



## News of Terrorism and the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict

March 25 – April 1, 2014



Crisis in the Israeli-Palestinian negotiations: Israel and the United States sit in the front seat, leaving the Palestinians in the rear (Albayan.ae, March 31, 2014)

### Overview

- Israel's south was quiet this past week. Land Day was marked in Judea, Samaria and the Gaza Strip; the ceremonies were poorly attended and there were no exceptional incidents.
- American Secretary of State John Kerry paid a sudden visit to the region in an effort to resolve the current crisis in the Israeli-Palestinian negotiations. He met with Benjamin Netanyahu and was supposed to meet with Mahmoud Abbas as well (April 1, 2014). On the agenda was an attempt to formulate a way to extend the negotiations and overcome the dispute between Israel and the Palestinians over the fourth phase of terrorist prisoner release. **Note:** The meeting between John Kerry and Mahmoud Abbas was cancelled shortly after Mahmoud Abbas declared that the Palestinians would seek membership in 15 UN agencies.

## The Security Situation in Israel's South

### Israeli Navy Fires on Palestinian Boats

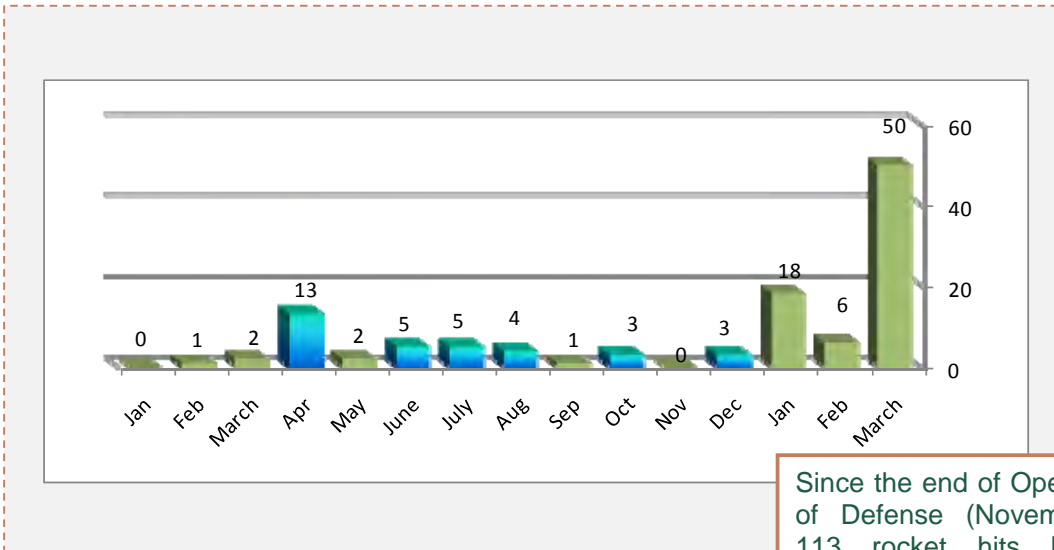
■ On the night of March 26, 2014, an Israeli navy vessel identified two small boats suspected of being **engaged in smuggling from the Sinai Peninsula to the Gaza Strip**. When the boats returned to the Gaza Strip the Israeli navy vessel fired at them. Secondary explosions were heard. During the event Palestinians shot at the navy vessel from the shore. There were no casualties to the IDF force and no damage was reported (IDF Spokesman, March 26, 2014). The Palestinian media claimed that in the region of Rafah four fishermen had been seriously wounded by Israeli navy fire (Safa News Agency, Paltoday.ps, March 26, 2014).



One of the fishing boats after the Israeli navy attack (Paltimes.net, March 26, 2014).

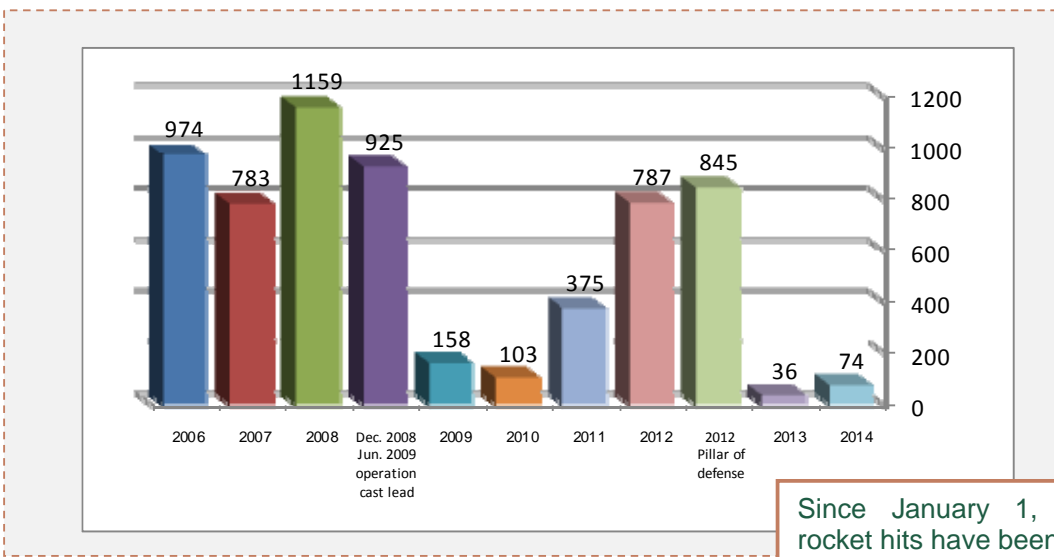
### Rocket Hits in Israeli Territory since January 1, 2013<sup>1</sup>

- This past week no rocket hits were identified in Israeli territory.



Since the end of Operation Pillar of Defense (November 2012), 113 rocket hits have been identified in Israeli territory, including eight rockets fired at the southern Israeli city of Eilat.

### Annual Distribution of Rocket Fire<sup>2</sup>



Since January 1, 2013, 113 rocket hits have been identified.

<sup>1</sup> As April 1, 2014. The statistics do not include mortar shell fire and rocket hits inside the Gaza Strip.  
<sup>2</sup> The statistics do not include mortar shell fire.

## Judea and Samaria

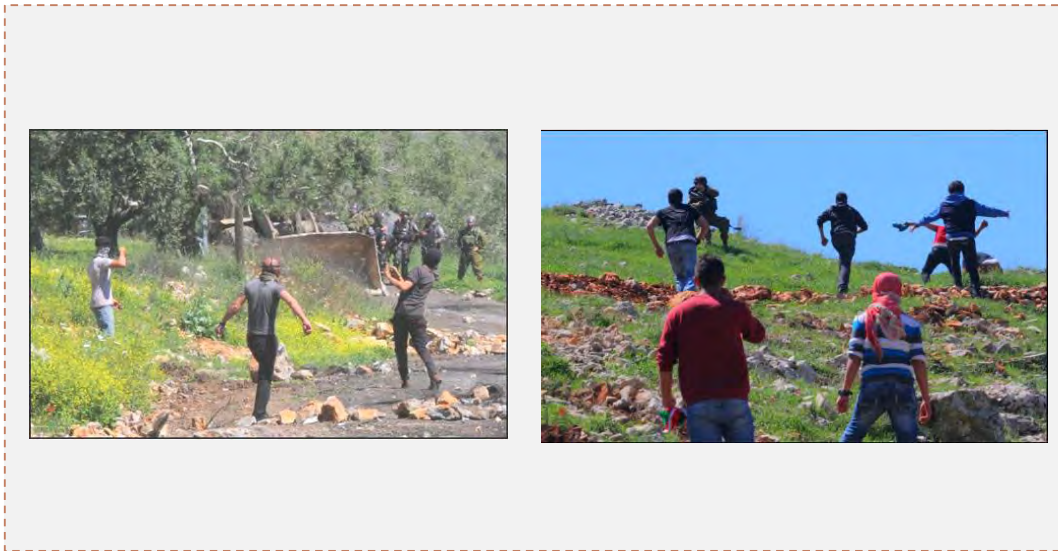
### Perpetrators of Two Shooting Attacks Apprehended

■ A joint action of the Israeli security forces led to the discovery and apprehension of the perpetrators of two shooting attacks in Judea and Samaria (Israel Security Agency website, March 2014):

- In **January 2014** a number of members of a terrorist squad in Nablus were detained. They had **fired shots at an Israeli vehicle in Samaria** (near the Israeli village of Qdumim). Interrogation revealed that two months previously the squad had collected information and carried out shooting practice. They made two unsuccessful attempts to shoot at Israeli vehicles. In their possession the rifle they used to carry out the shooting attack was found. Some of the squad members were detained by the Palestinian Authority (PA) security services.
- In **February 2014** a number of residents of the Palestinian town of Bir Zeit (north of Ramallah) were detained. They belonged to the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) and had fired shots and thrown stun grenades at an IDF post in the Bir Zeit region. They turned over the improvised rifle they had used in the shooting. One of the squad members, who had engaged in reconnaissance, was killed during the attempt to detain him.

### Palestinian Violence Continues

■ This past week violent incidents continued in Judea and Samaria, part of the so-called "popular resistance." Stones were thrown at Israeli civilians and Israeli security forces and Molotov cocktails were thrown at vehicles on main roads. Friday riots were held at the traditional friction points (Bil'in, Ni'lin, Nebi Saleh, Qadoum, Beit Umar, etc.). The 38<sup>th</sup> Land Day was marked by various incidents (See below).



Left: Palestinians throw stones at Israeli security forces in the village of Qadoum. Right: Confrontations between Palestinians and Israeli security forces at the village of Burin (Nablus district) (Wafa News Agency, March 28, 2014).

## Developments in the Gaza Strip

### The Rafah Crossing

■ After having been closed for an extended period of time, on March 29, 2014, the Rafah crossing opened for three days. However, according to the ministry of the interior of the de-facto Hamas administration in the Gaza Strip, it was a one-time opening. During those three days, it was open for limited traffic only (Website of the Hamas ministry of the interior, March 29, 2014). Trucks carrying building materials entered the Gaza Strip while the crossing was open. **Maher Abu Sabha**, head of the Hamas crossings administration, said that the connection with the Egyptian side of the crossing had been renewed and that the crossing was operating with new procedures to prevent delays (Safa News Agency, March 29, 2014).

■ In answer to an UNRWA appeal to open the Rafah crossing, the Egyptian ministry of foreign affairs said in a statement that Israel still controlled the air space, sea and land of the Gaza Strip. Therefore, according to the statement the [so-called Israeli] "occupation forces" were legally responsible for all aspects of the Gaza Strip. According to the announcement, Egypt was doing its best to ease the situation of the Gazans but there were exceptional security concerns in the Sinai Peninsula, where Egypt was working to stamp out terrorism (Filastin al-Yawm, March 27, 2014).



Gazans wait to exit the Strip after the opening of the Rafah crossing (Filastin Al-'Aan, March 29, 2014).

### Tension Continues in Hamas-Egypt Relations

■ Tension continues between Hamas and Egypt. This past week Egypt continued its destruction of the tunnels between the Gaza Strip and the Sinai Peninsula. Reportedly, Egyptian forces recently destroyed dozens of tunnels along the Rafah border. According to a media report so far the Egyptian security forces have destroyed 1,454 tunnels on the border between Egypt and the Gaza Strip (Palpress.ps, March 27, 2014).

## The Palestinian Authority

### Crisis in the Israeli-Palestinian Negotiations

■ The Israeli-Palestinian negotiations, which are supposed to end at the end of April 2014, are in a state of crisis. The core issues are still in dispute, and the Palestinians are now conditioning the continuation of the negotiations on the release of terrorist prisoners and a freeze on construction in the Jewish settlements and east Jerusalem. In an effort to rescue the negotiations and **make it possible to extend them to the end of 2014, on March 31, 2014, American Secretary of State John Kerry paid a surprise visit to the region.** He met with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and was supposed to meet with Mahmoud Abbas on April 1, 2014. **Note:** Secretary of State John Kerry cancelled the meeting in Ramallah shortly after Mahmoud Abbas declared that the Palestinians had decided to sign a document regarding their joining 15 UN agencies and conventions.

- **As to the release of the terrorist prisoners**, after Mahmoud Abbas met with Martin Indyk, the American envoy to the peace process, senior Palestinians said that Israel had officially told the PA it refused to carry out the fourth phase of prisoner release, including 26 terrorists detained before the Oslo Accords and sentenced to long prison terms, some of the Israeli Arabs (Al-Quds Al-Arabi, March 27, 2014). According to media reports, an Israeli-American deal is being discussed that would include the release of Palestinian prisoners as well as the release of Jonathan Pollard.
- Before the arrival of John Kerry the Palestinian leadership held a meeting in Ramallah, chaired by Mahmoud Abbas. The meeting was convened to discuss recent developments in the negotiations and possible avenues of action in view of Israel's refusal to carry out the fourth phase of Palestinian prisoner release. **Mustafa Barghouti**, chairman of the Palestinian National Initiative movement, who attended the meeting, said that if Israel did not carry out the fourth phase in the upcoming days, **the Palestinians would initiate steps towards the PA's joining UN agencies** (Al-Quds, April 1, 2014).



Mahmoud Abbas meets with the PA leadership in Ramallah (Wafa News Agency, March 31, 2014).

## The Northern Front

### Suspects Killed near the Security Fence along the Israeli-Syrian Border

- Two suspects, at least one of whom was identified as being armed, were shot and killed near the security fence along the Israeli-Syrian border in the central Golan

Heights. On the evening of March 28, 2014, they were identified by an IDF surveillance force and were seen sabotaging the fence (Ynet, March 29, 2014).

In response Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said that Israel would continue responding to all attempts to harm it and would prevent such attempts before they were carried out (Israeli Prime Minister's website, March 30 2014).

## The Battle for Hearts and Minds

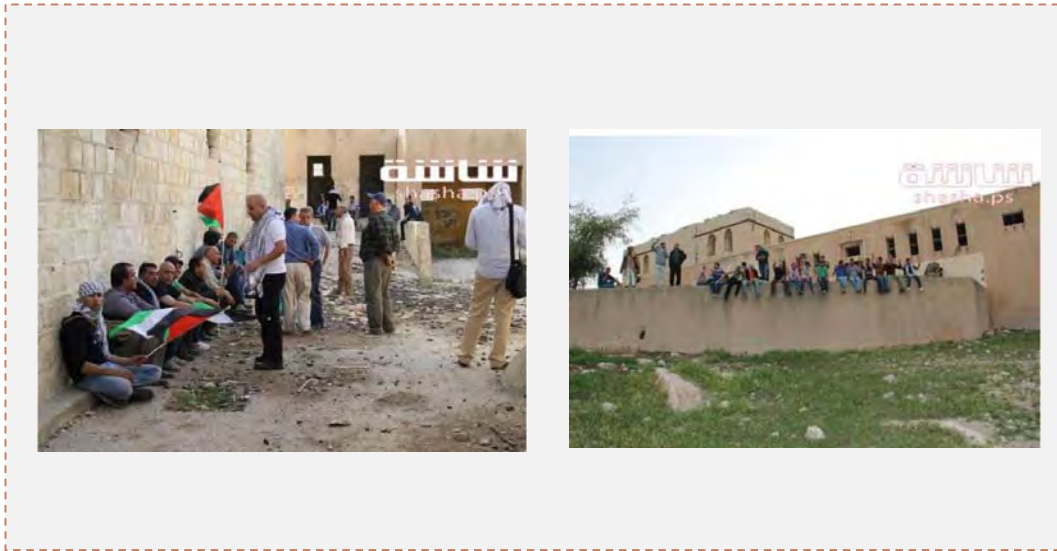
### Land Day Events

■ Every year since 1976 Israeli Arabs have marked Land Day on March 30 to express their adherence to the land and protest its expropriation. Events are also held in Judea, Samaria and the Gaza Strip. Because this year March 30 fell on a Sunday, Land Day was moved to the previous Friday to incorporate it into the weekly riots at the traditional friction points. Senior Palestinian figures called for participation in the events but asked for law and order to be observed and to avoid confrontations with the Israeli security forces and the Palestinian security services. However, **this year, as in previous years, there was a marked lack of public interest in Land Day, there were few participants and no exceptional events were recorded.** At a number of friction points the events turned into local confrontations with the Israeli security forces.

### Judea and Samaria

■ On **March 28, 2014**, several dozen Palestinian activists, led by Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP) activists, erected an illegal outpost called "The gate of dignity" in a historic building near the village of Jiftlik in the northern Jordan Valley (the building had formerly been used by the Turks and the British police). An estimated 120 activists gathered at the site, waved Palestinian flags, sprayed graffiti on the walls and prepared to spend the night. According to the organizers the objective was to stress the Palestinian identity of the site and strengthen the so-called "popular activities" against the Israeli plans to Judaize the Jordan Valley. IDF forces detained several dozen activists planning to reach the site from other locations in Judea and Samaria.





Palestinian activists erect an illegal outpost in the northern Jordan Valley (Shashe.net, March 31, 2014)

- In **Al-Bireh** local residents planted trees in the city's national park. **Walid Assaf**, the PA minister of agriculture, was present. In **Bil'in** popular committees activists held a march. The marchers confronted IDF forces and uprooted olive trees near the security fence. One Palestinian was injured.
- **Rami Hamdallah**, PA prime minister, participated in a tree-planting ceremony in the village of **A'izbat al-Tabeeb** (near Qalqiliya). He gave a speech in which he said that the Palestinian leadership would continue its commitment to raising the Palestinian issue in every international forum (Al-Hayat Al-Jadeeda, March 31, 2014).

### The Gaza Strip

- On **March 27, 2014**, several dozen Palestinian demonstrators gathered near the border security fence in the northern Gaza Strip (Paltoday.ps, March 27, 2014). The event had apparently been initiated by the Union of Agricultural Work Committees (UAWC), affiliated with the PFLP.



**Palestinians demonstrate near the border security fence in the northern Gaza Strip to mark Land Day (Paltoday.ps, March 27, 2014).**

■ On **March 30, 2014**, a rally was held at the customs' house junction on the road leading to the Erez crossing in the northern Gaza Strip. Participants included representatives from Hamas, the Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) and other Palestinian terrorist organizations. An estimated 150 Palestinians participated in the rally. A demonstration was held in the region of the Israeli village of Nahal Oz, sponsored by the "intifada youth coalition." Another event was held east of Khan Yunis. The security forces of the de-facto Hamas administration were deployed in the various regions in advance.

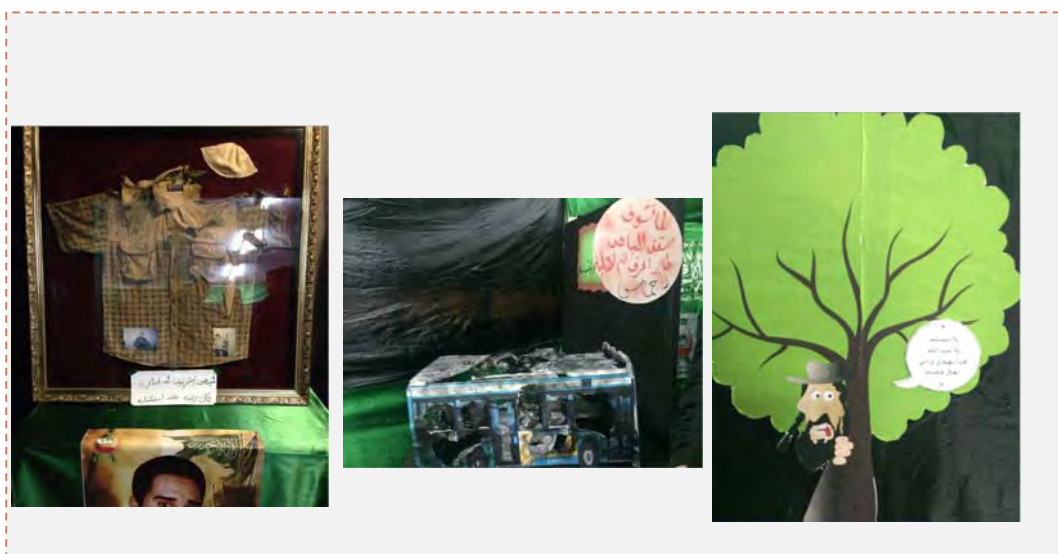
### **Palestinian Students Visit Auschwitz**

■ For the first time, **Palestinian students, 30 in number, from Bir Zeit and Al-Quds Universities visited, the Auschwitz-Birkenau extermination camp.** The visit was part of a program for resolving conflicts and held in collaboration with Ben Gurion University in Beersheba and the Friedrich Schiller University in Jena. The delegation was headed by **Muhammad Dajani**, who lectures on American studies at Al-Quds University and is promoting a campaign to emphasize moderate Islam (Al-Quds, March 28, 2014).<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup> For further information about Arab visits to Auschwitz, see the August 7, 2012 bulletin "Ziad al-Bandak, advisor to Mahmoud Abbas, recently visited Auschwitz, the Nazi extermination camp. He was strongly denounced by Hamas, which has issued statements denying the Holocaust."

### Glorification of Shaheeds at Al-Najah University

■ On **March 30, 2014**, "Martyrs Week" began at the Al-Najah national university in Nablus. An exhibition was opened called "Covenant and Loyalty." It displayed pictures, posters and objects glorifying the shaheeds, including suicide bombers. The opening ceremony was attended by representatives from the Palestinian Legislative Council, among them **Sheikh Fathi al-Qar'awi, Ms. Muna Mansour and Sheikh Abu Tahe al-Bishtawi** (Facebook page of Al-Najah University, Nablus, March 30, 2014).



Displays from the exhibition. Left: A shirt worn by Muhammad al-Hanbali, killed in a clash with IDF forces in Nablus.<sup>4</sup> Center: A burned-out Israeli bus, the result of a suicide bombing attack. Right: Poster of a stereotypical ultra-Orthodox Jew hiding behind a tree. The tree says, "Oh, Muslim, oh servant of Allah, here is a Jew behind me, come kill him" (based on a Qur'an verse).

<sup>4</sup> **Muhammad al-Hanbali** was a commander in Hamas' military-terrorist wing in Nablus. He was killed in a clash with IDF forces at his home in Nablus on September 5, 2003. An Israeli commander was killed in the clash. **Muhammad al-Hanbali was responsible for the deaths of 26 Israelis** (Ynet, December 5, 2003).