



Hamas attempts to ignite Judea and Samaria Updated November 22, 2023

Overview¹

► Since October 7, 2023, when the war in the Gaza Strip began, Hamas has been working to ignite Judea and Samaria to open another front that will engage Israel's security forces, part of the concept the "unity of the arenas" which Hamas and the "axis of resistance"² developed earlier. Senior Hamas terrorists, led by Saleh al-'Arouri, deputy chairman of the Hamas political bureau and in charge of Judea and Samaria for Hamas, are again urging the residents of Judea, Samaria, east Jerusalem and Israeli Arabs to join the campaign, attack settlers, clash with Israeli security forces and carry out attacks, including inside Israeli territory. They called on the operatives of the Palestinian Authority's (PA) security apparatus to use their weapons to carry out terrorist attacks against Israel.

► As part of the campaign to encourage the activity of the residents of Judea and Samaria, calls to the Palestinian public to carry out terrorist attacks are published on Hamas-affiliated social networks and channels, led by the Islamic Bloc (Hamas' student faction at the universities in Judea and Samaria). Hamas also officially declared "days of rage," mainly on Fridays, when the public was asked to demonstrate and clash with Israeli security forces.

► Not wanting to open another front and to foil Hamas' plans, immediately after the war began, the Israeli security forces increased their counterterrorism activities in Judea, Samaria and east Jerusalem. **Their actions are directed primarily against the Hamas terrorist infrastructure and its leadership. So far, the security forces have arrested about 1,850 wanted persons, about 1,100 of them Hamas operatives.**

► The PA also understood the danger and the possibility it would lose control. Therefore, as soon as the war began, Mahmoud Abbas instructed the Palestinian security forces to increase their activity in the Palestinian cities, warning that otherwise the situation could become

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

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

chaotic. He also ordered them to prevent any protest against him personally, and to use force to stop Hamas supporters from demonstrating.

► In practice, the public's response to Hamas' calls has been limited. The support marches held in the major cities almost every day since the beginning of the war have been relatively small and are usually contained by the PA security forces. The call for terrorist attacks was also only partially answered. Since the beginning of the war, 26 attacks have been carried out in Judea, Samaria and east Jerusalem (about four attacks a week similar to the number in the weeks preceding the war (16-19 on average per month). Most of the attacks were spontaneous and improvised (stabbing and vehicular ramming attacks) and it is not clear to what degree the attackers had been influenced by Hamas' calls.

► The increase in the Israeli security forces' counterterrorism activities in Judea and Samaria and the many clashes in the centers of friction also led to a significant increase in the number of Palestinian deaths. The ministry of health in Ramallah reported that since the beginning of the war in Gaza, 217 Palestinians had been killed. In addition, since the beginning of the war there has been a significant increase in clashes between Jewish settlers and Palestinians.

► Despite the public's identification with Hamas and the joy expressed by the Palestinians in Judea and Samaria at the beginning of the campaign, for now the situation on the ground is apparently under control and the mobilization of the Palestinian public in Judea and Samaria in favor of Hamas and the Gaza Strip is relatively limited. In ITIC assessment, the limited support reflects the mood of the Palestinian public, which is tired of struggles after two years of bloodshed and lack of trust in the PA. Some of them may also understand the damage the Hamas attack on October 7 did to the Palestinian issue, which affects and will continue to affect them as well.

Further Information

Hamas attempts to ignite Judea and Samaria

► Since the beginning of the war, Hamas has been working to ignite Judea and Samaria to open another combat front that will engage Israel's security forces, as part of the concept of the "unity of the arenas" which Hamas and the Iranian-led "axis of resistance" developed earlier. Senior Hamas terrorists, led by **Saleh al-'Arouri³, the deputy chairman of the Hamas**

³ For further information, see the November ITIC report, "[Profile of Saleh al-Arouri, a Senior Hamas Terrorist](#)"

political bureau and in charge of Judea and Samaria for the movement, are again calling on the residents of Judea, Samaria, east Jerusalem and Israeli Arabs to join the campaign, carry out attacks and clash with Israeli security forces. A separate approach was made to the PA security operatives to use their own weapons to carry out attacks against Israel.

► Statements made by Saleh al-'Arouri:

- ◆ Interviewed by al-Jazeera TV on the day the war broke out, he called on the "resistance" fighters [terrorist operatives] in Judea and Samaria to participate in the campaign and attack the settlers, stressing that the "enemy" should not be allowed to think they would not confront it everywhere. He emphasized that now was the time to take part in the campaign and not wait for its results, especially in Judea and Samaria (al-Jazeera TV website, October 7, 2023; Hamas Telegram channel, October 7, 2023).



A poster quoting al-'Arouri, "It is time to participate in the campaign and not wait for its results" (Hamas Telegram channel in Judea and Samaria, October 9, 2023)

- ◆ Interviewed by Hamas' al-Aqsa TV about a month after the outbreak of the war, he said the Judea and Samaria arena was perhaps the most influential on the campaign, that Israel was aware of it and therefore kept many soldiers there. He said Judea and Samaria had "never disappointed them," and that it was a campaign of liberation, a campaign to defeat Israel, a campaign to protect the holy places, and that Judea and Samaria had to fight at the level required and expected of it, despite all their deaths and sacrifices, and the measures taken by Israel. He sent a message to the young people and said that for the mass killing in Gaza not to reach them, they should help protect their brothers and their families in the Gaza Strip by waging a campaign against Israel. **He**

also called on the operatives of the PA security forces and "anyone who had a weapon" to attack Israel. He claimed that Israel had to pay the price for its "crimes" in the Gaza Strip and understand that the campaign was being launched against it on all fronts (Shehab, November 8, 2023).

► On October 7, 2023, **Abu Obeida, spokesman for Hamas' military-terrorist wing**, called on the Palestinians in Judea, Samaria and Jerusalem, and Israeli Arabs, to move on all axes to Israeli "settlements" [i.e., the settlements in Judea and Samaria and the cities, towns and villages inside Israeli territory] and all the places where there were Israelis, and to participate in Operation al-Aqsa Storm (al-Aqsa Brigades website, October 7, 2023; Dunia al-Watan, October 7, 2023).

► **Abd al-Hakim Hanini, a senior Hamas terrorist**, called on the Palestinians in Judea and Samaria to mobilize and emphasized the need for non-stop clashes with Israel. He called on them to "make the settlers' lives hell" by blocking roads and sabotaging everything that contributed to their continued settlement and theft of Palestinian land, including water and electric lines. He added that crowds should continue the demonstrations in all the squares and at the points of conflict (Hurriya News, November 18, 2023). **Abd al-Rahman Shadeed, a senior Hamas terrorist in Tulkarm, also urged the residents of Judea, Samaria, Jerusalem and Israeli Arabs to mobilize and "resist" [attack] by all means, and wondered why they were waiting after all the massacres in Gaza** (Hurriya News, November 18, 2023).

► **Hamas spokesman Muhammad Hamada** said the role of Judea, Samaria and Jerusalem was extremely important. He claimed Israel feared the opening of several simultaneous fronts and it viewed the awakening and "resistance" in Judea and Samaria as an existential threat to its forces and the settlers, and therefore it had increased the detentions and escalated its "crimes" in the West Bank. He noted the need to continue the general mobilization and exploit every possible opportunity to attack Israel's interests and the settlements, and **called on the "revolutionary youth" to mobilize in all areas to carry out "high-quality and effective attacks"** (Hurriya News, November 8, 2023).

► A video called "Advance" was published on the Telegram channel of the Islamic Bloc (the Hamas student faction in the universities) in Judea and Samaria. It documented the detonation of explosives used to attack Israeli security forces during an operation in Judea and Samaria. It was captioned, "Jihad fighters in Judea and Samaria engineered and detonated more than 120 IEDs during the first month of Operation al-Aqsa Storm. The skilled,

pure hands that created the IEDs are capable of creativity and creating their own explosive belts. Thousands of young people who dream of committing suicide are waiting inside Israeli territory or at the military roadblocks' (Islamic Bloc in Judea and Samaria Telegram channel, November 12, 2023).



Right: A series of posters calling on the residents of Judea and Samaria to "resist" in various ways: hit and run, night harassment activities; Molotov cocktails, stabbing, shooting at roadblocks and soldiers, sabotaging telephone poles, blowing up buses of soldiers and settlers (Islamic Bloc in Hebron University Telegram channel, November 9, 2023). Left: An Islamic Bloc in al-Quds University call to the residents of Jerusalem to observe the evening and night prayers at the point closest to the Temple Mount because Israel prevents Muslim worshipers from reaching it (Islamic Bloc in al-Quds University Telegram channel, November 6, 2023)



Palestinian posters calling on terrorist operatives in Judea and Samaria to attack settlements (Palestinian cartoons Telegram channel, November 16, 2023)

Support for Hamas and the Gaza Strip

► Since the beginning of the war in Gaza, there have been almost daily marches in support of Hamas and the Gaza Strip in Ramallah, Nablus, Hebron, Jenin and Tulkarm, the main cities of Judea and Samaria. On Fridays after the prayers there were demonstrations following calls by Hamas for the days to be "days of rage," to demonstrate and clash with the Israeli security forces at the friction points. Demonstrators waved green Hamas flags, chanted slogans in favor of Hamas, its military-terrorist wing and Muhammed Deif, its commander, and slogans against Israel. Some called for an end to the war and criticized the inaction of the PA and its leader.



Right: A Hamas call to leave the mosques in Judea and Samaria on the evening of November 18, and go out into the streets and squares (Hamas Telegram channel in Judea and Samaria, November 18, 2023). Left: A call by the Islamic Bloc at the universities in Judea and Samaria for mass participation in demonstrations in support of Gaza after the Friday prayer on November 3 (Islamic Bloc at al-Quds University Telegram channel, November 2, 2023)



Right: A call to participate in the "week of revolution and rage" between November 18-23 with the slogan, "There is no normal life when Gaza is destroyed and the crimes of the occupation continue" (Islamic bloc of Hamas in Judea and Samaria Telegram channel, November 18, 2023). Left: The Arabic reads, "Hebron's weapon – when will it take action to support Gaza?!" (Islamic bloc of Hamas in Judea and Samaria Telegram channel, November 13, 2023)

- ▶ School children also participated in the marches. The ministry of education in Ramallah did not encourage the activity, and the "student movement" called for disobeying the ministry of education's decisions and continuing the support marches (Hurriya News, November 4, 2023). At a demonstration in Ramallah, a student even called on the PA ministry of education to issue a call to students to hold demonstrations and marches in support of Gaza (Watan Agency, October 30, 2023). The Hamas student cells in the universities also organized demonstrations and events in support of Hamas and the Gaza Strip.
- ▶ Operatives of the PA's security forces were present at many demonstrations they did not engage in violent friction with Israeli forces.



Right: A march in Ramallah (Shehab X account, October 11, 2023). Left: A march in Nablus (Shehab X account, October 11, 2023)



Hamas march in Hebron (Shehab X account, October 11, 2023)



Right: Student march in Ni'lin (QudsN Telegram channel, November 6, 2023). Left: Women students demonstrate in front the department of education in the Ramallah district (Paldf Twitter account, November 5, 2023)

Terrorist Attacks

► Since the beginning of the war in Gaza, 26 terrorist attacks have been carried out in Judea and Samaria and east Jerusalem, including shooting, vehicular and stabbing attacks. An Israeli citizen and a Border Guard fighter were killed and several people were injured. It is not clear to what extent the attacks were influenced by Hamas calls, since an analysis of the attacks indicates that during this period, there were no more attacks than in the period preceding the war (between 17-19 attacks in the three months preceding the war). In addition, most of the attacks were spontaneous vehicular ramming attacks and stabbings carried out by a lone attacker. Unusually, the military wing of Hamas claimed responsibility for some of the attacks in Judea and Samaria.

► Notable attacks:

◆ On November 16, 2023, three Palestinians drove to the Tunnel Crossing in Jerusalem and opened fire at security forces working at the checkpoint. The forces returned fire, killing three terrorists. Seven people were injured. An IDF soldier was mortally wounded and died of his wounds. In the vehicle of the terrorists, who had come from Hebron, were two M-16 assault rifles, two pistols, hundreds of bullets, ten full ammunition magazines, two axes and clothing similar to IDF uniforms. They had also put a fake Israeli license plate on their vehicle. (Israel Police Force spokesperson's unit, November 16, 2023). Hamas' military-terrorist wing claimed responsibility for the attack (Izz al-Din Qassam Brigades Telegram, November 16, 2023).



Right: The scene of the shooting attack. Center: The weapons used by the terrorists. Left: The weapons brought by the terrorists (Israel Police Force spokesperson's unit, November 16, 2023)

◆ On the evening of November 8, 2023, shots were fired at an Israeli vehicle near the Gitai Junction between Samaria and the Jordan Valley. An Israeli civilian and his wife were injured and a five-month-old baby in the vehicle was unharmed. According to the initial assessment, a terrorist ambushed the vehicle and shot at it with a handgun. Empty shell casings were found at the scene. IDF forces were deployed to search for the terrorist (Israeli media, November 9, 2023).



The vehicle damaged in the shooting attack (QudsN X account, November 9, 2023)

◆ On the morning of November 6, 2023, an Arab from East Jerusalem armed with a knife, stabbed two Border Guard fighters near the Shalem Station in east Jerusalem. One fighter was mortally wounded and later died. The terrorist who carried out the attack was shot and killed by police forces at the scene. The police also detained the terrorist's escort. The terrorist was Muhammad Omar al-Froukh, 16 years old, from Issawiya (Israel Police Force Facebook page, Shehab, November 6, 2023).



**The knife used in the stabbing attack in Jerusalem
(Israel Police Force spokesperson's unit, November 6, 2023)**

◆ On the morning of November 2, 2023, shots were fired at an Israeli vehicle near the settlement of Shavei Shomron (east of Tulkarm). The vehicle overturned and the driver,

an Israeli citizen, was killed. IDF forces began searching for the perpetrators of the shooting and blocked roads near the area of the attack (IDF spokesperson's X account, November 2, 2023).

Israeli Security Force Operations

►Not wanting another front in the war in the Gaza Strip and attacks in the north, as soon as Operation Iron Swords began, the Israeli security forces increased their counterterrorism activities throughout Judea, Samaria and east Jerusalem. Most of the activities were directed against the Hamas terrorist infrastructure and its leadership in Judea and Samaria. The security forces operate daily, mainly in the known terrorist strongholds of Jenin, Nablus, Hebron, Tulkarm and Jericho, detaining dozens of wanted Palestinians, confiscating weapons, locating and destroying IEDs and laboratories for the manufacture of explosives, eliminating terrorist squads that planned to carry out attacks, and demolishing terrorist houses and the houses of senior Hamas terrorists, including the home of Saleh al-'Arouri, who currently resides in Beirut.



Right: Security force activity in the Balata refugee camp in Nablus. (QudsN X account, November 21 2023). Left: IDF forces detain wanted Palestinians in the village of Burqa, east of Ramallah (Shehab X account, November 22, 2023)



Weapons confiscated during Israeli security force activities (IDF spokesperson's website, October 29, 2023)



Weapons and a Hamas flag confiscated during a security force operation in Judea and Samaria (website of the IDF spokesperson, November 8, 2023)

►As part of their counterterrorism activities, the security forces also focused on printing houses used by Hamas to print incitement and propaganda materials and searching for funds intended to finance terrorist activities. For example, on November 13, 2023, IDF forces operated in Hebron and Bayta (south of Hebron) and sealed the offices of Hamas' Islamic Charity Association, confiscating money and computer equipment. Operating in Nablus, the Israeli security forces confiscated incitement and propaganda materials in a printing house (IDF spokesperson, November 13, 2023).



Right: Sealing the entrance to the Islamic Charity Society of Hamas in Hebron (Wafa YouTube channel, November 13, 2023). Left: Incitement and propaganda materials confiscated from a printing house in Nablus (IDF spokesman, November 13, 2023)

►The Israeli security forces also detained many Palestinians suspected of terrorist activities, primarily Hamas terrorist organizations. **As of November 22, 2023, the security forces had detained about 1,850 wanted Palestinians, about 1,100 of them Hamas operatives.** A number of senior Hamas terrorists among the organization's leadership in Judea and Samaria were also detained:

- ◆ **Hatem Qafisha**, a Hamas member of the Palestinian Legislative Council. He is a resident of Hebron and a released prisoner who spent many years in Israeli jails. He was

one of the senior Hamas terrorists deported to Marj al-Zahour in 1992 (Ra'ia Center for Political Development website, November 23, 2022). He was detained on October 13 (Quds Press, October 13, 2023).



Hatem Qafisha (Hatem Qafisha's Facebook page, April 17, 2023)

◆ **Abd al-Khalq al-Natsha**, a resident of Hebron and a released prisoner who spent more than 20 years in Israeli jails. He was among the terrorists deported to Marj al-Zahour in 1992 (Ra'ia Center for Political Development website, December 17, 2020). He was detained on October 13 (Quds Press, October 13, 2023).



Abd al-Khalq al-Natsha (Ayn al-Khalil website, October 12, 2022)

◆ **Sheikh Mustafa Shawr**, a cleric from Hebron. He is a released prisoner, who spent more than ten years in Israeli jails. He was among those deported to Marj al-Zahour in 1992. He participated in the establishment of the Association of Religious Sages of Palestine in 1992, and became its chairman in 2012, after the death of Sheikh Hamed al-

Bitawi (Ra'ia Center for Political Development website, December 28, 2020). He was detained on October 13 (Quds Peres, October 13, 2023).



Sheikh Mustafa Shawr (Ayn al-Khalil website, August 14, 2022)

◆ **Adnan Asfour**, a resident of Nablus. He is a released prisoner who spent many years in Israeli jails. In the past he was detained several times by the PA security forces (Ra'ia Center for Political Development website, July 5, 2019).



Adnan Asfour upon his release from administrative detention in 2022 (Facebook page of his son, Muhammad Adnan Asfour, May 12, 2022)

◆ **Aziz al-Dweik**, a Hamas member of the Palestinian Legislative Council and the Council chairman. He previously served as Hamas spokesman in English. He was among those deported to Marj al-Zahour in 1992, and was detained by Israel several times (Palestine Online, December 25, 2022).



Right: Aziz al-Dweik (Palestine Online, December 25, 2022). Left: A photo from a video documenting his detention (Palinfo X account, October 17, 2023)

◆ **Sheikh Hassan Yusuf**, a resident of Bitunia and a Hamas member of the Palestinian Legislative Council. He is a released prisoner who spent 24 years in Israeli jails. He was among those deported to Marj al-Zahour in 1992 (Quds Press, July 9, 2023).



Hassan Yusuf after his release from administrative detention in July 2023 (Dunia al-Watan, July 9, 2023)

◆ **Sheikh Jamal al-Tawil**, a resident of al-Bireh. He is a released prisoner who spent 17 years in Israeli prisons (Filastin al-A'an, November 28, 2022). He was detained on November 3 (al-Araby al-Jadeed, November 3, 2023).



Sheik Jamal al-Tawil at an activity held in Ramallah in support of the Gaza Strip (Asmaa Hamza's X account, October 29, 2023)

◆ **Hussein Abu Kweik**, a resident of al-Bireh. He is a released prisoner who spent at least 11 years in Israeli jails. He was among those deported from Marj al-Zahour in 1992 (Palinfo , October 7, 2022). During the second intifada, a targeted killing was attempted, which resulted in the deaths of his wife and three children.



Hussein Abu Kweik (left) in a march held in Ramallah in support of the Gaza Strip (QudsN YouTube channel, October 11, 2023)

Palestinian Casualties

- ▶The increase in the Israeli security force's counterterrorism activities in Judea and Samaria, along with the number of clashes at the friction points and the increase in clashes between settlers and Palestinians since the beginning of the war, caused a significant increase in the number of Palestinian deaths. **Most of the dead were armed terrorist operatives and Palestinians who clashed with Israeli security forces.** Given the high death toll and as part of the conclusions drawn from the Hamas attack on October 7, the IDF decided to change the protocol in the PA territories for opening fire. The IDF also decided there would be zero tolerance for Palestinians who tried to cross the fence or during mass disturbances and other events (Israel Hayom, October 26, 2023). The security forces also increased the use of manned and unmanned aircraft against terrorist operatives.
- ▶As of November 20, 2023, according to reports from the ministry of health in Ramallah, **217 Palestinians have been killed since the beginning of the war in Gaza.** Jenin has the highest number of dead, 49; Tulkarm has 35; Hebron, 31; Nablus, 30; Ramallah, 22.



Mapping Palestinian deaths in Judea and Samaria by district (QudsN X account, November 20, 2023)