



PA Security Forces Operate Against Armed Terrorists in the Jenin Refugee Camp

December 15, 2024

Overview¹

- ▶ On December 14, 2024, the Palestinian Authority (PA) security forces launched a large-scale operation against armed terrorist operatives in the Jenin refugee camp, following orders from PA chairman Mahmoud Abbas. The forces clashed with the operatives, and the commander of a local Palestinian Islamic Jihad brigade was killed.
- ▶ A spokesperson for the security forces stated that the operation's goal was to liberate the refugee camp from the grip of criminals. He asserted that control over the camp had been achieved and that a car bomb meant for an attack on the forces had been neutralized. According to reports, some of the wanted terrorists surrendered to IDF forces.
- ▶ The operation followed a rise in tensions between the terrorist operatives and the PA security forces, the result of Israeli security force activities in Judea and Samaria since the beginning of the Gaza Strip War. The decision to take action against the terrorists came after they seized two PA vehicles and opened fire at PA government buildings.
- ▶ The operation was also part of the PA's attempts to demonstrate governance and position itself as a ruling authority in the Gaza Strip in preparation for "the day after" the war. It was also an attempt to prevent an armed uprising similar to what overthrew the regime in Syria.
- ▶ Hamas and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) accused the PA of collaborating with Israel, and called on the security forces to cease their "persecutions" and join the "resistance" fighters.
- ▶ **Despite the change in PA security forces' approach and their willingness to confront armed terrorist operatives, it is a complex challenge which will require long-term efforts. Since the beginning of the war, Iran has been attempting to ignite the Judea and Samaria front against Israel. In light of the blows sustained by the "resistance axis" in recent weeks, Tehran may intensify its efforts to encourage armed factions to escalate**

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

their activities against Israel and the PA, thus there is concern that the violence may spill over into other areas in Judea and Samaria.

Operation Homeland Defense in the Jenin Refugee Camp

▶ On December 14, 2024, the PA security forces launched a large-scale security operation in the Jenin refugee camp called Operation Homeland Defense. A "source in the PA" stated that chairman Mahmoud Abbas ordered the security forces to take control of the Jenin refugee camp "at all costs" (Palestinian Communication Center Telegram channel, December 14, 2024).

▶ Anwar Rajab, PA security force spokesman, said that the objective of the operation was to liberate the refugee camp "from the control of criminals who damage the residents' quality of life and deprive them of their right to access public services freely and securely." He said the "militants" in the camp broke the law and threatened public order. He added that the security forces were determined to enforce the law and pursue those who sought to threaten peace and community security, as well as those attempting to advance "the enemy's mission to implement its plans to destabilize the national authority and prevent our people from achieving their freedom and independence" (Wafa, December 14, 2024).



PA security forces in the Jenin refugee camp (Quds News Agency, December 14, 2024)

▶ On December 14, 2024, PA security forces clashed with armed terrorists in the Jenin refugee camp. According to reports, the security forces blocked roads leading from the camp and conducted house-to-house searches. Security force spokesman Anwar Rajab stated that during the operation the forces discovered a car bomb which had been prepared in advance to attack them and called it "a cowardly, ISIS-like approach" (al-Jazeera, Wafa, December 14, 2024). PA security force gunfire resulted in two fatalities:

◆ Yazid Ja'ayseh, a commander in the PIJ's Jenin Brigade, who had been wanted by Israel for several years, was killed (Ahrar Qabatiya Telegram channel, December 14, 2024). The Jerusalem Brigades, the PIJ's military wing, issued a mourning notice for "mujahid commander Yazid Ja'ayseh, 28 years old, from the Jenin Brigade, who was killed by PA security forces in the Jenin refugee camp (Safa agency Telegram channel, December 14, 2024). Following his death, a video was issued of three armed men threatening that "For Yazid's blood, ten of you will fall, dogs" (Ahrar Qalqilya Telegram channel, December 14, 2024).

◆ Muhammad Imad al-Amar, a 13 year-old boy, was also killed (WAFA, December 13, 2024). His father, Imad al-Amar, stated that he served as a major general [sic] in the Preventive Security Apparatus, but despite shouting at the security forces that they were near the home of a senior officer, a sniper shot his son. According to him, another son was injured while trying to help his brother (al-Quds Telegram channel, December 14, 2024).



Right: Yazid Ja'ayseh, Left: Muhammad al-Amar
(Hamas in Judea and Samaria Telegram channel, December 14, 2024)

► According to reports, on the evening of December 14, 2024, the PA security forces completed their takeover of the city of Jenin and its refugee camp. Several armed terrorists from the camp reportedly surrendered to the PA security forces, while others fled to the Jalameh checkpoint and an Israeli military base, and surrendered to Israeli forces. The PA security forces called on other terrorist operatives to surrender before it was too late, noting the PA leadership's determination to combat elements acting against national security (Muhammad al-Jorani's Facebook page, December 14, 2024). Security force spokesman Anwar Rajab noted the security forces' resolve, bolstered by broad public support, to stamp out terrorist activity, enforce security and protect civilian lives. He added that preparations were underway to prevent the spread of violence to other camps, such as Nur Shams and

Tulkarm, to ensure legal control and security in all Palestinian cities (Wafa, December 14, 2024).

► On December 15, 2024, clashes reportedly resumed between Palestinian security forces and "resistance fighters" in the Jenin refugee camp. The security forces closed all the entrances to the camp except for one which was under their control (al-Jazeera, Quds Agency, December 15, 2024).

► A "source" in the PIJ's Jenin Brigade stated that the PA had exhausted its options after its recent actions and that the security forces were trying to find a way to exit while maintaining the appearance of control over the refugee camp. However, the "source" claimed the brigade remained strong and that the security forces had not actually stormed the camp itself, but rather had focused on its outskirts and "on attacking civilians and children" (al-Jazeera, December 15, 2024).



**PA security forces at the only open entrance to the Jenin refugee camp
(Quds News Agency, December 15, 2024)**

Why the Operation Was Carried Out

Graduation escalation of tension between the PA security forces and armed terrorists

► Since the beginning of the Gaza Strip War the Israeli security forces have intensified their operations in the Palestinian towns and refugee camps in Judea and Samaria to prevent the Iranian-led "resistance axis"² from opening another front against Israel.³

► Meanwhile, according to reports, PA security forces neutralized explosive devices planted by terrorist operatives to attack Israeli security forces. Hamas accused the actions of the PA security forces against "resistance fighters" of constituting "full cooperation" with

² Iran, Syria, Hezbollah, the Palestinian organizations, the Shi'ite Houthis in Yemen and the pro-Iranian militias in Iraq.

³ For further information, see the September 2024 ITIC report, "[Escalation and Thwarting of Terrorism in Northern Samaria.](#)"

Israel and of undermining the resolve and sacrifices of the Palestinian people and their "struggle." Hamas called on the PA leadership to collaborate with the "resistance" (Hamas Telegram channel, September 24, 2024).

▶ On December 5, 2024, operatives from the PIJ's Jenin Brigades seized two vehicles belonging to the PA. They were videoed driving recklessly while waving Hamas and PIJ flags and reportedly shot at security force headquarters and government buildings in Jenin. Following the events, PA security forces surrounded the Jenin refugee camp and clashed with "resistance" operatives, while simultaneously entering the city hospital and making arrests (Wafa, December 5, 2024).

▶ On December 9, 2024, armored vehicles reinforced the presence of PA security forces in the Jenin refugee camp area and snipers were deployed on rooftops. Terrorist operatives used improvised explosive devices to try to prevent the security forces from advancing and at least three security personnel were injured when a car bomb exploded (Quds Agency, al-Araby al-Jadeed, December 9, 2024).

▶ According to reports, on December 9, 2024, Rabhi Muhammad Rabhi al-Shalabi, 19 years old, died after having been injured during clashes while working as a delivery boy on a motorcycle near the Jenin camp. Videos from the scene showed him being shot from the direction of a police vehicle. Security force spokesman Anwar Rajab initially blamed "lawbreakers" for the incident but later admitted that the PA and its security forces were responsible for his death (Wafa December 9 and 12, 2024).

▶ On December 11, 2024, clashes broke out between PA security forces and terrorist operatives in the Tulkarm refugee camp. Armed terrorists attacked security headquarters to protest the prolonged siege of Jenin and the "executions" of local residents, including the shooting of al-Shalabi. To protest the PA's actions, a lieutenant colonel in the security forces resigned. He was the father of "military operative" Amjad al-Quneiri, who was eliminated by Israel in August 2024, (al-Shaheed, December 11, 2024).

▶ A meeting was held at the residence of the Jenin District government, attended by senior Fatah figures and security personnel, to discuss the need to support the security establishment and uphold law and order in accordance with Mahmoud Abbas' directives. Participants called for national unity, the eradication of lawlessness and the safeguarding of state and civilian security. It was announced that all lawbreakers would be prosecuted, and

there would be full support for the security institutions in fulfilling their national duties (Wafa, December 11, 2024).

PA attempt to demonstrate governance

▶ The actions of the PA in the Jenin refugee camp occur with the issue of control over the Gaza Strip "the day after" the war lurking in the background. According to reports, in early December 2024 Fatah and Hamas representatives met in Cairo and reached a preliminary agreement to establish a "community support committee" to manage the Gaza Strip under the authority of the PA government.

▶ However, senior figures in Fatah and the PLO Executive Committee opposed the formation of the committee, arguing that the PA government should assume full responsibility for managing the Gaza Strip. They claimed that the establishment of the committee would perpetuate the division between Gaza and Judea and Samaria, contrary to the position presented by PA chairman Mahmoud Abbas and Palestinian Prime Minister Muhammad Mustafa.

▶ Thus the PA security force operation in the Jenin refugee camp can be viewed as an attempt to demonstrate governance in areas under its security and civil control (Area A), thereby projecting its preparedness to take authority over the Gaza Strip after the end of the war.

Influence of the events in Syria

▶ According to an Israeli "military source," the revolution that led to the overthrow of Bashar al-Assad's regime in Syria had a direct impact on Mahmoud Abbas' decision to directly confront the armed terrorists in the Jenin refugee camp. According to the source, the PA observed "how a few armed groups with pickup trucks, some machine guns and Kalashnikovs easily and quickly seized power. So what would prevent groups of terrorists from doing the same to the Muqata'a in Ramallah?" (Ynet, December 14, 2024).

Reactions

The PA

▶ On December 14, 2024, PA Prime Minister Muhammad Mustafa visited Jenin and met with heads of the security forces and local officials. He called the Jenin and other refugee camps "symbols of national pride," claiming and that the Palestinian leadership was committed to preserving them while ensuring dignified living conditions for their residents. He added that the leadership was working to regain the initiative in all "national" districts for

the sake of security and praised the residents of the Jenin refugee camp for their "firm stance." He called for prioritizing the national interest over all others and warned against the [Israeli] "occupation's" plans to undermine the security and social cohesion of the Palestinian people (Wafa, December 14, 2024).

► Fatah spokesman Abd al-Fattah Doula said there was a Palestinian National Authority and a government whose duty was to provide civilians with security, enforce sovereignty and pursue lawbreakers (Aman24 Facebook page, December 14, 2024). He also criticized Hamas, calling on it to change its policy and agree that the PA was responsible for protecting Palestinian citizens (Abnaa al-Watan Telegram channel, December 14, 2024).

► Wasel Abu Yusuf, a member of the PLO's Executive Committee, called on Palestinians to support the security forces in their efforts to eradicate chaos, especially during the war. He said, "We need internal unity and to prioritize our national project without shifting the compass," and emphasized the need to block "those who seek to undermine civil peace and the fate of our people" (Wafa December 14, 2024).



"No one is above the law." The arm patch bears the emblem of the Palestinian national security forces (Maher al-Hajj, December 14, 2024)

Hamas

► Senior Hamas figure Mahmoud Mardawi criticized the PA security forces for arresting "resistance fighters" and storming the government hospital in Jenin. He claimed such actions threatened social unity and civilian security, and served the interests of the "Israeli occupation." He called on the PA to stop attacking "fighters," stop interfering in medical procedures and stop targeting public health institutions and medical centers (Hamas Telegram channel, December 9, 2024).

► Senior Hamas figure Abdul Rahman Shadid accused the PA security forces of killing at least 13 Palestinians since the beginning of the war. He urged the PA to strengthen conditions

in the nation and stop eliminating field commanders in Judea and Samaria (Hamas Telegram channel, December 14, 2024).

▶ Hamas strongly condemned the continued actions of the PA security forces against "resistance fighters" in Judea and Samaria in general and Jenin in particular, as well as the "targeted assassinations" of "fighters". Hamas accused the security forces of participating in the "crimes of the Israeli occupation" and called on the PA leadership to immediately cease attacking "operatives," release all political detainees and focus efforts on unity and "resistance" against the occupation (Hamas Telegram channel, December 14, 2024).

The PIJ

▶ The PIJ strongly condemned the actions of the PA security forces, including the killing of Yazid Ja'ayseh, claiming that such actions endangered national and social cohesion. The PIJ called on all the "factions" and national forces to unite and stop the "severe violations." It also demanded that the PA release political prisoners and change its tactics for the sake of unity and "resistance" against the "occupation." In addition, the Palestinian public was urged to protest the PA's actions and prevent attacks on the "resistance" and the residents of Judea and Samaria (Safa Agency Telegram channel, December 14, 2024).

▶ The Tulkarm Brigade expressed support for the Jenin Brigade and demanded that the PA immediately cease its operations against "resistance" fighters (Safa Agency Telegram channel, December 14, 2024).



Notice issued by the Jerusalem Brigades, the PIJ's military wing. The Arabic reads, "Jenin, capital of loyalty to the resistance and the shaheeds" (Jenin refugee camp Telegram channel, December 15, 2024)

Other Palestinian organizations

▶ The Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) condemned the PA policies, describing them as destructive and unacceptable, and as serving the interests of the "occupation" and its objectives. According to the PFLP, recent events reflected the "seriously

deviant behavior" of the PA security forces, emphasizing that Palestinian weapons should be directed solely against the "occupation." All Palestinian "factions" were called on to intervene immediately to prevent the situation from deteriorating, particularly given the critical condition of the Palestinian people, and to pressure the PA leadership to focus on the struggle against the "occupation" and support for the "resistance" (Safa Agency Telegram channel, December 14, 2024).

▶ According to a statement from the "national and Islamic factions," "while the attacks by settlers, under the protection of the Israeli army and government, intensify, and the mass killings in the Gaza Strip spread to the West Bank and Jerusalem," the PA security forces were systematically arresting and persecuting their own people and "resistance" fighters in Jenin and Tulkarm, including shooting and killing "fighters." The factions warned that "such repressive actions only serve the occupation" and undermined efforts to unite the people against the Israeli government's plans for "annexation and expulsion" (Safa Agency Telegram channel, December 14, 2024).

The Palestinian public

▶ On December 13, 2024, residents of the Jenin refugee camp issued a strongly-worded statement condemning the activities of various brigades in the camp. The residents accused the Jenin Brigade operatives of "gambling with the lives of camp residents for personal gain and foreign interests" and described their behavior as "barbaric and tyrannical," claiming it did not represent the spirit of the camp or its residents. They demanded an end to the "irresponsible actions" and called for the restoration of calm and order in the camp (Amman News Facebook page, December 13, 2024).

▶ On December 14, 2024, several demonstrations took place in Jenin and surrounding areas to protest the PA security force military operation in the Jenin refugee camp. Massive demonstrations occurred in the camp, where protesters carried Jenin Brigade operatives on their shoulders, chanting support for the "resistance fighters" and slogans against the security forces, including chants such as "The people want the Jenin Brigade."

▶ Protests against the PA and in support of the Jenin refugee camp were also reported in various towns in Judea and Samaria. According to reports, roadblocks were set up and tires were burned in Tammun, the al-Faraa refugee camp in Tubas, and Silat al-Dhahr, and youths reportedly blocked streets in Tulkarm (Safa and Quds Agency Telegram channels, December 14, 2024).



Right: Demonstration in Jenin (Palestinian Center for Communications Telegram channel, December 14, 2024). Left: Buring tires in Silat al-Dhahr (Quds News Agency Telegram channel, December 14, 2024).