

Spotlight on Terrorism and the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict July 14-21, 2026

Trending

- ▶ Khalil al-Hayya was elected Hamas' new leader during a period of challenges for the movement's future.
- ▶ IDF activity in the Gaza Strip focused on disrupting Hamas' reconstruction efforts and eliminating terrorists, many involved in the atrocities of the October 7, 2023 invasion and massacre.
- ▶ Disarming Hamas and the other armed terrorist organizations continues to be the main obstacle to making progress in the ceasefire agreement in the Gaza Strip.

Overview¹

- ▶ Hamas announced the election of Khalil al-Hayya as the new head of its political bureau, 21 months after the elimination of Yahya al-Sinwar.
- ▶ IDF forces continued operations within the Yellow Line and other parts of the Gaza Strip, destroying Hamas weapons depots and other terrorist facilities and assets and eliminating more than 16 Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad terrorists, many involved in the atrocities of the October 7, 2023 invasion and massacre and who had held hostages.
- ▶ Another round of negotiations in Cairo on implementing the second phase of the ceasefire agreement ended without progress in disarming Hamas and the other armed terrorist organizations operating in the Gaza Strip.
- ▶ The date for the entry into Gaza of the Palestinian national committee for the administration of Gaza remains unknown. However, the committee continues to hold coordination meetings with the Board of Peace and the Palestinian Authority to discuss the provision of essential services and the beginning of reconstruction work.
- ▶ Hamas' security forces continue to identify "collaborators" with the militias and Israel amid the continuing targeting of "resistance fighters"² in the Gaza Strip.

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 Terrorist operatives.

- ▶ Hamas and Palestinian Authority delegations arrived in Qatar to offer condolences to the emir on the death of his father.
- ▶ Israeli security forces continued extensive counterterrorism operations in Judea and Samaria, detaining dozens of wanted Palestinians and locating large quantities of weapons. An Israeli Arab was detained on suspicion of planning to assassinate an Israeli government minister.
- ▶ Two Palestinians were killed by Israeli security forces in the Ramallah area during clashes with Jewish rioters.

Hamas' New Leader

- ▶ On July 20, 2026, Hamas announced that Khalil al-Hayya, who had been head of the political bureau in the Gaza Strip, had been elected head of the movement's entire political bureau, following the elimination of the previous leader, Yahya al-Sinwar, in October 2024. His appointment came after an internal election process in which representatives of the movement from the Gaza Strip, Judea and Samaria, the prisons and outside the territories of Palestinian territories participated. Hamas claimed the election showed the continuity of its institutions and Shura mechanisms despite the blow to its leadership and the complex security circumstances. It also said all the movement's institutions stood behind the new leadership (Hamas Telegram channel, July 20, 2026).



Announcement of Khalil al-Hayya's election (Hamas Telegram channel, July 20, 2026)

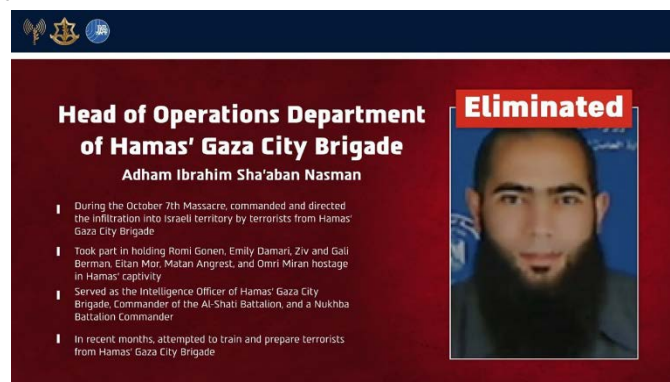
- ▶ Hussein al-Sheikh, the Palestinian Authority deputy chairman, telephoned al-Hayya to congratulate him and wish him success. Al-Hayya said he was willing to cooperate with all the leaders of the Palestinian people to achieve Palestinian unity "in the face of the dangers confronting our cause and our people." (Hamas Telegram channel, July 20, 2026). The Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) also congratulated Hamas on al-Hayya's election and wished it

success in achieving the Palestinian people's goals of "freedom, 'return'³ and the defeat of the occupation" (PIJ Telegram channel, July 20, 2026).

The Fighting in the Gaza Strip

The IDF

► IDF forces continued destroying terrorist facilities and assets and eliminating terrorists within the Yellow Line and in other areas of the Gaza Strip. At least 16 Hamas and PIJ terrorists who had been involved in planning attacks on IDF forces or in efforts to restore Hamas' military capabilities were eliminated. Many of those eliminated had also participated in the atrocities of the October 7, 2023 terrorist attack and massacre and had held hostages. That included the head of the operations department of Hamas' military wing's Gaza Brigade, who had been one of the leaders of the invasion into Israeli territory; the assistant to the former commander of Hamas' military wing, Muhammad al-Deif, and the former commander of the Khan Yunis Brigade, Rafi' Salameh, both of whom were eliminated in July 2024; and the head of military security in a Hamas battalion who held a senior position in the Hamas police. Hamas weapons depots, a rocket launch site and additional terrorist infrastructure was also destroyed (IDF Spokesperson, July 14-21, 2026).



The "ID card" of Adham Ibrahim Sha'aban Nasman, head of the Gaza Brigade's operations department (IDF Spokesperson, July 21, 2026)

► Palestinian sources reported the extension of the Yellow Line in the Gaza Strip. The IDF reportedly established a new yellow gate on the coastal road in the Mawasi area of Rafah, while in the area east of Deir al-Balah the line was moved westward, bringing homes and additional areas into the territory under Israeli control (Mutabaa min al-Midan Telegram channel, July 17-18, 2026).

³ The "return" of the Palestinian refugees who fled in 1948 and their descendants, that is, the physical destruction of the State of Israel.



The new gate/checkpoint on the coastal road (Shehab X account, July 17, 2026)

Negotiations for the Second Phase of the Ceasefire Agreement

► The negotiations held in Cairo between July 8 and 15, 2026 ended without a decision regarding the weapons of the terrorist organizations operating in the Gaza Strip, and the Hamas delegation departed for Turkey to consult in preparation for a possible return to Cairo on July 21 or 22, 2026, when the Israeli responses to the latest proposals were expected to be received. According to Palestinian sources, agreement was reached on Clause 5 of the roadmap, which regulates the powers of the national committee for the administration of Gaza and includes retaining the current government employees in their positions, preserving their rights and the government's obligations toward them, while the dispute over Clause 8, which deals with disarmament, remained unresolved. Hamas, the PIJ and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) rejected the wording presented by the Board of Peace's representative Nikolay Mladenov, which calls for the concentration, collection and storage of the heavy weapons and infrastructure of the "resistance"⁴ and the suspension of their use. Hamas demanded that if an agreement were reached, the militias "collaborating" with Israel would be dismantled and their members be prosecuted under Palestinian law (*al-Quds al-Arabi*, July 16, 2026; aljazeera.net, July 16, 2026).

► Hamas political bureau member Bassem Na'im claimed that during Mladenov's speech at the Palestine Donors Group meeting in Brussels, he had presented a misleading picture of the improvement in the delivery of aid into the Gaza Strip, avoided attributing the agreement's violations to Israel and claimed Hamas had rejected the roadmap, even though negotiations were still ongoing and it had not yet been presented to Israel. Na'im claimed Hamas wanted to

⁴ Terrorist organizations.

reach an agreement quickly, but demanded it be sustainable, implementable and backed by real guarantees, after, he claimed, Israel "had reneged on its commitments during the first stage." He also had reservations with Mladenov's position that setting a timetable was not a condition for implementing the agreement (Bassem Na'im's Telegram channel, July 15, 2026).

The Committee for the Administration of Gaza

► A member of the national committee for the administration of Gaza, who was in Cairo, said there were no signs the committee would enter the Gaza Strip in the near future. He said that during meetings with the committee's leadership in Cairo and Cyprus, Mladenov had refused to commit to a specific date because of Netanyahu's opposition. He added that the committee rejected a proposal to operate from within the Gaza Strip, from a small camp near Tel al-Sultan in Rafah, as a preliminary or pilot step for its activities. He said the proposal had been rejected in coordination with the senior officials in Cairo in light of the [alleged] "malicious intentions" behind the proposal (aljazeera.net, July 16, 2026).

► During the second meeting of the "Palestine" Donors Group, the European Commission launched the Team Gaza Initiative, bringing together international commitments totaling €883.6 million to finance early recovery in the Gaza Strip. Based on the damage and needs assessment published in April 2026, the funds will be directed toward restoring essential services and infrastructure, including water and sanitation, rubble and waste removal and the rehabilitation of health, energy, agriculture and food systems. Mladenov and the chairman of the national committee for the administration of Gaza Strip, Ali Shaath, participated in the meeting for the first time, indicating the integration of the new governance mechanisms into the international planning for the reconstruction of the Gaza Strip (European Commission website, July 13, 2026).

► The third formal meeting of the joint coordination office of the Palestinian Authority and the office of the representative of the Board of Peace was held on the sidelines of the conference in Brussels. It was attended by Mladenov; Palestinian Authority Prime Minister Muhammad Mustafa; national committee chairman Shaath; Dr. Bashir al-Ris, the national committee's commissioner of finance; Palestinian Authority minister of finance and planning and deputy foreign minister Omar Awadallah. They discussed coordination mechanisms for accelerating the delivery of essential services and supporting relief and early recovery activities (X account of the national committee for the administration of Gaza, July 15, 2026).

The International Stabilization Force

► The Board of Peace announced that Morocco had signed an agreement to participate in the international stabilization force. The Moroccan forces will support the delivery of humanitarian aid to the Gaza Strip and assist in training the Palestinian police forces (Board of Peace X account, July 16, 2026). According to the Moroccan announcement, participation would include the deployment of senior officers from the Moroccan armed forces to the joint headquarters of the international stabilization force, personnel from the royal gendarmerie and the general directorate for national security, as well as the establishment of a military field hospital (the Moroccan website Alayam24, July 15, 2026).



Morocco joins the stabilization force (Board of Peace X account, July 16, 2026)

The Gaza Strip

The Civilian Situation

► Mahmoud Bassal, spokesman for Hamas civil defense, announced the beginning of the second phase of recovering the bodies of Gazans buried under the rubble during the war. He claimed the phase would demand 800 working hours and include the search for the bodies of missing persons beneath the ruins of 147 houses destroyed in the Gaza, northern Gaza and central Gaza districts, where an estimated 1,072 bodies are buried. He said the search and recovery operations would be carried out with "limited resources" consisting of one excavator, one bulldozer and one truck, with Red Cross assistance. He said resources were insufficient for the needs on the ground, and heavy machinery and specialized equipment were necessary. He called on the UN and all international and humanitarian organizations operating in the Gaza Strip to expand their support and participate actively in recovering the bodies (Anadolu Agency, July 19, 2026).

► According to a report by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), about 9,300 cases of chickenpox were reported within two weeks in more than 130 medical facilities across the Gaza Strip, with more than half of the cases in Khan Yunis. The

outbreak has been attributed to severe overcrowding in displacement sites, shortages of water, soap and sanitation services, the accumulation of waste and summer conditions which increase the transmission of the disease. Children have been particularly affected, including in temporary learning spaces and child-friendly centers. Aid organizations have begun distributing guidance on prevention, referring suspected cases and treating them safely. Symptoms are being treated and efforts are being made to supply water, increase water chlorination and clean toilets at displacement sites (alresala.net, July 18, 2026).

► The World Health Organization (WHO), with the assistance of the Israeli Coordinator of Government Activities in the Territories (COGAT), delivered 193 pallets of dialysis fluid to the Gaza Strip on July 15, 2026, in addition to 190 pallets the previous week (COGAT X account, July 15, 2026). Dr. Muhammad Abu Salmiya, director of al-Shifa Medical Complex in Gaza City, said a shipment of bicarbonate required to operate dialysis machines had arrived, but claimed only enough for 20 days (Muhammad Abu Salmiya Facebook page, July 18, 2026).

Security Governance

► Al-Akhres, the Hamas "resistance" security Telegram channel, reported that according to "information from the field," Israel was no longer relying solely on its special units for kidnappings and targeted killings, but was also employing gangs of "collaborators," particularly in areas close to the Yellow Line (al-Akhres Telegram channel, July 13, 2026). A warning was issued after a "security source" reported that "collaborators" had kidnapped a "resistance fighter"⁵ from the central Gaza Strip (al-Akhres Telegram channel, July 15, 2026). Shawqi Abu Nasira, commander of the Free Homeland Forces, a militia in the central Gaza Strip opposed to Hamas, claimed responsibility for the kidnapping (Free Homeland Forces Facebook page, July 13, 2026).

► Two sources in the Gaza Strip said operatives from Abu Nasira's militia kidnapped a prominent operative in Hamas' military wing from Deir al-Balah, after deliberately colliding with his vehicle and transferring him in another vehicle "to take him to a hospital." Instead, they drove him to areas under IDF and militia control. Reportedly, the operative's apartment in Deir al-Balah had been one of four weapons depots targeted by the IDF in the central Gaza Strip on July 15, 2026 (*al-Sharq al-Awsat*, July 16, 2026). A security source in the Rada Force said they had identified the "collaborators" responsible for the kidnapping, thanks to information provided by Gazans (Rada Telegram channel, July 18, 2026).

⁵ Terrorist operative.

► Hamas "resistance" security issued photographs of six "collaborators" who were sentenced to death (al-Hares Telegram channel, July 16, 2026).



The six Gazans sentenced to death (al-Akhres Telegram channel, July 16, 2026)

► After an Israeli strike during a funeral in the al-Nuseirat refugee camp, in which eight people were killed, a senior "resistance" security figure claimed Israeli agents were sent to funerals, morgues and attack sites to verify the deaths of "resistance" operatives, identify senior operatives and gather information on the results of the attacks. He claimed that in one case an agent came disguised as a journalist and used a telephone to transmit information from the scene, which he alleged was used to carry out another attack after it became clear that one of the targets had survived. The "security figure" therefore warned Gazans not to expose the identities and photographs of operatives at strike sites, funerals and hospitals (al-Akhres Telegram channel, July 17, 2026).

Civilian Governance

► The Palestinian People's Party⁶ organized a rally in Khan Yunis attended by representatives of organizations and national and Islamic factions, activists and local residents. The participants called for an end to the war in the Gaza Strip, opposed the displacement of Gazans and demanded protection for civilians and the guaranteed entry of humanitarian aid. They noted the importance of the continued operation of UNRWA and its role in providing services to Palestinian refugees (Anadolu Agency X account, July 18, 2026).

⁶ The Palestinian People's Party was established in 1982 as the Palestinian Communist Party, but changed its name following the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. The party is a member of the PLO Executive Committee and supports the establishment of a Palestinian state that, in the long term, would be based on socialist principles of equality and social welfare. The party also criticized Hamas' takeover of the Gaza Strip in 2007, warned against Hamas' conduct and worked to promote Palestinian unity.

Hamas' International Activity

► A Hamas delegation headed by Muhammad Darwish, chairman of the movement's leadership council, arrived in Doha to offer condolences to the emir of Qatar, Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al Thani, on the death of his father. The delegation praised the former emir's longstanding support for the Palestinians and the Gaza Strip, including political, humanitarian and reconstruction assistance., and noted the importance of relations with Qatar and its continued support for the Palestinians under the leadership of the current emir. In addition to Darwish, the delegation included the head of Hamas' political bureau in the Gaza Strip (and now of all Hamas), Khalil al-Hayya; the leader of Hamas abroad, Khaled Mashaal; and senior members of Hamas' political bureau, Nizar Awadallah, Mousa Abu Marzouk, Husam Badran, Bassem Na'im and Izzat al-Rishq (Hamas in Judea and Samaria Telegram channel, July 14, 2026).

► Hamas welcomed the Belgian government's announcement banning the import of products from Israeli communities in Judea and Samaria, calling it a "historic decision consistent with international law and humanitarian values." Hamas claimed the ban would help thwart attempts by the Israeli government to legitimize its settlement policy in Judea and Samaria, and called on more countries to adopt similar measures and boycott Israel and the Jewish communities in Judea and Samaria (Hamas Telegram channel, July 18, 2026).

Israel, Judea and Samaria

Counterterrorism

► Israeli security forces continued counterterrorism operations throughout Judea and Samaria, carrying out more than 250 operations. More than 60 wanted suspects were detained, including Palestinians suspected of promoting terrorist activity, assembling explosive devices, throwing rocks and Molotov cocktails and possessing and trafficking in firearms and weapons. Large quantities of weapons were confiscated, including rifles, pistols and improvised firearms, drones and materials used for manufacturing and assembling explosive devices. During an operation in Nablus, two rifles and ammunition hidden in secret compartments inside cabinets in a building used by a charitable association were discovered (IDF Spokesperson, July 14-21, 2026).

► Five Palestinians were detained in the town of Sa'ir, northeast of Hebron, after two Jewish shepherds sustained head injuries from rock-throwing while grazing their flocks near the Ma'aleh Tidhar farm outpost (Israel Police Spokesperson, July 17, 2026).

- ▶ Two Palestinians were detained on suspicion of arson at Havat Gilad, which damaged dozens of buildings and vehicles (Israel Police Spokesperson's Telegram channel, July 20, 2026).
- ▶ According to reports, during recent weeks several Palestinians suspected of managing the Union of Health Work Committees were detained in a joint security forces' operation. The committee was designated a terrorist organization and outlawed in Israel in 2021 after it was found to belong to the PFLP's financial network. Indictments have been filed (Israel Police Spokesperson, July 16, 2026).
- ▶ Israeli security forces detained a 29-year-old Arab-Israeli citizen from Nazareth on suspicion of attempting to join Hamas and promote terrorist activity. Investigation revealed that the suspect had attempted to obtain resources from Hamas to carry out attacks, including an attack on Itamar Ben Gvir, minister of national security (Israel Police and Israeli Security Agency Spokespersons, and Israeli media, July 21, 2026).

Settler Terrorism

- ▶ This past week several incidents involving attacks by Jewish rioters in Judea and Samaria were reported. In the village of Jurish, south of Nablus, Palestinians and foreign activists were attacked; in the village of al-Maniya, near Bethlehem, a water supply network was destroyed and two water tanks were stolen; in Sinjil, north of Ramallah, crops were set on fire and shots were fired at Palestinians, after which clashes developed with IDF forces; near Beita in the Nablus area, electric poles were vandalized, with local sources claiming it was the fourth consecutive incident; and in the village of Tuwani in the southern Hebron Hills, about 20 Jewish rioters set fire to a mosque, burned a vehicle and spray-painted graffiti (Wafa, July 17, 2026; Al Jazeera Palestine Telegram channel, July 19, 2026).



**The fire at the mosque in the village of Tuwani and the graffiti on buildings
(Al Jazeera Palestine Telegram channel, July 19, 2026)**

► Two Palestinians were reportedly killed by Israeli security forces during clashes with Jewish rioters in the town of Deir Jarir, east of Ramallah (Quds Agency, July 20, 2026). Senior Hamas figure Abd al-Rahman Shadeed eulogized the two Palestinians and praised the steadfastness of local residents. He claimed the violence of the Jewish rioters and Israeli policy would not undermine the Palestinians' adherence to their land and their rights or advance annexation, displacement and settlement expansion. (Hamas Telegram channel, July 20, 2026).

► Three Israelis aged 18-20, residents of the Kedumim area, were detained after they were found at a gas station filling containers with gasoline; they claimed the fuel was intended for agricultural equipment. However, a search of their vehicle uncovered assault implements, face coverings, a pocketknife and two license plates from a vehicle which had been taken off the road, giving rise to the suspicion that they intended to carry out an attack in response to the fire at Havat Gilad (Israel Police Spokesperson, July 20, 2026).

The Palestinian Authority (PA)

► PA chairman Mahmoud Abbas headed a Palestinian delegation to Doha to offer condolences to the emir of Qatar, Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al Thani, on the death of his father, the former emir Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa al Thani. The Palestinian delegation included Abbas' deputy, Hussein al-Sheikh; PLO Executive Committee member Ziyad Abu Amr; Fatah Central Committee member and Abbas' son, Yasser Abbas; and Abbas' diplomatic adviser, Majdi al-Khalidi (Wafa, July 15, 2026).

► Abbas met with the secretary general of the Arab League, Nabil Fahmy, at his residence in Amman, to discuss political developments and the situation in the Palestinian arena. They focused on strengthening coordination between the PA and the Arab League, mobilizing Arab and international support, ending the fighting in the Gaza Strip, facilitating the entry of aid, reconstructing the Gaza Strip and securing Israeli withdrawal. They also discussed the demand to halt the expansion of Jewish communities and the violence of Jewish settlers, and to release the Palestinian tax clearance revenues being withheld by Israel. Abbas thanked the Arab states for their political and humanitarian support and called for the activation of an Arab financial safety net, while Fahmy pledged continued support for the Palestinian leadership and efforts to achieve "a just and comprehensive peace" (Wafa, July 16, 2026).