



News of Terrorism and the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict (November 6 - 9, 2019)

Overview

Before dawn on November 12, 2019, **the IDF carried out a targeted attack killing Bahaa Abu al-Atta, commander of the northern Gaza Strip brigade of the Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ).** At the same time an attack was carried out in the al-Mazzeh neighborhood of Damascus, killing the son of Akram al-Ajouri, a senior PIJ figure. Israel did not claim responsibility for the killing in Damascus but the PIJ linked it to the targeted attack in the Gaza Strip. After the killing of Bahaa Abu al-Atta the PIJ began to fire barrages of rockets at Israel's south and center. During the two days of the round of escalation (November 12 and 13, 2019), **about 560 rockets and mortar shells were fired at Israel.** The IDF responded by attacking PIJ targets.¹

► **American Secretary of State Mike Pompeo** announced that the United States recognized that **the establishment of Israeli civilian settlements in Judea and Samaria "is not per se inconsistent with international law."** He said the resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict would be reached through negotiations between the sides and without a legal dispute. Senior Palestinian Authority (PA) and Fatah figures strongly criticized the statement, stressing that it violated international law and saying that the American administration did not have the authority to decide the legitimacy of the settlements. Saeb Erekat, secretary of the PLO's Executive Committee, said in response that the PA would work against the decision as it had against the declaration of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel.

Palestinian Responses after the Escalation

► After the end of the round of escalation many senior Hamas and PIJ figures related to the cooperation of the various organizations during it. Sources told aljazeera.net that Hamas and

¹ For further information, see the November 17, 2019 bulletin, "The Latest Round of Escalation in the Gaza Strip: What Next? (Initial Assessment)" and the November 18, 2019 bulletin, "Summary of the Most Recent Round of Escalation in the Gaza Strip."

the PIJ are planning to hold meetings of their political and military leadership to evaluate the round of escalation and to settle their disputes. They claim that the leaderships of both organizations never stopped meeting, even during the escalation. In addition, the joint operations room of all the terrorist organizations began strengthening its ability to make military decisions (aljazeera.net, November 17, 2019).

► In summing up the recent round of escalation, **Muhammad al-Hindi, PIJ deputy leader**, said it had not been a "battle" but rather a response "with clear limits" to Israel's killing of Bahaa Abu al-Atta. He said they had no interest in a broad campaign against Israel, but every Israeli [targeted] killing would be met with a response for which Israel would pay a high price. He claimed that the other organizations had not participated in order to keep the escalation from developing into a broad, drawn-out battle. He stressed that the campaign against Israel continues and that currently they are preparing themselves for the next confrontation (al-Aqsa, November 18, 2019).



Muhammad al-Hindi, interviewed by al-Aqsa TV in Istanbul (al-Aqsa TV, November 18, 2019).

► While paying a condolence call at the mourning tent of the al-Sawarka family in Deir al-Balah, Isma'il Haniyeh, head of Hamas' political bureau, said the most recent round of escalation with Israel had come to an end but **the overall campaign had not ended and would not end until Israel retreated from all the Palestinian territories**. He claimed the "resistance" [i.e., the terrorist organizations] had been victorious over Israel and deterred it with 500 rockets fired at southern Israel. He said Hamas' relations with the PIJ had undergone a strategic change and the movement would continue to operate with the PIJ and the other organizations in the joint operations room (Hamas website, November 17, 2019).



Right: Isma'il Haniyeh, center, in the mourning tent of the Abu Milhous (al-Sawarka) family. Behind him is a PIJ-Fatah sign welcoming the people who come to pay condolence calls. Left: Isma'il Haniyeh in the mourning tent erected for Khaled Faraj, one of the PIJ military wing's operatives killed in the recent round of escalation (Hamas website, November 17, 2019).

Israel's South

The return marches

► On Friday, November 15, 2019, the day after the round of escalation ended, the Supreme National Authority of the Great Return March announced it had decided to postpone return march activities until the following week (Araby 21, November 15, 2019). Despite the official cancellation of the march, a number of people gathered at the five return camps. On November 19, 2019, the Supreme National Authority said the march that was supposed to be held on November 22 would not be held, and that on November 29 the march would be held with the theme, "The [UN] Partition Plan [of November 29, 1947]."

The return march of November 8, 2019

► On Friday, November 8, 2019, the return march was held in the Gaza Strip with the theme, "[We are] continuing." **About 5,500 Palestinians participated.** The level of violence was similar to previous weeks. Several dozen rioters approached the security fence and tried to sabotage it. IEDs, hand grenades, Molotov cocktails and stones were thrown at IDF forces. Several rioters tried to climb the security fence. The ministry of health in the Gaza Strip reported 69 wounded (Ashraf al-Qidra's Twitter account, November 8, 2019).



Operatives of Hamas' security services direct Palestinians to the events and help evacuate the wounded (website of the ministry of the interior in the Gaza Strip, November 8, 2019).



Right: Picture from a video documenting a Molotov cocktail catching fire on an IDF crowd-dispersal vehicle in eastern Rafah (Facebook page of Toka Soliman, November 8, 2019). Left: A Molotov cocktail catches fire on an IDF jeep in the eastern part of the al-Bureij refugee camp (Facebook page of Mohammad Mhawish, November 8, 2019).

► The Facebook page of the Supreme National Authority recently posted an appeal to the Palestinians participating in the return marches to fill out a questionnaire for a poll they claimed would be used in a psychological analysis of participants and their motivations to participate in the return marches (Supreme National Authority Facebook page, November 10, 2019). It is possible the poll is being conducted because the march organizers are worried by the decline in public participation of the events. The lack of public response endangers the continuation of the return march project and the poll may be an attempt to find new ways to interest the public in the marches.

الهيئة الوطنية العليا لمسيرة العودة الكبرى

أمس الساعة ١:١٣ م -

الاخوات والايخوة الكرام..
ثوار وثائرات مخيمات العودة الأساجد..
برجاء تعبئة هذا الاستبيان بخصوص مشاركتكم في مسيرات العودة وكسر
الحصار...
#مسيرة_العودة_الكبرى ... عرض المزيد

استبيان عن جماهير مسيرة العودة الكبرى وكسر
الحصار

الهدف من هذا الاستبيان هو التعرف على آراءكم في المسيرات ومخيمات العودة وكسر الحصار
والتعبئة على المشاركة في المسيرات القادمة. يرجى تعبئة الاستبيان في أسرع وقت ممكن.
شكرا لكم على تعاونكم.

هل شاركتم في مسيرة العودة وكسر الحصار؟

نعم

لا

حقا

المنطقة التي شاركتم فيها:

رام

The form the Supreme National Authority wants Palestinians in the Gaza Strip to fill out (Supreme National Authority Facebook page, November 10, 2019).

Report of IED balloon launched into Israeli territory

► A network in the Gaza Strip calling itself Ahfad al-Nasser, affiliated with the Popular Resistance Committees, posted reports on its Facebook page about the launching of incendiary and IED balloons with "suspicious objects" attached into Israel territory near the Gaza Strip between November 1 and November 6, 2019. On November 6, 2019, they reported that they had launched a remote control-guided plane with an IED from a point east of the al-Bureij refugee camp (Ahfad al-Nasser, Facebook page, November 6, 2019).



Right: Launching balloons on November 1, 2019. Left: "Suspicious objects" (Ahfad al-Nasser Facebook page, November 1, 2018).



Preparing the remote control-guided plane and incendiary balloons (Ahfad al-Nasser Facebook page, November 6, 2019).

► In effect, no recent launchings of incendiary balloons from the Gaza Strip were identified. Moreover, the Facebook pages of the "traditional" balloon-launching units (the Sons of al-Zouari) have not reported launchings of incendiary balloons or IED balloons into Israeli territory.

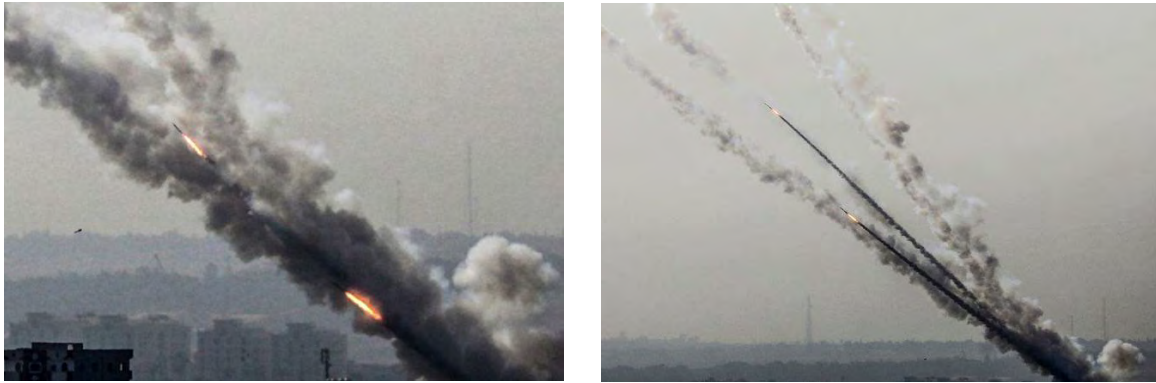
Rocket and Mortar Shell Fire

Rocket barrages during the recent round of escalation

During the recent round of **escalation 562 rockets and mortar shells were fired at Israel from the Gaza Strip**. Most of them were **short-range rockets fired at Israel's south, Sderot and the Israeli communities near the Gaza Strip**. A few were fired at **Netivot, Ashqelon and Ashdod**. At the beginning of the escalation rockets were also fired at the center of Israel. According to the IDF spokesman, **more than 90% of the rockets were intercepted by the Iron Dome aerial defense system**, and about 60% fell in open areas. Sporadic rocket fire continued even after the ceasefire, although with less intensity.

► The **rocket fire on the days of the escalation**:

- ◆ On **November 12, 2019**, immediately after the killing of Bahaa Abu al-Atta PIJ operatives fired barrages of rockets at Israel. Initially the rockets were fired at Israel's south and a short time at **central Israel**. Rockets were fired continuously throughout the day. **Two hundred and fifty rockets were fired**.



Firing rockets at Israel
(Facebook page of journalist Hassan Aslih, November 12, 2019).

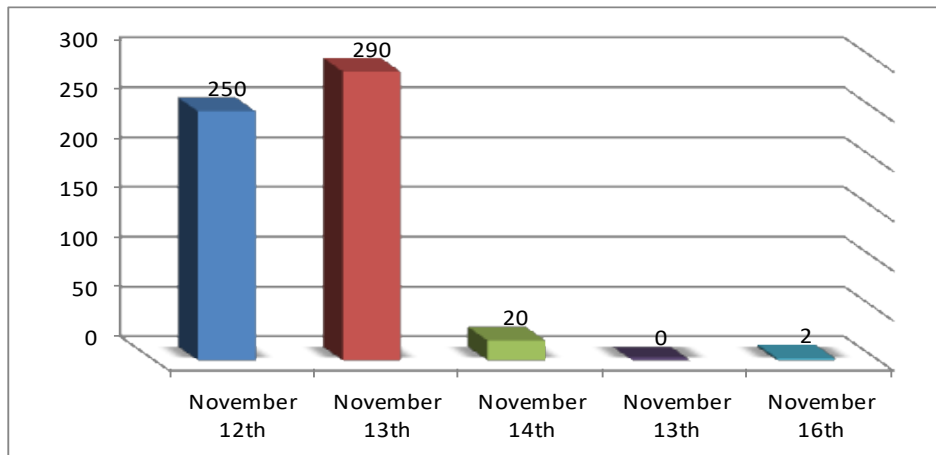
- ◆ **November 13, 2019** was the most intense day of the escalation, and **about 290 rockets were fired**, most of them at **the area near the Gaza Strip**. In the evening the range of the rockets was extended to the areas of **Ashqelon, Ashdod, Rehovot and Yavneh**.
- ◆ On **November 14, 2019**, even after a ceasefire had been reached, **sporadic rocket fire continued**. During the day more than 20 rockets were fired at Israel, most of them at the area near the Gaza Strip.



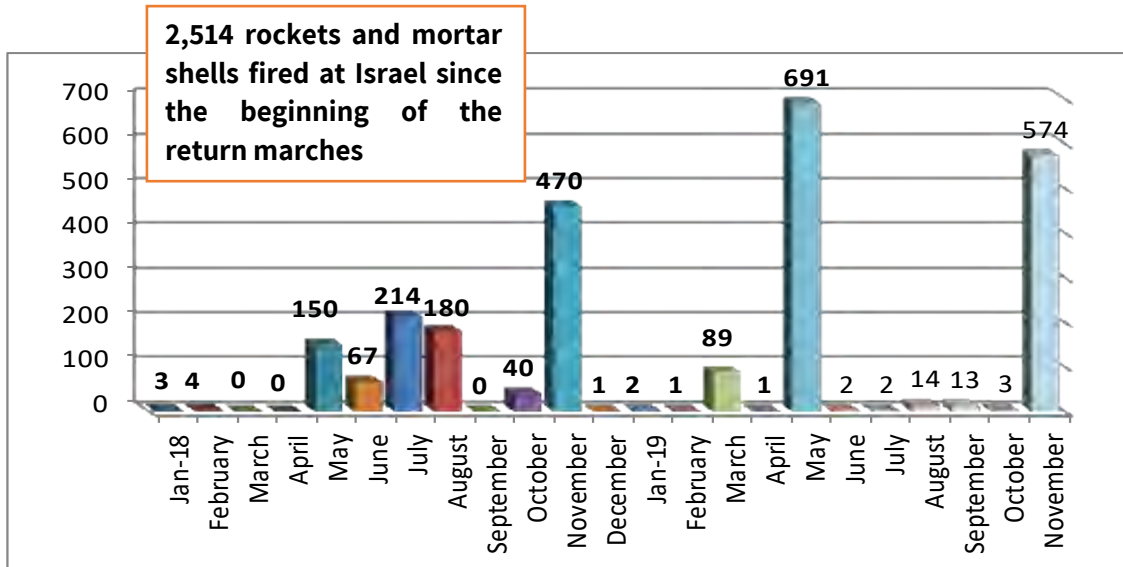
A correspondent for the Jordanian al-Ghad reports from the Gaza Strip about the launching of six rockets at Israel, a few hours after the ceasefire went into effect
(al-Ghad TV on YouTube, November 14, 2019).

- ◆ **On the night of November 16, 2019, two rockets were launched from the Gaza Strip at Beersheba**. The rockets were intercepted by the Iron Dome. Hamas operatives were apparently responsible for the rockets, **having remained on the sidelines during the escalation and did not fire rockets at Israel**.

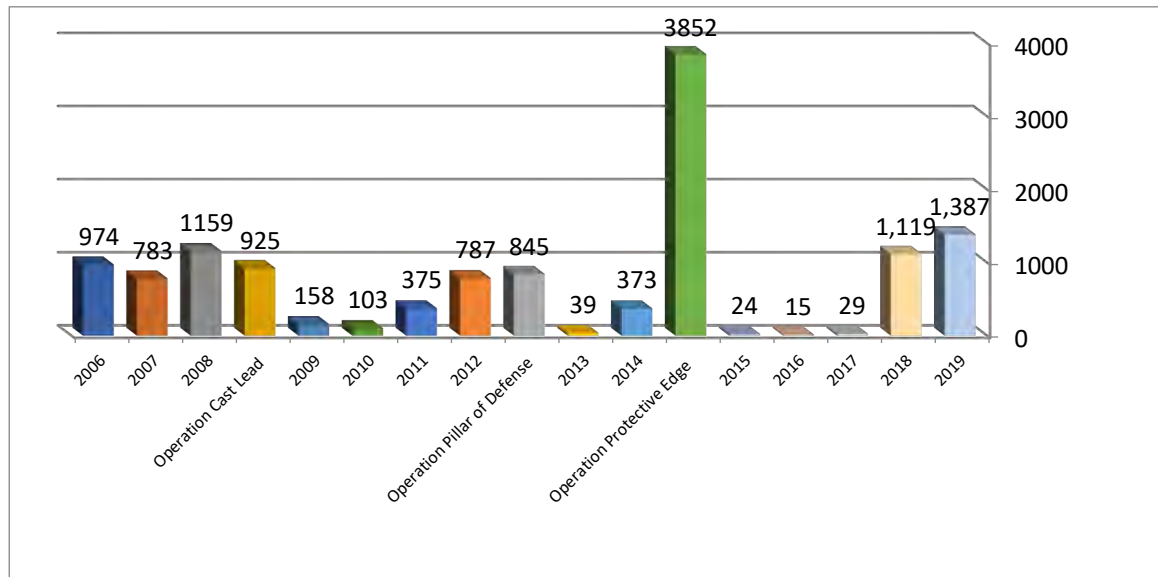
Daily distribution of rocket fire during the escalation



Monthly Distribution of Rocket and Mortar Shell Fire since January 2018



Annual Distribution of Rocket Hits



Other events

- ▶ On **November 7, 2019**, a Palestinian from the Gaza Strip who had received a permit to stay in Israel escaped from the bus taking him back to the Gaza Strip. After three hours of searching and after local residents had been instructed to stay indoors, the Palestinian was apprehended in Israeli territory (Israeli media, November 7, 2019).
- ▶ On **November 9, 2019**, IDF soldiers detained a suspicious Palestinian who crossed the security fence in the southern Gaza Strip. He was taken for interrogation.
- ▶ The Palestinian media claimed that on the morning of **November 9, 2019**, several Palestinians crossed the security fence in the region of Abasan east of Khan Yunis. According to the claim, they destroyed the gate in the fence and took control of IDF equipment, and then fled from the site (Safa, November 9, 2019).

Judea and Samaria

Palestinian killed in riot with Israeli security forces

- ▶ A Palestinian was shot to death in a riot against Israeli security forces near the al-Aroub refugee camp north of Hebron. The riot broke out after the Israeli security forces entered the refugee camp. Several dozen Palestinians threw stones and Molotov cocktails at the security forces, who responded with riot-control measures. When the Israeli forces felt their lives were in danger they fired live ammunition at the Palestinians throwing stones, mortally wounding one. The IDF is investigating the incident (Israeli media).

► The Palestinian media reported that the fatality was Omar Hitham al-Bawadi, from the al-Fawar refugee camp (Dunia al-Watan Twitter account, November 11, 2019). The PA's ministry of foreign affairs condemned the killing and called it a "crime." The ministry called on the UN secretary general to establish an international apparatus to protect the Palestinians (Wafa, November 11, 2019). Hamas praised the Palestinian killed while throwing stones at Israeli security forces and called for a continuation of the "resistance" (Hamas website, November 11, 2019).

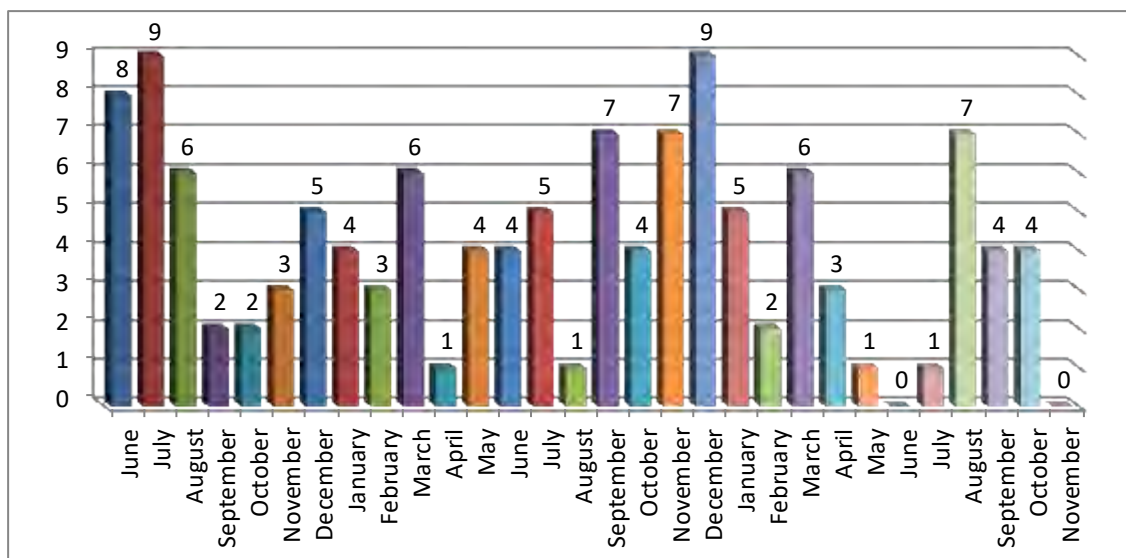
Other events on the ground

► 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, confiscating funds used to finance terrorist activities, and seizing military grade and improvised weapons. The more prominent events were the following:

- ◆ **November 17, 2019** – Stones were thrown at a vehicle on the road **between Ma'aleh Lavona and Sinjil northeast of Ramallah**. No casualties were reported. The vehicle was damaged (Rescue Without Borders in Judea and Samaria, November 17, 2018).
- ◆ **November 16, 2019** – At an ad hoc roadblock erected by Border Police fighters at **the entrance to Hebron** a vehicle with a bullet hole in it was stopped. A search of the vehicle revealed a pipe bomb, ball bearings and masks. The driver was taken for interrogation (Israel Police Force spokesman's unit, November 16, 2019).
- ◆ **November 10, 2019** – Stones were thrown at a vehicle **north of the community of Talmon (northwest of Ramallah)**. No casualties were reported. The vehicle was damaged. Stones were thrown at a vehicle **north of Hizma (near Jerusalem)**. No casualties were reported. The vehicle was damaged (Rescue Without Borders in Judea and Samaria, November 10, 2019).
- ◆ **November 10, 2019** – During the night Israeli police carried out an activity in the **east Jerusalem neighborhood of Issawiya**. Several dozen Palestinians attacked the police, throwing Molotov cocktails and stones. A policeman was hit in the head by a stone (Jerusalem police spokesman, November 10, 2019).
- ◆ **November 7, 2019** – A Molotov cocktail was thrown at an Israeli bus near **Neveh Tzuf (north of Ramallah)**. No casualties were reported. The bus was damaged (Rescue Without Borders in Judea and Samaria, November 7, 2019).

- ◆ **November 7, 2019** – During an Israeli security forces' activity in the **village of Kobar (Ramallah area)** and **Tulkarm** IDF forces seized several thousand shekels apparently meant to finance terrorist activities (IDF spokesman, November 7, 2019).

Significant terrorist attacks in Judea and Samaria since June 2017²



Preventing terrorism in Judea and Samaria

- Nadav Argaman, head of the Israel Security Agency, gave a lecture in which he said that **during the past year the Israel Security Agency had prevented more than 450 "significant" terrorist attacks**. He said the advanced technology used by the Israeli security forces played an important part in preventing the attacks (Yedioth Ahronot, November 8, 2019).

Developments in the Gaza Strip

The humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip

Distribution of aid to Palestinians harmed in the round of escalation

- The deputy minister for public works and housing in the Gaza Strip reported that \$1,000 of emergency aid had been allotted for every family whose house was completely destroyed during the recent round of escalation. The funds will be distributed by the ministry of the *waqf* in coordination with charitable societies. In addition, the ministry of social development will distribute emergency aid (al-Ra'i news agency, established by the Hamas administration, November 17, 2019). **Ihab al-Ghusein, secretary of the association of charitable societies,**

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.

made the announcement. He said that in coordination with the ministry of social development and the ministry of public works and housing the association had mapped all the buildings that had been destroyed, and had gone to every house that had been damaged (Facebook page of Ihab al-Ghussein, November 14, 2019).

Establishment of medical centers in the Gaza Strip

► UNRWA opened a new hospital, constructed with Saudi Arabian funding, in the Deir al-Balah refugee camp (Dunia al-Watan, November 7, 2019). It was reported that a non-governmental American delegation would arrive in the Gaza Strip to build a field hospital near the Erez Crossing in the northern Gaza Strip (al-Andalou News, November 17, 2019).

► **Bassem al Hamdin, head of the engineering and maintenance department in the ministry of health in the Gaza Strip**, said a donation of \$5 million had been transferred for the establishment of a medical center in Rafah. He said the donation was expected to grow in the future to \$7 million (Dunia al-Watan, November 5, 2019).

Possibility of a new commander appointed to replace Bahaa Abu al-Atta

► **So far the PIJ has not officially announced who would replace Bahaa Abu al-Atta** as commander of the northern PIJ brigade. The Israeli media, quoting Palestinian sources in the Gaza Strip, reported that **Taysir al-Jaabari (Abu Mahmoud) will be Bahaa Abu al-Atta's replacement**. According to the sources, al-Jaabari was Bahaa Abu al-Atta's aide (i24News channel, November 17, 2019). In 2012, during Operation Pillar of Defense, a targeted attack failed to kill him. At the time it was reported, according to the IDF spokesman, that Taysir Mahmoud Muhammad al-Jaabari was born in 1972. He lived in the Sajaiya neighborhood in Gaza City, and was a member of the PIJ's supreme military council, responsible for operations in the Gaza Strip. He was also **a source of authority for military activities against Israel** (Israeli Air Force website, November 14, 2012; the Bahraini newspaper al-Wasat, November 18, 2012).



Right: Taysir al-Jaabari (center) sits next to Bahaa Abu al-Atta (right). Left: Taysir al-Jaabari gives a speech at a PIJ and Jerusalem Brigades memorial ceremony for his brother, Yasir Mahmoud al-Jaabari, a senior operative in the Jerusalem Brigades' Gaza brigade, who died of a stroke on January 20, 2014 (Jerusalem Brigades website, February 21, 2014).



Taysir al-Jaabari at a memorial service for his brother, Yasir Mahmoud al-Jaabari, held by the Islamic association, the PIJ's educational framework (Jerusalem Brigades website, February 2, 2014).

Hamas delegation visits Turkey

► The media reported that **a Hamas delegation headed by Khaled Mashaal paid a visit to Turkey and met with Turkish President Erdogan.** The delegation included Musa Abu Marzouq and Maher Saleh, both members of Hamas' political bureau (Araby 21, November 9, 2018). After reports of the meeting were published Hamas issued a denial, stating that its delegation had not met with the Turkish president (Hamas website, November 10, 2019). In the meantime it was reported that Isma'il Haniyeh, head of Hamas' political bureau, had held a telephone conversation with Erdogan. They discussed the issue of the PA elections. Erdogan reportedly expressed his support for the elections (Hamas website, November 10, 2018).

Prevention of infiltration of terrorists into Egypt

► The ministry of the interior in the Gaza Strip recently reported a number of events in which its security forces prevented attempts made by squads [apparently jihadist squads] to infiltrate into Egypt from the Gaza Strip:

◆ On **November 8, 2019**, an infiltration by three armed men was prevented. A firefight broke out between Hamas' security forces and the armed men, who were eventually detained and the weapons impounded. The three were taken for interrogation (Iyad al-Bozom's Twitter account, November 8, 2019). Palestinian sources reported that **it was a group of five ISIS operatives who had infiltrated from Palestinian Rafah into the Sinai Peninsula**. After having been discovered by the Egyptians three of them managed to return to the Gaza Strip, where they encountered the Hamas security forces (al-Akhbar, Lebanon, November 9, 2019).

◆ On **November 13, 2019**, an infiltration of three men from the Gaza Strip into Egypt was prevented. One was caught by the Hamas security forces and pursuit of the other two was initiated (website of the ministry of the interior in the Gaza Strip, November 14, 2019).



Right: National security force operatives in the Gaza Strip deployed along the Gaza Strip-Egyptian border after an infiltration attempt (Twitter account of the national security forces in the Gaza Strip, November 11, 2019). Left: The commander of the national security forces in the Gaza Strip pays a visit to the posts along the Gaza Strip border after the infiltration was prevented on November 13 (Twitter account of the national security forces in the Gaza Strip, November 14, 2019).

► According to Kifah Zaboun, a correspondent for *al-Sharq al-Awsat*, following increasing attempts made by extremist operatives to infiltrate into Egypt from the Gaza Strip, Hamas is working to strengthen its hold over the Gaza Strip-Egyptian border. To that end Hamas operatives patrol the border and use the security cameras deployed in the area (al-Sharq al-Awsat, November 18, 2019).

The Palestinian Authority (PA)

The PA in the international arena

Renewal of UNRWA's mandate

► The UN General Assembly's Fourth Committee voted to renew UNRWA's mandate until 2023. One hundred and seventy member states voted in favor, two (Israel and the United States) voted against and there were seven abstentions. Riyad al-Maliki, PA foreign minister, thanked the Jordanian foreign minister for his efforts to renew the mandate and the Arab countries for their financial support of the agency. He said the issue will be brought before the UN General Assembly for a vote (Palestinian TV, November 19, 2019).



**The monitor showing the results of the vote
(Twitter account of Ayman Safadi, Jordanian foreign minister, November 15, 2019).**

► The PA and Hamas expressed satisfaction with the vote and represented it as an expression of additional international support for the Palestinian cause:

- ◆ **PA chairman Mahmoud Abbas** praised the vote, saying it was proof of the position of the international community, which supports the Palestinian refugees and wants to help them (Wafa, not 15, 2019).
- ◆ **PA Prime Minister Muhammad Shtayyeh** said the vote, which was overwhelmingly in favor, reflected international solidarity with the Palestinian people (Wafa, November 16, 2019).
- ◆ **PA Foreign minister Riyad al-Maliki** welcomed the vote and noted the importance of preserving UNRWA's activity (Wafa, November 16, 2019).

Marking products manufactured in the "settlements" (the Israeli communities in Judea and Samaria)

On November 12, 2019, the European Court of Justice determined **that a label had to be put on relevant foodstuffs marking them as manufactured in the Israeli settlements**, including products sold in EU countries. The Court also determined that a "made in Israel" label could not be applied because the settlements were in "occupied" territory and not in a sovereign entity (The Independent, November 12, 2019).

► Senior PA figures praised the Court's decision. PA Foreign Minister Riyad al-Maliki stressed the historic importance of the EU decision, saying that now a comprehensive strategy could be devised to exploit the decision. He said his ministry had already begun working on the subject in cooperation with international jurists. He said that in the future there was nothing preventing them from turning the decision into leverage for boycotting products made in the settlements or forbidding cooperation with the settlements (Palestinian TV, November 19, 2019). **Saeb Erekat, secretary of the PLO's Executive Committee**, called on the European countries to implement everything implied by the decision. He stressed that it should remind the international community that Israel had to be tried for violating international law (Wafa, November 12, 2019).

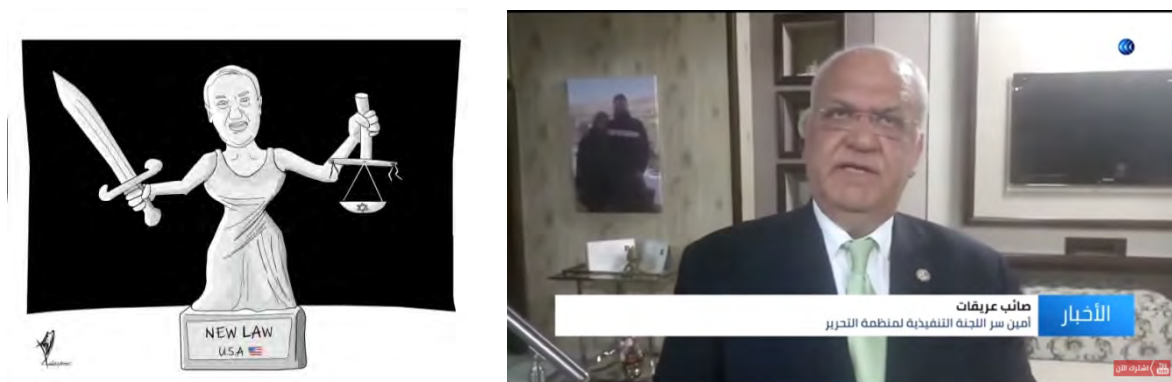
American declaration regarding the "settlements"

A number of days after the decision handed down by the European Court of Justice regarding products made in the settlements, American Secretary of State Mike Pompeo gave a briefing where he said that the United States recognized the fact that **the settlements in Judea and Samaria were not "per se inconsistent with international law."** He said that until now United States policy regarding the settlements had been inconsistent, and that even the Reagan administration had had a position similar to that of the current administration. Pompeo said that the American decision was meant to take a position regarding **the desirable solution for the conflict, which would be achieved through negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians and not through a legal dispute. The declaration marks a change in American policy which was formulated by the State Department about four decades ago.**

► The Palestinians criticized Pompeo's declaration, claiming it violated international law and was a continuation of previous administration decisions against the Palestinians

◆ **Nabil Abu Rudeineh, spokesman for Mahmoud Abbas**, wrote an open letter of condemnation in which he claimed the declaration was false, obscene and unacceptable. He said the American administration was not qualified to revoke international decisions and did not have the right to decide the legitimacy of the settlements (Wafa, November 19, 2019).

◆ **Saeb Erekat, secretary of the PLO's Executive Committee**, condemned the American administration, saying it was a danger to international security and stability. He said the American administration harmed international law and Pompeo's declaration was not only exceptional to international law but also the implementation of the "deal of the century" and of the recognition of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel. He said the PA would act against the American decision as it had against the recognition of Jerusalem as Israel's capital (al-Jazeera, November 18, 2019).



Right: Saeb Erekat, secretary of the PLO's Executive Committee, condemns the American decision (al-Ghad YouTube channel, November 19, 2019). Left: A cartoon in response to the decision of the American secretary of state's declaration regarding the settlements (Isma'il al-Bazam's Facebook page, November 19, 2019).