



Militancy/Terrorism



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Israel & Palestinian Territories Alert: Three PIJ operatives among nine killed in IDF operation in Jenin on January 26; limited rocket fire to southern Israel possible over coming days

Please be advised:

The Incident & Israeli Reaction

- Three Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) operatives were among nine individuals killed in a large-scale counter-militancy operation conducted by the Israel Defense Forces (IDF), Israel Police, and Shin Bet in Jenin's Refugee Camp on January 26.
- The IDF stated that the operation targeted three PIJ operatives suspected of extensive involvement in militant activity, including perpetrating shooting attacks against IDF personnel, in addition to planning other "significant" and imminent attacks.
- The IDF added that its troops neutralized four militants overall during an exchange of fire, indicating that the militants opened fire toward IDF troops. A further militant surrendered to troops.
- IDF sappers later entered the building in which the PIJ operatives were located to defuse two explosive devices.
- Israeli reports citing security officials indicate that the IDF is "ready and prepared for any scenario", including potential rocket fire from the Gaza Strip. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu

is reportedly set to attend a security briefing on the situation.

Palestinian Reaction

- The al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades (AAMB) and PIJ's Katibat Jenin claimed their involvement in armed clashes, with AAMB claiming at least one fatality among its ranks.
- The official Palestinian news agency stated that an elderly woman was among those killed, while 16 more were wounded, including four in serious condition.
- Hamas stated that Israel "will pay the price for the massacre" and that "the response... will not be delayed", while PIJ stated that "the resistance is ready for the next confrontation...if the aggression continues".
- Video footage depicts protests denouncing the operation in Ramallah and Birzeit University.
- Palestinian Authority (PA) President, Mahmoud Abbas, declared three days of mourning following the raid.

Assessments & Forecast:

1. While the IDF has conducted near-daily counter-militancy operations as part of its "Breaking the Waves" campaign, the latest raid is notable due to the extent of damage and fatalities incurred. The IDF's reported reference to an imminent major attack prepared by the operatives is likely credible. This is particularly given the presence of two explosive devices that were defused by sappers on site, with growing evidence that PIJ has sought to procure such devices for militant attacks in recent months. While no IDF casualties were recorded, the incident nonetheless highlights the increased risk to troops and uninvolved civilians resulting from extensive armed resistance and civil unrest. This is especially in hotbeds for militancy, such as Jenin, where militant groups such as AAMB and PIJ are entrenched and enjoy support from broad segments of the population.
2. **FORECAST:** Indications of potential rocket fire emanating from the Gaza Strip are likely credible. This is particularly based on precedent, with previous fatalities and arrests of the PIJ's West Bank operatives resulting in symbolic rocket fire. While this has not been entirely consistent, as denoted by the absence of such cross-border hostilities following an IDF raid that incurred PIJ fatalities on January 18-19, rocket fire is nonetheless possible. This is especially given the number of casualties and fatalities incurred, and Gaza-based groups' effort to draw a link between events in the West Bank and reprisal from the Palestinian enclave. However, cross-border hostilities are likely to be largely symbolic, constituting singular rocket fire targeting areas near the Gaza Strip border in southern Israel. This is especially given indications that both Hamas and PIJ currently prefer to avoid an escalation, and the current rhetoric from these groups is non-committal. Despite a change in government, the Israeli cabinet is likely to opt for a firm but contained approach in response if an attack occurs. A broader escalation is therefore unlikely, although tensions will remain elevated over the coming hours and days.
3. **FORECAST:** Tensions are also likely to remain elevated in the West Bank and East Jerusalem over the coming hours. Incitement from Palestinian militant organizations may result in a slight uptick in low-sophistication acts of militancy in the West Bank, including shooting attacks targeting IDF checkpoints and Israeli towns in the northern West Bank. Civil unrest may be recorded across the West Bank, including in Ramallah, while anti-Israel sentiments will remain elevated in East Jerusalem, increasing the risk of civil unrest.

Recommendations:

1. Those operating or residing in Israel are advised to avoid the immediate vicinity of the Gaza Strip

- border area over the coming hours and days given the potential for rocket fire towards the area.
2. Adhere to all Israel Defense Forces (IDF) Home Front Command guidelines regarding early warning sirens for incoming rockets.
 3. Avoid the vicinity of protests denouncing the IDF operation in the West Bank over the coming days.