

Spotlight on Terrorism and the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict

September 16-24, 2026

Trending

- ▶ **Hamas continued to violate the ceasefire agreement while tightening its control over the Gaza Strip.**
- ▶ **The advancing of the ceasefire agreement remains deadlocked despite the efforts of the Board of Peace.**
- ▶ **An increase in attacks by lone terrorists in Judea and Samaria has been reported.**

Overview¹

- ▶ IDF forces exposed a tunnel in the central Gaza Strip and eliminated more than ten Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad terrorists, including the Hamas finance director and operatives involved in the October 7, 2023 terrorist invasion and massacre. An IDF engineering vehicle drove over an explosive device in the Yellow Line area. There were no casualties.
- ▶ A Hamas spokesman denied claims of violations or that the movement was planning to abduct Israeli soldiers or civilians.
- ▶ The Board of Peace announced a six-month reconstruction plan for the Gaza Strip at a cost of \$2.45 billion. The high representative, Nikolay Mladenov, said the sensitive political situation caused by the upcoming elections in Israel was making it difficult to advance the ceasefire agreement.
- ▶ After 21 people were killed in the collapse of a building in Gaza City, the Hamas government services announced an emergency plan to evacuate approximately 255 buildings at risk of collapse.
- ▶ An Israeli civilian was killed in a shooting near Neve Tzuf, north of Ramallah, and an IDF reserve soldier was critically wounded in a vehicular attack on Route 443, the road connecting Jerusalem and the settlements in Judea and Samaria. Another vehicular attack in northern

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

Samaria ended without casualties. Israeli security forces continued counterterrorism activities in Judea and Samaria, and a tunnel 25 meters deep was exposed in Qalqilya. Two Israeli Arabs were charged with supporting Hamas.

► For the second consecutive year the American administration denied entry visas to the Palestinian Authority chairman and senior Palestinian officials for the UN General Assembly session in New York.

► Ahead of the planned elections for the Palestinian Legislative Council, a broad national slate is taking shape with the participation of Hamas, Palestinian Islamic Jihad and other terrorist organizations.

The Fighting in the Gaza Strip

► IDF forces continued operations to destroy terrorist infrastructure and eliminate terrorist operatives throughout the Gaza Strip. More than ten Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) terrorists were eliminated, including the Hamas finance director and operatives involved in the atrocities of the October 7, 2023, invasion and massacre, as well as the son of the director general of the Hamas ministry of health in Gaza, who was an operative in the *nukhba* (special forces) unit of the Hamas military wing. The forces also exposed a tunnel approximately 600 meters long near the central camps in the Gaza Strip, which crossed from the area under Hamas control into the Yellow Line area. An IDF engineering vehicle drove over an explosive device in the Yellow Line area; there were no casualties. The IDF responded with strikes targeting Hamas facilities and assets (IDF spokesperson, September 16-24, 2026).



The tunnel in the central Gaza Strip (IDF spokesperson, September 23, 2026)

► Hamas spokesman Hazem Qassem rejected Israeli claims of ceasefire violations carried out by Hamas operatives in the Strip, calling them "baseless." He claimed Israel's objective was to justify its "violations" and [alleged] "escalating aggression." He added that Hamas was committed to the ceasefire agreement, despite Israel's "violations" (Hamas Judea and Samaria

Telegram channel, September 22, 2026). The remarks were made after the announcement that an IDF engineering vehicle had detonated an explosive device and following the Israeli defense minister's threat that if Hamas tried to abduct an Israeli soldier or civilian, all Gaza City would be evacuated (Israeli media, September 22, 2026).

Negotiations for the Second Phase of the Ceasefire Agreement

► Khalil al-Hayya, head of the Hamas political bureau, held a series of talks with the mediators and sent messages to other countries warning of "the worsening humanitarian situation" in the Gaza Strip ahead of winter. He claimed strikes and targeted killings continued and war-damaged buildings collapsed while Israel restricted the entry of heavy equipment for clearing rubble, caravans, tents and equipment for winter protection. He claimed that the activity in the Strip, alongside the events in Judea and Samaria and at al-Aqsa Mosque and the restrictions on reconstruction and aid, damaged the prospects for calm and the implementation of the commitments of the first phase of the American president's plan. He called on the mediators to increase pressure on Israel to stop the strikes and allow the entry of rescue and shelter equipment (Hamas Telegram channel, September 19, 2026).

► The Board of Peace met on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly, during which it announced a six-month reconstruction plan for the Gaza Strip at a cost of \$2.45 billion. The plan's 66 projects include the provision of alternative housing, rubble removal, repair of hospitals, economic growth, training police forces, dismantling weapons and deploying the international stabilization force. The following are the main points (Al Arabiya and Al Jazeera, September 23, 2026):

- ◆ The Board of Peace representative for the Gaza Strip, Nikolay Mladenov, said the Palestinian committee to administer Gaza was ready to begin its activities, but noted it would not be a permanent administration and had no timetable. He added that the interim phase was intended to address the urgent needs of the Strip and provide basic services. He called on all sides to fulfill their commitments under the ceasefire agreement, but acknowledged that the upcoming elections in Israel made the situation more politically sensitive.
- ◆ Dr. Ali Shaath, chairman of the Palestinian committee, noted that the committee was working to rebuild the Strip and priority was being given to providing the conditions for children to return to school.

◆ General Jasper Jeffers, commander of the international stabilization force, said that more than 50 commanders and military planners were at the force headquarters and collection and monitoring missions were already being carried out in the Rafah area, while an initial force of 500 soldiers from Kosovo and Morocco was ready for deployment in the field. He said a technical plan was ready with the criteria for neutralizing weapons and destroying military infrastructure, including tunnels, and defined the verification mechanisms.



Board of Peace meeting in New York (X account of Egyptian Foreign Minister Badr Abdelatty, September 23, 2026)

The Gaza Strip

The Civilian Situation

► Following the rescue efforts at the al-Saada building, which collapsed in Gaza City on September 16, 2026, according to reports, 21 people had been killed and 45 had been rescued from the rubble and evacuated for medical treatment. More than 110 people lived in the building, some of whom had moved there after failing to find other shelter. According to Gazan civil defense, the shortage of heavy equipment hampered rescue operations (Reuters, September 19, 2026). The Hamas government media information office claimed the building had been directly hit in an Israeli strike on October 9, 2023, which targeted the building's foundations and its first two floors, and caused structural damage which ultimately led to its collapse (Sama News Agency, September 21, 2026).

► The Hamas government media information office announced an emergency plan for the evacuation and controlled demolition of approximately 255 damaged buildings which were at risk of collapse. The plan is being managed by the public works and housing ministry, in cooperation with other government ministries, the police and civil defense services, as well as international institutions and UN agencies. Under the plan, residents will be required to leave the dangerous buildings, warning signs will be posted and an attempt will be made to provide

them with temporary shelters. Field teams continue to map the buildings and those living in them, but they reportedly encounter refusals by some residents to evacuate, and suffer from a shortage of funding, heavy mechanical equipment and a lack of safe areas for establishing alternative housing. According to the announcement, the Egyptian committee said it was prepared to provide transportation to evacuate the families to shelter compounds. The authorities called on mukhtars, clans, tribes and civil society organizations to assist in implementing the plan, an example of Hamas government activity to address the danger of building collapses (alresala.net, September 20, 2026).

► The Palestinian central bureau of statistics said it was concerned about the future of approximately 626,000 children, who make up 57.4% of the Strip's children, after almost three years without regular frontal education. According to UNICEF, approximately 98% of school buildings were damaged, more than 93% of them require repair or reconstruction, and approximately 420,000 children still do not study frontally. Because of the shortage of buildings, classes are held in tents, apartments and temporary centers, and the remaining schools operate in six shifts. The Hamas ministry of education reported that it planned to operate 700 learning centers for 541,000 students, combined with online learning, but many children's education is behind by an estimated three to four years (Wafa, September 19, 2026).

► Rifaat al-Salhiya, spokesman for the Palestinian ministry of agriculture, said the war had damaged the agricultural sector, including land, crops, fruit trees, wells, irrigation networks, greenhouses, facilities and livestock farms. He said the damage and denial of access to agricultural areas sharply reduced local production, caused food shortages and rising prices and "deprived thousands of families of their livelihoods." According to agriculture ministry estimates, approximately 97% of the agricultural land in the areas surveyed is unavailable for cultivation because of destruction and the Israeli military presence, and only approximately 3% remains accessible for cultivation and is suitable for agriculture (alresala.net, September 23, 2026).

► Dental care in the Gaza Strip has become problematic because of shortages of anesthetics, materials for root canal work and other medical equipment, along with disruptions in the electricity supply and rising costs. According to Gazan dentists and dental technicians, the shortages force clinics to postpone treatments or limit themselves to pain relief, and in some cases patients choose to have a tooth extracted which could have been saved. The chairman of the dentists' association stated that about half of approximately 1,026 clinics active before the

war had closed, and warned that delaying treatment worsened tooth decay, infections and gum disease (Wafa, September 21, 2026).

Military Governance

► It was reported that a force belonging to one of the "armed gangs" operating in areas under Israeli control in the Gaza Strip entered the region east of the al-Bureij refugee camp and abducted two cousins from the Issa family from their home, one of whom reportedly belonged to a Palestinian terrorist organization. Bloodstains were found at the scene and property was stolen. The operation was carried out under the cover of Israeli UAVs. Palestinian sources claimed that the gangs were increasing their attempts to abduct "operatives of organizations" living near the Yellow Line and transfer them to Israel, under the direction of Israeli intelligence agents (*al-Sharq al-Awsat*, September 19, 2026).

Israel, Judea and Samaria

Terrorist Attacks

► Three terrorist attacks were carried out in Judea and Samaria, killing an Israeli civilian and critically wounding an IDF reserve soldier:

◆ **A shooting in Neve Tzuf:** On September 20, 2026, a Palestinian terrorist drove to the Ein Raya spring in Samaria, near Neve Tzuf, and opened fire with an automatic rifle, killing an Israeli civilian in a vehicle. After a manhunt the terrorist was detained at a clinic in Ramallah. Israeli security forces subsequently operated in the town of Biddu, where the terrorist lived. They mapped his house in preparation for its demolition, conducted searches and questioned 90 suspects (IDF spokesperson and Israeli media, September 20-21, 2026). Hamas praised the shooting and claimed it was a response to the provocative, theatrical actions of Prime Minister Netanyahu, who had attended a ceremony at the Western Wall and visited the Western Wall tunnels (Hamas Judea and Samaria Telegram channel, September 20, 2026). Palestinian media reported that dozens of young men were questioned during the activity in the town of Biddu and homes were converted into detention facilities (Nablus News Telegram channel, September 22, 2026).

◆ **A vehicular ramming in northern Samaria:** On September 20, a Palestinian terrorist from the Jenin refugee camp tried to ram his car into IDF soldiers operating at the Janna'im checkpoint in northern Samaria. He was shot and killed (IDF spokesperson and Israeli media, September 20, 2026).

◆ **A vehicular ramming on Route 443:** On September 23, 2026, a Palestinian terrorist rammed his car into a police vehicle at the Maccabim checkpoint on Route 443, in the Beit Horon area, critically wounding a reserve soldier, the son of the Israeli ambassador to the United States. Soldiers at the scene eliminated the terrorist, a resident of Beit Ur al-Tahta (IDF spokesperson, Israel Police spokesman's unit and Israeli media, September 23, 2026). Hamas and PIJ praised the attack (Hamas Judea and Samaria and PIJ Telegram channels, September 23, 2026).

Counterterrorism

► Israeli security forces continued extensive counterterrorism activity in Judea and Samaria, detaining dozens of wanted persons, terrorist operatives and inciters to violence and seizing weapons. In the village of Burqin, a PIJ operative who transferred funds for terrorist activity was detained; in the Balata refugee camp, a wanted Tanzim operative was detained; in the town of Qabatiya, two Hamas terrorists who planned to carry out an attack in the immediate future were detained; in the village of Qalil, a wanted Fatah operative involved in promoting terrorist activity was detained; in Qalqilya, a tunnel 25 meters deep in the process of being excavated was exposed, the beginning of another tunnel excavation was located and weapons were seized, four suspects were detained; in the village of Beit Imrin, the home of the perpetrator of an attack in which an Israeli civilian was killed in March 2026 was demolished (IDF spokesperson and Israel Police spokesman's unit, September 16-24, 2026). Palestinian media reported activity by Israeli security forces, including searches, raids and detentions in Nablus, Jenin, Tubas, Qalqilya, Ramallah, al-Bireh and Tulkarm. The detainee in the village of Qalil was an officer in the Palestinian preventive security forces (alresala.net, September 20, 2026; Palestinian information center, September 23, 2026; Nablus News, September 23, 2026).



The tunnel in Qalqilya (Israeli Police spokesman's unit, September 23, 2026)

► An indictment was handed down for two members of a terrorist cell from Nablus who obtained weapons and engaged in recruitment. Reportedly, they planned to carry out a

shooting attack and car bombings, abduct IDF soldiers and assassinate the national security minister by luring him to the scene of an attack or using an explosive UAV (Israel Police and Israel Security Agency spokespersons' units, September 23, 2026).

► Israeli Arab citizens continue involvement in terrorist activity. A resident of the northern city of Tamra was charged with contacting the Hamas military wing and Iranian intelligence (Israel Security Agency and Israel Police spokespersons' units, September 18, 2026); a 19-year-old Israeli Bedouin was charged with supporting Hamas and incitement to terrorism after sharing content praising senior Hamas figures, terrorists and terrorist attacks (Israeli Police and Israel Security Agency spokespersons' units, September 22, 2026).

Settler Terrorism

► Palestinian sources reported continued attacks by Jewish rioters targeting Palestinians and vehicles in Judea and Samaria. Near Mitzpe Jericho, Jewish rioters threw rocks at vehicles; in the area between Lubban al-Sharqiya and Salfit, two Palestinians were wounded, one stabbed in the thigh and the other whose head was injured; in Khirbet Farasin, 30 guava trees belonging to a Palestinian farmer were cut down (alresala.net, September 20, 2026). A vehicle was set on fire in the Safa area of Beit Ummar, residents were attacked and an attempt was reportedly made to abduct a child, prevented by the intervention of residents; in Masafer Yatta, a Palestinian was injured after being attacked and sprayed with pepper spray; in the Ramallah area, Jewish settlers blocked a road near Deir Abu Mashal, threw rocks at Palestinian vehicles and damaged one of them (Wafa, September 21, 2026).

The Palestinian Authority (PA)

International Activity

► The American State Department announced that the United States adhered to its denial of entrance visas to PLO members and senior PA officials, including chairman Mahmoud Abbas, because of the ongoing payments to the families of prisoners and perpetrators of terrorist attacks, glorification of terrorism, Palestinian activity in international courts and efforts to obtain recognition of a Palestinian state outside the framework of negotiations. As a result, Mahmoud Abbas was prevented from participating in the UN General Assembly debates in New York (State Department website, April 16, 2026). The UN General Assembly authorized Mahmoud Abbas to address it by video again this year (Reuters, September 17, 2026). PA foreign minister Varsen Aghabekian Shahin said the American denial of entrance visas was unjustified

and contrary to efforts to promote trust, improve relations between the sides and create conditions for implementing the two-state solution (Al Araby channel, September 17, 2026).

► Mahmoud Abbas also participated by video in a meeting held on the sidelines of the General Assembly session to mark one year since the New York Declaration to advance the two-state solution,² attended by the leaders of France, Canada and Britain, the Saudi foreign minister and the UN secretary general. He said the Palestinians thanked them for supporting their right to self-determination, adding that it opened the way to ending the "occupation." Mahmoud Abbas reported that "Palestine" had completed a "national reform plan" and general elections would be held on November 28, 2026, ahead of the convening of the Palestinian National Council and the presidential elections (Wafa, September 23, 2026)



Mahmoud Abbas addressing the UN in New York (Wafa, September 23, 2026)

Palestinian General Elections

► Ali Baraka, head of the national relations department of Hamas "abroad," rejected the system of unilateral appointments to the Palestinian National Council and claimed it excluded Palestinians in the dispersal and widened the internal Palestinian schism. He said Palestinians "abroad" should be allowed to elect their representatives in free, direct elections, and if it was not possible to hold them, a broad national consensus should be reached. He called for democratic participatory reform of the PLO in accordance with the 2005 Cairo understandings and the 2024 Beijing declaration, adding that the Palestinian National Council should represent all Palestinians in the territories and the dispersal while preserving the "right of return"³ (Hamas Telegram channel, September 17, 2026).

² See the September 2025 ITIC (now the Amit Institute) report, [Reactions to the Wave of Recognition of a Palestinian State](#).

³ The "right" of the Palestinian refugees from 1948 onward to "return" to their pre-State of Israel places of residence, thereby destroying Israel.

► In preparation for the elections for the Palestinian Legislative Council, scheduled for November 28, 2026, according to reports, a broad national slate was taking shape in Cairo with the participation of the National Democratic Forum headed by Nasser al-Qudwa, the Fatah Reformist Current led by Muhammad Dahlan, Hamas and PIJ, alongside independent figures and possibly other organizations. The sides are reportedly working to formulate the platform and compose the slate, while the participation of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) and the position of senior Fatah figure Marwan al-Barghouti, who is imprisoned in Israel, had not yet been decided, although he reportedly wants to run for president rather than for the Legislative Council. A Hamas delegation met with representatives of various organization, and all called for free and transparent elections, an end to the division, the rebuilding of the PLO on a democratic basis and the formulation of a common national strategy (Arab48, September 23, 2026; PNN, September 21, 2026).