



News of Terrorism and the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict

(April 28 May 4, 2021)

Overview

► **Terrorist attacks:** This past week three terrorist attacks were attempted or carried out in **Judea and Samaria**. Three Israelis were wounded in a shooting attack and two stabbing attacks were prevented. The escalation in terrorist attacks was caused primarily by the events in east Jerusalem, including an attempt to evacuate residents from Sheikh Jarrah and the postponement of the Palestinian Authority elections. The Palestinian terrorist organizations, led by Hamas, called for escalation and encouraged the residents of Judea, Samaria and east Jerusalem to carry out more attacks. The **Gaza Strip** was relatively quiet with the exception of a failed attempt to fire two rockets. Israel lifted the limitations on the fishing zone off the Gaza Strip coast.

► **Palestinian Authority (PA) elections:** At a meeting of the Palestinian leadership Mahmoud Abbas announced the postponement of the Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC) elections, which were supposed to be held on May 22, 2021. He claimed as the reason Israel's refusal to allow the elections to be held in east Jerusalem. Postponing the elections was harshly criticized, especially by Hamas, which claimed other considerations were in play, unconnected to east Jerusalem.

► **East Jerusalem:** Media coverage continues of east Jerusalem and the "victory" of the Palestinians who struggled to have the barriers removed. The preoccupation with Jerusalem includes the Sheikh Jarrah neighborhood in east Jerusalem and the eviction order handed down to a number of Arab residents by the district courthouse. Palestinian foreign minister **Riyad al-Maliki** sent a communiqué to the chief prosecutor of the International Criminal Court (ICC) in the Hague asking for the Court to take a public stand on the matter. Senior Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) figures call for "all forms of resistance" in response.

► **The international arena:** The EU parliament voted to condemn UNRWA for the incitement to hatred and violence in textbooks used in its schools in the Palestinian territories. The parliament is the first legislative body to condemn UNRWA. The condemnation was issued despite the strong lobbies of UNRWA and the PA, including an appearance by PA Prime

Minister **Muhammad Shtayyeh** before the parliament's foreign affairs committee the week before the parliament voted.

► **Human Rights Watch** issued a report accusing Israel of "a policy of apartheid and persecution of the Palestinians and the Arab minority in Israel," which equaled, according to the report, "crimes against humanity." The PA and Hamas welcomed and praised the report, regarding it as of great value and as the foundation for future activity with the ICC, UN agencies and the international community.

Judea and Samaria

Terrorist attacks

► This past week a shooting attack was carried out and two stabbing attacks were attempted in Judea and Samaria which were prevented by the Israeli security forces. The shooting attack wounded three Israelis. The cause of the escalation was apparently the events in east Jerusalem, including the attempt to evict residents of the Sheikh Jarrah neighborhood in east Jerusalem and the postponing of elections in the PA. The Palestinian terrorist organizations, led by Hamas, threatened to escalate and encouraged the residents of Judea, Samaria and east Jerusalem to carry out more attacks. A date mentioned was May 10, the 28th day of Ramadan and Israel's Jerusalem Day. Hamas also issued a notice of solidarity with the residents of Sheikh Jarrah who are facing eviction orders (Hamas website, May 2, 2021). The IDF spokesman said that following an assessment of the situation reinforcements would be sent to Judea and Samaria (IDF spokesman, May 2, 2018).

Shooting attack at the Tapuah Junction (south of Nablus)

► On the evening of **May 2, 2021**, a bus stop at the Tapuah Junction, south of Nablus, was the target of a drive-by shooting attack. A vehicle drove from the south to the bus stop and halted, and shots were fired at the six people waiting there. IDF forces securing the bus stop fired at the vehicle but it drove away. Three 19 year-old yeshiva students were shot and wounded, one of them critically, one seriously and the third superficially.



The scene of the shooting attack at the Tapuah Junction (QudsN Facebook page, May 2, 2021)

►The Israeli security forces still searching for the terrorists who carried out the attack have been attacked with Molotov cocktails and rocks. The IDF responded with riot dispersal measures. The IDF chief of staff visited the site and said the IDF would reinforce its presence and extend operational activities in Judea and Samaria in preparation for an escalation (IDF spokesman, May 3, 2021).

►The Palestinian media reported that on the morning of May 4, 2021, IDF forces began operating in the village of Aqraba, southeast of Nablus. According to the Palestinians, local residents were forbidden to leave their houses and the entrances to the village of Bayta, near the Tapuah Junction, were closed by IDF forces, and no one was allowed into the village (QudsN Facebook page, May 4, 2021).



Right: IDF security action in the village of Aqraba. Left: IDF forces block the entrance to the village of Bayta, near the Tapuah Junction (QudsN Facebook page).

Reactions to the attack

►The shooting attack at the Tapuah Junction was widely covered and the subject of postings to the Palestinian social networks. Most posts praised the perpetrator, blessed his hands and said they hoped he would not be apprehended. Many praised Nablus and its residents, saying the city was renewing its attacks. Social network activists called on local Palestinian residents

to vandalize the security cameras at the site of the attack and to the south of Nablus to prevent the IDF from obtaining pictures (Shehab, May 2, 2021). The following day the vehicle used in the attack was found by the Palestinian security forces in the village of Aqraba after it had been torched by local residents. The Palestinian news websites issued pictures of the burning vehicle (Shabakat Quds, May 3, 2021).



IDF forces extinguish the burning car (Palinfo Twitter account, May 3, 2021).

►Close to the time of the attack the **Fatah movement in Nablus** posted a notice to its Facebook page with no mention of the attack but rather noting that "the resistance to the occupation is the natural right of the Palestinian people," and that Israel ("the occupation") was responsible for its activities in Jerusalem. Apparently the notice posted by Fatah in Nablus was timed to support the attack. A second Fatah post called on anyone who had security camera photos of the shooting attack or the route taken by the vehicle involved to delete them to destroy evidence that could be used to help the Israeli security forces (official Facebook page of Fatah in Nablus, May 2, 2021).



The shooting attack served up as traditional Ramadan desserts (Alaa' al-Laqta's Facebook page, May 2, 2021).

►**Hamas and the PIJ** praised the attack which was, they claimed, a direct response to Israel's "aggression" against the holy places in east Jerusalem. Hamas issued a call to the residents of Judea, Samaria and east Jerusalem to escalate the "resistance" [i.e., terrorist attacks] in

light of plans of "Temple Mount groups" to enter the Temple Mount compound on the 28th day of Ramadan (which is also the day Israel celebrates its Jerusalem Day) (Hamas website, May 2, 2021).

► Hamas spokesman **Hazem Qassem** said the "heroic action" [of shooting at the yeshiva students] was clearly a direct response to the aggression of the settlers and the Israeli army against the holy places in east Jerusalem (Ramallah News, May 2, 2021). Hamas spokesman **Abd al-Latif al-Qanua** said they praised the heroic action carried out south of Nablus, adding that it was the "natural response" to the crimes of the "Zionist occupation," showed support for the Palestinian people in east Jerusalem and was a "legitimate" expansion of the Palestinian resistance in the West Bank (Abd al-Latif al-Qanua's Twitter account, May 2, 2021).



Hamas notice praising the shooting attack (Hamas website, May 2, 2021).

► The PIJ praised the shooting attack, saying its message was that Jerusalem was a red line and that any attack on the holy places would cause an explosion that would blow up in Israel's face. The PIJ added that the action was clearly an indication that the "resistance" [i.e., terrorist organizations] in the West Bank could restore its vitality (Sawa, May 2, 2021).

Stabbing attack prevented at the Gush Etzion Junction (southwest of Bethlehem)

► On the morning of May 2, 2021, an elderly Palestinian woman holding a sharp object arrived at the Gush Etzion Junction and walked towards the IDF soldiers securing the location. The soldiers carried out established procedures for halting a suspect, and when she did not obey they shot and wounded her. She was evacuated to a hospital, later dying. The Palestinian media reported she was Rahab al-Haroub, 60, apparently from the village of Husan, west of

Bethlehem (Palinfo Twitter account, May 2, 2021). Various Palestinian websites reported that she came from the villages of Ni'lin or Wadi Fukin.



Rahab al-Haroub (Husan Facebook page, May 2, 2021).

►The **Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP)** issued a mourning notice for al-Haroub, also stating the importance of a full "resistance" and the escalation of the intifada against Israel (Sawa, May 2, 2021). Senior **PIJ figure Khader Adnan** also offered condolences for her death (PIJ website, May 2, 2021).

Stabbing attack prevented at the Efrat Junction (southwest of Bethlehem)

►On the morning of April 30, 2021, a Palestinian holding a broken bottle came to Efrat Junction from the direction of Bethlehem. He approached the police and a soldier who were directing traffic. A policeman saw him and called out to him to halt, but the Palestinian did not obey and continued walking towards them. The policeman shot and wounded him, and he was evacuated to a hospital. Palestinians threw rocks at the ambulance evacuating the Palestinian (Rescue Without Borders in Judea and Samaria, April 30, 2021). The Palestinian media reported the would-be terrorist was Mansour Amro from Dura (near Hebron) (Dura Facebook page, April 30, 2021).

Rocks, Molotov cocktails and other events

►In Judea and Samaria Palestinians continued throwing rocks and Molotov cocktails, more than usual, at civilians and civilian vehicles driving on the roads. The more prominent events were the following:¹

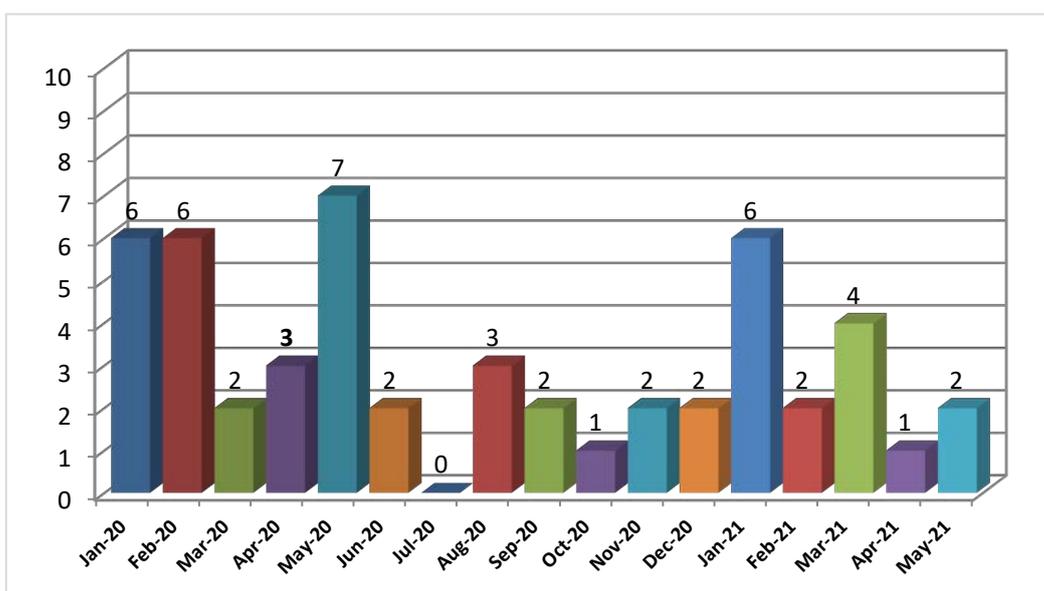
- ◆ **May 4, 2021:** A Molotov cocktail was thrown at an IDF post south of Hebron and caused a fire. No casualties were reported.

¹ All information and reports are from Rescue Without Borders in Judea and Samaria unless otherwise noted.

- ◆ **May 4, 2021:** Rocks were thrown at Israeli vehicles and bus northeast of Ramallah. No casualties were reported. The vehicles were damaged.
- ◆ **May 3, 2021:** Two Molotov cocktails were thrown at an Israeli bus southwest of Hebron.
- ◆ **May 3, 2021:** Rocks were thrown at an Israeli vehicle south of Hebron. No casualties were reported. The windshield of the vehicle was damaged.
- ◆ **May 3, 2021:** Rocks were thrown at an Israeli vehicle east of Qalqilya. One passenger was injured by flying glass and another went into shock.
- ◆ **May 2, 2021:** Rocks and various objects were thrown during a riot in Sheikh Jarrah in east Jerusalem. One man was injured. Police arrived and detained two suspects. A policewoman was superficially injured (Israel Police Force spokesman's unit, Jerusalem, May 2, 2021)
- ◆ **April 30, 2021:** Dozens of Palestinians threw rocks and Molotov cocktails and shot fireworks at the Tomb of Rachel compound in Bethlehem. Border Police fighters dispersed the rioters. Two Palestinians from Bethlehem who had thrown Molotov cocktails at the forces were detained (Israel Police Force spokesman's unit, May 1, 2021).
- ◆ **April 29, 2021:** Dozens of Palestinians in the east Jerusalem neighborhood of a-Tor threw rocks and shot fireworks at a police patrol car, Border Police fighters detained a suspect (Israel Police Force spokesman's unit, April 29, 2021).
- ◆ **April 29, 2021:** Rocks were thrown at an Israeli bus northeast of Hebron. No casualties or damage were reported.
- ◆ **April 29, 2021:** Rocks were thrown at an Israeli bus carrying IDF soldiers northeast of Hebron No casualties were reported. The windshield of the bus was damaged.
- ◆ **April 29, 2021:** Rocks were thrown at an Israeli vehicle east of al-Bireh. No casualties were reported. The vehicle was damaged.
- ◆ **April 29, 2021:** Rocks were thrown at an Israeli vehicle in southwestern Samaria. No casualties were reported. The vehicle was damaged.
- ◆ **April 29, 2021:** Six Molotov cocktails were thrown at a building in the Israel community of Oz Zion, east of Ramallah. The Israeli arriving at the scene put out the fire and conducted a search for the Palestinians who threw them. One person was slightly injured. The building was damaged (IDF spokesman, April 29, 2021).

- ◆ **April 28, 2021:** Molotov cocktails were thrown at an Israeli bus and vehicles on the Jerusalem-Gush Etzion road southwest of Jerusalem. No casualties or damage were reported.
- ◆ **April 28, 2021:** Rocks were thrown at an Israeli bus and vehicle southwest of Nablus. No casualties were reported. The vehicles were damaged.
- ◆ **April 27, 2021:** Rocks were thrown east of Ramallah. Two Israelis were superficially injured.
- ◆ **April 27, 2021:** Molotov cocktails were thrown at an IDF post north of Hebron. No casualties or damage were reported.

Significant Terrorist Attacks in Judea and Samaria since January 2020²



Praise for Hamas' military-terrorist wing from Muslims at al-Aqsa mosque

► This past week marked the third Friday of the Muslim month of Ramadan and many Muslims went to al-Aqsa mosque to pray. A video on the social networks documenting the prayer also documented Muslims shouting praise for **Muhammad Deif** (commander of Hamas' military-terrorist wing) and calls for the wing, the Izz al-Din Qassam Brigades, to **attack Tel Aviv** (Safa, April 30, 2021).

²A significant attack is defined by the ITIC as involving shooting, stabbing, a vehicular attack, the use of IEDs, or a combination of the above. Stones and Molotov cocktails thrown by Palestinians are not included.



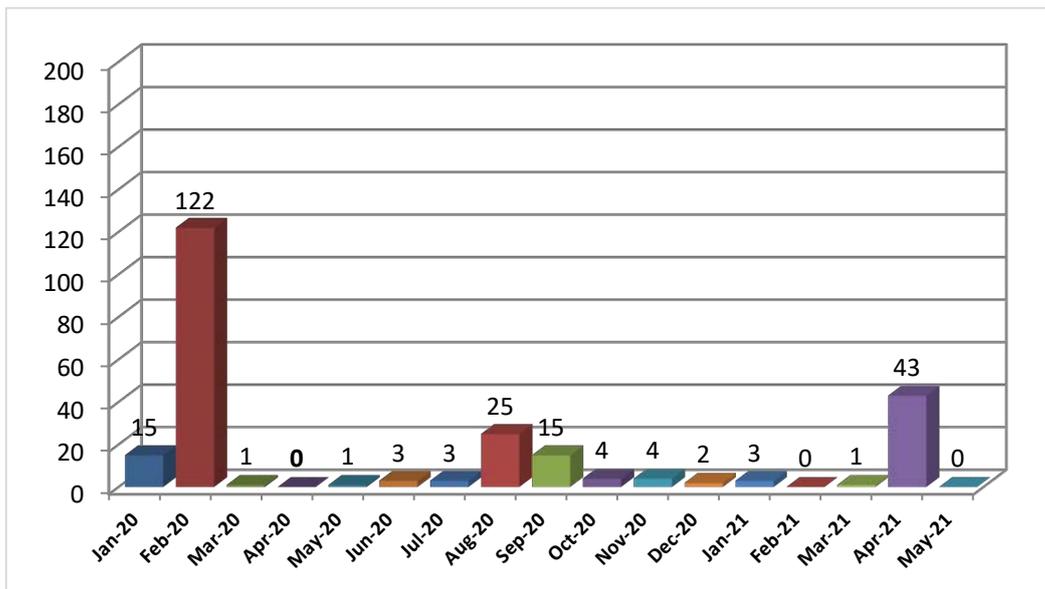
Muslims on the Temple Mount shout support for Muhammad Deif and Hamas' military-terrorist wing (Safa, April 30, 2021)

Israel's South

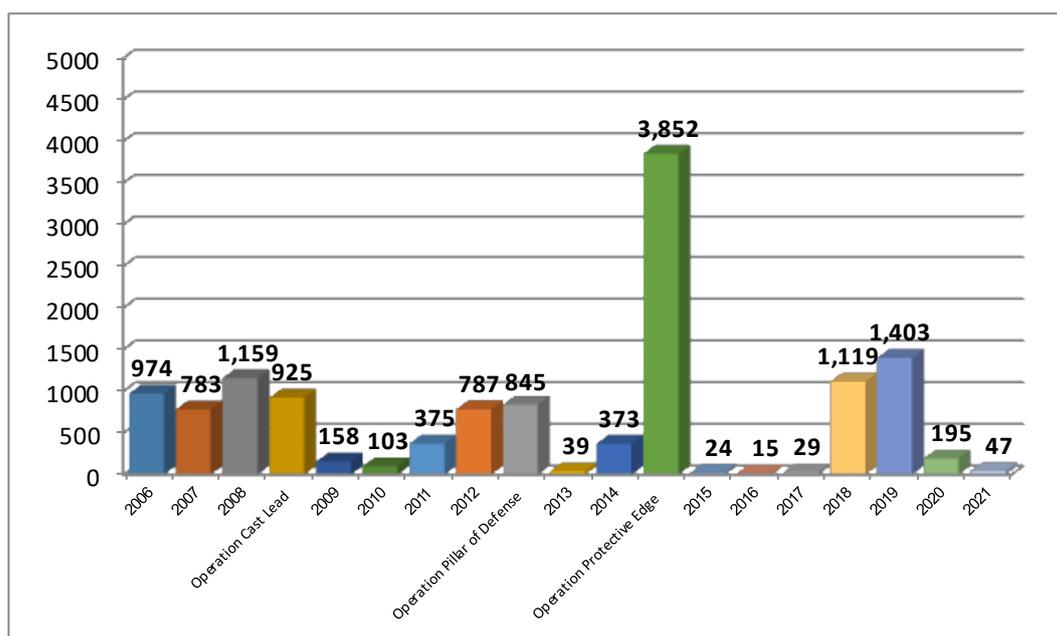
Rocket and mortar shell fire into Israel

►On April 28, 2021, two rockets were fired from the Gaza Strip at Israeli territory, both of them falling inside the Gaza Strip. The Abu Ali Mustafa Brigades, the PFLP's military-terrorist wing, claimed responsibility for firing a rocket at Israel, without mentioning the date (Abu Ali Mustafa Brigades Telegram channel, April 28, 2021).

Monthly Distribution of Rocket and Mortar Shell Fire since January 2020



Annual Distribution of Rocket Hits



Launching incendiary balloons

►The Palestinians reported launching a large number of incendiary balloons from the eastern Gaza Strip into Israeli territory, attacking the communities near the border (Paldf, April 29, 2021). No balloons were located in Israeli territory.

The fishing zone off the Gaza Strip coast

►In response to Israel's announcement regarding the closing of the fishing zone off the Gaza Strip coast, Hamas' naval police announced that as far as they were concerned the sea was open to fishing boats (Sawa, April 27, 2021). The Palestinian media reported that on April 28, 2021, an Israeli naval vessel had fired at Khan Yunis and Rafah to prevent Palestinian fishermen from setting sail (Shehab Twitter account, April 28, 2021).

►On April 29, 2021, Israel announced the reopening of the fishing zone off the Gaza coast after it had been closed following three consecutive nights of rocket fire from the Gaza Strip into Israeli territory. The Israeli Coordinator of Government Activities in the Territories said that the restoration of routine civilian policies towards the Gaza Strip was conditioned on the ongoing preservation of quiet and security stability (Israeli Coordinator of Government Activities in the Territories' spokesman's unit, April 29, 2021).

Developments in the Gaza Strip

Money from Qatar arrives in the Gaza Strip

► **Mohammed al-Emadi**, chairman of Qatar's National Committee for the Reconstruction of Gaza, said Qatar's aid for the Gaza Strip would arrive in the coming week and be distributed to 170,000 needy families through the branches of the post office bank in Gaza. He promised the funds would arrive before the Eid al-Fitr holiday, which ends Ramadan and falls on May 12, 2021 (Filastin al-Yawm, May 3, 2021).

► **Isma'il Haniyeh**, head of Hamas' political bureau, met with Muhammad bin Abd al-Rahman, the Qatari foreign minister, to discuss political developments in the Palestinian cause, including the issue of postponing the elections (Filastin al-Yawm, April 29, 2021).

► **Mahmoud al-Zahar**, a member of Hamas' political bureau, visited a Hamas military-terrorist wing post, where he told the operatives that they were currently on the Gazan shore but would reach the shores of Haifa and Rosh Hanikra [Israel's northernmost coastal site]. His visit was documented and uploaded to the social networks.



Mahmoud al-Zahar visits a Hamas military-terrorist wing post (Twitter account of Amira Fuad, May 2, 2021).

The Palestinian Authority (PA)

PA elections postponed

► On April 29, 2021, during a meeting of the Palestinian leadership, **Mahmoud Abbas** announced the **postponement of the PA elections** (which were supposed to be held on May 22, 2021). As a pretext he gave Israel's refusal to allow the elections to be held in east Jerusalem. He criticized the European countries for not having been able to make Israel allow elections in east Jerusalem and that without Jerusalem "our eternal capital" [sic] no elections would be held at all. However, he said they were working to form a national unity

government that would be committed to implementing international decisions and to strengthening the PLO (Palestinian TV, April 29, 2021). Mahmoud Abbas' spokesman **Nabil Abu Rudeineh** said the decision to postpone the elections was made to preserve national principles and interests, the foremost of which was Jerusalem, and that holding elections without east Jerusalem was in effect implementing the "deal of the century" (Voice of Palestine radio, May 1, 2021).



Right: Cartoon in al-Araby al-Jadeed, London. The Arabic reads, "Palestinian Legislative [Council] elections postponed" (al-Araby al-Jadeed, May 1, 2021). Left: Cartoon in al-Hayat al-Jadeeda, the official PA organ, blaming Israel for preventing the elections in east Jerusalem. The Arabic reads, "Elections in Jerusalem" (al-Hayat al-Jadeeda, May 3, 2021).

►Following Mahmoud Abbas' announcement the Palestinian Central Elections Committee halted the election process which had begun on April 30, 2021. Thus no election slate will be made public and election propaganda will not begin as planned. Committee members said they hoped they would be able to complete the election process as soon as possible (Wafa, April 30, 2021).

PA Prime **Minister Muhammad Shtayyeh**, meeting with **Sven Kühn von Burgsdorff**, the EU representative in the PA, said that the elections had been postponed but not cancelled. He added that the PA wanted the EU to continue exerting pressure on Israel to allow them to be held in Jerusalem (Wafa, May 2, 2021).

Reactions to the postponement

Fatah

►**Fatah**, on its official Facebook page, accused Israel of bearing responsibility for postponing the elections because it prevented them from being held in east Jerusalem (Fatah's official Facebook page, April 29, 2021).

►**Nasser al-Qidwa**, a former member of Fatah's Central Committee and currently heading the PA's Liberty slate, said they were consulting with **Marwan Barghouti**, a member of Fatah's

Central Committee, currently in prison in Israel, about what to do following Mahmoud Abbas's postponement of the elections. Nasser al-Qidwa called for setting a new date for PLC and "presidential" elections before the end of 2021 (Dunia al-Watan, May 1, 2021).

Hamas

► **Hamas**, whose delegates boycotted the meeting, was harshly critical of the decision to postpone the elections, which they claimed had been made because of considerations unrelated to east Jerusalem. Hamas' official response was that they were very sorry Fatah and the PA had decided to "cancel" the elections. They considered Fatah and the PA as fully responsible for the decision and its consequences. The east Jerusalemites, they said, had proved their ability to force the elections on Israel (Hamas website, April 30, 2021).

► **"Hamas sources"** said Hamas was currently working on a number of scenarios to deal with Mahmoud Abbas' decision. The primary one is not giving it legitimacy and after that escalating in Jerusalem, the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, and then forming a broad Palestinian front to exert pressure on Mahmoud Abbas, representing most of the Palestinian people as opposed to the postponement (al-Akhbar, April 30 2021).

► **Isma'il Haniyeh**, head of Hamas' political bureau, gave a speech where he said Hamas had always understood that Israel had an extremist government which supported the "deal of the century" and would not allow elections to be held in east Jerusalem. He said that despite Israel's objections the "organizations" had agreed to find alternative ways to hold them in Jerusalem. He also said they did not disagree with Fatah over the importance of holding the elections in Jerusalem, but they did disagree with Fatah and its perception that any election process was dependent on Israel's agreement (al-Aqsa, April 30 2021).

► Throughout the Gaza Strip demonstrations were held to protest the postponement, including in four locations along the border security fence between Israel and the Gaza Strip. At one of the demonstrations PLC speaker **Musheir al-Masri** said the Palestinian people were currently at one of the crossroads in the series of crossroads in the open battles against Israel ("the Zionist enemy") in Jerusalem. He said Hamas welcomed the free people who stood against the enemy in Jerusalem, and that "the house of the occupation is weaker than the house of a spider." He called for enforcing the elections in Jerusalem and said election day should be turned into a day of national struggle against the occupation (al-Aqsa, April 30, 2021).



Right: Protest demonstration in Gaza after the Friday prayers in the mosques (Palinfo Twitter account, April 30, 2021). Left: Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine demonstration in Khan Yunis (Palinfo Twitter account, May 2, 2021).

The Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ)

►PIJ leader **Ziyad al-Nakhalah** (whose organization was not expected to participate in the elections) said that what was happening now strengthened the claim that "jihad and resistance to the Zionist enemy" were the honest truth that everyone had to deal with. He called on all the Palestinian forces to meet urgently to agree on a national plan to struggle against Israel instead of making statements and holding demonstrations (PIJ website, April 30, 2021).

►Senior PIJ figure **Muhammad al-Hindi** said the meeting of the Palestinian leadership had been held for the sake of protocol only and that the decision had in fact been made several days before. He said that if they had been serious about holding the elections they would have confronted Israel and waited for it to agree (Filastin al-Yawm, April 29, 2021).

Other reactions

►The **PFLP** said it was not necessary for the Palestinian leadership to condition its decision regarding holding the elections in Jerusalem on the agreement of Israel ("the occupation"). Instead the Palestinian leadership should have acted to force elections in Jerusalem on Israel, since there was no need for authority from Israel to hold elections in Jerusalem or anywhere else (alresala.net, April 30, 2021).

►The **Palestinian people**, most of whom wanted to vote, are disappointed and resentful. Most of them refused to accept the PA's decision. Commentators noted that the Palestinian public understood that besides the issue of east Jerusalem there was the issue of internal politics and Fatah's standing in public opinion polls. A commentator named **Hani al-Masri** called postponing the elections "a terrible mistake" that would engender scenarios

prolonging and perpetuating the schism between the West Bank and Gaza Strip, and restore the situation of mutual Hamas and Fatah incitement. A commentator named **Sari Arabi** said that everyone had lost because now they were returning to the internal Palestinian schism (Quds al-Akhbariya, May 1, 2021).

Ongoing preoccupation with the events in Jerusalem

►Palestinian spokesmen continued their preoccupation with the events in Jerusalem. **Mahmoud Abbas**, speaking at a meeting of the Palestinian leadership in Ramallah, said Israel supported and even encouraged the settlers who chanted "Death to the Arabs" during the riots. He said he supported the [so-called] "popular resistance" [i.e., popular terrorism] over the use of weapons because, he claimed, the popular resistance was the only way to stop Israel's aggression against the Palestinian people and which would lead to the removal of the barriers in Jerusalem (Palestinian TV, April 29, 2021).

►**Isma'il Haniyeh**, head of Hamas' political bureau, gave a speech in which he praised the Palestinian people "which stood and defended Jerusalem and al-Aqsa mosque and fought bravely in the battle at the Damascus Gate." He said the "sons of Jerusalem" had restored the Palestinian cause to center stage and proved that the Palestinian people could regain their rights by force and guard the holy places. He also praised the Gazans for the rockets they fired and said he supported the Jerusalemites because they had proved that the battle for Jerusalem was everyone's battle. He said the 28th day of Ramadan was when Israel and the settlers were planning to storm al-Aqsa mosque, and called on Israel to stop playing with fire and to end its aggression against the Palestinian presence in Jerusalem. He claimed Hamas would not abandon the Jerusalemites (al-Aqsa, April 30, 2021).

►**Usama Hamedan**, responsible for Hamas' foreign relations, said the "resistance" wanted a new equations with Israel, in which if Israel "harmed" Jerusalem or al-Aqsa mosque in any way the "resistance" would fire rockets deep into the Israeli homeland. He claimed there would be no solution to the issue of Jerusalem without the "resistance" and that Jerusalem would only be liberated through the "resistance." He said the city was a red line for all the organizations in the joint operations room in the Gaza Strip (al-Manar, April 27, 2021)

►**Saleh al-'Arouri**, deputy head of Hamas' political bureau, posted a video to the social networks with a message for the east Jerusalemites He said the Palestinian people would not give up the "resistance" and would continue struggling until they had restored Jerusalem's Muslim-Christian character (Palinfo Twitter account, April 28, 2021).



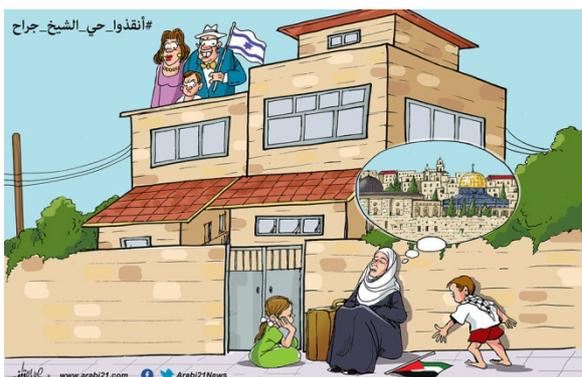
**Saleh al-'Arouri with a message for east Jerusalemites
(Palinfo Twitter account, April 28, 2021).**

► **Al-Aqsa TV** continued documenting Palestinians rioting against Jews in Jerusalem. According to one video "Jerusalem is going up in flames in the faces of the settlers in nights of courage and sacrifice..." One transition broadcast praised the east Jerusalemites, saying they had turned election day [May 22] into a milestone of confrontation. Another transition broadcast called on local resident to resist "Israel's attack" in Sheikh Jarrah and to stand united to foil the plots of the settlers, and to show the world that they would not accept the eviction of Jerusalemites and the takeover of their houses (al-Aqsa, May 3, 2021).

Sheikh Jarrah

► The preoccupation with Jerusalem includes extensive reporting on the Sheikh Jarrah neighborhood in east Jerusalem and the eviction order issued by the district court to several Arab residents.³ Palestinian foreign minister **Riyad al-Maliki** sent a communiqué to the chief prosecutor of the ICC elaborating recent events in Sheikh Jarrah and asking for the Court to take a unequivocal public stand regarding the "crime being committed in the neighborhood." According to al-Maliki they were monitoring events in full coordination with Jordan, which had provided documents in support of the rights of the Palestinians in Sheikh Jarrah. He also held a series of talks with foreign ministers around the world and the secretariat general of the Arab League, demanding the international community take responsibility and implement the measures necessary to force Israel to obey international law (Wafa, May 3, 2021).

³ An appeal was lodged with the Israeli Supreme Court and its ruling is supposed to be handed down on May 6, 2021. If the Court rejects the appeal the residents will have to leave their houses.



Palestinians clash with IDF forces during a demonstration held in support of the residents of Sheikh Jarrah (al-Hayat al-Jadeeda, May 4, 2021). Left: Israelis take over the houses of Palestinians in Sheikh Jarrah, #save_Sheikh_Jarrah (Alaa' al-Laqta's Facebook page, May 3, 2021).

►Fatah spokesman **Usama al-Qawasmeh** said Fatah called on the UN and the Security Council to take legal and moral responsibility for Israel's "slaughter" and its armed, forceful eviction of residents from their homes (Wafa, May 2, 2021). **Hamas** spokesman **Fawzi Barhoum** claimed Israel's "collective eviction" was a public attack on Palestinian identity. He called on Palestinians to go to Sheikh Jarrah and resist. He also appealed to the Arab states to defend the Palestinian people and support its "resistance" (he, May 2, 2021). Senior **PIJ** figure **Ahmed al-Mudallal** said the "resistance" was always prepared to respond to "Israel's crimes" and that the Palestinians demanded an intifada in the West Bank and Jerusalem as the response to the crime being committed in Sheikh Jarrah, and all forms of "resistance" (Filastin al-Yawm, May 2, 2021).

Palestinian reactions to the events at Mt. Meron

►After the events at Mt. Meron, which took the lives of 45 people and wounded about 150, **Mahmoud Abbas** sent a communiqué to Israeli President Reuven Rivlin expressing his condolences.

►On the other hand, **many Palestinians** in Judea, Samaria and the Gaza Strip, as well as abroad, used the social media to express **satisfaction**. Palestinians, Arab and BDS supporters around the world used the hashtag "#holy_bridge" to show their joy at the deaths. Many claimed Mt. Meron was where Jews had "attacked Palestinians throughout the history of the conflict," calling them "settlers" or even "murderous settlers." Others chose to claim that among the victims were those responsible for the murder of the Dawabshe family in Duma near Nablus.

►Other responses were the following:

- ◆The events at Mt. Meron "mean Allah gives us the right to be happy when the enemies of Allah die" (Facebook page of Aya Hasouna from the Gaza Strip).
- ◆Radwan al-Kharas, a Hamas-affiliated journalist and commentator from the Gaza Strip tweeted with the hashtag "#al-Jarmaq" (the Arab name for Mt. Meron) "al-Jarmaq, where the murderous settlers held their celebration, is the highest mountain in Palestine and lies near Safad, the bride of the Galilee. The occupation expelled its residents in 1948 and slaughtered its residents and the residents of the neighboring villages..."
- ◆"A wonderful thing happened at Mt. Meron in northern Palestine a short time ago" with pictures from the event (Twitter account of Muhammad Abu Gosh from Tulkarm).

The EU condemns the incitement in textbooks used in UNRWA schools

►On April 28, 2021, the **European parliament** voted to **condemn UNRWA** for the incitement to hatred and violence in the textbooks used in its schools in the PA.⁴ The ruling raises concern over the contents of the textbooks and insists that financial aid be conditioned on removing the offensive material, and full transparency from UNRWA and the publication of teaching materials for teachers and students. Also noted was that EU financing would be conditioned on teaching materials which met the standards of UNESCO for educating for peace, tolerance, coexistence and non-violence. The EU parliament is the first legislative body to condemn UNRWA, and the ruling was passed despite the activities of the strong UNRWA-PA lobby, including an appearance by PA Prime Minister **Muhammad Shtayyeh** at the parliament's foreign affairs committee the week before the vote was taken (i24, April 28, 2021).

►**Salim Za'anoun**, chairman of the PLO's Palestinian National Council, called on the EU to reverse its decision. He claimed the schools in the PA also use UNRWA teaching materials which reflect Palestinian identity and heritage, and reinforce the UN's principles and ideology (Wafa, May 4, 2021).

Responses to Human Rights Watch report

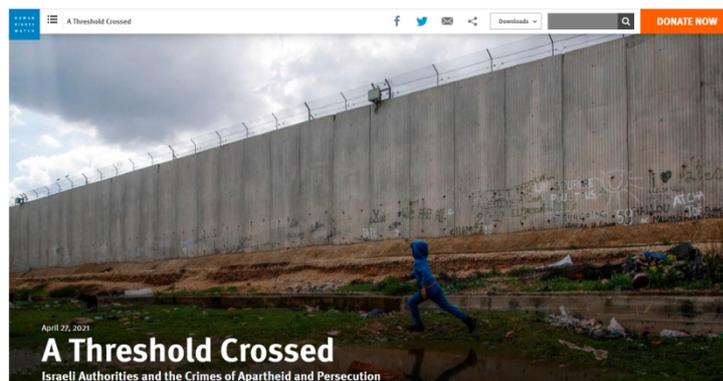
►On April 27, 2021, **Human Rights Watch** issued a 213-page report accusing Israel of policies of apartheid and the persecution of the Palestinians and the Arab minority in Israel which

⁴ The curriculum and textbooks used in UNRWA schools in Judea, Samaria and the Gaza Strip are published by the PA. They inculcate hatred for Israel and refusal to accept its existence, and adhere to the so-called "right of return."

equal, according to the reports, "crimes against humanity." The claim was based on the policies of the Israeli government to [allegedly] preserve Jewish Israeli control of the Palestinians and on the gross violations [allegedly] committed against the Palestinians living in the occupied territories, including east Jerusalem. According to the report, The [so-called] findings indicating "crimes against humanity" should motivate the international community to reassess the nature of its relations with Israel and the Palestinians, and to adopt an approach focusing on human rights and accountability instead of only the stalled peace process (Human Rights Watch website, April 28, 2021).

►The **PA and Hamas** welcomed the report and tried to use it to promote their goals in the international arena, especially with the ICC. **Nabil Abu Rudeineh**, spokesman for Mahmoud Abbas, claimed the report proved Israel's "crimes" such as racial separation and oppression (Wafa, April 28, 2021). **Muhammad Shtayyeh** said the report would join previous legal opinions calling for Israel's being brought to trial for its actions. He called for translating the report into the active punishment of Israel, such as cutting off diplomatic relations and cancelling trade and cultural agreements (Muhammad Shtayyeh's Facebook page, April 27, 2021). He also met with Human Rights Watch's regional director. He called on the organization and on UN agencies to monitor the report (Muhammad Shtayyeh's Facebook page, May 3, 2021).

►**Muhammad Shalaldeh**, the PA's minister of justice, said the report had great legal value and could be used in the PA's dealings with the ICC (al-Hayat al-Jadeeda, April 28, 2021). **Omar Awadallah**, head of the UN agency department in the Palestinian foreign ministry, said the report could be exploited at a number of levels: against Israel in the ICC; with UN agencies, such as the UN Human Rights Council and to renew the activities of the UN committees which dealt with the security fence; and politically and diplomatically to motivate the international community to punish Israel (al-Hayat al-Jadeeda, April 28, 2021).



Right: Photo from the Human Rights Watch report (Human Rights Watch website, April 27, 2021). Left: Cartoon in response to the report (al-Quds, May 1, 2021).

Payments for released prisoners

► **Qudri Abu Bakr**, chairman of the commission for prisoners and released prisoners' affairs, said, regarding the May 2021 payments for released prisoners in Judea, Samaria and the Gaza Strip, that they would be paid in Judea and Samaria through ATMs and in the Gaza Strip through "a number of authorized banks" (Amad, May 2, 2021).

The Arab bank reported a profitable first quarter of 2021

► The Arab Bank Group, to which the Arab Amman Bank belongs, published its first quarter report for 2021. According to the report, during the first quarter the bank increased its capital, which today stands at \$62.5 billion, 30% more than the first quarter of 2020. The bank's profits stood at \$128 million, down from \$148 million a year ago. **Sabih al-Masri**, chairman of the Arab Bank's board of directors, said the bank's positive balance sheet indicated its ability to deal with changes and preserve its profits, despite the difficult challenges it faced during the past year caused by the coronavirus (al-Quds, May 2, 2021).

► Despite the positive data published by the bank, al-Hayat al-Jadeeda published data summarizing the coronavirus' influence on the Palestinian economy. According to al-Hayat al-Jadeeda (May 2, 2021):

- ◆ 90% of the economic institutions in Judea and Samaria closed their doors, 37% in the Gaza Strip.
- ◆ Sales dropped by 50% during the first three months of the lockdown.
- ◆ 89% of the economic institutions had cash-flow problems.
- ◆ 62% of the economic institutions had problems importing raw materials.



The Palestinian worker, sliced up by both the coronavirus and the bankers. The Arabic reads, "The workers in our country celebrate" (Alaa' al-Laqta's Facebook page, May 1, 2021).

The Covid-19 Infection Update

The Gaza Strip

In the **Gaza Strip** there was a significant **drop** in the number of active coronavirus cases, although there was no change in the rate of infection. During the past week 3,645 new cases were detected, down from 6,245 a week ago. During the 24 hours between April 3 and 4, there were 484 new cases and 1,529 tests were administered, with a positive rate of 32% (no change since last week). The number of active cases in the Gaza Strip currently stands at 11,418, down from 14,846 on April 27, 2021. There are 267 Gazans in ICUs, 196 of them in serious condition. This past week 52 Gazans died of coronavirus-related complications, bringing the number of fatalities to 921. So far 38,000 Gazans have been vaccinated, of 120,000 doses of the vaccine which arrived in the Gaza Strip, sufficient for 60,000 people (Khabar Press, April 30, 2021).

The overall situation

►The ministry of health in Gaza announced that carriers of the British variant had been detected, and there was concern regarding the Indian variant although so far it was impossible to test for it in the Gaza Strip. The ministry assessed that 50% of the population (more than one million people) had already been infected with the coronavirus (Filastin al-Yawm, April 28, 2021). The ministry of the interior announced the current guidelines would be extended by a week until a new assessment could be formed (Sawa, April 28, 2021).

►**Dr. Majdi Dheir**, director of preventive medicine in the ministry of health in Gaza, said that even though they were instituting measures to prevent the Indian variant from entering the

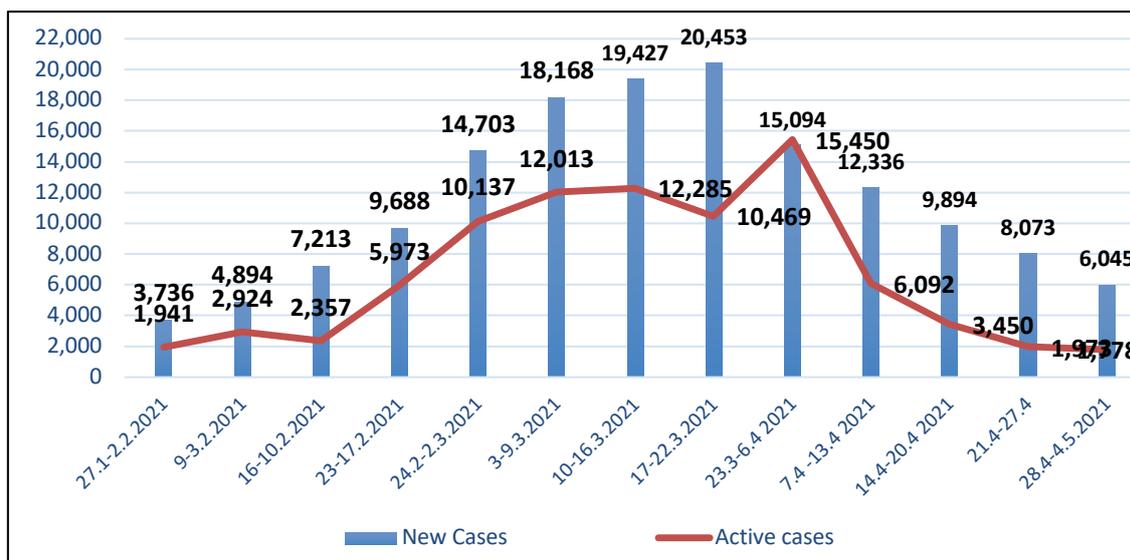
Gaza Strip, it could still happen. He said that anyone entering the Gaza Strip from India or Bangladesh through the Rafah Crossing was sent to a quarantine center for 14 days (QudsN, April 29, 2021). On another occasion he said they could see the results of the preventive measures in the reduction in the extent of the disease. However, he said, they were concerned the numbers could rise again after Ramadan because of the crowding [in the markets in preparation for the holiday] and family visits (Khabar Press, April 30, 2021).

Judea and Samaria

In **Judea and Samaria** the number of active cases and the rate of infection continue dropping. This past week 1,778 new active cases were detected, down from 1,973 on April 27, 2021. During the 24 hours between April 3 and 4, 260 new cases were detected and 2,327 tests were administered, with a positive rate of about 11%. The number of active cases stands at 6,045, down from 8,073 on April 27, 2021. There are 129 ICU patients, 41 of them on ventilators. This past week 43 Palestinians died from coronavirus-related complications, bringing the number of fatalities to 2,375. So far 222,000 Palestinians have been vaccinated (Facebook page of the ministry of health in Ramallah, May 4, 2018). Mahmoud Abbas issued an order extending the state of emergency for another month (Wafa, May 3, 2021).

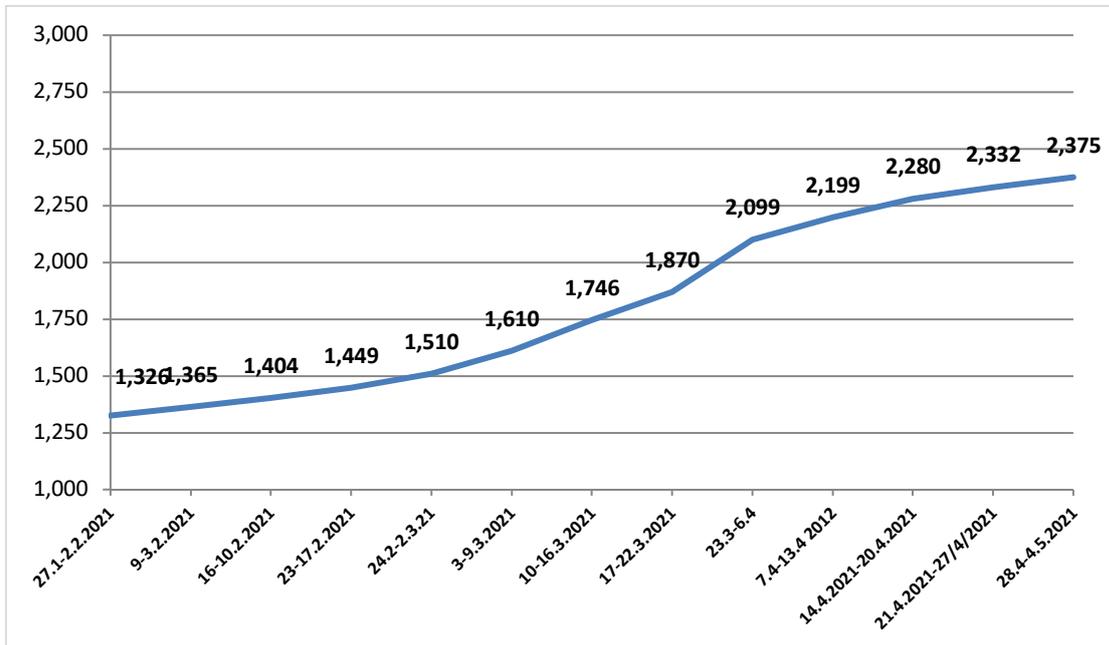
Coronavirus in Judea and Samaria

(According to the ministry of health in Ramallah)



Coronavirus-related fatalities

(According to the ministry of health in Ramallah)



Vaccines

► **Mai al-Kayla**, PA minister of health, announced that half a million Russian Sputnik vaccines would arrive in the middle of May (Sawa, May 3, 2021). The ministry of health in Ramallah announced that **Ramzan Kadyrov, the president of Chechnya**, had donated 20,000 doses of Russian vaccine to the PA (Wafa, April 30, 2021). Al-Kayla thanked him for his donation (Facebook page of the ministry of health in Ramallah, April 30, 2021).



Aid from Chechnya (ministry of health in Ramallah Facebook page, April 30, 2021).

The situation in the hospitals

► The doctors' union has intensified its struggle over what they call "the stubbornness of the Palestinian government and its dismissal of an initiative to implement the agreement signed a year ago." On April 27, 2021, it was reported that as of May 4, 2021, doctors would refuse to hospitalize new patients in government hospitals even if they were emergencies. They also

decided to close the ICUs in all government hospitals. The union called on local residents to transfer to private hospitals (alresala.net, April 27; Shehab Twitter account, May 1, 2021).