

## The Jewish–Palestinian conflict. History and the Present

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### Abstract

In this article, the author presents the causes and course of the Jewish–Palestinian conflict from the second half of the 19th century to the events of 2024. The main research problem concerns explaining the essence of this conflict and indicating the reasons why, in the author’s opinion, a two-state solution and life side by side for the two Jewish and Palestinian nations is impossible. The author has primarily used the historical method to show the chronology of the conflict with its pivotal moments. He considers that a lasting peace is currently unattainable because it is not wanted by the fanatical groups on both sides of the conflict, which adopts the religious motivation of the parties and thus becomes increasingly cruel and unpredictable. In his conclusions, the author points out, among other things, the deepening mutual hatred between Jews and Palestinians, which has fuelled the spiral of violence and made a political end to the conflict impossible and will continue to be so. This is also confirmed by the attempts made so far to resolve it with the involvement of third parties. The war currently being fought in Gaza will fade, but the conflict will continue and strengthen the radical factions on both sides, namely militant Islam (Hamas and Hezbollah) and the Jewish nationalist and ultra-orthodox right. The involvement of other actors in this war, notably Iran, Hezbollah

and the Yemeni Houthi (Ansar Allah) movement, poses the danger of its escalation and the transfer of terrorist acts to Europe.

#### Keywords

Israel-Palestine conflict, Al-Fatah, Hamas, Palestine Liberation Organisation, Gaza Strip, Occupied Palestinian Territories, West Bank, intifada, radicalisation, terrorism, ultra-orthodox

## Introduction

The Jewish-Palestinian conflict (Israeli-Palestinian since 1948) has lasted more than 100 years. It is the longest in recent world history and, most importantly, far from over<sup>1</sup>. It is classified as an unresolvable conflict<sup>2</sup>. Its cause is the struggle of the two peoples - Palestinians and Jews - for the same territory. In the literature, one can find information refusing to recognise the Jews as a nation under international law. There are also well-known opinions that define the Palestinians as the descendants of ancient Christians and Jews who became Islamised after the Arab invasion<sup>3</sup>. In the decades-long conflict, there were various groups on both sides with

<sup>1</sup> The article closed in August 2024 and does not take into account subsequent events (editor's note).

<sup>2</sup> Societies involved in irresolvable conflict try to adapt to the conflict situation or resolve it in some way, but the actions taken to do so lead to changes that reinforce and perpetuate the conflict, making it increasingly difficult to resolve and ever more destructive. See: D. Bar-Tal, *Złudzenia niszczące życie. O konfliktach państwa izraelskiego z Palestyńczykami* (Eng. Sinking into the honey trap. The case of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict), Warszawa 2023, p. 10.

<sup>3</sup> This issue is thoroughly analysed by Shlomo Sand in three books: *Kiedy i jak wynaleziono naród żydowski* (Eng. The invention of the Jewish people), Warszawa 2011; *Dlaczego przestałem być Żydem. Spojrzenie Izraelczyka* (Eng. How I stopped being a Jew. The Israeli perspective), Warszawa 2014 and *Kiedy i jak wynaleziono Ziemię Izraela. Od Ziemi Świętej do ojczyzny* (Eng. The invention of the land of Israel. From holy land to homeland), Warszawa 2015. In them, the author, a professor of history at Tel Aviv University, deconstructed the myth of the eternal existence of the Jewish people. He also subjected to an informed critique the sources and legends on which Israel's alleged inalienable right to Palestine as the Promised Land is based. These issues, raised in the Old Testament and above all in the Torah, for most rabbis and ultra-orthodox and nationalist groups in Israel constitute the religious and political justification for its existence, as well as the denial of the Palestinians' right to their own state. Sand's publications were met in Israel with widespread media coverage, criticism from historians and an aggressive reaction from Zionist circles, who labelled the author an enemy of the nation.

basic objectives: for the Jews, to gain and hold as much territory as possible; for the Palestinians, to expel the Jews. After the creation of the state of Israel, the Palestinians were the losing side. A larger part of Palestine was granted to the Jewish minority and a smaller part to the Arab majority. The Palestinians never gave up the armed struggle and its primary method was terrorism, which was used by both secular and religious organisations. For more than three decades, Israel's main opponent has been Hamas.

The aim of this article is to present this conflict, its causes and the successive phases of its course. A historical perspective, taking into account the changing actors involved in military and peacekeeping activities, allows for an understanding of its intricacies, even though it has followed a fixed scenario for decades: attack, response to attack, retaliation for response, revenge for retaliation, and so on. This sequence of events has been punctuated by peace talks, always disrupted and broken up for various reasons. In the 21st century, these talks have also been influenced by the Israeli concept of peace. According to it, Israel's primary goal is not to end the occupation, but to get rid of its effects, i.e. to displace the Palestinians from more territories, rather than to accept their rights. The main research problem concerns explaining the essence of the ongoing conflict and identifying the reasons why, in the author's opinion, a two-state solution and living side by side with two peoples is impossible. In writing the article, the author primarily used the historical method to show the chronology of the conflict with its pivotal moments and the escalation of hatred that led to the Gaza war fought since 7 October 2023. He also used comparative analysis to present the origins of the conflict, the motivations of the fighting parties and to show the differences between Palestinians and Jews in their approach to the conflict. The author has divided the article into several sections which differ from the way this has been done in the publications he has used. They are dominated by a division into periods marked by important international and domestic events, namely the time up to the World War I, the interwar period, the time of Israel's creation or the periods between the successive Israeli-Arab wars. The author's intention was to highlight the intensification and brutalisation of this conflict as the religious factor played an increasing role in it. It has influenced the escalation of mutual hatred, the dehumanisation and demonisation of the enemy. Among other publications on the same topic, the article stands out for its particular attention to the changing conditions of the conflict in its description, its attention to its religious motivation and its conclusion of the narrative on events of August 2024.

## Jewish settlement in Palestine

The social situation in Palestine was exacerbated by the organised influx of Jewish believers to the Middle East, which can be traced back to the second half of the 19th century and is divided into certain periods corresponding to successive waves of immigration later known as aliyahs, from the Hebrew word *aliyah* (plural *alijot*) meaning ‘ascending’ or ‘rising’. Indeed, the Zionist movement recognised that Jewish settlers arriving from Europe would rise above life in the diaspora and be reborn in Palestine. The settlement movement was opposed by, among others, Jews who had lived in Palestine for generations<sup>4</sup>. The immediate reason for the first aliyah in 1882-1903 was the anti-Jewish riots and pogroms that took place in Russia after the assassination of Tsar Alexander II in March 1881. Between 20,000 and 30,000 Russian Jews left for Palestine at that time<sup>5</sup>. Between 1882 and 1939, five waves of Jewish immigrants arrived in Palestine<sup>6</sup>. Arab immigration to Palestine was also increasing<sup>7</sup>. During the first period of Jewish settlement, it was a fairly common view that

<sup>4</sup> After the fall of Simon Bar-Kokhba’s uprising (132-135), the Romans established pagan religious sites in Jerusalem and forbade Jews to enter the city on pain of death. The name of Jerusalem was changed to Colonia Aelia Capitolina. The region was also renamed from Judea (the land of the Jews) to Palestine, using the name of Israel’s greatest ancient enemy, the Philistines. The latter are identified with the Peleset people, whose name is more akin to the term Palestine. See: K. Izak, *Brązowe zabytki w typie środkowoeuropejskim na terenie Grecji i wschodniej części wybrzeża Morza Śródziemnego a problem wędrówek Dorów i „ludów morskich”* (Eng. Bronze monuments of Central European type in Greece and the eastern Mediterranean coast and the problem of the wanderings of the Dorians and ‘maritime peoples’), “Materiały Zachodniopomorskie” 1986, vol. 32, p. 88; T. Jelonek, *Historia Izraela. Od niewoli babilońskiej do upadku powstania Bar-Kochby* (Eng. History of Israel. From the Babylonian captivity to the fall of the Bar-Kokhba uprising), Kraków 2019, p. 141.

<sup>5</sup> D. Bensimon, E. Errera, *Żydzi i Arabowie. Historia współczesnego Izraela* (Eng. Jewish and Arabs. A history of modern Israel), Warszawa 2000, p. 33.

<sup>6</sup> The oldest Jewish modern settlement in Palestine, Petach Tikva, was founded in 1878. However, Jews had already settled in Palestine before the 19th century. Among other things, they came there after the end of the Reconquista in Spain in 1492, when the Christian rulers issued edicts ordering Jews to leave Spain. They settled in Safed in the Galilee, among other places. See: K. Armstrong, *W imię Boga. Fundamentalizm w judaizmie, chrześcijaństwie i islamie* (Eng. The battle for God. Fundamentalism in Judaism, Christianity and Islam), Warszawa 2005, pp. 21–22, 29–30. There were an estimated 10,000 Jews living in Palestine in the mid-19th century, half of them in Jerusalem. See: K. Kubiak, *Wojna o niepodległość Izraela 1947–1949* (Eng. Israel’s War of Independence 1947-1949), Zabrze–Tarnowskie Góry 2013, p. 16.

<sup>7</sup> A. Chojnowski, J. Tomaszewski, *Izrael* (Eng. Israel), Warszawa 2001, p. 10.

Jewish immigration contributed to the development of Palestine, which also benefited the Arabs. One of the arguments in favour of this thesis was the opening of a Jewish-funded railway line connecting Jerusalem to Haifa in 1892. As a result of the second (1904-1914) and third (1919-1923) aliyahs, more than 75,000 new settlers arrived in Palestine. As with the first aliyah, the vast majority of them came from Russia<sup>8</sup>. They were the basis of permanent social and economic structures that provided foundation for the further Jewish colonisation of Palestine. However, this would not have been possible without the ideological and financial support of the World Zionist Organisation established in 1897 at the First Zionist Congress in Basel<sup>9</sup>. It was held on the initiative of Theodor Herzl (1860-1904), author of *Der Judenstaat* (Eng. The Jewish State), published in 1896<sup>10</sup>. In it, Herzl stated, among other things, that the only way for Jews to escape persecution was to build their own state and resettle in it<sup>11</sup>. The activities of this organisation were supported by the Jewish National Fund, established in 1901 to coordinate the purchase of land in Palestine. A slogan authored by Israel Zangwill, who called Palestine 'a country

<sup>8</sup> J. Gelvin, *Konflikt izraelsko-palestyński* (Eng. Israeli-Palestinian conflict), Kraków 2009, p. 75.

<sup>9</sup> Zionism is defined as a political movement preaching the idea of the return of Jews to their historic homeland. The term was coined in 1892 by the Viennese Jewish activist Natan Birnbaum. The name comes from the hill of Zion in Jerusalem. Over time, the word Zion was used to refer to the Holy Land. Zionism was founded on Jewish nationalism, taking shape in the 19th century in Germany as part of the so-called Haskalah, or Jewish Enlightenment, which developed ideas of nationalism and socialism that were common in Europe at the time. The Zionist movement had many opponents among the Jews themselves. Those who lived in Germany and France fought Zionism as a threat to their dreams of being recognised as German or French. For they could not define themselves as such if the Zionists claimed that the Jews were a separate people and aspired to build an independent state. In Eastern Europe, mainly in Russia, Jewish orthodoxy fought Zionism as heresy. Indeed, the restoration of Israel could only take place after the coming of the Messiah. Jews active in socialist parties, on the other hand, pinned their hopes on socialism rather than on the national movement, and therefore regarded Zionism as ideologically hostile. See: K. Gebert, *Pokój z widokiem na wojnę. Historia Izraela* (Eng. Peace with a view to war. Israel's history), Warszawa 2023, p. 20.

<sup>10</sup> The first Polish edition of *The Jewish State* was published in 1917 by the Publishing House of the Academic Zionist Youth 'Yardenja'.

<sup>11</sup> Initially, Herzl considered other locations for a Jewish state, including Argentina, the western regions of the US, Cyprus or Uganda, before speaking out in favour of Palestine. See: P. Johnson, *Historia Żydów* (Eng. A history of the Jews), Warszawa 2020, p. 559-560.

without a people for a people without a country', was then popularised<sup>12</sup>. Zionists also often used a slightly altered form: 'Palestine is a land without a people for a people without a land'<sup>13</sup>. They thus gave the impression that the region was uninhabited, while several hundred thousand people lived there. British Protestant theologians are also known to have preached the idea of Jews returning to the Holy Land in order to hasten the Second Coming of Jesus and consequently convert Jews to Christianity. These views survived in Britain and became popularised in the USA as Christian Zionism<sup>14</sup>.

Control of the Zionist settlements was taken over by the Jewish Colonisation Society, whose founder was the German financier Maurice de Hirsch, an enthusiast for the creation of Jewish agricultural settlements, later called kibbutzim<sup>15</sup> or moshavs<sup>16</sup>. Of the total Jewish population

<sup>12</sup> In 1840, the British politician Anthony Ashley Cooper, Lord Shaftesbury, put forward a project for the colonisation of Palestine by Jews, supporting it with the slogan: 'A country without a nation for a nation without a country'. See: D. Pipes, *[Christian Zionism]: Israel's Best Weapon?*, "New York Post", 15 VII 2003, quoted after: <https://pl.danielpipes.org/1149/chrzescijanski-syjonizm-najlepsza-bron-izraela> [accessed: 15 VII 2003].

<sup>13</sup> P. Bożejewicz, *XX wiek: Ziemia obiecana terrorystów* (Eng. The 20th century: the promised land of terrorists), "Rzecz o Historii", supplement to "Rzeczpospolita", 2 IX 2016.

<sup>14</sup> According to some authors, the source of the Zionist movement was Jewish messianism. According to its idea, the coming of the Messiah should not be delayed, but accelerated by taking concrete political action. The most important of these is the return of the Jews to Palestine and, if necessary, even by bringing about Armageddon - an apocalyptic war. See: J.M. Gleize, *Prawdziwy Izrael i fałszywy judaizm* (Eng. True Israel and false Judaism), Warszawa 2022, pp. 188–189.

<sup>15</sup> Kibbutzim, or communes, were communal farms. There was no private ownership in them. Residents combined growing vegetables and fruit with animal husbandry and dairying. Kibbutzniks, whose privacy was very limited, ate their meals in communal dining rooms and the upbringing of children was the responsibility of the whole community and took place in local kindergartens. Decisions were usually made collectively. The first kibbutz was founded in 1909 in Degania on the southern shore of Lake Tiberias (Gennesaret). See: J. Gelvin, *Konflikt izraelsko-palestyński...*, pp. 81–82.

<sup>16</sup> The moshavs evolved from the kibbutzim in the 1920s. They were cooperative farms, where people were allowed to own land on their own and sell their crops themselves. There is also a view in the sources that moshavs were established earlier than kibbutzim. They were established during the period of the first aliyah, while kibbutzim were created by participants in the second aliyah. The Jews, however, proved to be unprepared for the hard physical work, so it was mainly Arab agricultural labourers who worked there. The economic survival of the settlement was determined by the help of Jewish philanthropists from the Montefiore or Rothschild families. Consequently, the Zionist slogan 'conquest by Jewish labour' was made into an ideology. It became, along with

of Palestine, which numbered around 85,000 people after the third aliyah, only around 12,000 (14%) lived in kibbutzim and moshavs<sup>17</sup>. They contributed to the separation of Jewish agriculture from Arab workers and thus to the deterioration of their living conditions. It was as a result of the second and third migratory waves that it became apparent that the future Israel was slowly transforming into a social-democratic, Hebrew-speaking state, whose economic development went the way it did. And although it is estimated that 90% of the immigrants from the second and third aliyah left Palestine for Western Europe and the USA after a short stay, the Jewish population in the region grew enough that its structures and institutions could function and survived for a long period until they were fed by a new wave of settlers<sup>18</sup>.

Two events occurred during World War I that had long-term effects on the region and became the source of the Palestinian-Jewish and, more broadly, Arab-Israeli conflict. The French and British, active here since the 19th century, divided the territory into spheres of influence, to be in force after the war. In May 1916, they signed a secret agreement that went down in history as the Sykes-Picot Agreement<sup>19</sup>. Pursuant to it, the territory west of the Jordan River (so-called Cisjordan) was to remain under international control, while Transjordan (now Jordan) was to become part of an independent Arab state. The second extremely important event was the Balfour Declaration, i.e. the British promise to establish a Jewish national seat in Palestine<sup>20</sup>. Twenty years after the First Zionist Congress, Herzl's most important goal of obtaining international guarantees for Jewish settlement in Palestine was fulfilled. These guarantees were given

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the buyout of Arab land from Arab landlords indifferent to the fate of the tenants, one of the causes of the early conflict between Jews and Arabs. For Palestinian Arabs, such 'conquest' generally meant the loss of their livelihoods, as they were given up as workers and replaced by Jews. See: K. Gebert, *Pokój z widokiem...*, p. 44.

<sup>17</sup> J. Gelvin, *Konflikt izraelsko-palestyński...*, p. 81.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 81–82.

<sup>19</sup> It is named after the two negotiators and signatories to this pact - Mark Sykes, representing the UK, and François Georges-Picot, representing France.

<sup>20</sup> This was a letter sent on 2 November 1917 by British Foreign Secretary Lord Arthur Balfour to Baron Walter Rothschild. The letter was a declaration by the British government expressing its desire to establish a Jewish national headquarters in Palestine in response to the expectations and efforts of the Zionist movement of which Rothschild was a representative. See: D. Bensimon, E. Errera, *Żydzi i Arabowie...*, pp. 38–39.

by Great Britain. This situation was aptly illustrated by the slogan, that it was 'the promise of one nation to give to second nation the country of a third'.

The Balfour Declaration was in conflict with the Sykes-Picot Agreement. At the end of the war, at the San Remo Conference in April 1920, it was officially accepted that Palestine and Transjordan would constitute a British Mandate. A year later, at the Cairo Conference, Britain created a separate mandate area out of Transjordan, the Emirate of Transjordan, headed by Emir Abd Allah, son of Al-Hussein, the Sharif of Mecca and ruler of Al-Hijaz. To the latter, for his participation in the fighting against the Turks, the British promised the creation of the Kingdom of Arabia, which was also to include Palestine. Britain therefore intended to cede the same land to both Arabs and Jews, while taking control of it itself. Also over Transjordan, the British High Commissioner based in Jerusalem exercised real authority<sup>21</sup>.

One element of the British Mandate in Palestine was the implementation of the Balfour Declaration, i.e. the acceptance of the arrival of increasing numbers of Jewish immigrants. At the start of the British Mandate, there were around 70,000 Jews living in Palestine among a population of 700,000, with the majority arriving within 40 years, starting in 1882<sup>22</sup>. With only 10% of the Jewish community in the total population of Palestine, Zionists considered large-scale Jewish immigration to be a key issue. As a result of the fourth aliyah, some 82,000 new immigrants arrived in Palestine between 1924 and 1928, almost as many as in the previous three combined<sup>23</sup>. Half of the newcomers were Jews from Poland. The vast majority of newcomers settled in the cities, especially Tel Aviv and Haifa, abandoning the socialist ideals and kibbutz experience of their predecessors<sup>24</sup>. By the end of the 1920s, 100,000 Jews had arrived in Palestine, but between 1927 and 1928 Jewish emigration from Palestine was greater than immigration, as many were unable to find their way in their new home. Between 1929 and 1939 there was a fifth aliyah, which saw the arrival of some 200,000 Jews<sup>25</sup>. Most Jewish

<sup>21</sup> A. Citlak, *Na wschód od Jordanu. W kraju braci Semitów* (Eng. East of the Jordan. In the land of the Semitic brothers), Warszawa 2015, p. 138.

<sup>22</sup> M. Bunton, *Konflikt palestyńsko-izraelski* (Eng. Palestinian-Israeli conflict), Łódź 2017, p. 42.

<sup>23</sup> J. Gelvin, *Konflikt izraelsko-palestyński...*, p. 83.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> M. Bunton, *Konflikt palestyńsko-izraelski...*, p. 43; J. Gelvin, *Konflikt izraelsko-palestyński...*, p. 140.



immigrants had fled anti-Semitic persecution in Germany and Poland. The size of the yishuv, as the community of Jewish inhabitants of Palestine was referred to before the creation of Israel, had doubled. Jews now made up 30% of the population, three times more than 15 years earlier. This would allow the Zionist vision to come true. More specialists in various fields also arrived at this time than in previous waves of immigration. The newcomers settled in the cities on the Mediterranean rather than in the agricultural areas in central Palestine where kibbutzim and moshavas were established<sup>26</sup>. They were created on land bought from Arab feudal lords, hitherto leased to Palestinian peasants (fellahs), who were thus expelled the land. In 1930, there were almost 30% unemployed Arab farmers in Palestine. By 1933, the British administration had registered 3271 complaints from Arab peasants evicted from their land by Jewish landlords. However, it is not known how many such families there actually were, as not all of them filed complaints<sup>27</sup>.

The Jews who came from Europe had more knowledge and experience in setting up state and bureaucratic institutions than the natives. In June 1920, an underground organisation called the Haganah (Eng. Defence)<sup>28</sup> was formed to defend Jewish settlers against the Arab inhabitants. In 1921, the General Federation of Workers in the Land of Israel (Ha-Histadrut ha-Klalit shel ha-Owdim b'Eretz Yisrael, or Histadrut for short) was founded. It represented the social and economic interests of its members and provided them with credit, health care and education. It also regulated the size of the labour market by exerting pressure on Jewish employers, and importantly, it already referred to Israel in its name. In 1929, the Jewish Agency was established and built up its own parastatal structures. A year later, the leftist Workers' Party of the Land of Israel (Mifleget ha-Poalim b'Eretz Yisrael, Mapai) was founded and took control of the Histadrut. It was headed by David Ben Gurion, a Polish Jew from Płońsk who had arrived in Palestine in 1906 as part of the second Aliyah<sup>29</sup>. In contrast

<sup>26</sup> M. Bunton, *Konflikt palestyńsko-izraelski...*, p. 43.

<sup>27</sup> Many wealthy Zionists working for Jewish settlement in Palestine bought up land in Palestine with no intention of emigrating there. The Rothschilds, for example, became the owners of large areas of Palestinian land. See: E. Wójcik, *Konflikt bliskowschodni. Aspekty militarne* (Eng. The Middle East Conflict. Military aspects), Warszawa 1975, p. 49.

<sup>28</sup> The Haganah was formed as a result of the reform of the Ha-Shomer organisation established in 1908.

<sup>29</sup> E. Wójcik, *Konflikt bliskowschodni...*, pp. 42–45.

to the well-organised and politically important Jewish leadership, the Palestinian Arabs were divided, which paralysed their actions. However, Palestinian nationalism had also been developing among them since the 1920s. In 1921, Al-Hajj Muhammad Amin al-Husseini was elected as grand mufti of Jerusalem, or religious head of the Palestinian Muslims, and the following year as president of the newly formed Supreme Muslim Council (Al-Majlis al-Islami al-Ala). Al-Hajj Muhammad Amin al-Husseini began to use Islam to promote his leadership of the growing Palestinian national movement, increasingly hostile to Jews and the British. This was primarily due to the progressive takeover of Palestinian territory by Jewish settlements<sup>30</sup>. The rivalry between Jews and Arabs was played to their advantage by the British. Such actions were bound to meet with protests from the indigenous inhabitants of the territories. The Palestinian Arabs considered the entire territory of the British Mandate of Palestine as their homeland. No one consulted them about Jewish settlement, as their territory was first part of the Ottoman Empire and had been under British protectorate since 1917. British involvement in the Zionist movement was seen as a serious threat to the national identity of the Arabs, who not only did not receive their own state, as the British had promised during World War I, but also came completely under their control.

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### Summary

The migration of Jews to Palestine, supported by Zionist organisations, disrupted prevailing social relations and became a source of tension between the Arab population and the newcomers. The situation was exacerbated by the policy of Britain, which during World War I promised the Sharif of Mecca the creation of the Kingdom of Arabia and the Zionists the establishment of a Jewish national headquarters in Palestine. The implementation of the Balfour Declaration, which was perceived as an alliance between the British authorities and the Jews, led Palestinian Arabs to regard the migration of Jews as a colonising settlement movement. The newcomers from Europe towered over the local population economically and civilisationally. They built political and defence structures. On the Arab side, however, a Palestinian nationalist movement developed, led by Al-Hajj Muhammad Amin al-Husseini, grand mufti of Jerusalem. The local Arabs regarded both the Jews and the British who held the mandate in Palestine as enemies.

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid., p. 47.

## Clashes between Palestinians and Jews before the creation of Israel

The first clash between the indigenous inhabitants of Palestine and Jewish settlers took place on 29 March 1886. Arab peasants attacked Petach Tikva, the oldest Jewish settlement, which was founded in 1878. Attacks on Jewish settlements began to increase before World War I. However, this was an episode that had no impact on the subsequent, increasingly tense Arab-Jewish relations. In response, in 1908 the Ha-Shomer (the Watchman) organisation was founded, whose members protected Jewish property for a fee. The attackers were mainly motivated by criminal motives, robbing Jews of their possessions, while the Shomers were convinced that they were guarding the Jewish national interest and often behaved provocatively towards Arabs<sup>31</sup>.

There were repeated violent anti-Jewish riots in 1920, including in Jerusalem in February, March and April. There were fatalities on both sides. On 1 March, several hundred Lebanese Arabs attacked the small Jewish settlement of Tel Chai, founded in 1905 and now located in Israel on the border with Lebanon. During its defence, five Arabs and seven Jews were killed, including Josef Trumpeldor, a participant in the Russo-Japanese War, an officer in the Tsarist army and founder of the Jewish Legion supporting British forces in the Middle East during World War I. The attack on Tel Chai rose to prominence as the first battle in the never-ending war, and Trumpeldor became a national hero. The youth organisation Betar (from Brit Trumpeldor - the Trumpeldor family) or Beitar (from Brit Josef Trumpeldor), founded in late 1923 by a revisionist faction within the Zionist movement, was named after him<sup>32</sup>.

At the beginning of April 1920, the Muslim festival in honour of the Prophet Moses (Id Nabi Musa)<sup>33</sup>, during which Arabs propagated independence slogans, turned into anti-Jewish riots. There were deaths and injuries on both sides. The fighting was the result of increased tension in Arab-Jewish relations as a consequence of the expansion of Jewish settlement in Palestine and the proclamation of the Kingdom of Greater Syria covering the territory of modern Syria, Lebanon and Palestine, which lasted only four

<sup>31</sup> K. Gebert, *Pokój z widokiem...*, p. 47.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 74. The Beitar organisation was very active in Poland. See: footnote 44.

<sup>33</sup> Moses (Musa) is recognised by Muslims as a prophet, as is Jesus (Isa). Until the end of the World War I, residents of Jerusalem who were followers of Judaism, Christianity or Islam celebrated festivals there commemorating figures from the Old Testament, the Bible and the Qur'an.

months (8 March - 24 July 1920). Support for this kingdom and its monarch, Faisal, the second son of Al-Hussein, was manifested in Jerusalem, among other places. It was not recognised by France and Britain. Its existence was ended by the entry of French troops into Damascus<sup>34</sup>. As a result of the anti-Jewish riots, disputes arose within the Zionist movement. Its leader Chaim Weizman and the aforementioned David Ben Gurion hoped for a *modus vivendi* with the Arabs and the establishment of a Jewish state. The former had already held talks on the subject with Faisal. David Ben Gurion did not initially consider the threat of Arab nationalism. He wanted Jewish and Arab workers to live in harmony and friendship. Later, he also claimed that the rights of the Palestinian Arabs would be guaranteed not only by an agreement with the Jews, but also by the fact that they were surrounded by and closely linked to the neighbouring Arab states of Palestine. However, every act of violence by the Arabs strengthened the position of the revisionists, led by Vladimir Jabotinsky, who believed that Arab nationalism was a force no less than Zionism. He claimed that the Jewish state, which in his plans was to lie on both banks of the Jordan River, would be violently attacked and could only be defended by building an impregnable wall<sup>35</sup>. He was one of the first to join the Haganah<sup>36</sup>.

At the beginning of May 1921, there was a riot in Jaffa. Arabs attacked a hotel for Jewish immigrants, who were accused of spreading immorality because the sight of hotel girls walking to the beach in male company in shorts was a moral provocation to the conservative Arab community. The riots turned into violence that overtook the Jaffa area and escalated into Arab attacks on Petach Tikva and Hadera. This was the first violent Arab rebellion against the Balfour Declaration. At the time, 47 Jews and 48 Arabs were killed and 146 Jews and 73 Arabs were wounded<sup>37</sup>.

Another difficult period came in 1922. In June, in order to calm the mood in Palestine, the British Parliament adopted a White Paper drafted by Winston Churchill, then Minister for the Colonies, who held pro-Zionist views. It reaffirmed the validity of the promises made in the Balfour Declaration. According to the document's interpretation

<sup>34</sup> J. Żebrowski, *Dzieje Syrii. Od czasów najdawniejszych do współczesności* (Eng. The History of Syria. From the earliest times to the present day), Warszawa 2006, pp. 166–168.

<sup>35</sup> S.S. Montefiore, *Jerozolima. Biografia* (Eng. *Jerusalem: the biography*), Warszawa 2011, p. 463.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>37</sup> K. Gebert, *Pokój z widokiem...*, pp. 82–83, 85.

of the Balfour Declaration, the establishment of a Jewish national seat was not to be understood as the Judaisation of the whole of Palestine and an infringement of the rights of the Arab community. In addition, quantitative restrictions on Jewish immigration were announced. Settlement visas could only be obtained by Jews who owned more than \$2,500<sup>38</sup>. This greatly reduced the number of new Jewish immigrants coming into Palestine and reduced the political aspirations of the Zionists. The Arabs, by being granted government resources, gained considerable self-reliance and the confidence of British support. Despite this, there were further anti-Jewish incidents in Palestine in 1925. The Jewish community responded with an expansion of the Haganah, including the purchase of armaments, the establishment of ammunition depots and the organisation of military training. This was to create self-defence groups capable of countering such speeches. The initiator of the creation of these groups was Jabotinsky. Militarism became the basis of his revisionist ideology. In the mid-1920s, he founded the Revisionist Zionist Alliance<sup>39</sup>. Its youth organisation was the aforementioned Betar. Members of this organisation wore uniforms and held parades. Jabotinsky wanted the Jews to mind their own business, instead of relying on Chaim Weizman's diplomatic endeavours with the British authorities. For he believed that the conflict with the Arabs was of an existential nature.

In 1928, clashes began to occur at the Western Wall in Jerusalem. The British directed the police to suppress the riots, and at that time the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem, Al-Hajj Mohammed Amin al-Husseini, spread the rumour that the Jews intended to occupy the Al-Aqsa Mosque on the Temple Mount (Al-Haram ash-Sharif). At the same time, Jabotinsky proclaimed Jewish sovereignty at the Western Wall, which provoked even more anger from the Arabs, who attacked the Jews. On their part, there were in turn retaliatory killings, including of women and children, as well as lynchings of Arab bystanders. Most of the losses, however, were inflicted on the Arabs by British forces of law and order attempting to stop the slaughter. By 28 August 1929, when the British managed to bring the situation under control, 133 Jews and 116 Arabs

<sup>38</sup> P. Johnson, *Historia Żydów...*, pp. 618–619, 623.

<sup>39</sup> The name comes from Jabotinsky's central demand that the League of Nations should revise the Mandate and restore to Palestine a disconnected Transjordan, which the revisionists also intended to settle.

had been killed and 339 Jews and 232 Arabs injured<sup>40</sup>. The following year, a commission of inquiry set up to investigate the events published a report blaming both sides for the incidents, with the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem taking the main responsibility on the Arab side<sup>41</sup>. The events of 1929 confirmed the revisionists around Jabotinsky that only the militarisation of the Jewish community would allow it to survive in Palestine. At this time, David Ben Gurion also paid increasing attention to the development of the Haganah. It was developing from a loose network of village self-defence groups into an underground army in which almost all young men served, and was commanded by a disciplined cadre. The Haganah armed itself through the smuggling of weapons and their cottage industry in the kibbutzim<sup>42</sup>.

The rise of the 1929 unrest resulted in the publication of another White Paper in October 1930. Its principal author was the British Minister for the Colonies, Sidney Webb, Lord Passfield. The document announced a reduction in the number of Jewish immigrants and restricted their rights to acquire land in Palestine. This initiated illegal Jewish immigration<sup>43</sup>.

The Revisionists, who had lost confidence in the Zionist leadership, founded their own secret armed organisation, the National Military Organisation (Irgun Zvai Leumi), known as the Irgun for short, in 1931. The recruitment base of the new armed group was Betar, and Jabotinsky became its commander-in-chief in 1936<sup>44</sup>. The Arab community, although broken into clans and spheres of influence, also built up armed formations, of which Al-Hajj Mohammed Amin al-Husseini and Izz ad-Din al-Qassam, a participant in the anti-French uprising in Syria who came to Palestine

<sup>40</sup> K. Gebert, *Pokój z widokiem...*, pp. 99–100.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., p. 103.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., pp. 101–102.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., p. 103. In the 1930s, Jabotinsky's movement had a large following in Poland, where the number of Betar members was around 60,000. While in Poland in 1936, Jabotinsky was received by Prime Minister Felicjan Sławoj Składkowski and Foreign Minister Józef Beck. The Polish government decided to give support to the Irgun organisation. This consisted of a one-off subsidy of 250,000 zloty for the purchase of weapons, as well as the organisation of secret military courses for Irgun fighters. The last such course was held in Andrychów in the spring of 1939. The Polish authorities also supported illegal emigration to Palestine, for which they allocated 100,000 zloty. Thanks to this action, about 10,000 young Betar Jews left for Palestine. See: K. Kubiak, *Wojna o niepodległość Izraela...*, pp. 66–68.

after its collapse in 1921, were fervent advocates. Thanks to Al-Hajj Mohammed Amin al-Husseini, he became imam of the Haifa mosque. He also became involved in stimulating the national consciousness of the Palestinian Arabs. After the 1929 riots, he stepped up agitation, calling on the peasants to organise themselves and resist the Jews and the British. In 1930 he founded the Black Hand organisation (Al-Kaff al-Aswad), to which he recruited fellahs and provided military training. The underground network of armed units that was formed included around 800 people. Izz ad-Din al-Qassam decided to fight the British and the Jews on his own, and justified the need for violence on religious grounds. The actions of the Black Hand came to be known as the Sheikh al-Qassam uprising. They mainly consisted of organising attacks on kibbutzim and blowing up railway lines. Izz ad-Din al-Qassam was killed in November 1935 during an exchange of fire with British police. His death intensified resistance to the British and the Jews, and his funeral attracted the largest crowds in the history of Palestine to date<sup>45</sup>.

In the spring of 1936, leading Arab leaders united and formed the Arab High Committee (Al-Lajna al-Arabiyya al-Ulja) headed by Al-Hajj Mohammed Amin al-Husseini. The committee was also the representative of the Arab population in Palestine. It declared a general strike and spearheaded the uprising. However, in practice, the actions of the insurgents were led by local national committees. These were established simultaneously in Jerusalem, Nablus, Jaffa and other cities, where the British quickly suppressed the rebellion. The Arab High Committee ceased to function properly in them. Al-Hajj Mohammed Amin al-Husseini had to go into hiding before being arrested. When calm was restored in the cities, the uprising spread to the Palestinian villages. Many members of the Black Hand organisation took part in the fighting. The armed groups in the Galilee were led by Fawzi al-Qawuqji, who, like the late al-Qassam, had come from Syria, and in the area of Jerusalem and Hebron by the Palestinian Abdel Kader al-Husajni alias Mansur. Both later played an important role in the war against Israeli independence<sup>46</sup>. In the provinces, violence was on the increase. The British and Jews were fighting against the Arabs. David Ben Gurion arranged plans with Haganah commanders for the defence of the Yishuv, while imposing

<sup>45</sup> J. Gelvin, *Konflikt izraelsko-palestyński...*, p. 123–124.

<sup>46</sup> K. Gebert, *Pokój z widokiem...*, pp. 118–119.

a policy of restraint (Hebrew: *havlagah*) that ruled out mass reprisals, even in the case of acts of terrorism against Jews. Terrorist activities against Arabs, however, were continuously carried out by the Irgun. Arab militias responded with no less cruelty<sup>47</sup>. During the uprising, the Palestine Royal Commission, also known as the Robert Peel Commission after its chairman, was established. Its aim was to find a way for Arabs and Jews to co-exist in the territory of Palestine. In July 1937, the commission published a report with a proposal to divide Palestine into a Jewish part in the Galilee area, the Jezreel Valley and the coastal plain, an Arab part and territory under a British protectorate. Palestinians and Jews were proposed to be granted territories equal in area, despite the fact that Jews made up a third of the population of Palestine. The Palestinians responded to this proposal by increasing insurgent activity<sup>48</sup>.

On 26 September 1937, in Nazareth, an Arab militia assassinated Lewis Andrews, The British district commissioner for the Galilee, marking the first assassination of a senior official of the Mandate administration in Palestine. On 1 October, the British authorities dissolved the Arab High Committee and issued arrest warrants for all its members. The Mufti was removed from office. Fearing arrest, disguised as a woman, he fled Jerusalem for the coast, from where he sailed by boat to Beirut and then took refuge in Iraq. Palestinian insurgents, however, continued to attack the British and Jews<sup>49</sup>. It was during this time that the keffiyeh (also known in Arabic as a *hattah*) worn on the head by peasants, a popular checked headscarf held up with a band (Arabic: *agal*), became a symbol of Palestinian identity and patriotism. To bring the situation under control, Britain sent an additional 10,000 troops to Palestine. A total of 30,000 British servicemen attempted to establish peace<sup>50</sup>. The threatened Jewish community became more determined. The Irgun grew in strength and responded to Arab terror with even greater terror - the organisation launched mass terrorism in the Middle East in the form of attacks carried out with explosives. Irgun terrorists planted bombs in Arab bazaars, where dozens of people were killed. Jewish organisations condemned these attacks and did not accept that they were

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid., p. 120.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., p. 117.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> K. Kubiak, *Wojna o niepodległość Izraela...*, p. 50.



initiated by Jews<sup>51</sup>. The lack of response saw the Irgun, previously a small grouping, grow in size to almost a division in the 1940s. Most effective in the fight against the Palestinian uprising, however, were the Special Night Squads (SNS) under the command of Orde Charles Wingate, a mystic and Christian Zionist, sent by the British to Palestine in 1936. He was convinced that the establishment of a Jewish state would enable Christian prophecies to be fulfilled. The Arabs fighting the Zionists were thus enemies not only of the Jews and the Mandate authorities, but simply of God, and the enemies of God had to be fought ruthlessly. There were 50 British soldiers and about 150 Jewish volunteers serving in the SNS. Their task was to protect the oil pipeline leading from Iraq to Haifa. When there were acts of sabotage, the SNS punished the inhabitants of nearby villages<sup>52</sup>.

Fighting continued until May 1939. During the three years of the uprising, 400 Jews, 200 Britons and some 5,000 Arabs were killed, including more than 3,000 insurgents<sup>53</sup>. A significant number of Palestinian leaders were imprisoned or exiled. It is calculated that the loss of Palestinian Arabs as a result of the uprising was 10% of the total male population<sup>54</sup>. Thousands of homes were destroyed and the economy was in ruins. The British realised the need for a change in the exercise of their mandate and reconsidered their support for the establishment of a Jewish national headquarters in Palestine. The uprising marked the first such important point in recent Palestinian history<sup>55</sup>. It is important to note that it erupted during the period of the fifth aliyah, during which there was a sharp increase in the Jewish population, caused primarily by their departure from Germany after Adolf Hitler's rise to power. In August 1933, representatives of the German authorities and Jewish institutions signed the Haavara Agreement (Heskem ha-Awara - transfer agreement). The Zionists were represented by Chaim Arlosoroff.

<sup>51</sup> It is only since the late 20th century that some Jewish historians have begun to reveal previously hidden dark sides of the history of Israel and the Zionist movement, for which they are often accused of betrayal. See: K. Gebert, *Pokój z widokiem...*, pp. 119–120.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 120–122.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 121.

<sup>54</sup> M. Bunton, *Konflikt palestyński-izraelski...*, p. 59.

<sup>55</sup> The Palestinian uprising of 1936–1939 is considered the most important - next to *al-nakba* of 1948 - turning point in modern Palestinian history. See: J. Gelvin, *Konflikt izraelsko-palestyński...*, p. 131.

Under this agreement, some 60,000 German Jews left for Palestine from 1933 until the outbreak of World War II. Among them were well-to-do and educated people who, after the establishment of Israel in 1948, formed the elite of that state<sup>56</sup>. In 1939, the British authorities published another white paper. In it, the British government declared that there were more than 450,000 Jews in Palestine, proving that the Balfour Declaration for the creation of a Jewish state had been fulfilled. In addition, a limit of 75,000 Jews immigrating to Palestine over five years was set, after which immigration was to be subject to the consent of the Arabs. The ability of Zionists to purchase land was restricted to designated areas. There was also a call for the establishment of a unitary Palestinian state in which Arabs and Jews were to share power. It was assumed that ten years would be required for its establishment<sup>57</sup>. Despite various restrictions, illegal emigration from Europe to Palestine continued, intensifying in the late 1930s and early 1940s and then after the end of World War II. It was dealt with by the Institute for Illegal Immigration (Mossad le Aliya Bet). Illegal emigration from Europe was called in Hebrew *bricha* (escape) by Jews<sup>58</sup>.

World War II complicated the situation not only in Palestine, but also in the entire Middle East. It should be noted that in the 1930s the anti-British and anti-Jewish attitudes of the Arab population were of interest to Berlin. The Nazi authorities sought to use the uprising in Palestine to forge alliances with local leaders. Among other things, young Arab nationalists were invited to NSDAP conventions. The Arab community was closer to Nazi Germany than to other European countries or the USA, since Britain and France exercised direct control over it. In the autumn of 1941, Al-Hajj Mohammed Amin al-Husseini made his way from Iraq, where he was staying after fleeing Palestine, to Germany, where he met Hitler in November. From then until the end of the war, mufti Al-Hajj Mohammed Amin al-Husseini remained in Berlin and there rendered political and

<sup>56</sup> H. Koziel, *Jak sabotowano próby ratowania Żydów* (Eng. How attempts to save Jews were sabotaged), "Rzecz o Historii", suplement to "Rzeczpospolita", 4 II 2021; T. Łupina, *Za wszelką cenę, czyli ukryta historia powstania Izraela* (Eng. At all costs, or the hidden history of the creation of Israel), "Zakazana Historia" 2019, no. 11, p. 57.

<sup>57</sup> M. Bunton, *Konflikt palestyńsko-izraelski...*, p. 60.

<sup>58</sup> K. Gebert, *Pokój z widokiem...*, p. 128; J. Jeremicz, *Bricha – nielegalna emigracja Żydów z Polski do Palestyny w latach 1944–1947* (Eng. Bricha - the illegal emigration of Jews from Poland to Palestine between 1944 and 1947), Ośrodek Brama Grodzka – Teatr NN, <https://teatrnn.pl/leksykon/artykuly/bricha-nielegalna-emigracja-zydow-z-polski-do-palestyny-w-latach-19441947/> [accessed: 12 I 2024].

propaganda services to the Third Reich. He was an associate of Heinrich Himmler and Adolf Eichmann. He took an active part in the formation of the Muslim Legions and supported the mass extermination of the Jews and, according to some opinions, was a co-author of its plan. After World War II, he settled in Lebanon and never returned to Palestine<sup>59</sup>.

After the outbreak of World War II, David Ben Gurion ordered the Haganah to call off all armed operations against British forces and disband special task forces. He then coined a slogan that has become a permanent part of Jewish history: *we must help the British army as if there were no 'White Paper', and we must fight the 'White Paper' as if there were no war*<sup>60</sup>. However, the most radicalised group of Irgun fighters, led by Abraham Stern, rejected the ceasefire. In 1939, they left the organisation and founded a group called the Fighters for the Freedom of Israel (Lohamei Herut Israel, Lehi), also known as the Stern Gang. This was a terrorist organisation that killed Britons in Palestine and Egypt. Stern, fascinated by fascism, was looking to establish a partnership with Germany that would target Britain, in return for agreeing to establish a Jewish state in Palestine and transport European Jews to it. He even wrote a memorandum to Hitler, but it went unanswered<sup>61</sup>. In 1942, the Jewish armed groups were reinforced by several hundred Polish Jewish soldiers, who, numbering some 2,500, arrived in the Middle East with the army of General Władysław Anders. These soldiers deserted with the tacit approval of the Polish command or were exempted from the military oath, such as Menachem Begin, the former leader of the Betar movement in Poland, who joined the Irgun after leaving the Polish army<sup>62</sup>. In December 1943, he headed

<sup>59</sup> This issue has been extensively covered in publications: K.M. Mallmann, M. Cüppers, *Półksiężyc i swastyka. III Rzesza a świat arabski* (Eng. Crescent and Swastika. The Third Reich, the Arabs and Palestine), Warszawa 2009; B. Rubin, W.G. Schwanitz, *Hitlerowcy, islamisci i narodziny nowożytnego Bliskiego Wschodu* (Eng. Nazis, Islamists and the birth of the modern Middle East), Kraków 2014.

<sup>60</sup> S. Peres, D. Landau, *Ben Gurion. Żywot polityczny* (Eng. Ben Gurion. A political life), Wołowiec 2013, p. 82.

<sup>61</sup> J. Tomaszewicz, *Terroryzm. Na tle przemocy politycznej. Zarys encyklopedyczny* (Eng. Terrorism. Against the background of political violence. An encyclopaedic outline), Katowice 2000, p. 92.

<sup>62</sup> After the establishment of the state of Israel, Menachem Begin began his political career. He founded the Freedom (Herut) party. Later, as a result of a merger with other right-wing groups, Herut evolved into the right-wing Unity (Likud) bloc, on whose behalf Begin became Prime Minister in June 1977. He supported Jewish settlement in the Occupied

this organisation, deprived of a leader after Jabotinsky's death in 1940, Begin made terrorism his primary method of struggle. Another Polish soldier, Yitzhak Yezernitsky, who later became Prime Minister of Israel as Yitzhak Shamir, joined Lehi. In 1944, the Irgun officially declared war on the British<sup>63</sup>. Together with Lehi it began to organise terrorist attacks, the groups often working together. British military facilities were blown up, police stations and railway stations were attacked, and British officials were killed. These actions were admired by a significant proportion of the yishuv. Less popular, because not approved by the yishuv, were the Irgun's bank robberies and liquidations of Jewish collaborators. The most serious act of violence by these extremist groups was the assassination in Cairo in November 1944 of the British minister Walter Guinness, Lord Moyne, a well-known politician and privately a friend of Churchill. Lord Moyne was responsible for implementing British anti-immigration policy in Palestine. David Ben Gurion personally directed the Haganah's action against Lehi and Irgun, aimed at capturing and handing over fighters of both groups to the British. The action lasted four months. Many Irgun and Lehi members were deported, but Begin himself could not be arrested. In 1946, attacks by Jews reached a scale comparable to the Arab uprising and far surpassed it in terms of casualties. The most brutal attack, in the preparation of which Begin was involved, was organised on 22 July 1946. A powerful explosive device caused the collapse of a wing of the King David Hotel in Jerusalem, which housed the mandate authorities. As a result 91 people were killed and 45 injured<sup>64</sup>.

The terrorist campaign on Palestine was combined with a perfectly organised propaganda campaign by the Zionist movement throughout the world, particularly in the United States. Washington began to unequivocally lend its support to the Jewish side, provoking hostility towards the US in the Arab world and opposition from London, which increasingly realised that maintaining control over Palestine was becoming unviable for the British. One of the main demands made by Zionist activists was the unconditional and immediate admission to Palestine of 100,000 Jews in transit camps, often Holocaust survivors. This demand was

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Palestinian Territories. He led efforts to bring Russian and Ethiopian Jews to Israel. In 1983, he stepped down as Prime Minister. He died in 1992 in Tel Aviv.

<sup>63</sup> K. Gebert, *Pokój z widokiem...*, pp. 141–143.

<sup>64</sup> S. Peres, D. Landau, *Ben Gurion...*, p. 102, 108.

supported by the Americans and by European public opinion in general<sup>65</sup>. Agreeing to let in so many Jewish emigrants was a breach of British commitments set out in the 1939 White Paper, limiting Jewish emigration to Palestine to 75,000 people over five years. The emir Abd Allah joined the negotiations on the issue and in May 1946 declared the independence of Transjordan and was simultaneously proclaimed king. This created the Hashemite Kingdom of Transjordan (renamed in 1949 the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, popularly known as Jordan). The British authorities found themselves in a very difficult situation. They could have stepped up repression against the Jews or carried out the partition of Palestine, which the Zionists demanded. In 1947, however, Clement Attlee's government found another solution. It turned the problem of Palestine over to the United Nations, which set up the 11-member United Nations Special Committee on Palestine. Its activities were boycotted by the Arab side, while Jews cooperated with it. Most of the states represented on the Committee were in favour of partition, and the plan to carry it out favoured the Jewish side. The majority of Palestinian territory (14,000 km<sup>2</sup>) was to belong to the minority Jews, while more numerous Arab community would have 11,000 km<sup>2</sup> of territory. Jerusalem and its administrative district were declared an international zone<sup>66</sup>. This division confirmed that with successive acts of violence and rounds of negotiations, Palestinian Arabs experienced a gradual shrinking of the area they inhabited, which became even more apparent in the following years.

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### Summary

The period after World War I was marked by clashes between Palestinian Arabs and Jews. The Palestinians resented the progressive seizure of land by the ever-increasing number of Jews, while the Zionists defended their possessions and took control of more land. At the same time, they strengthened and rearmed their military groups. Subsequent white papers promulgated by the British were rejected by both sides in the conflict. From the mid-1920s, the Jewish revisionist movement, led by Jabotinsky, became increasingly important. He believed that only a victorious struggle against the Arabs would create the conditions for the establishment of a Jewish state, which should also include Transjordan. The Revisionists founded their own armed organisation called Irgun, carrying out terrorist activities against the Arabs. In 1936, a Palestinian uprising broke out, which

<sup>65</sup> J. Gelvin, *Konflikt izraelsko-palestyński...*, pp. 144–145.

<sup>66</sup> B. Wróblewski, *Jordania* (Eng. Jordan), Warszawa 2011, pp. 92–94.

lasted three years. In it, the Palestinians suffered defeat. Many Arab leaders were killed and others had to flee abroad. Among them was the long-time mufti of Jerusalem and leader of the Palestinian nationalist movement, Al-Hajj Mohammed Amin al-Husseini, who found refuge in Nazi Germany and, among other things, supported the annihilation of the Jews. After the outbreak of World War II, there was a split in the Jewish armed movement in Palestine. The majority of Jewish fighters, primarily from the Haganah, opted for an armistice with the British, while the Irgun continued to target them. After the war ended, the organisation did not stop its terrorist activities. The Jewish armed organisations were well organised and well commanded, supported by volunteers from Poland, including Jewish soldiers from the Gen. Władysław Anders army.

### The creation of Israel

On 29 November 1947, a majority of UN member states voted in favour of the partition of Palestine. This resulted in the passing of UN General Assembly Resolution 181 providing for the creation of two states, one Jewish and one Arab<sup>67</sup>, which the Palestinian leaders did not agree to. The day after the UN vote was a great celebration for the Jews and a day of determined protest for the Arabs, which turned into prolonged battles. The Jews had a clear advantage in them. The murder of the inhabitants of the village of Deir Yassin on 9 April 1948 by the Irgun and the Stern Gang went down in history. Those who survived were deported to Jerusalem. In the same month, the Haganah launched an operation known as 'Plan Dalet' (Plan D) and gave its officers orders to destroy, displace or occupy Arab villages. The acts of atrocity that occurred during this operation triggered a wave of panicked fleeing of Arab residents from village after village. Others were forced to leave their homes located in Jewish-controlled territories<sup>68</sup>. In 1948, Haganah volunteers were trained in Poland - in Bolków in Lower Silesia. The exercises were conducted by Polish and Soviet officers and Haganah activists who had come from Germany. After their completion, the volunteers were sent via Prague to Paris and then from French ports to Palestine. A total of about 3,000 new Jewish fighters arrived there from Poland<sup>69</sup>.

On 14 May 1948, David Ben Gurion proclaimed the *Declaration of Independence of the State of Israel*. The Arab states rejected the partition

<sup>67</sup> Ibid., p. 94.

<sup>68</sup> M. Bunton, *Konflikt palestyńsko-izraelski...*, pp. 76–77.

<sup>69</sup> K. Kubiak, *Wojna o niepodległość Izraela...*, pp. 83–84.

plan and declared that they would fight for one undivided Palestine. The following day, after the final withdrawal of British forces, they began the war, later called the First Israeli-Arab War<sup>70</sup>. Transjordan, Egypt, Syria, Lebanon and Iraq took part. They sent expeditionary troops to Palestine. The Arab troops totalled around 25,000 soldiers, while the Israel Defence Forces (Tsva ha-Hagana le-Yisra'el, Cahal) numbered 35,000<sup>71</sup>. The fighting ended in July 1949. As a result of this war, in which the Jews won a decisive victory, Israel gained 50% more territory than it had been allocated in the UN partition plan. Within a year, Israel had taken control of 78% of the former British Mandate of Palestine, including West Jerusalem. During the fighting, some 750,000 Palestinians fled or were expelled from their homes. The largest number of them (400,000) found refuge in Jordan. Some 200,000 Palestinians were confined to a small strip of land, 41 km long and 6 to 12 km wide (360 km<sup>2</sup> in total), in the Gaza Strip, which was already home to 88,000 people<sup>72</sup>. It came under the control of Egypt. Assistance to refugees began to be provided by the UN-established the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, which continues to do so today<sup>73</sup>. For the Arab inhabitants of Palestine, the war was a historic catastrophe, in Arabic referred to as *al-nakba*. Every year they organise anti-Israeli protests because of it. Apart from Israel, the war benefited Jordan the most, which annexed land in the West Bank and secured control of East Jerusalem, along with the Temple Mount, while

<sup>70</sup> In total, there have been five Israeli-Arab wars: the first between 1948 and 1949 (the War of Independence), the second in 1956 (the Suez Crisis), the third in 1967 (the Six-Day War), the fourth in 1973 (the Yom Kippur War) and the fifth between 1982 and 1985 (the Lebanon War).

<sup>71</sup> The official name of the Israeli army is the Israel Defense Forces (also known by its English acronym IDF). It was established on 26 V 1948 by a decree of the Provisional Government of Israel. It simultaneously banned the creation or maintenance of armed groups. The core of the new Israeli army consisted of Haganah fighters together with the Strike Force (Pelugot ha-Machac, or Palmach for short), which had been formed in 1941. On 1 VI 1948, Menachem Begin, leader of the Irgun, signed an agreement with the government providing for Irgun fighters to join the Cahal. Outside the army were Lehi fighters. The organisation supposedly disbanded, but the core of activists was still active. On 17 IX 1948, the UN mediator, Swedish diplomat Folke Bernadotte, was shot dead by them in Jerusalem. Following this murder, David Ben Gurion ordered the arrest of many of Lehi and Irgun members. See: S. Peres, D. Landau, *Ben Gurion...*, p. 144.

<sup>72</sup> M. Bunton, *Konflikt palestyńsko-izraelski...*, p. 74, 77.

<sup>73</sup> For Palestinians, the UN has adopted the principle of inheritance of refugee status, which does not apply to any other refugee group.

Israel subjugated neighbourhoods in the western part of the city, along with the only road connecting it to the new state of Israel<sup>74</sup>.

The July 1949 armistice agreements failed to resolve two issues that became the subject of years of dispute - the definition of Israel's borders and the future of Palestinian refugees living in the camps, despite the fact that, according to UN General Assembly Resolution 194 of December 1948, they were allowed to return to their homes. This gave rise to the ever-present issue of the 'right of return'. Israeli law from 1950 stipulates that any Jew could settle in Israel and obtain Israeli citizenship immediately upon arrival<sup>75</sup>. Israel justified its disagreement with the return of the Palestinians on the grounds that mainstream Zionism denied the existence of a Palestinian people. Zionists maintained that the Palestinians were simply Arabs, so they should find a home in any of the Arab states, from Mauritania to Iraq<sup>76</sup>. Many refugees attempted to cross into Israeli-controlled territory to reunite with their families, reclaim property or sabotage the actions of Jewish settlers occupying their property. Israeli reprisals have been ruthless against both Palestinian refugees and the countries from which they crossed into Israel, primarily Jordan and Egypt.

While the Arab population of Palestine declined sharply, the Jewish population grew rapidly. At the end of the War of Independence in 1949, Israel's population was 800,000 people, of whom 160,000 (20%) were Palestinian Arabs remaining in or living near their homes<sup>77</sup>. By 1951, Israel's population had grown to 1.3 million and exceeded 2 million in the first ten years of the state's existence. In addition to Jews from Europe, known as Ashkenazim, Jews from the Arab states of North Africa, known as Sephardim, and Oriental Jews, the Mizrachi, increasingly migrated to Israel. They came voluntarily through agitation and propaganda campaigns or were forced to emigrate by the authorities of the countries in which they resided.

In summary, the period following the establishment of Israel was dominated by conflicts between the Jewish state and its Arab neighbours. The tense situation was further complicated by the rivalry between the Arab states themselves, in which Gamal Abdel Naser played

<sup>74</sup> M. Bunton, *Konflikt palestyńsko-izraelski...*, p. 77, 80–81.

<sup>75</sup> A. Dudzińska, *Tożsamość żydowska a polityka imigracyjna Izraela* (Eng. Jewish identity and Israel's immigration policy), Warszawa 2014, p. 103.

<sup>76</sup> M. Bunton, *Konflikt palestyńsko-izraelski...*, pp. 155–156.

<sup>77</sup> A. Dudzińska, *Tożsamość żydowska a polityka imigracyjna...*, p. 103.



an important role. The Egyptian president was the biggest proponent of the ideologies of Arab nationalism and pan-Arabism, pursued in order to get rid of colonial dependencies and develop the region. The Palestinians in particular saw him as a leader capable of uniting the Arab states against Israel. However, both Naser and other Arab leaders used the Palestinian issue to pursue their own political ambitions. It is worth adding that this was compounded by the rivalry between the USSR and the US in the Arab world<sup>78</sup>. The Gaza Strip began to play a special role in Egypt's policy towards Israel as early as the early 1950s, serving as a base for the advance into Israeli territory. Agents of the Egyptian General Intelligence Directorate (Jihaz al-Mukhabarat al-Amma) began to train and assist Palestinian fighters there, among whom were mainly young Palestinians forced to leave their homes during the fighting of 1947-1949. In 1952 Khalil al-Wazir, later better known as Abu Jihad, and Salah Khalaf, who later adopted the nickname Abu Iyad, formed the Truth Battalion (Katibat al-Hakk), initially operating under the guise of the Society of Muslim Brothers (Jamiyat Al-Ichwan al-Muslimin). Members of this organisation were called fedayeen<sup>79</sup>. Fedayeen often infiltrated Israel as a result of individual initiatives or at the inspiration of clan councils. General Moshe Dayan, head of military operations at the Israeli military's General Staff, entrusted Major Ariel Sharon with the secret mission of eradicating Palestinian militant bases in the Gaza Strip. The unit's first action, which gave rise to the notorious Unit 101, was against the Al-Buraij refugee camp, where at least 20 civilians were killed. The brutality of this and other Israeli operations was intended to act as a deterrent and to raise the morale of the Israeli military. While the latter objective was achieved, the Cahal operations failed to intimidate Palestinian militants. As a result of repeated Fedayeen attacks on Israeli

<sup>78</sup> The beginning of this rivalry came in 1956 as a result of the Egyptian authorities' decision to nationalise the Suez Canal. The USSR then provided assistance to that country in the construction of the Aswan High Dam and subsequently supported national liberation movements in Asian and African countries as part of the decolonisation process.

<sup>79</sup> Previously, the term 'fedayeen' was used to refer to Palestinians who fought against the Jews between 1947 and 1949, but was later extended to include all other Palestinian fighters. A fedayeen is a person who sacrifices his or her life for God or others. The word is the secular equivalent of mujahid, which has religious connotations. In the Middle East, the name fedayeen is used to refer to Palestinian fighters, with the exception of Muslim fighters, for whom the word mujahid is used.

territory and retaliatory actions by the Israeli military, in which more and more Egyptian soldiers and policemen were killed, the Egyptian authorities decided to pacify the Palestinians in Gaza. In September 1954, some 200 Palestinian militants were arrested, among them Khalil al-Wazir, and in October of the same year, after a failed attempt to assassinate the Egyptian president, repression affected members of the Muslim Brotherhood. In 1955, Khalil al-Wazir and Salah Khalaf declared a break with them as a precondition for receiving discreet support from Egyptian intelligence. At the same time, a large number of Palestinian activists were released from Egyptian prisons, having adopted leftist, and many of them communist, ideology upon their release<sup>80</sup>.

Israeli Prime Minister David Ben Gurion in 1956 admitted that the Zionists had committed a historic annexation of Palestinian land:

Why should the Arabs make peace? If I were an Arab leader, I would never sign an agreement with Israel. It is normal: we have taken their country. (...) There has been anti-Semitism, the Nazis, Hitler, Auschwitz, but was that their fault? They see but one thing: we have come and we have stolen their country. Why would they accept that? They may perhaps forget in one or two generations' time, but for the moment there is no chance. So it's simple: we have to stay strong and maintain a powerful army<sup>81</sup>.

This view became widespread after the Second Israeli-Arab War (which lasted from October to November 1956), which broke out after President Gamal Abdel Naser announced the nationalisation of the Suez Canal. Cahal and British and French forces took part in the invasion of Egypt. Israel then occupied the Gaza Strip for four months, where between 900 and 1,200 people were killed and hundreds injured and arrested<sup>82</sup>. The Muslim Brother activists who went underground began to operate as the Unity

<sup>80</sup> J.P. Filiu, *Historia Gazy* (Eng. Gaza: a history), Warszawa 2017, pp. 98–103.

<sup>81</sup> Quoted after: E. Jasiewicz, *Podpalić Gazę* (Eng. Set Gaza on fire), Warszawa 2011, p. 18. Ben Gurion was to present this opinion in 1956 to Nahum Goldmann, his close associate, who later criticised the Israeli government for, among other things, its over-emphasis on military power and the government's confrontational policy towards the Arabs. He promoted the position that the only chance for the long-term survival of the Jewish state was to accept all the rights of the Palestinians. See: N. Goldmann, *The Future of Israel*, "Foreign Affairs" 1970, no. 3, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/egypt/1970-04-01/future-israel> [accessed: 15 IX 2012]; idem, *The Jewish Paradox*, London 1978, p. 98.

<sup>82</sup> J.P. Filiu, *Historia Gazy...*, p. 118.

Association (Jama'at at-Tawhid). It has engaged in a long-term process of Islamising Gaza Strip society with a peaceful character<sup>83</sup>.

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### Summary

After the end of the World War II, the British were unable to suppress the Zionist military campaign in Palestine. At the same time, the tragedy of the Jews during the war triggered strong support among the international community for the creation of a Jewish state. To the UN's announcement in November 1947 of the division of Palestine into Arab and Jewish parts, the Palestinians responded with a strong protest that escalated into violent fighting. Following the declaration of Israel's independence in mid-May 1948, neighbouring Arab countries sent military forces into Israel. The war proved victorious for Israel, which increased by 50% the territory allocated to it in the UN partition plan. For the Palestinians, the war was a historic disaster. Hundreds of thousands of Arabs were forced to leave their homes and live in camps within Palestine and in neighbouring countries. In contrast, thousands of Jews from Europe, Asia and Africa flocked to Israel. Meanwhile, anti-Jewish armed groups began to emerge in the Gaza Strip at the initiative of Egypt, which controlled the territory. Young Palestinian militants, mainly from refugee camps, attacked Israeli territory, and Israel responded with military operations. A religious movement led by the Muslim Brotherhood was also strengthening in the Gaza Strip.

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### Al-Fatah and the Palestine Liberation Organisation at the forefront of the fight against Israel

In 1957, most of the supporters of the armed struggle for the liberation of Palestine left the Gaza Strip and settled in the Gulf countries, and control of the Strip was reassumed by Egypt. Abu Jihad and Abu Iyad and other fedayeen went to Kuwait, where in 1958 they founded the organisation Palestine Liberation Movement, better known as Al-Fatah (from the end-reading initials of the Arabic name: Harakat at-Tahrir al-Filastini), which can be translated as victory or conquest. Muhammad Abdel Rauf Arafat, commonly known as Yasser Arafat, was chosen as its leader. While travelling in the Middle East and Europe, Al-Fatah activists raised funds for an independent Palestinian state and gained allies. Particularly valuable to the activists were contacts with Palestinian students in the Federal Republic of Germany, where they began to publish the magazine Al-Awda (the Return). Contacts between activists in Kuwait and Germany proved

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<sup>83</sup> Ibid., p. 121.

to be an important source of support, because they provided funds for Al-Fatah's first guerrilla operations and enabled the recruitment of many fighters. At its peak, the organisation's European structure had branches in twenty-six West German and three Austrian cities, and recruited Palestinian fighters in France, Italy, Spain and Sweden. The contacts made in Europe, especially among German revolutionary socialists, became important when Al-Fatah entered the path of international terrorism in the 1970s. The breakthrough in the activities of this organisation, hitherto lacking the support of Arab governments, was the opening of an office in Algiers in 1962<sup>84</sup>. Abu Jihad became the head of the Bureau de la Palestine in the Algerian capital. Two years later, the first Al-Fatah training camp was set up in Algeria for around 100 fighters, where they learned the basics of guerrilla warfare. Twenty others trained at the newly opened military academy in Cherchell. Contacts were made in Algiers with Chinese diplomats, who extended an invitation to Beijing to the Al-Fatah leadership<sup>85</sup>.

At the beginning of June 1964 in Cairo, during a meeting of the League of Arab States (Jama'at ad-Duwal al-Arabiyya), also known as the Arab League, the Palestine Liberation Organisation, PLO (Munazzamat at-Tahrir al-Filastiniyyah) was established on the initiative of Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Naser. Operating initially in Jordan, the PLO was the official representation of Palestine in the Arab League. According to its founding declaration, the PLO took responsibility for the liberation and future of Palestine. It was to unite the militant and political organisations operating in the Palestinian camps. The organisation was headed by Ahmad al-Shukeiri. Almost immediately, internal disputes and conflicts with Arab states emerged in the PLO. In July 1964, Shukeiri issued a statement in Amman stating that the territory of the Kingdom of Jordan was part of Palestine. This aroused the anger of the Jordanian authorities and prompted King Hussein to disarm the PLO troops formed

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<sup>84</sup> Palestinians were impressed by the Algerian independence movement. Some even looked for ways to join the struggle of the Algerian National Liberation Front. The relationship between Al-Fatah and Algerian independence activists solidified in Cairo. Yasser Arafat's older brother Jamal gave hospitality to an exiled Algerian militant, Muhammad Khidr. The acquaintance resulted in Arafat's invitation to Algerian independence celebrations in 1962 and contributed to the establishment of an Al-Fatah representative office in Algiers. See: T. Walker, A. Gowers, *Arafat (Eng. Arafat: the biography)*, Warszawa 2005, p. 41.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 41–42.

in the West Bank. Moreover, many Arab politicians, especially in Egypt, did not believe that the PLO could play a significant role in the fight against Israel. Al-Fatah was initially outside the PLO because its leading representatives had previously been linked to the Muslim Brotherhood movement, hostile to Naser, and were considered troublemakers. Al-Fatah did not see a rival in the PLO, even though the latter had formed the Palestine Liberation Army<sup>86</sup>.

The PLO armed forces developed as an independent structure with its own budget, cadres, training system and sources of supply. Out of concern that the Palestinian army might pose a threat to the governments of the countries hosting its troops, only Egypt, Iraq and Syria allowed the formation of small Palestinian units under the orders of their military commanders. In 1966, the supply of Chinese military equipment to the PLO and Al-Fatah began. In addition to these three Arab states, the fedayeen were also trained in China and Vietnam. The PLO forces consisted of four brigades that were part of the host state army, recruiting soldiers among Palestinians, including professional officers serving in the armies of Egypt, Iraq and Syria. One brigade consisted exclusively of Palestinians from the Gaza Strip area. It was the only Palestinian unit of military significance during the third Israeli-Arab war, known as the Six-Day War (5-11 June 1967). It waged desperate and often suicidal defensive battles against the Israeli army. As a result of the Six-Day War, Egypt lost the Sinai Peninsula and the Gaza Strip to Israel, Jordan lost the West Bank and East Jerusalem, and Lebanon lost the Golan Heights<sup>87</sup> (Figure 1).

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<sup>86</sup> Ibid., pp. 42–43.

<sup>87</sup> *Encyklopedia terroryzmu* (Eng. Encyclopaedia of world terrorism), M. Crenshaw, J. Pimlott (eds.), Warszawa 2004, pp. 288–290.

## Israel and the Palestinians

On 15 May 1948 in Tel Aviv, the creation of the State of Israel was proclaimed in the Mandate territories of Palestine. On the same day, Arab states attacked Israeli territory (1st Israeli-Arab War). On 22 July 1949, an armistice agreement was signed and Israel's new borders were drawn. In 1967, Israel won the Six-Day War. The state, surrounded by Arab countries, remains in constant conflict with its neighbours.

### JEWISH STATE AFTER WORLD WAR II

■ Jewish/Israeli territories     
 ■ Arab territories     
 J Jerusalem  
/ Israeli-occupied territories     
  Area under Israeli control     
  Palestinian Authority area

**1947**

United Nations resolution on the partition of Palestine



**1949**

Israel after the 1st Israeli-Arab War



**1967**

Israel after the Six-Day War



**2021**

Israel and the Palestinian Territories



\* Jerusalem was supposed to be under international control, but was divided as a result of the Israeli-Arab war. In 1967 Israeli troops occupied all of Jerusalem. The city's international status remains unresolved.

\*\* The Sinai Peninsula was ceded to Egypt under the Camp David Accords (1979).

Source: UN, DPA, Polish Press Agency (PAP).

POB

**Figure 1.** Changes in the political map of the Middle East.

Source: *Tak Palestyna znikala z mapy. Oto historia konfliktu na Bliskim Wschodzie* (Eng. This is how Palestine disappeared from the map. This is the story of the conflict in the Middle East), Business Insider, 11 X 2023, <https://businessinsider.com.pl/wiadomosci/tak-palestyna-znikala-z-mapy-oto-historia-konfliktu-na-bliskim-wschodzie/n0espx> [accessed: 11 X 2023].

The defeat of the Arab states in the Six-Day War demonstrated the weakness of the PLO and created a mood of discouragement among the Palestinian people. The organisation discredited itself in the eyes of the Palestinians as much as the Arab governments that had supported its founding in 1964. In the second half of 1967, some PLO activists came into contact with Yasser Arafat. On 21 March 1968, the Cahal entered Jordan

to break up Palestinian forces attacking Israel from Jordanian territory. In a day-long battle near Karama, where Yasser Arafat had his headquarters, between 128 and 170 Palestinians were killed. Unsurprisingly, Israeli forces, buoyed by their victory in the Six-Day War, also suffered heavy casualties. Twenty-eight Israeli soldiers were killed and eighty wounded. Four tanks were also lost and the fedayeen took over. Yasser Arafat managed to escape. Although the Battle of Karama was a dubious success for Al-Fatah, it resonated with Palestinians residing in Jordan and throughout the Arab world. After the event, thousands of young Palestinians wanted to join Al-Fatah. Yasser Arafat became the most popular Palestinian leader and his organisation was recognised as the most important faction in the PLO. Al-Fatah's disputed victory at Karama would have been impossible if the Jordanian army had not come to the aid of the fedayeen at a critical moment, but Palestinian propaganda was silent on this fact, which affected King Hussein deeply<sup>88</sup>.

In July 1968, after many talks and negotiations, several different organisations became part of the PLO, in which Al-Fatah with Yasser Arafat began to play a dominant role. Then, as it grew, other organisations joined. In total, 15 groups passed through the PLO to form the Palestinian National Council, also known as the Palestinian National Congress and the Palestinian National Assembly. Over time, some of them abandoned their affiliation to this structure. However, all were embedded in the tradition of secular Arab nationalism. Some of them enjoyed the support of various Arab states (Syria, Iraq, Egypt, Libya) or were established at the initiative and with the support of these states. Among the most important organisations and the most active in terrorist activities, besides the rather moderate Al-Fatah, were: Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, PFLP (Al-Jabha ash-Shaabiyya li-Tahrir Filastin), Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine - General Command, PFLP- GC (Al-Jabha ash-Shaabiyya li-Tahrir Filastin - Al-Qadija al-Amma), Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine, DFLP (Al-Jabha ad-Dimukratiyya li Tahrir Filastin) and the late-emerging Front for the Liberation of Palestine, FLP (Al-Jabha li-Tahrir Filastin), which in 1976 separated from the PFLP - GC. Influenced by its new members, the PLO amended the text of the Palestinian National Charter. Attention was drawn to the provision on war with Israel: *Armed struggle is the only*

<sup>88</sup> Ł. Kowalewski, *Czarny Wrzesień w Jordanii* (Eng. Black September in Jordan), "Komandos" 2011, no. 2, p. 33.

way to liberate Palestine. Thus it is the overall strategy, not merely a tactical phase<sup>89</sup>. The organisation that from the beginning sought to maintain autonomy in its actions was the PFLP, which combined Arab nationalism with Marxism and religious tolerance (an alliance of Maronite Christians and Muslims in the struggle against the Jews). It was headed by George Habash aka Al-Hakim and Wadi Haddad aka Abu Hani. The group's leaders believed in an international Arab revolution and a change in the political order in the Middle East leading to a Palestinian state. Such an idea led to the organisation's involvement in the internal politics of Arab states. It also meant looking for international ways to strike at Israel<sup>90</sup>.

The year 1968 marked the beginning of international terrorism against Jewish targets outside Israel, including diplomatic missions, Israeli aircraft, Jewish community centres and Israeli citizens. On 22 July 1968, three members of the PFLP hijacked an Israeli El Al airline plane and forced the crew to land in Algiers, and in December 1968, PFLP fired on an Israeli plane at Athens airport. In the following years, Palestinian militants from groups within and outside the PLO carried out dozens of terrorist attacks in the Middle East and Europe, including 52 attacks on El Al aircraft<sup>91</sup>. Palestinian terrorists have not only targeted Israelis. They travelled around Europe and carried out violent attacks targeting people who had nothing to do with the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. In this way, they tried to draw public attention to the Palestinian cause that needed to be resolved. At the same time, by establishing contacts with Western terrorist organisations, e.g. the Red Army Faction, the Red Brigades or the Irish Republican Army (IRA), the Palestinians became co-conspirators in the Cold War network of international terrorism. In doing so, they were able to count on the support of the Eastern Bloc states, which helped with the transfer of weapons, explosives, military training and allowed Palestinian fighters to receive medical treatment and rest<sup>92</sup>.

On 3 February 1969, the Palestinian National Congress, as expected, elected Yasser Arafat as chairman of the PLO Executive Committee in Cairo. Thus, in the presence of Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Naser,

<sup>89</sup> T. Walker, A. Gowers, *Arafat...*, p. 61.

<sup>90</sup> *Encyklopedia terroryzmu...*, p. 312.

<sup>91</sup> Ł. Szymankiewicz, *Terroryzm lotniczy wobec Izraela* (Eng. Aviation terrorism against Israel), Warszawa 2019, p. 7.

<sup>92</sup> C. Sterling, *Sieć terroru. Prawda o międzynarodowym terroryzmie* (Eng. The terror network. The secret war of international terrorism), Warszawa 1990, pp. 296–325.



the Al-Fatah chairman was appointed supreme Palestinian leader. Arafat took over the organisation with a ready-made structure - a finance ministry of sorts, an army (the Palestine Liberation Army), an Executive Committee for decision-making and an irregular parliament. The PLO's top leadership included the aforementioned Abu Jihad and Abu Iyad. The former was Yasser Arafat's closest associate and PLO military commander. Abu Iyad, on the other hand, was the PLO's intelligence chief and the organisation's commander in Lebanon. Upon assuming leadership of the PLO, Arafat declared unrestricted war against Israel, heralded by hijackings of Israeli aircraft, attacks on Israeli airline offices, Israeli embassies in Europe, Jewish-owned shops and premises. Yasser Arafat also emphasised a new policy aimed at independence from the Arab states. He sought equal status with other members of the Arab League. The first example of this was the signing of an agreement in early November 1969 in Cairo between the Lebanese government and the PLO chairman, allowing the recruitment, training and equipping of fighters on Lebanese soil. The Lebanese army was supposed to protect Fedayeen bases and supply lines, but the emergence of a large, undisciplined and armed force upset the delicate balance between Christians and Muslims. Moreover, the PLO's failure to abide by the agreement led to the loss of Beirut's de facto authority over the southern part of Lebanon, where the Palestinians had consolidated their positions on the south-western slopes of Mount Hermon<sup>93</sup>.

In the late 1960s, the PLO stepped up attacks from Jordanian territory, exposing the border area to frequent retaliatory raids by Israeli forces. In Jordan, where Palestinians outnumbered the local population, Al-Fatah was in power in many areas<sup>94</sup>. Some 20,000 militants were under its control here. After the Battle of Karama, they became more active. In the Palestinian enclaves and refugee camps, the Jordanian police and army gradually lost control of the population to Palestinian militias. Uniformed Al-Fatah troops officially carried weapons and set up checkpoints and roadblocks, illegally controlling the population, collecting taxes and even confiscating private property. At the time, many Palestinians claimed that the way to Tel Aviv was through Amman. Between 6 and 9 September 1970, PFLP terrorists hijacked four Western airline planes and forced three of them to land in Amman

<sup>93</sup> T. Walker, A. Gowers, *Arafat...*, pp. 61–62.

<sup>94</sup> In 1970, the population of Palestinians living in Jordan, either with Hashemite Kingdom citizenship or in refugee camps, was more than 2.5 times that of Jordan's indigenous population. See: Ł. Kowalewski, *Czarny Wrzesień...*, p. 33.

and one in Cairo. After the hijackers' demands were met, the hostages were released and the planes were blown up. This event outraged the Jordanian authorities. Arafat's simultaneous call for the overthrow of King Hussein led to the outbreak of armed conflict between Palestinians and Jordanian forces, supported by a contingent of Pakistani troops, in September 1970. Between 1,000 and 2,000 fedayeen and several thousand civilians were killed or wounded during this fighting. The Palestinians called this month Black September. In mid-October, a settlement was reached in Amman under which Hussein agreed to leave some Palestinian refugees in Jordan on the condition that all armed fighters, with Arafat in the lead, leave the country. Thousands of Palestinians then left Jordan and settled mostly in Lebanon<sup>95</sup>. They augmented the number of Palestinian refugees from 1948 and 1967. Among them were armed fedayeen who launched attacks on Israel from southern Lebanon, prompting an armed response from the Cahal. Israeli aircraft attacked Palestinian camps and bombed villages, while tanks crossed the border and entered Lebanese territory. The country's army was giving way to Israeli forces and the weak state had no power over Palestinian fighters. The rural population, both Muslims and Christians, resented the Palestinians for drawing retaliation from the Israeli military, destroying their homes and crops. The Palestine Liberation Organisation was expanding its armed structures in Lebanon, which trained terrorists from the Italian Red Brigades, the German Baader-Meinhof Group, and Iranian oppositionists from the Freedom Movement of Iran (Nehzat-e Azadi-e Iran), seeking to overthrow the Shah of Iran. The PLO's annual budget was \$400 million (coming mainly from the Gulf states) and through this a social welfare system was established, with hospitals and health centres. Palestinian businesses, press agencies, post offices, banks and radio stations were established. PLO headquarters were located in the Beqaa Valley and in the western part of Beirut<sup>96</sup>.

On 28 November 1971, four assassins killed Jordanian Prime Minister Wasfi at-Tall on the steps of the Sheraton Hotel in Cairo. The Black September (Ailul al-Aswad) organisation claimed responsibility for the assassination and thus launched its terrorist activities. Its key figures were Abu Iyad, Ali Hassan Salameh and Mohammad Oudeh aka Abu Daud. Another Black September operation was the failed attempt to assassinate the Jordanian

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<sup>95</sup> Ibid., pp. 33–34, 39.

<sup>96</sup> K. Ghattas, *Czarna fala* (Eng. Black wave), Warszawa 2023, p. 35.

ambassador to the UK, carried out in December 1971. The transfer of terrorist activities to Europe became characteristic of Black September. The grouping was not officially part of either the PLO or Al-Fatah and was not under their orders, but the fact that Black September's leadership came from Al-Fatah made it difficult for the latter to disassociate itself from the activities of its most extremist faction. Black September gained notoriety after a terrorist attack during the Munich Olympics in September 1972, in which 11 Israeli athletes and coaches were killed. After the attack, Israel set up a special Mossad hit group of young men and women. Its aim was to eliminate Black September activists linked to the events in Munich, regardless of the country they were in. During the operation 'Wrath of God', Israeli agents killed 11 members of this organisation<sup>97</sup>.

The 1973 Israeli-Arab war opened a new chapter in Middle East negotiations. The Arabs then had a bargaining chip in the form of oil. The US began diplomatic efforts to establish a lasting peace in the region. Al-Fatah, the main representative of the Palestinian cause and the largest grouping in the PLO, also hoped that an agreement would be reached. Yasser Arafat

<sup>97</sup> On 1 August 1981, an unsuccessful assassination attempt was made on Abu Daud at the Victoria Hotel in Warsaw. He was shot at by the Lebanese Dauer Hussein Nasif, who had arrived in Warsaw from Vienna on the same plane as his victim. It is not known exactly who the assassin was. Although he was recognised by the severely injured Abu Daud, he was released from custody. He lived in Beirut for ten consecutive years. He was kidnapped by Al-Fatah militants, sentenced to death for treason and hanged. Nasif was allegedly a member of Abu Nidal Organisation and a Mossad agent to carry out Abu Daud's death sentence as one of the organisers of the Munich attack on Israeli athletes. The injured Daud was taken to the Ministry of Interior hospital in Warsaw. There, he was guarded by Polish and Palestinian security. Nine days after the assassination, Abu Daud was intercepted by the East German Stasi and the Palestinian was transported to a hospital in East Berlin. In 1996, Abu Daud was allowed to travel through Israel to a meeting of PLO leaders in Gaza, where he opted to delete the demand for the destruction of Israel from the PLO's program statement. Three years later, he published an autobiography, *Palestine: from Jerusalem to Munich*, in which he confessed to co-organising an assassination attempt during the Olympic Games. He stated that Israeli athletes, as reserve soldiers, were a target that could be attacked. Abu Daud died in July 2010 in Damascus, where he was buried. The last participant in the attack on Israeli athletes, Atef Bseiso, was shot dead in 1992, 20 years after the events in Munich. See: P. Gasztold, *Zabójcze układy. Służby PRL i międzynarodowy terroryzm* (Eng. Lethal arrangements. The services of the People's Republic of Poland and international terrorism), Warszawa 2017, pp. 308–348; W. Gadowski, P. Wojciechowski, *Tragarze śmierci* (Eng. Porters of death), Warszawa 2010, pp. 13–88; M. Bar-Zohar, N. Mishal, *Mossad. Najważniejsze misje izraelskich tajnych służb* (Eng. Mossad. The greatest missions of the Israeli secret services), Poznań 2012, pp. 199–225; Y. Denoël, *Sekretne wojny Mossadu* (Eng. Mossad's secret wars), Warszawa 2013, pp. 67–75.

wanted his organisation to be accepted as a party to the negotiations, so he officially renounced terrorism. However, there were organisations that sought to break up the peace negotiations and, to this end, carried out terrorist attacks inside Israel. One of these was the PFLP - GC. On 11 April 1974, its members took Israeli hostages in the town of Kiryat Shmona in northern Israel. Three terrorists attacked a four-storey building and killed the occupants. Israeli troops surrounded the attackers, who died a suicide death as a result of explosives they had planted. A total of 18 Israelis were killed in the attack, including 8 children and 5 women, and 16 people were wounded. A spokesperson for PFLP - GC pointed to the operation as an example of violence inside Israel aimed at stalling peace agreements<sup>98</sup>. A month later, three members belonging to the DFLP took hostage a group of about 90 schoolchildren in Ma'alot, near the Lebanese border. They demanded the release of Palestinians from Israeli prisons. When the terrorists refused to extend their demands, Israeli soldiers attacked the building. The exchange of fire resulted in the deaths of 21 children and 65 more were injured. DFLP leader Najef Hawatmeh aka Abu an-Nuf stated that the immediate aim of the attack was to block US Secretary of State Henry Kissinger's peace mission. For the PLO, which at the time was trying to establish itself as the official representative of the Palestinians at peace talks, both attacks posed a serious problem. Since the PFLP-GC and the DFLP were officially members of the Palestinian National Council, the PLO was forced to recognise the actions in Kiryat Shmona and Ma'alot as its operations, thereby derailing the possibility of a positive conclusion to the peace talks<sup>99</sup>.

In June 1974, at a session of the Palestinian National Council, the PLO adopted a plan for the destruction of the Jewish state. It envisaged a struggle divided into three phases. In the first, involving armed struggle (terrorism), it was envisaged that actions would be implemented in order to conquer a patch of Palestine and establish an independent national authority on it. In the second, it was intended to carry out further fighting, using the territory already conquered as a base. In the third, it was planned to provoke the Arab states to strike together against Israel with a view to its eventual destruction and the liberation of the entire territory of Palestine.

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<sup>98</sup> *Encyklopedia terroryzmu...*, p. 308.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*

An important event for the PLO and Arafat himself was the Arab summit meeting held in Rabat in October 1974, where the Al-Fatah leader decided to abandon international terrorism as a method of struggle and to concentrate it exclusively on Palestinian area. It was stated at that time that the Palestinian people had a right to their own country, but it was not specified in which territory. More important was the recognition of the PLO as the only legitimate representation of this people. It also called for closer cooperation between the states bordering Israel ('frontline states') and Arafat's organisation. King Hussein of Jordan was promised \$300 million in annual subsidies to support Palestinian refugees. The Rabat conference allowed Arafat to continue his terrorist campaign against Israel without fear of a reaction from Arab states.

In November 1974, the UN General Assembly granted observer status to the PLO. A permanent PLO office was established at UN headquarters in New York<sup>100</sup>. Diplomatic relations were thus established with the representation of the non-existent Palestinian state. Yasser Arafat appeared at the session of the UN General Assembly and, with a revolver on his belt (this revolver made a strong impression on those attending the UN meeting), advocated the creation of a Palestinian state between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea. The Palestine Liberation Organisation officially accepted the solution of two states, Israel and Palestine, existing side by side. Despite this, Arafat continued to claim publicly that the movement's goal was the liberation of all Palestinian lands<sup>101</sup>.

The PLO's presence in Lebanon meant that the areas where the fedayeen bases were located were virtually out of Beirut's control. Under the pretext of preparing to fight Israel, the militants took political, police and economic control not only of the refugee camps, but also of the south of the country and the Beqaa Valley, where military training was carried out (so it was a situation analogous to that in Jordan a few years ago). This led to sharp conflicts with the local Lebanese population and skirmishes between the Lebanese army and the Palestinians, from which the latter emerged victorious. The combat-experienced fighters had an advantage over the inexperienced and divided Lebanese army. Life in Lebanon under PLO rule was difficult - combined with rape, mutilation and murder.

<sup>100</sup> In January 1976, the UN Security Council allowed PLO representatives to attend its deliberations, without voting rights. This privilege usually applied to UN member states.

<sup>101</sup> T. Walker, A. Gowers, *Arafat...*, pp. 100-110.

In the town of Damur, south of Beirut, the fedayeen established their base. In the process, they killed more than 580 people and expelled the 25,000 remaining residents of the town. The situation was further aggravated by repeated Israeli air strikes, carried out in retaliation for attacks carried out by Palestinians. The inability to provide protection against PLO arbitrariness forced the Lebanese to form local militias. This led to the outbreak of war in Lebanon, which began on 13 April 1975 with an attack by the Christian right-wing Phalange on Palestinian headquarters in eastern Beirut. This gave impetus to the outbreak of fighting throughout Lebanon, which, with brief interruptions, lasted 16 years. A terrorist operation by Palestinians inside Israel in March 1978, during which more than 30 people were killed and more than 100 wounded, resulted in Israeli forces joining Operation Litani and crossing Lebanon's borders. The army removed PLO fighters from southern Lebanese territory<sup>102</sup>.

On 17 February 1979, six days after the declaration of the victory of the Islamic Revolution in Iran, Yasser Arafat arrived in Tehran. He arrived from Damascus on a plane provided to him by Syrian President Hafiz al-Assad. He was the first foreign leader to visit Iran after the revolution. At the same time, at Camp David in the US, representatives of Egypt and Israel were holding peace negotiations. The juxtaposition of these two topics allowed Arafat to be portrayed as a hero on the front pages of Iranian newspapers, and he was greeted as such by the crowds in Tehran. The Egyptians, on the other hand, were considered traitors. Immediately after Arafat's arrival in Tehran, Iran broke off diplomatic relations with Israel and handed over the former Israeli embassy building to Arafat to be used as the headquarters of the PLO outpost. A decision was also taken to establish Jerusalem Day, celebrated annually on the last Friday of Ramadan. The holiday was conceived as a day of protest in the Muslim world. It was also intended as a response to Israel's Jerusalem Day, which commemorates the taking of Jerusalem under Israeli control. Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini pressed Arafat to define his movement as a Muslim resistance movement. Arafat never did so. Iran already had the capacity and resources to create its own movement to attract Palestinians interested in Khomeini's fundamentalist project of 'exporting the Islamic revolution'<sup>103</sup>.

<sup>102</sup> G. Corm, *Bliski Wschód w ogniu. Oblicza konfliktu 1956–2003* (Eng. The Middle East on fire. Faces of the 1956–2003 conflict), Warszawa 2003, pp. 246–247, 250–251.

<sup>103</sup> K. Ghattas, *Czarna fala...*, pp. 68–71.

From the 1980s onwards, the main part of the opposition to Arafat's leadership would be Palestinian Muslim radicals from the Palestinian Islamic Jihad and Hamas, who would find support in Iran (they still receive support from there to this day)<sup>104</sup>. Just as Arafat's visit to Iran had far-reaching consequences for the Palestinian cause, so the Knesset's decision in July 1980 to annex East Jerusalem and establish Israel's capital in that city contributed to the long-standing exacerbation of relations with the Muslim states. The Knesset declared Jerusalem the undivided and eternal capital of the Jewish state. This was contrary to international law and UN resolutions and provoked the ire of the Arabs, as Jerusalem is the third most sacred place for the followers of Islam, after Mecca and Medina.

On 3 June 1982, the Israeli ambassador to the UK Shlomo Argov was assassinated. This event was the *casus belli* of Operation Peace for Galilee in Lebanon, which Israeli forces joined three days later. During its course, the Cahal reached as far as Beirut with the aim of destroying the PLO. Despite resistance from the fedayeen and Syrian troops who had been stationed in Lebanon since 1976, Israeli forces closed the encirclement of Beirut and began a regular artillery barrage on the Palestinians residing there. In August 1982, talks were held in which it was agreed that PLO fighters would withdraw from the city and leave Lebanon. As a result, 9,000 armed Palestinians left Lebanon and went to Syria or sailed on hired ships to other Arab states and to Europe. This lasted from 21 August to 1 September. Yasser Arafat and his closest associates travelled to Tunis. The PLO headquarters, which had representatives in Arab states, European countries (including Poland) and the USA, was located in the sub-city of Borj Cedria<sup>105</sup>.

With the relocation of the PLO outside the Middle East, Yasser Arafat was losing influence within Palestine. For the Arab population living there, it was a period of doubt about the possibility of establishing their own state. The world was also paying less attention to the Palestinian cause. Israeli troops had occupied the Palestinian lands since 1967. There was no prospect of change, and Arab states were getting rid of Palestinians from their territories because they feared destabilisation, as exemplified by events in Jordan and Lebanon. In these states, Palestinian militants were

<sup>104</sup> Ibid., p. 72.

<sup>105</sup> J. Zdanowski, *Historia najnowsza Bliskiego Wschodu i Afryki Północnej* (Eng. Recent history of the Middle East and North Africa), Warszawa 2020, pp. 236–237; T. Walker, A. Gowers, *Arafat...*, pp. 164–174; *Encyklopedia terroryzmu...*, p. 329.

becoming an insecure element, a source of anarchy and disintegration of state structures. In addition, the Arab states were slowly becoming accustomed to the idea of being neighbours of the Jewish state. However, the campaign of terrorist attacks on Israeli targets and retaliatory operations by Israeli security forces continued unabated. In April 1984, four fedayeen from the PFLP hijacked a bus with forty passengers in Tel Aviv. In exchange for the release of the hostages, they demanded the release of hundreds of Palestinian prisoners. One soldier and two terrorists were killed when an elite Cahal unit stormed the bus. Two other hijackers were killed by Shin Bet (short for Sherut ha-Bitachon ha-Klali, Israel Security Agency) officers. Although the PFLP claimed responsibility for the kidnapping, Israel blamed it on Al-Fatah, and security forces demolished the houses where the families of the four kidnappers lived. This event initiated the practice of collective responsibility, which is still in use today, of destroying the homes of the families of the terrorists at whose hands Israelis were killed. On 7 October 1985, the PLO hijacked the Italian cruise ship *Achille Lauro* and threw US citizen Leon Klinghoffer overboard. This was in retaliation for the bombing of Arafat's quarters and the barracks of his Force 17 guard near Tunis by Israeli aircraft on 1 October. Some 60 militants were killed and 70 wounded in the attack<sup>106</sup>. In the same month, the Abu Nidal Organisation (Munazzamat Abu Nidal)<sup>107</sup> carried out

<sup>106</sup> *Encyklopedia terroryzmu...*, pp. 328–329; T. Walker, A. Gowers, *Arafat...*, pp. 187–189.

<sup>107</sup> The group's name was linked to the name of its leader, Hasan Sabri al-Banna aka Abu Nidal (Father of Struggle). In 1960, he joined Al-Fatah. In 1969, he became a member of the organisation's leadership and a year later its representative in Baghdad. Here he promoted a hard line towards the leadership, demanding that the PLO adopt a firm stance against its removal from Jordan in 1970 and the establishment of the organisation's bases in Lebanon. Abu Nidal fully supported the terror campaign waged by Black September and vociferously opposed Al-Fatah's curtailment of these activities. He is believed to have led the attempts to free Abu Daud, one of the leaders of Black September, who was betrayed and handed over to Jordan by Al-Fatah in 1973. In 1974, Abu Nidal completely severed ties with Al-Fatah, which was ready to start peace talks with Israel. He received financial support from Iraq and founded his own organisation called the Al-Fatah Revolutionary Council or Al-Fatah - Revolutionary Council (Medjlis as-Sauri al-Fatah), commonly known as the Abu Nidal Organisation. From then on, he became the PLO's most formidable opponent, rejecting any compromise with Israel, a symbol of internal Palestinian terrorism, and guilty of the assassinations of several leading PLO activists. Acting as a mercenary, Abu Nidal Organisation gradually abandoned its political and revolutionary slogans in favour of profit-making activities. It amassed a fortune, initially as a result of commissioned terrorist attacks and the investment of capital in trade and real estate. Like many terrorists, Abu Nidal enjoyed the protection of communist countries of that time, primarily the USSR,



terrorist attacks in Rome and Vienna. They coincided with an agreement between King Hussein of Jordan and Yasser Arafat to join efforts to adopt some kind of peace settlement with Israel. After the attacks, the talks broke down, accompanied by mutual recriminations between the Jordanian and Palestinian sides. In November 1985, in a statement known as the Cairo Declaration and adopted by the Palestinian National Council, the PLO reaffirmed its 1974 declaration condemning all terrorist operations carried out outside Palestine<sup>108</sup>.

Both declarations did not apply to groups outside the PLO. In Europe, attacks were carried out by the Abu Nidal Organisation and the PFLP, with which Ilich Ramírez Sánchez, or the famous 'Carlos' or 'Jackal', collaborated. The main targets of the attacks continued to be Jewish-owned facilities and Israeli diplomats, but Europeans and Americans were also among the victims. Abu Nidal Organisation claimed to have carried out more than 100 attacks in 20 countries. More than 380 people were killed in them and around 650 were injured. Among others, it has killed PLO representatives in Paris, London and Brussels, as well as American soldiers and police officers, and many civilians from Western European countries. According to some opinions, Abu Nidal was not driven by ideology, but carried out the attacks to order and demanded a high salary for them. Syria allegedly paid him to attack Jordanian embassies, and Saddam Hussein allegedly commissioned him to carry out an attack on Israeli ambassador to London Shlomo Argov in 1982. This attack served as a pretext for Israel to invade Lebanon, as mentioned earlier<sup>109</sup>.

Yasser Arafat's forced stay in Tunisia removed him from the main course of affairs in Palestine. The only person from the Al-Fatah leadership who remained in contact with the Occupied Palestinian Territories was Abu Jihad. A demonstration by Jabalia residents in the Gaza Strip on

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Germany, Romania and Hungary. From 1983 to 1985 he lived in Warsaw, where his SAS arms trading company operated. In 1985, after a failed assassination attempt carried out at the Victoria Hotel by Israeli intelligence, Abu Nidal left Poland for Libya. In the 1990s, as the importance of his organisation diminished, he found refuge in Iraq. On 19 August 2002, he was killed in unclear circumstances at his home in Baghdad. This was most likely an assassination attempt by the Iraqi Mukhabarat intelligence service. See: *Encyklopedia terroryzmu...*, pp. 310–311; P. Gasztold, *Zabójcze układy...*, pp. 133–199.

<sup>108</sup> C. Shindler, *Historia współczesnego Izraela* (Eng. A history of modern Israel), Warszawa 2011, p. 222; J. Gelvin, *Konflikt izraelsko-palestyński...*, pp. 251–252; T. Walker, A. Gowers, *Arafat...*, pp. 189–190.

<sup>109</sup> *Encyklopedia terroryzmu...*, pp. 310–311.

9 December 1987 sparked riots in much of the region. The rioting youths, hiding their faces under keffiyehs, built makeshift barricades on the roads. This social rebellion has been referred to as the stone uprising. It is also known by its Arabic name of intifada (Eng. trembling)<sup>110</sup>. No one expected it to erupt with such force. The intifada was assuming the proportions of a massive popular uprising, and within the PLO leadership in Tunis, taken by surprise by its outbreak, there was no unanimity on what measures should be taken<sup>111</sup>. The intifada was also not foreseen by Israeli intelligence. Most of the military, including the then Defence Minister Yitzhak Rabin, downplayed the uprising until all sections of Palestinian society joined in. Abu Jihad's involvement became increasingly important. He wanted to bring about the exchange of stones for rifles in order to extend the intifada to neighbouring Arab states, something that both Tehran and Tripoli were keen on. The first sign of an escalation of violence on the Palestinian side was an attack by PLO fighters on a bus carrying a group of women to work in Dimona in March 1988. Three people were killed in the attack. One attempt to stop the intifada was the successful Israeli operation to assassinate Abu Jihad, carried out in Tunis in April 1988<sup>112</sup>. In the West Bank, the insurgents were members of the Shabiba (the name comes from the Arabic word *shabab* meaning 'youth'), the youth branch of Al-Fatah. Prior to the uprising, its task was to contain the influence of Muslim extremists on the young people, something that had not been achieved

<sup>110</sup> The immediate causes for the outbreak of the intifada were the deaths of four Arabs in the Gaza Strip in a road accident on 8 December 1987, and the shooting a day later by Israeli soldiers of a 15-year-old Palestinian taking part in a demonstration in Jabalia, organised in protest at the deaths of four compatriots. From an initial spontaneous movement of civil disobedience, the protest quickly evolved into an organised rebellion. The Palestinian population attacked Israeli forces with stones, Molotov cocktails, less frequently grenades and small arms, supplied through various channels by Palestinian organisations, primarily Al-Fatah. The Israeli army was not prepared for such actions. The army, excelling in the field, was not trained to deal with demonstrators, most of whom were under the age of 18. The Intifada became an instrument of defiance for the younger generation of Palestinians, already born under Israeli domination and unfamiliar with a different life. An additional triggering factor was the lack of employment for them. The only option remained emigration to Arab countries or to the West. The uprising provided the Palestinian cause with international publicity. See: T. Walker, A. Gowers, *Arafat...*, pp. 197–208.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 197–199.

<sup>112</sup> C. Shindler, *Historia współczesnego Izraela...*, p. 226; T. Walker, A. Gowers, *Arafat...*, p. 199, 205.

in Gaza. Shabiba took control of all sports clubs and youth associations in the West Bank. It was the largest organisation here, allowing it to act as the coordinator of the intifada. This meant that decisions about the fate of the uprising passed into the hands of the youth.

Twenty years of Israeli domination brought significant improvements in the lives of Palestinians, especially in the West Bank, but Israeli interference was unacceptable to them. They rebelled against the construction of Jewish settlements, often built on land confiscated from private farmers or entire villages. These settlements were a visible sign of the occupation of the Palestinians' native lands. For most Muslims, on the other hand, the very presence of a Jewish state on land that had previously been part of the Islamic world was an affront, compounded by Israel's assumption of control over Islam's holy city of Jerusalem. There was another factor that was a catalyst for the revolt. This was the omnipresence of the Israeli secret services, which in various ways coaxed the Palestinians to cooperate. The dense network of informers, on the one hand, facilitated the fight against terrorism but, on the other, contributed to corrupting Palestinian society<sup>113</sup>. The declining influence of the PLO in the Occupied Palestinian Territories and the death of Abu Jihad resulted in Muslim organisations gradually taking the lead, primarily in Gaza.

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### Summary

The rise of Al-Fatah provided a new impetus for the young Palestinians to fight. The first years of the organisation's activities coincided with the decolonisation process of the African states and this is how the Palestinian struggle was perceived by parts of the international community, including the Eastern bloc. However, it was the PLO, established in 1964 in Cairo, that was recognised as the legitimate representative of the Palestinian cause. Many Arab states offered support for the Palestinians, but the highest hopes were pinned on Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Naser. The defeat of Israel's neighbours in the Six-Day War in June 1967 completely changed the political situation and dashed the hopes of the Palestinians, especially as they used the Palestinian problem for their own political ends. As a result of this war, Israel took control of the Gaza Strip, the West Bank and East Jerusalem, among others. Another effect of this war was the stirring up of anti-Israeli sentiment. More Palestinian political and armed organisations began to emerge, supported by Syria, Iraq or Libya. They were guided by Marxist ideology and could count on the support of the Eastern Bloc countries. Their main method of operation was to carry out terrorist attacks, which also targeted Israeli facilities in Europe. In 1969, the leader

<sup>113</sup> K. Gebert, *Pokój z widokiem...*, pp. 456–459.

of Al-Fatah became the head of the PLO. In this way, the organisation gained access to funds and weapons from Arab patrons. Palestinian militants conducted operations against Israel, but also posed a threat to the Jordanian authorities, where Palestinian refugees outnumbered the indigenous population. In September 1970, Palestinians staged an uprising there, which was suppressed. Al-Fatah fighters were forced to leave Jordan. They established new bases in Lebanon. From there they attacked targets in Israel, but also threatened, as in Jordan, the stability and internal security of Lebanon. In 1982, Israeli forces entered Lebanon and defeated the Palestinian fighters. The PLO leadership was forced to leave the country and go into exile in Tunisia. It thus lost direct control over events in Palestine, where an anti-Israeli uprising known as the intifada broke out in December 1987.

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### **Jewish ultra-orthodox and the islamisation of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict**

For religious Jews, the conquest of historic parts of the Land of Israel during the Six-Day War in June 1967 heralded a new era. The occupied areas of the West Bank were referred to by the biblical names Judea and Samaria, the name State of Israel was replaced by the phrase Land of Israel (*Eretz Israel*). However, it was not until the 1980s that Jewish religious organisations and parties, which had been active even before the establishment of Israel, began to grow in importance and popularity. Some of these were formed on the basis of the ideologies of religious Zionism and religious socialism. They supported Zionism by giving it characteristics of sanctity (sacralisation of the land, state, leaders, politics, militant organisations, war, etc.). The Jewish fundamentalist milieu is represented by significant political groupings, whose representatives sit in the Knesset. Orthodox Jews belong to two distinct groups. More extremist are the Haredim (God-fearing), or ultra-orthodox, who reject all novelties of civilisation. They are distinguished by their black attire and always walk around in head-covering yarmulkes, hats or fur hats (shtreimels). Their political views are expressed by two parties: the United Torah Judaism (Yahadut ha-Tora), representing Haredim of Ashkenazi Jews of Eastern European origin, and the Sephardic Torah Keepers (Shomrei Torah Sephardim, abbreviated to 'Shas'), which is the political representation of Sephardic and Mizrachi Haredim, i.e. North African and Oriental Jews of Spanish origin. Haredim believe that God used Nazi Germany as an instrument of punishment on Jews for their insufficient piety. They claim that all the misfortunes that befell the Jews were divine punishment.

The second fundamentalist option is made up of nationally-minded Jews who are less hostile to cultural modernism. They are represented by the National Religious Party (Mifleget Datit Leumit, or Mafdal for short). It is a political grouping belonging to the trend of religious Zionism, which assumes that the return to and settlement of the Land of Israel is a religious duty of the Jews. Unlike the Shas and Yahadut ha-Torah parties, the Religious Zionists do not advocate the introduction of a theocracy in Israel, but rather the assertion of religion's direct influence over the course of public affairs. Mafdal recognises Orthodox Judaism as the only legitimate and tradition-honoured line of faith. During the first 20 years of the Israeli state, it forged successive alliances with secular liberal left-wing parties and consistently advocated a conciliatory foreign policy. A significant turn in Mafdal policy came after the Six-Day War, when religious nationalists took a much more intransigent stance, opposing, on religious grounds, withdrawal from areas occupied during that conflict. Haredim are united by their hostility towards secular Jews. For them, anyone who is not Jewish deserves contempt. In 1988, the religious groups were successful in the Knesset elections, winning a record 18 seats in the 120-seat parliament, and have since enjoyed their position as tongues in the Knesset, which lacks a clear majority. They make themselves pay for their support of the ruling coalition with substantial state benefits for religious institutions, above all schools (yeshivas). There is a growing political significance of the Haredim, who from the outset have been hostile to the Palestinians and opposed to any peace talks<sup>114</sup>.

In addition to the officially active Jewish religious parties, the 1980s saw an increase in the activity of extremist groups, estimated to number around 20. The largest is the Bloc of the Faithful (Gush Emunim), founded in 1974. It unites Jewish settlers who believe that they are God's representatives on earth. They believe that galvanising the Jewish people into active action and extending Jewish rule from the Nile to the Euphrates

<sup>114</sup> The Haredim are a heavy burden on Israel. They are not prepared for life in modern society. They devote themselves entirely to Torah study in yeshivas, giving up gainful employment. They are supported by the state and are not obliged to perform military service. Mathematics, technical subjects, foreign languages and the basics of computer science are not taught in religious colleges. See in more detail: U. Huppert, *Israel w cieniu fundamentalizmów* (Eng. *Israel in the shadow of fundamentalisms*), Toruń 2016; J. Ochmann, *Wkład syjonizmu religijnego w politykę i sukcesy syjonizmu* (Eng. *The contribution of religious Zionism to the politics and successes of Zionism*), "Przegląd Religioznawczy" 2015, no. 2, pp. 29–68.

will bring about the redemption of both the people of Israel and all mankind. The Jewish occupation of the entire Land of Israel is one of the central tenets of Gush Emunim. All territories occupied by Israel are considered by the settlers to be the Holy Land of Israel. This explained the violent waves of opposition and riots caused by Israel's withdrawal from the Sinai in 1982, as well as the enthusiasm during the military operation in Lebanon in the same year when Israel occupied its southern part. For the leaders of the Bloc of the Faithful Gush Emunim, the strike on Lebanon was a continuation of the redemption process. They proclaimed that the people of Israel were returning to the territory where the Jewish tribes of Asher and Naphtali had lived in ancient times. They demanded the annexation of the whole of Lebanon as part of their ancestral heritage. They also opposed the Israeli army's alliance with the Lebanese Christian Phalange, describing Christians as idolaters. The view was expressed that it was not Israeli security considerations but the ideology of the chosen people that led to the annexation of Arab territories during the subsequent wars. Gush Emunim's pressure on the highest religious authorities of the state was reflected in a number of decisions affirming inalienable Jewish rights to the Lands of Israel<sup>115</sup>.

Some Jewish extremist groups sought to destroy Muslim buildings on the Temple Mount in Jerusalem, while others were non-violent but provoked the city's Arab inhabitants through their actions and undermined the secularity of the State of Israel. These groups came together to form the organisation Zealots of the Temple Mount (Shoharei ha-Mikdash). It exerted a great deal of pressure on the Israeli government and religious authorities, demanding an amendment to the ruling banning Jews from praying on the Temple Mount. Between 1980 and 1984, the period of greatest activity in the 20th century, Jewish extremist groups committed more than 380 acts of violence. In these, 23 Palestinians were killed and 191 injured. On 29 October 1982, grenades were thrown into a school football pitch in Hebron. One of them exploded and injured two Arab students. On 26 July 1983, masked and armed settlers attacked a madrassa in Hebron. They killed 3 students and wounded 33. The radical Rabbi Moshe Levinger commented on this attack with the words: *Whoever did this has sanctified the name of God in public*<sup>116</sup>. On 27 January 1984, members of the Sons of Judah (Bnei Yehuda)

<sup>115</sup> A. Krawczyk, *Terroryzm ugrupowań fundamentalistycznych...*, pp. 129–133.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 183.

organisation attempted to blow up two mosques - Al-Aqsa and Qubbat as-Sakra (the Dome on the Rock) located on the Temple Mount. The bombers were spotted by Arab guards. While fleeing, the perpetrators dropped 18 grenades and more than 10kg of explosives. In April of the same year, settlers belonging to the Jewish Underground (Ha-Makhteret ha-Yehudit) group, affiliated with Gush Emunim, were arrested placing explosives under Palestinian buses. Rabbi Moshe Levinger called the Jewish terrorists benevolent do-gooders<sup>117</sup>. In 1989, i.e. during the intifada, an organisation called the Sicarii (Sikrikim) emerged to intimidate Jews and foreigners trying to establish friendly contacts with Palestinians. The group passed a death sentence on Roland Dumas, the French foreign minister who held talks with Yasser Arafat. The Sicarii were responsible for planting a bomb in Jerusalem in 1989. The explosion killed two Palestinians. In a message to the daily Yedioth Ahronoth, the organisation said: *Jewish blood will not be shed in vain. For every Jewish eye, we will pluck out 20 Arab eyes*<sup>118</sup>. The group also threw a grenade into the car of the wife of Shimon Peres, twice prime minister and president of Israel from 2007 to 2014, and sent threats to four Knesset members who supported a Palestinian peace demonstration. The Sicarii famously set fire to the doors of the flats and homes of Jewish politicians, journalists and social activists whom they considered enemies of the Israeli cause<sup>119</sup>.

In the 1980s, Muslim fundamentalists linked to the Muslim Brotherhood movement became active throughout the Middle East, from which more radical factions began to split. In Palestine, religious content was replacing the hitherto Marxist ideology of the PLO. Dynamic re-islamisation occurred especially in the Gaza Strip, where the ideas of the Muslim Brotherhood were positively received by the younger generation of Palestinians, especially in the refugee camps. Influenced by the victory of the Islamic Revolution in Iran in 1979, the following year saw the establishment of the Islamic Jihad Movement in Palestine (Harakat al-Jihad al-Islami fi Filastin), also known as Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ). It seceded from the Muslim Brotherhood. The reason for the secession was the belief that it was possible to establish a Muslim

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<sup>117</sup> Ibid.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid., p. 189.

<sup>119</sup> Extensively on the ideology and activities of radical rabbis of Jewish extremist groups in: *ibid.*, pp. 122–203.

state of Palestine, without waiting for an Islamic revolution in the Arab world, which the Muslim Brotherhood had heralded. Their position was that only grassroots work and grassroots changes in society would bring about change and restore Islam's place and bring about social justice. The PIJ leaders, led by Fathi ash-Shaqaqi and Abdul Aziz al-Awda, not only negated the Muslim Brotherhood's ideology of non-violence, but also departed from Sunnism, seeking to emulate the Shi'ite doctrine of Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini<sup>120</sup>. The PIJ regarded theocratic Iran as the model of state that should be introduced in all Muslim countries. It also adopted the Shi'ite principle of rule by a religious leader (Arabic: velayat-e faqih). Like Iran, he regarded the United States and Israel as his main enemies. The PIJ named the United States the Great Satan and the Jewish state the Little Satan. Fathi ash-Shaqaqi recognised the supremacy of Ayatollah Khomeini over both Shiites and Sunnis, which was unacceptable to the latter. The grouping had supporters in Middle Eastern countries, in Europe and also in the US<sup>121</sup>.

Palestinian Islamic Jihad opened offices in Beirut, Damascus, Khartoum and Tehran, from where it received financial assistance through Lebanese Hezbollah. There were also repeated meetings between the leaders of the two organisations. The association of Sunnis affiliated to the PIJ with Shiites and followers of Khomeinism was generally met with suspicion and resentment by many Palestinians. However, promoting the slogan: 'Solving the Palestinian problem is the main goal of the Islamic movement' attracted Palestinian youth to the organisation. The armed wing of the PIJ

<sup>120</sup> In 1979, Fathi ash-Shaqaqi published a book in Cairo entitled *Khumayni, al-hall al-islami wa al-badil* (Khomeini, the Islamic Solution and the Alternative), in which he glorified Ayatollah Khomeini and the views he preached. He praised Khomeini for being the first Muslim leader to define the proper place of Palestine in Islamic ideology and history. See: J. Jarzabek, *Etnonacjonalizm i religijny fundamentalizm jako podstawy ideologii Palestyńskiego Islamskiego Dżihadu* (Eng. Ethno-nationalism and religious fundamentalism as the basis of the ideology of Palestinian Islamic Jihad), "Wschodnioznawstwo" 2012, no. 6, p. 158.

<sup>121</sup> PIJ's representative in the United States was Sami Amin al-Arian, a professor from the University of South Florida's College of Engineering. He was a member of the Consultative Council (Medjlis ash-Shura) of PIJ, for which he raised funds in the US. In 2003, he was arrested in the US and sentenced to prison for supporting a terrorist organisation. See: S. Besson, *Islamizacja Zachodu. Historia pewnego spisku* (Eng. The conquest of the West. The secret project of the Islamists), Warszawa 2006, pp. 151–153. In March 2009, Sami Amin al-Arian was again brought to trial for tax evasion. In 2015, he was deported from the US to Turkey, where he still resides.



was the Jerusalem Brigades (Saraya al-Quds) founded by Asad at-Tamimi, former imam of the Al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem<sup>122</sup>. Since 1988, the group has published its own newspaper, Al-Istiklal (Eng. Independence), printed and distributed in Palestine. The first suicide attack in Israel was carried out by PIJ in July 1989. A terrorist hijacked a bus on the road between Tel Aviv and Jerusalem and drove the vehicle off the road into a deep ravine. As a result 16 Israelis were killed and 27 wounded. The organisation has been responsible for many terrorist attacks targeting Israeli residents and Israeli soldiers. It has used a variety of methods in its terrorist activities: kidnappings, vehicle shelling, attacks with hand grenades and booby-trapped cars, bomb attacks carried out by suicide bombers<sup>123</sup>.

Despite the activity of the PIJ, the Muslim Brotherhood still managed to maintain peaceful methods of operation in Palestine for several years. In 1982, the group Palestinian Jihad Fighters (Al-Mujahidun al-Filistinun) was formed, which was the armed wing of the Muslim Brotherhood in the Gaza Strip, but non-violent at the time. The Jura as-Shams mosque, opened in 1973 by Ahmed Yassin, the leader of the Muslim Brotherhood in the Gaza Strip, played an important role in the movement's activities. The mosque simultaneously became the Muslim Centre (Al-Mujama al-Islamiyya), which organised a network of religious groups throughout the Gaza Strip and distributed Muslim literature, held debates, built kindergartens and tutored students. By 1987, the Muslim Centre had established a charity movement in Gaza to help the needy. Clinics, youth clubs, sports facilities and a drug rehab programme for drug addicts were established. However, the pacifist stance of the Muslim Brotherhood caused some members to leave the association and join Al-Fatah<sup>124</sup>. In 1986, a secret meeting of historic importance was held in Hebron. It was attended by seven activists of the movement: Ahmed Yassin, Muhammad Jamal an-Natsha, Jamal Mansur, Hasan Yusuf, Mahmud Muslih, Jamal Hamami and Ayman Abu Taha. They decided that it was necessary to take up arms against Israel. They decided to start with acts of civil disobedience, such as throwing stones

<sup>122</sup> In 1982, Asad at-Tamimi published a pamphlet entitled *Erasing Israel: a Qur'anic injunction*, in which, among other things, he wrote: 'The Jews must return to the countries from which they came. We did not consent to a Jewish state on our land, even if it were to be just one village'. See: K. Izak, *Leksykon organizacji i ruchów islamistycznych* (Eng. Lexicon of Islamist organisations and movements), Warszawa 2014, p. 208.

<sup>123</sup> K. Izak, *Leksykon organizacji...*, pp. 206–208.

<sup>124</sup> K. Armstrong, *W imię Boga...*, pp. 495–496; J.P. Filiu, *Historia Gazy...*, p. 168, 181.

and burning tyres. The aim was to awaken, unite and mobilise Palestinians to fight for independence under the banners of Allah and Islam<sup>125</sup>. Thus, Hamas was born. The organisation's name is an acronym for Harakat al-Muqawama al-Islamiyya (Islamic Resistance Movement). The word *hamas* also translates as 'zeal' or 'fervour'<sup>126</sup>.

The Israeli authorities discreetly supported the emergence of Islamic organisations as an alternative to the PLO's secular nationalism, because they saw them as a way to draw youth away from Al-Fatah. It was imagined that their members would study the holy books in mosques and madrassas rather than engage in politics. In realising this assumption, they were most likely guided by the example of Jewish yeshivas. The Israelis also hoped for the outbreak of fratricidal fighting between Palestinians<sup>127</sup>. Meanwhile, for Hamas, Islam represented a holistic programme for a better life. It provided the new movement with an intellectual, ideological and practical basis. It became a political and military message. The priority was to oppose Israel. From its inception, Hamas expanded its structures, courted widespread popular support within Palestine and created an international network to fund its activities, drawing on support from the Arab diaspora in Western Europe and the US and Islamic charities, among others. Hamas's organisational structure consisted of: the social welfare and administration department (Arabic: *dawa*)<sup>128</sup>, the media department (Arabic: *ilam*), the security department (Arabic: *jihaz aman*) and the armed wing, the Izz ad-Din al-Qassam Brigades (Kataib Izz

<sup>125</sup> M.H. Jusuf, R. Brackin, *Syn Hamasu* (Eng. Son of Hamas) Wrocław 2017, pp. 34–35.

<sup>126</sup> The date and circumstances surrounding the founding of Hamas were not precisely known. Three of the seven founders of Hamas were mentioned, or only Ahmed Yassin by name, and the date of the organisation's founding was erroneously pushed back by a year. It was not until a book by M.H. Yusuf and R. Brackin, published in 2010, entitled *Son of Hamas: A Gripping Account of Terror, Betrayal, Political Intrigue, and Unthinkable Choices* shed new light on the genesis of Hamas. See: M.H. Jusuf, R. Brackin, *Syn Hamasu...*, pp. 300–301.

<sup>127</sup> J.P. Filiu, *Historia Gazy...*, p. 168.

<sup>128</sup> Under the *dawa* (call, mission) system, the organisation ran, among other things, orphanages, welfare homes, kindergartens, schools and hospitals, and organised camps for children. At these camps they were indoctrinated in the spirit of radical Islam and hatred of Israel. These activities contributed to the popularity of Hamas among the Palestinian population and, at the same time, provided logistical and operational support for arms transfers, ground reconnaissance and terrorist attacks. The *dawa* system also made it possible to find temporary employment for field commanders and shelter for agents in hiding. See: K. Izak, *Leksykon organizacji...*, pp. 193–194.

ad-Din al-Qassam, hereinafter: the Al-Qassam Brigades)<sup>129</sup>. The division of Hamas into political and military parts streamlined its activities. The organisation gained notoriety for its extensive charitable activities for the benefit of Palestinians, including providing them with necessities. Public involvement significantly influenced both the political and armed activities of the group<sup>130</sup>.

Hamas, whose spiritual leader is the blind Sheikh Ahmed Yassin<sup>131</sup>, has led an intifada in the Gaza Strip. Yassin stressed that Hamas is at war not only with Israel, but also with all Jews. He is supposed to have said: *Six million descendants of the apes* [i.e. the Jews - ed. B. Hoffman] *now rule all the nations of the world, but their day will also come. Oh Allah! Kill them all, do not spare a single one*<sup>132</sup>. In January 1988, the United National Leadership of the Uprising (UNLU) was formed with representatives from Al-Fatah, the DFLP, the PFLP and the communists. This body wanted to hand over the leadership of the intifada to the PLO. Initially, Hamas participated in the joint activities of the UNLU. In June 1988, however, the paths of the religious and secular groups began to diverge. This coincided with the unexpected relinquishment by King Hussein of Jordan

<sup>129</sup> The Izz ad-Din al-Qassam Brigades were formed in 1991. Their name comes from the aforementioned Izz ad-Din al-Qassam, who fought in Palestine against the British and Jews in the first half of the 1930s at the head of the Black Hand organisation. See: *ibid.*, p. 323.

<sup>130</sup> M. Levitt, *Hamas, polityka, dobroczynność i terroryzm w służbie dżihadu* (Eng. Hamas, politics, charity and terrorism in the service of jihad), Kraków 2008, pp. 14–15.

<sup>131</sup> Ahmed Ismail Yassin (1937-2004) was an opponent of a peace agreement with Israel. He claimed that Palestine was destined for eternity for future generations of Muslims. In 1989, Yassin and more than 200 Hamas activists were arrested by Israeli security forces and sentenced by a military court. Yassin was given a life sentence for inspiring to carry out a terrorist attack that killed two Israeli soldiers. In 1997, under an Israeli-Jordanian agreement, Yassin was exchanged for Mossad agents involved in the failed attempt to kill Khalid Mashal, then head of the Hamas Political Bureau in Syria and deputy secretary-general of the organisation. The agents in question were detained by Jordanian police after attacking Mashal in Amman with nervous system paralysing gas. As part of the agreement to release the perpetrators of the attack, Israel had to provide the antidote for Mashal, as well as release the Hamas leader and other activists of the organisation from prison. After his release, Yassin embarked on a tour of Arab countries to raise funds, which he used to finance a number of attacks. At the same time, he resumed hate propaganda against Israel. He was killed in March 2004 as a result of an Israeli rocket attack in Gaza. See: M. Levitt, *Hamas, polityka...*, pp. 46–51, 61.

<sup>132</sup> Quoted after: B. Hoffman, *Oblicza terroryzmu* (Eng. The faces of terrorism), Warszawa 2001, pp. 94–95.

of all territorial claims to the West Bank under Israeli domination. This event provided Palestinian leaders with new opportunities to establish an independent state. In the summer of 1988, the first leaflets signed by Hamas as an independent structure appeared. In a manifesto published in August 1988, the organisation identified Israel as its main enemy and its destruction as its primary objective. Young people enlisted *en masse* for Hamas, just as they had for Al-Fatah 20 years earlier. Many of them came from refugee camps, others came from middle-class, white-collar backgrounds. It was a movement invoking violence as a response to Israeli actions.

Following Jordan's renunciation of its claim to the West Bank, in November 1988 the Palestinian National Council, meeting in Algiers, adopted UN Resolution 181 of 1947 on the division of the Mandate of Palestine into two states. The division boundaries proposed at the time had long been outdated, but for the first time the PLO signalled that it was prepared to recognise Israel's existence. Yasser Arafat declared this in December 1988 and at the same time renounced terrorism on behalf of the PLO. These actions were to move towards the establishment of a Palestinian state. Hamas and the PIJ perceived Arafat's declaration as a betrayal. In late 1988, unofficial talks between PLO representatives and the US ambassador began in Tunis. They continued until May 1990, when the FLP launched an attack on Tel Aviv beaches using speedboats. Arafat refused to condemn it, which led to the breakdown of talks with the Americans. In retaliation for this act of terrorism, a young Israeli killed seven Palestinians who were waiting by the highway for a job offer. After the killing of 17 Palestinians praying on the Temple Mount in Jerusalem in October 1990, Hamas stepped up terrorist actions. Members of the organisation also tortured and killed Palestinians suspected of collaborating with Israel<sup>133</sup>.

Hamas, like the PIJ, framed the Arab-Israeli conflict in religious terms. It believed that the cause of the tragedy of the Palestinians was the neglect of religious duties by the faithful. They will only free themselves from Israeli rule when they return to Islam. The view in Hamas was that Israel's success was linked to the Jewish religion and that Israel was determined to destroy Islam<sup>134</sup>. The religious motivation of this conflict made it increasingly bloody. Hamas was able to count on the financial support of Arab states, including

<sup>133</sup> K. Gebert, *Pokój z widokiem...*, p. 463.

<sup>134</sup> K. Armstrong, *W imię Boga...*, pp. 497–498.

managing to capture most of the aid flowing from the Gulf states. In 1990 it received \$60 million from Kuwait, more than twice as much as the PLO. In the same year, Yasser Arafat supported Iraq's invasion of Kuwait, which resulted in its political marginalisation and the withholding of financial aid. In December 1992, Israel deported 415 people with possible terrorist links to Lebanon. This enabled Palestinians to establish contacts with Hezbollah. Party of God activists trained the deportees to construct bombs, carry out suicide attacks and organised courses in media influencing skills. Among the deported Palestinians was Mahmoud Abu Hanud, comprehensively trained by Hezbollah. Upon his return to Palestine in 1993, he became commander of the al-Qassam Brigades in the West Bank, where he carried out numerous attacks on Israeli targets until his death in November 2001. Trained in Lebanon, Brigades members modified their terrorist tactics, resulting in the carrying out suicide attacks. The first was carried out on 16 April 1993<sup>135</sup>. In response, Israel stepped up military action. According to B'Tselem, an Israeli human rights organisation, 1,095 Palestinians were killed during the intifada, 48 were killed by Jewish settlers. The killing of traitors by Palestinians was common, and looting was portrayed as acts of revolutionary dispossession. Retaliatory killings carried out as part of clan revenge became common. More than 800 Palestinians fell victim to fratricidal slayings<sup>136</sup>.

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## Summary

Israel's victory in the Six-Day War and taking control of the West Bank, Gaza and Jerusalem revitalised the messianic belief that the destiny of the Jewish people had been fulfilled. A new settlement movement implementing the religious-Zionist dream of taking over all of Palestine began to play an increasingly important role in Israeli social life. The 1980s saw the rise of Jewish ultra-orthodox parties and religious organisations preaching hatred of the Palestinians and the restoration of the Kingdom of Israel. Jewish religious fanatics organised terrorist attacks, as did their Palestinian opponents. The increased influence of religion on life in Israel was accompanied by the re-islamisation of the Palestinians, a result, as in other Arab states, of the victory of the Islamic Revolution in Iran in 1979. Its beneficiaries were Lebanese Hezbollah, Hamas and, above all, the PIJ. These groups' hatred of Israel fuelled a spiral of violence and prompted retaliatory action by the Cahal. Hamas and PIJ treated the fight against Israel as a jihad and dominated intifada in Gaza Strip.

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<sup>135</sup> K. Izak, *Leksykon organizacji...*, pp. 324–325.

<sup>136</sup> K. Gebert, *Pokój z widokiem...*, p. 463; C. Shindler, *Historia współczesnego Izraela...*, p. 226.

## Peace talks and the impact of the Oslo Accords

The intifada was the impetus for reform of the PLO. It also enabled the organisation to prepare for the transition that led to the peace process initiated by the collapse of the bipolar world after the collapse of the USSR. The peace talks were initiated in Madrid in the summer of 1991 and then continued in Oslo. A factor in the negotiations was the victory of the Israel Labor Party (Mifleget ha-Awoda ha-Yisraelit, commonly referred to as Avoda) in the 1992 Knesset elections. These elections, described as a revolution and an earthquake, represented the great return of the left to the political scene. In popular opinion, it was the most significant election since 1977 (the first victory of the right-wing Likud), as Yitzhak Rabin, Avoda leader, succeeded under the slogan of the need to take steps to solve the Palestinian problem, in winning over the centrist electorate. Indeed, the left supported the aspirations of the Palestinians to create their own state. Israeli society at the time was divided over this aspiration, but was generally willing to accept the project of autonomy for the Palestinian people. It was under this slogan that the Labor Party won the elections and, in July 1992, Yitzhak Rabin formed a coalition government that took unprecedented action on the Palestinian cause. These culminated on 13 September 1993 at the White House, where the Oslo Accord (later called Oslo I)<sup>137</sup>, also referred to as the Declaration of Principles, were signed with the PLO. This day is also recognised as the date of the end of the intifada. The document was initialled by Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and Yasser Arafat. The agreement provided for, among other things, the redeployment of Israeli troops and the gradual transfer of administration to the Palestinian Authority (PA), the creation of a Palestinian police force and elections to the Palestinian National Authority (As-Sulta al-Wataniya al-Filastiniya), also known as the Palestinian Authority. Yasser Arafat became its president. The Palestinian Authority was intended as a prelude to the two-state solution advocated by the international community. It was opposed by some Palestinians, with Hamas in the lead. 4 May 1999 was set as the final

<sup>137</sup> In 1995, the Oslo II agreement was signed in Taba, Egypt. Both agreements aimed to conclude a peace agreement with the Palestinians on the basis of UN Security Council resolutions 242 and 338 and to grant the Palestinian people the right to self-determination. Yitzhak Rabin's government was also inclined to cede the Golan Heights to Syria and conclude a peace deal with Damascus. However, Rabin's strong policy did not suit all coalition partners and the Shas party left the government in 1993. See: J. Zdanowski, *Historia najnowsza Bliskiego Wschodu...*, p. 431.

date for the conclusion of negotiations on cooperation and mutual security, Jewish settlements, the status of Jerusalem, border settlement, the return of refugees and the creation of a Palestinian Authority. Enshrined in the Declaration of Principles, the prospect of Israel leaving the Occupied Palestinian Territories generated enthusiasm among the people of Gaza, but was met with a hostile reception by Hamas and the Jewish ultra-orthodox. When news of the Oslo diplomatic breakthrough began to reach the public at the end of August 1993, it caused confusion in the Palestinian organisations confronted by Arafat with accomplished facts. The DFLP and PFLP withdrew from the PLO, while Hamas and PIJ spoke of betrayal. Hamas called the compromise with Israel worked out by Arafat a land sale. The organisation also refused to participate in the building of Palestinian Authority structures and joined the National Democratic and Islamic Front, based in Damascus. In addition to Hamas, its organisations included: PIJ, DFLP, PFLP, PFLP- GC and five smaller reactionary groups. The aim of the National Front was to oppose the Oslo peace provisions. Hamas called on Palestinians to carry out terrorist attacks and mass demonstrations against these provisions<sup>138</sup>.

The future has shown that the Oslo Accords, which led to the creation of the Palestinian Authority, proved to be the last. While they empowered the Palestinians internationally, they did not change their position in the negotiations. It was Israel that in practice dictated the terms and achieved all the negotiating objectives. The Palestinians, on the other hand, apart from receiving autonomy, had to postpone the implementation of the rest of the important issues. In addition, new Jewish settlements were being built in the West Bank and Gaza at a rapid pace. These provided accommodation for thousands of Jews arriving from the former USSR. By the end of the 1990s, around one million were to arrive<sup>139</sup>. The population of Soviet Jews has greatly expanded the right-wing and far-right electorate.

On 25 February 1994, in Hebron, an American settler, Baruch Goldstein, a doctor, opened fire on Muslims praying in the mosque above the Cave of the Patriarchs. As a result 29 people were killed and 120 wounded. After firing all the bullets, Goldstein was lynched by a crowd of Muslim worshippers. After his death, posters appeared praising the deed he had

<sup>138</sup> A. Krawczyk, *Terroryzm ugrupowań fundamentalistycznych...*, p. 249; G. Corm, *Bliski Wschód...*, pp. 390–397.

<sup>139</sup> K. Bojko, *Izrael a aspiracje Palestyńczyków 1987–2006* (Eng. Israel and the aspirations of the Palestinians 1987–2006), Warszawa 2006, p. 51; K. Gebert, *Pokój z widokiem...*, p. 471.

done. His funeral became a demonstration of Jewish radicalism. Goldstein was buried in Kiryat Arba, near Hebron. Religious ceremonies, attended by more than 1,000 people, were also held in Jerusalem. Mourners chanted slogans, threatening Arabs with death. For many Israelis, Goldstein has become a hero. The crime was condemned by the Israeli government and the majority of the public. However, opinion polls found that 50% of Jews were willing to approve of the attack in Hebron on condition that it would not be called a massacre, but Operation the Cave of the Patriarchs<sup>140</sup>.

In response to the attack in Hebron, Arafat broke off negotiations with Israel and made the removal of settlers from Hebron a condition for their resumption. Faced with a growing wave of right-wing protest, Yitzhak Rabin feared a further escalation of the conflict with opponents of the Oslo agreement, among whom the settlers were the most active. However, he outlawed two extremist organisations - Kach<sup>141</sup> and Kahane Chai<sup>142</sup>. In retaliation for the Goldstein attack, Hamas carried out the first suicide bombing in Israel in April 1994. A terrorist belonging to the Al-Qassam Brigades blew himself up at a bus stop in Afula in a car filled with explosives. As a result 8 people were killed and 51 injured. In doing so, the organisation launched attacks on civilian targets<sup>143</sup>. At the end of September 1995, an agreement known as Oslo II, enshrined in the Declaration of Principles, was signed. It concerned the withdrawal of Israeli troops from parts of the West Bank. The Occupied Palestinian Territories were divided into three sectors: Zone A (3% of the territory, 29% of the population,

<sup>140</sup> In 1995, the ultra-orthodox of Kiryat Arba built a small shrine at Goldstein's burial site. It became a pilgrimage destination for Jewish extremists. The tombstone bears the inscription: 'Here lies the holy Dr Baruch Kapel Goldstein, let us bless the memory of this righteous and holy man. The Lord will avenge his blood and soul, which he sacrificed for the Jews, the Jewish religion and the Jewish land. His hands are pure and his heart is bright. He became a martyr for the Lord on 14 Adar Purim 5754.' Goldstein's widow, Miriam, did not allow her husband to be described as a fanatic or mentally ill person, but as 'a Jew who loves the Land and the People of Israel'. Pamphlets in Goldstein's honour were delivered by many Israeli and American rabbis, including Yitzhak Ginsburg, one of the leaders of Gush Emunim. In 1999, Goldstein's grave was decommissioned by law by the Israeli authorities. See: A. Krawczyk, *Terroryzm ugrupowań fundamentalistycznych...*, p. 192.

<sup>141</sup> The organisation is named after Rabbi Meir David Kahane. The word *kach* means 'only in this way'. Baruch Goldstein was a member of this organisation.

<sup>142</sup> In the 1990s, a group called Kahane Chai (Kahane lives) split off from Kach, led by several individuals, including Rabbi David Kahane's son Benjamin Kahane.

<sup>143</sup> K. Izak, *Leksykon organizacji...*, p. 194.



362,000 Arabs) came under the full control of the Palestinian Authority; in Zone B (23% of the territory, 67% of the population, 825,000 Arabs) Israel retained security responsibility and the civilian sphere was handed over to the Palestinian Authority; in Zone C (74% of the territory, 4% of the population, Jewish settlements with 140,000 settlers) Israel retained full control excluding the Arab population, whose affairs were theoretically regulated by the Palestinian Authority<sup>144</sup>. In this way, Palestinian-controlled territories were preceded by areas under Israeli administration. In later years, it was very common for the Israeli authorities to introduce troops into the Palestinian Authority area in order to arrest perpetrators of attacks or destroy terrorist infrastructure. In addition, the Israeli government was also able to influence the finances of the PA. Under the agreements, the Israeli Customs Service still collects fees today, which it later transfers to the PA. In many situations, mainly due to terrorist attacks, the Israelis have refused to transfer funds.

Opposition from ultra-religious-nationalist Jewish circles to agreements with the Palestinians and the signing of a peace treaty with Jordan in October 1994 led to the assassination of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin. This was carried out on 4 November 1995 by Yigal Amir, a student at the paramilitary yeshiva in Herzli and Bar Ilan University. There he encountered the views of Rabbi Israel Hess, preaching the thesis of exterminating all who declared war on the people of Israel. Amir was a member of a little-known group called the Jewish Combat Organisation (Irgun ha-Jehudi ha-Lohem). During the court hearing, Yigal Amir testified: *If someone leaves his people and his land to the enemy, as Rabin did, he must be killed. I have studied halakha all my life and I know what I am talking about. When I aimed at him, it was as if I was shooting at a terrorist*<sup>145</sup>. The Israeli right-wing and religious circles' campaign of reprisal against Yitzhak Rabin's left-wing government has continued since the start of peace negotiations with the Palestinians. For the ultra-orthodox, the signing of the Oslo I agreement was the trigger for an anti-government campaign. Leaflets were distributed in the city of Or Akiva with the text that Rabin must be assassinated. There were banners at demonstrations showing him in SS uniform or wearing a keffiyeh, and he was compared to Adolf Hitler

<sup>144</sup> D. Madejska, *Historia współczesnego świata arabskiego* (Eng. History of the contemporary Arab world), Warszawa 2008, pp. 31–33.

<sup>145</sup> Quoted after: A. Krawczyk, *Terroryzm ugrupowań fundamentalistycznych...*, p. 197.

or Marshal Philippe Pétain. Jewish mystics performed the kabbalistic rite of *Pulsa deNura* (fiery whip), during which they wished for the death of the Prime Minister. Two rabbis referred to him as a *rodef* (persecutor) and a *mosser* (informer)<sup>146</sup>. Right-wing and religious circles, in order to deflect suspicion of inciting the crime and fuelling an atmosphere of hatred, accused Shin Bet and the Left, led by Foreign Minister Shimon Peres, of the assassination. The assassination of the Israeli Prime Minister caused shock and was condemned by the majority of Israeli society. The religious circles, however, took an ambiguous stance, in many cases praising the assassination and the perpetrator. Yigal Amir became the idol of many Jewish religious fanatics<sup>147</sup>.

In October 1995, the Mossad killed PIJ leader Fathi Ash-Shaqaqi in Malta. After his death, the organisation only managed to carry out a few assassinations in early 1996. After that, the number of assassinations fell so sharply that in 1997 some Israeli media considered that the grouping led by Ramadan Abdullah Shallah was experiencing an internal crisis. Hamas also suffered a great loss. In January 1996, Israeli intelligence eliminated Yahya Ayyash, who had been one of the greatest explosives experts and bomb makers. After his death, he became a cult figure among Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza. His funeral in Gaza was attended by some 100,000 people who raised shouts of hatred against Israel. In retaliation, in February and March 1996, the organisation carried out a series of devastating suicide attacks in which more than 60 Israelis were killed<sup>148</sup>. The conflict situation has been exacerbated by political changes in Israel. After the transitional government of Prime Minister Shimon Peres, Benjamin Netanyahu, a supporter of Israel's uncompromising stance towards the Palestinians, took power. The new right-wing government rejected 'the land-for-peace' policy and froze the peace process. Prime Minister Netanyahu declared that the constant attacks by Palestinian terrorists absolved Israel of its obligation to implement the Oslo Accords, and in March 1997 made a decision regarding the construction of the Jewish settlement of Har Homa in East Jerusalem. This action, part of a plan to have

<sup>146</sup> *Rodef* is the term for a persecutor who puts Jews in danger by his actions. A *mosser* is an informer or someone who 'sells' Jews to non-Jews. For religious fanatics, Yitzhak Rabin as a *rodef* and *mosser* could be killed without a court sentence. See: *ibid.*, p. 196.

<sup>147</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 195–197.

<sup>148</sup> M. Górka, *Mossad. Porażki i sukcesy tajnych służb izraelskich* (Eng. Mossad. Failures and successes of the Israeli secret service), Warszawa 2015, pp. 177–178.

Jewish settlements surround the entire Arab part of the city, was met with opposition from parts of the international community<sup>149</sup>. In 1998, under heavy pressure from Washington, Israeli–Palestinian dialogue resumed. In August 1998, Yasser Arafat, condemning the policies of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, stated that a compromise with Israel was possible on the condition of a complete withdrawal of Israeli forces from the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. At the same time, he promised that Palestinian forces would take up an effective fight against terrorist organisations operating within the Palestinian Authority, as long as they had free access to all areas assigned to Palestinian control, in accordance with the Oslo Accords and subsequent agreements. The atmosphere favourable to the resumption of Israeli–Palestinian talks activated Hamas, which carried out an attack at a Tel Aviv bus station. In retaliation, the Cahal arrested a number of suspected Hamas members within the Palestinian Authority. Arafat announced that there would be a unilateral declaration of Palestinian independence in May 1999. Under pressure from US mediators, however, this was postponed indefinitely so as not to derail the Israeli–Palestinian dialogue<sup>150</sup>. It was to have culminated in the signing of a peace deal at Camp David on 25 July 2000 by Prime Minister Ehud Barak and Yasser Arafat, in the presence of US President Bill Clinton. Despite numerous concessions from the Israeli side and Barak’s determination, the deal was not signed, as Arafat consistently demanded a return to the pre-Six-Day War of 1967 borders<sup>151</sup>.

In an atmosphere of mounting tension, the second intifada, known as Al-Aqsa, began at the end of September 2000. The immediate cause of its outbreak was the provocative visit to the Temple Mount by General Ariel Sharon, known by Palestinians as the Butcher of Beirut<sup>152</sup>, then leader of the opposition right-wing Likud. When Sharon became prime minister in early 2001, the Palestinians saw this as a declaration of war, despite the new prime minister’s stated desire to cooperate. With the start of the second intifada, Arafat ordered the release of many Hamas

<sup>149</sup> D. Madejska, *Historia współczesnego świata...*, p. 33.

<sup>150</sup> K. Bojko, *Izrael a aspiracje Palestyńczyków...*, pp. 129–130, 135.

<sup>151</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 158.

<sup>152</sup> The nickname refers to the events of September 1982, when Ariel Sharon, commanding Israeli troops in Lebanon, remained passive during the brutal pacification of the Palestinian camps of Sabra and Shatila in the suburbs of Beirut. Christian Phalange troops killed hundreds of Palestinian civilians there.

members from prison and began military cooperation with the Muslim fundamentalists. In January 2001, Arafat offered Hamas an alliance and, in June, complicity in forming a government, but these proposals were rejected. In August, support for Al-Fatah among Palestinians stood at 26% and for Hamas at 27%. However, the latter grouping was aware of Al-Fatah's weakening position and the increase in support for its own activities. This was one of the main reasons why Hamas refused to cooperate with Al-Fatah. In addition, by attacking Israel, the Muslim extremists were gaining the support of the Palestinians and at the same time provoking Israeli retaliation, which disintegrated Al-Fatah. In a bid to attract religious Palestinians, Al-Fatah changed the name of its armed wing from Tanzim (Organisation) to Kataib Shuhada al-Aqsa (Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades). Marwan Barghouti, considered the most important Palestinian leader after Arafat, continued to be the commander. He was also to make the decision to launch the second intifada. Brigades fighters were responsible for numerous bombings carried out in Israel. They also carried out attacks involving Palestinian children. Since the beginning of the intifada, the PIJ has also intensified its activities. The organisation has taken responsibility for more terrorist attacks than Hamas. A decisive factor in the PIJ's resumption of activities was the increase in Iranian financial aid. Tehran began to give the organisation millions of dollars for each attack against Israel. On the initiative of Marwan Barghouti, the Palestinian National and Islamic Forces were formed. A membership declaration was signed by 14 organisations, including: Hamas, PID, PFLP- GC and Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades. The Salah ad-Din (Saladin) Brigades, which is the armed wing of the Popular Resistance Committees (Lidjan al-Mukawama al-Shabiyya), was also formed by these organisations (in addition to Hamas)<sup>153</sup>.

The attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon on 11 September 2001 caused Palestinians to rejoice as they took to the city streets. The Palestinian Authority had to tighten censorship in the local media and banned such demonstrations. However, in December 2001, Arafat was interned at the headquarters (Mukata) in Ramallah. As a consequence, he lost control of part of the Palestinian police apparatus and local groups grew in importance. Meanwhile, in Gaza, Ahmed Yassin and Abdel Aziz ar-Rantisi of Hamas inspired increasingly audacious attacks on Israeli targets. Yassin treated the struggle in religious terms: *The love*

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<sup>153</sup> K. Izak, *Leksykon organizacji...*, pp. 195–196.

*of martyrdom runs deep in the heart. But these rewards are not in themselves the goal of the martyrs. The only goal of the true believer is to please Allah. The simplest and quickest way to achieve this is to die for Allah. We never forget that it is Allah who chooses the martyrs*<sup>154</sup>. He believed that women could also be suicide bombers. Disputes between the various organisations translated into rivalry in terrorist activity. In February 2002, the Saladin Brigades effectively destroyed an Israeli tank near Nekarim and killed three Cahal soldiers. In response, the Israeli air force bombed the headquarters of the Palestinian police in Jabalia. Four days later, in Gush Katif, a suicide bomber blew himself up along with three Jewish settlers. This was followed by another Israeli air and naval attack on the headquarters of the Force 17 unit and a complex of Palestinian residences in Gaza. In the same month, the Al-Qassam Brigades fired the first Qassam rocket it had produced into Israeli territory. It caused no casualties, but the Cahal again responded by bombing Gaza. Thus, the spiral of violence gained momentum and the number of dead, including mainly Palestinian and Jewish civilians, increased on both sides. At the same time, extremist factions began to dominate among Jews and Palestinians<sup>155</sup>.

Arafat's internment exacerbated the situation in the West Bank and once again postponed the resumption of Israeli-Palestinian peace talks. Despite the tense situation, General Anthony Zinni, Washington's special envoy to the Middle East, undertook to mediate the issue in March 2002. His efforts were thwarted by one of the bloodiest attacks perpetrated by Hamas. On the day of the Jewish holiday of Passover, 27 March, a suicide terrorist detonated a bomb at the Park Hotel, in the seaside resort of Netanya, killing 29 people and wounding around 140. The Israeli authorities decided to carry out a large-scale counter-terrorism operation in the West Bank, from where the terrorist had come, codenamed 'Defensive Shield' (initially named 'Defensive Wall'). It began on 29 March 2002 and lasted until 3 May. Already in the first few days, Israeli forces occupied almost all major cities in the West Bank, including: Ramallah, Hebron, Jenin, Nablus, Tulkarm and Bethlehem. In the latter city, the Palestinians took control of the Basilica of the Nativity, which they occupied for 39 days<sup>156</sup>. 'Defensive Shield' was

<sup>154</sup> G. Thomas, *Szpiedzy Gideona. Tajna historia Mossadu* (Eng. Gideon's spies. The secret history of the Mossad), Warszawa 2005, p. 266.

<sup>155</sup> J.P. Filiu, *Historia Gazy...*, pp. 260–262.

<sup>156</sup> From 2 April to 10 May 2002, more than 250 people, fighters and civilians, were held in the basilica. Besieged by Israeli troops, Palestinian militants, mainly from

the largest Israeli operation since the Six-Day War. According to various sources, between 200 and 500 Palestinians were killed and between 600 and 1,500 wounded in the operation, with around 40 soldiers killed on the Israeli side, half of them during operations in Jenin. More than 4,200 people were detained, including many local leaders and Palestinian government officials whom Israel accused of complicity in the preparation of terrorist acts. Among those arrested in Ramallah was Marwan Barghouti, later sentenced to five life terms. After Operation 'Defensive Shield', the number of Palestinian terrorist attacks decreased significantly, the structures of the Palestinian Authority disintegrated and Arafat experienced physical and political isolation<sup>157</sup>.

The weakening of the Palestinian Authority has prompted Egypt, Jordan and Saudi Arabia to put pressure on Palestinian leaders to force them to reform economically and resume peace dialogue with Israel. Prince Abdullah, heir to the throne of Saudi Arabia, presented an eight-point plan for peace, but it was rejected by Israel. A US proposal for peacemaking, later called the 'roadmap', was instead accepted. It was first presented in June 2002 by US President George W. Bush. In September, this proposal was endorsed by the newly formed Madrid Quartet, also known as the Quartet on the Middle East, formed by the UN, the EU, the US and the Russian Federation. From the outset, however, the implementation of the 'roadmap' faced serious difficulties. These consisted of the start of the construction of a wall along the border with the Palestinian Authority, dubbed the Anti-Terrorist Barrier or Security Wall by Israel, and the ignoring of Hamas, PIJ and Hezbollah, considered by Israel to be terrorist organisations, as interlocutors<sup>158</sup>.

In June 2002, a conference was organised in Iran to help the Palestinians. The meeting was attended by top Iranian leaders and representatives of Hezbollah, PIJ and Hamas. Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, on

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the Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades, repelled attempts to storm the shrine. Israeli snipers shot dead eight Palestinians trying to enter the courtyard of the building to get water and food. These events focused the attention of the world media. As a result of the negotiations, the Palestinians were allowed to leave the basilica on the condition that 39 people (one for each day of the siege) go into exile - 26 to Gaza and 13 to Europe. See: K. Izak, *Leksykon organizacji...*, p. 196.

<sup>157</sup> K. Bojko, *Izrael a aspiracje Palestyńczyków...*, pp. 185–187; D. Madejska, *Historia współczesnego świata...*, p. 34; S. Niedziela, *Konflikty i napięcia w świecie arabskim* (Eng. Conflicts and tensions in the Arab world), Warszawa 2012, pp. 56–57.

<sup>158</sup> K. Bojko, *Izrael a aspiracje Palestyńczyków...*, pp. 188–191.

behalf of those present, called for (...) *the mobilisation of all material and spiritual forces to strengthen the morale of the Palestinians in their jihad against the occupiers*<sup>159</sup>. The Iranian Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (Sepah-e Pasdaran-e Enqelab-e Eslami), which recruited fighters from all factions, regardless of ideology, was active in the Palestinian territory. Renegades from Al-Fatah founded the organisation of the Brigades of Return (Kataib al-Awda), which became Hezbollah's agenda in Israel and the Palestinian Authority. Hezbollah played a liaison role between Palestinian groups and Iran. This was particularly true of the ideologically loyal PIJ, whose activities Iran still supports and coordinates today. In May 2002, PIJ leader Ramadan Abdullah Shallah agreed in a meeting with Ayatollah Khamenei to separate PIJ finances from the Party of God budget and increase it by 70%. Iran, through Hezbollah, also supported other organisations fighting Israel during the second intifada, primarily Hamas and the PFLP - GC influenced by Syrian politics. The PFLP-GC stood in opposition to the PLO, considering only the armed struggle against Israel as its goal. A classic example of this cooperation was the smuggling of arms from Lebanon to the Gaza Strip. In May 2001, the fishing boat Santorini with a shipment of weapons was intercepted by the Israeli navy. Found on it were Katyusha rocket launchers, Arrow portable anti-aircraft missile sets, anti-tank missiles, light weapons and ammunition. In contrast, the freighter Karine A, sailing from the Iranian island of Kish, was seized in January 2002. The ship was transporting \$2 million worth of various weapons for the PIJ and Hezbollah. At the same time, the Qassam missiles were upgraded with Hezbollah specialists, increasing their range to 20 km and the weight of the explosive carried to 20 kg. The reconstruction of the Al-Qassam Brigades has also begun. From a grouping using guerrilla tactics, they were to become the nucleus of an insurgent army<sup>160</sup>.

In 2003, attempts were made to forge an agreement between Israel and the Palestinian organisations. Because of mutual accusations of Palestinian leaders, however, they were ineffective. Al-Fatah criticised Hamas in the media for failing to help fight for the national interests of the Palestinians, while Hamas accused Al-Fatah of betraying the Palestinian cause. The ineptitude of secular activists from Al-Fatah

<sup>159</sup> R. Ożarowski, *Hezbollah a sprawa palestyńska* (Eng. Hezbollah and the Palestinian cause), in: *Palestyna: polityka - społeczeństwo - kultura*, I. Kończak, M. Woźniak (eds.), Łódź 2009, p. 68.

<sup>160</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 69-73.

and Hamas' subsequent declarations of its willingness to take leadership of the Palestinians strengthened the position of the Muslim radicals. Al-Fatah, during the Al-Aqsa intifada, began to clearly deviate from an explicitly defined secular ideology. It increasingly referred to Islam, calling the liberation of Jerusalem and the Al-Aqsa mosque a sacred duty and using the term 'jihad'. The name of the organisation's military wing, the Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade, also had religious connotations. Al-Fatah did not close itself off to cooperation with Muslim organisations. An example was the interaction with the PIJ. There was also a religious background to the establishment of the so-called moral patrol in the West Bank, whose task was, among other things, to watch over the observance of fasting during Ramadan. The period also saw an increase in bombings by Islamic extremists. Israel's response was to eliminate Hamas leader Ahmed Yassin in March 2004 and his successor Abdel Aziz ar-Rantisi the following month. Izz ad-Din Khalil, head of Hamas' armed wing in Syria, was killed shortly afterwards. Since these assassinations, the movement's leadership has remained underground and the organisation has stopped making public who is leading it<sup>161</sup>.

The intifada did not end until the death of Yasser Arafat on 11 November 2004. During the four years of the uprising, 1017 Israelis were killed and 5598 wounded. On the Palestinian side, there were 3345 dead and more than 40,000 wounded<sup>162</sup>. The second intifada caused trauma in Israeli society. A section of public opinion felt that the tragic events were a consequence of the misguided decisions of the Israeli left, which signed the 1993 and 1995 agreements. According to the majority of Israelis, the government decided at that time to make too many concessions to the Palestinians, thereby demonstrating its weakness and fostering hopes for full independence and confidence in the effectiveness of violent solutions among Muslims. The Palestinian policy of the Israeli left has been assessed as dangerous for Israel and its people. As a result, the left-wing electorate shifted to the centre and the centrist electorate to the right, which completely changed the balance of political power and thus the attitude towards the Palestinian problem<sup>163</sup>.

<sup>161</sup> K. Izak, *Leksykon organizacji...*, p. 196.

<sup>162</sup> J. Zdanowski, *Historia najnowsza Bliskiego Wschodu...*, p. 435.

<sup>163</sup> Ibid.



## Summary

The stay of members of the PLO leadership in Tunisia allowed them to establish contacts with diplomats from the West. In the opinion of the author of this paper, at that time Arafat became more flexible and positive about the possibility of establishing talks with Israel. Thus began the Oslo peace process. The conclusion of its first phase was the signing of the Palestinian-Israeli Agreement at the White House on 13 September 1993. From the beginning of the process, however, there were forces on both sides of the conflict opposed to a diplomatic solution, which translated into little progress in the implementation of the agreement's provisions. Instead, it brought dramatic consequences in the form of the assassination by Baruch Goldstein at the Hebron mosque in February 1994 and the assassination of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin in November 1995. This deepened mutual distrust. The parties accused each other of sabotaging the agreements. Israel used the negotiating process to expand and consolidate its settlements, while the Palestinians continued terrorist attacks. In the autumn of 2000, the Al-Aqsa intifada broke out. The popularity of Hamas increased greatly during this time, and the political opposition to Al-Fatah became stronger. The lasting effect of the agreements was the creation of the Palestinian Authority with Yasser Arafat as its president. His death in November 2004 was seen as the end of the intifada. Israeli society, however, became increasingly opposed to the creation of a Palestinian state, and Jewish settlements covered more and more territory.

## The development of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict after the second intifada

Following the death of Yasser Arafat, Mahmoud Abbas aka Abu Mazen became president of the Palestinian Authority. This caused a deepening split in the Palestinian independence movement. In August 2005, the government of Prime Minister Ariel Sharon decided to evacuate Jewish settlements and military posts from the Gaza Strip, prompting resistance from settlers and a harsh response from Israeli security forces, who forcibly removed the resistant and detained the most aggressive individuals. Khalid Mashal, leader of Hamas from 2004 to 2017, predicted at the time: *For us, the withdrawal (of Israel from the Gaza Strip - author's note) is the first step to liberation and regaining our full rights (...). Today is Gaza, tomorrow is the West Bank, and later - all this land (...). This is the beginning of the end of the State of Israel*<sup>164</sup>. The Al-Qassam Brigades Command, for its part, has once again announced that it will not disarm even after the complete withdrawal

<sup>164</sup> *Evakuacja osiedli żydowskich* (Eng. Evacuation of Jewish settlements), <http://www.izrael.badacz.org/historia/gaza.html> [accessed: 26 I 2024].

of Israeli forces from the Gaza Strip and will not rest until Israel has left all the Occupied Palestinian Territories. According to Mahmoud Abbas, Israel will not prove that it cares about peace until Jewish colonists stop settling in the West Bank. He pointed to the withdrawal of Israeli troops and Jewish settlers from the Gaza Strip as a necessary first step. He further stated that: (...) *Jews now must stop settling in Jerusalem and not Judaize this city. Those who think otherwise simply do not want peace*<sup>165</sup>. Already in September 2005, Hamas and the PIJ fired 30 rockets into Israel, which caused little damage. The Cahal responded with air strikes. Mutual shelling continued until the end of 2005<sup>166</sup>.

In January 2006, Hamas won the parliamentary elections. It won 76 seats in the 132-seat Palestinian Authority parliament. It is noteworthy that in the election campaign Hamas did not present any plans for the Islamic nature of a future independent Palestinian state, which the organisation intended to be an emirate governed by strict adherence to Sharia. In contrast to the armed struggle against Israel advocated earlier by Hamas, the Change and Reform Party formed by the organisation for the duration of the election campaign accepted the possibility of negotiations with Israel and even declared its readiness to make concessions. In this way, Hamas used negotiations with Israel to achieve their goals. The Change and Reform Party did not demand a closer link between Sharia and the state, but advocated the construction of the rule of law. In March 2006 Hamas formed a new government of the Palestinian Authority. Ismail Haniyeh<sup>167</sup>, a veteran of the Hamas terrorist underground, became prime minister. Attempts to soften the organisation's ideology (recognition of Israel and renunciation of terrorism) were rejected. The opponents of changes to the professed principles were Hamas leaders: Khaled Mashal, Mahmoud al-Zahar and Mousa Abu Marzook, despite initially showing a willingness to recognise Israel. Shortly after the elections, Hamas offered Israel a ceasefire (Arabic: *hudna*). In January 2007, Mashal stated that the problem was not the existence of a Jewish state, but the non-existence of a Palestinian

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<sup>165</sup> Ibid.

<sup>166</sup> Ibid.

<sup>167</sup> In 2017, Ismail Haniyeh replaced Khalid Mashal as leader of Hamas. On 31 VII 2024, Haniyeh was killed in Tehran as a result of an Israeli air strike carried out on the residence where he was staying. See: *Lider Hamasu nie żyje. Został zabity w Teheranie* (Eng. Hamas leader is dead. He was killed in Tehran), TVN24, 31 VII 2024, <https://tvn24.pl/swiat/lider-hamasu-ismail-hanija-nie-zyje-zostal-zabity-w-teheranie-st8024623> [accessed: 1 VIII 2024].

state. He added that talks on the existence of Israel would only be held if an independent Palestine was created<sup>168</sup>.

Al-Fatah's conciliatory policy towards Israel and Hamas' intransigent stance led to the division of the Palestinian Authority in 2007. During street clashes, dubbed the Battle for Gaza, Hamas forced Al-Fatah representatives, its militia officers and supporters to flee Gaza and took unrestricted control of the entire Strip. In June 2007, during the fighting in Gaza, Mahmoud Abbas dismissed Ismail Haniyeh from office and appointed Salam Fayyad as Prime Minister, whose cabinet included only Al-Fatah representatives. Haniyeh's deposed cabinet took over the Gaza Strip. The consequence of these events was the creation of practically two Palestinian Autonomies: one ruled by Al-Fatah in the West Bank and the other under Hamas in the Gaza Strip. Each established its own government and security forces and denied the legitimacy of the other's authority. The Israeli and Egyptian response was to impose a complete blockade on the Gaza Strip, which led to a deterioration in the living conditions of its inhabitants. In late January/early February 2008, Hamas militants broke the blockade on the border with Egypt for a few days, allowing free border movement. At the end of February/beginning of March, Hamas launched a rocket barrage on Israel, which provoked an Israeli military offensive in the Gaza Strip, before unilaterally declaring a six-month ceasefire in June (the Palestinians used the term *tahdiyya*, meaning 'temporary period of calm'). In December, the organisation resumed shelling Israel<sup>169</sup>.

On 27 December 2008, the day after a large humanitarian aid convoy was allowed into Gaza, the Israeli air force began bombing Gaza and the military went on the offensive in Operation Cast Lead, which lasted until 21 January 2009. Its main objective was to destroy Hamas. The leaders of this organisation hoped to gain political advantages and better conditions for negotiations with Israel after triggering the conflict. On the one hand, they did not foresee that Israel would launch a retaliatory strike on a huge scale, while on the other hand, losses among their own population could be exploited propaganda-wise. The militants created resistance points against the Israelis in schools, hospitals, mosques and public offices. The tactic of deploying mortar and rocket positions on

<sup>168</sup> K. Izak, *Leksykon organizacji...*, p. 193.

<sup>169</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 194; Ł.M. Nadolski, *Operacja „Cast Lead” (cz. 1)* (Eng. Operation Cast Lead (part 1)), "Komandos" 2009, no. 12, p. 14.

private land or in the immediate vicinity of public institutions, from where Israel was fired upon, also made the civilian population a target for Cahal. During the fighting, the Hamas leadership spread propaganda in which it developed and managed information sent to dozens of websites, edited in some 20 languages. During Operation Cast Lead, Israel and Egypt imposed a complete blockade of the Gaza Strip, but the pro-Palestinian measure was Cairo's unofficial acceptance of underground tunnels used to move supplies from Egypt to Gaza. Cahal troops withdrawing in January 2009 left behind a ruined territory with a naval blockade extended from 3 to 20 nautical miles, and the hatred of the Palestinian community and increased resentment of Israel by the international community. Hamas, despite heavy losses, achieved its priority goal of consolidating its position as Israel's main opponent in Palestine, and carved itself out as an entity with the right to decide war and peace. Hamas' military defeat proved to be its media and political success. The organisation's leadership has proven that it is capable of conducting effective operations against Israel and, despite its weakening, has become one of the most important players on the political scene and representative of the majority of Palestinian society<sup>170</sup>.

During Operation Cast Lead, the Popular Resistance Committees and the PIJ suffered the heaviest losses, in contrast to the Al-Qassam Brigades, which were not deprived of their leadership, which was the main objective of the Israeli military action in Gaza. According to Hamas, 150 fighters were killed out of a total of 10,000-15,000 Brigades members. However, Israeli forces reported that they had not only destroyed the terrorist infrastructure, but had also largely paralysed the Hamas command system<sup>171</sup>. The fighting, which lasted for weeks, caused trauma for the people of the Gaza Strip, as civilians were defenceless and powerless during the fighting. More than 600 people were killed. The term *al-nakba* of 2009 was used, referring to the historic catastrophe of 1948. The scale of the destruction was enormous: 6 400 buildings were demolished, including 34 hospitals and 214 schools, and 46 000 homes were damaged. Operation Cast Lead triggered a wave of protests around the world, intensifying anti-Israeli and anti-American sentiment among Islamists. In Germany, a large

<sup>170</sup> On the course of the fighting in Gaza and its aftermath, see in more detail: K. Mroczkowski, „Phynny Ołów”. *Izraelska operacja wojskowa w Strefie Gazy 2008–2009* (Eng. Cast Lead. Israeli military operation in Gaza 2008–2009), Zabrze 2015.

<sup>171</sup> Ł.M. Nadolski, *Operacja „Cast Lead”...*, p. 18.

anti-Israel and pro-Palestinian demonstration was held for the first time, with nine parliamentarians in attendance<sup>172</sup>. After the Israeli attack on the Gaza Strip, Hamas terrorist activity essentially ceased, due to harsh criticism of the organisation from the civilian population, who accused the militants of being undefended and concerned only with their own security<sup>173</sup>. In order to appease civilian anger, Hamas proceeded to provide €4,000 in relief payments to the owners of completely destroyed homes, €2,000 to partially destroyed homes, €1,000 to the family of each Palestinian killed and €500 to each injured person<sup>174</sup>. The dispute between Hamas and Al-Fatah has not only not died down during the fighting, but has become even more heated. Al-Fatah reported that 75 of its activists in the Gaza Strip had had their legs shot off by Hamas, while the Islamists announced that they had executed 35 Israeli collaborators. It is possible that some of these were activists from a rival group. This deepening conflict has meant that Al-Fatah could count on Israeli favour. There were even opinions that, if it increased its involvement, Al-Fatah could single-handedly overthrow Hamas, which had been significantly weakened<sup>175</sup>.

In June 2009, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, in a speech at Bar Ilan University, stated for the first time that Israel would accept a Palestinian state provided it was demilitarised and security for Israel was guaranteed. The Palestinians were to recognise Israel in a binding way as the state of the Jewish people. In September 2009, the first trilateral meeting took place in New York, attended by US President Barack Obama, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas. However, it did not yield results. Once again, it became clear that any negotiations without Hamas were unproductive<sup>176</sup>. In 2009, small groups ideologically linked to Al-Qaeda became active and began shelling Israeli territory. These were the Army of Islam (Jaysh

<sup>172</sup> P. Jendroszczyk, *Niemcy: bez taryfy ulgowej dla Izraela* (Eng. Germany: no concessions for Israel), "Rzeczpospolita", 23 I 2009.

<sup>173</sup> J.P. Filiu, *Historia Gazy...*, pp. 304–305.

<sup>174</sup> *Hamas zapłaci rodzinom zabitych w Strefie Gazy* (Eng. Hamas will pay the families of those killed in Gaza), Wprost, 22 I 2009, <https://www.wprost.pl/swiat/151224/hamas-zaplaci-rodzinom-zabitych-w-strefie-gazy.html> [accessed: 22 I 2009].

<sup>175</sup> P. Zychowicz, *Palestyńska wojna domowa* (Eng. Palestinian civil war), "Rzeczpospolita", 8 I 2009.

<sup>176</sup> K. Mroczkowski, *Operacja „Płynny Ołów” – fragmenty* (Eng. Operation Cast Lead – excerpts), "e-Terroryzm.pl" 2015, no. 4 (40), p. 53.

al-Islam) and the Army of Allah's Supporters (Jund Ansar Allah). The former grouping claimed responsibility for the abduction of Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit and British BBC journalist Alan Johnson, who was imprisoned from March to July 2007, when his freedom was returned as Hamas came to power in Gaza. Shalit, on the other hand, who was captured by Palestinians in June 2006, was released after lengthy negotiations in October 2011<sup>177</sup>.

Both groups have been targeted by Hamas. The armed confrontation between Hamas and the Army of Allah's Supporters occurred on 14 August 2009, when its leader, Abdel Latif Musa, at the Ibn Taymiyya Mosque in Rafah announced the creation of an Islamic emirate in the Gaza Strip and accused Hamas of not adhering to Sharia. Hamas militants attacked the extremists gathered at the shrine. During the hours-long battle, 24 people were killed, including the organisation's leader. Following the incident, the Army of Islam and the Army of Allah's Supporters identified the destruction of Hamas infrastructure as one of their objectives for action<sup>178</sup>. Despite this, Israel accused Hamas of tolerating Al-Qaeda members in the Gaza Strip. Salah al-Bardawil, a senior official of Hamas, strongly rejected the accusation and called it a lie aimed at dividing Palestinians and building a false image of Hamas as a terrorist organisation. Yuwal Diskin, head of Shin Bet, claimed that Al-Qaeda members were responsible for the shelling attacks on Israel. Israeli services estimated their number at around 500 militants. The Army of Islam was most likely linked to one of Gaza's strongest Palestinian clans, the Dogmush, whose members were in the Jabalia refugee camp near Gaza. Israel has conducted operations against the Army of Islam. In November 2010, Israeli soldiers succeeded in eliminating Islam Yassin, a close associate of this organisation's leader<sup>179</sup>.

<sup>177</sup> Gilad Shalit was released in exchange for the release of 1,027 Palestinians, including many terrorists, from Israeli prisons. Palestinians left prisons in two rounds: in the first, immediately after Shalit's release, 477 were released from prison; in the second, in December 2011, as a result 550 were released. Due to the demands of the Israeli side, however, most of them had to leave Palestine. Hamas had long refused to agree to the exchange because it did not include important representatives of Palestinian armed groups, i.e.: Marwan Barghouti and Ahmed Saadat - secretary general of the PFLP. See: R. Stefanicki, *1027 za sierżanta. Gilad Szalit na wolności* (Eng. 1027 for a sergeant. Gilad Shalit freed), "Gazeta Wyborcza", 18 X 2011.

<sup>178</sup> K. Izak, *Leksykon organizacji...*, p. 198.

<sup>179</sup> <https://www.alamy.com/relatives-of-palestinian-militant-islam-yasin-and-his-brother-muhammed-not-seen-mourn-at-the-family-house-during-their-funeral-in-jebaliya-northern-gaza-strip-thursday-nov-18-2010-image524147723.html> [accessed: 18 XI 2010].

In January 2010, Israeli special forces killed Mahmoud Abdul al-Mabhouh, one of the founders of the Al-Qassam Brigades. He was killed in Dubai, after visiting Saudi Arabia, where he had gone to buy weapons for Hamas<sup>180</sup>. Police in Dubai have identified 15 people who took part in the attack. Some of them were using fake European passports (from the UK, Ireland and France). Following Al-Mabhouh's death, Hamas launched an appeal calling for another intifada in defence of Jerusalem and against the Judaisation of the city. The immediate reason for this announcement was Israel's continued construction of housing in the eastern (so-called Arab) part of Jerusalem and the expansion of Jewish settlements in the West Bank. The communiqué issued expressed the view that organising an uprising against the Israeli occupier is a fundamental duty of the Palestinians. They were urged to express their anger by all available means, as only such actions could enable a positive change for Israelis towards the Palestinian people and their holy sites. At the beginning of 2010, Israeli Defence Minister Ehud Barak accused the international organisation Palestinian Return Centre of having links with Hamas, engaging in terrorist and propaganda activities against Israel, which were intended, among other things, to discredit Israel as a state and to make it viewed negatively by the European community. The Palestinian Return Centre organised conferences in Europe with Hamas members and Muslim Brotherhood representatives from around the world. It was also involved in financial aid to Hamas and co-organised the so-called Freedom Flotilla that sailed to Gaza in late May 2010<sup>181</sup>.

<sup>180</sup> Referring to the attack, media in Dubai indicated that Al-Mabhouh, who was killed in a hotel room, was travelling under an altered name. Saudi Arabia's police chief said that if the kingdom's security forces had information about his true personal details, they would have given him proper protection. Al-Mabhouh's funeral was held at the Yarmuk Palestinian refugee camp near Damascus. Following the funeral ceremony, the slain man's family received Ismail Haniyeh at their home. See: K. Izak, *Leksykon organizacji...*, p. 199.

<sup>181</sup> Among those involved in organising and supporting the Freedom Flotilla were those associated with the Muslim Brotherhood movement, including Yusuf al-Qardawi and Abdul Majeed az-Zindani, who sit on the board of Itilaf al-Kheir (founded in 2000 by al-Qardawi to help Hamas, bringing together nearly 50 charitable organisations and associations), the Turkish Foundation for Human Rights and Freedoms (Insani Yardim Vakfi), European politicians and intellectuals. The Flotilla ships were stopped by Israeli forces. The action resulted in the deaths of nine Turkish citizens. This caused increased tension in relations between Ankara and Tel Aviv. See: K. Izak, *Leksykon organizacji...*, p. 199.

Successive attempts in 2009-2010 to establish dialogue and mediation between Hamas and Al-Fatah did not yield results. Relations between the two groups were exacerbated by the disclosure of documents by WikiLeaks, including dispatches by Richard Jones, the US ambassador to Israel, about conversations with Yuwal Diskin, the head of Shin Bet, and Amos Radlin, the head of military intelligence, i.e. the Intelligence Branch (Agaf ha-Modi'in, Aman). They portrayed Abbas, the Al-Fatah leadership and the Palestinian Authority in the West Bank in a very unfavourable light. The documents also testified to Al-Fatah's close cooperation with Israel in fighting Hamas<sup>182</sup>. It was not until a series of protests in Arab countries, dubbed the Arab Spring, and above all the change of power in Egypt after the resignation of President Hosni Mubarak, that effective mediation and a landmark agreement between the warring parties was possible. It was announced on 27 April 2011 and officially signed on 4 May in Cairo. The agreement stipulated, among other things, the entry of Hamas into the PLO and the Palestinian National Council, the formation of an interim government of specialists and the preparation of parliamentary and presidential elections. The agreement was enthusiastically welcomed by Palestinians in both the West Bank and Gaza. Al-Fatah's deal with Hamas was met with a sharp reaction from the Israeli government and Prime Minister Netanyahu, who described it as a blow to peace and a victory for terrorism. The White House was cautious about this agreement and expressed the hope that the new Palestinian government would renounce violence, recognise the state of Israel and respect previous peace agreements. In May 2011, Barack Obama called for a solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict by establishing a Palestinian state within the pre-Six-Day War of 1967 borders. Never before had an American president openly called on the state of Israel to withdraw from the Occupied Palestinian Territories and agree to the creation of a state for Palestinians on this land. Obama's initiative caused consternation and outrage among most Israeli politicians

<sup>182</sup> The documents show that even before the battle for Gaza in 2007, the Palestinian Authority leadership was asking Israel for help in cracking down on Hamas. The Israeli security service could count on the full cooperation of the Palestinian security services loyal to Abbas, who gave it their intelligence material. At the same time, Shin Bet and Aman expressed satisfaction with Hamas' control of the Gaza Strip, as they could now recognise it as hostile territory and carry out military operations there. See: J. Jarząbek, *Palestyniacy na drodze do niepodległości. Rozwój, przemiany i kryzys ruchu narodowego* (Eng. Palestinians on the road to independence. The development, transformation and crisis of the national movement), Warszawa 2012, p. 290.



and the Republican opposition in the US. On the other hand, it was viewed positively by many Western governments and parts of the global media<sup>183</sup>.

At the same time, Hamas, in cooperation with Iran, took action to combat Israeli intelligence agents. The first stage of the operation was the killing of several people suspected of having relations with Israel's secret services, as a warning to all Palestinians. Hamas then announced a two-month amnesty for those cooperating with Israeli services. Anyone disclosing was assured secrecy. Around 200 people took up Hamas' offer. Many of them gave testimonies in which they revealed further suspected agents for Israel. Based on the information obtained, several hundred people were arrested by mid-2011. Despite the operation, Hamas was unable to even approximate the number of Israeli agents in Palestine. To achieve this, Iranian advisors provided Hamas with electronic equipment to check people entering the Palestinian Authority and to check their luggage. These actions served to undermine the operations of the Israeli security forces<sup>184</sup>.

The agreement between Al-Fatah and Hamas did not stop the terrorist attacks against targets in Israel and the shelling of its territory with Qassam rockets. In December 2011, on the occasion of Hamas' 24th anniversary, the organisation demonstrated its strength and popularity. The venue for the central celebrations in Gaza was a large stage in the shape of a ship symbolising the drive to seize the entire area between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea. Alongside it marched fighters wearing black masks (to avoid recognition). In an anniversary statement, Hamas representatives announced the continuation of the resistance by all possible means until the liberation of the whole of Palestine and the return of the refugees. At the same time, they criticised the conciliatory strategy presented by Al-Fatah, which has been ineffective and should be reviewed. However, the desire to implement the agreement with Al-Fatah was

<sup>183</sup> Ibid., pp. 290–292.

<sup>184</sup> K. Izak, *Leksykon organizacji...*, p. 200. Israeli services have for many years applied to the Palestinian community a policy described as: 'corruption, blackmail, extortion'. This system enabled the effective identification of people involved in terrorist activities, especially those called 'engineers', i.e. explosive and missile designers. The elimination of 'engineers' by the Israeli services has resulted in a significant reduction in the number of bombings, including suicide bombings. In addition to personal sources, Israel also has a highly effective electronic intelligence service. The use of telecommunications networks by Palestinian terrorists risks deconfliction. In recent years, the Pegasus spyware has been used in counter-terrorism operations.

maintained. A few days later, Khaled Mashal, secretary-general of Hamas, ordered fighters from the Al-Qassam Brigades to halt attacks on targets in Israel. The decision was related to the implementation of the April 2011 agreement and the demonstration of Palestinian unity. According to the Israeli authorities, the reason for Hamas' refraining from violence was the negative perception by the Palestinian population of the violent tactics employed by the extremists. It is the civilian population that has suffered the greatest losses as a result of Israeli retaliatory attacks. Hamas' decision to halt attacks was not accepted by the PIJ and the Popular Resistance Committees, whose fighters continued to shell Israel<sup>185</sup>.

In November 2012, Mahmoud Abbas called on the Palestinians to stimulate action against Israel. In response, the PIJ leadership announced its readiness to engage in war with Israel. In a statement, it said that there is currently no chance of a long-term truce with Tel Aviv and in this situation the grouping, which has around 8,000 members, must expect to fight the Israeli armed forces. It was also reported that the organisation looks forward to assistance from allies and welcomes the declaration of support from Tehran. However, information about Iranian arms supplies was dismissed. Overshadowing this rhetoric was the so-called 'olive war', which involved removing olive trees or setting fire to entire plantations belonging to Palestinians. In order to stop Israeli expansion, there was a simultaneous campaign to plant new trees. The same actions were carried out by Jewish settlers to assert their right to the land<sup>186</sup>.

In November 2012, Israeli forces killed Ahmed al-Jabari, commander of the Al-Qassam Brigades. In response, Hamas militants launched a massive rocket attack. In retaliation, the Cahal launched Operation Pillar of Defense, which lasted from 14 to 21 November. Its aim was to eliminate Hamas members and destroy its infrastructure, primarily the tunnels connecting the southern part of the Gaza Strip to Egypt. Weapons and all kinds of goods were smuggled through the underground passages. The Israeli Air Force had already bombed the entrances to the tunnels during Operation Cast Lead at the turn of 2008 and 2009, but the tunnels were quickly brought back into use. Now 140 tunnels were targeted, most of which were destroyed. This has not deterred the Palestinians from building new subways linking

<sup>185</sup> K. Izak, *Leksykon organizacji...*, p. 204.

<sup>186</sup> R. Stefanicki, *Wojny oliwne. Sadzenie i niszczenie drzew oliwkowych stało się w Palestynie namiastką działań wojennych* (Eng. Olive wars. The planting and destruction of olive trees became a substitute for warfare in Palestine), "Gazeta Wyborcza", 23 III 2012.

Egypt to Gaza<sup>187</sup>. The blockade imposed on Gaza by Israel and Egypt actually encouraged smuggling through the tunnels, with contraband being one of Hamas' main sources of income. At the end of November 2012, the UN General Assembly decided to upgrade the status of Palestine, which took the Israeli authorities by surprise. The resolution adopted recognised Palestine as a non-member state of the UN. Opposing the resolution were the US, Canada, the Czech Republic, and Israel, which penalised the Palestinian Authority by withholding the transfer of \$100 million in taxes collected by Israeli officials on behalf of the Authority. The Israeli authorities also decided to intensify Jewish settlements in the West Bank and East Jerusalem<sup>188</sup>.

It should be noted that Jewish land claims and settlement construction in the West Bank remain among the key factors fuelling the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The colonisation of the West Bank has been ongoing since 1977, when the right-wing Likud took power in Israel. Even the Oslo peace agreement in 1993 was unable to stop it. During the 1991-1993 peace talks, the largest number of Jewish settlements were and are being established spontaneously by settlers affiliated to Gush Emunim, without official permission from the Israeli authorities. In practice, however, such settlements receive military protection as early as their establishment. Governments that have tried to stop settlement activities have succumbed to pressure from religious circles. In 2010, more than 60% of the West Bank

<sup>187</sup> The tunnels started to be built in the early 1980s. They were financed by several investors, who then profited from the smuggled goods and the people carried out. In 2009, the cost of building one tunnel was between \$100,000 and \$200,000. The capacity of these constructions proved to be very large and smuggling extremely lucrative, as prices in Gaza were becoming many times higher than in Egypt. Virtually everything was smuggled through the tunnels, from cigarettes, building materials, weapons to animals and cars. The average tunnel was 1 km long and ran 20 m underground. They were fitted with lighting and winches to pull goods placed in wagon-like containers. In autumn 2009, Hamas 'legalised' the tunnels. It began to charge owners an annual subscription of \$2,500 and duties for smuggled goods. More than 700 tunnels were registered at the time. Tens of thousands of people were involved in digging them, smuggling and distributing goods on both sides of the border. See: M. Zawadzki, *Israel walczy z tunelami* (Eng. Israel fights the tunnels), "Gazeta Wyborcza", 9 I 2009.

<sup>188</sup> M. Szydzisz, *Uznanie Palestyny za państwo nieczłonkowskie o statusie obserwatora ONZ - nowa rzeczywistość na Bliskim Wschodzie* (Eng. Recognition of Palestine as a non-member state with UN observer status - a new reality in the Middle East), in: *Bliski Wschód w stosunkach międzynarodowych w XXI wieku*, W. Lizak, A.M. Solarz (sci. eds.), Warszawa 2015, p. 89, 94-95.

as under direct Israeli control, with the area - as illegal settlement activity<sup>189</sup> continued to grow. The UN Security Council described the settlements as a violation of international law and called on Israel to cease all settlement activity<sup>190</sup>. Negotiations with the Palestinians on various issues, such as the release of prisoners, have always been the occasion for decisions to build Jewish settlements in Zone C in the West Bank and East Jerusalem and to expand and legalise them, as happened in 2012 and subsequent years. Israel's policy of mass displacement is part of a broader strategy to force the Palestinian population out of Zone C - which is entirely controlled by Israel - and into Zones A or B. In most cases, the policy pursued on Palestinian land is considered by Israel to be a matter of its national security. Military commanders used coercive measures to control the Palestinian community, resorting to arrests and destruction of property. Colonisation continues to be a major stumbling block in talks between the Palestinian Authority and the Israeli government<sup>191</sup>. The Israeli authorities have argued that all actions are taken to ensure Israel's existence and the security of its citizens.

From the beginning of Israeli domination of the West Bank in 1967 until the entry into force of the Palestinian Authority agreements in 1995, Palestinians who wanted to travel across the border via Jordan had to leave their documents at Israeli border posts. In return, they received an exit permit, which was valid for three years and could only be renewed for one year three times. People who did not return to the West Bank within the stipulated period were classified as no longer residents. Before leaving the West Bank, Palestinians were not informed of this procedure. In this way, the Israeli authorities revoked the right of residency for some 140,000 Palestinians. In 2011, similar measures were applied to Arab residents of East Jerusalem. Palestinians with the status of its residents and, unlike their West

<sup>189</sup> Almost 600,000 Israelis currently live in the West Bank and East Jerusalem in more than 200 settlements. See: G. Latos, *Wbrew naciskom USA rząd Izraela zatwierdził ułatwienia w rozbudowie żydowskich osiedli na Zachodnim Brzegu* (Eng. Against US pressure, Israeli government approves facilitation of Jewish settlement expansion in the West Bank), *Dziennik Gazeta Prawna*, 18 VI 2023, <https://www.gazetaprawna.pl/wiadomosci/swiat/artykuly/8735578,izrael-usa-rozbudowa-zydowskich-osiedli-na-zachodnim-brzegu-palestyna.html> [accessed: 18 VI 2023].

<sup>190</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>191</sup> A. Jerska, *Życie pod lufami karabinów* (Eng. Life under the gun barrels), *Palestyna.wordpress*, 17 I 2011, <https://palestyna.wordpress.com/2011/01/17/zycie-pod-lufami-karabinow/> [accessed: 17 I 2011].

Bank compatriots with Israeli identity documents, lost their right of return if they had been abroad for more than seven years<sup>192</sup>. Furthermore, according to Israeli law, if Palestinian residents of Jerusalem are not Israeli citizens, they are also not residents of the West Bank. They are entitled to the status of so-called residents, i.e. people with permission to stay in the city<sup>193</sup>. Residents from outside East Jerusalem with Palestinian documents are not allowed to enter Jerusalem. Permission to do so is expensive and granted in special cases. If the Israeli authorities determine that Jerusalem is not a permanent place of residence for a person or that he or she has received a foreign passport, they can revoke the resident permit at any time. On this basis, in 2008 alone, the residency permits of some 4,500 residents in East Jerusalem were revoked, and 31% of Palestinian residents were displaced from the area during the first decade of the 21st century<sup>194</sup>. In the following years, 50,000 housing units were planned to be built in this part of the city for Jewish settlers, whose numbers are steadily increasing in contrast to the number of Palestinians.

In 2002, the erection of the security wall, also known as the wall of separation, began. Its length is expected to be 790 km and its height in some places reaches 8 m. In 2004 International Court of Justice (ICJ) in The Hague issued an advisory opinion on the legal implications of the construction, declaring it illegal. However, the Israeli authorities rejected the ICJ's recommendations and continued with the investment. The Israeli government justified this action mainly on security grounds, primarily defence against Palestinian suicide attacks. However, the relevance of the wall as a security measure was debatable. For example, at the end of 2007, more than 1,200 Palestinians crossed the wall each week to work illegally in Israel. While opinions were expressed that its construction

<sup>192</sup> *Jak Izrael pozbywał się niechcianych* (Eng. How Israel got rid of the unwanted), TVN24, 11 V 2011, <https://tvn24.pl/swiat/jak-izrael-pozbywal-sie-niechcianych-ra170717-3524829> [accessed: 11 V 2011].

<sup>193</sup> From 1967 to 2021, more than 14,000 Palestinians were barred from Jerusalem, resulting in their forced resettlement outside the city. See: *Izraelski apartheid wobec Palestyńczyków: okrutny system dominacji i zbrodnia przeciwko ludzkości* (Eng. Israeli apartheid against the Palestinians: a cruel system of domination and a crime against humanity), Amnesty International, 1 II 2022, <https://www.amnesty.org.pl/izraelski-apartheid-wobec-palestynczykow-okrutny-system-dominacji-i-zbrodnia-przeciwko-ludzkości/> [accessed: 1 II 2022].

<sup>194</sup> A. Jerska, *Życie pod lufami karabinów...*; P. Zychowicz, *Jerozolima tylko dla Żydów* (Eng. Jerusalem for Jews only), "Rzeczpospolita", 12 III 2010.

contributed to a sharp decline in Palestinian terrorist attacks, even the Israeli security services acknowledged that the improvement observed since 2006 was due to a unilateral ceasefire by Palestinian groups. The construction of the wall caused massive changes in the geography and control mechanisms of the West Bank, as it was designed to leave as much of the best land as possible on the Israeli side and to separate neighbouring Palestinian villages that had become hours away from each other or inaccessible at all. In addition, the land fenced off by the wall contained 65% of the West Bank's water resources<sup>195</sup>. To the knowledge of the article's author, Israeli policies towards Palestinians include checkpoints and roadblocks, house demolitions, the destruction of Palestinian territorial continuity and arrests, including so-called administrative detention, in which those suspected of posing a threat to state security can be held for several years without trial.

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### Summary

In January 2006, Hamas won parliamentary elections in the Palestinian Authority, which were not recognised by the international community. However, the organisation formed a new government headed by Ismail Haniyeh. The following year, he was dismissed by Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas, who took over the position after Arafat's death in 2004. Haniyeh's deposed cabinet took over the Gaza Strip, from which Hamas militants had forced Al-Fatah representatives to flee. Hamas thus took control of the Gaza Strip, while Al-Fatah took control of the West Bank. Each side established its own government and security forces and denied the legitimacy of its opponent's authority. Hamas militants fired rockets at Israel, prompting it to retaliate with a first major military operation code-named 'Cast Lead' in late 2008 and early 2009. This resulted in the deaths of many civilians and massive destruction in Gaza cities. Foreign mediation between Israel and the Palestinians as well as negotiations between Hamas and Al-Fatah were unsuccessful. A new factor exacerbating the situation was Israel's construction of a wall separating Israeli and Palestinian areas.

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### From Operation Protective Edge to Operation Guardian of the Walls

Between 2013 and 2021, Palestinian opposition to Israeli policies took various forms. This resulted in attacks by Israeli armed forces in the Gaza Strip. Areas and towns in the West Bank under Palestinian control were

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<sup>195</sup> B. White, *Apartheid izraelski* (Eng. Israeli apartheid: a beginner's guide), Warszawa 2010, pp. 95–98.

also targeted. In line with the agreement reached with Hamas in April 2011, the Palestinian Authority was involved in the formation of a Transitional Unity Government to lead the struggle for independence. It was formed on 2 June 2014 and lasted only one year. Internal divisions, as before, proved too great for such a government to operate stably and effectively. It had virtually no authority over the Gaza Strip, where Hamas had undivided control<sup>196</sup>. In June 2014, the situation was exacerbated by the kidnapping and murder of three young Israelis. Israeli security forces accused Hamas, and personally two young Palestinians, of the killings. During searches carried out almost all over the West Bank, more than 400 people were arrested and the homes of the alleged perpetrators were demolished. Meanwhile, the murder of the three Israelis was claimed by the Supporters of the Islamic State in Jerusalem (*Ansar ad-Dawla al-Islamiyya fi Bayt al-Makdis*), an organisation hostile to both the PLO and Hamas<sup>197</sup>. The situation was extreme and threatened to spark a third intifada, especially as Hamas resumed rocket fire into Israel from Gaza. A new organisation called the Sheikh Omar Hadid Brigade (*Liwa ash-Shaykh Umar Hadid*), affiliated with the Islamic State and fought by Hamas, had also emerged in the Strip and was also firing rockets into Israeli territory<sup>198</sup>.

On 8 July 2014, the Cahal launched an offensive in the Gaza Strip as part of 'Operation Protective Edge'. Israeli forces attacked the town of Rafah, where the border crossing with Egypt is located. The initiator of this attack was Colonel Ofer Winter, who, even before the offensive began, called on the soldiers under his command to wage a religious war<sup>199</sup>. 'Protective Edge' is the most vicious operation since the 'Cast

<sup>196</sup> *Palestyna: Rząd jedności po roku do dymisji* (Eng. Palestine: Unity government to resign after a year), *Dziennik Gazeta Prawna*, 17 VI 2015, <https://www.gazetaprawna.pl/wiadomosci/artykuly/877813,palestyna-rzad-jednosci-po-roku-do-dymisji.html> [accessed: 17 VI 2015].

<sup>197</sup> *Dżihadyci przyznają się do zabójstwa trzech młodych Izraelczyków* (Eng. Jihadists confess to killing three young Israelis), *Onet*, 3 VII 2014, <https://wiadomosci.onet.pl/swiat/dzihadyci-przyznaja-sie-do-zabojstwa-trzech-mlodych-izraelczykow/wbkqv> [accessed: 3 VII 2014].

<sup>198</sup> A.J. Al-Tamimi, *New Salafi Jihadi Group in Gaza: The Sheikh Omar Hadid Brigade*, *Jihad Intel*, 2 VI 2015, quoted after: <https://www.aymennjawad.org/2015/06/new-salafi-jihadi-group-in-gaza-the-sheikh-omar> [accessed: 2 VI 2015].

<sup>199</sup> *Sekretny protokół izraelskiej armii – jak doszło do „katastrofального” ataku na Rafah?* (Eng. The Israeli army's secret protocol - how did the 'catastrophic' Rafah attack happen?), *Wirtualna Polska*, 22 VIII 2014, <https://wiadomosci.wp.pl/sekretny-protokol-izraelskiej-armii-jak-doszlo-do-katastrofального-ataku-na-rafah-6027704390927489a> [accessed: 22 VIII 2014].

Lead' of late 2008 and early 2009. Israeli offensive lasted until 26 August and more than 2,000 Palestinians and 70 Israelis were killed in it. More than 30 tunnels leading from Gaza to Egypt were eliminated. During this operation, sectarian hatred on both sides of the conflict deepened. It was an additional source of violence that continues to this day. Rabbis and Knesset deputies, not only from the ultra-orthodox parties but also from the right, began to openly revolt Jews against Arabs. This became possible because a generation had grown up in Israel, raised in the spirit of extreme nationalist-religious ideology, which was not afraid to proclaim its views and intimidate otherwise thinking compatriots<sup>200</sup>. This was accompanied by an unstable system of government due to the frequent break-up of some coalitions and the formation of others, early parliamentary elections, but still with the right in power and the growing importance of religious parties. They increased their electorate as the population of ultra-orthodox communities grew relative to citizens with more liberal views. In order to gain as many supporters as possible, activists of national-religious parties, who were also members of the government, used hate speech. One example is Ayelet Shaked, Minister of Justice from 2015-2019 and a member of the Jewish Home (Ha-Bayit ha-Yehudi) party, which was primarily voted for by youth and Jewish settlers. Shaked called all Palestinians traitors who must be killed, and referred to their children as little snakes. She expected judges to be inspired by the Talmud in their verdicts<sup>201</sup>. Jewish Home also attracted secular Israelis who supported an uncompromising stance towards the Palestinians. The clearest manifestation of this shift in public consciousness was the conflict over the Temple Mount - a site sacred to both followers of Islam and Judaism. While previously only one of the extreme groups wanted to reclaim it, these aspirations later became widespread among religious Jews. The extreme right supported these aspirations and fuelled militant sentiments among the population<sup>202</sup>.

In 2014, new forms of violence by Palestinians became widespread – driving speeding vehicles into Israelis and attacking them with knives,

<sup>200</sup> J.A. Hever, Święta ziemia radykałów. *Kto rządzi Izraelem?* (Eng. The holy land of radicals. Who is ruling Israel?), "Przegląd" 2014, no. 17, pp. 66–69.

<sup>201</sup> N. Abé, R. Bergman, *Nie popełnimy samobójstwa* (Eng. We will not commit suicide), "Forum" 2016, no. 6, p. 59.

<sup>202</sup> K. Izak, *Sieć ekstremizmów religijnych i politycznych. Sojusznicy i wrogowie* (Eng. A network of religious and political extremism. Allies and enemies), "Przegląd Bezpieczeństwa Wewnętrznego" 2019, no. 21, pp. 103–104.



machetes and even axes. Fourteen Israelis were killed between mid-September and mid-October 2015. During the same period, more than 80 Palestinians were killed as perpetrators of these attacks and participants in increasingly violent clashes with Israeli forces<sup>203</sup>. The knife violence escalated when the Palestinian authorities began to spread the news about the change in the status of the Temple Mount. The Grand Mufti of Jerusalem announced on Palestinian television that a mosque had stood there since the beginning of the world and there had never been any traces of Judaic worship. Muslim preachers also appeared on television praising the knife attacks and even giving instructions on how to do so<sup>204</sup>. The Temple Mount has become the scene of increasingly frequent clashes between Palestinians and the police. Occasionally, security forces entered the Al-Aqsa Mosque, exacerbating the situation. In July 2015, for the first time, hundreds of Jews invaded the Temple Mount to commemorate the anniversary of the demolition of Jerusalem's First and Second Temples. Fighting then ensued with Palestinians defending access to the Al-Aqsa Mosque. The Jews were repulsed, but shortly afterwards Israeli police proceeded to storm the temple and threw stun grenades there<sup>205</sup>.

In October 2015, the serious threat of a Palestinian uprising was again perceived. Civil unrest spread not only to East Jerusalem, but also to Hebron and Nablus, where there was street fighting between Palestinians and the police. There were casualties on both sides, but many more Palestinians were killed. The scale of the violence was increased by the impunity of Jewish settlers who believed they had the right to live wherever they wanted, even in the centre of Jerusalem's Muslim quarter. The organisation of religious radicals, the Crown of the Priests (Ateret Cohanim), also known as the Jerusalem Crown (Ateret Yerushalayim), headed by Rabbi Daniel Luria, plays a important role in this sensitive issue. No less hostile activities against Muslims, but also Christians, are carried out by the group the Prevention the Assimilation of the Holy Land (Le-mni'at ha-hitbolelut ha-arec ha-kodesh, abbreviated as Lehava), known for acts of violence, incitement to hatred on national, racial and religious grounds, whose

<sup>203</sup> P. Jendroszczyk, *Izrael ignoruje dżihadystów* (Eng. Israel ignores the jihadists), "Rzeczpospolita", 19 XI 2015.

<sup>204</sup> *Nowa fala nożowników* (Eng. New wave of knifemen), "Dziennik Trybuna", 23 XI 2015.

<sup>205</sup> According to an order from the Israeli authorities, Jews are not actually allowed to enter the Temple Mount. They may be there during strictly defined hours and under strict supervision. However, they are not allowed to pray there.

members are against contact and mixed marriages between Jewish and non-Jewish women and carry out acts of vandalism of holy places of other faiths. The organisation's founder Benci Gopstein justifies any violence. He claims that it is carried out in the name of the Messiah. He further calls for the expulsion of all Christians and Muslims from Israel, and in August 2015 called for churches to be set on fire<sup>206</sup>.

The situation in Palestine was exacerbated by US President Donald Trump's declaration on 6 December 2017, in which he recognised Jerusalem as Israel's capital and announced the relocation of the US embassy to it from Tel Aviv. This sparked outrage and protests in the Muslim world. They demanded that Washington's decision be cancelled and declared Jerusalem to be the capital of Palestine. Hamas then called on Palestinians for a new uprising against Israel, and Al-Qassam Brigades fighters proceeded to shell Israel, which responded with airstrikes. On 14 May 2018, the 70th anniversary of Israel's declaration of independence, Jews and Americans celebrated the opening of the US embassy in Jerusalem<sup>207</sup>. During the ongoing celebrations at the Gaza-Israel border, Hamas organised a protest of many thousands as part of the so-called Great March of Return. This is because 14 May is the date of *al-nakba* for Palestinians and is associated with the deprivation of many of them their homeland by the Jewish state. The event was initiated by Yahya Shinwar, a fierce enemy of the Jews, who was elected leader of Hamas in Gaza in 2017<sup>208</sup>.

<sup>206</sup> P. Pokrzywiński, *Organizacja Lehawa – ekstremizm spod znaku Kahane* (Eng. Lehava organisation – Kahane extremism), "Stosunki Międzynarodowe – International Relations" 2019, vol. 56, no. 2, pp. 61–79. <https://doi.org/10.7366/020909621201904>.

<sup>207</sup> The opening of the US embassy in Jerusalem marked a departure from a 70-year-old policy tying the city's status to the resolution of the Israeli-Arab conflict. Since the creation of Israel in 1948, it had been assumed that the international community would recognise the city as the capital of the Jewish and Arab states when the two sides finally ended the conflict. For this reason, all diplomatic missions were located in Tel Aviv, which is not formally the capital of Israel. The seats of the government and parliament of the Jewish state are located in Jerusalem. Since the seizure of the eastern Arab part of the city as a result of the Six-Day War, Israel has been demanding recognition of the whole of Jerusalem as its capital. At the same time, the Palestinians believe that the capital of their future state should be in Al-Quds, as Jerusalem is called in Arabic. The dispute was not even resolved by the peace process in the 1990s.

<sup>208</sup> The Great March of Return protests, in which 214 Palestinian civilians, including 46 children, were killed, expired in 2019 after a truce with Israel. Qatar was the negotiator in them. Doha then provided millions of dollars in aid to the Palestinians. See: *Yahya Sinwar re-elected as Hamas chief in Gaza Strip*, AlJazeera, 10 III 2021, <https://www.aljazeera>.

Immediately after taking up this position he stated: *The time Hamas spent discussing the recognition of Israel is over. Now Hamas will discuss when we will destroy Israel*<sup>209</sup>. On the day the protest began, leaflets were distributed from a plane warning that Palestinians who approached the border fence would be shot dead. Despite this, tens of thousands of people took part in the largest and most violent demonstrations in weeks. In order to stop the crowds pushing against the border fence, the Israeli army opened fire. This did not deter the Palestinians, who organised weekly protests<sup>210</sup>.

In mid-June 2018, Nadav Argaman, head of Shin Bet from 2016 to 2021, reported that the security service had foiled 250 major terrorist attacks since the beginning of this year. This was possible thanks to high-tech surveillance and tracking tools (including Pegasus)<sup>211</sup>. In July 2018, the Knesset passed new law stating that Israel is exclusively a Jewish state. In this way, the Arab inhabitants of this state, who number approx. 20%, have become second-class citizens, especially as this law downgraded the previous status of the Arabic language. The document also had an anti-Palestinian dimension, as it guaranteed the Jewish settlement a national value and obliged the state to act on its behalf, support its development and consolidation. The latter provision was adopted by the Knesset at a time when the UN criticised the Israeli authorities for tolerating illegal Jewish settlements in the Palestinian territories<sup>212</sup>. In response, for two days in November 2018, Hamas fired 460 Qassam rockets into Israel, killing 8 people. The Israelis responded by bombing 160 targets in the Gaza Strip. The fiercest exchange of fire since 2014 ended in a ceasefire. A 25-year truce (Arabic: *hudna*) was even forecast, allowing the people of Gaza and southern

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com/news/2021/3/10/yahya-sinwar-elected-as-hamas-chief-ahead-palestinian-elections [accessed: 10 III 2021]. In August 2024, Yahya Shinwar became the leader of Hamas. He succeeded Ismail Haniyeh in this position.

<sup>209</sup> Quoted after: D. Lieber, *Hamas chief: We won't discuss recognizing Israel, only wiping it out*, "The Times of Israel", 19 X 2017, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/hamas-chief-we-wont-discuss-recognizing-israel-only-wiping-it-out/> [accessed: 19 X 2017].

<sup>210</sup> P. Jendroszczyk, *Izrael świętuje. Palestyńczycy giną* (Eng. Israel celebrates. Palestinians die), "Rzeczpospolita", 15 V 2018; *Izraelski apartheid wobec Palestyńczyków: okrutny system dominacji...*

<sup>211</sup> A. Turczyn, *Izraelski Szin Bet w tym roku udaremniał 250 ataków terrorystycznych* (Eng. Israel's Shin Bet has thwarted 250 terrorist attacks this year), trybun.org, 13 VI 2018, <https://trybun.org.pl/2018/06/13/izraelski-szin-bet-w-tym-roku-udaremnial-250-atakow-terrorystycznych/> [accessed: 13 VI 2018].

<sup>212</sup> *Apartheid po izraelsku* (Eng. Apartheid in Israeli style), "Dziennik Trybuna", 20 VII 2018.

Israel to live peacefully with the hope that the next generation would not return to the path of war. The *hudna* was meant to be a blow to Iran's policy, which wanted to create a second front in Gaza in case of confrontation with Israel in Lebanon and Syria. However, Iran's calculations were based solely on the mood among the Palestinians and did not take into account the mood in Israel, where 75% of the population was against the ceasefire<sup>213</sup>. The truce, even a short-lived one, was not concluded.

Violence by Hamas did not result in Israel eliminating the organisation's sources of funding. In 2018, Israeli secret services obtained detailed information on its extensive financial operations. Despite this, the country's authorities did not take sufficiently decisive action to end the terrorist group's funding. This was probably due to the belief that Hamas was more interested in ruling Gaza than in the conflict. In the same year, Benjamin Netanyahu sent a secret letter to the Qatari authorities asking for \$30 million a month in financial assistance to Hamas. Netanyahu thus pursued a policy towards the Palestinians whose main objective was to prevent the emergence of a Palestinian state. He was therefore undermining the position of the Palestinian Authority, which was supported by almost the entire international community, which was in favour of a two-state solution to the Middle East conflict. Netanyahu thus decided to strengthen Hamas, hostile to the PA, which he sought to destabilise by freezing transfers of its due share of taxes collected by Israel. Qatar's support was supposed to weaken Hamas' aggressive motivations, provide humanitarian aid to the people of Gaza and preserve stability in the region. This policy of the Prime Minister prompted Defence Minister of Israel Avigdor Lieberman to resign. The politician then issued a statement: *With one hand, you are blocking funds to the Palestinian Authority, accusing it of funding terrorism, while with the other hand you are allowing a stream of money to flow to Hamas terrorists in Gaza*<sup>214</sup>.

<sup>213</sup> W. Młynarz, *Minister obrony Izraela podał się do dymisji* (Eng. Israeli defence minister resigns), "Gazeta Polska Codziennie", 16 XI 2018; J. Kociszewski, *Izrael i Hamas o krok od porozumienia* (Eng. Israel and Hamas on the verge of agreement), "Dziennik Gazeta Prawna", 21 XI 2018; K. Izak, *Sieć ekstremizmów religijnych i politycznych...*, p. 104.

<sup>214</sup> Quoted after: *Premier Izraela Benjamin Netanjahu prosił o fundusze dla Hamasu. Ujawniony tajny list do Kataru* (Eng. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has asked for funds for Hamas. Secret letter to Qatar revealed), polskieradio24, 11 V 2024, <https://polskieradio24.pl/artykul/3376273,premier-izraela-benjamin-netanjahu-prosil-o-fundusze-dla-hamasu-ujawniony-tajny-list-do-kataru> [accessed: 11 V 2024]. See also: A. Pokorski, *Finansowanie Hamasu. USA wyznaczyły nagrodę za „globalnych terrorystów”* (Eng. Hamas funding. US has set a bounty on 'global terrorists'), Interia, 6 I 2024, <https://wydarzenia.interia.pl/raport->

The winter and spring of 2019 were marked by rocket shelling of Israeli territory by the Al-Qassam Brigades and bombardment of the Gaza Strip by Cahal aviation. In June 2019, Jared Kushner, President Donald Trump's Middle East advisor, presented a plan for a final solution to the Middle East conflict. It included promises of multi-billion dollar aid to Palestine, Jordan and Egypt, the implementation of some 180 projects to develop local infrastructure and business, including Palestinian tourism. These were promises of economic aid, with no mention of a political solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the creation of a Palestinian state. Moreover, according to Kushner's conception, most of the investment would be financed by the rich Gulf states<sup>215</sup>. Following Kushner's announcement of the programme, Palestinian groups in Gaza and the Cahal began exchanging fire, which occurred after each mediation attempt. In November 2019, Baha Abu al-Atta, a top PIJ commander, and his wife and three children were killed in an Israeli air strike. On the same day, Israelis attacked the headquarters of Akram al-Ajouri – another PIJ leader who was not in the building at the time, near Damascus. His son and daughter were killed. In the following days, hundreds of rockets were fired from Gaza towards Israel, including dozens at Tel Aviv. Most were intercepted by the Iron Dome anti-missile system. Seventeen Israelis were wounded. Commentators pointed out that the Cahal's actions came at a time of a complicated political situation in Israel, as they coincided with another early election. Benjamin Netanyahu thus wanted to prove that he had state security issues under full control. His political opponent, Naftali Benett, who had criticised the prime minister for years, now accused him of being too soft on radical Palestinian organisations. At the same time, losing the election would threaten Netanyahu with prosecution for corruption<sup>216</sup>. Thus, not for the first time, according to the author, the rivalry on the right

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wojna-w-izraelu/news-finansowanie-hamasu-usa-wyznaczyly-nagrode-za-globalnych-ter,nId,7253023 [accessed: 6 I 2024].

<sup>215</sup> O. Górzyński, *Pokojowy plan Trumpa dla Palestyny. Obiecuje miliardowe inwestycje* (Eng. Trump's peace plan for Palestine. Promises billions in investment), *Wirtualna Polska*, 23 VI 2019, <https://wiadomosci.wp.pl/pokojowy-plan-trumpa-dla-palestyny-obiecuje-miliardowe-inwestycje-6395042740618881a> [accessed: 23 VI 2019].

<sup>216</sup> P. Jendroszczyk, *Kolejna wojna Netanjahu* (Eng. Netanyahu's next war), "Rzeczpospolita" 13 XI 2019; *Kolejne ataki raketowe na Izrael* (Eng. Further rocket attacks on Israel), "Gazeta Polska Codziennie", 14 XI 2019.

side of the Israeli political scene has translated into increased Cahal action against the Palestinians.

On 28 January 2020, Donald Trump, in the presence of Benjamin Netanyahu and opposition leader Benny Gantz, announced at the White House a new peace plan for the Middle East. This time it included the existence of two separate states, Israel and Palestine. The Palestinian capital was to be East Jerusalem. Despite this declaration, Trump stated that an 'undivided' Jerusalem would remain under Israeli control. The American president announced a doubling of the territory under Palestinian control, but Israel would gain sovereignty over Jewish settlements in the West Bank. The Palestinian state was to consist of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, connected by roads and tunnels. The draft also included a four-year freeze on Jewish settlements in Palestinian areas administered by Israel. Regarding Israeli sovereignty in the West Bank Trump stated that: *No Palestinian will be expelled from his home*<sup>217</sup>. The plan also included the complete demilitarisation of Palestinian militants. Both the Israeli prime minister and the Israeli opposition leader endorsed the plan which Trump called a historic breakthrough in relations with the Palestinians<sup>218</sup>.

The draft was rejected by Palestinian leaders who were not in Washington when it was announced. The plan for the creation of a Palestinian state was to favour Israel in all major areas of contention (the course of the borders, security, the issue of Palestinian refugees, the status of Jerusalem). The implementation of this project would have meant the existence of Palestine as an entity with limited sovereignty and capacity to function as a state organism. All Jewish settlements and the Jordan Valley, which is about 30% of the West Bank area, would become part of Israel. Compensation for the Palestinians would be, for example, the uninhabited Israeli areas of the Negev desert. The de facto capital of Palestine would not be East Jerusalem, but the adjacent Palestinian towns. During future four-year negotiations, the Palestinian side would have to meet certain political conditions, including not taking action against Israel in international courts. The plan included solutions proposed

<sup>217</sup> Quoted after: *Izrael i Palestyna jako oddzielne państwa. Trump ogłosił plan pokojowy dla Bliskiego Wschodu* (Eng. Israel and Palestine as separate states. Trump announced a peace plan for the Middle East), Forsal.pl, 28 I 2020, <https://forsal.pl/artykuly/1450987,izrael-i-palestyna-jako-oddzielne-panstwa-trump-oglosil-plan-pokojowy-dla-bliskiego-wschodu.html> [accessed: 28 I 2020].

<sup>218</sup> Ibid.

in an initiative presented in June 2019 by Jared Kushner, such as a tunnel linking Gaza to the West Bank and the demilitarisation of Palestine. This would be complemented by a \$50 billion investment package, also announced by Kushner. The Palestinian Authority-led Al-Fatah and Hamas and the majority of Palestinians (94%) rejected Trump's plan. The plan did not lead to the continuation of Israeli-Palestinian negotiations. Instead, it served both Trump and Netanyahu propaganda purposes in the election campaign<sup>219</sup>.

Following Israel's parliamentary elections in early March 2020, an important element of the coalition agreement between Benjamin Netanyahu and Benny Gantz was the announcement of the annexation of Palestinian territories already settled by Jewish settlers. This was to take place in July 2020. The announced annexation was rejected by the majority of the international community and all permanent members of the UN Security Council, with the exception of the US. Instead, the PA announced that it would declare independence throughout the West Bank and Gaza as soon as the annexation was carried out<sup>220</sup>. However, this did not happen, which did not change the situation anyway, as the areas settled by Jewish settlers are under Israeli control and the area is gradually expanding. Hamas has escalated the violence, expressing its opposition to current Israeli policies. In addition to rocket fire, it has sent hundreds of balloons with attached explosives into Israeli territory. The Cahal has carried out retaliatory actions<sup>221</sup>.

On 13 August 2020, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) officially announced the normalisation of relations with Israel and even a desire to strengthen diplomatic relations. The Palestinians described the event as a stab in the back for the Arab world. In September, Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh arrived in Lebanon to meet with Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah. This was Haniyeh's first visit to Lebanon in almost 30 years. It resulted in financial and military aid from Hezbollah (or rather Iran through Hezbollah) to Hamas. While in Lebanon, Haniyeh spoke to leaders of other Palestinian groups active in the country, opposing the Israeli

<sup>219</sup> M. Wojnarowicz, *Plan pokojowy Trumpa – znaczenie polityczne* (Eng. Trump's peace plan - political significance), PISM, 27 II 2020, [https://pism.pl/publikacje/Plan\\_pokojowy\\_Trumpa\\_znaczenie\\_polityczne](https://pism.pl/publikacje/Plan_pokojowy_Trumpa_znaczenie_polityczne) [accessed: 27 II 2020].

<sup>220</sup> K. Gebert, *Palestyna do wzięcia* (Eng. Palestine up for grabs), "Polityka" 2020, no. 26, p. 49.

<sup>221</sup> P. Kryszak, *Balonowy terroryzm Hamasu* (Eng. Hamas' balloon terrorism), "Gazeta Polska Codziennie", 28 VIII 2020.

diplomatic initiative to normalise relations with some Arab countries in the Middle East<sup>222</sup>. Israel's diplomatic efforts, supported by the US, have been successful. On 15 September 2020, Israel, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain and the United States (in a mediating role) signed a treaty on peace, diplomatic relations and full normalisation, also known as the Abraham Accords, in Washington<sup>223</sup>. This event marginalised the Palestinian cause in the Arab world. The Palestinians ceased to count in the Muslim world's relations with Israel, and their problems were losing importance among the priorities of the Arab League. The Palestinian leadership refused to cooperate with it after their demands to condemn the Abraham Accords were rejected. The PA recalled its ambassadors to the UAE and Bahrain for consultations and threatened to do the same to other Arab states making peace with Israel. The PA has attempted to antagonise the Arab world, saying among other things: *A knife stabbed in the back by traitors from the Gulf states*<sup>224</sup>. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the resolution of which for decades was a *sine qua non* for peace in the Middle East, has been overlooked in international relations. The hitherto sponsors of the Palestinians and countries feeling hostile towards Israel because of their plight have begun to cooperate officially with the Jewish state.

The COVID-19 pandemic has weakened Hamas activity for a time. Palestinian sources (including Wafa News Agency) reported that Yahya Sinwar, the organisation's leader in Gaza, threatened bloodshed if Israel withheld respirators and other medical aid at the border. The Israeli side, on the other hand, reported that Yahya Sinwar had even announced his willingness to enter into an unspecified agreement with Israel in exchange for financial assistance in the fight against the pandemic<sup>225</sup>. The scale of this aid depended on the flexibility of Hamas, which ignored the needs for medical supplies of the population in Gaza and carried out shelling of Israel in late 2020 and early 2021. The Cahal responded with the same. In mid-April 2021, riots broke out in Israel itself, mainly in Jerusalem, but also within the country, including in Jaffa. In Jerusalem, they had different

<sup>222</sup> *Hamas and Hezbollah leaders meet to discuss response to Israel-UAE deal*, Jewish News, 7 IX 2020, <https://jewishnews.timesofisrael.com/hamas-and-hezbollah-leaders-meet-to-discuss-response-to-israel-uae-deal/> [accessed: 7 IX 2020].

<sup>223</sup> A. Ben Zvi, *Bliski Wschód coraz bliżej pokoju* (Eng. Middle East getting closer to peace), "Rzeczpospolita", 27 X 2020.

<sup>224</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>225</sup> *Yahya Sinwar re-elected...*



causes. In the Old City, they were related to the restrictions imposed by the police during the fasting period of Ramadan, primarily the restriction of the number of people praying at the Al-Aqsa Mosque. In the Ash-Shaykh Jarrah neighbourhood of East Jerusalem, on the other hand, discontent and anger was sparked by a Supreme Court ruling to evict Arab families from homes standing on land allegedly owned by Jewish religious organisations before 1948. This was followed by clashes between Arabs and security forces, as well as a march by Jewish ultra-orthodox in Jerusalem, who attacked Israeli police officers, Arabs and left-wing counter-protesters. The tense situation was exploited by Mahmoud Abbas, who on 29 April cancelled the Palestinian Authority's parliamentary elections scheduled for 2021. He justified this on the grounds that Israel did not agree to hold them in East Jerusalem. The real reason, however, was the deep crisis in the Palestinian Authority and the almost certain defeat of Abbas and the corrupt representatives of the Authority, financially supported by Western countries<sup>226</sup>.

The conflict in Jerusalem was exacerbated by the actions of Hamas, which has launched intense rocket fire into Israel from Gaza. Between 8 and 10 May 2021, the Al-Qassam Brigades fired more than 1,000 rockets. The Iron Dome anti-missile system destroyed the majority of the missiles, but some of them reached civilian targets and killed several people. Hamas and other organisations operating in Gaza gave Israel an ultimatum related to the situation in Jerusalem, and threatened to continue shelling if it was not met. In response, the Cahal on 10 May launched Operation Guardian of the Walls, in which more than 500 Hamas-linked targets were attacked. Already at its outset, more than 30 Palestinians were killed, among them several senior representatives of the organisation. The military action in Gaza was accompanied by an escalation of riots organised by the Arab population in Israel. These were particularly violent in the city of Lod, where, among other things, buildings inhabited by Jews, synagogues and religious schools were set on fire. As a result, a state of emergency was declared. Similar incidents, albeit on a smaller scale, occurred in Akka, Jaffa

<sup>226</sup> D. Siryoti, *Coronavirus could send 'thousands' of Gazans to Israeli border*, Israel Hayom, 23 III 2020, <https://www.israelhayom.com/2020/03/23/coronavirus-could-send-thousands-of-gazans-to-israeli-border/> [accessed: 23 III 2020]; *Izraelskie czołgi ostrzelały pozycje Hamasu w Strefie Gazy* (Eng. Israeli tanks shelled Hamas positions in the Gaza Strip), Forsal.pl, 20 I 2021, <https://forsal.pl/swiat/bezpieczenstwo/artykuly/8073139,izraelskie-czolgi-ostrzelaly-pozycje-hamasu-w-strefie-gazy.html> [accessed: 20 I 2021].

and Ramla. Operation Guardian of the Walls lasted until 21 May. It ended with a ceasefire brokered by Egypt. Both sides in the conflict declared victory. More than 250 Palestinians were killed in the operation, which lasted 11 days. Israeli forces claimed to have killed around 160 terrorists. It was the most intense fighting since ‘Operation Protective Edge’ in 2014<sup>227</sup>. Artificial intelligence was used in military operations in 2021. An Israeli intelligence officer said after the fighting ended: *For the first time, artificial intelligence was a key element and amplifier of our force used against the enemy. This was the first campaign of its kind for the Israel Defense Forces. We implemented new methods of operation and used technological advances that were a force multiplier for the entire Israel Defense Forces*<sup>228</sup>.

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## Summary

The second decade of the 21st century was characterised by Palestinian opposition to Israel’s policies, which intensified its actions. Every rocket attack by Hamas was met with massive retaliation. West Bank areas and cities under Palestinian control were also targeted. In 2014, the Cahal carried out an offensive in the Gaza Strip codenamed ‘Operation Protective Edge’, targeting Hamas and its infrastructure of underground tunnels leading to Egypt. Israel declared it a success. Meanwhile, Hamas structures were not strained and the destroyed tunnels were quickly rebuilt. With a sense of injustice and hatred of Israel and Jews, a new generation of militants was growing up. In the West Bank and Jerusalem, they attacked Jews with knives or rammed them with speeding cars. These actions intensified the retaliation of the Israeli security forces. Their target was increasingly the Temple Mount in Jerusalem. This led to deepening religious hatred on both sides of the conflict. In Israel, in turn, a generation grew up with an extreme nationalist-religious

<sup>227</sup> M. Matusiak, K. Zielińska, *Eskalacja konfliktu izraelsko-arabskiego* (Eng. Escalation of the Israeli-Arab conflict), OSW, 12 V 2021, <https://www.osw.waw.pl/en/node/28844> [accessed: 12 V 2021]; K. Śmiałkowska, *Operacja „Strażnik Murów” – za kulisami walki z Hamasem* (Eng. Operation Guardian of the Walls - behind the scenes of the fight against Hamas), epatmos.pl, 11 VI 2021, <https://epatmos.pl/szabat-szalom/item/operacja-straznik-murow-za-kulisami-walki-z-hamasem> [accessed: 11 VI 2021].

<sup>228</sup> Quoted after: *Pierwsza wojna oparta na sztucznej inteligencji* (Eng. First war based on artificial intelligence), 30 V 2021, [http://www.izrael.badacz.org/fakty/fakty\\_straznik\\_murow.html](http://www.izrael.badacz.org/fakty/fakty_straznik_murow.html) [accessed: 30 V 2021]. In the years leading up to Operation Guardian of the Walls, the Cahal had developed a sophisticated artificial intelligence technology platform that centralised all data on terrorist groups in Gaza into a single system, enabling real-time data analysis and the extraction of relevant information. Pioneers in this field were soldiers from the elite intelligence group (Unit 8200), who created several new programmes: Alchemist, Gospel, Depth of Wisdom. These were successfully used during the fighting in Gaza in May 2021.

ideology that demanded retaliation against the Palestinians. Right-wing politicians, settlers and rabbis openly revolted the Jews against the Arabs. The situation in Palestine was exacerbated by US President Donald Trump's declaration in December 2017 to recognise Jerusalem as the capital of Israel. This sparked outrage and protests in the Muslim world, which demanded that Washington's decision be annulled and that Jerusalem be declared the capital of Palestine. The White House did not reverse the decision, and on 14 May 2018, the 70th anniversary of Israel's declaration of independence, Jews and Americans celebrated the opening of the US embassy in Jerusalem. In response, Hamas organised a protest of thousands. The normalisation of the UAE and Bahrain's relations with Israel in 2020 was a blow to Hamas, which has strengthened ties with Hezbollah. The revolt by Palestinian youth in Jerusalem was supported by Hamas, which began firing rockets into the Gaza Strip in May 2021. In response, the Israeli army embarked on a military operation code-named 'Guardian of the Walls', which ended with a ceasefire.

### **Escalation of hatred and aggression leading to the most violent events in the history of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict**

The end of Operation Guardian of the Walls did not affect the situation in East Jerusalem, where violent anti-Jewish demonstrations continued. Furthermore, in June 2021, riots broke out in the Palestinian Authority against its leadership. The source of this unrest was the killing by Palestinian police of Nizar Banat, an Al-Fatah activist and fierce critic of the Palestinian Authority, which he accused of corruption. During his funeral, demonstrators called on the then 85-year-old Mahmoud Abbas to leave his post, held continuously since 2005. He formally ended his mandate in 2009, but continues to rule despite not holding elections, and having cancelled those due in 2021 and not setting a new date<sup>229</sup>. At the end of June 2021, Ismail Haniyeh arrived in Lebanon for the second time in a year, where he held talks with Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah and other Hezbollah leaders on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in May and the possibility of using the experience of the recent fighting in the decisive battle with Israel<sup>230</sup>. On 1 August 2021, during internal elections, Ismail Haniyeh was unanimously re-elected leader of Hamas for a four-year term. Since the end of 2019, he has led the movement's activities from

<sup>229</sup> *Palestinians attend funeral for PA critic Nizar Banat in Hebron*, AlJazeera, 25 VI 2021, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/6/25/palestinians-hold-funeral-for-activist-nizar-banat-in-hebron> [accessed: 25 VI 2021].

<sup>230</sup> A. Boxerman, *Hamas leader Haniyeh meets Hezbollah chief Nasrallah in Beirut*, The Times of Israel, 29 VI 2021, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/hamas-leader-haniyeh-meets-hezbollah-chief-nasrallah-in-beirut/> [accessed: 30 VI 2021].

exile, splitting his stay between Turkey and Qatar. He has not said whether he intends to return to Palestine<sup>231</sup>. As a result of continued protests on the Gaza-Israel border, Egypt closed the Rafah border in August 2021. Egyptian intelligence officials, who had negotiated the truce, reported that Hamas was an increasingly unpredictable partner, failure to honour agreements. This was the first critical comment, after many years, by the Egyptian secret service against Hamas. In December 2021, Israel completed the three-and-a-half-year construction of a 65-kilometre border fence with Gaza. The fence is a high-tech facility. It separates the Gaza Strip from Israel both above and below ground. The barrier is 6m high and has been equipped with underground sensors to detect tunnel construction, radar installations, underwater equipment and surveillance cameras<sup>232</sup>.

The last few months of 2021 and the whole of 2022 were marked by protests and violence, this time on a smaller scale in the Gaza Strip. It escalated in the West Bank and Jerusalem. The beginning of 2022 coincided with the publication by Amnesty International (AI) of a comprehensive report entitled *Israeli apartheid against Palestinians: a cruel system of domination and a crime against humanity*. The document details how Israel applies a system of oppression and domination against the Palestinian people in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories. Among other things, the report states that the Israeli authorities must be held accountable for their crimes against the Palestinians<sup>233</sup>. The Israeli authorities accused AI of being one-sided, lying and omitting in silence the terrorist activities of Palestinian groups and the Israeli victims of these activities. In response to the report, Palestinians organised protests in the West Bank, accompanied by violence. These events resulted in the launch of an Israeli counter-terrorism operation in March 2022, code-named 'Breakwater', which ran throughout that year and the following year. In March and April 2022 alone, 14 Israelis were killed in terrorist attacks, while Israeli police shot dead at least

<sup>231</sup> Ismail Haniya re-elected as leader of Palestinian group Hamas, AlJazeera, 1 VIII 2021, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/8/1/haniya-re-elected-as-chief-of-palestinian-group-hamas> [accessed: 1 VIII 2021].

<sup>232</sup> Izrael: Zakończono budowę ogrodzenia na granicy ze Strefą Gazy (Eng. Construction of the fence on the border with Gaza completed), wnp.pl, 7 XII 2021, <https://www.wnp.pl/rynki-zagraniczne/izrael-zakonczono-budowe-ogrodzenia-na-granicy-ze-strefa-gazy,514438.html> [accessed: 8 XII 2021].

<sup>233</sup> Izraelski apartheid wobec Palestyńczyków: okrutny system dominacji...; D. Bar-Tal, *Złudzenia niszcząca życie...*, pp. 173–182.

29 Palestinians. At the same time, Hamas conducted rocket fire on Israeli territory, without causing much damage. In retaliation, the Cahal attacked Hamas and PIJ positions. One of these attacks resulted in the killing of Tayseer al-Jabari, commander of the Al-Quds Brigades, the armed wing of the PIJ. On 11 May, an Israeli soldier shot dead Shireen Abu Akleh, a prominent Palestinian journalist for Al-Jazeera. Two days later, Israeli forces attacked participants at her funeral. On 14 May, protests were held against the assassination of the journalist, coinciding with demonstrations marking the 74th anniversary of *al-nakba*. The death of Shireen Abu Akleh sparked protests almost across the Middle East, the US and Europe<sup>234</sup>.

Continued confrontation between Israeli security forces and Palestinians in East Jerusalem and the West Bank led to a general strike in October 2022. During it, violent riots and fighting between Palestinians and Israeli police took place at the intersection of the main roads leading from Jerusalem to Ramallah, Bethlehem, Nablus and Hebron. In the same month, Israeli forces proceeded to dismantle the base of the new organisation the Lions' Den (Arin al-Usud) in Nablus. It was founded in July 2022 as a manifestation of the younger generation of Palestinians' opposition to the ageing leadership of al-Fatah, Hamas and PIJ and the ineffectiveness of their struggle against Israel. The escalation of violence made 2022 the most dramatic for Palestinians in the West Bank in 17 years. More than 2,200 searches, raids and arrests were carried out by Israeli security forces there and 149 Palestinians were killed. Twenty-nine Israelis have been killed in attacks by Palestinian terrorists<sup>235</sup>.

<sup>234</sup> P. Ślusarczyk, *Konflikt palestyński-izraelski odżywa* (Eng. Palestinian-Israeli conflict revives), Euroislam, 24 IV 2022, <https://euroislam.pl/konflikt-palestynsko-izraelski-odzywa/> [accessed: 24 IV 2022]; M. Humaid, *Israel hits Gaza with air attacks as tensions escalate*, AlJazeera, 5 VII 2022, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/8/5/israel-hits-gaza-with-air-strikes-as-tensions-escalate> [accessed: 5 VIII 2022]; *Mapping Shireen Abu Akleh solidarity protests*, AlJazeera, 16 V 2022, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/5/16/mapping-shireen-abu-akleh-solidarity-protests> [accessed: 16 V 2022].

<sup>235</sup> *Palestinians strike in West Bank, Jerusalem over Israel killings*, AlJazeera, 20 X 2022, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/10/20/palestinians-strike-in-west-bank-jerusalem-over-israel-killings> [accessed: 20 X 2022]; *Who are the Lions' Den armed group in the occupied West Bank?*, AlJazeera, 26 X 2022, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/10/26/who-are-the-lions-den-armed-group-in-occupied-west-bank-explainer> [accessed: 26 X 2022]; Z. Al-Tahhan, *Israel raids: Why are so many Palestinians being killed?*, AlJazeera, 26 I 2023, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/1/26/why-israeli-raids-killed-many-palestinians-this-year-explainer> [accessed: 26 I 2023].

In November 2022, a new government was formed in Israel, the most right-wing in the country's history. Political radicalisation translated into brutality by Israeli forces and violence by Palestinians, which was already evident by early 2023<sup>236</sup>. More than 30 Palestinians and 10 Jews were killed in January alone. The victims were residents of the West Bank and Jerusalem. Israeli security forces have been intensifying operations in continuation of Operation Breakwater and have been attacking targets almost every night in West Bank cities, mainly in Nablus and Jenin. After a year of this operation, the determination of a new generation of Palestinian militants increased and attacks on Israeli civilians intensified. The brutality of the Israeli police and military was met with acceptance and support from Jewish settlers encouraged in their anti-Palestinian actions by Itamar Ben Gvir, Israel's Minister of National Security. He comes from a settler background in which he has found many of his constituents. This has emboldened some of the 450,000 Israeli citizens living in the West Bank to use violence against Palestinians, sometimes as a provocation and sometimes in retaliation for Palestinian terrorism<sup>237</sup>. Almost every week brought casualties on both sides. In February 2023, after the shooting of two Israelis near Nablus, Jewish settlers carried out more than 300 attacks on Palestinian towns and settlements in a single day<sup>238</sup>. The worst damage was done in Huwara, where buildings and cars were burned and residents were beaten. Two Palestinians were killed and more than 100 injured. Jonathan Pollard, a former Israeli spy in the US, stated that: *Huwara*

<sup>236</sup> Among others, the new government included two well-known Jewish radicals. One of them is Itamar Ben Gvir, chairman of the Jewish Power Party (Otzma Yehudit), who became head of the newly formed Ministry of Internal Security. Among other things, he controls the West Bank police. Gvir has maintained contacts with Jewish extremist groups and, as a lawyer, has defended their members. He is an ardent supporter of the religious and 'racial' purity of Jews and opposes the presence of Arabs and churches in Israel. The second is Bezalel Smotrich, who has taken up the position of Minister of Finance. He is responsible for, among other things, the civil administration in the West Bank. He is a staunch supporter of Jewish settlement expansion.

<sup>237</sup> B. McKernan, S. Taha, *Tu i tak nie ma życia* (Eng. There is no life here anyway), "Forum" 2023, no. 7, p. 53; J. Katulski, *Nikt nie jest święty. Obie strony konfliktu izraelsko-palestyńskiego mają swoje motywacje* (Eng. No one is a saint. Both sides in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict have their motivations), "Przegląd" 2023, no. 42, p. 21.

<sup>238</sup> *Palestine's Huwara should be wiped out: Top Israeli minister*, AlJazeera, 1 III 2023, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/3/1/israel-arrests-settlers-after-anti-palestinian-pogrom> [accessed: 1 III 2023].

*should be destroyed, but without killing people*<sup>239</sup>. A few days later, during the Jewish holiday of Purim, a video was posted on social media showing soldiers dancing and rejoicing with settlers at the site of the worst damage in Huwara<sup>240</sup>.

In February 2023, the ultra-right-wing government of Benjamin Netanyahu announced the legalisation of nine Jewish settlements in the West Bank. The US, EU and Arab countries strongly opposed this decision, but this made little difference. For the Israeli authorities, the conflict with the Palestinians is an internal matter and a matter of national security. In the author's opinion, the international community, including the Arab world, has not been able to prevent, apart from verbal protests, Israel's actions, i.e. taking over more Palestinian land and building settlements on it. At the same time, Al-Fatah's passive attitude towards events in the West Bank resulted in the increasing resentment of the population towards the Palestinian Authority, which was no longer in control of the mood of Palestinians hostile to it. The lack of popular support meant that the authorities isolated themselves from the population and expanded, with Israeli support, the Palestinian security forces, which were also used against their own opposition and Palestinian protesters. In March 2023, for example, dozens of officers used tear gas and dispersed a demonstration in Nablus by participants in the funeral of Hamas member Abdul Fatah Kharushah, who was killed in Jenin along with six other Palestinians. In the confusion, Kharushah's body fell to the ground. The Palestinian Authority was condemned by Hamas and the PFLP<sup>241</sup>.

In April, Israeli police stormed the Al-Aqsa Mosque. Officers argued that they entered the mosque because groups of rioters had barricaded themselves inside and had gathered stones and dangerous tools to attack police officers. In response to the police action, Hamas fired several rockets towards Israel. This time there was no confrontation with Israeli

<sup>239</sup> Quoted after: T. Staff, *Ex-spy Jonathan Pollard says 'Huwara must be destroyed', but without killing people*, The Times of Israel, 6 III 2023, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/ex-spy-jonathan-pollard-says-huwara-must-be-destroyed-but-without-killing-people/> [accessed: 6 III 2023].

<sup>240</sup> E. Fabian, *IDF soldiers seen dancing with settlers in flashpoint West Bank town of Huwara*, The Times of Israel, 7 III 2023, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/idf-soldiers-dance-with-settlers-in-flashpoint-west-bank-town-of-huwara/> [accessed: 7 III 2023].

<sup>241</sup> *Palestinian police fire tear gas at Hamas militant funeral*, Al-Monitor, 8 III 2023, <https://www.al-monitor.com/originals/2023/03/palestinian-police-fire-tear-gas-hamas-militant-funeral> [accessed: 8 III 2023].

forces. In May 2023, the Cahal conducted a five-day operation in the Gaza Strip codenamed ‘Shield and Arrow’ targeting the PIJ, which responded by firing rockets at Israel. Israeli forces reported killing six commanders of the organisation and eliminating numerous rocket launchers and command posts<sup>242</sup>. Hamas did not take part in this fighting and thus managed to maintain the economic agreement negotiated for the people of Gaza after the 2021 fighting, including notably work permits for 20,000 Palestinian workers. Operation ‘Shield and Arrow’ only briefly shifted the focus of the conflict to the Gaza Strip, only to return to the West Bank after its conclusion, where Israeli armed forces carried out operations on an almost daily basis, including in Ramallah, Nablus and Jenin, in an attempt to quell growing Palestinian resistance. In the latter city on one day in July alone, 12 Palestinians were killed and 140 wounded. In the same month, around 1,000 Israeli soldiers re-entered Jenin. Eight Palestinians were killed and dozens were wounded. The Israeli operation, which involved air and ground forces, lasted 18 hours. According to Israel, it targeted terrorist infrastructure. Palestinian leaders called the operation in Jenin ‘a new war crime’, the largest in the city in 20 years. A spokesman for the Palestinian Authority president called on the international community to (...) *break the shameful silence and take serious action*<sup>243</sup>. Hamas responded to an attack by Israeli forces in Jenin by shelling Israel, and a militant of the organisation shot dead an Israeli soldier near the West Bank settlement of Kedumim. The attacker was killed while fleeing. The following day, Israeli forces killed three Palestinians in Nablus and in Ramallah<sup>244</sup>.

On the morning of 7 October 2023, the day after the 50th anniversary of the outbreak of the Yom Kippur War, some 1,300 Hamas and PIJ fighters breached the border fence in dozens of locations and attacked Israeli territory in a meticulously prepared operation that Mohammed Deif, leader of the Al-Qassam Brigades, called the ‘Al-Aqsa Flood’ (Tufan al-Aqsa). The scale and form of the attack was unprecedented and took Israel completely by surprise. The combination of a rocket attack (more than 3,500 rockets were fired towards Israel) with the use of drones and the incursion

<sup>242</sup> *Operacja „Tarcza i Strzala”* (Eng. Operation ‘Shield and Arrow’), [http://www.izrael.badacz.org/historia/operacja\\_tarcza\\_strzala.html](http://www.izrael.badacz.org/historia/operacja_tarcza_strzala.html) [accessed: 21 VI 2023].

<sup>243</sup> A. Ibrahim, V. Pietromarchi, *Jenin updates: Israel hits Gaza after 12 killed in Jenin raid*, Aljazeera, 4 VII 2023, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/liveblog/2023/7/4/jenin-attack-live-10-killed-as-israeli-raid-enters-second-day> [accessed: 4 VII 2023].

<sup>244</sup> *Ibid.*



into areas adjacent to the Gaza Strip proved extremely effective. Groups of armed terrorists reached more than 20 Israeli towns and military bases in an area of approximately 80 km<sup>2</sup> of Israeli territory. The attackers fired at passing cars, murdered villagers and unarmed soldiers. They killed many young participants in a music and dance festival organised to celebrate the Jewish holiday of Sukkot, during which many soldiers were on leave. It took the Israeli army several hours to bring the situation under control and regain the lost outposts. The number of casualties (around 1,200 killed and 240 abducted) shocked both Israelis and the world. Many people, including women and children, were cruelly murdered, prompting a retaliation by the *Cahal*<sup>245</sup>, which later that same day launched 'Operation Swords of Iron'. The scale of violence on both sides is enormous, making this conflict stand out in the history of the Jewish-Palestinian struggle. In doing so, Hamas has not lost the support of allies operating within the so-called Axis of Resistance, an informal anti-Israeli alliance of state and non-state structures that, in addition to Hamas, comprises the PIJ, Hezbollah and the Yemeni Houthi movement. Members of the Axis of Resistance are united by their opposition to Israeli and US policies in the region, and are armed, trained and coordinated by the Iranian Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps<sup>246</sup>.

In November and December 2023, Hamas released dozens of hostages kidnapped on 7 October in three rounds in exchange for the release of more than 150 Palestinians from Israeli prisons. The exchange and accompanying short truce periods were negotiated by Qatar, a long-time supporter of Hamas. Hezbollah and armed Shi'ite organisations in Syria, which have attacked US bases there and in Jordan, have joined the action against Israel. In retaliation, Israeli and US forces destroyed extremist positions. In November 2023, the Houthi movement in Yemen, also known as Ansar Allah (Supporters of God), took action, using drones and rockets to attack ships passing through the Gulf of Aden and the Red Sea. He announced

<sup>245</sup> R. Bergman, P. Kingsley, *Dlaczego izraelskie służby zawiodły* (Eng. Why Israeli services failed), "Gazeta Wyborcza", 14–15 X 2023; *Przyjechali się bawić, walczyli o życie. „Byli wszędzie, chodzili i strzelali. Wokół umierali ludzie”* (Eng. They came to play, they fought for their lives. 'They were everywhere, walking and shooting. 'People were dying all around.'). TVN24, 8 X 2023, <https://tvn24.pl/swiat/izrael-atak-hamasu-ostrzal-podczas-nova-festiwal-przystrefie-gazy-wiele-osob-zginelo-wiele-pojmano-relacje-ocalalych-st7381277> [accessed: 8 X 2023].

<sup>246</sup> J. Katulski, *Czy Hamas można pokonać?* (Eng. Can Hamas be defeated?), "Przegląd" 2023, no. 46, p. 30.

that the attacks would not stop until Israel ceased hostilities in the Gaza Strip. This forced the US and UK to send ships to the area to protect vessels passing through. Despite this, many shipowners, including those operating tankers, changed their itinerary and chose a route around Africa, which increased the price of oil and other imports from Asia. Hezbollah shelling of Israel's border areas in the north of the country forced the evacuation of hundreds of residents. Israeli Defence Forces responded with air strikes on positions of Party of God fighters. On 1 April 2024, an Israeli air strike completely destroyed the Iranian consulate in Damascus. General Mohammad Reza Zahedi - commander of the elite Quds (Jerusalem) unit operating in Syria and Lebanon - and his deputy, General Mohammad Hadi Haji-Rahimi, were killed, along with five other officers. In retaliation, on the night of 13-14 April, Iran launched an attack on Israeli territory using hundreds of drones and missiles, almost all of which were neutralised. These events threatened to expand the conflict to the entire Middle East<sup>247</sup>.

The protracted war in the Gaza Strip, which has caused a humanitarian disaster on an unprecedented scale and a growing number of casualties on the Palestinian side (more than 35,000 by mid-May 2024), has triggered a wave of anti-Israel protests around the world, including in the USA. On 1 April 2024, seven volunteers (including a Pole, Damian Soból) working for the World Central Kitchen organisation were killed. The shelling of the humanitarian convoy was explained by Israeli authorities as a mistake<sup>248</sup>. An unforgiving stance on the continuation of hostilities was taken by Israeli Ministers Itamar Ben Gvir and Bezalel Smotrich, who announced in April 2024 that they would not agree to a ceasefire with Hamas, even for the release of all hostages. They also informed Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu that they would bring down the government if the Rafah attack was called off. Israeli forces had long been prepared

<sup>247</sup> K. Gurgul, *Teheran zapowiada zemstę. „Pożalują tej zbrodni”* (Eng. Tehran announces revenge. "They will regret this crime"), *Wirtualna Polska*, 2 IV 2024, <https://wiadomosci.wp.pl/teheran-zapowiada-zemste-pozaluja-tej-zbrodni-7012650427476576a> [accessed: 2 IV 2024]; P. Juraszek, *Nocna obrona Izraela. Jej koszt robi wrażenie* (Eng. Israel's night-time defence. Its cost is impressive), *Wirtualna Polska*, 14 IV 2024, <https://tech.wp.pl/nocna-obrona-izraela-jej-koszt-robi-wrazenie,7016869610097568a> [accessed: 14 IV 2024].

<sup>248</sup> B. Frymorgen, *Szokujące brytyjskie ustalenia po izraelskim ataku na konwój z pomocą* (Eng. Shocking British findings after Israeli attack on aid convoy), *RMF24*, 3 IV 2024, [https://www.rmf24.pl/raporty/raport-izrael-w-stanie-wojny/news-szokujace-brytyjskie-ustalenia-po-izraelskim-ataku-na-konwoj,nId,7429027#crp\\_state=1](https://www.rmf24.pl/raporty/raport-izrael-w-stanie-wojny/news-szokujace-brytyjskie-ustalenia-po-izraelskim-ataku-na-konwoj,nId,7429027#crp_state=1) [accessed: 3 IV 2024].

to carry out this attack, but the Israeli war cabinet<sup>249</sup> – due to pressure from Washington – delayed giving the order. It was not until 6 May that it unanimously approved the operation in Rafah. At the same time, the Cahal ordered the evacuation of residents from the eastern and central districts. In the Israeli Defence Forces' view, the city is the last bastion where Hamas troops are stationed intact and fully armed, and the network of underground tunnels through which weapons are smuggled in from Egypt remains intact. However, this assessment proved to be wrong, as Israeli forces were coerced to re-attack the town of Jabalia in the north of the Gaza Strip, already captured in early 2024 when it was announced that Hamas troops there had been broken up. The militants had withdrawn from the town, however they rebuilt forces and returned. A similar situation could arise in Rafah, with Hamas carrying out a tactical retreat, and when the Israeli army withdraws from the city, the militants return to it. US President Joe Biden has threatened to withhold military aid to Israel if a full-scale offensive is launched in Rafah. In addition to its 200,000 residents, Rafah shelters some 1.4 million refugees from across the Gaza Strip<sup>250</sup>. Moreover, the tense situation on the Israeli-Lebanese border continues, where mutual attacks have led to significant loss of life and equipment on both sides. This increases the risk of the conflict escalating into a full-scale war. The Cahal maintains a high level of combat readiness, with Israeli officials and its military command suggesting the possibility of a ground invasion of Lebanon if the situation calls for it. In June, Naim Kassem, Hezbollah's deputy chief, declared that the Party of God was ready for total war against Israel and would not allow the Jewish state any victories. He added that the Lebanese front is permanently linked to the Gaza Strip.

<sup>249</sup> The war cabinet consists of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, Defence Minister Joav Galant and opposition politician Benny Gantz.

<sup>250</sup> *Skrajnie prawicowi ministrowie grożą Netanjahu obaleniem rządu* (Eng. Far-right ministers threaten Netanyahu with overthrow of government), *Bankier.pl*, 28 IV 2024, <https://www.bankier.pl/wiadomosc/Skrajnie-prawicowi-ministrowie-groza-Netanjahu-obaleniem-rzadu-8737247.html> [accessed: 28 IV 2024]; M. Czmieł, *Gabinet wojenny Izraela zatwierdził operację w Rafah* (Eng. Israel's war cabinet has approved the Rafah operation), *Wirtualna Polska*, 6 V 2024, <https://wiadomosci.wp.pl/gabinet-wojenny-izraela-zatwierdził-operacje-w-rafah-7024738830465952a> [accessed: 6 V 2024]; *Wojna w Strefie Gazy. Co najmniej 360 tys. osób ewakuowało się z Rafah* (Eng. Gaza war. At least 360,000 people evacuated from Rafah), *Bankier.pl*, 13 V 2024, <https://www.bankier.pl/wiadomosc/Wojna-w-Strefie-Gazy-Co-najmniej-360-tys-osob-ewakuowalo-sie-z-Rafah-8744798.html> [accessed: 13 V 2024].

Poland has, since the creation of Israel, expressed the position of a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. During votes at the UN, it stood in favour of Israel or abstained, which was considered a pro-Israeli gesture anyway. This changed in May 2024, although bilateral relations had already deteriorated. During the vote on the resolution granting Palestine full UN membership, Poland, along with 143 countries, supported the proposal. Warsaw's position outraged Israeli diplomacy. The change in Poland's stance towards Israel had previously been signalled by Foreign Minister Radosław Sikorski, who, referring to the situation in the Middle East, said that there were now no more pro-Israeli gestures<sup>251</sup>. The European Union condemned Hamas terrorist attacks in Israel and stressed Israel's right to defend itself in accordance with humanitarian and international law, in particular with regard to the protection of civilians. It also called on Hamas to immediately release all hostages. It confirmed that a two-state solution based on cooperation with the legitimate Palestinian Authority could be the only solution to the conflict. Subsequently, however, the Palestinian issue divided the EU. Some of its countries, like Poland, recognised Palestinian statehood, while others took the position that this could only be done after the current conflict had been resolved<sup>252</sup>. The question of when and how it will be concluded remains unanswered. What is important is to bring about a truce and to find lasting political solutions. The current Palestinian Authority has not only failed to condemn the actions of Hamas, but also sees its participation in the future political authorities, which at this stage is unacceptable to Israel and the West. However, in the 20th century, similar declarations were made against Al-Fatah as a terrorist organisation, so that in 1994 its leader, Yasser Arafat, was honoured with the Nobel Peace Prize.

<sup>251</sup> J. Haszczyński, *Polska była proizraelska, teraz głosuje w ONZ za Palestyną* (Eng. Poland was pro-Israel, now votes in the UN for Palestine), Rzeczpospolita, 12 V 2024, <https://www.rp.pl/publicystyka/art40335201-jerzy-haszczyński-polska-była-proizraelska-teraz-głosuje-w-onz-za-palestyna> [accessed: 12 V 2024].

<sup>252</sup> Ibid. See also: *Palestynę uznaje większość krajów na świecie, najmniej w Europie* (Eng. Palestine recognised by most countries in the world, least in Europe), Bankier.pl, 23 V 2024, <https://www.bankier.pl/wiadomosc/Palestynie-uznaje-wiekszosc-krajow-na-swiecie-najmniej-w-Europie-8751322.html> [accessed: 23 V 2024].

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## Summary

Between 2021 and 2022, violence escalated in the West Bank and East Jerusalem. Constant confrontation between Israeli security forces and Palestinians led to a general strike, during which there were violent riots and fighting between Palestinians and Israeli police. In turn, riots broke out in the Palestinian Authority against its authorities. Palestinians called on the aged and corrupt President Mahmoud Abbas to leave office. A new generation of Palestinian militants became active, in opposition to the ageing leadership of Al-Fatah, Hamas and PIJ and the ineffectiveness of their struggle against Israel. The escalation of violence made 2022 the most dramatic time for Palestinians in the West Bank in 17 years. In November 2022, a new government was formed in Israel, the most right-wing in the country's history. Political radicalisation translated into the intensity of action by Israeli security forces, conducting constant blockades of Palestinian towns, house searches and arrests, during which people were killed. Al-Fatah's passive stance towards events in the West Bank created resentment among residents towards the Palestinian Authority. At the time, Hamas remained relatively calm. It fired only a few rockets towards Israel, which went unanswered by the Cahal. In May 2023, the Israeli military conducted a brief operation in the Gaza Strip codenamed 'Shield and Arrow' targeting the PIJ. Following its conclusion, the armed confrontation returned to the West Bank, where the Israeli armed forces conducted operations on an almost daily basis and attempted to suppress the growing Palestinian resistance. On 7 October 2023, Hamas and PIJ militants attacked Israeli territory from the Gaza Strip as part of 'Operation Al-Aqsa Flood'. Later the same day, the Israeli armed forces launched 'Operation Swords of Iron'. In its course, the Gaza Strip was completely ruined. By the end of the first half of 2024, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict continued, threatening to shift the fighting to Lebanon and destabilise the Middle East.

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## Conclusions

For many years, the opinion was expressed that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict could only be ended through a political solution, but this specific war without end destroyed the Israeli and Palestinian left, the only forces that sought peace based on the existence of the two states. In doing so, it should be noted that the Israeli leadership defended such a concept of peace, the aim of which was to eliminate the effects of the domination of Palestinian lands, not the occupation as such, i.e. the removal of the Palestinians, not the acceptance of their rights. Yasser Arafat set as a condition for peace the recovery of the Palestinian territories under Israeli control since the end of the Six-Day War in 1967. At present, a lasting peace is impossible because it is not wanted by the fanatic groups on both sides. Israel is ruled by the far right. The deepening mutual hatred has led to an escalation of the conflict on an unprecedented scale. Before this happened, Hamas and other radical

Islamic organisations had from the beginning regarded the fight against Israel as the main way to solve all social, political and economic problems. The fight against the Jews was considered a jihad, a sanctified war against the infidels. Prior to Hamas' creation of regular insurgent army units, for Palestinian fighters joining Muslim armed organisations, terrorism was a sacred act, the fulfilment of a divine duty. No rationale should therefore constrain the perpetrators of such attacks, guided by Islamic principles. Although it was not the Palestinians who initiated suicide attacks, they contributed, following the example of Hezbollah, to their proliferation and to making them the main means of terrorist action.

In Hamas-run kindergartens and camps, children were brought up in the spirit of being a martyr (shahid). Religious radicalism has repeatedly provoked Israel to retaliate, resulting in massive destruction in Gaza, casualties and suffering for a population that has become hostage to the organisation and its protective shield. For the leadership of Hamas or the PIJ, the aim was not to achieve peace at any cost, but to maintain a state of constant conflict if the groups could not realise their own intention, which was to establish an Islamic emirate over the whole of Palestine. Indeed, the Palestinian extremist groups sought to establish a religious state based on Sharia, with Allah as its ruler. They rejected all non-Islamic values, denied the Jews statehood and treated them as second-class people.

For Jews, it is a war for existence, for the land that God promised them. More than 100 years of confrontation with the Palestinians, and since the establishment of the State of Israel also with its Arab neighbours, have reinforced the acceptance by Israeli society of military action as the only means to guarantee survival. For Israel, making peace would have meant many sacrifices, the displacement of thousands of settlers and the return of a large part of the Occupied Palestinian Territories to the Palestinians. For any government in this country, this would constitute an act of political suicide, as it would verge on treason and would provoke a huge public resistance from the settlers, and this would translate into considerations of defence. Besides, permanent war for the Cahal's senior military commanders was an opportunity to build up their own position and, once in reserve, their personal fortune and political careers<sup>253</sup>. Achieving a compromise would

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<sup>253</sup> An extensive analysis of this issue is contained in: P. Tyler, *Twierdza Izrael. Zakulisowa historia elit wojskowych, które uparcie bronią się przed pokojem* (Eng. *Fortress Israel. The inside story of the military elite who run the country – and why they can't make peace*), Poznań 2014.

therefore require enormous concessions, which the Israeli political elite cannot afford. At the same time, the increasing radicalism of the young Jews could be detrimental to the Jewish state. Because of their steadfastness and fanaticism, the extremists are fuelling the conflict with the Palestinians. Religious-nationalist fanatics dream of the establishment of the Kingdom of Israel. According to the author, nowadays even non-believing Jews base their national identity on concepts derived from the Torah.

The Gaza war has exacerbated a long-standing crisis of internal support for the Palestinian Authority, but has so far not led to open conflict in the West Bank, where there is enormous instability and Israeli security forces carry out regular special operations, often accompanied by armed clashes. By keeping force structures in place, the PA leadership can suppress any signs of opposition rebellion. In the author's view, the authoritarian leadership of Mahmoud Abbas has long been in need of change. Abbas is perceived by Palestinians as a corrupt and collaborative president with Israel and has therefore lost the trust of his people. However, the Palestinian leadership seeks to maintain power despite changing circumstances and external pressure. Moreover, it declares its willingness to return to administering the territory once the fighting stops. Meanwhile, the West criticises the Israeli seizure of the West Bank and the construction of Jewish settlements, while at the same time supporting Israel's right to exist, although it is unclear within what borders, as the state has not defined them. Regardless of how the current war in Gaza ends, according to the author, Israel will not succeed in eradicating Palestinian terrorism. The killed militants will be replaced by others, who are now children seeing the death of their loved ones and the tragedy of the people of Gaza.

As the history of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict shows, the leaders who were killed were followed by new leaders who were even more hostile to Israel, while at the same time successive generations of Palestinians were radicalised and organised terrorist attacks. Would their activities be confined to Israeli and Palestinian territory, or would they be transferred to the European continent, as happened between the 1960s and 1980s? The answer to this question is unknown.

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The article expresses author's personal views and does not represent the position of the Internal Security Agency.

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