



## Palestinian Authority and Fatah responses to the ramming attack in Abu Dis show their support for this type of popular terrorism attack

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### Overview

► **Ramming attacks are a common, deadly modus operandi carried out as part of the Palestinian Authority (PA) and Fatah's strategy of "popular resistance"** [i.e., popular terrorism].<sup>1</sup> The concept of "popular resistance," which replaced the concept of armed struggle, includes the political-popular-economic-propaganda-legal campaign the PA wages against Israel. The "popular resistance" is not the non-violent strategy publicly touted by the PA leadership or the rhetoric the PA uses when dealing with the West. It is **non-institutional violence carried out on the initiative of individuals or local networks**. "Popular terrorism" includes **throwing stones and Molotov cocktails, stabbing attacks, ramming attacks**. The "popular resistance," in the minds of the PA and Fatah, is different from an armed military struggle, as was manifested in the second intifada, whose renewal Hamas preaches.

► Ramming attacks are usually carried out by lone terrorists. They are sometimes turned into combined attacks when the terrorist leaves the vehicle and continues the attack with a knife. The attacks are usually spontaneous, not orchestrated by a terrorist organization and do not necessitate preparation, making them difficult to prevent. **Ramming attacks are particularly deadly** (as opposed to stabbing attacks, which cause fewer casualties). **Since October 2015 (when the wave of popular terrorism broke out) more than 65 ramming attacks have been carried out**, killing and injuring a large number of Israeli soldiers and civilians (A table detailing the attacks is available in the Appendix of the Hebrew version of this document).

► The PA supports ramming attacks, as it supports other forms of popular terrorism attacks, and **systematically avoids condemning them**, even when Israel civilians are killed. The analysis of PA and Fatah responses to the ramming attacks carried out since October 2015 reveals three main patterns of response:

<sup>1</sup> The Fatah movement, which is the PA's organizational and popular base proposed the concept of "popular resistance" [i.e., popular terrorism] as its leading strategy in August 2019 at Fatah's sixth conference. The strategy has had the PA's support from that day on.

- ◆ **Ignoring:** The Palestinian media provide informative reports while the PA and Fatah avoiding publicly supporting the attacks.
- ◆ **Denial:** The PA and Fatah issue **false claims of "traffic accidents," denying they were ramming attacks, accusing Israel of killing innocent civilians and calls for international investigation.** Denial continues even in the face of factual information about the circumstances of the attack and motivation of the perpetrators.
- ◆ **Public support:** Senior PA and Fatah figures pay condolence calls to the family of terrorists who are killed carrying out ramming attacks; there are public expressions of support such as issuing mourning notices; and the PA occasionally contributes to the rebuilding of the houses of terrorists destroyed by Israel.

► On **June 24, 2020**, a Palestinian drove his car to a Border Police roadblock in Abu Dis (east of Jerusalem). He veered out of his lane, drove up onto the sidewalk and tried to run over a female Border Police fighter who was securing the roadblock. He hit her, injuring her slightly. The Palestinian exited his vehicle, and Border Police fighters stationed at the site shot and mortally wounded him (Israel Police Force spokesman's unit, June 23, 2020). **Videos issued after the attack proved he was trying to run over the female Border Police fighter.** It was also proved that his motive was personal (see below). The Palestinian terrorist was **Ahmed Erekat, a nephew of Saeb Erekat, secretary of the PLO's Executive Committee.**



Cartoon by Palestinian Imad Baalbeki issued after the ramming attack in the Armon Hanatziv promenade of Jerusalem (in which four IDF officers were killed and 13 IDF soldiers were injured). Instead of the slogan, "Revolution until Victory," the Arabic reads, "Ramming attack until victory" (mapnews.com, January 9, 2017).

**As a response for the ramming attack in Abu Dis the PA and Fatah chose denial, and launched a high-profile smear campaign of Israel, claiming Ahmed Erekat had been "executed."** The reason might have been that Ahmed Erekat was a relative of Saeb Erekat, secretary of the PLO's Executive Committee. However, Saeb Erekat demanded the appointment of an international investigation committee. The **PA foreign ministry** also called for an international investigation of Israel's alleged "criminal killings [of Palestinians]." The **Palestinian Center for Human Rights (PCHR)<sup>2</sup> reportedly lodged a formal complaint with the International Criminal Court (ICC)** in The Hague and asked that the death of Ahmed Erekat be investigated. The PA claimed the ICC has jurisdictional authority over the Palestinian territories and says it will cooperate with the ICC in investigating Israel's alleged "war crimes."<sup>3</sup> **Thus, the PA's response to the ramming attack is another example of the PA's intention to use the ICC as a tool to incriminate Israel and its leadership by providing the ICC with false information about how the IDF operates in Judea, Samaria and the Gaza Strip.**

## The Ramming Attack in Abu Dis

On **June 23, 2020**, a Palestinian drove to a Border Police roadblock east of Jerusalem. **When ordered by a female Border Police fighter to halt he drove up onto the sidewalk and hit her**, injuring her slightly. Other Border Police fighters at the scene opened fire, mortally wounding the driver, who later died (Israel Police Force spokesman's unit, June 23, 2020). **The security camera video documenting the event clearly shows the vehicle leaving its lane, speeding up and ramming into the examination booth** (Israel Police Force spokesman's unit, June 24, 2020).

<sup>2</sup> The PCHR is a Palestinian human rights organization operating in the Gaza Strip. It is a leading organization waging lawfare against Israel and participates in the campaign to delegitimize the State of Israel.

<sup>3</sup> For further information, see the June 10, 2020 bulletin, "Exchange of clarifications between the ICC and the Palestinian Authority following Mahmoud Abbas's statement on the PA considering itself absolved from all agreements and understandings."



**Right: The car involved in the ramming attack. Left: Security camera footage of the attack (Border Police Facebook page, June 23 and 24, 2020).**

► The Palestinian who carried out the attack was **Ahmed Mustafa Erekat**, 27, from Abu Dis, a nephew of Saeb Erekat, secretary of the PLO's Executive Committee. A video issued after the attack indicated **that the motivation for the ramming attack was personal/familial** (a common motivation for popular terrorism attacks). The Israeli media received a video filmed by Ahmed Erekat before the attack. In it he said the social media spread rumors accusing him of collaborating with Israel. He added that the rumors had caused him a great deal of damage, shamed his family and **sent him into a state of depression**. In the video says, "I never betrayed the people, your brother is not a spy" (Ynet, June 24, 2020).



**Right: Ahmed Erekat, the terrorist who carried out the attack (Facebook page of the Abu Dis municipality, June 23, 2020). Left: The picture of Ahmed Erekat posted by PA Prime Minister Muhammad Shtayyeh on his Facebook page (June 23, 2020).**

► **The death of Ahmed Erekat led to a wave of condemnation of Israel from senior PA figures, with false claims he had been "executed."** The claims were made despite videos proving that the motive for carrying out the ramming attack was personal. Saeb Erekat and the Palestinian foreign ministry demanded **the appointment of an international investigation committee**. According to reports, **the PCHR has reportedly lodged a formal complaint with the ICC** in The Hague about the death of Ahmed Erekat (Dunia al-Watan,





Right: Ahmed Erekat at a reception for released Hamas operative Musheir Halabiya, from Abu Dis (Ahmed Erekat's Facebook page, July 11, 2019). Left: Fatah's Facebook page condemns the killing of Ahmed Erekat, posting a cartoon reading, "The crime of killing Ahmed Erekat" (June 25, 2020).

## Appendix

- In the Hebrew version of this document there is a table detailing the ramming attacks carried out since the beginning of the wave of popular terrorism, October 2015.