



Spotlight on Terrorism and the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict

(June 7-13, 2023)

Overview

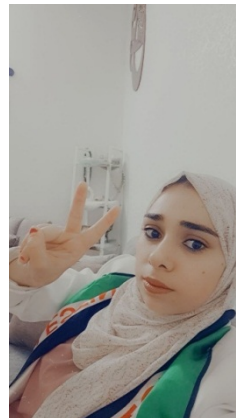
- ▶ This past week there were two terrorist attacks in Judea and Samaria: a stabbing near Hawwara and a shooting near the Tapuah Junction. An attempt near Ramallah to steal a soldier's weapon is being investigated as having been criminally motivated. Israeli security forces continued counterterrorism activities. The Palestinian Islamic Jihad's (PIJ) Jenin Battalion claimed it had intercepted an IDF drone near the Jenin refugee camp; their engineers were working to extract information from it. The Israeli security forces demolished the house of the terrorist from Ramallah who carried out a double attack in two sites in west Jerusalem in November 2022, killing two civilians. Riots broke out in several locations and a number of Palestinians were injured during IDF activities in Judea and Samaria.
- ▶ The Gaza Strip remained relatively quiet. Egyptian General Intelligence talks in Cairo with Hamas and the PIJ ended. Contradictory reports were issued about the results of the talks. The PIJ's recruitment unit announced the opening of recruiting camps, possibly to fill the ranks after Operation Shield and Arrow.
- ▶ Mahmoud Abbas went to China for a three-day visit and Palestinian Authority (PA) leadership figures met with a series of foreign representatives. Palestinians related to events and declarations in Israel, including the violence in Arab-Israeli society, a Likud proposal to divide the Temple Mount and the national security minister's proposal to stop financing dental care for Palestinian prisoners.
- ▶ The UN published the third report of its Commission of Inquiry. According to its findings, Israel systematically violates the rights of the civilian human rights organizations in Judea and Samaria. The report called on the International Criminal Court's chief prosecutor to prioritize investigations of the situation in "Palestine."

Judea and Samaria

Stabbing near Hawwara

►During a Border Police activity in Hawwara (south of Nablus) on June 9, 2023, a young Palestinian woman approached the fighters and tried to stab the commanding officer. A Border Police fighter instituted procedure for detaining a suspect. The Palestinian woman was superficially wounded. (Israeli media, June 9, 2023).

Kamal Awda, Fatah secretary in Hawwara, said the woman was **Sara Ayman Abd al-Azia Kamal**, 25 years old, from the village of al-Juneid (al-Araby al-Jadeed and the @jalestinian2 Twitter account, June 9, 2023). According to her Facebook page she is married and has children; she often posted pictures of shaheeds to her Facebook page. On June 9, 2023, she posted a video glorifying Wadia al-Houh, a Lion's Den network commander killed by the IDF on October 2022. In the video, which shows her visiting his grave, she writes that her dream is to die as a martyr and live with Wadia al-Houh in paradise. She also said she wanted to be buried next to him, wrapped in a Palestinian flag (Sara Abdalla's Facebook page, June 9, 2023).



Right: Sara Ayman Kamal's (Sara Abdalla's Facebook page, May 12, 2023). Left: The knife she was planning to use (Israel Police Force spokesman's unit, June 9, 2023).



Sara Ayman Kamal visits Wadia al-Houh's grave (Sara Abdalla's Facebook page, June 9, 2023).

Shooting near Nablus

- ▶ On June 6, 2023, Palestinians shot at an Israeli vehicle near the Tapuah Junction (south of Nablus), and an Israeli civilian was wounded by flying glass. Bullet holes were found in the car body. IDF forces searched the area and found empty shell casings (IDF spokesman, June 6, 2023).
- ▶ A network calling itself the "Dawn Battalion" claimed responsibility for the attack, stating that "one of its squads" shot at a "settler's vehicle" in Hawwara (Dawn Battalion's Telegram channel, June 6, 2023). The network's logo indicates its affiliation with the al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades (AAMB). According to its Telegram channel, it is active in the village of Bayta, southwest of Nablus.

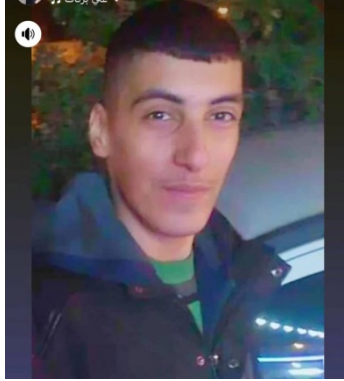


Dawn Battalion logo. To the right of the gun the Arabic reads, "al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigade" (Dawn Battalion Telegram channel, June 6, 2023).

Attack near Ramallah

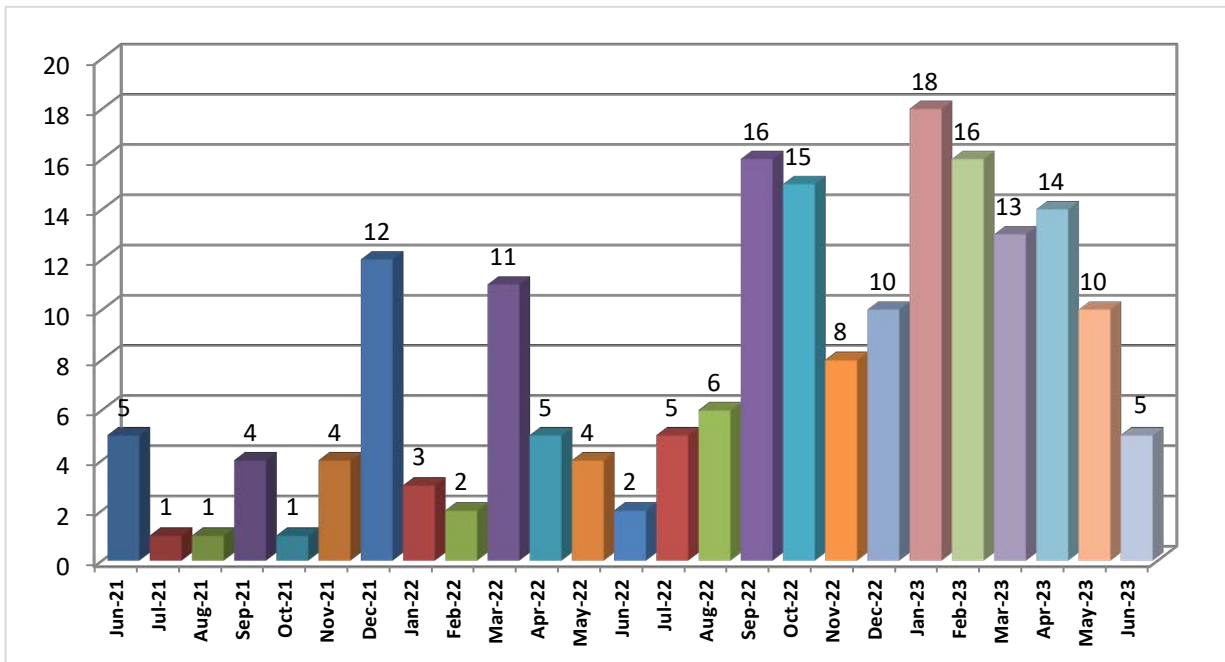
- ▶ A Palestinian drove a stolen vehicle to the Rantis crossing near Ramallah. During the security check he attacked the soldier examining him and tried to steal his weapon. Another fighter at the site shot and killed him. The soldier carrying out the security check was wounded. The incident is under investigation as possibly having criminal motivations (IDF spokesman, June 9, 2023).
- ▶ The ministry of health in Ramallah announced the death of **Mahdi Samir Muhammad Biadsa**, 29 years old (Wafa, June 9, 2023). He was from the al-Faraa refugee camp in the Tubas district, and lived in Bir Nabala, northwest of Jerusalem (al-Ayam, June 10, 2023). The Fatah movement and the Population Committee of the al-Faraa refugee camp issued mourning notices (Fateh On al-Faraa Facebook page, June 9, 2023).
- ▶ PA government spokesman Ibrahim Melhem said Biadsa had "joined the list of shaheeds," having been "executed by occupation soldiers". Speaking on behalf of PA Prime Minister

Muhammad Shtayyeh, he offered condolences to the family (Ibrahim Melhem's Facebook page, June 9, 2023). The PIJ in Judea and Samaria issued a mourning notice claiming the "crime of the cold-blooded execution" was the continuation of the "barbaric war" against the Palestinians who adhered to their "resistance" [anti-Israeli terrorism] (PIJ website, June 9, 2023).



Mahdi Biadsa (Right: Wafa, June 9, 2023. Left: Ibrahim Melhem's Facebook page, June 9, 2023).

Critical Terrorist Attacks in Judea and Samaria since November 2020¹



¹ A critical 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.

Jenin Battalion activity

► On June 8, 2023, the PIJ's Jenin Battalion claimed to have intercepted an IDF drone near the Jenin refugee camp, and its engineers were working to extract "important, sensitive information" from it (Jenin Battalion alternative Telegram channel, June 8, 2023).



The IDF drone (Right: Jenin Battalion alternative Telegram channel, June 8, 2023. Left: Shehab Telegram channel, June 8, 2023).

► A short time earlier, the Jenin Battalion issued an announcement calling on its operatives to take extreme precautions and recommended they not shoot at armored IDF jeeps, which wasted ammunition and exposed them to Israeli snipers. The operatives were asked to save ammunition and aim their guns only at the heads and chests of soldiers moving on foot, and to give preference to ambushes, because they had lethal consequences [for the Israeli soldiers]. The announcement also apologized to local residents for the Jenin Battalion's roadblocks and closures, claiming they were necessary for "reasons of security." Addressing Israel, it claimed threats would not scare them or deter them from continuing the "path of jihad" [anti-Israel terrorism] (Jenin Battalion Telegram channel, June 5, 2023).

Terrorist's house demolished

► On the night of June 8, 2023, Israeli security forces operated in Ramallah to demolish the house of Islam Faroukh, currently imprisoned in Israel, who carried out the double terrorist attack in west Jerusalem on November 23, 2022, killing two civilians and wounding several others. The house was demolished after the Israeli Supreme Court rejected an appeal. During the activity Palestinians rioted in several locations, throwing rocks, Molotov cocktails and IEDs at the forces. The forces responded with riot control measures and live fire. Several Palestinians were wounded. An initial investigation determined that a Palestinian photojournalist in the area who was wounded had been shot with a rubber bullet. The

circumstances are under investigation. The IDF stressed they made efforts to avoid harming uninvolved noncombatants, and strove to preserve freedom of movement and of the press (IDF spokesman, June 8, 2023).



The demolishing of the terrorist's house in Ramallah (IDF spokesman's Twitter account, June 8, 2023).

- ▶The ministry of health in Ramallah reported that 35 wounded Palestinians, four of them seriously wounded, had been treated at the "Palestine" Medical Center. According to the Palestinians, photojournalist Maamun Samarin was seriously wounded and evacuated to the hospital, and photojournalist Rabi' al-Muneir was superficially wounded (Wafa, June 8, 2023).
- ▶The demolishing of the terrorist's house was widely covered by the Palestinian media, which published pictures of the explosion and the consequent damage. Muhammad Shtayyeh, whose office is near the site of the explosion, was photographed amid the rubble. He called demolishing the house "a heinous crime which made an entire family homeless in the blink of an eye" and an Israeli attempt to lower the Palestinian people's morale. He said that every house demolished by Israel would be rebuilt and they would provide for all the families' needs (Muhammad Shtayyeh's Facebook page, June 8, 2023).



Right: Muhammad Shtayyeh and the governor of the Ramallah-al-Bireh district with Islam Faroukh's father amid the rubble (Muhammad Shtayyeh's Facebook page, June 8, 2023). Left: A video of the IDF force's exit from Ramallah, the jeep under a rain of Molotov cocktails ("Palestine" Times Telegram channel, June 8, 2023).

► Hamas said in an announcement that demolishing the houses of "resistance" fighters [terrorist operatives], the most recent of which was the house of "prisoner hero" Islam Faroukh in Ramallah, was a "Zionist crime" which would only serve to increase the strength and determination of the "young revolutionaries" and ignite the "resistance." Hamas called on the Palestinians in "occupied Palestine" and beyond to demonstrate their support (Hamas website, June 8, 2023). **Hamas spokesman Hazem Qassem** claimed demolishing Islam Faroukh's house was "a crime in every sense of the word," and an example of Israel's policy of collective punishment, condemned by every international convention (Shehab, June 8, 2023).

► **PIJ spokesman Tareq Salami** claimed the demolition of the terrorist's house was part of the "aggressive Zionist" policy which had not stopped the "resistance," whose strength and determination were increasing in light of the rise in "aggression." He said the "resistance" was gaining strength and reaching all the cities and villages in Judea and Samaria (PIJ website, June 8, 2023).

Counterterrorism Activities

► This past week the Israeli security forces continued intensive counterterrorism activities in Judea and Samaria. They detained Palestinians suspected of involvement in terrorism and confiscated large quantities of weapons. In several locations Palestinians rioted, shooting at the forces and throwing rocks and IEDs. The main activities were the following:

- ◆ On June 14, 2023, during activities in Jenin and Dura (near Hebron) the forces seized an M-16 assault rifle, spare rifle parts, a military vest and ammunition magazines. Armed Palestinians shot at the forces and threw IEDs; the forces returned fire (IDF spokesman's Twitter account, June 13, 2023).



Weapons seized in Jenin and Dura (IDF spokesman's Twitter account, June 13, 2023).

- ◆ On June 11, 2023, during an activity in the village of Ya'bad (southwest of Jenin) the forces located and seized two handguns (IDF spokesman's Twitter account, June 11, 2023).



Handgun seized in Ya'bad (IDF spokesman's Twitter account, June 11, 2023).

- ◆ On June 7, 2023, during an activity in Kafr Dan (northwest of Jenin) the fighters destroyed a vehicle found to contain a large number of IEDs. They also seized a handgun, hunting rifle, an M4 NATO carbine and other weapons. In the village of Kharsa (southwest of Hebron) and in the city of Hebron two wanted Palestinians were detained and an M-16, an improvised Carlo machinegun, spare parts, ammunition and other weapons were seized (IDF spokesman, June 7, 2023).



Right: The trunk of the vehicle packed with IEDs (IDF spokesman, June 7, 2023). Left: Weapons seized in Hebron (Israel Police Force spokesman's unit, June 7, 2023).

PA security services' activities

- ▶ Local sources in the Nur Shams refugee camp in Tulkarm reported that the PA security services had raided the camp and torn down iron-pipe and tire roadblocks erected at the entrance of the camp in order to prevent Israeli security forces activity. Armed Palestinians in the refugee camp clashed with the PA security services. The PIJ's Tulkarm Battalion called the PA activity a stab in the back, and accused them of trying to make it easier for the IDF to carry out its missions. They called on local residents to demonstrate at the camp entrance (Tulkarm

Battalion Telegram channel, June 11, 2023). The "al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades – Revenge and Liberation" network in the Balata refugee camp called on the PA security services not to interfere with "resistance" [terrorist] operatives. It also warned they would not sit idly by if a "resistance" operative was harmed (al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades – Revenge and Liberation Telegram channel, June 11, 2023). The network held a press conference where they said they had been surprised by the PA security services' action and demanded they not repeat it. They also claimed they would not be responsible for what would happen if the security services removed the roadblocks, because they were boobytrapped (al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades – Revenge and Liberation Telegram channel, June 12, 2023).



Right: PA security services remove the tires at the entrance to the Nur Shams refugee camp (AhrarNoorShams Telegram channel, June 11, 2023). Center: Local residents clash with the PA security services (PL Plus Twitter account, June 11, 2023). Left: Burning tires in the refugee camp in response to the PA security services' activities (AhrarNoorShams Telegram channel, June 12, 2023).

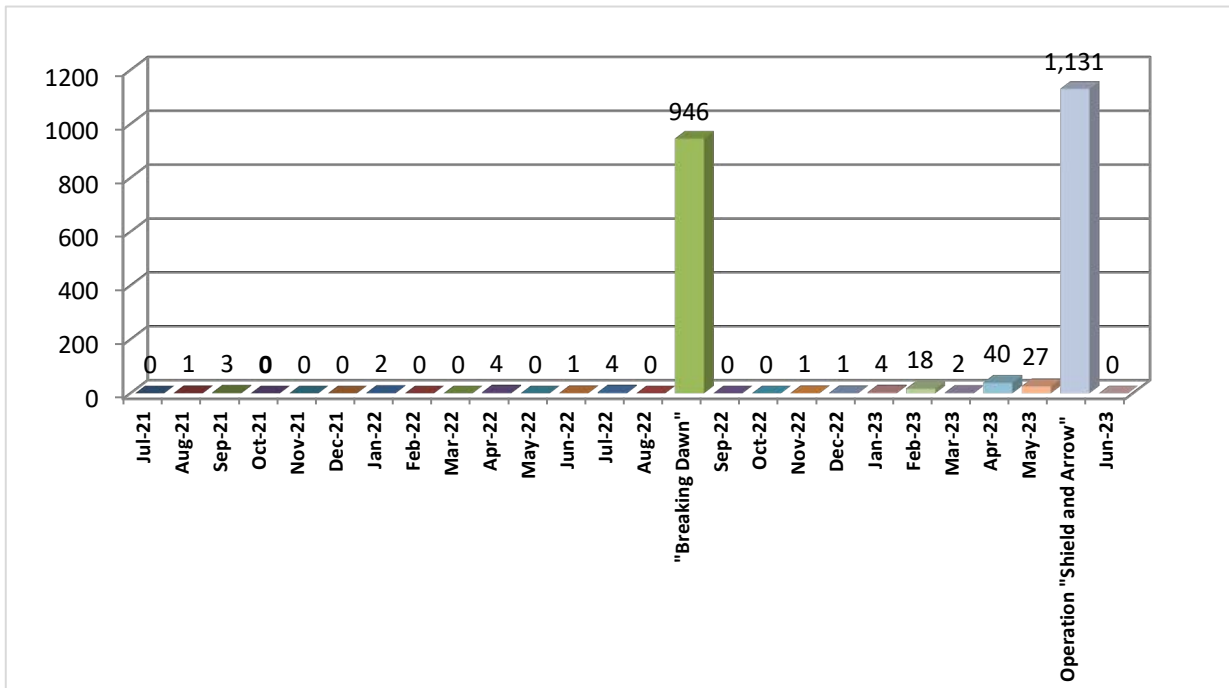
►According to **Feisal Salama, coordinator of the "national organizations" in Tulkarm and a member of the Tulkarm district Fatah branch**, the PA security services carried out the activity in response to a "popular appeal from the refugee camp residents, who called for the removal of the roadblock because it made it difficult for them to enter and leave." He also said that the barbed wire harmed the residents instead of IDF soldiers, and the smoke from the burning tires damaged the health of infants and the elderly. He said the Nur Shams refugee camp did not want the chaos that existed in the Jenin refugee camp, but rather wanted to have an easier life, not a harder one. **Issam Abu Bakr, Tulkarm district governor**, refused to respond on the grounds he was hospitalized and could not contact his deputy, Mustafa Taqatqa (al-Shahad website and al-Araby al-Jadeed, June 11, 2023).

Israel's South

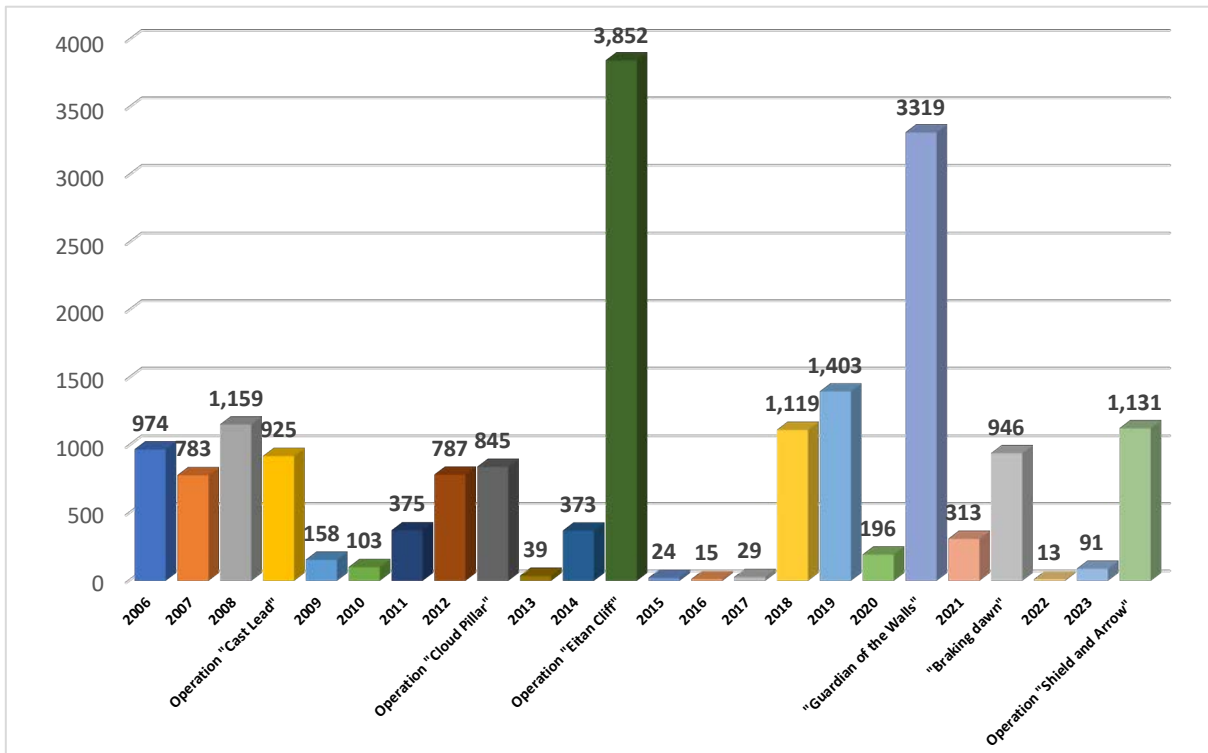
Rocket and mortar shell fire into Israel

- ▶ This past week no rocket or mortar shell hits were identified in Israeli territory.
- ▶ According to reports, on the morning of June 9, 2023, a rocket was fired towards the sea as part of what was referred to as "improving military capabilities and rocket precision" (Shehab, June 9, 2023). According to another report, the rocket exploded in the air immediately after firing (Twitter account of @abweadi216564, which refers to itself as "Fatah military information," June 9, 2023).

Monthly Distribution of Rocket and Mortar Shell Fire since July 2021



Annual Distribution of Rocket Hits since 2006



Palestinian attempts to infiltrate Israeli territory

► On the night of June 11, 2023, IDF surveillance reported a Palestinian in the central Gaza Strip was trying to cross the border security fence into Israel territory. The Palestinian, who was unarmed, was detained and taken for interrogation (IDF spokesman, June 12, 2023).

Developments in the Gaza Strip

Pilgrimages to Mecca from Gaza

► On June 12, 2023, the first group of Muslim pilgrims, 2,688 in all, left the Gaza Strip through the Rafah Crossing en route to Saudi Arabia. Hathem al-Bakri, PA minister of Muslim endowments; Abd al-Hadi al-Agha, deputy minister of Muslim endowments in the Gaza Strip; and Issam al-Dalis, chairman of the governmental monitoring committee, went to the Rafah Crossing to wish them bon voyage ("Palestine" Online and Shehab, June 12, 2023).



Right: The minister of Muslim endowments says goodbye to the pilgrims. Left: Issam al-Dalis at the Rafah Crossing (Shehab, June 12, 2023).

Hamas and PIJ delegations in Egypt

►As the meetings in Egypt continued, a Hamas delegation led by **Isma'il Haniyeh, head of Hamas' political bureau**, met with Abbas Kamal, director of Egyptian General Intelligence. According to reports, they discussed topics of mutual interest, especially the situation in the Gaza Strip after the recent escalation and the situation in Judea, Samaria and Jerusalem. Their announcement described the meeting as "positive and beneficial," and reflecting Egypt's desire to unite the Palestinian position (Hamas Telegram channel, June 6, 2023). After the PIJ's visit to Egypt, **Ziyad al-Nakhalah, PIJ secretary general**, PIJ sources expressed their appreciation for Egypt's efforts and thanked them for their warm reception and hospitality. They said they would continue the contacts, reinforcing their connections and coordination with the Egyptians (PIJ website, June 6, 2023).

►So far no official mention has been made of the meetings beyond their general tenor. Contradictory reports have been issued by Hamas and the PIJ as well as other sources reporting anonymously:

- ◆ **Ihsan Ataya, a member of the PIJ's political bureau**, claimed that no arrangement for a long-term ceasefire with Israel had been offered. He said the negotiations had failed and they would continue "confronting" [attacking] Israel (al-Ghad, June 12, 2023).

Hamas also issued an announcement claiming the talks did not include negotiations for a long-term ceasefire (al-Andalou News, June 12, 2023).

- ◆ However, a "knowledgeable source" reported that a long term calm in the Gaza Strip had been agreed on, adding that the Egyptians had held separate meetings with the leaderships of each organization (al-Sharq al-Awsat, June 6, 2023).

- ◆ In another publication, "knowledgeable sources" were quoted as saying the Palestinian [terrorist] organizations were planning to implement the understandings agreed on at the meetings in Cairo, among them a long-term ceasefire after defining measures of trust between the Palestinians and Israel. Another round of talks between the organizations and Egyptian security will be held in July 2023. The sources also claimed Hamas would maintain calm while waiting for the sides to build trust (al-Sharq al-Awsat, June 9, 2023).
- ◆ "High-level Palestinian sources" reported that Egypt did not hesitate to make an effort to close the Gaza file but so far its efforts had not produced a working draft for a serious lull agreement, and all that had been achieved was an agreement for an extension. It was also reported that the PIJ leadership would hold another meeting with the Hamas leadership, this time in Beirut (Ra'i al-Youm, June 11, 2023).

"External" PIJ figure visits Gaza

► **Anwar Abu Taha, a member of the PIJ's political bureau and head of the organization's media information department**, who lives permanently in Lebanon and Syria, visited the Gaza Strip on June 10, 2023. He visited the house of Ramadan Abdallah Shalah, the organization's former secretary general, and the houses and graves of the Jerusalem Brigades' commanders who were killed in Operation Shield and Arrow (al-Istiqlal, June 10, 2023; PIJ website, June 11, 2023). Yussuf Daloul, responsible for the PIJ's Gaza City branch, accompanied him on his visits to the shaheeds' houses (Shams News, June 10, 2023).



Right: Anwar Abu Taha. Left: One of Abu Taha's visits to a grave (Shams News, June 10, 2023).

PIJ opens military camps for Gazan youth

► The recruitment unit of the Jerusalem Brigades, the PIJ's military-terrorist wing, announced that on June 12, 2023, the first stage of the "military camps for Free Men's Revenge youth" would begin. The training camps would be of two weeks' duration and held in the Jerusalem

Brigades' military posts. Registration would begin on June 10, 2023 at the PIJ mosques in the Gaza Strip (al-Istiqlal, June 10, 2023).

Another Palestinian wounded in Operation Shield and Arrow dies

► On June 9, 2023, the death of **Isma'il Salman Iyad** was reported; he was wounded in an Israeli attack on the al-Zeitoun neighborhood in the southern part of Gaza City on May 12, 2023, during Operation Shield and Arrow. His son and nephew were also wounded in the attack (Snd News website, June 9, 2023). The PIJ in the Gaza district issued a mourning notice for him; he was 75 years old (palsawa, June 9, 2023). Members of the PIJ leadership attended his funeral and his body was wrapped for burial in a PIJ flag (Paltoday, June 9, 2023). His death brought the number of fatalities in the operation to 34.



Right: Isma'il Iyad. Left: His funeral (Paltoday, June 9, 2023).

The Palestinian Authority (PA)

Mahmoud Abbas visits to China and Muhammad Shtayyeh meets with foreign diplomats

► **PA chairman Mahmoud Abbas** arrived in China for an official visit, leading a delegation which included **Palestinian foreign minister Riyad al-Maliki**. During the three-day visit he met with Chinese President Xi Jinping and other government officials (Wafa, June 13, 2023).

► **This past week PA Prime Minister Muhammad Shtayyeh held several meetings with foreign representatives:**

- ◆ Meeting with **Eamon Gilmore the EU special representative for human rights**, Shtayyeh called for an end to the international community's double standard regarding the Palestinian issue, and for forcing Israel to take responsibility for its "crimes against [the Palestinian people]." He also called on the EU and international community to exert

pressure on Israel to honor the right to hold elections throughout the Palestinian territories, including Jerusalem (Wafa, June 7, 2023).

◆ Meeting with **Hilde Haraldstad, the Norwegian envoy to the peace process in the Middle East**, Shtayyeh called on the international community, especially the American administration, to exert pressure on Israel. He also called on Norway, which heads the Committee of Donor States, and the donor states themselves, to exert pressure on Israel to stop its unfair deductions of the tax funds it collects for the PA, and to strengthen the Palestinian economy. He said the objective of Israel's current government, which was following in the previous government's footsteps, was to "destroy every aspect of Palestinian life, to wage a struggle against [them] at every level" (Wafa, June 8, 2023).

◆ **Hussein al-Sheikh, secretary of the PLO's Executive Committee**, met with **Philippe Lazzarini, UNRWA's general commissioner**. They discussed the agency's financial crisis, and the UNRWA employees' strike in the refugee camps in Judea and Samaria and ways to end it. Al-Sheikh also met with **Hady Amr, deputy assistant secretary for Israeli and Palestinian affairs in the American State Department's Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs**. He called on Amr to exert pressure on the government of Israel to end its unilateral measures (Hussein al-Sheikh's Twitter account, June 7, 2023).



Right: Shtayyeh meets with the Norwegian envoy (Wafa, June 8, 2023). Left: Hussein al-Sheikh meets with Hady Amr (Hussein al-Sheikh's Twitter account, June 7, 2023).

Statements from Mahmoud al-'Aloul

► Interviewed by Agence France-Presse, **Fatah deputy chairman Mahmoud al-'Aloul** said Fatah had to admit its popularity had declined with the Palestinian public. In his opinion, that was because Fatah had opted for peace and promised it to the Palestinians, but had not been able to provide it. As to Mahmoud Abbas' successor, he said they were looking for someone from the younger generation (Agence France-Presse, June 7, 2023).

►After the interview had been published, al-Aloul's office issued a clarification stating that his remarks as reported by the media were taken out of context, especially regarding Mahmoud Abbas' successor and some remarks about the Fatah movement (QudsN Twitter account and the arabi21 website, June 7, 2023). An announcement was posted to al-Aloul's Facebook page by his office stating he had met with members of the Arab and foreign media operating in the PA territories and briefed them about developments related to the Palestinian issue. According to the announcement, the meeting dealt with the future role of the Fatah movement led by the Palestinians in light of the many challenges and changes, ways to deal with them, and what Fatah had to do as the leader of the "national liberation project" (Mahmoud al-'Aloul's Facebook page, June 7, 2023).

Violence in Arab-Israeli society

►**Muhammad Shtayyeh** related to the issue of violence in Arab-Israeli society during the weekly government meeting, blaming Israel for it. He claimed Israel was trying to "destroy the spirit of unity within Arab society and sowed dissension" (Wafa, June 12, 2023).

►**Hamas** said in a statement that the killings and crimes which had led to more than 100 Arab-Israeli deaths since the beginning of the year were due to the absence of Israel police and security force intervention, whose objective was to weaken Israeli Arab society. According to the statement, the "occupation" was fully responsible for all the crimes. Hamas appealed to the Arab social institutions and international agencies to fulfill their roles and act to prevent crime from escalating (Hamas Telegram channel, June 11, 2023).

Reactions to Knesset Member Amit Halevi's proposal to divide the Temple Mount

►Likud Knesset Member Amit Halevi proposed a plan to change the current policies governing the Temple Mount. According to his proposal, it would be divided into Jewish and Muslim areas. The Muslims would receive al-Aqsa mosque and all the holy sites related to it to the south, and the Jews would receive the central and northern area, including the Dome of the Rock, where the Temple had stood. Halevi also proposed to remove Jordan's long-standing political status on the Temple Mount, gained as part of agreements with the government of Israel (Zeman Israel, June 7, 2023).

►The proposal enraged the Palestinians, who threatened bloodshed, should be it be enacted. The PA's ministry for Jerusalem affairs called the plan extremely dangerous and a recipe for religious war (Wafa, June 7, 2023). Reactions included the following:

- ◆ **Muhammad Shtayyeh** related to the issue during the weekly government meeting. He warned the "occupation authorities" not to enact the proposal. He said it would cause extreme anger whose consequences could not be foreseen because of al-Aqsa mosque's sanctity and religious significance for Palestinians, Arabs and Muslims (Wafa, July 12, 2023).
- ◆ **Mahmoud al-Habash, Mahmoud Abbas' advisor for religious affairs and Islamic relations**, said Israel had crossed all the red lines. He warned of serious consequences and called for an urgent Arab, Islamic and international stand and for imposing sanctions on Israel to prevent it from "harming the holy sites" (Wafa, June 13, 2023).
- ◆ **Sheikh Muhammad Hussein, the general Mufti of Jerusalem and the Palestinian territories**, and the sermonizer of al-Aqsa mosque, warned of the "racist occupation authorities'" plan to divide the area, allow extremist settlers to worship there, and annul the site's the historic and legal status. He claimed it would ignite a religious war that would influence the entire Middle East. He said al-Aqsa mosque was exclusively Muslim and would be neither divided nor shared. He called on the international community to bear responsibility, intervene urgently to halt Israel and prevent it from implementing its plan (Wafa, June 8, 2023).
- ◆ **Ramzi Khouri, a member of the PLO's Executive Committee and chairman of the committee to monitor church affairs in "Palestine,"** issued an announcement calling Israel's plan "fascist aggression against the Arab and Palestinian nation and all true believers," a plan which they had to stop and object to. He called it the destruction of al-Aqsa mosque's legal and historic status, which had to be preserved, and they had to deal with anyone who attacked it (committee to monitor church affairs website, June 8, 2023).
- ◆ **Haroun Nasser al-Din, a member of Hamas' political bureau**, said three ministers of the "extremist Zionist government" had decided among themselves to take control of part of al-Aqsa mosque and turn it into a place for worship similar to the Cave of the Patriarchs. He said the Palestinians, who had defended and would continue to defend al-Aqsa mosque, and maintained it to preserve the Temple Mount, would not allow Israel to attack al-Aqsa mosque or appropriate any part of it. He added that the "resistance" [terrorist] organizations, headed by the Izz al-Din Qassam Brigades (Hamas' military-terrorist wing), were monitoring events in al-Aqsa and all the negotiators had been

informed that any damage to al-Aqsa mosque would show that Operation Guardian of the Walls was nothing but a skirmish, compared to what Israel would have to contend with (Shehab, June 8, 2023).

- ◆ **Isma'il Radwan, a member of the Hamas leadership**, warned of "Zionist conspiracies" regarding al-Aqsa mosque, which would ignite the entire Middle East in a religious war. He called on the Palestinians to go en masse to the mosque to prevent the "Zionist conspiracies," and called on international institutions and human rights organizations to stop the "aggression" against it (al-Aqsa TV website, June 9, 2023).

- ◆ According to a joint announcement from the "resistance" [terrorist] organizations, the plan to divide al-Aqsa mosque was a declaration of war and the Palestinians and the "resistance" would not accept such "aggression," regardless of how many martyrs there would be. The organizations called on the Palestinians to escalate their oversight of the areas surrounding al-Aqsa mosque and all forms of clashes with Israel (Hamas website, June 8, 2023).

Reactions to Itamar Ben-Gvir's latest proposal regarding the Palestinian prisoners

► On June 7, 2023, Itamar Ben-Gvir, Israel's minister of national security, said that as part of restricting conditions for the security prisoners in Israeli jails, which he promised to do when he became minister, he had ordered the Israel Prison Service to update procedure and require prisoners to pay for their own dental treatment. He said it was a matter of hundreds of thousands of dollars every year and there was no reason for the state to pay for it (Itamar Ben-Gvir's Twitter account, June 7, 2023). Some Palestinian reactions were the following:

- ◆ **Zaher Jabarin, responsible for the office of shaheeds, prisoners and wounded in Hamas**, said the decision had escalated anger in the prisons and Israel would be responsible for the consequences. He said the prisoners would not surrender to "Israel's racists decisions" (Hamas website, June 8, 2023).

- ◆ **Qadoura Fares, chairman of the Palestinian prisoners' club**, said the decision to deny one of the prisoners' most important rights, the right to medical treatment, was "a decision to kill the prisoners, another expression Israel's deep fascism." He added that such decisions would force the renewal of the clashes begun by the prisoners in **February** 2023 in response to Ben-Gvir's measures because they were not directed only

at their living conditions, but at the prisoners' lives and fate (prisoners' club website, June 8, 2023).

◆ **Bahaa al-Din al-Madhoun, deputy minister for prisoners and released prisoners' affairs in the Gaza Strip**, called the decision a continuation of the theft of the money of the **prisoners'** families, and reflected Israel's attitude, which was based on stealing prisoners' money (Hamis administration al-Ra'i news agency, June 8, 2023).

◆ **Yasser Muzher, PIJ representative to the prisoners' committee of the national and Islamic forces**, called the decision dangerous and worrying. He said considerable tension **existed** in the prisons; in the wake of the decision they would wait for a response from the prisoners' emergency committee (alqudsnews website, June 7, 2023).

UN investigatory committee report published

► On June 8, 2023, the UN published the third report of its Commission of Inquiry. According to the findings, Israel systematically violates the rights of Palestinian civilian society by means of Israeli civilian attacks, limitations and harassment in the "occupied territories" to ensure the continuation of the "occupation." Oppression is manifested by passing laws defining a number of Palestinian civilian social organizations in Judea and Samaria as terrorist organizations, contrary to international law. In addition, according to the report, official Palestinian agencies also violate the rights of the civilian society. The report called on the International Criminal Court's chief prosecutor to prioritize the investigation of "Palestine" (October 2022). The committee was established after Operation Guardian of the Walls and its previous report recommended asking for an advisory opinion from the International Court of Justice regarding the implications of "the continuing occupation" (UNHRC, June 8, 2023).

Appendix

Rocks, Molotov cocktails and other attacks

► **In Judea, Samaria and east Jerusalem Palestinians continued throwing rocks and Molotov cocktails at Israeli vehicles driving on the roads.** The more prominent events were the following:²

- ◆ **June 12, 2023:** Rocks were thrown at an Israeli vehicle in Arab Teqoa (southeast of Bethlehem). No casualties were reported; the vehicle was damaged.
- ◆ **June 12, 2023:** Rocks were thrown at an Israeli bus and other vehicles near the al-Khader Junction (southwest of Bethlehem). No casualties were reported; vehicles were damaged.
- ◆ **June 11, 2023:** Rocks were thrown at an Israeli bus near Azzun (southeast of Tulkarm) No casualties or damage were reported.
- ◆ **June 11, 2023:** Rocks were thrown at an Israeli vehicle in Hawwara (south of Nablus). No casualties or damage were reported.
- ◆ **June 11, 2023:** Rocks were thrown at an Israeli vehicle near the Te'enim roadblock (east of Qalqilya) No casualties were reported; the vehicle was damaged.
- ◆ **June 11, 2023:** Rocks were thrown at an Israeli vehicle in Uja (north of Jericho). No casualties were reported; the vehicle was damaged.
- ◆ **June 8, 2023:** Rocks were thrown at an Israeli bus north of Jericho. Two passengers were injured and the bus was damaged.
- ◆ **June 8, 2023:** Rocks were thrown at an Israeli vehicle west of the T junction (southeast of Bethlehem). No casualties were reported; the vehicle was damaged.
- ◆ **June 8, 2023:** Rocks were thrown at an Israeli bus and other vehicles between Azzun and Ma'aleh Shomron (east of Qalqilya). No casualties were reported; vehicles were damaged.
- ◆ **June 8, 2023:** Rocks were thrown at an Israeli bus near Hebron. No casualties or damage were reported.
- ◆ **June 7, 2023:** Rocks were thrown at an Israeli vehicle near Bayt Ummar (north of Hebron). No casualties or damage were reported.

² Information and pictures from Rescue Without Borders in Judea and Samaria unless otherwise noted.

- ◆ **June 6, 2023:** Rocks were thrown at an Israeli vehicle in Hawwara (south of Nablus). No casualties were reported; the vehicle was damaged.
- ◆ **June 6, 2023:** Rocks were thrown at an Israeli vehicle near Bayt Ummar (north of Hebron). No casualties were reported; the vehicle was damaged.