



News of Terrorism and the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict (January 3 – 9, 2018)

Overview

- ▶ This past week there was an increase in the trend towards fewer participants in demonstrations and riots in Judea, Samaria and east Jerusalem. The stormy weather on Friday, the main day of prayer in the mosques, contributed to the smaller numbers of people.
- ▶ The sporadic rocket and mortar fire from the Gaza Strip into Israeli territory that began after Trump's declaration continues. This past week a rocket and several mortar shells were fired at Israel. Israeli Air Force aircraft attacked "a key terrorist facility" in the Gaza Strip.
- ▶ The Israel Security Agency revealed that an indictment was recently handed down for a Palestinian student from Hebron **who was recruited by Iranian intelligence** during a visit to a relative in South Africa. His mission was to recruit a suicide bomber and terrorist squad to carry out shooting attacks.

Riots, clashes and popular terrorism

- ▶ This past week **Palestinians continued rioting and holding demonstrations in Judea, Samaria, east Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip** in the wake of Trump's declaration of American recognition of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel. However, there has been a consistent decline in attendance at the events. The riots during the week, and particularly on Friday, had **few participants**, also as a result of the stormy weather. Only a few hundred Palestinians participated in the demonstrations and riots. To blow new life into the demonstrations, the Palestinian terrorist organizations posted a call for what they call "days of rage" (Wafa, January 8, 2018).



Hamis incitement to continue the clashes with Israel (Twitter account of Palinfo, January 3, 2018).

► In the Gaza Strip the Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) held a protest rally in Khan Yunis during which participants walked on the Israeli and American flags and on pictures of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and the American president, Donald Trump. They held signs reading "Death to America and Israel" (Paltoday, January 5, 2018).

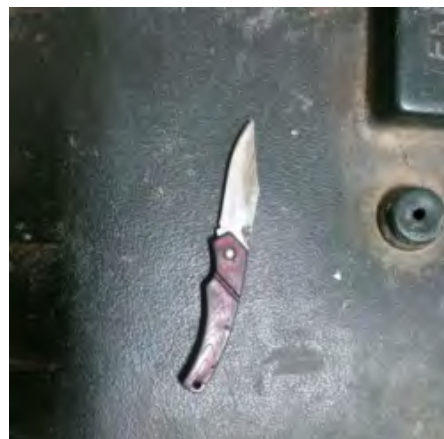


Participants at the PIJ rally (Paltoday, January 5, 2018).

► In the meantime, **Palestinians continue throwing stones and Molotov cocktails at Israeli security forces and civilians.** The Israeli security forces carried out counterterrorism activities throughout Judea and Samaria, detaining Palestinians suspected of terrorist activity and seizing weapons. Prominent events were the following:

- ◆ **January 8, 2018** – A Palestinian woman went to a checkpoint near **the Cave of the Patriarchs in Hebron**. The security forces found a knife in her bag. Further investigation revealed that the Palestinian woman had previously been detained in November 2016 when she tried to enter the Cave of the Patriarchs with two knives. She was tried and sent to jail for a number of months (Israel Police Force spokesperson's

unit, January 8, 2018). According to the investigation of the previous event, she was **Fatima Badran Amran Abu Miala**, 30, from Hebron (Facebook page of QudsN, November 1, 2016).

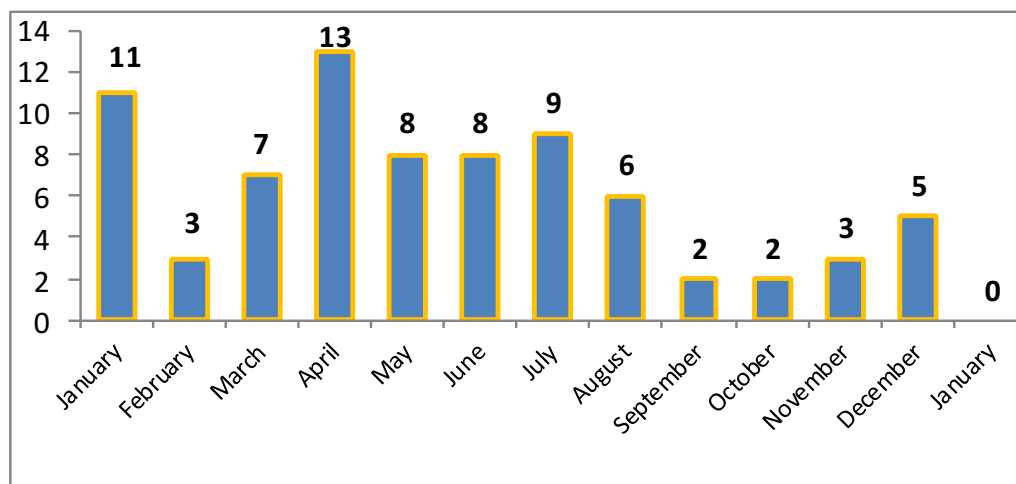


Right: The knife found in the possession of the Palestinian woman near the Cave of the Patriarchs in Hebron (Israel Police Force, January 8, 2018). Left: Two knives found her possession in the same place several months ago (Facebook page of QudsN, November 1, 2016).

- ◆ **January 4, 2018** – Two IDF soldiers were attacked during a riot in the **Dheishe refugee camp (south of Bethlehem)**. They saved themselves by firing their weapons (Facebook page of Red Alert, January 4, 2018). The Palestinian ministry of health reported that a number of Palestinians had been injured during clashes in the Dheishe refugee camp (Wafa, January 4, 2018).

- ◆ **January 3, 2018** – A Palestinian tried to approach Israeli security forces near **Deir Nizam (Ramallah region)**. He was shot and evacuated to the hospital in Ramallah, where he died. According to the Israeli security force, he was shot because he carried a rifle during the riot (Haaretz, January 4, 2018). Mahmoud Abbas called the father of the Palestinian, Musab al-Tamimi, to offer condolences (Dunia al-Watan, January 4, 2018).

Significant terrorist attacks during the past year ¹



Exposure of Iranian intelligence activity against Israel

► The Israel Security Agency revealed that an indictment was recently handed down for **Muhammad Maharmeh**, 29, a computer engineering student from Hebron, who was **recruited by Iranian intelligence during a visit to South Africa**. His mission was **to carry out terrorist activities against Israel**. They offered him a course in explosives and operating weapons. He was recruited by a relative named **Bakr Maharmeh**, who lived in South Africa for the past few years.

► Bakr Maharmeh was **handled by Iranian intelligence agents**. He invested efforts in recruiting operatives from Judea, Samaria and Israel to spy and carry out terrorist activities for the Iranians. He exploited the visit of Muhammad Maharmeh to South Africa three years ago and recruited him. Bakr Maharmeh set up meetings for Muhammad with Iranian agents a number of times, some of whom came from Tehran especially for the meetings. He received \$8,000 in return for his activities (Israel Security Agency, January 4, 2018).

► Among the missions assigned to Muhammad Maharmeh were the following:

- ◆ **To recruit a suicide bomber.**
- ◆ To recruit a squad **to carry out shooting attacks**. He successfully recruited two 22-year-old Palestinians from Hebron.

¹ A significant 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.

- ◆ **To open a computer store in the Hebron area.** He was told to photograph the store and send the pictures to his handlers. The Iranians may have been planning to use the store as a base for collecting intelligence.
- ◆ **To provide the Iranians with an Israeli SIM card and money.**



Muhammad Maharmeh (right), who was recruited by his relative Bakr Maharmeh (left), to establish a terrorist squad handled by Iranian intelligence (Panet, January 3, 2018).

Detention of two female Israeli citizens planning an ISIS-inspired attack

▶ As part of their counterterrorism activities, during December 2017 the Israeli security forces detained two Israeli women, both 19 years old, from the Bedouin Negev settlement of Laqia. Interrogation revealed that **during the past year they had been in contact with ISIS-affiliated operatives abroad, and wanted to carry out terrorist attacks against Israelis inside Israeli territory.** They also planned to leave Israel to join ISIS, and disseminated publications encouraging incitement for terrorist activity against Jews and Israel. Both were indicted (Israel Security Agency, January 9, 2018).

Israel's South

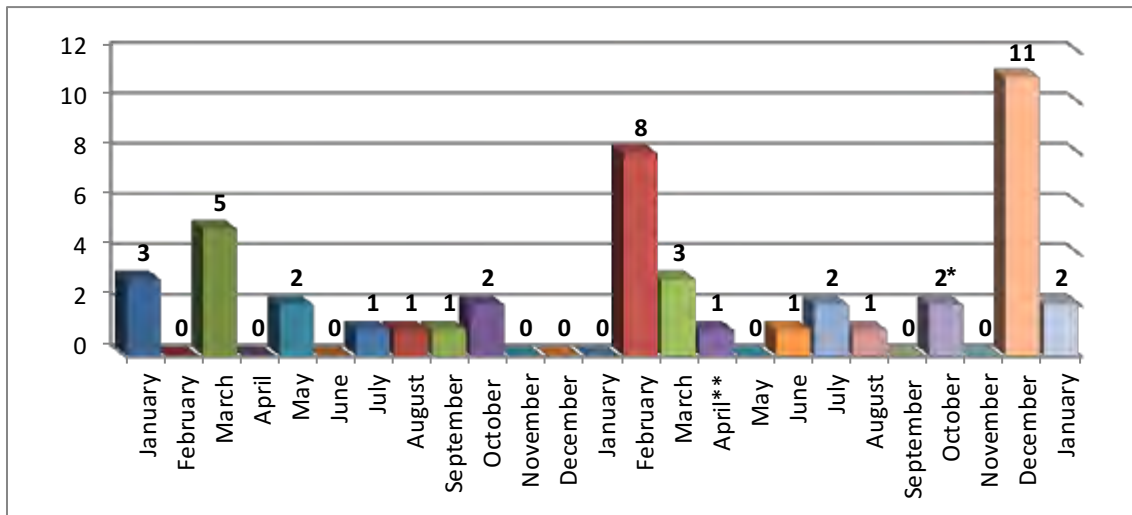
Rocket Fire Attacking Israel

▶ On January 3, 2018, a rocket and a number of mortar shells were fired from the Gaza Strip at Israel. At least one rocket hit was identified in the western Negev. No casualties or damage were reported.

▶ According to an announcement from the IDF spokesperson, in response to the rocket fire Israeli Air Force aircraft attacked a "key terrorist facility" in the Gaza Strip. According to the Israeli media, it may have been a tunnel. The Palestinian media reported that the IDF planes

had attacked an agricultural region east of Rafah. No casualties were reported (Twitter account of Ajel from Palestine and Dunia al-Watan, January 4, 2018).

Monthly Distribution of Rocket Hits in Israel since January 2016

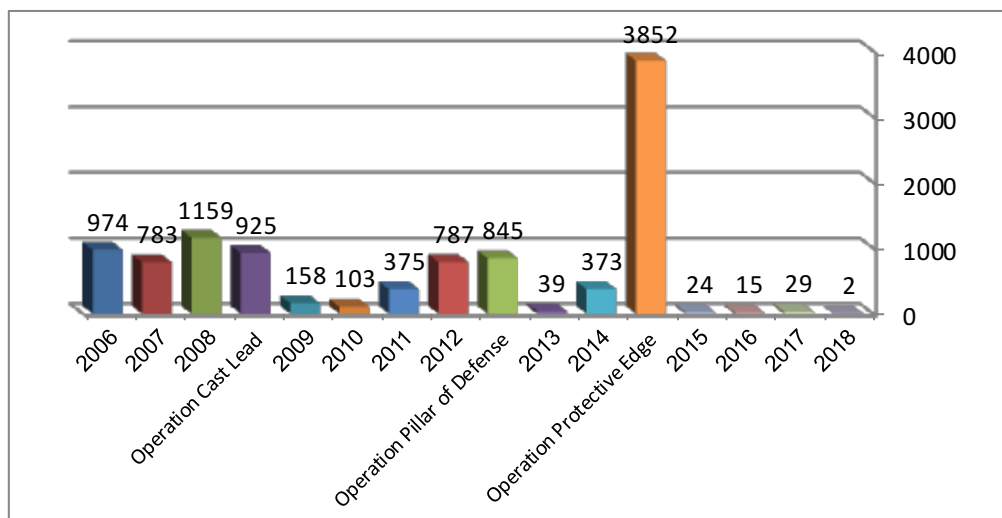


Notes:

* The statistics do not include mortar shell fire or rockets which misfired and fell inside the Gaza Strip.

** Six of the rockets fired in February 2017 were launched from the Sinai Peninsula at Israeli territory, apparently by ISIS's Sinai Province. In April a rocket was launched from the Sinai Peninsula by ISIS's Sinai Province. In October 2017 two rockets were fired from the northern Sinai Peninsula by ISIS's Sinai Province. They fell in an open area in the western Negev.

Annual Distribution of Rocket Hits



► During riots along Israel's border with the southern Gaza Strip, a Palestinian tried to throw a pipe bomb at the IDF forces. He was shot (Facebook page of Red Alert, January 5, 2018).



Gazans clash with IDF forces along the border east of Gaza City (Twitter account of Paldaf, January 5, 2018).

The Internal Palestinian Reconciliation

PA activities to ease the hardships in the Gaza Strip

► **Given the fact that the internal Palestinian reconciliation has stalled**, the Palestinian Authority (PA) has been trying to promote a number of measures to ease the hardships in the Gaza Strip. One of the measures was **to appeal to Israel and promise to pay the Israel Electric Company for an additional 50 megawatts of electricity for the Gaza Strip. Israel agreed. The supply of electricity has been restored to 125 megawatts**, the same as it was before the PA decided to reduce it (April 2017). According to **Rami Hamdallah, prime minister of the national consensus government**, the appeal to Israel was ordered by Mahmoud Abbas, who ordered the supply of electricity be restored to the Gaza Strip to ease the Gazans' hardships (Wafa, January 3, 2018).



Gazans claim the restoration of 50 megawatts is useless and will not improve the situation in the Gaza Strip (The Ninth Channel, YouTube, January 6, 2018).

► **The Palestinian minister of health, Jawad Awad**, said his ministry was preparing a shipment of medicine for the storehouses of the ministry of health in the Gaza Strip. It was also reported that the ministry of health had begun paying the salaries of the sanitation and catering staff in the hospitals, and had allotted 1.3 million shekels (about \$380,000) to

sanitation companies and about half a million shekels (about \$145,000) to the companies providing catering (Shams, January 2, 2018).

Transfer of Hamas' weapons

► The Palestinian newspaper al-Hayat, quoting Palestinian sources in the Gaza Strip, reported that Hamas had sent a communiqué to Mahmoud Abbas stating it was willing to put "the weapons of the resistance" [i.e., the terrorist organizations] under the command of the PLO leadership, of which Hamas will be a part, or of the PLO's Executive Committee, if it joins the committee (al-Hayat, January 5, 2018). Hamas rushed to deny the report:

- ◆ **Hamas spokesman Hazem Qassem** said Hamas considered the weapons of the "resistance" as legitimate and that they were a red line that could not be crossed (al-Quds, January 5, 2018).
- ◆ **Mahmoud al-Zahar, a member of Hamas' political bureau**, said the "resistance" was a red line and that not one rifle or bullet would be turned over to any group that was not active in the "resistance." He also said it was a known fact that the PA maintained security collaboration with Israel even though the Oslo Accords had reached an end (Twitter account of Palinfo, January 6, 2018).
- ◆ **Hamas spokesman Husam Badran** emphasized that at this point there was no discussion about turning over the "weapons of the resistance" to the PLO. He said the weapons of Hamas' military wing were under the direction of an intelligent, fully aware command staff, which knew how and when to use them, knew their value and the effort and blood that had been invested to acquire them (al-Quds, January 6, 2018).

Developments in the Gaza Strip

The humanitarian situation

► On January 4, 2018, a demonstration was held in the Jabalia refugee camp to protest the bad economic situation in the Gaza Strip. Demonstrators waved Palestinian flags and signs calling for improvement in the economic situation, lifting the [so-called Israeli] "siege" of the Gaza Strip and removing the sanctions imposed by Mahmoud Abbas (aljazeera.net and Palinfo, January 4, 2018).



Demonstration in the Jabalia refugee camp (Twitter account of QudsN, January 4, 2018).

Statement from Saleh al-Aroui

► During an interview, **Saleh al-Aroui, deputy head of Hamas' political bureau**, said the meaning of "resistance" was not only fighting against Israel every few years. **He said the real "resistance" was "resistance" in Judea, Samaria and Jerusalem.** He said the Palestinian people had to be the spearhead of resistance to Israel wherever they were. He claimed Hamas was willing to make concessions for the sake of the reconciliation, but not concessions that would profit Israel, such as giving up the weapons of the "resistance" or putting them in the care or under the control of anyone. He said **Iran supported the "resistance"** but the fact that a specific country supported Hamas in its struggle against Israel did not commit Hamas to support that country in its clashes with the Arab world (al-Jazeera, January 3, 2018).

The Palestinian Authority (PA)

Reactions to the American announcement of cutting funds for UNRWA

► **Nikki Haley, the American ambassador to the UN**, warned that the **United States was liable to cut funding for UNRWA if the Palestinians continued in their refusal to negotiate.**

► **UNRWA spokesman Sami Mshasha** said UNRWA had not been informed by the United States about any change in funding (Ma'an, January 3, 2018). **UNRWA spokesman in the Gaza Strip Adnan Abu Hasna** also stressed that the agency had not been officially informed by the United States of any change. He said the agency supported five million people and therefore its activities could not be harmed (Filastin al-Yawm YouTube channel, January 6, 2018).



**Adnan Abu Hasna, UNRWA spokesman in the Gaza Strip
(Filastin al-Yawm YouTube channel, December 6, 2018).**

- ▶ At the beginning of the weekly cabinet meeting, **Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said**, "I agree completely with US President Trump's harsh criticism of UNRWA. UNRWA is an organization that perpetuates the Palestinian refugee problem. It also perpetuates the narrative of the right-of-return...to eliminate the State of Israel; therefore, UNRWA needs to pass from the world..." (Israeli prime minister's website, January 7, 2018).
- ▶ The Palestinian ministry of foreign affairs and expatriates in the national consensus government denounced the American-Israeli activity which, it claimed, harmed UNRWA. It denounced the so-called call made by the Israeli leadership to disband UNRWA and Israel's questioning of the agency's trustworthiness and function. It also denounced Israel's accusations that UNRWA supports terrorism (quds.net, January 6, 2018). Senior Palestinian figures denounced the American declaration, claiming its objective is to destroy the "refugee problem" and the so-called "right of return."
 - ◆ **Nabil Abu Rudeina, spokesman for Mahmoud Abbas**, denounced the declaration of the American administration, saying the city of Jerusalem and its sanctity were not for sale, not for gold and not for silver. He said that if the United States cared about peace in the Middle East, it should examine the principles of the UN Security Council and General Assembly (Wafa, January 3, 2018).
 - ◆ **Rami Hamdallah, prime minister of the national consensus government**, said the American decision to freeze UNRWA's funding was "illegal extortion" what harmed the rights of the Palestinians. He added that the countries of the world should end the damage done to the rights of the refugees and unilaterally and permanently resolve the issue (Wafa, January 6, 2018).

- ◆ **Saeb Erekat, secretary of the PLO's Executive Committee**, said the objective of the American president's decision was to destroy the refugee issue.
- ◆ **Hamas spokesman Sami Abu Zuhri** said the objective of the decision was to deny the [so-called] "right of return" of the Palestinian refugees and the other rights of the Palestinian people, and was a corollary to the declaration about Jerusalem (Shehab, January 7, 2018).
- ◆ **Senior PIJ figure Ahmed Medullal** called the decision a continuation of Trump's crimes, after he recognized Jerusalem as the capital of Israel. He said the objective of the decision was to destroy the "right of return," which was an important principle the Palestinians would not waive (Filastin al-Yawm, January 7, 2018).

Reaction to the Israeli government decision to impose the death penalty on terrorists

► The Israeli Knesset (parliament) voted unanimously in favor of the first reading of a bill that would make it possible to impose the death penalty on terrorists. The proposed bill would allow military courts to sentence terrorists to death by a simple majority of the sitting judges (and not a unanimous vote, which has so far been the custom). According to the proposed bill, civilian courts could also impose the death penalty. The ministry of foreign affairs and emigrants of the national consensus government denounced the Israeli decision. The ministry argued that the decision continued the escalation of Israeli policy and of Israel's "arbitrary crimes" against the Palestinians. It also claimed the decision violated international law and human rights (quds.net, January 4, 2018). Hamas and PIJ spokesmen threatened to increase attacks on Israel.

► Some of the comments were the following:

- ◆ **Issa Qaraqe, chairman of the PA Commission of Detainees and Ex-Detainees Affairs**, said the Palestinians would appeal to the International Criminal Court for a verdict on the legal status of Palestinian prisoners, and they would use all judicial means to protect the prisoners (al-Karama Press, January 4, 2018).
- ◆ **Fares al-Qadura, head of the Palestinian prisoners' club**, said Israel was trying to enact a law while most of the countries of the world were revoking such laws. He called it an attempt to undermine the honor of the Palestinian people and their rights (al-Anadolu News, January 4, 2018).

- ◆ **Ali Abu Diak, the Palestinian minister of justice**, denounced the law which, he said, was part of Israeli governmental terrorism, war crimes and crimes against humanity carried out by Israel against the Palestinian people. He claimed Israel was exploiting Trump's declaration to justify racial crimes. He called on the UN, the Human Rights Council and the countries of the world to try the "occupation" and the settlements in criminal court (Ma'an, January 4, 2018).
- ◆ **Hamas spokesman Abd al-Latif al-Qanu'** denounced the proposed bill and warned that the law might worsen regional tensions and lead to an intifada. He said the law negated conventions and international human rights laws (al-Anadolu News, January 4, 2018).

Preparations for a conference of the PLO's Central Council

- ▶ **Preparations continue for a conference of the PLO's Central Council, which is supposed to be held on January 14 and 15, 2018.** Hamas and the PIJ received formal invitations to attend. It is not yet known if they will participate, and if they do, what the composition of the delegation will be. A source within Hamas, who insisted on remaining anonymous, said there was an internal difference of opinion regarding Hamas' participation in the conference. However, he said, the general opinion is in favor of attending. Nine Hamas representatives who live in Judea and Samaria received invitations but it has not yet been decided if Hamas will attend (al-Anadolu News, January 5, 2018).
- ▶ According to **Ahmed Medullal, a member of the PLO's Executive Committee**, the Palestinian leadership is waiting for the decisions of Hamas and the PIJ regarding participation in the Central Council conference. He said Hamas has three options: **one**, to commit itself to accepting the PLO's political platform and thereby to join the PLO as a full member; **two**, Hamas will allow its representatives in the Palestinian Legislative Council to attend the conference; **three**, Hamas will attend the conference in the capacity of observer as it did at the Central Council conference held in 2015 (Dunia al-Watan, January 6, 2018).
- ▶ Regarding the issues to be discussed at the conference, according to senior PA figures the Council will decide several issues. The most prominent of the issue including **revoking the agreements signed with Israel and limiting security contacts with it**; deciding that Israel is not a partner in the peace process and that the United States will not broker it; changing the PA's state to "a country under occupation;" and revoking the mutual recognition between Israel and the Palestinian state (Ma'an, January 8, 2018).

The Battle for Hearts and Minds

Incitement to terrorism: ceremony marking the anniversary of Fatah's founding at Bir Zeit University

► On January 3, 2018 Fatah's student movement at Bir Zeit University held a ceremony to mark the 53rd anniversary of Fatah's founding. **Pictures documenting the ceremony show masked operatives, some of them wearing uniforms and bullet-proof vests. Others wear wearing white shrouds and models of explosive belts,** and hold up copies of the Qur'an. Participants held signs saying that Jerusalem was Palestinian and others expressing support for security prisoners, such as Ahed al-Tamimi. During the event participants pretended to be "IDF soldiers" shooting at Palestinians demonstrating for the sake of Jerusalem (Facebook page of the Fatah student movement at Bir Zeit University, January 3, 2018).



Masked terrorist operatives, some of them wearing uniforms and bullet-proof vests, some wearing white shrouds and explosive belts, carrying copies of the Qur'an. Bottom left: On the back of the vest the Arabic reads, "the shaheed units of Ra'ed al-Karami"² (Facebook page of the Fatah student movement at Bir Zeit University, January 3, 2018).

² Ra'ed al-Karami was a senior Fatah-Tanzim operative in Tulkarm who was under the direct command of Marwan Barghouti. Al-Karami was involved in planning and carrying out terrorist attacks which killed and wounded many Israelis. He was killed by Israeli security forces on January 14, 2002.



Right: Pretending to be IDF soldiers shooting at demonstrators. Left: The "funeral" of one of the demonstrators killed by "IDF fire" (Facebook page of the Fatah student movement at Bir Zeit University, January 3, 2018).



At the right is a picture of Yusuf al-Shaib, the Fatah coordinator of student activities at Bir Zeit University, detained by the IDF on December 16, 2017. At the left is a picture of Yasser Arafat; the Arabic reads "A million shaheeds are marching to Jerusalem" (Facebook page of the Fatah student movement at Bir Zeit University, January 3, 2018).

The Northern Front

The Palestinian issue in Hezbollah leader interview

► In a long interview with al-Mayadeen, Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah discussed a number of issues, including the Palestinian cause and Hezbollah's relations with the Palestinians (al-Mayadeen, January 3, 2018). He revealed that after Trump's declaration (December 6, 2017) he met with representatives of Hamas, Fatah and other organizations (Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine and al-Saiqa). He said everyone agreed on the importance of Jerusalem and on the need to hold demonstrations and exert pressure.

► Nasrallah admitted that **Hezbollah gave political, financial and media support to the Palestinians. Iran**, he said, **also helped**, as it had during the "Jerusalem intifada," with financial support for the wounded and families whose houses had been destroyed. Nasrallah said **Iran supported all the organizations of the "Palestinian resistance" [i.e.,**

the terrorist organizations], and that was why the United States had imposed sanctions on it. He added that the "resistance" in Palestine needed weapons, and military capabilities. Iran's support for the "resistance" was permanent policy and did not depend on one decision or another.



Hezbollah secretary general Hassan Nasrallah interviewed by the Lebanese al-Mayadeen channel (al-Mayadeen YouTube channel, January 3, 2018).

► Nasrallah stressed that since Hezbollah was founded, **"the organization's compass has pointed towards Palestine."** He said **Palestine would be liberated by the "resistance" [i.e., terrorism] which would eradicate Israel.** He called for **"resistance and intifada"** because, he claimed, they were the only things that could stop Israel. **He encouraged the path of intifada** and asked it be preserved it as a political, educational and military choice. He claimed the peace process was an illusion and a deception whose objective was to support Israel and recognize its borders. He called for an end to every kind of peace or security coordination with Israel.