



The "Return March," Aug 3, 2018

August 5, 2018

Overview

- ▶ The slogan of the Friday, August 3, 2018, "return march" was "loyalty to the shaheeds of Jerusalem – shaheed Muhammed Tareq Yusuf" (the terrorist who carried out the stabbing attack in the community of Adam on July 26, 2018, killing an Israeli civilian). Beginning around noon, more than 8,000 Gazans gathered at the five "traditional" locations along the border fence.
- ▶ **The events this past Friday were particularly violent. Palestinians clashed with IDF forces near the fence, throwing an IED and Molotov cocktails.** Events peaked when a **group of Palestinians crossed the security fence and entered an IDF post. They then returned to the Gaza Strip.** The "return march" was **attended by the "external" Hamas leadership, headed by Saleh al-Aroui, deputy head of the Hamas political bureau,** who arrived in the Gaza Strip from Egypt for a discussion of an agreement with Israel. Senior Hamas figures repeatedly stated that the "return marches" would continue until all their objectives had been attained.
- ▶ Hamas' conduct indicates that alongside talks with the UN envoy and Egypt, it **continues its policy of controlled violence towards Israel.** The objective of the policy is **to exert continual, systematic pressure on Israel along the border** to reach an arrangement that satisfies Hamas. It is **a policy of brinkmanship with the potential for deterioration,** even Hamas has no interest in it.

The events on the ground

- ▶ On Friday, August 3, 2018, beginning at around noon, more than 8,000 Gazans gathered at the five "traditional" locations along the border with Israel. One of the events held was a mock funeral for the terrorist who carried out the stabbing attack in the Jewish community of Adam (near Ramallah) (Palinfo Twitter account, August 4, 2018). Gazan children launched kites and balloons with pictures of other shaheeds and of Palestinian prisoners (Dunia al-Watan, August 3, 2018).



Mock funeral held for the terrorist who carried out the lethal stabbing attack in the Jewish community of Adam. The "funeral" was one of the activities held during the Friday "return march" (Facebook page of the "supreme national authority of the return march," August 3, 2018).



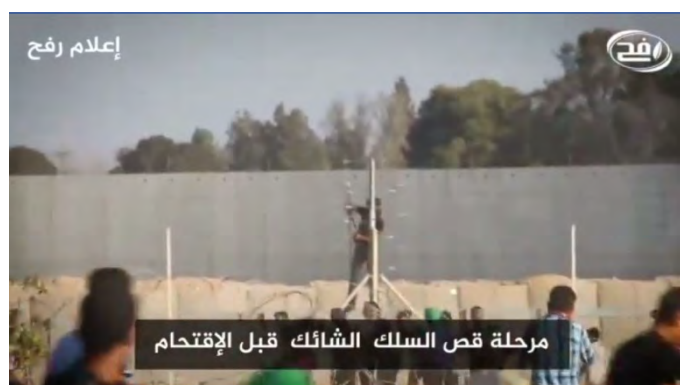
Masked Palestinians in eastern Gaza City hold a sign encouraging stabbing attacks. The Arabic reads, "Strike with your knife, and avenge your land and religion. Young [Gazan] men, unity and revolution against the occupier"

(Facebook page of the "supreme national authority of the return march," August 4, 2018).



Children launch balloons from the central Gaza Strip. Attached to the balloons are pictures of Palestinian terrorist prisoners and shaheeds, as well as messages for Israel (Facebook page of the "supreme national authority of the return march," August 3, 2018).

The riots were particularly violent. Gazans tried to sabotage Israeli security installations along the border fence. In several instances, there were violent clashes with IDF forces. The most prominent occurred when a number of Gazans crossed the security fence in the southern Gaza Strip. **They threw an IED and Molotov cocktails near the fence** and then returned to the Gaza Strip (IDF spokesperson, August 3, 2018). The Palestinian media reported that a number of Palestinians who crossed the fence managed to enter an IDF post. According to several reports, some of the rioters returned to the Gaza Strip with equipment stolen from the IDF (Dunia al-Watan, August 3, 2018).



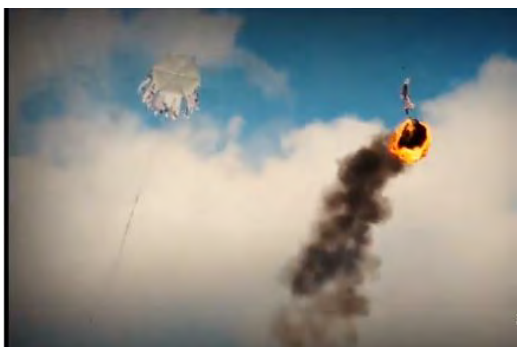
Picture from a video documenting Palestinians entering an IDF sniper post (Facebook page of the "supreme national authority of the return march," August 3, 2018).



Palestinians who infiltrated into an IDF sniper post in eastern Rafah take equipment from the post (Facebook page of the "supreme national authority of the return march," August 3, 2018).

- In response to the infiltration into Israeli territory **an IDF tank attacked a Hamas post** (IDF spokesperson, August 3, 2018). The Palestinian media reported that IDF forces attacked an observation post of the defenders of the area near the fence in eastern Rafah and that there were no casualties (Amama Twitter account, August 3, 2018).

Arson terrorism



**A kite with a burning tire launched from eastern Gaza City
(Facebook page of the "supreme national authority of the return march," August 3 and 5, 2018).**

Palestinian casualties

- ▶ The Hamas-controlled ministry of health in the Gaza Strip reported that one Palestinian had been killed and 220 had incurred various wounds (Ashraf al-Qidra's Twitter account, August 3, 2018). The following day it was reported that another Palestinian had died of his wounds (Ashraf al-Qidra's Twitter account, August 4, 2018).



**Ahmed Yahya Atallah Yaghi, one of the "return march" fatalities, during a riot near the fence
(Facebook page of Ahmed Yahya Atallah Yaghi, August 4, 2018)**

- ▶ On July 30, 2018, the ministry of health reported the overall statistics regarding "return march" casualties. According to the report, since the "return marches" began on March 30,

2018, 155 Palestinians have been killed, 23 of them children and three of them women; 17,259 have been affected to one degree or another by tear gas inhalation. Of the Palestinians wounded, 404 were critically wounded, 4,141 were seriously wounded, and 4,354 were slightly wounded (Ashraf al-Qidra's Twitter account, July 30, 2018). **Note:** An Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center examination showed that **most of the Gazans killed in the "return marches" belonged to or were affiliated with terrorist organizations (primarily Hamas)**. Senior Hamas figures also admitted that most of the fatalities belonged to Hamas.

Participation of senior Hamas figures

► This past Friday a delegation of some of the senior members of Hamas' political bureau who live outside the Gaza Strip participated in the "return march." They had entered the Gaza Strip from Egypt to discuss a possible agreement with Israel. The most prominent was **Saleh al-Aroui, deputy head of Hamas' political bureau**, participated in "return march" activities east of Jabalia in the central Gaza Strip (Dunia al-Watan, August 3, 2018). "External" Hamas spokesman **Husam Badran** went to the "return camp" east of Gaza City (Paldf Twitter account, August 3, 2018). Other senior Hamas figures who participated were **Musa Abu Marzouq, Maher Salah and Izzat al-Rishq**.



Senior Hamas figures at a "return march." Right: Left to right, Ahmed Bahar, deputy chairman of the Legislative Council and a member of Hamas' political bureau; and Muhammad Nasr, a member of Hamas' political bureau. Left: The delegation (Facebook page of the Legislative Council in the Gaza Strip, August 3, 2018).



Members of Hamas' political bureau Izzat al-Rishq and Maher Abid (in the orange shirt in the picture at the left), who came with Hamas' "external delegation" to visit the "return camp" in the eastern district of the Gaza Strip (Facebook page of the "supreme national authority of the return march," August 3, 2018).

- ▶ **External Hamas spokesman Husam Badran** carried a picture of the terrorist who stabbed a civilian to death in the Jewish community of Adam on July 26, 2018. He gave a speech in which he said it was a great honor for him and for the Hamas leadership to be present at a "return march." He praised the residents of the Gaza Strip, saying the "external" leadership had come to take part in the "return march" activities as a sign of solidarity with the Palestinian people.
- ▶ Husam Badran said **he could not say they were standing "a few meters" from the border because "it is not a border but rather part of the occupied homeland."** He added that the "marches" were a lesson the Palestinians were teaching the world, as they had during the first intifada, and as they had when **they attacked Tel Aviv** or operated in the tunnels, all of them had been "glorious milestones" that free men all over the world were learning from (al-Aqsa TV, August 3, 2018).



External Hamas spokesman Husam Badran, who arrived with a Hamas delegation to visit the "return camp" in eastern Gaza City. Left: Maher Salah (left) also part of the delegation (Facebook page of the "supreme national authority of the return march," August 3, 2018).

- ▶ Most of the spokesmen stressed that **the "marches" would continue until they achieved their objectives**. Other statements were the following:
- ▶ **Hamas spokesman Abd al-Latif al-Qanua'** said the "return marches" would continue in order to achieve national objectives, and they were closer than ever to achieving them, after the great sacrifices made by the Palestinian people. He said that participation in the "marches" reflected the involvement of the Palestinians in the "peaceful" campaign being waged and in dealing with the attempts to eliminate the Palestinian cause (Shabakat al-Quds Twitter account, August 3, 2018).
- ▶ **Musheir al-Masri, speaker for the Hamas faction in the Legislative Council**, said the "return march" showed the unity of the Palestinian people and that the "return" was very close. He said the "marches" were witness to the fact that measures were being taken in the Palestinian arena to lift the "siege" and the sanctions imposed on the Palestinian Authority (PA) and the Palestinian people (al-Watania, August 3, 2018).
- ▶ **Ahmed Bahar, deputy chairman of the Legislative Council**, said the "return marches" would continue until all their objectives had been achieved. He expressed his appreciation for the Palestinian "resistance," which defend the "marches" and had created the "strategy of deterrence" (Filastin al-Yawm, August 3, 2018).
- ▶ **Senior Palestinian Islamic Jihad figure Ahmed al-Mudallal** said the Palestinian people would not retreat from the border until they had achieved all their objectives. He said Israel was fighting incendiary kites with missiles from planes, showing Israel was weak and helpless (al-Aqsa TV, August 3, 2018).

Lawfare

- ▶ On July 1, 2018, the PA reported it had given the International Criminal Court (ICC) **in the The Hague a file dealing with what it called Israel's "crimes" and the IDF's violations of international law as part of Israel's "oppression" of the "peaceful marches."** [ITIC note: the term "peaceful" is a false description of the violent events on the ground.] According to the report the file includes reports on Israel's attacks on the demonstrators at the "marches" and Israel's "crimes" against children, media correspondents and medical teams (al-Quds, August 1, 2018). **ITIC note:** during the "marches" **Palestinians, under Hamas direction and with the participation of its operatives, have used a variety of forms of violence,** including on Friday, August 3, 2018.

Possible future demonstrations and riots

► The "supreme national authority of the return march and lifting the siege" held a press conference where it called on the Gazans to **demonstrate in front of UNRWA headquarters**. The authority said it supported the Egyptian efforts to effect an internal Palestinian reconciliation. However, it was made clear that the "marches" would continue as planned every Friday. Next Friday, **August 10, 2018, the theme will be "Freedom and life in the Gaza Strip"** (Paltoday, August 3, 2018).