



Spotlight on Terrorism and the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict

(July 26 – August 1, 2023)

Overview

- ▶ **This past week Palestinians carried out two terrorist attacks: a vehicular ramming and a shooting, both targeting IDF forces.** On July 27, 2023, the Hamas-affiliated [Yahya] al-Ayash Battalion announced it had fired a rocket at Ram-Ohn, a moshav south of the northern city of Afula. Israeli security forces and demolitions experts searched the area and located the remains of an improvised rocket which landed in Palestinian territory. **It was the sixth time since May 2023 the al-Ayash Battalion has launched rockets at Israel and the fifth time rocket remains have been found.**¹ Two Palestinians were killed in clashes with Israeli security forces.
- ▶ The Palestinian Authority's (PA) security forces continued their countermeasures and prevention activities, mainly in the Jenin area, detaining Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) operatives. The PA is trying to dismantle the Jenin Battalion by recruiting its operatives to the PA's security forces.
- ▶ The Gaza Strip remained relatively calm. Local residents held demonstrations to protest the Hamas administration and living conditions. The Hamas administration contained the demonstrations and accused Israel.
- ▶ A summit meeting of the Palestinian organizations' leadership, initiated by Mahmoud Abbas, was held in el-Alamein, in northern Egypt; the PIJ was not represented. The meeting ended without issuing an official summary statement, which might indicate that the differences in positions were so great that the participants were unable to reach an agreement. Mahmoud Abbas met with Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi on the sidelines of the meeting. While in Turkey before going to Egypt, Mahmoud Abbas met with Isma'il Haniyeh, head of Hamas' political bureau.

¹ For further information see the ITIC July 30, 2023 report, "Israel attacked by rockets fired from Judea and Samaria: analysis and significance."

►The presence of Jewish worshipers on the Temple Mount on Tisha b'Av,² among them National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir, provoked a wave of angry reactions among the Palestinians as well as among senior government officials in Arab countries.

Judea and Samaria

Attempted stabbing

►On July 29, 2023, a Palestinian driver tried to break through two IDF roadblocks in the Einabus square near Hawwara (south of Nablus), and run over IDF soldiers deployed to secure the roadblocks. He was unsuccessful and he fled the scene. The IDF force at one of the roadblocks shot at the vehicle but it escaped. A short time later, the Palestinian was apprehended after abandoning the vehicle and trying to escape on foot. There were no casualties (IDF spokesman, July 29, 2023).

Shots fired at an IDF post

►On the night of July 29, 2023, shots were fired from a passing vehicle at an IDF post near the Samaritan village of Tal. IDF forces pursued the vehicle; no casualties were reported (IDF spokesman, July 29, 2023).

Rocket fired

►On July 27, 2023, the Telegram channel of the al-Ayash Battalion,³ which affiliated with Hamas' military-terrorist wing, issued a claim of responsibility for launching a Qassam 1 rocket from the Jenin area at the "settlement" of Ram-Ohn, an Israeli moshav 8 kilometers (5 miles) south of Afula. According to the claim, "the action was carried out in response to Israel's 'crimes' against the Palestinians and al-Aqsa Mosque is a red line." The channel also published a video documenting the launch (al-Ayash Battalion in western Jenin Telegram channel, July 27, 2023). Following the publication of the video Israeli security forces and demolitions experts searched the area and located the remains of an improvised rocket which had landed in Palestinian territory (IDF spokesman, July 27, 2023).

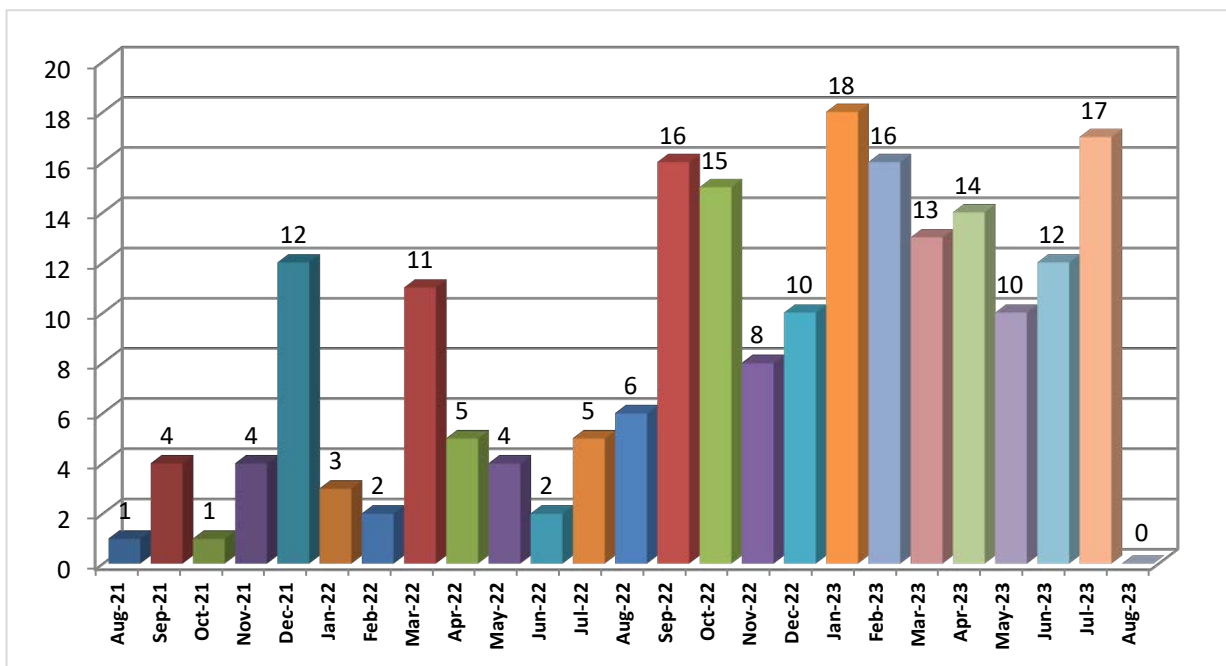
² Tisha b'Av (The Ninth of Av) is a day of fasting that commemorates various tragedies that befell the Jewish people, particularly the destruction of the two Temples in 586 BCE and 70 CE.

³ Affiliated with the Izz al-Din Qassam Brigades, Hamas' military-terrorist wing, the Battalion is named for Yahya Ayash, aka "the engineer," one of the founders of the Izz al-Din Qassam Brigades and responsible for orchestrating suicide bombing attacks against Israel during the 1990s. He died in a targeted killing carried out by the Israeli security forces in 1996.



Right: The rocket launch. Left: The rocket launcher with a note from the al-Ayash Battalion (al-Ayash Battalion in western Jenin Telegram channel, July 27, 2023).

Critical Terrorist Attacks in Judea and Samaria since August 2021⁴



Counterterrorism Activities

► This past week the Israeli security forces continued intensive counterterrorism activities in Judea and Samaria, entering Jenin for the first time since the activity in the city and its refugee camp at the beginning of July 2023. They detained Palestinians suspected of involvement in terrorism and confiscated large quantities of weapons:

⁴ 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.

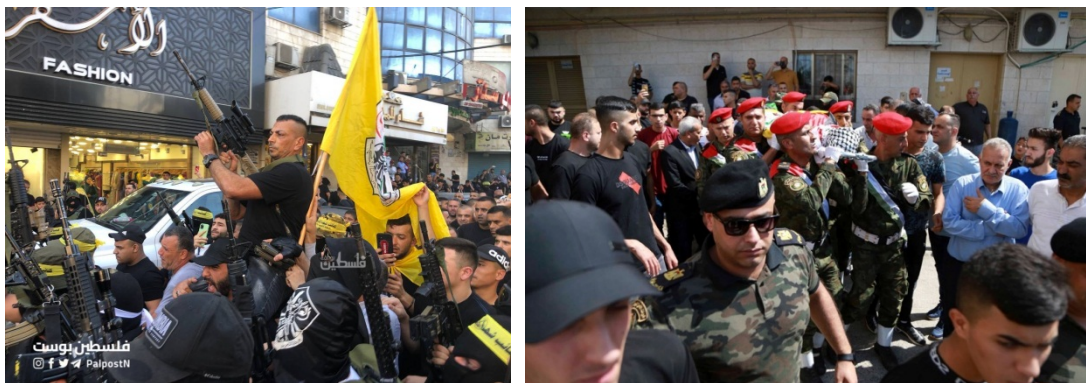
- ◆ On the night of July 30, 2023, Israeli security forces detained two Hamas operatives in Jenin. During the activity, there was an exchange of fire between armed Palestinians and the Israeli forces, who did not enter the refugee camp. The al-Qassam Battalions in Jenin claimed responsibility for the clashes with the IDF forces. They claimed their operatives had attacked the forces with gunfire and IEDs, stalling an IDF armored which was extracted under heavy fire from the "resistance" fighters [terrorist operatives] (Shehab, July 31, 2023).
- ◆ IDF forces halted a suspicious Palestinian vehicle for inspection near the Gush Etzion Junction. The driver tried to escape and rammed into an IDF military vehicle. He was injured and taken for medical treatment (IDF spokesman, July 27, 2023).

Palestinian killed in Qalqilya

► On July 27, 2023, riots broke out during an IDF activity in Qalqilya. Palestinians threw rocks and Molotov cocktails at the forces, who responded with riot control measures and by firing into the air (IDF spokesman, July 27, 2023). The ministry of health in Ramallah reported the death of **Fares Shabel Abu Samra, 14 years old**, [allegedly] shot by IDF forces while operating in the al-Naqar neighborhood in Qalqilya (Wafa, July 27, 2023). His father is an operative in the PA National Security Forces (Fatah's media information and cultural commission Facebook page, July 27, 2023). A photo was issued showing Fares Abu Samra with Ibrahim al-Nabulsi, a senior operative in the al-Aqsa Battalions in Nablus, killed by the IDF on August 9, 2022. A military funeral was held for Fares Abu Samra, attended by Rafi' Rawajba, the Qalqilya district governor (Facebook page of the Qalqilya district governor, July 27, 2023).



Right: Fares Abu Samra (Wafa, July 27, 2023). Left: Fares Abu Samra and Ibrahim al-Nabulsi (@ahrar_qalqilia Telegram channel, July 27, 2023)



Right: The military funeral held for Fares Abu Samra (Facebook page of the Qalqilya district governor, July 27, 2023. Left: Fares Abu Samra's father at the funeral (Palestine Post Twitter account, July 27, 2023).

►The **PA foreign ministry** condemned the "crime of executing" Fares Abu Samra, claiming it was a "war crime and a crime against humanity, another in the series of murders committed by IDF forces against the Palestinians with the guidance, backing and approval of the political leadership" and "an expression of the level of the IDF's moral deterioration" (PA foreign ministry website, July 27, 2023). **Rawhi Fatouh, chairman of the Palestinian National Council**, called on the UN to add Israel to the blacklist of countries that violate children's rights (Wafa, July 27, 2023).

►**Hamas** claimed "the blood of the [Palestinian] children will haunt the Zionist criminals" everywhere (Hamas website, July 27, 2023). The PIJ in Judea and Samaria claimed the blood of the martyrs in all arenas was more fuel for revenge and would increase the Palestinians' firm stance and the courage of the "resistance" activists [terrorist operatives] to continue on the path [of "resistance"] despite the victims (PIJ website, July 27, 2023).

Palestinian killed in the al-Ayn refugee camp in Nablus

►On July 26, 2023, Palestinians rioted during an IDF activity in the al-Ayn refugee camp in Nablus to detain a Palestinian suspected of involvement in terrorist activities. They threw rocks and bottles of paint and shot at the IDF forces, who responded with live fire (IDF spokesman, July 26, 2023). The ministry of health in Ramallah reported that during the riots in the al-Ayn refugee camp in Nablus, after the Israeli security forces surrounded a house to detain a Palestinian who barricaded himself inside, **Muhammad Abd al-Hakim Na'im Nada, 23 years old**, was killed. The wanted Palestinian, **Nur al-Bassyouni**, was detained by the forces (Wafa, July 26, 2023).

►According to his Facebook page, Muhammad Nada was a barber who worked at the barbershop belonging to Hamdi Sharaf. Sharaf was killed by Israeli security forces in Nablus on

October 25, 2022, after he identified the forces as they entered the area and warned operatives of the Lion's Den network (Hiyam Sharaf's Facebook page, July 26 2023). A military funeral was held for Muhammad Nada; his body was wrapped in a Palestinian flag (Wafa, July 26, 2023).



Right: Muhammad Nada (Muhammad Nada's Facebook page, April 1, 2023). Left: Muhammad Nada and Husam Aslim, commander of the Jerusalem Brigades' Nablus Battalion, killed on February 22, 2023 (Ali Samir al-Madhoun's Twitter account, July 26, 2023).

►The **PA foreign ministry** condemned the "crime of Muhammad Nada's execution," stating that the ministry demanded the International Criminal Court (ICC) end its silence, take responsibility and meet its obligations to bring the "Israeli war criminals" to justice (PA foreign ministry website, July 26, 2023). **Rawhi Fatouh, chairman of the Palestinian National Council**, accused the Israeli government of forming death squads directed by National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir to kill as many Palestinians as possible, intimidate them, carry out revenge attacks and force the Palestinians to leave their land (Wafa, July 26 2023). Hamas and the PIJ in Judea and Samaria also condemned his killing and said that following his death the "resistance" [terrorist attacks] could continue and increase (Hamas and PIJ websites, July 26, 2023).

Confrontations between Palestinians and settlers

►On July 28, 2023, clashes broke out between Jewish settlers and Palestinians near the al-Asira Qibliya bus stop south of Nablus. During the clashes a Palestinian vehicle was set on fire and rocks were thrown at Palestinian houses. According to reports, five settlers were superficially injured but refused to evacuate to receive medical treatment (Israeli media, July 28, 2023).

PA security force activities

►This past week the PA security forces also continued countermeasures and preventive activities, focusing mainly on the Jenin area. Operating in the village of Ya'bad (southwest of Jenin) on July 29, 2023, several Palestinians were detained, including Hamza and Hossein

Harazallah, Baha' al-Adnan Abu Bakr, all released prisoners. The Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP) condemned the detentions in Ya'bad, claiming two of the detainees as organization operatives (DFLP central information unit, July 29, 2023).

►On July 26, 2023, the PA forces operated in Jaba (southwest of Jenin). They entered without warning in civilian vehicles and detained **Khaled Ahmed Malaysha, a senior operative in the PIJ's military-terrorist wing in Jenin** (PIJ website, July 26, 2023). According to an article in al-Akhbar about the activity in Jaba, since the Israeli activity in Jenin in early July 2023, the PA security forces have begun playing a more central role in countermeasures in the area. Reportedly, one of their intermediate goals is the dismantling the Jaba Battalion, and contrary to events in the Jenin refugee camp, the security forces believe that they can dismantle the Battalion, because as opposed to the Jenin Battalion, it does not have a strong organizational structure or popular support to help it resist detentions (al-Akhbar, July 27, 2023).



Khaled Malaysha (left) with his brother Naif, who was killed on March 9, 2023 (Filastin al-Yawm channel Twitter account, July 26, 2023).

►The PIJ reported that the PA was holding several senior organizational figures detained during July 2023 in Hebron, Surif, Jaba, Qalqilya and Tubas (Daffa_media Telegram channel [the PIJ Telegram channel in Judea and Samaria], July 26, 2023). Hamas-affiliated media outlets reported that after Mahmoud Abbas called for a summit meeting in Cairo (see below), the rate of detentions increased and so far the PA's security forces had carried out approximately 70 political detentions (Shehab, July 28, 2023; Palinfo, July 29, 2023).

►The PA security forces are making a particular effort with the Jenin refugee camp, which is the PIJ military-terrorist wing's most prominent stronghold, to repeat the arrangements that were relatively successful with the Nablus Battalion. "Sources in the Jenin Battalion" revealed that **Akram al-Rajoub, Nablus district governor**, along with heads of the security forces and Fatah

figures, were working to convince Fatah operatives in Jenin to lay down their arms in exchange for employment in the security forces and an arrangement to stop persecuting them. Dozens of al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades (AAMB) terrorist operatives have recently been integrated into the forces. It was also reported that the security forces were encountering extreme opposition from Jenin Battalion terrorist operatives, who refuse to participate in any arrangement, and so far the Battalion had not lost any of its fighters because no one had accepted the security forces' offer (al-Akhbar, Lebanon, July 27, 2023).

The Lion's Den network

► On the one year anniversary of the deaths of **Muhammad al-Azizi Abu Saleh, who founded the Lion's Den network, and Muhammad Harazallah Abu Hamdi, a network operative**,⁵ a memorial ceremony was held in the al-Yasmina neighborhood of the old city of Nablus. It was attended by a large crowd of people who cheered for them and chanted slogans supporting the path of "resistance" (Safa, July 28, 2023). The Lion's Den network said in a statement that anyone who thought about the end of the Lion's Den was delusional. The statement contained three main messages (Lion's Den network Telegram channel, July 28, 2023):

- ◆ **A message to the Palestinians:** A call to unite behind the "resistance" regardless of political affiliation, and to abandon political and partisan differences because the Palestinian issue was more important anything else.
- ◆ **A message to Israel:** The network hid its commanders, "soldiers" and capabilities from Israel, which did not know where or when it would strike, which in itself was a success for the network. For more than four months operations were carried out against IDF soldiers, settlers and military roadblocks with no claims of responsibility, but Israel definitely knew the "resistance" was continuously developing, and they promised Israel more attacks and surprises like the ones on Tal Street in Nablus, in the Jenin refugee camp, in Nur Shams, the attack near Eli and the attack on Har Gerizim.⁶
- ◆ **A message to the Lion's Den operatives:** Operatives had to remain silent, not publish announcements or hold demonstrations, just let the [events on the] ground and the guns speak. Silence was better, stronger and more effective than thousands of words.

⁵ Both killed in an IDF activity in Nablus on July 24, 2022.

⁶ The attempted attack on July 25, 2023, was carried out by three Izz al-Din Qassam Brigades operatives who were killed by an IDF force at the entrance gate to Har Gerizim. On July 26, 2023, the Lion's Den Telegram channel issued a mourning notice representing the terrorist operatives as belonging to the network.



Right: Muhammad al-Azizi's mother gives a speech at the memorial ceremony (Safa Twitter account, July 28, 2023). Left: Akrama al-Khamash,⁷ a wounded Lion's Den operative, carried on the shoulders of a supporter at the ceremony (@haneenhallabii Twitter account, July 28, 2023).

►According to an article published in The Economist in Britain about the network, it has about a hundred activists and no hierarchical structure. It is gaining popularity among the younger generation who are frustrated by the situation and feel that they represent it. The local population also sympathizes with the network, its posters have been hung around the city and various small articles related to it are sold in stores (The Economist, July 7, 2023).

Documentation of Jenin Battalion operatives during the IDF activity in Jenin at the beginning of July

►On July 26, 2023, the PIJ-affiliated Filastin al-Yawm channel aired a documentary called "Authorized for Release," which dealt with the fighting of the Jerusalem Brigades' Jenin Battalion during the IDF activity at the beginning of July 2023. The film showed a command and control room where the Jenin Battalion operatives reportedly monitored the movement of Israeli forces outside and inside the camp. Photos of a tunnel were also shown, which the activists allegedly used to protect themselves from Israeli Air Force attacks. A Jenin Battalion source stated the video did not provide Israel with new information because during the activity IDF soldiers entered the tunnel shown the film and took over one of the Jenin Battalion command and control rooms (al-Akhbar, Lebanon, July 28, 2023).

⁷ Lion's Den operatives Akrama al-Khamash and Taysir Imad al-Kharaz were wounded in a "work accident" when an IED exploded in the Old City of Nablus on October 12, 2022.



Right: Jenin Battalion command and control room (YouTube, July 26, 2023). Left: The tunnel (QudsN YouTube channel, July 26, 2023).

►After the Israeli activity, an al-Akhbar reporter visited the al-Ansar Mosque in the al-Damaj neighborhood of Jenin. During the activity IDF soldiers surrounded the mosque, where about ten operatives had barricaded themselves, but they escaped through a tunnel dug near the mosque (al-Akhbar, Lebanon, July 14, 2023).



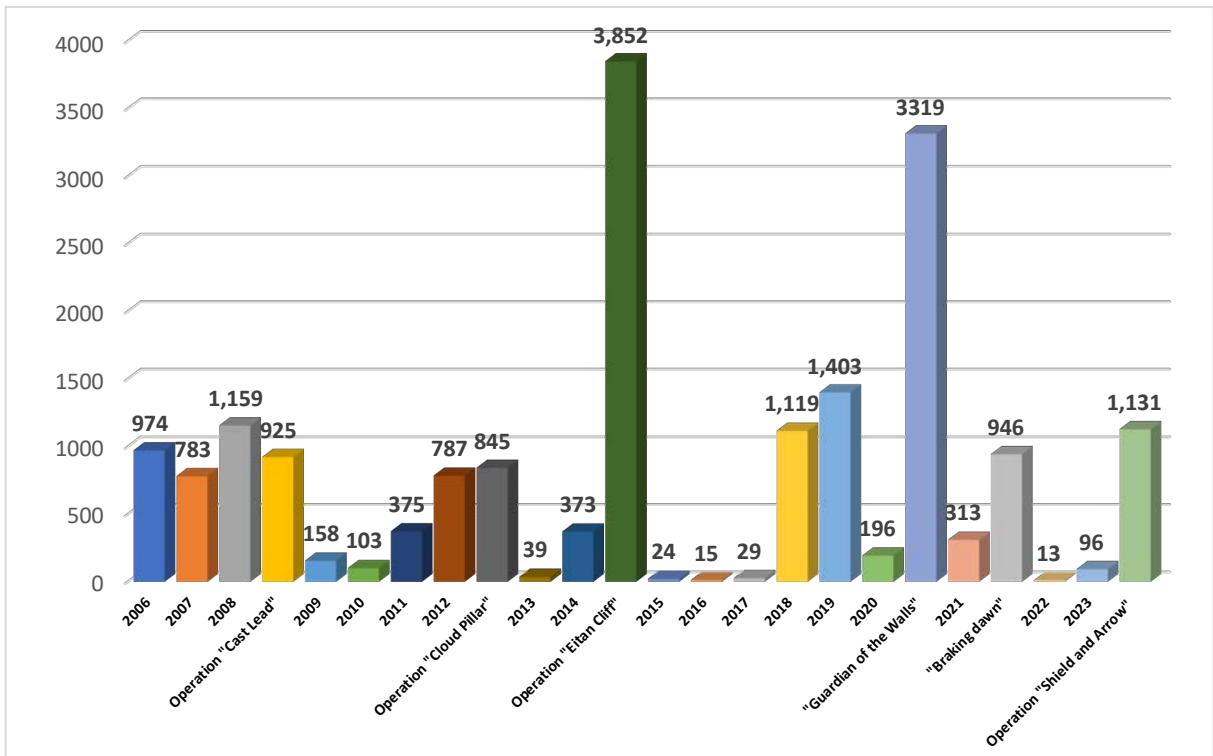
The tunnel through which the operatives escaped (al-Akhbar, Lebanon, July 14, 2023).

Israel's South

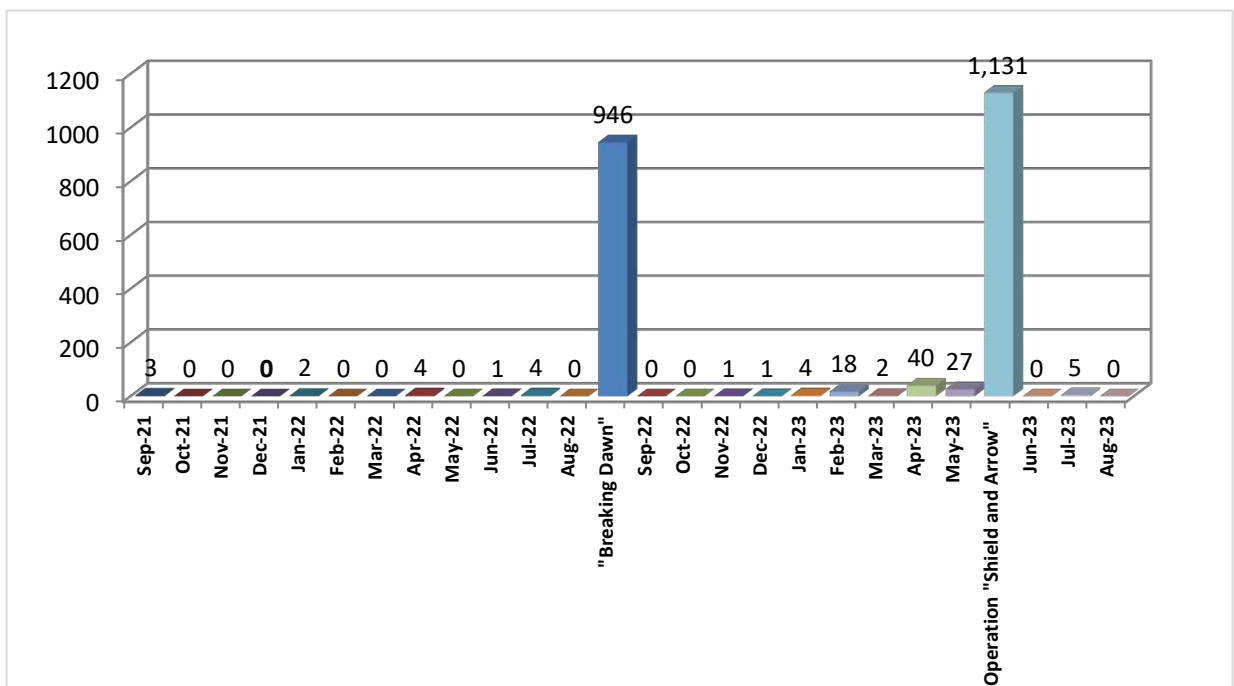
Rocket and mortar shell fire into Israel

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

Monthly Distribution of Rocket and Mortar Shell Fire since September 2021



Annual Distribution of Rocket Hits since 2006





Palestinian rioters burn tires near the border (Right: Palinfo Twitter account, July 26, 2023. Left: Palsawa Twitter account, July 26, 2023).

Developments in the Gaza Strip

Anti-Hamas protests

►Fatah figures and Hamas opponents have recently been trying to convince the Gazans, who have been suffering from the recent heat wave and decreased supply of energy, to protest the shortage of electricity. Calls were circulated on social media for local residents to join protests on July 30, 2023. In several locations, hundreds of civilians protested the Hamas administration and the living conditions in the Gaza Strip. Marches were held in Gaza City, Khan Yunis and other locations. Marchers chanted anti-Hamas slogans and demanded the administration provide the necessities for a dignified life or relinquish power. In one location demonstrators burned Hamas flags. Hamas security forces were deployed to suppress the protests and dispersed the gatherings. They also attacked reporters and anyone documenting the events (AP, July 30, 2023; Wafa, July 30, 2023).



Right: One of the demonstrations held in the Gaza Strip (Amad, July 30, 2023). Left: The middle sign reads, "We want to live with dignity. That's all we ask for #We_want_to_live." The sign at the left reads, "We want to live like the son of the senior [Hamas figure]. Is he better than I?" (Amad, July 30, 2023).



**Hamas security force operatives deal with demonstrators
(Hamze al-Masri's Telegram channel, July 31, 2023).**

The Palestinian Authority (PA)

Palestinian terrorist organization summit meeting held in Egypt

► On July 30, 2023, a summit meeting of the Palestinian organizations' leadership was held in El-Alamein in northern Egypt. The meeting was initiated **by PA chairman Mahmoud Abbas**, who called for it on July 3, 2023 following the IDF activity in Jenin. Its objective was to discuss various matters, primarily the internal Palestinian issue and "developing a national strategy to deal with Israel." Mahmoud Abbas chaired the meeting and it was attended by the heads of the organizations, including **Isma'il Haniyeh, head of Hamas' political bureau**.

► The PIJ leadership was absent, refusing to participate in protest over the "continuing political arrests of activists [sic]" carried out by PA security forces in Judea and Samaria. While the meeting was being held in Egypt, PIJ operatives held a press conference in Gaza, where **Khaled al-Batash, a member of the PIJ's political bureau**, said they had had to table the political arrests file and therefore decided not to attend the summit meeting in Egypt. At the same time, he said they would honor the results "as long as they do not affect the national vision of the fight against the enemy." He called for the Palestinians to abandon recognition of Israel and form a united national leadership to lead the "resistance in the West Bank" (Filastin al-Yawm, July 30, 2023).

► During the press conference in Gaza, a press conference was held in Damascus. **Nafed Azzam, the secretary of the PIJ's political bureau**, said the organization's non-participation in the summit in Egypt did not mean it aspired or sought to establish alternatives to the PLO. He

added they were prepared to visit Cairo after the summit as part of a delegation headed by Ziyad al-Nakhalah, PIJ secretary general (Paltoday, July 30, 2023).

► **Mahmoud Abbas** gave a speech at the summit calling for an end to the Palestinian schism and emphasizing adherence (at this stage) to "peaceful popular resistance" [popular terrorism] as a way to continue the Palestinian struggle and achieve national goals. He called for elections, on the condition they could also be held in east Jerusalem, and for the establishment of a monitoring committee consisting of representatives of the organizations present at the summit, who would "complete the dialogue on the issues discussed." He said he hoped the El-Alamein meeting would be a first step towards completing the dialogue and that another meeting would be held in Egypt soon to announce the end of the internal Palestinian schism (Wafa, July 30, 2023).



Right: El-Alamein summit meeting, group photo. Left: Mahmoud Abbas delivers a speech (Wafa, July 30, 2023).

► **Isma'il Haniyeh** gave a speech in which he called for the adoption of a national program based on "resistance [terrorism], partnership and ending the Oslo [Accords] phase." He emphasized the importance of a political partnership based on democratic elections, choosing the option of "resistance" that included Judea, Samaria and east Jerusalem, and the "removal of all obstacles" (implying the end of security coordination with Israel and the detentions carried out by the PA's security forces). He demanded the launching of a broad political, media [propaganda] and diplomatic campaign "to isolate and condemn Israel and the settlers," and emphasized the need to take legal steps to prosecute senior Israeli officials in international courts. He added that they had to exploit the window of opportunity that had been opened by Israel's internal division and its difficulties in the international arena (al-Risalah, July 30, 2023).



Hussein al-Sheikh (right) and Isma'il Haniyeh (left), and with Saleh al-'Arouri (left) (Muneir al-Jaghoub's Twitter account, July 30, 2023).

►The meeting lasted for about four hours and ended with no report of decisions made or a joint summary announcement, which could indicate that no breakthrough had been made and there were substantial differences of opinion between the participants. **Mustafa Barghouti, secretary general of the Palestinian National Initiative**, said a summary statement had not been issued because it was not possible to deal with all the disputed issues in one day. He claimed the atmosphere at the meeting was one of national responsibility and participants were serious about dealing with the issues in dispute and did not want to omit them with a document which would not be implemented (Dunia al-Watan, July 30, 2023). Hamas-affiliated sources accused Mahmoud Abbas of causing the meetings in Egypt to fail and not publishing a summary statement. According to them, that was because of his conditions and insistence on international legitimacy and only "peaceful resistance" (al-Risalah, July 31 2023).

►The Egyptian al-Ghad network reported that Egypt would host another meeting and the absence of some organizations, led by the PIJ, did not mean they would not be invited to the next one (al-Ghad, July 31, 2023).

Meetings held by Mahmoud Abbas

►Before the summit meeting in El-Alamein, Turkish President Tayyip Erdoğan organized a meeting between Mahmoud Abbas and Ismail Haniyeh. The meeting was described as a "tripartite summit," during which the three discussed the Palestinian issue (al-Andalou News, July 26, 2023). While the meeting was in progress, Fatah and Hamas delegations in Ankara

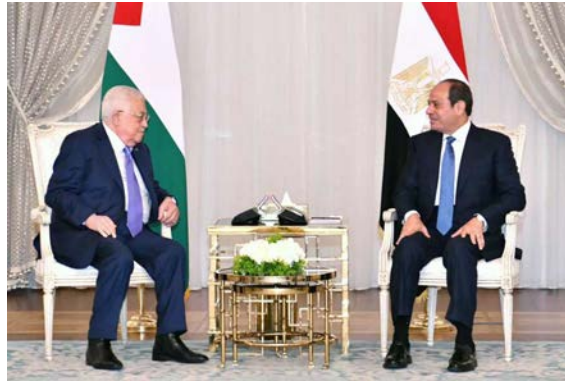
discussed ways to prepare the atmosphere for the talks in Egypt. **Muneir al-Jaghoub**,⁸ a senior **Fatah figure**, who gave details about the meeting, said that Mahmoud Abbas presented his political vision to Hamas, which included integrating Hamas into the PLO, "popular resistance" and "obedience to one rule, one law and one weapon." Hamas presented Mahmoud Abbas with a list of its operatives detained and held by the PA. The PA delegation also said that it would not accept the activity of Hamas figures against the PA after Hamas established its understanding with Israel in Gaza. The Hamas leadership claimed the PA was not a target of its activities and that it conduct incitement against it (Muneir al-Jaghoub's Twitter account, July 27, 2023).



The Turkish president meets with Mahmoud Abbas and Isma'il Haniyeh (Right: al-Andalou News, July 26, 2023. Left: al-Jazeera Mubasher website, July 26, 2023).

- ▶ Before the summit meeting, Mahmoud Abbas met in Cairo with **Abbas Kamal, head of the Egyptian General Intelligence**. Mahmoud Abbas thanked him for hosting the meeting and noted the need for the meeting to succeed and for national unity to be achieved (Wafa, July 29, 2023).
- ▶ On July 31, 2023, Mahmoud Abbas met with the Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi in EL-Alamein. He thanked el-Sisi for hosting the meeting, and for Egypt's ongoing sponsorship of peace efforts and its important role in achieving Palestinian national unity. El-Sisi emphasized his country's position supporting the Palestinian issue (Wafa, July 31, 2023).

⁸ Muneir al-Jaghoub was head of Fatah's bureau of mobilization and organization until he was detained by Palestinian general intelligence on January 18 2023. He is currently in charge of public relations in the PLO's negotiating department. One of Hussein al-Sheikh's inner circle.



Mahmoud Abbas meets with el-Sisi (Wafa, July 31, 2023).

Muhammad Shtayyeh meets with an American congressman

► **PA Prime Minister Muhammad Shtayyeh** held a video conference with **American Congressman Richard McCormick (R-GA), a member of the House Foreign Relations Committee**. They discussed strengthening relations between the Palestinians and the United States, and the importance of defending the two-state solution. Shtayyeh briefed McCormick on the latest regional developments and complained that "Israel's orders for opening fire have been changed to make it easier to kill our people" (Wafa, July 26, 2023).

Activity in the International Court of Justice (ICJ)

► **Judge Joan Donoghue, president of the International Court of Justice**, said in early 2024 the court would be prepared for the stage of oral proceedings regarding the opinion on the Palestinian issue. On July 15, 2023, the stage of submission of positions by various countries and organizations had ended, and the process of formulating the opinion will end on October 25, 2023 (ICJ website, 28 July 2023).

► **The Arab League's Secretariat General** of presented a copy of its lawsuit to the ICJ as part of a legal opinion on "the legitimacy of the occupation of the Palestinian lands and the resulting legal consequences." The lawsuit included evidence and considerations claiming the Palestinian people were subjected to the Israeli occupation, settlements and crimes which violated international law. A number of Arab countries as well as friendly countries will file lawsuits supporting the Palestinian position and refuting Israel's claims (Wafa, July 27, 2023).

► According to reports, **Qatar's legation in The Hague** announced it had submitted a letter to the ICJ condemning "the continuous and illegal Israeli occupation of Palestine." According to the letter, Israel violates the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination and is an "apartheid regime," and the court has to compel it to stop the occupation (Qatari News Agency, July 27, 2023).

UN Security Council meeting

► On July 27, 2023, the UN Security Council held a scheduled meeting to discuss the situation in the Middle East, focusing on the Palestinian issue. The conference ended without an official statement. Western countries, led by the United States, France and the United Kingdom, expressed concern over the ongoing violence, especially because of the IDF activity in Jenin at the beginning of July and the attack in Tel Aviv on July 4, 2023, and expressed sorrow for the victims on both sides. They also condemned provocations and unilateral measures, including the expansion of the settlements and the visit of the minister of internal security to the Temple Mount, and reiterated their support for the two-state solution, the need to increase security cooperation and promote dialogue. **Robert Wood, the United States Alternative Representative for Special Political Affairs at the United Nations**, called on the Palestinian Authority issue clear condemnation of acts of terrorism against Israelis, and expressed support for Israel's legitimate right to defend its citizens, including against threats from Hamas. **Riyad Mansour, the Palestinian delegate to the UN**, called for the implementation of UN resolutions, increased enforcement against "settler crimes," and advancing the ICC's investigations and the process at the ICJ (UN website, July 27, 2023).

Condemnations of Jewish worshippers on the Temple Mount

► On July 27, 2023, Tisha b'Av, about 1,700 Jewish worshippers entered the Temple Mount, among them Itamar Ben-Gvir, the minister of national security. It was the third time Ben-Gvir had entered the Temple Mount since taking office in January 2023. The arrival of the worshippers and the minister was widely covered by the Palestinian media, which called it a "settler assault on Al-Aqsa Mosque":

- ◆ **Nabil Abu Rudeineh, spokesman for Mahmoud Abbas**, claimed the "assault" of an extremist Israeli government minister on al-Aqsa Mosque was dangerous, contributed to "escalating the situation" and continued "the settlers' acts of killing and arson." He also claimed it offended the sensibilities of Muslims around the world (Wafa, July 27, 2023).
- ◆ The **PA foreign ministry** condemned "Minister Ben-Gvir's morning attack on al-Aqsa Mosque" and called for urgent international intervention to protect Jerusalem and the holy places, especially al-Aqsa Mosque (Wafa, July 27, 2023).
- ◆ **Hamas** also condemned the incident and claimed that "the ongoing attacks by settlers and ministers are a dangerous escalation of the religious war waged by the occupation against Jerusalem and al-Aqsa" (Hamas Telegram channel, July 27, 2023).

◆ **PIJ spokesman Tareq Salmi** claimed the "Zionist invasions" of al-Aqsa Mosque were an "aggressive escalation" reflecting the extent of the danger posed by Israel's "plan," which he claimed would lead to another conflict (PIJ Telegram channel, July 27, 2023).

► Condemnation was also issued by the Iranian foreign ministry and the foreign ministries of Jordan, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Turkey and the UAE. The American embassy in Israel called for the preservation of the status quo in the holy places in Jerusalem and said that any unilateral step or statement that endangered the status quo was unacceptable (Sky News in Arabic, July 27, 2023).

Reactions to the decision against the early release of terrorist operatives

► The Israeli media reported that as part of Minister Ben Gvir's plan to worsen the conditions of imprisoned terrorists, he had passed an amendment to the Law of the Administrative Release of Terrorists which effectively cancelled the possibility of early release of terrorists. In the past hundreds of terrorists were released every year because of the shortage of space in the prisons (Israeli media, July 30, 2023).

► **The PA commission for the affairs of prisoners and released prisoners** criticized the decision, calling it "another measure to worsen conditions for approximately 5,000 prisoners" and make their lives "more complicated and tense." It called on human rights and humanitarian organizations to meet their responsibilities and act immediately (Wafa, July 30, 2023). The Hamas ministry for the affairs of prisoners and released prisoners in the Gaza Strip called the decision a "new crime," a poor attempt to harm the prisoners' firm stance, and a continuation of the Israeli government's extremist way of dealing with the prisoners. The ministry warned against continuing to enact laws and make decisions limiting the prisoners, which would inevitably have serious consequences and could "explode the situation" in the prisons again (Shahab, July 30, 2023).

Campaign to collect funds for the families of terrorists whose houses were demolished

► The second popular campaign for rebuilding terrorists' houses was recently launched in al-Shuhadaa Square in the center of Nablus, with the slogan "Nablus: its glory is its residents." The goal of the campaign, which will continue until August 5, 2023, is to collect donations to help the families of prisoners Usama al-Tawil and Kamal Jouri,⁹ whose homes were recently

⁹ On October 11, 2022, Usama al-Tawil and Kamal Jouri shot and killed an IDF soldier near the settlement of Shavei Shomron.

demolished by IDF forces. Mazen al-Danbak,¹⁰ the campaign coordinator, said the most important message for Israel to take from the campaign was that Nablus would continue to stand behind the "resistance." He said that since 2003 [sic] they had rebuilt three residential buildings that were destroyed by Israel, and in 2016 the residents of Nablus managed to collect more than \$250,000 for new lodgings for four families of prisoners whose houses had been destroyed by Israel after the Palestinians had carried out the attack in Itamar.¹¹ He claimed that despite coordination with the governor of Nablus district and with some official institutions in the city, it was a popular, grassroots campaign. He also claimed that giving donations was not charity, but fulfilling a national, moral and religious duty, and everyone had to bear responsibility. Yazen Jaber, campaign coordination for the Nablus Engineers' Union, said that the funds they collected would be deposited in a bank account and used to purchase new homes for the families. He said that other popular, grassroots campaigns had been launched, including in Jenin and its refugee camp, as well as in other places (aljazeera.net, July 30, 2023).



Right: A sign for the campaign in al-Shuhadaa Squad in Nablus. Left: A child puts his donation into the box. Mazen al-Danbak stands in back to the right, giving an interview (aljazeera.net, July 30, 2023).



Money collected by the campaign (Palestine Post Twitter account, July 31, 2023).

¹⁰ Mazen al-Danbak is a Fatah activist in the Old City of Nablus who in the past was detained by Israel. Today he is head of the Nablus district department of welfare.

¹¹ In 2016 he said they had purchased houses for the families of Karam al-Masri, Sami al-Kousa and Yahya al-Hajj Hamad, who carried out the attack at the Bayt Furiq Junction (between the settlements of Alon Moreh and Itamar) on October 1, 2015, in which they shot and killed a young Israeli couple.

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:¹²

- ◆ **July 31, 2023:** Rocks were thrown at an Israeli bus near al-Aroub (northeast of Hebron). No casualties were reported; the bus was damaged.
- ◆ **July 31, 2023:** Rocks were thrown at an Israeli bus and other vehicles between Nebi Elias and Azzun (east of Qalqilya). No casualties or damage were reported.
- ◆ **July 31, 2023:** Rocks were thrown at an Israeli vehicle near Dir Abu Mashal (northwest of Ramallah). No casualties were reported; the vehicle was damaged.
- ◆ **July 31, 2023:** Rocks were thrown at an Israeli vehicle near al-Aroub (northeast of Hebron). No casualties were reported; the vehicle was damaged.
- ◆ **July 29, 2023:** Rocks were thrown at an Israeli vehicle near the settlement of Kfar Tapuah (near Ariel). No casualties were reported; the vehicle was damaged.
- ◆ **July 27, 2023:** Rocks were thrown at an Israeli vehicle near al-Aroub (northeast of Hebron). No casualties were reported; the vehicle was damaged.
- ◆ **July 26, 2023:** Molotov cocktails were thrown near the settlement of Karmeit Tzur (north of Hebron). No casualties or damage were reported.
- ◆ **July 25, 2023:** Rocks were thrown at an Israeli vehicle in Hawwara (south of Nablus). No casualties were reported; the vehicle was damaged.
- ◆ **July 25, 2023:** Rocks were thrown at an Israeli vehicle in Teqoa (southeast of Bethlehem). No casualties or damage were reported.

¹² Information and pictures from Rescue Without Borders in Judea and Samaria unless otherwise noted.