



# Spotlight on the Israel-Palestinian Conflict

September 3 – 10 , 2024

## Overview<sup>1</sup>

- ▶ **The southern arena:** IDF forces continued their operations in Rafah and the center of the Gaza Strip, attacking terrorist facilities located in civilian compounds and eliminating senior terrorist operatives.
- ▶ **The hostages and the ceasefire agreement:** Hamas reiterated its demands for a complete Israeli withdrawal from the Gaza Strip and denied Israeli and American accusations of its making new demands as part of the negotiations.
- ▶ **The situation in the Gaza Strip:** The drive to vaccinate the children in the Gaza Strip against polio continues.
- ▶ Charges were revealed in the United States against six Hamas terrorist leaders for their involvement the October 7, 2023 attack and the massacre of civilians.
- ▶ **Israel, Judea and Samaria:** This past week Palestinian terrorist operatives carried out two attacks, one of which killed three Israeli civilians. The Israeli security forces continued their counterterrorism activities, detaining three suspects for planning an attack in the immediate future. The IDF is investigating the circumstances of the death of a Turkish-American activist who was shot during riots in Beita.
- ▶ **The Palestinian Authority (PA):** The PA submitted a draft proposal to the UN General Assembly calling for an end of the "Israeli occupation" within six months.

## The Southern Arena

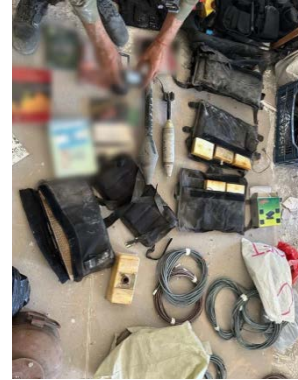
### IDF operations in the Gaza Strip

- ▶ This past week the IDF forces focused their activities on the Rafah area and the center of the Gaza Strip, striking large numbers of terrorist operatives from the air and on the ground, destroying terrorist facilities and tunnels, and locating weapons.

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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.

► **Rafah:** The IDF forces continued focusing their activities on the Tel al-Sultan neighborhood, raiding terrorist facilities and killing dozens of terrorist operatives in the Kasbah region. So far more than 200 terrorist operatives have been eliminated and dozens of weapons have been found in houses and other civilian structures, in addition to ten launchers for firing long-range rockets into Israeli territory (IDF spokesperson, September 4-10, 2024).



**Right: Weapons found at Tel al-Sultan (IDF spokesperson, September 7, 2024).  
Left: Launchers prepared to fire long-range rockets (IDF spokesperson, September 4, 2024)**

► **The center of the Gaza Strip:** IDF activity focused on the al-Zeitoun neighborhood in Gaza City. The forces killed dozens of terrorist operatives and destroyed terrorist facilities, and exposed a machine for the production of explosives and an operational tunnel shaft (IDF spokesperson, September 9, 2024).

## Rocket fire from the Gaza Strip

► On September 8, 2024, two rockets were fired at Ashqelon from the north of the Gaza Strip. One was intercepted and the other fell into the sea (IDF spokesperson, September 8, 2024). The Jerusalem Brigades, the military wing of the Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ), claimed responsibility for the rocket attack (Filastin al-Yawm Telegram channel, September 9, 2024).

## Terrorist organization exploitation of civilian sites

► On September 4, 2024, the IDF revealed that the opening of the tunnel shaft where the bodies of six executed Israeli hostages were discovered on August 31, 2024, was in a children's room in a building in Rafah. Dolls were found in the room and the Disney figures Mickey Mouse and Snow White were painted on the walls (IDF spokesperson, September 4, 2024).



**The opening of the tunnel shaft in the children's room (IDF spokesperson, September 4, 2024)**

► This past week Israeli Air Force aircraft continued to attack terrorist operatives and facilities operating from civilian sites in the Gaza Strip and attacking IDF forces and the State of Israel. In all cases preliminary steps were taken to reduce possible harm to civilians. The terrorist organizations in the Gaza Strip, especially Hamas, have typically used civilian sites such as schools, hospitals and shelters for terrorist purposes. The terrorist organizations exploit IDF reprisals for propaganda and incitement purposes while exaggerating the number of victims and their alleged injuries, and in most instances concealing the identity of the terrorists who were attacked:<sup>2</sup>

► On the night of September 9, 2024, a Hamas command and control compound was attacked in the humanitarian area located in Khan Yunis. Present at the time were several senior military commanders who had been involved in the Hamas attack and massacre on October 7, 2023, including Samer Ismail Abu Daqa, commander of the Hamas aerial force in the Gaza Strip; Osama Tabash, head of the surveillance and targets department; and senior terrorist operative Ayman al-Mabhouh (IDF spokesperson, September 10, 2024). The civil defense force in the Gaza Strip claimed that 40 people had been killed and 60 wounded in the attack, and that 20 tents had caught fire. The ministry of health in Gaza later reported that the number of dead was 19 (Quds Agency and al-Aqsa TV, September 10, 2024).

► On September 7, 2024, a Hamas command and control compound operating at the site formerly occupied by the Amro Ibn al-As School in the north of the Gaza Strip was attacked (IDF spokesperson, September 7, 2024). Civil defense in the Gaza Strip reported three deaths in an

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<sup>2</sup> For further information, see the August 2024 ITIC report, "[The terrorist organizations in the Gaza Strip exploit the civilian infrastructure for terrorist activities](#);" the January 2024 ITIC report, "[Evidence of the terrorist organizations' use of civilian facilities in the Gaza Strip](#);" and the November 2023 ITIC report, "[Hamas use of the civilian population as human shields and Gaza's civilian facilities for terrorism](#)."

attack on a "school" in the al-Sheikh Radwan neighborhood (al-Aqsa TV channel, September 7, 2024).

► On September 6, 2024, a camouflaged Hamas command and control compound was attacked at a site that was previously occupied by the Halima al-Saadiya School in Gaza City (IDF spokesperson, September 6, 2024). Civil defense in the Gaza Strip reported four deaths in an attack on a "school" in Jabalia (al-Aqsa Channel, September 7, 2024).

► On September 5, 2024, a Hamas-PIJ command and control compound was attacked. It was hidden in the humanitarian area in the Shuhadaa al-Aqsa Hospital complex in Deir al-Balah. Several military operatives were eliminated, including Abdallah Khattab, commander of the PIJ's South Deir al-Balah Battalion; and Abu al-Jadian, commander of the PIJ's East Deir al-Balah Battalion (IDF spokesperson, September 5 and 7, 2024). Palestinian media reported four deaths in the attack (al-Aqsa TV, September 5, 2024).

► On September 3, 2024, a camouflaged Hamas command and control compound was attacked at the site formerly occupied by the Namaa' College in the Sheikh Radwan neighborhood of Gaza City (IDF spokesperson, September 3, 2024). Palestinian media reported four deaths in the attack (Palestinian media information center, September 3, 2024).

## **The hostages and a ceasefire agreement**

► This past week senior Hamas figures continued blaming Israel for the stalemate in negotiations for a ceasefire in the Gaza Strip and the release of the hostages. They rejected the Israeli and American accusations that the movement had made new demands and reiterated yet again that Hamas demanded the full withdrawal of IDF forces from the entire Gaza Strip, including the Philadelphi Axis, in the first phase of the agreement. After the discovery of the execution of the six Israeli hostages, whose bodies were found in a tunnel in Rafah on August 31, 2024, Hamas warned that delay in reaching an agreement could endanger the lives of the other hostages:

- ◆ Khalil al-Haya, deputy chairman of the Hamas political bureau in the Gaza Strip, who leads the negotiations on behalf of the movement, said that Hamas did not want new proposals regarding the agreement, adding that any proposal, regardless of who made it, had to exhaust the issue of how to force Netanyahu to carry out agreements, not return to square one and not keep repeating the endless loop of what he wanted. He said the policy of military escalation to release prisoners by force had proven to be a failure, adding that "Netanyahu's stupidity and continued evasion of reaching an agreement led

to the killing of many of his prisoners in the Gaza Strip" ( Hamas Telegram channel, September 5, 2024).

- ◆ Senior Hamas figure Sami Abu Zuhri accused Israel of not really wanting to reach an agreement, which was why Hamas had boycotted the last round of negotiations. He claimed that the objective of the current proposal was to allow Israel to resume fighting after the release of the hostages, which Hamas was not prepared to accept. He also claimed that the American administration was not serious about reaching a real agreement, coordinated the negotiating positions with the "occupation" and adopted the Israeli position that the Philadelphi Axis was the obstacle to the agreement (al-Jazeera Telegram channel, September 4, 2024).

- ◆ Izzat al-Rishq, a member of Hamas' political bureau, said that Hamas' demands for a permanent cessation of "aggression" and a complete withdrawal from the Gaza Strip were clear and the movement adhered to them. He accused Prime Minister Netanyahu of setting new conditions, and warned that if he did not comply with the agreements, "the hostages will never see the light of day again" (Quds Agency, September 9, 2024).

- ▶ Muhammad al-Hindi, deputy PIJ secretary general, claimed that Prime Minister Netanyahu had sent two representatives from the UN to negotiate with the PIJ regarding the hostage deal, bypassing Hamas. He added that another regional country had also tried to conduct similar negotiations, but the organization rejected the proposal, stating it authorized Hamas to conduct the negotiations (Sama al-Quds X account, September 6, 2024).

## The Gaza Strip

### Palestinian casualties

- ▶ On September 10, 2024, **the Hamas-controlled ministry of health in the Gaza Strip** reported that since the beginning of the war, 41,020 Palestinians had been killed and 94,925 injured (ministry of health in Gaza Facebook page, September 10, 2024).

### The situation in the Gaza Strip

- ▶ On September 10, 2024, the third and final phase of the WHO-UNICEF drive to vaccinate children in the Gaza Strip against polio began, coordinated with the Israeli Coordinator of Government Activities in the Territories (COGAT). In the first phase, 189,034 children were vaccinated in the center of the Gaza Strip, and in the second phase, 251,471 children were vaccinated in the south (COGAT X account, September 8, 2024). Antonio Guterres, the UN

secretary general, praised the humanitarian ceasefire that made the vaccinations possible, calling it a "rare ray of hope" (UN website, September 3, 2024).



**Vaccinating children against polio in the northern Gaza Strip (ministry of health in Gaza Telegram channel, September 10, 2024)**

- ▶The COGAT reported that since the beginning of the war, more than a million tons of aid had been delivered to the Gaza Strip by land, air and sea, including about 50,000 trucks carrying more than 980 thousand tons of humanitarian aid. According to the report, 38.8% consisted of basic goods, and 31.7% of food (COGAT X account, September 9, 2024).
- ▶According to reports, four trucks carrying humanitarian aid from the PA were looted after leaving the Kerem Shalom Crossing and entering the Gaza Strip. The trucks carried tents, food, flour, water, dates and legumes (Beit Lahia and the North Telegram channel, September 5, 2024).

### **Hamas attempts to silence criticism in the Gaza Strip**

- ▶On September 6, 2024, armed Hamas terrorist operatives attacked Ziyad Abu Haya, a resident of Bani Suheila in the central Gaza Strip, who in early August 2024 uploaded a video in which he said, "Save us from Hamas before you save us from the Jews! Hamas is trading in our blood!" (al-Hadath TV X account, August 9, 2024). According to reports, armed men dragged Abu Haya from his home, beat him, breaking his arms and legs, returned him to his family only after several days. Hamas warned him not to contact the media again (al-Arabiya, September 7, 2024).



**Ziyad Abu Haya after being beaten (Facebook page of Wa'el Ziyad Abu Haya, September 7, 2024)**

► On September 2, 2024, Gazan photojournalist Ihab Fafous posted to Facebook that he had fled from his home after learning that Hamas was planning to kill him because of his prolonged criticism of the movement, especially since the beginning of the war (Ghattas' X account, September 2, 2024). Three days later, he posted again, stating that he "apologizes for every previous post I put on my page, which will be closed to avoid making a mistake again" (Ihab Fafous' Facebook page, September 5, 2024). According to reports, on September 7, 2024, armed men broke into his house in Khan Yunis and kidnapped him, and that his whereabouts were unknown (Wafa, September 7, 2024).

### **Senior Hamas terrorists charged in the United States**

► On September 3, 2024, the United States Department of Justice announced the "unsealing of terrorism, murder conspiracy, and sanctions-evasion charges against six senior leaders of Hamas, a designated foreign terrorist organization. The charges relate to the defendants' central roles in planning, supporting, and perpetrating the terrorist atrocities that Hamas committed in Israel on Oct. 7, 2023 (the October 7 Hamas Massacres), involving the murders and kidnappings of countless innocent civilians, including American citizens..." The defendants were Yahya al-Sinwar, head of the Hamas political bureau in the Gaza Strip; his predecessor, Isma'il Haniyeh, who was killed in Tehran on July 31, 2024; Muhammed Deif, the commander of Hamas' military wing, who was killed in an Israeli attack on July 13, 2024; Marwan Issa, the deputy head of the military wing, who was killed in an Israeli attack on March 10, 2024; Khaled Mashal, head of the "external" Hamas leadership; and Ali Barakeh, responsible for Hamas' foreign relations. United States Attorney General Merrick Garland said the "charges unsealed today are just one part of our effort to target every aspect of Hamas' operations" (United States Department of Justice website, September 3, 2024).

## The Issue of "The Day After"

► On September 5, 2024, the PA committee responsible for the reconstruction and development of the Gaza Strip began the first phase of preparing a national plan at a meeting with Wa'el Zaqout, the PA minister of international planning and cooperation. The meeting discussed the tasks at hand, including the development of a recovery and rehabilitation plan. Zaqout emphasized the need for cooperation with international partners, such as the World Bank, the UN and the EU, to formulate the plans (Wafa, September 5, 2024).

► A "senior American source" stated that an American-trained Palestinian force was the most reasonable arrangement for securing the border between the Gaza Strip and Egypt. A "former Egyptian official" stated that Egypt would accept the presence of the EU at the Rafah crossing, along with the PA, as had been the situation until Hamas took over the Strip (The Washington Post, September 3, 2024). Hamas spokesman Jihad Taha claimed the movement had never been informed of such a plan. He claimed that American programs had already proved to have failed in the Palestinian arena, and Hamas' position was clear: such issues were internal (al-Araby al-Jadeed, September 5, 2024).

## Israel, Judea and Samaria

### Terrorist attacks

► This past week Palestinian terrorists carried out two attacks, in one of which three Israeli civilians were murdered:

- ◆ **Shooting:** On September 8, 2024, a Jordanian truck driver arriving at the Allenby Crossing from Jordan opened fire in the cargo area. Three Israeli civilians working there were killed. The terrorist was killed.

- ◆ **Vehicle ramming:** On September 7, 2024, a Palestinian driver deliberately rammed into an Israeli police car at the gas station at the Ali Junction. There were no casualties. The terrorist was detained.

► On September 9, 2024, a Palestinian attempted to run over soldiers at an IDF checkpoint near Hebron. The soldiers opened fire and two terrorists were wounded (Israeli media, September 9, 2024).

► A resident of Nablus armed with a knife and scissors was detained in Jerusalem. He attacked the officers during his arrest. Ammunition rounds and suspected stolen property were found in his possession (Israel Police Spokesperson, September 5, 2024).



## Counterterrorism activities

- ▶The Israeli security forces continued their counterterrorism activities in Judea and Samaria:
  - ◆On September 9, 2024, the Israeli security forces detained three terrorist operatives from Bani Na'im in the Hebron area on suspicion of planning an attack in the immediate future. One of the suspects was detained in his car on a highway and the other two were arrested in their homes, and were in possession of weapons intended for use in the attack (Israel Police Force X account, September 9, 2024).
  - ◆On September 6, 2024, the Israeli security forces completed ten days of counterterrorism activities in Jenin and the Jenin refugee camp. During the operation 14 terrorist operatives were killed, more than 40 Palestinians suspected of terrorist activity were detained and 30 explosive devices planted under traffic routes were destroyed (IDF spokesperson, September 6, 2024).
  - ◆On September 5, 2024, the Israeli security forces began counter-terrorism operations in Tubas, the al-Faraa refugee camp and Jericho. Seven terrorist operatives were killed in airstrikes and in exchanges of fire, and explosives planted in traffic routes were exposed (IDF spokesperson, September 5, 2024).
  - ◆Israeli security forces operating on the Jordanian border were rushed to an agricultural community in the region after suspicious movement was detected. The forces located two bags holding guns and parts for M-16 rifles and for other types of weapons (Israel Police Force spokesperson, September 5, 2024).



**Weapons seized at the Jordanian border (Israel Police Force spokesperson, September 5, 2024)**

## Activities of the Palestinian security forces

- ▶On September 9, 2024, the PA security forces neutralized explosive devices planted by terrorist operatives in the Jenin refugee camp and Tubas to attack Israeli security forces. "Local sources" reported that during the defusing of an explosive device in the area of al-Hissan

Square (The Horse Square), near the government hospital in the Jenin refugee camp, the PA security forces exchanged fire with armed Palestinians, and one person was injured (al-Araby al-Jadeed, al-Jazeera and the Quds Agency, September 9 2024).

►The PA police force established a new rapid response unit for security operations. The unit will be under the direct command of Lt. Col. Alam al-Saqa, the chief of police (Bayt Furiq First Telegram channel, September 5, 2024).



**Operatives of the new unit (Bayt Furiq First Telegram channel, September 5, 2024)**

## **Turkish-American activist killed in Beita**

►On September 6, 2024, Palestinian media reported that Aysenur Ezgi, a 26-year-old Turkish-American activist, was killed after being shot in the head during a march in the town of Beita, south of Nablus (Wafa, September 6, 2024). The IDF spokesperson said that a military force shot at a man who was throwing rocks and posed a threat to the forces. Following the report that a foreign citizen had been killed by gunfire, an investigation into the circumstances was begun (IDF spokesperson, September 6, 2024). The IDF investigation found that there was a high probability that the civilian was hit by indirect fire from IDF forces aimed at a Palestinian rioter. The Military Police opened an investigation (IDF spokesperson, September 10, 2024).

►The Palestinians condemned Ezgi's death, claiming it was "the continuation of the crimes of the Israeli occupation" against the Palestinians and against human rights activists. They also claimed that the United States provided the ammunition and was therefore complicit in the killing of an American citizen (Wafa, September 6, 2024; Hamas Telegram channel, September

6, 2024). The United States and the UN called for an investigation into the circumstances of Ezgi's death. The Turkish president condemned the killing (Reuters, September 9, 2024).



Right: Aysenur Ezgi (Wafa, September 6, 2024). Left: A Palestinian cartoon claiming that the bullet that killed Ezgi was "also American" (Mohammad Sabaaneh's X account, September 6, 2024)

## The Palestinian Authority (PA)

### Palestinian proposal in the UN for ending the Israeli "occupation"

►The PA submitted a draft proposal to the UN General Assembly calling on Israel to end its "illegal presence in the occupied Palestinian territories"<sup>3</sup> within six months. It was reported that the Arab and Muslim countries in the UN requested the vote be held on September 18, 2024, before the convening of the annual meeting of the UN General Assembly (Reuters and AP, September 9, 2024). The proposed resolution came after the opinion of the International Court of Justice on July 20, 2024, which stated that the Israeli presence in the Palestinian territories was illegal and called for it to end as soon as possible.

### Political activity

►On September 6, 2024, Muhammad Mustafa, PA prime minister, met in Ramallah with Annalena Baerbock, the German foreign minister, to discuss the latest developments in the Gaza Strip, Judea and Samaria. Mustafa related to the Israeli security forces' counterterrorism activities in northern Samaria and accused the forces of "destroying infrastructure and laying siege to hospitals." He claimed that "technical teams" had begun to examine the damages in preparation for restoration activity. Referring to the war in the Gaza Strip, he noted the need to implement UN Security Council Resolution 2735 to achieve a ceasefire, and said that the PA government was working to complete a comprehensive, detailed national plan for the

<sup>3</sup> I.e., the Gaza Strip, Judea, Samaria and east Jerusalem.

reconstruction of the Gaza Strip after the end of the "aggression." Baerbock addressed the importance of reaching a ceasefire agreement and halting the latest escalation in Judea and Samaria, which she claimed included the destruction of EU- and German-funded facilities (Wafa, September 6, 2024).



**Mustafa and Baerbock (Vafa, September 6, 2024)**

► On September 3, 2024, Hussein al-Sheikh, secretary of the PLO's Executive Committee, met with Hans Wechsler, who was recently appointed head of the office of Palestinian affairs at the United States State Department. According to reports, they discussed the developments in the Gaza Strip "and the unprecedented escalation in the West Bank." Al-Sheikh discussed the regional and international efforts to end the war in the Gaza Strip and the [alleged] Israeli "violations" in Judea and Samaria. Wechsler expressed the support of the United States for promoting a political process that would ensure stability and peace in the Middle East and which would lead to the implementation of the two-state solution (Hussein al-Sheikh's X account, September 3, 2024).

## **The future of the Palestinian Authority**

► "Jordanian sources" said that the Jordanian royal house was exerting pressure on Mahmoud Abbas, PA chairman, to take three critical steps to prevent the collapse of the PA: reconciliation within the Fatah movement, the establishment of a new technocrat government that would be more acceptable to the international community, and a solution to the issue of his successor by appointing a deputy. The sources stated that Jordan was working in coordination with Egypt and Abu Dhabi in the belief that such steps would ensure international support and prevent the PA's collapse (al-Shahed, September 4, 2024).