



المركز العربي للأبحاث ودراسة السياسات
Arab Center for Research & Policy Studies

Strategic Papers | 19 September 2022

The Israeli War on Palestinian Islamic Jihad

Unity of the Arenas Battle and its Strategic Implications

Strategic Paper No. 6

Majd Abuamer and Wadee Alarabeed

The Israeli War on Palestinian Islamic Jihad: Unity of the Arenas Battle and its Strategic Implications

Strategic Papers

Strategic Paper No. 6

19 September 2022

Majd Abuamer and Wadee Alarabeed

Majd Abuamer: Researcher and rapporteur of the Strategic Studies Unit at the Arab Centre for Research and Policy Studies and the editorial secretary of the social sciences journal Omran. He received an MA in political science and international relations from the Doha Institute for Graduate Studies. His research interests focus on issues of democratic transition, social movements, the Arab state, and Palestinian studies.

Wadee Alarabeed: Researcher in the Centre for Conflict and Humanitarian Studies at the Arab Centre for Research and Policy Studies. He received an MA in conflict management and humanitarian work from the Doha Institute for Graduate Studies. He has published numerous papers and articles, including “Youth in Post-conflict Reconstruction: The Case of the Gaza Strip,” in: Ibrahim Natil (ed.), *Youth Civic Engagement and Local Peacebuilding in the Middle East and North Africa: Prospects and Challenges for Community Development* (Routledge, 2021).

Copyright © 2022 Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies. All Rights Reserved.

The Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies is an independent research institute and think tank for the study of history and social sciences, with particular emphasis on the applied social sciences.

The Center’s paramount concern is the advancement of Arab societies and states, their cooperation with one another and issues concerning the Arab nation in general. To that end, it seeks to examine and diagnose the situation in the Arab world - states and communities- to analyze social, economic and cultural policies and to provide political analysis, from an Arab perspective.

The Center publishes in both Arabic and English in order to make its work accessible to both Arab and non-Arab researchers.

The Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies

Al-Tarfa Street, Wadi Al Banat

Al-Dayaen, Qatar

PO Box 10277, Doha

+974 4035 4111

www.dohainstitute.org

Table of Content

Introduction	1
I. Background of the Israeli war on Islamic Jihad	2
II. Unity of the Arenas Battle	12
III. Strategic Implications of Unity of the Arenas Battle	16
References	20



Introduction

On 5 August 2022, four days after a state of alert was declared in the settlements of the Gaza envelope, Israel launched a war on the Gaza Strip, ostensibly to thwart a large-scale attack against civilians, according to Israeli Prime Minister Yair Lapid.¹ The aim of “Operation Breaking Dawn” was “to restore security to civilians in the state of Israel,” the Israeli occupation army said in a statement.² The assault came after rising tensions in the West Bank following the arrest of Islamic Jihad leader Bassam al-Saadi in the Jenin refugee camp in the northern West Bank on 1 August 2022 and the movement’s threat of retaliation.

In the Battle of Saif al-Quds (Sword of Jerusalem) from 10 to 21 May 2021, Palestinian resistance factions, in particular the Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades, the military wing of Hamas, were able to choose the moment of engagement by firing rockets at the occupied territories following the Israeli occupation forces’ refusal to stop its ongoing attacks on Jerusalem and withdraw from the Aqsa Mosque and Sheikh Jarrah. Saif al-Quds was viewed as changing the rules of engagement between resistance forces and the occupation army: the resistance would no longer respond only to Israeli aggression in the Gaza Strip, but in Jerusalem as well.³ The latest escalation, however, demonstrated that this change was not permanent. The Palestinian resistance was unable to choose the zero-hour in this round, as Israel took the first step in launching its war on Islamic Jihad in the Gaza Strip by assassinating Tayseer al-Jabari (1972–2022), the northern commander of the Quds Brigades, the group’s military wing. This set off a 56-hour confrontation that Islamic Jihad entered alone, after Hamas assumed a posture of neutrality (publicly at least), which it has done several times since entering the political fray in 2006, thus becoming a movement that combines governance with resistance. Israel, too, explicitly recognised the neutrality of Hamas, announcing that its fight was not with Hamas, and that it would not target its leaders or positions. Hamas’s declaration of neutrality was likely motivated by other reasons as well, including a desire to spare the Gaza Strip an all-out war that would be disastrous for the Gazans, who are still coping with the fallout of the 2021 war, to allow the reconstruction of the Strip to continue unhindered, and to regroup militarily after Saif al-Quds. In so doing, Hamas broke with the tenet of the “unity of arenas” of struggle, the Palestinian name for the latest battle and also one of the most significant achievements of Saif al-Quds, which brought together all Palestinian resistance factions in Gaza into a joint operations room that acted as a centralised front for armed Palestinian resistance movements.

Accordingly, what is the background for Battle of Unity of the Arenas in light of confrontations in the West Bank and the organisational situation currently taking shape there? How should the military performance of the Quds Brigades be evaluated? To what extent should the recent confrontation be

1 “Joint Statement by Prime Minister Yair Lapid and Defense Minister Benny Gantz,” *Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs*, 5/8/2022, accessed on 11/8/2022, at: <https://bit.ly/3vWY40X>

2 “Operation ‘Breaking Dawn,’” *Israel Defence Forces*, 5/8/2022, accessed on 11/8/2022, at: <https://bit.ly/3PF1Fyu>

3 See for example: Ahmed Qassim Hussein, “AlQassam Brigades and the Sword of Jerusalem Battle Possible Retaliation in Asymmetric-Warfare,” *Strategic Paper*, no. 4, Arab Centre for Research and Policy Studies, 24/6/2021, p. 1, accessed on 6/9/2022, at: <https://bit.ly/3wYdKla>



considered an extension of the popular Palestinian rebellion of April 2021 and the Battle of Unity of the Arenas an extension of Saif al-Quds? What are the battle's strategic implications for the current condition of the Palestinian struggle and Islamic Jihad, as well as for Israeli politics?

I. Background of the Israeli war on Islamic Jihad

From 2003, when Israel's plan to unilaterally disengage from the Gaza Strip first began to take shape, to 2022, Israeli occupation forces have launched 32 military operations in which the Gaza Strip was the chief or exclusive target (see Table 1),⁴ most importantly the massive operations that followed the Palestinian internal schism in 2007 and Hamas's assertion of control over the Gaza Strip. The aim of these offensives was to inflict severe damage on the infrastructure of the Palestinian resistance factions, thereby defusing the threat they posed in the short term and preventing them from resuming attacks.⁵ In the long term, Israel aimed to eliminate the obstacle to "the reordering of the political system in the region to enable Israel and the so-called 'Arab moderates' to enter into an unjust political settlement involving security cooperation with and policing on behalf of Israel undisturbed."⁶ Between these wars, Palestinians in the Gaza Strip have continued to struggle daily due to deteriorating economic, health, and living conditions since Israel imposed its siege on Gaza, confining its population in the world's biggest open-air prison and tossing the key into the sea, according to John Dugard, the former UN special rapporteur for human rights in Palestine.⁷

⁴ This is in addition to limited airstrikes on resistance locations or individuals in the Gaza Strip, the bulldozing of small tracts of land, occasional cross-border fire and naval fire, and several operations in which the Gaza Strip was a secondary target, such as Operation Bronze (2001), the Mofaz Plan (2001), Rolling Response (2022), and Operation Colourful Journey (2002). See: Michele K. Esposito, "Israeli Military Operations against Gaza, 2000–2008," *Journal of Palestine Studies*, vol. 38, no. 3 (Spring 2009), pp. 122–138. To review the most prominent events in Gaza from 1948 to 2008, see: Linda Butler "A Gaza Chronology, 1948–2008," *Journal of Palestine Studies*, vol. 38, no. 3 (Spring 2009), pp. 98–121.

⁵ On Israeli deterrence and strategic management of the conflict, including operations for limited and comprehensive deterrence, see: Mark Vinson, "An Israeli Approach to Deterring Terrorism: Managing Persistent Conflict through a Violent Dialogue of Military Operations," *PRISM*, vol. 5, no. 3 (2015), pp. 60–75.

⁶ Mouin Rabbani, "Israel's Assault on Gaza: A Transformational Moment? An Interview with Azmi Bishara," *Journal of Palestine Studies*, vol. 38, no. 3 (Spring 2009), p. 39.

⁷ Ilan Pappé, *The Biggest Prison on Earth: A History of the Occupied Territories* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2017), p. 215.

Table 1
Israeli Wars/Operations in the Gaza Strip, 2003–2022

Israeli name	Date	Main trigger /objective	Participating factions	Targeted area	Palestinian casualties
Automatic Gear	6 September 2003	Attempted assassination of senior Hamas leaders, first and foremost Ahmed Yassin	NA	Residential building in Gaza City	15 injured, including Yassin and 12 passers-by
Root Canal	10–19 October 2003	Israeli seizure and razing of a piece of land in Rafah on pretext of searching for smuggling tunnels	Elements from the Aqsa Martyrs Brigades (Fateh) and Hamas	Palestinian-Egyptian border	17 dead, 100 injured, 300 homes partially or wholly destroyed
Continuous Story	14 March–5 April 2004	Hamas suicide bombing in the Ashdod port, which killed 11 Israelis and wounded 20	NA	Gaza Strip, especially Rafah City	37 dead, 80 injured, 111 homes partially or wholly destroyed, 100 dunams of land bulldozed
Rainbow	13–24 May 2004	Israeli escalation of violence following the assassination of Abd al-Aziz al-Rantisi on 17 April 2004. Islamic Jihad launched an attack on 12 May 2004 against the Israeli army in the Philadelphi route. After the operation, Israel started expanding the Philadelphi route (Salah al-Din Road)	Hamas and Islamic Jihad	Southern Gaza (Rafah, Brazil refugee camp)	43 dead, hundreds injured, 167 homes partially or wholly destroyed, 725 dunams of land bulldozed
Active Shield	27 June–5 August 2004	Striking at the infrastructure of resistance movements before the unilateral disengagement and expanding the buffer zone along the border between Gaza and Israel by 8 km around Beit Hanoun	NA	Northern Gaza (Beit Hanoun, Jabalia refugee camp)	22 dead, 200 injured, 15 homes partially or wholly destroyed, 3,900 dunams of land bulldozed
Unnamed	8–11 September 2004	Response to increasing rocket attacks by Hamas, fired from northern Gaza on Israel, and continuing efforts to expand the buffer zone in northern Gaza	NA	Northern Gaza (Beit Hanoun, Beit Lahia, Jabalia)	8 dead, 100 injured, 50 homes partially or wholly destroyed, 90 dunams of land bulldozed

Israeli name	Date	Main trigger /objective	Participating factions	Targeted area	Palestinian casualties
Days of Penitence (Palestinian name: Days of Rage)	29 september – 15 October 2004	Pressuring the residents of northern Gaza to prevent rocket fire on Israel, in response to rockets fired at Sderot that killed two children and injured five Israelis	Hamas, Aqsa Martyrs Brigades, other factions	Northern Gaza (Beit Hanoun, Beit Lahia, Jabalia)	120 dead, 234 injured, 195 homes partially or wholly destroyed, 1,000 dunams of land bulldozed
King's Court	24–26 October 2004	Firing of mortars from Khan Younis at nearby Jewish settlements in response to the assassination of a founder of Hamas, Adnan al-Ghoul, on 21 October 2004	NA	Khan Younis	17 dead, 74 injured, 29 homes destroyed
Orange Iron	16–18 December 2004	In response to Israeli attacks and targeted killings in al-Burayj, Beitunia, Hebron, and Jenin in November and December, Palestinian factions fired mortar rounds from Khan Younis at nearby settlements, in addition to sniper operations; Islamic Jihad and the Fateh Hawks planted a bomb at an Israeli military checkpoint on the border with Egypt on 11 December that killed 5 Israeli soldiers and injured 10 more; Israel launched the military operation in response	Islamic Jihad, Fateh Hawks, other factions	Khan Younis	11 dead, 53 injured, 39 homes destroyed
Violet Iron	22 December 2004–2 January 2005	Response to repeated rocket and mortar fire on Israeli settlements in southern Gaza after Operation Orange Iron and the Israeli army withdrawal from Khan Younis	Hamas and other factions	Khan Younis	11 dead, 36 injured, 14 homes wholly destroyed, 21 homes partially destroyed
Autumn Wind	2 January 2005	Putting an end to Palestinian rocket fire from northern Gaza, after 7 rockets were fired towards Erez and Sderot that injured 7 Israelis	NA	Northern Gaza (Beit Hanoun, Beit Lahia, Jabalia)	Palestinian journalist seriously injured



Israeli name	Date	Main trigger /objective	Participating factions	Targeted area	Palestinian casualties
Eastern Step	15–17 January 2005	In response to the resumption of Israeli violence after a 72-hour period of calm to permit Palestinian elections, the Aqsa Martyrs Brigades, Hamas, and the Popular Resistance Committees launched an attack at the Karni crossing, killing 6 Israelis and injuring 10; Israel responded with an operation aimed primarily at stopping rocket and mortar fire	Aqsa Martyrs Brigades, Hamas, Popular Resistance Committees	Deir al-Balah, al-Burayj refugee camp, Beit Lahia, Gaza City	5 dead, 13 injured, 80 dunams of land bulldozed
First Rain	24 September–2 October 2005	In response to the assassination of 3 Islamic Jihad members in Tulkarm in the West Bank, the movement fired rockets from Gaza at Sderot; they were later joined by Hamas in firing rockets at the Negev that left 5 Israelis dead, leading Israel to declare the first military operation in Gaza since the disengagement	Islamic Jihad, Hamas, other factions	Northern Gaza	2 dead, 46 injured
Starting All Over Again	26–30 October 2005	In response to the assassination of a military commander of Islamic Jihad in the West Bank on 24 October 2005, Islamic Jihad fired rockets from Gaza at Israel, after which Israel shelled areas from which they fired in northern Gaza, as well as a building used by the movement in Rafah; the movement again responded with a suicide bombing in Hadera in the occupied interior on 26 October 2005, killing 5 Israelis and injuring 20, leading Israel to announce the military operation	Islamic Jihad	Northern Gaza and Rafah	9 dead, 25 injured
Unnamed	5–18 December 2005	A week after the exchange of fire between the Gaza Strip and Israel, Islamic Jihad launched a suicide mission in Netanya in Israel on 5 December, killing 5 Israelis and injuring 31 more; Israel responded with a military operation that it declared would last for one month	Islamic Jihad and other factions	Northern Gaza and the West Bank	14 dead, 120 Islamic Jihad members arrested

Israeli name	Date	Main trigger /objective	Participating factions	Targeted area	Palestinian casualties
Blue Skies	22 December 2005–23 January 2006	In the wake of continued rocket and mortar fire from the Gaza Strip, and rockets fired by Islamic Jihad on Ashkelon that killed 5 soldiers, Israel launched an open-ended military operation with the objective of putting an end to the rocket fire	Islamic Jihad, Aqsa Martyrs Brigades, Abu al-Rish Brigades, Popular Resistance Committees	Northern Gaza	31 dead, dozens injured
Southern Arrow	4 April–29 May 2006	In response to a suicide attack by the Aqsa Martyrs Brigades near the settlement of Kedumim on 30 March 2006, which killed 4 Israelis, Israel assassinated the commander of the brigades in the West Bank; the brigade launched rockets from Gaza in return, after which Israel announced a military operation, whose chief objective was ending Palestinian rocket fire. Israeli violence was intensified after Islamic Jihad launched a suicide mission in Tel Aviv on 17 April 2006 that killed 11 Israelis and left 57 injured	Aqsa Martyrs Brigades and Islamic Jihad	Gaza Strip	23 dead, 84 injured
Summer Rains	27 June 2006	Part of the Israeli attempt to rescue abducted soldier Gilad Shalit and destroy the infrastructure of the resistance	Hamas, Islamic Jihad, and other factions	Gaza Strip	Hundreds of dead and injured, hundreds of homes partially or wholly destroyed, thousands of dunams of agricultural land bulldozed
Sword of Gilad (part of Summer Rains)	5 July 2006	A suboperation of Operation Summer Rains whose objective was to pressure the PA and resistance factions to release captured Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit	Hamas and other factions	Gaza Strip	4 dead, 11 injured
Grasshopper (part of Summer Rains)	9 July–15 August 2006	A suboperation of Operation Summer Rains that included ground attacks on various areas of the Gaza Strip and daily airstrikes on the homes of leaders of resistance factions and the offices of the PA government	NA	Gaza Strip	213 dead, 650 injured, hundreds of homes partially or wholly destroyed, 3,666 dunams of land bulldozed

Israeli name	Date	Main trigger /objective	Participating factions	Targeted area	Palestinian casualties
Samson's Pillars (part of Summer Rains)	26–28 July 2006	A suboperation of Operation Summer Rains that entailed ground engagements and airstrikes on Palestinian fighters	Various resistance factions	Northern Gaza and the areas around Gaza City	27 dead, 66 injured, 25 homes partially or wholly destroyed, 80 dunams of land bulldozed
Locked Kindergarten (part of Summer Rains)	27–31 August 2006	A suboperation of Operation Summer Rains; the Israeli army made an incursion into the eastern neighbourhoods of Gaza City and exchanged fire with Palestinian fighters and shelled them from the air	Various resistance factions	Gaza City	19 dead, 31 injured
Autumn Clouds	1–8 November 2006	In response to an Israeli attempt to assassinate a Hamas leader, the movement resumed firing rocket from Gaza, injuring 4 Israelis; Israel responded with a military operation to end the rocket fire, during which 1 Israeli soldier was killed and 11 others injured	Hamas and other factions	Northern Gaza (Beit Hanoun, Beit Lahia, Jabalia refugee camp) and parts of Gaza City	82 dead, 262 injured, 150 homes partially or wholly destroyed, 250 dunams of land bulldozed
Unnamed	21–26 November 2006	In response to the Israeli army's assassination of two Hamas commanders and the attempted assassination of two others, Hamas stepped up its rocket fire from Gaza, killing 1 Israeli on 21 November 2006; Israel responded with a ground and air incursion in northern Gaza, during which Hamas carried out a suicide attack that injured 3 Israeli soldiers	Hamas and other factions	Northern Gaza (Beit Hanoun, Beit Lahia, Jabalia refugee camp)	22 dead, 67 injured, 20 homes and businesses destroyed, 80 dunams of land bulldozed
Hot Winter	28 February–3 March 2008	In response to escalating rocket fire from Gaza on Israel, which killed 1 Israeli and injured 2 others on 27 February 2008, Israel launched the biggest ground invasion of the Gaza Strip since the disengagement; two Israeli soldiers were killed and 16 injured during the operation. The main objective of the operation was to destroy the infrastructure of the resistance and test its capabilities in advance of Operation Cast Lead (2008–2009)	Hamas and other factions	Northern and central Gaza	111 dead, 400 injured, 80 people arrested for questioning, 109 homes partially or wholly destroyed, 90 dunams of land bulldozed

Israeli name	Date	Main trigger /objective	Participating factions	Targeted area	Palestinian casualties
Cast Lead (Palestinian name: Battle of al-Furqan)	27 December 2008–18 January 2009	Israel broke the Egypt-sponsored truce with Hamas with an airstrike on the Gaza Strip that killed seven Hamas fighters; after a period of calm, Hamas fired 130 rockets on southern Israel on 19 December 2008	Hamas, Islamic Jihad, Popular Resistance Committees, and other factions	Gaza Strip	1,391 dead, 5,400 injured, 21,100 homes partially or wholly destroyed
Pillar of Defence (Palestinian name: Stones of Baked Clay)	14–21 November 2012	Israel's assassination of Hamas military commander Ahmed al-Jabari in an airstrike	Hamas, Islamic Jihad, Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine, Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, Popular Resistance Committees	Gaza Strip	180 dead, 1,300 injured, 450 homes wholly destroyed, 8,000 homes partially destroyed
Protective Edge (Palestinian name: Empty Field of Stalks and Straw)	8 July–26 August 2014	Israel accused Hamas of kidnapping 3 Israeli settlers from the Gush Etzion bloc and launched a broad campaign of arrests and raids in the West Bank; Hamas responded with rocket fire from Gaza, after which Israel announced a military operation to deter rocket attacks	Hamas, Islamic Jihad, other factions	Gaza Strip	2,322 dead, 10,500 injured, 17,800 homes severely damaged, 153,000 homes lightly damaged
Magma of the Full Moon (Palestinian name)	3–6 May 2019	In response to Israel's assassination of Palestinian demonstrators during the March of Return on 3 May 2019, a Palestinian sniper injured 2 Israeli soldiers, after which Israel shelled a Hamas military position in central Gaza; resistance factions responded by firing dozens of rockets on Israel	Hamas, Islamic Jihad, Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine, al-Nasir Salah al-Din Battalions, and other factions	Gaza Strip	31 dead, 154 injured, 130 homes wholly destroyed, 700 homes partially destroyed
Dawn Cry	12–14 November 2019	Israel's assassination of Baha Abu al-Ata, the field commander of the Quds Brigades, in an airstrike and the attempted assassination of Islamic Jihad leader Akram al-Ajouri in Damascus	Islamic Jihad	Gaza Strip	34 dead, 109 injured, 30 homes wholly destroyed, 500 homes partially destroyed

Israeli name	Date	Main trigger /objective	Participating factions	Targeted area	Palestinian casualties
Guardian of the Walls (Palestinian name: Saif al-Quds)	10–21 May 2021	Qassam Brigades commander Mohammed al-Deif warned Israel on 10 May 2021 that the Israeli army had one hour to leave Sheikh Jarrah in Jerusalem and the Aqsa Mosque or it would declare war; when the deadline passed, resistance factions fired rockets at Israel, which responded with airstrikes on Gaza	Hamas, Islamic Jihad, Aqsa Martyrs Brigades, Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, Popular Resistance Committees, and other factions	Gaza Strip	260 dead, 1,948 injured, 1,700 homes wholly destroyed, 60,000 homes partially destroyed
Breaking Dawn (Palestinian name: Unity of the Arenas)	5–7 August 2022	Ostensibly to thwart an attack on Israeli civilians, following Islamic Jihad's threat to respond to the arrest of leader Bassam al-Saadi in the Jenin refugee camp, Israel launched a military operation in Gaza that began with the assassination of military commander Tayseer al-Jabari	Islamic Jihad, National Resistance Brigades, Mujahideen Brigades, Aqsa Martyrs Brigades	Gaza Strip	49 dead, 360 injured, 18 homes wholly destroyed, 1,748 homes partially destroyed

Source: compiled by the authors based on: Michele K. Esposito, “Israeli Military Operations against Gaza, 2000–2008,” *Journal of Palestine Studies*, vol. 38, no. 3 (Spring 2009), pp. 122–138; *Interactive Encyclopedia of The Palestine Question*, “Overall Chronology,” accessed on 19/8/2022, at: <https://bit.ly/3dkX4O8>; Sultan Barakat, Sansom Milton & Ghassan Elkahout, “Rebuilding Gaza: The Need for a Radical Shift in Reconstruction Strategy,” *Policy Briefs*, Centre for Conflict and Humanitarian Studies, 7/7/2021, pp. 6–7, accessed on 11/9/2022, at: <https://bit.ly/3qKZk4e>; UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, “Escalation in the Gaza Strip and Israel: Flash Update #2 as of 18:00, 8/8/2022,” 8/8/2022, pp. 1–5, accessed on 17/8/2022, at: <https://bit.ly/3RSM0qa>; World Bank, “The Rebuilding of Gaza Amid Dire Conditions: Damage, Losses, and Need,” 6/7/2021, accessed on 17/8/2022, at: <https://bit.ly/3bXOKDd>; “Most Prominent Israeli Assaults on the Gaza Strip,” *Al Jazeera*, 7/8/2022, accessed on 7/8/2022, at: <https://bit.ly/3pgwPuP>; “Third Day of Israeli Aggression on Gaza Strip,” *Palestinian Health Ministry*, 14/11/2019, accessed on 20/8/2022, at: <https://bit.ly/3Th71MX>; “31 Martyrs and 830 Housing Units Damaged... Gaza Counts Its Losses after the Aggression,” *Al Jazeera*, 6/5/2019, accessed on 20/8/2022, at: <https://bit.ly/3Kcix8a>; “Detailed Cumulative Stats of the Israeli aggression on the Gaza Strip,” *Palestinian Health Ministry*, 14/8/2022, accessed on 20/8/2022, <https://bit.ly/3K6PrXu>; “News Report: the Israeli Military Begins its Launch of Operation Sword of Gilad on the Gaza Strip,” *al-Shaab*, 6/8/2006, accessed on 20/8/2022, at: <https://bit.ly/3cay3EW>



For the last 19 years, the primary strategic objective of the Israeli occupation army in its military operations in the Gaza Strip has been to destroy the infrastructure of the Palestinian resistance, particularly the missile and defensive capabilities of Hamas and Islamic Jihad, achieve deterrence by preventing rocket attacks on Israel, redefine the rules of the game after the disengagement and Israeli withdrawal from the Gaza Strip in 2005, and deter resistance factions in Gaza from responding to Israel if the latter launches operations in the West Bank. In other words, it is to break down the unity of the arenas of Palestinians' struggle against the Israeli occupation. Since 1948, deterrence has been a strategic pillar and approach for the Israeli occupation army, in the course of which it has developed military capabilities and strategic deterrence systems, such as the Iron Dome missile shield and drones, to retaliate quickly against attacks by groups it describes as violent extremist organisations. In all this, Israel seeks to maintain a state of relative deterrence against threats from organisations capable of strategic adaptations and tactical combat innovations.⁸

During recurrent military operations in the Gaza Strip (see Table 1), Israel has bombed civilian infrastructure on a large scale, with the majority of operations resulting in significant human casualties, demonstrating Israel's approach of punishing civilians to pressure resistance movements. Operation Breaking Dawn was not the first time that Israel went to war against the Gaza Strip, specifically targeting Islamic Jihad and its military wing, the Quds Brigades. Nor was it the first time that a war erupted following the assassination or arrest of one of the movement's leaders, whether in the West Bank or the Gaza Strip. The movement often responds to Israeli attacks on both fronts. For example, it responded to the assassination of three of its members in Tulkarm, in the West Bank, by firing rockets from Gaza on Sderot, after which Israel announced the launch of Operation First Rain (24 September–2 October 2005), the first military operation on the Gaza Strip after the disengagement. Similarly, Islamic Jihad responded to the assassination of one of its military commanders in the West Bank on 24 October 2005 by firing rockets from Gaza, an engagement that escalated into an exchange of fire and Israeli airstrikes. In turn, the movement launched a suicide attack in Hadera on 26 October 2005, which triggered Israel's Operation Starting All Over Again (26–30 October 2005). In contrast, the movement has twice been drawn into war at an hour not of its own choosing over the past four years. Israel's assassination of Baha Abu al-Ata, the commander of the northern zone of the Quds Brigades, on 12 November 2019, led to Operation Dawn Cry (12–14 November 2019), while the arrest of the movement's leader Bassam al-Saadi from the Jenin refugee camp on 1 August 2022, and the subsequent assassination of Tayseer al-Jabari, who succeeded Abu al-Ata in the leadership of the northern zone of the Quds Brigades, on 6 August 2022, drew the movement into a head-to-head confrontation with Israel during Battle of Unity of the Arenas (5–7 August 2022).

While the discussion of whether Hamas participated in the recent confrontation has occupied the bulk of the Palestinian debate, it is not the first time since Hamas decided to participate in

⁸ Vinson, p. 66.



Palestinian elections that it has refused to join Palestinian resistance factions in responding to Israeli attacks due to political considerations. It did not take part in the response to Israeli attacks and raids on the Gaza Strip during Operation Starting All Over Again, despite the arrest of a number of its members in Jenin and Nablus in the course of the operation, which can be explained by its preoccupation with the elections, which had then been postponed to January 2006. It pursued the same tack when Palestinian factions staged cross-border attacks and fired rockets when Israel launched Operation Blue Skies on 22 December 2005, adhering to the Sharm al-Sheikh truce of February 2005 and waiting until after Palestinian elections to reassess its position, according to statements from its leaders. Hamas remained neutral even after winning the elections on 25 January 2006, despite Israel's resumption of military operation, the continued closure of the border, and the uptick in targeted assassinations, particularly against operatives with the Aqsa Martyrs Brigades and Islamic Jihad.⁹ However, Hamas has immediately responded to the assassination (or attempted assassination) of any of its leaders. For example, it responded to the Israeli attempt to assassinate a Hamas leader in Gaza City on 12 October 2006 by firing rockets at Israel, which in turn precipitated Operation Autumn Clouds (1–8 November 2006). It also responded to Israel's assassination of military commander Ahmed al-Jabari on 14 November 2012 and faced Israeli shelling and attacks for eight days during Operation Pillar of Defence.

Operation Breaking Dawn can generally be defined as the latest example of the policy of collective punishment practiced by Israel since the Nakba in 1948. Indeed, Israel continues to apply the Nakba scenario to each segment of the Palestinian community inside the occupied interior, the West Bank, the Gaza Strip, and the diaspora, which entails mechanisms to target elites, including arrests and assassinations.¹⁰ After Israel occupied the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, in 1967, it developed its assassination policy as a strategy aimed at eliminating the Palestinian national movement through the liquidation of its political and field leaders, seeing this as an effective tool for preventing, deterring, and weakening the infrastructure of resistance.¹¹ According to Israeli analysts, this policy is more effective with Islamic Jihad than Hamas.¹² Israel stepped up assassinations after the Aqsa Intifada in 2000,¹³ the general outlines of the policy becoming clearer with the implementation of the disengagement/unilateral withdrawal from the Gaza Strip in 2005 and the subsequent imposition of a crippling siege after Hamas assumed control of the Gaza Strip in 2007, which intensified with the capture of Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit in June 2006.

⁹ Esposito, pp. 132–133.

¹⁰ Ismail Nashif, *Ṣuwar Mawt al-Filiṣṭīnī [Images of the Palestinian Death]* (Doha and Beirut: ACRPS, 2015), pp. 10, 32.

¹¹ Yossi Getler, "Revenge: Are Assassinations Central Again?" [Hebrew], *Kol Hazaman*, 18/5/2019, accessed on 10/8/2022, at: <https://bit.ly/3SJFMKw>

¹² Salih al-Naami, "Gaza and the Policy of Assassinations in Israeli Policy," *Al Jazeera Centre for Studies*, 20/11/2019, p. 3, accessed on 7/9/2022, at: <https://bit.ly/3QntWTK>

¹³ The most important of these assassinations in the Gaza Strip include that of Salah Shehade, the founder of Qassam Brigades, in 2002; Hamas founder Ahmed Yassin and Hamas leader Abd al-Aziz al-Rantisi in 2004; Hamas leader Nizar Rayan and Hamas Interior Minister Said Seyam in 2009; Ahmed Jabari in 2012; Baha Abu al-Ata in 2019; and Tayseer al-Jabari and Khaled Mansour in 2022. See: "Israeli Assassination Campaign Within Palestine Borders," *Interactive Encyclopedia of the Palestine Question*, accessed on 18/8/2022, at: <https://bit.ly/3BsnllC>



One of the most prominent Israeli justifications for the siege, which some UN organisations consider a crime against humanity,¹⁴ is to contain the military capabilities of armed resistance movements in the Gaza Strip, in particular Hamas and Islamic Jihad.¹⁵ Contrary to expectations, however, the siege period has seen a qualitative development in the military capabilities of armed resistance movements in Gaza, especially during the wars of 2014 and 2021.¹⁶ This alerted Israel to the ineffectiveness of its assassination policy and led it to adopt a scorched earth policy as well, demonstrated by its intensive shelling of Gaza to destroy the infrastructure of resistance.¹⁷ In some cases, Israel resorts to assassination to avoid broader engagements (this is Israel's own assessment), meaning that assassination is essentially a pre-emptive strike calculated to limit confrontation while weakening its "strong enemies,"¹⁸ as seen in the wars of 2012, 2019, and 2022. Nevertheless, Israel has failed to achieve its objectives in its military operations in the Gaza Strip, whether through assassinations or its scorched-earth policy. The Palestinian resistance has consistently developed its arsenal and military capabilities. The missile capacity of both Hamas and Islamic Jihad have advanced significantly since 2006, chiefly thanks to local production despite the tightening of the Israeli blockade.

II. Unity of the Arenas Battle

Israel's military operation in the Gaza Strip on 5 August 2022 is closely linked to the confrontations between the Palestinians and occupation forces at the Aqsa Mosque, especially the Israeli "flags march" in Jerusalem in late May 2022.¹⁹ In response to the flags march, and in an attempt to repel incursions by settlers into the Aqsa Mosque courtyards, armed revolutionary groups (resistance battalions) have been active in the West Bank for months. These include the Nablus Quds Brigades, established in Nablus on 24 May 2022 by guerrillas from Islamic Jihad and the Aqsa Martyrs Brigades, and the Jenin Brigade, which was formed after six Palestinian prisoners (five affiliated with Islamic Jihad and one with the Aqsa Martyrs Brigades) escaped from the Israeli Gilboa Prison on 6 September 2021 in an operation known as the Freedom Tunnel.²⁰ In addition, a joint operations room was formed in Jenin in conjunction with Freedom Tunnel; bringing together a number of factions, including the Quds Brigades and the Aqsa Martyrs Brigades, it is the first organisational body established in the

¹⁴ Human Rights Watch, "A Threshold Crossed: Israeli Authorities and the Crimes of Apartheid and Persecution," 27/4/2021, accessed on 21/8/2022, at: <https://bit.ly/3dINOJA>

¹⁵ Majd Abuamer & Yara Nassar, "Hamas Contained: The Rise and Pacification of Palestinian Resistance by Tareq Baconi" [Arabic], *Siyasat Arabiya*, vol. 8, no. 45 (July 2020), pp. 215–216.

¹⁶ Hussein.

¹⁷ Palestinian Centre for Human Rights, "Assault on Gaza in Numbers," 7/2/2022, accessed on 11/9/2022, at: <https://bit.ly/3ruKzmt>

¹⁸ David Horowitz, "The Most Prominent Israeli Assassinations that Have Changed the Course of History and Preserved Israel's Security," *The Times of Israel*, 30/11/2018, accessed on 11/8/2022, at: <https://bit.ly/3SG0BpZ>

¹⁹ For more details on the flag march and its history, see: Nidal Mohammed Watad, "Get to Know the History of the Israeli Flag March in Jerusalem" *al-Araby al-Jadid*, 29/5/2022, accessed on 11/8/2022, at: <https://bit.ly/3rJaMOo>

²⁰ Atef Daghlas, "From Jenin to Nablus, one Battalion after Another... Will the Al-Quds Brigades Model Withdraw from the West Bank Resistance?" *Al Jazeera*, 26/5/2022, accessed on 10/8/2022, at: <https://bit.ly/3bMw8Gu>



West Bank after the second Palestinian Intifada.²¹ In May 2022, these armed groups carried out some 235 resistance actions in response to the flags march, including armed skirmishes, the detonation of explosive devices, and the throwing of Molotov cocktails and stones.²² This brings the total number of resistance actions since the beginning of 2022 to 6,348, including 1,358 during the last three months, which involved 165 shootings.²³ In light of the growing effectiveness of these armed groups and the increasing acts of resistance to Israeli incursions and settlement expansion, especially in Nablus, and given the prominent role the Islamic Jihad played in organising these actions, Israeli occupation forces arrested the movement's leader, Bassam al-Saadi, during a massive arrest campaign carried out in the cities of the West Bank.

The recent military operation in the Gaza Strip coincided with the continued incursions of extremist settler groups into the Aqsa Mosque under the protection of the Israeli police and the occupation authorities' ramping up of arrests of Palestinians in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem. Since the beginning of 2022, some 3,050 people have been detained, and from 28 July to 3 August 2022, 63 checkpoints were erected in the West Bank, in addition to 108 already existing fixed checkpoints.²⁴

It became clear that an Israeli military operation was imminent when the occupation army announced a state of military alert on 2 August and closed the roads to the settlements bordering the Gaza Strip, along with the Karam Abu Salim crossing in southern Gaza and the Beit Hanoun crossing in the north.²⁵ This came after Islamic Jihad threatened that the arrest of Saadi would not go unpunished.²⁶ Israel declared the start of Operation Breaking Dawn on 5 August 2022 with the assassination of Tayseer al-Jabari, the northern district commander of the Quds Brigades. This is the third time in the last ten years that a war on Gaza has been triggered by the assassination of a Palestinian resistance leader, following the eight-day war in 2012 that erupted in the wake of the assassination of Ahmed al-Jabari (1960–2012) and the three-day war in 2019 following the assassination of Baha Abu al-Ata (1977–2019).

Over the three days of Operation Breaking Dawn, the Israeli occupation forces carried out 147 air raids on the Gaza Strip, while the Quds Brigades fired some 1,100 rockets and mortars at Israel in response,²⁷ targeting Tel Aviv, the Ben Gurion Airport, Ashdod, Beersheba, Ashkelon, Netivot, Sderot,

21 On the development of modes of Palestinian resistance in Jenin since the 2002 massacre and up to the current resistance formations, see: Ibrahim S. Rabaia, "The Surge and the Clashes: The 'Domestication' Model and its Decline in Jenin," *Shu'un Filistiniyya*, no. 287–288 (Spring/Summer 2022), pp. 8–28.

22 "Nablus Brigade: The Occupation is in Trouble from Organized Resistance Groups in the West Bank!" *Al-Khanadeq*, 31/5/2022, accessed on 10/8/2022, at: <https://bit.ly/3d4Fw8P>

23 "More than 300 Shootings in the West Bank since the Beginning of 2022," *Quds Brigades*, 16/8/2022, accessed on 21/8/2022, at: <https://bit.ly/3KcxSVX>

24 Palestinian Centre for Human Rights, "Israeli Human Rights Violations in the Occupied Palestinian Territory (Weekly Update 28 July–3 August 2022)," 4/8/2022, accessed on 10/8/2022, at: <https://bit.ly/3RoDu1D>

25 "Israel raises alert on the Gaza border in anticipation of Islamic Jihad's response to the arrest of its leader in the West Bank," *Al Jazeera*, 2 August 2022, accessed on 11 August 2022, at: <https://bit.ly/3C4mBmX>; "In Anticipation of a Response to the Arrest of Leader Al-Saadi...the Occupation Army Continues to Close Roads in the Settlements of the Gaza Envelope." *Al Jazeera*, 3/8/2022, accessed on 11/8/2022, at: <https://bit.ly/3zQPLF9>

26 Nur Abu Aysha, "Jihad leader to *Anadolu*: The crime of arresting Al-Saadi will not go unpunished," *Anadolu Agency*, 2/8/2022, accessed on 11/8/2022, at: <https://bit.ly/3pbj13p>

27 Office of the UN Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, "Security Council Briefing (Emergency Session) on the Situation in The Middle East (as Delivered by Special Coordinator Wennesland," 8/8/2022, accessed on 20/8/2022, at: <https://bit.ly/3Qq6N4a>

and other settlements and military positions. The shelling caused some material damage to homes and businesses.²⁸

Table 2
Rockets and mortar artillery used by the Quds Brigades during Unity of the Arenas Battle²⁹

Rocket/ artillery	Range (km)	Weight of warhead (kg)	Size	Manufacture	Targeted areas
107	8	20	79–85 cm	Iranian	Gaza Envelope
Mortar	10	20	--	Local	Gaza Envelope
Qassim	5–10	400	2.5 m	Local	Gaza Envelope
Grad	20–40	10–20	2.8 m	Foreign	Gaza Envelope
Buraq 70	70	90	4.5 m	Local	Cities in central Israel
Buraq 100	100	90	6.5 m	Local	Cities in central Israel
Buraq 120	120	300	--	Local	Cities in central Israel
Badr 3	160	300–400	3 m	Local	Cities in central Israel

Source: compiled by the authors based on: “First Scenes of the Launch of the Qassem Missile and Disclosure of New Details about It” *Quds Brigades*, 17/5/2021, accessed on 21/8/2022, at: <https://bit.ly/3QMqovG>; “Breaking: Battle Magma of the Full Moon,” *Quds Brigades*, 5/5/2020, accessed on 21/8/2022, at: <https://bit.ly/3Ci2bJ7>; Al Jazeera TV, “Learn about the Type and Range of the Missiles Fired by the Resistance Factions towards Israel,” *YouTube*, 6/8/2022, accessed on 21/8/2022, at: <https://bit.ly/3dEW1IB>; “Surprises in the Quiver of Saraya Al-Quds!” *al-Khanadeq*, 1/10/2021, accessed on 21/8/2022, at: <https://bit.ly/3dMcf2C>; “Al-Quds Brigades Publish Details about the Russian Grad Missile,” *Dunya al-Watan*, 29/3/2006, accessed on 21/8/2022, at: <https://bit.ly/3T8r2Fi>; “Assessing Palestinian Islamic Jihad’s Military Capabilities after the August 2022 Conflict,” *Foundation for the Defence of Democracies*, 7/8/2022, accessed on 21/8/2022, at: <https://bit.ly/3wmwk6m>; Daniel Levin, “Iran, Hamas & Palestinian Islamic Jihad,” *Wilson Centre*, 21/5/2021, accessed on 21/8/2022, at: <https://bit.ly/2Kczt0B>; Fabian Hinz, “Iran Transfers Rockets to Palestinian Groups,” *US Institute of Peace*, 19/5/2021, accessed on 21/8/2022, at: <https://bit.ly/3pvazxn>

²⁸ “Unity Arenas’ Continuous Injuries and Destruction after Missile Explodes (video),” *Quds Brigades*, 6/8/2022, accessed 21/8/2022, at: <https://bit.ly/3CiYoeF>

²⁹ In addition to these rockets, the Quds Brigades possess the Fajr missile system, which has a range of 43–75 km, as well as other artillery and missiles; these were not used in the latest battle. See: Fabian Hinz, “Iran Transfers Rockets to Palestinian Groups,” *United States Institute of Peace*, 19/5/2021, accessed on 21/8/2022, at: <https://bit.ly/3pvazxn>



It is clear that the Quds Brigades have succeeded in developing their military capabilities since 2006.³⁰ Some of their rockets, such as Badr 3, unveiled in 2021, have a range of up to 160 kilometres, while the Buraq rocket has a range of 120 kilometres. Their mortars have a range of up to 10 kilometres and Grad rockets up to 40 kilometres. It is estimated that the Quds Brigades possesses 6,000–8,000 short- and long-range missiles and fired at least 10 per cent of them during the recent battle.³¹

The Quds Brigades have developed unconventional tools of warfare as well. In 2008, it established a cyber unit, the Quds Banner, the aim of which is to prevent Israeli cyberattacks, espionage, and surveillance and to carry out attacks on Israeli cyber infrastructure.³² In terms of numbers, the missile capabilities of the Quds Brigades are modest compared to those of the Qassam Brigades,³³ and of course, the combined military capabilities of resistance movements in the Gaza Strip are generally not comparable to the sophisticated military weaponry of Israel, which ranks 18th globally in terms of military capabilities.³⁴ Nevertheless, in none of its military operations has Israel been able to eliminate the infrastructure of resistance or deter rocket fire.

Israel claimed that the Iron Dome air defence system intercepted 96 per cent of the rockets targeting populated areas.³⁵ Israeli military objectives against the Islamic Jihad movement in the Gaza Strip, according to the Israeli occupation army, included the assassination of Tayseer al-Jabari and Khaled Mansour (the Quds Brigades commander of the southern zone), as well eliminating five rocket launch systems, six military manufacturing workshops, two rocket storage depots, one mortar storage depot, and six observation sites.³⁶ Meanwhile, rockets fired by the Quds Brigades disrupted the lives of tens of thousands of Israelis, leading to curfews and a state of alert, particularly in the settlements on the Gaza envelope; they also resulted in the injury of 31 Israelis, according to Israeli estimates.³⁷ In contrast, during the 56-hour Israeli offensive, 49 Palestinians were killed due to shelling and 360 others were injured, while 18 homes were destroyed completely and 71 partially, and 1,675 homes sustained minor damage. The power plant in the Gaza Strip also shut down due to the interruption of fuel supplies, and the electrical grid was damaged by Israeli shelling.³⁸

³⁰ See for example: “In video, the Stages of Al-Quds Brigades’ Launchers’ Development,” *Quds Brigades*, 3/8/2019, accessed on 22/8/2022, at: <https://bit.ly/3T6Ucoc>

³¹ “Assessing Palestinian Islamic Jihad’s Military Capabilities After the August 2022 Conflict,” Foundation for the Defence of Democracies, 7/8/2022, accessed on 21/8/2022, at: <https://bit.ly/3wmwk6m>; International Institute for Strategic Studies, *The Armed Conflict Survey 2021: The Worldwide Review of Political, Military and Humanitarian Trends in Current Conflicts* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2021), p. 152.

³² Erik Skare, *Digital Jihad: Palestinian Resistance in the Digital Era* (London: Zed Books, 2016).

³³ Omar Alagha, “If Hamas Enters the War, Here Are the Most Important Missiles Owned by the Qassam Brigades,” *Aljazeera*, 12/5/2021, accessed on 14/8/2022, at: <https://bit.ly/3T26eiP>

³⁴ “2022 Israel Military Strength,” *Global Firepower*, accessed on 21/8/2022, at: <https://bit.ly/3K8SxdE>

³⁵ “Everything You Missed on Operation ‘Breaking Dawn,’” *Israel Defence Forces*, 7/8/2022, accessed on 20/8/2022, at: <https://bit.ly/3QZu7p4>

³⁶ “Updates on Operation ‘Breaking Dawn,’” *Israel Defence Forces*, 5/8/2022, accessed on 20/8/2022, at: <https://bit.ly/3pxKz4l>; “Operational Recap on ‘Breaking Dawn,’” *Israel Defence Forces*, 6/8/2022, accessed on 20/8/2022, at: <https://bit.ly/3Cl9Syg>; Avichay Adraee, *Twitter*, 6/8/2022, accessed on 20/8/2022, at: <https://bit.ly/3PCPvzx>

³⁷ “Operation Breaking Dawn: Overview,” *Israel Policy Forum*, 8/8/2022, accessed on 21/8/2022, at: <https://bit.ly/3CuH2eC>

³⁸ Youssef Abu Watfa, “Gaza Counts the Losses of 56 Hours of Aggression: Extensive Destruction of Housing and Infrastructure,” *al-Araby al-Jadid*, 8/8/2022, accessed on 20/8/2022, at: <https://bit.ly/3RqcIM>



At the end of the third day of the battle, the two parties reached a ceasefire agreement, brokered by Egypt in indirect negotiations, which entered into force at 11:30 pm on 7 August 2022.³⁹ The ceasefire was delayed due to the assassination of Khaled Mansour, the leader of the southern district of the Quds Brigades, on the evening of 6 August 2022, when the Egyptian authorities were calling on Islamic Jihad to lay down their arms. Moreover, Israeli Prime Minister Yair Lapid did not order an end to the campaign of arrests and assassinations in the West Bank, as demanded by the Egyptian side during the negotiations, causing friction in Egyptian-Israeli relations, especially in the field of security and military coordination.⁴⁰ While Islamic Jihad believed that it succeeded imposing its conditions⁴¹ by compelling Israel to release Khalil al-Awawda and Bassam al-Saadi,⁴² Israeli Defence Minister Benny Gantz considered the military operation a success as well, having achieved its objectives of eliminating the potential threat from the Gaza Strip, maintaining the freedom of Israeli operations in all arenas, achieving deterrence⁴³ (by preventing Islamic Jihad from taking any hostile action against Israel or following through on its threats of retaliation in response to Saadi's arrest), neutralising Hamas, and preventing the conflict from extending to the West Bank, Jerusalem, and the occupied interior. It was also seen as a personal success for Lapid,⁴⁴ who, unlike his predecessors, does not have extensive military and security experience, his military background being limited to his work as a correspondent for the Israeli army weekly newspaper.⁴⁵

III. Strategic Implications of Unity of the Arenas Battle

1. Operation Breaking Dawn was part of a broader Israeli strategic vision whose aim is to completely sever the Gaza Strip from the West Bank. Its immediate objective was to deter resistance factions from retaliating against Israel (or threatening to do so) when the latter conducts operations in the West Bank. This policy of containment or “mowing the lawn” is based on Israel's recognition that it cannot solve the problem permanently. Fearing the emergence of more radical movements, Israel does not seek to eliminate existing movements, but instead maintains an assassination policy, repeatedly targeting the leadership of Palestinian armed movements to keep violence in check.⁴⁶ Nevertheless, Islamic Jihad was able to assert the unity of the arenas of struggle in the West Bank, Gaza Strip, Jerusalem, and the occupied interior, just as it did in 2005 in during Operation First Rain

³⁹ “Al Jazeera Gets the Text of the Cease-Fire Agreement between Israel and the Islamic Jihad, under the Auspices of Egypt,” *Al Jazeera*, 7/8/2022, accessed on 21/8/2022, at: <https://bit.ly/3pxlp55>

⁴⁰ Amos Harel, “Gaza Flare-up Leaves New Israel-Egypt Tensions in Its Wake,” *Haaretz*, 19/8/2022, accessed on 21/8/2022, at: <https://bit.ly/3KbB05j>

⁴¹ Although the ceasefire agreement did not contain any conditions but simply indicated Egypt's ongoing efforts to secure the release of the two prisoners. Israel denied that their release was part of the ceasefire agreement. See: “Israel Didn't Agree to Release PIJ Prisoners-Security Minister,” *I24 News*, 8/8/2022, accessed on 21/8/2022, at: <https://bit.ly/3K8w7t3>

⁴² “An Egyptian pledge and an agreement without complications.. ‘Jihad’ confirms the imposition of its conditions and its readiness to resume fighting if the occupation violates the armistice,” *Al Jazeera*, 8/8/2022, accessed on 21/8/2022, at: <https://bit.ly/3K9V8UB>

⁴³ Tamir Morag, “Israel Achieved its Main Goals in Operation Breaking Dawn,” *Israel Hayom*, 9/8/2022, accessed on 20/8/2022, at: <https://bit.ly/3pwF1XF>

⁴⁴ Israel Policy Forum.

⁴⁵ Omar Shaban, “The Causes and Consequences of Israel's Latest Attack Against Islamic Jihad in Gaza,” *Middle East Institute*, 31/8/2022, accessed on 5/9/2022, at: <https://bit.ly/3ANBrO7>

⁴⁶ Raphael S. Cohen et al., “Lessons from Israel's Wars in Gaza,” *RAND Corporation* (2017), p. 2, accessed on 11/9/2012, at: <https://bit.ly/3U54kOA>



and Operation Starting All Over Again. As such, Israel did not achieve deterrence in the latest round; resistance in the West Bank continues and is growing more frequent.

2. Although an end to the battle in Gaza was announced, the Israeli campaign will likely continue and additional Israeli occupation forces will be deployed in the West Bank, especially in Jenin and Nablus, until the threat of Islamic Jihad and armed factions in the West Bank is neutralised, especially given ongoing acts of resistance in the West Bank and Jerusalem.⁴⁷ Islamic Jihad's position outside the Palestinian political arena, its refusal to seek power since its establishment in 1981,⁴⁸ and its focus on armed resistance, as well as its close ties with Iran, make it difficult for Israel to contain it or reach an understanding with it. With this in mind, the recent Israeli military operation can be read as having sought in part to target the anti-Israeli regional alignment led by Tehran, specifically in light of the geographic extension of Islamic Jihad's military influence to the West Bank and its public leadership of armed formations there, unlike Hamas, which has never made public its armed formations in the West Bank. On the other hand, it is unlikely that the Gaza Strip will again be on the frontline of battle in the near term, given that Israel achieved its strategic objectives in Gaza and also due to Egyptian pressure and Hamas's unwillingness to participate in an all-out war, especially since the damage of the 2021 war has not yet been redressed. Hamas tends to prolong truces with Israel seeking to improve economic conditions in the Gaza Strip and to avoid a suspension of Gazans' work permits in Israel, which could bring economic benefits to the Gaza Strip, as well trying to forestall a suspension of reconstruction assistance.

3. The events of the current confrontation in the West Bank can be seen as an extension of the Palestinian rebellion of April 2021, and Unity of the Arenas Battle as an extension of Saif al-Quds. In this context, with Operation Breaking Dawn, Israel aimed to undermine the achievements of the Palestinian resistance in the 2021 rebellion, most notably the unification of Palestinian arenas of struggle in a comprehensive confrontation against Israeli assaults. With the emergence of armed groups and increasing acts of resistance in the West Bank—August 2022 witnessed some 832 resistance actions compared to 649 in July⁴⁹—the revolutionary situation in the West Bank is expected to continue, especially shooting operations, which are also on the rise, along with increasingly severe responses to resistance by Israel. Already in August, Israel made 503 arrests, compared to about 259 the previous month.⁵⁰ The new equation in the West Bank is that every arrest carried out by the Israeli occupying forces is countered by an act of resistance, whether stone-throwing or shooting.⁵¹

⁴⁷ See for example: "Jihad Operation in Jerusalem Continues to Resist the Enemy in the 'Unity of the Arenas,'" *Quds Brigades*, 14/8/2022, accessed on 22/8/2022, at: <https://bit.ly/3dLynui>

⁴⁸ For texts and documents related on the founding of Islamic Jihad, see: Erik Skare, *Palestinian Islamic Jihad: Islamist Writings on Resistance and Religion* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2021).

⁴⁹ Centre for Information on Palestine, "Periodic Report of the Resistance Activities in the West Bank for June 2022," 2/7/2022, pp. 1–10, accessed on 7/9/2022, at: <https://bit.ly/3BiVZzr>; Centre for Information on Palestine, "Periodic Report of the Resistance Activities in the West Bank for August 2022," 1/9/2022, pp. 1–11, accessed on 7/9/2022, at: <https://bit.ly/3Bki68Q>

⁵⁰ Al-Quds Centre, "Arrests in July 2022 - 259 Arrests in July 2022," 4/8/2022, p. 2, accessed on 7/9/2022, at: <https://bit.ly/3KPnqnT>; al-Quds Centre, "Arrests in August 2022- 503 Arrests in August 2022," 4/9/2022, p. 2, accessed on 7/9/2022, at: <https://bit.ly/3x1a9To>

⁵¹ Salih al-Naami, "Israeli Estimates: The West Bank is Witnessing a New Kind of Intifada," *al-Araby al-Jadid*, 5/9/2022, accessed on 5/9/2022, at: <https://bit.ly/3Bfu8Aa>



4. Unity of the Arenas Battle demonstrated that Islamic Jihad has maintained the combat and military capabilities it possessed in the 2021 war, with one of its rockets reaching the outskirts of Jerusalem. Although Israel was able to assassinate the leaders of Quds Brigades' northern and southern commands, this did not weaken the structure of the movement's military wing, which relies on decentralised organisation. The military wing is divided into cells based in regions, each with its own commander.⁵² It is therefore not affected by the assassination of its military leaders because it can promote lower-level leaders or fighters to leadership positions, even if this takes time, as was seen after previous Israeli military operations in which the movement's leaders were assassinated. On the other hand, the battle demonstrated that the Quds Brigades could not achieve qualitative goals if it entered the engagement alone. It further showed the decline in coordination between resistance forces in the joint operations room led by armed factions in the Gaza Strip, as Islamic Jihad leader Khaled al-Batsh pointed out,⁵³ due to the refusal of the largest military force in the Gaza Strip— Hamas—to join the battle, which Israel considered a success for its strategic goal of separating Islamic Jihad and Hamas.⁵⁴

5. The Israeli government, held together in a fragile coalition, faced broad criticism from the Israeli opposition, which sees its rival as lacking the requisite political and military expertise to run in the upcoming elections in October 2022. It also met with bitter criticism from extremist settler groups who questioned why the Israeli police allowed settlers to storm the Aqsa Mosque and its courtyards but did not allow them to perform ritual sacrifices there; settlers also condemned the re-routing of the flag march to prevent friction between Palestinians and settlers between 15 and 23 April and the government's reluctance to escalate the military confrontation in the Gaza Strip. Along with the growth of armed resistance formations in the West Bank, these criticisms encouraged the Israeli government to launch a military operation in the Gaza Strip. With Operation Breaking Dawn, the government hoped to gain the confidence of the Israeli public and prevent any reaction that might blow up into an all-out popular rebellion like that seen in 2021, which would exacerbate the political and security challenges facing the government. Nevertheless, after the battle ended, Israeli polls showed that the domestic political crisis continued, and that the outcome of the upcoming Israeli elections remained uncertain.⁵⁵

6. Since the Hamas government took control of the Gaza Strip, negotiations between Gaza and Israel have been conducted through several regional and international mediators, most notably Egypt, Qatar, and various UN envoys. Since 2006, these mediators have failed to halt repeated Israeli aggression or even to cement ceasefire agreements between the Gaza Strip and Israel. Their efforts

⁵² "Palestinian Islamic Jihad," *Counter Extremism Project*, accessed on 22/8/2022, at: <https://bit.ly/3AB5oSQ>; Erik Skare, *A History of Palestinian Islamic Jihad: Faith, Awareness, and Revolution in the Middle East* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2021), p. 115.

⁵³ Raed Moussa, "In an Interview with Al Jazeera, Khaled Al-Batsh Explains the Gains of Jihad from the War, the Role of Hamas, and the Relationship with Iran," *Al Jazeera*, 13/8/2022, accessed on 14/8/2022, at: <https://bit.ly/3PojtXN>

⁵⁴ "The Head of Israeli Shin Bet Recommends an End to the Assault on Gaza, and Many Voices Support It," *Al Jazeera*, 7/8/2022, accessed on 22/8/2022, at: <https://bit.ly/3Cpwo9i>

⁵⁵ "Poll: The Political Impasse Remains and the Knesset Elections Have Not Been Resolved," *Arab* 48, 19/8/2022, accessed on 21/8/2022, at: <https://bit.ly/3Cj5MGV>



during previous military operations focused largely on announcing a state of calm in exchange for calm, promising economic assistance, and facilitating reconstruction and the entry of humanitarian aid into the Gaza Strip, but subject to Israel's approval and control of the flow of external aid into Gaza,⁵⁶ absent any mention of lasting political solutions. For example, the ceasefire agreement to end the attack on Gaza in 2014 included several conditions, including the opening of Gaza border crossings and the start of discussions on the construction of a port and airport in the Gaza Strip, but none of these conditions were implemented. While Egypt successfully mediated a ceasefire in the latest battle, it did not address conditions in the Gaza Strip and was unable to compel Israel to comply with its demands, causing friction between the two sides. Accordingly, the role of mediators in the Gaza Strip must be reconsidered. Most of them lack the capacity to force compliance with the commitments already made by Israel, and there are no effective follow-up mechanisms to monitor the implementation of the ceasefire agreements between Israel and Gaza. Mediators' focus on achieving calm without addressing the true roots of the crisis—namely, Israel's occupation and its siege of the Gaza Strip—promise to bring repeated outbursts of violence.

⁵⁶ Elia Zureik, "Qatar's Humanitarian Aid to Palestine," *Third World Quarterly*, vol. 39, no. 4 (2018), pp. 786–798.



References

- Abuamer, Majd & Yara Nassar. " Hamas Contained: The Rise and Pacification of Palestinian Resistance by Tareq Baconi" [Arabic]. *Siyasat Arabiya*. vol. 8 no. 45 (July 2020).
- Barakat, Sultan, Sansom Milton & Ghassan Elkahout. "Rebuilding Gaza: The Need for a Radical Shift in Reconstruction Strategy." *Policy Briefs*. Centre for Conflict and Humanitarian Studies. 7/7/2021. <https://bit.ly/3qKZk4e>
- Butler, Linda. "A Gaza Chronology, 1948–2008." *Journal of Palestine Studies*. vol. 38. no. 3 (Spring 2009).
- Centre for Information on Palestine. "Periodic Report of the Resistance Activities in the West Bank for June 2022." 2/7/2022. <https://bit.ly/3BiVZzr>
- _____. "Periodic Report of the Resistance Activities in the West Bank for August 2022." 1/9/2022. <https://bit.ly/3Bki68Q>
- Cohen, Raphael S., et al. "Lessons from Israel's Wars in Gaza." *RAND Corporation*, 2017. <https://bit.ly/3U54kOA>
- Counter Extremism Project. "Palestinian Islamic Jihad." <https://bit.ly/3AB5oSQ>
- Esposito, Michele K. "Israeli Military Operations against Gaza, 2000–2008." *Journal of Palestine Studies*. vol. 38. no. 3 (Spring 2009).
- Foundation for the Defence of Democracies. "Assessing Palestinian Islamic Jihad's Military Capabilities After the August 2022 Conflict." 7/8/2022. <https://bit.ly/3wmwk6m>
- Hinz, Fabian. "Iran Transfers Rockets to Palestinian Groups." *United States Institute of Peace*. 19/5/2021. <https://bit.ly/3pvazxn>
- Hussein, Ahmed Qassim. "AlQassam Brigades and the Sword of Jerusalem Battle Possible Retaliation in Asymmetric-Warfare." *Strategic Paper*. no. 4. Arab Centre for Research and Policy Studies. 24/6/2021. <https://bit.ly/3wYdKla>
- International Institute for Strategic Studies. *The Armed Conflict Survey 2021: The Worldwide Review of Political, Military and Humanitarian Trends in Current Conflicts*. Abingdon: Routledge, 2021.
- Israel Policy Forum. "Operation Breaking Dawn: Overview." 8/8/2022. <https://bit.ly/3CuH2eC>
- Levin, Daniel. "Iran, Hamas & Palestinian Islamic Jihad." Wilson Centre, 21/5/2021. <https://bit.ly/2Kczt0B>
- al-Naami, Salih. "Gaza and the Policy of Assassinations in Israeli Policy." *Al Jazeera Centre for Studies*, 20/11/2019. <https://bit.ly/3QntWTK>



- Nashif, Ismail. *Şuwar Mawt al-Filişţīnī [Images of the Palestinian Death]*. Doha and Beirut: Arab Centre for Research and Policy Studies, 2015.
- Palestinian Centre for Human Rights. "Assault on Gaza in Numbers." 7/2/2022. <https://bit.ly/3MhOk8t>
- Pappe, Ilan. *The Biggest Prison on Earth: A History of the Occupied Territories*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 2017.
- al-Quds Centre. "Arrests in July 2022 - 259 Arrests in July 2022." 4/8/2022. <https://bit.ly/3KPnqnT>
 _____ . "Arrests in August 2022 - 503 Arrests in August 2022." 4/9/2022. <https://bit.ly/3x1a9To>
- Rabbani, Mouin. "Israel's Assault on Gaza: A Transformational Moment? An Interview with Azmi Bishara." *Journal of Palestine Studies*. vol. 38. no. 3 (Spring 2009).
- Rabaia, Ibrahim S. "The Surge and the Clashes: The 'Domestication' Model and its Decline in Jenin." *Shu'un Filistiniyya*. no. 287–288 (Spring/Summer 2022).
- Shaban, Omar. "The Causes and Consequences of Israel's Latest Attack Against Islamic Jihad in Gaza." *Middle East Institute*. 31/8/2022. <https://bit.ly/3ANBrO7>
- Skare, Erik. *Digital Jihad: Palestinian Resistance in the Digital Era*. London: Zed Books, 2016.
 _____ . *A History of Palestinian Islamic Jihad: Faith, Awareness, and Revolution in the Middle East*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2021.
 _____ . *Palestinian Islamic Jihad: Islamist Writings on Resistance and Religion*. London: I. B. Tauris, 2021.
- Vinson, Mark. "An Israeli Approach to Deterring Terrorism: Managing Persistent Conflict through a Violent Dialogue of Military Operations." *PRISM*. vol. 5. no. 3 (2015).
- Zureik, Elia. "Qatar's Humanitarian Aid to Palestine." *Third World Quarterly*. vol. 39. no. 4 (2018).