Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP)

OVERVIEW

AS OF OCTOBER 2026

The Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) is a terrorist group based in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank. The PFLP combines Arab nationalism with Marxist-Leninist ideology, and the group views the destruction of Israel as integral to removing Western capitalism from the Middle East and establishing a Communist Palestinian state. The PFLP was founded after the Six Day War in 1967. The group fostered links and carried out attacks with leftist militants worldwide during the 1970s and was actively involved in the Second Intifada from 2000 to 2005, during which the PFLP carried out suicide operations and launched joint operations with other Palestinian terrorist groups.

The PFLP participated in HAMAS's attack against Israel on 7 October 2023 and took some hostages. In the ensuing conflict, the PLFP claimed mortar and rocket attacks against Israel's military and Israeli civilians.

Operating Area

Largely based in the Gaza Strip; also operates and has members in Israel, Lebanon, Syria, and the West Bank

Tactics And Targets

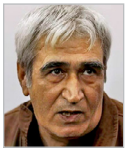
The PFLP targets Israeli Government, military, and security personnel, as well as Israeli civilians. In its early years, the PFLP favored large-scale and high-visibility terror attacks, such as hijacking civilian airliners. Since the late 1970s, the group has focused more on firing rockets and mortars from the Gaza Strip at communities in southern Israel and conducting bombing, explosives, and shooting attacks. Fighters are equipped with small arms, light machineguns, artillery rockets, mortars, man-portable surface-to-air missiles, improvised weapons, and explosives, including improvised explosive devices and suicide vests.

Terrorist Group Designation

The US State Department designated the PFLP as a foreign terrorist organization on 8 October 1997. The State Department designated the group as a terrorist organization under Executive Order 13224 on 31 October 2001.

Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) *(continued)*

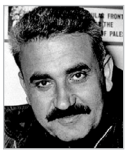
KEY LEADERS



Ahmad Sa'adat
Incarcerated; leader from 2001 to present; imprisoned since 2002, first by Palestinian Authority and later Israel

Jamil Mazhar
Deputy secretary general

Abu Ali Mustafa [DECEASED]
Leader from 2000 to 2001; killed by an Israeli airstrike in August 2001



George Habash [DECEASED]
Founder and leader from 1967 to 2000; died in 2008 of natural causes

NOTABLE ATTACKS

7 October 2023
Israel
The PFLP participates in the HAMAS-led attack that kills nearly 1,200 people; at least 240 people are kidnapped.

23 August 2019
Dolev, Palestinian territories
A PLFP cell detonates an explosive device near an Israeli settlement, killing a 17-year-old girl and wounding her father and brother.

17 October 2001
Jerusalem, Israel
Two PFLP gunmen assassinate Israeli Tourism Minister Rehavam Ze'evi in a hotel in retaliation for an Israeli airstrike that killed then–PFLP leader Abu Ali Mustafa.

Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) *(continued)*

NOTABLE ATTACKS *(continued)*

4 July 1976

Entebbe, Uganda

PFLP splinter group members and German Red Army faction members hijack an Air France flight bound for Tel Aviv and land the plane in Entebbe, Uganda, where Israeli commandos later free nearly 100 hostages.

30 May 1972

Tel Aviv, Israel

PFLP and Japanese Red Army faction gunmen kill two dozen passengers at Israel's Ben Gurion International Airport.