



News of Terrorism and the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict

(May 13-19, 2015)



The car used in the vehicular attack at the Alon Shvut junction in Gush Etzion (south of Jerusalem)
(Facebook page of PALDF, May 14, 2015)

Overview

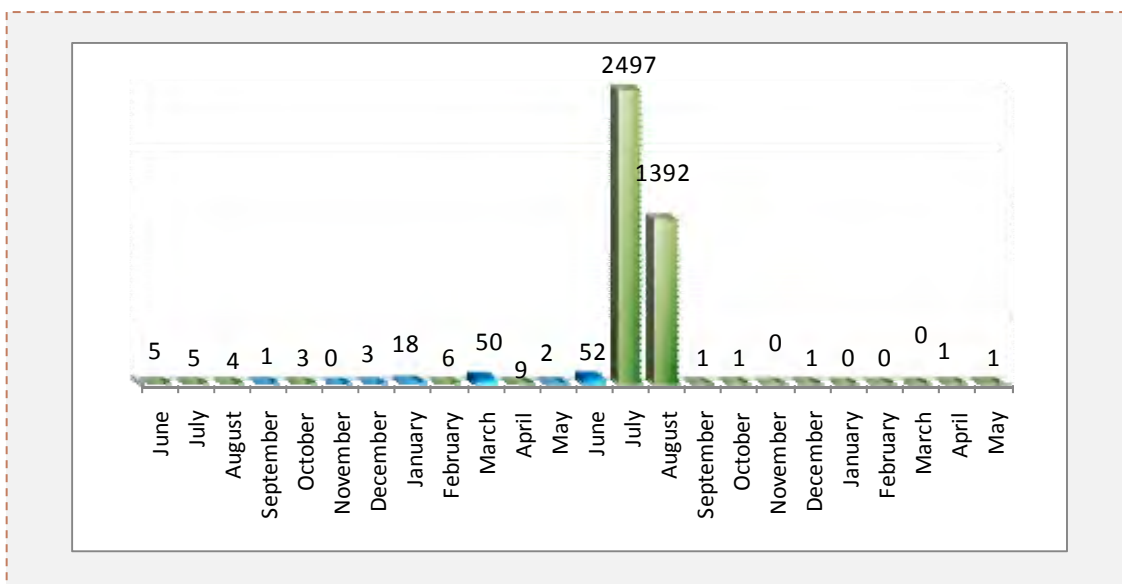
- This past week Israel's south remained quiet. Rallies and marches were held in Judea, Samaria and the Gaza Strip for the so-called Nakba Day, which commemorates the catastrophe visited upon the Palestinians in Israel's War of Independence. Attendance at the events was relatively poor. In some instances there were clashes between Palestinians and the Israeli security forces, which did not, however, spiral out of control.
- A vehicular attack was carried out near the entrance to the village of Alon Shvut in Gush Etzion. Four Israelis were injured, one seriously. The perpetrator had been released from an Israeli jail half a year ago after serving a prison term for throwing stones. This past year there was an increase in the number of vehicular attacks in Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria. Such attacks are supported by Fatah, the Palestinian Authority (PA) does not condemn them and they are considered part of the so-called "popular resistance."

Israel's South

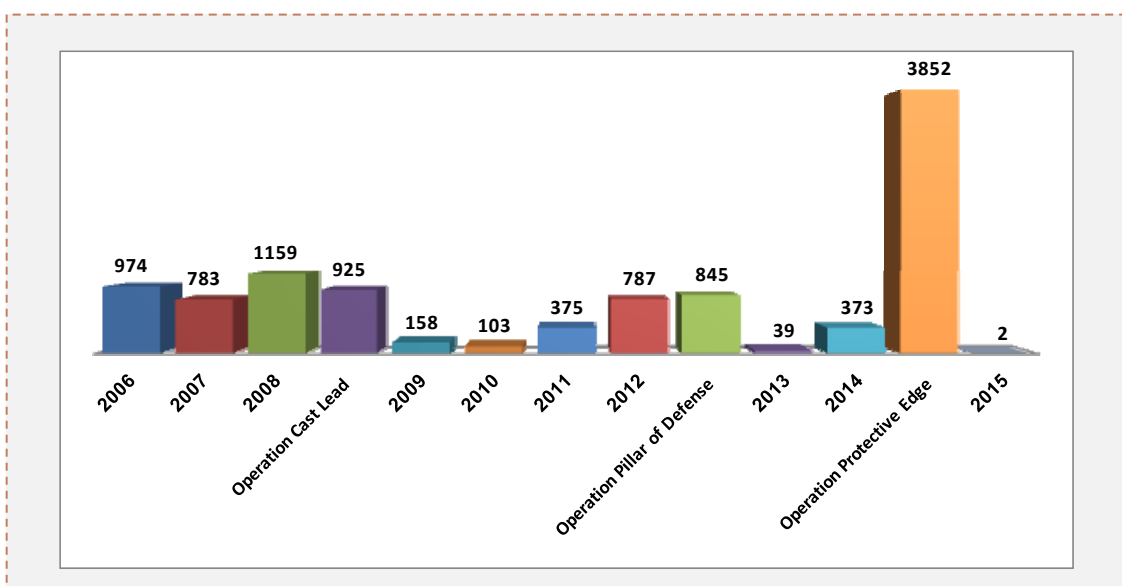
Rocket Fire Attacking Israel

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

Monthly Distribution of Rocket Fire (2013 – 2015)¹



Annual Distribution of Rocket Fire in Israel's South²



¹ As of May 19, 2015. The statistics do not include mortar shell fire or rockets which misfired and fell inside the Gaza Strip.

² The statistics do not include mortar shell fire.

Clashes along the Israeli-Gazan Border

■ On May 15, 2015, three Palestinians near the border security fence close to the village of Nahal Oz (southern Gaza Strip) were wounded by IDF fire. They had been participating in a Nakba Day march near the security fence. Palestinians burned tires to prevent IDF surveillance activities (Alquds.com, May 15, 2015).

Smuggling of Wetsuits Prevented

■ At the beginning of May 2015 the Israel Security Agency and customs officials at the Nitzana border crossing **prevented wetsuits from being smuggled into the Gaza Strip**. According to the documentation, the containers held "sporting goods," but a close investigation by customs officials revealed that they held **forty wetsuits**, for which a special import license is required. In security source assessment, **the shipment was destined for Hamas' military buildup** (Tazpit.org.il, May 18, 2015).

Judea, Samaria and Jerusalem

Vehicular Attack

■ At around noon on **May 14, 2015**, a Palestinian drove a taxi with an Israeli license plate to the **junction at the entrance of the village of Alon Shvut** in Gush Etzion (south of Jerusalem). The driver swerved out of the lane, rammed into youths waiting at the bus stop and sped away. **Four young men were injured**, one seriously; the others suffered minor injuries. Searches for the driver were conducted in the area around the town of Halhul and the villages north of Hebron. In the evening of May 14, 2015, a Palestinian was detained on suspicion of having carried out the attack. He was **Muhammad Irfa'iyat Abu Sneineh**, 22, from Hebron. **He was released from an Israeli jail last year after having been imprisoned for throwing stones and carrying a non-specified cold weapon.**³

"Popular Resistance" Terrorism and Violence Continue

■ This past week violence and rioting continued at the usual locations in Judea, Samaria and east Jerusalem, part of what the Palestinians call the "popular resistance." The violence mainly centered on throwing stones, rocks and Molotov cocktails. The weekend events were devoted to Nakba Day (which commemorates

³ For further information see the May 18, 2015 bulletin, ["During the past year there has been an increase in the number of vehicular attacks in Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria. The attacks, which are sometimes deadly, are supported by Fatah, not condemned by the Palestinian Authority and considered a part of the so-called "popular resistance."](#)

the catastrophe visited upon the Palestinians during Israel's War of Independence). In some instances Palestinians clashed with Israeli security forces. Most of the clashes were at Qadoun and Bil'in. Participation in the events was relatively poor and they did not spiral out of control (See below).

■ Some of the prominent attacks were the following:

- On **May 17, 2015**, during an Israeli flag-waving march to mark Jerusalem Day, Palestinians clashed with marchers near the Nablus Gate in east Jerusalem. Two Israeli policemen securing the event were injured when stones were thrown at them. Several Palestinians were detained (Ynetnews.co.il, May 17, 2015).
- On **May 16, 2015**, Palestinians threw stones at a Jewish residence in the Ras al-Amoud neighborhood of east Jerusalem. There were no casualties and no damage was reported (Facebook page of the Israel Police Force, May 16, 2015).
- On **May 15, 2015**, Palestinians threw a Molotov cocktail at an Israeli military vehicle at the Harsa junction in Mt. Hebron. There were no casualties. The vehicle was damaged (Facebook page of Red Alert, May 15, 2015).
- On **May 15, 2015**, Palestinians threw stones at the Israeli security forces at the Bitunya checkpoint. A guard suffered minor injuries and was treated at the site (Facebook page of Red Alert, May 15, 2015).
- On **May 14, 2015**, Palestinians threw stones at Israeli vehicles on the Tunnel Road in south Jerusalem. There were no casualties; two vehicles were damaged (Facebook page of Red Alert, May 14, 2015).
- On **May 14, 2015**, a Palestinian threw stones at the village of Psagot. Israeli security forces opened fire at him; he sustained minor wounds and was evacuated to a hospital (Facebook page of Red Alert, May 14, 2015).
- On **May 14, 2015**, Palestinians threw stones at the light railway in the Shuafat region of north Jerusalem. There were no casualties; the railway was damaged (Facebook page of Red Alert, May 14, 2015).



Palestinians throw Molotov cocktails at a roadblock near the Shuafat refugee camp during clashes with Israeli security forces (Facebook page of PALDF, May 17, 2015).

Prevention of Planned Stabbing Attack

- The Israeli security forces detained a number of Palestinians, including a minor, **who planned to carry out a stabbing attack against security guards posted at the Beit Ovadia building (a Jewish residence) in the Silwan neighborhood (east Jerusalem)**. The Palestinians, all from Silwan, included **Muhammad Nasr Abbasi**, born in 1994, a Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) terrorist operative; and **Murad Muhammad Awda Qustiro**, born in 1993, who had no terrorist organization affiliation.
- During interrogation Muhammad Nasr Abbasi admitted he had recruited the minor to conduct surveillance on the security arrangements at Beit Ovadia in preparation for attacking the guards. Having received surveillance information, he decided to carry out a stabbing attack using a knife or an axe, rather than a shooting attack. Muhammad Nasr Abbasi also admitted to having manufactured pipe bombs and Molotov cocktails which he gave to operatives to throw at Jewish homes in Silwan (Israel Security Agency, May 14, 2015).

Developments in the Gaza Strip

Explosion at Hamas Post

- On May 14, 2015, the Palestinian media reported that **an explosion had occurred at a Hamas military post in the Al-Atatra region near Beit Lahia**. According to the report, dozens of Palestinians were injured in the blast and considerable damage was done to property. **Ashraf al-Qidra**, spokesman for Hamas' ministry of health, claimed fifty Palestinians were injured, two of them critically. He claimed the explosion had been caused by the "dismantling of an IDF shell" (Alresala.net, May 14, 2015). **Iyad al-Bazam**, spokesman for Hamas' ministry of the interior, claimed the explosion was "internal" (Official Facebook page of Iyad al-Bazam, May 14, 2015).
- The Palestinian media reported the death of a Hamas military-terrorist wing operative from Beit Lahia during **"training in one of the wing's bases."** It was also reported that an operative had been killed when a "resistance" tunnel collapsed (Qassam.ps and Alresala.net, May 18, 2015).



Left: The Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades notice of the explosion (Qassam.ps, May 14, 2015). Right: Palestinians stand around the site of the explosion in Beit Lahia (Ghaza al-'Aan, May 14, 2015).

Hamas-Egypt Relations

- It was reported that an attempt to smuggle weapons into the Gaza Strip through the tunnels had been prevented, part of Egypt's security force counterterrorist activities in the Sinai Peninsula, (Rama Press, May 12, 2015). **Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi** said so far the Egyptian army had

successfully destroyed 80% of the tunnels in the three-kilometer (almost two-mile) buffer zone along the Egyptian-Gazan border at Rafah (Safa.ps, May 12, 2015).

■ Hamas spokesmen condemned the death sentence the Egyptian court handed down for former Egyptian President Mohamed Morsi and other defendants. They also rejected the accusations that Hamas had been involved in their alleged crimes. **Ismail Haniya**, deputy head of the Hamas' political bureau, wrote on his Facebook page that the "honest " Egyptian legal system had sentenced Hamas prisoners to death while they were in Israeli prisons.⁴ Hamas spokesman **Sami Abu Zuhri** called the sentence "saddening and shocking" (Paltimes.net, May 16, 2015).

■ **Iyad al-Bazam**, spokesman for the Hamas ministry of the interior, wrote on the ministry's Facebook page that he was surprised the Egyptian legal system continued accusing the Gaza Strip of involvement in Egypt's internal affairs. He claimed the accusations were not supported by evidence proving the Gaza Strip had violated Egyptian security (Facebook page of the ministry of the interior in the Gaza Strip, May 16, 2015).

■ **Husam Badran**, external Hamas spokesman, claimed the Egyptian court decision was "political" and had nothing to do with law. He claimed the decision only harmed those issuing it and that it was "a present for the occupation and a cover-up of [Israel's] crimes against the Palestinian people" (Facebook page of Husam Badran, May 18, 2015).

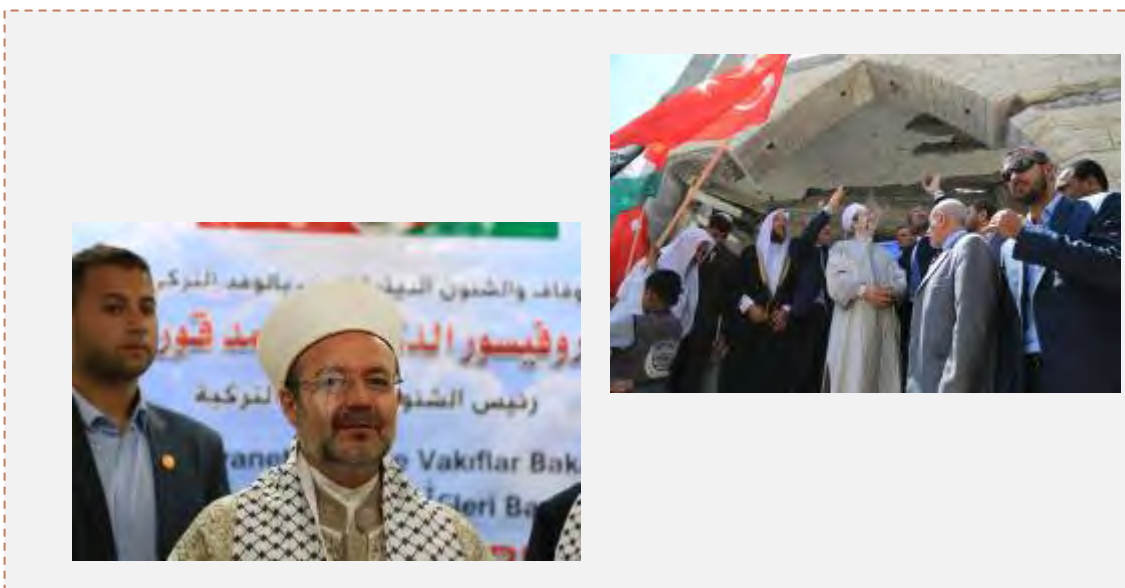
Hamas-PA Relations

■ **Palestinian's security services were responsible for the recent bombings in the Gaza Strip.** He claimed the PA's security services had financed operatives in the Gaza Strip and directed them to carry out the bombings. He also claimed that Hamas had detained individuals involved in the events and was conducting an investigation. He said that any attempt to undermine the security of the Gaza Strip would fail, and demanded the PA put an end to its activities and bring those involved to trial (Facebook page of Musheir al-Masri, May 13, 2015).

⁴ He was probably referring to one of the convicted is Hassan Salameh, a Hamas military-terrorist wing operative and a member of the Muslim Brotherhood, imprisoned in Israel (Official Hamas website, May 17, 2015).

Turkish Minister of Religious Affairs Visits the Gaza Strip

■ **Mehmet Gormez**, Turkish minister of religious affairs, paid his first visit to the Gaza Strip. He met with **Ismail Haniya**, deputy head of Hamas' political bureau. He called for Israel to be brought to trial for its use of illegal weapons and the violation of the Palestinians' human rights during Operation Protective Edge. He also visited the mosques destroyed during the operation which Turkey promised to reconstruct, as well as Turkish institutions in the Gaza Strip. Before entering the Gaza Strip through the Erez crossing he visited Jerusalem and Hebron (Paltoday.tv, May 17, 2015).



The Turkish minister of religious affairs visits the Gaza Strip (Paltoday.tv, May 17, 2015).

The Palestinian Authority

Nakba Day Events

Overview

■ Palestinians marked Nakba Day in Judea, Samaria and the Gaza Strip with ceremonies, marches, rallies and a 67-second siren. At a number of locations the events were accompanied by clashes between Palestinians and the Israeli security forces; the events did not spiral out of control. Notable was the relatively poor attendance at the events, especially in Judea and Samaria. The Palestinian media broadcast special live programs, while the official Palestinian TV channel kept to its customary programming schedule.

■ The **PLO** issued a formal statement for Nakba Day, stressing that the Palestinians would continue their national struggle even if the number of victims rose. In addition, given the alignment of the new Israeli government, **the PLO would not call for a return to the negotiating table unless a date were set for the end of the Israeli occupation.** **Fatah** also issued a formal statement. It stressed that nothing was more important than the so-called "right of return." Fatah, according to the statement, had been established to realize the "right of return" for the entire Palestinian people and it intended to demand that "right" in the international campaign being waged by the Palestinian leadership (Wafa.ps, May 13, 2015).

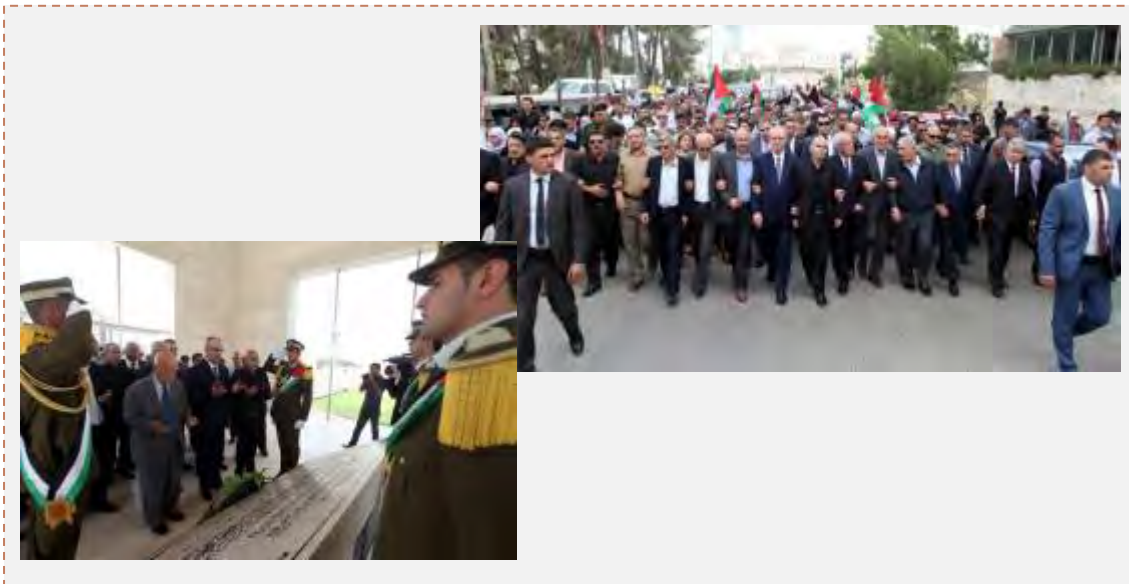
Mahmoud Abbas' Speech

■ **Mahmoud Abbas**, in Italy at the time, broadcast a speech for Nakba Day. He claimed the "Israeli government plot" to bring the Palestinian cause to an end had failed and that the Palestinian people adhered to their land and their rights, and would struggle against "any scheme to push the Palestinian cause aside." **He stressed the "non-violent" popular activities against the occupation and settlements would continue.**

■ Mahmoud Abbas also claimed the Palestinians would strive to erode and isolate the occupation's policies, and **those responsible for them would be brought to trial in the International Criminal Court (ICC) in The Hague.** He reiterated his preconditions for renewing the negotiations with Israel, among them the cessation of construction in the settlements, the release of the Palestinian prisoners in Israeli jails, and a timetable for the end of the occupation no later than 2017. He claimed that if Israel continued its current policies the Palestinians would escalate their efforts and use every means to internationalize the issue (Wafa.ps, May 14, 2015).

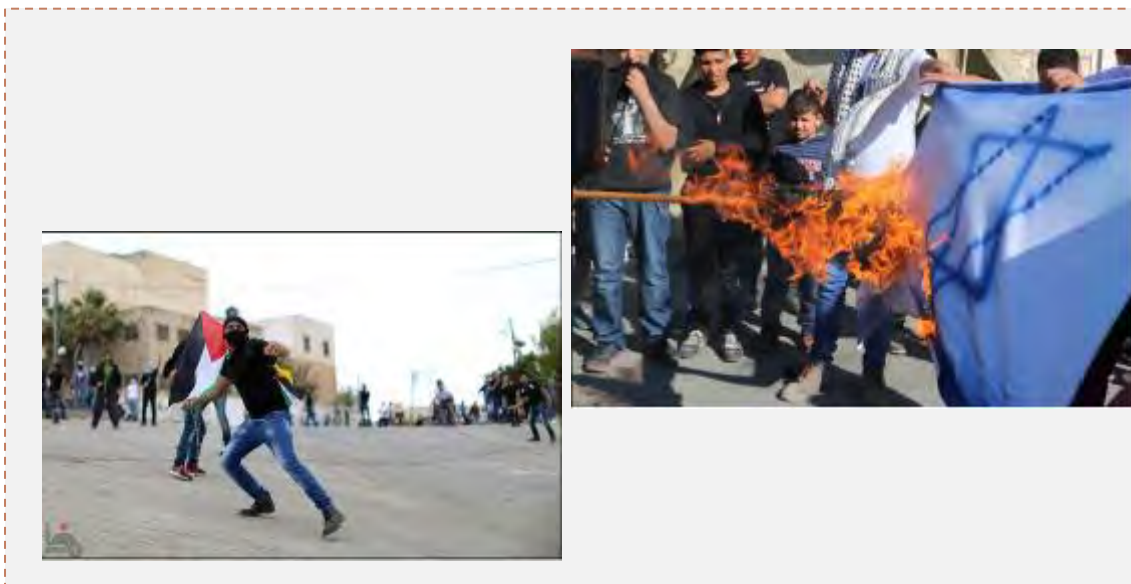
Rallies in Judea and Samaria

■ Rallies, marches and demonstrations to mark Nakba Day were held throughout Judea and Samaria. The main rally was held in Ramallah. On May 13, 2015, a march was held starting from the grave of Yasser Arafat and ending at Arafat Square in the middle of Ramallah, where a rally was held by the High Committee for Marking Nakba Day (Wafa.ps, May 13, 2015).



Left: Rami Hamdallah, Palestinian prime minister, at the grave of Yasser Arafat in Ramallah. Right: Nakba Day march headed by Rami Hamdallah (center) and other senior PA figures (Wafa.ps, May 13, 2015).

■ In **Bil'in** several hundred Palestinians marched to the security fence. They rioted and clashed with the Israeli security forces. The Palestinian media reported that dozens of Palestinian youths had been injured. In **Nebi Saleh** (north of Ramallah) Palestinians clashed with Israeli security forces. There were also clashes in **Bitunya, the Nablus region, Bethlehem and Qadoum** (Alresala.net, May 15, 2015).



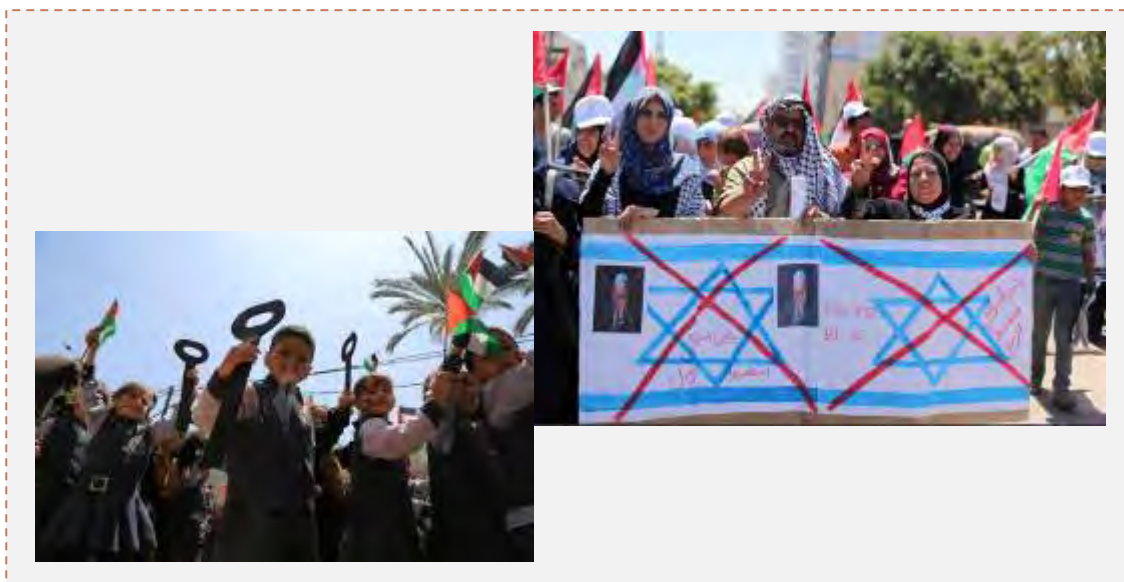
Left: Palestinians riot near the Ofer jail (Wafa.ps, May 16, 2015). Right: Palestinians in the Aida refugee camp in Bethlehem burn an Israeli flag to mark Nakba Day (PNN.ps, May 16, 2015).

The Gaza Strip

■ A number of events were held in **the Gaza Strip** to mark Nakba Day. Hamas issued a formal statement claiming that the issue of the Palestinian refugees could be

resolved only by returning them to their houses. Reconciliation with the PA, according to the statement, could only begin if it stopped its security coordination with Israel. **Abu Obeida**, spokesman for Hamas military-terrorist wing, claimed that "with the resistance and our firm stance, after 67 years we will return. We will return..." (Twitter account of Abu Obeida, May 14, 2015).

■ On May 16, 2015, the Palestinian organizations in the Gaza Strip organized a joint march in Gaza City to UN headquarters. A speech was given by **Ahmed Bahar**, Hamas faction deputy chairman of the Palestinian Legislative Council. He said the Palestinian people would not give up one inch of their land and adhered to the "right of return." He called on the PA to end its security coordination with Israel and to end the "useless" negotiations (Safa.ps, May 16, 2015).



Left: Children rally in front of UN headquarters in Gaza City waving keys, the symbol of the so-called "right of return" (Paltoday.tv, May 13, 2015). Right: Joint rally of the Palestinian organizations in Gaza to mark Nakba Day. Participants burned the Israeli flag and waved signs with the flag of Israel reading, "Israelis, plan to move," and in English, "Bye-bye Bibi" (Paltoday.ps, May 16, 2015).

■ Several dozen Palestinians belonging to a network calling itself the "Coalition of Intifada Youths" demonstrated near the Israeli border in the Nahal Oz region. During the events three Palestinians were wounded by IDF fire. The demonstration was dispersed after a short time by Hamas' security forces. Another demonstration was held east of Khan Yunis (Alquds.com, May 15, 2015).



Nakba Day march east of Gaza City near the security fence (Paltoday.ps, May 15, 2015)

PA Activity in International Agencies

■ **Jamil Shehadeh**, a member of the PLO's Executive Committee, claimed the organization's High National Committee would hold an important meeting at the beginning of June to formulate the final version of the files that would be presented to the ICC in The Hague. He claimed that after the committee had approved the files they would be given to the Palestinian leadership for examination and if authorized, they would be given to the ministry of foreign affairs which would present them to the ICC (Quds.net, May 17, 2015).

Mahmoud Abbas' Visit to Italy

■ **Between** May 15 and 17, 2015, Mahmoud Abbas paid a visit to Italy. He met with the Italian president, prime minister and minister of foreign affairs. He also met with the Pope, with whom he discussed Vatican-Palestinian relations; the flag of "Palestine" was flown in the Vatican for the first time. Presenting Mahmoud Abbas with a gift, the Pope said he might be "the angel of peace" (Wafa.ps, May 15, 2015).

The Anti-Israeli Propaganda Campaign

The Swedish Flotilla to the Gaza Strip

■ **Zaher al-Birawi**, Hamas-affiliated activist in Britain and coordinator for the International Committee to Break the Siege of the Gaza Strip, said in an interview that the ship that had sailed from Sweden was the "spearhead" of the so-called "Freedom Fleet III," and would try to break the "siege" of the Gaza Strip. He claimed the ship

had been organized by the Swedish and Norwegian branches of the so-called "Freedom Fleet Coalition."

■ Birawi said the ship was expected to sail 5,000 miles before reaching the Gaza Strip, and that the international activists aboard were determined to succeed (Alquds.com, May 11, 2015). He warned Israel it would be fully responsible for the safety of the activists participating in the flotilla. He appealed to the countries of the world to exert pressure on Israel to end the siege of the Gaza Strip, which he claimed was "a crime against humanity, according to international law" (Al-Risala, May 13, 2015).

■ **Dror Feiler**, one of the flotilla participants, told a Swedish news website that one of the organizations that would join the flotilla was the Turkish IHH (which organized the *Mavi Marmara* flotilla in May 2010). Feiler claimed the campaign was not against Israel but rather against "the Israeli siege of the Gaza Strip" (Svd.se, May 14, 2015).

■ **Alaa' al-Din al-Bata**, chairman of the government committee to break the siege and receive delegations in the Gaza Strip, held a press conference at the ministry of information where he said that Freedom Fleet III would reach the Gaza Strip towards the middle of June 2015. He said the flotilla would consist of at least three ships and there would be dozens of correspondents, human rights activists, members of parliament and solidarity activists aboard (Alresala.net, May 18, 2015).

Information Video Issued by Fatah's Military Wing in the Gaza Strip

■ A **network** calling itself the Nidal al-'Amoudi Battalions of the Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades (Fatah's military-terrorist wing in the Gaza Strip) issued a video for Nakba Day. It showed military training overlaid with threats directed at Israel. One threat was "Announcement for the people of Israel. The battle of liberation will begin very soon...Your army is weaker than cobwebs..." (Website of Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades, Nidal al-'Amoudi Battalions, May 13, 2015).



Pictures from the video
(Website of Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades, Nidal al-'Amoudi Battalions, May 13, 2015).

Tent Erected in Susiya

- On May 4, 2015, the Israeli supreme court rejected the request for an interim ruling to freeze the implementation of destruction orders issued against the buildings in the village of **Khirbet Susiya** in southern Mt. Hebron.⁵ The Palestinian residents asked for an order countermanding the ruling of the Israeli civilian administration to reject the master plan they prepared for the village.
- In the wake of the court's rejection, **Palestinians erected a protest tent**. Senior Palestinian figures visited the tent in solidarity with the local residents. **Shuqi Issa**, chairman of the Committee to Struggle against the Fence and the Settlements, claimed the PA supported the residents' struggle and would provide them with what they needed to conduct it.
- **Mustafa Barghouti**, chairman of the [Palestinian] National Initiative Movement, called on a group of leftwing parties in the European Union to exert more pressure on Israel by ending their collaboration with it. He claimed the negotiations with Israel were misleading because it was useless to negotiate with a government that refused to recognize the existence of a Palestinian state or to end the illegal construction in the settlements. He claimed that before negotiations were renewed sanctions had to be imposed on Israel (Alquds.com, May 12, 2015).

⁵ The village of Khirbet Susiya is a seasonal Palestinian village located in southern Mt. Hebron and inhabited by residents of the village of Yata.