



Spotlight on the Israel-Palestinian Conflict

May 15-21, 2024

Overview¹

- ▶ **The southern arena:** This past week the IDF forces expanded their activities in the Gaza Strip. The focal points were east Rafah and the Jebalya refugee camp. Meanwhile, the terrorist organizations continued firing rockets at the cities, towns and villages surrounding the Gaza Strip. Following intelligence information, the IDF returned the bodies of four Israeli civilians who were murdered on October 7, 2023, and taken to the Gaza Strip. Nine soldiers died fighting in the Gaza Strip.
- ▶ **The issue of the hostages:** The negotiations are at a dead end and Hamas continues blaming Israel for the failure of the talks. Senior Hamas members reiterated their mantra, claiming they would not negotiate under fire and demanding an end to the war, the immediate withdrawal of the IDF from the Gaza Strip and the execution of an exchange deal.
- ▶ **Aid for the Gaza Strip:** On May 17, 2024, the floating pier constructed by the United States military off the coast of the Gaza Strip for the delivery of humanitarian aid was activated for the first time. Palestinian officials expressed concern that its use would lead to the displacement of residents and called for the land border crossings to be opened. Following the closure of the Rafah and Kerem Shalom Crossings, the Palestinians again warned of a "humanitarian disaster" in the Gaza Strip.
- ▶ There are **significant discrepancies** between the reports of the Hamas ministries of health and information in the data regarding the number of dead in the Gaza Strip.
- ▶ **Israel, Judea and Samaria:** There were three stabbing attacks. The Israeli security forces continued their counterterrorism activities in Judea and Samaria. An extensive operation was focused on the Jenin refugee camp, where aircraft attacked a terrorist operations room. The forces also took action against currency exchange companies in the Palestinian Authority territories.

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

►**The Palestinian Authority:** Mahmoud Abbas gave a speech at the Arab League summit meeting in Bahrain attacking Hamas and stating that its unilateral action on October 7, 2023 gave Israel excuses to attack the Gaza Strip and displace its residents. The al-Jalameh (Gilboa) Crossing was opened for the first time since the beginning of the war to allow Israeli Arabs to shop in Jenin to help improve the Palestinian economy.

►The prosecutor general of the International Criminal Court in The Hague requested arrest warrants for suspicion of war crimes for Yahya al-Sinwar, head of the Hamas political bureau in the Gaza Strip, Muhammed Deif, the commander of Hamas' military-terrorist wing, Isma'il Haniyeh, head of Hamas' political bureau, and the Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, and Minister of Defense Yoav Gallant. The International Court of Justice in The Hague is holding a hearing on South Africa's request to issue an order obliging Israel to stop the war in the Gaza Strip.

The Southern Arena

IDF activity in the Gaza Strip

►This past week, IDF forces expanded their activities in the Gaza Strip, focusing on east Rafah in the southern Gaza Strip and the Jebalya refugee camp in the north. Following intelligence information, IDF and Israeli Security Agency forces returned the bodies of four Israeli civilians who were murdered on October 7, 2023, and taken to the Gaza Strip.

►Nine IDF soldiers were killed in the fighting in the Gaza Strip last week. Five were accidentally killed by Israeli tank fire, two were killed by an explosive device in the southern Gaza Strip, and two were killed during battles in the northern Gaza Strip (IDF spokesperson and Israeli media, May 15-20, 2024).

►**Rafah:** IDF forces expanded their activities in east Rafah as far as the southwest of the city and along the Philadelphia Axis, which runs along the Gaza Strip-Egypt border. Dozens of terrorist operatives were killed and terrorist facilities and weapons warehouses were destroyed. Rocket launching pits and a warehouse storing long-range rocket launchers were located. The forces also found a large number of tunnels, including at least 50 crossing the border from the Gaza Strip into Egyptian territory. Two IDF soldiers were killed and three were injured by an IED which exploded in a tunnel shaft (IDF spokesperson and Israeli media, May 16-20, 2024).



Weapons and rocket launching pits found by IDF forces in east Rafah (IDF spokesperson, May 16, 18, 2024)

►An al-Jazeera TV correspondent reported on the continuing Israeli Air Force attacks in Rafah. He said the IDF forces had expanded their activities to the al-Brazil neighborhood, where they searched houses (al-Jazeera YouTube channel, May 19, 2024). Meanwhile, the Palestinian media reported residents continued to leave Rafah because of IDF activity (Wafa YouTube channel, May 15, 2024). According to UNRWA, so far more than 810,000 people have been evacuated from Rafah (UNRWA X account, May 20, 2024).



Right: IDF attack in Rafah (Wafa YouTube channel, May 16, 2024). Left: Residents leave Rafah (Wafa YouTube channel, May 15, 2024)

►**Jebalya refugee camp:** The IDF forces entered areas where they had not operated since the beginning of the ground maneuver, clashing with and killing dozens of terrorist operatives. They found large quantities of weapons, including anti-tank missiles, guns, grenades, IEDs, drones and rocket launchers. A lathe for the manufacture of weapons was also found (IDF spokesperson, May 19 and 20, 2024). In a combined operation and under combat conditions, IDF forces and the Israeli Security Agency extracted the bodies of four Israeli civilians who were murdered on October 7, 2023 and whose bodies were taken to the Gaza Strip; they were found in a tunnel (IDF spokesperson, May 19-20, 2024).

►Five IDF soldiers were killed by friendly fire because of mistaken identification. One IDF soldier was killed in a clash with terrorists; in another incident an IDF officer was wounded in a clash with terrorists and died four days later (IDF spokesperson and Israeli media, May 16-18, 2024).



Right: Tanks in the Jebalya refugee camp. Left: Aerial photograph of a weapons warehouse near the tent camp (IDF spokesperson, May 18, 2024)

►Correspondents reported heavy battles in the center of the Jebalya refugee camp between operatives of the Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) military-terrorist wings, and added that IDF forces were carrying out massive attacks (al-Jazeera YouTube channel, May 16, 2024). Hamas' military-terrorist wing published a video of operatives firing anti-tank missiles at IDF tanks (Hamas Telegram channel in Judea and Samaria, May 19, 2024).



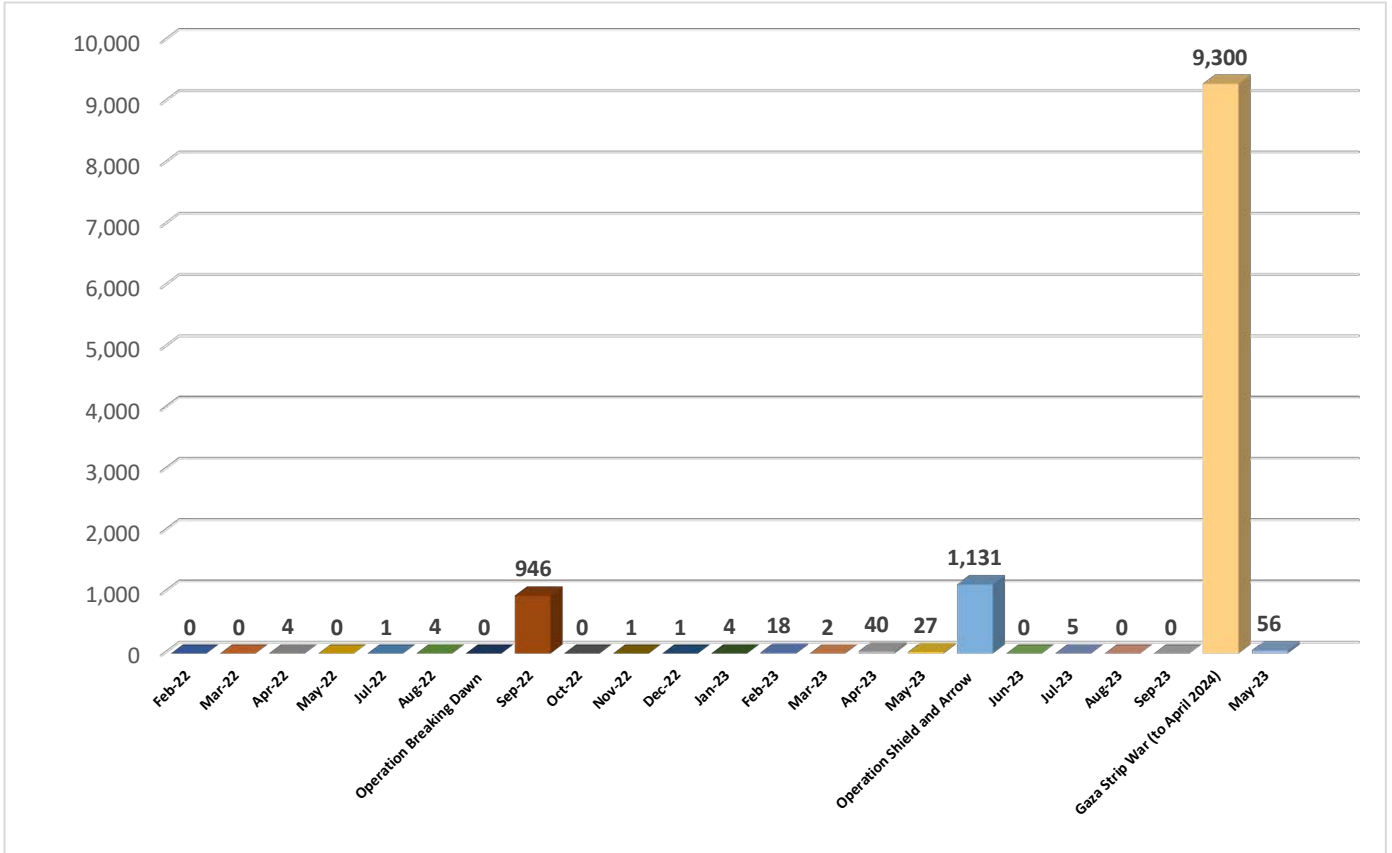
Right: Israeli Air Force strikes in the heart of the Jebalya refugee camp (al-Jazeera YouTube channel, May 16, 2024). Left: Picture from of video of anti-tank fire attacking tanks in the east of the refugee camp (Hamas Telegram channel in Judea and Samaria, May 19, 2024)

Rocket fire from the Gaza Strip

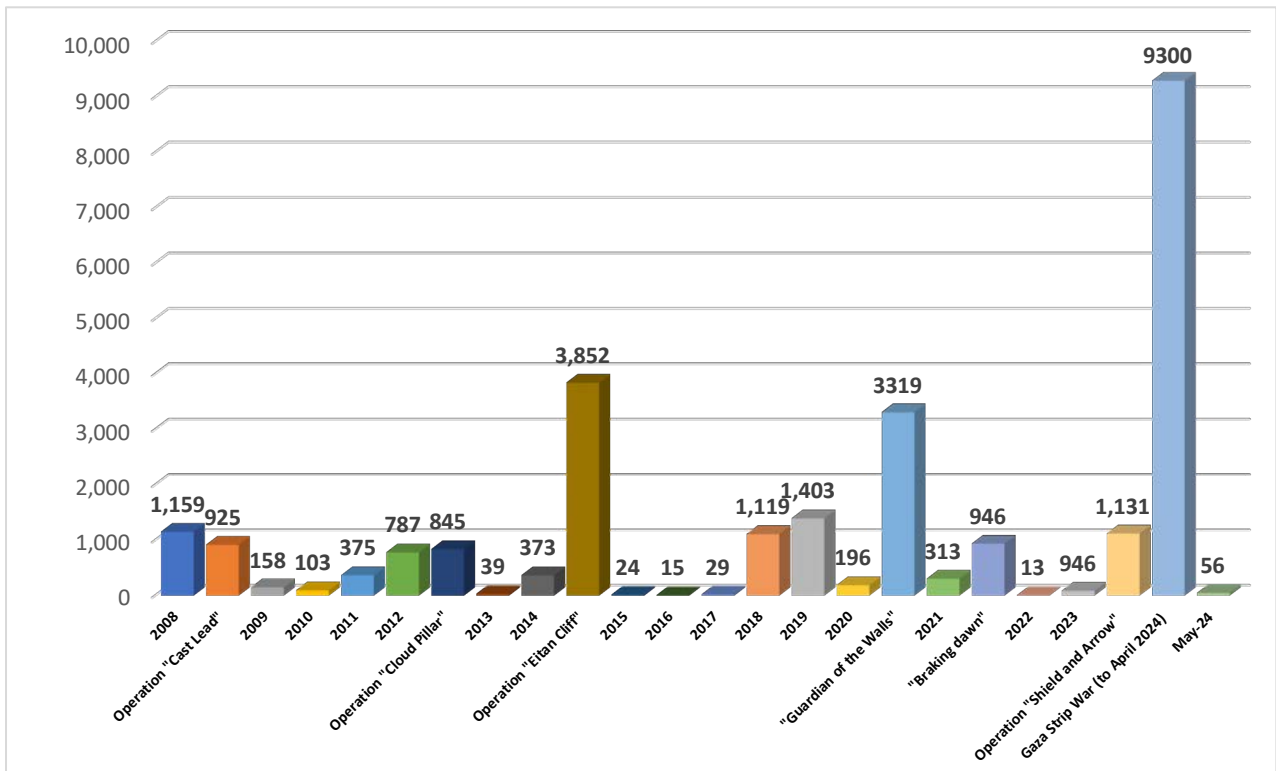
►The terrorist organizations in the Gaza Strip continue firing rockets and mortar shells at the cities, towns and villages surrounding Gaza, including Sderot and Ashqelon, almost daily. No casualties or damage were reported:

- ◆ **May 20:** In the morning two rockets were fired at Sderot and the surrounding regions. At least one rocket fell in an open area. There were no interceptions or hits in the city (Israeli media, May 20, 2024).
- ◆ **May 19:** In the morning a rocket fired from the northern Gaza Strip at Sderot was intercepted (Israeli media, May 19, 2024). The Jerusalem Brigades, the PIJ's military-terrorist wing, announced it had fired a barrage of rockets at Sderot in conjunction with the military-terrorist wing of the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP) "in response to Israel's actions against the Palestinians" (Paltoday Telegram channel, May 19, 2024).
- ◆ **May 18:** Ten rockets were fired from the northern Gaza Strip at the Ashqelon region. Five were intercepted and the rest fell in open areas (Israeli media, May 18, 2024). The PIJ's military-terrorist wing claimed responsibility (Paltoday Telegram channel, May 18, 2024).
- ◆ **May 17:** A rocket was fired at the Sderot region and intercepted (Israeli media, May 17, 2024).
- ◆ **May 15:** A rocket was fired at Kerem Shalom from the Rafah region, falling in an open area (IDF spokesperson's Telegram channel, May 15, 2024). A rocket fired at the Sderot area was intercepted (Israeli media, May 15, 2024).

Monthly Distribution of Rocket and Mortar Shell Fire since February 2022



Annual Distribution of Rocket Hits



IDF activity in the al-Zeitoun neighborhood of Gaza City

►According to reports, during the IDF operation al-Zeitoun neighborhood in Gaza City, which ended on May 15, 2024, 90 terrorist operatives were killed and 300 terrorist infrastructures were destroyed, including attack tunnels, a lathe for the manufacture of weapons, rocket launching pits and Hamas headquarters, one of which was located inside a school (IDF spokesperson, May 17, 2024). It was also reported that the forces located tons of humanitarian aid which Hamas had hidden in one of its neighborhood strongholds and distributed to its operatives and associates (Israeli media, May 16, 2024). Correspondents reported extensive destruction in the neighborhood and the beginning of the return of residents to their former places of residence (al-Jazeera YouTube channel, May 15, 2024).

Speech of Abu Obeida

►On May 17, 2024, a speech by **Abu Obeida, spokesman for Hamas' military-terrorist wing**, was broadcast for the first time since April 23, 2024. He claimed the "resistance" [terrorist organizations] had demonstrated its ability to continue fighting with its "modest means and capabilities" [sic], despite the differences in forces and the arms shipments sent by the United States to Israel. He added that although Hamas was working to stop Israeli "aggression," it was prepared for a long war of attrition against Israel, which achieved nothing but the deaths of soldiers and officers (aljazeera.net, May 17, 2024).

The hostages and a ceasefire agreement

►**Khalil al-Haya, a member of the Hamas political bureau and deputy chairman of Hamas in the Gaza Strip**, said in an interview that even after eight months Israel had not been able to eradicate the "resistance" [terrorist organizations] in the Gaza Strip. He claimed the "resistance" was able to stand firm for many months and would continue to "defend the Palestinians" as long as the campaign continued. Hamas, he said, was interested in an exchange deal that would liberate the Palestinian prisoners from Israeli jails, while Israel wants to restore the hostages by force. He alleged that 70% of the hostages had been killed by the IDF. He repeated the Hamas mantra that the organization's objectives in the negotiations were to end the "aggression" completely and comprehensively, achieve the withdrawal of IDF forces and conclude an exchange deal. He said the most recent offer presented to them came "very close" to meeting their demands, but Israel did not respect the offer or the mediators (al-Manar TV Telegram channel, May 16, 2024).

► **Mahmoud Mardawi, head of the Hamas political bureau in Judea and Samaria**, said that Egypt had made efforts to reach a ceasefire, but Israel sought to sabotage the agreement and use its military power to force the Palestinians to surrender. He claimed that Hamas continued to rely on the agreement reached with the mediators, and which was opposed by Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu. Al-Mardawi expressed his opposition to negotiating under fire, when Israel was operating in Rafah and the Rafah crossing was under its control (al-Qahera al-Akhbariya website, May 15, 2024; al-Qahera al-Akhbariya YouTube channel, May 15, 2024).

The Gaza Strip

Palestinian casualties

► **The Hamas-controlled ministry of health in the Gaza Strip** reported at 3:00 p.m., May 20, 2024, that since the beginning of the war in Gaza (October 7, 2023) 35,562 Palestinians had been killed and 79,652 injured (ministry of health in Gaza Facebook page, May 20, 2024).

► On May 19, Zaher Houli, aka Abu Hamed, was killed in a targeted airstrike. He was a senior operative in Hamas' military-terrorist wing, held a senior position in the Hamas police force in the central Gaza Strip refugee camps and engaged in terrorist activity against Israel, (IDF Telegram channel, May 20, 2024). Palestinians on social media reported that Zaher Hamed al-Houli, who served as the head of the general investigations department in the Central Gaza District with the rank of lieutenant colonel, was killed with a companion, Jihad al-Hamidi, in an aircraft attack near Bureij Palestine in Deir al-Balah (Facebook page of journalist Hassan Aslih, May 19, 2024; Facebook page of the journalist Hazem Muzeid, May 19, 2024).



Zaher Houli (Abu Khaled al-Silawi's Facebook page , May 19, 2024)

► On May 18, 2024, Azmi Abu Daqqa was killed in a targeted airstrike. He was a senior operative in Hamas' supply department who was involved in the transfer of weapons and funds for financing terrorist activity (IDF Telegram channel, May 19, 2024). Palestinian websites reported

that Dr. Azmi Khalil Abu Daqqa, head of the Center for Environmental and Chemical Studies at the Islamic University, was killed in an attack on a civilian vehicle in southwest Khan Yunis (Palinfo, May 18, 2024; Shehab X account, May 18, 2024).



Azmi Abu Daqqa (right) with his son Usama, who was killed in the war (Shehab X account, May 18, 2024)

►On May 18, Rami Khalil al-Faqi, an operative in Hamas' military-terrorist wing and the Hamas police force in the al-Nuseirat refugee camp, was killed in a targeted airstrike. His deputy and four other Hamas operatives were also killed (IDF spokesperson's Telegram channel, May 20, 2024). The social media reported that five Palestinian policemen were killed in an attack on the Nuseirat refugee camp (Quds Press X account, May 18, 2024; X account of ahmend momen from Nuseirat, May 18, 2024) One of the dead was Rami al-Faqi (@Yasser_Gaza X account, May 18, 2024).



Rami al-Faqi aka Abu Ahmed (@Yasser_Gaza X account, May 18, 2024)

►On May 17, it was reported that Lt. Col. Mu'ataz Tawfik Abd al-Wahhab al-Katary the commander of the military police in the Gaza District and the central Gaza Strip refugee camps, was killed in an Israeli attack in Jebalya (Qusay al- Katary Facebook page, May 17, 2024; Hala al-Katary X account, May 17, 2024).



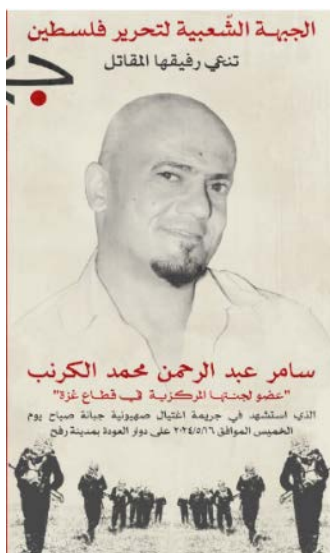
Mu'ataz al-Katary, (Qusay al- Katary Facebook page, May 17, 2024)

►On May 16, the death of Muhammad Aqel (Abu Imad), aka Haydra, a nukhba terrorist operative, was reported. He was the nephew of Imad Aqel, who was one of the founders of Hamas' military-terrorist wing and commanded it until he was killed in 1993. According to reports, Muhammad Aqel was killed in an Israeli attack in the Jebalya refugee camp (@an_em24 X account, May 16, 2024; Mustafa al-Musali's X account, 16 May 2024).



Muhammad Aqel (Mustafa al-Musali's X account, 16 May 2024)

►The Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) reported the death in the Gaza Strip of a member of its Central Committee, Samer Abd al-Rahman Muhammad al-Karnab, 42 years old, who was killed in an Israeli attack on al-Awda Square in Rafah on May 16, 2024. He joined the PFLP in 1996 and held a series of positions, including membership in the Central Committee in the Gaza Strip for two consecutive terms. He also fought in the ranks of the Abu Ali Mustafa Brigades, the PFLP's military-terrorist wing, and then with the Popular Defense Committees (PFLP Telegram channel, May 16, 2024).



Mourning notice issued by the PFLP for Samer al- Karnab (PFLP Telegram channel, May 16, 2024)

►Palestinian social media accounts reported the deaths of other terrorist operatives:

- ◆Mahmoud al-Shalfouh, aka Abu Mu'awiya, was killed in the fighting in the Jebalya refugee camp. He was reportedly one of the commanders of the Hamas October 7, 2023 terrorist attack and massacre (Hamada Quffa's Facebook page, May 17, 2024; @basem_gaza's X account, May 18, 2024).
- ◆Abdallah Salah al-Din Yusuf al-Kahlout, an operative in Hamas' military-terrorist wing, was killed in the fighting in the Jebalya refugee camp (Mohammed Ihab's X account May 18, 2024; @basem_gaza's X account , May 18, 2024).
- ◆Izz al-Din Salman, a terrorist operative in the Izz al-Din Qassam Brigades, was killed in the fighting in the Jebalya refugee camp. He was the son of Rafat Salman, who was the deputy commander of Hamas' Northern Gaza Brigade and killed on November 26, 2023. (Muhammad Hamed's X account, May 18, 2024).
- ◆Anas Shabana, an operative in Hamas' military-terrorist wing, was killed while attacking IDF soldiers in the al-Tanour neighborhood in east Rafah. He was the eldest son of Muhammad Mahmoud Shabana, the commander of the Rafah Brigade of Hamas' military-terrorist wing (al-Jazeera Mubasher X account, May 18, 2024; Ahmed Wa'el Hamdan's X account, May 18, 2024).
- ◆Yassin Saleh, a terrorist operative in the al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades, Fatah's military-terrorist wing, was killed in the fighting in the Jebalya refugee camp (elaqsa_1965 telegram channel of the al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades May 18, 2024).

- ◆Hudhayfa al-'Arbid, an operative in the Izz al-Din Qassam Brigades' artillery unit, was killed in the fighting in the Jebalya refugee camp (Muhammad al-Najjar's X account, May 15, 2024; @basem_gaza's X account, May 15, 2024).
- ◆Muhammad Saleh, an operative in the Izz al-Din Qassam Brigades, was killed in the fighting in the Jebalya refugee camp (@Rd_fas1's X account, May 15, 2024; Rhazala Said's X account, May 16, 2024)

Different versions of the number of Palestinians killed

- ▶Recently, a significant discrepancy was revealed between the reports of the Hamas ministries of health and information in the Gaza Strip regarding the numbers of casualties in the Gaza Strip. Although the two ministries provide the same figure for the total number of dead, there is a fundamental difference regarding the division into the different population groups of men, women and children.
- ▶The ministry of health lists the death toll based on those for whom there is complete information according to hospital records and information received from families. The ministry of health's figure is nearly 10,000 lower than the total number of deaths specified. For example, according to the latest report based on the data from May 3, 2024, there were 34,654 deaths, but only 24,691 of them had the required information from ministry of health records. Among the dead were 10,008 men, 4,961 women, 7,798 children and 1,924 aged (ministry of health in Gaza Telegram channel, May 4, 2024). On the other hand, a parallel ministry of the information report stated that among the dead were 14,500 children and 9,560 women, (ministry of information in Gaza Telegram channel, May 3, 2024), without explaining the discrepancy between the numbers.
- ▶The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) was also confused by the various versions of Hamas data. A report dated May 6, 2024, stated that among the dead were 9,500 women and 14,500 children (OCHA, May 6, 2024). A report that came out later indicated 10,006 men, 4,959 women, 7,797 children and 1,924 aged (May 8, 2024). Only in the next report, which provided the same data, was it clarified that the figures came from the ministry of health in Gaza and included only identified deaths of the total number (May 13, 2024).

Aid for the Gaza Strip

- ▶The United States Army Central Command (CENTCOM) announced the beginning of the operation of the floating pier that was constructed off the coast of the Gaza Strip intended for

the unloading of goods. According to the announcement, humanitarian aid trucks have begun to transport goods to the coastal area. The announcement stated that it was an ongoing multinational effort to provide the Gazans with additional aid by means of a maritime corridor, and that the aid would include goods donated by several countries and humanitarian organizations. The message also stated that American soldiers did not go ashore (CENTCOM X account, May 17, 2024).



**Trucks with humanitarian aid on the floating sea pier off the coast of Gaza
(CENTCOM X account, May 17, 2024)**

- ▶ There is a debate regarding the volume of aid transferred to the Gaza Strip:
 - ◆ According to CENTCOM, 569 tons of humanitarian aid have been brought in through the pier since the beginning of its activity (CENTCOM X account, May 21, 2024).
 - ◆ Reuters quoted a UN official as saying that the agency had not received aid shipments through the pier for two days after 11 of 16 food trucks had been looted before reaching the World Food Program warehouses in Deir al-Balah. A UN spokeswoman confirmed that no aid shipments had arrived through the pier on Sunday and Monday (Reuters, May 20, 2024).
 - ◆ The Israeli Coordinator of Government Activities in the Territories (COGAT) reported 300 pallets of humanitarian aid had been transferred on the first day of the pier's operation. He also reported the opening of two new crossings, the Erez West Crossing and the Erez East Crossing. They are designated for the transfer of humanitarian aid to the northern Gaza Strip and join the ongoing transfer from the port of Ashdod, Jordan and Judea and Samaria through the Kerem Shalom Crossing in the southern Gaza Strip and by airlifts from the Egyptian Rafah airport. According to the COGAT, 422 trucks delivered humanitarian aid on May 19, and 402 trucks the following day (COGAT X account, May 17 to 20, 2024).



The map of the humanitarian routes to the Gaza Strip (COGAT X account, May 17, 2024)

- ▶ Hamas issued a statement on behalf of all "resistance" [terrorist] organizations claiming the right of the Palestinians to receive all the assistance they needed, and making it clear that they were opposed to the military presence of any force on Palestinian lands. According to the statement, any route for the delivery of humanitarian aid, including the pier, is not an alternative to opening all the land crossings under Palestinian supervision (Hamas Telegram channel in Judea and Samaria, May 17, 2024).
- ▶ The Hamas government media information office in the Gaza Strip said that the United States government was trying to prettify its "ugly image" and represent itself as civilized by building a floating pier off the coast of Gaza. The office claimed the pier did not meet the Gazans' food needs and delivering food through it only gave Israel a chance to continue the war (Quds Press, May 17, 2024).
- ▶ Fatah spokesman Abd al-Fattah Doula claimed that in light of Israel's control over the Rafah Crossing, operating the floating pier off the Gaza coast perpetuated the "occupation" of the crossing and the complete isolation of the Strip. He added that the most effective ways to help the Gaza Strip were to stop the "aggression" and the bloodshed and not to control the Rafah Crossing, which is the main gateway for aid, or to open all the crossings. He called on the Gazans to be alert to any attempt to use it as a way to displace them (Rai al-Youm, May 18, 2024).
- ▶ The PFLP stated that the construction of the pier was a cause for concern, and warned against the dangers of using it to implement other goals and plans, such as displacing Gazans or protecting Israel rather than delivering aid. The PFLP noted the need to open all the crossings, including the Rafah Crossing, as an alternative to the pier and to ensure the flow of aid to the Gaza Strip without restrictions or conditions (PFLP website, May 18, 2024).

The situation in the Gaza Strip

►The ministry of health in Gaza has warned of a shortage of medicines and equipment necessary to provide emergency and regular medical services. According to the ministry, its stocks are running out, which could endanger patients' lives. The ministry called on international organizations to deliver medical aid (ministry of health in Gaza Facebook page, May 20, 2024).

►With the activity of the IDF forces in east Rafah, the city municipality reported that its crews continued their routine activities. Pictures were uploaded to social networks showing municipality cleaning crews working in Rafah's western neighborhoods. It was noted the IDF had instructed the municipality not to operate in the neighborhoods in the east or in the city center (Rafah municipality Facebook page, May 19, 2024).



Rafah municipality crews remove trash in the west of the city (Rafah municipality Facebook page, May 19, 2024)

►In east Khan Yunis, the emergency committee of Abasan al-Jadeeda continued to open streets to traffic and repair the water grid, which had been damaged during the activities of the IDF forces (Facebook page of the Abasan al-Jadeeda municipality, May 15 and 19, 2024).

►Palestinian media reported on the continued closure of the Rafah and Kerem Shalom Crossings and warned of a "humanitarian disaster." According to the media, the Kerem Shalom Crossing has been closed since May 5 and the Rafah Crossing since May 7, when IDF forces took control of it. Therefore, according to the Palestinian media, due to the current situation, so far the entry of 3,000 aid trucks through the two crossings and the exit of 700 sick and wounded for treatment abroad have been prevented (al-Quds, May 20, 2024). The COGAT reported that the Kerem Shalom Crossing was open and that humanitarian aid to the Gaza Strip passed through it every day (COGAT X account, May 20, 2024).

Isma'il Haniyeh and the Islamic Resistance in Iraq

► **Isma'il Haniyeh, head of Hamas' political bureau**, spoke with Abu Hussein al-Hamidawi, the secretary general of the Hezbollah Brigades.² Haniyeh praised Iraq and the support of the Islamic Resistance in Iraq for the Palestinian people. He said that the issue of "Palestine" was a point of agreement for the Islamic nation and that Operation al-Aqsa Flood [the Gaza Strip War] was a major turning point in the Palestinian issue. Al-Hamidawi said the Gaza Strip provided an example disproving the pretense of those who claimed lack of resources and weakness, and laid the foundations for the action of "the oppressed against the arrogant." He added that one of the blessings of Operation al-Aqsa Flood was the rapid return of Iraq to the circle of the Islamic-Arab-Zionist conflict, and promised that the Islamic Resistance in Iraq would spare neither nor blood nor money to support "Palestine" (Hamas website, May 17, 2024).

► Isma'il Haniyeh met in Doha, Qatar, with Muthanna Harith al-Dhari, the head of the political department of the Sunni Association of Muslim Religious Scholars in Iraq, and a number of senior organization members. Haniyeh expressed appreciation for the Association's positions regarding "Palestine" and the Palestinian cause. Al-Dhari praised the "resistance" and the firm stance of the Palestinian people, and said that the Iraqi people and the Association of Muslim Religious Scholars in Iraq stood by the Gaza Strip and Operation al-Aqsa Flood (Hamas website, May 17, 2024).



Haniyeh (to the right of the white flag) meets with al-Dhari (Hamas website, May 17, 2024)

² A Shi'ite pro-Iranian militia.

Al-Nakhalah meets with a delegation of the Hamas leadership

► **Ziyad al-Nakhalah, PIJ secretary general**, met in Cairo with a Hamas delegation which included Khalil al-Haya, deputy chairman of the Hamas political bureau in the Gaza Strip; Muhammad Nasr and Usama Hamdan. Also present at the meeting was Akram al-Ajouri, a member of the PIJ's political bureau. They noted the Palestinian people's firm stance against Israel in Operation al-Aqsa Flood and their solidarity with the "resistance." They reportedly expressed appreciation for the role of the "support fronts" in Lebanon [Hezbollah], Yemen [the Houthis] and Iraq [the pro-Iranian militias], which provided a new "equation" in the conflict with Israel (PIJ media information office, May 15, 2024).



Ziyad al-Nakhalah meets with the Hamas delegation (PIJ media information office, May 15, 2024)

Reactions to the death of the Iranian president

► Hamas expressed deep sorrow over the death of Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi, Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein-Amir Abdollahian and other senior figures in a helicopter crash, and expressed its full sympathy with the Iranian people. Senior Hamas members thanked Iran for its military and financial support over the years (swissinfo in Arabic, May 20, 2024).

► On the other hand, extreme joy was also expressed. Sheikh Majdi al-Mughrabi, a Salafist sheikh from Rafah who is opposed to Iranian intervention in the Arab countries in general and in the Gaza Strip particular, distributed pastries in Rafah as a sign of joy over the death of the Iranian president (Sheikh Majdi al-Mughrabi's X account, May 20, 2024).



Right: Sheikh Majdi al-Mughrabi expresses his joy at the death of Ebrahim Raisi. Left: Distributing pastries in Rafah (Sheikh Majdi al-Mughrabi's X account, May 20, 2024)

Israel, Judea and Samaria

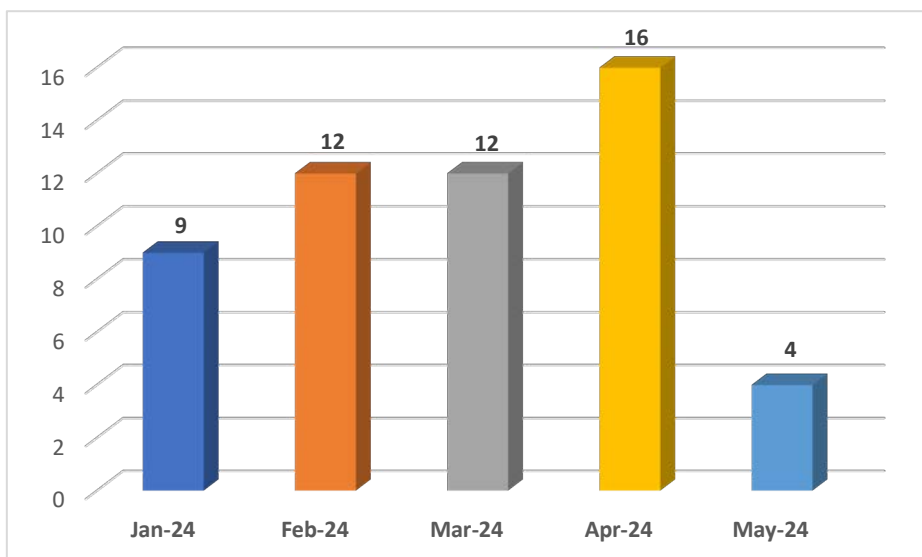
Terrorist attacks

- ▶ On the morning of May 16, 2024, a Palestinian arrived at the Yitzhar Junction, (south of Nablus) and stabbed an IDF soldier sitting in his car. The terrorist fled the scene and was captured in Awarta, south of Nablus, after a three-hour chase. The IDF soldier was slightly injured (IDF spokesman, May 16, 2024).
- ▶ On the morning of May 19, 2024, a Palestinian arrived at the checkpoint near Abu Dis, east of Jerusalem, pulled out a sharp object and ran towards the Border Guard fighters while shouting "Allahu Akbar." He was shot and killed. He was Rami Muhammad Musa Hiyan, 44 years old from the village of Beit Fajjar, and according to reports his weapon was a screwdriver (Israeli media, May 19, 2024).
- ▶ Before dawn on May 16, 2024, police officers arrested a suspicious man near the Shalem station in east Jerusalem. As the police attempted to carry out a security check, he pulled out a knife and attacked one of the officers. He was shot and killed (Israeli media, May 16, 2024) According to the Palestinian media, he was Nur Nizar Shehabi, 17 years old, from the al-Sawana neighborhood in east Jerusalem (Wafa, May 16, 2024).



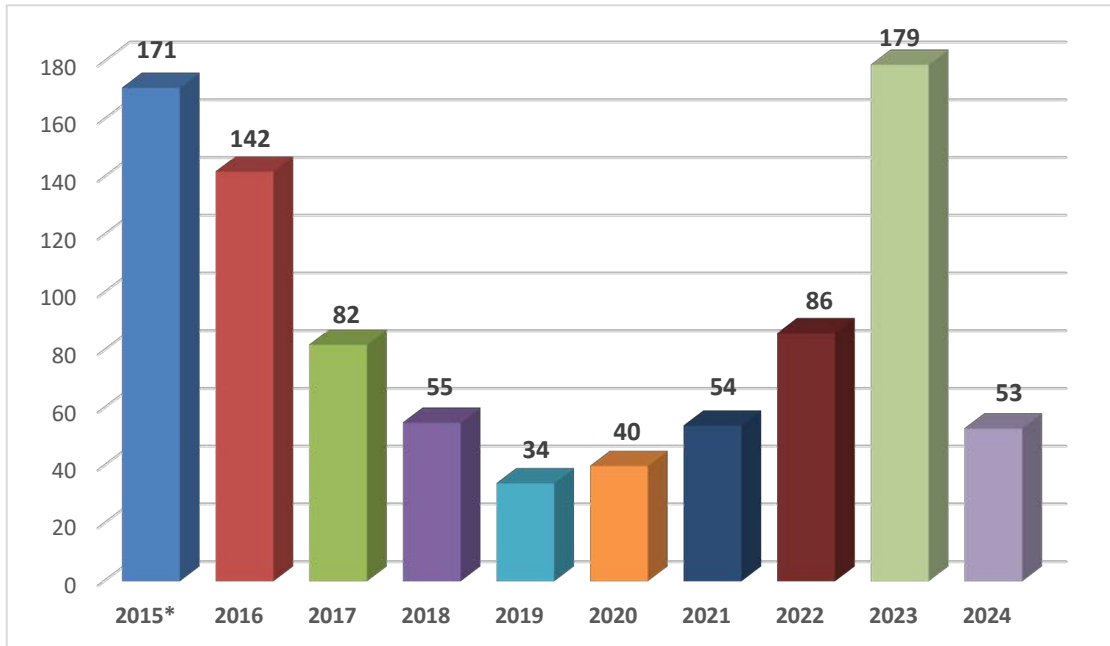
Right: The attempted attack in east Jerusalem (Israel Police Force spokesperson's unit, May 16, 2024). Left: The attempted attack near Abu Dis (police Israel Police Force spokesperson's unit, May 19, 2024)

Critical terrorist attacks, 2024³



³ 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.

Annual distribution of critical terrorist attacks



Counterterrorism activities

►The security forces continued their counterterrorism activities in Judea and Samaria, **focusing on the Jenin refugee camp**. An extensive operation was carried out in the camp and there was an unusual attack of air force aircraft, including a fighter jet. Since the beginning of the war, approximately 4,000 wanted persons have been detained in Judea and Samaria, of whom more than 1,700 are Hamas operatives (IDF spokesperson X account, May 16, 2024):

►On the morning of May 21, the IDF began an extensive activity in the Jenin refugee camp; 30 Palestinian terrorists were reported injured (Israeli media, May 21, 2024). Palestinians reported seven dead and 15 wounded during a heavy exchange of fire between armed men and the security forces, and reported that the IDF had deployed large forces to the Jenin area (Ma'an, May 21, 2024). It was also reported that many armed Palestinians from the Jenin area responded to the calls and arrived at the refugee camp to confront the Israeli forces. The Palestinian media published photos IEDs' being detonated to attack IDF vehicles and bulldozers (QudsN X account May 21, 2024).



Right: Israeli security force activity in the Jenin refugee camp. Left: Detonation of an explosive device to attack an IDF vehicle (QudsN X account, May 21, 2024)

- ◆ On May 18, an Israeli Air Force fighter jet and attack helicopter attacked a building used as an operations room by a terrorist network in Jenin and where several terrorist operatives were hiding. Islam Khamaisa was killed; he had been responsible for a series of terrorist attacks, including a shooting attack in which an Israeli citizen was murdered in Hermesh in May 2023 (IDF spokesperson, May 18, 2024). The Jenin Battalion of the PIJ's military-terrorist wing announced the death of Islam Khamaisa, "senior commander and member of the Jenin Battalion's military council, who was responsible for the death of several Israelis" (@jenencamb Telegram channel, May 18, 2024). The PIJ said the use of aircraft to attack "a residential building" in Jenin was a dangerous development which could not be ignored (PIJ media information office Telegram channel, May 18, 2024).



Right: Islam Khamaisa (@quds_feed X account, May 18, 2024). Left: Islam Khamaisa's funeral (al-Quds, May 18, 2024)

- ◆ On the night of May 15, 2024, the Israeli security forces conducted a targeted operation to seize funds used to finance terrorist activities. They raided the offices a currency exchange company which transferred millions of shekels from abroad to terrorist organizations, including Hamas and the PIJ. The forces raided the company's offices in Tulkarm, Arabe, Qalqilya, Nablus, Ramallah, Bethlehem, Jericho, Tubas and Hebron.

During the operation, large quantities shekels and foreign currency were seized. In Tulkarm the forces killed three operatives who had planted explosives (Israel Police Force X account, May 16, 2024; IDF spokesperson's Telegram channel, May 16, 2024). The Palestinian media reported that Israeli security forces had raided the offices of the al-Khaleej exchange company, which operates branches in the PA territories, and detained employees for questioning. The forces also raided Fakhr al-Din currency exchange company in the town of Atil in the Tulkarm District (Wafa, May 16, 2024; al-Araby al-Jadeed May 16, 2024). The ministry of health in Ramallah reported that the dead in Tulkarm were Ayman Ahmed Mubarak, 26 years old; Hussam Imad Dabas, 22 years old; and Mohammed Yusuf Nasrallah, 27 years old (Wafa, May 16, 2024).

► **Firas Milhem, chairman of the Palestinian Monetary Authority**, condemned the security forces' raids of the currency exchange offices. He claimed the offices were closely supervised by the Palestinian Monetary Authority, therefore there was no justification for the action. He alleged that the purpose of the Israeli action was to damage the Palestinian "banking industry" and public trust in it (Palestinian Monetary Authority Facebook page, May 16, 2024).



Right: The office of the Fakhr al-Din exchange company in Atil after the raid by the forces (Filastin al-Yawm TV X account, May 16, 2024). Left: Funds confiscated in the raids (Israel Police Force X account, May 16, 2024)

The Palestinian Authority (PA)

Mahmoud Abbas at the Arab League Conference in Bahrain

► On May 15, 2024, Mahmoud Abbas arrived in Manama, the capital of Bahrain, to participate in the 33rd Arab League summit meeting. He was accompanied by Hussein al-Sheikh, secretary of the PLO's Executive Committee, Muhammad Mustafa, PA prime minister and foreign minister, and Majdi al-Khaldi, Mahmoud Abbas' diplomatic advisor. On the sidelines of the convention, Mahmoud Abbas met with Arab leaders, including President al-Sisi of Egypt, King Abdullah of

Jordan and King Hamad bin Issa al-Khalifa of Bahrain. He reviewed the situation in the Palestinian arena, the efforts to end the war in the Gaza Strip and the PA's difficult financial situation (Wafa, May 15 and 16, 2024). Meeting with Mikhail Bogdanov, Russian deputy foreign minister and the Russian president's envoy to the Middle East, he thanked him for Russia's support for the Palestinians and noted that the PA would will continue its efforts to obtain full UN membership (Wafa, May 15, 2024).

►Mahmoud Abbas gave a speech at the meeting in which he related to a number of issues (Wafa, May 16, 2024):

- ◆**Arab countries' relations with Israel:** He called on the Arab countries to examine their relations with Israel, and linked their continued relations to the cessation of Israel's actions against the Palestinians.
- ◆**The war in the Gaza Strip:** He claimed during a period of more than seven months about 120,000 Palestinians,⁴ most of them women and children, had died or were injured under the auspices of American support, violating international legitimacy, norms and morals.
- ◆**Public criticism of Hamas:** He stated that Hamas' refusal to end the schism and return to the fold of Palestinian legitimacy served the Israeli government's plan to perpetuate the separation of the Gaza Strip from Judea and Samaria to prevent the establishment of a Palestinian state and weaken the PA and the PLO. He claimed the unilaterally-decided "military action" [terrorist attack and massacre] carried out by Hamas on October 7, 2023 provided Israel with "additional reasons" to attack the Gaza Strip.
- ◆**The PA's financial situation:** He pointed out that despite the establishment of a government of technocrats whose goal was to develop and reorganize the PA institutions and improve its financial situation, so far it has not received the financial assistance required to achieve its goals. He blamed Israel for continuing to delay the transfer of the Palestinian revenue funds to the PA. Therefore, he called on the Arab countries to activate the Arab security net to enable the PA government could carry out its duties.
- ◆**Global support demonstrations [i.e., anti-Israel demonstrations]:** He praised the international protest demonstrations, especially in universities in America and Europe, for Palestinian rights and to stop the war in the Strip.

►In response to Mahmoud Abbas' criticism, the Hamas movement stated that it regretted the statements and noted that the "Zionist enemy," which had been [allegedly] "terrorizing and

⁴ About 105,000 according to Hamas.

torturing" the Palestinians for more than 76 years, did not wait for excuses to commit crimes against them. The announcement emphasized that Operation al-Aqsa Flood was extremely important for the Palestinian "struggle" (Hamas Telegram channel, May 16, 2024).

►The closing statement of the Arab League summit meeting called on all Palestinian organizations to unite under the PLO, emphasizing that the war in the Gaza Strip had to be stopped and it was urgent that the IDF withdraw immediately. It also called for international defense and peacekeeping forces to be stationed in "Palestine" until the two-state solution was implemented. The statement also condemned Israel's takeover of the Palestinian side of the Rafah Crossing and claimed that the objective of war waged by Israel in the Gaza Strip was to destroy it completely (al-Arabiya, May 16, 2024).



Right: Mahmoud Abbas gives a speech at the Arab League summit meeting in Bahrain. Left: Attendees of the 33rd Arab League summit meeting in Bahrain (Wafa, May 16, 2024)

al-Sheikh and Mustafa meet with Jack Sullivan

►Hussein al-Sheikh, secretary of the PLO's Executive Committee, and PA Prime Minister **Muhammad Mustafa**, met with Jack Sullivan, the United States national security advisor, and discussed the consequences of the war in the Gaza Strip. Al-Sheikh called for an end to the war and to force Israel to open all the crossings, deliver humanitarian aid and stop its operations in the PA territories, including the confiscation of funds. He also said there was no alternative to a political solution which would end the [alleged] "occupation" and lead to the establishment of a Palestinian state (Wafa, May 20, 2024). "Informed sources" said that the meeting was tense and difficult because Sullivan made them the recipients of the American administration's sharp criticism of the PA's conduct (al-Quds, May 21, 2024).

The International Criminal Court in The Hague

►Kareem Khan, the prosecutor general of the International Criminal Court (ICC) in The Hague, announced he requested arrest warrants on suspicion of war crimes be issued for Yahya al-Sinwar, head of the Hamas political bureau in the Gaza Strip, Muhammed Deif, the commander of Hamas' military-terrorist wing, Isma'il Haniyeh, head of Hamas' political bureau, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Israeli Minister of Defense Yoav Gallant. A panel of ICC judges will examine the request (Account X of the International Criminal Court, May 20, 2024).

►**Wasil Abu Yusuf, a member of the PLO's Executive Committee**, claimed that the prosecutor general's request confused the victim and the hangman. He claimed that the Court had to issue arrest warrants against the Israeli officials who were continuing the [alleged] crime of "genocide" in the Gaza Strip to stop them (swissinfo website, May 20, 2024).

►**Ahmed Majdalani, a member of the PLO Executive Committee**, praised the prosecutor's request. He said that it was a step in the right direction, although it had come very late (Sputnik website in Arabic, May 20, 2024).

►In response to the request for arrest warrants for senior Hamas members, **senior Hamas member Sami Abu Zuhri** said it compared the victim to the hangman. He also claimed that the decision encouraged Israel to continue the [alleged] "war of extermination" in the Gaza Strip (Reuters, May 20, 2024).

►The PIJ said in a statement that the prosecutor "made do with" the request for arrest warrants for Netanyahu and Gallant, ignoring hundreds of actions by Israeli military forces since October 7, 2023, adding that it was a small, late step in the right direction. The announcement condemned the recommendation to issue arrest warrants for three Hamas leaders (PIJ media info office Telegram channel, May 20, 2024).

►On May 16 and 17, 2024, the International Court of Justice (ICJ) in The Hague held a hearing on South Africa's new request to issue an order to stop the war because of the IDF operation in east Rafah. The request was submitted as part of the South African lawsuit accusing Israel of committing "genocide" in the Gaza Strip. Representatives of South Africa claimed that Rafah was the last refuge for the citizens of the Gaza Strip from IDF attacks. Israeli representatives responded to the claims and said that in Rafah there were hundreds of tunnels and rocket launch sites and Israeli hostages were being held in the city. The tribunal's judges have not yet decided whether to accept South Africa's request. Egypt expressed support for the request, and Turkey announced that it would seek to join it.

►Mahmoud Abbas' office welcomed the discussion in The Hague and accused Israel of breaking international law. The office also thanked South Africa for its initiative and indicated that it would continue to cooperate with it and its allies in legal efforts to prevent "genocide" (Wafa, May 16, 2024).

Opening the Gilboa Crossing for Israeli Arabs on the weekends

►Israel's security establishment has approved the reopening of the al-Jalameh (Gilboa) Crossing on weekends for Israeli Arabs to enter Jenin. The crossing has been closed since October 7, 2023. The move is meant to allow Israeli Arabs to shop in Jenin and help improve the Palestinian economy (Israeli media, May 17, 2024).

►**Amer Abu Yaish, head of the Jenin Chamber of Commerce**, said he hoped opening the crossing would contribute to reviving Palestinian economy in the Jenin District, since Israeli Arabs spend about 15 million NIS (about \$4,100,000) a day in the Jenin market (Wafa YouTube channel, May 17, 2024).



Opening the Gilboa crossing (Wafa YouTube channel, May 17, 2024)