

Palestine Liberation Front (PLF)



OVERVIEW

AS OF AUGUST 2026

The Palestine Liberation Front (PLF) is a small faction in the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) that is committed to establishing an independent Palestinian state and violent resistance to Israel. The PLF was founded in 1961 by Ahmed Jibril, a Palestinian serving in the Syrian Army. The group merged with several other Palestinian groups after the Six-Day War in 1967 but broke away again in 1977. By 1984, the PLF split into three factions—all using the PLF name—with different leaders. Muhammad Zaydan, a.k.a. Abu Abbas, established and led the most prominent and operationally active faction until his death in 2004.

The PLF publicly agreed to abandon terrorism in the 1990s but still publicly claimed attacks against Israel during the 2000s. The group has not claimed responsibility for an attack since 2010.

Operating Area

The PLF is based primarily in the Gaza Strip, Lebanon, Syria, and the West Bank. Abu Abbas's faction was based in Baghdad, Iraq, before Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Members

50 to 500, based on 2016 estimates

Tactics And Targets

The PLF hijacked an Italian cruise ship in 1985 and used rubber boats, gliders, and hot-air balloons for attacks against Israeli military targets and civilians in the 1980s and 1990s. In the 2000s, the group continued to attack Israeli military and civilian targets but shifted to primarily using assault rifles, handgrenades, homemade explosive devices, and mortars for smaller, less sophisticated attacks.

Terrorist Group Designation

The US State Department designated PLF as a foreign terrorist organization on 8 October 1997.

KEY LEADERS



Wasel Abu Yousef

Leader from 2007 to present; PLO Executive Committee member



Palestine Liberation Front (PLF) *(continued)*

KEY LEADERS *(continued)*



Omar Shibli

a.k.a. Abu Ahmed Halab

Leader from 2004 to 2007



Muhammad Zaydan

a.k.a. Abu Abbas

Leader from 1977 to 2004; died of natural causes while in US custody after being captured in Baghdad

NOTABLE ATTACKS

18 February 2010

Gaza Strip

The PLF conducts an IED attack on an Israeli military patrol, causing minor injuries.

14 March 2008

Hebron, West Bank

The PLF shoots and wounds an Israeli settler.

14 March 2008

Huwarah, West Bank

The PLF attacks an Israeli military bus, causing no casualties.

7 October 1985

Egypt

The PLF hijacks the Italian cruise ship Achille Lauro, killing an American tourist on board. PLF operatives demand the release of Palestinian prisoners and hold hundreds of passengers hostage for several days until the hijackers eventually surrender.

