# Spotlight on Terrorism and the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict

## July 21 – 28, 2026

## Trending

**► Escalation in Judea and Samaria with an increase in Palestinian attacks and settler retaliation.**

**► Hamas' new leader, Khalil al-Hayya, demanded international pressure to combat "Israeli violations."**

**► Israeli targeted killings focused on senior Hamas operatives who played a role in maintaining the movement's security control in the Gaza Strip.**

## Overview[1]

► An IDF officer and an Israeli civilian were shot and killed following clashes between Israelis and Palestinians in the Palestinian village of Tal. The Palestinians reported four fatalities and settler retaliation. A senior Hamas figure praised the "resistance of the residents," while the Palestinian Authority called for international intervention.

► An Israeli civilian was stabbed by two Hamas terrorists near Itamar, and an IDF soldier was stabbed by a Palestinian police officer in northern Samaria. Israeli security forces conducted extensive counterterrorism operations in Judea and Samaria.

► IDF forces continued operations in the Yellow Line and other parts of the Gaza Strip, destroying weapons depots and a tunnel hundreds of meters long, and eliminating more than ten Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad terrorists, including senior Hamas security operatives and terrorists involved in the atrocities of the October 7, 2023 invasion and massacre and who had held hostages. The IDF reported that 12 Palestinian football [soccer] players killed during the war had been terrorist operatives.

► Satellite photographs showed the IDF had expanded the boundaries of the Yellow Line in the Gaza Strip and constructed earthen embankments.

[1] Click https://www.terrorism-info.org.il/en to subscribe and receive the ITIC's daily updates as well as its other publications.

► Khalil al-Hayya delivered his first speech as head of the Hamas political bureau. He related to the continuation of the "resistance"[2] while rejecting any compromise regarding "Palestine." He asked the leaders of the mediating countries to compel Israel to stop the "violations" of the ceasefire agreement. It has not yet been determined who will replace him as head of Hamas' negotiating team.

► Board of Peace representative Nikolay Mladenov welcomed Israel's Security Cabinet decision to allow the entry of the first 200 security personnel of the international stabilization force into the Gaza Strip.

# Escalation in Judea and Samaria

## Shooting in Kafr Tal

► On July 24, 2026, a group of Israelis hiking without authorization from the Israeli security forces, entered the outskirts of the Palestinian village of Kafr Tal, near Havat Gilad, where dozens of armed Palestinians attacked them. One of the Palestinians snatched the weapon of a member of the Havat Gilad emergency response team and it was used to shoot and kill him. Another terrorist opened fire on the hikers and several IDF soldiers who arrived at the scene, killing an IDF officer and wounding two other Israelis. The soldiers shot and killed him (IDF Spokesperson and Israeli media, July 24, 2026). A closure was imposed on Kfar Tal and the city of Nablus, and the security forces conducted searches to locate others who had been involved. At a hospital in Nablus, two suspects involved in the attack were detained, including the terrorist who had snatched the weapon. The Israeli security forces sealed the houses of the terrorist who carried out the shooting attack and of the terrorist who seized the weapon. At least 11 wanted Palestinians were also detained and at least 80 suspects were questioned (IDF Spokesperson, July 24-28, 2026).

**The terrorist opens fire (Arabic-language Facebook page of the IDF Spokesperson, July 24, 2026)**

[2] Terrorist attacks and violence.

► Palestinian reports claimed clashes broke out near the village mosque after Jewish settlers entered the village and attacked local houses, and Israeli soldiers and settlers fired "indiscriminately" at Palestinians. The ministry of health in Ramallah reported four fatalities from the same family and four other Palestinians wounded (Wafa and Nablus News Telegram channel, July 24, 2026). Fatah announced that the four fatalities, including the perpetrator of the shooting attack, were its operatives (Aman News Facebook page, July 25, 2026).

► Palestinian sources reported that shortly after the attack, settlers attacked several villages in the Nablus area. In the village of Sarra, six houses and vehicles were set on fire and three Palestinians were injured. In the village of Urif, clashes were reported with no casualties (Sama Telegram channel, July 24, 2026). near Yabad, settlers threw rocks at houses, attacked local residents with pepper spray and assaulted them. In Faraata, east of Qalqilya, four Palestinians were shot and wounded, while a carpentry workshop, two houses and fields were set on fire (Wafa, July 24, 2026). In Awarta, a quarry was set on fire, and olive trees were uprooted in Tal, Burin and Madama (Sama Telegram channel, July 25, 2026). In Qusra, a newly-completed mosque was set on fire, and near Tulkarm an attempt to torch a mosque was thwarted (Reuters, July 26, 2026).

► Zaher Jabarin, Hamas leader in Judea and Samaria, praised the shaheeds who died while "defending their land and their honor" during confrontations with "settler gangs." He claimed their deaths would not go unanswered and that the "resistance"[3] in Judea and Samaria and Jerusalem would continue and intensify (Hamas Telegram channel, July 24, 2026).

**The attack in the village of Tal**
**(Facebook page of Alaa al-Laqta, Hamas' inhouse cartoonist, July 25, 2026)**

► The office of Palestinian Authority chairman Mahmoud Abbas condemned the incidents in Tal and put full responsibility on the Israeli government for the "crimes" committed by the

[3] Terrorist attacks and violence.

settlers against "unarmed Palestinians." The statement called on the American administration to intervene and compel Israel to stop the escalation and the settler violence (Wafa, July 24, 2026). Mahmoud Abbas also sent letters to the leaders of "sisterly, friendly countries," the EU, the secretary general of the Arab League and the president of the UN Security Council, calling for urgent international action to stop the "ongoing Israeli aggression and settler attacks" against the Palestinian people in the West Bank. He claimed Israel systematically imposed "new facts on the ground" by expanding the settlements, escalating settler atttacks and undermining and weakening the Palestinian Authority's institutions, deliberately harming the prospects for implementing the two-state solution and threatening regional security and stability (Wafa, July 26, 2026).

## Other Terrorist Attacks

► **Stabbing near Itamar**: On July 23, 2026, while firefighters were extinguishing a fire near the community of Itamar in Samaria, two terrorists stabbed and critically wounded an Israeli civilian. The two were shot and killed by an armed civilian (IDF Spokesperson, July 23, 2026). Hamas claimed responsibility for the attack and reported that the terrorists were its operatives (Hamas Telegram channel in Judea and Samaria, July 23, 2026).

► **Stabbing in northern Samaria**: On July 23, 2026, a Palestinian terrorist went to an IDF post in northern Samaria, near the planned community of Ganim, where he stabbed and superficially wounded one of the soldiers. He was shot and killed (IDF Spokesperson and Israeli media, July 23, 2026). The terrorist had been a policeman in the Palestinian police force (Quds Agency, July 23, 2026).

► On July 25, 2026, several terrorists attacked an IDF soldier who was on leave in the Susya area, threw a rock at him, wounding him, and seized his weapon. A short time later, IDF forces located the weapon and detained two of the attackers. A third terrorist involved in the attack was later detained, and a fourth turned himself in (IDF, Israel Police and Israeli Security Agency Spokespersons, and Israeli media, July 25 and 27, 2026).

## Counterterrorism Activity

► Following the attack in Kafr Tal, the Israeli security forces conducted extensive counterterrorism operations in dozens of communities throughout Judea and Samaria. More than 70 wanted individuals and suspects were detained, including those involved in terrorist activity and the manufacture of explosive devices, wanted individuals affiliated with Hamas, arms dealers and Palestinians involved in spreading incitement propaganda. During

operations in villages near the Israel-Palestinian Authority border, including the Tulkarm, Qalqilya and Azzun Atma areas, about 30 wanted Palestinians were detained for infiltrating illegal residents into Israeli territory (IDF and Israel Police Spokespersons, July 24-28, 2026). Palestinian sources reported that the IDF operated at Aqbat Jabr, Kobar, Yabad, al-Zababdeh, Kafr 'Aqab, Farun, Burqin, Qaryut, Beit Furik and Kafr Tal (Al Jazeera, July 24-25, 2026).

## Khalil al-Hayya Elected Chairman of Hamas Political Bureau[4]

► In his first speech after being elected chairman of the Hamas political bureau, Khalil al-Hayya pledged to continue the path of the movement's previous leadership and the course of the "resistance."[5] He rejected compromising over "Palestine" and said victory and liberation were long-term objectives, relating to Hamas' priorities (Hamas Telegram channel, July 22, 2026):

- A complete end to Israeli "aggression" and a full IDF withdrawal from the Gaza Strip. He called on the states sponsoring the negotiating process to exert real pressure on the Israeli government to implement what had been agreed upon and to complete the transition to the next stage. He said he opposed anything that infringed upon the legitimate rights of the Palestinians under international law, especially their right to "liberation, statehood [*sic*] and self-determination."
- Restoring a dignified life to the Gazans, thwarting all conspiracies, especially displacement, and accelerating reconstruction. He claimed that was the Palestinians' right and could not be linked to negotiations, concessions or political positions. He added that Hamas would continue to "operate" simultaneously on all fronts on behalf of the Gaza Strip, Judea and Samaria and Jerusalem, while working to secure the release of the prisoners and provide them with lives worthy of their "struggle and sacrifices."
- He extended his hand to all Palestinian forces and "factions"[6] to unite on a common basis according to an agreed national program which would ensure the achievement of Palestinian priorities and objectives, and called for an immediate start to a national dialogue.

[4] See the July 2026 Amit Institute report, **Khalil al-Hayya Elected to Chair Hamas political bureau – Insights and Reactions**

[5] Hamas and the other terrorist organizations operating in the Gaza Strip.

[6] Terrorist organizations.

◆He called for the reinforcement of Hamas' strategic relations with its "Arab-Islamic" environment because they faced a "common enemy." He claimed regional developments had shown that the stability and security of the Palestinian people, and the achievement of their rights, freedom and independence, were the key to regional security and stability. He called on the Arab-Islamic nation to effectively exert pressure to stop the killing of Palestinians, and thanked the countries which had supported and assisted the Palestinians, particularly the "brothers" in Yemen, Lebanon, Iraq and Iran.

◆He appealed to the international community and the UN, saying that the principle of human justice would lose all meaning if they were unable to protect the children of Gaza and prosecute Israel, and called for the continuation and expansion of all forms of solidarity with the Palestinians.

**Al-Hayya during his first speech (Hamas Telegram channel, July 22, 2026)**

## IDF Security Activity in the Gaza Strip

► IDF forces continued operations to destroy terrorist infrastructure and eliminate terrorists within the Yellow Line and other parts of the Gaza Strip. This past week more than ten Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) terrorists were eliminated after planning to attack IDF forces or involvement in efforts to rebuild Hamas' military capabilities. Many of those eliminated also participated in the atrocities of the October 7, 2023 terrorist attack and massacre and were involved in holding hostages in tunnels. Those eliminated included the commander of the Gaza Strip north district police, the commander of Hamas' internal security in the central camps, the commander of Hamas' UAV unit in the central camps and the head of a department in Hamas' military intelligence, who had also been employed for years as a teacher by UNRWA. Weapons depots, weapons production facilities and tunnels were attacked and destroyed, including a tunnel running for hundreds of meters in the northern Gaza Strip (IDF Spokesperson, July 21-28, 2026).

► The IDF Spokesperson reported that 12 Palestinian football [soccer] players, coaches and referees, who had been represented by Palestinian and international media as sports figures, simultaneously belonged to the military wings of Hamas and PIJ, where they had combat and command positions, and some also participated in the atrocities of the October 7, 2023 invasion and massacre. According to the IDF, the objective of the report was to refute claims they had been targeted because of their involvement in sports and to underscore their hidden involvement in terrorism in campaigns to defame Israel (IDF Spokesperson, July 22, 2026).

► An Israeli strike on July 20, 2026 allegedly targeted a vehicle belonging to a private security company which protected aid shipments intended for the World Food Programme, killing three Palestinian employees. The company denied the IDF's statement that those killed were PIJ operatives identified while transferring weapons to a vehicle. It claimed the weapons carried by its employees when they were attacked in the al-Mawasi area of Rafah had been assigned to protect the aid from theft and that was routine practice carried out in accordance with security protocols agreed upon between the international organizations and Israel (*al-Sharq al-Awsat*, July 25, 2026; Khallik Wa'i Telegram channel, July 22, 2026).

► Palestinian sources claimed Israel was using a new type of missile in the Gaza Strip that allegedly contained napalm[7] (al-Sayyad Telegram channel, July 21, 2026). The director of the medical aid society in Gaza, Dr. Muhammad Abu 'Afash, alleged that IDF forces had resumed using weapons which cause severe burns. He claimed such injuries had been observed since the beginning of the war in the Gaza Strip and had recently reappeared. He added that medical teams had documented cases of fatalities completely covered with burns, adding that the scale of the explosives used by the IDF resulted in complex injuries requiring urgent medical intervention and advanced treatment capabilities at a time when hospitals were suffering from a shortage of medicines and medical supplies (SND website, July 22, 2026).

[7] Used extensively during the Vietnam War and banned by international law for use against civilians in 1980.

**The Arabic reads, "The occupation deletes entire families from the population registry"**
**(Facebook page of Alaa al-Laqta, Hamas' inhouse cartoonist, July 22, 2026)**

►An analysis of satellite images taken by Planet through July 15, 2026 indicated an acceleration in the construction of earthen embankments along the Yellow Line in the Gaza Strip, with some sections extending beyond the Yellow Line. According to the analysis, since November 2025 the IDF has constructed sections of embankments and fortifications with a combined length of about 30 kilometers, including an almost continuous section approximately 19 kilometers long from east of Khan Yunis to the al-Zeitoun neighborhood in Gaza City. It was claimed that the pace of construction increased in July 2026, particularly in the Rafah area, where the length of the earthen embankment separating Rafah from the al-Mawasi area grew from about 400 meters on July 1 to about 2.6 kilometers by mid-July, and the temporary deployment line established under the ceasefire agreement was gradually becoming a de facto control zone. The satellite images showed that on the eastern side of the line, most structures had been demolished, military roads had been paved, new bases had been erected and fields had been bulldozed. The IDF confirmed it was constructing a physical barrier in the Yellow Line area and was clearly marking the route of the Yellow Line to reduce friction and prevent harm to uninvolved persons. The statement further noted that in addition to the barrier, the IDF had developed a security zone around the line equipped with intelligence and technological capabilities (Associated Press, July 22, 2026; aljazeera.net, July 23, 2026).

**Right: Map of the earthen embankments constructed along the Gaza Strip and the area of the Strip located within the Yellow Line and the orange line (aljazeera.net, July 23, 2026). Left: Yellow Line markers placed on Salah al-Din Street in the al-Tuffah neighborhood of Gaza City (Quds Agency, July 27, 2026)**

► Israel released 60 Palestinian prisoners from the Gaza Strip who had been detained since the October 7, 2023 attack and massacre, some of them laborers who had been detained inside Israel. The Red Cross assisted in transferring them through the Kerem Shalom Crossing to Nasser Medical Complex in Khan Yunis and helped them contact and reunite with family (Wafa, July 27, 2026).

## Negotiations for the Second Phase of the Ceasefire Agreement

► The Israeli Security Cabinet approved the legal framework which would allow the entry into the Gaza Strip of the international stabilization force of an expected 200 security personnel from "friendly countries," including Uganda and Morocco. They will be deployed in areas not under Israeli control, subject to Israeli approval for each unit. The objective of the force is to assist in stabilizing the Gaza Strip, its demilitarization and the transfer of responsibility to a temporary Palestinian administration through the national committee for the administration of Gaza. However, no date has been set for the force's deployment (Israeli media, July 26, 2026). Board of Peace representative Nikolay Mladenov welcomed the decision, which he called "a key factor" in implementing the American ceasefire plan (Reuters, July 26, 2026).

► Khalil al-Hayya, chairman of the Hamas political bureau, sent letters to the leaders of the mediating countries, Egypt, Qatar and Turkey, asking them to make an effort to compel Israel to stop "violating" the agreements which had been signed and to meet its commitments under those agreements. He detailed the "violations," which he alleged had recently increased, and said it required rapid action by the Arab parties to the agreement in order to preserve it and

ensure its successful completion (Hamas Telegram channel in Judea and Samaria, July 23, 2026).

► A member of the Hamas political bureau said al-Hayya had decided to continue along the diplomatic path and negotiating track, giving them priority within the Hamas leadership over the "military option," to reach a comprehensive agreement with Israel. He said al-Hayya sought to reach an agreement which would bring stability and reconstruction to the Gaza Strip and avoid a return to "armed confrontations with the occupation," provided Israel committed to doing so. Another Hamas figure said al-Hayya had held a series of contacts with leaders and senior officials, particularly in Egypt, Qatar, Turkey, Iran and the Palestinian Authority, urging them to exert pressure for a comprehensive agreement with Israel on a ceasefire and the restoration of stability. A source stated that al-Hayya had instructed senior Hamas figures, who had recently held discussions with Nikolay Mladenov, as well as with several senior European and Russian officials and a senior American official, to reiterate the need to pressure Israel to adhere to the ceasefire agreement and reach an agreement on the second stage (al-Sharq website, July 25, 2026).

► Hamas sources said the movement was discussing the appointment of a new chairman of its negotiating delegation to replace Khalil al-Hayya. According to a member of the political bureau, al-Hayya told the political bureau that he needed time to consult with the movement's negotiating committee regarding the appointment of his replacement. Another Hamas source said the movement was inclined to appoint either Zaher Jabarin or Dr. Bassem Na'im as chairman of the delegation. Meanwhile, members of the general Shura council proposed Nizar Awadallah to head the delegation (*al-Quds al-Arabi*, July 22, 2026; al-Sharq website, July 25, 2026).

# The Gaza Strip

## The Situation in the Gaza Strip

► Hamas police in the Gaza Strip reported that two underage brothers had been injured after they touched unexploded ordnance in the Khan Yunis camp in the southern Gaza Strip and it detonated, and one of them lost a hand. The police called on locals to stay away from suspicious objects and unexploded ordnance, warn children not to touch them and immediately report them to the police or to the ministry of interior's operations room (Gaza Strip Police Telegram channel, July 23, 2026).

► The ministry of health in Gaza warned of a shortage of oncological medicines, chemotherapy treatments and supportive medications. Reportedly, oncology departments were currently unable to admit new breast cancer patients and the shortage of specialized drugs was delaying the preparation of combination chemotherapy treatments. It also stated that about 4,000 cancer patients, out of 11,000 patients with medical referrals for treatment outside the Gaza Strip, were still awaiting travel permits, and that the shortage of diagnostic and radiological equipment and the difficulties of patients waiting to travel abroad, was endangering their lives (Palestine Online, July 21, 2026).

► Ross Smith, director of emergency preparedness and response at the United Nations World Food Programme, warned that without additional funding, the agency would have to make deeper cuts to the assistance it provided in the Gaza Strip, where it supports 70% of the population. He said the increased operating costs associated with the war in Iran were a significant factor, but the main problem was donor fatigue, as global attention shifted elsewhere. He added that during July 2026, cash assistance for 75,000 people had been reduced by 25% and food rations for about 220,000 families had been cut in half, warning of additional cuts in October 2026 without further funding. His remarks followed the latest IPC[8] report, according to which more than two-thirds of Gazans could face severe hunger by the end of 2026 because humanitarian agencies had reduced aid due to funding shortages. The report found that the number of people suffering from severe food insecurity in the Gaza Strip declined to 1.2 million between mid-April and the end of June 2026, but was expected to rise to more than 1.4 million by December, about 67% of the Strip's population (Reuters, July 24, 2026).

► According to Sa'id al-'Aklouk, responsible for monitoring sanitation and sewage at the ministry of health in Gaza, before the war there were about 320 active wells in the Strip, but fewer than 100 were currently operating. He added that about 80% of the water distribution network and most desalination facilities had been damaged or destroyed in the war. He added that untreated sewage from more than 300,000 cesspits was seeping into Gaza's coastal aquifer, the Strip's only natural source of fresh water. He said that for the first time, control

[8] IPC, Integrated Food Security Phase Classification, is an international classification system used to assess the level of food security in countries and geographic regions. The UN is responsible for implementing and developing the classification system.

over water sources had been lost and it was the worst situation Gaza had ever experienced (Reuters, July 21, 2026).

## Hamas Governance

► Sources in the Gaza Strip reported that the head of the internal security forces in the Central Gaza District, Lieutenant Colonel Wael Musa al-Laddawi,[9] had recently directed a security operation in coordination with several security forces and Palestinian "factions"[10] to pursue "armed gangs" supported by Israel because of their attacks on operatives from the "military wings" of the "factions." According to the sources, he was also responsible for managing the file of collaborators with Israel and had recently arrested several suspects accused of espionage (*al-Sharq al-Awsat*, July 26, 2026).

► The Hamas ministry of interior and national security claimed that since the ceasefire went into effect in October 2025, 53 police commanders, officers and operatives had been killed in Israeli strikes, alleging that the objective of the attacks was to undermine police functioning and increase chaos in the Gaza Strip. The ministry added that the police would continue to maintain public order and ensure operational continuity despite the losses of personnel (Palestinian police in the Gaza Strip Telegram channel, July 25, 2026).

► Hamas' "resistance security" announced that in preparation for the publication of the Gaza Strip matriculation examination results, residents should not fire their guns and should report any behavior endangering the public. It added that some of the fireworks and firecrackers purchased for the celebrations contained materials from unexploded rockets [*sic*] and could cause serious injuries. Residents were therefore urged not to purchase or use them (al-Sayyad Telegram channel, July 23-24, 2026).

**Matriculation examinations in the Gaza Strip**
**(Facebook page of Alaa al-Laqta, Hamas' inhouse cartoonist, July 24, 2026)**

[9] Eliminated in an airstrike on his vehicle in Deir al-Balah on July 26, 2026.
[10] Terrorist organizations.

# The Palestinian Authority (PA)

► Syrian Foreign Minister Asaad Hassan al-Shibani met in Damascus with Yasser Abbas,[11] an adviser to the PA chairman, who arrived at the head of a delegation. They discussed bilateral relations, regional developments, increasing coordination and consulting on matters of common Arab concern (SANA, July 22, 2026).

► Mahmoud al-Habbash, adviser to the PA chairman for religious affairs and Islamic relations, welcomed UNESCO's adoption of four decisions concerning "Palestine" by the World Heritage Committee. He said the decisions reinforced the Palestinian position that Israeli measures to change the status and character of heritage sites in Judea, Samaria and east Jerusalem, particularly in the Old City of Jerusalem and in Hebron, were legally invalid. He called for the dispatch of delegations to Jerusalem and Hebron to monitor and document the alleged "violations " (Wafa, July 23, 2026).

► Polish Deputy Foreign Minister Wojciech Zajączkowski met with Varsen Aghabekian Shahin, the PA foreign minister, on the sidelines of a conference of PA ambassadors to European countries. Zajączkowski noted Poland's support for peace based on international law and the two-state solution, and called for consolidating the ceasefire in the Gaza Strip, allowing the entry of humanitarian aid, transferring the tax clearance revenues and halting construction in the settlements and violence by Jewish settlers (Wafa, July 23, 2026).

[11] Yasser Abbas, son of the PA chair,am, is a member of Fatah's Central Committee and the movement's commissioner for foreign relations.