



The Palestinian Islamic Jihad opens military training camps for adolescents

June 29, 2023

Overview

- ▶ On June 12, 2023, the recruiting unit of the Jerusalem Brigades, the Palestinian Islamic Jihad's (PIJ) military-terrorist wing, opened training camps for adolescents in the Gaza Strip, calling them "the camps of Operation Free Men's Revenge" [the name the Palestinians gave Operation Shield and Arrow]. The camps were held at Jerusalem Brigades military facilities, and were open to adolescents 14, 15 and 16 years of age. According to the camp organizers, their objective was to give them the tools that would enable them to join the Jerusalem Brigades as operatives.
- ▶ Ahmed al-Ra'i, in charge of media information for the camps, claimed the response to the camps had been so great they had to divide them into a number of phases. He also said that a short time after Operation Breaking Dawn [August 2022] more than 1,500 operatives had joined the Jerusalem Brigades' regular units after a military training crash course, and the adolescents participating in the Operation Free Men's Revenge camps would join those units (al-Khanadeq, June 15, 2023).
- ▶ Hamas and the PIJ regard the summer camps as very important. They are organized by their military-terrorist wings every year and usually bear the names of shaheeds or milestones in terrorist organization or Palestinian history. The camps' activities are varied, ranging from semi-military training to ideological indoctrination, including the so-called "right of return" and the shahada (dying as a martyr for the sake of Allah and becoming a shaheed), the "liberation of Palestine" through "resistance" [anti-Israeli terrorism], and the tenets of Islam.
- ▶ The pictures which follow are of this year's PIJ training camps and document their military nature, whose objective is to train the youths for induction into the Jerusalem Brigades' units as soon as possible to fill the ranks which were depleted in Operation Shield and Arrow (May 2023).

Military Training Camps for Adolescents

Overview

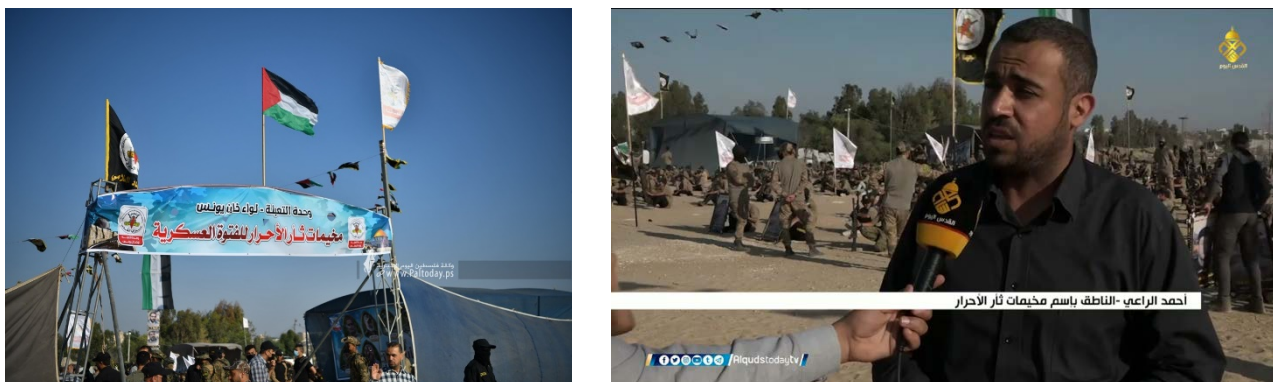
► On June 12, 2023, the recruiting unit of the Jerusalem Brigades, the PIJ's military-terrorist wing, announced the opening of "the first phase of military camps" to train adolescents in the Gaza Strip to join the wing's ranks. They were called "the camps of Operation Free Men's Revenge," the Palestinian name for Operation Shield and Arrow. Registration opened on June 10, 2023, and was conducted at the PIJ-affiliated mosques and locations throughout the Gaza Strip manned by operatives from the recruiting unit (al-Istiqlal, June 10, 2023).



Camp registration at the recruiting unit's site in Khan Yunis in the southern Gaza Strip (Paltoday, June 14, 2023).

► The camps lasted for about two weeks and were held simultaneously at Jerusalem Brigades military facilities in the northern Gaza Strip, Gaza City, the central Gaza Strip, Khan Yunis and Rafah. Registration was open to adolescents 14, 15 and 16 years of age. According to the organizers, their objective was to provide them with the comprehensive military and ideological tools they would need to join the Jerusalem Brigades' ranks. Apparently, their instructors were Jerusalem Brigades terrorist operatives, who were photographed with their faces masked.

► The Jerusalem Brigades' recruiting unit reported satisfaction with the considerable response from the adolescents and their families. **Ahmed al-Ra'i, aka Abu Islam, responsible for the camps' media information**, said there had been an enormous positive response from local residents, who encouraged their children to participate in the camps and derive the benefits offered. He said more than 1,000 had registered, which forced the organizers to divide the camps into ministry of education than one phase (al-Khanadeq, June 15, 2023);



Right: Ahmed al-Ra'i, camp spokesman (al-Quds al-Yawm TV website, June 23, 2023). Left: The sign at the entrance to the camp in Khan Yunis. The Arabic reads, "Khan Yunis Brigade – recruiting unit." "Operation Free Men's Revenge military youth camps " (Paltoday, June 22, 2023).

Objectives and activities

► The objectives of the camps, according to the Ahmed al-Ra'i, were the following (al-Khanadeq, June 15, 2023).

- ◆ **The camps' main objectives:** The most important objective was to strengthen attachment to the "homeland" and the ideology of jihad and "resistance" [anti-Israel terrorism], and the connection created between the PIJ's military wing and the public during Operation Shield and Arrow. Other objectives were to increase the youth's awareness of the dangers facing them and to prevent them from abandoning the central issue, which was "resistance for the liberation Palestine."

- ◆ **Other objectives:** The camps held activities to inculcate the youth with a love for jihad and defending the "homeland," and to locate potential recruits **After the first phase those chosen would join the recruiting unit's more advanced programs, which would prepare them to enter the ranks of the Jerusalem Brigades.** The camps also fostered connection to Islam and the path of the Prophet Muhammad, which were an integral part of the organization's ideology, in light of the many attempts to distance the younger generation from Islam and distract its attention.

◆ **The camps' military, security and religious programs:** The organizations formulated a program of comprehensive military education, including the basic disciplines of land fighting, shooting and storming the enemy. There was a full, integrated security program intended to put the campers on the correct path and warn them of the dangers that would threaten them, and to keep them from straying from the path. The objective of the religious program was to strengthen their religious thinking so they would become fighters who would face Israel with an Islamic combat mentality (Shams News, June 13, 2023).



Pictures from a video of the camps' first day (Jerusalem Brigades website, June 12, 2023).

◆ **The message for Israel:** The camps, claimed Ahmed al-Ra'i, sent a message to Israel, which thought destroying Jerusalem Brigades military posts during Operation Shield and Arrow would put them out of commission and the Jerusalem Brigades were weaker because their commanders had been killed. The camps, he claimed, proved to Israel that its attempts had failed and as soon as Operation Shield and Arrow ended the Jerusalem Brigades had begun rehabilitating their forces and returned their posts to operation. Now, he boasted, the posts were hosting summer camps and preparing their participants to integrate into the Jerusalem Brigades' ranks at a later date.



At the entrance to the camp participants walk to the site of the final ceremony on an Israeli flag (Right: Paltoday, June 22, 2023. Left: Shams News, June 22, 2023).

End-of-camp ceremony

► On June 22, 2023, the PIJ and the Jerusalem Brigades announced the end of the military camps' first phase. A ceremony was held at the Hittin Post in Khan Yunis. The uniform-wearing camp participants held a military parade; some of them were armed. They also waved pictures of Jerusalem Brigades terrorist operatives killed in Operation Shield and Arrow. A speech was given by **senior PIJ figure Darwish al-Gharabli**, who said that while Israel thought that by killing the Jerusalem Brigades' commanders it would destroy the wing and the "resistance," the camps were the PIJ's response to Israel and a message to its leaders that they would not crush the PIJ or any other "resistance" [terrorist] organization. He added that the camps were preparing the younger generation to carry the flag, after some of the current generation had been killed, and they were laying the foundations for a generation that would support the path of "jihad and resistance," and believe it was the correct option (Jerusalem Brigades website and Paltoday, June 22, 2023).



The speakers at the final ceremony (Shams News, June 22, 2023).



Right: Camp participants marching with pictures of shaheeds (Paltoday, June 22, 2023). Left: Camp participants marching with arms (Jerusalem Brigades website, June 23, 2023).



The final ceremony (Paltoday and the Jerusalem Brigades website, June 22, 2023).



Two very young armed children. The guns are real (Paltoday, June 22, 2023).



Armed campers. Their instructors are masked (Jerusalem Brigades website, June 22, 2023).



Displays at the final ceremony (Paltoday, June 22, 2023).