



# Spotlight on Terrorism and the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict

(August 23 –29, 2023)

## Overview

► This past week there was one shooting attack, it was carried out at the settlement of Havat Dorot, east of Qalqilya; no casualties were reported. On August 25, 2023, before the Friday prayer at al-Aqsa Mosque, Palestinians rioted and clashed with Israeli police forces; several policemen and Palestinians were injured. Israeli security forces continued counterterrorism activities, detaining Palestinians suspected of terrorist activities and confiscating weapons and propaganda material. The pursuit of the terrorist who shot and killed a father and son in Hawwara continues. Hamas' military-terrorist wing issued a notice implying it was behind the attack. Senior Hamas figures called it a "challenge" to Israel.

► Palestinians made three attempts to cross the border security fence from the Gaza Strip into Israeli territory. Two rockets were launched towards the sea, what the Palestinian organizations called experiments to "improve rocket capabilities." On Friday August 25, 2023, "popular activities" were organized in the Gaza Strip in support of Judea, Samaria and Jerusalem and the "resistance" [Palestinian terrorism]. A demonstration was held in the east of Gaza City where demonstrators approached the security fence and clashed with IDF forces.

► The decision made by Israel's Political-Security Cabinet to target terrorists and their dispatchers raised concern among the Palestinians, who feared Israel would reinstate the policy of targeted killings. That led senior terrorist operatives in the Gaza Strip and Lebanon to take security and precautionary measures. **Saleh al-'Arouri, deputy chairman of Hamas' political bureau and responsible for Hamas activity in Judea and Samaria**, was interviewed twice by the media. On both occasions he claimed Israel's threats did not deter them, and that any targeted killing would prompt a "severe response." The Israeli prime minister responded and was threatened by Hamas. The organization's military-terrorist wing held a conference of university lecturers in the Gaza Strip for "resistance education" to promote the culture of "resistance" [anti-Israel terrorism] among university students.

► Political and religious figures in the Palestinian Authority (PA) forbade the residents of East Jerusalem to vote in Jerusalem's mayoral elections. Condemnations were issued in response

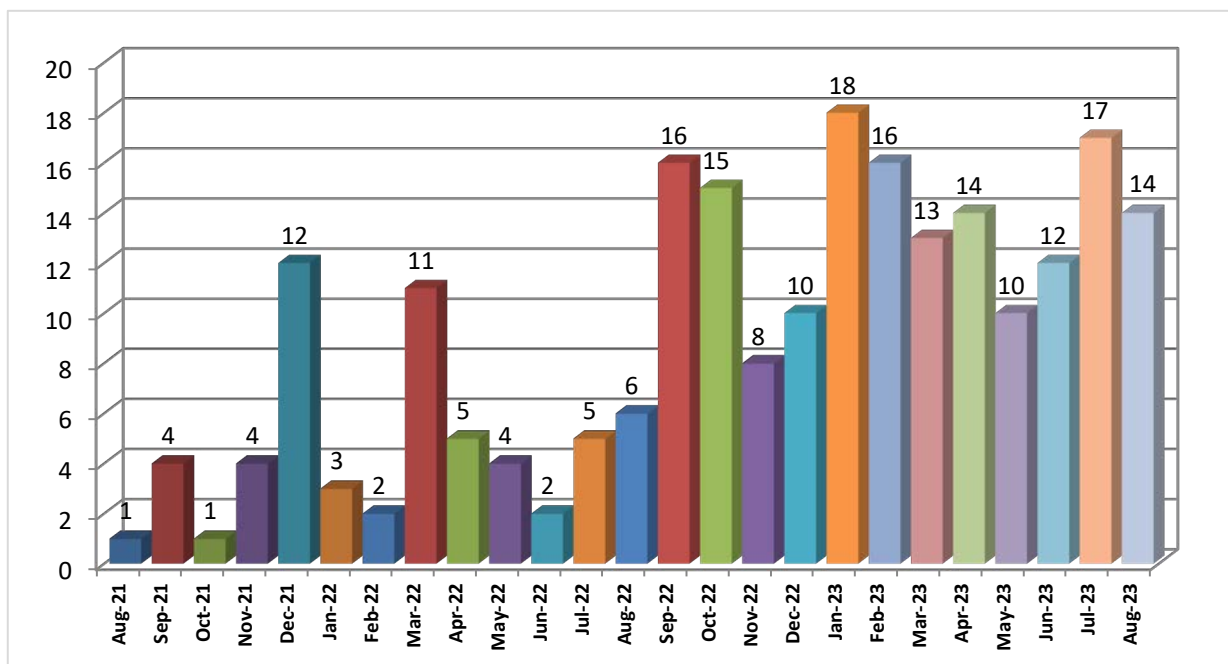
to the statement made by Israel's minister of national security and the five-year plan proposed for developing Jerusalem, including east Jerusalem.

## Judea and Samaria

### Terrorist attack

► On August 23, 2023, a masked man shot at an Israeli citizen in the settlement of Havat Dorot Illit (east of Qalqilya); no casualties were reported. The IDF instituted a search for the shooter (Israeli media, August 23, 2023).

### Critical Terrorist Attacks in Judea and Samaria since November 2020<sup>1</sup>



### Terrorist attacks prevented

► **August 28, 2023:** In the areas surrounding Jerusalem, Border Guard fighters caught three Palestinians trying to enter Jerusalem; they did not have permits to enter Israeli territory. One of them, a 32 year-old resident of Bethlehem, was armed with a knife (Israel Police Force spokesman's unit, August 28, 2023)

<sup>1</sup> 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.



**Right: The suspect detained. Left: The knife found in the suspect's possession (Israel Police Force spokesman's unit, August 28, 2023)**

►IDF forces who operating near Ya'bad (west of Jenin) shot at Palestinians who threw explosives from a moving vehicle at a nearby IDF post. Several wounded Palestinians were detained and their vehicle was confiscated (IDF spokesman's Twitter account, August 28, 2023).

►**August 25, 2023:** Israeli security forces detained a young man at the entrance to David Street in East Jerusalem who did not obey their calls to halt, arousing their suspicions. He was a 28 year-old Israeli Arab from the northern part of the country and during a security examination was found to be carrying a knife (Israel Police Force spokesman's unit, August 25, 2023).



**The knife carried by the young man (IDF spokesman's Twitter account, August 25, 2023)**

## Counterterrorism Activities

►This past week the Israeli security forces continued intensive counterterrorism activities in Judea and Samaria, detaining Palestinians suspected of involvement in terrorism and confiscating large quantities of weapons and propaganda material:

►On **August 29, 2023**, Israeli security forces operated to detain wanted Palestinians in Judea and Samaria, seizing a large quantity of weapons. Palestinians rioted in several locations (Israel Police Force spokesman's unit, August 29, 2023).



**Right: Weapons seized during the operation. Left: Weapons seized in Hebron (IDF spokesman's Twitter account, August 29, 2023)**

►On the night of **August 26, 2023**, Israeli security forces operating in the village of Dan (northwest of Jenin) detained two wanted Palestinians and seized Molotov cocktails ready for throwing. During the activity armed Palestinians shot at the forces and threw an IED at them; they responded with live fire (IDF spokesman's Twitter account, August 26, 2023).

►On **August 24, 2023**, Israeli security forces operating al-Fawwar (southwest of Hebron) seized weapons. During the activity explosives were thrown at the forces. In Hebron the forces detained a wanted Palestinian, and located and confiscated propaganda material (IDF spokesman's Twitter account, August 24, 2023).



**Right: Some of the weapons seized in al-Fawwar. Left: Propaganda material seized in Hebron (IDF spokesman's Twitter account, August 24, 2023)**

►On the night of **August 23, 2023**, Israeli security forces operated in Hebron to map the houses of the two terrorists who shot and killed an Israeli woman on August 21, 2023. During the activity Palestinians threw rocks and Molotov cocktails, and shot fireworks at the forces (IDF spokesman's Twitter account, August 23, 2023).



Mapping a terrorist's house for demolition (IDF spokesman's Twitter account, August 23, 2023)

## Clashes at the entrance to the Temple Mount

► Before the Friday prayer at al-Aqsa Mosque on August 25, 2023, Palestinians rioted and clashed with police forces. The rioting began after several Palestinians threw rocks and heavy objects at the police who were conducting inspections near the Lions' Gate, through which the worshipers entered for prayer. The police responded with riot control measures. One policeman was wounded, and fearing for his life, fired into the air. Three police officers were injured and a resident of east Jerusalem was detained (Israeli media, August 25, 2023).

► Palestinian sources reported that riots broke out after Israeli security forces [allegedly] attacked worshipers at the Gate of the Tribes<sup>2</sup> before the Friday prayers. Eight Palestinians were injured by stun grenades and rubber bullets. According to reports three police officers were injured during the clashes (Shehab, Wafa, August 25, 2023).



The clashes near the Lions' Gate (al-Qastel Twitter account website, August 25, 2023)

► **Rawhi Fatouh, chairman of the Palestinian National Council**, strongly condemned the activity of the Israeli security forces, calling it an "aggressive fascist terrorist act" which violated freedom of worship. He claimed the "fascist right-wing occupation government" was responsible for igniting the region, adding that acts of aggression against the worshipers were

<sup>2</sup> The Gate of the Tribes is located at the northeastern end of the Temple Mount, near the Lions' Gate.



a provocation for millions of Muslims and "added fuel to the fire" (Wafa, August 25, 2023).

**Muhammad Hamada, Hamas spokesman for Jerusalem**, said that the act of aggression against the worshipers at the Gate of the Tribes was serious and showed Israel's "cruelty, Nazism and aggression" against Muslim places of worship and worshippers. He threatened the Palestinians would make Israel pay the price and teach it a lesson (Shehab, August 25, 2023).

## **Pursuit of the terrorist who carried out the shooting attack in Hawwara**

►After several days of intense activity in the town of Aqraba (near Nablus) to apprehend the terrorist who shot and killed a father and son at a car wash in Hawwara, the Palestinian media reported the Israeli security forces had identified the shooter as **Usama al-Haj Issa Bani Fadhal**, 20 years old, and had mapped his father's house in preparation for its demolition. According to his father, Issa Bani Fadhal, he was told his son had carried out the shooting and had three days to surrender, otherwise he would be killed. His brother Muhammad said Usama was studying mechanical engineering at al-Najah University and had not been detained previously by Israel or the PA (Shehab, August 24, 2023; Ultra Palestine website, August 24, 2023). The Palestinian social media represented Usama Bani Fadhal as an operative of Hamas' military-terrorist wing (@Qadoomeagain Twitter account, August 26, 2023; Adnan Hamarsheh's Twitter account, August 26, 2023).

## **Hamas' military-terrorist wing claims responsibility for the attack in Hawwara**

►On August 26, 2023, a week after the attack, Hamas' military-terrorist wing in Judea and Samaria issued a notice implying it was behind the shooting in Hawwara. The notice had two pictures, one of the bodies of brothers Hillel and Gal Yaniv, who were shot to death in their vehicle in Hawwara in February 2023, and the other of the bodies of father and son Shay Nigreker and Aviad Nir, who were shot to death on August 19, 2023. Under the photos and the dates of the murders, the Arabic caption reads, "Our jihad continues and our attacks will not stop" (Telegram channel of the Izz al-Din Qassam Brigades in Judea and Samaria, August 26, 2023).



**The Hamas notice for the two terrorist attacks in Hawwara (Telegram channel of the Izz al-Din Qassam Brigades in Judea and Samaria, August 26, 2023)**

► **Hamis spokesman Hazem Qassem** said Hamas had ramped up its challenge to "the Zionist enemy" and claimed no threats from Israel would stop the "resistance," which had increased its presence and whose achievements and ability to inflict casualties on IDF forces were stronger. He claimed the Izz al-Din Qassam Brigades were operating at the heart of the campaign in Judea and Samaria, "as they have always been," and were in a state of continuous "struggle" (Filastin al-A'an, August 26, 2023).

► **Isma'il Radwan, a senior Hamas figure**, boasted that after Israel's threats, claiming responsibility for the attack in Hawwara was a Hamas challenge. He promised that Israel's future would be darker (Radio Sawt al-Aqsa Twitter account, August 26, 2023). Relating to the attacks and recent developments in Judea and Samaria, **Isma'il Haniyeh, head of Hamas' political bureau**, claimed Hamas would expand the area of its activity against "the leadership of the Zionist entity," helping to enlarge and escalate the conflict (Shehab, August 22, 2023)

### **A Palestinian wounded in the IDF activity in Jenin in early July died of his wounds**

► The death of Izz al-Din Mahmoud Kanaan, 20 years old, from the town of Jabba (south of Jenin) was reported; he died from injuries incurred during the IDF activity in Jenin in early July, 2023 (Wafa, August 25, 2023). The al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades (AAMB) claimed him as an operative (AAMB Telegram channel, August 25, 2023). According to reports he also belonged to a network in Jabba calling itself al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades, the Shaheed Amjad al-Fakhouri Squads (Shaheed Amjad al-Fakhouri Squads Telegram channel, August 25, 2023). The Fatah movement also claimed him as an operative (Fatah's media information and cultural commission Telegram channel, August 25, 2023). His body was wrapped for burial in an AAMB

flag and his weapon was placed next to it (@jaba\_almqwme Telegram channel, August 26, 2023)



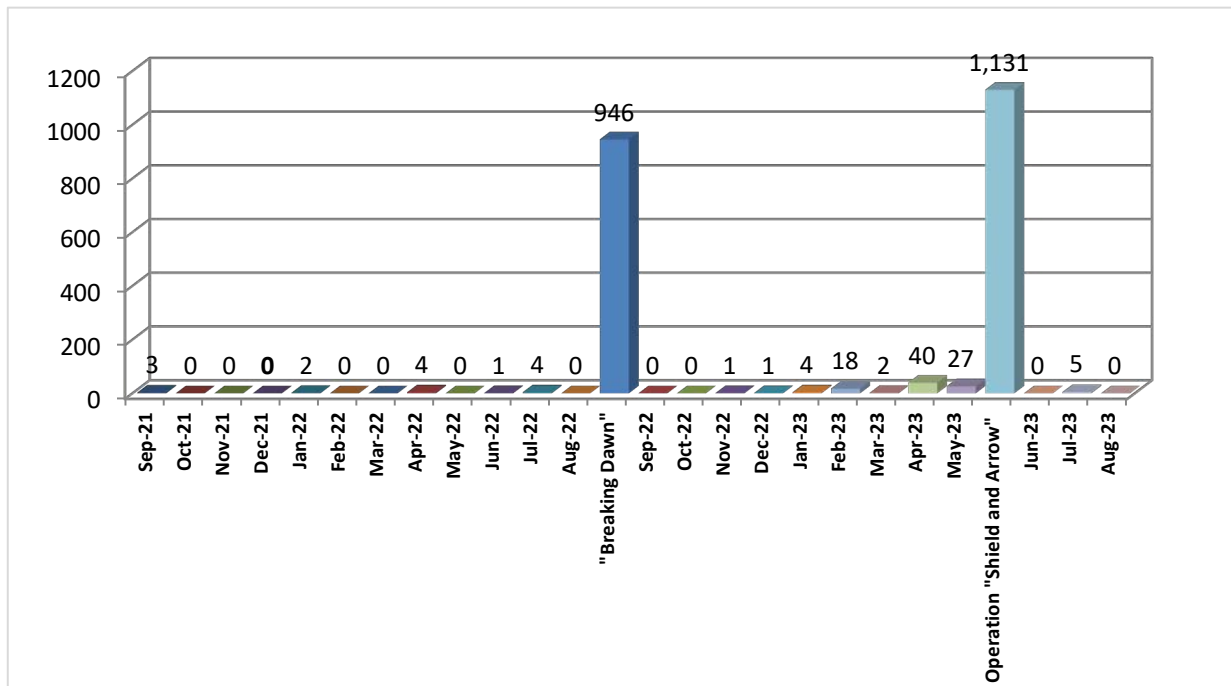
Right: Mourning notice issued by the AAMB (AAMB Telegram channel, August 25, 2023). Left: Mourning notice issued by the Shaheed Amjad al-Fakhouri Squads (Shaheed Amjad al-Fakhouri Squads Telegram channel, August 25, 2023)

## Israel's South

### Rocket and mortar shell fire into Israel

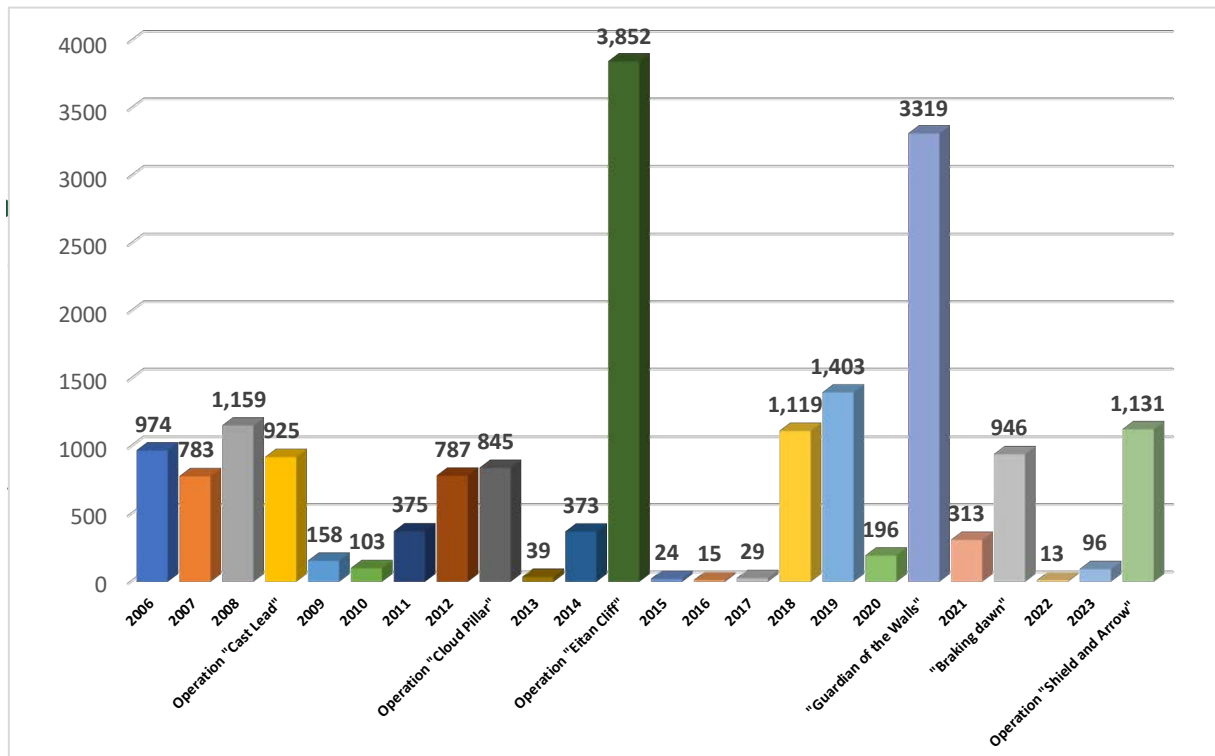
► This past week no rocket or mortar shell hits were identified in Israeli territory.

### Monthly Distribution of Rocket and Mortar Shell Fire since September 2021





## Annual Distribution of Rocket Hits since 2006



### Hamas fires rockets towards the sea

► On the morning of August 27, 2023, two rockets were fired towards the sea from the central Gaza Strip, part of what the terrorist organizations call "improving the "resistance's' military and rocket capabilities" (Shehab, August 27, 2023). According to other websites, one rocket was fired (Palestine Online, August 27, 2023; al-Mayadeen TV website, August 27, 2023).



Firing a rocket (New Press Twitter account, August 27, 2023).

## Attempts to cross the border security fence

► This past week IDF surveillance detected several attempts by Palestinians to cross the security fence from the Gaza Strip into Israeli territory (IDF spokesman's Twitter account):

On the morning of August 28, 2023, a man was identified trying to cross the border security fence in the northern Gaza Strip. IDF forces detained him and he was taken for questioning.

On August 25, 2023, two Palestinians were identified trying to cross the fence in the southern Gaza Strip. IDF forces detained the two, who were not armed, and they were taken for further investigation. A search of the area revealed two grenades which had apparently been brought by the Palestinians.

On August 23, 2023, IDF forces identified a Palestinian trying to cross the fence in the northern Gaza Strip. He was detained and found to be unarmed. He was taken for further investigation.

## Clashes in the eastern part of Gaza City

► On Friday, August 25, 2023, the Palestinian organizations organized demonstrations and riots ("popular activities") in the various districts in the Gaza Strip and near the border security fence, allegedly in support of Judea, Samaria, Jerusalem and the "resistance" against Israel and the settlers. A demonstration was organized in the Malka return camp in the eastern part of Gaza City. Demonstrators who approached the security fence clashed with IDF forces. Three Palestinians were reportedly injured by tear gas. According to reports, for the second time this past week, the Palestinians detonated a powerful IED near the security fence in the eastern part of Gaza City (Shehab, August 25, 2023; @tawra8001 Twitter account, August 25, 2023; Filastin al-A'an, August 25, 2023).



**Right: Rioting near the security fence (Shehab Telegram channel, August 25, 2023).**

**Left: Pictures from a video documenting the explosion of the IED (@tawra8001 Twitter account, August 25, 2023)**

## Israel freezes the work permit quota

►The Israeli Kan 11 TV channel announced that given Hamas' involvement in terrorist attacks in Judea and Samaria and the recent events near the security fence, Israel decided to freeze the quota of permits for workers from the Gaza Strip and not raise it from 18,000 to 20,000. **Sami al-Amsi, chairman of the workers' unions in the Gaza Strip**, claimed Israel was trading in the Gazans' suffering. He claimed Israel had not announced its intention to increase the quota, which was revealed only when it announced freezing it. He also claimed that Israel's statements about alleviating the workers' suffering were intended for media purposes only, and since the rise of Netanyahu's "extreme right-wing government" the residents of the Gaza Strip had experienced increased distress and suffering (website of the General Workers' Union in the Gaza Strip, August 28, 2023).

## Developments in the Gaza Strip

### An explosion at a Hamas military-terrorist post

►On August 24, 2023, an explosion occurred at the Hamas military-terrorist wing al-Tal post in Deir al-Balah in the central Gaza Strip. According to several reports, two operatives of the military wing were killed in the explosion. They were Ashraf Hussein, from Deir al-Balah and Ali al-Dara from the al-Bureij refugee camp (Amad, August 24, 2023; Roya TV news site, August 24, 2023). **Iyad al-Buzum, spokesman for the ministry of the interior in Gaza**, reported one person had been killed and another seriously injured in an explosion inside a "resistance" post in the central Gaza Strip (ministry of the interior in the Gaza Strip website, August 24, 2023). The Izz al-Din Qassam Brigades announced the death of its operative Ashraf Abd al-Karim Hussein, 35 years old, from Deir al-Balah (Izz al-Din Qassam Brigades website, August 24, 2023).



Right: Smoke rises from the al-Tal post (Telegram channel of Safinaz al-Loh's, reporter for the Amad website, August 24, 2023). Left: Ashraf Hussein (Izz al-Din Qassam Brigades website, August 24, 2023)

## Conversations with an advisor to the Iranian leader

► **Ali Akbar Velayati**, advisor to the Iranian leader for international affairs, spoke on the phone with **Ziyad al-Nakhlah**, secretary general of the **Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ)**. Al-Nakhlah assured him that Israel's threats did not deter the Palestinians and that "the resistance will exercise its natural, legal [sic] right to fight and respond to any aggression." Velayati emphasized Iran's support for the Palestinian people and their "resistance" [terrorist attacks] (PIJ Telegram channel, August 25, 2023).

► Earlier, Velayati spoke on the phone with **Isma'il Haniyeh**, head of **Hamas' political bureau**, praising the "resistance of the Palestinian people, especially in the West Bank." Velayati emphasized that Iran would continue supporting the Palestinian "resistance." Haniyeh thanked him for calling and noted they would continue to face Israel and its "aggression" (Shehab, August 25, 2023).

## Reactions to the Israeli Cabinet's anti-terrorist decision

► On August 22, 2023, Israel's Security-Political Cabinet announced its decision to take a series of measures to attack terrorists and their dispatchers, and had authorized the prime minister and the defense minister to act accordingly. The statement caused concern among the Palestinians, who feared Israel would in fact initiate the measures, including targeted killings, especially against Hamas (Shehab, August 23, 2023). According to reports, the "resistance" leadership [the heads of the terrorist organizations] took Israel's threats seriously and senior "resistance" leaders in the Gaza Strip and Lebanon had taken "unprecedented" security measures, and the organizations in the Gaza Strip had abandoned their posts. It was also reported that the "resistance" monitored various types of Israeli UAVs in the skies above the

Gaza Strip, most of whose activity is gathering information and "updating the target bank" (al-Araby al-Jadeed, August 23, 2023).

►Senior Hamas and PIJ figures also noted that they took the threat seriously:

◆**Mahmoud al-Zahar, a member of Hamas' political bureau**, threatened that in the event of a military strike on the Gaza Strip, Hamas would respond by attacking Tel Aviv. Regarding Israeli threats to attack leaders of the movement abroad, al-Zahar claimed Israel would not do so at the present time because it knew reactions would come from the Gaza Strip (Arab World Press news agency, August 23, 2023).

◆**Hamas spokesman Hazem Qassem** threatened that if Israel carried out the "stupid act" of assassinating Palestinian leaders, inside or outside Gaza, there would be an "unprecedented, unexpected" response. He claimed that in light of Hamas's serious approach to threats, the "authorized authorities" were taking precautionary measures, which, according to him, did not affect daily life (Shehab, August 23, 2023).

◆**Ahmed al-Mudallal, a member of the PIJ's Executive Committee**, claimed Israel's threats of aggression against Gaza and the assassination of "resistance" leaders reflected the helplessness and confusion of Netanyahu and his "extremist" government due to their inability to stop "the escalation [of terrorism] in Judea and Samaria" (Paltoday website , August 25, 2023).

◆**Walid al-Qutati, a member of PIJ's political bureau**, said they took Israel's threats very seriously, and that all scenarios had been taken into account. He added it was necessary to be wary of repeating scenarios of targeted assassinations inside and outside "Palestine" (Paltoday, August 24, 2023).

◆**Ahsan Ataya, a member of the PIJ's political bureau**, said a targeted assassination would be met with a harsh response, claiming the PIJ was prepared for every military response, including attacking the heart of Israel (Arab World Press news agency, August 25, 2023).

►**Said Zidani, a lecturer in political science at al-Quds University**, said that because Israel considered Hamas directly responsible for planning and financing the attacks against it, Israel was moving towards renewing targeted killings (Samad, August 23, 2023). **Adel Yassin, a Palestinian political commentator**, claimed Israel might want a military action or a return to targeted killings, but was aware of the consequences and costs involved. In his assessment, the Netanyahu government had a limited number of options, and it was not impossible that



there would be an attempt to carry out security and military operations as part of the campaign between wars (Shehab, August 23, 2023).

►"Sources" in the Palestinian organizations reported that messages had been sent to the mediators stating that any aggression or assassinations by Israel would have a harsh response (al-Araby al-Jadeed, August 24, 2023). The Hezbollah-affiliated al-Akhbar reported Egypt was in contact with both the Palestinian organizations and Israel to prevent a military confrontation (al-Akhbar, August 26, 2023).

### **Statements by Saleh al-'Arouri**

►This past week **Saleh al-'Arouri, deputy chairman of Hamas' political bureau and responsible for activity in Judea and Samaria**, was interviewed by both Hamas' al-Aqsa TV and the Hezbollah-affiliated al-Mayadeen TV.

►Interviewed by al-Aqsa TV, he claimed that "the resistance has been going on since the beginning of Zionist colonization of our country," and they believed the final result would be a victory for the Palestinian people, how had never discussed the possibility of surrender and would not surrender. He also claimed they were not deterred by Israel's threats of targeted killings, and reiterated that the Palestinian people were united "in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, inside [sic] and in the dispersal." He also emphasized that the Palestinian people were always able to surprise Israel, and one of the surprises was the escalation of the "resistance" in Judea and Samaria (al-Aqsa, August 24, 2023).

►Interviewed by al-Mayadeen, he stated they were preparing for a comprehensive war and were discussing the issue behind closed doors with all the relevant, involved parties [the other terrorist organizations, Hezbollah and Iran]. He also claimed that if it came to a comprehensive confrontation, Israel would have a defeat unprecedented in its history. Anyone, he said, who thought about targeted killings knew it could lead to a regional war. He also claimed the "equation" in Judea and Samaria had changed and boasted the "resistance" could close Israel's air and maritime space and shut down its electricity and economy (al-Mayadeen TV, August 25, 2023).



**A sign at the al-Saraya intersection in the center of Gaza City with a quote from one of Saleh al-'Arouri's interviews: "In the face of the Zionist occupation and its fascist government, we are all in one organization called the Palestinian people" (Telegram channel of journalist Anas al-Sharif, August 26, 2023)**

- ▶ In response to al-Arouri's interviews, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said al-Arouri knew perfectly well why he and his friends were in hiding, and that anyone who financed, organized, or used terrorism against Israel would pay the price (Benyamin Netanyahu's Facebook page, Israeli media , August 27, 2023).
- ▶ In response what Hamas considered were threats from the Israeli prime minister to eliminate Saleh al-'Arouri and other "resistance" leaders, Hamas said the threats were empty and would not succeed in weakening the "resistance." Hamas added that Saleh al-'Arouri and all his "brothers" and Palestinians stood firm and would resolutely continue to resist the "occupation" until all the legitimate rights of the Palestinians had been restored, first of all the "liberation" of Jerusalem and al-Aqsa Mosque. Hamas emphasized that the "Zionist enemy," confused by the blows inflicted by the "resistance," had to be aware that any harm to the "resistance" leadership would be answered firmly and with force (Hamas website, August 27, 2023). At the same time, a photo of Saleh al-Arouri was published in the Hamas media, sitting in his office (possibly in Beirut), smiling, wearing a uniform and talking on the phone with a loaded M-16 on his desk. It was clearly intended to convey the message that despite the threats against him, he continued his daily routine, which included directing Hamas' terrorist activities in Judea and Samaria.



**Saleh al-'Arouri in his office (Shehab, August 27, 2023)**

►After the publication of the photo, **Mustafa all-Sawaf, a Hamas operative and political commentator**, wrote that al-'Arouri was challenging Netanyahu. Israel, he wrote, had to understand it was playing with fire and its threats would not deter the "resistance" led by al-'Arouri and [Muhammad] Deif,<sup>3</sup> nor scare any operatives, regardless of their organizational level (Shehab, August 27, 2023).

►**Khader Habib, a senior PIJ figure**, said he knew Saleh al-'Arouri well enough to know such threats would only increase his determination to escalate the "resistance" attacks against Israel (alresala.net, August 27, 2023).

►The Hezbollah-affiliated al-Akhbar reported that according to "sources in the Palestinian organizations," all the "resistance" factions [terrorist organizations] took Israel's threats to the "resistance" leadership very seriously, in particular Saleh al-'Arouri, who was in Lebanon, and had several scenarios for dealing with the Israeli government's intentions. According to the "sources," the initial response might be similar to that of Ramadan, firing rockets from many fronts,<sup>4</sup> but on a larger scale. The sources stated that the "Palestinian resistance" was in contact with the "axis of the resistance" [i.e., Hezbollah and Iran]. They had, according to the sources clear scenarios for dealing with any Israeli measure, especially if Israel attempted to kill al-'Arouri on Lebanese soil, since the commitment of **Hassan Nasrallah, Hezbollah secretary general**, regarding the killing of any important Lebanese or Palestinian on Lebanese soil was still alive and well (al-Akhbar, Lebanon, August 28, 2023).

►**Hassan Nasrallah** also related to the issue in a speech he delivered on August 28, 2023. He said Hezbollah would not remain silent about assassinations carried out by Israel on Lebanese

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<sup>3</sup> Commander of the Izz al-Din Qassam Brigades, Hamas' military-terrorist wing.

<sup>4</sup> Referring to the dozens of rockets launched at Israel during the Passover Seder and in the following days from the Gaza Strip (April 5 and the night of April 6, 2023), from south Lebanon (April 6, 2023) and from southern Syria (April 8, 2023).

soil against Lebanese, Palestinians, Iranians, Syrians or any other person and there would be severe repercussions. They would not, he said, allow Lebanon to become an arena for assassinations and Israel had to know the "equations" established in 2006 [the Second Lebanon War] could not be changed. He also claimed that contrary to the Israeli government's description of the escalation of the "resistance" in Judea and Samaria and Israel's resulting helplessness as an Iranian plot, in practice it was purely "a Palestinian desire" (al-Mayadeen, August 28, 2023)

## The Izz al-Din Qassam Brigades act to strengthen the "culture of resistance"

►On August 24, 2023, the Izz al-Din Qassam Brigades, Hamas' military-terrorist wing, held a conference in one of its posts about "resistance education." According to the organizers, it was held to promote the culture of "resistance" among university students and to establish a new generation which would assume the mantle of "liberating the lands." More than 300 lecturers from universities in the Gaza Strip participated. There was a review of "scientific" articles which offered proposals and recommendations for ways to increase the spirit of "resistance" and introduce the culture of "resistance" to students through study programs and extracurricular activities which would help make the university environment supportive of the "resistance" (Safa, August 26, 2023).

►Before the conference, participants became acquainted with the operations of the "resistance" by meeting with military-terrorist wing operatives, who reviewed their activities and weapons. They also visited observation posts and looked towards the territory of Israel (Safa, August 26, 2023).

►The conference opened with a speech delivered by a representative of the military wing's home front. He described their hope that the Palestinian universities would support the path of "resistance" with "academic" curriculums. He said university students had the educational foundation to bring awareness and knowledge to their social environment, and they could show the masses the importance of the "resistance" as the option for the restoration of the "occupied land." **Ayman Nofal, a member of Hamas' Military Council and commander of the Central Gaza Brigade**, spoke on behalf of the military wing and presented the vision of the "resistance" in the fight against the "occupation" and the rules of confrontation after Operation Guardian of the Walls. He emphasized that throughout modern history the universities had been a hothouse for revolutionaries in every national liberation movement.

**Jamilla al-Shanti, a member of Hamas' political bureau**, presented the vision of the movement's university department as it related to strengthening the "resistance" culture by means of the university faculties (Safa, August 26, 2023).



The conference to promote the culture of "resistance" (Safa, August 26, 2023)

## The Palestinian Authority (PA)

### Fatah's Revolutionary Council

► On August 24, 2023, after a delay of eight months, the 11th session of Fatah's Revolutionary Council was held in the Muqata'a in Ramallah. It was opened by PA chairman Mahmoud Abbas, who gave a speech in which he related to the latest political developments in the Palestinian issue and the efforts invested in the regional and international arenas. He said they would not allow Israel to carry out its annexation and expansion plans, enforce an apartheid regime and drag the area into escalation. He praised the "peaceful popular resistance" [popular terrorism] and claimed it was achieving its objectives, but efforts still had to be made to reveal the "true face of the occupation" to the world (Wafa, August 24, 2023). He proposed holding the 8th General Fatah Convention in Ramallah between December 17 and 23, 2023; the proposal was accepted (Wafa, August 24, 2023).

### Ban on participation in the municipal elections in Jerusalem

► In its summary statement, the PLO's Revolutionary Council stated Jerusalem was the heart of the Palestinian national project. It emphasized the continuation of the overall "popular resistance" [popular terrorism] in Jerusalem, and claimed the elections to the Jerusalem municipality should be denounced and boycotted, in terms of both voting and presenting candidates (Wafa, 26 August 2023).

► **Sheikh Ikrima Sabri, a preacher at al-Aqsa Mosque**, claimed in his Friday sermon that since 1967 the Supreme Islamic Committee in Jerusalem had published fatwas signed by many religious scholars which spoke of not recognizing the legitimacy of the Israeli occupation of



Jerusalem and all Palestinian territories, and therefore from a religious point of view it was forbidden to participate in the Jerusalem municipality elections (al-Ayam, August 19, 2023). A similar position was presented at a meeting of the religious sources of authority of Jerusalem, held at the PLO headquarters in Ramallah on August 7, 2023, chaired by **Adnan al-Husseini, member of PLO Executive Committee and head of its Jerusalem department** (Wafa, August 7, 2023).

## Hussein al-Sheikh holds meetings in Jordan

► **Hussein al-Sheikh, secretary of the PLO's Executive Committee**, met in Amman with **Naif bin Bandar al-Sudairi, Saudi Arabia's ambassador to Jordan** and non-resident ambassador-designate to the PA. The meeting was also attended by **Majed Faraj, the head of general intelligence, and Majdi al-Khalidi, diplomatic advisor to Mahmoud Abbas**. They discussed Saudi Arabia-"Palestine" relations and bilateral cooperation (Hussein al-Sheikh's Twitter account, August 27, 2023).



**Al-Sheikh, Majed Faraj and al-Khalidi meet with the Saudi Arabian ambassador to Jordan (Hussein al-Sheikh's Twitter account, August 27, 2023)**

► The delegation, led by al-Sheikh, also met with **Barbara Leaf, United States assistant secretary of state for Near Eastern affairs**. They discussed the latest political developments, bilateral relations and regional developments. **Yael Lampert, the American ambassador to Jordan**, also participated (Hussein al-Sheikh's Twitter account, August 27, 2023).

## The PA successfully averts a lawsuit against it in the United States

► **Shukri Bishara, PA finance minister**, announced a new achievement in the lawsuits filed against the PA and the PLO in the United States, the rejection of the Levine suit. He said the lawsuit was filed in the United States courts in 2021, when the plaintiffs, victims of terrorism, demanded compensation of a billion dollars, claiming the PA and the PLO were for the attack

in Jerusalem in 2014.<sup>5</sup> He said the achievement had been made despite the US government's support for the prosecutors' position. Bishara thanked the team of lawyers defending the PA's position who, he claimed, had succeeded over the past few years in overturning thirty court rulings, and canceling lawsuits against them in the amount of approximately \$4.5 billion (Wafa, August 24, 2023).

### **Condemnations of remarks made by Itamar Ben-Gvir**

►During an interview Itamar Ben-Gvir, the minister of national security, claimed his, his wife's and his children's right to drive on the roads of Judea and Samaria was more important than the Arabs' right of movement (Israeli TV Channel 12, August 23, 2023). His statement was roundly condemned. The PA foreign ministry strongly criticized what it called the "expansion of aggression against the Palestinian people" by the Israeli government and the "open incitement of the Israeli right wing." The ministry demanded the immediate intervention of the UN Security Council in light of the official Israeli attempt "to perpetuate the occupation and legitimize apartheid before the eyes of the world" (Wafa, August 24, 2023).

► Hamas said the statements of "the extreme Zionist minister" joined a series of other racist statements by the Israeli government, including the statement of Minister Smotrich, who called for the town of Hawwara to be erased from the map. According to Hamas, they were all a continuation of "the campaign of ethnic cleansing that the Palestinians have been subjected to since 1948 at the hands of the Zionist gangs and settlers supported by the fascist Zionist occupation authorities." Hamas called on the international community, which also condemned the statements, to translate them into practical steps by prosecuting Israel's leaders and "the settlers" (Hamas website, August 25, 2023).

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<sup>5</sup> It was a civil suit against the PLO and the PA filed by relatives of the Americans murdered in the combined shooting and stabbing attack in a synagogue in the Har Nof neighborhood of Jerusalem on November 18, 2014. <https://www.courthousenews.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/Palentine-Lawsuit.pdf>



Cartoons by Muhammad Sabaana in reaction to the statements of Itamar Ben-Gvir (Muhammad Sabaana's Twitter account, August 25, 2023)

## Reactions to the five-year plan for Jerusalem

- ▶ On August 20, 2023, the Israeli government approved the new five-year plan for east Jerusalem in the amount of about \$605 million for the years 2024 to 2028. About \$210 million will be allocated to education, with an emphasis on the integration of the Israeli curriculum in east Jerusalem. The plan also includes investments in infrastructure, encouraging employment, welfare and the quality of the environment. For the first time, it also included a commitment to approve the construction of 2,000 dwelling units for Palestinian residents each year. Funding was also allocated to increase the number of police officers and municipal inspectors, add security cameras and establish additional police stations in the eastern part of the city (Calcalist, August 20, 2023; Haaretz, August 20, 2023).
- ▶ The plan provoked harsh reactions and condemnations from the Palestinians, despite the allocation of resources to Palestinian residents:
- ▶ The **PA foreign ministry strongly** condemned the plan, claiming its objective was to increase the Judaization of Jerusalem and change its character, reduce the natural population growth of the Palestinians, impose the Israeli curriculum on the schools, and strengthen settlements in and around Jerusalem. According to the ministry, the plan has "clear colonial and racist goals" (PA foreign ministry website, August 20, 2023).
- ▶ The **Fatah movement** claimed it was "a faint attempt behind which projects for Judaizing the city are hidden." According to Fatah, they intend to cancel the projects that were decided upon because they were intended to eliminate the Palestinian national identity (Fatah Telegram channel, August 21, 2023).
- ▶ **Hamas** emphasized that approval of the plan was a step towards Judaization by means of which the Israeli government sought to tighten its control over Jerusalem, isolate it from its

Palestinian environment, and rebuild its demography in a way that served Israel's interests ( Hamas website, August 21, 2023). **Muhammad Hamada, Hamas spokesman for Jerusalem affairs**, claimed the plan was intended to make Jerusalem residents emigrate and noted that it would fail, like the rest of Israel's plans (Shehab, August 21, 2023).

►**Sheikh Ikrima Zabri, a preacher at al-Aqsa Mosque**, said the approval of the plan was aimed at Judaizing Jerusalem and taking it over completely. He rejected Israel's claims regarding the development of the eastern part of the city (Shehab, August 24, 2023).

►**Ramdan Tahe, spokesman for the association of parents' committees in Jerusalem**, referring to the program's focus on education said the allocation of a large budget for the education sector was intended to eliminate the Palestinian curriculums in Jerusalem schools and integrate the students into Israeli education, until the entire sector had been Israelized, which was the program's main objective. He claimed the program would prevent students in Jerusalem from studying the Palestinian curriculum, which expressed their identity and their suffering over the years as a result of the "occupation" (Safa, August 24, 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:<sup>6</sup>

- ◆ **August 28, 2023:** Rocks were thrown at an Israeli vehicle in Hawwara (south of Nablus). On August 23, 2023, rocks were thrown at the same site. No casualties were reported; vehicles were damaged.
- ◆ **August 28, 2023:** Rocks were thrown at an Israeli vehicle near Azzun (east of Qalqilya). One Israel was injured. No damage was reported.
- ◆ **August 27, 2023:** Rocks were thrown at an Israeli bus and other vehicles near Nebi Elias (east of Qalqilya). No casualties were reported; vehicles were damaged.
- ◆ **August 23, 2023:** Rocks were thrown at an Israeli vehicle in Luban al-Sharqiya (northeast of Ramallah). No casualties were reported; the vehicle was damaged.
- ◆ **August 23, 2023:** Rocks were thrown at an Israeli bus near Jericho (northeast of Jerusalem). No casualties or damage were reported.
- ◆ **August 23, 2023:** Rocks were thrown at an Israeli vehicle near the settlement of Homesh (northwest of Nablus) No casualties or damage were reported.
- ◆ **August 22, 2023:** Molotov cocktails were thrown at an Israeli vehicle near Ofra (northeast of Ramallah). No casualties or damage were reported.
- ◆ **August 22, 2023:** Rocks were thrown at an Israeli bus near Nebi Elias (east of Qalqilya). No casualties were reported; the bus was damaged.
- ◆ **August 22, 2023:** Rocks were thrown at an Israeli bus near the village of al-Maniya (south of Bethlehem). No casualties were reported; the bus was damaged.
- ◆ **August 22, 2023:** Rocks were thrown at an Israeli vehicle near the Yakir Junction (northwest of Salfit). No casualties were reported; the vehicle was damaged.
- ◆ **August 22, 2023:** Rocks were thrown at an Israeli vehicle near the Jinsafut Junction (west of Nablus). One passenger was hit in the head by a rock. The vehicle was damaged.

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<sup>6</sup> Information and pictures from Rescue Without Borders in Judea and Samaria unless otherwise noted.