



Israel attacked by rockets fired from Judea and Samaria: analysis and significance

July 30, 2023

Overview

- ▶ On July 27, 2023, Tisha b'Av,¹ the Telegram channel of the Hamas-affiliated al-Ayash Battalion² announced its operatives had fired a Qassam 1 rocket from the Jenin area at Ram-Ohn, an Israeli moshav 8 km (5 miles) south of the northern Israeli city of Afula. According to the announcement, "the action was carried out in response to Israel's 'crimes' against the Palestinians" and "al-Aqsa Mosque is a red line." In addition, "with the help of Allah, the legacy of [Yahia] al-Ayash reached the West Bank." The Battalion's Telegram channel issued a video allegedly documenting the launch (al-Ayash Battalion Telegram channel in western Jenin, July 27, 2023). The announcement was quoted by the Hamas-affiliated Shehab channel.
- ▶ Following the publication of the video, Israeli security forces and demolitions experts searched the area and located the remains of an improvised rocket which had fallen in Palestinian territory (IDF spokesman, July 27, 2023).

¹ Tisha b'Av (The Ninth of Av) is a day of fasting that commemorates various tragedies that befell the Jewish people, particularly the destruction of the two Temples in 586 BCE and 70 CE.

² Affiliated with the Izz al-Din Qassam Brigades, Hamas' military-terrorist wing, the Battalion is named for Yahya Ayash, aka "the engineer," one of the founders of the Izz al-Din Qassam Brigades and responsible for orchestrating suicide bombing attacks against Israel during the 1990s. He died in a targeted killing carried out by the Israeli security forces in 1996.



Right: The logo of the al-Ayash Battalion Left: Launching the rocket (al-Ayash Battalion Telegram channel, July 27, 2023).



A message left next to the rocket launcher. The Arabic reads, "al-Ayash Battalion; the rocket attack against the settlements near Jenin in Marj Ibn Amer [the Jezreel Valley] used a Qassam 1 rocket; Thursday, July 27, 2023 [and the Muslim calendar date]; and the next attack will be bigger #[the West]_Bank_defends_Jerusalem" (al-Ayash Battalion Telegram channel in western Jenin, July 27, 2023).

► Since May 2023, it was the sixth al-Ayash Battalion claim of responsibility for firing rockets at Israel and the fifth time rocket remains have been found. So far the rockets have not caused damage and the attacks have been used to make propaganda capital. The

Palestinian social networks described the rocket launches as "a new nightmare" for Israel which changed the "equation" of the confrontation (al-Watan June 26, 2023).

► For many years, the terrorist organizations, especially Hamas and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ), have been trying to copy Gaza's tactics in Judea and Samaria, aspiring to establish similar rocket capabilities. Almost at the same time as the rocket launch was announced, the channels affiliated with the Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) issued what they claimed was documentation of a terrorist attack tunnel dug under the Jenin refugee camp and used by Jenin Battalion operatives during the most recent IDF activity (Filastin al-Yawm, July 26, 2023). During that activity IDF forces exposed an underground space under a mosque which was used to hide weapons (IDF spokesman, July 4, 2023).

► So far, the improvised rockets appear relatively primitive and have limited capabilities. They do not have particularly high operational capabilities and do not significantly increase the use of force against Israel from Judea and Samaria. However, the rockets are a statement of intent, and the IDF has warned that the statement should not be underestimated. The rockets launched from Gaza also began as improvisations using the posts of traffic signs and pipes, and were developed and improved to the point where thousands of rockets now threaten extensive areas in southern and central Israel .

Additional Information

- **Since May 2023, six official announcements have been issued regarding rocket attacks from the Jenin region against Israeli communities close to Jenin, mainly Ram-Ohn and the settlement of Shaked;** in five instances the rockets were located by the IDF forces. The attacks were carried out by a network in western Jenin calling itself the al-Ayash Battalion. Its logo identifies it as affiliated with the Izz al-Din Qassam Brigades, Hamas' military-terrorist wing (@ayashqassam Twitter account). The network's claims of responsibility for the rocket launches (one or two at a time) were accompanied by videos published first on Palestinian social networks and later through a dedicated Telegram channel opened by the network. Various posts on the Palestinian social networks represented Jenin as treading the same path as the Gaza Strip, with the hashtag #al-Ayash_Battalion (@Yasser_107 Twitter account).
- All the videos of the network's claims of responsibility have been produced according to a fixed pattern. They open with its logo followed by the description of the rocket launch and close-ups of a note attached to the rocket launcher. The note states the use of the Qassam 1

rocket, the target, the date according to the Gregorian and Muslim calendars, #[the West]_Bank_defends_Jerusalem" and a threat that the launches have only begun.

► The rocket launches have been called "an extraordinary, unprecedented development, a mortal blow to 'the occupying entity and its army' " and a "strategic turning point in the history of the conflict" which show the ongoing preparations of the Palestinian forces (despite their paucity of resources), and "their determination to defeat Israel" (@KlvKlv937404 Twitter account, July 12, 2023). It was also claimed the rocket launches escalated attacks against the Israeli forces and showed Judea and Samaria were becoming like the Gaza Strip (al-Watan, June 26, 2023).



The messages conveyed by the rocket launches (@KlvKlv937404 Twitter account, July 12, 2023).

- For many years the terrorist organizations in Samaria have been trying to copy the military modus operandi of the Gaza Strip, including rocket attacks. For example, during Operation Shield and Arrow (May 2023), Ronan Bar, head of the Israeli Security Agency, revealed the exposure of a squad in the Jenin refugee camp working on manufacturing rocket capabilities to be able to attack Israel from northern Samaria. He also noted that senior PIJ figure Tareq Izz al-Din had been responsible for financing the activity before he was killed in a targeted killing during the operation (Israeli media, May 9, 2023).
- During the July 2023 IDF activity in the Jenin refugee camp the forces located and confiscated an improvised rocket launcher and other weapons (IDF spokesman and the Israeli Security Agency website, July 3, 2023).
- Most of the rockets launched so far apparently lacked warheads and contained only a propellant, such as gunpowder, which kept them aloft for a distance of a few meters, after which they fell in Palestinian territory, not far from the launch site.

Appendix

Rocket fire attacking Israel from the Jenin area

► On **May 8, 2023**, a video was posted to the social networks documenting the launch of a locally-manufactured rocket fired at the settlement of Shaked, northeast of Jenin. The video was accompanied by the claim that the al-Ayash Battalion had launched the rocket. The video was published on the Telegram channel of Safinaz al-Louh, a journalist from the Gaza Strip who works for the al-Amed website. A caption claimed it was a recording of preparations in Jenin to launch a rocket to attack "the settlement of Shaked in Jenin [sic]," and included the hashtag #al-Ayash_Battalion. A search for the hashtag on the Telegram channel located a report claiming the al-Ayash Battalion was active in western Jenin (journalist Safinaz al-Louh's Telegram channel, May 8, 2023). On May 8, 2023, IDF forces did not locate a rocket launcher or the remains of a rocket.



The first video. Right: The rocket and accompanying note. The Arabic reads, "al-Ayash Battalions; rocket launched at the settlement of Shaked; Wednesday, May 24, 2023 [and the Muslim calendar date]; the next attack will be bigger." Left: The rocket ready for launching. It has "Qassam 1" written on the side (journalist Safinaz al-Louh's Telegram channel, May 24, 2023).

► On **May 24, 2023**, Safinaz al-Louh issued another video, entitled "As part of its military training, the al-Ayash Battalion conducts a rocket test" (Safinaz al-Louh's Telegram channel, May 24, 2023). The video was also issued on the al-Ayash Battalion's Telegram channel, which

was launched on June 7, 2023. The video shows the note attached to the rocket stating it was a Qassam 1 rocket and attacked the settlement of Shaked on May 24, 2023.

► Both the Israeli media and the Palestinian social networks had doubts about the video's reliability (@az_z98 Twitter account and the Israeli media, May 24, 2023). The @StayConscious2 Telegram channel, whose motto is "For social awareness of the 'resistance,'" reported a quick check indicated the al-Ayash Battalion did not have a channel on any network and was unknown in Jenin. In addition, a statement from the "resistance" [terrorist organizations] in Jenin questioned the video and regarded it as legitimizing [Israel's] "next aggression" (@StayConscious2 Telegram channel, May 24, 2023).

► However, according to reports, a day later, IDF forces located a launcher near the village of Nazlat Zeid, west of Jenin, which security sources said had a rocket-like object with a cardboard head containing a small amount of explosive material (IDF spokesman, May 25 2023).



Documentation of a rocket launch (Safinaz al-Louh's Telegram channel, May 24, 2023).

► On **June 7 and June 14, 2023**, another video was issued by the al-Ayash Battalion Telegram group, reportedly showing preparations for a rocket launch scheduled for June 14, 2023 targeting Marj Ibn Amer [the Jezreel Valley] (@ayashqassam Twitter account, June 14, 2023). The video also mentioned Gazan journalist Safinaz al-Louh.



Pictures from the video documenting rocket launcher (al-Ayash Battalion in western Jenin Telegram channel, July 14, 2023).

- ▶ On **July 9, 2023**, the IDF spokesman reported that the remains of an improvised rocket had been found by security personnel in the Israeli community of Ram-Ohn. Inspection revealed it was an old improvised rocket with no explosive material (IDF spokesman, July 9, 2023). The Palestinian media quoted Israeli sources claiming that the remains belonged to the same rocket launched from Jenin on June 14, 2023 which caused the fire in Ram-Ohn.
- ▶ On **June 26, 2023**, the al-Ayash Battalion issued the claim that as part of its preparations, development and "breaking the 'equations' with the usurping enemy, and in response to its crimes and the crimes of its 'herds of settlers,' " the al-Ayash Battalion had successfully launched two Qassam 1 rockets at the 'settlement' of Ram-Ohn in the Jezreel Valley west of Jenin. The announcement added that Qassam rockets would soon fall on the heads of the settlers everywhere in the West Bank (al-Ayash Battalion in western Jenin Telegram channel, June 26, 2023). A video of the launch was released in which Gazan journalist Safinaz al-Louh was mentioned.



The beginning of the video: the al-Ayash Battalion in western Jenin. Above the inscription is the Izz al-Din Qassam Brigades logo (al-Ayash Battalion in western Jenin Telegram channel, June 26, 2023).



Two rocket launchers (al-Ayash Battalion in western Jenin Telegram channel, June 26, 2023).



Right: The note next to one of the launchers. The Arabic reads, "al-Ayash Battalion; Qassam 1 attack on the settlements near Jenin in Marj Ibn Amer [the Jezreel Valley]; Monday, June 26, 2023 [and the Muslim calendar date]; the next attack will be bigger; #[the West] Bank_Defends_Jerusalem." Left: The first rocket launch (al-Ayash Battalion in western Jenin Telegram channel, June 26, 2023).



Rocket launch (al-Ayash Battalion in western Jenin Telegram channel, June 26, 2023).

- ▶ On the same day the Palestinian Information Center said that for the first time in the West Bank the al-Ayash Battalion, which belonged to the Izz al-Din Qassam Brigades in Jenin, had issued a video documenting the launch of Qassam 1 rockets targeting the "settlement of Ram-Ohn" (@PalinfoAr Twitter account, June 26, 2023). Other media also issued the information.
- ▶ The IDF spokesman reported the launch of a rocket from the Jenin area that exploded in Palestinian territory, adding that Israeli security forces had carried out searches and the incident was under investigation. He also stated the rocket did not pose a danger to the settlements in the area (IDF spokesman, June 26, 2023).

- ▶ On **July 10, 2023**, according to reports, al-Ayash Battalion operatives launched two Qassam 1 rockets at the settlement of Shaked (Shehab, Quds al-Akhbariya, July 10, 2023). The video of the launch was posted on the Palestinian networks with an official announcement about a launch of two rockets (al-Aqsa TV, July 10, 2023).
- ▶ The al-Ayash Battalion said a statement that as part of its preparations, continuous development, breaking the "equations" with Israel and in response to its "crimes" against the Palestinians in the Jenin camp, and in response to the [alleged] harm to the Palestinian women, al-Ayash Battalion fighters had successfully launched two Qassam 1 rockets at the settlement Shaked west of Jenin. The statement added that despite the sensitive, complex security circumstances and the "impossible work," and despite their paucity of means and tools, they worked day and night, developing and making preparations for Israel to experience the force of Yahya al-Ayash' Qassam rockets (al-Ayash Battalion in western Jenin Telegram channel, July 10, 2023). Later, a video showing the pre-launch preparations was published with the claim that the actual launch was not filmed because of "security." Unlike previous videos, it did not mention Gazan journalist Safinaz al-Louh, who issued the organization's first videos of the organization on her Telegram channel on May 24, 2023.



The Arabic reads, "al-Ayash Battalion; attack on the settlement of Shaked west of Jenin using two Qassam 1 rockets; Monday, July 10, 2023 [and the Muslim calendar date]; the next attack will be bigger; #[the West] Bank_Defends_Jerusalem." (al-Ayash Battalion in western Jenin Telegram channel, July 10, 2023).

- ▶ On **July 10, 2023**, the IDF located two tripods and the remains of two improvised rockets near the settlement of Shaked. The security forces and demolitions experts did not find remains of explosive material, therefore the rockets did not pose a threat to local residents (IDF Twitter account, July 10, 2023). It was also announced that the two rockets fell in Area A, which is under full Palestinian Authority control (Israeli media, July 10, 2023).
- ▶ On **July 27, 2023**, the al-Ayash Battalion Telegram channel announced its operatives had launched a Qassam 1 rocket at Ram-Ohn from the Jenin area. According to the announcement, "the action was carried out in response to Israel's 'crimes' against the Palestinians and al-Aqsa mosque is a red line." The announcement added that with the help of Allah, the legacy of [Yahya] al-Ayash had reached the West Bank. The channel published a video documenting the launching (al-Ayash Battalion in western Jenin Telegram channel, July 27, 2023). The announcement was also quoted by the Hamas-affiliated Shehab channel.
- ▶ Israeli security forces and demolitions experts who searched the area following the publication of the video found the remains of an improvised rocket that had landed in Palestinian territory (IDF spokesman, July 27, 2023).



Right: The network logo. Left: The rocket launch (al-Ayash Battalion in western Jenin Telegram channel, July 27, 2023).



The rocket launcher and its accompanying note. The Arabic reads, "al-Ayash Battalion; attack on the settlements near Jenin in Marj Ibn Amer by means of a Qassam 1 rocket; Thursday, July 27, 2023 [and the Muslim calendar date]; the next attack will be bigger; #[the West] Bank_Defends_Jerusalem." (al-Ayash Battalion in western Jenin Telegram channel, July 27, 2023).