



Escalation from the Gaza Strip – Operation Guardian of the Walls Summary

May 23, 2021

Overview

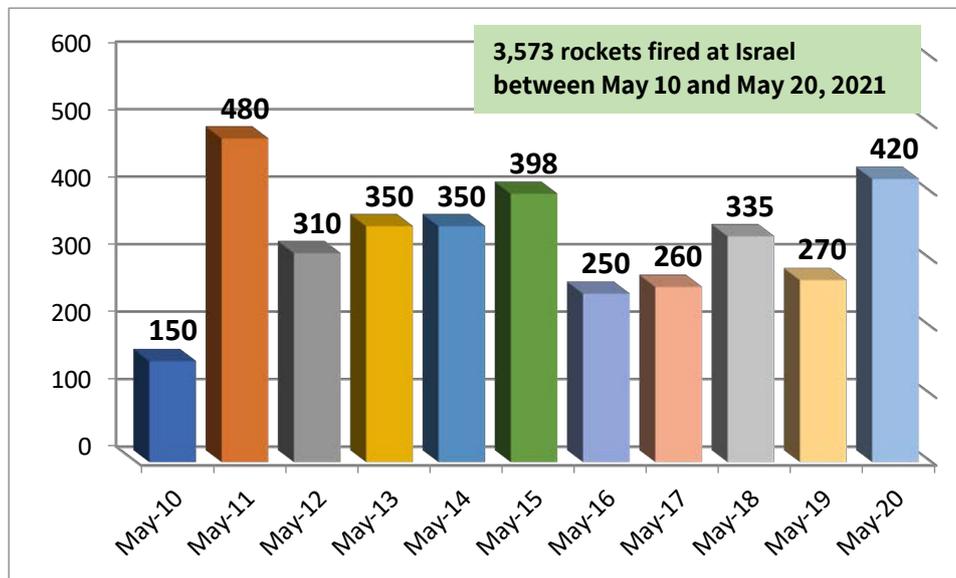
- ▶ After 11 days of hostilities, Operation Guardian of the Walls ended with a ceasefire at 0200 on May 21, 2021. The terrorist organizations in the Gaza Strip continued firing rockets until shortly before the deadline, and since the ceasefire there has been a tense quiet in the Gaza Strip. **Hamas spokesman Taher al-Nunu** and **Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) leader Ziyad al-Nakhalah** said they would adhere to the ceasefire as long as Israel did.
- ▶ During the 11 days of Operation Guardian of the Walls **more than 4,360 rockets** were fired at Israel, of which 3,573 fell inside Israeli territory, the rest falling either inside the Gaza Strip or into the sea. The Iron Dome aerial defense system intercepted about 90% of the rockets. Eleven civilians were killed by rocket fire and an IDF soldier was killed by an anti-tank missile. Several hundred people were injured and there was property damage to homes, schools, industry, commerce and agriculture. The IDF attacked about 1,500 terrorist targets in the Gaza Strip.
- ▶ As soon as the ceasefire went into effect Gazans began celebrating in the streets. They also began to understand the extent of the destruction and the results of Israel's attacks. The Palestinians reported serious infrastructure damage, including to water and sewage pipes, roads and communications networks.
- ▶ Rebuilding the Gaza Strip began immediately after the ceasefire was announced. Unlike previous rounds of hostilities, Egypt has taken upon itself not only to send money, but to establish a mechanism for transferring the funds and for coordinating donations and the supplies entering the Gaza Strip. According to Egypt, the entire task will be handled mainly by companies belonging to the Egyptian army in order to limit the influence of companies that operated in the Gaza Strip in the past, especially Turkish companies.
- ▶ Despite the destruction, Hamas and PIJ spokesmen celebrate their "victory" and Israel's "defeat." According to the Hamas narrative, they attacked not for the Gaza Strip but rather for Jerusalem, al-Aqsa mosque and the Sheikh Jarrah neighborhood in east Jerusalem. Even though the enlistment of Judea, Samaria and east Jerusalem was only partial, the Hamas

leadership continues claiming that all the Palestinians participated in the Hamas-led hostilities.

Rocket Fire

- ▶ During the 11 days of the operation **more than 4,360 rockets and mortar shells** were fired at Israel, of which 3,573 penetrated Israeli airspace, about 680 fell inside the Gaza Strip and about 280 fell into the sea. The Iron Dome aerial defense system intercepted about 90% of the rocket fire. Two anti-tank missiles were fired at Israel and several launches were prevented. One killed an IDF soldier when it hit his jeep, the other superficially injured an IDF soldier.
- ▶ The joint operations room of the terrorist organizations in Gaza held a press conference where they claimed they had used "new technology" to fire rockets and that Israel had failed when it relied on "deception" to attack and destroy the "resistance" [i.e., terrorist] leaders and operatives. They also claimed they could have continued firing rockets in response to any Israeli "aggression" against the Palestinians (al-Aqsa, May 21, 2021).

Daily distribution of rocket fire during Operation Guardian of the Walls



(According to data from the IDF)



Direct hit on a house in the southern Israeli coastal city of Ashqelon on the last day of the hostilities (Twitter account of journalist Hassan Aslih, May 20, 2021).

Israel casualties

► Despite the massive barrages of rocket and mortar fire, relatively speaking Israeli casualties were few and there was relatively light property damage. Eleven Israeli civilians were directly killed by rocket and mortar fire. One soldier was killed when an anti-tank rocket hit his jeep. Two Israelis died when they ran for shelter. Several hundred people were injured, most of them superficially, and many had anxiety attacks. However, the rocket fire disrupted routine daily life for people living as far north as Netanya, and Jewish-Arab coexistence in the mixed cities was severely damaged by riots that were influenced by the events in the Gaza Strip.

Israel's Response

► During Operation Guardian of the Walls Israel destroyed more than 1,500 terrorist targets, severely damaging the strategic and tactical capabilities of Hamas and the PIJ. Among the targets were the following (IDF spokesman, May 21, 2021):

- ◆ **Hamas' tunnel system** (the "metro") in Gaza City, Rafah and Khan Yunis: The IDF destroyed more than 100 kilometers (60 miles) of tunnels used by the Hamas leadership and terrorist operatives as hideouts, and command and control centers. Several attack tunnels in the northern Gaza Strip were also hit.
- ◆ **Terrorist operatives:** An estimated 50 senior Hamas and PIJ terrorist operatives were killed including brigade commanders, and about 20 lower-ranking commanders and about 200 terrorist operatives.
- ◆ **Rocket launching capabilities:** The IDF carried out about 340 attacks on high-trajectory rocket launchers, 230 attacks on surface-to-surface rocket launchers, and about 35 on mortar shell launchers.

- ◆ **Weapons-manufacture capabilities:** The weapons-manufacturing and military-buildup capabilities of the terrorist organizations were hit hard, research and development operatives were killed, and small facilities for the manufacture of weapons, development centers and weapons storehouses were hit.
 - ◆ **Hamas administration structures:** Dozens of administration offices, 11 buildings belonging to the internal security forces, and five banks used to transfer funds for terrorist activities were attacked. A senior source in the Hamas police force said that between 15% and 25% of the police management offices and most of its headquarters were partially destroyed (al-Aqsa, May 22, 2021).
 - ◆ **The terrorist infrastructure:** The Israeli Air Force attacked dozens of bases, posts, command centers and nine multistory buildings where terrorist activity was coordinated.
 - ◆ **Prevention of attacks:** Terrorist invasions were prevented, as were attacks from anti-tank missile squads, seven aerial threats (armed UAVs) and two naval threats (including attacks by unmanned submarine vessels).
- ▶ On May 21, 2021, the ministry of health in Gaza reported that 248 Gazans had been killed, including 66 children, 39 women and 17 old people, and that 1,948 had been injured (ministry of health in Gaza Facebook page, May 21, 2021).
 - ▶ Hamas exploited the days following the ceasefire to remove the bodies of terrorist operatives from the tunnels. On May 21, 2021, a mass funeral was held in Khan Yunis for Hamas operatives killed in the tunnels in the al-Fakhri and Soufa areas east of Khan Yunis. The bodies were wrapped in Hamas flags (Twitter account of journalist Hassan Aslih, May 21, 2021).



Mass funeral held in Khan Yunis for Hamas terrorist operatives (Twitter account of journalist Hassan Aslih, May 21, 2021).

- ▶ The PIJ's military-terrorist wing issued a mourning notice for 19 of its operatives killed during the operation, the most important of whom was **Husam Abu al-Rabid**, commander

of its northern brigade. During a press conference held by the police the names of police casualties were read (al-Mayadeen, May 22, 2021). It was not the first time serving policemen participated in hostilities as operatives in the military-terrorist wings.

► After the declaration of a ceasefire, Hamas' internal security forces warned that Israeli security and intelligence forces were increasing their efforts to collect information to renew their bank of targets. Gazans were instructed to be more conscious of security and not transmit information about what had happened or the sites hit by Israeli attacks. They were also warned not to transmit information about operatives or their movements (Dunia al-Watan, May 22, 2021).

The overall situation in the Gaza Strip

► When the ceasefire went into effect Gazans poured into the streets to celebrate. They also began to understand the extent of the damage and destruction, reporting serious damage to the infrastructure, including water and sewage pipes, electric lines, roads and the communications networks. **Iyad al-Buzum**, spokesman for the ministry of the interior in Gaza, said that immediately after the ceasefire police and security forces were deployed to attack sites and to remove unexploded ordnance (Dunia al-Watan, May 21, 2021).



Gazans celebrate the end of the hostilities (Wafa, May 21, 2021)



Right: Hamas terrorist operatives celebrate their "victory" by handing out cake and candy. Left: Gazans thank Hamas operatives for fighting Israel (Palinfo Twitter account, May 21, 2021).

► **Naji Sirhan**, deputy ministry for public works and housing in the Gaza Strip, said that at least 2,000 residences, four mosques and dozens of police stations had been destroyed. The UN reported that about 800 thousand Gazans had no access to clean water and that about half the water pipes had been destroyed, as were 53 schools, six hospitals and 11 public health centers (AP, May 22, 2021). **Abd al-Hadi al-Agha**, deputy ministry of Muslim endowments in the Gaza Strip, said about \$5 million worth of damage had been done to mosques and cemeteries. He said three mosques had been completely destroyed and 40 others had been damaged. He claimed the IDF had attacked six cemeteries and the ministry of endowments building in the Ansar facility in Gaza City (al-Quds, May 23, 2021)



Gazans visit ruins and have their pictures taken (Wafa, May 21, 2021).



Gazans leave the UNRWA schools they stayed in during the fighting (Wafa, May 21, 2021).



Routine life returns to the Gaza Strip (Twitter account of journalist Hassan Aslih, May 21, 2021).



Gazans go to the beach (Wafa, May 22, 2021).

- ▶ On May 23, 2021, the ministry of education in Gaza announced the end of the school year for the 1st through 11th grades because of the general situation, among them the difficulties in frontal and distance teaching. The education system in Gaza is now focusing on holding matriculation exams for 12th grade students (Twitter account of journalist Hassan Aslih, May 23, 2021).
- ▶ **Mai al-Kayla, PA minister of health**, said "terrible" damage had been done to the Gaza Strip's medical sector and "Israeli aggression" had prevented the delivery of medical equipment planned for the Gaza Strip which included coronavirus testing kits. She also claimed that for days Israel had delayed a delivery of drugs to the Gaza Strip (Wafa, May 21, 2021).

Rebuilding the Gaza Strip

- ▶ **Egypt** has taken it upon itself to lead the rebuilding of the Gaza Strip. According to the Lebanese newspaper al-Akhbar, Egypt promised to transfer \$500 million to rebuild the Gaza Strip and now fills a key position in its implementation. According to report, Egypt's efforts will not be limited to delivering materials for construction but it will also determine how the \$500 million will be used and coordinate donations and supplies that enter the Gaza Strip. Generally speaking the reconstruction project will be carried out by companies belonging to the Egyptian army, limiting the influence of Turkish companies and strengthening cooperation with the Gulf States, which will also send aid in the coming days. According to "sources," Egypt wants to restore its relations with Hamas and the other "organizations" to the point where they will protect the interests of Egypt, which aspires to ensure the continuation of the lull (al-Akhbar, May 22, 2021). **Hasan Abd al-Aziz**, a member of the Egyptian contractors' association, said that for Egyptian private and public companies the rebuilding of the Gaza Strip would be a national mission and not a profit-making operation.

He said the funds Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi promised would be translated into projects, raw materials and materials for construction, and not cash donations (Sputnik, May 22, 2021). It was also reported that Egypt is making contacts to hold a conference in Cairo for rebuilding the Gaza Strip through international cooperation (al-Arabiya, May 21, 2021).

► Following instructions from the Egyptian president, a convoy of 130 trucks will arrive in the Gaza Strip bringing 2,500 tons of food, drugs, clothing, furniture and electrical appliances (Facebook page of the Egyptian president's spokesman, May 22, 2021)



Gazan volunteers remove the rubble and clean the streets (Twitter account of journalist Hassan Aslih, May 23, 2021).

Statements from the Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) Leadership

► On May 22, 2021, according to by bodyguards, **Yahya al-Sinwar**, head of the Hamas political bureau in the Gaza Strip, made his first public appearance since Operation Guardian of the Walls began. He toured the Gaza Strip and offered his condolences to **the family of Bassem Issa**, commander of the Gaza City brigade of Hamas' military-terrorist wing, killed in an IDF attack. The visit was widely covered by the media, which stressed his public appearance despite Israel's threats (al-Jazeera, May 22, 2021).



Right: Yahya al-Sinwar and Rawhi Mushtaha in their first public appearance since the end of the hostilities. Left: Yahya al-Sinwar visits the mourning tent erected for Bassem Issa and comforts one of his sons (Facebook page of journalist Ibrahim Ahmed, May 22, 2021).

► Senior Hamas and PIJ leaders rushed to describe the operation as a stunning victory for the organizations in the Gaza Strip, saying that this time the hostilities were not for the Gaza Strip but for Jerusalem, al-Aqsa mosque and the Sheikh Jarrah neighborhood of east Jerusalem. Some statements were the following:

- ◆ **Isma'il Haniyeh, head of Hamas' political bureau**, said the Palestinian organizations in the joint operations room had stood together and hit Israel in a way that deeply affected its security. He said the Gaza Strip would continue to defend Jerusalem, and thanked **Qatar and Egypt** for their **moral support** of the Gaza Strip, and **Iran**, which supported them with **arms and money**.
- ◆ **Musa Abu Marzouq**, deputy "external" Hamas leader, said all possible options of the "equation" with Israel were open and that al-Aqsa mosque and east Jerusalem were a red line. He added that "the era of the division between the Gaza Strip, the West Bank and Jerusalem" had ended.
- ◆ **Abu Obeida**, spokesman for Hamas' military-terrorist wing, claimed the "resistance" had entered the hostilities to defend al-Aqsa mosque and had accumulated its forces and weapons for that specific purpose. He said they had humiliated Israel and its army and shown the world that Israeli attacked civilian residences and facilities (al-Aqsa, May 20, 2021).
- ◆ **Khalil al-Haya**, a member of Hamas' political bureau, praised the Palestinian people and the "resistance" for their firm stance, claiming that jihad fighters were now "striding proudly through the tunnels" (al-Aqsa, May 21, 2021).
- ◆ **Musheir al-Masri**, spokesman for the Hamas faction in the Palestinian Legislative Council, claimed the "resistance" had new tools to confront Israel and was no longer geographically limited to Gaza Strip but controlled all "Palestine," protecting Jerusalem

and the Palestinian people. He claimed they had shown Israel that al-Aqsa mosque and evicting Palestinians from Sheikh Jarrah were red lines and that the "resistance" had controlled when the hostilities began and when they ended (al-Mayadeen, May 21, 2021). On another occasion he said that the rockets were launched until the last minute to show that the "resistance" had its finger on the trigger and that the decision to strike Israel was in the hands of the joint operations room and on the table. He claimed they had agreed to a ceasefire because they had successfully enforced a new equation in managing the conflict (al-Ghad, May 21, 2021).

◆ **PIJ leader Ziyad al-Nakhalah** claimed it was a "historic victory" and a giant step towards the ultimate victory over the "Zionist project," and that they were emphasizing more than ever that they would continue to pursue "resistance" and jihad. He claimed they had forced a "new equation" on Israel and created a new balance of terror (al-Mayadeen, May 21, 2021).

◆ Senior PIJ figure **Muhammad al-Hindi** said that Palestinian cause had been returned to the international agenda as the issue of an occupied people and not a people in need of humanitarian assistance. He claimed the conflict had returned to its starting point, "the Gaza Strip 'resists,' the West Bank rises up, the Arabs of 1948 rise up, and even the Palestinian dispersal helps." He claimed no mutual understandings or indirect negotiations with Israel existed, but rather Israel had been forced to agree to a ceasefire because it had no targets left. He also claimed that Israel's boasts about destroying tunnels were baseless lies. He said he thought the ceasefire would remain in force but added that the uprising included "revolutionaries in the West Bank, the 1948 territories and Jerusalem" (Filastin al-Yawm, May 21, 2021).

◆ **Abu Hamza**, spokesman for the PIJ's military-terrorist wing, said they would continue the path of jihad, adding that the most recent campaign proved they belonged to Jerusalem and its residents. He claimed the ["resistance"] fighters, using barrages of rockets, mortar shells and Kornet missiles, had made Israel's cities and bases, including the communities near the Gaza Strip, uninhabitable. He also claimed that for days they had attacked Tel Aviv and other cities in Israel with hundreds of rockets (al-Mayadeen, May 21, 2021).

The Palestinian Authority (PA)

- ▶ The **PA welcomed the ceasefire**, noting that Jerusalem was the heart of the conflict and the way to peace, praising the efforts of Egypt, Qatar, Jordan and the American administration, the EU and the UN in achieving a ceasefire. The PA also said the time had come for the American administration and the international community to take serious practical steps to stop "Israel's crimes," which had led to hostilities which had caused hundreds of fatalities (Wafa, May 21, 2021).
- ▶ The **Fatah movement** welcomed the end of "Israel's aggression" against the Gaza Strip, and declared that the Palestinian people, wherever they were, would always unite to defend Jerusalem and the holy places. Fatah also said the unity the Palestinians had shown during the hostilities could be a catalyst for a discussion about national unity and the end of the internal Palestinian schism (Wafa, May 21, 2021). **Jibril Rajoub**, a member of Fatah's Central Committee, said they did not condemn the rocket fire, rather they saluted every form of "resistance." He claimed the rocket fire had shocked Israel and undermined the concept of its security.

Contacts for a ceasefire

- ▶ **Mahmoud Abbas** met with an Egyptian the newly-arrived delegation to discuss coordinating efforts to rebuild the Gaza Strip. He thanked the Egyptian president for his efforts to achieve a ceasefire, rebuild the Gaza Strip and return to a political path for ending the [so-called Israeli] "occupation" (Wafa, May 22, 2021). **Hussein al-Sheikh**, minister of civilian affairs and responsible for coordination with Israel, said the **Egyptian delegation**, headed by **Ahmed Abd al-Khalq**, who holds the Palestine portfolio in Egyptian General Intelligence, arrived in Ramallah on May 22, 2021, to discuss implementing the ceasefire. The delegation met with Mahmoud Abbas, Hussein al-Sheikh and Majdi Faraj, head of Palestinian general intelligence (Hussein al-Sheikh's Twitter account, May 22, 2021). According to reports, the Palestinians are preparing for long-term negotiations with Israel, led by the Egyptian security delegation (al-Ayam, May 22, 2021). According to a report quoted in Hamas' al-Risalah, the Egyptian delegation will work with three main issues: to ensure the commitment of all sides to implementing the ceasefire, to ensure agreement on the measures taken by the sides to maintain the ceasefire, and to invest efforts to rebuild the buildings in the Gaza Strip.

Terrorist attacks, demonstrations and riots

► Throughout the hostilities rioting increased in Judea, Samaria and Jerusalem between the Palestinians and the Israeli security forces. Ten terrorist attacks were carried out, most of them shooting attacks:

- ◆ **May 14, 2021** – Shots were fired at a crossing in western Samaria from a passing car. No casualties were reported. The vehicle drove away (Rescue Without Borders in Judea and Samaria, May 14, 2021).
- ◆ **May 15, 2021** – An attempted vehicular ramming attack south of Hebron. No casualties were reported. The terrorist was neutralized by IDF forces (IDF spokesman, May 15, 2021).
- ◆ **May 15, 2021** – Shots were fired at IDF forces near the security fence southeast of Nablus. A soldier was superficially wounded.
- ◆ **May 16, 2021** – A vehicular ramming attack near Sheikh Jarrah in east Jerusalem. Six Border Police fighters were wounded. The terrorist was shot and killed.
- ◆ **May 16, 2021** – Palestinians fired shots and threw an IED at Israeli security forces at the Qalandia roadblock
- ◆ **May 17, 2021** – Shots were fired from a passing vehicle at an Israeli vehicle west of Hebron. The vehicle was damaged. An IDF force at the site also reported being shot at.
- ◆ **May 17, 2021** – Shots were fired from a passing vehicle at IDF fighters in the Hebron region. The fighters returned fire. No casualties or damage were reported.
- ◆ **May 17, 2021** – A vehicular ramming attack south of Nablus, superficially wounding an IDF soldier. The terrorist was apprehended and taken for interrogation (Rescue Without Borders in Judea and Samaria, May 17, 2021).
- ◆ **May 18, 2021** – A Palestinian armed with an IED, an improvised Carlo machine gun and a knife attempted a combined attack against IDF fighters in the Jewish settlement in Hebron.
- ◆ **May 19, 2021** – A Palestinian woman armed with an M-16 assault rifle went to one of the entrances to Kiryat Arba. She opened fire at IDF fighters and civilians. She was shot and killed.

► When the ceasefire went into effect people poured into the streets of Judea, Samaria and east Jerusalem. They celebrated spontaneously, waving Hamas flags and shouting praises for Muhammad Deif and Hamas' military-terrorist wing. On Friday, May 21, 2021, Palestinians

rioted on the Temple Mount after the Friday prayer, forcing the Israeli police to enter the Temple Mount compound. Jordan and the PA issued a statement condemning the entrance of the Israeli police. Palestinian sources reported the forces used tear gas and stun grenades against Palestinians who threw rocks at them, and reportedly dozens were superficially wounded.



Right: Hamas "victory parade" in Ramallah (Palinfo Twitter account, May 21, 2021). Left: Palestinians riot at the Hawwara roadblock (south of Nablus) (Wafa, May 21, 2021).



Fatah terrorist operatives riot at the northern entrance to al-Bireh (Wafa, May 21, 2021).



Palestinians riot in Hebron (May 21, 2021).



**Palestinians on the Temple Mount after the Friday prayer
(Twitter account of journalist Hassan Aslih, May 21, 2021).**

Lebanon and Syria

Lebanon

- ▶ There were several incidents along the Israel's border with Lebanon during the operation:
 - ◆ **May 13, 2021** – Three rockets were launched from Lebanon. They fell into the sea.
 - ◆ **May 14, 2021** – A number of Lebanese infiltrated into Israeli territory after cutting the border security fence in the region of Metulla, Israel's northernmost city. The IDF returned them to Lebanon. One of the Lebanese was killed.
 - ◆ **The night of May 14, 2021** – An attempted infiltration from Lebanon was prevented.
 - ◆ **May 17, 2021** – Six rockets were fired at Israeli territory. All six fell inside Lebanon.
 - ◆ **May 19, 2021** – Four rockets were fired at Israel from the region of Sadiqin in south Lebanon. The Iron Dome aerial defense system intercepted one, two fell into the sea, and one fell near the northern Israeli Arab city of Shfaram.

Syria

- ▶ On **the night of May 14, 2021**, three rockets were fired at Israel from Syria. Two fell in an open area in the Golan Heights. The third fell inside Syria. On **May 18, 2021**, the IDF intercepted an armed UAV near Beit Shean in the eastern part of the country, apparently launched from Syria.

Appeal to the International Criminal Court (ICC)

- ▶ According to reports, Jawad Mahdi, the owner of the al-Jalaa Building, which was toppled by the IDF and where foreign news companies had their transmitters, lodged a formal complaint against Israel with the ICC. According to Mahdi, there were no military targets in the building and the attack was a war crime. The complaint is being dealt with the AFD, an

organization operating in Belgium (al-Jazeera, May 22, 2021). According to another report, the first complaint for the ICC will be officially lodged on Tuesday, May 26, 2021, and will deal with the deaths of six members of the al-Tanani family, whose house in the Sheikh Zaid neighborhood in the northern Gaza Strip was attacked. The complainant is Isma'il al-Tanani, the grandfather, and the complaint will be presented by a Belgian lawyer named Georges Henri Beauthier (al-Mayadeen, May 22, 2021).

Regional Countries

Syria

► On May 20, 2021, Bashar al-Assad, the Syrian president, met with a delegation of representatives from the Palestinian terrorist organizations. He told them the Palestinian cause was Syria's main focus and Syria would continue to support the Palestinian people's struggle. The delegation praised Syria's steadfast support for the Palestinian people over the years (al-Mayadeen, May 20, 2021). A "source within the Hamas leadership" reported that in light of positive hints received from a number of leaders of Palestinian organizations in Syria, **Hamas was considering returning to Syria**. According to the source, Hamas will soon begin consulting with Hezbollah and Iran to see if the Syrians are interested in renewing relations, and expects Syria's response to be positive (al-Akhbar, May 21, 2021).

► **Na'im Qassem, Hezbollah's deputy secretary general**, said he believed Hamas would return to Syria in the near future because efforts had been invested for a long time and the results were positive (al-Nashra, May 22, 2021).

Iran and Lebanon (Hezbollah)

► The heads of the Iranian leadership praised the Palestinians on the "victory" and issued their support. Iranian President Rouhani gave a speech in which he claimed the Palestinian people had won a great victory over "the occupying entity" during the days of the confrontation, and that Palestinian people everywhere were united in support [of the Gaza Strip]. The Iranian media reported that **Hossein Salami**, commander of the **Iranian Revolutionary Guards Corps**, spoke with Isma'il Haniyeh and Ziyad al-Nakhalah, congratulating them on their "great victory" (Dunia al-Watan, May 21, 2021).

► PIJ leader **Ziyad al-Nakhalah** thanked Iran for its support, saying it had greatly influenced the victory. He also said he was thankful for the help previously given to the Palestinians by Qassem Soleimani, the late commander of the Qods Force (al-Manar, May 22, 2021). **Abu**

Hamza, spokesman for the **PIJ's military-terrorist wing**, expressed his appreciation for Iran's role and all the forces of the "resistance axis" that provided the Palestinians with weapons and technical information and strengthened their practical and professional capabilities, saying they were partners in the victory (al-Mayadeen, May 21, 2021).

► **Na'im Qassem**, deputy Hezbollah secretary general, gave a speech praising the Gaza Strip's victory, calling it a "historic turning point." He said Hezbollah had been updated on the stages of the operation in real time and supported the Palestinians. He claimed he was one of the organizers of the demonstrations on the Israeli-Lebanese border. Regarding the death of a Lebanese "demonstrator," he said he was a youth from Hezbollah's educational mobilization. Regarding the rocket fire from south Lebanon during the hostilities, he said he did not want to discuss the identity of the people who had launched the rockets or whether launching them was the right thing to do, only that responsible people were dealing with the issue (al-Nashra, May 22, 2021).