



News of Terrorism and the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict

(April 7 – 13, 2021)

Overview

- ▶ **Coronavirus:** The number of active cases in the **Gaza Strip** continues rising sharply. Senior public health figures are worried by the Gazans' disdain for health guidelines and restrictions and threaten they will impose a general lockdown. In **Judea and Samaria** the number of active cases continues declining. In preparation for the Muslim religious month of Ramadan, when mass events may lead to a rise in cases, the Palestinian Authority (PA) has announced new public health guidelines. In the meantime, the vaccination campaign continues.
- ▶ **Terrorist attacks:** This past week Palestinians continued throwing rocks and a larger than usual number of Molotov cocktails and IEDs at Israeli vehicles driving on the roads in Judea and Samaria. In Issawiya in east Jerusalem a bus driver and his family were attacked. The Gaza Strip is relatively quiet.
- ▶ **Palestinian Authority (PA) elections:** Preparations continue for holding elections in the PA territories. The main issue this past week was the elections in east Jerusalem and Israel's position regarding them. The Palestinians continue declaring that if elections are not held in east Jerusalem they will not be held at all. Hamas threatens an "explosion" if Israel does not meet its demands.
- ▶ **The Gaza Strip:** An Egyptian security delegation paid a visit to the Gaza Strip and met with senior Hamas figures. Mohammed al-Emadi, chairman of Qatar's National Committee for the Reconstruction of Gaza, also arrived in the Gaza Strip with Qatar's latest installment of money for needy Gazans. Khaled Mashaal, former head of Hamas' political bureau, was chosen to serve as head of the Hamas leadership abroad. Musa Abu Marzouq was appointed as his second in command. Mahmoud al-Zahar, a member of Hamas political bureau, was interviewed by Iraqi TV and made virulent anti-Semitic anti-Israeli statements related to the Holocaust and Holocaust Remembrance Day.

► **The Palestinian Authority (PA):** The Biden administration announced its intention to renew economic aid to the PA, reversing the last three years of American foreign policy. The PA was quick to praise the announcement. Palestinian foreign minister Riyad al-Maliki stressed the good relations with the United States, noting that contacts with Biden started before he was elected. Senior PA figures called on the United States to begin working in diplomatic channels as well. The Palestinians are making preparations for Palestinian Prisoners Day (April 17).

► Riyad al-Maliki said, in response to Fatou Bensouda's request to initiate an investigation, that they Palestinians were prepared for it to begin and would cooperate.

► The governor of the Jenin district headed a delegation that visited the home of terrorist operative Rushdi Abu Mukh in Baqa al-Gharbiyeh (Israel), who was released from jail after serving a sentence of 38 years, and brought him formal congratulations from Mahmoud Abbas.

The Spread of Covid-19

The Gaza Strip

The sharp rise of Covid-19 cases in the Gaza Strip continues. During the past week 11,120 new active cases were detected, an average of 1,588 new cases per day, up from 940 a week ago. During the 24 hours between April 12 and 13, 3,913 tests were administered and 1,292 new cases were detected, a positive rate of 33%. Currently there are 20,484 active cases, up from 14,080 a week ago. There are 395 patients in ICUs, 276 of them in serious or critical condition. This past week 66 Gazans died of the disease, bringing the number of coronavirus-related deaths to 702. So far 32,153 Gazans have been vaccinated out of a stock of 40,800 doses (ministry of health in Gaza Facebook page, Dr. Ashraf al-Qidra's Twitter account, April 13, 2021).

The current situation

► **Dr. Majdi Dheir**, director of preventive medicine in the ministry of health in Gaza, called the current situation "very serious," adding that the positive rate of infection was rising. He blamed the Gazans for not obeying the guidelines and restrictions issued by the ministry of health and threatened that if the situation continued they would be forced to impose a full lockdown on the Gaza Strip (Sama, April 7, 2021).



Ramadan shoppers in a market in the Gaza Strip (Twitter account of journalist Hassan Aslih, April 12, 2021). Left: Rapid Covid-19 testing in Khan Yunis (Palinfo Twitter account, April 12, 2021).

New restrictions

► In light of the sharp rise in infection the ministry of health in Gaza issued new restrictions, including a ban on vehicle traffic. Public service offices and educational institutions, including institutions of higher learning, have been closed until further notice. The new restrictions join previous ones including a nightly curfew beginning at 21:00 and restrictions on the opening of reception venues, markets and mourning tents.



Partial lockdown and ban on vehicle traffic (Palinfo Twitter account, April 10, 2021)

► **Ali al-Hayak**, chairman of the Gazan businessmen's association, called on the ministry of the interior to reconsider its decision to ban the movement of private vehicles and trucks. He said Ramadan necessitated the supply and delivery of merchandise and equipment to shops and storeowners. He claimed it was wrong to deny the basic needs of residents and the local economy (Ma'an, April 7, 2021). The Restaurant and Hotel Commission in the Gaza Strip warned an economic catastrophe in the tourist industry would result from the restrictions (al-Hayat al-Jadeeda, April 13, 2021).

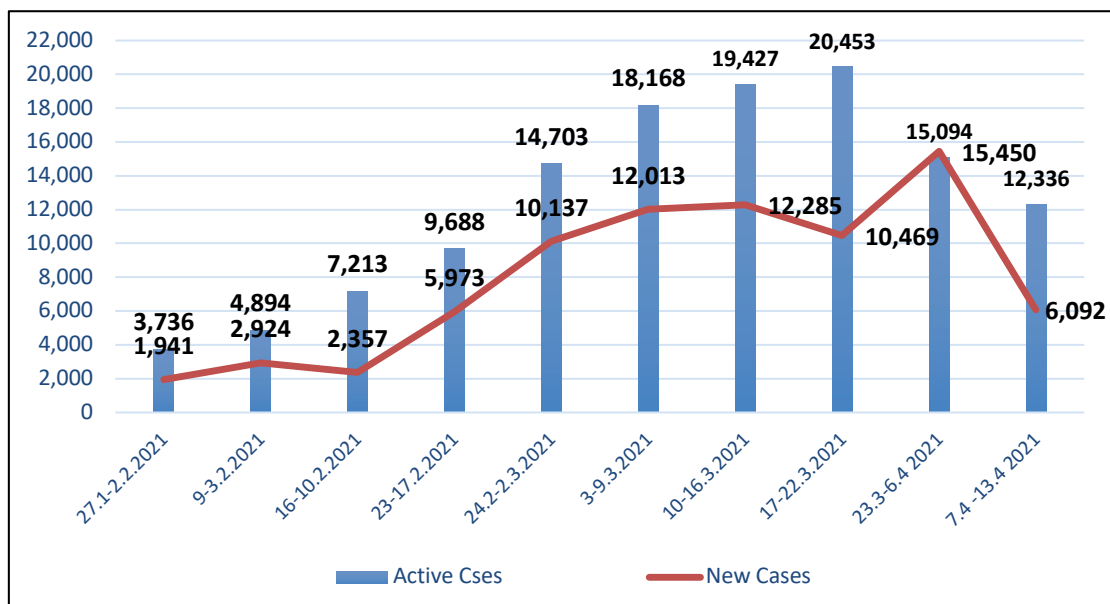
Judea and Samaria

The decline in the rate of infection continues. During the past week 6,092 new Covid-19 cases were detected, an average of 870 per day, down from 1,030 a week ago. Between April 12 and 13, 3,503 tests were administered and 619 new cases were detected, a positive rate of 18%. Currently there are 12,336 active cases, 182 of them in ICUs, 56 of whom are on ventilators. So far there have been 2,199 coronavirus-related deaths. In east Jerusalem the decline continues as well and there are 226 active cases. The Nablus district is still the epicenter of the disease (ministry of health in Ramallah Facebook page, April 13, 2021).

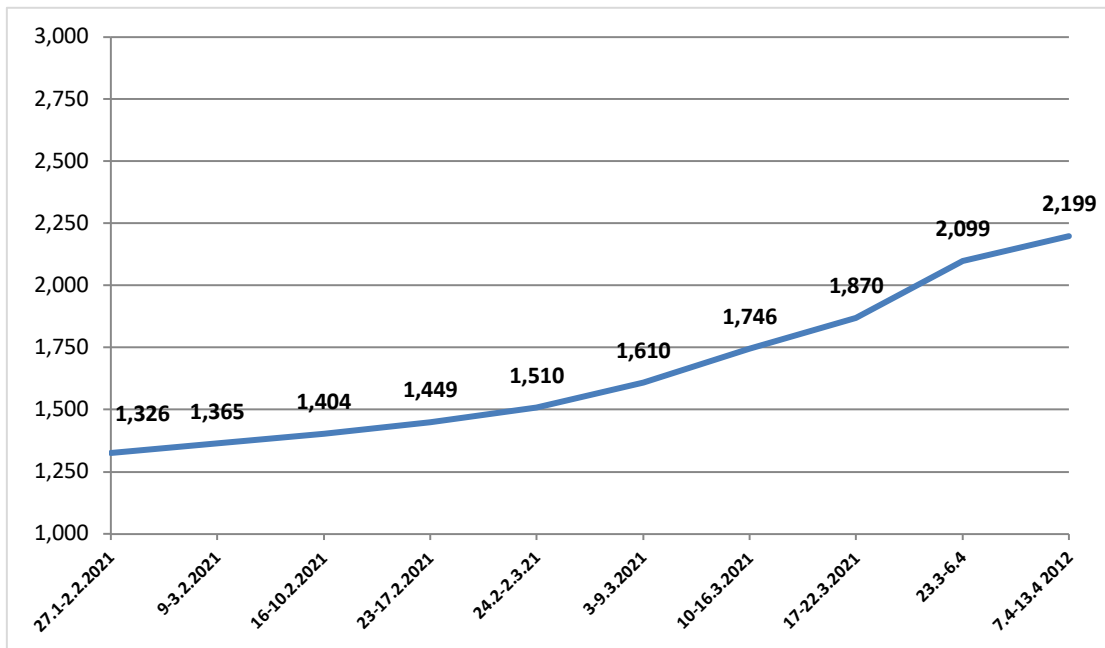
The current situation

►] **Mai al-Kayla**, PA minister of health, reported on the general flattening of the curve throughout the PA districts. As for the Gaza Strip, she said they were worried by the sharp increase in cases and the high occupancy rate of hospital beds. Summarizing the activities of the ministry of health to halt the spread of the virus, she said that during the past year 400 hospital beds were added for coronavirus patients and today there were eight laboratories testing for coronavirus, up from just one when the epidemic began a year ago (ministry of health in Ramallah Facebook page, April 7, 2021).

The increase in coronavirus infection in Judea and Samaria (According to the ministry of health in Ramallah)



Number of coronavirus-related death (According to the ministry of health in Ramallah)



Extending the lockdown

► PA government spokesman **Ibrahim Melhem** issued new public health guidelines for the Muslim religious month of Ramadan, which began on April 13, 2021. They included the following (Wafa, April 10, 2021):

- ◆ A ban on mass communal fast-breaking meals, on gatherings, weddings, parties and on the erection of mourning tents.
- ◆ The Friday prayers will be held in public areas, the Ramadan night prayers will be held in the mosques.
- ◆ Businesses will work at 50% capacity until 20:00.
- ◆ There will be no movement of residents between population centers throughout the day. The weekend lockdowns will continue.
- ◆ Every village, town or city where infection increases will be locked down.
- ◆ However, government and UNRWA schools will reopen for the first through sixth grades and high schools for the 12th grades. The kindergartens will also reopen



Elementary school students return to their studies in the PA (Wafa, April 11, 2021).

- ▶ The Palestinian ministry of endowments ordered the Friday prayers and sermons to be held in open areas (al-Quds, April 8, 2021).
- ▶ The Palestinian media reported that last Friday, April 9, 2021, about 40,000 Muslims went to pray on the Temple Mount despite the Israel's restrictions on entrance to the Temple Mount compound. According to reports, Israeli Arabs responded to the call issued by the Muslim waqf for mass attendance at prayers on the Temple Mount (Palinfo Twitter account, April 9, 2021).



Right: Mass Friday prayer on the Temple Mount. Left: Israeli Arabs from the northern part of the country en route to the Friday prayer on the Temple Mount (Palinfo Twitter account, April 9, 2021).

Vaccines

- ▶ **Mai al-Kayla reported she had signed contracts with three vaccine-manufacturing companies:** Pfizer for two million doses, AstraZeneca for two million doses, Sputnik for one million doses. She also said they had all the equipment necessary for storing the vaccines, and they were now waiting for delivery. She said the large companies were unfair in their distribution of the vaccines, and there were countries which had taken control of the supply. For example, she said the PA had been allotted a very small number of vaccine doses, as

opposed to Israel, which had a strong lobby and connections, and had already vaccinated more than half of its total population (ministry of health in Ramallah Facebook page, April 6, 2021).



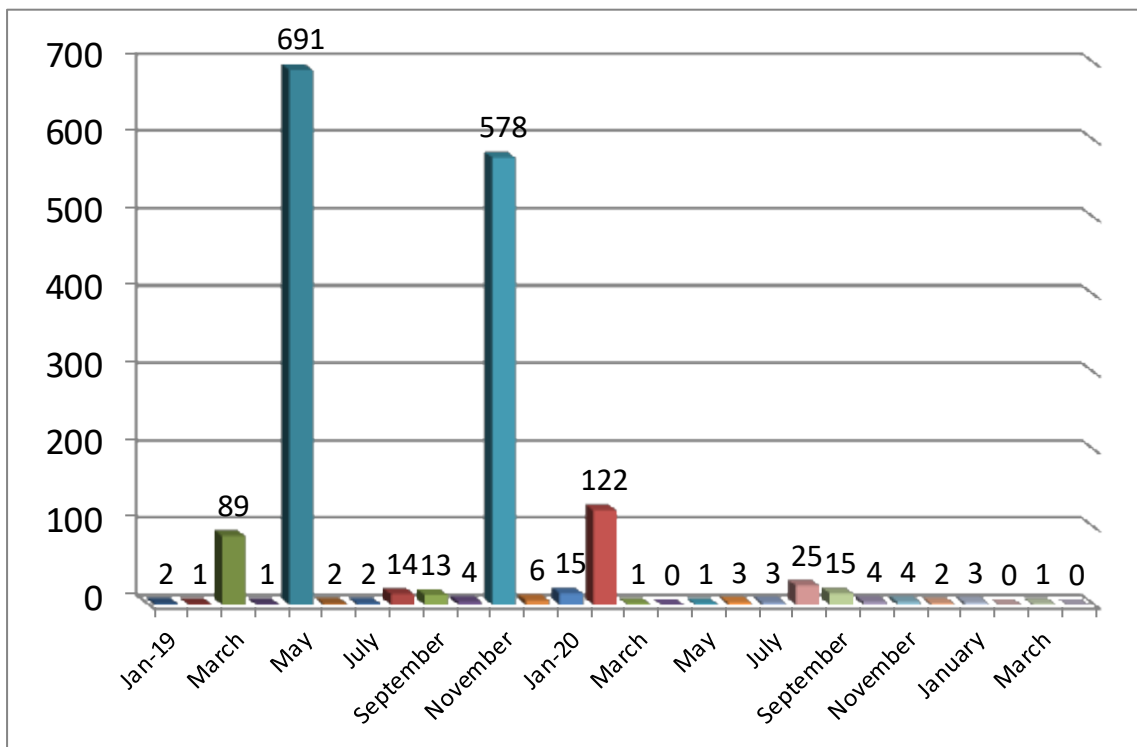
The coronavirus is still a present threat, despite the vaccination campaign (al-Quds, April 7, 2021).

Israel's South

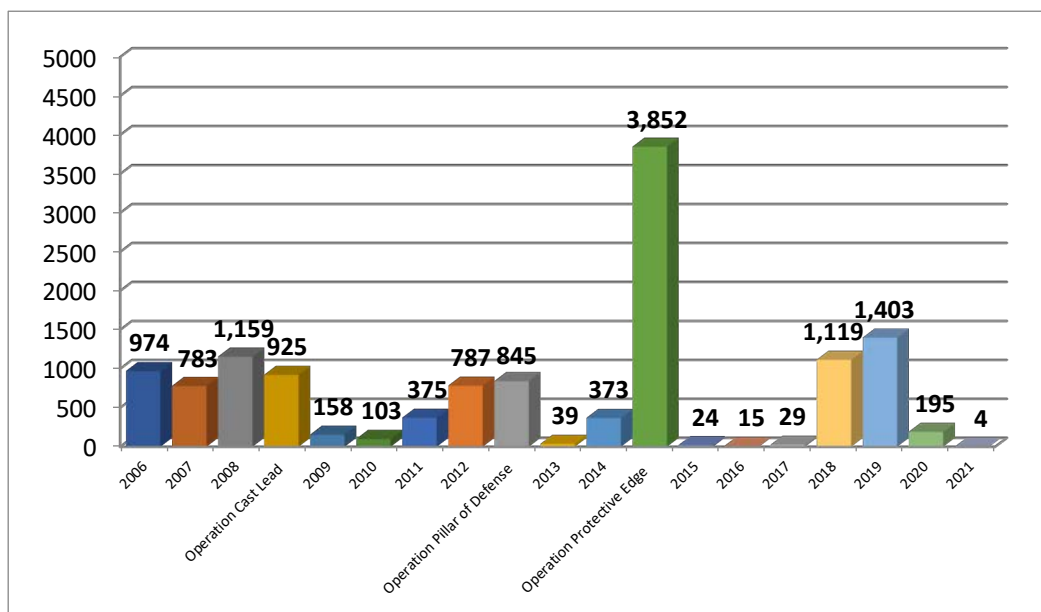
Rocket and mortar shell fire into Israel

► This past week no rocket or mortar shell hits were identified in Israeli territory.

Monthly Distribution of Rocket and Mortar Shell Fire



Annual Distribution of Rocket Hits



Judea and Samaria

Rock- and Molotov cocktail-throwing, and other events

► In Judea and Samaria Palestinians continue throwing rocks, Molotov cocktails and IEDs at Israeli civilians and vehicles driving on the roads. This past week more attacks than usual involved Molotov cocktails. The more prominent events were the following:¹

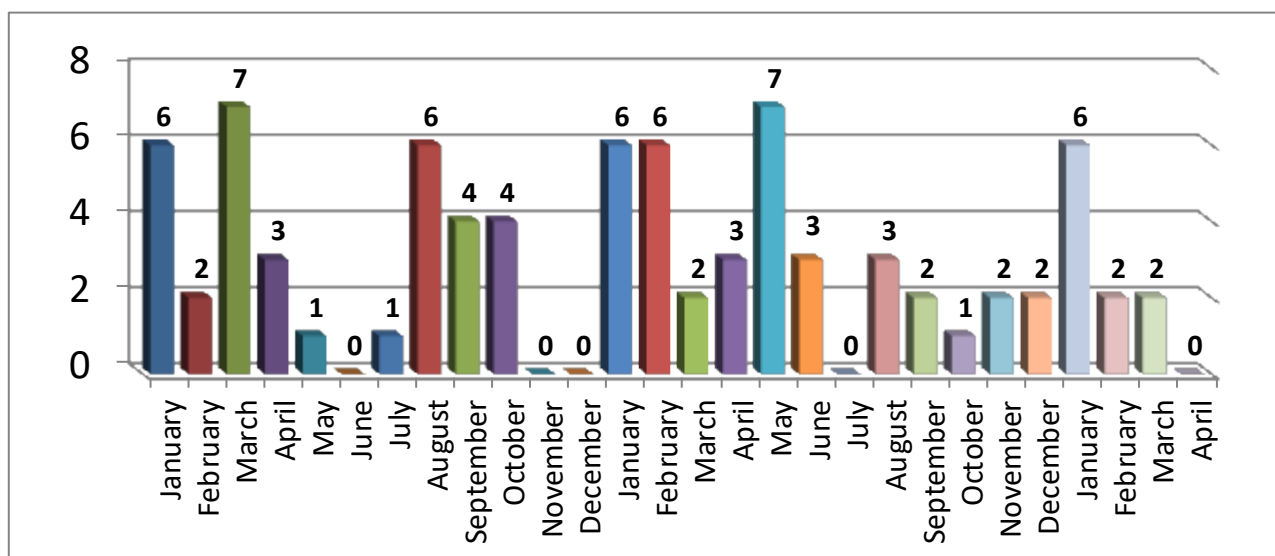
- ◆ **April 12, 2021:** Two Molotov cocktails were thrown at the Israeli community of Migdal Oz in Gush Etzion. No casualties or damage were reported.
- ◆ **April 12, 2021:** A Molotov cocktail was thrown at an Israeli bus north of Hebron. No casualties or damage were reported.
- ◆ **April 11, 2021:** An IED was thrown at the fence of the community of Psagot (east of Ramallah). No casualties or damage were reported.
- ◆ **April 11, 2021:** Rocks were thrown at an Israeli vehicle south of Nablus. No casualties were reported. The vehicle was damaged.
- ◆ **April 11, 2021:** Rocks were thrown at an Israeli vehicle north of Ramallah. No casualties were reported. The vehicle was damaged.
- ◆ **April 10, 2021:** A bus with the driver's family aboard took a shortcut through the neighborhood of Issawiya in east Jerusalem and was attacked by Palestinians who

All information and reports are from Rescue Without Borders in Judea and Samaria unless otherwise ¹ noted.

threw rocks and Molotov cocktails at the bus. The driver and his family exited the bus and were protected by police. The bus suffered extensive damage. The next day three Palestinians were detained on suspicion of throwing rocks, two of them minors (Israel Police Force spokesman's unit, Jerusalem, April 10 and 11, 2021).

- ◆ **April 10, 2021:** An IED hidden in a tire exploded north of Ramallah. No casualties or damage were reported.
- ◆ **April 8, 2021:** Border Police fighters detained a suspicious 18 year-old Palestinian from Kafr 'Aqab, east of Jerusalem. A Kalashnikov assault rifle was found in a bag he was carrying. He was taken for interrogation (Israel Police Force spokesman's unit, Jerusalem, April 8, 2021).
- ◆ **April 6, 2021:** Rocks were thrown at an Israeli bus north of Hebron. No casualties or damage were reported.

Significant Terrorist Attacks in Judea and Samaria since January 2020²



²A significant attack is defined by the ITIC as involving shooting, stabbing, a vehicular attack, the use of IEDs, or a combination of the above. Stones and Molotov cocktails thrown by Palestinians are not included.

Developments in the Gaza Strip

Foreign aid for the Gaza Strip

►On April 9, 2021, **Mohammed al-Emadi**, chairman of Qatar's National Committee for the Reconstruction of Gaza, announced that the monthly Qatari donation of funds had been delivered to the Gaza Strip (alresala.net, April 8, 2021). On April 11, 2021, the distribution of the funds began, paid through Hamas' post office bank branches. Each of 100,000 needy families received \$100 (alresala.net, April 8, 2021). The ministry of welfare in Gaza announced that the payments for the wounded and killed of the return marches would be paid on April 12 and 13, 2021, through the post office bank branches in the Gaza Strip (Sawa, April 10, 2021).



The Qatari donation distributed in the Gaza Strip through Hamas post office bank branches
(Facebook page of Qatar's National Committee, April 12, 2021)

The Rafah Crossing

►The Palestinian legation in Egypt announced the establishment of a new department for managing the Rafah Crossing to facilitate the procedures for passage. The department will operate under the direct supervision of the PA representative in Egypt and will be headed by Khaled Atiya (Wafa, April 6, 2021).

Egyptian security delegation visits the Gaza Strip

►An Egyptian security delegation headed by Ahmed Abd al-Khalq, who holds the Palestinian portfolio in Egyptian General Intelligence, arrived in the Gaza Strip on through the Erez Crossing April 6, 2021, and remained for a few hours to meet with members of the Hamas leadership. Before entering the Gaza Strip they met with senior PA figures in Ramallah (al-Sharq al-Awsat and al-Araby al-Jadeed, April 6, 2021).

Khaled Mashaal appointed head of Hamas political leadership abroad

► **Khaled Mashaal**, former head of Hamas' political bureau, was appointed as head of the Hamas leadership abroad. He will continue as a member of Hamas' political bureau (alresala.net, April 12, 2021). Mashaal will replace Maher Salah. According to the Hamas website, his second in command will be **Musa Abu Marzouq** (Hamas website, April 12, 2021).

Hamas security forces' leadership reshuffled

► **Iyad al-Buzum**, spokesman for the ministry of the interior in Gaza, reported that Louai Nasser Muslah was appointed deputy minister of the interior and national security in the Gaza Strip, replacing Tawfiq Abu Na'im, who held the post since 2015. Tawfiq Abu Na'im resigned after deciding to run as a candidate in the Palestinian Legislative Council elections (Sawa, April 8, 2021).

Mahmoud al-Zahar makes anti-Semitic remarks and denies the Holocaust

► Interviewed by the Iraqi TV channel Aletejah, **Mahmoud al-Zahar** said he "understood" the murder of the Jews in Europe during the Holocaust and condemned the Gulf States for holding events marking Holocaust Remembrance Day. He claimed the Holocaust happened not because the Nazis were criminals but because the Jews in the various countries had taken control of the economy and political systems and stolen natural resources. He alleged that the peoples of Europe hated the Jews and expelled them because they spread corruption, claiming that during wars the Jews collaborated with the enemy. He also claimed the Holocaust was nothing special and European countries had expelled the Jews and killed them before the Second World War.

The Palestinian Authority (PA)

The PA budget

► PA Prime Minister **Muhammad Shtayyeh**, speaking at a coronavirus conference, said that given the decrease in international aid, the Palestinians had a budget deficit of one billion dollars. He said that in 2020 the PA received no aid from the Arab countries and aid from the United States had been cut (Wafa, April 8, 2021).

PA elections

Palestinian organizations meet in Cairo

►After all the parties and factions (36 in number) had registered, the Central Elections Committee received 231 objections (Wafa, April 10, 2021). Most of the objections were from Fatah parties. Hamas entered no objections. A source in Hamas reported that while they had more than 40 objections to candidates on Fatah tickets, they had not entered them because of understandings reached between Fatah and Hamas in Cairo (al-Akhbar, April 10, 2021).

Election propaganda

►A Hamas propaganda video called "Hamas and the struggle against the occupation" featured senior Hamas figures condemning Israel and calling for its eradication. **Isma'il Haniyeh**, head of Hamas' political bureau, said Hamas was building up its forces not only to defend the Gaza Strip but also for the sake of liberating Jerusalem, al-Aqsa mosque and all of "Palestine." **Saleh al-'Aroui**, deputy chairman of Hamas' political bureau, said Hamas' policy was to revive the "resistance" [i.e., terrorist attacks against Israel], adding that the Palestinian people would not agree to the occupation and would struggle against it until it was expelled (al-Aqsa, April 11, 2021).

The position of the Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ)

►**Khader Habib**, a senior PIJ figure, said they had not yet reached a decision regarding active participation in the Palestinian Legislative Council election and were still deliberating. He said that if they decided to participate in the election they would support candidates of the organization on tickets affiliated with the "resistance" which refused to recognize the [so-called Israeli] "occupation" (Sabaq24, April 7, 2021).

The position of Israel and the issue of the vote in east Jerusalem

►The issue of the right of the residents of east Jerusalem to vote was an important aspect of preparations for the elections this past week. The PA called on the international community to intervene. Palestinian foreign minister **Riyad al-Maliki** said the Palestinians were waging a campaign against Israel because of the elections in Jerusalem. He said he was disappointed by the international community, which, he said, did not intervene. He said the Palestinians were examining the possibility of appealing to the UN Security Council with a demand that it force Israel to allow elections to be held in east Jerusalem (al-Quds, April 7, 2021).

► On April 12, 2021, representatives of the Palestinian organizations met at Fatah headquarters in Ramallah to discuss the elections in east Jerusalem. They declared there would be no elections without the participation of the residents of east Jerusalem, adding that Israel did not have the authority to decide if elections would be held or not. They called on the UN, the EU, Russia and China to exert pressure on Israel to allow elections to be held in east Jerusalem (Wafa, April 12, 2021)/

► Hamas spokesman **Abd al-Latif al-Qanua** said Hamas called on all the Palestinian organizations to agree on ways to exert pressure on Israel to allow elections to be held in Jerusalem. He said Hamas would not give up the rights of the Palestinians in east Jerusalem to participate in the elections (Sawa, April 12, 2021). According to the daily Lebanese newspaper al-Akhbar, Hamas told the Egyptian delegation visiting in Israel to pass the message on to Israel that the situation could "explode" if Israel prevented the Palestinians from voting in the elections in general and in east Jerusalem in particular (al-Akhbar, Lebanon, April 12, 2021).



Right: East Jerusalem voters want to vote (cartoonist Isma'il al-Bazam's Facebook page, April 5, 2021), Left: Israel exploits the rivalries of the Palestinian organizations to sabotage the PA elections (cartoonist Alaa' al-Laqta's Facebook page, April 4, 2021).

Relations with the United States

► American Secretary of State **Antony Blinken** announced that the American administration was planning, in coordination with the Congress and in accordance with American law, to renew economic aid to the PA. That would reverse the position of the last three years of the previous administration. According to reports, \$75 million will be transferred as direct aid,

\$10 million for a program to promote peace, and \$150 million for humanitarian aid for UNRWA3 (American Department of State website, April 7, 2021).

► The PA was quick to praise the American decision. Senior PA figures also called for the renewal of diplomatic relations with the United States as well, and for attempts to resolve the conflict. **Muhammad Shtayyeh** said they welcomed the renewal of American aid to UNRWA and the PA, and called on the American administration to launch a new political course that would provide for the rights and expectations of the Palestinian people, based on international law and UN resolutions. He also said they were waiting for the renewal of diplomatic relations with the United States and for the opening of an American consulate in east Jerusalem (Wafa, April 8, 2021)

► Palestinian foreign minister **Riyad al-Maliki** said there was a genuine change in the United States' relations with the Palestinians. He said relations with Joe Biden and his vice president had begun while they were still running for office, and as soon as Biden was sworn in the Palestinians contacted the American administration. He said he hoped the Biden administration would narrow the gap created under the previous president so that relations between the Palestinians and the United States could return to the status quo ante. He also said that it seemed the administration wanted to focus on the economy, but what was important was the political aspect and correcting the "crimes" of the previous administration, such as closing the PLO's office in Washington and relocating the American embassy to Jerusalem (Palestinian TV, April 11, 2021).

► UNRWA spokesman **Adnan Abu Hasna** reported that American aid would be given to the agency in the coming weeks. He said that despite the deficit the agency's annual budget would continue to be \$150 million (Filastin al-Yawm, April 8, 2021).

The International Criminal Court (ICC)

► A senior figure in the PA foreign ministry said they had received a communiqué from Fatou Bensouda, chief prosecutor of the International Criminal Court (ICC), asking if the PA was planning to conduct its own independent investigation of the "crimes" Bensouda

³ The Congress is divided on the issue of aid for the Palestinians. Republicans called on the administration to use its leverage to criticize the PA's conduct, with an emphasis on the payments to the families of terrorists. Congressmen said they had to make sure the administration's actions were in keeping with the Taylor Force Act (which limits the administration's ability to transfer funds to the PA as long as it continues paying terrorists) and with all the relevant laws related to transferring aid to the Palestinians.

announced.⁴ According to the senior figures, Riyadh al-Maliki answered on April 7, 2021, that the Palestinians were prepared to cooperate in the best way possible with the ICC. However, it was important that Fatou Bensouda update the Palestinians on the crimes the Court was investigating so that the Palestinians could cooperate (al-Araby al-Jadeed, April 8, 2021).

► Relating to the issue in an interview, Riyadh al-Maliki said that in response to Bensouda's communiqué to Israel and the Palestinians regarding a request to initiate an investigation, the Palestinians responded that they were prepared to have her begin and promised to cooperate. He said the Israeli response was the claim that the ICC did not have the authority to discuss crimes committed in its territory. He said the Palestinians had met with Bensouda and her staff and agreed to sign a memorandum between the "state of Palestine" and the ICC regarding opening an investigation. He said it would be signed in the coming weeks and would motivate the beginning of the investigation.

Reception held for released Hamas terrorist prisoner

► On April 6, 2021, a reception was held in the Balata refugee camp for Hamas-affiliated Arabi Thuqan, a terrorist organization released from an Israeli jail after having served a term of 18 years. Many Hamas and Fatah flags were in evidence. Thuqan was wearing a green Hamas scarf and waved a rifle (Paldf Twitter account, April 7, 2021). It was another in a series of Hamas displays of force in Judea and Samaria and the first in a long time where a Hamas operative was shown holding a weapon. It comes after a decline in PA security force enforcement in view of the coming elections and the Fatah-Hamas dialogue. According to reports Arabi Thuqan's brother Amir was a Fatah terrorist operative who was detained by Israel in 2007, released in the Gilad Shalit prisoner exchange deal in 2011 and expelled to the Gaza Strip (Felesteen, QudsN Facebook page, April 6, 2021).

⁴ Israel received a similar communiqué from Fatou Bensouda, and replied on April 9, 2021, that the chief prosecutor had no authority to open an investigation of Israel and that Israel would not cooperate.



Right: Released terrorist operative Arabi Thuqan wearing a green Hamas scarf and holding a rifle during a reception held for him in the Balata refugee camp (Paldf Twitter account, April 6, 2021). Left: Yellow Fatah and green Hamas flags clearly visible at the reception (QudsN Facebook page, April 6 2021).



Hamis sign welcoming Arabi Thuqan in the Balata refugee camp after his release from an Israeli jail (Snd YouTube channel, April 9, 2021).

Governor of the Jenin district visits released terrorist operative Rushdi Abu Mukh in Israel

►On April 5, 2021, Israel released terrorist operative Rushdi Abu Mukh, from Baqa al-Gharbiyeh, an Israeli Arab city, after he served a term of 35 years for his involvement in the abduction and murder of IDF soldier Moshe Tamam in 1984. A mass reception and parties were held for Abu Mukh (PA Commission of Prisoners and Released Prisoners' Facebook page, April 5, 2021). On April 7, 2021, a delegation from Jenin arrived for a visit, headed by Jenin district Akram al-Rajoub. Al-Rajoub congratulated Mukh on his release and passed along formal congratulations from Mahmoud Abbas, saying that the matter of the Palestinian

prisoners is at the top of the Palestinian leadership's list of priorities (Akram al-Rajoub's Facebook page, April 7, 2021).



Jenin district governor Akram al-Rajoub at the home of terrorist operative Rushdi Abu Mukh. Abu Mukh holds the plaque and al-Rajoub is to his left (wearing a suit) (Akram al-Rajoub's Facebook page, April 7, 2021).

Preparations for Palestinian Prisoners Day

►Every April 17th the Palestinians mark Palestinian Prisoners Day. Qudri Abu Bakr, chairman of the Commission for Prisoners and Released Prisoners' Affairs, met in Ramallah with Ahmed Assaf, responsible for Palestinian public diplomacy, to discuss preparations for marking the day. They discussed the broad media coverage they wanted for the events (Commission Facebook page, April 6, 2021). In preparation for the day Abu Bakr held a series of meetings with released prisoners, where he repeatedly stressed that the issue of the Palestinian prisoners is at the top of the Palestinian leaders' list of priorities. He said his commission would continue to support and help Palestinian prisoners and their families (Commission Facebook page, April 10, 2021).



Qudri Abu Bakr and Qadoura Fares meet with Ahmed Assaf (PA Commission of Prisoners and Released Prisoners' Facebook page, April 6, 2021).

Palestinian Prisoner's Club leadership reshuffled

►The board of directors of the Palestinian Prisoners' Club appointed Abdallah al-Zaghari as chairman, replacing Qadoura Fares, who resigned so he could run as a candidate in the Palestinian Legislative Council elections (al-Quds, April 8, 2021).

Reaction to the Jerusalem municipality's authorization for construction in Har Homa

►The Jerusalem municipality's local committee for planning and construction authorized a plan to expand the neighborhood of Har Homa by building 540 dwelling units. **Nabil Abu Rudeineh**, spokesman for Mahmoud Abbas, condemned the decision, saying that if the international community, and especially the International Quartet, wanted to protect the two-state solution, they had to exert pressure on the Israeli government to stop the "settlement project" (Wafa, April 7, 2021).