Overview

In the Gaza Strip the number of Covid-19 cases continues to spike, with 3,013 active cases as of November 10, 2020. Gaza reports increasing hospital admissions and the intention to impose a full lockdown as hospital capacity shrinks. In Judea, Samaria and east Jerusalem there has also been an increase in the number of active cases, but the rate of infection is lower there than in Gaza.

The Gaza Strip was relatively quiet this past week. The Palestinian Islamic Jihad's (PIJ) rhetoric was particularly harsh as the anniversary of Bahaa Abu al-Atta's death approaches. Abu al-Atta was the former commander of the organization's northern Gaza sector, killed in a targeted attack on November 12, 2019. Senior PIJ figures claimed Israel is anxious about the coming revenge of the Jerusalem Brigades, the organization's military-terrorist wing.

In Judea and Samaria there were two terrorist attacks this past week. A terrorist who served in the Palestinian Authority's (PA) Preventive Security carried out a shooting attack; he was killed by IDF return fire. The Palestinian foreign ministry called his death an Israeli "barbaric execution." In the region southwest of Hebron, a Palestinian attempted to stab IDF soldiers. He was shot and seriously wounded. In addition, the routine throwing of stones at Israeli vehicles on the roads in Judea and Samaria continues.

In the Palestinian Authority the results of the American general election were received with a sense of relief. Mahmoud Abbas congratulated President-Elect Joe Biden and Vice President-Elect Kamala Harris, saying he expected to work with the new administration to strengthen the PA's ties with the United States. The expectation in the PA is that the new administration will change America's policy towards the Palestinians, limit the political and financial damage done during the Trump era based on the two-state solution, and make the Palestinian cause its first priority.

On November 10, 2020, Saeb Erekat, senior Fatah figure and secretary of the PLO's Executive Committee, died in Hadassah Ein Kerem Hospital in Jerusalem of Covid-19 complications. Mahmoud Abbas, the Palestinian government and Fatah called his death a
great loss for the Palestinian people. Isma’il Haniyeh, head of Hamas’ political bureau, called Mahmoud Abbas to offer condolences.

Covid-19 Infection

Overview

Gaza Strip

In the Gaza Strip the spike in the number of Covid-19 infections and active cases continues. During the 24 hours between November 9 and 10, 2020, 191 new cases were detected. The number of active cases in the Gaza Strip as of November 10 was 3,013. Three more Gazans died, bringing the number of deaths to 42 (al-Ra’i news agency, November 10, 2020).

Yusuf al-Akkad, director of the European Gaza Hospital, reported an increasing number of hospitalizations. According to al-Akkad, there are 11 Gazans permanently on ventilators in the ICUs and 18 patients who do not need ventilators. He added that during the past two weeks there was a serious increase in the number of patients needing medical treatment, which meant allotting more beds for Covid-19 cases and opening an intermediate care ward (al-Ra’i news agency, November 10, 2020).

According to a report, the number of people who came into contact with active cases and are currently self-isolating has reached 15,000, with 9,000 from the first week of November. According to the ministry of health in Gaza, 155 patients are in moderate, serious or critical condition (up from 60 a week ago). They account for about 30% of the 500 available hospital beds. Furthermore, said the ministry of health, if the current rate of infection continues, the hospitals will be swamped and preventive measures will gradually be increased until a full lockdown is imposed. The ministry expects another wave of Covid-19 cases this coming winter (al-Ra’i news agency, November 9, 2020).

Judea and Samaria

In Judea and Samaria there has been a rise in the number of verified active cases. On November 9, 2020, 410 new infections were detected, bringing the number to 4,426. So far 482 Palestinians have died in Judea and Samaria, and 41 patients are in ICUs, ten of them on ventilators (Facebook page of the ministry of health in Ramallah, November 9, 2020). This past week the number of active cases in east Jerusalem also rose.
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
Judea and Samaria

Shooting attack in the Nablus region

On November 4, 2020, there was a shooting attack near Nablus. According to the initial investigation, a Palestinian armed with a hand gun drove towards the Hawwara junction south of Nablus and opened fire on soldiers engaged in routine activities. The soldiers identified the threat, took cover, returned fire and killed the shooter. No IDF casualties were reported (IDF spokesman, November 4, 2020). The Palestinian shooter was Bilal Adnan Rawajba, legal advisor to the PA Preventive Security branch in Tubas.

Mahmoud Abbas and other senior Palestinian figures did not officially comment on the event. However, the Palestinian foreign ministry falsely represented Rawajba's death a "barbaric execution." Al-Hayat al-Jadeeda, the official PA newspaper, also represented his death as an "execution." Fatah's official Facebook page praised Rawajba. His brother claimed he had not shot at soldiers and called the event an "execution."

Right: Fatah's official Facebook page glorifies Palestinian terrorist Bilal Rawajba: "The shaheed Captain Bilal Adnan Rawajba of Preventive Security, who died today, executed in cold blood by the Israeli occupation at the occupation's Hawwara roadblock. Honor and glory to the pure shaheeds" (Fatah Facebook page, November 4, 2020). Left: The scene of the shooting at the Hawwara roadblock and the terrorist's vehicle at the right (Quds Press website, November 4, 2020).

1 For further information, see the November 8, 2020 bulletin, "A shooting attack against an IDF force near Nablus ended with the death of the shooter. The Palestinian foreign ministry issued a false report, representing the killing as a "barbaric execution" (a familiar PA response to Palestinian popular terrorism events)."
**Attempted stabbing attack**

On November 8, 2020, a Palestinian attempted to carry out a stabbing attack near the al-Fawwar refugee camp, southwest of Hebron. He drove armed with a knife, exited the vehicle and advanced towards IDF soldiers engaged in routine activities. They called to him to halt, and when he did not obey they shot at his legs. The Palestinian was wounded but continued advancing towards the soldiers. He said he had come to die while carrying out an attack. The soldiers shot at him again. He was injured and evacuated to a hospital. No IDF casualties were reported (IDF spokesman and Ynet, November 8, 2020).

Two versions of his identity appeared in the Palestinian media: he was variously referred to as Ali Suleiman Abu Ali Amro, 40, from a village near the al-Fawwar refugee camp (Wafa, November 8, 2020), and as Ali Suleiman Muhammad Amro from a village near Hebron (Facebook page of his uncle, Jamal Amro, November 8, 2020). He taught in the Majed Abu Shrar Boys’ High School in Dura (Facebook page of the department of education in southern Hebron, November 8, 2020).

![Attempted stabbing attack](image1)

**Stones thrown at Israeli vehicles in Judea and Samaria**

In Judea and Samaria Palestinians continued throwing stones and Molotov cocktails at Israeli vehicles. The more prominent events were the following:²

- **November 9, 2020**: Stones were thrown at an IDF post near the al-Fawwar refugee camp (southwest of Hebron). No casualties were reported.

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² All information and reports are from Rescue Without Borders in Judea and Samaria unless otherwise noted.
November 9, 2020: Stones were thrown at a civilian Israeli vehicle southwest of Nablus. No casualties were reported; the vehicle was damaged.

November 8, 2020: Stones were thrown at a civilian Israeli bus on the road between Gush Etzion and Hebron. No casualties were reported; the bus was damaged.

November 8, 2020: Stones were thrown at a civilian Israeli vehicle southeast of Bethlehem. No casualties were reported.

November 7, 2020: Stones were thrown at a civilian Israeli vehicle east of Nablus. Two people went into shock. The vehicle was damaged.

November 7, 2020: Stones were thrown at a civilian Israeli vehicle northeast of Ramallah. No casualties were reported; the vehicle was damaged.

November 6, 2020: An IDF force at an observation post in Hebron identified a stone thrown with a slingshot. No casualties or damage were reported.

November 5, 2020: Stones were thrown at a civilian Israeli bus on the road between Gush Etzion and Hebron. No casualties or damage were reported.

November 5, 2020: Stones were thrown at a civilian Israeli bus south of Nablus. No casualties were reported; the bus was damaged.

November 5, 2020: Stones were thrown at a civilian Israeli vehicle east of Alfei Menashe. No casualties were reported; the vehicle was damaged.

November 5, 2020: Stones were thrown at a civilian Israeli bus southeast of Ramallah. No casualties were reported; the bus was damaged.

November 4, 2020: Stones were thrown at two civilian Israeli buses north of Hebron. No casualties were reported. The front windshield of one bus was damaged.

November 3, 2020: Stones were thrown at a civilian Israeli bus northwest of al-Bireh. No casualties were reported.
Significant terrorist attacks in Judea and Samaria since January 2019³

Hamas recruited minors to collect intelligence and carry out terrorist attacks

In October 2020 the Israeli security forces detained two Palestinian minors from Bayt Umar (north of Hebron), one of them 16 years old. Interrogation revealed that the two had been recruited via the social networks by Bilal Kurdi, an operative in the Hamas military wing’s cyber unit. The minors were in contact with a number of operatives in the Gaza Strip for several months.

Their interrogation revealed that Hamas had them carry out various missions, such as collecting intelligence about the Israeli communities near where they lived. They sent their handlers pictures of the communities of Bat Ayin and Kfar Etzion, as well as maps and information about nearby gathering points for IDF forces. In addition, they were asked to carry out shooting attacks. They also unsuccessfully experimented with the manufacture of pipe bombs. They were asked to initiate the abduction of a civilian from an Israeli community near their home. Their Hamas handlers promised them money and said Hamas would claim responsibility for the attacks the two carried out.

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.
Developments in the Gaza Strip

The Rafah Crossing closes

After four days during which the Rafah Crossing was open, on November 6, 2020, it was closed to traffic in both directions. The crossings and borders authority in the ministry of the interior in Gaza reported that while the crossing was open, 1,337 Palestinians entered the Gaza Strip and 3,171 left (website of the ministry of the interior in Gaza, November 6, 2020).

Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) threats

On November 12, 2020, the PIJ marked the anniversary of the death of Bahaa Abu al-Atta, the commander of the organization's northern sector, who was killed in a targeted Israeli attack. To mark the anniversary the PIJ's military wing published a short video with a recording of Bahaa Abu al-Atta saying that weapons benefitted Islam and the Jerusalem Brigades. That was followed by pictures of the manufacture of rockets, and of operatives
training with weapons and firing rockets. The sentence, "Weapons are the last will and testament of the shaheeds" was repeated several times during the video (Twitter account of Yahya Hilles, November 9, 2020).

From the PIJ military wing's video. Right: Bahaa Abu al-Atta. Left: Manufacturing rockets at a PIJ facility (Twitter account Yahya Hilles, November 9, 2020).

► Senior PIJ figures threatened Israel with revenge for his death:

◆ Nafez Azzam said that with the approach of the first anniversary of Bahaa Abu al-Atta's killing Israel should live in fear of the vengeance of the military wings of the PIJ and the other [Palestinian terrorist] organizations. He said the "resistance" was on the rise and developing, and that of Bahaa Abu al-Atta's blood had paved the way for its return (Filastin al-Yawm, November 8, 2020).

◆ Ahmed al-Mudallal said "the Zionist enemy" (i.e., Israel) justifiably lives in fear of the vengeance of the Jerusalem Brigades and the military wings of the other organizations as the anniversary of Bahaa Abu al-Atta approaches. He praised Bahaa Abu al-Atta who, he said, was the first to "attack Tel Aviv" during Operation Pillar of Defense (Canaan website, November 8, 2020).

◆ Khader Habib said the concern within the Israeli security and military establishment regarding the renewal of escalation with the Palestinian "resistance" (i.e., terrorist organizations), especially the Jerusalem Brigades, was "evidence" of the fear Bahaa Abu al-Atta had sown during his life and even after his death. Habib added that the Palestinian "resistance" and the Jerusalem Brigades are ready and preparing and training hard, and that the "resistance" will determine when it will take its revenge (Khabar, November 9, 2020).
The Palestinian Authority (PA)

Palestinian reactions to the United States election results

The PA received the results of the American general elections with a sense of relief. The PA expects the new president to change the United States' policy regarding the Palestinians and reduce the political and financial damage done during the Trump administration. Senior PA figures congratulated Joe Biden and Kamala Harris on their electoral victory. However, according to a reporter who carried out interviews in Ramallah after the election was had been called, local residents expect no change in American policy and no support for the Palestinians (al-Hayat al-Jadeeda YouTube channel, November 8, 2020).

The following were the reactions from the heads of the PA government:

Mahmoud Abbas congratulated Joe Biden and Kamala Harris on his Facebook page. He wrote that he expected to work with the new administration to strengthen the ties between the PA and the United States, and to work for peace, stability and security in the region and the world (Wafa and Mahmoud Abbas’ Facebook page, November 8, 2020).

PA Prime Minister Muhammad Shtayyeh said he hopes the new American administration will operate on the basis of the two-state solution, recognize a Palestinian state and make the Palestinian cause its first priority (Muhammad Shtayyeh’s Facebook page, November 8, 2020). At the weekly government meeting he officially congratulated President-Elect Joe Biden and Vice
President-Elect Kamala Harris, noting that the Palestinians aspire to establish bilateral relations with the United States without involving Israel. He called for security, peace and stability through ending the [so-called Israeli] "occupation" (Muhammad Shtayyeh’s Facebook page, November 9, 2020).

Some of the responders were happy that Trump lost. Nabil Sha'ath, advisor to Mahmoud Abbas, said there had been no era worse than Trump's term in office, and that its end was an achievement for the Palestinians (al-Andalou News, November 7, 2020). Sabri Sidam, a member of Fatah's Central Committee, said, regarding Trump, that the best "deal of the century" was his defeat in the general elections (Facebook page of Sabri Sidam, November 7, 2020).

Cartoon from the east Jerusalem Palestinian daily paper al-Quds, November 8, 2020.

Hamas and PIJ reactions

Isma'il Haniyeh, head of Hamas' political bureau, welcomed Trump’s defeat. He said the Palestinian people had suffered during his term because of the American administration's bias towards Israel, adding that the Trump administration had been the most extreme in support of Israel at the expense of the rights of the Palestinians. He called on Biden to enact a "historic correction" and repeal the "deal of the century," revoke recognition of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel and nullify the relocation of the American embassy to Jerusalem. He also called on Biden to reverse the decrease in funding for UNRWA and stop pressuring regional states to normalize relations with Israel (Hamas website, November 7, 2020).

Musa Abu Marzouq, a member of the Hamas political bureau, said the Trump administration had been extremist, condescending and hostile to the Palestinian people, had invested effort in revoking the [so-called] "right of return" and had supported construction in the settlements. He stressed that Trump's bias towards Israel had not helped him (Musa Abu Marzouq's Twitter account, November 8, 2020).
PIJ spokesman Da’ud Shehab said the PIJ did not expect much from Biden or hope for a change in Washington’s policy towards the Palestinian cause. He said the United States had a long history of bias towards Israel and incitement against the Palestinian people, and that America had to do a great deal if it wanted to clean the slate. He said the Palestinians would not forget that under Trump America had relocated its embassy to Jerusalem and declared it the capital of Israel (al-Andalou News, November 7, 2020).

Responses to the arrangement with hunger-striking prisoner Maher al-Akhras

Maher al-Akhras, a PIJ terrorist operative who was detained by Israel and went on a hunger strike, ended the strike after 103 days. An agreement was reached with Israel and he will be released on November 26, 2020; his detention will not be extended. Until his release he will remain in an Israeli hospital for treatment (Israeli media, November 6, 2020).

In an interview held after the agreement had been reached he said he had gone on the hunger strike for himself, for the Palestinian people and for the [other Palestinian terrorist] prisoners [in Israeli jails]. He said he had ended his hunger strike after he had been victorious and after Palestinian leaders in Judea, Samaria and the Gaza Strip had exerted pressure on him (al-Mayadeen, November 6, 2020). He also thanked the Palestinian prisoners’ club, the Palestinian people and everyone who had supported him (Wafa, November 6, 2020).

Social network users congratulated Maher al-Akhras and called for the release of all the [Palestinian terrorist] prisoners. They claimed he had won his struggle against Israel, and some of them even called him a “hero.” Qadri Abu Baker, chairman of the prisoners’ affairs authority, responded to Maher al-Akhras’ “victory” by saying that all the institutions, people, supporters and the Palestinian people had to use the “victory” as the starting point of an
Uprising against the administrative detention Israel used to detain prisoners who had not been accused of anything (Safa, November 7, 2020).

Cartoon congratulating Maher al-Akhras on his "victory." The Arabic reads, "Congratulations on your freedom" (Fatah Twitter account, November 6, 2020).

Hamas and the PIJ congratulated Maher al-Akhras on ending his hunger strike and on his "victory." Hamas spokesman Hazem Qassem said he had proved the Palestinians could force their will on Israel and had shown Israel's inability to break that will, even with the harsh conditions of detention and jail. Senior PIJ figure Nafez Azzam said the arrangement Israel signed with Maher al-Akhras was fair and in effect, a victory for al-Akhras (Filastin al-Yawm, November 6, 2020).

Saeb Erekat dies of Covid-19

On November 10, 2020, Saeb Erekat, secretary of the PLO's Executive Committee, died of Covid-19 complications, after having been hospitalized in the Hadassah Ein Kerem Hospital in Israel on October 19, 2020. A senior Fatah figure, he was in a high-risk group as the recipient of a lung transplant.

Mahmoud Abbas called his death a great loss for the Palestinian people, and sent his condolences to the family (Ma'an, November 10, 2018). PA Prime Minister Muhammad Shtayyeh called him a "shaheed of Palestine" and stressed that his death was a great loss for the Palestinian people. Muhammad Shtayyeh noted Erekat's enormous contribution to the Palestinian people, especially in the international arena. He declared three days of mourning and lowered the Palestinian flag to half mast (Muhammad Shtayyeh's Facebook page, November 10, 2020).

Fatah's Central Committee said in a statement that the Palestinian people had lost a man of stature, a fighter who gave a personal example of sacrifice and charity, and who defended the lives of the Palestinian people. According to the statement, Mahmoud Abbas and the
Palestinian leadership sent their condolences to the family (Fatah Facebook page, November 10, 2020). Isma'il Haniyeh, head of Hamas' political bureau, called Mahmoud Abbas and offered his condolences (Ma’an, November 10, 2018).

Fatah’s announcement of the death of Saeb Erekat (Fatah Facebook page, November 10, 2020).

Saeb Muhammad Saleh Erekat, 65, was born in Abu Dis and lived in Jericho. He received a BA and an MA from America universities and a PhD in Britain, afterwards teaching at al-Najah University in Nablus. He was Jericho’s representative to the Legislative Council. For the past twenty years he was in charge of the peace talks and negotiations between Israel and the PA. In 1991 he was deputy head of the Palestinian delegation to the Madrid Conference and the subsequent talks. In 1994 he was appointed minister for local government and chairman of the Palestinian delegation to the negotiations with Israel. He headed the Palestinian delegation to the Oslo Accords. He was loyal to Arafat and served as his translator at the Camp David talks in 2000, and at the Taba Summit talks in 2001. He also participated in the Annapolis Conference in 2007.

Despite his negotiating activity, Saeb Erekat was a controversial figure. In Israel there were claims that he supported Palestinian terrorists and because of his belligerent anti-Israel rhetoric (for instance, during the second intifada referring to the IDF operation in the Jenin refugee camp a "slaughter" and a "war crime.")
UNRWA's financial situation

Muhammad Shtayyeh met with Philippe Lazzarini, the UN general representative, to discuss UNRWA’s financial situation and how the agency was coping with the crisis caused by the reduction of international aid. Muhammad Shtayyeh said a financial war was being waged against UNRWA, like the one the against the Palestinians. Muhammad Shtayyeh stressed the support of the Palestinian leadership for UNRWA and its efforts to preserve its activity (Wafa, not 8, 2020).

The day after the meeting Lazzarini told them the payment of the salaries of UNRWA’s employees (about 28,000 people) would be delayed because the funds from the donor states were insufficient. He said the agency had a budget shortfall of $70 million and could not pay the full salaries for November and December (Wafa, November 9, 2020). UNRWA spokesman Adnan Abu Hasna said UNRWA hoped the new American administration would restore its aid to the agency (Palinfo Twitter account, November 9, 2020).

In response, Ahmed al-Mudallal, a senior PIJ figure, said the UNRWA employees' salaries were their “natural right” and should not be ignored. He said every step that causes UNRWA not to fulfill its role towards the Palestinian refugees was [allegedly] a "conspiracy" and part
of the "deal of the century." He called on the international community to exert pressure on the donor states, and on the UN secretary general to make UNRWA's budget part of the UN's general budget (PIJ website, November 9, 2020).

**Fire engines donated by Saudi Arabia**

Muhammad Shtayyeh received eight fire engines from Saudi Arabia, worth $8 million. The fire engines were transferred to the PA's civil defense force. Shtayyeh thanked Saudi Arabia for its aid, saying Saudi Arabia supported the Palestinians in combatting Covid-19 with funds and by other means (Wafa, November 3, 2020)

![Muhammad Shtayyeh at the transfer of the fire engines](Wafa YouTube channel, November 3, 2020).

**Reactions to destruction of Palestinian houses in the northern Jordan Valley**

On November 4, 2020, the Israeli civilian administration destroyed about 70 tents and shacks where 11 Palestinian families lived in the region of Khirbet Hamsa al-Foqa in the northeastern Jordan Valley (Area C) (Europa.eu, November 6, 2020). Muhammad Shtayyeh condemned the destruction and called on the international community to intervene and put an end to Israel's actions (Wafa, November 3, 2020). The PA's foreign ministry condemned the demolition of the structures and called on the international community to intervene, also calling for sanctions to be imposed on Israel and for the ICC to open an investigation into Israel's [alleged] "crimes" (Wafa, November 7, 2020.)

Hamas condemned the demolition of the structures, calling it part of Israel's annexation plan. Hamas called for a national strategy employing all forms of "resistance," and also called on the PA and Palestinian human rights organizations to stop Israel's actions and to begin a popular Arab, Islamic and international operation to expose Israel's actions and to boycott it (Hamas website, November 7, 2020). *Hamas spokesman Abd al-Latif al-Qanua* condemned
Israel's policy of demolishing houses, saying that without the normalization with Arab states, Israel would not employ the policy as frequently. He demanded that the "normalization railroad" be halted, the Palestinian people be protected and the firm stance on their land be strengthened (Sawa, November 4, 2020).

A diplomatic delegation from the EU which visited the site condemned the demolition of the structures. According to an EU statement, the extent of the destruction indicated the trend in demolitions and confiscations had risen since the beginning of the year. The EU noted that such developments were an obstacle to the two-state solution and repeated its call to Israel to stop demolishing structures, including those built with EU funding (Europa.eu, November 6, 2020).

The visit of the EU delegation to Hamsa al-Foqa (Wafa, November 6, 2020).

First case against settler to be heard in Palestinian court

On November 8, 2020, Muhammad Shalaldeh, PA minister of justice, said that a Palestinian from the village of Burin was lodging a suit for damages in the magistrate's court in Nablus against a settler who had allegedly attacked his house, which was under construction, causing material and psychological damage. Shalaldeh said it was the first court case based on international norms and laws, especially the Hague Convention, lodged in a Palestinian court against a settler (Wafa, November 8, 2020). He also said the government would provide the Palestinian plaintiff with legal representation and aid. The case is a response to a PA call made at the end of 2019 for victims of alleged "settlers' crimes" to appeal to the Palestinian legal system (Facebook page of the PA ministry of justice, November 8, 2020).