



# Spotlight on the Israel-Palestinian Conflict

February 18 – 25 , 2025

## Overview<sup>1</sup>

- ▶ The ceasefire agreement in the Gaza Strip: Hamas transferred the bodies of four murdered Israeli hostages and six living hostages, including two who had been held in the Gaza Strip for more than a decade, to the Red Cross. Due to the release "ceremonies" and Hamas' failure to transfer the body of a female hostage at the agreed time, Israel delayed the release of 602 Palestinian terrorist prisoners. Hamas accused Israel of violating the agreement but claimed they were prepared to negotiate on the second phase.
- ▶ Hamas figure Musa Abu Marzouq claimed he would not have supported the October 7, 2023 attack [and massacre] had he known the extent of the damage that would be visited on the Gaza Strip. Hamas rushed to claim his remarks had been taken out of context.
- ▶ Reportedly, the Egyptian reconstruction plan for Gaza will include restrictions and oversight on the weapons of "the resistance." The plan is expected to be approved at the Arab summit on March 4, 2025.
- ▶ A senior delegation of the Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) visited Iran and met with regime leaders to express gratitude for their support and reaffirm their commitment to continuing "the resistance."
- ▶ Israel, Judea and Samaria: Three explosive devices blew up on empty buses in the central Israeli cities of Bat Yam and Holon. Two additional explosive devices were discovered before they could be detonated. There were no casualties. Apparently the devices exploded prematurely. Israeli security forces continued extensive counter-terrorism operations in northern Samaria, including the use of tanks for the first time in 22 years.
- ▶ Reportedly, the American administration halted funding to the Palestinian Authority's security forces, significantly impacting their capabilities.

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

## The Ceasefire

► On February 20, 2025, Hamas transferred four bodies of murdered Israeli civilians during a "ceremony" held in Bani Suheila in the southern Gaza Strip. The event was attended by hundreds of Palestinians, including many children, as well as several Palestinian prisoners serving life sentences who had been previously released from Israeli prisons (Aram News, February 20, 2025).



**Spectators watch the "ceremony"**  
(Israeli foreign ministry Facebook page in Arabic, March 20, 2025)

► The examination in Israel confirmed the identities of three of the victims, including the Bibas brothers, Ariel, four years old, and Kfir, ten months old at the time of their deaths. However, the fourth body was not that of their mother, Shiri Bibas, but of an unidentified Gazan woman (IDF spokesperson, February 21, 2025). Hamas and the Mujahedin Movement, which held the Bibas family, claimed it was a "mistake" and accused Israel of not providing the equipment needed to identify bodies (Hamas Telegram channel and al-Araby network, February 21, 2025). On the night of February 21, 2025, Hamas transferred a body which, after examination, was confirmed to be that of Shiri Bibas (Israeli media, February 21, 2025).

► On February 22, 2025, Hamas released four Israeli civilians who had been taken hostage on October 7, 2023. Two Israeli civilians who had been held in the Gaza Strip for over a decade were released (Israeli media, February 22, 2025).

► During the "ceremony" at the al-Nuseirat refugee camp, where three of the hostages were released, Hamas brought two Israeli hostages still held in the Gaza Strip to witness the event (Hamas Telegram channel, February 22, 2025). Hamas spokesperson Abd al-Latif al-Qanua said the two Israeli hostages had been brought to witness the ceremony to "demonstrate the failure of the military option" for their return and the ability of the "resistance" to control events. He claimed Hamas was prepared to release all the Israeli "prisoners" at once, provided Israel

permanently stopped its "aggression," fully withdrew from the Gaza Strip and began its reconstruction (Abd al-Latif al-Qanua's Telegram channel, February 23, 2025).

► Following Hamas violations of the ceasefire agreement, the "ceremonies" during the release of hostages and the return of bodies, and the transfer of an unidentified body, Israel delayed the release of 602 Palestinian prisoners scheduled for February 22, 2025, until assurances were given that no further "ceremonies" would be held (Israeli prime minister's office, February 23, 2025). The Hamas-affiliated prisoners' information office claimed Israeli authorities were preventing the families of Palestinian prisoners from traveling to Egypt to receive the released prisoners (Quds, February 21, 2025).

► Israel's decision to delay the release of the Palestinian prisoners offended Hamas, which accused Israel of violating the ceasefire agreement. They reiterated the claim that Hamas was prepared to negotiate the second phase of the agreement, including the return of all Israeli hostages at once in exchange for the release of all Palestinian prisoners held in Israel:

◆ Izzat al-Rishq, head of the Hamas information office, strongly condemned Israel's decision, which he claimed "again proves Israel evades its commitments." He further claimed that the "ceremonies" were not an insult to the hostages but "reflected respectful, humane treatment toward them" (Hamas in Judea and Samaria Telegram channel, February 23, 2025).

◆ Zaher Jabarin, Hamas leader in Judea and Samaria, warned that Prime Minister Netanyahu's abandoning the agreement would amount to a "death certificate for the remaining hostages," because no one would want to mediate between Israel and the "resistance" or guarantee future agreements. He added that the mediators and Arab parties to the agreement should compel Israel to fully adhere to its terms. He said Hamas had informed the mediators and the world that it was prepared to negotiate the second phase of the agreement, claiming Hamas had initially proposed conducting the deal in a single phase, but Netanyahu had opposed it (al-Jazeera TV, February 22, 2025).

◆ Hamas figure Mahmoud Mardawi said no talks with Israel through mediators would take place until the Palestinian prisoners were released, adding that the mediators had to force Israel to implement the agreement (Shehab agency Telegram channel, February 23, 2025).

◆ Hamas said the Israeli hostages would either return in coffins because of "Netanyahu's stubbornness" or alive "according to the conditions of the resistance." Hamas claimed it

was prepared to progress to the second phase of the agreement and complete a comprehensive "prisoner" exchange deal, including a permanent ceasefire and full Israeli withdrawal. Hamas also warned Israeli not to try to evade the agreement (Hamas Telegram channel, February 22, 2025).

◆ A spokesman for the al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades – Nidal al-Amoudi Brigade, sponsored by former Fatah official Muhammad Dahlan, said they would continue taking "enemy" soldiers hostage until a "just" solution had been reached for the Palestinian prisoners. He warned Israel not to abandon the "prisoner" exchange agreement, since any Israeli aggression would be met with a strong, coordinated response. He added that the "resistance" factions<sup>2</sup> were prepared to proceed to the second phase of the agreement (al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades – Nidal al-Amoudi Brigade Telegram channel, February 22, 2025).

◆ A "figure in the Palestinian resistance" said the mediators and Israel continued discussing the "crisis" of the release of Palestinian prisoners. He said Israel demanded the return of the bodies of the four remaining Israeli hostages of the first phase without ceremonies or photographic documentation, while Hamas insisted that the Palestinian prisoners scheduled for the seventh installment had to be released first (Telegram channel of al-Mayadeen, February 24, 2025).

◆ Musheir al-Masri, a Hamas figure in the Gaza Strip, said Hamas had informed the mediators that it was prepared for the second phase but the "Zionist enemy" had to understand that the "Palestinian resistance" would not tolerate delays. He added that the second phase of the agreement would also involve "soldiers and officers," and that "the demands would differ from those of the first phase" (al-Alam network, February 24, 2025).

## **IDF operations in the Gaza Strip**

► On February 19, 2025, an Israeli Air Force aircraft attacked a drone which crossed from Israeli territory into the southern Gaza Strip in an attempted smuggling operation. Several suspects who had collected the drone inside the Gaza Strip were also targeted. Palestinian media reported that a UAV attacked a group of Palestinians in the Abu Halawa area, east of Rafah (Shehab News Agency, February 19, 2025).

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<sup>2</sup> Terrorist organizations operating in the Gaza Strip.

► On February 24, 2025, a rocket was fired at Israel from the Gaza Strip but did not enter Israeli territory. Shortly thereafter, the launch site and an additional launcher in the area were attacked (IDF spokesperson, February 24, 2025).

## Hamas governance

► On February 24, 2025, Musa Abu Marzouq, a member of the Hamas political bureau, said that **had he known the extent of the destruction that would be visited on the Gaza Strip following the October 7, 2023 attack, he would not have supported it.** He said the Hamas leadership disagreed about the consequences of the attack, and frustration in Gaza was affecting the movement's decision-making. He claimed Hamas was willing to discuss the future of its weapons in Gaza, an issue previously off limits. He added that Hamas' survival in the war was an achievement but could not be described as a victory, given the destruction Israel inflicted upon Gaza (The New York Times, February 24, 2025). Hamas spokesperson Hazem Qassem responded by saying that the movement remained committed to the "weapon of resistance,"<sup>3</sup> viewing it as "legitimate," and it would not be discussed as long as "the occupation remains on our Palestinian land." He added that the statements attributed to Abu Marzouq did not represent the Hamas position, since Palestinian "resistance" in "all forms" would remain "a legitimate [sic] right until liberation and return" (al-Aqsa TV Telegram channel, February 25, 2025). Hamas claimed Abu Marzouq's remarks "were taken out of context in a way that distorted their meaning." According Hamas, in the quoted interview Musa Abu Marzouq supported the Hamas attack [and massacre] of October 7, which he described as "an expression of our people's right to resist and reject the siege, occupation and settlement." Hamas further claimed that Abu Marzouq had noted the importance of "armed resistance" (Hamas Telegram channel, February 24, 2025).

► On February 22, 2025, Musheir al-Masri, who previously served as the Hamas spokesman in the Gaza Strip, appeared publicly for the first time since the war began. He refuted reports that he and Hamas political bureau member Mahmoud al-Zahar had been killed during the war, stating that al-Zahar was in good condition (al-Jazeera Mubasher YouTube channel, February 22, 2025).

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<sup>3</sup> Terrorist attacks.



**Musheir al-Masri (al-Jazeera Mubasher YouTube channel, February 22, 2025)**

► The Hamas ministry of education in the Gaza Strip announced the start of the new school year on February 23, 2025. The ministry acknowledged the challenges faced by teachers and students but said they were committed to providing full support to ensure every child's right to education (Hamas government information office Telegram channel, February 23, 2025). The ministry of education further noted that in preparation for the new school year, maintenance work, renovations, cleaning and debris removal had been undertaken at schools. The ministry called upon residents to return school furniture taken during the war (Alam 24 website, February 20, 2025).

### **The situation in the Gaza Strip**

► On February 22, 2025, the ministry of health in Gaza, in cooperation with the World Health Organization, UNRWA and UNICEF, launched a large-scale polio vaccination campaign for children up to the age of 10, after the virus was found present in sewage (Hamza al-Masri Telegram channel, February 22, 2025). According to the World Health Organization, more than 454,300 children, 76% of the campaign's target, were vaccinated within two days (WHO X account in the Palestinian territories, February 24, 2025). The Palestinian Authority (PA) minister of health said the vaccination campaign would be held in two phases, the first starting on February 22, and the second beginning on April 5, with each phase lasting three days (PA ministry of health Facebook page, Ministry of Health, February 19, 2025).

► Khader al-Qudra, director general of the Palestinian Red Crescent in the Gaza Strip, announced the opening of the Kuwaiti Red Crescent field hospital in the al-Saraya area of Gaza City on February 20, 2025. He said the hospital had 54 beds plus ten emergency room beds, eight intensive care beds and six infant beds, two operating rooms, a laboratory and an X-ray unit. He said efforts were being made to rehabilitate al-Quds Hospital in the Tal al-Hawa area,



aiming for partial operation in the coming days (Palestinian Red Crescent in Gaza Facebook page, February 19, 2025).



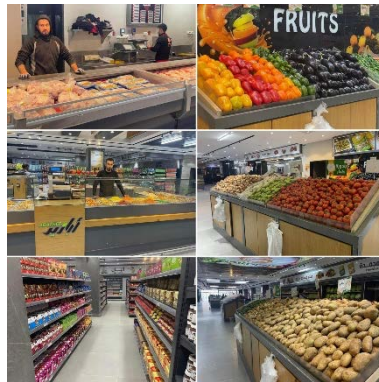
**Right: The field hospital operated by the Palestinian Red Crescent in al-Saraya area of Gaza City (Palestinian Red Crescent in Gaza Facebook page, February 19, 2025); Left: Al-Quds Hospital participates in the polio vaccination campaign (Palestinian Red Crescent in Gaza Facebook page, February 21, 2025)**

► The Jabalia al-Nazla municipality, in cooperation with the emergency committee of western Jabalia, the ministries of public works and welfare, plus support and partner organizations, erected a tent camp in Jabalia for residents whose homes were destroyed. The camp covers a little more than 18 acres, is composed of one thousand tents divided into eight sub-camps and shelters one thousand families, about 5,000 people. The municipality also arranged for drainage, is working to upgrade essential water services and is organizing environmental facilities to prevent the outbreak of disease in the camp (Jabalia al-Nazla municipality Facebook page, February 20, 2025).



**The tent city in Jabalia (Jabalia al-Nazla municipality Facebook page, February 20, 2025)**

► The Hyper Mall shopping center in al-Nuseirat refugee camp, central Gaza Strip, reportedly reopened (al-Nuseirat refugee camp Facebook page, February 23, 2025).



**An abundance of fruits and vegetables in the shopping mall  
(al-Nuseirat refugee camp Facebook page, February 23, 2025)**

► Ahmed al-Sufi, the mayor of Rafah, said 90% of homes in the city had been destroyed, including six neighborhoods and five refugee camps which had been completely razed. He added that 200,000 residents were displaced and homeless, 70% of the water and sewage networks and 100% of the electricity and communication networks had been destroyed, and all hospitals were non-operational. He said reconstruction included removing debris, activating wells and establishing temporary camps, but urgent international assistance was needed to provide shelter and basic necessities (al-Bureij, Gaza-Palestine Telegram channel February 24, 2025).

► Hamas claimed six newborn babies recently died of hypothermia because of lack of heating. Hamas blamed the "criminal policies of the occupation government" and called upon mediators to pressure Israel to end "violations" of the humanitarian clauses in the ceasefire agreement (Hamas Telegram channel, February 25, 2025).

### **"The day after"**

► At a conference held in al-Saraya Square in Gaza, whose theme was "National Unity – How to organize the Palestinian house, thwart the immigration conspiracy, and rebuild," the Palestinian "factions" called on Palestinian Authority (PA) chairman Mahmoud Abbas to convene an emergency meeting of all factions to formulate a joint strategy to oppose "Israeli plans." They also demanded the upcoming Arab summit in Egypt on March 4, 2025, find strategies to combat emigration schemes and to strengthen Palestinian, Arab and Islamic unity against Israeli "plots" (alresala.net, February 19, 2025).



► Khaled al-Batash, a member of the Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) political bureau, said there were genuine Arab efforts, led by Egypt, to establish a "mechanism" for managing the Gaza Strip "the day after" the war. He reiterated the claim that "the day after" belonged to the Palestinians, with no room for anyone except the Palestinian people. He added that the idea of a "support committee" had been suggested as a temporary option until a national unity government was formed, but the PA had reservations regarding the proposal. He called for forming a national unity government, and if that was impossible, there had to be an independent or consensus-based government to resolve the current crisis. He noted the importance of a comprehensive national framework to manage the situation in Judea, Samaria and the Gaza Strip, strengthen national unity and pave the way toward achieving Palestinian national objectives, the [so-called] "return"<sup>4</sup> and "liberation" (Sunud website, February 19, 2025).

► Egyptian and Arab "diplomatic sources" revealed details of the Egyptian plan for the Gaza Strip, which is expected to be presented to President Trump after approval by Arab states. The plan consists of two phases, the first lasting ten years, which will focus on reconstruction, housing and infrastructure, with preparations for the next phase, which includes the redistribution of residential areas in the Gaza Strip and the reduction of the population in northern Gaza. Restrictions and the oversight of the weapons of the "resistance" are also planned, without disarmament, through an Egypt-led Arab committee responsible for the oversight of internal security and the return of displaced persons. Under international supervision, an American security firm will be stationed in certain areas to ensure the absence of tunnels or military facilities. In the second phase, the plan proposes establishing a Palestinian state with territorial links between the Gaza Strip, Judea, Samaria and Jerusalem (al-Araby al-Jadeed, February 19, 2025).

► Fatah figure Iyad Nasr, head of the civil affairs authority in the Gaza Strip, criticized Hamas after the "ceremony" transferring the coffins of the four kidnapped Israeli victims. He said the ceremony was "a disaster" for Hamas because handing over the bodies of children who had been kidnapped reinforced the Israeli narrative that the war had been launched to protect Israeli citizens, especially considering that the children had been murdered along with their mother. He also claimed that the presence of an individual wearing a hat with the logo of

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<sup>4</sup> The return of all the Palestinian refugees to their places of residence before 1948, that is, the elimination of the State of Israel.

Fatah's military wing among the pall bearers portrayed all Palestinians as involved [in the murder], including Fatah, the only internationally legitimate movement. He accused Hamas of deliberately seeking to "drag everyone down with it," stating it was neither coincidental nor due to poor planning (Iyad Nasr's Facebook page, February 21, 2025).

## A PIJ Delegation Visits Iran

► Last week, a delegation the Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) leadership, including Ziyad al-Nakhalah, PIJ secretary general, his deputy Mahmoud al-Hindi, and Ihsan Ataya, responsible for Arab and Islamic relations, visited Iran. They met with regime officials, including Iranian Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei, President Masoud Pezeshkian, Majlis Speaker Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf, Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi, Secretary of the Supreme National Security Council Ali Akbar Ahmadian, International Affairs Advisor to the Supreme Leader Ali Akbar Velayati, Iranian Revolutionary Guards Corps Commander Hossein Salami, and Chief of Staff Mohammad Bagheri. They discussed developments in the Palestinian arena and the war in the Gaza Strip; the PIJ delegation thanked Iran for its support of the Palestinian "resistance."

◆ Iranian Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei congratulated the delegation on the "victory of the resistance" in Gaza, which he said marked a turning point in the history of the "resistance struggle." He said the "foolish American plan for Gaza" would not materialize, noting that those who claimed they had quickly destroyed the "resistance" a year and a half ago were now receiving their prisoners back in small groups from "resistance" fighters, in exchange for releasing large numbers of Palestinian prisoners. Al-Nakhalah thanked Iran for the "resistance's" achievements in Gaza, crediting Iran's continued support and its backing of "resistance forces," especially former Hezbollah secretary general Hassan Nasrallah. He stressed that the "unity and cohesion" among Palestinian and Lebanese "resistance factions," both politically and on the ground, was a crucial factor in the "victory," and that the Palestinian people would never abandon the "resistance" (Ali Khamenei's Arabic website, February 18, 2025; Telegram channel of PIJ's Information Office, February 18, 2025).



**Khamenei meets the PIJ delegation  
(Iranian supreme leader's Telegram channel, February 18, 2025)**

◆ Iranian President Pezeshkian said Iran would always stand with the Palestinian people and the "Islamic resistance," adding that Islamic countries had to cooperate to help the Palestinian people and the Gazans rebuild the Strip. Al-Nakhalah thanked Iran for its unprecedented support, and said he appreciated the bravery of Hezbollah and the "brothers in Yemen." He said Israel was now seeking to achieve politically what it had failed to achieve militarily, and Israel's supporters were paving the way for its success arena, necessitating greater vigilance (PIJ Information Office Telegram channel , February 20, 2025).

◆ Meeting with Velayati, al-Nakhalah noted the "resistance's commitment" to continue the "struggle" until the complete liberation of all "Palestine." He noted the importance of solidarity among the "resistance factions" and Iran's central role in achieving "ultimate victory." Al-Nakhalah claimed that the recent successes of the resistance were just the beginning. Velayati congratulated the Palestinian "resistance" on its latest achievements, stating they demonstrated the strong determination of the Palestinian people and the "resistance front." He reiterated his position that the United States remained the "resistance's" greatest enemy (Filastin al-Yawm Network Telegram channel, February 22, 2025).

## Israel, Judea and Samaria

### Terrorist attacks

► **IED attack on buses in the Gush Dan region:** On the evening of February 20, 2025, explosive devices blew up on three empty buses in Bat Yam and Holon. Searches revealed two explosive devices hidden on buses. There were no casualties (Police spokesperson, February 20, 2025). Reportedly, one of the devices was inscribed, "Revenge from the Tulkarm refugee camp." It is

suspected that the devices exploded prematurely. Israeli security forces launched a manhunt for the terrorists who were responsible (Israeli media, February 20, 2025). The Tulkarm Battalion of Hamas denied any connection to the explosions (Tulkarm Battalion, Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades Telegram channels, February 22, 2025).

## Counterterrorism activities

► This past week, Israeli security forces continued Operation Iron Wall, which took place concurrently with routine activities in Judea and Samaria. The forces focused on Jenin, Qabatiya and Tulkarm. This week was the first time in 22 years that IDF forces entered the Jenin area with tanks. Terrorist operatives were targeted, dozens of wanted Palestinians and those suspected of terrorist activity were detained, weapons and explosive devices were located and destroyed, and firearms were confiscated. Israeli forces demolished the home of the terrorist who carried out the August 2024 attack in Holon and killed two Israelis (IDF spokesperson and Israeli media, February 18-25, 2025). Palestinian media reported that a "young man" was wounded by gunfire from Israeli security forces in Qabatiya (Quds News Agency Telegram channel, February 24, 2025). The al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades said three of their operatives had been killed in the al-Faraa refugee camp (al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades Telegram channel, February 19, 2025). Muhammad Jarrar, the mayor of Jenin, reported that twenty thousand residents had been displaced from their homes. He added that they opposed turning the Jenin refugee camp into a neighborhood within the city (Ramallah News Telegram channel, February 24, 2025).



**Right: An Israeli tank in the Jenin refugee camp (Quds News Agency Telegram channel, February 24, 2025). Left: Weapons found during Operation Iron Wall (IDF spokesperson, February 21, 2025)**

## The Palestinian Authority (PA)

### The freezing of American funding for Palestinian security forces

► "Palestinian and American officials" reported that the Trump administration halted funding for the PA's security forces as part of a global freeze on foreign aid. According to "Palestinian

sources," the funding freeze led to cuts in training and severely impacted the readiness of the Palestinian security forces. The decision increased pressure on the PA as it struggles to maintain control over Judea and Samaria and fulfill its role in the Gaza Strip following the war, according to reports from Palestinian sources (The Washington Post, February 19, 2025).

### **Activity of Palestinian security forces**

► The PA security forces operating in the Old City of Nablus arrested Khaled al-Sabarini, commander of the rapid response battalion in the Tulkarm refugee camp. The battalion was established in February 2023 amid escalations in fighting against Israeli security forces, and a month later, the battalion commander, Amir Imad Abu Khadija, was killed during a confrontation with Israeli forces (Quds News Agency, February 22, 2025). It was also reported that Palestinian security forces arrested Ibrahim Fayyad, a released prisoner wanted by Israel, in the Nur Shams refugee camp in Tulkarm ("Mish Rayeh" [I'm Not Going] Telegram channel, February 24, 2025). The forces also arrested Mahmoud Jabarin, wanted by Israel, in the Jenin refugee camp (Quds News Agency Telegram channel, February 25, 2025).

► "Palestinian sources" reported that PA security forces neutralized explosive devices in the Old City of Nablus (Shehab Agency, February 22, 2025).

► "Palestinian sources" reported that PA security forces dispersed a rally held in Ramallah commemorating former Hezbollah secretary general Hassan Nasrallah, which took place during Nasrallah's funeral in Beirut (Quds News Agency, February 23, 2025).

### **Political activity**

► The office of PA chairman Mahmoud Abbas reported he would present the "Palestinian vision for confronting challenges faced by the Palestinians" at the Arab Summit in Cairo on March 4, 2025. According to the report, the "vision" has six principles, which are the return of full PA control over the Gaza Strip, including border crossings, and planning an economic rehabilitation program in cooperation with Egypt and international organizations; continuation of reforms in state institutions; pursuit of a comprehensive ceasefire in all Palestinian territories; advancement of diplomatic and legal efforts to achieve international recognition of an independent Palestinian state; initiating an international peace conference in June 2025 led by Saudi Arabia and France; and the need for national unity under the PLO as the sole representative of the Palestinian people. He also said general elections would be held within a year, "provided conditions permit" (Wafa, February 20, 2025).

► Abbas Zaki, a member of Fatah's Central Committee, criticized Trump's plans for the Palestinians. He claimed the American administration was biased in favor of Israel at the Palestinians' expense, made obvious by Secretary of State Marco Rubio's avoidance of meeting with the Palestinian leadership during his regional visit. Zaki noted that they had previously severed ties with the Trump administration and might make a similar decision if Trump "attempts to impose on the Palestinians the vision known as the Deal of the Century, or any other vision derived from it" (Aram News, February 20, 2025).

### **Convention of the Fatah Revolutionary Council**

► The Fatah Revolutionary Council held its 12<sup>th</sup> session in Ramallah with Mahmoud Abbas in attendance. Issues discussed were the challenges facing the Palestinian people in light of "Israeli aggression" in the Gaza Strip, Judea and Samaria, Jewish settler activities and the "economic blockade." Mahmoud Abbas said he opposed Trump's plan for relocating Gazans, and noted the importance of maintaining the ceasefire agreement and ensuring humanitarian aid flowed into the Strip. He added that the PA was committed to being active in the Gaza Strip, including at the Rafah and Kerem Shalom Crossings, and said the international peace conference led by France and Saudi Arabia would be held in New York in June 2025. He condemned the Jewish settlements, noted the commitment of the PA security forces to maintaining safety and stability, and called for "bold action" to realize the two-state solution and end "the occupation" (Wafa, February 20, 2025).

► The council approved the movement's plan for action, noting "steadfast resistance to the occupation," rejecting any attempt at displacement or annexation, and strengthening national unity. It also expressed willingness to integrate released prisoners into the movement's ranks and national frameworks, highlighting its commitment to the families of those killed, imprisoned and wounded. The council also called for support for UNRWA and increased regional and international efforts to protect the agency's activities, and thanked Jordan and Egypt for opposing Trump's plan, and Saudi Arabia for supporting the "legitimate rights of the Palestinian people." It also called for convening the UN Security Council under the Uniting for Peace resolution to "halt aggression" and prevent "attempts at displacement." In its concluding statement, the council noted that any action undermining or attacking the unified representation by the PLO was "a crime serving the interests of the occupation" (Wafa, February 22, 2025). After the convention Fatah spokesperson Munther al-Hayek said that despite statements made, salaries would continue to be paid for shaheeds, the wounded and



imprisoned (Fatah commission for information and culture Telegram channel, February 24, 2025).



**Mahmoud Abbas at the Fatah Revolutionary Council meeting (Wafa, February 20, 2025)**

## Palestinian National Conference in Qatar

► The PA decided to take firm steps against participants of the Palestinian National Conference held in Doha, Qatar. Security forces prevented more than 35 participants from going to the conference, confiscated their passports, threatened conference attendees with sanctions and conducted a media campaign against the conference. The PLO and Fatah claimed the objective of the conference was to undermine the legitimacy of the PLO as the Palestinians' sole representative and warned against external interference in creating an alternative political framework. The conference concluded on February 19, 2025 with recommendations to promote "rebuilding" the PLO, affirmed as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinians, and to establish a liaison committee to meet with Mahmoud Abbas, the PLO leadership, and Palestinian factions (al-Araby al-Jadeed, February 20, 2025).<sup>5</sup>

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The Palestinian National Conference held in Qatar between February 17-19, 2025, was intended "to<sup>5</sup> formulate a unified national leadership and rebuild the PLO." Approximately 400 representatives from Judea and Samaria, the Gaza Strip, the Palestinian dispersal and Arab countries participated. For further details, see the ITIC report, "[Spotlight on Terrorism and the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict \(February 11-18, 2025\)](#)."