



Spotlight on Terrorism and the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict

(August 16 –22, 2023)

Overview

- ▶ This past week Palestinians carried out four shooting attacks, two of them deadly, in which three Israelis were killed: a woman was shot to death south of Mount Hebron, and a father and son were gunned down in Hawwara (south of Nablus). Palestinians also shot at an industrial area west of Jenin and at an IDF position in the Nablus area; no casualties were reported. The Israeli security forces continued counterterrorism activities. A laboratory and a warehouse with 15 IEDs ready for use were located in the Balata refugee camp in Nablus.
- ▶ The terrorist organizations in the Gaza Strip, led by Hamas, continue to develop and improve their rockets and other weapons capabilities. On August 17, 2023, Hamas fired fifty Ayash 250 rockets towards the sea. On two consecutive days the Iron Dome aerial defense system intercepted UAVs flying over the Gaza Strip. On August 21, 2023, Qatar began distributing its monthly donations to 100,000 needy families in the Gaza Strip.
- ▶ On August 17, 2023, about a thousand security prisoners began a hunger strike to protest the transfer of prisoners from one prison to another and following the intention of the Itamar Ben-Gvir, the minister of national security, to worsen prison conditions. Sources in Hamas, Fatah and the Palestinian Authority (PA) warned Israel not to harm the prisoners, whose welfare is considered a red line. The hunger strike ended on the evening of August 18, 2023, after an agreement had been reached with the prison service, viewed as a "victory" for the prisoners.
- ▶ PA security forces continued detaining wanted persons. According to reports, all the operatives of the Balata Battalion in Nablus surrendered to the national security forces. PA Prime Minister Muhammad Shtayyeh continued diplomatic activity for recognition of a Palestinian state and to enlist international aid. On August 20, 2023, the school year began for Palestinian children.

Judea and Samaria

Shots fired south of Mt. Hebron

► In a drive-by shooting on the morning of August 21, 2023, Palestinian terrorists fired about twenty bullets an Israeli vehicle near Hakvasim Junction in the south of Mount Hebron. An Israeli woman was killed and the driver was seriously injured. The victim's 12-year-old daughter was not injured. The terrorists fled the scene and IDF forces instituted a search for them. Reinforced forces partially closed the southern area of Mount Hebron (IDF spokesman's Twitter account, Israeli media, August 21, 2023). The Palestinian media reported the shooters' torched vehicle had been found near Kiryat Arba, on the eastern outskirts of Hebron (al-Ghad TV, August 21, 2023).



The scene of the attack in the south of Mount Hebron (Shehab Twitter account, August 21, 2023).



Right: Reinforced IDF forces in the Hebron area. Left: IDF forces enter Hebron (Shehab Twitter account, August 21, 2023).

► Before dawn on August 22, 2023, a few hours after the attack, Israeli security forces operating in Hebron detained two Palestinian brothers in a previously-prepared hideout which belonged to the family. During interrogation they confessed to the attack and handed over the weapons they had used (IDF spokesman's Twitter account, August 22, 2023). After their detention was

made public, the social media reported that they were Muhammad Akram al-Shantir and Saqr Akram al-Shantir (Adnan Hamarsheh's Twitter account, 22 August 2023; Paldf Twitter account, 22 August 2023).



Right: The weapon used by the terrorists in the shooting attack south of Mount Hebron (General Security Service, August 22, 2023). Left: Saqr al-Shantir. [Inset] The weapon used by the terrorists (Paldf Twitter account, August 22, 2023)

►The Fatah-affiliated al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades (AAMB) in Hebron claimed responsibility for the attack, calling it a "natural response to the crimes of the occupation" and carried out on the 54th anniversary of the attempt to burn down al-Aqsa Mosque in 1969 (Dunia al-Watan, August 21, 2023).¹



The AAMB in Hebron claim of responsibility (Dunia al-Watan, August 21, 2023).

¹ On August 21, 1969, a young Australian Christian set fire to al-Aqsa mosque, causing damage. The young man was emotionally disturbed and institutionalized, and later deported to Australia.

►The attack in the Hebron area, which until now had been relatively quiet, was cheered in Judea, Samaria and the Gaza Strip. Baklava was distributed in the streets and congratulatory notices were posted to the social networks (Paltoday, August 21, 2023). **Hamas spokesman Hazem Qassem** said the "resistance" [Palestinian terrorists] was attacking forcefully in northern, central and now in southern Judea and Samaria (Hazem Qassem's Telegram channel, August 21, 2023). **Suheil al-Hindi, a member of Hama' political bureau**, claimed the attack had humiliated Israel because it had been carried out in an area with a large presence of settlers (al-Mayadeen Twitter account, August 21, 2023).



Right: Handing out baklava in Gaza (Alam24, August 21, 2023). Left: A celebratory notice (Mana Muhammad's Twitter account, August 21, 2023).

Two Israelis shot to death in Hawwara (south of Nablus)

►On the afternoon of August 19, 2023, a Palestinian armed with a handgun went to a car wash in Hawwara (south of Nablus) and fired point blank range at two Israelis, a father and his son, killing them. He left the scene on foot, leaving his gun nearby. In Israeli security assessment, the terrorist arrived after being informed that two Israelis were at the car wash. Large IDF forces were deployed and conducted a manhunt for the terrorist. A closure was imposed on the village of Bayta and nearby villages were also searched (Israeli media, August 19, 2023).



The scene of the shooting attack in Hawwara (Shehab website, August 19, 2023).



IDF reinforcements arrive in Hawwara following the attack (QudsN Twitter account, August 19, 2023)

►Following the attack Palestinians in Judea, Samaria and the Gaza Strip rejoiced, and baklava was distributed in the streets of Gaza to celebrate the killing of two Israelis. **Mu'ain al-Dhameiri, head of the Hawwara local council**, condemned the attack in the Israeli media while supporting it in the Palestinian media. Interviewed by the Israeli daily newspaper Israel HaYom, he criticized the attack and Hawwara's negative image caused by the attacks in the town. He claimed he did not accept the killing of visitors to the town, emphasizing that the attackers were not local residents, since anyone could come and shoot at cars driving along the main street (Israel HaYom, August 20, 2023). However, interviewed by QudsN TV, his tone was different. He claimed attacks in Hawwara were a "natural reaction" and the Palestinian people's legal right [sic], adding that the Israeli government and "settler terrorism" were responsible for everything that happened (QudsN Twitter account, August 20, 2023).

►Other reactions:

◆ **Hamas spokesman Abd al-Latif al-Qanua** welcomed the "heroic" attack, claiming it was the result of the "resistance's" [terrorist organizations] determined, continuous promise to "protect" the Palestinians, respond to the "crimes of the occupation" and protect al-Aqsa Mosque. He added the "resistance" would continue to attack the IDF and the settlers (Hamas website, August 19, 2023). **Muhammad Hamada, another Hamas spokesman**, claimed the attack sent the strong message to "the Zionist enemy" that all its attempts to break the "resistance were useless, and promised the "resistance" would continue to convey such messages (Shehab, August 19, 2023).

◆ **The Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) in Judea and Samaria** welcomed the "heroic" attack, claiming it again proved the "resistance's" determination " and its ability to strike powerfully and send Israel the message that it would have neither security nor stability

as long as it continued its "crimes" against the Palestinians (Telegram channel of the media office of the PIJ in Judea and Samaria, August 19, 2023).



Handing out baklava. Right: Jerusalem Brigades' Tulkarm battalion operatives (Paltoday, August 19, 2023). Left: In Khan Yunis (Twitter account of photojournalist Hassan Aslih, August 19, 2023).

Shots fired at the Shahak Industrial Park west of Jenin

►On the afternoon of August 17, 2023, shots were fired at the Shahak Industrial Park west of Jenin.² A building was damaged; no casualties were reported. IDF forces searched for the shooters. Their vehicle was located in Palestinian territory with backpacks and ammunition still inside (IDF spokesman's Twitter account, August 17, 2023).

Shots fired at an IDF post south of Nablus

►On the night of August 16, 2023, shots were fired at an IDF post in Hawwara from a vehicle carrying several armed Palestinians. The soldiers returned fire, wounding and detaining one of the Palestinians; the others exited the vehicle and fled on foot. The vehicle was found to contain IEDs, a hand grenade, ammunition and other military equipment (IDF spokesman's Twitter account, Israeli media, August 16, 2023).

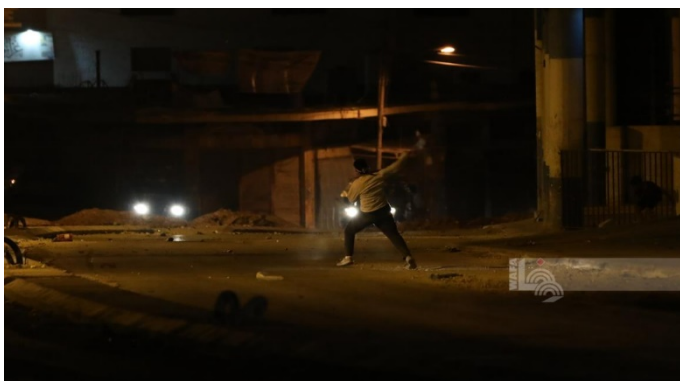
² The Shahak Industrial Park was established in 1998 in the northern area of the Samaria Regional Council, and employs Israelis and Palestinians.



The weapons found in the Palestinians' vehicle (IDF spokesman's Twitter account, August 16, 2023).

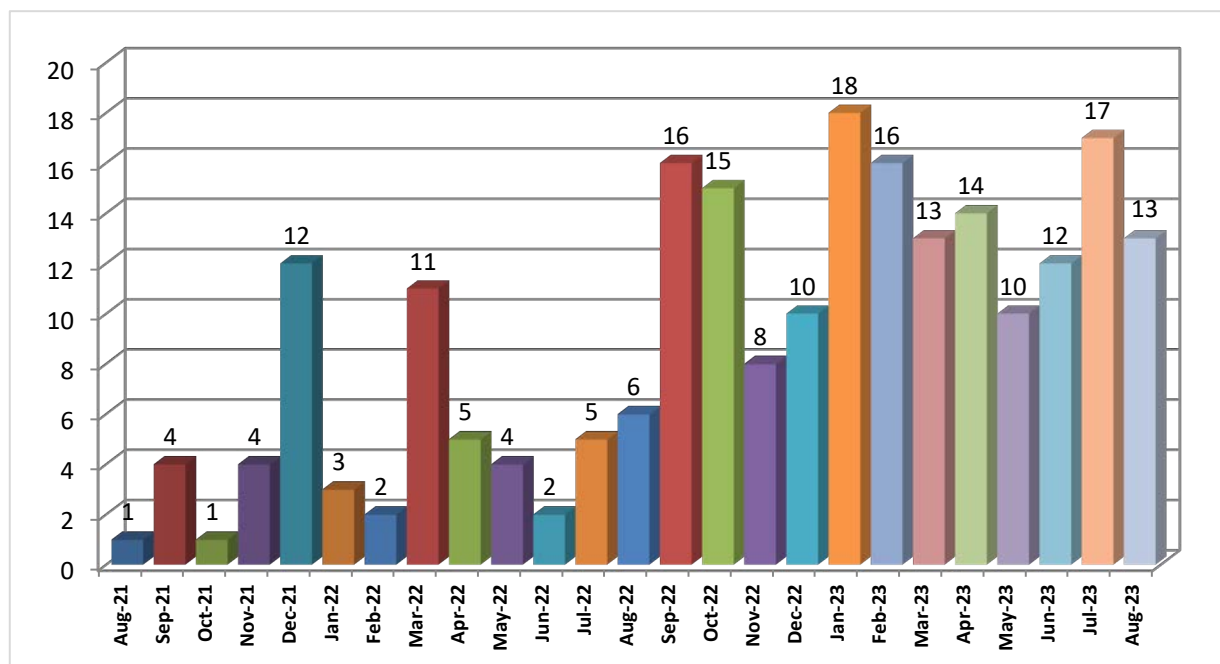
Clashes at the Tomb of Joseph (Nablus)

►On the night of August 15, 2023, approximately 1,500 Israeli worshipers entered the Tomb of Joseph in Nablus, heavily guarded by Israeli security forces. As they entered Palestinians rioted, throwing IEDs, Molotov cocktails and rocks, and blocking roads. The security forces returned fire (IDF spokesman's Twitter account, August 16, 2023). The Palestinian media reported a Palestinian had been fatally wounded (QudsN Twitter account, August 16, 2023).



Right: An IED explodes near the Tomb of Joseph in Nablus (QudsN Twitter account, August 16, 2023). Left: Palestinians riot near the Tomb of Joseph (Wafa, August 16, 2023)

Critical Terrorist Attacks in Judea and Samaria since November 2020³



Counterterrorism Activities

► This past week the Israeli security forces continued intensive counterterrorism activities in Judea and Samaria, focusing on Jenin and Nablus. They detained Palestinians suspected of involvement in terrorism and confiscated large quantities of weapons:

Al-Zababdeh (south of Jenin)

► During the morning of August 22, 2023, Israeli security forces operated al-Zababdeh (south of Jenin). Palestinians threw IEDs at them and they responded with gunfire (IDF spokesman's Twitter account, August 22, 2023). The director of al-Razi Hospital in Jenin reported the death of **Uthman Atef Abu Kharraj**, 17 years old, from al-Zababdeh, who was shot during violent clashes that included throwing Molotov cocktails and rocks at the [Israeli] forces (Wafa, August 22, 2023). The al-Zababdeh Deterrence Unit, which belongs to the Jerusalem Brigades, the PIJ's military-terrorist wing, issued a mourning notice for him claiming him as one of its first operatives (al-Zababdeh Deterrence Unit Telegram channel, August 22, 2023).

³ A critical attack is defined by the ITIC as involving shooting, stabbing, a vehicular attack, the use of IEDs, or a combination of the above. Stones and Molotov cocktails thrown by Palestinians are not included.



Uthman Atef Abu Kharraj (Wafa, August 22, 2023).

Jenin

► On the night of August 17, 2023, Israeli security forces operated in Jenin to detain wanted PIJ terrorists who were inside a building. During the activity one of the terrorists shot at the forces and tried to escape. The forces returned fire, killing him. Two other wanted Palestinians were arrested near the building. Weapons and dozens IEDs were found inside the building. As the forces left Jenin, local residents rioted, shooting and throwing IEDs; the forces returned fire. One soldier was injured and evacuated to a hospital (Israeli media and the IDF spokesman's Twitter account, August 17, 2023).



Weapons and IEDs found during the activity in Jenin (IDF spokesman's Twitter account, August 17, 2023).

► The ministry of health in Ramallah reported the death of **Mustafa al-Kastouni** (al-Qamba), 32 years old, from Jenin. Al-Kastouni, an AAMB operative, was wanted by Israel and had been detained about a year ago and released a few months later (Shehab Twitter account, August 17, 2023). During the second intifada (2000-2005) he threw rocks and participated in riots against IDF forces (aljazeera.net, August 17, 2023). A funeral was held for him in Jenin, attended by armed operatives. Fatah flags were waved and his body was wrapped for burial in a Palestinian flag (Wafa, August 17, 2023).



Right: Al-Kastouni. Left: Al-Kastouni throws rocks during the second intifada (QudsN website, August 17, 2023)

► **PA Prime Minister Muhammad Shtayyeh** posted his condolences to the family on his Facebook page and called for the International Criminal Court (ICC) in The Hague to prosecute [alleged] "Israeli war criminals" to deter Israel (Muhammad Shtayyeh's Facebook page, August 17, 2023).

Nablus

► On the night of August 16, 2023, Israeli security forces operated in the Balata refugee camp in Nablus. They located an explosives laboratory and 15 IEDs in a warehouse. The laboratory was located next to a Palestinian home where children were sleeping. During the activity Palestinian militants shot at the forces and threw IEDs and rocks. The forces responded with gunfire (IDF spokesman's Twitter account, Israeli media, August 16, 2023).



The IEDs seized in the explosives laboratory in the Balata refugee camp (IDF spokesman's Twitter account, August 16, 2023).

► On August 19, 2023, the death of **Muhammad Daoud Abu Assab**, 20 years old, from the Balata refugee camp, was reported; he died of wounds incurred during the Israeli security force activity on August 16, 2023 (Wafa, August 19, 2023; Shehab, August 19, 2023). **Fatah claimed him as an operative** (Fatah's media information and cultural commission Telegram channel, August 19, 2023). The AAMB issued a mourning notice for him, claiming him as an operative

(AAMB Telegram channel, August 19, 2023). Abu Assab was wounded half a year ago while trying to prevent IDF forces from entering the Tomb of Joseph in Nablus. After recovering he returned to terrorist activities, was wounded by Israeli security forces in the Balata refugee camp and later died (Shehab, August 19, 2023). He was given a military funeral which left from the Rafidia Hospital in Nablus (Shehab, August 19, 2023). His body was wrapped for burial in the Palestinian flag and an AAMB headband was on his forehead (Palestine Post Twitter account, August 19, 2023).



Right: Mourning poster issued by the AAMB (AAMB Telegram channel, August 19, 2023). Left: From a video documenting his activity against IDF forces (Fedayeen Twitter account, August 19, 2023).



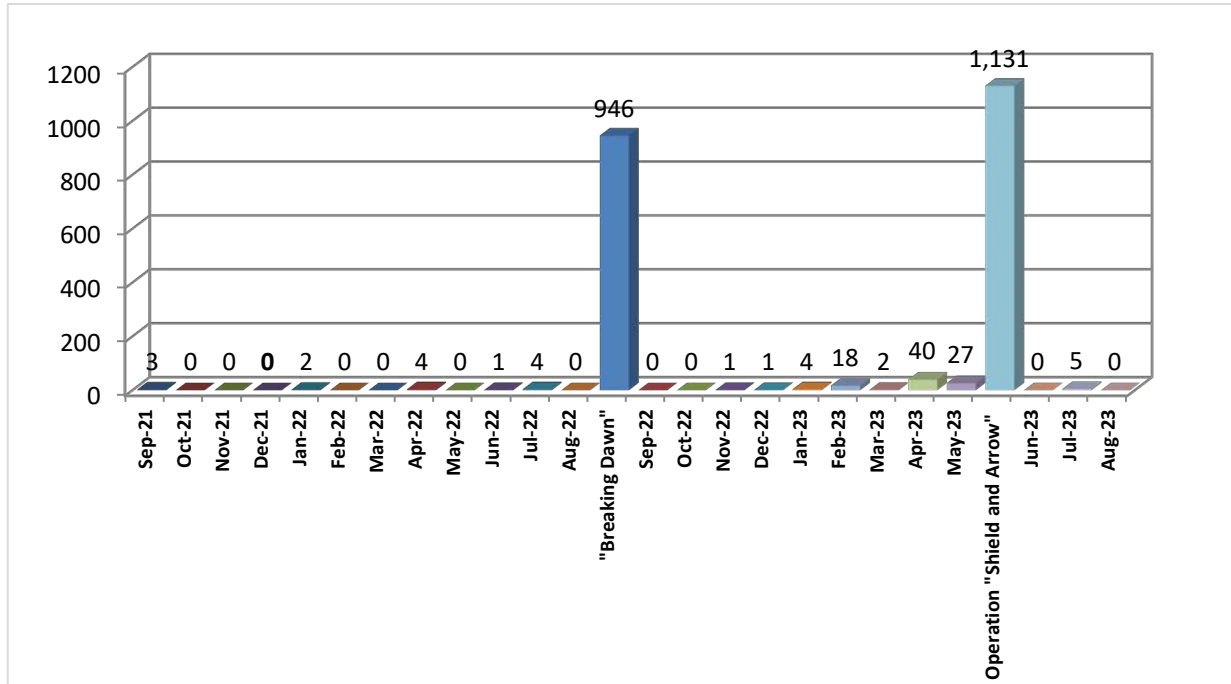
The military funeral held for Abu Assab in Nablus (PA national security forces Telegram channel, August 19, 2023).

Israel's South

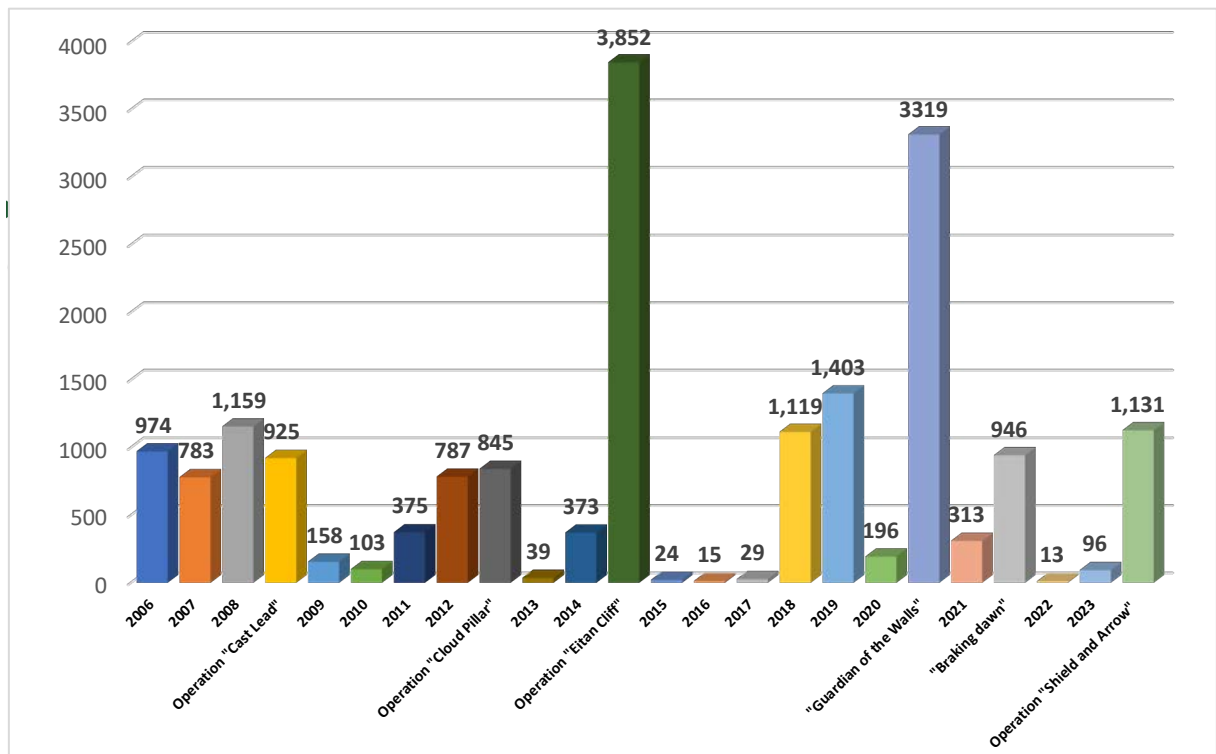
Rocket and mortar shell fire into Israel

► This past week no rocket or mortar shell hits were identified in Israeli territory.

Monthly Distribution of Rocket and Mortar Shell Fire since September 2021



Annual Distribution of Rocket Hits since 2006



Rockets launched towards the sea

►As part of developing and improving their rocket capabilities, Hamas and the PIJ launched rockets from the Gaza Strip towards the sea:

►On August 20, 2023, a rocket was launched from the southern Gaza Strip towards the sea as part of what was cited as "improving military and rocket capabilities" (Shehab, August 20, 2023). According to the Hezbollah-affiliated Lebanese daily al-Akhbar, the launch was carried out by operatives of the PIJ's military wing to test a new rocket model (al-Akhbar, August 21, 2023).

►On August 17, 2023, Hamas operatives launched about fifty long-range Ayash 250 rockets. The launches were reportedly part of a military exercise and in response to "Israel's actions against the Palestinian prisoners in Israeli jails" (see below) (Safa, August 17, 2023; al-Aqsa TV Twitter account, August 17, 2023). Assam al-Dalis, a senior Hamas figure and chairman of the Hamas administration monitoring committee in the Gaza Strip, said the rockets had been launched to send Israel a "strong message" to make it understand what could happen if "something bad" happened to the prisoners (alBawaba24 website, August 18, 2023).



Documenting the rocket launch (QudsN, August 17, 2023).

Iron Dome intercepts UAVs in the skies over the Gaza Strip

►This past week the Iron Dome aerial defense system intercepted two UAVs in the skies over the Gaza Strip. They had not penetrated Israeli territory and did not pose a threat to the Israeli communities near the Gaza Strip, and for that reason no sirens were sounded. The first UAV was intercepted on the morning of August 20, 2023, and the second on the morning of August 21, 2023 (IDF spokesman's Twitter account, August 20, 2023).



Right: "Resistance" UAV intercepted in the skies over the Gaza Strip (Twitter account of photojournalist Hassan Aslih, August 21, 2023). Left: UAV intercepted over Rafah skies (Shehab Twitter account, August 20, 2023)

Developments in the Gaza Strip

Distribution of money from Qatar

►Mohammed al-Emadi, chairman of Qatar's National Committee for the Reconstruction of Gaza, announced payment of the Qatari aid would begin on August 21, 2023 \$100 to about 100,000 needy families. Payment is made with the aid of the UN at 300 distribution centers throughout the Gaza Strip (website of Qatar's National Committee, August 19, 2023).

The Palestinian Authority (PA)

Reorganization of the PA continues

►The PA foreign ministry notified a number of Palestinian ambassadors and representatives abroad who had reached or passed retirement age, that the procedure for their retirement would be initiated in the near future. The ministry thanked them for their work during their diplomatic service (PA foreign ministry Facebook page, August 20 2023).

►So far it is not known how many representatives are involved, but it was one in a series of internal changes and reorganization measures that the authority has recently carried out, among them retiring the district governors. Other moves in PA institutions are also being discussed, including replacing the government or government ministers and the convening of a Fatah's Central Committee (al-Araby al-Jadeed, August 21, 2023).

About a week after Mahmoud Abbas decided to retire the district governors in the PA territories and Gaza Strip, on August 20, 2023, a ceremony to show appreciation and gratitude was held in his office in Ramallah. In addition to the outgoing governors, the ceremony was attended by Nabil Abu Rudeineh, spokesman for Mahmoud Abbas, Ziad Hab al-Reeh, PA

minister of the interior, Majed Faraj, head of Palestinian General Intelligence, and Mahmoud al-Habash, advisor to Mahmoud Abbas for religious affairs and Islamic relations, and Chief Qadi (Wafa, August 20, 2023) . The ceremony was official and conducted by Majdi al-Khalidi, Mahmoud Abbas' advisor for diplomatic affairs; there were no speeches.



The ceremony held for the district governors (Wafa, August 20, 2023).

► **PA Prime Minister Muhammad Shtayyeh** met with **Kenji Yamada, Japan's parliamentary vice-minister for foreign affairs**. Shtayyeh expressed his appreciation for Japan's support and assistance for the PA, which includes financial support for UNRWA. He called on Japan for the full recognition of a Palestinian state, to defend the two-state solution, act to end the "Israeli occupation" and pressure Israel to allow Palestinian elections to be held in East Jerusalem. The Japanese Minister invited Muhammad Shtayyeh to visit Japan (Wafa, August 14, 2023).



Muhammad Shtayyeh meets with Kenji Yamada (Wafa, August 14, 2023)

► The Japanese legation in the Palestinian Authority announced the transfer of a \$1 million emergency grant from the Japanese government for the Jenin refugee camp in light of the severe damage it suffered during the Israeli activity at the beginning of July. The grant will be transferred through UNRWA and be used for sanitation, health and the treatment of unexploded ordnance (Wafa, August 15, 2023).

Activities of the PA security forces in Nablus

Nablus

►The Ma'an news agency reported that 25 operatives of the Balata Battalion, led by its commander, **Assam al-Salaj**, and his deputy, **Abdallah Abu Shallal**, surrendered to the national security forces and asked for protection (Ma'an, August 20, 2023). Assam al-Salaj was represented on social media as the AAMB commander in the Balata refugee camp, when on June 13, 2023, Israeli security forces surrounded his family's house in the refugee camp and demanded that al-Salaj, who had barricaded himself inside the house, surrender. However, in the end they failed to detain him (Shehab, June 13, 2023).



Assam al-Salaj (Twitter account of @miral_abusaleh, June 13, 2023)

Tubas

►This past week the PA security forces continued preventive activities, detaining several operatives in the Tubas district, among them Ahmed Abu al-Aida, a released prisoner who is a PIJ terrorist operative, while he was in a barbershop (Ultra Palestine website, August 16, 2023). Also arrested was Uday al-Shahrouri, a Tubas Battalion operative, after his house in the al-Farr'a area, south of Tubas, had been surrounded for several hours (al-Jazeera TV website, August 19, 2023). In response, local residents gathered and shouted chants condemning "political" detentions, blocked roads and burned tires. Clashes and exchanges of fire were reported between armed men and the PA security forces deployed to suppress the protests (Shehab Twitter account, August 18, 2023).



Right: Blocking roads and burning tires to protest the detentions (Shehab Twitter account, August 18, 2023). Left: PA security forces deployed in Tubas following the protest (Palinfo Twitter account, August 18, 2023)

Bani Na'im

► **Talal Dweikat, spokesman for the Palestinian security forces**, said the security forces had detained five people wanted for criminal offenses who had barricaded themselves in a house in the village of Bani Na'im, east of Hebron on August 16, 2023. An officer was injured in the operation (Wafa, August 16, 2023). Among the detainees are a Palestinian accused of murder and another who escaped from a jail in Hebron. The forces confiscated two M-16 assault rifles, three handguns and vehicles (Ma'an, August 16, 2023).



Right: The house in Bani Na'im where the five wanted Palestinians had barricaded themselves. Left: The weapons found in their possession (SND website Twitter account, August 16, 2023).

Protest of security prisoners in Israeli jails

► On August 17, 2023, a thousand security prisoners announced they would join the hunger strike of the 75 prisoners transferred from Ktziot Prison to Nafha Prison (Facebook page of the PA commission for prisoners and released prisoners affairs, August 17, 2023). The announcement was made following a decision made by the Israel Prison Service to transfer the

prisoners and a visit to Ofer Prison by Itamar Ben-Gvir, minister of national security, during which he demanded the conditions of security prisoners be changed (Israeli media, August 17, 2023),

► **Zaher Jabarin, in charge of Hamas' bureau of martyrs, wounded and prisoners**, warned the fight would not remain within the walls of the prisons, but would spread beyond them. He said harming prisoners and trying to isolate them would have consequences, because Hamas continuously sought to prevent Israel from isolating the prisoners inside the jails (al-Aqsa TV website, August 17, 2023). **Qadoura Fares, the chairman of the PA commission for the affairs of prisoners and released prisoners**, condemned the actions of the Israeli government and the national security minister's "provocations" against the Palestinian prisoners. He claimed in the near future there would be a new type of struggle, both inside and outside the prisons, for the sake of the Palestinian prisoners, adding that the international community had to take responsibility for their situation (al-Quds, August 16, 2023). The Palestinian media announced a day of rage and mosque preachers were asked to focus Friday sermons on the issue of Palestinian prisoners (Ma'an, August 17, 2023).

► After the threats and warnings, on the evening of August 18, 2023, the prisoners announced they were ending the hunger strike after reaching an agreement with the prison service, which included returning the prisoners from Nafha Prison to Ktziot Prison (Israeli media, August 18, 2023). The Palestinians viewed the agreement as "a victory and achievement" for the prisoners:

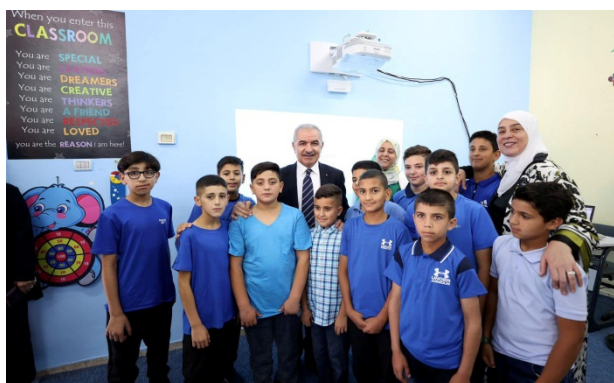
► **Yasser Mazhar, PIJ representative in the prisoners' committee of the national and Islamic forces**, claimed the prisoners had won a "new victory" and Ben-Gvir would not be able to break their will. He also claimed that if Israel did not keep the agreements made with the prisoners, they would begin an indefinite hunger strike (Paltoday, August 19, 2023).

► **Zaher Jabarin** congratulated all the prisoners on their "great victory over the plots of Ben-Gvir and the prison service." He stated they would not allow Ben-Gvir, Smotrich [Israeli minister of finance] and the "extreme right-wing government" to paint a picture of victory anywhere or at any time, and any harm to prisoners would spur the Palestinians to revolt against Israel (Palestine Online, August 18, 2023).

School year opens in the Palestinian education system

► On August 20, 2023, the school year opened in Judea, Samaria and the Gaza Strip. Muhammad Shtayyeh participated in festive ceremonies in several schools in the villages of the Ramallah district. He said 1.4 million students had returned to school and twenty new schools with 248

classrooms had been constructed for the school year (Muhammad Shtayyeh's Facebook page, August 20, 21, 2023).



Shtayyeh in one of the schools in the Ramallah district (Muhammad Shtayyeh's Facebook page, August 20, 2023).

►The PIJ in Judea and Samaria reported that as part of the campaign to support the firm stand of the Palestinians, and in light of the harsh economic conditions in the Jenin refugee camp, Jenin Battalion operatives had distributed school supplies to students for the new school year (Telegram channel of the media office of the PIJ in Judea and Samaria, August 20, 2023).



The distribution of school supplies to students in the Jenin refugee camp (Telegram channel of the media office of the PIJ in Judea and Samaria, August 20, 2023).

The anniversary of the attempt to set fire to al-Aqsa mosque

►August 21st marked the 54th anniversary of the attempt to burn down al-Aqsa mosque. Muslim clerics in east Jerusalem issued messages warning of Israel's actions to Judaize Jerusalem and calling for Arab and international assistance:

►**Sheikh Muhammad Hussein, the General Mufti of Jerusalem and the Palestinian territories, and who delivers sermons in al-Aqsa Mosque**, said that although 54 years had passed since the fire in al-Aqsa had been extinguished, it still burned. That was because Israel continued to Judaize Jerusalem by carrying out archaeological excavations, replacing Arab street names with Hebrew names, taking over Palestinian houses surrounding al-Aqsa Mosque,

all done in an attempt to force a fait accompli of taking over al-Aqsa and dividing it according to schedules and areas, and later to rebuild the Temple. He called on Palestinians who were able, to go to al-Aqsa Mosque and stay there throughout the year. He also called on Arabs, Muslims, international institutions and organizations not to stand by and watch the Judaization of Jerusalem and the damage to al-Aqsa Mosque, since the mosque was the responsibility of all Muslims (Wafa, August 21 2023).

► **Sheikh Yusuf Juma'a Salama, the first deputy chairman of the Supreme Islamic Committee in Jerusalem**, said the anniversary of attempt to burn down al-Aqsa Mosque coincided with the increase in Israel's acts of aggression against the mosque and Jerusalem, and the world turned a deaf ear and closed its eyes to what was happening. He claimed the fire was still burning in al-Aqsa Mosque and took many forms, including the "invasion fire" of the settlers led by senior Israeli officials, during which ceremonies were held, people prostrated themselves, flags were waved and the shofar was blown, the "fire imposing Israeli sovereignty on al-Aqsa Mosque" as a prelude to allotting visits according to schedules, etc. He called on the Arab-Muslim world to act for its liberation and protection (al-Quds, August 21, 2023).



Right: An infographic titled "The burning of al-Aqsa – 54 years and the fire still burns," showing Israel's activity that allegedly prevented the rapid extinguishing of the fire (Palestine Online Twitter account, August 21, 2023). Left: The Arabic reads "Setting fire to Al-Aqsa – a crime sponsored by the occupation" (Twitter account of the International al-Quds Institute, August 21, 2023).

► In the Gaza Strip, the anniversary was marked with a mass event organized by the national and Islamic forces. Buses transported thousands of people from the northern Gaza Strip, Gaza

City and the central Gaza Strip to the return camp⁴ in the eastern part of Gaza City. **Senior PIJ figure Khader Habib and Muhammad Hamada, Hamas spokesman for Jerusalem**, spoke at the event (Safa, August 21, 2023). After the speeches large numbers of Palestinians approached the border security fence. The IDF reported Palestinians rioted the northern Gaza Strip, throwing IEDs and trying to cross the fence. In response, IDF forces fired at the demonstrators to disperse them (IDF spokesman's Twitter account, August 22, 2023). Sources in the Gaza Strip reported 18 casualties, including a boy who was shot in the leg and Palestinians who were injured by inhaling tear gas (Shehab, August 21, 2023).



Palestinian protesters climb the fence in eastern Gaza (Telegram channel of journalist Hassan Aslih, August 21, 2023)

⁴ One of the sites of the organized Gaza Strip border riots known as return marches, held in 2018 and 2019.

Appendix

Rocks, Molotov cocktails and other attacks

►In Judea, Samaria and east Jerusalem Palestinians continued throwing rocks and Molotov cocktails at Israeli vehicles driving on the roads. The more prominent events were the following:⁵

- ◆ **August 21, 2023:** Rocks were thrown at an Israeli vehicle in Turmus Aya (northeast of Ramallah). No casualties or damage were reported.
- ◆ **August 21, 2023:** Rocks were thrown at an Israeli vehicle in Hawwara (south of Nablus). No casualties were reported; the vehicle was damaged.
- ◆ **August 21, 2023:** Rocks were thrown at an Israeli bus near the Adam Junction (north of Jerusalem). No casualties were reported; the bus was damaged.
- ◆ On the evening of **August 20, 2023** an Israeli driver mistakenly drove his vehicle into Turmus Aya. Several Palestinians gathered around it, threw rocks and set it on fire. Israeli security forces entered the village and extracted the driver. When the forces and civilian left, local residents rioted (IDF spokesman's Twitter account, August 20, 2023).



The Israeli vehicle burning in Turmus Aya (Shehab Twitter account, August 20, 2023).

- ◆ **August 20, 2023:** Rocks were thrown at an Israeli bus and other vehicles near Ibei Hanahal (south of Bethlehem). No casualties were reported; vehicles were damaged.
- ◆ **August 17, 2023:** Rocks were thrown at an Israeli bus and other vehicles near Nebi Elias (east of Qalqilya). No casualties were reported; vehicles were damaged.

⁵ Information and pictures from Rescue Without Borders in Judea and Samaria unless otherwise noted.



Damage to the bus near Nebi Elias

- ◆ **August 17, 2023:** Rocks were thrown at an Israeli bus near Hizma (northeast of Jerusalem). The previous day a similar event occurred at the same location. No casualties or damage were reported.
- ◆ **August 17, 2023:** Rocks were thrown at an Israeli vehicle near Luban al-Sharqiya (northeast of Ramallah). Two Israelis were injured.
- ◆ **August 16, 2023:** Rocks were thrown at an Israeli bus near the Har Gilo Junction (west of Bethlehem). No casualties were reported; the bus was damaged.
- ◆ **August 15, 2023:** Molotov cocktails were thrown at an IDF post in Psagot (east of Ramallah). No casualties or damage were reported.