



Spotlight on the Israel-Palestinian Conflict

March 25 – April 1, 2025

Overview¹

- ▶ IDF forces operated against targets of Hamas and other terrorist organizations in the northern and central Gaza Strip. In the south, the IDF ordered the evacuation of the city of Rafah. Senior terrorist operatives were eliminated, including a Hamas spokesperson. Six rockets were fired at Israeli communities near the Gaza border; there were no casualties.
- ▶ Efforts continued to renew the ceasefire between Israel and Hamas. Hamas official stated they would not hesitate to release all the Israeli hostages if it guaranteed the end of the war.
- ▶ Spontaneous popular demonstrations took place in various locations of the Gaza Strip to protest the continuation of the war and to end Hamas rule. According to reports, Hamas security forces threatened and assaulted protestors.
- ▶ The Hamas government in the Gaza Strip admitted that due to the elimination of senior figures it was currently limited to providing only basic services.
- ▶ Hamas and other Palestinian terrorist organizations reportedly agreed that dismantling their military wings in the Gaza Strip was a red line and they would not to discuss it as long as the "Israeli occupation" continued.
- ▶ Israeli security forces continued counterterrorism operations in Judea and Samaria, and exposed a terrorist cell handled by Hamas headquarters in Turkey.

The Southern Front

IDF activity in the Gaza Strip

- ▶ This past week IDF forces continued operating against terrorist targets, primarily those of Hamas and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ), part of Operation Strength and Sword. They advanced on the ground in various areas in the northern, central and southern Gaza Strip, accompanied by aerial and ground attacks targeting terrorists, including operatives who fired mortars at the forces, terrorist facilities, rocket launchers and weapons. With the support of the Israel Security Agency (Shin Bet), IDF forces eliminated senior political figures and

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

operatives from Hamas and other terrorist organizations, including Hamas spokesperson Abd al-Latif Rajab al-Qanua. A one-kilometer Hamas tunnel in northern Gaza and a 25-barrel rocket launcher found in Rafah were destroyed (IDF spokesperson, March 25 – April 1, 2025).

► On March 31, 2025, the IDF Arabic spokesperson issued an evacuation order for the entire city of Rafah and three neighborhoods south of Khan Yunis (IDF Arabic Telegram channel, Avichay Adraee, March 31, 2025). Thousands of Gazans left the area (Palestinian Media Center, March 31, 2025). Hamas condemned the order, accusing Israel of a "blatant violation" of international law and a "crime of forced displacement." Hamas called on Arab and Islamic leaders, the international community and the UN to immediately exert pressure on the "occupation" to stop its "crimes" (Hamas official Telegram channel, March 31, 2025).



Right: The IDF spokesperson's evacuation notice to residents of Rafah and the surrounding area (IDF Arabic, March 31, 2025). Left: Gazans leave the Rafah area (Palestinian Media Center, March 31, 2025)

► The Hamas-controlled ministry of health in Gaza reported that since the IDF resumed military operations on March 18, 2025, 1,042 people had been killed and 2,542 wounded. According to the ministry, since the start of the war on October 7, 2023, the number of deaths in the Gaza Strip stood 50,399, with 114,583 wounded (ministry of health in Gaza Telegram channel, April 1, 2025).

► Civil Defense in Gaza claimed Israel had "executed" six of its personnel and nine from the Palestinian Red Crescent, whose bodies were found buried in sand in the Tel al-Sultan neighborhood in Rafah (Quds News Agency, March 31, 2025). Hamas accused Israel of committing a "war crime" and called for an international investigation commission led by the UN and the Red Cross (Hamas Telegram channel, March 28, 2025).

► In light of the elimination of senior Hamas operatives since the resumption of fighting, "Hamas sources" claimed Israel used the ceasefire to increase its intelligence efforts and update its list of targets, using drones equipped with AI systems, area-specific wiretapping and

voice-based identification to track down wanted operatives. They claimed Israel dropped tiny surveillance devices from UAVs and planted cameras and monitoring equipment during the ground force actions, equipment " Hamas has not yet fully exposed." The sources added that the Hamas "military ceremonies" held during the release of Israeli hostages were also exploited by Israel to identify field commanders and fighters, some of whom were later eliminated. The sources admitted that the Palestinian "factions"² had lost a significant portion of their command and control tunnels, which also served as hideouts for senior Hamas and Izz al-Din Qassam Brigades operatives, forcing them to operate under difficult conditions without real shelter. Some had to live in tents in areas populated by displaced persons, others returned to their homes and were killed along with their families, while others were eliminated with their families after hiding in apartments owned by others (al-Sharq al-Awsat, March 27, 2025).

Rocket fire

► This past week six rockets were fired into Israeli territory, targeting the Gaza border area. Five were intercepted, and one fell in the area of Zimrat; no casualties or damage were reported. The IDF attacked the areas of the rocket launches after evacuation notices had been issued (IDF spokesperson, March 25 – April 1, 2025). The PIJ's military wing claimed responsibility for the rocket fire, claiming it had fired a barrage at the Hatzor Airbase (PIJ combat information Telegram channel, March 25 – April 1, 2025).

The Hostages and the Ceasefire

► This past week, Egyptian and Qatari mediators continued efforts to promote a framework which would enable Israel and Hamas to renew the ceasefire and release Israeli hostages in exchange for Palestinian prisoners, the entry of humanitarian aid into the Gaza Strip, negotiations for the second phase of a ceasefire agreement and an end to the war. Disagreements reportedly remain on several issues, including the number of live hostages to be released, a full Israeli withdrawal from the Gaza Strip and the exile of senior Hamas terrorists abroad (al-Araby al-Jadeed, March 29, 2025; al-Sharq al-Awsat, March 29 and 31, 2025; Israeli media, March 25 – April 1, 2025).

► Hamas continued to claim commitment to the ceasefire agreement of January 2025, while also claiming to have accepted new proposals from the mediators in order to move forward with the second phase of the agreement and an end to the war. They also reiterated their

² Terrorist organizations.

opposition to any attempt to "displace" Gazans, and [allegedly] declared their willingness to give up governance of the Strip:

◆ Hamas figure Mahmoud Mardawi, in a speech for World Jerusalem Day, said the Palestinian "factions" had responded "responsibly and seriously" to the ceasefire initiatives presented in the first stage, but the "occupation" evaded the understandings, violated its commitments to the mediators and returned to a "policy of murder and escalation." He said the international community had to decide whether it would act according to law and justice or maintain its double standard and threaten regional stability. He claimed they were prepared to continue negotiations to achieve their goals, adding that "the resistance remains a legitimate means for liberation and the restoration of Palestinian rights" (Shehab Agency, March 27, 2025).

◆ Suheil al-Hindi, a member of the Hamas political bureau, said talks with the mediators were being held around the clock, adding he hoped an agreement to stop the bloodshed could be reached "within days." He claimed they were conducting the negotiations "flexibly" to end the war, achieve the withdrawal of the "occupation" and lift the "siege" of the Strip (Al Jazeera, March 27, 2025).

◆ Khalil al-Haya, head of the Hamas political bureau in Gaza, said in a speech for Eid al-Fitr that Hamas did not want anything new, only the honoring of the agreement already signed, which the mediators had guaranteed. He added that Hamas had responded "responsibly and positively" to all proposals for ending the war. On March 27, 2025, he said, they received a proposal from the Egyptian and Qatari mediators, approved it and responded positively. He said he hoped Israel would not sabotage the proposal or undermine the mediators' efforts. He added that the weapons of the "resistance"³ were a red line, linked to the presence of the "occupation" and the establishment of an independent Palestinian state, and if the "occupation" continued, the people and the state would "retain weapons to defend their resources and rights" (Hamas Telegram channel, March 29, 2025).

³ I.e., the terrorist organizations' arsenals.



Khalil al-Haya speaking for Eid al-Fitr (Quds News Agency, March 29, 2025)

◆ " Hamas sources involved in the negotiations" said that in recent weeks talks had been held to formulate a mutually agreed-on proposal between the movement's leadership and the mediators, including the United States, which would work to ensure Israel's compliance. According to the "sources," the Hamas leadership received various proposals and did not shut the door on any of them. They informed the mediators that they were willing to release hostages and [allegedly] had no problem with the number of hostages or prisoners to be released in exchange, but demanded guarantees for a ceasefire that would lead to a second phase or negotiations for a second phase. According to the "sources," Hamas also reiterated that it was prepared to transfer governance of the Strip to a community support committee or any other mutually-agreed party (al-Sharq al-Awsat, March 29, 2025).

◆ Hamas' Sami Abu Zuhri claimed that if the return of the Israeli "captives" [hostages] guaranteed Israel ended the war in the Gaza Strip, they would "not hesitate for a moment to release them" [sic] (Al Jazeera, March 31, 2025).

The Gaza Strip

The situation in the Gaza Strip

► Dr. Munir al-Bursh, director general of the Hamas ministry of health in Gaza, warned of a severe deterioration of the public health system in the Strip, claiming it was on the verge of collapse. He reported that hospitals lacked basic supplies and 80% of patients did not receive the medications they needed. He called on the Islamic world to intervene to stop the ongoing humanitarian disaster in the Gaza Strip (Telegram channel of al-Khamisa News, March 26, 2025).

► Abd al-Nasser al-‘Ajrami, head of the Gaza Bakers’ Association, reported that 18 bakeries operating under the World Food Program would close on April 1, 2025, due to shortages of flour and diesel fuel. He claimed the bakeries would not be able to reopen until Israel allowed the entry of aid, and warned that closed bakeries would lead to the spread of hunger in the Strip (al-Aqsa TV Telegram channel, April 1, 2025). Posts on social media also blamed Hamas for the closure of the bakeries. One read, "Do the [Hamas] negotiation delegation and the mediators know the bakeries in the north and south of the Gaza Strip have run out of flour? Do they know they have run out of gas and stopped working today? We are dying, dying! Using what tone and in what way [do we need to say it]?" (ali_s723's X account, March 31, 2025).



Gazans wait in line at a bakery in Gaza City to buy pitas before the bakeries close (journalist Shadi Sabah's Telegram channel, March 31, 2025)

Hamas governance

► On March 25, 2025, Gazans held spontaneous demonstrations in Beit Lahia in northern Gaza to protest the ongoing war and Hamas rule. Over the following two days, additional protests were held in Beit Lahia and other areas, with dozens to hundreds of participants. Since March 28, 2025, no further demonstrations have been reported, and the protest has continued primarily on social media. Hamas claimed Israel was behind the protests. Reports indicated that Hamas security forces used violence, and people who participated in the protests or promoted them on social media received threats from Hamas operatives and were physically assaulted, including one protester who was tortured to death.⁴

► Following the elimination of Issam al-Da’alis, a member of the Hamas political bureau and head of the governmental oversight committee in the Gaza Strip, a "senior Hamas figure" reported that the movement had decided not to appoint a replacement. He said that paved

⁴ For further information, see the March 2025 ITIC report, "[Demonstrations in the Gaza Strip against Hamas.](#)"

the way for transferring responsibility for the administration of the Strip to the community support committee, which is expected to be appointed according to the Egyptian proposal. He added that the current government management was limited to basic services to prevent a vacuum during the war, and Hamas had asked to expedite the start of the community support committee's operations (al-Araby TV website, March 27, 2025).

► The Hamas government media information office reported that all governmental institutions were operating solely to provide services without political functions, with the objective of ensuring the continued provision of basic services to the population, particularly in health, education and municipal services, despite the destruction and ongoing war. The report welcomed Egypt's efforts to establish a temporary administration for the Strip to guarantee continued basic services, and expressed hope that the move would proceed quickly in accordance with the Egyptian proposal accepted by the Palestinian "factions" (Hamas government media information office Telegram channel, March 29, 2025).

► "Hamas sources" reported that the movement had appointed "revolutionary courts" to handle collaborators arrested in areas where senior figures from Hamas and other "factions" had been eliminated. Some of the accused who were found guilty of espionage were executed, while others remained under investigation. The sources did not disclose the number of those executed but reported that Hamas viewed the activity as part of its effort to strengthen security following the severe blow to its political, military and governmental leadership since the resumption of fighting (al-Sharq al-Awsat, March 27, 2025).

► According to reports, on March 28, 2025, Hamas executed six men accused of spying for Israel, after they confessed to working on its behalf. Among the accused were three Hamas operatives who were "proved" to have been in contact with the Mossad. They were caught on hidden cameras at Nasser Hospital while allegedly planning to eliminate senior Hamas figure Isma'il Barhoum, and were involved in targeting Hamas political bureau member and strategic planner Salah al-Bardawil. The security forces responsible for protecting the leaders had been monitoring them with hidden cameras. According to claims, Ahmed Suleiman Arafat, head of the Islamic Bloc [the Hamas student faction] at the Islamic University, was among those executed (X accounts of Abd Najem, 5llit and DrEman, March 29, 2025). Ahmed Suleiman Arafat denied he had been executed (Ahmed Suleiman Arafat's Facebook page, March 29, 2025).

"The Day After"

► "Diplomatic sources" reported that Egypt was investing efforts for an international conference for the reconstruction of the Gaza Strip, to be held as soon as possible despite several obstacles, the most prominent of which was [allegedly] "Israeli aggression." The sources reported that Egypt wanted to believe Hamas would relinquish control of the Gaza Strip in favor of establishing an independent technical committee which would oversee administrative matters in cooperation with international institutions. It was further noted that Egypt was calling for Arab and international support for the reconstruction plan, which includes providing temporary housing for Palestinians who lost their homes, rebuilding infrastructure and constructing a fishing port, a commercial port and an international airport (al-Araby al-Jadeed, March 31, 2025).

► A document drafted at a secret meeting in Beirut, attended by 13 Palestinian "factions" including Hamas, reportedly included the unanimous decision that dismantling the "resistance" military wings in the Gaza Strip was a red line and would not be discussed as long as the "Israeli occupation" continued. Reportedly, Hamas informed mediators from Egypt, Qatar and Turkey, as well as American officials, that the weapons were meant "to defend the Palestinian people and land" and would not be discussed as long as Israel remained in Gaza. However, the "factions" agreed that only if Israel fully withdrew, a complete ceasefire was achieved and the international community promoted a process toward the establishment of a Palestinian state, could future use of the weapons be discussed and potentially integrated into the institutions of a future Palestinian state. Hamas noted it was not a refusal, on principle, of political dialogue in the long term, but under "occupation" and continued "aggression," the issue of weapons was not on the table at all (Rai al-Youm, March 31, 2025).

Israel, Judea and Samaria

Terrorist attacks

► This past week there were no terrorist attacks.

Counterterrorism activities

► During the past week, Israeli security forces continued Operation Iron Wall to fight terrorism in northern Samaria, focusing on Qabatiya, Silat al-Harithiya and al-Yamoun in the Jenin area. Meanwhile, routine security activity continued in Judea and Samaria. The forces eliminated terrorist operatives, including one who threw stones and a Palestinian wanted for involvement in a terrorist attack in January 2025 where an IDF soldier was killed. Dozens of wanted

Palestinians and suspects involved in terrorist activity were detained, weapons and military equipment were seized, and funds intended to finance terrorism were confiscated (IDF spokesperson, March 25 – April 1, 2025).

► "Palestinian sources" in the Jenin refugee camp reported that at least 3,250 housing units were unfit for human habitation after being destroyed or turned into "military posts" (Al Jazeera Palestine Telegram channel, March 30, 2025). "Palestinian sources" reported that more than 4,000 families had been displaced from their homes in Tulkarm and its refugee camp, and that approximately 3,000 homes were either destroyed or partially damaged (alresala.net, March 29, 2025).

► On March 31, 2025, it was reported that during January and February 2025, Israeli security forces exposed a terrorist cell in Nablus. It had been funded and handled by Hamas headquarters in Turkey to carry out shootings and plant explosives to attack security forces and targets in Judea and Samaria. The six operatives of the cell were detained, with the possession of an M-16 rifle and approximately \$60,000 in cash for funding attacks. During the investigation, a large explosive device was located and destroyed near the Jit Junction [north of Nablus] (Shin Bet, IDF and Israel Police Force spokesperson's units, March 31, 2025).⁵

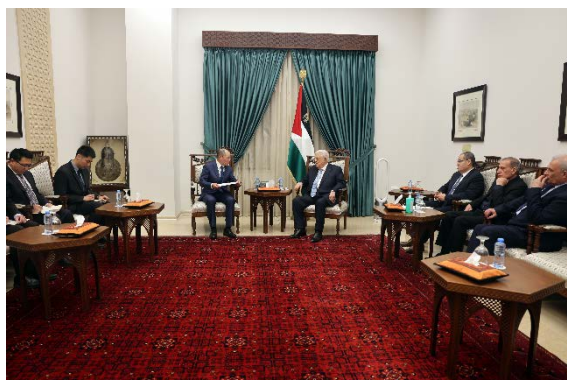
The Palestinian Authority (PA)

International activity

► Mahmoud Abbas, PA chairman, met with the Chinese ambassador in Ramallah and received a letter from Chinese President Xi Jinping. The Chinese president noted the historic friendship between China and "Palestine" and China's commitment to supporting the national rights of the Palestinian people, the establishment of an independent state and the two-state solution. Mahmoud Abbas thanked China for its political, humanitarian and economic support and expressed a desire to deepen bilateral relations. He also briefed the ambassador on recent

⁵ For further information, see the February 2025 ITIC report, "[Turkey as a Center for Hamas Activity](#)."

developments in the Gaza Strip, Judea and Samaria, and praised his contribution to strengthening bilateral ties (Wafa, March 26, 2025).



Mahmoud Abbas meets with the Chinese ambassador (Wafa, March 26, 2025)

- ▶ Mahmoud Abbas spoke with Turkish President Erdoğan for Eid al-Fitr. Erdoğan said he hoped the holiday would bring an end to the "aggression" against the Palestinian people and they would attain their independence and freedom. He noted the increasing humanitarian crisis in the Gaza Strip and said Turkey would continue to make the Palestinian voice heard in all forums. Mahmoud Abbas thanked Erdoğan for Turkey's support and noted his desire for increased bilateral cooperation (Wafa and TRT Network, March 29, 2025).
- ▶ Egyptian Foreign Minister Badr Abdelatty held separate talks with Muhammad Mustafa, PA prime minister, and Hussein al-Sheikh, secretary of the PLO's Executive Committee. They discussed the "dangerous situation" in the Gaza Strip, Judea and Samaria in light of the ongoing Israeli "aggression." Abdelatty reviewed the Egyptian-Qatar contacts to reestablish the ceasefire in the Gaza Strip and advance negotiations for the second phase. Mustafa said he appreciated Egypt's efforts, adding that he hoped they would pave the way for convening the Cairo Conference for Gaza's reconstruction as part of efforts to mobilize funding and support for the Arab-Islamic reconstruction plan (Egyptian foreign ministry Facebook page, March 26, 2025).
- ▶ Varsen Shahin, Palestinian minister of state for foreign affairs, met with Julien Chassany, head of the International Red Cross delegation, at the foreign ministry in Ramallah. Shahin presented the latest updates on the humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip, Judea and Samaria, especially in east Jerusalem. She stressed the need for increased international involvement, with an emphasis on the situation of Palestinian prisoners held in Israel. She

called on the Red Cross to take a clearer and more effective stance in response to the "violations" (PA foreign ministry Facebook page, March 27, 2025).

Actions taken by the PA security forces

► According to reports, during the past week the PA security forces neutralized explosive devices planted by the "resistance" in various areas of Tubas to attack Israeli security forces. In one instance, an explosive device was neutralized (Quds News Agency Telegram channel, March 27–29, 2025).



Neutralizing an explosive device in Tubas (al-Aqsa TV Telegram channel, March 27, 2025)