



News of Terrorism and the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict (September 11-16, 2019)

Overview

- ▶ This week, the return march was characterized by a **relatively high level of violence**. Many IEDs, grenades and Molotov cocktails were thrown at IDF forces. Palestinians attempted to damage the security fence and even crossed into Israeli territory. The IDF response reportedly resulted in dozens of casualties. The Palestinian media continues its threats of further violence (implementing “harsh measures”), including the resumption of the activity of the Night Harassment Units.
- ▶ During the week, **five rockets were launched at Israel** in two separate incidents. No organization claimed responsibility. On September 10, 2019, two rockets were launched at the cities of Ashdod and Ashkelon and were intercepted by the Iron Dome system. Prime Minister Netanyahu, who was speaking at a political rally in Ashdod at the time, was evacuated. Hamas and the PIJ took advantage of the incident for propaganda purposes. On September 11, 2019, three rockets were launched at the Hof Ashkelon Regional Council. One of the rockets landed in the yard of a house, causing minor damage. In both cases, the IDF responded by attacking Hamas targets.
- ▶ Prime Minister Netanyahu’s statement that if he is elected his administration will apply Israeli sovereignty over the Jordan Valley has led to a wave of condemnations among the Palestinians. The Palestinian Authority spokesmen threatened that if Israel carried out its intention, all agreements between it and Israel would be canceled. In addition, the Palestinian Authority’s Foreign Ministry announced its intention to operate in international forums, including the UN Security Council, to thwart Israel’s intention.

Israel's South

The return march

- ▶ The 72nd return march took place on Friday, September 13, 2019. It was held with the theme, “Let us erase [the] Oslo [Accords] from our history.” **About 5,300 Palestinians participated in the events**, which were mostly focused on the five return camps. Dozens of

Palestinian rioters approached the security fence. **This week, the return march was characterized by a relatively high level of violence. Rioters threw a large number of IEDs, hand grenades and Molotov cocktails at the IDF forces. Several rioters tried to sabotage the fence and even cross into Israeli territory** (Israeli media, September 13, 2019)



Right: Operatives of Hamas’s security forces direct traffic to the return march centers (Facebook page of the Ministry of the Interior in the Gaza Strip, September 13, 2019). **Left: Ushers in orange vests assisting in the evacuation of a wounded Palestinian in eastern Gaza City** (“Malaka Return Camp” Facebook page, September 13, 3019)



Right: Burning tires in confrontations in eastern Jabalia (Facebook page of the Supreme National Authority of the Great Return March, September 13, 2019). **Left: Photo from a video showing Palestinians throwing stones and Molotov cocktails (marked) on an IDF jeep in the eastern part of the Al-Bureij refugee camp** (Facebook page of photographer Hazem Mazid, September 13, 2019)



Violent confrontations with the IDF in the eastern part of the Al-Bureij refugee camp (Facebook page of photographer Mohammad Mohawesh, September 13, 2019)

► Prior to the demonstrations, the Supreme National Authority of the Great Return March called on march participants to take all measures to prevent Israel (“the occupation”) from killing demonstrators, to watch out for Israeli snipers, uphold the instructions of the organizing committees which supervise the camps and cooperate with them (Facebook page of the Supreme National Authority of the Great Return March, September 12, 2019). In spite of the instructions, the marches were quite violent, resulting in dozens of wounded Palestinians. Ashraf al-Qudra, the spokesman for the Ministry of Health in the Gaza Strip, reported that 55 Palestinians had been wounded (Ashraf al-Qudra's Twitter page, September 13, 2019).

► During the marches, **senior Hamas leader Ismail Radwan** warned Israel not to take action against participants of the marches. He also called on the Palestinian Authority to fight against the Oslo Accords (Al-Aqsa; Sawa, September 13, 2019). **Hussam Badran, a member of Hamas’s political bureau outside Gaza**, said that Hamas would not agree to Israel changing the rules of the game. According to Badran, Hamas continues to meet its obligations regarding the understandings while Israel, on its part, acted several times contrary to the understandings and targeted innocent people (Palestinian Online, September 14, 2019).

► Speaking at a press conference held by the Supreme National Authority of the Great Return March, Ismail Radwan pointed out on behalf of the Supreme National Authority that the return marches would continue in spite of all the obstacles and difficulties. He called on the Palestinians to take part in the protests on the next Friday, September 20, 2019, which will be held with the theme, “Friday of the refugee camps in Lebanon” to mark the anniversary of the Sabra and Shatila massacre¹ (Al-Aqsa, September 13, 2019).

¹ Massacre perpetrated by the Christian Lebanese Forces in the Palestinian refugee camps in Beirut (September 16-18, 1982).



Ismail Radwan, senior Hamas figure, reading the closing announcement of the Supreme National Authority in the return camp in eastern Gaza City (Facebook page of the information office of the Al-Ahrar Movement, September 13, 2019)

Flying balloons and the activity of the Night Harassment Units

► According to a source in the Supreme National Authority of the Great Return March, who wished to remain anonymous, **on the ground, there are initiatives of youngsters to resume the use of means of resistance such as the Night Harassment Units, burning tires and other means of protest which were stopped.** The source stressed that **the Supreme National Authority of the Great Return March could not restrain people on the ground and stand up against such initiatives.** He said that Israel was to blame for the expansion of “means of resistance” due to Israel’s not lifting the “siege” and not refraining from firing live ammunition at demonstrators (Sabaq24, September 14, 2019). **Posts on the resumption of the activity of the Night Harassment Units** also appeared on social media in recent days. Internet users who commented on the posts expressed doubt or disbelief regarding them.



Examples of posts on the subject. Right: News on the resumption of the night harassment tomorrow (September 15, 2019) on the eastern border of the Gaza Strip. We are waiting for confirmation. Left: The author of the post is asking: “Guys, is there night harassment today or not?” Users answer that there are none, no night harassment and no incendiary balloons (post on the Facebook group “Revolutionary youngsters in the Gaza Strip, September 14, 2019). In practice, incendiary and IED balloons are still flown, although on a lesser scale than before.

► Salah Abu Zarifa, a member of the political bureau of the Democratic Front and member of the Supreme National Authority of the Great Return March, referred to this issue. He said that the [Supreme] Authority had not received yet a decision to employ the “harsh measures” and that flying balloons and burning tires near the border were “individual initiatives” of the youngsters (sabaq24, September 15, 2019).

► The Bani al-Zawari unit announced that its operatives had managed to manufacture tear gas and that it would be used in the coming days against Israeli communities in the western Negev (Bani al-Zawari Facebook page, September 12, 2019). The Facebook page of the Bani al-Zawari in eastern Khan Yunis featured a photo of the device which the unit operatives intend to use.



Right: Photo from a video showing the tear gas device of the Bani al-Zawari unit. Left: The device (Facebook page of the Bani al-Zawari unit in eastern Khan Yunis, September 11, 2019)

Rocket fire from the Gaza Strip into Israel

► This past week, **five rockets were fired** at Israeli territory **in two separate incidents**. Two rockets were launched at Ashkelon and Ashdod. As in previous incidents, **no organization claimed responsibility for the launch**. Following are the details:

◆ **On September 10, 2019, two rockets were launched from the Gaza Strip at Ashdod and Ashkelon.** They were both intercepted by the Iron Dome system. No damage and no casualties were reported, except for one woman who was treated for shock. **During the rocket fire, Prime Minister Netanyahu was giving a speech in the city of Ashdod.** He was evacuated to a shelter and afterwards came back and continued his speech. The incident was used by Hamas and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) for propaganda purposes. In response to the rocket fire, **Israel Air Force aircraft attacked about 15 Hamas targets**, including a site for manufacturing

weapons, the naval force compound, and an offensive terror tunnel (IDF Spokesperson's Office, September 10, 2019).



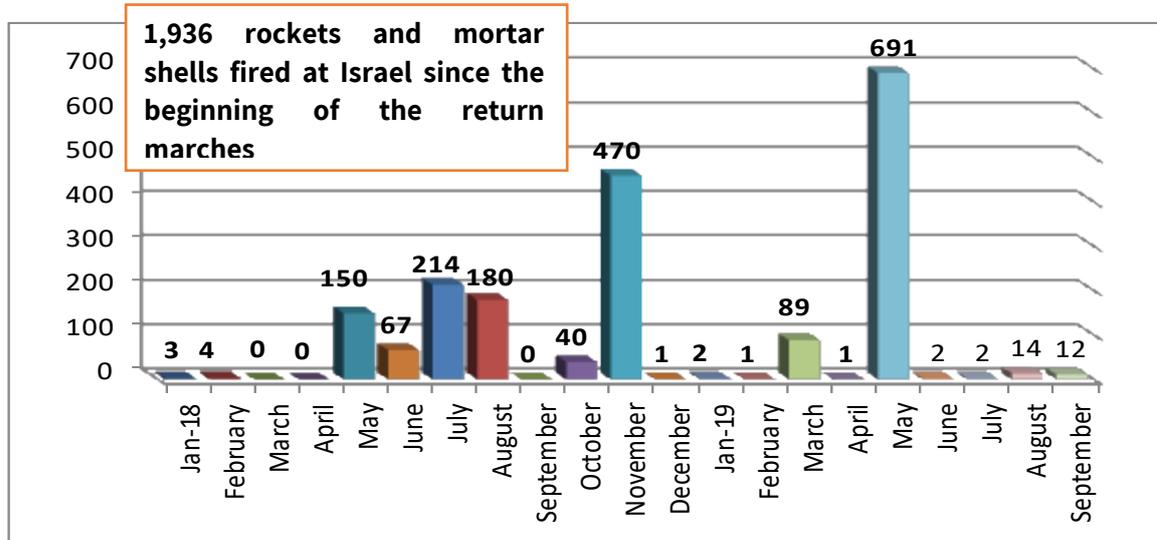
**Attack against Filastin Outpost in the northern Gaza Strip, in response for firing the rockets
(Facebook page of photographer Majdi Fathi, September 11, 2019)**

◆ On **September 11, 2019**, at noon, three rocket launches were identified from the Gaza Strip into the territory of the Hof Ashkelon Regional Council. One of the rockets hit a yard of a house and caused slight damage. In response, an IDF tank attacked two Hamas military positions near the security fence in the northern Gaza Strip (IDF Spokesperson's Office, September 11, 2019). On the night of September 11-12, 2019, in continuation of the response for the rocket fire, IDF aircraft attacked several terror targets at a Hamas military compound in the northern Gaza Strip (IDF Spokesperson's Office, September 12, 2019). Palestinian media outlets reported a UAV attack against the Ashkelon Outpost west of Beit Lahiya (Shehab, September 11, 2019). In addition, it was reported that an outpost of Hamas's restraining force was attacked in northern Beit Lahiya and that artillery had been fired at an observation post in northern Beit Lahiya (Shehab Twitter account, September 11, 2019).

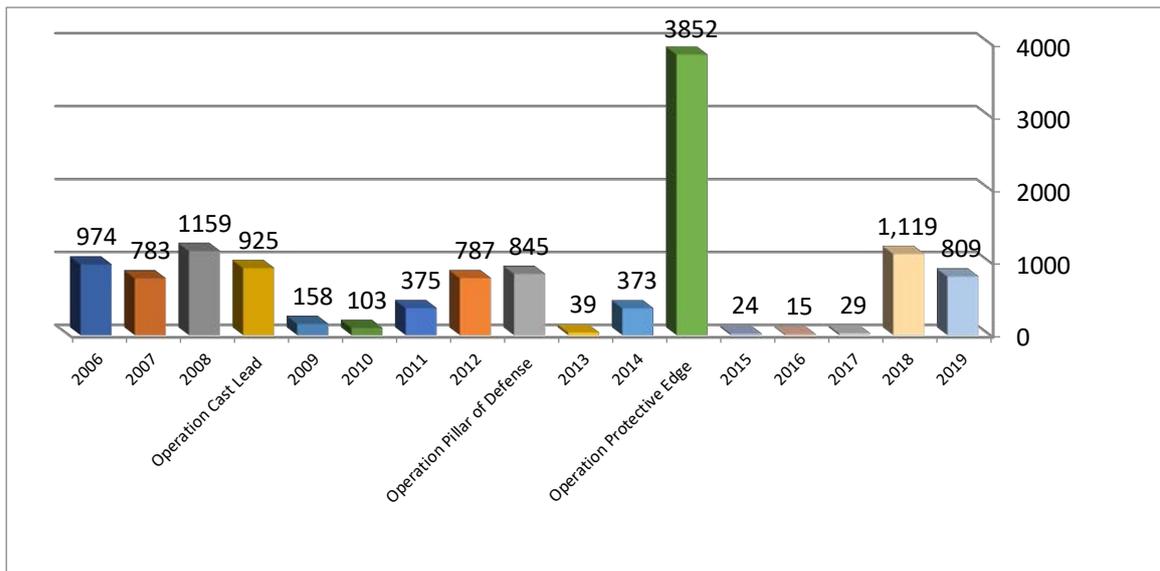


Right: Window of a house which was hit by rocket shrapnel (Hof Ashkelon Regional Council's Spokesperson's Office, September 11, 2019). Left: Rocket which fell in the territory of the Hof Ashkelon Regional Council (PALINFO Twitter account, September 11, 2019)

Monthly Distribution of Rocket and Mortar Shell Fire since January 2018



Annual Distribution of Rocket Hits



Statements in the Gaza Strip regarding the rocket fire

► In an interview, **Mushir al-Masri, spokesman for the Hamas faction in the Legislative Council**, said that “the resistance” is capable of teaching Israel “difficult and painful lessons.” According to him, the rockets launched from the Gaza Strip are causing panic in Israel. He mentioned that the Israeli Prime Minister “escaped from the rockets when he heard alarms.” Al-Masri noted that the “resistance” was holding a military arsenal that would be able to strike Israel in any future confrontation and even force “new equations” on Israel that no negotiation or security coordination could achieve. Regarding the Egyptian delegation, Al-

Masri said that Egypt's job was to compel Israel to carry out the understandings regarding the siege imposed on the Gaza Strip (Dunia Al-Watan, September 11, 2019).

► While the rockets were being fired at Ashdod and Ashkelon, the PIJ in Gaza held a rally in support of hunger-striking security prisoners. A photo of **Baha Abu al-Ata**, a senior operative in the PIJ's military wing, being carried on the shoulders of the mob was posted on social media. The text accompanying the photo says that while Netanyahu "was fleeing to the shelter," young men were carrying the senior operative of the Al-Quds Battalions on their shoulders as an expression of their happiness at the launching of the rockets (Facebook page of journalist Akram Daloul, September 10, 2019).



Baha Abu al-Ata being carried on the shoulders of young men at a rally of the Islamic Jihad in Gaza (Rahiq al-Ward Twitter account, September 10, 2019)

Additional incidents

► On September 14, 2019, the military wing of the PFLP **announced that its forces had shot down an Israeli drone east of Khan Yunis** and that they had managed to collect the wreckage (Shabakat Quds Twitter account, September 14, 2019). The IDF reported that it was not aware of such an incident. **Gaza Strip sources reported that the drone that was downed belongs to the PIJ** (Ynet, September 14, 2019).

► On September 11, 2019, the IDF Spokesperson's Office reported two intrusions into Israeli territory: In the first incident, IDF fighters identified a number of suspects who crossed the security fence in the southern Gaza Strip and returned immediately (IDF Twitter account, September 11, 2019). Subsequently, IDF fighters detained two suspects who had crossed the security fence in the southern Gaza Strip into Israeli territory. Three knives and two wire cutters were found in their possession (IDF Twitter account, September 11, 2019).



The equipment that the Palestinians who crossed the security fence allegedly took with them (journalist Mathna al-Najjar's Facebook page, September 11, 2019)

Judea and Samaria

Incidents on the ground

► In Judea and Samaria, Palestinians continued throwing stones and Molotov cocktails at Israeli security forces and civilian targets (mainly vehicles). 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:

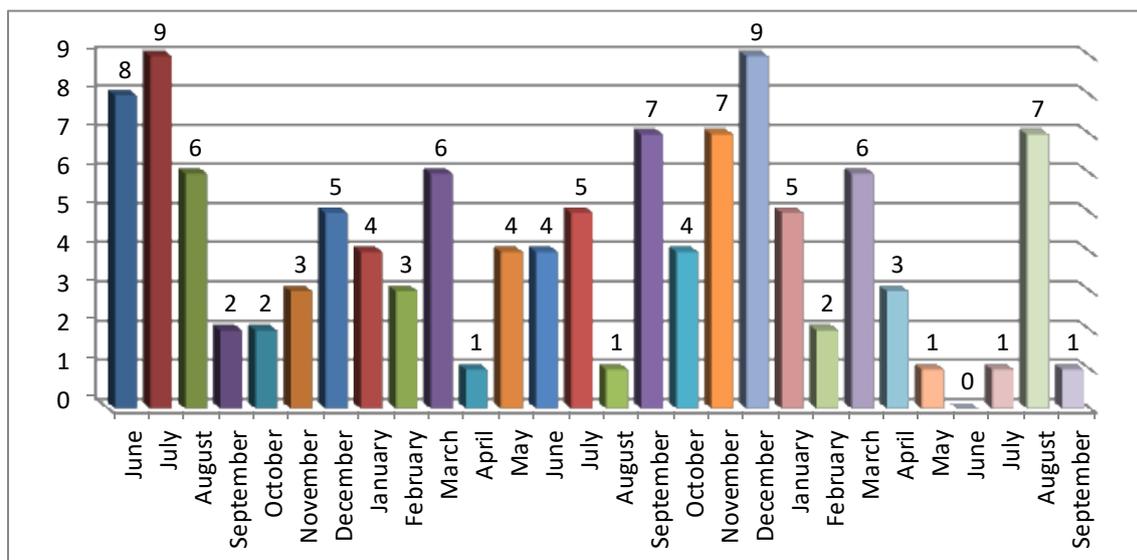
- ◆ **September 15, 2019** – IDF soldiers detained a Palestinian **near Sebastia** (Nablus area). They found **a gun and ammunition** in his vehicle. He was taken for questioning (IDF Spokesperson's Office, September 15, 2019).
- ◆ **September 14, 2019** – A **Molotov cocktail** was thrown at a vehicle **between Ariel and the Gitai Avisar Junction**. No casualties were reported. The IDF detained several suspects (Rescue Without Borders in Judea and Samaria, September 14, 2019).
- ◆ **September 14, 2019** – Border Policemen operating in **the Hebron area** noticed a suspicious vehicle. Two passengers tried to flee. While searching the area, the Israeli forces found a gun which was thrown from the vehicle. When the two suspects were apprehended, the soldiers found tens of thousands of shekels in cash in the vehicle (Israel Police Force Spokesman's Unit, September 14, 2019).
- ◆ **September 13, 2019** – Border Policemen operating in the area of the **Shuafat refugee camp** (East Jerusalem) noticed several suspects throwing **Molotov cocktails** at the security post at the entrance to the refugee camp. In pursuing those who threw the Molotov cocktails, the forces captured one of the suspects (Israel Police Force Spokesman's Unit, September 13, 2019).

- ◆ **September 13, 2019** – Stones were thrown at a vehicle **on the access road leading to Maale Shomron** (near Karnei Shomron). One woman was treated for shock. The vehicle was damaged (Rescue Without Borders in Judea and Samaria, September 14, 2019).
- ◆ **September 13, 2019** – Stones were thrown at a vehicle **on the Jerusalem-Gush Etzion Road**. No casualties were reported. The vehicle was damaged (United Hatzalah, September 13, 2019).
- ◆ **September 12, 2019** – Stones were thrown at a bus **between Hizma and Anatot** (northeast of Jerusalem). A window was broken (Rescue Without Borders in Judea and Samaria, September 12, 2019).
- ◆ **September 12, 2019** – Border Policemen operating at the **Tapuach Junction** stopped a vehicle which aroused their suspicion. When searching the vehicle, they found an M-16 rifle and a magazine. The two passengers, residents of Nablus, were detained (Israel Police Force Spokesman’s Unit, September 12, 2019).



Right: Weapon found by the Israeli security forces in one of the villages in the Hebron area (Twitter account of the IDF Spokesperson’s Office, September 12, 2019). Left: Illegal weapon found by the Israeli security forces in the Jenin area (Twitter account of the IDF Spokesperson’s Office, September 16, 2019)

Significant terrorist attacks in Judea and Samaria since June 2017²



The Gaza Strip

The economic situation in the Gaza Strip

► Speaking at a press conference, **Gaza Mayor Yahya Al-Saraj** said the municipality was in dire financial straits. According to him, the municipality's debts amount to NIS 220-250 million, most of which are owed to employees and the insurance and pension fund. According to Al-Saraj, residents' debts to the municipality amount to NIS 750 million. The number of residents receiving services from the municipality is more than 94,000 people, while only about 11% of them pay taxes (Beit Al-Sahafa Institute website, September 11, 2019; PALSAWA , September 11, 2019).



Gaza Mayor Yahya Al-Saraj at a press conference
(Beit Al-Sahafa Institute website, September 11, 2019)

²A 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.

Hamas’s military wing operative killed in a “work accident” in one of the tunnels

► The Gaza Health Ministry’s spokesman announced the death of 25-year-old **Muhammad Fawzi Ibrahim Al-Najjar** in an accident in Khan Yunis (Twitter account of Dr. Ashraf Al-Qudra, September 12, 2019). Hamas’s military wing published a death notice stating that he was an operative in the military wing and was killed while working in one of the “resistance tunnels” (Muqawama Press Twitter account, September 12, 2019).



Muhammad Fawzi Ibrahim Al-Najjar, the operative who was killed
(Muqawama Press Twitter account, September 12, 2019)

The Palestinian Authority

Responses to the Israeli Prime Minister’s statement on the application of Israeli sovereignty in the Jordan Valley

► On September 10, 2019, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu announced that **if he formed the next government, he would apply Israeli sovereignty in the Jordan Valley and the northern Dead Sea in coordination with the US**. The Prime Minister’s statement led to a series of condemnations among the Palestinians, who presented the statement as part of Netanyahu's election campaign. The Palestinians have announced that they intend to act on the issue in the international arena. Hamas and the PIJ have called for increased terrorism against Israel.

► Following are several comments:

◆ **Mahmoud Abbas** said that all signed agreements and commitments vis-à-vis Israel would end the moment Israel implements its intention to apply sovereignty over the Jordan Valley (Wafa News Agency, September 10, 2019).

◆ **The Palestinian Authority’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs** claimed that Netanyahu’s statements were part of the Israeli election campaign. According to the ministry, action must be taken immediately to expose the “conspiracy” in all international forums and to act on the issue within the framework of the UN Security Council. The ministry called on all countries around the world to condemn the decision (Dunia Al-Watan, September 11, 2019).

◆ On September 16, 2019, the Palestinian Authority held a cabinet meeting in the village of Fasa’il in the Jordan Valley. **The Palestinian Authority’s Prime Minister, Mohammad Shtayyeh**, emphasized that the valley is an integral part of Palestinian geography and that the talk about its annexation is invalid. He further noted that Netanyahu’s comments on annexation of the valley were illegal and that they thanked everyone who condemned this statement. Shtayyeh stressed that if Israel implemented the annexation of the Jordan Valley, this would mean that all the agreements signed with Israel would be canceled (Dunia Al-Watan, September 16, 2019).



**Palestinian Authority cabinet meeting in the village of Fasa’il in the Jordan Valley
(Mohammad Shtayyeh’s Facebook page, September 16, 2019)**

◆ **Saeb Erekat, Secretary General of the PLO Executive Committee**, called on the countries of the world to impose sanctions on Israel and act in accordance with UN resolutions. He also urged the International Court of Justice in The Hague (ICC) to carry out a criminal investigation urgently, saying that it was time to put Israel in its place (Dunia Al-Watan, September 11, 2019).

◆ **Hamas Spokesman Fawzi Barhoum** said that these statements would not stop the Palestinian “resistance” from fighting the occupation and its plans. According to him, Netanyahu was driven by the US government which is a partner in the aggression against the Palestinian people. According to Barhoum, the issue necessitates taking steps on the ground and formulating a unified national strategy that will focus on

choosing the struggle and “resistance” in all its forms. He also called on the PA to stop the security coordination with Israel (Hamas website, September 10, 2019).

Economic disengagement from Israel

► The PA is still preoccupied with the issue of economic disengagement from Israel. Speaking at the inauguration of a new hospital in Ramallah, Mahmoud Abbas stated that within a year, Palestinian residents would not have to receive medical treatment outside the Palestinian Authority (Mahmoud Abbas’s Facebook page, September 14, 2019).



Mahmoud Abbas inaugurating a new hospital in Ramallah (Mahmoud Abbas’s Facebook page, September 14, 2019)

► Speaking at a cabinet meeting held by the PA in the village of Fasa’il in the Jordan Valley, Palestinian Authority’s Prime Minister Mohammad Shtayyeh said that as part of the economic disengagement from Israel, the PA had imposed a boycott of Israeli goods; had stopped sending patients to hospitals in Israel and had stopped importing calves from Israel (Dunia Al-Watan, September 16, 2019).

Prisoners’ strike

► Last week, the protest by Palestinian prisoners in Israeli prisons intensified after 39 Hamas and PIJ prisoners had begun a hunger strike. This is because the Israel Prison Service did not remove the devices blocking cell phone reception in the prisons. Throughout Judea, Samaria and the Gaza Strip, rallies and demonstrations were held in support of the prisoners on hunger strike. Speaking at a rally in support of the strikers, **PIJ official Khader Habib** said that the “resistance” would not remain silent if any striking prisoners were harmed and that Israel would be held accountable (website of the PIJ’s military wing, September 14, 2019).