



Spotlight on Terrorism and the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict

(March 19-26, 2024)

Overview¹

► **The southern arena:** IDF forces continued operating in the Gaza Strip in three central locations. In Shifa Hospital in Gaza City, several hundred terrorist operatives were detained, including senior Hamas and Islamic Jihad in Palestine (PIJ) terrorist operatives, dozens of terrorists were killed, and large quantities of weapons were found hidden with patients and with medical equipment. In the central Gaza Strip, the forces raided a laboratory for the production of drones. The forces also operated in the Khan Yunis region, west of the city and in the Qarara area. On March 25, 2024, for the first time in two months, eight rockets were fired from the Gaza Strip at the southern coastal of Ashdod; Hamas' military-terrorist wing claimed responsibility for the attack.

► **The issue of the hostages:** Despite Israeli flexibility regarding the Palestinian prisoners and the return of the displaced persons to the northern Gaza Strip, Hamas announced its rejection of the latest United States offer. As a result, Israel announced that the Israeli delegation in Qatar would return to Israel. Hamas and the PIJ claim that so far there have been no "positive responses" from Israel and that Israel's answer does not meet their demands. The UN Security Council has passed a resolution calling for a ceasefire and the unconditional release of all hostages.

► **Aid for the Gaza Strip:** Operations to introduce humanitarian aid into the Gaza Strip continue. The ministry of health in Gaza called on local residents not to go to the western area of Gaza City to allow the rapid movement of aid trucks from the southern Gaza Strip. Aid continues to enter the Gaza Strip through the Rafah crossing.

► **Ramadan:** The prayer of the second Friday of Ramadan on the Temple Mount was relatively quiet. Reportedly, 120 thousand worshipers came to pray.

¹ Click <https://www.terrorism-info.org.il/en> to subscribe and receive the ITIC's daily updates as well as its other publications.

► **Judea and Samaria:** Four terrorist attacks were carried out this past week. An IDF soldier was killed in an attack at the Parsa Junction (west of Ramallah). The security forces carried out counterterrorism activities in Jenin, the Nur Shams refugee camp in Tulkarm and Aqabat Jaber refugee camp near Jericho. A massive weapons smuggling operation from Iran to Judea and Samaria was exposed it was directed by a terrorist from Lebanon.

► **The Palestinian Authority (PA):** PA figures continue their activities to end the war in the Gaza Strip. Mahmoud Abbas again accused Israel of stealing Palestinian water sources and not bringing humanitarian aid to the Gaza Strip. A public opinion poll indicated a strengthening of trust in Hamas in the Gaza Strip.

The Southern Arena

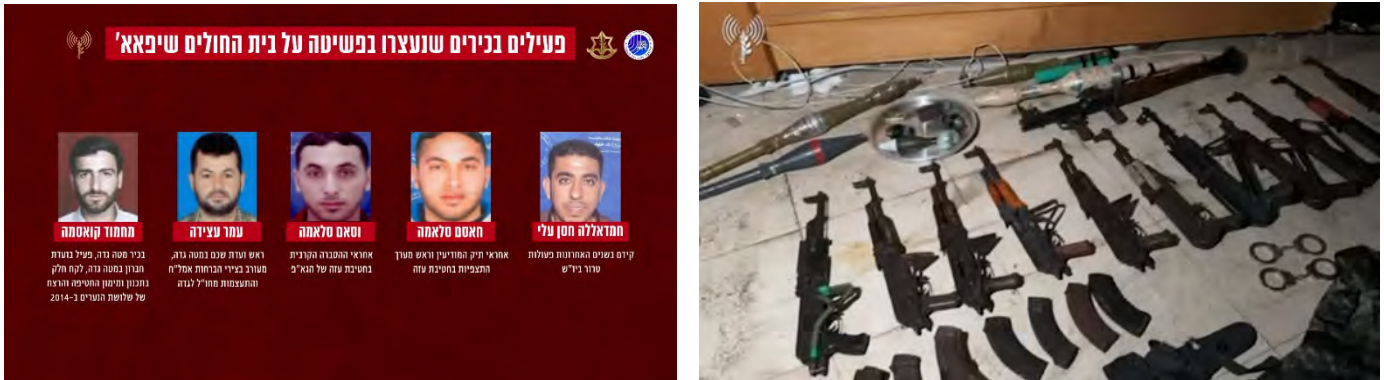
IDF activities in the Gaza Strip

► This past week the IDF forces focused on Shifa hospital in Gaza City and several neighborhoods in Khan Yunis. The Palestinians reported that in **the northern Gaza Strip** the IDF operated in Jebalya and **Gaza City**, where in addition to the activity in the hospital, the IDF attacked nearby neighborhoods. In **the central Gaza Strip** the IDF operated in Deir al-Balah, Mughraqa and Nuseirat. In **the southern Gaza Strip**, in **Khan Yunis**, the forces operated in the Qarara area in the north and Abasan in the east; in Rafah, they attacked throughout the city and near the border with Egypt (Wafa, March 22, 23 and 24, 2024):

► **Shifa Hospital:** IDF forces continued the activity inside the hospital which began on March 18, 2024. The IDF reported over 140 terrorists killed in face-to-face battles, and the detention of about 800 suspects, about 500 of them terrorist operatives. The forces located many weapons hidden in the hospital, including inside the wards and with medical equipment. Approximately \$3 million in shekels, dollars and Jordanian dinars for financing terrorist activity was also seized.

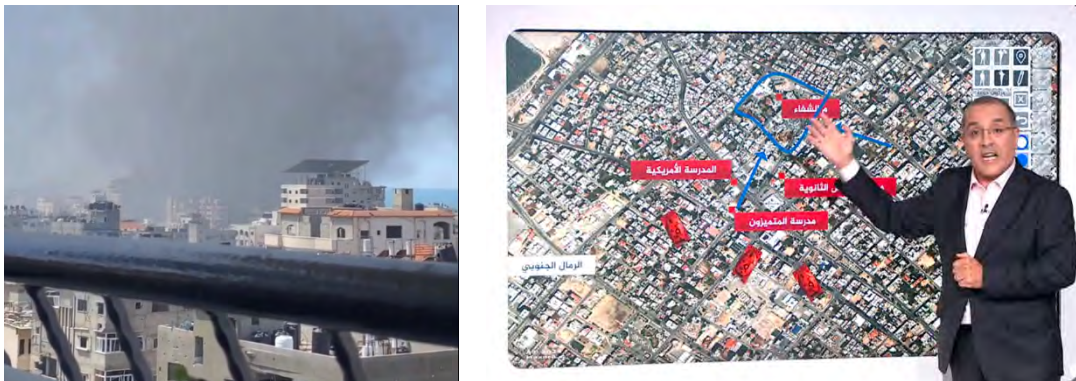
► Among the detainees were several senior Hamas terrorist operatives, including **Izz al-Din Haddad, commander of Hamas' Gaza Brigade of Hamas; Omar Asidah, head of the Nablus Committee**, in charge of Hamas activities in Nablus; **Mahmoud Qawasmeh**, who orchestrated the kidnapping and murder of the three Israeli boys in 2014; and **Hamdallah Hassan Ali**, who promoted terrorist activities in Judea and Samaria in recent years. Senior PIJ terrorist operatives were also detained, among them **Hussam Salameh, in charge of the surveillance**

in the Gaza Brigade, and his brother **Wissam Salameh**, in charge of the PIJ's combat information in Gaza (IDF spokesperson, March 21-25, 2024).



Right: Some of the weapons found in Shifa Hospital (IDF spokesperson, March 20, 2024). Left: Senior terrorist operatives detained (IDF spokesperson, March 21, 2024)

►The PA foreign ministry strongly condemned the activities of the IDF forces in Shifa Hospital, falsely claiming Israel was trying to kill hundreds of Palestinians and burn hundreds of houses in the area of the hospital, thereby putting the medical institutions in the Gaza Strip out of commission. The foreign ministry also claimed it was preparing the ground to displace Gazans, especially from the northern Gaza Strip. The ministry also expressed "outrage" that the international community had become a forum which made statements but did not translate them into actions (PA foreign ministry Telegram channel, March 23, 2024).



Right: An al-Jazeera channel presenter describes the IDF's activity at Shifa Hospital (al-Jazeera's YouTube channel, March 19, 2024). Left: The activity of IDF forces at Shifa Hospital (QudsN X Account, March 20, 2024).

►**The Amal neighborhood in Khan Yunis:** During the night of March 24, 2024, IDF forces began an operation against terrorist facilities in the Amal neighborhood in western Khan Yunis. The operation began with airstrikes which destroyed forty terrorist targets, including military buildings, tunnels and other facilities. The forces surrounded the neighborhood, detained dozens of suspects and allowed the evacuation of residents. The forces located IEDs, weapons

and military equipment (IDF spokesperson, March 24, 2024). The Palestinian media reported that residents evacuated from the west of Khan Yunis towards Rafah (Wafa, March 24, 2024).



Attack on terrorist facilities in Khan Yunis (IDF spokesperson, March 24, 2024)



Local residents evacuate from western Khan Yunis towards Rafah (Wafa, March 24, 2024)

► **The Qarara region:** On March 21, 2024, IDF forces assisted by aircraft and tanks began operating in the Qarara region north of Khan Yunis. They located large quantities of weapons including limpet IEDs, grenades, RPGs and mortar shells hidden in a residence in UNRWA bags. The forces destroyed dozens of terrorist facilities and a missile launch pit, and killed terrorist operatives (IDF website, March 21, 24, 2024). Qarara residents stated that they had been forced to evacuate because of the IDF activity. They said they were surprised by the intensity of the attacks and the extensive damage (Wafa YouTube channel, March 23, 2024).



Right: IDF forces in Qarara (IDF spokesperson, March 21, 2024). Left: Weapons found in one of the houses (IDF spokesperson, March 24, 2024)



Residents evacuate the Qarara region (Wafa YouTube channel, March 23, 2024)

► **The Hamad neighborhood:** IDF forces raided a building in the Hamad neighborhood in northwest Khan Yunis, which had been used by **Ahmed Kullab, deputy commander of a battalion in Hamas' Khan Yunis Brigade**. Terrorist operatives had established themselves in the building; an Israeli Air Force aircraft attacked and killed four of them; large quantities of weapons were found (IDF spokesperson, March 19, 2024). On March 25, 2024, a ten-day operation in the Hamad neighborhood ended. The IDF spokesperson reported that dozens of armed terrorists were killed, about 300 terrorist operatives were detained, dozens of high-rise buildings were searched, and large quantities of weapons were seized (IDF spokesperson, March 25, 2024).



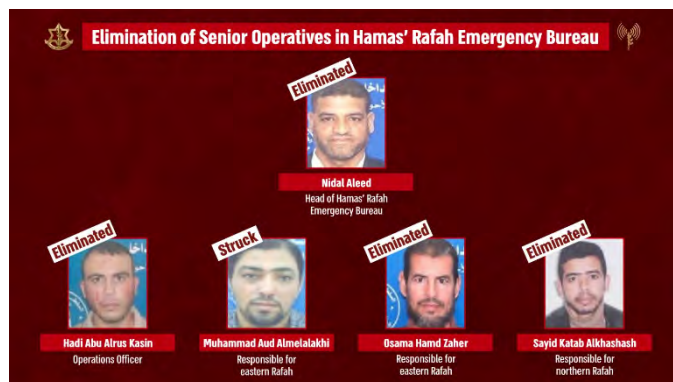
Right: Weapons and documents found in the Hamad neighborhood (IDF spokesperson, March 19, 2024). Left: The Hamad neighborhood after the activity of the IDF forces. Mapping the buildings searched in the neighborhood (IDF spokesperson, March 25, 2024)

► **The central Gaza Strip:** IDF forces located a laboratory for the manufacture of drones for the terrorist organizations in the Gaza Strip (IDF spokesperson, March 24, 2024).



Drones and other weapons found in a laboratory in the central Gaza Strip (IDF website, March 24, 2024)

► **Rafah:** Israeli Air Force aircraft attacked a building in Rafah where the Hamas emergency committees were operating. In the attack, **Sayyid Qutb al-Hashash, Osama Hamed Dahir, and Mohammed Awad al-Malahi, the heads of the emergency committees in northern and eastern Rafah, were killed. Hadi Abu al-Rous, the operations officer of the emergency committees,** was also killed. The five helped Hamas' military wing establish and continue its control and activity in the area (IDF spokesperson, March 20, 2024).



The terrorist operatives killed in Rafah (IDF spokesperson, March 20, 2024)

►The PA foreign ministry reported that Israel had begun to destroy Rafah without officially announcing it. The ministry claimed it was an Israeli escalation which did not consider the lives of the displaced residents in the area, adding that it showed an official disregard for the international demands to protect the residents of the Gaza Strip, according to Anthony Blinken, the United States Secretary of State, who noted the lack of an Israeli plan to protect the residents of Rafah (Dunia al-Watan, March 19, 2024).



Right: An al-Jazeera TV presenter describes the IDF strikes in the Strip (Aljazeera YouTube channel, March 19, 2024). Left: Israeli Air Force strikes in Rafah (Wafa YouTube channel, March 20, 2024)

Rocket fire from the Gaza Strip

►During the past week, the terrorist organizations in the Gaza Strip continued launching rockets at Israel, extending their range to the region of the southern coastal city of Ashdod.

- ◆ On March 21, 2024, a rocket launch was detected from the central Gaza Strip at the Be'eri area; the launch was intercepted. In response, Israeli Air Force warplanes attacked an operational shaft and a military structure (IDF spokesperson, March 22, 2024).
- ◆ On March 25, 2024 at noon, several rockets were launched at Ashdod for the first time in about two months. A total of eight rockets were launched, three intercepted by the

Iron Dome aerial defense system and five falling in open areas. No casualties were reported (Israeli media, March 25, 2024). The Izz al-Din Qassam Brigades, Hamas' military-terrorist wing, claimed responsibility for rocket attack on "occupied Ashdod" in response to Israel's [alleged] harming of civilians (Izz al-Din Qassam Brigades Telegram channel, March 25, 2024). The rockets were launched from an area designated as "humanitarian" in the Deir al-Balah area in the central Gaza Strip, where civilians are located. Israeli Air Force fighter jets attacked and destroyed the launch position from which the attack was carried out, after which secondary explosions were detected, indicating the presence of additional weapons (IDF spokesperson, March 25, 2025).



Rockets from the Gaza Strip launched at Ashdod (Palinfo X account, March 25, 2024)

◆ On the evening of March 25, 2024, a barrage of rockets was reported to have been launched towards the city of Ashkelon. One rocket was reportedly intercepted, with no casualties or additional hits (Israeli media, March 25, 2024). It was the first volley fired at Ashkelon since March 1, 2024. The Jerusalem Brigades, the PIJ's military-terrorist wing, claimed responsibility for "launching a blessed rocket barrage at occupied Ashkelon and the area surrounding Gaza" (Jerusalem Brigades Telegram channel, March 25, 2024) .

► On March 25 at around 11:00 p.m., another barrage of rockets was launched at the cities, towns and villages surrounding Gaza.

The hostages and a ceasefire agreement

► Despite Israel's flexibility regarding the issue of the Palestinian prisoners and the return of local residents to the northern Gaza Strip, Hamas announced its rejection of the latest United States proposal. Israel then announced that its delegation in Qatar would return to Israel. Senior members of Hamas and PIJ noted that on March 19, 2024, Israel had presented its response to the document given by Hamas to the mediators on March 14, and claimed it did not meet Hamas' demands. The reason given was that it did not address the issue of a

permanent ceasefire and the complete withdrawal of IDF forces from the Gaza Strip. Regarding the return of the displaced persons, Israel agreed that they would return little by little and under its supervision, and refused to withdraw from Rashid Street and Saladin Avenue. Hamas and the PIJ claimed Israel's entire intention was to disrupt and sabotage the negotiations.

►During various interviews, **Mahmoud Mardawi, a senior Hamas member**, claimed that if Israel did not meet Hamas' demands the hostages would not be released. As to Israel's reported agreement to the compromise proposed by the Americans regarding the number of prisoners to be released from prison, he claimed Hamas had not received any offer from the United States (al-Jazeera Mubasher YouTube channel, March 21, 2024).

►**Muhammad Nazzal, a member of the Hamas political bureau**, said Israel wanted to decide who would be released in the exchange deal, and stated that Hamas "would not fall into the trap." He claimed, the Israeli delegation had not presented details regarding the hostages' deal because the general principles had not been agreed on (al-Araby YouTube channel, March 24, 2024).

►**Ali Abu Shahin, a member of the PIJ's political bureau**, said that the document presented by Hamas, which has the agreement of all the [terrorist] organizations, had no room for concessions, and it had demonstrated its greatest flexibility and positivity (Arab World Press News Agency (AWP), March 21 2024).

The UN Security Council

►After several postponements, the UN Security Council voted on proposed Resolution 2728 of March 25, 2024 demanding a ceasefire during Ramadan which would lead to a lasting and sustainable ceasefire, and at the same time demanding the release of all the hostages, providing them with medical treatment, for all parties to conduct themselves in accordance with the international law of the parties and for more humanitarian aid for the Gaza Strip. Fourteen countries voted in favor, the United States abstained because the resolution did not condemn Hamas, but since it did not veto the resolution, it was passed (Israeli media, March 25, 2024). It was the first resolution proposed by the Security Council during the war that explicitly called for the cessation of hostilities.

►**Mahmoud Abbas' office** issued a statement welcoming the Security Council's resolution and stating that it should be implemented immediately. It called the resolution a positive step towards the withdrawal of all IDF forces from the Gaza Strip and the cessation of all Israeli operations against the Palestinians (Wafa, March 25, 2024).

► Hamas also welcomed the resolution and emphasized the need to reach a permanent ceasefire which would lead to the withdrawal of IDF forces from the Gaza Strip, and the return of the displaced Gazans to their previous places of residence. Hamas also claimed it was prepared for an immediate hostage deal that would lead to their release "from both sides." Hamas noted the importance of freedom of movement of the Palestinians and the entry of all humanitarian needs for all residents throughout the Gaza Strip, including heavy equipment for the removal of rubble. Hamas called on the Security Council to exert pressure on Israel to commit to a ceasefire and stop its operations in the Gaza Strip (Hamas' Telegram channel in Judea and Samaria, March 25, 2024).

► **Ihsan Ataya, a member of the PIJ's political bureau**, said that the wording of the Security Council's resolution was ambiguous. He claimed the United States did not want a ceasefire in the sense of a cessation of "aggression," but rather a temporary ceasefire to return the Israeli hostages, and then the complete elimination of the "resistance" [terrorist organizations]. He added that the United States representative at the UN said that the decisions were not binding, that is, she sent an advance message to Israel that all the resolutions were worthless (al-Mayadeen TV X account, March 26, 2024).

The Gaza Strip

Palestinian casualties

► **The Hamas-controlled ministry of health in the Gaza Strip** reported at 1:00 p.m., March 25, 2024, that since the beginning of the war in Gaza (October 7, 2023) 32,333 Palestinians had been killed and 74,694 had been wounded (ministry of health in Gaza Facebook page, March 25, 2024).

► The Hamas government media office reported that the number of journalists killed during the war had risen to 136 after three more had been killed (Hamas government media office Telegram channel, March 23, 2024):

► **Abd al-Rahman Saima**, a photojournalist and producer for the Raqami TV channel (digital television),² who was killed in an attack on a house in the al-Bureij refugee camp. Raqami TV announced Saima's death, reporting he had been killed by shrapnel in the attack on the house

² Raqami TV represents itself as presenting programs in video format to provide the Arab viewer with information on issues of technology. The programs include news, reviews, articles, discussions and more. The channel was launched on October 19, 2014. <https://www.youtube.com/@raqamity>

of Haitham al-Nabahin, one of the most important programming engineers in Gaza, who was also killed. Saima had worked at the channel since its inception as a cameraman and producer of the program Ibtikar ("innovation)" (Raqami TV Facebook page, March 14, 2024).



Abd al-Rahman Saima (@F___reiheit's X account, March 15, 2024)

► **Muhammad al-Rifi**, 36 years old, a photojournalist who worked as a freelance photographer with several media outlets. He was seriously wounded on March 14, 2024 by shots fired at Palestinians who had gathered near Kuwait Square in Gaza waiting for aid to arrive (Hassan Aslih's X account, March 15, 2024; Samir Kassir Foundation's Skeyes Center for Media and Cultural Freedom website, March 16, 2024).



Muhammad al-Rifi (Muhammad al-Rifi's Facebook page , April 2, 2021)

► **Dr. Mahmoud Imad Issa**, presenter of religious programs on the PIJ-affiliated al-Quds al-Yawm TV. He was killed along with several members of his family in the attack on his home in northeastern Rafah on March 20, 2024 (Palinfo X account, March 20, 2024) .



Mahmoud Imad Issa presents one of his programs (SND website X account, March 20, 2024)

- ▶The al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades (AAMB) issued a mourning notice for the death of **Ahmed Khalil al-Ras, commander of the Shati Battalion**, who was killed in an Israeli attack (elaqsa_1965, the AAMB Telegram channel, March 22, 2024). He was reportedly killed on March 21 (Ahmed al-Ras' Facebook page, March 21, 2024).
- ▶The Palestinian social networks reported the death of commander Samad Rafat Abu 'Oudah, and Mu'awiyah 'Akef Abu 'Oudah, two operatives of the Beit Hanoun Battalion of Hamas military-terrorist wing who were killed in a clash with the IDF force in Beit Hanoun (X account of journalist Ahmed Wa'el Hamdan, March 23, 2024; @flagvsls X account, 23 Mar 2024; youssef shabat X account, 24 Mar 2024).
- ▶The Palestinian media and social media reported that IDF forces had killed Dr. Muhammad Zaher al-Nunu, a doctor at Shifa Hospital, after he [allegedly] refused to leave the hospital and insisted on continuing to treat the wounded. He was the brother of Taher al-Nunu, Ismail Haniyeh's media advisor (Palinfo, March 23, 2024; Filastin al-Yawm TV X account, March 23, 2024). Taher al-Nunu confirmed the news of his brother's death in an interview (al-Jazeera Mubasher YouTube channel, March 23, 2024).



Dr. Muhammad Zaher al-Nunu (Rami Abdo's X account, March 23, 2024)

The situation in the Gaza Strip

Kazem Abu Khalaf, UNRWA spokesman in Jerusalem, stated that the humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip was "extremely tragic," more so in the northern Gaza Strip, in light of Israel's [alleged] attempts to prevent UNRWA from transferring aid and the difficulty experienced by other organizations. He noted that 25% of children under the age of five in Khan Yunis were suffering from malnutrition, and 10% had reached dangerous stages. He noted that according to food security experts, the famine was expected to hit the northern Gaza Strip between March and May, and by July to spread to all parts of the Gaza Strip. He claimed that all the residents of the northern Gaza Strip had [allegedly] reached the third of five stages that precede the definition of hunger, and there were [allegedly] 500,000 who had entered the fifth stage, is hunger.

►Abu Khalaf stated that the airlifted aid was insufficient and could not be considered an alternative to the entry of trucks. He added that aid such as medical equipment could be transported by parachute, and hundreds of trucks could enter through the crossings every day, but Israel was unwilling and the world was unable to force it. He noted that UNRWA services were expected to stop by the end of March due to the cessation of fin support, but some countries had changed their decision and some which had increased the amount of their support, so UNRWA services would continue at least until the end of May (AWP, March 26, 2024).

►**Antonio Guterres, the UN secretary general, and Philippe Lazzarini, UNRWA commissioner general**, paid a visit to El Arish, in the northern Sinai Peninsula, accompanied by the Egyptian minister of health. The two visited wounded Gazans hospitalized in El Arish. Later, Guterres visited the Egyptian side of the Rafah Crossing. He held a press conference at

the Crossing where he said he had come to empathize with the Gazans' suffering. He again called for a ceasefire and the immediate introduction of humanitarian aid (Alqaheranews account X, March 23, 2024).



The delivery of humanitarian aid to the Gaza Strip through the Rafah Crossing during Guterres' visit (al-Hadath TV X account, March 23, 2024)

► **United States Secretary of State Anthony Blinken** said during a press conference that the entire population of the Strip suffers from severe levels of food insecurity and it was the first time that an entire population has been classified as such. He noted that increasing the delivery of aid should be a priority (Agence France-Presse, March 19, 2024).

► The UN Satellite Center published a report estimating the damage to buildings in the Gaza Strip. According to the report, about 35% of the buildings in the Gaza Strip have been damaged since the beginning of the war. It was also reported that out of about 89,000 buildings that were damaged, about 31,000 were completely destroyed and about 17,000 were severely damaged (UN website, March 21, 2024).

Aid for the Gaza Strip

► The Hamas-controlled ministry of health in the Gaza Strip called on residents of Gaza City and the northern Gaza Strip not to go to Kuwait Square or the sea road west of Gaza City in order not to endanger themselves, and to allow the humanitarian aid convoys to pass more smoothly and reach the residents through the popular committees (Shehab Telegram channel, March 25, 2024).

► The airlift of humanitarian aid to the Gaza Strip continued. On March 22, 2024, it was reported that Egyptian planes dropped aid in the Nuseirat and Rafah regions (Hamza al-Masri's Telegram channel, March 22, 2024). The al-Araby channel televised an airlift in western Gaza City near Shifa Hospital (al-Araby YouTube channel, March 23, 2024). The British ministry of defense reported that the Royal Air Force had dropped over ten tons of food supplies to the

Gaza Strip, including water, rice, oil, flour, baby food and canned goods (UK government website, March 26, 2024).



Right: Humanitarian aid airlifted to the Gaza Strip (al-Araby YouTube channel, March 23, 2024)

Left: British aid is loaded in Jordan on a Royal Air Force plane before it takes off (British government website, March 26, 2024)

Israel, Judea and Samaria

Terrorist attacks

► On the evening of March 25, 2024, there was a report of shots fired at the settlement of Karmeit Zzur (north of Hebron). A house was damaged and a bullet was found; there were no casualties. IDF forces began searches and they even entered Bayt Ummar, the nearby village (IDF spokesperson's Telegram channel, March 25, 2024). The AAMB's Youth of Revenge and Liberation claimed responsibility for the shooting (AAMB's Youth of Revenge and Liberation in the Balata refugee camp's Telegram channel, March 26, 2024).



A bullet hole in a window in the settlement of Karmeit Zzur (Gush Etzion spokesperson's unit, March 25, 2024)

► Before dawn on March 22, 2024, a Palestinian sniper shot at an Israeli minibus at the Parsa Junction between Dolev and Talmon (west of Ramallah) and at an ambulance that arrived on

the scene. There were no casualties but the minibus and ambulance were damaged. The IDF force that was called to the scene pursued the shooter, who fled towards Ramallah. The terrorist positioned himself on a high branch and began shooting at the forces. In the exchange of fire, an IDF soldier was killed and six other soldiers were wounded. After a four-hour battle, the terrorist was killed by air force helicopter fire (IDF spokesperson, Israeli media, March 22, 2024).



Sniper killed at the Parsa Junction (IDF spokesperson, March 22, 2024)

►According to reports the terrorist was Mujahed Barakat Mansour from the village of Deir Izbzi' (west of Ramallah), married and father of two (Wafa, March 22, 2024). The AAMB claimed responsibility for the attack and stated that the organization's operative, released prisoners Mujahed Barakat Mansour, 31 years old, carried it out as part of the AAMB's responses to Israel's ongoing "aggression" in the Gaza Strip, against the prisoners, and "everywhere" (elaqsa_1965, the AAMB Telegram channel, March 22, 2024). According to reports, Mujahed Barakat Mansour Karajah served in a PA "presidential guard" until he resigned several years ago (roya channel news website, March 22, 2024; Aljazeera.net, March 22, 2024). IDF forces mapped his house in preparation for its demolition (IDF spokesperson's Telegram channel, March 23, 2024).

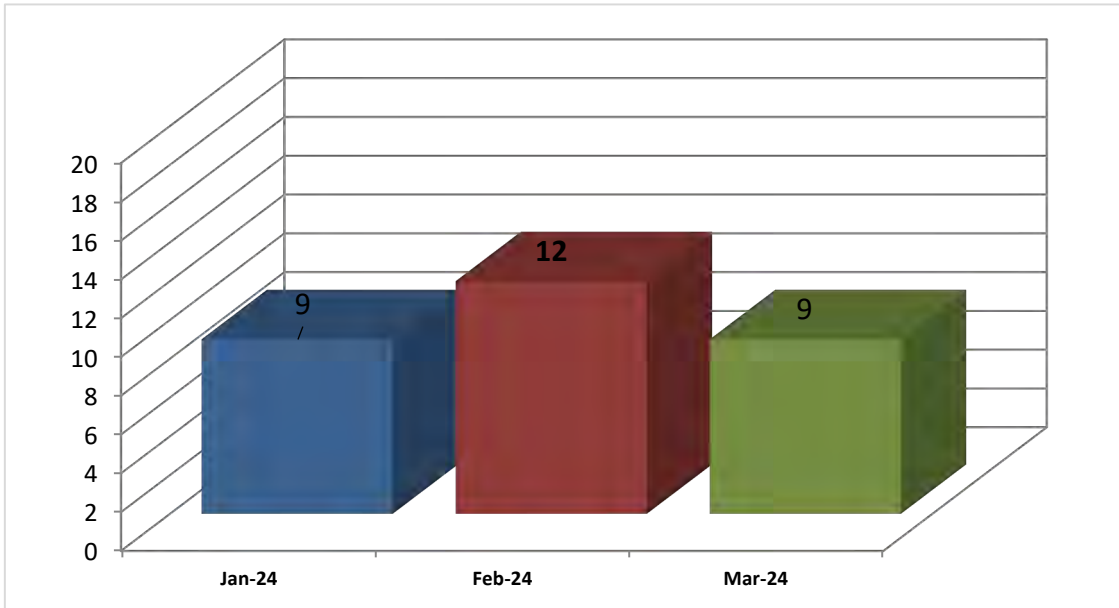


Right: An AAMB mourning notice for Mujahed Barakat Mansour (elaqsa_1965 Telegram channel, March 22, 2024). Left: Mapping Mansour's house in preparation for its demolition (Telegram channel of the IDF spokesperson, March 23, 2024)

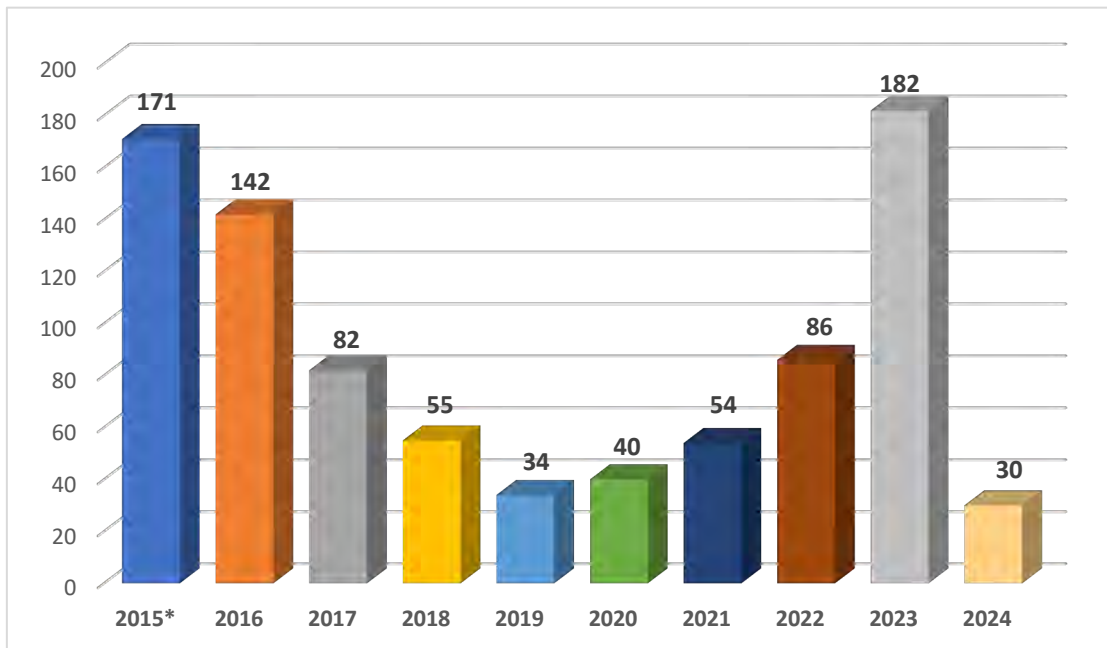
- ▶ Hamas welcomed the attack, claiming the Palestinian "resistance" [terrorist attacks] to the "occupation" of the Gaza Strip, Judea and Samaria would not stop until Israel was "removed" and that Operation al-Aqsa Flood would continue to flow and erupt "in all parts of the homeland until the Palestinians achieve freedom and their legitimate rights" (Telegram Channel of Hamas in Judea and Samaria, March 22, 2024).
- ▶ On the evening of March 21, 2024, an IED was thrown at a bus near the T-junction in the Gush Etzion area (Israeli media, March 21, 2024). The AAMB – Bethlehem network claimed responsibility for the attack (al-Furqan network X account, March 22, 2024). The Mujahideen Brigades of the West Bank³ – the Bethlehem squad claimed responsibility for throwing the IED (Mujahideen Brigades of the West Bank Telegram channel, March 24, 2024).
- ▶ On the afternoon of March 19, 2024, a Palestinian unexpectedly opened fire from a grove at the Gush Etzion Junction at two Shabak fighters who were on operational activity. One of them shot and killed the terrorist. The two fighters were injured. The terrorist was is Ziyad Hamran, 30 years old from Jenin. It was reported that an investigation of the incident was being conducted, the terrorist who carried out the shooting had no connection with the Shabak and no meeting had been coordinated with him at the location (Israeli media, March 19, 2024).

³ The Mujahideen Brigades is a network which began operating in 2000 at the beginning of the second intifada as part of the al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades, Fatah's military-terrorist wing. It later split from the AAMB after adopting more radical Islam. The secretary general of its political organization is Assad Ibrahim Abu Sharia, a Gazan, who was involved in several incidents of rocket fire attacking Israel and placing of IEDs near the border fence. The organization is active in the Gaza Strip with the knowledge and patronage of Hamas and even received funding, training and professional assistance from it. Starting in September 2022, it began publishing claims of responsibility for attacks in Judea and Samaria.

Critical terrorist attacks, 2024⁴



Annual distribution of critical terrorist attacks



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. Rocks and Molotov cocktails thrown by Palestinians are not included. Shots fired at IDF forces during counterterrorism activities in Judea and Samaria are included.

Preventing Iranian terrorist activity in Judea and Samaria

►The Israeli security forces succeeded in preventing the smuggling of weapons from Iran to Judea and Samaria. According to reports, in recent months Iranian security officials have been working to smuggle weapons into Judea and Samaria to carry out terrorist attacks on Israeli targets. The Iranian security forces responsible are Division 4000, the special operations division of the Iranian Revolutionary Guards Corps' intelligence organization, and special operations unit 18840 of the Qods Force in Syria.

►The activity was exposed and prevented by the Israeli Security Agency after Palestinians who planned to attack Israeli targets were detained for questioning. The investigation also revealed information about the activities of Munir al-Maqdah, a Palestinian from the Ein al-Hilweh refugee camp in south Lebanon, who has been known for years as working for Hezbollah and the Iranian Revolutionary Guards Corps. The investigation revealed that al-Maqdah recruited operatives in Judea and Samaria to carry out attacks and that he promoted the smuggling of Iranian weapons and the transfer of funds in a variety of ways to the squads he recruited in Judea and Samaria. As part of the operation, a large amount of advanced weapons smuggled into Judea and Samaria was seized, including guns, hand grenades, RPGs and shoulder-launched weapons (IDF spokesperson, March 25, 2024).



Some of the weapons seized (Israeli Security Agency, March 25, 2024)



Munir al-Maqqah (Israeli Security Agency, March 25, 2024)

Counterterrorism activities

►The security forces continued their counterterrorism activities in Judea and Samaria, detaining dozens of wanted Palestinians and confiscating weapons. The activities focused on Tulkarm, Jenin, Nablus and the Aqbat Jaber refugee camp in Jericho (IDF spokesperson's X account, March 20-25, 2024). Since the beginning of the war, approximately 3,600 wanted Palestinians have been detained, more than 1,600 of whom were Hamas operatives.

►On the night of March 20, 2024, the security forces operated in the **Nur Shams refugee camp in Tulkarm**. They detained three wanted Palestinians and uncovered IEDs planted to attack the forces. An Israeli Air Force aircraft attacked and killed two terrorist operatives who threw IEDs at the forces (IDF spokesperson's X account, March 21, 2024). The Palestinians reported that the dead were Nidal Maamoun Abu Ubeid, 23 years old, and Iyad Nidal Azmi Kanouh (aka Iyad al-Azmi), 19 years old (Wafa, March 21, 2024). Their bodies were wrapped in PIJ flags, and an AAMB headband was tied around Abu Ubeid's head (@samsalmohaiam's Telegram channel, March 21, 2024; "Palestine Post" Telegram channel March 21, 2024).

►Also killed were:

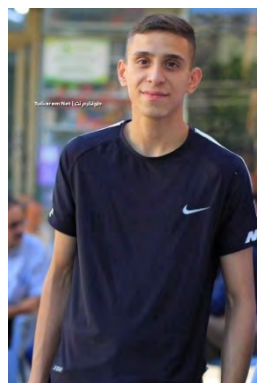
◆**Abdullah Mahmoud al-Qaisi**, 20 years old (Wafa, March 21, 2024). Hamas announced that he one of its operatives (Hamas Telegram channel in Judea and Samaria, March 21, 2024).

◆**Ahmed Marwan Muhammad Abu Ali** (aka Ahmed al-Jabaawi), 22 years old (Wafa, March 21, 2024). The al-Aqsa Martyrs Battalions said that Abu Ubeid was their operative (elaqsa_1965 telegram channel of the al-Aqsa Martyrs Battalions, March 22, 2024).

◆The Jerusalem Brigades – West Bank stated that the four were operatives of the Jerusalem Brigades' Tulkarm Battalion (Paltoday Telegram channel, March 22, 2024).



Right: Mourning notice issued by Hamas for the death of Abdullah al-Qaisi (Telegram channel of Hamas in Judea and Samaria, March 21, 2024). Left: Iyad Kanouh in front of PIJ flags (Mirfat Riyan's X account , March 21, 2024)



Nidal Abu Ubeid (right) and Ahmed Jabaawi (TulkaremNet1 Facebook page, March 21, 2024)



Right: IDF forces enter the Nur Shams refugee camp in Tulkarm. Left: Nur Shams refugee camp after the activity of the IDF forces (QudsN account X, March 20, 21, 2024)

► On the evening of March 21, 2024, Israeli security forces operated in **the Aqbat Jaber refugee camp** (southwest of Jericho) following information of a Palestinian's intention to carry out a suicide attack in the near future. When the forces arrived, the Palestinian tried to escape. A riot broke out, at the end of which the Palestinian was caught and taken for questioning (Israel Police Force X account, March 21, 2024). Palestinian sources reported that the Israeli security forces entered the camp, surrounded the al-'Awiti family home and detained the brothers

Amar and Hamdi 'Awiti. Local residents rioted and three Palestinians were injured, including Ibrahim Abd al-Rahim Fares Katash, who later died (Wafa, March 21, 2024).

►On the evening of March 20, 2024, an Israeli Air Force aircraft attacked a Palestinian vehicle in **the Jenin refugee camp** in which two senior PIJ terrorist operatives and two other terrorist operatives were riding. The two PIJ terrorists officials who were eliminated were **Ahmed Barakat**, who carried out the shooting attack in Hermesh in May 2023, in which an Israeli civilian was killed, and **Muhammad Hawashin**, commander of the PIJ terrorist infrastructure in Jenin. The two were behind the attempt, foiled on March 11, 2024, to insert a terrorist operative into the heart of Israeli territory, and they directed the March 8, 2024, IED attack on IDF forces near the Homesh Junction, in which seven soldiers were injured (IDF spokesperson's X account , March 21, 2024) .

►The Palestinian media reported that three people were killed in the attack and the fourth passenger was seriously injured and taken to a hospital. The PIJ in Jenin announced that the three fatalities were senior operatives Ahmed Barakat, Mahmoud Rahal, and Muhammad al-Fayid. A general strike was declared in Jenin as a sign of mourning for their deaths (al-Jazeera TV, March 21, 2024).



Right: The vehicle attacked in the Jenin refugee camp. Left to right, the three terrorists who were killed: Mahmoud Rahal, Ahmed Barakat and Muhammad al-Fayid (Ma'an, March 21, 2024)

►The Jerusalem Brigades' Jenin Battalion issued a mourning notice for the death of Muhammad Hawashin (Abu Shadi), the general commander of the Jerusalem Brigades in Judea and Samaria and the commander of the Jenin Battalion (Paltoday Telegram channel, March 22, 2024).



Muhammad Hawashin (X account @shfanews_net, March 21, 2024)

Ramadan

The Friday prayer on the Temple Mount

►The Islamic Waqf reported that about 120,000 worshipers participated in the prayer on the second Friday of the Ramadan at al-Aqsa Mosque. The Israel Police reported that the prayer was held without special incident (Israel Police Force X account in Arabic, March 22, 2024). According to the Palestinian Red Crescent, the security forces prevented its medical teams and volunteers from entering the Temple Mount to provide medical assistance to worshipers (al-Jazeera website, March 22, 2024).

►**Al-Aqsa Mosque preacher Sheikh Khaled Abu Jum'ah** devoted most of his sermon to the war in the Gaza Strip. He reiterated that al-Aqsa Mosque is the exclusive property of Muslims and it could be neither bought or sold. He called for a non-stop ribat (extended stay for the purpose of guarding) at al-Aqsa Mosque, and added that by participating in prayer at al-Aqsa, the Palestinians foiled Israel's plans to Judaize the mosque and Jerusalem (Wafa, March 22, 2024; al-Araby al-Jadeed, March 22, 2024).



Ramadan Friday prayer on the Temple Mount (Wafa, March 22, 2024)

► Hamas issued a statement praising the crowds who, by means of the ribat, "defied the restrictions imposed by the security forces" whose objective was to keep them away from al-Aqsa Mosque. The message also warned of the severity of the Israeli escalation in Jerusalem, at al-Aqsa Mosque and in all the "occupied territories," and called on the international community, especially the Organization for Islamic Cooperation, to take action to protect al-Aqsa Mosque and the Islamic and Christian holy places from Israel and its plans (Hamas Telegram channel in Judea and Samaria, March 22, 2024) .

The Palestinian Authority (PA)

Mahmoud Abbas

► **Mahmoud Abbas, the chairman of the Palestinian Authority**, published a written speech on the occasion of International Water Day, in which he claimed that Israel had been stealing the Palestinians' water resources for decades and denying them their right to control the water sources. He claimed that the children of the Gaza Strip were "drinking sea water and polluted water" and had to deal with diseases because of it. He also claimed the Israeli government was preventing the introduction of humanitarian aid to the residents of the Gaza Strip and that more than 1.3 million people were currently living in Rafah in shelters and tents in difficult conditions. He called on the international community and the free world to stand with the Palestinians and protect their rights (Wafa, March 22, 2024).

► Fatah's Central Committee, headed by Mahmoud Abbas, convened in Ramallah. He briefed the committee on the latest developments and the talks with Arab and international parties to end the war, and noted the need to prevent the displacement of Palestinians from their land and the need to introduce humanitarian aid. He also reviewed the actions that the elected government would carry out, including implementing aid and rehabilitation programs in a variety of sectors, revitalizing the Palestinian economy and completing the reform plan. He reported that they had renewed their call to the international community to become an independent Palestinian state and obtain full membership in the United Nations, while implementing a political solution and emphasized the need to define the PLO as the [only] legitimate representative of the Palestinians (Wafa, March 20, 2024).

► Mahmoud Abbas met with **Annalena Baerbock, the foreign minister of Germany**, and to discuss the latest developments in the Gaza Strip, Judea and Samaria. He said that the UN Security Council resolution was important and should be implemented, and humanitarian aid

should be introduced into the entire Gaza Strip. He reiterated his opposition to the displacement of Palestinians in the Gaza Strip, Judea and Samaria, and claimed Israel had to stop its actions against the Palestinians and its restrictions on worshipers at al-Aqsa Mosque during the Ramadan. He thanked her for her country's support for the Palestinians (Wafa, March 25, 2024).



Mahmoud Abbas with Annalena Baerbock (Wafa, March 25, 2024)

Forming the new PA government

► Muhammad Mustafa, the newly-appointed prime minister, said the ministers of his new government would have professional capabilities and government would be "transparent." He stated he had begun formulating his government's programs and would present the composition of the new government to Mahmoud Abbas within the allotted time period. He noted that the challenges were many and difficult, but they would be an incentive to work harder and overcome them (Filastin al-A'an, March 23, 2024).

Muhammad Shtayyeh praises Canada

► Muhammad Shtayyeh, outgoing PA prime minister, welcomed Canada's announcement to stop the export of weapons to Israel and the possibility of Canada recognizing a Palestinian state. He said the war in the Gaza Strip required a decisive international position regarding the cessation of arming Israel and imposing sanctions on it immediately. He also noted the need to exert pressure to open the crossings in the Gaza Strip to bring in aid and restore the supply of electricity and water from Israel to the Strip (Wafa, March 20, 2024).

Jibril al-Rajoub visits Bangladesh

► **Jibril al-Rajoub, secretary of Fatah's Central Committee**, met with **Sheikh Hasina Wajed, prime minister of Bangladesh**,⁵ in Dhaka, the capital city, and informed her about the latest developments in the Palestinian arena. He claimed the war in the Gaza Strip was "one-sided" and mainly hurt "helpless residents." He claimed peace would only be achieved through the establishment of an independent Palestinian state and the release of Palestinian prisoners in Israeli jails. Wajed emphasized her country's support for the Palestinians and their right to establish an independent state, and also called for an immediate ceasefire in the Gaza Strip and the opening of the crossings for the entry of aid (Wafa, March 24, 2024).



Jibril al-Rajoub meets with the prime minister of Bangladesh in Dhaka (Wafa, March 24, 2024)

Status of the cases in the International Criminal Court (ICC) in The Hague

► Al-Quds al-Arabi sent a number of queries to the office of Karim Khan, the chief prosecutor of the International Criminal Court in The Hague (ICC), regarding the fate of the lawsuits filed by hundreds of lawyers and organizations around the world against Israel. In response, Khan said he considered the situation in the Palestinian territories as having urgent priority regarding investigating violations against civilians. He noted that he was in contact with the local authorities, civil society organizations and international partners to support the investigations. He claimed there was a reasonable basis to believe that the "crimes" set forth in the Rome Convention were committed in Palestine as well as in Israel, and they were using all the means at their disposal to ensure that all crimes were tried. He called on Israel to immediately allow the entry of all necessary humanitarian supplies into the Gaza Strip, since, according to him, the deliberate use of starving civilians as a method of war, including the deliberate blocking of

⁵ Bangladesh is one of the 29 member states of the United Nations which do not recognize the State of Israel. It has no diplomatic or trade relations with Israel.

aid supplies, was defined as a war crime according to the Rome Convention (al-Quds al-Arabi, March 19, 2024).

Public opinion poll

► On March 20, 2024, the Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research Institute, headed by Dr. Khalil Shikaki, published the main findings of the quarterly public opinion poll conducted between March 5-10, 2024, among the residents of Judea, Samaria and the Gaza Strip. It was the second poll conducted during the war in the Gaza Strip, and in the Strip it was conducted under restrictive conditions to ensure the integrity of the data collections, the interviews with residents of the Gaza Strip were limited to specific areas where daily fighting did not take place. A number of conclusions emerged, including a decrease in support for Hamas and the "armed resistance." Some responses show a strengthening of trust in Hamas in the Gaza Strip. The majority of respondents living in shelters in the Gaza Strip reported that the distribution of food was affected by political affiliation and was carried out in an unfair manner. Regarding the effect of the war on the internal Palestinian internal balance of power, the poll indicated a significant change compared to the previous poll.⁶

⁶ For further information see the March 2024 report, The Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research quarterly public opinion poll shows a certain decline in support for Hamas and the "armed resistance."