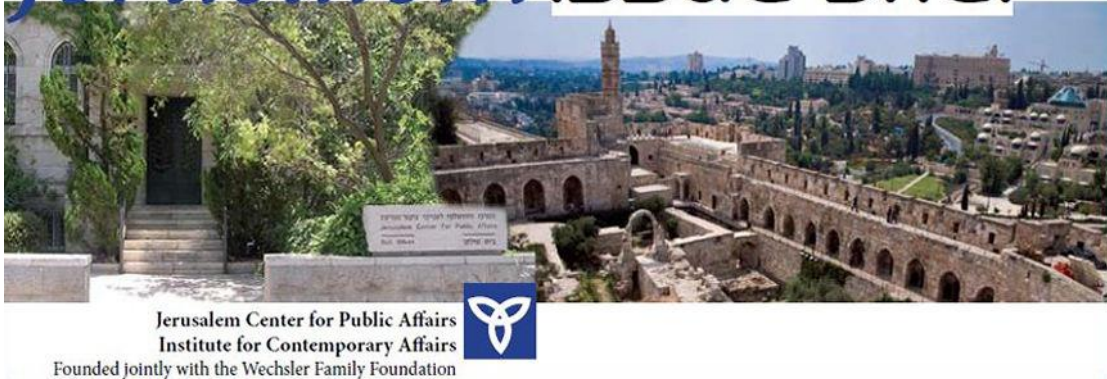


Jerusalem issue brief



Vol. 18, No. 6 May 1, 2018

Hamas' Warfare Tactics in the "Great Return March"

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Palestinian "protesters" trying to dismantle the Gaza-Israel border fence, April 27, 2018.
(AFP Photo/Mahmud Hams)

- The tactics used by the Palestinians during the events surrounding the "Great Return March" pose a direct threat to IDF forces and civilians in the vicinity of the border fence between Israel and Gaza.
- The violent activities that occurred within the framework of the "Great Return March" include shooting attacks, explosive charges, firebombs, catapults, burning tires, dropping burning objects from the air and sabotaging the border fence.
- Hamas' "Great Return March" is an assault on Israel's border, and its vow to "return" is nothing less than promising to replace Israel and its citizens.



Video of Palestinian “protesters” cutting the border fence under the cover a tire burning.
(*Palestinian Information Center*)

“The Great Return March” is the Hamas codename for its campaign that is striking against Israel’s existence. The campaign includes assemblies, demonstrations, and violent weekly disturbances against public order in several locations along the border fence between the Hamas-ruled Gaza and Israel. Attempts are being made to tear down the fences to enable infiltration into Israel.

Khalil al-Hayya, a senior Hamas official and member of the Hamas political bureau, defined the three main objectives of the return marches in Gaza: inculcating the right of return among the Palestinian people and the younger generation, thereby giving a focus to the struggle against the “occupation;” torpedoing the “deal of the century,” President Trump’s diplomatic plan for resolving the Middle East conflict; and breaking the embargo on the Gaza Strip.¹

In one violent attack on the fence on April 27, 2018, the *New York Times* reported, “Dozens made it through a barbed-wire barrier about 30 yards inside Gaza territory, deploying wire cutters, hooks, and winches.”²

According to the Palestinian Health Ministry in Gaza, 40 Palestinians were killed by IDF fire during the events beginning on March 30, 2018 (as of April 29, 2018)³

The Israeli Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center has published the findings of its initial examination of the organizational connections of the Palestinians who were killed. Below are the main points of these findings:⁴

Twenty-six of the 32 (about 80 percent) Gazans killed were terrorist operatives affiliated with terrorist organizations, primarily Hamas. Nine were operatives in military wings and four in the security forces. The others were identified as affiliated with the terrorist organizations after death notices were issued by the

organizations or when their bodies were wrapped in organization flags at their funerals. Regarding the six whose organizational affiliation was not identified, it can be assumed that they were civilians.

The affiliation of the terrorists was identified by the Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center as the following:

- **Hamas:** Five of the Gazans killed were identified as operatives of the Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades, Hamas' military-terrorist wing. Four were identified as operatives in the security forces controlled by Hamas and involved in their activities (such as the military police). Seven were identified as affiliated with Hamas after the organization held memorial services, or issued death notices, or they were buried wrapped in Hamas flags. One of them was identified as affiliated with the Islamic Bloc, Hamas' student movement.
- **Fatah: Six** of the Gazans killed were identified as operatives of the al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades, Fatah's military-terrorist wing. Four were identified as affiliated with the organization because Fatah issued death notices for them and their bodies were wrapped and buried in Fatah flags.
- **Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ): One** of the Gazans killed was identified as an operative of the Jerusalem Brigades, the PIJ's military-terrorist wing.
- **Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP): Two** of the Gazans killed were identified as DFLP operatives. One was identified as an operative in the military-terrorist wing and the other described as a senior organization figure in the Nusseirat refugee camp.
- **Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP): One** of the Gazans killed was identified as a PFLP operative."

The violent activities that occurred within the framework of the "Great Return March" included the following:

Shooting attacks – On March 30, 2018, two Hamas operatives approached the border fence in northern Gaza and opened fire from a light weapon at an IDF force, which returned fire and killed them.⁵ Two more gunmen fired on Israeli troops on April 27.

Explosive charges – An IDF spokesman reported on April 13, 2018, an explosive charge was laid a few meters away from the border fence in the area near the Karni crossing, close to the neighborhood of Shuja'iyya. The explosives blew up on the Palestinian side of the fence, apparently injuring several protesters. A Palestinian was filmed throwing a suspicious object, apparently an explosive charge, several meters from the security fence. In a photograph taken at the scene of the incident, several journalists and a disabled person are seen close to the thrower of the explosive charge.⁶

Another explosive device that was laid during the disturbances at the events of the "great return march" in northern Gaza was activated (on April 11, 2018) against IDF

engineering tools.⁷ On April 8, an IDF force located several explosive devices in northern Gaza. These explosives were placed by Palestinians who passed through the fence and immediately retraced their steps.⁸ Several days earlier, a hand grenade thrown from the Gaza at IDF forces was located.⁹ Explosive charges along the entire border pose a tangible threat against IDF forces on a regular basis. On March 15, several explosive devices were detonated while an IDF force was patrolling the area around northern Gaza.¹⁰ On March 1, 2018, IDF forces neutralized explosives that had been placed on the fence in southern Gaza to harm soldiers patrolling the area. The explosives had been laid during “peaceful” Friday protests, along with an explosive charge that had been attached to a flagpole. When it exploded on February 17, 2018, it wounded four soldiers.¹¹ In March 2017, explosive devices were also located close to the border fence with Gaza.¹²

Molotov cocktails¹³ - These are glass bottles filled with flammable liquid that are activated by lighting a damp cloth in the neck of the bottle. In the past, Molotov cocktail attacks have caused serious injuries to soldiers and civilians and even death. A Molotov cocktail is considered by the IDF to be a weapon.

Catapults – East of Khan Yunis, the Palestinians used catapults attached to a wagon or anchored in the ground that were able to launch rocks at IDF forces.¹⁴



Catapult used for firing projectiles across the fence at Israeli soldiers. (Aaed Zakaria Baker Facebook)

Slingshot for throwing steel ball bearings/stones¹⁵ - The Palestinians use various kinds of slingshots, including a slingshot with long arms.¹⁶ The U.S. company simple-shot.com, which manufactures slingshots for throwing steel ball bearings for sporting purposes,

issues its clients with the following warning: “Slingshots are dangerous weapons. ... They can cause serious personal injury or death. Treat each slingshot as though it is a loaded firearm.”¹⁷



The head of the political bureau of Hamas, Ismail Haniyeh, shooting his sling shot at Israeli soldiers.
(Published by the Palestinian Information Center)

Rolling burning tires toward an IDF force¹⁸ - Anything thrown at IDF forces is considered to be suspicious objects, such as an explosive device. Women also take part in these activities. In the past, explosive devices hidden in tires were activated by the Palestinians.¹⁹

Burning thousands of tires next to the border – The thick smokescreen enables the Palestinians to get close to the border fence and attack IDF forces at close range.

Dropping burning objects from the air – In the past, Palestinians have been filmed launching burning balloons toward Israeli territories,²⁰ such as flaming kites,²¹ kites carrying Molotov cocktails,²² or a rock wrapped in a burning Israeli flag.²³ This method has caused fires on the Israeli side.²⁴

Sabotaging the border fence – Dozens of Palestinians worked together to uproot the border fence by cutting it or by connecting an iron cable to the fence and pulling it toward the Palestinian side.²⁵ Breaking through the border fence creates an immediate security threat to the IDF forces stationed along the border.

Throwing stones – Women have also taken part in throwing stones and objects at IDF forces.²⁶



Kite with firebomb on its tail launched to fall in Israel. (AFP Photo/Said Khatib)

The methods of action adopted by the Palestinians during the events surrounding the “Great Return March” pose a direct threat to IDF forces and civilians in the vicinity of the border fence between Israel and the Gaza Strip. The Palestinians are endangering life, whether by using firearms or steel weapons or by actively aiding attackers, who are considered to be participants in combat when they reach the area and then immediately withdraw after the attack.

Conclusion

Hamas’ “Great Return March” is an assault on Israel’s border, and its vow to “return” is nothing less than promising to replace Israel and its citizens.

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Notes

- ¹ <http://felesteen.ps/article/alhyt-lflstyn-3-ahdaf-mrkzyt-lmsyrt-alwdt-walahtlal-mrtbk>
- ² <http://archive.is/MftcW#selection-1771.0-1771.123>
- ³ <http://beta.nydailynews.com/news/world/15-year-old-palestinian-latest-die-protests-gaza-article-1.3961214>
- ⁴ <http://www.terrorism-info.org.il/en/initial-analysis-identities-gazans-killed-great-return-march-march-30-april-6-2018/>
- ⁵ <https://www.kan.org.il/item/?itemid=29507>
- ⁶ <https://tinyurl.com/y83fqoup>
- ⁷ <https://www.ynet.co.il/articles/0,7340,L-5227102,00.html>
- ⁸ <http://reshet.tv/item/news/politics/security/newsitem-704472>
- ⁹ <https://tinyurl.com/y8r35g7y>
- ¹⁰ <https://www.ynet.co.il/articles/0,7340,L-5168268,00.html>
- ¹¹ <https://www.10.tv/news/156634>
- ¹² <https://www.ynet.co.il/articles/0,7340,L-5118114,00.html>
- ¹³ <http://www.davar1.co.il/120837/> <https://tinyurl.com/ybqm4qrf>
- ¹⁴ <https://twitter.com/PalinfoAr/status/985880946917498881>
- ¹⁵ <https://twitter.com/PalinfoAr/status/984892511817818117>
- ¹⁶ <https://twitter.com/PalinfoAr/status/984735899652116480>
- ¹⁷ <https://simple-shot.com/safety>
- ¹⁸ <https://twitter.com/PalinfoAr/status/984832636190420993>
- ¹⁹ <https://www.inn.co.il/News/Flash.aspx/192403>
- ²⁰ <https://twitter.com/PalinfoAr/status/984813515713269767>
- ²¹ <https://twitter.com/PalinfoAr/status/984934866482540545;>
<https://www.ynet.co.il/articles/0,7340,L-5232273,00.html>
- ²² [http://www.davar1.co.il/120837/;](http://www.davar1.co.il/120837/) <https://tinyurl.com/y83fqoup>
- ²³ <https://twitter.com/PalinfoAr/status/984892511817818117>
- ²⁴ <https://twitter.com/PalinfoAr/status/984799364353839104>
- ²⁵ <https://twitter.com/PalinfoAr/status/984883965692661761;>
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²⁶ <https://twitter.com/PalinfoAr/status/984810016325718016>;
<https://twitter.com/PalinfoAr/status/984792813379481601>;
<https://twitter.com/PalinfoAr/status/984782963190706177>

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