



## The military-terrorist wing of Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) held military exercise in the Gaza Strip to convey threats to Israel.

June 23, 2022

### Overview

- ▶ On June 20, 2022, the Jerusalem Brigades, the military-terrorist wing of the Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) held a large exercise called "The determination of the truth tellers" in the Gaza Strip. Originally it was planned to last several days, but it actually began in the morning and ended in the evening of the same day. Jerusalem Brigades spokesman Abu Hamza reported that all the objectives of the exercise has been achieved and the results were good.
- ▶ The exercise was fully coordinated with the de facto Hamas administration and the Izz al-Din Qassam Brigades, Hamas' military-terrorist wing. To fully enable the exercise, the Gaza Strip coast was closed from the morning of June 20, 2022, until midnight, an inconvenience for the Gazans, for whom the beach is a recreation site throughout the day and night.
- ▶ According to PIJ sources, the objective of the exercise was to complete their operational preparedness and improve their combat capabilities for a future military engagement with Israel. Several Palestinian and Arab commentators claimed its main objective was to deter Israel with threats of the wing's military capabilities.
- ▶ The exercise mainly focused on firing rockets and artillery at targets at sea. According to spokesmen for the military-terrorist wing, the objective was to examine and improve their degree of precision. Senior PIJ figures claimed that between 200 and 350 rockets and mortar shells were fired at various targets at sea, simulating an attack on the Israeli towns and villages near the Gaza Strip. The rockets and mortar shells used in the exercise were manufactured locally by the Jerusalem Brigades' development and production department.
- ▶ The Jerusalem Brigades forbade media coverage and pictures were taken by local residents. On June 21, 2022, the PIJ issued pictures and a video of the exercise.
- ▶ A number of military exercises were recently held in the Gaza Strip. For instance, on December 26, 2021, one held by the joint operations room, led by Hamas.<sup>1</sup> The current exercise is a practical manifestation of the PIJ's repeated threats to "escalate" the situation

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<sup>1</sup> For further information, see the January 4, 2022 bulletin, " The military exercise held by the joint operations room of the terrorist organizations in the Gaza Strip: messages and threats for Israel."

with Israel because of Palestinians killed by the Israeli security forces in Judea and Samaria (primarily in Jenin) and Israel's activities in Jerusalem and the Temple Mount compound.

► Apparently the military-terrorist wings of the organizations in the Gaza Strip are keeping a low profile and maintaining relative quiet to prevent another round of combat with Israel at this time. The exercises, with their displays of force and military capabilities, are another way of threatening Israel and part of the so-called "balance of deterrence," including threats from Ibrahim al-Madhoun to attack Israel's offshore oil rig (see below).

## The Military Exercise

► On **June 19, 2022**, the PIJ announced that the Jerusalem Brigades, its military-terrorist wing, was planning to conduct a large military exercise called "The determination of the truth tellers." Jerusalem Brigades spokesman Abu Hamza said the exercise would partially complete preparations for a future round of combat against Israel. He said it would continue for a number of days and have a variety of military scenarios, especially the use of rockets and artillery fire. As part of the preparations, the Jerusalem Brigades issued a public service video for the Gazan public explaining the exercise's significance (Paltoday, June 19, 2022). Because of the exercise, Hamas' naval police closed the fishing area off the Gazan coast to prevent fishermen from entering the firing zone (Paldf Twitter account, June 19, 2022).



**The logo of the Jerusalem Brigades exercise called "The determination of the truth tellers" (Jerusalem Brigades website, June 19, 2022).**

► On **June 20, 2022**, the Gazan media announced the exercise would begin with rocket fire towards the sea. Pictures show rockets fired from locations close civilian population centers. Although the exercise was supposed to be held over several days, on the evening of June 20, 2022, the Jerusalem Brigades announced it had been completed. The announcement was delivered by Abu Hamza, who said hundreds of operatives from all over the Gaza Strip had participated in a variety of military activities. He claimed they had reached an advanced stage

of combat readiness and had achieved better rocket and mortar fire precision, which strengthened their operational capabilities (Jerusalem Brigades website, June 20, 2022). The Jerusalem Brigades also issued an announcement thanking the operatives who participated and the ministry of the interior in the Gaza Strip for their efforts towards the success of the exercise (Jerusalem Brigades website, June 20, 2022).



**Rocket fire during the exercise. The picture at the right shows rockets launched from a populated civilian area (al-Hayat Press, June 20, 2022).**

► **"Abu Ahmed," an operational Jerusalem Brigades commander**, reported that the exercise was meant to raise the combat readiness of the military operatives in the artillery and rocket-firing units in preparation for the next confrontation with Israel. He said the exercise simulated attacks on Israeli targets and "settlements." He also noted that all the rockets and mortar shells used in the exercise had been manufactured locally by the Jerusalem Brigades, despite the hardships in the Gaza Strip and Israel's "siege." He said the Jerusalem Brigades' engineers had produced new and advanced warheads suitable for various distances (Shams News, June 21, 2022).

► **Dr. Muhammad Shelah, a senior PIJ figure in the Gaza Strip**, said that during the exercise between 200 and 350 rockets and mortar shells had been fired at targets off the Gazan coast to simulate firing at the Israeli communities and towns near the Gaza Strip (al-Khanadeq, June 21, 2022).

## Political Commentary and Reports about the Military Exercise

► The military exercise was reported and commented on by PIJ operatives, journalists and commentators, and even by Hezbollah. They all claimed the exercise had shown the PIJ's military wing high level of preparedness for facing Israel in a possible military scenario.

► **Ihsan Ataya, PIJ representative in Lebanon**, claimed the exercise had conveyed the message to Israel that the Jerusalem Brigades were "prepared to defend the Palestinian people and their land," and their "hands would not be tied" if Israel attacked them. He said the military wing continued developing and strengthening its capabilities (al-Quds al-Yawm, June 21, 2022).



**Ihsan Ataya, PIJ representative in Lebanon, discusses the exercise**  
(al-Quds al-Yawm, June 21, 2022)

► **Hezbollah's Sheikh Hassan Haballah, responsible for Palestinian -Hezbollah relations**, said the exercise had conveyed the message to Israel that [the PIJ was] prepared and its forces on the ground were prepared to ward off any attack. The objective was to deter Israel, and in his opinion, Israel had been deterred, as opposed to previous years. He said the exercise had made it clear to Israel that the "resistance" [i.e., the terrorist organizations] had taken the initiative and could and would prevent an [Israel] attack (al-Quds al-Yawm, June 21, 2022).



**Sheikh Hassan Haballah, responsible for Palestinian-Hezbollah relations, discusses the exercise (al-Quds al-Yawm, June 21, 2022).**

- ▶ **PIJ-affiliated journalist Muhammad Mansour** said the exercise had conveyed two messages to Israel: one, the PIJ had reserves of rockets and mortar shells sufficient to contradict the claim made by **Israeli Prime Minister Naftali Bennett** that today the "resistance" in the Gaza Strip was weak. Two, it was a response to the declaration by **PIJ leader Ziyad al-Nakhalah** that they would no longer accept the humiliation of the Palestinian prisoners and the activities of PIJ operatives in the West Bank (al-Akhbar, June 22, 2022).
- ▶ **Ibrahim al-Madhoun** (a Hamas operative who currently resides in Istanbul) tweeted that the exercise was a clear threat against Israel's explorations for natural gas near the Gaza coastline. He said the exercise had been coordinated with the Hamas administration and its military wing. On another occasion he tweeted, "When will we see Jerusalem Brigades military exercises in the West Bank? in preparation for the 'liberation' and the end of security cooperation with Israel, which ties the hands the 'resistance.?' " The exercise, he tweeted, showed the Palestinian people that guns and rockets are their strength and are paving the way for unity and [realizing the right of] return (Ibrahim al-Madhoun's Twitter account, June 20, 2022).
- ▶ **Hassan Lafi, a political commentator in the Gaza Strip**, said the timing of the exercise revealed a new stage in the most important issues for the Palestinians, which were preserving their internal unity and integrating all the Palestinian fronts. He said the objective of the exercise was to convey to Israel the message that the "forces" were prepared to integrate all the Palestinian fronts and that the Jerusalem Brigades were prepared for military combat against Israel at any time (Paltoday, June 19, 2022)
- ▶ **Dr. Mahmoud al-Ajarmi**, Palestinian security and strategy expert, said the exercise was meant to show the Jerusalem Brigades' operational preparedness for combat in the Gaza Strip, and to make it clear to Israel that they would not remain silent when activities were

carried out "against the Palestinians," as had been the case during the Flag March (Paltoday, June 19, 2022).

# Appendix

## Documenting the exercise

- ▶ The exercise was declared closed and no media reports were permitted (al-Quds al-Arabi, June 20, 2022). **On June 21, 2022**, the following day, the Jerusalem Brigades published an official selection of pictures and a video documenting the exercise (Jerusalem Brigades website, June 21, 2022).
- ▶ The video shows rocket fire, the operations room with operatives following the rocket fire on TV screens and the command center. A recording of "Abu Muhammad al-'Ajouri" was played in the background, apparently Akram al-'Ajouri, a member of the PIJ leadership and head of the Jerusalem Brigades. He announced the start of the exercise, quoted Qur'an verses and called on the Palestinian people to trust in Allah to encourage the military operatives and raise their morale. Rocket and mortar fire was later shown (Jerusalem Brigades website, June 21, 2022). The following are pictures from the exercise (Jerusalem Brigades website, June 21, 2022):

## The operations room and command center



The operations room monitors the rocket fire.



The command center where the commander and his aides stayed during the exercise.

Firing rockets towards the sea







Firing at targets along the coast (al-Hayat Press, June 20, 2022).



Rocket fire (Paltoday, June 21, 2022).