

Spotlight on Terrorism and the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict August 25 – September 1, 2026

Trending

- ▶ **Hamas is rebuilding its military capabilities.**
- ▶ **The Palestinian Authority is mobilizing Arab and international support against Israel's Palestinian and UNRWA policies.**

Overview¹

- ▶ IDF forces eliminated 20 Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad commanders and terrorists, including operatives involved in the atrocities of the October 7, 2023 terrorist invasion and massacre, and attacked Hamas infrastructure near civilian facilities. The head of Hamas general intelligence was reportedly detained in an operation by Israeli forces and militias in Gaza City, despite Hamas claims that the operation had not been successful.
- ▶ Following Israeli threats, the Board of Peace warned Hamas not to fly kites into Gaza border communities.
- ▶ Board of Peace representative Nikolay Mladenov said preparations for the deployment of the international stabilization force in the Gaza Strip had been completed and Turkey would not participate in it.
- ▶ Hamas forces continued their activity against the Israeli-supported militias.
- ▶ "External" Hamas figures will not be candidates in the elections for the movement leadership in the Gaza Strip.
- ▶ A terrorist operative who belonged to Hamas and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad was eliminated in an airstrike in Jenin.
- ▶ A Palestinian Authority delegation discussed Israel's [allegedly] "illegal measures" with the foreign ministers of Egypt and Jordan.

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 Islamic Jihad deputy secretary general said the organization would not propose candidates for the elections for the Palestinian Legislative Council but would support an agreed-on "national" list.

The Fighting in the Gaza Strip

The IDF

► IDF forces continued destroying terrorist infrastructure and eliminating terrorists throughout the Gaza Strip. Twenty Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) commanders and terrorist operatives were eliminated, including operatives involved in the atrocities of the October 7, 2023 terrorist invasion and massacre and who held hostages in tunnels, and terrorist operatives who assisted in rebuilding the organizations' military wings. A building in the northern Gaza Strip which Hamas used as an ambush point and weapons depot and which was located near a hospital and a school was destroyed (IDF spokesperson, August 25-September 1, 2026). Palestinian sources said that IDF activity included airstrikes, tank and artillery fire, UAVs, signal flares and demolitions, and that several Palestinians had been killed (al-Jazeera Ajel Telegram channel, August 25-29, 2026).



The building attacked in the northern Gaza Strip (IDF spokesperson, August 26, 2026)

► On September 1, 2026, Hamas claimed an Israeli special force had attempted to abduct or assassinate a senior operative in the internal security apparatus in western Gaza City, but Hamas security forces foiled the attempt and exchanged fire with the force. Following the clash, Israeli aircraft attacked the area to enable the force to withdraw, and at least three people were reported killed and eight wounded (Quds and Shehab agencies, al-Sayyad Telegram channel, September 1, 2026). The Israeli defense minister said a senior Hamas terrorist had been detained and Israeli security sources said the head of the Hamas general intelligence had been detained in a joint operation conducted by Israeli security forces and militias supported by Israel (Israeli media, September 1, 2026). The IDF confirmed that several targets had been

attacked to remove threats and there were no Israeli casualties (IDF spokesperson, September 1, 2026).

► The Board of Peace warned Hamas not to fly kites after Israel threatened a forceful response. A senior Board official said all armed activities in the Gaza Strip, including flying kites, had to cease. He added that Israel had to adhere to the ceasefire and military operations could not go beyond responding to real and immediate threats. Reportedly, the Popular Committees, in coordination with Hamas, warned Gaza Strip residents not to allow their children to fly kites following the Israeli threat (Reuters in Arabic, August 25, 2026). Hamas political bureau member Bassem Naim reacted with anger, saying, "What a nerve! To appease Netanyahu, children's innocent games are called armed activities!"² (Bassem Naim's Telegram channel, August 25, 2026).



The caption reads, "After handing over the weapons;" the Arabic on the podium reads, "Netanyahu's excuses," while he says, "We will withdraw from Gaza only after the kites are handed over" (Facebook page of Alaa al-Laqta, Hamas in-house cartoonist, August 28, 2026)

Hamas Rebuilds Its Military Capabilities

► Palestinian sources said the Hamas military wing recently resumed training its naval commando forces. The Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades recruited new operatives and are using the experience of former operatives and surviving field commanders to resume military training for the naval commando forces. The training is limited to small groups, unlike the large-scale training held before the war, and consists of physical fitness exercises without actual military exercises (i24NEWS website, August 27, 2026). The Hamas-affiliated Khallik Wa'i channel claimed the report was baseless, adding that such activity was impossible in light of

² For background information, see the April and July 2018 ITIC reports, [“Molotov kites” – a new means of causing damage to Israel as part of the violent demonstrations of the “Great Return March”](#) and [Institutionalizing arson terrorism: what began as a local initiative has been turned by Hamas into the leading modus operandi in its policy of controlled violence against Israel. Kites are launched under the central direction of Hamas’ military wing, and its operatives participate in the launchings.](#)

the IDF's naval blockade and aerial surveillance along the Gaza coast (Khallik Wa'i Telegram channel, August 28, 2026).

► Footage circulated from the Gaza Strip showed a drone arriving from the direction of the Egyptian border, landing in the Gaza Strip and releasing a cargo of drugs, reportedly. Sources in the Gaza Strip said drones were also used to smuggle weapons and other materials from Egypt and from the direction of the Negev, and organized networks linking parties outside the Strip with Gazan residents and families were behind the activity. Reportedly, the shortage of goods and the risks involved in smuggling have increased the prices of the cargoes and turned the activity into a lucrative industry. The report raised concern that Hamas could exploit the routes to rearm and rebuild damaged capabilities (N12, August 30, 2026).

Negotiations for the Second Phase of the Ceasefire Agreement

► At the UN Security Council, Board of Peace representative Nikolay Mladenov warned that a resumption of the war in the Gaza Strip could bring the sides to a point of no return. He claimed Hamas and the "armed organizations"³ agreed for the first time to hand over all their weapons and transfer civilian and security authority to a transitional administration recognized by the UN. He said disarmament and the Israeli withdrawal would be effected gradually, reciprocally and based on performance rather than a timetable, with full verification. He said progress necessitated the deployment of the international stabilization force, Israel's fulfillment of its commitments under the Sharm el-Sheikh agreement and Hamas compliance with its commitments. He criticized Israeli attacks not intended to remove immediate threats, claiming they delayed demilitarization and the transition to civilian administration, but added that the continued possession of weapons, tunnel activity and interference with convoys also postponed the process (Board of Peace X account, August 26, 2026; U.S. public radio [NPR] website, August 27, 2026).

► Interviewed by Al Jazeera, Mladenov said the international stabilization force's deployment and areas of operation had been determined and the first forces were expected to arrive in the Gaza Strip "soon." He said a formal agreement had been reached with Morocco regarding its participation in the force, while Turkey would not participate. He warned that Israeli and/or Palestinian failure to comply with the roadmap could lead to the collapse of the ceasefire and

³ Terrorist organizations.

undermine security and humanitarian arrangements, adding that a return to war would be devastating for both sides. He also said that commitments totaling \$7 billion had been received for the reconstruction of the Gaza Strip, talks were being held with Israel on increasing humanitarian aid and the Board of Peace hoped the national committee would soon assume responsibility for administering the affairs of the Gaza Strip. (Al Jazeera, August 28, 2026).

The Gaza Strip

The Civilian Situation

► Municipalities in the northern Gaza Strip warned of the consequences of the worsening water crisis [allegedly] caused by the Israeli blockade. Mazen al-Najjar, the mayor of Jabalia al-Nazla, said the issue of water had become one of the most serious challenges facing Gazans in the north, claiming that approximately 60% of the municipal generators were out of service, impairing the ability to operate water wells and sewage facilities (Shehab Agency, August 25, 2026). PIJ political bureau member Ali Abu Shahin condemned the Israeli attack on a water desalination facility near Shuhadaa al-Aqsa Hospital in Deir al-Balah (PIJ media information Telegram channel, August 24, 2026).

► The Hamas ministry of national economy claimed there was an "imbalance" in the quantities of flour supplied to the Gaza Strip. It stated that monitoring the markets and imports through the border crossings during the recent period had revealed shortages and disruptions of flour supply chains and quantities. The ministry alleged that Israel's procedures at the crossings did not permit sufficient quantities of flour to enter, causing a shortage, adding that the Gaza Strip's daily flour requirement was 450 tons (Shehab Agency, August 26, 2026).

► Despite a statement issued by the Israeli prime minister and defense minister that no directive had been given to open the Erez Crossing for the passage of goods, the German embassy in Tel Aviv published photographs of preparations to open the Beit Hanoun-Erez Crossing in the northern Gaza Strip (Ramallah News Facebook page, August 29, 2026).



Photographs from the installation of a truck-scanning facility purchased and donated by the German government for the Erez Crossing (German embassy in Israel Instagram account, August 21, 2026)

Civilian Governance

► The Hamas ministry of education in the Gaza Strip announced that the opening of the school year in the Gaza Strip had been postponed to September 19, 2026. Teaching and administrative staff will begin the school year on September 16, 2026 (Gaza al-'An Telegram channel, August 26, 2026).

Hamas Military Governance and Militia Activity

► Ashraf al-Mansi's Popular Army – Northern Forces militia reported that its special operatives had arrested three Hamas operatives after they sabotaged and blocked roads to disrupt the movement of the forces. The three are currently in custody and will be tried in accordance with the rules and procedures of the Popular Army (Aljayshalshaabi Facebook page, August 24, 2026).

► Hamas "resistance security" claimed that an "Israeli agent" had turned himself in to the forces after being influenced by the published confessions of the agent who was involved in the elimination of the head of the military wing, Izz al-Din al-Haddad, in May 2026. The agent reportedly initiated contact with Israeli intelligence after responding on the al-Munasaq Facebook page of the Israeli Coordinator of Government Activities in the Territories (COGAT) and immediately received a telephone call from an Israeli intelligence officer (al-Akhres Telegram channel, August 27, 2026).

► The Hamas Rada force reported that its operatives had ambushed collaborators with Israel in the al-Shuja'iyya neighborhood in eastern Gaza City. In the wake of the casualties, IDF artillery and fighter jets intervened to cover the collaborators' retreat toward the camp of militia leader Rami Halas inside the Yellow Line (Rada force Telegram channel, August 27, 2026). According to other reports, an ambush was laid for about 40 fighters from Rami Halas' militia. Eighteen of them escaped and 22 were allegedly killed, including Ghassan Mahdi Halas

(Palestinian Press Network news website, August 25, 2026; Amsak Amil Telegram channel, August 26, 2026).

► A Hamas-affiliated news website published a statement from a former operative in Ashraf al-Mansi's Popular Army militia, which operates in the northern Gaza Strip, according to which fear, violence and humanitarian deterioration prevail in the area under its control. He claimed that the militia had taken over a school and turned it into a center of operations and hideout, and the militia was involved in violence, extortion, attacks and settling scores. It was further claimed that militia members used drugs and smoked cigarettes and al-Mansi and members of his family ruled the area by force of arms and made arbitrary decisions while threatening their opponents. According to the statement, the militia used individuals and families as human shields, prevented some of them from returning to their homes and created a sense of siege and fear of violent retaliation (Quds Press, August 26, 2026).

Elections for the Hamas Leadership

► Hamas sources said members of the "external" political bureau had unanimously decided not to run for the Hamas leadership in the Gaza Strip, claiming that under the current circumstances it should remain in the hands of senior figures on the ground. They informed Shura council chairman Muhammad Isma'il Darwish of their willingness to accept the authority of the candidate chosen by consensus and to serve under him as part of the Gaza regional leadership. According to the sources, the decision is the result of the difficulty of managing the movement's institutions remotely, communications restrictions and the security risks involved in maintaining contact with senior political and military figures in the Gaza Strip. Ali al-Amoudi, deputy Hamas leader in the Gaza Strip, who has played a central role in managing the movement's activities since the resumption of fighting in March 2025, is considered the leading candidate for head of the political bureau in the Gaza Strip, and the elections are expected to take place in the near future (*al-Akhbar*, August 26, 2026).

Israel, Judea and Samaria

Counterterrorism

► This past week IDF forces continued extensive counterterrorism activity in Judea and Samaria:

◆ Qais al-Bitawi, who was responsible for Hamas activity in a terrorist network dismantled in the Jenin refugee camp, was eliminated in an airstrike in Jenin. Two accomplices were eliminated with him, and a gun was found in their vehicle (IDF spokesperson, August 28, 2026). The Hamas military wing confirmed that al-Bitawi was a commander in the Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades (Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades combat information Telegram channel, August 28, 2026). The PIJ military wing also claimed al-Bitawi belonged to its ranks and noted that the other two men killed also belonged to the Jerusalem Brigades (Jerusalem Brigades Telegram channel). In Nablus, a Palestinian terrorist operative suspected of attempting to attack Israeli civilians was detained. He had been wanted since he had been active in the Lions' Den terrorist network in Nablus, which was effectively dismantled by the Israeli security forces in 2022. Another wanted Palestinian was detained in the Balata refugee camp in Nablus (Israel Police spokesperson and IDF spokesperson, August 31, 2026).

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◆ Israeli security forces detained a Palestinian woman armed with a knife at the Ganot Junction in Samaria after receiving information that she planned to carry out a stabbing (IDF spokesperson, August 26, 2026).

► A 16-year-old from the Galilee was charged with contacting an individual linked to ISIS, swearing allegiance to the organization and intending to attack Jewish police officers and soldiers on the Temple Mount. An indictment was filed for a 19-year-old Israeli Arab who swore allegiance to ISIS and planned to attack an IDF base in northern Israel (Israel Police spokesperson, August 28, 2026).

Settler Terrorism

► This past week incidents of violence by Jewish rioters against Palestinians in Judea and Samaria continued:

- ◆ Palestinian sources reported that Jewish rioters vandalized trees and crops, stole agricultural equipment and attempted to take control of a water well on an area of more than 100 dunams in the village of Burqa, east of Ramallah; in the Turmus Ayya area, land was reportedly being cultivated for the purpose of expanding Jewish communities and outposts in the area, and a four-dunam farm was vandalized; on the Araba plain, south of Jenin, fig trees were reportedly cut down, irrigation pipes were damaged and a fence was destroyed; in the Za'atara area, east of Bethlehem, 50 settlers positioned themselves in the area and provoked residents; in the village of Awarta, south of Nablus, hundreds of settlers accompanied by IDF forces entered a tomb located in the village and held religious ceremonies at Muslim holy sites (Wafa, August 28, 2026); in the Hebron area, Jewish rioters damaged homes, farmland and crops in the Yatta and Rihiya areas; reportedly, settlers brought their herds into the area adjacent to Palestinian residents' homes in Khirbet Hummus in Masafer Yatta, south of Hebron (Quds Agency, August 29, 2026).
- ◆ Dozens of settlers attacked Palestinian homes in the village of Qusra, followed by a riot. The head of the Qusra council claimed IDF forces had prevented the evacuation of the wounded from a house which had been surrounded (Al Jazeera, August 29, 2026). In the village of al-Mughayyir, IDF forces shot live ammunition and tear gas canisters after a clash between Palestinians and Jewish rioters, and in Jalud dozens of Jewish rioters reportedly attacked a crew from an American news network (al-Jazeera Ajel Telegram channel, August 29-30, 2026).

- ◆ In the village of Bazariya, northwest of Nablus, Jewish rioters set fire to a mosque and spray-painted racist slogans and threats (Palestinian Information Center, September 1, 2026).



**Photographs from the burned mosque in Bazariya
(al-Jazeera Palestine, September 1, 2026)**

The Palestinian Authority (PA)

International Activity

► The PA foreign ministry organized a visit to the Qalandiya refugee camp for members of the accredited diplomatic corps to observe the destruction and its humanitarian consequences. The delegation visited the Qalandiya training center and schools, and during the visit Israel's policy toward UNRWA and the measures it takes against the agency were discussed. Deputy foreign minister for political affairs Omar Awadallah said UNRWA could not be dispensed with, particularly at the present time and in light of the war in the Gaza Strip, adding that the International Court of Justice had ruled that the international community had to support the agency and that Israel had to respect UNRWA's immunity, privileges and rights and not damage its facilities, because ultimately that was detrimental to the Palestinian refugees (Wafa, August 24, 2026).

► Egyptian Foreign Minister Badr Abdelatty met with PA Vice President Hussein al-Sheikh, general intelligence chief and Fatah Central Committee member Majed Faraj and Palestinian National Council chairman Rawhi Fattouh to discuss developments in the Gaza Strip, Judea and Samaria and efforts to "restore Palestinian unity." Abdelatty reiterated Egypt's opposition to all Israel's "illegal" measures, which he said were meant to impose a new situation on the ground or undermine Palestinian "territorial unity." He noted the need to preserve unity between the Gaza Strip and the West Bank and to create a "political horizon" which would lead to the establishment of an independent Palestinian state with the June 4, 1967 borders and east Jerusalem as its capital (Egyptian foreign ministry Facebook page, August 25, 2026).

► The senior Palestinian delegation arrived in Amman, where its members met with Jordanian Foreign Minister Ayman al-Safadi to discuss the latest developments in the Palestinian territories and coordination between the PA and Jordan. They warned against the continuation of Israel's "illegal" measures in Judea and Samaria, including settler terrorism, settlement expansion, land confiscation and the withholding of tax clearance revenues, measures allegedly leading the West Bank to an "explosion." Al-Sheikh and al-Safadi condemned Israel's activity against UNRWA and its institutions and the decision to build hundreds of new housing units as part of the E1 plan.⁴ They also noted the need to halt the "violations" in Jerusalem and the importance of implementing the decisions of the ministerial meeting in support of Jerusalem and the holy sites, held in Jordan on August 8, 2026 (Wafa, August 25, 2026).

► PA Foreign Minister Varsen Aghabekian Shahin participated in the 23rd session of the Council of Foreign Ministers of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, held in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. She called on the member states to take legal and practical measures against Israel, impose sanctions on the Israeli communities in Judea and Samaria and support full UN membership for "Palestine." The member states were also asked to activate the organization's financial safety net to help the PA cope with the freezing of tax clearance revenues. On the sidelines of the meeting, Shahin held meetings with the organization's secretary general and with senior officials from Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Senegal and Turkey (Wafa, August 27, 2026).



**Shahin meets with the secretary general of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation
(Organization of Islamic Cooperation X account, August 27, 2026)**

► The PLO department of refugee affairs called on the Finnish government to reverse its decision not to renew its multi-year funding agreement with UNRWA, which expires at the end of 2026 and under which approximately €5 million is provided to the agency annually. Department head and PLO Executive Committee member Ahmad Abu Holi said the decision

⁴ The E1 (East 1) plan is a development project in Judea and Samaria designed to connect Jerusalem with the large Israeli settlement of Ma'ale Adumim.

was inconsistent with Finland's historic support for UNRWA and could exacerbate financial uncertainty and impair the continuation of services to refugees, particularly in the Gaza Strip (Wafa, August 28, 2026).

Palestinian General Elections

► The Palestinian central elections commission announced it was conducting training programs and coordination meetings in the Gaza Strip, Judea and Samaria in preparation for the local elections scheduled for November 28, 2026. It also reported that the commission had reopened its offices in the Gaza Strip, resumed its activities on the ground and held meetings with representatives of telecommunications companies to strengthen cooperation (Wafa, August 26, 2026).

► Muhammad Shtayyeh, former Palestinian prime minister and a member of the Fatah Central Committee, met with a delegation from the European external relations commission to discuss preparations for sending an EU delegation to monitor the elections for the Palestinian Legislative Council. Shtayyeh called on the EU to pressure Israel to allow the elections to be held in the Gaza Strip and Jerusalem, and claiming that was an "essential step" toward rebuilding Palestinian institutions and political system. He said that although Israel had not yet approved the holding of the elections, the Palestinian leadership and Fatah wanted them to take place as scheduled (Wafa, August 27, 2026).

► PIJ deputy secretary general Muhammad al-Hindi participated with Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) deputy secretary general Jamil Mazhar and Jamal Issa, political adviser to Hamas "external" leader Khaled Mashal, in a meeting of the Congress of Palestinians in Istanbul, which dealt with developments in the Palestinian arena, particularly the elections. Al-Hindi said that the elections in their current format did not address the aspirations of the Palestinian people and could damage their right to self-determination, therefore the PIJ demanded that the elections be postponed until a comprehensive national consensus could be reached on reforming the PLO and reforming its institutions. He said the PIJ participated in consultations with the other organizations to discuss ways of dealing with the PA's decision to hold the elections. He said the PIJ would not propose its own candidates but would support a "national" list formed by consensus (Palestinian Media Institution [*al-mu'assasa al-filastiniyya lil-i'lam*] website, August 28, 2026; PIJ information bureau Telegram channel, August 28, 2026).

► Senior Fatah figure Samih Khalaf said he doubted whether the elections would take place, particularly in the Gaza Strip, because of the lack of preparations, appointments and an agreed

political plan, as well as the absence of understandings with Israel and the United States (al-Shaheed, August 29, 2026).

► PFLP Central Committee member Muhammad al-Ghoul said that proposals to form a coalition had been received from the Fatah and Hamas leaderships and other Palestinian organizations, but no decision had been made regarding the format of participation in the upcoming Palestinian elections. He said internal consultations and talks with the organizations and other national elements were under way. He called for a national dialogue which would create the conditions for free elections and guarantee Palestinian rights, adding that the elections could not be regarded as a proper process without a political, legal and security environment which would enable them to succeed (Sawa News Agency, August 30, 2026).