



ANNUAL REPORT

DECEMBER 2016



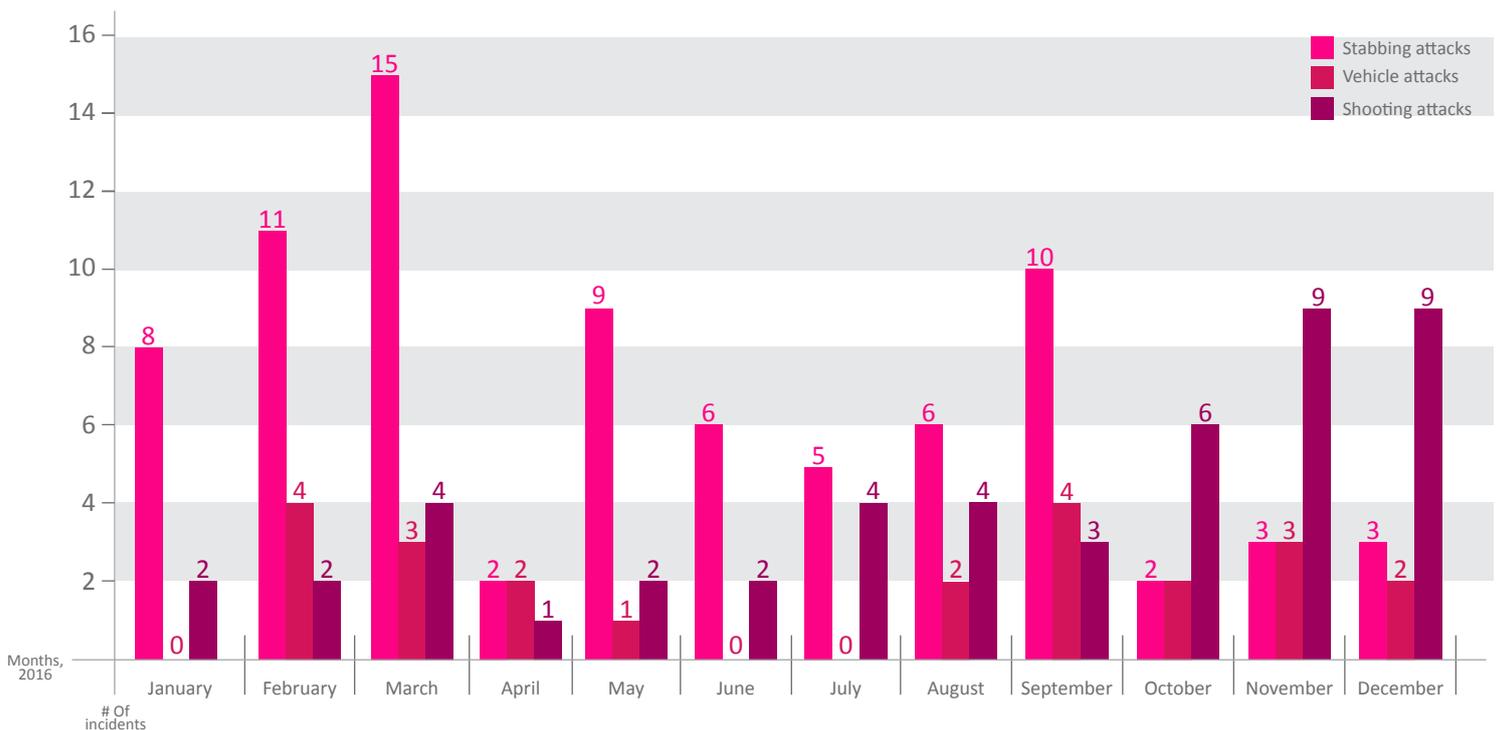
Tension and security situation that started in late 2015 continued throughout 2016. Lone wolf attacks varied in intensity and numbers during the year, armed attacks increased in the last quarter. Stabbing and vehicle attacks occurred almost once every three days on average.

The Palestinian uprising that started in October 2015 was mainly characterized by lone-wolf attacks carried out by individuals non-aligned with Palestinian factions. According to Al Watan Voice, over 60% of attacks reported were conducted by individual Palestinians not backed by political parties, 23% belonged to a specific party but conducted individually without an order or coordination from the party's leadership, and less than 17% of the attacks were carried out by individuals who were backed by a specific party.



The first quarter of 2016 the security threat level was heightened; during January, 90 clashes were reported between ISF and Palestinians in Jerusalem and the West Bank, and 6 in the Gaza Strip. Reported stabbing attacks reached 8 with over 90 ISF search and arrest operations. Security situation in February was higher as 17 attacks were reported of which 11 were stabbings, 127 clashes were reported between ISF and Palestinians. During March, 22 lone wolf attacks were reported (15 stabbings, 4 shooting attacks, and 3 vehicle attacks).

Incidents Graph 2016

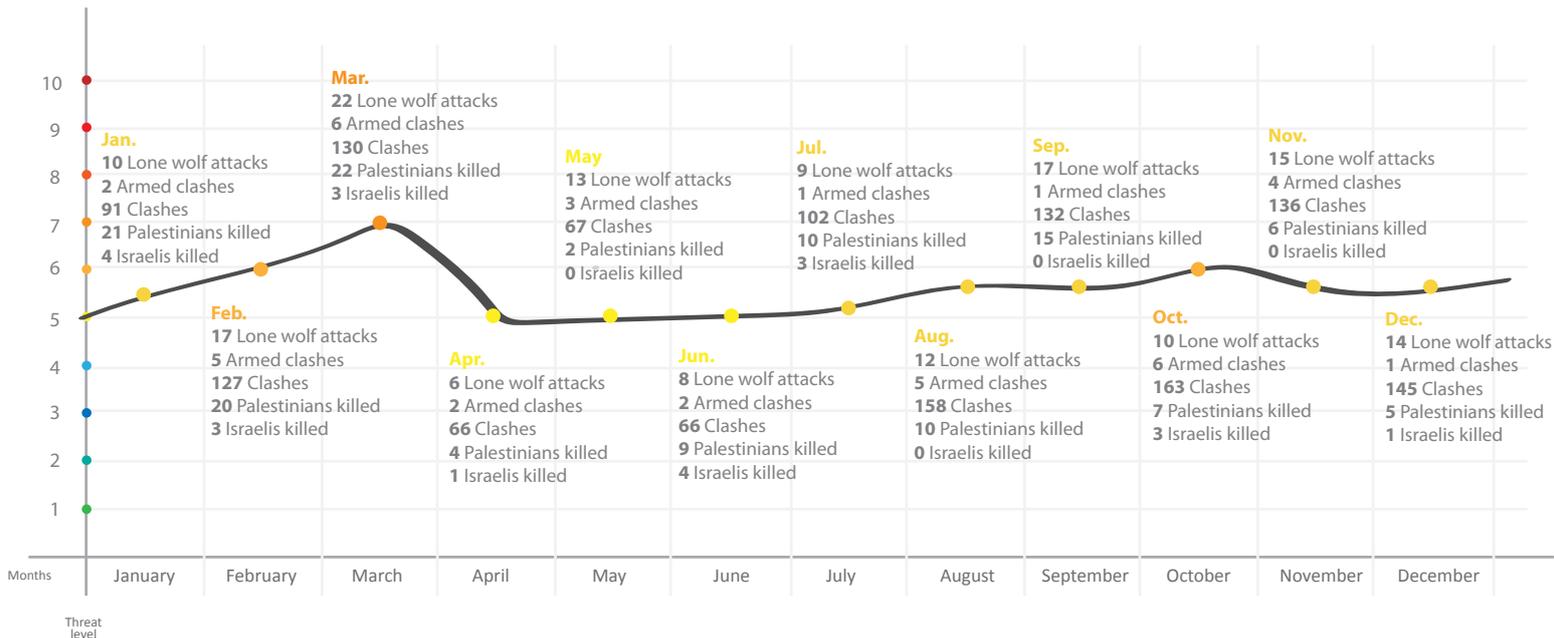


The overall security situation and the number of attacks have decreased in the second quarter. According to Walla news, the sharp decline in number of attacks is the result of a heat map that ISF and Shabak have developed. The heat map illustrated the hometowns of past attackers to help predict future attackers. The map was developed in April, and according to ISF it has been successful by 50%. It showed the locations in which future attackers may reside; Hebron was the highest (30 attacks reported in Hebron or by Palestinians from Hebron), Qalandiya RC (17 attacks in Qalandiya or by Palestinians from Qalandiya), Qabatiya (10 attacks by Palestinians from Qabatiya), and Nablus (10 attacks reported in Nablus or by Palestinians from Nablus). However, an Israeli Officer stated that the situation may explode again in the West Bank.

The source also reported that "ISF and Shabak have had difficulty in identifying the core characteristics of the Palestinian who would wake up in the morning with an intention of conducting an attack on Israelis"(translated), therefore making it difficult to predict or stop the attack. Following this report security threat level increased in Jerusalem on the 18th of April after a bus explosion was reported in Har Homa settlement (2.84 km NE of Bethlehem). The explosion resulted in the injury of 21 Israelis, and the death of the attacker. After three days of the attack, Hamas political party adopted the attack. This attack was the first of its kind since the start of the last wave of events in October 2015; the attack was similar to the pre-planned attacks that were reported during the Second Intifada.



Security threat level chart - 2016



Attacks prevention

According to Israeli sources, ISF have adopted five techniques to suppress the uprising;

- Increasing the number of military and arrest operations in East-Jerusalem and the West Bank, and further restricting the freedom of movement for Palestinians.
- Punitive action against families of individuals who have allegedly taken part in actions against ISF or Israeli citizens; by property vandalism and demolition, and by refusing to return the bodies of Palestinians killed during attacks.
- Pursuing Palestinians who encourage the attacks; Palestinians who praise martyrs mainly through social media networks were arrested and fined by ISF.
- Coordination between ISF and PA security forces for confiscating firearms and denouncing attacks against Israelis.

In March 2016, Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas stated that the PA security forces conducted military operations in schools for confiscating knives. He added the PA security forces confiscated around 70 knives in these operations.

In addition, Commander of the PA's General Intelligence Force in the West Bank Majid Faraj stated that since October 2015 the PA security forces have thwarted almost 200 attack attempts of Israeli targets by Palestinians and arrested 100 on the same background.



Shlomo Brom, an analyst at Israel's Institute for National Security Studies think tank, believes if the Palestinian Authority ended the cooperation, ISF would have to interfere themselves to hinder attacks, which will lead to more contact and clashes between the Palestinian public and ISF. These clashes will encourage Palestinians to carry out more attacks.

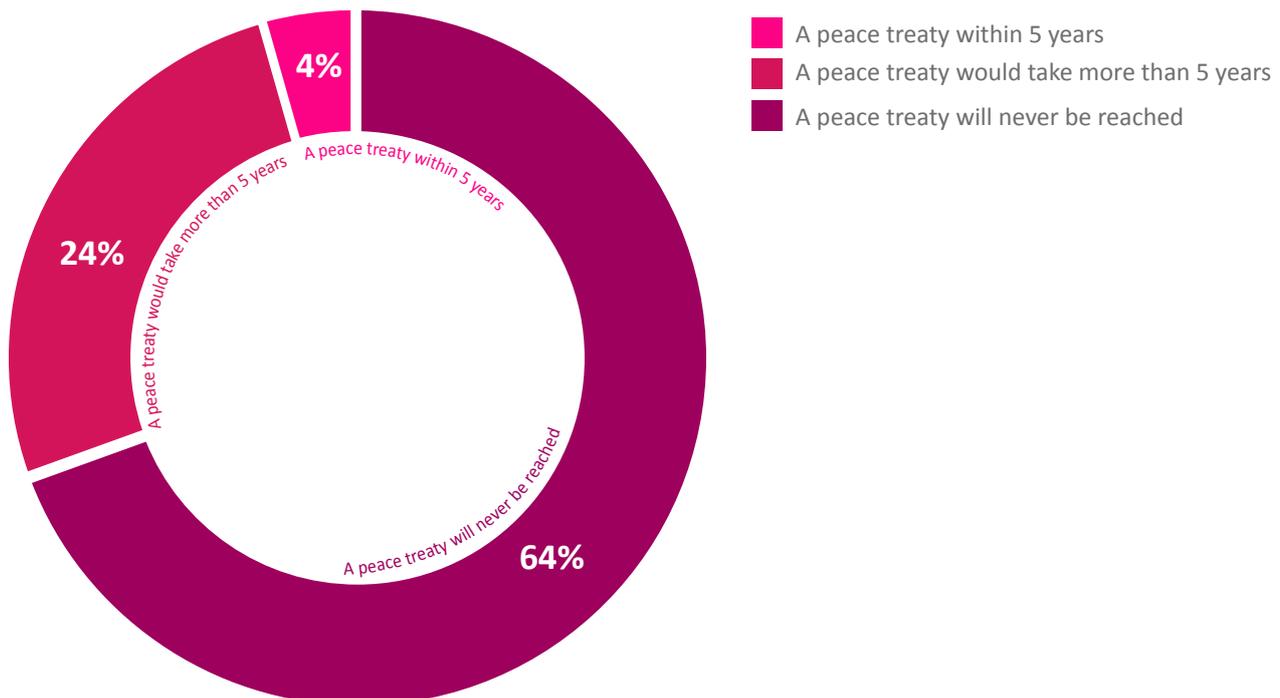
Inside the Israeli Society

Gideon Levy, Israeli Writer and Political Analyst stated that the reoccurrence of stabbing attacks has created an obsession within the Israeli community. Israelis fear they may be slaughtered at any given moment during their daily routines, whether during grocery shopping or simply going to work.

In a recent survey published by Walla News on October 2nd; around two-thirds of Israelis believe no peace agreement will ever occur with the Palestinians. The survey included 646 respondents; 64% do not believe a peace treaty will ever be reached, 24% believe it is probable, but would take more than five years to be reached. 4% believe it might occur during the upcoming five years and the remaining 8% were undecided.

Another survey published on October, 4th showed that 25% of Israelis living in West Bank settlements and in Tel Aviv want to leave due to the unsteady security conditions and expressed a dissatisfaction of the current government, while 77% want to stay.

Israeli public opinion on peace between Palestinians and Israelis



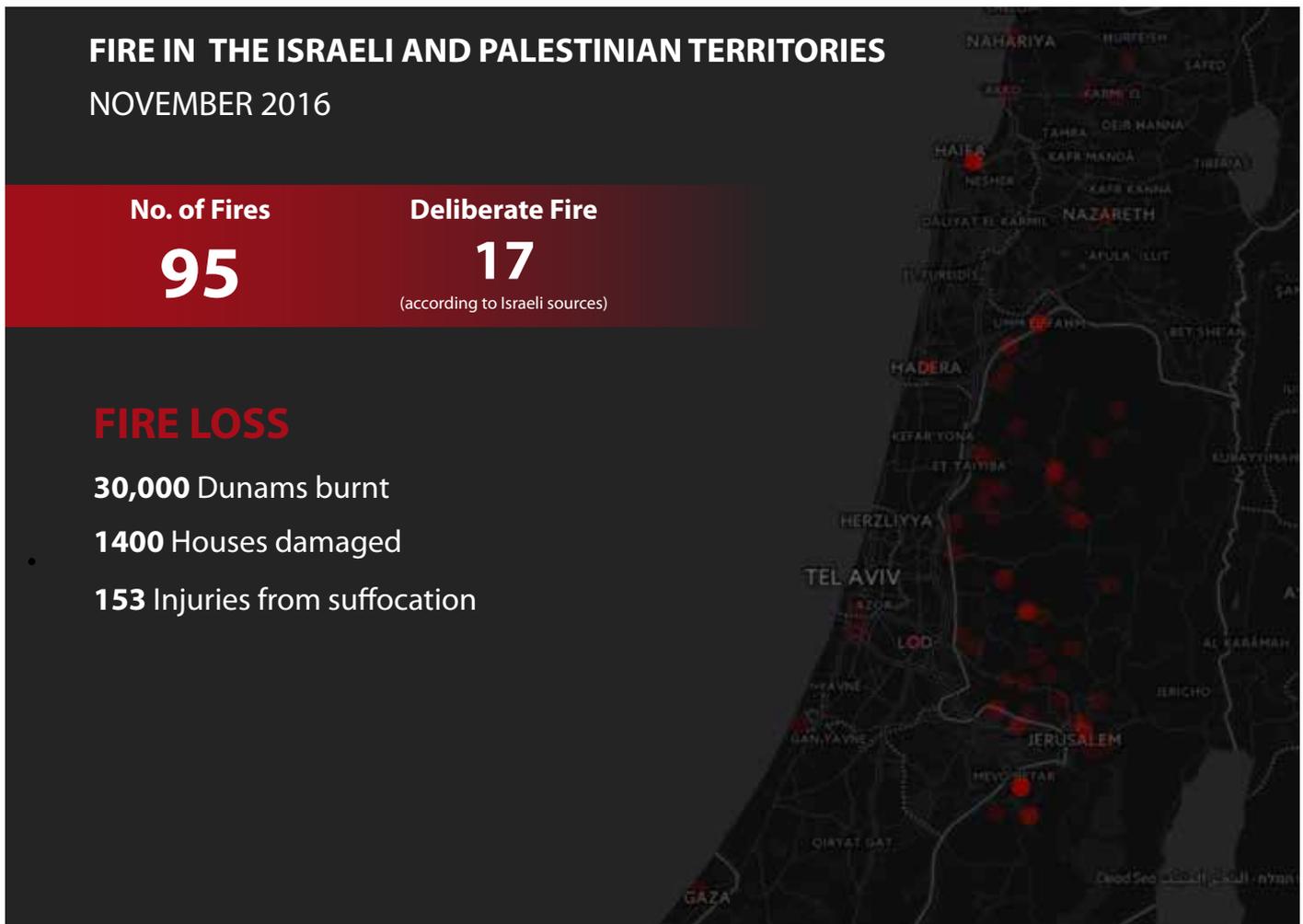


Fires in the Region

On November 22nd, Fire broke out in sixteen locations in two days in Israeli controlled areas and the West Bank to include Haifa, Tel-Aviv, Jerusalem, Ramallah, Nablus, and Bethlehem among other locations. Most fires led to the evacuation of nearby buildings, neighborhoods or villages. The phenomenon was the first of its kind in the country as wildfire spread between neighborhoods. Weather forecast has warned of such fires due to dry winds.

As fires spread, Israeli authorities asked for international aid, claiming many fires were started by deliberate action. ISF have arrested many Palestinians for allegedly starting fires in the West Bank and Israeli controlled areas. International aid came from Azerbaijan, Russia, Spain, Canada, Turkey, Egypt, Jordan, Greece, and Croatia.

Palestinian Firetrucks helped with putting out the fire also as fires that broke out in Haifa intensified. According to reports, 1400 houses were damaged, estimated cost of 120 million dollars.





Major Attacks During This Year:

- On January 1st, a Palestinian opened fire towards a restaurant in Dizengoff Street in Tel Aviv killing two Israelis and injuring ten others. The attacker fled the scene and was not identified or found for eight days sparking fear among Israelis of the possibility that the attacker may conduct another attack. ISF found the attacker in a mosque in Ar'ara 17.17 km E of Hadera; where armed clashes erupted between him and ISF and resulted in his death.
- A stabbing attack on January 17th resulted in the death of a settler in Otniel 12.06 km SW of Hebron. The attacker entered the settlement and stabbed one settler in his house then fled the scene undetected. ISF increased its security measures and search operations in addition to declaring the area a closed zone for two days until the attacker was found and arrested. Security measures in and around settlement were increased drastically in order to limit such attacks in the future.
- A shooting attack was reported near Beit El on the DCO CP (4.10 km NE of Ramallah) on the 31st of January. A Palestinian officer targeted three ISF members at the CP; the Palestinian was shot and killed at the scene. This was the second incident in the uprising that involved a member of the Palestinian Authority's security services, where in December 2015, a shooting attack was carried out at Hizma CP (9.18 km NE of Jerusalem) in the WB which led to the injury of two ISF members.
- An armed attack was reported at Damascus Gate (0.42 km NW the Old City of Jerusalem), on 3rd of February. Three Palestinians stabbed and opened fire towards ISF in the area, later after the attack ISF discovered that the three Palestinians had explosives as well. The attack resulted in the death of an ISF member and the attackers, who were shot and killed at the scene.
- A shooting attack on route 60 at Otniel settlement 12.06 km SW of Hebron resulted in the death of one Israeli and the injury of three others on July 1st. The attacker was able to flee the scene without being caught and remain in hiding for 27 days. ISF found the attacker in Surif 13.69 km N of Hebron; armed clashes erupted between him and ISF and lasted for seven hours before his death.
- Palestinian Misbah Abu Sbaih was sentenced to four months in Al Ramla Israeli prison on the claim of assaulting an Israeli officer in the Old City of Jerusalem in 2013, and he was scheduled to turn himself to the Israeli authorities on October 9th. On the morning of October 9th, Misbah carried out a drive-by shooting attack in Jerusalem killing two Israelis and injuring four. The attack started when Misbah opened fire towards Israelis at the light-rail stop on the opposite direction of the main Police headquarters in Ammunition Hill, and then headed to the eastern Jerusalem neighborhood of Sheikh Jarrah, while Israeli police pursued him on motorcycles, Misbah opened fire towards Police and they shot and killed him.

These attacks were considered sophisticated as they required pre-planning and organization. Palestinians were able to target highly secured locations while carrying weapons without being detected. Some were able to carry out the attack, flee and succeed in hiding for a period of time.

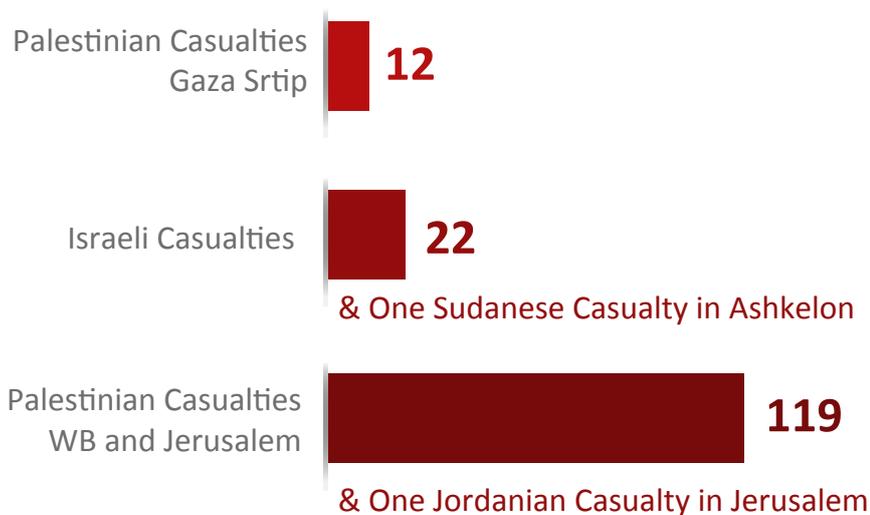
Palestinian security forces members' participation in the uprising raised concerns regarding the



effectiveness of security coordination between the PA and ISF, and the possibility of similar attacks to occur in the future.

Another concern was the armed turn the uprising took; more and more shooting attacks were reported on a daily basis drawing attention to Palestinians' ability to acquire, use, and manufacture firearms without being discovered as well.

Casualties 2016



Weapons Manufacturing

Firearms manufacturing in the West Bank has been increasing in the last two years despite Israeli restrictions and control over the borders of the West Bank.

In Mid-2016, ISF increased their raid operations of Palestinian cities and villages in search for weapons manufacturing in local lathes. According to Israeli Police, 29 weapon manufacturing workshops have been closed in the West Bank since the beginning of 2016. In August 2016, ISF carried out the largest raid operation in years. Six out of seven locations were manufacturing weapons with advanced technology. Israeli Police believes there are still thousands of guns in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, and the goal behind this operation is for weapons' prices to increase, making them harder to obtain.

This operation was carried out after two Palestinians from Yatta (Hebron) conducted an armed attack in Tel -Aviv using Carl Gustav-style weapons (locally manufactured), resulting in the death of 4 Israelis and injuries to six others. An Israeli Officer commented on the attackers who conducted the shooting in suits: "They paid for their suits more than they paid for the weapons".

In spite of the above, more shooting attacks were reported in the last four months of the year than the rest of it; 21 shooting attacks have been reported from January until August, while 27 shooting attacks were reported in the West Bank from September until December alone.



War with Hezbollah or Hamas is unlikley

It has been argued that a war on the northern front (with Hezbollah) and on the southern front (with Hamas) is probable during the next year, however a senior Israeli officer recently revealed that ISF has concluded it is unlikely. The source stated that Hezbollah is now too immersed in the Syrian civil war and has suffered many losses during the conflict.

While Hamas has lost much of the support it has been given from outer fronts especially from Iran due to its embroilment in the Syrian war at the side of Assad's forces leading to reduced support for Hamas. The source believes both Hamas and Hezbollah are not interested in a confrontation with Israelis in the midst of these circumstances. However, he added that the security situation may still explode at any moment given the unpredicted turn of events.

UN resolution 2334

On December 23rd, the United States Security Council adopted resolution 2334, which condemned Israeli settlements and expansion in the West Bank and East Jerusalem. However, The Israeli Prime Minister Benyamin Netanyahu proclaimed that Israel will continue its settlements despite the resolution, and accused Obama administration of preplanning to pass the resolution. Netanyahu also asked the Israeli Foreign Minister to temporarily stop Israel's relationships with countries that voted for the resolution, as a punishment. Trump announced that his administration supports Israel and is even planning to move its embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem.

UN resolution 2334 is considered to be a push in favor of the Palestinian Authority's efforts that aim to take the settlements issue to the International Criminal Court.

“2017 will present Israel with a variety of opportunities, the biggest of which will come from its security guarantor, the United States. With Republicans firmly in control of the executive and legislative branches of government in the U.S., Israel will have freer rein to pursue its interests without rebuke. The country will benefit from a more assertive U.S. policy on Iran, and through Washington may try to place even more restrictions on Iranian uranium enrichment — after all, the new U.S. administration is liable to be more receptive to intelligence collected on Iran, especially if it points to infractions of the nuclear deal. An emboldened Israel will also probably accelerate settlement development in the West Bank, even if doing so incites attacks from Palestinian militants.



Political forecast

After the wave of violence in the country and the continued increase in lone wolf operations, several analysts argued the high possibility of Palestinians will opt for an armed intifada, which will lead to Israelis going to elections with Netanyahu as a favorite. Akiva Eldar (an Israeli author and columnist, and co-author of the biography of Shimon Peres) expects “the Israeli-Palestinian conflict to heat up by summer 2017 if there is no real progress with the peace process.” Stratfor supported this assumption, as they stated in their recent report; “2017 will present Israel with a variety of opportunities, the biggest of which will come from its security guarantor, the United States. With Republicans firmly in control of the executive and legislative branches of government in the U.S., Israel will have freer rein to pursue its interests without rebuke” they continued to state “ An emboldened Israel will also probably accelerate settlement development in the West Bank, even if doing so incites attacks from Palestinian militants.” <https://www.stratfor.com/forecast/2017-annual-forecast-middle-east-and-north-africa/middle-east-and-north-africa#seven>

President Mahmoud Abbas aims to establish a Palestinian state, before he retires, to be known as “founder of the State of Palestine.” He stated that 2017 will be the “Year of Decision.” Taking into consideration the irreversible strategy of Israeli settlements expansion in the West Bank and the lack of U.S. support - which may occur when Trump comes into office; this goal seems far from practicable now.

During the Fatah’s 7th conference in November 2016, it was clear that unlike president Mahmoud Abbas, other Fatah leaders believe that a leadership gap will affect the Palestinian political arena, as they predict that Abbas will end his rule during 2017 before achieving his goal of establishing a Palestinian state. Many presume, that this will lead to a brutal power struggle among Fatah’s leaders and potentially Hamas.

On a regional level Stratfor forecasted; “An escalation in Israeli-Palestinian frictions will stress Israel's relationships with Jordan and Egypt, both facing internal stresses of their own. (The Palestinian issue will also notably be a source of competition between Turkey and Egypt. Ankara will try to develop better relations with Palestinian groups while managing a normalized but still tense relationship with Israel.)”

<https://www.stratfor.com/forecast/2017-annual-forecast-middle-east-and-north-africa/middle-east-and-north-africa#seven>



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