerusalem on November 19, 2016.

◆ To carry out the attacks **they used Zakaria Zubeidi's PA-issued car**. During the attacks they replaced the car's license plates with Israeli plates. In preparation for the terrorist attacks they examined the territory they had chosen, **carried out observation of pinpointed targets and collected preliminary information**. After being detained they surrendered an M-16 assault rifle and magazines used in the attacks (Israel Security Agency media unit, May 20, 2019).

► **It should be emphasized that the two repeatedly chose to attack buses.** In addition to disrupting traffic on the roads in Judea and Samaria, **attacks on buses can potentially kill many passengers and are liable to cause the deterioration of the security situation in Judea and Samaria**. However, the Detainees Commission, the PA institution that employed Zakaria Zubeidi and Tarek Barghouth, **not only did not distance itself from the attacks but condemned Israel for detaining the perpetrators**. Fatah's Revolutionary Council and Fatah's bureau of mobilization and organization also issued condemnations.

The Detainees Commission and its response to the arrest of the two terrorists

The Detainees Commission is an institution formally subordinate to the PLO but **in practice operated by PA** (it was made subordinate to the PLO by Mahmoud Abbas **as a way of hiding the fact that it pays salaries to terrorist operatives** in Israeli prisons and to released terrorists. **The salaries are paid from the PA's budget.** The Detainees Commission is on the list of the institutions that receive their budgets from the PA.²

► The Detainees Commission was established in 1998 by Yasser Arafat as a central authority to deal with the issue of Palestinian terrorists in Israeli jails. On May 29, 2014, following accusations that the PA was giving financial support to both imprisoned and released terrorists, Mahmoud Abbas instructed the conversion of the PA ministry of prisoners' affairs into a commission subordinate to the PLO. **Issa Qaraqe**, who was at the time PA minister of prisoners' affairs, took the position of chairman of the Detainees Commission. In August 2018 **Mahmoud Abbas replaced Issa Qaraqe with Qadri Abu Bakr.**



Facebook page of the Commission, with the PLO logo (second from the right) (Commission Facebook page, June 13, 2019).

► Following the detentions of the two terrorists, the Detainees Commission posted to its Facebook page **a condemnation of the detention of Zakaria Zubeidi, a member of Fatah's Revolutionary Council and a senior employee of the Commission with the standing and pay grade of a CEO**; and of Tarek Barghouth, a lawyer who worked for the Commission (Detainees Commission website, February 27, 2019). Qadri Abu Bakr, Commission chairman, added a link to the condemnation on his Facebook page (Qadri Abu Bakr's Facebook page, February 27, 2019).

² For further information, see the March 29, 2018 bulletin, "Terror funding by the Palestinian Authority: Mahmoud Abbas recently approved the budget for 2018, about 7% of which is devoted to assisting prisoners, released terrorists, and families of shahids."



Right: The official condemnation issued by the Detainees Commission (Commission website, February 27, 2019). Left: Chairman Qadri Abu Bakr posted a link to condemnation on his Facebook page (Qadri Abu Bakr's Facebook page, February 27, 2019).



Zakaria Zubeidi (left) with Ali Abu Diyak at the time the Palestinian minister of justice (third from left),; and Qadri Abu Bakr, Commission chairman (fourth from left) (Zakaria Zubeidi's Facebook page, January 13, 2019).

Fatah's responses

► **Fatah's Revolutionary Council** issued a condemnation of the detentions of Zubeidi and Adnan al-Ghaith, the PA-appointed governor of the Jerusalem district. According to the condemnation, the detentions will not break their desire for liberation from the [Israeli] occupation (al-Mayadeen, February 27, 2019).

► **Monir al-Jaghob**, responsible for media relations in Fatah's bureau of mobilization and organization, said Fatah regarded the detentions as an Israeli call to return to a continuous confrontation. He claimed Israel had decided on an escalation and an obvious attack on Fatah. Fatah will not remain silent [in the face of the alleged Israeli decision], he said. (al-Mayadeen, Feb 27, 2019).

Appendices

► Two appendices follow:

- ◆ **Appendix A:** Information about the two terrorist who were detained and the connection between them
- ◆ **Appendix B:** Zakaria Zubeidi's long history of terrorist activity

Appendix A

Information about the two terrorists who were detained and the connection between them

The connection between Zakaria Zubeidi and Tarek Barghouth

► The connection between Zakaria Zubeidi and Tarek Barghouth was apparently formed while both were working for the PA's Detainees Commission. **According to their Facebook pages, until their detention they regularly communicated via Facebook and frequently spent time with one another after work.** For example, on November 30, 2018 (after they had carried out the first attack), Zakaria Zubeidi posted to his Facebook page that he had had "a nice evening in the company of his blood brothers and fellow inmates Tarek Barghouth and Thaeer Anis,³" climbing the hills of Palestine around the Dead Sea (Zakaria Zubeidi's Facebook page, November 30, 2019).



The post from Zakaria Zubeidi's Facebook page (Zakaria Zubeidi's Facebook page November 30, 2018).

³ **Thaeer Anis** is a former prisoner from the village of Eizariya in east Jerusalem. He is **head of the Detainees Commission's service department.**

Zakaria Muhammad Abd al-Rahman Zubeidi

Zakaria Zubeidi was born in 1976, the son of a Fatah member. He lives in the Jenin refugee camp with his wife and three children. On his Facebook page he represents himself as having an MA in modern Arabic studies from Bir Zeit University and a BA in political science from al-Quds University. In the period before he was detained he lived almost all the time in an apartment in Ramallah because of his senior position in the Detainees Commission and because of his studies at Bir Zeit University (Dunia al-Watan, February 27, 2019).

► **Zakaria Zubeidi was an iconic figure of the second intifada** as head of Fatah's terrorist network (Tanzim/al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades) in the Jenin region. Since the summer of 2002, he has planned and carried out deadly terrorist attacks in Judea, Samaria and inside Israel, causing the death and wounding of Israeli civilians and soldiers. **He was involved in planning the shooting attack at the Likud party branch in the northern Israeli city of Beit Shean, which killed six Israeli civilians (November 28, 2002).** Some of his attacks were carried out with the Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) network in Jenin.



Archive picture of Zakaria Zubeidi, who commanded Fatah's military-terrorist wing in Jenin (QudsN Twitter account, November 29, 2016).

► In 2003, he prominently rejected the temporary ceasefire (*hudna*) achieved during the second intifada. That was evident both by his terrorist activities on the ground and a series of interviews with the media where he **called for the continuation of terrorist attacks on Israel**. For example, in an interview with Tzvi Yehezkeili of Israel's Channel 10 TV on the day after Fatah announced its acceptance of the ceasefire, Zubeidi announced that as far as he was concerned, no ceasefire existed. He said he would continue to act against Israel, as Arafat wanted (Israel Channel 10 TV, June 30, 2003).

► At the end of the second intifada (the amnesty agreement, 2007), Zakaria Zubeidi (who was wanted by the Israeli security forces) was included in the amnesty plan, whose conditions were that terrorist operatives committed to stopping violent and illegal activities and left the terrorist organizations they belonged to. Later on, **Zubeidi received a position with the standing and pay grade of a CEO in the PA ministry of prisoners and released prisoners' affairs (which was converted to the Detainees Commission and moved to the authority of the PLO)..** In 2016 **he was elected to Fatah's Revolutionary Council.** Nevertheless, **he never stopped his terrorist activities and support for terrorist attacks against Israel.**

► **In recent years Zubeidi has continued to demonstrate support for terrorist attacks and to glorify and praise those who carry them out.** For example, on October 8, 2018, the day after the shooting attack in the Barkan industrial zone, where two Israeli civilians were killed, Zakaria Zubeidi wrote on his Facebook page that he supported the terrorist who carried out the attack and the residents of his village (Shuweika). He wrote, "[the village of] Shuweika is a fork in the throat of the occupation and a volcano that will erupt against the oppressive [Israeli] entity. Have a good morning of resistance with a different taste" (Zakaria Zubeidi's Facebook page, October 8, 2018).



Zakaria Zubeidi supports the attack and the residents of the village of Shuweika, where the terrorist who carried out the attack in the Barkan industrial zone came from (Zakaria Zubeidi's Facebook page, October 8, 2018).

► On February 16, 2019 (about ten days before he was detained in his apartment in Ramallah), Zakaria Zubeidi posted a video to his Facebook page documenting Fatah celebrations held in Jenin when Atta Abu Rumaila was elected to the position of Fatah secretary in Jenin. In the video Abu Rumaila raises a rifle and shots of celebration are heard in the background. He says **that Fatah continues the armed struggle** and that Israel has to understand that the rifle [he holds] will not be silent. Zakaria Zubeidi appears in the video standing behind Abu Rumaila (Zakaria Zubeidi's Facebook page, February 16, 2019).



Zakaria Zubeidi stands behind Atta Abu Rumaila at the celebration held in Jenin for the election of Abu Rumaila to the position of Fatah secretary in Jenin (Zakaria Zubeidi's Facebook page, February 16, 2019).

► According to Zakaria Zubeidi's Facebook page, **he has close relations with Jamal Hawil, who was a senior Fatah/Tanzim operative during the second intifada. Today is a member of Fatah's Revolutionary Council and the Palestinian Legislative Council.** Hawil was responsible for orchestrating deadly terrorist attacks, for which he was detained by the Israeli security forces on April 11, 2002, and sentenced to seven and a half years in prison. On May 9, 2019, some time after Zubeidi's detention, Hawil posted old pictures of himself and Zubeidi to his Facebook page. **He wrote that he applauds and praises Zakaria Zubeidi for everything he has achieved** (Jamal Hawil's Facebook page, May 9, 2019).



Right: Zakaria Zubeidi and Jamal Hawil, a former senior Fatah Tanzim operative, in Ramallah (Jamal Hawil's Facebook page, May 9, 2019). Left: Zakaria Zubeidi and Jamal Hawil in Marwan Barghouti's office in Ramallah. Hawil posted the picture with wishes for a speedy release for Marwan Barghouti and Zakaria Zubeidi from prison (Jamal Hawil's Facebook page, March 1, 2019).



Jamal Hawil, a Fatah member of the Palestinian Legislative Council, representing Jenin, participates in a riot against Israeli forces at the Beit El roadblock (Jenin al-Hadath Facebook page, May 14, 2017).

Tarek Barghouth

Tarek Barghouth was born in 1975. He is an Israeli Arab lawyer from the village of Eizariya in east Jerusalem. He carries an Israeli ID card. He is a member of the Israeli Bar Association. His office is at 6 Ibn Sina Street in east Jerusalem. As a lawyer he has represented many Palestinian terrorist operatives in Israeli courts. He is also employed as a lawyer for the Detainees Commission.



Right: Tarek Barghouth during a TV interview (Musawa TV on YouTube, December 15, 2015). Left: Basic details about Tarek Barghouth as they appear on the website of the Israeli Bar Association (website of the Israeli Bar Association, June 13, 2019).



Tarek Barghouth's vehicle impounded during a detention carried out by the Israel security forces in Ramallah. It had an Israeli license plate (Arab 48, February 27, 2019; Roya News Facebook page, February 27, 2019).

► The terrorists Barghouth has represented in Israeli courts include **Khalil Yusuf al-Jabarin**, who stabbed an Israeli civilian to death at the Gush Etzion Junction on September 16, 2018; **Ahmed Manasra**, 13, who carried out a stabbing attack in Pisgat Ze'ev; and **Mamduh Amru**, who attempted a stabbing attack on February 24, 2016, which resulted in the death of an IDF reserve officer, accidentally killed by IDF fire.



Tarek Barghouth as the lawyer of teenager Ahmed Manasra, who carried out a stabbing attack (al-Ra'i, December 2, 2015).

► In 2015, at the height of a wave of terrorist attacks in Judea, Samaria and Jerusalem, Tarek Barghouth was detained on suspicion of using his Facebook page to incite violence. In an interview with the Israeli NRG news website, he claimed he opposed murder but refused to directly condemn the attacks. However, he was released after the judge determined that what he wrote on his Facebook page was covered by the right of freedom of expression (NRG, December 17, 2015).



Picture posted by Zakaria Zubeidi to his Facebook page with Ahmed Abu Houli (center), a member of the PLO's Executive Committee, and his friend Tarek Barghouth (Zakaria Zubeidi's Facebook page, January 13, 2019).

Zakaria Zubeidi's long history of terrorist activity

Zakaria Zubeidi was an iconic figure during the second intifada, during which he headed the Fatah terrorist infrastructure (Tanzim/al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades) in the Jenin area.

Since the summer of 2002 he has been involved in planning and carrying out deadly terrorist attacks in Judea, Samaria and inside Israeli territory, causing the deaths and wounding of Israeli civilians and soldiers. He orchestrated **the attack on the Likud party branch in the northern Israeli city of Beit Shean in which six Israeli civilians were killed (November 28, 2002)**. Some of the attacks were carried out in cooperation with the PIJ infrastructure in Jenin.

► According to the indictment, **even after the second intifada Zakaria Zubeidi did not end his involvement in terrorist attacks despite being included in the wanted Palestinian terrorists amnesty agreement.** As part of the agreement terrorist operatives in Judea and Samaria committed to ending all forms of violent and illegal activities and to leave the terrorist organizations they belonged to. According to the indictment, **Zubeidi not only carried out terrorist attacks after 2007 but also supported terrorists who wanted to carry out shooting and suicide bombing attacks by providing them with funds, weapons, guidance and recruitment.**

► **In recent months Zubeidi and his friend Tarek Barghouth carried out a series of shooting attacks targeting Israeli buses.** According to the indictment, Barghouth contacted Zubeidi and asked him to carry out a shooting attack with a weapon he [Zubeidi] owned. He wanted to carry out an attack because he was angry about the strict, inflexible way he claimed the Israeli military judicial system and imprisonment authorities treated "security" prisoners [i.e., terrorists], situations he met during his work as a lawyer.

► According to the indictment against Zakaria Zubeidi (from the indictment, May 2019):

- ◆ **On November 7, 2018, Zubeidi and Barghouth carried out a shooting attack on the road between Givat Asaf and Beit El (north of Ramallah), targeting an Israeli bus.** Two bullets penetrated the front windshield, slightly wounding the driver's arm.



The front windshield of the Israeli bus after the shooting attack near Beit El (Beit El News, November 7, 2018).

◆ **In December 2018 the two carried out a shooting attack targeting a bus at the entrance to the community of Psagot (east Jerusalem).** Apparently they did not hit the bus.

◆ **On January 5, 2019, the two carried out a shooting attack targeting an Israel bus on the road near Beit El.** Two bullets hit the front windshield, and the driver lost control of the vehicle, which struck the security railing at the side of the road. The driver was slightly injured.



The attack on the Israeli bus near Beit El (Filastin al-A'an Twitter account, January 5, 2019).

- ◆ **In February 2019 the two planned to carry out an attack targeting yet another bus near Psagot** but they heard dogs and, afraid they would be discovered, abandoned the plan. **A few days later they decided to attack an Israeli bus in the Beit El region or to attack soldiers standing at a bus stop near the military camp in Beit El.** They were unsuccessful in their attempt to shoot at soldiers and therefore decided to shoot at a bus the following day, but the presence of Israeli security forces deterred them and they abandoned the plan. The same day they were detained.
- ▶ The indictment also related to previous events, including **those before and during the period after the amnesty agreement. During both periods Zakaria Zubeidi was active in intensive terrorist activities.** His activities included planning and carrying out terrorist attacks, enlisting operatives for suicide bombing attacks and selling weapons. A number of events described in the indictment were the following:
 - ◆ **In November 2012, during Operation Pillar of Defense in the Gaza Strip, Zakaria Zubeidi provided weapons for two Palestinians who planned to carry out a shooting attack at an Israeli military camp in Samaria [Salem].** He also provided them with a car with Israeli license plates.
 - ◆ **Zakaria Zubeidi contacted a Fatah/al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades operative in Syria and asked him to send \$3000 for a suicide bombing attack in Israel.** He also met twice with **Palestinians who wanted to carry out suicide bombing attacks.** The detention of one of the Palestinians prevented the attack. As for the other Palestinian, Zakaria Zubeidi gave him instructions for carrying out **a combined attack inside Israel territory near Afula (a stabbing attack followed by a suicide bombing attack).** That attack was also prevented by the detention of the potential suicide bomber. In addition, Zubeidi met with a Palestinian woman who wanted to carry out a terrorist attack, and he asked her to recruit female suicide bombers.
 - ◆ **Zubeidi tried to recruit a former terrorist who was suspected of collaboration with Israel to carry out an attack "to clear his name."** First he suggested **a suicide bombing attack,** but eventually they decided **to plant a bomb in the Talpiot market** in the northern Israeli city of Haifa. The terrorist received a bomb weighing 15 kilos (33 pounds) and planned to take it into Israeli territory through the Qalandia Crossing. For an unclear reason the crossing was closed, so he detonated the bomb at the crossing

by remote control, killing two Palestinians and seriously wounding two Israeli Border Police fighters.

◆The indictment also described a meeting Zubeidi held with two Palestinians **who wanted to buy a weapon from him**. He told them he did not have a weapon for sale at that time, but the event can be considered evidence that he was an address for weapons purchases (Ynet, May 21, 2019).