



Spotlight on the Israel-Palestinian Conflict

September 10 - 17 , 2024

Overview¹

- ▶ **The southern arena:** IDF forces continued their activities in the southern and central Gaza Strip, including attacks on Hamas facilities operating in civilian compounds. The IDF announced the collapse of Hamas' Rafah Brigade and the destruction of 80% of all the tunnels on the Philadelphi Axis. Two IDF soldiers were killed and seven injured in a helicopter crash.
- ▶ **The hostages and the ceasefire agreement:** Hamas held talks with the mediators from Egypt and Qatar, stating it adhered to the outline agreed upon on July 2, 2024 and would not accept new demands from Israel.
- ▶ **The situation in the Gaza Strip:** The first phase of the drive to vaccinate Gazan children against polio ended and 90% of all children have received the first dose. In coordination with Israel, more than a hundred sick and wounded Palestinians were evacuated for treatment outside the Gaza Strip.
- ▶ Hamas published letters sent by Yahya al-Sinwar, head of the Hamas political bureau in the Gaza Strip, for the first time since he took office.
- ▶ **"The day after:"** A senior Hamas figure stated that the movement was interested in having a Palestinian national consensus government manage the Gaza Strip after the war, adding that the organizations would hold a meeting to promote a common vision.
- ▶ **Israel, Judea and Samaria:** This past week Palestinians carried out two terrorist attacks; an IDF soldier was killed. The Israeli security forces continued their counterterrorism activities throughout Judea and Samaria.
- ▶ **Palestinian Authority (PA):** The PA representative to the UN attended a General Assembly session, following the upgrading of the status of the "State of Palestine."

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The Southern Arena

IDF operations in the Gaza Strip

- ▶ This past week the IDF continued its activities in the Rafah region in the southern Gaza Strip and in the Netzarim Corridor in the central Gaza Strip. The forces attacked terrorist operatives from the air and on the ground, destroyed terrorist facilities and tunnels, and located weapons. Two IDF soldiers were killed, and seven other individuals were injured when a technical malfunction caused an Israeli Air Force helicopter to crash during the evacuation of a wounded person soldier in the Rafah region (IDF spokesperson, September 11, 2024)
- ▶ The IDF spokesperson reported that in the three months of activity in Rafah, more than 2,000 terrorist operatives had been killed, including the commanders of Hamas' Tel al-Sultan Battalion, and that Hamas' Rafah Brigade had collapsed. In addition, 13 kilometers of tunnels were destroyed, including 80% of all the tunnels in the area of the Philadelphi Axis (IDF spokesperson, September 12, 2024).



The areas of activity of IDF forces in Rafah (IDF spokesperson, September 12, 2024)

Attacks on Hamas terrorists in civilian facilities

- ▶ This past week Israeli Air Force aircraft continued to attack terrorist operatives and facilities operating in civilian sites in the Gaza Strip to plan and carry out terrorist attacks on IDF forces and the State of Israel. In every instance, preliminary steps were taken to reduce possible harm to civilians. The use of civilian facilities such as schools and hospitals for terrorist purposes is typical of the activities of the terrorist organizations in the Gaza Strip, especially Hamas, and the terrorist organizations exploit IDF attacks on the "civilian facilities" for propaganda and incitement purposes. They exaggerate the number of civilian casualties and their injuries, in most instances hiding the identities of the terrorists who were attacked:

- ◆ On September 10, 2024, the IDF attacked a Hamas command and control center in a building that had previously served as the al-Farouq Mosque in the al-Bureij region of the

central Gaza Strip. Operatives used the site to orchestrate and carry out terrorist attacks on IDF forces and the State of Israel (IDF spokesperson, September 10, 2024). Palestinian media reported that two people had been killed in the attack on the al-Farouq Mosque in the al-Bureij refugee camp (al-Aqsa TV Telegram channel, September 10, 2024).

- ◆ On September 11, 2024, the IDF attacked a Hamas command and control center in a building that had previously been the al-Ja'ouni School in al-Nuseirat in the central Gaza Strip. The attack killed a number of Hamas terrorist operatives, some of whom were employed by UNRWA (IDF spokesperson's Telegram channel, September 11, 2024). Palestinian media reported 15 dead in the attack on the al-Ja'ouni School (Palestinian media center, September 11, 2024). UNRWA claimed that six of its employees had been killed in two attacks on and in the vicinity of the school (UNRWA X account, September 12, 2024). The IDF spokesperson stated that at least nine Hamas terrorist operatives had been identified as killed in the attack, including three UNRWA employees (IDF spokesperson, September 12, 2024).
- ◆ On September 14, the IDF attacked a Hamas command and control center at the site which used to be the Shuhadaa al-Zeitoun School in Gaza City (IDF spokesperson, September 14, 2024). Palestinian media reported that five people had been killed in the attack (Quds Agency, September 14, 2024).
- ◆ On September 14, 2024, two buildings in the al-Furqan region of Gaza were attacked, near a shelter that had previously served as a school. Hamas used the buildings to manufacture explosives and carry out terrorist activities (IDF Telegram channel, September 14, 2024). "Local officials" in Gaza claimed that the attack caused plastic to burn, which destroyed a factory for the production of recycled diesel fuel and that five of its workers were killed (al-Sharq al-Awsat, September 14, 2024).
- ◆ On September 15, 2024, the IDF attacked a Hamas command and control center at the site which had previously been the Ghazi al-Shawa School in Beit Hanoun in the northern Gaza Strip. The center had recently been used as a hideout and as a location for the preparation of rockets used to attack IDF forces and the State of Israel (IDF spokesperson, September 15, 2024).
- ◆ On September 16, 2024, Ahmed Aish Salama al-Hashash, the commander of the Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) rocket unit, was killed in the humanitarian area in Khan

Yunis, from where he fired rockets into Israeli territory (IDF spokesperson, September 17, 2024).

Rocket fire from the Gaza Strip

►On September 14, 2024, two rockets were fired at Ashqelon from the northern Gaza Strip. One was intercepted and the other fell into the sea (IDF spokesperson, September 8, 2024).

The hostages and a ceasefire agreement

►On September 11, 2024, Hamas said that Khalil al-Haya, deputy chairman of the Hamas political bureau in the Gaza Strip, met in Doha with Mohammed bin Abdulrahman, the Qatari prime minister, and Abbas Kamal, the head of the Egyptian General Intelligence. According to reports, Hamas claimed it was prepared to demonstrate "positivity and flexibility" in order to reach an agreement, but it still adhered to the outline to which it agreed on July 2, 2024, and is not willing to accept new demands from Israel. (Hamas movement Telegram channel September 11, 2024).

►"Sources familiar with the negotiation process" reported that Egypt and Qatar told the United States that they thought it was possible to hold a discussion with Hamas and soften its position on the negotiations, but called on the American administration to soften Israel's position. However, "Egyptian officials" warned that a return to negotiations without a timeframe would lead to a regional escalation (al-Akhbar, September 13, 2024).

►On September 13, 2024, senior members of the Hamas political bureau met in Ankara with Ibrahim Kalin, the head of Turkish intelligence, to discuss the latest developments in the negotiations. According to "security sources," the meeting dealt with the final stage of the negotiations and the practical steps required to guarantee a permanent ceasefire and humanitarian aid to the Gaza Strip. According to reports, Hamas expressed a positive position towards the negotiations, but claimed that Israel's introduction of new conditions to the proposal had caused difficulties in reaching an agreement. The head of the Turkish intelligence said that he would continue holding contacts with all parties (Anadolu Agency, September 13, 2024).

The Gaza Strip

Palestinian casualties

►**The Hamas-controlled ministry of health in the Gaza Strip** reported that since the beginning of the war, 41,252 Palestinians had been killed and 95,497 injured (ministry of health in Gaza Facebook page, September 17, 2024).

The situation in the Gaza Strip

►On September 12, 2024, the World Health Organization conducted the largest medical evacuation from the Gaza Strip since the beginning of the war: 97 sick and seriously wounded Gazans, including 45 children, and 155 escorts, passed through the Kerem Shalom Crossing and were taken to the Ilan and Asaf Ramon International Airport in the south of Israel, and from there flew to Abu Dhabi for medical treatment. Eight of the patients and 12 escorts were transferred in a special operation from Gaza City to the European Hospital in Khan Yunis in preparation for the evacuation (Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus X account, September 12, 2024).



Evacuation of the patients (Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus X account, September 12, 2024)

►On September 13, 2024, the ministry of health in Ramallah announced the end of the first phase of the drive to vaccinate Gazan children against polio. The operation lasted 12 days, during which approximately 560,000 children under the age of ten were vaccinated, 86% of the drive's target. According to the ministry, the second phase of the operation, in which the children would be given the second dose of the vaccine, would begin within two to four weeks (ministry of health in Ramallah, September 14, 2024). Philippe Lazzarini, UNRWA commissioner, stated that the first round of the drive had been completed successfully and that 90% of the children received the first dose of the vaccine. He called for humanitarian pauses during the second round to allow it to take place safely (Philippe Lazzarini's X account, September 16, 2024).

►Palestinian "sources" reported that a large number of bakeries in Gaza City and the northern Gaza Strip had closed because Israel had recently prevented the delivery of fuel and raw materials necessary for the production of bread (Palestinian media center Telegram channel, September 15, 2024). The chairman of the board of directors of Kamal Ajjur Bakeries in Gaza City claimed that five of the company's six bakeries in Gaza City and the northern Gaza Strip were closed because Israel prevented fuel and essential raw materials from being delivered to

the Gaza Strip. He warned that if the situation continued, the only bakery still operative might have to shut its doors within a week (Anadolu Agency, September 15, 2024).



Closed bakery in Gaza City (Quds Agency Telegram channel, September 15, 2024)

►The Hamas media office in the Gaza Strip reported that two million displaced persons were in danger because of the approaching winter. According to the office, 74% of the tents in which the displaced lived were unfit for use and should be replaced immediately, and the winter could worsen the situation of displaced Gazans who would be left without shelter. The office called on the international community to help bring tents into the Gaza Strip (Hamas government media office, September 14, 2024).

Hamas governance in the Gaza Strip

►Fayiz Abu Shamala, a political commentator who lives in the Gaza Strip, tweeted his criticism of the local police's dysfunction. He wrote, "Where did the police in Khan Yunis go? Did they resign? What do they feel when they see ambulances stuck between vendors and stalls, and the wounded inside are bleeding? Do the police know that your way to the Nasser Medical Center was blocked by a young boy who sells ice water? Can't the Khan Yunis police remove young boys from the street corners; do your work, so we know you exist!" (Fayiz Abu Shamala's X account, September 11, 2024). According to it some responses, if the policemen went out in uniform to maintain order, Israel would bomb and kill them. Others suggested establishing popular committees to deal with the problem.

Hamas reveals letters sent by Yahya al-Sinwar

►Last week, Hamas published a number of letters allegedly written by Yahya al-Sinwar, head of the Hamas political bureau in the Gaza Strip, for the first time since he was appointed to the position in August 2024 following the killing of Isma'il Haniyeh. He wrote:

- ◆ A letter of congratulation to Abdel-Majid Thaboun, president-elect of Algeria, following his victory in the elections. He praised Algeria's role in standing by the Palestinian people

and defending their rights in international forums (Hamas Telegram channel, September 10, 2024).

- ◆ A letter acknowledging and thanking all the leaders and officials who sent condolences on the death of Isma'il Haniyeh. According to reports, Hamas claimed "its leadership would remain strong and loyal to the blood of the shaheeds and the principles of the shaheed Haniyeh" (al-Aqsa TV Telegram channel, September 11, 2024).

- ◆ A letter to Hassan Nasrallah, secretary general of Hezbollah, expressing his appreciation for Nasrallah's condolences following the killing of Haniyeh and acknowledging Hezbollah's solidarity with the "support fronts" of the "resistance axis."² Al-Sinwar added that Hamas would remain faithful to Haniyeh's principles and the path of jihad and "the resistance," and was committed to the unity of the "resistance axis" (al-'Ahed, September 13, 2024).

- ◆ A letter to Abd al-Malik al-Houthi, the leader of the Houthis, welcoming the launch of the ballistic missile to attack central Israel on September 15, 2024, claiming the operation "introduces the heart of Tel Aviv to the radiance of combat." He claimed the "resistance" was in good condition and that the publications about its weakening were "psychological warfare." He added that the "resistance" was prepared for a war of attrition and would also "break the enemy's political will just as it broke its military will" (Hamas Telegram channel, September 16, 2024).

- ▶ "Arab mediators for a ceasefire" said that al-Sinwar used a complex system of messengers to direct the movement's operations from his hiding place in the Gaza Strip. They claimed he relied on a system he used when he was imprisoned in Israel and his messages were coded, written by hand and transmitted to a trusted Hamas member and from him to a chain of messengers, some of whom were not necessarily Hamas operatives. After that, the message was passed on to an Arab mediator who entered the Gaza Strip or an operative of the movement, and from there to the "external" Hamas leadership (The Wall Street Journal, September 16, 2024).

²Iran, Syria, Hezbollah, the Palestinian organizations, the Shi'ite Houthis in Yemen and the pro-Iranian militias in Iraq.

"The Day After"

- ▶ Senior Hamas figure Osama Hamdan stated that after the war the movement wanted the Gaza Strip to be governed by a Palestinian national consensus government, of which Hamas would be a part, in accordance with the agreements made at the reconciliation meeting of the Palestinian organizations held in Beijing in July 2024. He said that "the day after the campaign has to be Palestinian," adding that a meeting of the Palestinian organizations would soon be held in Cairo to discuss a common vision for the day after the war (al-Jazeera, September 15, 2024, al-Araby TV, September 16, 2024).
- ▶ A "high-ranking source in the Palestinian resistance" stated that the Palestinian organizations were holding intensive consultations regarding the establishment of a national unity government based on the results of the Beijing conference. He added that if it became impossible to form a government, a committee would be established to manage the Gaza Strip within the framework of "national unity" (al-Mayadeen, September 12, 2024).
- ▶ Hamas announced that meetings had been held with representatives of other Palestinian organizations in the Gaza Strip regarding the national unity government:
 - ◆ Hamas met with the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP) to discuss issues related to the war in the Gaza Strip. The parties agreed to continue coordinating and confirmed that any agreement with Israel had to meet all the Palestinian demands (Hamas Telegram channel, September 11, 2024).
 - ◆ Hamas met with the Arab Liberation Front and the Palestinian Liberation Front. They agreed that all the "demands of the Palestinian people" had to be met, primarily a cessation of "aggression, a complete Israeli withdrawal from the Gaza Strip and its reconstruction, the lifting of the [so-called Israeli] 'siege' and a 'serious' [prisoner] exchange deal." They also discussed the need to implement the Beijing agreement for the formation of a national consensus government. Hamas said urgent action had to be taken to restore the PLO's reputation and its position in the "leadership of the Palestinian people" (Hamas Telegram channel, September 13, 2024).
- ▶ Muhammad Mustafa, PA prime minister, published an op-ed piece in The Washington Post in which he stated that his government was prepared to assume responsibility for the Gaza Strip after a permanent ceasefire had been reached and to lead the reconstruction efforts. He also referred to the PA "day after" program for the Gaza Strip, which includes immediate aid efforts with the support of international organizations; long-term reconstruction processes that

would be led by an independent agency and would be subject to international standards; restoring law and order to the Strip; the integration of civil institutions and services in Judea, Samaria and the Gaza Strip; and restoring local government capabilities. He called on the international community to provide significant support for the reconstruction of the Gaza Strip, including the restoration of homes, infrastructure and health services (The Washington Post, September 13, 2024).

Israel, Judea and Samaria

Terrorist attacks

► This past week Palestinians carried out two terrorist attacks, in which an IDF soldier was killed and a Border Police fighter was injured:

- ◆ **Vehicle ramming:** On September 11, 2024, a Palestinian terrorist driving a truck sped towards an IDF force conducting an operational activity at the Givat Assaf junction, and killed an IDF soldier. The terrorist was neutralized by IDF forces and an armed civilian (IDF spokesperson, September 11, 2024).



The scene of vehicle ramming (IDF spokesperson, September 11, 2024)

- ◆ **Stabbing:** On September 15, 2024, a Palestinian terrorist stabbed and injured a Border Police fighter with a sharp object at the Nablus Gate in the Old City of Jerusalem. The police forces neutralized the attacker, a resident of Arara in the Negev.
- On September 14, 2024, the Israeli security forces located an explosive device that was disguised as a gas canister near the community of Beit Horon (northwest of Jerusalem), and which was intended to be activated remotely to attack an Israeli vehicle. The device was neutralized with no casualties (Israeli media, September 14, 2024).

Counterterrorism activities

- The Israeli security forces continued their counterterrorism activities in Judea and Samaria:
 - ◆ On September 10, 2024, Israeli security forces began a large-scale operation in Tulkarm and its refugee camps. The forces eliminated terrorist operatives with airstrikes and

exchanges of fire on the ground, including a suspect in the killing of a Border Police fighter in October 2023. The forces also confiscated large quantities of weapons, destroyed explosives laboratories and a lathe, and located a tunnel opening near a hospital in the Tulkarm refugee camp (IDF spokesperson, September 13, 2024). The Jerusalem Brigades, the PIJ's military wing, reported that three of the Tulkarm battalion commanders had been killed in an attack on their vehicles in Tulkarm (Jerusalem Brigades Telegram channel, September 12, 2024). UNRWA claimed that Safian Jawad Fayiz Abd al-Jawad, one of its employees, was killed by security forces in the al-Faraa refugee camp, the first worker of the agency to be killed in Judea and Samaria in a decade (UNRWA website, September 13, 2024). Hamas issued a mourning notice for the death of al-Jawad, calling him a "shaheed of jihad," an epithet awarded terrorist operatives after their death (Hamas in Judea and Samaria Telegram channel, September 12, 2024).

- ◆ On the night of September 10, 2024, Israeli security forces initiated an extensive operation in Tubas and Tamun in the northern Jordan Valley. The forces eliminated terrorist operatives with airstrikes and exchanges of fire on the ground. They also destroyed explosives and neutralized a car bomb in which three explosive charges weighing 80 kgs were hidden (IDF spokesperson, September 11 and 13, 2024). The Jerusalem Brigades, the PIJ's military wing, confirmed that five of its operators who belonged to the production and engineering unit in Tubas had been killed in an airstrike (Jerusalem Brigades Telegram channel, September 13, 2024).



Neutralizing the car bomb in Tubas (Israel Police Force spokesman's unit, September 13, 2024)

- ◆ On September 10, 2024, Israeli security forces prevented the smuggling of weapons from the Jordanian border near the community of Naaran, seizing several handguns and a shotgun (Israel Police Force spokesman's unit, September 10, 2024).

- ◆ On September 12, 2024, Israeli security forces detained a resident of Halhul who was seriously injured while preparing a car bomb near Hebron on August 13, 2024 (Israel Police Force spokesperson's unit, September 12, 2024).

Activities of the Palestinian security forces

► On September 10, 2024, Lt. Gen. Ziyad Hab al-Reeh, PA minister of the interior, visited the Hebron district, where he met with Khaled Dodin, the district governor; and the commanders of the security forces. Hab al-Reeh related to the directives of Mahmoud Abbas and the prime minister, issued with the objective of strengthening the stance of the residents and to improve cooperation between the security forces and the local clans for maintaining stability and civil peace (PA ministry of the interior Facebook page, September 11, 2024). During a meeting with the dignitaries of the district, Ziyad al-Rajoub, a member of Fatah's Revolutionary Council, attacked the "resistance" in northern Samaria and called on the PA to eliminate it. He noted the security forces' loyalty to the PA and demanded that those joining the "resistance" be fired (al-Shahed TV, September 14, 2024). The clan heads warned against being dragged into events in the Gaza Strip and northern Samaria, and expressed their desire to keep Hebron protected from a prolonged blockade like the one in the Gaza Strip (@khalelnews Telegram channel, September 13, 2024). Following the statements against the "resistance," various bodies in Hebron, including youth associations and local clans, published notices of condemnation and disavowed the criticism, claiming that had not been the purpose of the meeting (Safa, September 14, 2024; al-Shahed website, September 15, 2024).



Right: The clan heads meet with the ministry of the interior. Left: Ziyad al-Rajoub (PA ministry of the interior Facebook page, September 11, 2024)

► According to reports, on September 10, 2024, the Palestinian security forces detonated four explosive devices prepared by terrorist operatives at the western entrance of Qabatiya (al-Shahed, September 10, 2024; @qabatiya Telegram channel, September 10, 2024). The Qabatiya engineering unit, which belongs to the PIJ's Jerusalem Brigades, accused the PA of

detonating explosive devices that had been prepared in advance to attack vehicles of the "Zionist enemy" (Qabatiya engineering unit Telegram channel, September 10, 2024).

►An internet network was exposed in Bethlehem which had engaged in incitement against the Palestinian "resistance" and had justified the "occupation's" actions, while [allegedly] "spreading false information." According to the report, computer experts found that the network was operated by a PA intelligence unit in Ramallah (Bethlehem News Agency's Telegram channel, September 15, 2024).

►On September 17, 2024, the PA security forces in Jenin arrested Taar Lahluh, aka Abu Sunud, who was wanted by Israel ("The Wasp's Nest," Jenin refugee camp Telegram channel, September 17, 2024). Following the arrest, riots broke out between armed Palestinians and the operatives of the PA security forces in Jenin (Jenin News Telegram channel, September 17, 2024).

The Palestinian Authority (PA)

Upgrading of the PA's UN status

►On September 10, 2024, Riyad Mansour, the Palestinian delegate to the UN, attended a UN General Assembly session the first time, among the member states, according to alphabetical order. Mansour sat between the representatives of Sudan and Sri Lanka, with a "State of Palestine" sign in front of him. In May 2024, the UN General Assembly decided to upgrade "Palestine" from the status of an "observer non-member" (Wafa, September 12, 2024).



Mansour at the UN General Assembly (Wafa, September 12, 2024)

Attempts to achieve a Fatah-Dahlan reconciliation

►Senior officials in the Fatah movement announced that the Central Committee had decided to attempt reconciliation with all those exiled from the movement, including members of the reformist movement led by Muhammad Dahlan. According to reports, Samir Masharawi, one of Dahlan's senior men, began contacts with senior Fatah figures, but Dahlan himself made it clear that at this stage he had no interest in returning to the movement. It was also reported

that Mahmoud Abbas supported the reconciliation, but emphasized that each case had to be examined individually (al-Sharq, September 11, 2024).

►According to reports, Dahlan set conditions for reconciliation, including the return of those exiled from the Fatah movement, the establishment of a government with broad powers, the return of the PA to the Gaza Strip, and the restoration of payments to those whose salaries had been cut, while he reiterated his position that the decision to remove him from the ranks of the Fatah movement in 2011 was illegitimate (al-Shahed, September 12, 2024).