



## Using youngsters as a tool for violence near the security fence in the Gaza Strip

July 31, 2019

### Overview

The return march in the Gaza Strip on July 26, 2019, was similar in most respects to the previous marches. About 4,500 Palestinians participated, gathering mainly at the five return camps. **As usual, the march was accompanied by violent activities near the border fence carried out by several dozen Palestinians, most of them adolescents and children.** The violent activities included throwing **IEDs, hand grenades and Molotov cocktails** at the IDF. **Several Palestinians tried to sabotage the security fence and some crossed the fence into Israeli territory.** Videos photographed at the return march clearly illustrated the exploitation of **youngsters handled for military missions, endangering their lives.** Harm that may come to them serves **Hamas as a propaganda and lawfare weapon against Israel, which is represented as Israel's killing youngsters in cold blood.**

► The activities of the youngsters near the security fence last Friday was documented by a number of journalists. **Watching the videos (see below) provides a number of insights:**

- ◆ Despite the fact that several thousand Palestinians participate in the return marches (between 4,000 and 6,000 in recent weeks), **the number of Palestinians who confront IDF forces along the front line near the security fence is a few dozen at each friction site** (every Friday there are routinely a number of sites along the border where Palestinians clash with the IDF).
- ◆ **Most of the Palestinians who confront the IDF are obviously adolescents, and some of them are children.** Putting youngsters on the front lines is intended to make it **difficult for the IDF to respond.** Hamas uses it as a propaganda tool to blacken Israel's image in world public opinion. Moreover, **sometimes the adolescents may be sent to the front lines to conceal terrorist activities carried out by military operatives, endangering the youngsters' lives.**
- ◆ The violence against the IDF forces near the security fence is not "**popular and spontaneous**" but rather **organized and is either deliberately initiated or a blind**

**eye is turned to it.** In most instances Hamas operatives are integrated into the activities in the front line, **and the number of them wounded at the return marches is extremely high.**<sup>1</sup> In one video an operative, apparently from Hamas' restraint force (wearing an orange vest) is seen watching the violent events, but he does not try to prevent the youngsters' activity.

- ◆ Members **of civil defense, fire department and medical teams equipped with stretchers** are shown in one of the videos. That is apparently because they are aware in advance that the violence is liable to lead to an IDF response and the harming of demonstrators, while **no attempt is made to prevent the violent activities.**

- ◆ Media outlets and independent journalists systematically document the events. They stand close to the demonstrators and rioters and give them extensive media coverage. **The coverage is clearly biased in Hamas' favor, and generally speaking does not include videos documenting the violence of the use of youngsters to clash with the IDF (for past examples, see the Appendix).**

► **Three videos posted to the Internet are described below:**

### **Video No. 1: Attacking an IDF jeep east of the al-Bureij refugee camp**

The video was posted to the Quds News Facebook page. **It shows hand grenades thrown at an IDF jeep** east of the al-Bureij refugee camp during a return march. It shows **rioters approaching the fence, sabotaging it, and climbing it.** There are two IDF jeeps in the background. **The explosion of a device under on the jeeps is clearly visible** (Quds News Facebook page, July 27, 2019).<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> For further information, see the 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."

<sup>2</sup> The video calls the event "throwing a hand grenade." In ITIC assessment, it was an IED that was used to attack the IDF vehicle. During the July 26, 2019 return march rioters did in fact throw a number of IEDs near the security fence.



**Palestinian youths throw hand grenades at an IDF jeep east of the al-Bureij refugee camp (Quds News Facebook page, July 27, 2019).**

[Click for Video](#)

## **Video No. 2: Sabotaging the security fence and crossing the fence into Israeli territory**

The video was uploaded to the Facebook page of Mazen Qdieh, a Palestinian photographer who comes from Khan Yunis and lives in Gaza City. He records the events of the return marches every Friday. His video shows the events of the return march in eastern Khan Yunis.

**Rioters are seen approaching the security fence, sabotaging it, and climbing it. Some of them penetrated into Israeli territory.** Behind the crowd of demonstrators is an operative who apparently belongs to Hamas' restraint force (wearing an orange vest). He does not intervene in the event, but stands watching it (Facebook page of photographer Mazen Qdieh, July 26, 2019).



**Palestinian youths climb the security fence  
(Facebook page of photographer Mazen Qdieh, July 26, 2019).**



An operative who apparently belongs to Hamas' restraint force watches the events. Next to him is a man with a red backpack, possibly a paramedic (Facebook page of photographer Mazen Qdieh, July 26, 2019).

[Click for Video](#)

### Video No. 3: Climbing up the security fence and entering Israeli territory

Another video uploaded by Mazen Qdieh documents the return march in eastern Khan Yunis. It shows Palestinians climbing the security fence and penetrating into Israeli territory. They return to the Gaza Strip after IDF forces arrive and scatter them. It is clear from the **pictures that most of the Palestinians clashing with the IDF are youngsters**. A short distance away stand civil defense and fire brigades operatives. There are also medical personnel: a woman is carrying a large backpack and behind her a young man is wearing a red and white vest. The picture also shows a man carrying a stretcher (Facebook page of photographer Mazen Qdieh, July 26, 2019).



Palestinian youths climb the security fence and cross the border into Israeli territory (Facebook page of photographer Mazen Qdieh, July 26, 2019).



**Palestinian youths try to cross the fence. Behind them are civil defense and fire brigade operatives (orange and black vests), medical personnel and a woman with a large backpack (Facebook page of photographer Mazen Qdieh, July 26, 2019).**

**Click for Video**

## Appendix

### Previous examples of using youths for violent activity near the security fence

#### The case of Saadi Fahmi Abu Salah

- ▶ On May 14, 2018, at the height of the return march rioting and violence, **a 16-year-old Hamas-affiliated Palestinian named Saadi Fahmi Abu Salah was killed. Despite his young age he was sent by Hamas to the front lines of the rioting, near the fence.** Near the fence a group of youngsters, including Saadi Abu Salah, were engaged in **cutting through the security fence in preparation for breaking into Israeli territory at the risk of their lives** (they were organized into a group called "the tire [burning] and fence cutting unit").
- ▶ Saadi Abu Salah's funeral was attended by operatives of Hamas and its military wing, and his body was wrapped for burial in a Hamas flag. After his death Hamas held a ceremony where a video produced in his memory was shown. Its objective was to commemorate him and glorify his image to turn him into a role model for youngsters.<sup>3</sup>



**Saadi Abu Salah shortly before his death, in the company of a group of youths who are cutting through the border fence in the northern Gaza Strip during riots and attempts to break into Israeli territory on May 14, 2018 (Hamas information committee in Beit Hanoun, May 14, 2019).**

#### A group of youths breaks through the security fence and enters Israeli territory

- ▶ During the August 3, 2018 return march a number of Palestinians **crossed the security fence in the southern Gaza Strip, threw an IED and a Molotov cocktail and returned to the Gaza Strip** (IDF spokesman, August 3, 2018). **The Palestinian media reported that a**

<sup>3</sup> For further information, see the May 14, 2018 bulletin, "Hamas sends boys to their deaths in the 'great return march:' the case of Saadi Abu Salah, 16, who died in an attempt to cut through the security fence on May 14, 2018."

**number of Palestinians had crossed the security fence and entered an [abandoned] IDF post.** Some of them returned to the Gaza Strip with IDF equipment (Dunia al-Watan and Shehab, August 3, 2018).

► On August 3, 2018, the Supreme National Authority of the Great Return March Facebook page posted **a video documenting the activities of a group of about 20 adolescents and children, who broke through the border fence east of Rafah and penetrated into Israeli territory.** The video shows them **cutting the fence. Then three boys enter the [abandoned] IDF post and return through the gap in the fence.** The impression gained from watching the video is that the event was organized. It has a soundtrack of a song performed by a Turkish group singing in Arabic, **calling for the Jews to be beaten and slaughtered because the land they live on belongs to the Palestinians.**<sup>4</sup>



**Right: Cutting through the barbed wire fence in preparation for penetrating Israeli territory.  
Left: Three youths climb up an abandoned IDF post inside Israeli territory.**



**One of the youths who participated in the breakthrough wears a press vest. The video does not indicate he had any media function (he had no equipment to document the event). He apparently used the vest to protect himself.**

<sup>4</sup> For further information, see the August 9, 2018 bulletin, "Video published by the organizers of the 'return marches' shows Gazan youths sent into Israeli territory and entering an abandoned IDF post, knowingly risking their lives."