



# News of Terrorism and the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict (April 17 – 24, 2018)

## Overview

► On April 20, 2018, **the fourth Friday of the "great return march,"** about 10,000 Palestinians demonstrated and rioted at five central locations along the Gaza Strip border. **Despite the decrease in the number of participants, there was an increase in violence** and attempts to attack IDF soldiers. Acts of violence included throwing various objects and **flying kites with burning objects tied to their tails in order to light fires in Israel. As a result, several fires broke out in Israeli communities near the Gaza Strip border.** The organizers of the march have declared next Friday, April 28, 2018, as "Friday of the young rebels," **thus increased participation of Palestinian youths in acts of violence can be expected.**



**Video of riots near the border fence using children and adolescents  
(IDF spokesperson, April 20, 2018).**

► Palestinians in Judea and Samaria have avoided exceptional shows of solidarity with the Gaza Strip, even before special events. Demonstrations for "Palestinian prisoners' day," marked this past week, were limited. Regarding terrorist attacks, an attempt to smuggle a powerful IED into Israeli territory was prevented. The device was hidden on the roof of a truck entering Israel through the Reihan crossing (west of Jenin). Palestinians **apparently meant to detonate it during the Independence Day festivities in Netanya or Hadera, in central Israel.** The Israeli minister of defense ordered the crossing closed until further notice.

## The "Great Return March"

### Summary of the events of April 20, 2018

► **On Friday, April 20, 2018, the fourth Friday of the "great return march,"** the theme of the demonstrations was "the release of prisoners." In IDF assessment, **about 10,000 Palestinians participated in the events in five central locations along the Gaza Strip**

**border with Israel.** During the morning the IDF distributed flyers in Arabic warning the demonstrators not to approach the fence. Palestinians were warned that the IDF would take action against anyone trying to vandalize the fence. According to a post to the Facebook page of the "great return march," in response Palestinian participants distributed flyers in Hebrew stressing "their right" to return to their lands, calling on the IDF soldiers not to obey the orders of their commanders (Facebook page of the "the great return march," April 20, 2018).



**Demonstrators in the eastern part of Jabalia on April 20, 2018 (Facebook page of al-Shimal Online, April 20, 2018).**

Despite the decrease in the number of participants in events of the "great return march," **there has been an increase in violence and attempts to attack IDF soldiers.** During the riots Palestinians burned large quantities of tires. Hidden by the smoke, operatives, **some of them children, tried to approach the fence, vandalize Israel's security installations and cross the security fence. They also threw stones and IEDs, and flew kites with burning objects tied to their tails to set fires in Israeli territory** (IDF spokesperson, April 21, 2018). Several kites crossed the border and caused fires near several Israeli communities near the border.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>According to a program broadcast on al-Aqsa TV, young Palestinians successfully set fire to forests and IDF posts using kites with burning substances tied to their tails. The kites were flown, according to the broadcast, from secure locations where IDF snipers could not reach the Palestinians flying them. It was reported that the use of kites was increasing from one day to the next (al-Aqsa TV, April 18, 2018).



**Right: Palestinians fly a kite with a Molotov cocktail tied to its tail from the central Gaza Strip into Israeli territory (Palinfo Twitter account, April 21, 2018). Left: Fire in a hay storage structure in a community in the western Negev, caused by a Molotov cocktail flown in on a kite (Facebook page of Shehab, April 21, 2018).**



**Right: Burning tires near the border fence (Facebook page of Shehab, April 20, 2018). Left: Palestinians use a giant slingshot to attack IDF forces with rocks (al-Qabas, April 21, 2018).**



**Children and adolescents approach the border fence, and then use a rope to pull the barbed-wire fence (al-Hadath, April 22, 2018).**

► **The demonstrations were attended by senior members of the Hamas leadership, led by Isma'il Haniyeh, head of Hamas' political bureau, and Yahya al-Sinwar, head of Hamas' political bureau in the Gaza Strip, who brought his three year-old son and four month-old daughter with him. Al-Sinwar reportedly stood 300 meters from the fence (Twitter account of the Shehab news agency, April 20, 2018). Isma'il Haniyeh gave a speech during a visit to the northern Gaza Strip where he called on the Palestinians to prepare**

for a "human flood" at all the borders of Palestine "inside and outside the occupied lands" ( Hamas website, April 20, 2018).



Isma'il Haniyeh, head of Hamas' political bureau (second from left) delivers a speech in the "return camp" in the eastern part of Jabalia (Facebook page of Shehab, April 20, 2018).



Right: Yahya al-Sinwar and his children. Left: Yahya al-Sinwar talks to demonstrators east of Gaza City (Palinfo and Filistin al-'An Twitter accounts, April 20, 2018).

## Casualties

► According to the Hamas-controlled ministry of health in the Gaza Strip, four Palestinians were killed during the riots on Friday, among them a 15 year-old boy, and more than 700 were wounded, half of them treated at the scene (two others died a number of days later as a result of previous wounds). **According to the ministry of health in the Gaza Strip, since March 30, 2018, a total of forty people have been killed.** The Palestinian ministry of health, whose data are used by media in Israel and around the globe, **does not distinguish between Palestinian civilians and operatives affiliated with terrorist organizations.** Thus it gives the impression that those killed were innocent Palestinians with no link to terrorism or terrorist organizations, while **in reality most of the Palestinians killed were terrorist operatives** or affiliated with a terrorist organization (an updated analysis of those killed will be published in a separate ITIC bulletin).



**Infographic issued by the Hamas-controlled ministry of health summarizing the casualties of April 20 (Facebook page of the spokesman of the ministry of health in the Gaza Strip, April 20, 2018).**

- ▶ The death of **Muhammad Ayoub**, a 15 year-old boy, led to many reactions. **Isma'il Haniyeh**, head of Hamas' political bureau, who visited the family's mourning tent, labelled his death a "crime," saying that the death of a child was new evidence of Israel's "terrorism" (aljazeera.net, April 21, 2018). **Saeb Erekat**, secretary of the PLO's Executive Committee, accused Israel of carrying out "acts of sniping and the deliberate murder" of innocent victims in the Gaza Strip, in violation of international law. He also denounced Israeli Defense Minister Avigdor Lieberman, who praised the IDF soldiers for their actions at the Gaza Strip border (al-Hayat al-Jadeeda, April 21, 2018). **The IDF announced it would thoroughly investigate the circumstances of the boy's death, adding that Hamas deliberately endangered adolescents by sending them to the fence in effect to serve as human shields** (Ynet, April 21, 2018).
- ▶ Hamas announced it would pay for medical treatment for **350 Palestinians who had been injured**. The total sum, according to Hamas, would be \$75,000 for the seriously and critically wounded (Safa, April 18, 2018).

### **Attempts to carry out terrorist attacks under cover of the events**

- ▶ Before and after Friday, April 20, 2018, there were limited clashes between IDF forces and several hundred Palestinians rioting along the border. **The rioters continued trying to vandalize the fence, light fires, throw Molotov cocktails and fly kites with burning objects into Israeli territory**. The kites caused a number of fires along the border fence

and in nearby communities. The IDF responded by shooting at the rioters. Prominent incidents were the following:

- ◆ On **April 18, 2018**, five suspicious Palestinians approached the security fence east of Khan Yunis. **At least one was armed**. An IDF force shot at them. The Palestinians **planned to place IEDs and various other objects** near the fence to attack IDF forces (Ynet, April 18, 2018).
- ◆ On **April 22, 2018**, two Palestinians **tried to vandalize the fence near Khan Yunis**. In response an IDF force shot and slightly wounded them. The Palestinians reported two wounded men in the region east of Khirbat Ikhza'a (Wafa, April 22, 2018).
- ◆ On **April 23, 2018**, four Palestinians **cut through the security fence and infiltrated into Israeli territory**. IDF forces pursued them and detained them for interrogation. They were not armed (Facebook page of Red Alert, April 24, 2018).
- ◆ On **April 24 2018**, the Israeli security forces detained two Palestinians who had crossed the security fence and infiltrated into Israeli territory. They were taken for interrogation (Facebook page of Red Alert, April 24, 2018).

## Prognosis

► **According to the organizers, Friday, April 27, 2018, has been declared the "Friday of the young rebels"** (Twitter account of Dunia al-Watan, April 20, 2018). In preparation, sites in Rafah have been assigned for collecting tires (Paldf Twitter account, April 22, 2018). A group calling itself the "general union of youth authorities" called on the youth of the Gaza Strip, the West Bank, Jerusalem and Israel to invest all their efforts in participating in the activities, especially in the marches this coming Friday (al-Aqsa TV, April 22, 2018).



**Gazans prepare for the next march. Right: Collecting shoes in the eastern part of Khan Yunis to throw at IDF soldiers (Twitter account of photojournalist Hassan Aslih, April 22, 2018), Left: Collecting tires in Rafah (Palinfo Twitter account, April 22, 2018).**

► The organizers of the march are currently trying a **new tactic**: every Friday **they will move the tents a number of meters closer to the border fence**. Their intention is that **by May 15, when the events climax, the tents will have been moved very close to the fence**. Various Twitter accounts have documented the movement of the tent camps towards the border (Twitter accounts of Shehab and Palinfo, April 19, 2018). **Khaled al-Batsh, coordination of the "supreme national authority of the great return march"** and a senior figure in the Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ), announced the moving of the tents 50 meters as a first step, which, he claimed, **expressed progress towards the so-called "right of return" and showed the adherence of the Palestinian people to its objectives** (Filastin al-Yawm, April 18, 2018).



**Gazans move a tent camp 50 meters (about 3/10 of a mile) closer to the border (Facebook page of al-Quds TV, April 19, 2018).**

► **Palestinian groups continue emphasizing that the "great return march" will climax on May 15 (Nakba Day)**, calling on the general public to participate in the activities (Wafa, April 23, 2018). At a press conference held by the "supreme national authority of the great return march," it was stated that **on May 15, 2018, all the demonstrators would move towards the security fence** to cut through the barbed wire, calling on the international community to protect them (al-Aqsa, April 17, 2018). **Da'ud Shehab, PIJ spokesman and head of the march's information committee**, said there was high-level coordination among all the organizations to spread the march to the West Bank and Jerusalem (al-Mayadeen, April 20, 2018).



Hamas cartoon of the Palestinians' determination to realize the so-called "right of return"  
 (Facebook page of al-Risalah, April 21, 2018).

## Prevention of terrorist attacks

### Exposure of an IED intended for a terrorist attack on the eve of Independence Day

- ▶ On April 18, 2018, the day before Independence Day, a Palestinian delivery truck arrived at the **Reihan crossing**, west of Jenin. It aroused the suspicion of the crossing authority's security personnel. When searched, a powerful IED was found hidden on the roof. It was composed of several improvised pipe bombs. The truck driver was detained for interrogation.
- ▶ According to the initial investigation, the truck driver had a permanent entrance permit for Israel. The license plates on the truck had been stolen from a car. Israel security sources are of the opinion that the IED, which weighed about 10 kilos (22 pounds), was meant to be **detonated during the Independence Day festivities in either Netanyahu or Hadera**. In response, Israeli Defense Minister Avigdor Lieberman ordered the Israeli Coordinator of Government Activities in the Territories to close the Reihan crossing until further notice (Haaretz, April 18, 2018).





**Truck seized at the Reihan crossing. It had a powerful IED hidden on the roof. It is suspected that the device was meant to be used in a terrorist attack on Independence Day (Facebook page of the Israeli Ministry of Defense, April 18, 2018).**

### **Detention of Palestinian with knife in his possession**

► On April 18, 2018, policemen in the Crossings Unit of the Israel Police Force at the Qalandia crossing detained a 32 year-old Palestinian from the Gaza Strip. A knife was found in his possession. He was taken for interrogation (Israel Police Force spokesperson's unit, date, 2018).



**Knife seized at the Qalandia crossing  
(Israel Police Force website, April 18, 2018).**

### **Demonstrations, clashes and riots**

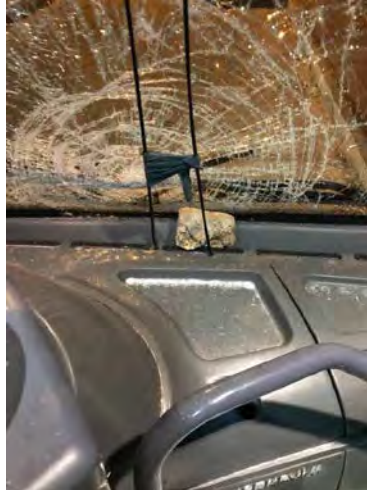
► This past week demonstrations and riots continued in Judea, Samaria, east Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip. **"Palestinian Prisoners Day" was marked throughout Judea and Samaria in a relatively limited fashion without unusual events.** Several hundred

Palestinians clashed with Israeli security forces at a number of locations. The Palestinians reported that a Palestinian youth had been injured in a riot with the Israeli security forces in the village of al-Luban al-Sharqiya, south of Nablus (Wafa, April 21, 2018).

► On April 23, 2018, in a joint Israeli security force activity in Ramallah, 15 Palestinians suspected of being senior Hamas operatives were detained. Funds for financing terrorist activities were seized and a printing house that distributed inciting materials was closed. The suspects who were detained had ties to **Khaled al-Din Hamed, a Hamas operative from the Gaza Strip**, and other senior Hamas figures in Gaza. The operatives received money from Hamas to promote terrorist activities where they lived (Israel Security Agency information, April 23, 2018).

► Palestinians continued throwing stones and Molotov cocktails at Israeli security forces and civilian targets. The more prominent events were the following:

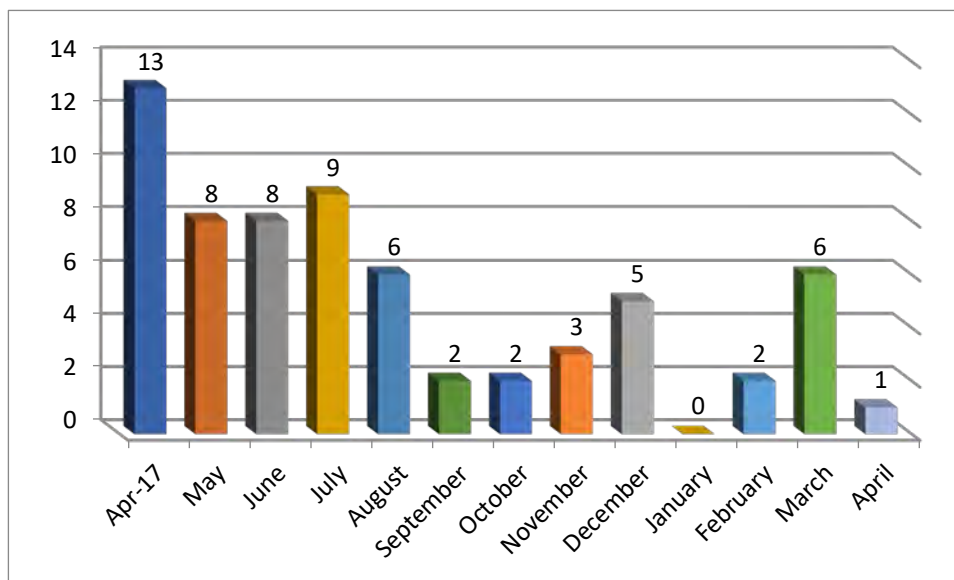
- ◆ **April 23, 2018** – Stones were thrown at a bus in **the village of Uja in the Jordan Valley**. No casualties were reported; the bus was damaged (Facebook page of Red Alert, April 23, 2018).
- ◆ **April 22, 2018** – Stones were thrown at a vehicle near **Deir Nizam, northwest of Ramallah**. No casualties were reported. The windshield of the vehicle was damaged. Stones were thrown at a bus on the **road between 'Azoun and Ma'ale Shomron**, in the region between Nablus and Qalqilya. No casualties were reported; the bus was damaged (Facebook page of Red Alert, April 22, 2018).
- ◆ **April 22, 2018** – Stones were thrown at Israeli vehicles on the road between **Beit Furik and Itamar, near Nablus**. No casualties or damage were reported (Facebook page of Red Alert, April 22, 2018).
- ◆ **April 20, 2018** – In **the village of Burqa, east of Ramallah**, several vehicles were damaged and graffiti were spray-painted. The Israeli security forces initiated an investigation (Facebook page of Red Alert, April 20, 2018).
- ◆ **April 19, 2018** – Rocks and stones were thrown at a bus near **Hizma, east of Jerusalem**. No casualties were reported; the front windshield of the bus was damaged (Facebook page of Red Alert, April 19, 2018).



**Windshield of Israeli bus damaged by a rock thrown by Palestinians near the village of Hizma, east of Jerusalem (Facebook page of Shehab, April 23, 2018).**

- ◆ **April 19, 2018** – Stones were thrown at a bus on the road near **'Azoun, between Nablus and Qalqilya**. No casualties were reported; the windshield of the bus was damaged (Facebook page of Red Alert, April 19, 2018).
- ◆ **April 19, 2018** – A Molotov cocktail was thrown at a bus on the **Hebron-Gush Etzion road south of Karmeit Tsur**. No casualties were reported. A Molotov cocktail was thrown on **route 443, the Jerusalem-Tel Aviv road**. No casualties were reported (Facebook page of Red Alert, April 19, 2018).
- ◆ **April 18, 2018** – Stones were thrown at an Israeli vehicle near **Bayt 'Einun, north of Kiryat Arba**. A woman was wounded and evacuated to a hospital. A bus on the road near **Argaman in the Jordan Valley** was also damaged by stones (Facebook page of Red Alert, April 18, 2018).
- ◆ **April 17, 2018** – Stones were thrown at vehicles on the road near **Beitar Illit, southwest of Jerusalem**. A woman was injured (Facebook page of Red Alert, April 17, 2018).

## Significant terrorist attacks during the past year 2



### Destruction of terrorist's house accompanied by clashes between Palestinians and Israeli security forces

► The Israeli security forces destroyed the house of **Ahmed Qunbu'** in Jenin, who was an operative in the terrorist squad that carried out the shooting attack near Havat Gilad, killing Rabbi Raziel Shevah (January 9, 2018). During the action Palestinians rioted against the Israeli security forces. The Palestinians fired shots and threw IEDs and stones at the Israeli soldiers. A Border Policewoman was superficially wounded by gunfire (IDF spokesperson, April 24, 2018).

► Ahmed Qunbu' was an operative in the terrorist squad headed by Ahmed Jarar, a Hamas operative killed during a shootout with the Israeli security forces in the village of Yamoun about a month after the attack. According to the indictment handed down by the military prosecutor against Qunbu', the operatives of the squad had been **involved in other shooting attacks targeting Israeli buildings and vehicles** (Ynet, April 24, 2018).

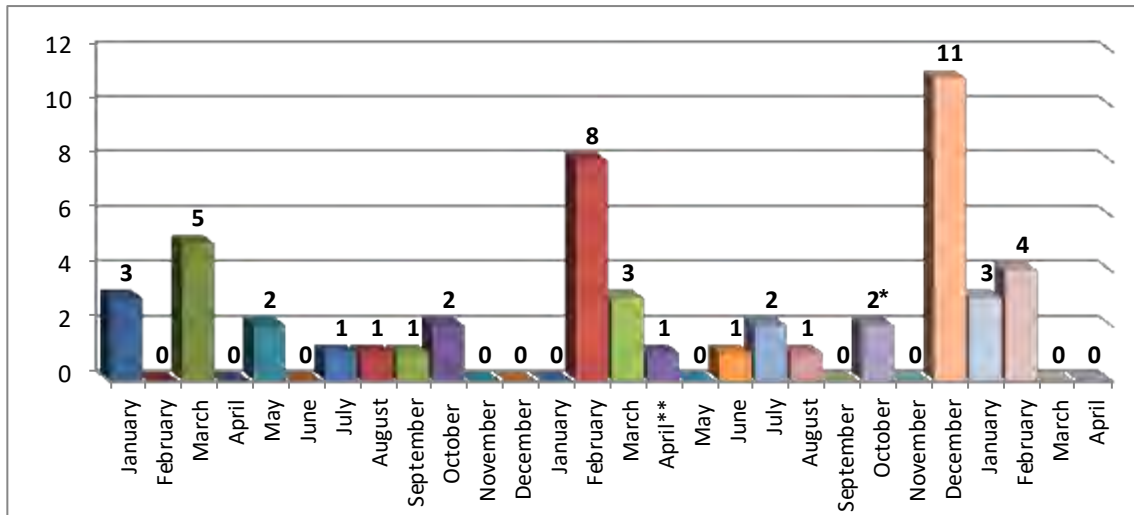
## Israel's South

### Rocket fire

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

<sup>2</sup>A significant attack is defined by the ITIC as involving shooting, a vehicular attack, the use of IEDs, shooting, or a combination of the above. Stones and Molotov cocktails thrown by Palestinians are not included.

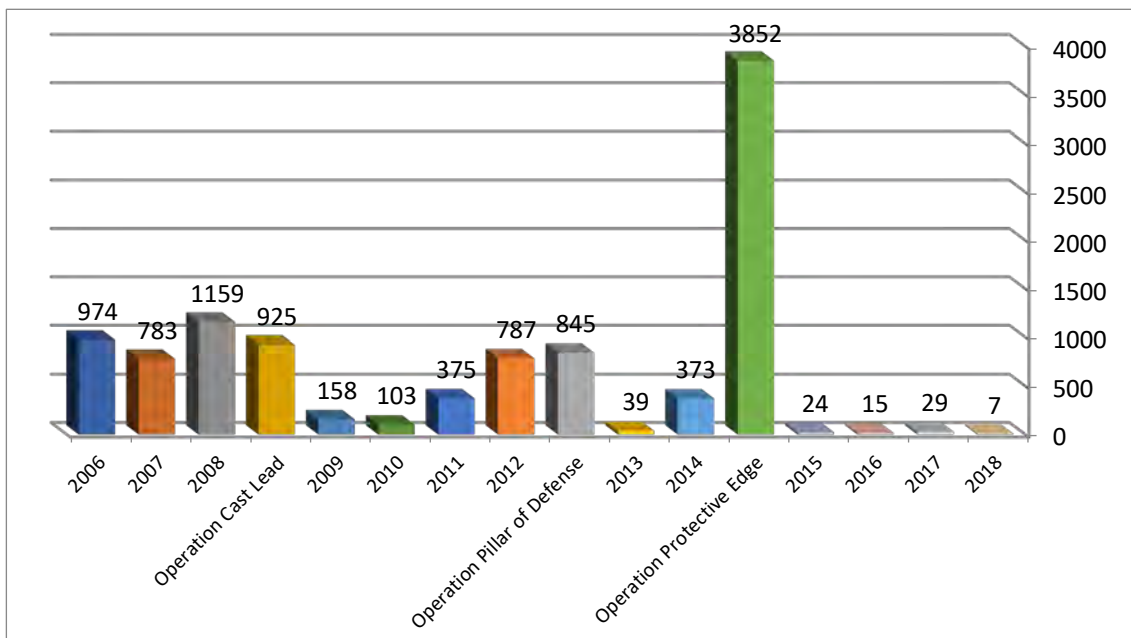
### Monthly Distribution of Rocket Hits in Israel since January 2016



**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



## Developments in the Gaza Strip

### The humanitarian situation

► **Abd al-Latif al-Haj**, director general of hospitals for the ministry of health in the Gaza Strip, said supplies of 44 types of drugs for patients suffering from cancer and blood diseases had been exhausted (Dunia al-Watan, April 21, 2018). **Marwan Abu Sa'ada**, director of the surgical hospital of the al-Shifaa' Medical Center, said that every day between 50 and 60 scheduled operations were postponed because of urgent operations that had to be performed on Palestinians wounded during the "great return march." He warned that the cancer patients would have to be moved out of the Gaza Strip for treatment, and that they had to be operated on keep their lives out of danger (Dunia al-Watan, April 22, 2018).

### Death of two Hamas terrorist operatives in "work accidents"

► Hamas' military wing reported the death of **Tha'er Naif al-Zari'i**, 30, from Deir al-Balah, in one of the tunnels of the "resistance" (Izz al-Din Qassam Brigades website, April 22, 2018). Tha'er Naif al-Zari'i was an operative in Hamas' military wing and was killed while working at the entrance to a tunnel when it collapsed (Wafa, April 22, 2018).



**Hamas operative Tha'er Naif al-Zari'i, who was killed in a tunnel collapse in the central Gaza Strip (Izz al-Din Qassam Brigades website, April 23, 2018).**

► **Ashraf al-Qidra**, spokesman for the Hamas ministry of health in the Gaza Strip, announced the death of **Muhammad Nimr Hassan al-Muqadma**, 55, an operative in Hamas' military wing, during a "sudden explosion" in his home in Beit Hanoun in the northern Gaza Strip. Reportedly, the explosion injured three young men, one of them al-Muqadma's son (Wafa, April 23, 2018). Hamas military wing issued a statement saying al-

Muqadma was killed by a shell of suspicious origin (Izz al-Din Qassam Brigades website, April 23, 2018).



**Hamas operative Muhammad Nimr al-Muqadma**  
(Izz al-Din Qassam Brigades website, April 23, 2018).

## Hamas delegation visits Egypt

► On April 17, 2018, a **Hamas delegation led by Khalil al-Haya arrived in Egypt**. They joined senior external Hamas leadership figures who were already in Egypt, headed by **Saleh al-Arouri** (Hamas website, April 19, 2018). At the same time, a Fatah delegation led by **Mahmoud al-'Alul** arrived in Egypt, and met separately with senior Egyptian General Intelligence officers headed by **Abbas Kamal, acting head of general intelligence**. The meetings were held in view of Mahmoud Abbas' intensifying sanctions on the Gaza Strip. Hamas sources said that the atmosphere at the meeting was positive, and stressed Egypt's efforts to realize the internal Palestinian reconciliation and alleviate the siege of the Gaza Strip (al-Araby al-Jadeed, April 20, 2018).



**The Hamas delegation to Egypt. Left to right, Khalil al-Haya, Husam Badran, Saleh al-Arouri, Musa Abu Marzouq, Rawhi Mushtaha, Zaher Jabarin** (Twitter account of, al-Quds TV, April 19, 2018)

## The Palestinian Authority (PA)

### Meeting of the Palestinian National Council (PNC)

► **Preparations continue for the PNC meeting scheduled for April 30, 2018, in Ramallah.**

The PNC secretary reported that all the invitations had been sent (Dunia al-Watan, April 22, 2018). According to **Saeb Erekat**, secretary of the PLO's Executive Committee, it will be a very important meeting and deal with the transition from Palestinian Authority to Palestinian statehood (al-Mayadeen, April 23, 2018). **Salah al-Bardawil**, a member of Hamas' political bureau, announced that Hamas had not received an invitation to participate in the PNC meeting and added that even if Hamas had been invited, its representatives would not have attended (al-Quds al-Arabi, April 23, 2018).

► **Muhammad Ashtiya, a member of Fatah's Central Committee**, said that at the meeting significant changes would be made in the composition of the PLO's Executive Committee. He said 12 of the 18 members would be replaced (al-Hayat, April 22, 2018). **Hana 'Amira**, a member of the PLO's Executive Committee, said changes would be made in the PLO's organizational structure, the number of activists would be reduced and the work method would be updated. In addition, he said, PLO departments will be closed and the Council will be limited to no more than 700 (aman.net, April 21, 2018). According to a Palestinian source, **Salim Zanoun**, Council chairman, refused the suggestion to discuss the election of a new chairman during the meeting (quds.press, April 22, 2018).

► **Husam Badran**, a member of Hamas' political bureau, said Hamas, the PIJ and a number of other organizations which opposed the meeting, had **decided to hold their own meetings in Beirut and Gaza** (Arabi 21, April 22, 2018). In addition, it was reported that on April 29, 2018, one conference would be held in Beirut and another in the Gaza Strip, attended by all the organizations that announced they would boycott the PNC meeting in Ramallah (Safa, April 22, 2018).





Hamas cartoon expressing dissatisfaction with the PNC meeting: "#not\_national." The logos (left to right) are the Palestinian Islamic Jihad, Hamas, and the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (Palinfo Twitter account, April 22, 2018).

### Palestinian "prisoners' day" in Judea and Samaria

► For Palestinian "prisoners' day" Mahmoud Abbas met in his office in Ramallah with a delegation of former **prisoners who had served sentences of more than 15 years in Israeli prisons**. He stressed that the prisoners' cause was the Palestinian leadership's top priority, and that they were working with international agencies to effect their release (Facebook page of Mahmoud Abbas, April 22, 2018).



Mahmoud Abbas (center, standing) meets in his office in Ramallah with Palestinian prisoners who served sentences of more than 15 years in Israeli prisons (Wafa, April 22, 2018).