



## Israeli-Palestinian Islamic Jihad escalation in the Gaza Strip: Operation Breaking Dawn

August 7, 2022

### Overview

► After a number of tense days in the Gaza Strip, caused by the detention of senior Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) figure Bassem al-Sa'adi in the Jenin refugee camp on August 1, 2022, the PIJ threatened to fire rockets and anti-tank missiles at Israel. At 16:16 on Friday, August 5, 2022, the IDF killed **Tayseer al-Jaabari, commander of the Jerusalem Brigades, the PIJ's military-terrorist wing in the northern Gaza Strip**. The targeted killing was carried out with a direct hit on an apartment in a high-rise building in the heart of Gaza City. The following day the IDF killed **Khaled Mansour, the Jerusalem Brigades commander in the southern Gaza Strip**.

► A few hours after the targeted killing of al-Jaabari, the PIJ launched a massive barrage of rockets and mortar shells at Israel. Most of the attacks were directed at the Israeli cities and smaller communities near the Gaza Strip, but some rockets targeted the cities in the center of Israel, and on August 7, 2022, the morning of Tisha B'Av,<sup>1</sup> the Jerusalem area as well. The PIJ claimed responsibility for most of the rocket fire. Hamas spokesmen were careful to issue vague reports which did not commit them to intervention in the attacks, and so far no Hamas involvement has been detected in the rocket attacks against Israel. In response, mostly from the air, the IDF attacked PIJ terrorist targets, avoiding Hamas targets.<sup>2</sup>

► In the meantime Egypt, Qatar and the UN have begun efforts to mediate between Israel and the PIJ, so far without response from the PIJ. All the Palestinian terrorist organizations have called on the Palestinians in the West Bank and east Jerusalem, and on Israeli Arabs, to participate in activities against Israel.

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<sup>1</sup> Tisha B'Av (the ninth day of the Hebrew month of Av) is one of the saddest day in the Jewish calendar and is a day of mourning and fasting. It commemorates various tragedies that befell the Jewish people throughout history, particularly the destruction of the two temples in Jerusalem in 586 BCE and 70 CE.

<sup>2</sup> From the very beginning, the question was whether Hamas' military-terrorist wing would participate in the rocket fire, after Israel specifically stated that the operation was directed against the PIJ and was a preventive action because the PIJ was planning to attack Israel. As of this writing, Hamas has not taken an active part in the fighting and its spokesmen have merely issued vague declarations.

## Operation Breaking Dawn

► On the night of August 1, 2022, the Israeli security forces operating in the Jenin refugee camp detained Sheikh Bassem al-Sa'adi, a senior PIJ figure. The PIJ then threatened to launch anti-tank missiles and rockets into Israel. After a number of tense days in the Gaza Strip sector, on Friday, August 5, 2022 at 16:16, the IDF killed **Tayseer al-Jaabari, a member of the PIJ's military council and the commander of the Jerusalem Brigades, its military-terrorist wing in the northern Gaza Strip**. The targeted killing was carried out by means of a precise hit on the apartment where he was located in a high-rise building in the heart of Gaza City.

► The targeted killing signaled the beginning of Operation Breaking Dawn, initiated by the IDF against the PIJ's terrorist infrastructure in the Gaza Strip. Immediately after the first attack, other PIJ terrorist targets were attacked.

► A short time after the attack on the building, the PIJ admitted that the target had been Tayseer al-Jaabari. A funeral was held in Gaza City that evening for him other the terrorist operatives who had been killed later.



**IDF forces deploy in the Gaza Strip sector before the beginning of the operation (IDF spokesman's Twitter account, August 5, 2022).**



**The funeral held for Tayseer al-Jaabari and other Palestinians killed in the August 5, 2022 attack. The bodies were wrapped for burial in PIJ flags (Twitter account of photojournalist Ashraf Abu Amra, August 5, 2022).**

► The PIJ, Hamas and other organizations issued announcements stating that Israel would pay a high price for its aggression. In an attempt to gain the participation of the other Palestinian organizations, a PIJ spokesman claimed the announcement issued by the IDF stating it had only attacked PIJ targets was meant to damage Palestinian unity. The attack, claimed the announcement, was that all the Palestinian people were under attack and the response would most likely come from the Gaza Strip, but could also come from the West Bank (al-Jazeera, August 5, 2022). The joint operations room of the terrorist organizations said in an announcement they were deliberating to reach a consensus. Hamas spokesmen were careful to issue vague announcements which did not commit the movement to active involvement in a response.



**The aftermath of the attack on the apartment in the Palestine Tower where Tayseer al-Jaabari was located. Right: QudsN Facebook page, August 5, 2022. Left: al-Mayadeen TV Twitter account, August 5, 2022).**



**"No red lines:" Notice posted to the Jerusalem Brigades website following the targeted killing of Tayseer al-Jaabari (Jerusalem Brigades website, August 5, 2022).**

► On August 6, 2022, the IDF killed **Khaled Mansour**, a senior PIJ operative who was found hiding in a safehouse in Rafah. He was Tayseer al-Jaabari's counterpart in the southern Gaza Strip, and considered a senior Jerusalem Brigades commander. He was responsible for the organization's tunnels and commanded the rocket unit. In recent days he was occupied with planning to attack Israel with anti-tank missiles and rockets as a response to the detention of Bassem al-Sa'adi in Jenin. Two other PIJ commanders were killed with him, one of whom was **Ziyad al-Mudallal**, the son of Ahmed al-Mudallal, a senior figure in the PIJ's "political bureau." The organization issued a formal mourning notice for him and other operatives (Jerusalem Brigades' Telegram channel, August 7, 2022).



**Khaled Mansour (right) and Tayseer al-Jaabari (Twitter account of photojournalist Ashraf Abu Amra, August 7, 2022).**



**The aftermath of the attack in Rafah that killed Khaled Mansour  
(Twitter account of photojournalist Hassan Aslih, August 6 and 7, 2022).**

► **PIJ leader Ziyad al-Nakhalah**, who resides in Iran, said in an interview that Israel had begun the "aggression" and that there would be no red lines in the PIJ's response. He added that his message to the organizations was that they all had to fight together and that all the cities in Israel had to be targets. Appealing to Hamas, he said that the Izz al-Din Qassam Brigades [Hamas' military-terrorist wing] had to join them in the campaign, and that Tel Aviv had to be a target for their rockets [al-Mayadeen, August 5, 2022].

► About a day later, after the events of the afternoon of August 6, 2022 began, the Jerusalem Brigades announced a new name for its military activities, "Unity of the Arenas." Apparently the PIJ was trying to attract the other organizations in the Gaza Strip to join the combat, as well as Palestinians in Judea, Samaria and east Jerusalem, as well as Israeli Arabs, especially because of the events of Tisha B'Av in Jerusalem (Jerusalem Brigades' Telegram channel, August 6, 2022).

► **Jerusalem Brigades spokesman Abu Hamza** issued his first announcement on August 7, 2022. He said that so far the organization had only shown a small part of the organization's rocket capabilities and what the military wing had prepared. He called on the Palestinians in Judea and Samaria and Israeli Arabs to wake up and join the Unity of the Arenas (Jerusalem Brigades website, August 7, 2022).

## Rocket and Mortar Shell Fire

► Close to 21:00 on August 5, 2022, approximately four hours after Israel declared the beginning of the operation, and after the funerals of Tayseer al-Jaabari and the other operatives had been held, a barrage of dozens of rockets was fired at the Israeli communities near the Gaza Strip and the cities in the south and along the coast. A few minutes later rockets were fired at the center of Israel, western Rishon LeZion and Bat Yam, south of Tel Aviv. The Jerusalem Brigades rushed to claim responsibility for the rocket fire, stating that in its "first response" it had fired more than 100 rockets at Tel Aviv, the cities in central Israel and the communities near the Gaza Strip (Jerusalem Brigades website, August 5, 2022).



**Rockets launched from the Gaza Strip at Israel  
(Twitter account of photojournalist Hassan Aslih, August 5, 2022).**



**Rockets launched from the Gaza Strip at Israel (Right: Twitter account of Khaled Safi from Gaza, August 5, 2022. Left: Facebook page of the Ghaza al-A'an website, August 5, 2022).**

► On the second day of the operation, the PIJ continued launching rockets and mortar shells at the communities near the Gaza Strip, the southern cities of Sderot and Netivot, and the coastal cities of Ashqelon and Ashdod. In the afternoon a barrage of rockets was launched at

Modi'in, and at around 18:00, a large barrage was launched at the greater Tel Aviv area. Sirens were sounded in Rishon LeZion, Bat Yam, southern Tel Aviv and other cities. The Iron Dome aerial defense system intercepted rockets in the skies over greater Tel Aviv, and two rockets landed in the sea off the Tel Aviv coast.

►The main events were the following:

- ◆ On August 6, 2022, a rocket hit a house in the southern city of **Sderot**. The family was in house's protected space and were not harmed, although the house was extensively damaged. Later a rocket hit a factory in Sderot's industrial zone, causing a fire. No casualties were reported; the factory was damaged (Israel Police Force spokesman's unit, spokesman for Israel Fire and Rescue, August 6, 2022).



**Right: Direct rocket hit on a house in the southern Israeli city of Sderot (Israel Police Force spokesman's unit, August 6, 2022). Left: The rocket and some of the resulting damage (Sderot municipality, August 6, 2022).**

- ◆ A rocket that did not explode was found in a parking space near an apartment house in Ashqelon. No casualties were reported, but there was extensive damage to property (Israel Police Force spokesman's unit, August 6, 2022).



**The rocket hit in Ashqelon (Israel Police Force spokesman's unit, August 6, 2022)**

► After a relatively quiet night, on the morning of Tisha B'Av, August 7, 2022, rocket fire was renewed, most of it targeting the communities near the Gaza Strip. Two mortar shells landed near workers' accommodations on Kibbutz Nirim. No casualties were reported; property was damaged.



**Rocket hit near workers' accommodations on Kibbutz Nirim in the western Negev (Eshkol spokesman's unit, August 7, 2022).**

► Several barrages of rockets were launched at the Jerusalem area. **Muhammad Hamada, Hamas spokesman for Jerusalem affairs**, praised the operatives of the "resistance" who had attacked the settlements in the Jerusalem areas while the settlers were carrying out their "provocative invasions in memory of the temple, as though it had really existed" (al-Aqsa TV, August 7, 2022).

► The IDF spokesman reported that as of 07:00, August 7, 2022, **585 rockets and mortar shells had been launched**. About 115 fell inside the Gaza Strip and about 470 were fired at

Israel. The Iron Dome aerial defense system carried out about 185 interceptions with a success rate of 97%.



Report from the IDF spokesman, August 7, 2022.

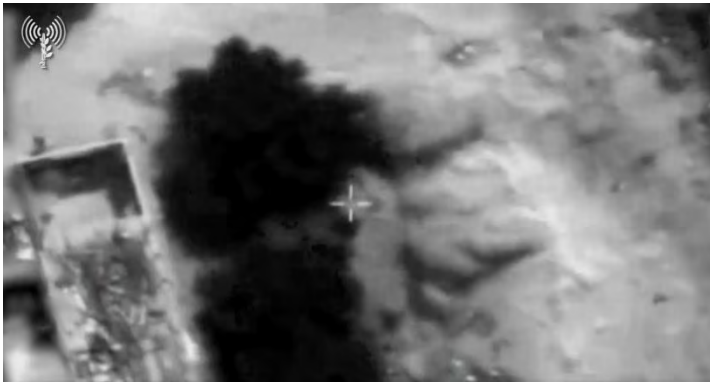
► Most of the rockets were launched by the PIJ. The Abu Ali Mustafa Brigades of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine claimed responsibility for a number of attacks on the communities near the Gaza Strip, and the military-terrorist wing of the Popular Resistance Committees also claimed responsibility for rocket fire. So far, Hamas has not claimed responsibility for rocket fire. According to reports, Israel sent messages to Hamas stating it was not planning to attack Hamas targets. According to an al-Araby al-Jadeed "source," Hamas regarded Israel's messages as an effort to drive a wedge between it and the PIJ (al-Araby al-Jadeed, August 5, 2022).

► A number of Israelis were wounded by shrapnel or fell while running to protected spaces (spokesman for Magen David, Barzilai Medical Center spokesman's unit, August 6, 2022).

## IDF attacks

► In response to the rockets launched at Israel, as of 13:00, August 7, 2022, the IDF continued attacking PIJ targets. In addition to aircraft, special units, armored and artillery forces participated in the attacks (IDF spokesman's Twitter account, August 6, 2022). The IDF attacked only PIJ targets and did not attack those of Hamas. Among the targets were senior commanders, rocket launching squads, military positions, weapons storehouses, facilities for the manufacture of weapons, and military facilities in Gaza City which served the PIJ's naval forces for training and storing equipment. Examples of targets attacked:

- ◆ Mortar shell launchers



**PIJ mortar shell-launchers attacked (IDF spokesman's Twitter account, August 6, 2022).**

◆ PIJ military-terrorist posts



**PIJ military-terrorist posts attacked (IDF spokesman's Twitter account, August 6, 2022).**

◆ Rocket launchers in the northern Gaza Strip.



◆ Rocket launchers in the northern Gaza Strip attacked Tunnel for the use of PIJ offense forces. The tunnel route did not cross the border into Israeli territory (IDF spokesman's Twitter account, August 7, 2022).

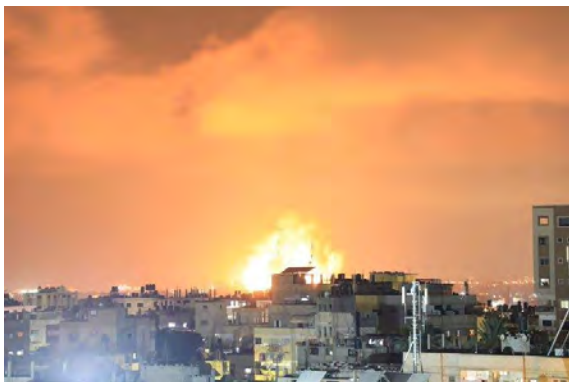


**Right: The tunnel is attacked. Left: The tunnel route, lower left (IDF spokesman's Twitter account, August 7, 2022).**

► The ministry of health in Gaza reported that as of 12 noon, August 7, 2022, 31 Palestinians had been killed and 265 wounded (ministry of health in Gaza Telegram channel, August 7, 2022). The ministry of health also reported that because of the fuel shortage and the shutdown of the power station, within 48 hours they would be forced to stop providing public health services (ministry of health in Gaza Telegram channel, August 7, 2022).



**Gaza City attacked (Twitter account of photojournalist Ashraf Abu Amra, August 5, 2022).**



**Right: Post in western Khan Yunis attacked (Facebook page of journalist Hani al-Shaer, August 5, 2022). Left: Attack in the center of Gaza City (QudsN Twitter account, August 5, 2022).**



**Right: The ruins of a building in the southern part of Gaza City, attacked on August 6, 2022 (Twitter account of photojournalist Ashraf Abu Amra, August 6, 2022). Left: A Jerusalem Brigades' post in western Khan Yunis attacked (Twitter account of the Snd News website, August 6, 2022).**

## The event in Jabalia

► On the night of August 6, 2022, the Palestinian media in the Gaza Strip began reporting that Israel had attacked near a mosque in the Jabalia refugee camp in the northern Gaza Strip. According to the reports, at least five people had been killed, four of them children. The media immediately began calling the event "the Jabalia slaughter." Israel made it clear that the deaths had been caused by a rocket misfire and not by an Israeli attack (IDF spokesman, August 6, 2022).



**A rocket that misfired and exploded during launch (IDF spokesman's Twitter account, August 7, 2022).**

## Judea and Samaria

► During the events in the Gaza Strip, the Israeli security forces continued counterterrorism activities in Judea and Samaria. Several dozen operatives identified as belonging to the PIJ

were detained. No Israeli casualties were reported (IDF spokesman's Twitter account, August 7, 2022).



**Israeli security forces in Judea and Samaria (IDF spokesman's Twitter account, August 7, 2022).**

► The PIJ-affiliated media reported a march held by armed PIJ operatives in response to the "aggression against the Gaza Strip" (Twitter account of Qarar al-Shukri, August 5, 2022).

## Reactions to Operation Breaking Dawn

### Mediation efforts

► As soon as the operation began, mediation efforts were made to prevent escalation, most of them by Egypt, Qatar and the UN (al-Araby al-Jadeed, August 5, 2022). Egypt and Qatar are coordinating their efforts. In a telephone conversation, **Isma'il Haniyeh, head of Hamas' political bureau**, told Egyptian General Intelligence that Israel was solely responsible for what was happening in the Gaza Strip and had to stop its attacks. He also spoke on the phone with Mohammed bin Abdulrahman al-Thani, the Qatari foreign minister ( Hamas Telegram channel, August 6, 2022). On August 7, 2022, the PIJ decided not to cooperate with the mediation efforts until it had "avenged [Israel] aggression and the targeted killings [of its senior military-terrorist figures]" (al-Mayadeen, August 7, 2022).

### Hamas

► From the beginning of Operation Breaking Dawn, Hamas' reactions were general and vague, and did not promise Hamas would participate in the fighting. Most of the time they related to the joint operations room and the high alert of the "resistance" [the terrorist organizations]. A notice was issued about what was described as an "extremist [i.e., Jewish] assault on the al-Aqsa mosque compound of Sunday," and called on Palestinians to barricade themselves inside the mosque to face the "assault." Hamas also issued a picture of operatives from all the Palestinian terrorist organizations joining hands under a quote from senior organization

figure Maher Salah, reading, "All the factions of the resistance are waging a united operation to respond to the Zionist aggression against the Gaza Strip" ( Hamas Telegram channel, August 6, 2022).

► Hamas announced that Isma'il Haniyeh was in contact with Egypt, Qatar and the UN, calling for the "invasion" [of the Gaza Strip] to stop in order to keep it from spinning out of control ( Hamas website, August 7, 2022). "Sources" told *al-Arabiya* that Hamas had updated senior Egyptian officials that the movement had no interest in "escalation" and was waiting for "understandings" (*al-Arabiya*, August 7, 2022).



Hamas notice ( Hamas Telegram channel, August 6, 2022).

## The Palestinian Authority (PA)

► The PA foreign ministry condemned "Israel's aggression" and demanded an urgent international action to stop it and to provide the Palestinians with protection (foreign ministry website, August 6, 2022). **Nabil Abu Rudeineh, spokesman for Mahmoud Abbas**, reported that Mahmoud Abbas was working with regional and international entities to stop the "Israeli escalation." He said Israel's ongoing aggression against al-Aqsa mosque, the Gaza Strip, Jenin and other cities crossed every red line (Wafa, August 7, 2022).

► **Hussein al-Sheikh, general secretary of the PLO's Executive Committee**, said the PLO strongly condemned Israel's aggression in the Gaza Strip, which harmed civilian children and the infrastructure, and called on the international community to intervene and protect the Palestinians (Hussein al-Sheikh's Twitter account, August 6, 2022).

## Iran

► The Iranian media kept up a running commentary, including headlines about the fighting between Israel and the PIJ. **Hossein Salami, commander of the Iranian Revolutionary Guards Corps**, met with **PIJ leader Ziyad al-Nakhalah**, who was visiting Iran. Salami claimed that the "rapid response" of the "Palestinian resistance" [terrorist organizations] to the

"Zionist crimes" proved that the "resistance" had begun a new chapter with regard to its strength, and that Israel would again [sic] pay a high price for its crimes. Al-Nakhalah thanked him, and said the support of the "guardians of the Palestinian people," especially Iran, raised their morale and improved the "resistance's" capabilities (YJC News, August 6, 2022).

► **Hossein Amir-Abdollahian, the Iranian foreign minister**, sent a communiqué to the foreign ministers of the Arab-Muslim countries condemning "Israel's attacks on the Gaza Strip," [made possible] by the lack of intervention of international organizations. He said there was a need for immediate international and UN activity against Israel (Telegram channel of the Iranian foreign ministry, August 6, 2022). He also spoke with Ziyad al-Nakhalah (al-Mayadeen, August 6, 2022).

## Hezbollah

► Hezbollah sent its condolences on the death of al-Jaabari and expressed support for the PIJ and every action it took against Israel (al-Mayadeen, August 5, 2022). Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah gave a speech in which he called the IDF's activity "aggression and a crime" that had to be universally condemned, claiming that the PIJ had the right to respond when and how it saw fit. As to the targeted killing of al-Jaabari, he said it was liable to pave the way for other targeted killings and that Hezbollah was following the events closely and was in contact with operatives of the PIJ, Hamas and the other organizations (al-Manar, August 6, 2022).

## Other reactions

► **Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Morocco** expressed sorrow and said they were worried about escalation. Demonstrations were held in **Turkey** near the Israeli consulate in Istanbul (AGD Twitter account, August 6, 2022). **Ayman al-Safadi, the Jordanian foreign minister**, spoke with the UN envoy to the Middle East, and said that Jordan condemned Israel's aggression. He called on the international community to stop the escalation (Twitter account of the Jordanian foreign minister, August 6, 2022). A demonstration was held in Jordan near the Israeli embassy in Amman, where pictures of Tayseer al-Jaabari were held.

► **Riyad Mansour, the Palestinian delegate to the UN**, said the UN Security Council would meet to discuss the event. The spokesman's unit of the UAE mission to the UN said that in compliance with requests from the UAE, France, Ireland and China, the Security Council would meet on Monday, August 8, 2022, for a closed discussion of the issue (Twitter account of the spokesman's unit of the UAE mission to the UN, August 7, 2022).