Overview

This past week a rocket was fired at Israel, falling in the Gaza Strip. In response Israeli Air Force aircraft attacked a Hamas post in the northern Gaza Strip. On Friday, August 30, 2019, the 72nd return march was held. About 6,000 Palestinians participated in the events, gathering at the five return camps. Several dozen rioters approached the security fence. Some tried to sabotage it while others tried to cross into Israeli territory. The rioters threw hand grenades and IEDs at IDF forces. An IDF soldier was slightly wounded. One hand grenade damaged an IDF vehicle. The launching of incendiary balloons into Israeli territory continued, causing a number of fires.

Click for video

On the night of August 27, 2019, there were two explosions in the Gaza Strip near Hamas police roadblocks. The explosions killed three policemen. The ministry of the interior in the Gaza Strip accused Israel and its "collaborators" (Facebook page of the ministry of the interior and national security in the Gaza Strip, August 28, 2019).

The Palestinian Authority (PA) is acting to end the division of Palestinian territory into Areas A, B and C. Majdi al-Saleh, minister of local government, officially instructed district governors and the heads of the branches of his ministry to expand the town construction plans of the Palestinian settlements regardless of the existing divisions.

At 1600 hours on September 1, 2019, anti-tank missiles were fired at an IDF post and vehicle near the community of Avivim on Israel’s northern border. No casualties were reported. In response the IDF returned fire at the source of the attack in the Maroun al-Ras region, firing more than 100 artillery shells. An IDF helicopter attacked the squad firing the missiles. Hezbollah claimed responsibility for the attack, adding that the squad firing the missiles was named for the two Hezbollah operatives killed in the attack on Aqrabeh in Syria.
The return march of August 30, 2019

On August 30, 2019, the 72nd return march was held in the Gaza Strip. Its theme was "Loyalty to the shaheeds" [Palestinians killed during Operation Protective Edge]. More than 6,000 Palestinians participated in the events, gathering in the five return camps. Several dozen rioters approached the security fence, and tried to sabotage it. Other tried to cross into Israeli territory. Rioters threw hand grenades and IEDs at IDF forces. An IDF soldier was slightly injured by shrapnel from a hand grenade or fire cracker. An IDF jeep was damaged (IDF spokesman, August 30, 2019). The Sons of al-Zawari unit in Rafah praised the attack on the IDF jeep, saying that the unit was beginning its plans for the following Friday, which would be “far more serious” (Facebook page of the Sons of al-Zawari unit in Rafah, August 30, 2019).

Right: IED thrown at a military jeep in the eastern part of the al-Bureij refugee camp (Facebook page of photographer Hazem Muzeid, August 30, 2019). Left: Security guards in orange vests in the return camp in eastern Khan Yunis (Facebook page of journalist Azzam al-Abdallah, August 30, 2019).

Rioters climb the security fence east of the al-Bureij refugee camp (pictures from a video on the Facebook page of photographer Hazem Muzeid, August 30, 2019).

The spokesman for the ministry of health in the Gaza Strip reported that 75 Palestinians had been injured. The following day one of the wounded Palestinians died; he had been...
wounded in the region of Khirbat Ikhza’a (eastern Khan Yunis) (Ashraf al-Qidra’s Twitter account, August 30 and 31, 2019). Reportedly, the Palestinian who died was an operative of the tire-burning unit in Khan Yunis (Facebook page of Ali Mustafa Muhammad Farawna from Khan Yunis, August 31, 2019). The Fatah branch in western Khan Yunis issued a mourning notice for him, stating he was a Fatah operative (Facebook page of the branch’s media unit, August 31, 2019).

The Supreme National Authority of the Great Return March announced that on Friday, September 6, 2019, the theme of the return march would be “Defending the home front,” and the activities would stress national unity (al-Aqsa, August 30, 2019).

**Arson terrorism**

During the return march a number of balloons were launched from the Gaza Strip, some of which entered Israeli territory. Incendiary balloons caused two fires in the western Negev (Israeli media, August 30, 2019).

Right: Fire in a community near the Gaza Strip caused by a incendiary balloon. Left: incendiary balloon near the Ofaqim train station (Israeli media, August 30, 2019).
Pictures from a video documenting the launching of balloons with to bags of toxic substances, according to a Sons of al-Zawari claim (Facebook page of the Sons of al-Zawari in eastern Khan Yunis, August 28, 2019).

On August 31, 2019, a fire was caused in the western Negev by an incendiary balloon launched from the Gaza Strip (Israeli media, September 2, 2019).

On August 28, 2019, a rocket was launched from the northern Gaza Strip at Israel. It fell inside the Gaza Strip. In response IDF forces attacked a Hamas post in the northern Gaza Strip (IDF spokesman, August 28, 2019). The Palestinian media reported that Israeli aircraft had attacked a Hamas observation post (Dunia al-Watan Twitter account, August 28, 2019).

Regarding the rocket fire last week, "knowledgeable Palestinian sources" told the London-based daily newspaper al-Sharq al-Awsat that Hamas was convinced Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) operatives were responsible for the rocket fire. According to the sources, Hamas
appealed to the PIJ to stop "violating the lull," which might lead to the cancellation of the understandings. The sources noted that although the PIJ is not satisfied with the understandings or the progress in implementing them, the organization claims it is not responsible for the rocket fire (al-Sharq al-Awsat, August 26, 2019). "Egyptian sources" reported that Egypt had threatened Hamas, warning it would stop its sponsorship of the lull talks with Israel if Hamas did not stop the rocket fire (al-Arabiya Twitter account, August 28, 2019).

**Monthly Distribution of Rocket and Mortar Shell Fire since January 2018**

![Monthly Distribution of Rocket and Mortar Shell Fire since January 2018](image)

**Annual Distribution of Rocket Hits**

![Annual Distribution of Rocket Hits](image)
**Attempted penetration into Israel**

A few hours before the return march, IDF soldiers detained four Palestinians who tried to cross the security fence in the southern Gaza Strip. They were in possession of a hand grenade and a knife, and were taken for interrogation (IDF spokesman, August 30, 2019).

**Fatwa forbidding terrorist activities carried out by individuals from the Gaza Strip**

In light of the increase of individual terrorist activities carried out along the Gaza Strip border, the social networks recently posted a fatwa issued by a body called "the Sharia Conference in the Gaza Strip" forbidding individuals to carry out "jihad actions" on their own without authorization from their commanders and without coordinating with the Palestinian organizations.

According to the fatwa, if an individual belongs to one of the military wings operating on the ground, he is forbidden to carry out an action without authorization from his commanders, for the following reasons:

- His commanders know better than he where and when an action is to be carried out, or not carried out.
- The action is liable to cause a sudden, unplanned escalation.
- The action is liable to cause the cancelling or postponing of urgent military or security actions resulting from an increased alert level.
- The action is liable to expose commanders to danger because of a lack of knowledge about the [individual's] action, which will force them to escape to hiding places that are liable to be exposed.
- The action is liable to encourage "disobedient" extremists to carry out unplanned actions.

The fatwa permits individual jihad actions only in cases where the enemy enters the Gaza Strip and during war. Then everyone is ordered to fight the enemy with every possible means and in every possible way to cause the enemy losses (Facebook page of Abu Islam and Rashad al-Aqdar, August 19, 2019).
Events on the ground

In Judea and Samaria Palestinians continued throwing stones and Molotov cocktails at Israeli security forces and civilian targets (primarily vehicles). Israeli security forces carried out counterterrorism activities throughout Judea and Samaria, detaining Palestinians suspected of terrorist activity, confiscating funds used to finance terrorist activities, and seizing military grade and improvised weapons. The more prominent events were the following:

♦ September 2, 2019 – During an operation in the Qalqilya region IDF forces seized about 10,000 shekels (about $2,800) intended for financing terrorist activities. A handgun was also seized (IDF spokesman, September 2, 2019).

♦ September 2, 2019 – During an IDF security force activity in Bethlehem Palestinians rioted, throwing stones and shooting fireworks at the soldiers. An IDF soldier was wounded and evacuated to a hospital for medical treatment (IDF spokesman, September 2, 2019).

♦ September 1, 2019 – Stones and Molotov cocktails were thrown at a bus on the Gush Etzion-Hebron road near the Halhul Junction. No casualties were reported. The bus was damaged (News Desk, September 1, 2019).
August 30, 2019 – Molotov cocktails were thrown at Israeli vehicles near Azoun (between Nablus and Qalqilya) no casualties or damage were reported (News on the Ground, August 30, 2019).

August 29, 2019 – A pipe bomb was thrown at an IDF post on the Gush Etzion-Hebron road near Bayt Umar. No casualties or damage were reported (United Hatzalah, August 28, 2019).

The pipe bomb thrown at the IDF forces (IDF spokesman, August 29, 2019).

August 28, 2019 – A Palestinian from Jenin, about 20 years of age, went to the entrance of the military courthouse in Salem in Samaria. Arousing the suspicions of Border Police fighters, he was searched and a pipe bomb was found hidden in his clothing. A demolitions expert neutralized the bomb (Israeli media, August 28, 2019).

Significant terrorist attacks in Judea and Samaria since June 2017

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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.
Developments in the Gaza Strip

Delivery of fuel to the Gaza Strip

On September 1, 2019, Israel decided to renew the full delivery of fuel to the Gaza Strip, after it had announced it was limiting the quantity following rocket fire the previous week. After Israel's announcement the Gaza electric company said the third turbine was again operating and an increase in the hours of electricity provided to the residents of the Gaza Strip could be expected (Filastin al-Yawm and Palinfo, September 2, 2018).

Shortly after Israel's announcement to limit the amount of fuel entering the Gaza Strip, Mohammed al-Emadi, the Qatari envoy to the Gaza Strip, announced that Qatar had decided to buy only half of the monthly amount of fuel for the Gaza Strip. The motives behind Qatar’s decision are unclear. The Israeli Coordinator of Government Activities in the Territories said the matter was being investigated (Ynet, September 1, 2019).

Isma'il Haniyeh, head of Hamas' political bureau, denied the reports, saying there had been no change in Qatar's position and that it intended to supply the Gaza Strip's full quantity of fuel. He said the Qatari envoy had made the statement to protest the Israeli decision to reduce the quantity of fuel without first updating Qatar (Dunia al-Watan, September 2, 2019).

Explosions at police roadblocks in Gaza City

On the night of August 27, 2019, there were two explosions in the Gaza Strip near Hamas police posts. According to the ministry of the interior and security in the Gaza Strip, the explosions occurred at two police roadblocks. Three policemen were killed and three were wounded. Two of the policemen killed were also operatives in Hamas' military wing (Filastin al-A'an, August 28, 2019). The ministry of the interior blamed the explosions on Israel and its "collaborators" (Facebook page of the ministry of the interior and national security in the Gaza Strip, August 28, 2019).

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2 Security force operatives who are also operatives in Hamas' military wing are common. For further information, see the September 17, 2018 ITIC bulletin "Further proof of the “dual identity” of operatives in the Gaza Strip security services."
Right: Isma'il Haniyeh at the site of the explosion (Shehab Twitter account, August 29, 2019).

Left: The members of the Palestinian police force who were killed. Left: Major Alaa Ziyad al-Ghrabli; center: Sergeant Wa'el Musa Khalifa; right: Sergeant Salameh Majed al-Nadim (Facebook page of the Palestinian police in the Gaza Strip, August 28, 2019).

Pictures of two of the Hamas operatives killed, as reported by the "combat information" unit of Hamas' military wing. Right: Wa'el Musa Khalifa (Twitter account of Muqawama Press, August 28, 2019). Left: Salameh Majed al-Nadim (two of journalist Hassan Aslih, August 28, 2019).

After the explosions the security forces in the Gaza Strip began searching for those responsible. Nafez Azzam, a member of the PIJ's political bureau, said a joint Hamas, PIJ and security forces' committee had been established to investigate the explosions. Sources in Hamas accused Israel of pointing the finger at the PIJ's military wing to cause the organizations to argue among themselves (Dunia al-Watan, August 28, 2019). Hamas also accused the PA and its security forces (Twitter account of the al-Ra'i news agency, August 28, 2019).

At a memorial service for the policemen who had been killed, Isma'il Haniyeh praised them, saying they had fought against Israel and at the same time guarded the security of the Gaza Strip (a possible reference to their double roles). He said Israel profited most from the explosions at the police roadblocks because it exploited the event in its election campaigns (al-Aqsa, September 2, 2019).
Cartoon accusing Israel of responsibility for the explosions. The accompanying tweet reads, "The zealous effort, the unending action and the alertness and preparedness of the security forces will prevent the plots of Zionist intelligence and its agents from creating anarchy" (Twitter account of the al-Majdi website, affiliated with the Hamas security forces, August 28, 2019).

Hamas delegation visits Egypt

From the details revealed in the media about the talks held by the Hamas delegation in its most recent visit to Egypt, it is clear that the Egyptians demanded that Hamas commit itself to stopping the rocket fire at Israel, threatening that otherwise Egypt would no longer make an effort to mediate:

- "Egyptian sources" reported that during the deliberations with the Hamas delegation, senior Egyptian officials stressed that Hamas had to adhere to the lull with Israel so Egypt could be able to help ease the suffering of the residents of the Gaza Strip. An Egyptian source said that as opposed to previous meetings, in the most recent meeting Egypt's message was clear, and Egypt condemned the escalation and rocket fire. The Hamas delegation asked Egypt to exert pressure on Israel to adhere to the most recent lull agreement (Independence, August 28, 2019).
- According to al-Akhbar in Lebanon, senior Egyptian General Intelligence officials explained to the Hamas delegation that to ensure additional measures for easing the daily life of the residents of the Gaza Strip, Hamas had to take control of the situation. According to "a Hamas source," the representatives of Egyptian General Intelligence suggested that the humanitarian and economic situation in the Gaza Strip would improve in return for a promise of long-term quiet along the border. According to al-Akhbar, the Hamas delegation has not yet responded to the proposal but promised to transmit it to the movement's leadership. Egypt also warned Hamas that Israel's leadership was prepared to carry out a serious military attack if the rocket fire
continued. Hamas made it clear it did not want a confrontation at this time but could not promise quiet along the border if aggression continued (al-Akhbar, August 30, 2019).

During the return march Suheil al-Hindi, a member of Hamas' political bureau, related to reports that Egypt had threatened Hamas regarding the possibility of a new escalation in the Gaza Strip. He said that Egypt was too big to threaten Hamas. He added that Hamas and the other organizations were monitoring Israel's "delaying tactics" in implementing the lull understandings, and the organizations had the means to respond to the "arrogance of the occupation" (Dunia al-Watan, August 30, 2019).

Suheil al-Hindi gives a speech at the return camp in eastern Gaza City (Shehab, August 30, 2019).

Hamas-Iran relations

Isma'il Haniyeh sent a communiqué to Iranian leader Ali Khamenei thanking him for the reception given to the Hamas delegation, for Iran's complete support of the Palestinian "resistance" and Iran's willingness to arm the resistance as long as necessary so it can carry out its duty. Haniyeh said the reception pleased him greatly and would have a strategic influence on the war with Israel ("the Zionist enemy") (al-Alam, September 1, 2019).

The Palestinian Authority (PA)

The PA plans to end the divisions between Areas A, B and C

Following the announcement by the Palestinian prime minister about ending the divisions between Areas A, B and C, Majdi al-Saleh, PA minister of local government, officially instructed district governors and the heads of the branches of his ministry to enlarge the

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3 At the July 22, 2019 government meeting, Palestinian Prime Minister Muhammad Shtayyeh announced the revoking of the divisions of Palestinian territory into Areas A, B and C. He repeated his remarks at the government meeting on August
town construction plans for the Palestinian settlements without considering the existing divisions. He said instructions had been received from the Palestinian government to revoke the divisions and treat the regions as one territory under Palestinian rule (Watan al-Anbaa, August 31, 2019).

Majdi al-Saleh told Watan TV in Ramallah that the Palestinians had the right to construct houses without considering the land as divided into areas. He said that towards the end of the year his ministry would adjust the registration of the buildings that would be constructed (Watan TV Ramallah, August 31, 2019).

Letter written by Majdi al-Saleh with instructions for district governors and heads of the branches of his ministry (Watan TV, Ramallah, August 31, 2019).

The PA continues glorifying Palestinian terrorists

On the 18th anniversary of the death of Abu Ali Mustafa, head of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), Wafa, the Palestinian news agency subordinate to Mahmoud Abbas’ office, issued a video entitled “18 years since the assassination of Commander Abu Ali Mustafa.” It glorifies Abu Ali Mustafa who, until his death in a targeted killing, was responsible for planning and carrying out many terrorist attacks. The video, which was posted to the homepage of the Wafa website, begins with a short recording from a speech given by Abu Ali Mustafa, in which he says “This is your enemy [i.e., Israel], which does not want peace with you, it wants your surrender.” Then milestones in his life are shown, among them the PFLP’s retaliation for Abu Ali Mustafa’s death, which was the assassination of Israeli Minister of Tourism Rehavam Ze’evi (Wafa, August 27, 2019).
A video commemorating Abu Ali Mustafa on the Wafa news agency's website: "18 years since the assassination of Commander Abu Ali Mustafa" (Wafa, August 27, 2019).


The Northern Front

Hezbollah fires anti-tank missiles at an IDF base

At 1600 hours on September 1, 2019 anti-tank missiles were fired at an IDF post and vehicles near Avivim, a community on the Israel-Lebanon border. No casualties were reported. A number of hits were identified. In response the IDF fired more than 100 artillery shells at the sources of the missile fire in the region of Maroun al-Ras. An IDF helicopter attacked the operatives of the squad that launched the anti-tank missiles (IDF spokesman, September 1, 2018). Lebanese army headquarters reported that Israel fired more than 40 artillery shells at Maroun al-Ras, Aitaroun and Yaroun, and that fires broke out in the villages (Lebanese News Agency, September 1, 2019).
Hezbollah claimed responsibility for the anti-tank missiles fired at the post and military vehicles driving in the Avivim region. Hezbollah claimed Israelis were killed and/or wounded. Hezbollah also said that the squad firing the missiles was named for two Hezbollah operatives who had been killed in the Aqrabeh region in Syria (al-Ghad, September 1, 2019).

Pictures from a Hezbollah video of the anti-tank missile fire (al-Manar TV, September 2, 2019).

UNIFIL forces conduct a search along the Lebanon-Israeli border (Zahraa' al-Quds, September 2, 2019).
On September 2, 2019, Hassan Nasrallah gave a speech for the Ashuraa celebration, exaggerating the achievements of the rocket fire into Israeli territory. He claimed that his announcement of Hezbollah's intention to retaliate for the killing of its operatives in Syria had a negative psychological effect on Israel and caused the evacuation of IDF posts along the Lebanese border for a number of days. He also claimed that the operation made it clear that what Israel considered a red line had been crossed because Hezbollah had responded in Israeli territory and not as it had in the past, in the territory of "occupied Lebanon," i.e., the slopes of Mt. Hermon. In the second part of the speech Nasrallah related to the activity of Israeli aircraft in Lebanese airspace, saying that so far they had ignored the activity inconsideration of internal Lebanese considerations. He said that from now on Hezbollah would respond to the activity, but would not rush to respond because it was interested in a "clean" action without Lebanese casualties (al-Manar, September 2, 2019).

The anti-tank missile attack met with support from Hamas, the PIJ and other Palestinian terrorist organizations:

- **Hamas** praised Hezbollah's attack, stressing that it was the right of Hezbollah and all other "resistance" forces to respond to Israel's aggression, to resist Israel and to create a balance of deterrence to restrain it (Hamas website, September 1, 2019).

- **Isma'il Haniyeh**, in a speech at a memorial ceremony given by the ministry of the interior in the Gaza Strip, sent congratulations from the "resistance" [i.e., terrorist organizations] in the Gaza Strip to the "resistance" [Hezbollah] in Lebanon. According to Haniyeh, Hezbollah forced the theory and equation of mutual deterrence [on Israel],

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4 A Shi’ite commemoration of the martyrdom at Karbala of Hussein, a grandson of the Prophet Muhammad. It falls on the 10th of Muharram, the first month of the Islamic lunar calendar.
and cancelled the static situation that had been on the ground since 2006 [the Second Lebanon War]. He added that the events of September 1, without connection to its outcome, would have strategic consequences for the northern front (Ma'an, Palinfo, Shehab Facebook page, September 2, 2018).

![Ismail Haniyeh speaking at the memorial ceremony](Shehab Facebook page, September 2, 2019).

*Hamas spokesman Hazem Qassem* said Hezbollah was the "resistance" the Palestinian people relied on and that the "resistance" in Lebanon, Syria and Iraq had the right to defend itself. He said Hezbollah's response would prevent Israel from violating the "rules of the confrontation" (al-Mayadeen, September 1, 2019).

*The PIJ's military wing* said Hezbollah's "high-quality" response showed that the choice of "resistance" was the best choice for restraining Israel ("the enemy") (al-Mayadeen Twitter account, September 1, 2019).

*Azzam al-Ahmed, a member of the PLO's Executive Committee and Fatah's Central Committee*, said that the events on the Lebanese front damaged the Palestinian cause and shredded the Arab effort, and that one of Israel's goals was to deflect attention away from the Palestinian cause towards Iran, which was a fictitious enemy, existing only in the mutual accusations between Israel and Iran (Radio Voice of Palestine website, September 2, 2019).