A day of tension following the death of a Palestinian prisoner in an Israeli jail

May 31, 2023

Overview

▸ On May 2, 2023, the Israel Prison Service announced the death of administrative detainee Khader Adnan, who was found unconscious in his cell in the Nitzan prison facility before dawn. Attempts to revive him failed and he was pronounced dead at Asaf Harofeh Hospital. He had been on a hunger strike for 86 days and refused medical examinations or care. His death led to a day of tension in Judea, Samaria and the Gaza Strip.

▸ **Khader Adnan was a high-ranking Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) operative in northern Samaria. He was detained by the Israeli security forces on February 5, 2023 on suspicion of membership in a terrorist organization, support for terrorism and incitement**. It was the 13th time he had been detained. As on previous occasions, he immediately began a hunger strike (Israeli media, May 2, 2023). An Israeli court rejected the Prison Service's request to force-feed him (Israeli media, May 2, 2023).

▸ The Palestinian arena condemned Israel and blamed it for his death. Threats were made that Israel would "pay for it" and the international community was called on to punish Israel. The Jerusalem Brigades (the PIJ's military-terrorist wing), put all its units on alert to prepare a response to his death and a PIJ political bureau delegation cancelled a planned trip abroad. A general strike was declared in the Palestinian Authority (PA) territories, east Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip and protests marches and rallies were held. On the social networks Palestinians posted calls for revenge and for clashes with IDF forces at the friction points.

▸ Following his death, **on the morning of May 2, 2023, and throughout the next 24 hours, terrorists in the Gaza Strip fired more than 100 rockets and mortar shells at the Israeli communities near the Gaza Strip**. The IDF responded by attacking terrorist targets in the Gaza Strip, which led to more rocket fire. Before dawn on May 3, 2023, a ceasefire was achieved.

▸ The responses to Khader Adnan's death were another illustration of the connection of events in Judea and Samaria to the Gaza Strip, an "equation" formulated by the terrorist

organizations in 2021 during Operation Guardian of the Walls. However, the relative speed with which a ceasefire was achieved again showed that Hamas did to want a broad escalation in the Gaza Strip, which could threaten the Gazans' economic privileges, especially those who work in Israel.

- Hamas and the PIJ represented the events as a "success" of the "equation" by firing rockets from the Gaza Strip. They also claimed that after Israel responded with its military it was "forced" to stop after a relatively short period. The organizations also claimed success for the anti-aircraft missiles they had recently developed, boasting that in a short time Israeli Air Force planes would not be able to fly in the skies over the Gaza Strip.

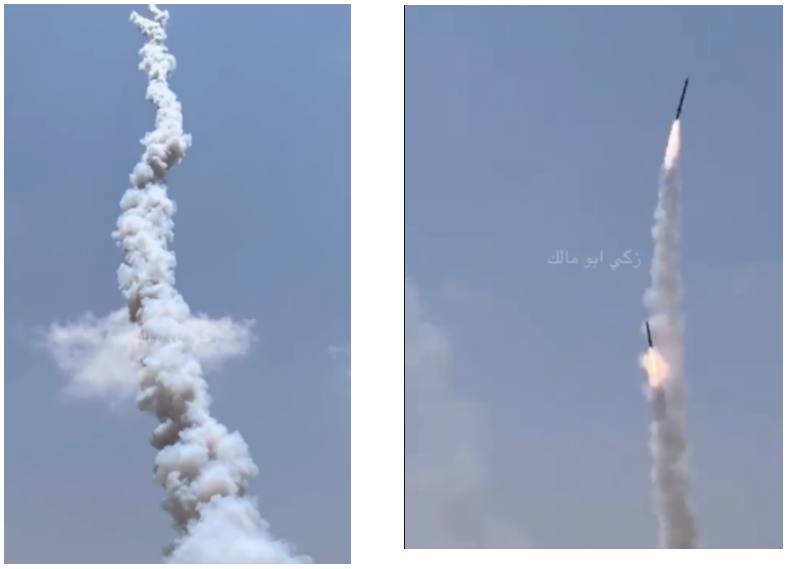
Reactions in the Gaza Strip

- Immediately after the death of Khader Adnan was made public the Palestinian terrorist organizations in the Gaza Strip issued a joint statement accusing Israel of "murdering" him and claiming Israel would pay the price for his death. They declared a day of mourning and a general strike, and called on the Palestinians in Judea and Samaria to escalate their clashes with Israel (Palestinian terrorist organizations' Telegram channel, May 2, 2023).
- The Hamas and PIJ leaderships blamed Israel for his death and threatened a harsh response. **Isma'il Haniyeh, head of Hamas' political bureau**, spoke with **PIJ leader Ziyad al-Nakhalah**, and extended his condolences for Khader Adnan's death, adding they were waging open war against Israel and revolting around the clock, and would continue the path of jihad, the shaheeds and the "resistance" (anti-Israeli terrorist activities) (Hamas Telegram channel, May 2, 2023).

Rocket fire

- In the early morning hours of May 2, 2023, the terrorist organizations in the Gaza Strip began firing rockets and mortar shells at Israel's south, stopping only after a ceasefire had been declared at 3:30 a.m. on May 3, 2023. According to the IDF spokesman, **104 rockets were fired from the Gaza Strip at Israel**: 11 fell into the sea, 14 fell inside the Gaza Strip, 24 were intercepted by the Iron Dome aerial defense system and 48 fell in open areas; the landings of seven rockets are still unaccounted for (IDF spokesman, May 3, 2023).
- **Professor Hezi Levy, Director General of the Barzilai Hospital in Ashqelon**, said five people had been brought to the hospital from Sderot. One, in critical condition, had been

wounded by shrapnel, and four had been wounded by shrapnel and had various other injuries (Israeli media, May 2, 2023).



Rockets fired at Israel from the Gaza Strip
(Twitter account of photojournalist Hassan Aslih, May 2, 2023).

- The rocket fire (IDF spokesman, May 2 and 3, 2023):
  - At around 7 a.m. on May 2, 2023, three rockets were fired at Israel from the Gaza Strip, falling in open areas. No casualties were reported.
  - At around 4 p.m., after Israel fired artillery at Hamas posts, a barrage of 22 rockets was fired. Four were intercepted by the Iron Dome aerial defense system; 16 fell in open areas. One rocket fell on a construction site in Sderot and wounded three Chinese workers. Two additional rockets were fired at Sderot, one hitting a house and the other landing on a road. Several people were wounded by shrapnel.
  - At around 8 p.m. six mortar shells were fired, some of them landing inside the Gaza Strip. After the Israeli Air Force attacked, rocket launchings continued throughout the night until 3:30 a.m., which a ceasefire was declared. Rocket fire at the communities near the Gaza Strip continued until around 5:30 in the morning.

Jerusalem Brigades documentation of rocket fire (Jerusalem Brigades website, May 3, 2023).

Firing rockets at Israel from within population centers (Shehab Twitter account, May 2, 2023).

Right: Rocket hit in Sderot (Twitter account of photojournalist Hassan Aslih, May 2, 2023). Left: Building in Sderot damaged by rocket fire (Israel Police Force Facebook page, May 2, 2023).

Pieces of the rocket that hit the building in Sderot (Israel Police Force Facebook page, May 2, 2023).

Rocket fire damage in Ashqelon (QudsN Twitter account, May 3, 2023).

- The ministry of health in Gaza reported that the Israeli attacks killed one person and injured five. The fatality was Hashel Salman Mubarak, 58, from the northern Gaza Strip (ministry of health in Gaza Facebook page, May 3, 2023). He was wounded by a rock that fell on him from an attack near his house, which was near Hamas' al-Safina post, northwest of Gaza City (Shehab, May 2, 2023; Katia Nasser's Twitter account, May 3, 2023).

Right: Hashel Mubarak (PA government spokesman Ibrahim Melhem's Facebook page, May 3, 2023). Left: Funeral held for Hashel Mubarak (photojournalist Usama al-Kahlout's Facebook page, May 3, 2023).

- The five wounded Gazans were members of the same family from Beit Hanoun who were wounded by shrapnel. According to the Palestinian version, they were wounded by shrapnel from an Israeli missile, apparently from an Iron Dome interception (Wafa and qudsnet.com, May 2, 2023). Two Internet users, about whom nothing is known, claimed they were wounded by a Palestinian rocket which misfired and landed in Beit Hanoun (Twitter accounts of moaad alnjar and @omaralhdad15, May 2, 2023).

Claim of responsibility

- The joint operations room of the Palestinian organizations claimed responsibility for firing rockets at Israel "as the first response" to Khader Adnan's death (joint operations room Telegram channel, May 2, 2023). The military-terrorist wing of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) also claimed responsibility for rocket fire (PFLP military-terrorist wing Telegram channel, May 3, 2023). The Mujahedeen Brigades claimed responsibility for rocket fire targeting Kibbutz Nir Oz (Mujahedeen Brigades Telegram channel, May 3, 2023).

Israel's response

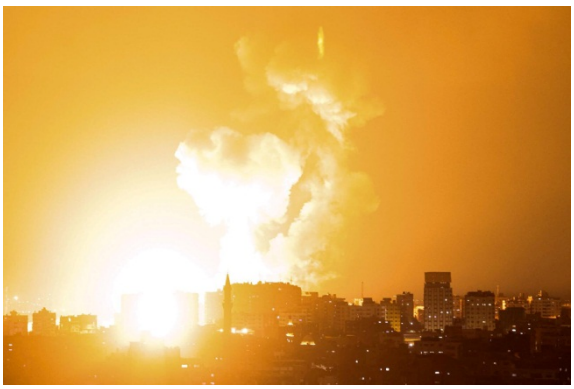
- Israel's initially responded to the rocket fire with artillery fire targeting Hamas posts (IDF spokesman, May 2, 2023). Later in the day Israeli Air Force aircraft attacked a number of

terrorist facilities and posts belonging to Hamas, which Israel regards as responsible for events in the Gaza Strip. Among the sites attacked were (IDF spokesman, May 2 and 3):

- A facility used as a training camp for Hamas terrorists, a post used for storing weapons and a site for the manufacture of weapons.

Attacks on a Hamas terrorist post and facility for the manufacture of weapons. Left: Attacks on a Hamas terrorist camp and site for the manufacture of weapons (IDF spokesman's Twitter account, May 3, 2023).

- Two facilities for the manufacture of weapons used by Hamas headquarters, a concrete factory used for "infrastructure" [terrorist tunnels] construction, a terrorist post of Hamas' naval force and a tunnel used by the naval force in the southern Gaza Strip.
- A facility used as a training camp for operatives who manufacture Hamas' weapons, a weapons storehouse and two terrorist facilities. Also attacked were a Hamas naval force camp and post, and a terrorist tunnel..



Israeli Air Force attack in the Gaza Strip (QudsN Twitter account, May 2, 2023).

Aftermath of the Israeli Air Force attack on Deir al-Balah in the central Gaza Strip (Twitter account of photojournalist Hassan Aslih, May 3, 2023).

- Hamas said its aerial defense had fired surface-to-air missiles to repel the warplanes attacking the Gaza Strip (Izz al-Din Qassam Brigades Telegram channel, May 2, 2023). The PIJ's military-terrorist wing said that its operatives has launched anti-aircraft missiles an Israeli Air Force planes (Jerusalem Brigades' Telegram channel, May 3, 2023). A Hamas spokesman claimed the movement's military wing was on a path to establish a new "equation," according to which no Israeli plane would be able to fly over the Gaza Strip (Hamas website, May 2, 2023).

The PIJ's military-terrorist wing fires a missile at an Israeli plane (Jerusalem Brigades website, May 3, 2023).

Jerusalem Brigades notice. The Arabic reads, "You have no place on our land and our skies are closed to you" (Jerusalem Brigades' Telegram channel, May 3, 2023).

Attempts to relieve tensions

▸ During the morning, as soon as tensions rose, "knowledgeable sources" reported that Egyptian General Intelligence began making an effort to keep the situation from "exploding," although according to an "Egyptian source," the Egyptian mediators had been unable to "contain the wrath of the PIJ," which was determined to react. It was also reported that the Egyptians were trying to reach an agreement for Khader Adnan's body to be delivered to his family in return for halting the escalation (al-Araby al-Jadeed, May 2, 2023). Somewhat later it was reported that **Isma'il Haniyeh** was in contact with the mediators in Egypt and Qatar to "end the aggression against the Gaza Strip." He claimed Israel was responsible for the "aggression." According to Isma'il Haniyeh, they had relayed their "firm position" to all the mediators regarding the "premeditated murder" of Khader Adnan, and said his body had to be turned over to his family (Hamas Telegram channel, May 3, 2023).

▸ At around 3:30 a.m. there were announcements of a ceasefire to which the Palestinians would be committed as long as Israel was committed to it (al-Jazeera, May 3, 2023).

▸ An article in the Lebanese daily newspaper *al-Akhbar* dealing with reactions to Khader Adnan's death claimed "knowledgeable sources" had told the paper that the mediators were holding intensive contacts with Hamas and PIJ representatives, demanding they not react to his death from the Gaza Strip in order to avoid a new military confrontation with Israel at the present time. However, according to the article, the "resistance" responded that "the crime of Adnan's killing would not go without a fitting response which would deter the enemy and prevent him from repeating his crimes against the prisoners." Hamas and the PIJ held consultations regarding the type of response, along with, according to the paper, "other actors in the resistance axis [i.e., Hezbollah, Iran, Syria and the Shi'ite militias in Lebanon]." they decided that the initial reaction would come from Judea and Samaria (where two attacks wounded three IDF soldiers on May 2, 2023), after which there would be responses from other arenas, including the Gaza Strip (*al-Akhbar*, May 3, 2023).

Reactions from the terrorist leadership in the Gaza Strip

▸ Members of the leaderships of Hamas and the PIJ expressed satisfaction with the reactions to Khader Adnan's death. The noted the "unity of the arenas" and the coordinated reaction of all the organizations, as well as setting the new "equation" of a killing in Judea and Samaria having a response from the Gaza Strip.

- Regarding the declaration of the ceasefire, **Isma'il Haniyeh** said they "saluted the Palestinian people and the resistance," which had played a role in the battle against Israel (Hamas Telegram channel, May 3, 2023). **Hamas spokesman Hazem Qassem** also praised the joint operations room of the Palestinian organizations for its "struggle" to respond to "Israel's crimes and its assassination [sic] of Khader Adnan." He claimed the joint operations room's national unity against Israel was worthy of respect, adding that Hamas was operating in every military, political and media venue to make Israel pay for his death (Hazem Qassem's Telegram channel, May 3, 2023).
- **Hamas spokesman Abd al-Latif al-Qanua** claimed the "resistance's" combined response showed its unity, the rapid response in the Gaza Strip to avenge Khader Adnan's death showed willingness to defend the Palestinian people and the ongoing open battle would not stop (al-Aqsa, May 3, 2023).
- **Hamas figure Isma'il Radwan** praised the "resistance" and the joint operations room for having reacted to the "crime of killing" national hero Khader Adnan and halting the attacks of the Zionist planes against the Gaza Strip while stressing the unity of the arenas and "resistance" fronts (alqudstoday channel, May 2, 2023).
- **PIJ spokesman Tareq Salami** claimed one round of confrontation had ended but the "resistance's" campaign continued. He said the "fighters" had proven their loyalty by defending their people and the Jerusalem Brigades had "excelled" in their response to the killing of Khader Adnan (PIJ political bureau Telegram channel, May 3, 2023).
- **Khader Adnan's wife** said the "heroes on the ground" in the Gaza Strip had not disappointed her, as opposed to the PA and its security services, which continued attacking those who condemned what had happed to her husband. She called on all the Palestinian people to avenge his death by firing rockets (QudsN Twitter account, May 3, 2023).

Reactions in Judea and Samaria

- Protest and solidarity marches were held in a number of locations in Judea and Samaria, including in the town of Arabeh (south of Jenin, Khader Adnan's birthplace), the Jenin refugee camp, the Muqata'a in Ramallah, the Tulkarm refugee camp, Hebron and Bethlehem (Wafa, May 2, 2023).

Right: Khader Adnan's son's on the shoulders of the protest march in Arabeh (Wafa, May 2, 2023). Left: The protest march in Arabeh (QudsN Twitter account, May 2, 2023).

- Several marches turned into riots against Israeli security forces. According to reports, five Palestinians were wounded by rubber bullets and inhaled teargas during the riot at the northern entrance to al-Bireh. There were riots at the entrance to al-Ram in the northern Palestinian Jerusalem district, the village of Bayt Ummar and the al-Aroub refugee camp north of Hebron, in Qalqilya and Kafr al-Labad in the Tulkarm district. Dozens of Palestinians reportedly inhaled teargas (Wafa and al-Araby al-Jadeed, May 2, 2023).
- A march was held in the Jenin refugee camp, attended by armed operatives who marched from the camp to the city of Jenin. The march was forcibly suppressed by operatives of the PA security services. In response, a number of armed operatives opened fire at the district governor's headquarters, where the headquarters of the PA security services are located. Palestinian security forces returned fire (al-Araby al-Jadeed and Wafa, May 2, 2023). The Jerusalem Brigades' Jenin Battalion issued a statement criticizing the security services for "operating in the service of Israel" (Jenin Battalion Telegram channel, May 2, 2023).

Crowd dispersal and rioting in Jenin (Safa Twitter account, May 2, 2023).

Statements from the PA leadership

▸ **PA Prime Minister Muhammad Shtayyeh** said Israel, its prison service and judges had committed the premeditated murder of Khader Adnan because they refused to release him neglected his health and left him in his cell despite the seriousness of his medical condition (Muhammad Shtayyeh's Facebook page, May 2, 2023). He called on the international human rights organizations to condemn the "crime" and not permit those who committed it to evade punishment (PA government spokesman Ibrahim Melhem's Facebook page, May 2, 2023).

▸ **Hussein al-Sheikh, general secretary of the PLO's Executive Committee**, claimed Israel was fully responsible for Khader Adnan's death, the result of "neglect and forced imprisonment" (Hussein al-Sheikh's Twitter account, May 2, 2023).

Other Reactions

▸ **Hezbollah** sent condolences for Khader Adnan's death and called on international and humanitarian institutions to expose the "crimes of Israel in its prisons." According to the announcement, Hezbollah supported every measure taken by the Palestinian organizations in response (al-Manar, May 2, 2023).

▸ **Sayid Abu Ali, aid to the secretary general of the Arab League of Palestinian and "occupied" territory affairs**, condemned the death and called it a "crime of execution." He claimed it was the result of Israel's medical neglect and a manifestation of its violations of

international and humanitarian laws. He warned that the silence of the international community encouraged Israel to continue its policy (al-Youm al-Sabaa, May 2, 2023).

- **The deputy spokesman for the UN secretary general** said the secretary general was following the situation with great concern and that the authorities in Israel had to make sure the circumstances of his death would be fully investigated. He called on Israel to stop administrative detentions and either prosecute the detainees or release them (UN website, May 3, 2023).

Appendix

Khader Adnan

Right: Adnan's son leads a march in Arabeh to protest his death. Left: Picture from the house of Khader Adnan. (@asranews Twitter account, May 2, 2023).

- Khader Adnan Muhammad Musa was considered an important PIJ operative in northern Samaria although it is unclear whether he had an official position. He was born on March 24, 1978, in the town of Arabeh in the Jerusalem district. He graduated from the local high school in 1996, after which he studied science at the Ramallah branch of Birzeit University. In 2001 he received a BA in general mathematics. He then registered for an MA in economics at the same university but did not graduate because he was detained. He opened a bakery in Arabeh to support his wife and nine children.
- He was a disciple of the founders of the PIJ in northern Judea and Samaria, among them Naaman Tehaina, Iyad Hardan, Anwar Hamran and Safian 'Ardah. He began his political life while still a university student and headed the PIJ's student faction. He later organized a protest against the entourage of French Prime Minister Lionel Jospin, who visited Birzeit University in February 2000, because Jospin had condemned the attacks carried out by Hezbollah. He was detained by the PA, accused of incitement and spent two weeks in the PA prison in Jericho, where he went on a hunger strike.
- For several years he was the PIJ spokesman in Judea and Samaria and wanted by both the PA and Israel. He was also a member of the National and Islamic Forces Committee in the Jerusalem district, and a member of the PIJ's "freedom committee" in Judea and Samaria.
- Khader Adnan was detained by Israel 13 times, the first time for a week in 1997, while he was still a student, and then between March 11 and July 8, 1999, when he was in administrative detention for four months. He was detained for a year from May to November 2000 and again during the second intifada, between December 2002 and December 2003, and again for a year

beginning on May 3, 2004. While detained in the Megiddo jail he led prisoner demonstrations and went on a hunger strike that lasted for 28 days, along with other prisoners. He was put in solidary confinement in the Ashmoret prison for six months and released on April 11, 2005. He was detained again several times. His most famous detention began on December 17, 2011, when he spent 66 days on a hunger strike. He was released on April 17, 2012. He also went on a hunger strike for 12 days in February 2013, not as a prisoner but as a civilian in front of Red Cross headquarters in Ramallah, in solidarity with prisoners who were hunger striking. He was detained again on July 8, 2014, accused of supporting the "resistance" in the Gaza Strip. He was known as a militant opponent of the PA and was also detained several times by the PA's security services.

▸ His final detention was on February 5, 2023, when Israeli security forces raided his house in Arabeh, and he immediately declared a hunger strike. He continued it for 86 days until he died on May 2, 2023 (Paltoday and the Daffa_media Telegram channel [the PIJ Telegram channel in Judea and Samaria], May 2 2023). His frequent hunger strikes turned him into a symbol and role model for many prisoners, whom he inspired to also go on hunger strikes.

Khader Adnan (Jerusalem Brigades website, May 2, 2023).