



Spotlight on Terrorism and the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict

February 17-24, 2026

Overview¹

- ▶ IDF forces continued activity within the Yellow Line in the Gaza Strip to locate and destroy weapons and terrorist infrastructure. An IDF soldier was killed by friendly fire in the south of the Strip.
- ▶ It was reported that the National Committee for the Administration of Gaza was dissatisfied with Hamas' appointment of new police commanders who had ties to the military wing.
- ▶ According to Hamas sources, the movement was preparing to announce the new chairman of the political bureau, either Khaled Mashaal or Khalil al-Hayya, and the candidate selected would hold the position for one year only.
- ▶ The American-led Board of Peace held its first meeting, during which promises for economic assistance worth tens of billions of dollars and for assistance in reconstructing the Strip were reported. Indonesia is expected to send 8,000 soldiers to participate in the international stabilization force.
- ▶ The National Committee for the Administration of Gaza issued a notice recruiting police officers for the new order-keeping force and thousands of applications were reportedly received.
- ▶ The Palestinian Authority established a liaison office which would operate with the high commissioner for the Gaza Strip on behalf of the Board of Peace.

The Fighting in the Gaza Strip

- ▶ IDF forces continued to operate within the Yellow Line while attacking in various areas in the Strip. The forces located weapons, destroyed terrorist infrastructure, including tunnels, and eliminated terrorists who approached the line or tried to cross it to attack the soldiers. An IDF soldier was killed by friendly fire in the south of the Gaza Strip. An unsuccessful attempt was

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

made to drome-smuggle three M-16 rifles through the Egyptian border (IDF spokesperson, February 17–24, 2026).

The Second Phase of the Ceasefire Agreement and "The Day After"

► On February 19, 2026, the first meeting of the Board of Peace for Gaza was held with the participation of leaders and senior representatives from member states. A series of benefits for the Gaza Strip were agreed upon, including a commitment for economic assistance for reconstruction. The United States pledged \$10 billion, the UAE \$1.2 billion, and Qatar, Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, \$1 billion each. Proposals were made for assistance in rehabilitating the health and education sectors and governmental institutions (Reuters, February 19, 2026). Hamas said holding the meeting while Israel continued its "violations" of the ceasefire agreement required the international community and the participants to take practical steps that would compel Israel to stop its actions, open crossings, allow humanitarian aid to enter without restrictions and immediately begin reconstruction (Hamas Telegram channel, February 19, 2026).

► At the Board of Peace meeting, the commander of the international stabilization force for the Gaza Strip, Brigadier General Jasper Jeffers, said five states had promised to provide forces for the international stabilization force. They were Indonesia, which was expected to send 8,000 soldiers, Morocco, Kazakhstan, Kosovo and Albania, and in addition Egypt and Jordan said they would train police officers. He said deployment would begin in Rafah in the south of the Strip, where police officers would be trained, and later expand sector by sector. He said the long-term plan was to deploy about 20,000 soldiers within the force and to train about 12,000 police officers (White House website, February 19, 2026).

► The Palestinian-American businessman Bashara Bahbah, who participates in contacts with Hamas, said the future of the Gaza Strip was still unclear because of the ambiguous nature of the Board of Peace's implementation measures and the absence of effective Palestinian political representation in arrangements for the next phase. He said a 15-member technocrat committee had been established with a division of portfolios, but it did not have sufficient tools, authority or capabilities to carry out its tasks, and its members were in Cairo without a clear date of entry into the Strip or a defined modus operandi. He said that the absence of the Palestinian Authority (PA) and the PLO from the Board of Peace turned the situation into a kind of mandate model, and noted that the PLO was the legitimate representative and the PA was

its executive arm, and therefore had to be part of the framework. Regarding Hamas, Bahbah said the movement did not oppose an international force if it did not intervene inside the Strip, but the Board of Peace demanded disarmament, which he claimed Hamas had "expressed willingness to discuss," however the movement had reportedly not yet received a clear plan (al-Mamlaka, February 21, 2026).

► According to reports, the United States plans to establish a large military base in the south of the Gaza Strip, about 86.5 acres, intended for about 5,000 military personnel, which would serve as a future operational base for the international stabilization force. Reportedly, plans include the phased establishment of a fortified compound which would have armored watchtowers, barbed wire fencing, small arms training facilities and bunkers with ventilation systems (*The Guardian*, February 19, 2026).

The National Committee for the Administration of Gaza

► At the Board of Peace meeting, the chairman of the National Committee for the Administration of Gaza, Ali Shaath, said they were committed to achieving stability in the Gaza Strip and to reconstructing it, despite the difficult conditions. He said the Committee was working to improve the economic situation, restore basic services and restore security in the Strip through professional police forces, under one authority, one law and one weapon. According to him, 5,000 police officers were expected to be deployed in the Gaza Strip within 60 days (al-Jazeera Mubasher, February 19, 2026).



**The new logo of the National Committee for the Management of Gaza
(the Committee's Facebook page, February 19, 2026)**

► The National Committee for the Administration of Gaza opened registration for the establishment of a police force in the Strip. According to the Committee's announcement, registration was open to men and women residents aged 18–35, without a criminal record and in good physical condition. It was reported that about 2,000 Gazans registered in the first hours (Reuters, February 19, 2026). It was reported that Brigadier Jamal Abu al-Hassan, a retired

officer in the Palestinian police from Khan Yunis, had left for Cairo and it was assumed that he would be the police commander in the Strip (Ahmed Said Facebook page, February 16, 2026; al-Akhbar, February 18, 2026).

► The holder of the clan portfolio in the National Committee, Hassani al-Mughni, aka Abu Salman,² who also serves as chairman of the Supreme Authority for Tribal Affairs in the Southern Governorates,³ said the committee would enter the Gaza Strip but the timing depended on what could be offered to the Gazans, since the Committee did not want to arrive empty-handed. He said he had attended a meeting in the Strip in which Hamas declared its full and absolute preparedness to hand over all headquarters, departments, documents and even the security mechanisms to the committee upon its entry into the Gaza Strip. He added that public sector employees affiliated with Hamas would return to their positions, but under Committee leadership and management, and according to the need for their services. Al-Mughni also claimed that the role of the militias and gangs operating under Israeli auspices would end once the IDF withdrew. He claimed members of the militias had no backing since their families had removed their protection, as their actions had severely damaged their families' reputations and brought them shame (al-Shorouk, February 19, 2026). Ghassan al-Dahini, commander of the Popular Forces militia supported by Israel in east Rafah, published an arrest warrant issued by the militia's supreme judicial committee for al-Mughni on charges of direct incitement to murder and affiliation with prohibited terrorist entities. Al-Dahini called on all activists at the border crossings to implement the warrant (Ghassan al-Dahini Facebook page, February 21, 2026).

² Al-Mughni, born in 1941 in the al-Shuja'iyya neighborhood in Gaza, joined the Fatah movement in 1968 and held a series of public positions. He expressed support for the "resistance," including "armed resistance," [terrorism] and argued that the Oslo Accords harmed the Fatah movement and shattered hopes for the establishment of a Palestinian state.

³ A body established by "presidential" decree in 2012, its role is to resolve disputes and conduct reconciliation agreements between people in the Gaza Strip.



Al-Mughni, in the center with the keffiyeh, with the chairman of the National Committee for the Administration of Gaza and some of its members (Facebook page of the Supreme Authority for Tribal Affairs in the Southern Governorates, February 17, 2026)

Palestinian Authority (PA) Involvement in the Strip

► Nikolay Mladenov, the high commissioner on behalf of the Board of Peace for the Strip, announced the establishment of a liaison office for the PA, which is supposed to create an official and orderly channel for communication and coordination between the office of the high commissioner and the PA. Mladenov said he expected to work with the liaison office to implement the American 20-point peace plan to promote a better future for the Gazans and the region (X account of Nikolay Mladenov, February 20, 2026). In response, the deputy chairman of the PA, Hussein al-Sheikh, wrote to Mladenov saying that the PA had established the liaison office headed by the PA prime minister, Muhammad Mustafa, and that the office was fully ready to carry out its duties (Ma'an, February 21, 2026).

The Gaza Strip

Humanitarian Aid

► The Israeli Coordinator of Government Activities in the Territories (COGAT) reported that in the week ending February 21, 2026, 4,200 aid trucks entered the Gaza Strip in accordance with the ceasefire agreement. The trucks carried food, medical supplies and equipment, including tents and clothing (COGAT X account, February 22, 2026). Marwan Mihsin, deputy director of Hamas' chamber of commerce in Gaza, accused Israel of coordinating the entry of goods into the Strip selectively, so that certain goods entered while others had almost disappeared. According to him, about 80 trucks carrying frozen products entered the Strip every week, but prices had not fallen to a "natural" level and the public's purchasing power was very weak. He estimated that on average about 250–300 trucks entered daily, while the need was for 600 trucks per day, and added that there was no effective enforcement body addressing exploitation and price gouging in the markets (Radio Alam, February 19, 2026).

The Gaza Strip during Ramadan

► With the beginning of the Muslim religious month of Ramadan, Gazans in the north of the Strip were dissatisfied and complained about how hot meals were distributed by organizations and charitable associations. They complained not only about the distribution method, which they claimed lacked professionalism, fairness and efficiency, but also about the timing of meal distribution, since while some charities began distributing meals, especially rice, before noon, others distributed them only minutes before sunset, which meant some Gazans did not benefit because they had already been forced to purchase food and prepare their own meals. They accused the organizations of not including them in various aid packages, especially food aid flowing to displaced persons camps in large quantities on an almost daily basis, to the extent that beneficiaries were selling it, and they demanded fairness in distribution (al-Ayyam, February 20, 2026).



Right: An iftar meal [the meal breaking the Ramadan fast] in the Jabalia refugee camp in the north of the Strip (Shehab Agency, February 18, 2026). Left: The market in the al-Zeitoun neighborhood in Gaza City (Facebook page of the al-Zeitoun neighborhood, February 22, 2026).

► On February 18, 2026, Saudi Arabia launched a "humanitarian aid bridge" in honor of Ramadan for Gazans in the amount of \$200 million (Facebook page of the al-Sharq channel dedicated to the Palestinian issue, February 19, 2026). The 81st Saudi Arabian aid plane for Gaza landed on February 21, 2026, at the El Arish airport in the northern Sinai Peninsula, bringing food packages and shelter kits (*al-Sharq al-Awsat*, February 21, 2026).

► The Turkish singer Yildiz tribe announced that it would fund *iftar* meals for 12,000 fasting Gazans during Ramadan (Nablus News Telegram channel, February 23, 2026).

The Rafah Crossing

► According to data from Hamas in the Gaza Strip, between February 2 and 18, 2026, 640 travelers left for Egypt through the Rafah Crossing and 508 entered and 26 instances of return or denial of passage were recorded. In total, 1,148 outgoing and returning travelers were

recorded, out of 3,400 who were supposed to enter or leave during this period according to the agreement, that is, a rate of only about 33% (Telegram channel of the Hamas government media information office Hamas' Government Media Office, February 19, 2026).

Civilian Governance

► Hamas police announced they were carrying out their Ramadan plan for deployment and increased presence on the ground to regulate daily life and ease the lot of the Gazans. The deployment plan reportedly dealt with important locations, including markets, streets, major intersections and mosques, as well as with reinforcing the activity of the department investigating supplies in markets and shops to examine product availability and validity, monitor prices and prevent hoarding and exploitation. According to reports, the police would patrol daily near the locations, especially during the peak hours of late afternoon until before the *iftar* meal, and the number of traffic police would be reinforced to assist at intersections and at commercial areas to reduce congestion; intervention and order-maintenance forces would be deployed at central points (Telegram channel of the Hamas ministry of the interior, February 17, 2026). It was further reported that strict measures would be taken against traders and vendors manipulating prices, hoarding goods and exploiting Gazans during Ramadan (Telegram channel of the Hamas police force, February 20–22, 2026).

Security Governance

► According to unverified reports, the militia of Hussam al-Astal, operating in eastern Khan Yunis with Israeli support, kidnapped the police commander of the Khan Yunis district, Osama Abu Anza (Facebook page of Ahmed Yussuf, February 19, 2026; Facebook page of Muhammad Abu Jiyab, February 19, 2026). It was further reported that Abu Anza was kidnapped from Nasser Hospital in Khan Yunis (Telegram channel of activist Hamza al-Masri, February 19, 2026; Facebook page of Ghassan al-Dahini, February 19, 2026). In response, the al-Akhres channel of Hamas "resistance security" quoted a security source denying the rumor of the kidnapping of a senior governmental official (al-Akhres Telegram channel, February 20, 2026). Hussam al-Astal claimed that his militia had taken control of the center of Khan Yunis and promised it would soon completely take over the city (Facebook page of Hussam al-Astal, February 18, 2026).

► Two Palestinian sources "familiar with the details" stated that members of the Committee for Administering the Gaza Strip, the technocrat committee, were dissatisfied with Hamas because it had recently appointed five district police commanders, all linked to the Izz al-Din

al-Qassam Brigades [Hamas' military wing]. They added that the movement had also appointed new senior officials in the ministry of the interior and national security and in the ministry of economy. In response, the director of the Hamas government media information office claimed they were "temporary appointments" to prevent an administrative vacuum and ensure essential services (Reuters, February 19, 2026).

Elections to the Hamas Leadership

► Hamas announced that, in accordance with its internal regulations, the movement had completed its internal elections in the, the Gaza Strip, Judea and Samaria and abroad, and had reached the final stage of selecting the chairman of the political bureau. The vote was between Hamas leader "abroad," Khaled Mashaal, and the head of the bureau in the Gaza Strip, Khalil al-Hayya, and Hamas would publish a statement of the results once the chairman had been elected, most likely during Ramadan. Two Hamas sources stated that the next chairman would head Hamas' political bureau for one year only, after which the movement would organize additional elections for its Shura frameworks and leadership for a new four-year term (Agence France-Presse, February 22, 2026).



Right: Khaled Mashaal. Left: Khalil al-Hayya (al-Sharq, February 17, 2026)

Israel, Judea and Samaria

Counterterrorism

► Israeli security forces continued counterterrorist activities throughout Judea and Samaria, detaining more than 100 wanted persons and individuals suspected of terrorist activity, including terrorists involved in manufacturing explosives and carrying out attacks, weapons dealers and operatives from the Islamic Charity Association, an illegal organization which cooperates with Hamas. A terrorist who attempted to throw an explosive device at IDF forces in Beit Furiq was eliminated, weapons, explosives and equipment for manufacturing weapons were seized and tens of thousands of shekels designated for financing terrorist activity were

confiscated. Two houses of terrorists who had participated in attacks in which Israelis were killed were demolished (IDF spokesperson, February 17–24, 2026).

► The Israel Security Agency and Israel Police detained four Israeli citizens from the Galilee on suspicion that they had planned to shoot soldiers in the northern Israeli city of Karmiel. According to the indictment filed against them, they had undergone training and received instructions in preparation for the attack, including firearms training (ISA and Police spokesperson, February 23, 2026).

Friction between Palestinians and Settlers

► According to reports, a 19-year-old Palestinian holding American citizenship was shot dead by a Jewish settler in the village of Mikhmas near Ramallah. Relatives of the deceased said settlers had raided the village to steal sheep and when local residents tried to prevent them, the settlers opened fire, killing the victim and injuring other residents (Reuters, February 19, 2026). Reportedly, in addition to the fatality, five Palestinians were injured in the incident, three of them by gunfire (Wafa, February 19, 2026).

► According to reports, in the village of Tal, near Nablus, an attempt was made to set fire to the Abu Bakr al-Siddiq mosque, and racist graffiti were written on the walls of the building (Quds News Network, February 22, 2026).

The Palestinian Authority (PA)

► Muntasir Abu Jalion, a Fatah activist deported to Egypt after being released from an Israeli prison, criticized the decision of PA chairman Mahmoud Abbas to cut off prisoners' financial allotments, claiming it was mistaken and caused severe economic damage and hunger to families. He claimed the prisoners suffered from hunger inside the prisons and their families suffered outside prison from decisions made by the PA. He said the living conditions of released prisoners were "very difficult" in Judea and Samaria, in the Gaza Strip and in the places to which they had been deported, adding that they did not seek a confrontation with the PA, but its promises had not yet been fulfilled (Quds News Network, February 19, 2026).



Families of prisoners and shaheeds at a demonstration in Nablus protesting the PA's decision to cut or stop their salaries (Quds News Network, February 17, 2026)