

NEW YORK CITY POLICE DEPARTMENT

WEEKLY TERRORISM BRIEF

Issue 41 | October 13, 2023

NEW YORK CITY POLICE DEPARTMENT



WEEKLY TERRORISM BRIEF

Issue # 41 | October 13, 2023

Information Cutoff: October 13, 2023 at 1200

The NYPD Intelligence & Counterterrorism Bureau compiles this weekly open source brief to provide an overview and analysis of what we assess to be the most relevant headlines and trends currently impacting the global terrorism and targeted violence threat environment. This is not intended to be a comprehensive overview of all terrorism-related news and inclusion is not a confirmation of credibility or an endorsement by the NYPD.

As a reminder, this document is for official use only and we request that you not forward or distribute it further. If you know someone who should be added to the distribution list or have any comments or questions about this brief, please contact the team at IntelAnalysisPublications@nynjhidta.org



Attacks

Over 900 Dead, Dozens Held Hostage in Massive Ongoing Mass Casualty Attack Against Israel



Hamas video shows attackers using gliders amid rocket fire (Social media)

Beginning on the morning of 7 October, the foreign terrorist organization (FTO) Hamas led other violent extremist militants in a multi-pronged, complex attack against Israel using coordinated rocket fire and incursions through land, air and sea.

- As of 13 October, at least 1,300 people—mostly civilians—have been killed in Israel, making it the deadliest terrorist attack in Israeli history.
- The militants reportedly took approximately 150 Israelis hostage and threatened to execute them to deter Israeli operations against Gaza. They also allegedly committed numerous war crimes, including rape, kidnapping of civilians, and summary executions.
- Videos and images on social media appeared to show a number of novel tactics, such as the use of remotely piloted aircraft (RPA, aka drones) as “kamikaze” devices or to drop explosives; the use of hang gliders to thwart Israeli fences; and the leveraging of bulldozers to break through border security countermeasures.
- The Israeli military began counterstrikes against Gaza, targeting alleged militant centers, with Israeli officials claiming that Hamas was launching drones from the roofs of residential buildings.
- Palestinian authorities stated that approximately 1,800 Palestinians, including both civilians and combatants, have died in those operations.
- On 9 October, Israel shut off all access to Gaza as well as utilities such as water. On 13 October, the Israeli military warned Gazans to “evacuate” the north ahead of the widely expected ground invasion.
- Sporadic clashes between Israel and the Iran-sponsored Lebanon-based FTO Hizballah, as well as extremists in the West Bank and Jerusalem, risked further escalation beyond Gaza. ([CNN](#), [THE WALL STREET JOURNAL](#), [THE WALL STREET JOURNAL](#), [THE WALL STREET JOURNAL](#), [THE NEW YORK TIMES](#), [REUTERS](#), [ABC NEWS](#), [SOCIAL MEDIA](#))

Analyst Comment: The extreme escalation of already elevated Israeli-Palestinian tensions, coupled with the alleged but unconfirmed involvement of Israel’s main geopolitical adversary, Iran, will likely have significant security implications both in and beyond the conflict zone. The abundance of propaganda already released, showing atrocities and rare or unprecedented terrorist tactics, threatens to galvanize homegrown violent extremists (HVEs) to take action in solidarity with Hamas and serves as an instructional resource for a variety of malicious actors. While the NYPD Intelligence & Counterterrorism Bureau (ICB) is not aware of any specific or credible threat to New York City, the Jewish and Palestinian community, houses of worship, religious and cultural institutions, as well as Israeli/Palestinian government locations and affiliated sites of interest in the city may be viewed as targets of opportunity following these latest high-profile attacks. This tense and dynamic threat environment necessitates elevated vigilance by NYPD members of the service, law enforcement personnel, and private-sector security partners. Since 7 October, there have been protests and counter-protests, accompanied by sporadic violence and rioting, in various major Western cities.

Teacher Killed and Several Wounded by Suspected Salafi-Jihadist Extremist in France



Scene of edged weapon assault in Arras (Getty Images)

A Russian national of Chechen heritage, publicly identified as Mohammad Moguchkov, allegedly killed one teacher and wounded at least two others in an edged weapon assault at a school in Arras, Northern France on 13 October.

- A video purportedly of the attack has circulated on social media, in which a young man in a grey sweatshirt, apparently Moguchkov, can be seen wielding a knife and attacking people in the school courtyard.
- According to local media, the perpetrator is a former pupil at the school and was known to police prior to the attack; he is allegedly on a register of people considered to be a security risk due to links with Salafi-jihadist extremism.

NEW YORK CITY POLICE DEPARTMENT

WEEKLY TERRORISM BRIEF

Issue 41 | October 13, 2023

- A police source who spoke to French media revealed that police stopped Moguchkov on 12 October but released him without charge, the reasons for which are unknown at this time.
- The police source described Moguchkov as “a radicalized individual whose potential [to act] is known, but who suddenly decides to act, making it difficult to neutralize him.”
- In addition, media sources reported that Moguchkov’s brother was arrested in 2019 at the age of 17 in Strasbourg, Eastern France, as part of a cell of five Salafi-jihadist extremists with allegiance to ISIS, who were plotting to kill police officers.
- Moguchkov is currently in police custody. He cannot be deported despite being a Russian national due to his protected status as someone who entered France before the age of 13. ([LE MONDE](#), [GUARDIAN](#))

Analyst Comment: According to a philosophy teacher at the school in Arras, Moguchkov approached him during the attack and “aggressively” asked if he was a “history or geography” teacher, suggesting a possible grievance motivation. This detail recalls the case of Samuel Paty, a 47-year-old history and geography teacher who was beheaded by an 18-year-old Salafi-jihadist extremist outside of his school in the Paris suburb of Conflans-Sainte-Honorine on 16 October, 2020. In that instance, the perpetrator, Abdoullakh Abouyezidovich Anzorov—who was also of Chechen origin—was aggrieved at Paty’s display of a depiction of the Prophet Muhammad during one of his classes.

Israeli Embassy Employee Stabbed in Beijing

On 13 October, a perpetrator stabbed an unidentified 50-year-old Israeli man, who reportedly works at the Israeli Embassy in Beijing, in front of a nearby supermarket. Media reports indicated that the individual may also be a family member of an Israeli diplomat.

- The suspect, who has not been publicly named, is reportedly a 53-year-old foreign worker in a small commodities business.
- A video posted on social media showed a man with a knife struggling with another man on the ground and stabbing him several times.
- The motive for the attack was not immediately apparent.
- The victim was reportedly in the hospital in stable condition, according to early reports. ([ASSOCIATED PRESS](#), [REUTERS](#))

Analyst Comment: The incident highlights the need for heightened situational awareness among embassy or consulate staff as well as members of service posted around these locations during times of geopolitical turmoil. While the case is still under investigation, it came days after Hamas’s attack against Israel and amid the ensuing Israel-Gaza war.

San Francisco Man Rams Car Into Chinese Consulate

A 31-year-old Chinese-born male, Zhanyuan Yang of San Francisco, crashed his car into and through the lobby of the local Chinese Consulate on 9 October before responding officers fatally shot him. No one else was injured in the incident.

- Police reportedly found a knife and crossbow at the scene, and witnesses said that they heard him shout, “Where is the CCP?,” apparently in reference to the Chinese Communist Party.
- Investigators subsequently found several guns, a knife, and a supply of “replica firearms” at his home, as well as a book about political assassinations. ([CBS NEWS](#), [THE SAN FRANCISCO STANDARD](#))

Analyst Comment: While authorities did not immediately declare a likely motive, circumstantial evidence suggests the attack was motivated by political grievances against the Chinese government. The incident underscores that diplomatic sites remain a potential target for a variety of malicious actors, necessitating elevated situational awareness.

Arrests, Trials, and Investigations

Man Convicted in Connection with 2016 ISIS-Inspired Killing of Police Officers in France

On 11 October, a criminal court in Paris convicted 30-year-old Mohamed Aberouz on charges of being complicit in a terrorism-related murder, kidnapping, and terrorist conspiracy, in connection with the 2016 ISIS-inspired murders of an off-duty police officer and his partner at their home near Paris.

- He has been sentenced to life in prison with the possibility of parole after 22 years.
- The perpetrator of the assault, Larossi Abballa, killed the victims in an edged weapon assault at their home before taking their three-year-old son hostage for several hours.
- After livestreaming via Facebook for 13-minutes, during which he claimed responsibility for the assault and

declared his allegiance to ISIS, he was shot and killed by police.

- According to prosecutors, Aberouz, a childhood friend of Abballa’s, shared his friend’s extremist views and helped him stage the attack.
- Authorities arrested Aberouz years after the attack after finding his DNA on the victim’s computer, despite his claims that he did not enter the victims’ home. ([THE NEW YORK TIMES](#))

NEW YORK CITY POLICE DEPARTMENT

WEEKLY TERRORISM BRIEF

Issue 41 | October 13, 2023

Brooklyn Man Sentenced to 23 Months for Attempting to Build Explosives in Homeless Shelter



Items for explosives in Burgess's possession (Court Evidence)

Twenty-five-year-old Brooklyn resident Darnell Burgess was recently sentenced to 23 months in prison after pleading guilty to federal explosives charges in January.

- Burgess, described as mentally ill, was living at the Atlantic House Men's Shelter when, on 8 April 2022, staff called police after noticing several shipments addressed to Burgess of suspicious items, including a carbon dioxide tank, charcoal, potassium nitrate, and wire.
- According to court filings, Burgess also ordered sulfur powder, additional potassium nitrate, copper wire, and a wireless remote-control switch. He also reportedly had ballistic armor plates and a canister of gasoline in his possession.
- A search of Burgess' cell phone revealed that he downloaded bomb-making instructions and the NYPD's active shooter manual and regularly conducted online searches related to school shootings, suicide bombings, and police killings.
- He had a prior history of violent threats: in 2017, he made a call to a special education school in Long Island threatening to "shoot the place up" and targeting three specific students. ([NY DAILY NEWS](#))

New Jersey Senator Charged with Being an Unregistered Agent of the Egyptian Government

On 12 October, federal prosecutors filed a superseding indictment charging Senator Bob Menendez of New Jersey with conspiring to act as an agent of Egypt and Egyptian officials.

- Menendez is accused of violating the Foreign Agents Registration Act that requires individuals to register with the US government if they are acting "as an agent of a foreign principal."
- As a member of congress, Menendez is also prohibited from acting as an agent of a foreign government.
- The indictment alleges that Egyptian officials told a business associate of Menendez's that if he assisted in resolving a matter concerning military aid to the

country, then he would "sit very comfortably," after which Menendez allegedly lobbied on behalf of Egypt on key foreign policy issues.

- Menendez and his wife were previously charged in September in connection with allegedly accepting bribes in exchange for official acts benefitting Egyptian officials; they have pleaded not guilty. ([ASSOCIATED PRESS](#), [ABC NEWS](#))

Indiana Man Charged for Threatening Calls to Anti-Defamation League Offices in Multiple States

On 6 October, 67-year old Andrzej Boryga of Indiana was charged with sending threatening interstate communications to Anti-Defamation League (ADL) offices in New York, Texas, Colorado, and Nevada.

- On 24 and 25 July, Boryga called the ADL's office in New York, at least three times.
- In those calls, Boryga allegedly threatened to kill individuals and discussed his grandfather's participation in the Nazi regime as an SS officer.
- On 2 August, Boryga allegedly called the ADL's Houston office and threatened to cut people's "head off."
- In August, September, and October, he allegedly called the organization's offices in Colorado and threatened to kill individuals.
- On 1 October, he reportedly called the ADL'S office in Las Vegas, Nevada, and conveyed a similar message.
- If convicted, Boryga could face up to 20 years in prison and a fine of up to \$250,000. ([DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE](#))

Analyst Comment: Malicious actors who hold anti-Semitic beliefs may be especially galvanized to express or act on their beliefs given amid the ongoing conflict in Israel.

Suspects Arrested in Germany Following Nationwide Search Targeting Reichsbürger Group

In the early hours of 10 October, state security agents in six German states reportedly arrested suspected members of the Reichsbürger ("Reich Citizens") movement, an umbrella label for several anti-government and anti-constitutional groups who reject the legitimacy of the German Federal Republic.

- The arrests included a suspect who was allegedly involved in a plot to kidnap Health Minister Karl Lauterbach, another man who allegedly attempted to procure weapons from Croatian arms dealers in connection with that plot, a suspect accused of plotting an attack on Germany's energy supply, and two others accused of involvement in the plots and considered a threat to public safety.
- While the plot to kidnap Minister Lauterbach was uncovered in May of this year, the new arrests pertain to information that emerged during the trial of a Reichsbürger group known as the Vereinten Patrioten (United Patriots), aka the Kaiserreichsgruppe (Empire

NEW YORK CITY POLICE DEPARTMENT

WEEKLY TERRORISM BRIEF

Issue 41 | October 13, 2023

Group), who stand accused of forming a terrorist organization and preparing a “treasonous enterprise.”

- Court testimony so far revealed that the group was planning a large-scale accelerationist event, intending to incite chaos via attacks on electrical power supplies as well as the hijacking of television news stations. ([DER SPIEGEL](#), [DEUTSCHE WELLE](#))

Analyst Comment: The Reichsbürger movement, while previously considered to be a lesser terror threat in Germany, has increased its activity in the past few years. In December 2022, German police conducted a nationwide raid of 25 prominent

Reichsbürger figures, including a former special forces officer, a lawyer, and an aristocrat with royal lineage, after the Office for the Protection of the Constitution (BfV) uncovered a plot to overthrow the German government and replace it with a “monarchist order.” The movement as a whole is broad and composed of varying factions, many of whom communicate through encrypted messaging forums such as Telegram, as well as in person. The decentralized, or cell-based structure of the movement gives it somewhat of a tactical advantage, though to date all of their plots have been foiled by domestic intelligence.

Global Security Developments

Anti-Semitic Incidents Rise by More Than 300 Percent in UK

On 11 October, the Community Security Trust (CST), a UK-based charity that provides safety and security to the Jewish community, reported that anti-Semitic incidents have risen by more than 300 percent since Hamas launched its 7 October attack on Israel.

- The CST recorded a total of 89 incidents across the UK which took place between 7-10 October, compared with 21 incidents which took place across the same four days in 2022, an increase of 324 percent.
- More than half of the incidents occurred in London. These 89 incidents include 66 “recordings of abusive behavior,” 14 direct threats (including death threats), six assaults, and three instances of damage to Jewish property.
- The CST advises that these numbers are an incomplete total, which is likely to rise further as delayed reports are made and as the crisis in Israel continues. ([TELEGRAPH](#), [REUTERS](#), [CST](#))

Analyst Comment: While the CST has not provided information on specific groups responsible for these attacks and threats, a variety of individuals with different political and ideological leanings have engaged in anti-Semitic actions and speech since the 7 October attack. Pro-Palestinian extremists, racially and ethnically motivated violent extremists (REMVE), and other

malicious actors across the political spectrum have demonstrated anti-Semitic behavior both online and through real-world actions. In many cases, seemingly disparate groups have found common ground in their hatred of Jews, manifesting in support for Hamas.

Niger Junta Orders Top UN Official to Leave Country

A statement issued by Niger’s foreign ministry on 10 October ordered the departure of the UN resident coordinator to Niger, Louise Aubin, and accused the UN of deliberately excluding junta officials from UN events, including the September UN General Assembly (UNGA) held in New York City.

- Like its neighbors of Mali and Burkina Faso, the Nigerien junta has grown increasingly hostile to the UN and former colonial ruler France after seizing power.
- On the same day, French forces began withdrawing from the country, and the US officially halted financial assistance to Niger after declaring the 26 July takeover a military coup. ([REUTERS](#), [FRANCE24](#))

Analyst Comment: Niger has been a critical partner for the US and its fight against Salafi-jihadist insurgents in the region. The decision to halt financial assistance will not likely affect US troops’ posture or presence in Niger. The ICB previously assessed that reduced counterterrorism personnel in the Sahel will likely exacerbate violence by al-Qa’ida and ISIS affiliates in the region, who may exploit this vulnerability to conduct attacks.

Counterterrorism Policy

Treasury Secretary Yellen Hints at Heightened Sanctions on Hamas, Hizballah, and Iran

In public comments on 11 October, US Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen said that additional US sanctions could be coming in response to Hamas and other militant groups’ ongoing attack on Israel that began days earlier.

- The potentially increased sanctions could target not only Hamas but also the Lebanese FTO Hizballah and the Iranian regime, as they are both aligned with and supportive of Hamas.

- While some open source reports indicated that Iran may have aided Hamas in the planning of the mass-casualty assault, others suggested that senior Iranian government officials were caught by surprise.
- Yellen did not rule out the possibility of reversing the recent decision to unfreeze \$6 billion of Iranian funds in exchange for the release of American hostages, if it is determined that Iran did indeed play a role in the attacks on Israel. ([THE NEW YORK TIMES](#))

NEW YORK CITY POLICE DEPARTMENT

WEEKLY TERRORISM BRIEF

Issue 41 | October 13, 2023

Red Cross Issues Rules of Engagement for Civilian Hackers Involved in Conflict

The International Committee of the Red Cross issued eight rules of engagement on 4 October for civilian hackers who involve themselves in war and conflict.

- The move follows an unprecedented uptick in the number of people enlisting in “patriotic cyber-gangs” since the Russian invasion of Ukraine. These cyber gangs have directly targeted civilian objects or caused incidental damage to them.
- The rules seek to define the parameters of cyberwarfare by proscribing a number of activities including the targeting of civilian objects, such as medical and humanitarian facilities; the use of malware that spreads automatically; the targeting of objectives which impact the survival of civilians; threats of violence intended to spread terror amongst civilians; and anything which violates international humanitarian law (IHL).
- The rules also state that any cyberattack upon a military objective must have minimal impact upon civilians.
- Finally, the rules mandate that all hackers must comply with these rules even if their enemy does not.
- The Red Cross further asserts that states are to be held “internationally legally responsible” for hackers who act on their behalf and should prosecute war crimes and IHL violations, including cyberattacks.
- While the Red Cross highlights the growing global trend in civilian-led cyberattacks, the committee’s new rules are aimed at those involved in the Ukraine war.
- After initial criticism of the rules, two of the largest hacktivist groups involved in the conflict – Killnet, which is Russian, and the IT Army of Ukraine—announced that they will “make best efforts to follow the rules.” ([BBC](#), [BBC](#), [SECURITY WEEK](#), [RED CROSS](#))

European Countries Take Policy Steps in Response to Hamas Attacks

As of 12 October, Britain, France, and Germany have each issued bans on pro-Palestinian demonstrations.

- The French ban was announced by Interior Minister Gérald Darmanin after the former leader of Hamas, Khaled Meshaal, urged Muslims to gather and demonstrate in a “Day of Rage,” on 13 October.
- France was already experiencing public disorder on 12 October, as police used tear gas and water cannons to disperse an estimated 3,000 pro-Palestinian demonstrators who had gathered at Paris’s Place de la République, subsequently making 10 arrests.
- Minister Darmanin said protests are “likely to generate disturbances to public order,” and warned that anyone defying the ban will face arrest and possible deportation.
- Meanwhile authorities in the German capital Berlin issued a similar ban after pro-Palestinian demonstrations, which took place between 7 and 11 October, resulted in police clashes.
- Berlin authorities further cited the risk of anti-Semitism and the glorification of violence as reasons for the ban.
- Later, German Chancellor Olaf Scholz announced that all Hamas activities and the Islamist Samidoun Network would be banned in Germany.
- According to German anti-extremism laws, this means that the gatherings and activities of these groups can no longer take place, and their logos cannot be displayed. Anyone who persists in these activities will be committing a criminal offense and may face deportation.
- Finally, the UK announced on 13 October that the Home Office is drawing up plans to expel foreign students, academics, and workers who perpetrate anti-Semitic offenses or praise Hamas. ([WASHINGTON POST](#), [BBC](#), [DEUTSCHE WELLE](#), [TELEGRAPH](#))

Cyber and Media

Hamas Encourages Demonstrations in Solidarity with “Al-Aqsa Flood” Operation on 13 October



Khaled Meshaal speaks in the recent video (Social Media)

Former Hamas Chief, Khaled Meshaal, gave a video speech in which he asked Muslims around the world to “show anger” this upcoming Friday, 13 October, calling it “the Friday of al-Aqsa flood.”

- He said that such demonstrations of solidarity will “send a message of rage to Zionists and to America.”
- Additionally, he encouraged supporters to financially support fighters in Gaza and encouraged those located in the region to fight and be martyrs for al-Aqsa.
- This speech is consistent with another statement released by Hamas on 10 October, which declared Friday as a “day of general mobilization” for the “Al-Aqsa Flood” operations.
- The group stated that it is a day to “rally support, offer aid, and participate actively,” demonstrating “our love for Palestine, Jerusalem, and Al-Aqsa.”

NEW YORK CITY POLICE DEPARTMENT

WEEKLY TERRORISM BRIEF

Issue 41 | October 13, 2023

- It called on young people in the region to join mass demonstrations and “shake the ground beneath the feet of the Zionist invaders and their settler gangs.”
- It urged others in the “Arab and Islamic nation” to “march towards the borders of our beloved Palestine in massive gatherings” and declare “solidarity” with Palestine.
- For those outside the region, the group encouraged them to “mobilize in solidarity with our Palestinian people and in support of their just cause.” (MEMRI, SOCIAL MEDIA)

Analyst Comment: These latest statements from Hamas on “the Friday of al-Aqsa flood” are not indicative of any specific or credible threats to the West, and the messages appear to be more focused on the region itself. The group has called for a “day of rage” on numerous occasions in the past, which have catalyzed large demonstrations and unrest in the West Bank, Gaza, and Jerusalem. Nevertheless, these latest statements have the potential to resonate and spark reactionary unrest and exploitative violence beyond the region, warranting elevated vigilance on the part of law enforcement personnel.

Hamis and PFLP Continue Propaganda Statements Amid Conflict with Israel



Recent propaganda poster observed in pro-Hamas channels (Social Media)

Official statements from Hamas and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) on 12 October commented on the ongoing conflict with Israel and called for sympathizers to become involved.

- Hamas’s Jerusalem-based spokesperson Mohammed Hamada called for the people of the West Bank to “mobilize urgently” and attack the Israeli army with any weapons they can find.
- Similarly, the PFLP issued a multi-part call for action. In one part, it urged “our people everywhere,” including the diaspora, to “clash” with Israel on 13 October, apparently echoing similar calls from Hamas officials regarding that day in particular.

- The statement also called for followers to “confront the hostile American and Western behavior against our people.”
- Deputy Head of the Hamas Political Bureau Saleh al-Arouri said in part that the group was ready for a defensive war and that “for every action taken by the occupation, we have a plan.” He also claimed that “after the battle, discussions will take place regarding the prisoners.”
- The same day, an unconfirmed video circulating on social media, purportedly from Hamas, showed militants demonstrating how they dug up water pipes and used the material to build rockets. (SOCIAL MEDIA)

REMVEs Express Admiration for Hamas Attack on Israel, Advocate for Similar Violence



Censored version of REMVE meme about recent Hamas attack (Social Media)

In posts observed since the start of the large-scale, complex Hamas attack on Israel on 7 October, REMVE groups and individuals shared praise for HAMAS and encouraged similar acts of violence on behalf of white supremacist causes.

- In neo-Nazi and accelerationist Telegram channels, a user stated, “If Arabs with bottle rockets, old broken guns, and rocks can do so much damage... Imagine what organized Whites can do against them.”
- One user called the attacks “very inspiring” and another instructed like-minded extremists to “follow what is being taught by our comrades,” evidently referring to Hamas.
- One poster shared online featured a man in traditional Gulf Arab clothing riding a hang-glider—an apparent reference to one of the Hamas tactics—with the text, “Get in [anti-Black slur]. We’re turning Israel into wasreal.”
- A statement shared by multiple neo-Nazi and accelerationist Telegram channels opened with, “Needless to say, HAIL HOLY TERROR stands with Terrorism and wholeheartedly backs Hamas in their [anti-Semitic slur] crusade.”

NEW YORK CITY POLICE DEPARTMENT

WEEKLY TERRORISM BRIEF

Issue 41 | October 13, 2023

- It continued by noting similarities between their own cause and that of Hamas, including their hatred of Jewish people and glorification of past like-minded perpetrators of mass violence.
- The message continued by praising the extensive coordination, planning, and dedication on the part of Hamas and expressed hope about REMVEs' being able to mimic such tactics "when the time is right."
- Additionally, other REMVEs expressed hope that Israelis and Palestinians were headed toward mutually assured destruction and celebrated attacks against both Muslims and Jews. (SOCIAL MEDIA)

Analyst Comment: In recent years, as well as amid the current crisis, REMVE channels have leveraged the actions of Hamas and other Palestinian militants, whom they perceive to be fighting a common enemy of "Jewish tyranny," to bolster a violently anti-Semitic agenda.

African Countries and FTOs React to Israel-Palestine Conflict

Various countries and other groups in Africa reacted to the ongoing crisis in Israel beginning on 7 October.

- For example, likely in response to the Kenyan government's official pledge of support for Israel, Somalia al-Qa'ida affiliate al-Shabaab released a communique on 9 October commending the attack, stating that it has been "heartily welcomed in Somalia, where many Somalis have circulated the attack news with great joy and pride."
- African countries have been divided in their support, with Sudan, Djibouti, and South Africa clear in their support for Palestinians, while Zambia, Kenya, and Ghana have explicitly condemned Hamas and expressed their support for Israel.
- Finally, in a statement, the African Union (AU) Commission Chairperson, Moussa Faki Mahamat, called for peace, and added that the "tense," ongoing situation between Israel and Palestine results from "denial of the fundamental rights of Palestinian people, particularly an independent and sovereign state." (NORTH AFRICA POST, THE SOUTH AFRICAN, SOCIAL MEDIA)

Analyst Comment: The divided support for Israel demonstrates that despite Israel's efforts to bolster diplomatic relations with African nations in the last decade, it has not fully consolidated its support in the continent in this latest conflict.

Taliban Commend Hamas Attacks, Blame Israel and the West

Beginning on 7 October when Hamas launched its multi-pronged attack on Israel, the Taliban and their officials shared various statements praising the FTO.

- In a communique, the Taliban declared its support for "every kind of defense and resistance" by Palestinian groups and blamed Israel for the violence.

- Prominent Taliban member Jawad Sargar, who reportedly helped prepare suicide attacks against US and allied forces in years past, said that Hamas's attacks were part of a larger war between Islamic groups and the West.
- Similarly, a prominent former mujahideen commander, Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, blamed the US and the UK for the bloodshed.
- Another official added, "May Allah help the mujahideen of Palestine to conquer Jerusalem" and said that Israel is "a very bad nation" because "they are Jews."
- The National Resistance Council for the Salvation of Afghanistan, which is the main local group fighting the Taliban, also expressed support of the Palestinian people's "right to defend their human existence" by expelling the Israeli people. (MEMRI)

ISIS Supporter Requests Bomb Tutorial for Suicide Operation

An online user posted an English message to a pro-ISIS platform on 5 October, expressing his intention to conduct a suicide operation to "cast terror in the eyes and hearts of disbelievers" and requested others to share a bomb-making video or educational resources on "other deadly methods of terrorism."

- Another user praised the original poster, while a third criticized their usage of words like "suicide" and "terrorism" instead of referring to the operation as "itishadi," or martyrdom-seeking, claiming that only intelligence agents would use secular terminology.
- The original poster replied, criticizing the individual for spreading negativity and finding fault with "brothers who seek martyrdom." (SOCIAL MEDIA)

Analyst Comment: Western-based individuals inspired by Salafi-jihadist violent extremist ideology are not always knowledgeable of groups' terminology or the nuances of the ideology despite their purported adherence. Users in similar online platforms also regularly accuse one another of being spies or informants rather than true believers, and urge caution in cooperating or sharing plans with others. However, the proliferation of extremist content online has offered malicious actors greater accessibility to engage with terrorist content and conduct acts of violence even with limited direction.

NEW YORK CITY POLICE DEPARTMENT

WEEKLY TERRORISM BRIEF

Issue 41 | October 13, 2023

Online ISIS User Accuses Muslim World of Hypocrisy, Advises Supporters Against Alliances with Hamas

On 11 October, a user on a pro-ISIS social media channel posted several messages in Arabic and English expressing frustration with what they perceive as hypocrisy in the Muslim world's backing of the Palestinian resistance movement and warning ISIS supporters against forging alliances with Hamas.

- The user wrote that the scenes of destruction and killings of Muslims in Gaza “are not equivalent to a tenth” of what occurred in ISIS-held territories in Syria and Iraq, asserting that the “infidel media whether Arab or Western...turned a blind eye to us.”
- The user continued that if ISIS perpetrated these attacks, “you would have seen alliances forming, countries mobilizing, and the rabid Arabs denouncing and disavowing.”
- Finally, the individual advised supporters in Palestine to collect weapons, coordinate amongst themselves, take proper security precautions, and “wage war for the sake of Allah” rather than in alliance with “the apostates HAMAS.” (SOCIAL MEDIA)

Analyst Comment: This rhetoric reflects the often complex dynamic between supporters of Palestinian militant extremist groups and Salafi-jihadist FTOs, including ISIS and al-Qa'ida. ISIS in particular tends to take issue with the Palestinian groups for what they perceive as a focus on a national struggle rather than total devotion to Salafi-jihadist principles. Despite the hostile nature of this statement, it comes as increasing comparisons are being made by public officials and journalists between Hamas's attacks and violence perpetrated by ISIS, especially in light of revelations surrounding the brutality of assaults in Israel over the weekend. For example, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken recently stated that Hamas has evoked “the worst of ISIS,” and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said, “Hamas is ISIS, and just as ISIS was crushed, so too will Hamas be crushed.” Additionally, the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) recently confirmed that soldiers found an ISIS flag on the vest of a militant killed during an assault on Kibbutz Sufa near the Gaza border.

Active Clubs Document Additional Cross-Group Training Sessions with Extremist Groups

Between 1 and 3 October, various REMVE active clubs in the United States and Europe documented joint training and recruitment efforts.

- On 1 October, the “NorCal Active Club” (NCAC) documented a physical training session with members of Patriot Front at what appeared to be a tennis court at an undisclosed location.
- Images of the event were shared on NCAC's Telegram channel, which included a quote noting the importance of physical training for white men.
- On 3 October, Finnish white nationalist group Active Helsinki (AH) shared a promotional video documenting training efforts and social gatherings while calling for recruits.
- The video spread across Scandinavian and US-based white supremacist online platforms, including Finnish white nationalist media outlet Partisaani (“Partisan”) and those connected to prominent white nationalist network Will2Rise. The video ended with a call for users to “join the action,” accompanied by a link to AH's Telegram channel.
- The post caption described these activities as a “tour” by the group through “other parts of Finland” before encouraging members to find a local chapter near them. (SOCIAL MEDIA)

Analyst Comment: REMVE groups are increasingly recruiting individuals—frequently via messaging apps like Telegram—to join social fitness groups like NCAC. Such groups seek to normalize REMVE ideology by recruiting individuals to join so-called “Active Clubs,” which focus primarily on physical fitness, outdoor skills, and combat sports activities, while acting as a potential incubator for racist and violent hate-filled ideologies. Members of active clubs have posted about and sympathized with REMVE incidents and attacks in the US, like the May 2022 mass shooting at a predominantly Black supermarket in Buffalo, New York. While much of this rhetoric and activity constitutes constitutionally-protected speech in the US, it could serve to radicalize and incite likeminded individuals to violence.

NEW YORK CITY POLICE DEPARTMENT

WEEKLY TERRORISM BRIEF

Issue 41 | October 13, 2023

ON OUR RADAR

[The War Hamas Always Wanted](#) — *Foreign Affairs* (11 October 2023)

Hamas's attack on October 7 took nearly everyone by surprise—most devastatingly, Israel, which struggled to respond as hundreds of fighters streamed across the border from the Gaza Strip to unleash a campaign of terror. But in the months before the attack, Hamas had in fact warned that a conflict could be coming. In late August, Saleh al-Aroui—the group's number-two leader, based in Beirut—told a Lebanese news channel that the Israeli government's policies, particularly what he described as its land grabs in the West Bank and its desire to control the al Aqsa mosque in Jerusalem, could spark a regional war. "We are preparing for an all-out war," he said, "and we are closely discussing the prospects of this war with all relevant parties." Indeed, in April, a delegation from Hamas met in Beirut with Hassan Nasrallah, the leader of the Lebanese terrorist group Hezbollah, to discuss cooperation between the two organizations as an "axis of resistance" against Israel. The meeting was not the first. Officials from Hamas, Hezbollah, and Iran's Quds Force have been meeting regularly in Iran and Lebanon for years. Following the May 2021 rocket war between Hamas and Israel, the editor of a Lebanese newspaper affiliated with Hezbollah reported that Hamas, Hezbollah, and Iran coordinated the fighting from a "joint war room" in Beirut.

[Improving the Prospects of Prosecuting 'Terrorists' for Core International Crimes Committed in Syria and Iraq](#) — *International Centre for Counter-Terrorism* (10 October 2023)

The majority of European citizens - often referred to as 'foreign fighters' - that have returned to European soil have predominantly been prosecuted for terrorist offences. In recent years several European countries have been prosecuting alleged terrorists cumulatively for both terrorist offences and core international crimes. This paper explores which building blocks need to be in place to allow for such prosecutions. This paper argues that only if a suitable legal and institutional framework is in place can prosecution of core international crimes take place, thereby contributing to achieving accountability of the full range of crimes that have been committed by alleged terrorists in the context of the conflict in Syria and Iraq.

[The REPO Act: Confiscating Russian State Assets Consistent With U.S. and International Law](#) — *Lawfare* (12 October 2023)

On June 15, Sens. Jim Risch (R-Idaho), ranking member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, and Sheldon Whitehouse (D-R.I.), in conjunction with Reps. Michael McCaul (R-Texas), chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, and Marcy Kaptur (D-Ohio), co-chair of the Congressional Ukraine Caucus, introduced the Rebuilding Economic Prosperity and Opportunity (REPO) for Ukrainians Act. The legal mechanisms proposed in the REPO bill empower the president of the United States to confiscate sovereign assets of the Russian Federation that are directly or indirectly owned by the government, the Central Bank, or the Russian Direct Investment Fund. Specifically, the REPO Act would create a domestic Ukraine Support Fund—consisting of Russian sovereign assets in U.S. financial institutions—that the secretary of state would administer in consultation with the administrator of the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) "for the purpose of compensating Ukraine for damages resulting from the unlawful invasion by the Russian Federation." The bill authorizes specific purposes for the transferred funds, which include (a) reconstruction and rebuilding efforts in Ukraine; (b) providing humanitarian assistance to the people of Ukraine; and (c) such other purposes as the secretary determines directly and effectively support the recovery of Ukraine and the welfare of the people of Ukraine.

[IntelBrief: The Fog of War Envelopes Syria](#) — *The Soufan Center* (10 October 2023)

On October 5, perceiving a potential threat to U.S. forces in Syria, U.S. F-16s shot down an armed Turkish drone that was striking Kurdish forces near the northeastern Syrian city of Hasakah. Describing the rationale for what they called a "regrettable" incident, U.S. military officials said the Turkish drone had been observed striking targets within a declared "restricted operating zone" – to which Türkiye had been notified - by U.S. commanders. While adding that the Turkish drone did not appear to intend to strike any U.S. forces, U.S. officials stated that the weapon's proximity to U.S. forces caused them to "relocate to bunkers." The United States maintains 900 troops in eastern Syria, where they work with Kurdish-dominated militia partners known as the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) to combat remnants of Islamic State (also known as ISIS or Da'esh). The Kurdish forces partnering with the U.S. military in eastern Syria are largely from the People's Protection Units (YPG), which Türkiye considers an offshoot of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK). The PKK has conducted periodic terrorist attacks on the Turkish government and other targets since 1984. It claimed responsibility for a suicide attack on the Turkish Ministry of Interior building in Ankara on October 1, wounding two Turkish security officers and resulting in the deaths of two suspects – one a suicide bomber and the other a gunman killed in a shootout with police.