



News of Terrorism and the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict

(May 13-19, 2020)

Overview

- ▶ While the Gaza Strip is relatively quiet, **in Judea and Samaria there has recently been a rise in the number of popular terrorism attacks and attempted attacks.**
- ▶ The most notable event was the **vehicular attack in southern Mt. Hebron, where an IDF soldier was seriously injured.** This past week a stabbing attack and an attempt to throw IEDs at IDF forces were prevented. In the meantime, Palestinians continue throwing Molotov cocktails and stones at Israeli vehicles on the roads in Judea and Samaria.
- ▶ The 72nd Nakba Day events in Judea and Samaria were overshadowed by the COVID-19 crisis. There were local demonstrations but with poor attendance. Most of the events took place in the social media, with relatively little activity. During Nakba Day events there were prominent references to the [so-called] "right of return" of the Palestinian refugees and calls for violence and terrorism ("resistance" and "armed resistance").
- ▶ Mahmoud Abbas and other senior Palestinian figures repeatedly threatened that **the Palestinian Authority (PA) would exit all its agreements with Israel if Israel announced the annexation of parts of the "occupied territories."** Palestinian spokesmen were encouraged by remarks made by Abdallah, king of Jordan, and strongly condemned criticism from Mike Pompeo, the American secretary of state, of the International Criminal Court (ICC). **PA Prime Minister Muhammad Shtayyeh warned of a "burning hot summer"** for the Palestinian cause due to Israel's annexation plans.
- ▶ **Ziyad al-Nakhalah**, leader of the Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ), was interviewed for Iranian-initiated Jerusalem Day. He called for **a new reality to be enforced on Israel through "resistance" [terrorism], and praised Iran for the aid it gave the Palestinian "resistance" [i.e., terrorist organizations].**

The Fight Against COVID-19

Judea and Samaria¹

► **The fight against COVID-19 in Judea and Samaria** (Facebook page of the PA ministry of health, May 18, 2020):

- ◆ The total number of COVID-19 cases in Judea and Samaria has **risen to 368**, after **13 cases were detected in Bayt Ula in the Hebron district. There are now 45 active cases** (88 last week).
- ◆ Two PA districts currently have active cases: **the Hebron district (37 cases) and the towns and villages surrounding Jerusalem (eight cases)**. The other districts are coronavirus-free. In the meantime, the number of active cases in the east Jerusalem neighborhoods has declined to 59 (104 last week).
- ◆ The Palestinian government is considering relaxing the preventive measures and **gradually returning life to normal**. However, it announced that during Eid al-Fitr (which ends Ramadan and begins on the evening of May 23, 2020) **preventive measures will be implemented more strictly and a lockdown will be imposed**.
- ◆ On May 22, 2020, **33,000 Palestinian workers are expected to return to Judea and Samaria for Eid al-Fitr**. The PA's program for receiving them includes deploying medical teams along the security fence and conducting medical exams (Sawa, May 18, 2020).

The Gaza Strip²

► **The situation in the Gaza Strip**, according to a spokesman for the ministry of health in Gaza (al-Aqsa, Shehab, Filastin al-Yawm, May 18, 2020):

- ◆ **Of the remaining 20 COVID-19 cases, only four are still being treated in hospitals.** They are in stable condition. There are 1,562 people in quarantine centers.
- ◆ **So far 488 people who returned to Gaza through the Rafah Crossing have been tested.** Since the beginning of the spread of the virus the ministry of health has conducted 7,492 tests. The Gaza Strip is ready to receive 74 residents returning from Jordan who are expected to enter the Strip through the Erez Crossing.

¹ For further information see the May 18, 2020, bulletin, "The Fight Against COVID-19 in the Palestinian Authority"

² For further information see the May 17, 2020 bulletin, "The Fight Against COVID-19 in the Gaza Strip."

- ◆ Despite the encouraging statistics, senior public health figures are still worried about an outbreak of the disease **inside the Gaza Strip**. For that **reason most of the preventive measures are still in force, and will only be relaxed gradually**.

The reopening of the mosques

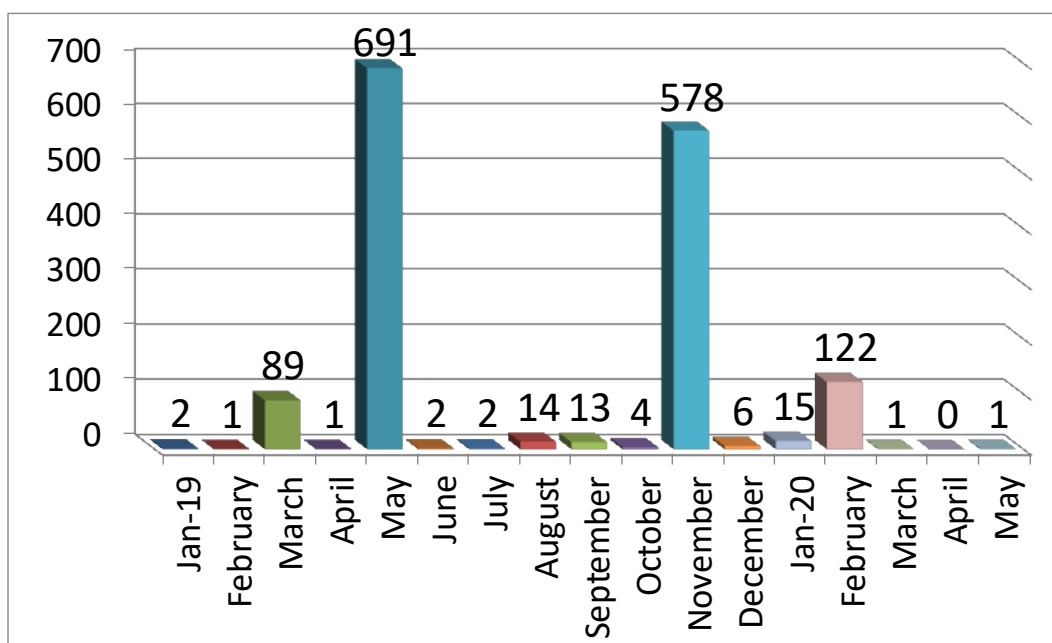
► **The ministry of Muslim endowments in the Gaza Strip announced the mosques would gradually be opened beginning of May 22, 2020**. Initially they will open only for the Friday prayers, and with mandatory social distancing, face masks, avoidance of hand shaking and the enforcement of all the guidelines for the prevention of the spread of the disease. **The Eid al-Fitr prayers (May 23-24, 2020) will be held in the same manner**. The ministry of health called on people who are sick, aged, suffer from chronic diseases, still quarantined, do not feel well, and women and children to observe the Friday prayers at home. **The ministry stressed that following the guidelines and practicing the preventive measures was a religious obligation**.

Rocket and Mortar Shell Fire

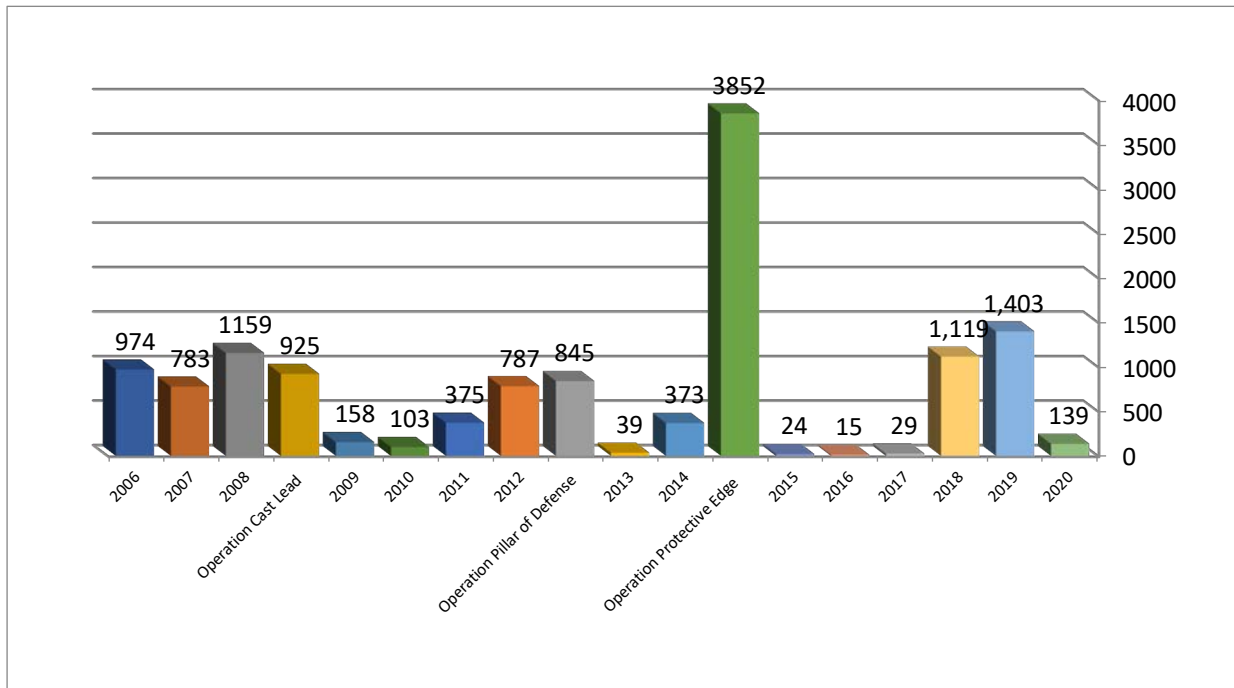
Rocket and mortar shell fire into Israel

► This past week no rocket hits were identified in Israeli territory. Reportedly, however, on May 16, 2020, Hamas' military wing fired a test rocket into the sea, part of its program of "developing capabilities and preparing for a future confrontation with Israel" (Amad, May 16, 2020).

Monthly Distribution of Rocket and Mortar Shell Fire



Annual Distribution of Rocket Hits



Judea and Samaria

After a period of relative quiet during the COVID-19 crisis, **the number of popular terrorism attacks and attempted attacks has recently risen**. This past week there was a vehicular attack in southern Mt. Hebron, an attempted stabbing attack at the Qalandia Crossing, IEDs were thrown at Israeli soldiers in Abu Dis and there was a riot in the al-Fawwar refugee camp during an IDF activity to detain Palestinians wanted for terrorist activities. In the meantime Palestinians continue throwing Molotov cocktails and stones at Israeli vehicles on the roads in Judea and Samaria, including buses.

IDF soldier killed in the village of Ya'bed (follow-up)

► **The search continues for the terrorist from the village of Ya'bed, where an IDF soldier was killed**. A number of suspects were detained and taken for interrogation (IDF spokesman, Israel Police Force spokesman's unit, May 13, 2020). The Palestinian media reported that several Palestinians were wounded in clashes with IDF forces in Ya'bed (Wafa, May 17, 2020). **Senior PIJ figure Khadr Adnan** called on Palestinians in the Jenin district to observe the last Friday prayer of Ramadan in Ya'bed (Filastin al-Yawm, May 15, 2020). Palestinians continue discussing the killing of the IDF soldier in Ya'bed on the Palestinian social networks, where the main theme is that **in the absence of guns, a rock can "do the work" as well**.



Right: IDF activity in the village of Ya'bed (Wafa, May 13, 2020). Left: IDF forces erect concrete roadblocks at the entrance to the village (Wafa, May 15, 2020).

Vehicular attack in southern Mt. Hebron

► **On May 14, 2020, there was a vehicular attack near an IDF post in southern Mt. Hebron.**

The initial investigation revealed that a Palestinian drove his car at high speed at IDF soldiers manning a military post in southern Mt. Hebron,. He hit and critically wounded one soldier. Another soldier opened fire and killed the terrorist. **A suicide note was found in his pocket** (IDF spokesman, Mt .Hebron spokesman, May 16, 2020).

► The Palestinian media reported that the terrorist was **Bahaa al-Din Muhammad Abdallah Awawda**, 18, from Deir Samet, a village west of Hebron (Ma'an, May 14, 2020). The **Fatah movement** in Deir Samet issued a mourning notice for the "heroic shaheed" (Facebook page of the village of Deir Samet, May 14, 2020). **Hamas** praised and welcomed the attack. Hamas spokesman Abd al-Latif al-Qanua said the [self-] sacrifice activities of the revolutionary young people of the West Bank, the most recent of which was the vehicular attack in the Hebron area, were concrete proof of the Palestinian resistance to the plan to annex the West Bank, and confirmation of the willingness of the young people to make more sacrifices to ensure the failure of [Israel's] plots (Quds Press, May 14, 2020).



Right: The car used in the attack (QudsN Facebook page, May 14, 2020). Left: Fatah's mourning notice (Facebook page of the village of Deir Samet, May 14, 2020).

Stabbing attack prevented at the Qalandia Crossing

► On May 12, 2020, a Palestinian arrived at the Qalandia Crossing (north of Jerusalem), holding a sharp object. He approached the security guard manning the crossing and tried to stab him. The guard opened fire, critically wounding him. According to reports the Palestinian attacker was Hitham Ibrahim Ahmed Bilal from Yatta (Facebook page of Yatta FM, May 12, 2020).



Right: The scene of the attack at the Qalandia Crossing (Shehab Twitter account, May 12, 2020). Left: Hitham Ibrahim Bilal (qudsnet.com, May 12, 2020).

IED thrown in Abu Dis (east Jerusalem)

► On May 16, 2020, an IED was thrown at a post in Abu Dis in east Jerusalem. An IDF force conducting an ambush identified three Palestinians throwing the IED and shot and wounded them. The terrorists also had Molotov cocktails they were planning to throw at the post.

Riot in the al-Fawwar refugee camp

► **On the night of May 12, 2020**, a riot broke out during an IDF activity to detain wanted Palestinians in the al-Fawwar refugee camp (south of Hebron). Palestinians threw stones, rocks, Molotov cocktails and IEDs at the Israeli security forces. Gunshots were also heard. One IDF soldier was slightly wounded by a stone. The soldiers responded with riot control measures and live fire (IDF spokesman, May 13, 2020). **A Palestinian youth was killed and four Palestinians were wounded.**

► The Palestinian media reported the death of Ziad Feisal Qaysia, 15, from the al-Fawwar refugee camp (Ma'an, May 13, 2020), Mahmoud Abbas called his mother to express his condolences, saying that "this crime is another in the list of crimes the occupation commits against our people" (Wafa, May 16, 2020). Hamas issued a statement saying that "the [alleged] crime" proves that Israel has to be brought to trial for its [alleged] "crimes" against Palestinian children (Hamas website, May 13, 2020). Hamas spokesman Hazem Qassem said that it was the "resistance" of a people who would not stop its continuing sacrifices (Palinfo, May 13, 2020).



Right: Ziad Qaysia (QudsN Facebook page, May 13, 2020). Left: The funeral held in the al-Fawwar refugee camp for Ziad Qaysia (Wafa, May 13, 2020).

Stones and Molotov cocktails thrown at Israeli vehicles

► In Judea and Samaria Palestinians continued throwing stones and Molotov cocktails at Israeli vehicles. The more notable events were the following:

- ◆ **May 18, 2020** – A bottle of paint was thrown at a civilian Israeli bus on the Gush Etzion-Hebron road near the al-Fawwar refugee camp. No casualties were reported (Rescue Without Borders in Judea and Samaria, May 18, 2020).

◆ **May 17, 2020** – Stones were thrown at a civilian Israeli bus south of Hebron. No casualties were reported; the bus was damaged (Rescue Without Borders in Judea and Samaria, May 17, 2020).

◆ **May 17, 2020** – Stones were thrown at a civilian Israeli vehicle northeast of Ramallah. No casualties were reported (Rescue Without Borders in Judea and Samaria, May 17, 2020).

◆ **May 17, 2020** – Stones were thrown at an Israeli bus carrying IDF soldiers southwest of Nablus. No casualties were reported; the bus was damaged (Rescue Without Borders in Judea and Samaria, May 17, 2020).

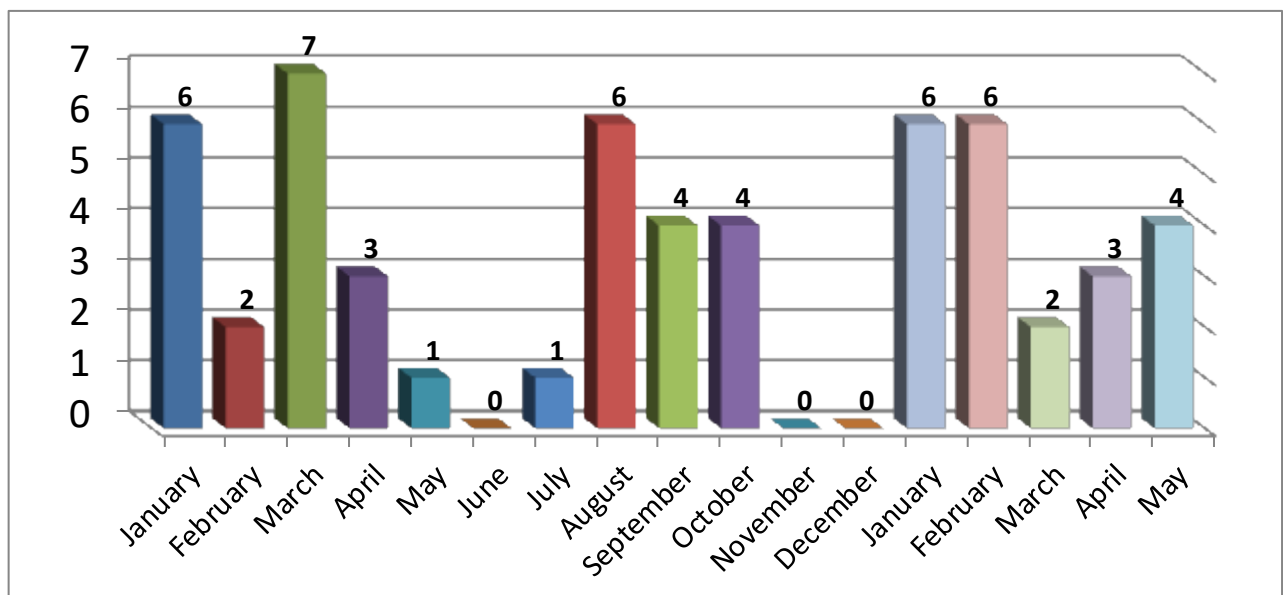
◆ **May 17, 2020** – A Molotov cocktail and stones were thrown at a civilian Israeli bus on the Gush Etzion-Hebron road near the al-Aroub refugee camp. No casualties were reported (Rescue Without Borders in Judea and Samaria, May 17, 2020).

◆ **May 15, 2020** – Stones were thrown at a civilian Israeli vehicle east of Ariel. No casualties were reported; the vehicle was damaged (Rescue Without Borders in Judea and Samaria, May 15, 2020).

◆ **May 13, 2020** – Stones were thrown at a civilian Israeli vehicle north of Ramallah. No casualties were reported (Rescue Without Borders in Judea and Samaria, May 13, 2020).

◆ **May 12, 2020** – Molotov cocktails were thrown at a civilian Israeli vehicle on the Jerusalem-Gush Etzion road. No casualties were reported (Rescue Without Borders in Judea and Samaria, May 12, 2020).

Significant terrorist attacks in Judea and Samaria since January 2019³



Developments in the Gaza Strip

Distribution of aid to the needy

► **Mohammed al-Emadi, chairman of Qatar's National Committee for the Reconstruction of Gaza**, announced that the Committee, in coordination with the Qatar Development Fund, had begun the distribution of payments to Gazans as part of the project he declared during his most recent visit to the Gaza Strip. The funds are for the following (website of Qatar's National Committee for the Reconstruction of Gaza, May 13, 2020):

- ◆ **Aid to needy university graduates** to pay their university fees and receive their diplomas. The donation of one million dollars will be divided among 6,512 university graduates from 20 educational institutions in the Gaza Strip.
- ◆ **Aid to pay for the weddings of needy young couples:** Two million dollars will be divided among 500 young couples, \$4000 dollars per couple (website of Qatar's National Committee for the Reconstruction of Gaza, May 13, 2020).



**Distributing the first payment of Qatar's donation
(Facebook page of the ministry of youth and sport in the Gaza Strip, May 17, 2020).**

► In addition aid was distributed to the needy by ministries of the Hamas administration in Gaza:

- ◆ **The ministry of welfare**, in cooperation with the Red Crescent Association, distributed emergency aid to 3,883 needy families (Amad, May 12, 2020).
- ◆ On May 13-14, 2020, **the ministry of labor** distribution \$100 to 1,500 Gazans who were harmed by the COVID-19 crisis (al-Aqsa, May 14, 2020).

Activity of the Iraqi Movement of the Noble Ones in Gaza

► On May 4, 2020, the Iranian center for information and relations of the Movement of the Noble Ones,⁴ an Iraqi Shi'ite militia handled by Iran, announced a movement campaign to **distribute aid to Palestinian families in the Gaza Strip**. Reportedly, employees of the Movement's office in Gaza distributed packages of food, hygiene products and Ramadan presents to **the families of shaheeds and prisoners** around Sajaiya, Gaza City and the northern Gaza Strip. It was also reported that to preserve the families' honor the distributions were carried out at night (website of the center of information and relations of the Movement of the Noble Ones in Iran, May 4, 2020).



Aid distributed by the Movement of the Noble Ones in the Gaza Strip. The packages were accompanied by a note with the logo of the movement and an inscription reading, "Gift for Ramadan from the Movement of the Noble Ones to the families of the shaheeds and prisoners in Palestine (website of the center of information and relations of the Movement of the Noble Ones in Iran, May 4, 2020).

► It was not the first time the Movement's office appeared in an Internet search. The ITIC found an Internet article mentioning that the division of international relations of the Movement of the Noble Ones' Gazan office held a meeting on December 21, 2019 to discuss

⁴ The Movement of the Noble Ones is an Iraqi Shi'ite militia that operates in Syria and Iraq and has ties to Iran. Information about the Movement of the Noble Ones can be found in the ITIC bulletin from December 20, 2017 bulletin, "The Movement of the Noble Ones (*harakat al-nujaba*). Portrait of an Iraqi Shi'ite militia, operated in Iraq and Syria by Iran and intended for future 'strategic missions.' "

"America, the Great Satan – the American position regarding the resistance axis and Israel's expansionist policies" at the offices of the Atlas center for Israeli studies. Speakers at the meeting included senior PIJ figure Ahmed al-Mudallal and Hasan Abdo, a political commentator close to the PIJ and a senior figure in the Mujahidin Battalions (u-news.net, a Lebanese website which tracks the activities of the so-called "resistance axis," December 21, 2019).



**The meeting in Gaza
(Paltoday, December 21, 2019).**

Ziyad al-Nakhalah interviewed

► **Ziyad al-Nakhalah, PIJ leader**, was interviewed by the Hezbollah-affiliated al-Mayadeen TV in Lebanon for Global Jerusalem Day. His main points were the following (al-Mayadeen, May 18, 2020):

- ◆ **"The Palestinian resistance:"** The "resistance" [i.e., terrorism and violence] is the only possible option for the Palestinian people, because the other option is surrender. **"Resistance" is the only way to change the situation and force Israel ["the enemy"] to make concessions.** The Palestinian and regional "resistance" is stronger than ever. The Gaza Strip is the fortress of the "resistance." Israel is careful not to get involved Gaza and avoids creating clashes with it because Israel knows that the "resistance" will immediately respond to any aggression without hesitation. The "resistance" is obliged always to take the initiative. The "resistance" must continue until it succeeds in enforcing a new reality [on Israel] and achieves its objectives. **All Israel's cities are within range of "resistance" missiles from the Gaza Strip.**
- ◆ **Relations with Iran: Iran plays an important role in strengthening the "resistance."** Iran's military aid continues arriving and Iran supports the "resistance" [i.e., the terrorist organizations] at every opportunity. Even Iran's objection to American policy and Zionism is also a great support. When Qassem

Soleimani, who supported the Palestinians as Iran's representative, died the Palestinians lost a man they had worked with for years, and who had played a great, prominent role. However, Iran's position has not changed with Soleimani's death. The opposite is true, Iran has become more determined to support "resistance" movements in the region. As for Soleimani's replacement, Esmail Ghaani, he had an important role in supporting the "resistance" when he was Soleimani's second in command, and his importance has even grown since then.

◆ **Ties to Hezbollah:** Israel is very wary of the "resistance" in Lebanon. Hezbollah's relations with the Palestinian "resistance organizations" – Hamas, the PIJ and the other organizations – are close in every respect. Hezbollah gives the "Palestinian resistance" everything they need.

◆ **The "deal of the century" and Israel's annexation intentions:** Annexation is only an administrative matter because Israel already controls the West Bank. In any event, the "deal of the century" **is confirmation of the existing situation** in Judea and Samaria, since the annexation program has already begun.



Ziyad al-Nakhalah interviewed by Lebanese al-Mayadeen TV
(al-Mayadeen YouTube channel, May 18, 2020).

The Palestinian Authority (PA)

The PA's economy in the shadow of the COVID-19 crisis

► Regarding the PA's economic situation, PA Prime Minister Muhammad Shtayyeh said **they were currently working hard to formulate a program to rebuild the economy, protect the residents and support the various economic sectors harmed by the COVID-19 crisis** (Dunia al-Watan, May 14, 2020).

► Muhammad Shtayyeh told a press conference that the fund of private sector donors he established had **collected \$6 million**. He said **the money would be distributed to the unemployed and needy in Judea, Samaria, east Jerusalem, the Gaza Strip and the**

refugee camps in Syria and Lebanon. Some of the money would be transferred to cover the expenses of the ministry of health. Talal Nasser al-Din, chairman of the fund, said the distribution would begin on May 16, 2020. **The money will be given to 40,000 employees who were harmed by the COVID-19 crisis, each receiving 700 shekels (about \$200).** In addition, funds will be distributed to 30,000 needy families, including families in east Jerusalem. (Palestinian TV, May 14, 2020).

Nakba Day events

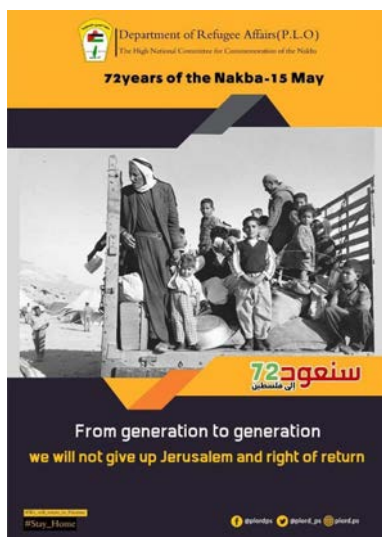
► On May 15, 2020, the Palestinians marked the 72nd Nakba Day, this overshadowed by COVID-19 and the preventive measures imposed on Judea, Samaria and the Gaza Strip. On the eve of Nakba Day the national committee to mark Nakba Day called on the Palestinian public **to take an active part in the online events whose theme was "We will return to Palestine"** (Wafa, May 14, 2020). In reality, this year **the Palestinian public did not show any particular interest in Nakba Day.** In a number of locations in Judea, Samaria and the Gaza Strip there were demonstrations, and in some cases local residents clashed with Israeli security forces. On the social networks, where most of the events were held, hashtags were launched to mark the day, but they were fairly inactive. The few posts that were uploaded received relatively few responses.

Statements from senior Palestinian figures and the Palestinian organizations marking the day included calls to continue "resistance" [i.e., terrorist] activity, including "armed resistance." The Fatah movement said it would not give up the goals for which it had been founded, **the first and most important of which were the [so-called] "right of return" and realizing national independence.** Its announcement called for the struggle against the "deal of the century" and Israel's annexation plan (Wafa, May 14, 2020).

► The most important statements were the following:

◆ **Mahmoud Abbas** gave a speech for Nakba Day where he said the Palestinian people would not be broken or surrender to "Israel's plots." He added that the Palestinians were marching ahead with confidence to the restoration of their rights. He repeated that given "Israel's [alleged so-called] war crimes" in the West Bank, including the settlement project, and given [Israel's] plan to annex east Jerusalem and the Jordan Valley, **the PA would review its positions on all the existing agreements and understandings with Israel and the United States.** He again stated that **if Israel**

announces the annexation of any part of the occupied territories, the PA will renege on all its agreements (Palestinian TV, May 13, 2020).



Right: Mahmoud Abbas gives his Nakba Day speech (Mahmoud Abbas' Facebook page, May 13, 2020). Left: A notice posted by the refugee department for Nakba Day, disseminated by the social networks. Its message is the so-called "right of return" of the Palestinian refugees (Facebook page of the Hebron municipality, May 14 2020).

◆ **Hamas** called on the Palestinian public **to adhere to "resistance" as its nation strategy**. According to Hamas' announcement, the Palestinian people has the right to resist the "occupation" in every way, **especially through "armed resistance"** (Hamas website, May 14, 2020). **The PIJ** said continuing the plans to harm the Palestinian cause would meet a determined stand of the Palestinian people who would not trade with the right to Palestine, regardless of the number of victims. According to the PIJ's announcement, all forms of "resistance" were the legal right of the Palestinian people and the PIJ insisted on continuing the "resistance," **especially the armed "resistance," which was the supreme option** (Filastin al-Yawm, May 15, 2020).

Palestinian activity to combat Israel's intentions to annex parts of the Palestinian territories

The internal Palestinian arena

- ▶ The PA announced a meeting of the leadership of all the organizations. Its objective was to formulate a joint strategy to deal with Israel's plan to impose its sovereignty on parts of Judea and Samaria. The meeting was scheduled for May 16, 2020.
- ▶ **Hamas and the PIJ announced they would not attend the meeting. Isma'il Haniyeh, head of Hamas' political bureau, said such meetings were never serious.** He called on

Mahmoud Abbas instead to hold a meeting of the PLO's temporary leadership to deal with the three top issues: achieving internal Palestinian peace, the political situation with Israel and formulating a national strategy to resist and struggle against Israel. He said the annexation was an extraordinary step and therefore extraordinary means had to be used to deal with it. He called for an end to negotiations, which had failed again and again. The path of "resistance," he said, had proved its efficacy. He also called for the escalation of the struggle, for "resistance" and an unlimited intifada, and to stop security coordination with Israel (al-Jazeera, May 13, 2020).



Isma'il Haniyeh interviewed by al-Jazeera
(al-Jazeera YouTube channel, May 13, 2020).

► **Hamas and the PIJ called on the PA to use terrorism ["resistance"] in its dealings with Israel:**

- ◆ **Hamas spokesman Fawzi Barhoum** said the only way to make Israel's plan to annex the West Bank fail was to enlist the entire Palestinian people for "resistance" (al-Aqsa, May 13, 2020).
- ◆ **Izzat al-Rishq, a member of Hamas' political bureau,** said the PA had to allow the "resistance" [i.e., terrorist organizations] to operate in the West Bank, especially the "armed resistance" (Hamas website, May 15, 2020).
- ◆ **Ahmed al-Mudallal, senior PIJ figure,** said the PA had to allow the "resistance" to act freely to bring about a regional revolution and intifada which would make Israel live in fear for its existence and security (al-Aqsa, May 12, 2020).

Palestinian reaction to a statement from the king of Jordan

► **King Abdallah of Jordan** said Jordan would oppose an Israeli annexation of the West Bank.⁵ **Nabil Abu Rudeineh, spokesman for Mahmoud Abbas**, said that following efforts and threats from the king of Jordan, the Palestinians and European countries, they had **temporarily prevented Prime Minister Netanyahu from receiving a green light from the Americans for the annexation while Secretary of State Mike Pompeo was visiting Israel** (Wafa, May 15, 2020).

The international arena

► **Riyad al-Maliki, Palestinian foreign minister**, sent communiqués to a number of foreign ministers of EU countries and UN Security Council member states to enlist them in the struggle against Israel's plans (Dunia al-Watan, May 12, 2020).

► The Palestinians were greatly encouraged by a statement made by Josep Borrell, the current EU high representative for foreign affairs and security, who said, after a meeting for the foreign ministers, that they had to cooperate to prevent an initiative that would lead to the annexation of the West Bank. He also called on both sides of the conflict to avoid unilateral action (Bloomberg, May 15, 2020).

Palestinian reactions to criticism of the ICC from the American secretary of state

► On May 15, 2020, **Mike Pompeo, the American secretary of state, criticized the case of the International Criminal Court (ICC) against Israel**. He said, "the International Criminal Court is a political body, not a judicial institution. This unfortunate reality has been confirmed yet again by the ICC Prosecutor's attempt to assert jurisdiction over Israel, which like the United States, is not a party to the Rome Statute that created the Court." He added that as "[the United States] made clear when the Palestinians purported to join the Rome Statute, we do not believe the Palestinians qualify as a sovereign state, and **they therefore are not qualified to obtain full membership, or participate as a state in international organizations, entities, or conferences, including the ICC**. The United States reiterates its longstanding objection to any illegitimate ICC investigations. If the ICC continues down its

⁵ In an interview with the German magazine *Der Spiegel*, Abdallah threatened that Israel's annexation of parts of the West Bank would lead to Jordan's opposition. He said he did not want to generate an atmosphere of differences of opinion and conflicts, but stressed that if its carried out the annexation Jordan would examine all its options with other countries, including Europe and the international community (*Der Spiegel*, May 15, 2020).

current course, we will exact consequences" (website of the American State Department, May 16, 2020).

► **The Palestinians were enraged by his remarks.** Riyad al-Maliki, Palestinian foreign minister, said his ministry would issue a strongly-worded condemnation in response to the American administration's "crass interference." He said his ministry and the ICC prosecutor were closely monitoring the events and he expected an announcement from the ICC stressing the prosecutor's determination to continue, despite American pressure. Al-Maliki also said that the **PA legation in Holland had received instructions to raise the issue** (Dunia al-Watan, May 17, 2020).

► The PA foreign ministry summoned the Austrian ambassador to the PA to express its opposition to the recent Austrian declaration to the ICC regarding the Court's authority in the Palestinian territories.⁶ The Palestinians expressed their opposition to the Austrian position and called on Austria for official clarification (Wafa, May 18, 2020).

► Other reactions were the following:

◆ **Saeb Erekat, secretary of the PLO's Executive Committee**, said America's warning to the ICC not to continue its investigation of Israel's [so-called alleged] "crimes" in the PA territories is crass, unacceptable intervention in the ICC's work (Saeb Erekat's Twitter account, May 16, 2020).

◆ **Hamas spokesman Hazem Qassem** called it "bullying of the American administration" against an international legal body. He said Pompeo's statement was the continuation of the support the United States gives to Israel's [alleged] crimes against the Palestinian people, and encourages Israel to carry out more "crimes" (Hamas website, May 18, 2020).

Reactions to the formation of the new Israeli government

► **PA Prime Minister Muhammad Shtayyeh** warned of a coming "burning hot summer" for the Palestinian cause in view of the intention of the new Israeli government, headed by Benjamin Netanyahu and Benny Gantz, to implement an illegal plan and measures to annex the Jordan Valley, the Dead Sea and the settlements (Wafa, May 18, 2020).

► **The PA foreign ministry** issued a statement strongly condemning the [so-called] "racist colonial" positions expressed by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. During the

⁶ Austria is one of seven Rome Statue member states which Pompeo mentioned as having officially stated their opinion that the ICC has no jurisdiction to continue its investigation.

weekly meeting of the new government Netanyahu reiterated his "positions and threats" to enforce Israeli sovereignty on Judea and Samaria and to annex large areas. The PA foreign ministry called for a determined international stance to force Israel ("the country of the occupation") to change its positions and abandon its threats (al-Quds, May 17, 2020).