



News of Terrorism and the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict

(July 15 – 21, 2020)

Overview

► This past week the Gaza Strip was quiet. In Judea and Samaria an exceptionally large number of stones and Molotov cocktails were thrown at Israeli vehicles. The Israeli security forces detained four Palestinians who manufactured IEDs and Molotov cocktails, and three Palestinians who tried to throw an IED and carry out a drive-by shooting at the Israeli community of Beit El.

► **At the political level** intensive Palestinian Authority (PA) diplomatic activity continued in the international and Arab arenas, even though Israel has not carried out its intention to annex territories in Judea and Samaria and the PA is mostly involved in fighting the coronavirus. **The PA urged the International Criminal Court in The Hague to speed up its decision regarding its authority to investigate Israel.** The Palestinian foreign minister claimed that the Court recessed without making a decision because of pressure from Israel and the United States. According to the Palestinians, the Court can reach a decision even if it is not in session.

► This past week the number of COVID-19 cases in the PA territories surged. The number is currently **7,221 active cases, up from 5,569 last week.** Most of the cases are in Hebron. So far 67 Palestinians have died. In the Gaza Strip there are five active COVID-19 cases, with no change since last week. The PA tightened its preventive measures, which are not always implemented by the population, given their lack of faith in the PA. Open protests are increasing in the districts, although so far without significantly challenging the PA's governance. That is liable to change as the health and financial crises worsen.

► This past week the number of COVID-19 cases in east Jerusalem surged to **1,524, up from 795 last week.** In ITIC assessment infection in east Jerusalem trickles into west Jerusalem. The increase in infections is accompanied by struggles beneath the surface for influence in east Jerusalem. The PA decided to provide financial assistance to 1,400 Palestinian store owners in the Old City while Israel, according to Palestinian reports, detained both the governor and the head of Palestinian general intelligence in the PA's Jerusalem district.

►According to reports, Hamas prevents Gazans from watching the al-Arabiya and al-Hadath TV channels, both of which are supported by Saudi Arabia, and their offices in the Gaza Strip were closed. That came as a response to a report that a senior Hamas figure had deserted to Israel. The incident again illustrates Hamas' determination to control the media messages leaving the Gaza Strip, and to prevent (or at least to make difficulties for) uncontrolled reports to be published. Hamas' control over media messages is very important, because the biased, and often false reports exported from the Gaza Strip are almost universally quoted extensively by the Israeli, Arab and Western media, and serve the West as sources for its propaganda attacks on Israel.

The Palestinian Fight Against COVID-19

Judea and Samaria¹

The surge in the number of COVID-19 infections in Judea and Samaria continues. So far, **as of July 21, 2020, there are 7,221 active cases**. Of them, **5,060 are in the Hebron district**, and account for about 70% of all the active cases in Judea and Samaria. Forty patients are in serious or critical condition, four are on ventilators. Sixty-seven Palestinians have died, most of them in the Hebron district. The number of active cases in the Gaza Strip remains five. The total number of cases in Judea and Samaria since the outbreak of the disease is 9,214.

►According to PA reports, the number of active cases in the east Jerusalem neighborhoods is **1,524**. After a meeting PA Prime Minister Muhammad Shtayyeh held with the "high al-Quds committee,"² in Ramallah on July 15, 2020, at its weekly meeting on July 20, 2020, the PA government decided to **provide financial aid to 1,400 Palestinian store owners** in the Old City of Jerusalem, which is under Israeli control (Facebook page of Muhammad Shtayyeh, July 20, 2020).

The Gaza Strip

►As opposed to the difficulties the PA is having in containing the surge of the virus, the Hamas administration in the Gaza Strip has been very successful in dealing with the pandemic. This

¹ For further information see the July 20, 2020 bulletin, "COVID-19 numbers continue to surge in the Palestinian Authority, while the number of cases in the Gaza Strip remains low. (Updated to July 20, 2020)."

² The "high committee for Jerusalem affairs" was appointed by an edict from Mahmoud Abbas in 2005, and it is responsible for dealing with and monitoring every issue regarding Jerusalem and support of the city's Arab residents. The committee is directly subordinate to Mahmoud Abbas and the PLO's Executive Committee.

past week **two new cases of COVID-19 were detected in Palestinians** who had entered the Gaza Strip through the Erez Crossing. Three previous patients recovered so **the number of active cases is currently five.**

►Maarouf Salama, responsible for the Hamas administration's ministry of information, said the issue of Palestinians stranded outside the Gaza Strip has turned into the main worry of the team directing the coronavirus crisis in Gaza. To receive Palestinians returning to the Gaza Strip the teams began renovating the existing quarantine centers and constructing a new center in Deir al-Balah. He said they were currently waiting for an answer from Egypt about arrangements in the Cairo international airport and opening the Rafah Crossing (Filastin al-Yawm, July 20, 2020).

Preparations for the new school year

►Given the spread of COVID-19, the PA ministry of education announced that **the school year would begin on September 6, 2020.** There will be a combination of frontal and remote learning based on medical protocol formulated by the ministries of health and education (website of the PA ministry of education, July 15, 2020).

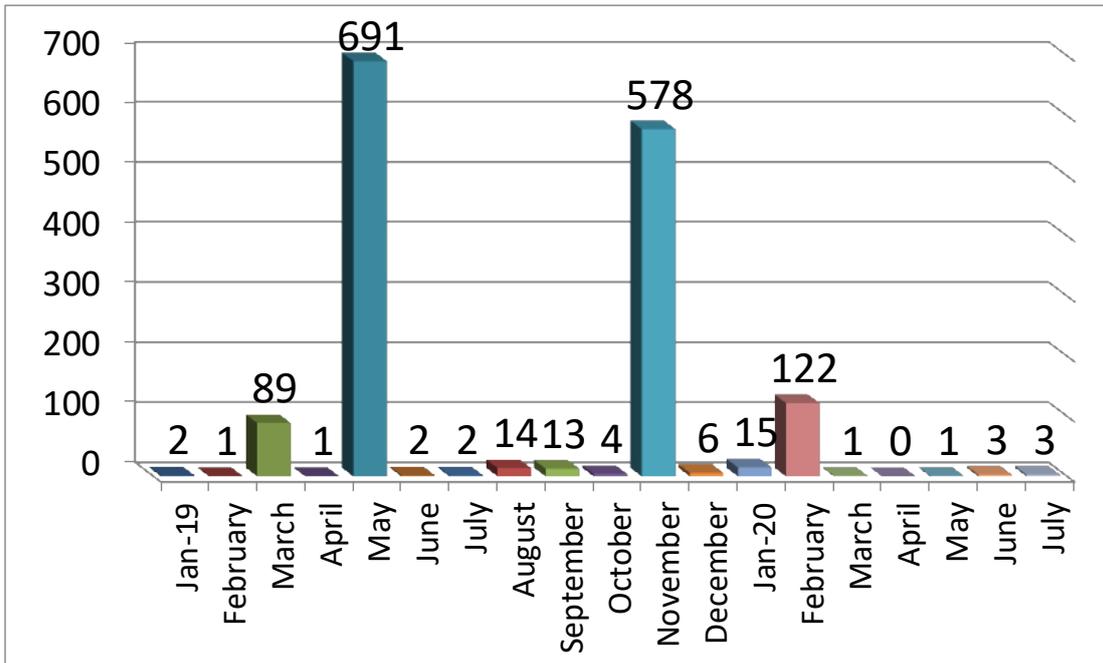
►In the Gaza Strip, on the other hand, Ziyad Thabet, deputy minister of education, announced that with the agreement of the PA ministry of education, **the school year will begin on August 8, 2020.** The head of the education program in UNRWA also announced that the school year in Gaza would begin on August 8 (Shehab, July 19, 2020). Thabet said they were in constant contact with the ministry of education in Ramallah, and aware **that beginning the school year was linked to the difference in public health between the West Bank and the Gaza Strip** (Dunia al-Watan, July 15, 2020).

Rocket and Mortar Shell Fire

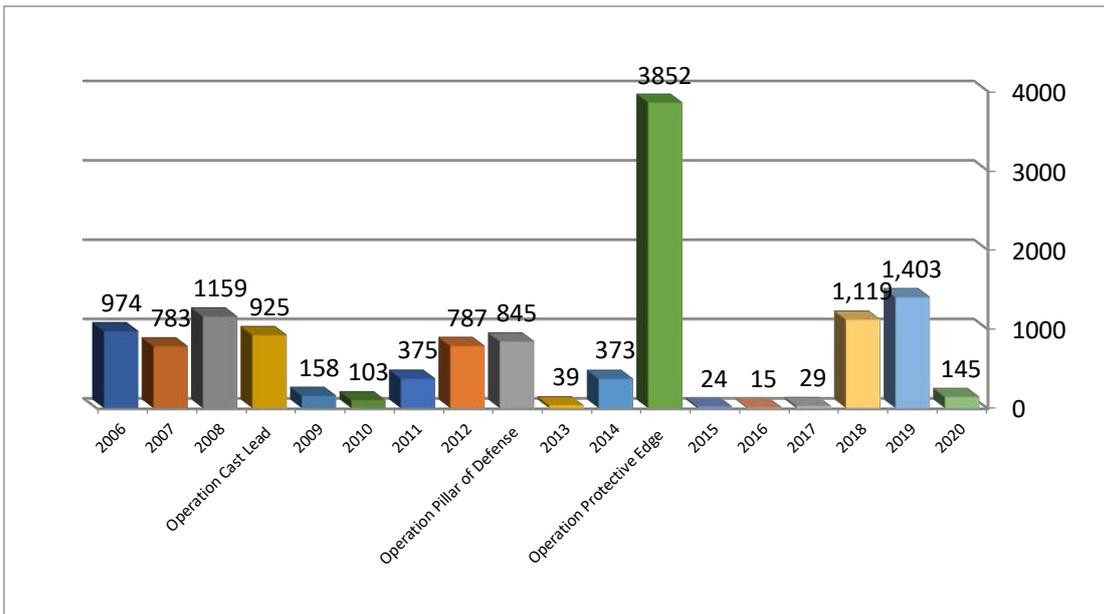
Rocket and mortar shell fire into Israel

►This past week no rocket hits were identified in Israeli territory.

Monthly Distribution of Rocket and Mortar Shell Fire



Annual Distribution of Rocket Hits



Attempted infiltration into Israeli territory

►According to reports, on July 16, 2020, the Hamas security forces detained a young Palestinian who tried to enter Israel territory from the northern Gaza Strip. The young man was sent to a quarantine center for 21 days (Amad, July 16, 2020).

Judea and Samaria

Preventing terrorist attacks

►On July 15, 2020, IDF fighters prevented a terrorist attack by detaining four Palestinians near Nablus. They had two Molotov cocktails and an IED in their possession (IDF spokesman, July 15, 2020).



The IED found in the possession of the four Palestinians (IDF spokesman, July 15, 2020).

►On July 18, 2020, three Palestinians from the Jalazone refugee camp (near Ramallah) threw an IED and carried out a drive-by shooting in the community of Beit El. No casualties or damage were reported. A few hours later, they were detained by the Israeli security forces IDF spokesman, July 18, 2020



The IED thrown at the community of Beit El (IDF spokesman, July 18, 2020).

►The Palestinian media reported that the detainees were Qasi Ra'ed Barakat Malki, 19; Abdallah Muhammad Sharaka, 18; and Ra'ed Ibrahim al-Biari, 19 (Facebook page of Jalazone.camp, July 18, 2018).



The Palestinians who were detained, left to right: Ra'ed Ibrahim al-Biari, Abdallah Muhammad Sharaka and Qasi Ra'ed Barakat Malki (Facebook page of Jalazone.camp, July 18, 2018).

►Palestinian sources reported **the detention of Adnan Ghaith, the governor of the PA's Jerusalem district, at his home in the Silwan neighborhood of east Jerusalem** (Wafa, July 19, 2020). On July 19, 2020, sources also reported the detention of the head of Palestinian general intelligence for the Jerusalem district, Jihad al-Faqih, while he was on his way home to the town of Qatana northwest of Jerusalem (official Fatah Facebook page, July 19, 2020).



The detention of Adnan al-Faqih (QudsnBrk Twitter account, July 19, 2020).

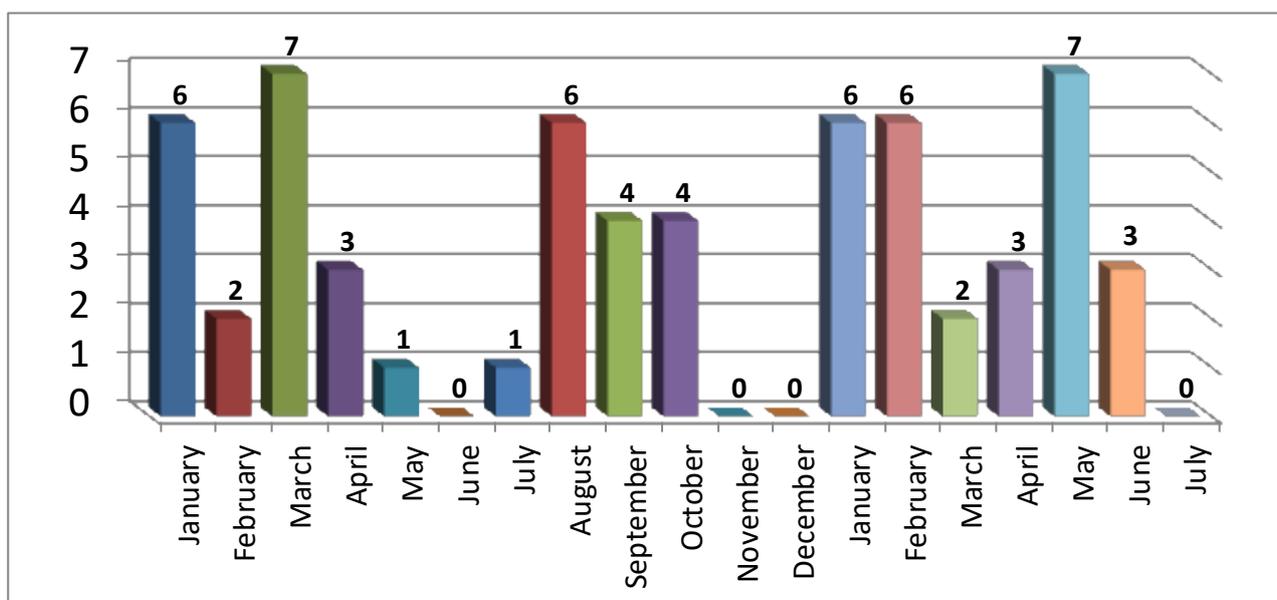
Stones and Molotov cocktails thrown at Israeli vehicles and Israeli security forces

►In Judea and Samaria Palestinians continued throwing stones and Molotov cocktails at Israeli vehicles and at the Israeli security forces. All reports are from Rescue Without Borders the same day as the event, unless otherwise noted. The more notable events were the following:

- ◆ **July 20, 2020** – Stones were thrown at a civilian Israeli vehicle in western Samaria. No casualties were reported; the vehicle was damaged.
- ◆ **July 19, 2020** – Two IEDs were thrown at the Tomb of Rachel, north of Bethlehem. One IED exploded. No casualties were reported
- ◆ **July 19, 2020** – Stones were thrown at a civilian Israeli vehicle north of Ofra. No casualties or damage were reported.

- ◆ **July 17, 2020** – Molotov cocktails were thrown at the fence of the Israeli community of Kokhav Yaakov (southwest of Ramallah). no casualties or damage were reported.
- ◆ **July 17, 2020** – A Molotov cocktail was thrown at a civilian Israeli vehicle on the Gush Etzion-Hebron road. No casualties were reported.
- ◆ **July 16, 2020** – Stones were thrown at a civilian Israeli vehicle in a drive-by attack north of Jerusalem. No casualties were reported; the front windshield of the vehicle was damaged.
- ◆ **July 16, 2020** – Stones were thrown at a civilian Israeli bus and vehicle northwest of Beit El. No casualties were reported.
- ◆ **July 16, 2020** – Stones were thrown at a civilian Israeli vehicle between Ariel and Tapuah. Three passengers were sustained minor injuries.
- ◆ **July 15, 2020** – Stones were thrown at a civilian Israeli bus north of Kiryat Arba. No casualties or damage were reported.
- ◆ **July 15, 2020** – An IED post was attacked in a drive-by shooting attack east of Nablus. No casualties were reported.
- ◆ **July 14, 2020** – Stones and bottles of paint were thrown at a civilian Israeli bus north of Hebron. No casualties were reported. The front windshield of the bus was damaged.

Significant terrorist attacks in Judea and Samaria since January 2019³



³A 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.

Terrorist operatives exposed in Judea and Samaria

►According to a report from the Israel Security Agency, terrorist activity was exposed in recent months. It was carried out under the aegis of a organization called al-Shabab al-Qawmi al-Arabi. The exposure of their activity began on April 20, 2020, with the detention of **Yazan Abu Salah**, 23, from Arabe, a Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) operative. He was detained following information that he was planning to carry out terrorist attacks in Judea and Samaria (Israel Security Agency, July 21, 2020).

►In preparation for the attacks **he purchased a weapon and recruited operatives** who headed two squads: one operated in Samaria and the other in Ramallah. They planed to carry out an attack in the Israeli community of Harish and **to abduct an IDF soldier** as a bargaining chip. **Yazan Abu Salah was supposed to leave for military training in Lebanon.** During interrogation his ties with an organization called al-Shabab al-Qawmi al-Arabi were exposed. It has a military wing operating in Syria, mainly against the jihadist organizations and organizations opposing the Syrian regime. The organization is headed by Assad al-Amali (aka Thu al-Fager) who is **its liaison with Iran and Hezbollah.**

►The interrogation of Muhammad Abu Salah, Yazan's cousin, revealed that **the organization held training exercises in Iran and with Hezbollah and the Syrian army** (which also funded its operation). In ITIC assessment, Iran and/or Hezbollah may be behind the organization, using it as a front for their activities.

Developments in the Gaza Strip

The Gaza Strip economy

►Jamal al-Khudari, chairman of the popular committee for lifting the "siege," said that **the rate of unemployment in Gaza had risen to 60% and that there were currently more than 300,000 unemployed.** He said that in the wake of restrictions on exports, factories had cut production in the Gaza Strip by 30% and that the economic situation was deteriorating. He claimed the only solution for improving the situation was to lift the [so-called] "siege" of the Gaza Strip, open the crossings, and remove the lists of materials whose import into Gaza is forbidden (Sawa, July 17, 2020).

►Adhem al-Basiouni, spokesman for the ministry of agriculture in Gaza, said the annual production of vegetables in Gaza was 450,000 tons, of which the local population consumed about 400,000 tons, and the rest was exported to West Bank markets. He said that because of

the limitations Israel placed on the export of vegetables from Gaza, farmers were forced to sell their produce in local markets at low prices. The ministry of agriculture instructed farmers to limit their crops, which were flooding the markets, for example, potatoes, which caused them heavy losses (al-Ayam, July 20, 2020).

Funds distributed to needy families

►UNRWA sources reported that the agency will give \$40 to hundreds of needy families in the Gaza Strip. The funds will be paid before Eid al-Adha (which falls on July 30, 2020) (Filastin al-Yawm, July 14, 2020). On July 20, 2020, UNRWA began distributing the funds. According to a report, 46,413 families will receive the money and the total amount will be \$1,856,520 (Sawa, July 20, 2020).

Interview with Ziyad al-Nakhalah

►Ziyad al-Nakhalah, leader of the Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ), was interviewed about the positions of the organization. The following are some of the issues he dealt with (Filastin al-Yawm, July 18, 2020):

◆**Imposing Israeli law [on territories in Judea and Samaria] and the "deal of the century:"** According to al-Nakhalah, Trump's plan is not new, it is part of the original program of the "Zionist project." What is new is the intention to carry it out. He said that when the Palestinians choose worthless political solutions they never achieve anything. However, when the Palestinian people initiate "resistance" activities [i.e., terrorist attacks], Israel will change its mind [about annexation], because **the "resistance" makes it possible to enforce a new equation.**

◆**Joining the PLO:** According to al-Nakhalah, the PIJ will not become part of the PLO as long as it recognizes Israel, but if a new political organization is formed the PIJ will be able to join it. He claimed Egypt had to unite the Arab position and the "resistance." He said non-violent popular resistance [i.e., popular terrorism] was not the way to fight Israel, and that a new approach was necessary to restore the conflict to its proper course [i.e., the use of military-type terrorism].

◆**The PIJ's military buildup:** Despite the "siege" and its poor resources, the **PIJ continues manufacturing weapons in the Gaza Strip and poses a strategic threat to Israel.** In Gaza there are **long- and medium-range rockets** despite the fact that it seemed impossible to manufacture them during the "siege." The "resistance" is arming itself and growing stronger daily, and invests a great deal of energy in its military

buildup, adding that the weapons manufactured in the Gaza Strip [allegedly] terrify and deter Israel.

◆ **Operation Protective Edge:** Regarding the launching of rockets at Tel Aviv, al-Nakhalah said that Operation Protective Edge was not the first time they had launched rockets at Tel Aviv. He claimed they had done so in 2012 when they crossed the red line for the first time. He claimed that when the Gaza Strip is attacked, all of Israel becomes a target for rocket fire for the "resistance" organizations (Filastin al-Yawm, July 18, 2020).



Ziyad al-Nakhalah
(Paltoday channel, July 18, 2020).

Tension between Hamas and the Saudi Arabian TV channel al-Arabiya

► The Saudi Arabian TV channel al-Arabiya reported that **Hamas began preventing Gazans from watching the al-Arabiya and al-Hadath TV channels after they broadcast exclusive information about the desertion of a senior Hamas figure to Israel.** The al-Arabiya management was informed of the closing of its offices and of the offices of al-Hadath in the Gaza Strip. Advertising companies were warned not to work with either channel (al-Arabiya Twitter account, Amad, July 15, 2020).

► The station was stopped from broadcasting because of a report about **the alleged desertion to Israel of the commander of a Hamas naval commando force.** The report led to the strong negative reaction (encouraged by Hamas) of thousands of Palestinian social media users with the hashtag "al-Arabiya TV is completely fake news." They claimed the channel served the interests of the Israeli media and urged normalization (alresala.net, July 16 2020).

► **Senior Hamas figures accused the channel of collaborating with Israel.** Musa Abu Marzouq, a member of the Hamas political bureau, called on the media and especially al-Arabiya to issue precise reports and not turn into "an Israeli media station" (al-Mayadeen,

July 15, 2020). Khalil al-Haya, a member of Hamas' political bureau, said there were media that collaborated with the "Zionist media," and tried to harm Palestinian unity and the safety of Palestinian residents (al-Aqsa, July 16, 2020). Senior Hamas figure Hamad al-Raqab said Hamas regarded al-Arabiya as a "Zionist channel" in every respect, and was not committed to professionalism or morality. It operated, he said, to echo the Israel narrative (Dunia al-Watan, July 15, 2020).

Hamas military wing statement for the anniversary of Operation Protective Edge

► Hamas' military wing issued a statement for the anniversary of Operation Protective Edge, claiming that six years ago, during the Operation, the organization's military wing had revealed a UAV called Ababil 1 created by its engineers. According to the statement, the UAV carried out a number of sorties and even reached IDF headquarters in Tel Aviv. The military wing claimed it had successfully manufactured **three types of UAVs: one, the A1A, for reconnaissance missions; two, the B1A, for attack and bombing missions; and three, the C1A, for "suicide bombing" missions** (Izz al-Din Qassam Brigades website, July 14, 2020)

The Palestinian Authority (PA)

Agreement for funding projects

► Majdi al-Saleh, PA minister for local government, signed an agreement with a representative of the EU and a representative of Denmark for developing infrastructure projects. The agreement was for €5.8 million to finance projects for the residents of Area C. Schools will be built in Area C, roads will be paved, electrical grids and water systems, reservoirs and public buildings will be renovated. PA Prime Minister Muhammad Shtayyeh said that they did not recognize a division into Areas A, B and C, and that the donation was an expression of the European reaction to Israel's annexation (Wafa, July 14, 2020).



Signing the EU aid agreement for projects in Area C (Wafa, July 14, 2020).

The Palestinian campaign to prevent Israel from annexing territories continues

►Despite the postponement of the implementation of Israel's annexation plan, and although most of the PA's attention is turned to dealing with the coronavirus, the PA continues its diplomatic activity to prevent Israel from annexing territories in Judea and Samaria. This past week the activity of senior PA figures focused on diplomatic contacts with international and Arab groups. PA Prime Minister Muhammad Shtayyeh said at the weekly government meeting that Israel's annexation plan was still on the horizon and Israel's refusal to formally withdraw the plan continued to be an existential threat for the Palestinian cause. He said **they were still waiting for the decision of the International Criminal Court regarding bringing Israel to trial** (Palestinian TV, July 20 2020).

►Saeb Erekat, secretary of the PLO's Executive Committee, said during an online conference held at the Arab Center in Washington that the PA had formulated a program for the struggle against Israel's annexation plan. It included reinforcing the Palestinian institutions and preparing them so that they would be able to successfully cope with any challenge posed by the annexation plan. **He said they were conversing with representatives of 132 countries** which had been called on to institute measures against Israel if it did in fact carry out its annexation plan. He added that the deal was not new, and claimed that Netanyahu will use it to topple the PA (July 16, 2020).

►The main diplomatic contacts were the following:

- ◆**Mahmoud Abbas spoke with British Prime Minister Boris Johnson** and thanked him for Britain's position on annexation. He called for more efforts to oppose the plan. Mahmoud Abbas said he was prepared to return to negotiations supervised by the International Quartet and with the participation of other countries immediately after Israel canceled its annexation plan (Wafa, July 14, 2020).

- ◆**Chinese President Xi spoke with Mahmoud Abbas.** Xi expressed his opposition to unilateral measures that violate international law, and expressed China's support for Mahmoud Abbas' suggestion to hold an international conference. He said China was prepared to play a role in the peace process and to support the Quartet's efforts (Wafa, July 20 2020).

◆ **Mahmoud Abbas spoke with Egyptian President al-Sisi**, who said Egypt would continue to invest efforts to achieve a peace based on international legitimacy and the Arab peace initiative (Wafa, July 19, 2020).

◆ The day after Mahmoud Abbas spoke with al-Sisi, **Sameh Shoukry, the Egyptian foreign minister**, arrived in Ramallah for a formal visit. He met with Mahmoud Abbas, who explained the PA's diplomatic activity to recruit international support for the Palestinian position. Shoukry told Mahmoud Abbas that Egypt opposed all unilateral decisions or measures taken by Israel (Wafa, July 20, 2020).



Mahmoud Abbas meets with Egyptian Foreign Minister Sameh Shoukry (Wafa, July 20, 2020).

The PA has difficulties in functional after ending contacts with Israel

► The PA continues not having contacts with Israel, which **makes it difficult for the PA to function, especially when it has to deal with the spread of the coronavirus**. For example:

◆ **Kamal al-Shakhra**, spokesman for the Palestinian ministry of health, said that because of Mahmoud Abbas' decision to end the agreements with Israel, **the Palestinian security apparatuses could not join the medical teams in Area C** (areas under Israeli security and civilian control) **unless they wore civilian clothing**. Al-Shakhra claimed Israel was making it difficult for doctors and medical teams to operate, and delayed and detained them. Therefore, the security apparatuses went to various locations without their uniforms to secure the medical teams so that they could carry out tests. He also said there were areas in Hebron they couldn't reach, and therefore there were many sick people who could not be tested (Palestinian TV, July 19, 2020).

◆ Mai al-Kayla, PA minister of health, reported that there were 100,000 test kits that had been bought on the world market that were currently in Ben-Gurion International

Airport. She said the minister of health could not bring them into the PA because of the cessation of security cooperation with Israel (Wafa, July 15, 2020).

◆ **Abdallah al-Theira, advisor to the PA prime minister**, denied the PA had received tax revenues through a third party or another country (Dunia al-Watan, July 16, 2020).

Qudri Abu Bakr, chairman of the authority for prisoners and released prisoners, said that Israel still held up the transfer of the tax revenues because, he claimed, the Netanyahu government had posed a number of conditions for transferring the funds, and one of them was a renewal of security cooperation. Qudri Abu Bakr insisted that Mahmoud Abbas had rejected all of Israel's conditions for transferring the funds (Dunia al-Watan, July 20, 2020).

Joint Hamas-Fatah protest

► Jibril Rajoub, secretary of Fatah's Executive Committee, said that **Fatah and Hamas had agreed to hold a joint demonstration in the Gaza Strip in the near future**. He said the event would be a "historic point" in the formulation of a untied Palestinian position in the struggle against the annexation and the "deal of the century," and other similar projects. Ahmed Hiles, a member of Fatah's Central Committee in the Gaza Strip, is in charge of organizing the event. Rajoub said Mahmoud Abbas and other senior figures would give speeches at the event (Wafa, July 20 2020). Khalil al-Haya, a member of Hamas' political bureau, said Isma'il Haniyeh would also give a speech (al-Aqsa, July 20, 2020).⁴

General manager appointed to the bank established by the PA government

► At its weekly meeting the PA government appointed Bayan Qassem to the position of general manager of the government development and investment bank established by the PA. It will provide banking and development services and manage the expenditures and income of the government, and will also be the first integrated digital bank (Wafa, July 20 2020).⁵

⁴ At a meeting with journalists in Qatar, Isma'il Haniyeh said contacts had been made for an internal Palestinian reconciliation and that for the first time Fatah and Hamas would meet directly and not through third party mediation. He said the reconciliation could exist despite their different world views. He praised Mahmoud Abbas' declaration of reneging on the agreements signed with Israel (Dunia al-Watan, July 19, 2020).

⁵ For further information see the June 28, 2020 bulletin, "The Palestinian Authority takes practical steps to set up a government bank to handle payments to prisoners and families of shaheeds."



Bayan Qassem (al-Iqtisadi website, July 21, 2020).

►In the meantime Israeli Defense Minister Benny Gantz extended the sanctions on Palestinian banks holding the accounts of Palestinian terrorist operatives (Israeli media, July 19, 2020). Qudri Abu Bakr, chairman of the PA authority for prisoners and released prisoners, said Gantz had taken the step based on security recommendations, and they should not conduct their affairs as though he would permanently retract the measure. He said that in the meantime the PA would continue paying the salaries of prisoners and released prisoners through Palestinian banks (Dunia al-Watan, July 20, 2020).

Palestinian protest against Google

►Rumors recently raced around the social media claiming that Google had deleted the name "Palestine" from its maps and that the maps showed the outlines of the Gaza Strip and West Bank, but the name itself was absent. The source of the claims was a viral Instagram posting from July 15, 2020, issued by someone with the username "Astagfirolah," who accused Google and Apple of the "official removal" of "Palestine" from their maps. In **response a Google spokesman told Agence France-Presse that they had not recently made any changes to their border lines or territories in the region, and that they had not used the name "Palestine" on the maps in the past** (AFP, July 20 2020). In ITIC assessment, the rumors might have been started as part of the Palestinian's struggle against Israel's plans to annex territories in Judea and Samaria.

►Despite Google's denial, and despite the questionable source of the rumor, many senior Palestinians protested, and elaborated on the counter measures they intended to take:

- ◆**Riyad al-Maliki, Palestinian foreign minister**, condemned the eliminating of "Palestine" from the maps, saying that they would sue both Google and Apple. He said they were currently working to find an international legal figure they could turn to in this case (Amad, July 17, 2020).

◆ **Ishaq Sadr, the Palestinian minister of communications and IT**, said his ministry was looking for a new search engine that the PA could use instead of Google. He said his ministry had formulated a number of plans to deal with the issue, including exerting pressure on Google and Apple through their servers, which are used by Palestinian companies, and by using legal measures.

◆ **Dhaz Daraghmeh, director of innovations in the Palestinian ministry of communications and IT, said the PA government had decided to boycott all Google products and platforms at the governmental level.** He added that the government would work with local partners and private institutions to find an alternative for the Google search engine, especially in light of the availability of Russian, Chinese and Turkish alternatives, whose search engines and websites are not biased in favor of Israel and are not racist regarding their users. However, he said, the ministry of communications will not prevent anyone from using Google or its platforms (Dunia al-Watan, July 20, 2020).



Fatah cartoon issued after the rumors of the removal of "Palestine" from Google maps (official Fatah Facebook page, July 19, 2020).