



Spotlight on the Israel-Palestinian Conflict

August 13 – 20 , 2024

Overview¹

- ▶ **The southern arena:** IDF forces continued their activity in the Rafah area in the southern Gaza Strip and the Netzarim Corridor in the central Gaza Strip, expanding their activities in Khan Yunis and Deir al-Balah. The Palestinian organizations continued firing rockets into Israeli territory, including targeting the center of the country. Three IDF soldiers were killed in combat.
- ▶ **The release of the hostages and a ceasefire agreement in Gaza:** Israeli security forces rescued the bodies of six Israeli hostages from a tunnel in Khan Yunis; they had been murdered by Hamas. Efforts to promote a ceasefire agreement and the release of hostages continued, while senior Hamas figures continued to accuse Israel of making new demands.
- ▶ The UN called for a humanitarian ceasefire in the Gaza Strip to allow children to be vaccinated against polio. The Hamas-controlled ministry of health in Gaza claimed to have identified the first active case of the virus.
- ▶ **Israel, Judea and Samaria:** This past week Palestinian terrorists carried out two attacks, murdering one Israeli civilian and wounding another. An Israeli citizen was injured when an IED exploded in Tel Aviv. Hamas and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) claimed responsibility for the "suicide attack." In an attack in an industrial area in Samaria, an Israeli citizen was killed by a hammer-wielding Palestine; the IDF is searching for the terrorist. The Israeli security forces continued their counterterrorism activities in Judea and Samaria.
- ▶ A Palestinian was killed when dozens of Jewish settlers rioted in the village of Jit in Samaria. The Palestinians condemned the attack.
- ▶ **The Palestinian Authority (PA):** PA chairman Mahmoud Abbas visited Turkey and met with President Erdogan. He gave a speech to the Turkish Parliament, announcing his intention to visit the Gaza Strip with senior Palestinian figures.

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The Southern Arena

IDF operations in the Gaza Strip

► This past week IDF activities focused on the southern and central Gaza Strip. Ground and air forces attacked and injured dozens of terrorist operatives, destroyed terrorist facilities and located tunnels and large quantities of weapons. Two IDF soldiers were killed by an IED in central Gaza Strip; an IDF soldier was accidentally killed in an Israeli Air Force attack in Khan Yunis.

► **Rafah:** IDF activity focused on the Shaboura and Tel al-Sultan neighborhoods. The forces killed dozens of terrorist operatives with ground and air strikes, located weapons and destroyed terrorist facilities (IDF spokesperson, August 13-20, 2024).



A drone locates weapons inside a building (IDF spokesperson, August 13, 2024)

► **Khan Yunis:** The IDF forces expanded their operations in Khan Yunis and on the outskirts of Deir al-Balah after terrorist operatives fired rockets at Israeli territory from the humanitarian enclave. The forces killed dozens of terrorist operatives with air, ground and underground strikes, destroyed rocket launchers prepared for firing and other terrorist facilities, and found large quantities of weapons. They also destroyed a tunnel about one and a half kilometers long (almost a mile in length), where they found an active Hamas compound for terrorist operatives which contained weapons, IEDs and equipment for a long stay. On August 19, 2024, an IDF soldier was killed and several soldiers were injured in Israeli Air Force strike (IDF spokesperson, August 13-20, 2024).

► **The central Gaza Strip:** IDF forces continued operations in the region of the Netzarim Corridor, eliminating armed terrorists with air and ground strikes. On August 17, 2024, two IDF soldiers were killed by an IED attack on a convoy in the Netzarim Corridor region (IDF spokesperson, August 13-20, 2024).

Hamas activity in the civilian enclaves in the Gaza Strip

► On the morning of August 20, 2024, Israeli Air Force fighter jets attacked a Hamas command and control complex operating in the Mustafa Hafez school in Gaza City, used by Hamas operatives to attack IDF forces and Israeli territory. Before the attack, measures were employed to reduce possible harm to civilians, including the use of precision weaponry (IDF spokesperson, August 20, 2024). Gaza civil defense reported that its crews had evacuated 12 dead from the school site (al-Jazeera, August 20, 2024).

► The IDF spokesperson reported that Hamas had fired rockets into central Israeli from the area of the humanitarian enclave in Khan Yunis (IDF spokesperson, August 14, 2024). Hamas also fired rockets at Israel from positions situated near two schools, a cemetery and a field hospital which serves the needs of the civilian population in the southern Gaza Strip (IDF spokesperson, August 19, 2024).



Right: A site in the humanitarian enclave from which Hamas fired rockets (IDF spokesperson, August 14, 2024). Left: Rocket-firing locations near civilian sites (IDF spokesperson, August 19, 2024)

Rocket fire from the Gaza Strip

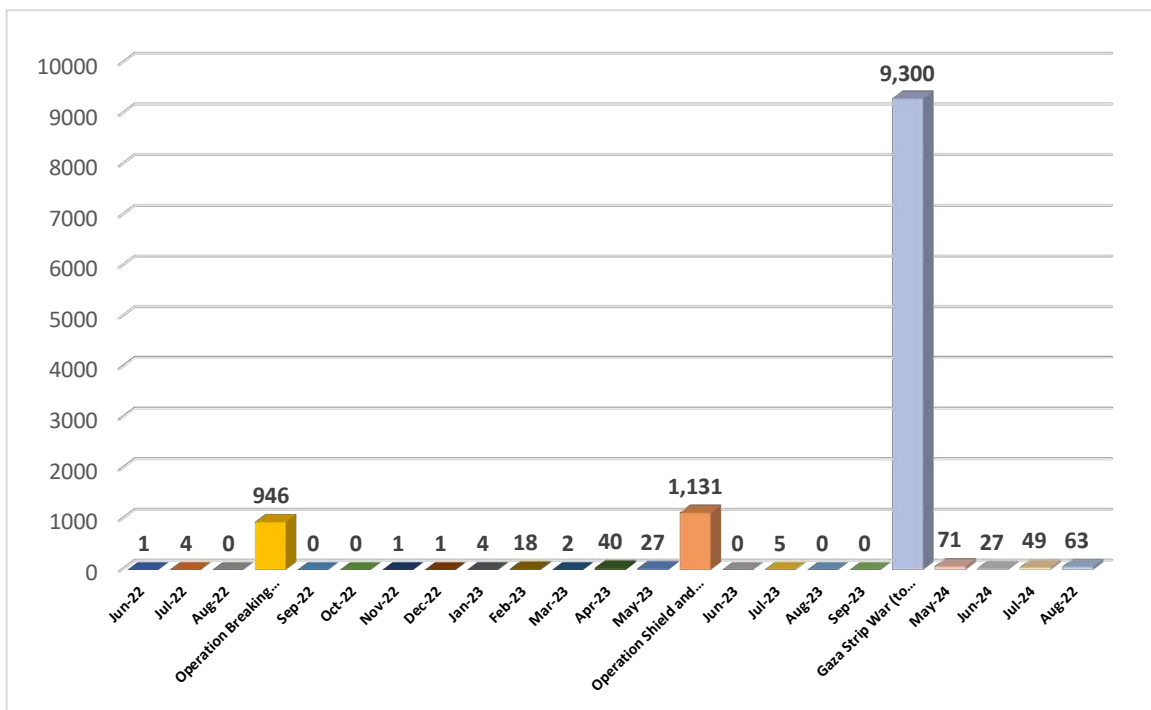
► This past week the Palestinian organizations continued firing rockets into Israeli territory. Most of the rockets were fired at the cities, towns and villages surrounding Gaza; one rocket attack targeted the greater Tel Aviv area:

- ◆ **August 13, 2024:** Palestinian terrorists fired two rockets at Israel from the humanitarian enclave in Khan Yunis. One fell into the sea off the Jaffa coast; no casualties were reported. The other did not enter Israeli territory (IDF spokesperson, August 13-14, 2024). The Izz al-Din Qassam Brigades, Hamas' military wing, announced it had launched two M90 rockets at Tel Aviv and its suburbs (Hamas in Judea and Samaria Telegram channel, August 13, 2024).
- ◆ **August 15, 2024:** Two rockets launched from the Khan Yunis area fell in open areas in the western Negev (Israeli media, August 15, 2024).

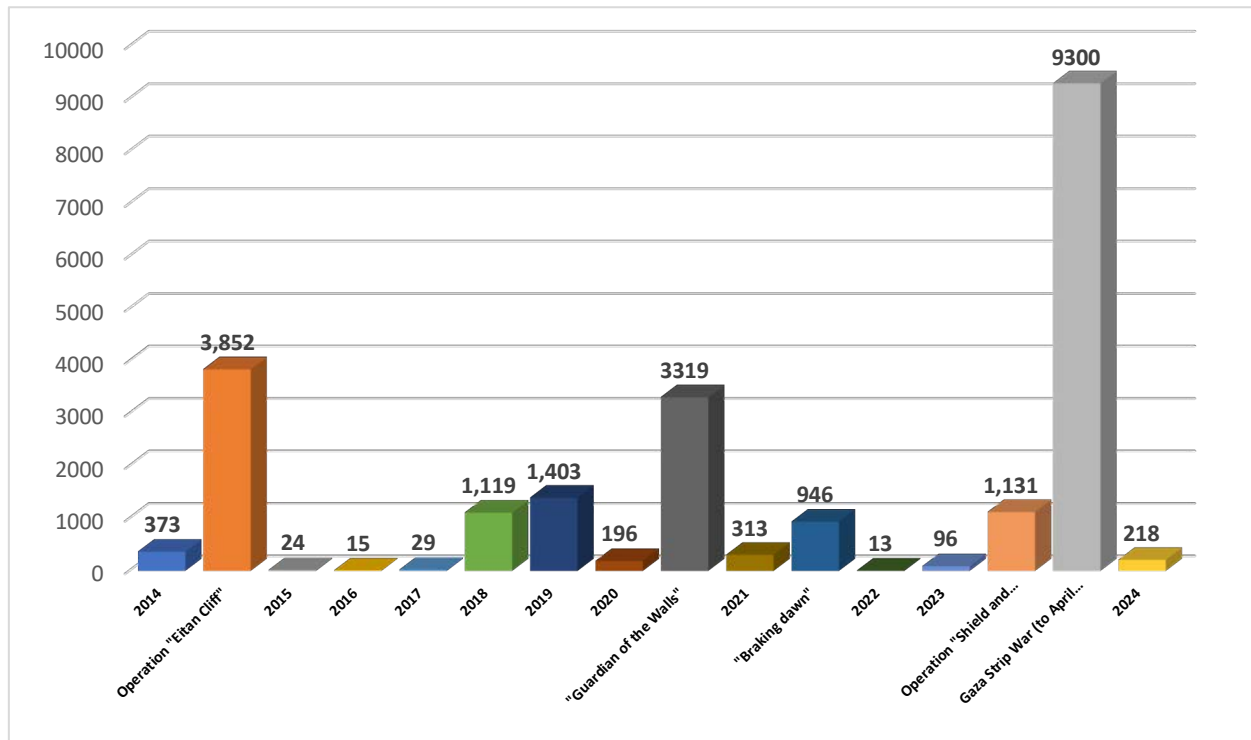
◆ **August 16, 2024:** Palestinian terrorists fired five rockets from Khan Yunis, one was intercepted and the others fell in open areas in the western Negev; no casualties were reported (Israeli media, August 16, 2024). The Izz al-Din Qassam Brigades claimed responsibility for firing 114 mm Rajum rockets at the western Negev and Israeli security forces (Hamas in Judea and Samaria Telegram channel, August 16, 2024). A rocket was fired at a kibbutz to the north of the Gaza Strip; it fell in an open area (Israeli media, August 16, 2024). The Salah al-Din network, the Brigade of the "Tawhid Allah," a Salafi-jihadist faction of the Popular Committees affiliated with the global jihad, claimed responsibility for firing a barrage of rockets at the southern coastal city of Ashqelon and at an IDF post (BURAQPal Telegram channel, August 16, 2024).

► **August 18, 2024:** Three rockets fired from Khan Yunis fell in open areas in the western Negev. A rocket fired from Khan Yunis fell in open area to the north of the Gaza Strip. No casualties or damage were reported (Israeli media, August 18, 2024). The military wing of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) claimed responsibility for firing a 107 mm rocket at a kibbutz in the western Negev (Abu Ali Mustafa Brigades Telegram channel, August 18, 2024).

Monthly Distribution of Rocket Fire



Annual Distribution of Rocket Hits



* Distribution for 2024 begins in May

The hostages and a ceasefire agreement

- ▶ On the night of August 19, 2024, the Israeli security forces rescued the bodies of six Israeli civilians who had been abducted in the Hamas attack and massacre on October 7, 2023, and subsequently murdered. Their bodies were found in a tunnel in Khan Yunis (IDF spokesperson and Israeli media, August 20, 2024).
- ▶ On August 15 and 16, 2024, a round of negotiations for a ceasefire and the release of the hostages was held in Qatar, attended by senior representatives from the United States, Israel, Qatar and Egypt. A joint announcement was issued after the talks, stating that a plan had been devised for narrowing the gaps between Israel and Hamas. The announcement added that negotiations for implementing the plan would continue and another meeting would be held in Cairo to promote an agreement (Facebook page of the spokesman of the Egyptian presidency, August 16, 2024).
- ▶ Senior Hamas figures reiterated that they were committed to the July 2, 2024 proposal, which was based on President Biden's plan and the UN Security Council resolution, and accused Israel of making new demands which prevented an agreement being reached:
 - ◆ Hamas claimed that the movement had acted "responsibly" in dealing with the mediators from Qatar and Egypt, and that Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu was "guilty

of raising obstacles and preventing agreements for a ceasefire and exchange of prisoners." Hamas demanded that the mediators exert pressure on Israel to implement the agreements reached on July 2, 2024 (Hamas website, August 18, 2024).

◆ Hamas spokesman Jihad Taha said that the movement was "eager" to end the "aggression" in the Gaza Strip. He accused Prime Minister Netanyahu of trying to sabotage the negotiations by imposing new conditions, and emphasized that Hamas opposed an Israeli presence in the Netzarim Corridor, the Philadelphia Axis and the Rafah Crossing (Radio Quds Telegram channel, August 17, 2024).

◆ Musa Abu Marzouq, a member of the Hamas political bureau, said there had been no breakthrough in the negotiations. He claimed that the new proposal was closer to the Israeli proposal and was considered an abandonment of the American proposal which Hamas agreed to on July 2, 2024 (al-Araby al-Jadeed, August 19, 2024).

► Hamas-affiliated al-Aqsa TV claimed that Israel had made several demands, including no permanent ceasefire during the first phase, Israel would continue to control the Rafah Crossing and the Philadelphia Axis, Israel would continue to control the Netzarim Corridor and supervise the passage of Gazan residents [northward], Israel would have the right to refuse the release of more than 100 specific Palestinian prisoners, 150 prisoners who would be released from Israeli prisons would be deported abroad, humanitarian aid was conditional on the acceptance of all Israeli conditions, and talks on the reconstruction of the Gaza Strip would be held only after the implementation of the first phase (al-Aqsa TV, August 19, 2024).

The Gaza Strip

Palestinian casualties

► The Hamas-controlled ministry of health in the Gaza Strip reported that since the beginning of the war, 40,173 Palestinians had been killed and 92,857 injured (ministry of health in Gaza Facebook page, August 20, 2024).

► On August 15, 2024, senior Hamas figure Osama Hamdan denied that Muhammed Deif, the commander of Hamas' military wing, had been killed in an airstrike on July 13, 2024. He claimed Deif was in perfect health (Shehab news agency, August 15, 2024).

► On August 19, 2024, Palestinian media reported that nine Palestinians were killed in an Israeli airstrike in the al-Shati refugee camp in Gaza. Hamas "sources" said that six of the dead were personal bodyguards of Isma'il Haniyeh, late head of Hamas' political bureau, who was killed in Tehran on July 31, 2024 (Shehab news agency, August 19, 2024).

Polio in the Gaza Strip

► On August 16, 2024, Philippe Lazzarini, the UNRWA commissioner, called for a seven-day humanitarian ceasefire in the Gaza Strip to allow for two rounds of polio vaccinations (Philippe Lazzarini's X account, August 16, 2024). The UN secretary general, Antonio Guterres, called for vaccinating more than 640,000 children in the Gaza Strip. He claimed children could not be vaccinated while a war was being waged, and therefore a ceasefire for vaccinations was "necessary" (UN website, August 16 2024).

► On August 16, 2024, following the UN calls for a humanitarian ceasefire, the Hamas-controlled ministry of health in Gaza announced the first active case of polio, diagnosed in a ten-month-old toddler from the Deir al-Balah refugee camp. The ministry of health announced the initiation of a vaccination campaign, in cooperation with international organizations, for children younger than ten. The ministry said the success of the campaign depended on a ceasefire, which would allow medical teams to operate in the field, and warned that the epidemic could spread beyond the Gaza Strip if the serious problems of sanitation were not addressed (ministry of health in Gaza, August 16, 2024).

► The Israeli Coordinator of Government Activities in the Territories (COGAT) reported that since beginning of the war, more than 2.8 million doses of polio vaccinations had been brought into the Gaza Strip and another 60,000 doses were expected to be delivered in the coming weeks. A campaign for vaccinating 600,000 children younger than ten years of age was expected at the end of August 2024 (COGAT Facebook page in Arabic, August 18, 2024). The Avichay Adraee, the IDF spokesperson in Arabic, told the Arab media that since July 2024, vaccines adapted to the strain of the virus detected in the samples for the Gaza Strip had already been delivered, enough for two rounds of vaccinations for more than a million children (Avichay Adraee's X account, August 18, 2024).

Israel, Judea and Samaria

Terrorist attacks

► This past week Palestinians terrorist operatives carried out two terrorist attacks, killing one Israeli civilian and wounding another.

IED explodes in Tel Aviv

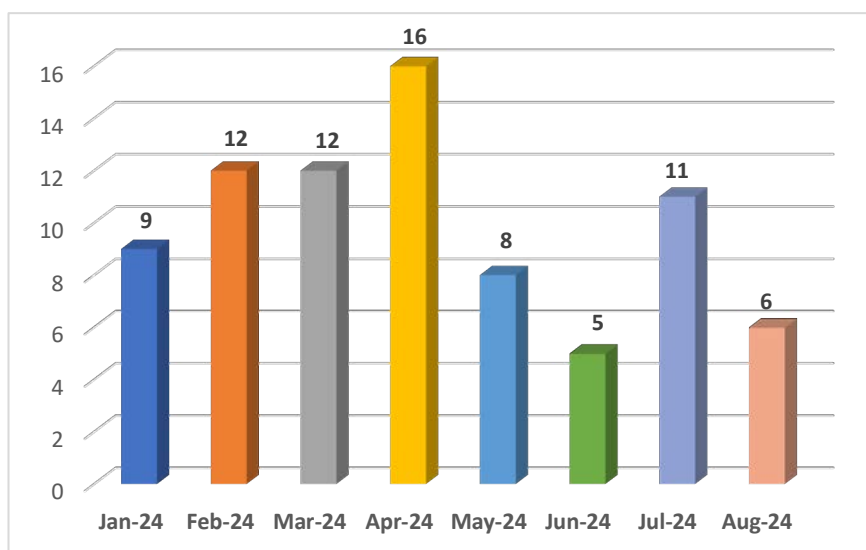
► On the evening of August 18, 2024, a powerful IED exploded on a main street in the southern area Tel Aviv. The person carrying the IED in his backpack was killed, and an Israeli civilian was injured. According to reports, the person suspected of carrying out the attack came from of

Nablus and had no criminal or security record (Israel Police Force X account and Israeli media, August 18-19, 2024). The Izz al-Din Qassam Brigades, Hamas' military wing, and the Jerusalem Brigades, the PIJ's military wing claimed responsibility for the "suicide bombing attack in Tel Aviv." The Izz al-Din Qassam Brigades said it would continue to operate "in the depths of the occupied territories" and would restore the suicide attacks "as long as the massacres of the occupation continue along with the targeted attacks [of senior terrorist operatives]" (Hamas Telegram channel, August 19, 2024). Osama Hamdan said that the attack was the launch of a "new model" of "operations" (al-Araby TV, August 19, 2024).

Palestinian attacks Israeli civilian with a hammer

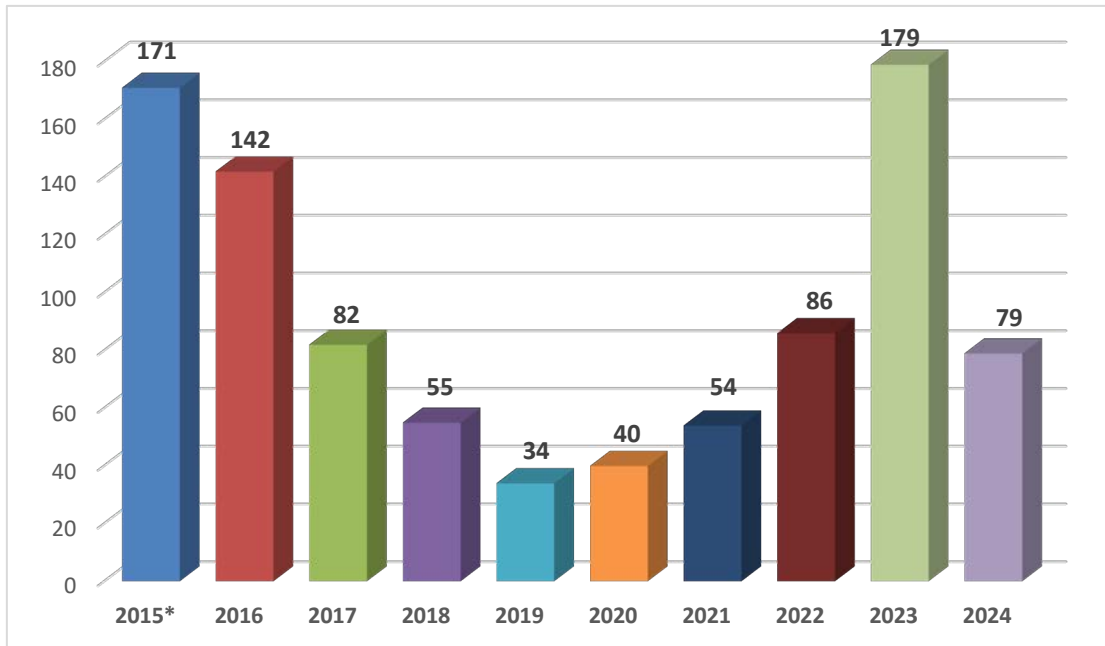
► On August 18, 2024, a Palestinian armed with a hammer attacked and mortally wounded an Israeli security guard at a factory in the Bar-On Industrial Park in Samaria, stole his gun and fled the scene in a stolen vehicle. IDF forces instituted a search for the suspect murderer, identified as Sultan Nidal Abd al-Aziz Abd al-Gani, 21 years old, from the village of Baqa al-khatab, east of Qalqilya (IDF spokesperson and Israeli media, August 17, 2024).

Critical terrorist attacks, 2024²



² A critical attack is defined by the ITIC as involving shooting, stabbing, a vehicular attack, the use of IEDs, or a combination of the above. Rocks and Molotov cocktails thrown by Palestinians are not included. Shots fired at IDF forces during counterterrorism activities in Judea and Samaria are included.

Annual distribution of critical terrorist attacks



Counterterrorism activities

- The Israeli security forces continued their counterterrorism activities in Judea and Samaria. Since the beginning of the war, approximately 4,400 wanted persons have been detained, of whom more than 1,850 were Hamas terrorist operatives (IDF spokesperson, August 13-20, 2024):
- On August 14, 2024, the Israeli security forces completed a 12-hour counterterrorism operation in the villages of Tubas and Tammun and the al-Faraa refugee camp. During the operation, an Israeli Air Force aircraft eliminated four armed terrorist operatives and the forces killed a wanted terrorist operative; three Palestinians suspected of terrorist activity were detained. Four IDF soldiers were injured when their vehicle drove over an IED (IDF spokesperson, August 14, 2024). Hamas' military wing confirmed the death of Izz al-Din Qassam Brigades operative Faiz Daraghmeh, killed in a "violent confrontation with the Zionist forces" who raided his house in Tubas (Hamas in Judea and Samaria Telegram channel, August 14, 2024). The PIJ military wing reported that the dead were Amro Muhammad Bani Awda, Muhammad Bashar Abu Shema, Faiz Fawaz Abu Amer, Muhammad Jawad Muhammad Bani Dhib, Khaled Bani Awda (Telegram channel of journalist Amir al-Maqousi, August 14, 2024).



Right: Israeli Air Force attack on armed terrorist operatives in the village of Tammun (IDF spokesperson, August 14, 2024). Left: Faiz Daraghmeh (Hamas in Judea and Samaria Telegram channel, August 14, 2024)

► On August 15, 2024, the Israeli security forces carried out counterterrorism activities in Nablus. An Israeli Air Force aircraft killed two armed terrorist operatives. Armed terrorist operatives shot and threw IEDs at the forces, who returned fire (IDF spokesperson, August 15, 2024). Hamas' Izz al-Din Qassam Brigades announced the death of Wa'el Bilal Masheh, killed in an airstrike in the Balata refugee camp (Hebron News Network, August 15, 2024). Fatah's al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades (AAMB) in Nablus announced that Fatah operative Ahmed Sheikh Khalil was also killed in the attack (AAMB Telegram channel, August 16, 2024).



Wa'el Bilal Masheh (Hamas in Judea and Samaria Telegram channel, August 15, 2024)

► On August 15, 2024, a terrorist operative was detained in Qalqilya. He was an operative the squad responsible for shooting and wounding an Israeli civilian in Qalqilya on August 12, 2024. The IDF reported he confessed to having transmitted information about the presence of an Israeli civilian in Qalqilya (IDF spokesperson, August 15, 2024). Palestinian "sources" reported that Hussein al-Aqra, a Palestinian in his twenties, was detained by Israeli forces in a raid on his workplace near the community of Tzufim (Wafa, August 15, 2024).

► On August 17, 2024, an Israeli Air Force aircraft attacked a vehicle in Jenin, killing senior Hamas terrorist operatives Ahmed Abu Ara from Aqaba, who manufactured explosives, and Rafat Dawasi, from Silat al-Harithiya, who was a senior operative in Hamas' military wing in

Jenin. According to reports, during the questioning of Yassin Ghanem, who was detained by the security forces, it was learned that the two were also involved in planning the shooting in which an Israeli civilian was murdered in the Jordan Valley on August 11, 2024 (IDF spokesperson, August 17, 2024). Hamas' military wing confirmed the death of Rafat Dawasi, from Silat al-Harithiya, its commander in the Jenin district, and of Ahmed Walid Abu Ara from Aqaba, also a commander. According to the Hamas announcement, the two were responsible for orchestrating several "high-quality" operations, including blowing up an IDF armored vehicle in Jenin on June 27, 2024, an ambush on the Israel-Samaria border on Mt. Gilboa on July 23, 2024, and the shooting in the Jordan Valley on August 11, 2024 (Hamas in Judea and Samaria Telegram channel, August 17, 2024).

► On the night of August 13, 2024, an explosion was reported inside a vehicle in the Haska area, north of Hebron. It injured two people, one of them in a seriously. After the incident, IDF forces raided the area and confiscated the vehicle. According to reports IDF forces also raided the homes of the wounded in Halhul (Ma'an, August 14, 2024). The Palestinian security forces raided al-Ahli Hospital in Hebron to arrest the wounded men but local residents confronted them [to prevent the arrests] (Hebron Telegram channel, August 13, 2024; al-Shahed, August 14, 2024).



Right: The explosion in the vehicle. Left: The vehicle after the explosion (Palestine Online X account, August 13, 2024)

Activities of the Palestinian security forces

► According to reports, on August 13, 2024, the Palestinian security forces dismantled and detonated IEDs planted by terrorist operatives on the Wadi Tayseer Road to attack the Israeli security forces during the raid on Tubas (A7rartoubas Telegram channel, August 13, 2024).



**A photograph from a video the PA detonating the IEDs
(A7rartoubas Telegram channel, August 13, 2024)**

► According to reports, on August 14, 2024, the PA security forces in Jenin searched the al-Tanakiyah region for IEDs belonging to the Jenin Battalion, detonating one of them (@jenencamb TV, August 14, 2024).

► Hamas condemned the ongoing activities of the PA security forces in Judea and Samaria carried out against "the 'resistance' of our people, escalating their campaigns to pursue the 'resistance fighters,' confiscating their weapons, the discovery and dismantling of their IEDs, which are designed to deal with the occupation during its continued invasions." Hamas claimed that "such un-national actions" contradicted the security forces' role to protect the Palestinians and safeguard local residents from the "occupation and its ongoing crimes" (Hamas website, August 15, 2024).

Jewish settlers attack the Samaritan village of Jit

► On the evening of August 15, 2024, dozens of Jewish civilians, some of them masked, entered the village of Jit in Samaria, set fire to vehicles and buildings, and threw stones and Molotov cocktails. IDF and Border Police forces arrived in the village minutes after receiving the report, employed riot control measures and fired shots into the air. Following the incident, a joint investigation was opened by the IDF, the Shin Bet and the Israel Police Force (IDF spokesperson, August 15, 2024). Palestinian media reported that during the incident, Rashid Mahmoud al-Sada was killed and another young man was mortally wounded. The rioters caused substantial damage, including burning houses, vehicles and agricultural areas (Wafa, August 15, 2024).

► Prominent reactions were the following:

- ◆ Nabil Abu Rudeineh, spokesman for Mahmoud Abbas, warned of the tangible danger "from the spread of settler crimes against the residents of the West Bank with the support and protection of the Israeli occupation forces." He reiterated that the international community should intervene to enforce the decisions of the international courts, including the opinions of the International Court of Justice that the "Israeli occupation of the territories" was illegal (Wafa, August 16, 2024).
- ◆ The PA foreign ministry claimed it was "organized state terrorism" and accused Israel of responsibility for the "dangerous escalation" of "ongoing crimes" against the Palestinians, [allegedly] carried out under the aegis of the IDF. The ministry called on the international community to take a serious stance against "the settlements and settler militias" in Judea and Samaria and to impose sanctions. It also noted the need to dismantle the settlements and appealed to the International Criminal Court to take responsibility for the situation (Wafa, August 16, 2024).
- ◆ Hamas condemned the incident and called for the escalation of the "resistance" in Judea and Samaria, as well as for the establishment of popular defense committees "to deal with the settlers and protect the Palestinian people" (Filastin al-A'an, August 16, 2024).
- ◆ The PIJ claimed it was a "declaration of war" against the Palestinian people in Judea and Samaria, and called on local residents to "confront the settlers and their crimes" (al-Aqsa TV Telegram channel, August 16, 2024).
- ◆ The Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) condemned the events in Jit and offered its condolences for the death of Rashid al-Sada. The organization called on the Palestinian people to rise up against the "crimes of the occupation and the terrorism of the settlers," stating the need to take a firm stand against the "crimes" (Wafa News Agency, 16 August 2024).



Right: Torched vehicles in Jit (Quds Agency, August 16, 2024). Left: Pictures from Rashid Mahmoud al-Sada's Facebook page (Rashid Mahmoud al-Sada's Facebook page, July 24, 2022)

The Palestinian Authority (PA)

Mahmoud Abbas visit Turkey

► On August 14, 2024, PA chairman Mahmoud Abbas visited Turkey and met with President Erdogan. They discussed the developments in the Gaza Strip, Judea and Samaria and the [alleged] "aggression against the Palestinian people, which includes harming women, the elderly and children, destroying infrastructure and starvation." Mahmoud Abbas reiterated the Palestinian position, which calls for an immediate ceasefire in the Gaza Strip to "prevent the shedding of innocent blood," Israel's withdrawal from the Gaza Strip, an end to the "ongoing aggression" in Judea and Samaria, an end to the "invasions" of the holy places of Islam and Christianity in Jerusalem, an end to "strangling the Palestinian economy, ending the Israeli occupation and implementing the two-state solution." He also said the international community should obligate Israel to comply with international resolutions. Erdogan noted Turkey's position supporting the Palestinian people and the establishment of an independent Palestinian state on the "national" land.



Mahmoud Abbas and Erdogan meet (Wafa, August 14, 2024)

► The Palestinian delegation also met with a delegation of Turks. The Palestinian delegation included Hussein al-Sheikh, secretary of the PLO's Executive Committee; Majed Faraj, head of Palestinian general intelligence; Mahmoud al-Habash, Mahmoud Abbas' advisor for religious affairs; Majdi al-Khaldi, advisor to Mahmoud Abbas for diplomatic affairs; and Faed Mustafa, the PA representative in Turkey.

► On August 15, 2024, Mahmoud Abbas addressed the Turkish Parliament and accused Israel of committing [an alleged] "genocide" of the Palestinians. He claimed that the Gaza Strip, Judea, Samaria and east Jerusalem constituted one geographical unit, the "Palestinian state" and stated his intention to visit the Gaza Strip together with the entire Palestinian leadership, while calling on the UN Security Council to ensure their access to the Strip. Mahmoud Abbas accused the United States of supporting Israel by exercising its veto in the Security Council and only by voting on a ceasefire in the Gaza Strip. He also congratulated Turkey on joining the legal proceedings against Israel at the International Court of Justice and called on the international community to take legal action against Israel (Wafa, August 15, 2024).



Mahmoud Abbas in the Turkish Parliament (Wafa, August 15, 2024)

► Regarding Mahmoud Abbas' statement of a planned visit to the Gaza Strip, Hussein al-Sheikh, secretary of the PLO's Executive Committee, sent a communiqué to countries around the world informing them of the plan. He claimed its objective was to emphasize the authority of the "state of Palestine" over the Gaza Strip, Judea, Samaria and east Jerusalem. He also claimed Mahmoud Abbas wanted to see the "the tragic conditions in the Gaza Strip" while calling for "an end to the aggression and the withdrawal of Israeli forces from the area." According to the communiqué, Israel and the United States were informed of the visit and the need to ensure the safety of Mahmoud Abbas and the delegation (Munir al-Jaghoub's X account, August 19, 2024).

► Mandher al-Hayek, Fatah spokesman in the Gaza Strip, noted that the planned visit was a message to the international community that the Strip was an integral part of the "state of

Palestine" and confirmation of the geographical and political unity of the "homeland." "We in the Fatah movement are fully prepared to receive Mahmoud Abbas, the Palestinian leadership and those who are with them" (Sabaq24 agency, August 19, 2024).

► Abd al-Fattah Doula, spokesman for Fatah's recruiting and Tanzim, department, claimed that Mahmoud Abbas seriously planned to visit the Gaza Strip, and it was a warning to the international community to take responsibility for the region. He said Mahmoud Abbas called on the Arab countries and the United Nations to support the move to break the "siege" of the Gaza Strip and allow the PA to be responsible for all of "Palestine," including the Gaza Strip and east Jerusalem. He said the PA was prepared to reconstruct the Strip and called for a national consensus while establishing a unity government which would deal with the control of the Gaza Strip (Radio Alam Gaza, August 18, 2024). Mahmoud Abbas has not visited the Gaza Strip since Hamas took over the Strip in 2007.

PA activity in the international arena

► August 16, 2024, Muhammad Mustafa, PA prime minister, met in Ramallah with the foreign ministers of Great Britain and France, David Lammy and Stéphane Séjourné, to discuss the need to stop the war in the Gaza Strip, strengthen increase efforts to provide humanitarian aid and stop the IDF "escalation" and the activities of the Jewish settlers in Judea and Samaria. Mustafa also reiterated the need for international recognition of an independent, sovereign Palestinian state, and praised the efforts of Great Britain and France to promote a ceasefire in the Gaza Strip. He thanked them for the financial aid transferred to the PA and talked about the government's plans for reconstructing the Gaza Strip, while uniting institutions in Judea, Samaria and the Gaza Strip under one authority and one government. Lammy and Séjourné noted the need for a ceasefire, the delivery of humanitarian aid and stopping the "escalation" in Judea and Samaria, while supporting the right of the Palestinians to establish an independent state (Wafa August 16, 2024).

► On August 14, 2024, Hussein al-Sheikh, secretary of the PLO's Executive Committee, spoke with Mikhail Bogdanov, the Russian envoy to the Middle East, about the results of Mahmoud Abbas' visit to Russia. They discussed Russian support for the Palestinian positions and stopping Israeli attacks in the Gaza Strip, Judea and Samaria, and the Russian president's decision to invite the PA to participate in the BRICS summit in the Russian city of Kazan in

October 2024. Bogdanov noted the importance of an "internal Palestinian reconciliation"³ and reiterated that it was Russia's firm, unchanging position (Hussein al-Sheikh's X account, August 14, 2024).

► On August 19, 2024, Hussein al-Sheikh spoke with Hakan Fidan, the Turkish foreign minister. They discussed the most recent regional developments and efforts to stop the "destructive war being waged against the Palestinian people while uniting the Arab countries and Islamic provinces." Al-Sheikh expressed his gratitude and appreciation for the warm welcome Mahmoud Abbas received during his visit to Turkey, and for being given the opportunity to deliver a speech before the parliament (Wafa, August 19, 2024).

³ Hamas-Fatah reconciliation.