



Intelligence and Terrorism
Information Center Israel Intelligence
Heritage and Commemoration Center

News of the Israeli-Palestinian Confrontation

January 30-February 5, 2008



The scene of the suicide bombing attack in Dimona
(Amir Cohen for Reuters, February 4, 2008).

Overview

- Events this past week focused on the suicide bombing attack in the southern city of Dimona, which killed one resident and wounded a number of others, one of them critically. The attack was carried out by Hamas a terrorist squad from Hebron. In addition, there was an escalation in rocket fire from the Gaza Strip on February 5. On February 5, close to 20 rockets were launched by Hamas.
- In the early morning hours of February 3, after 12 days during which Gazans poured into Egypt, Egyptian security forces in collaboration with Hamas closed the breaches in the border fence. One of them temporarily remained partially open to allow Gazans in Rafah and El-Arish

to return to the Strip. The issue of movement through the Rafah Crossing has yet to be resolved.

- The Palestinian terrorist organizations exploited the collapse of the fence to smuggle large quantities of weapons into the Gaza Strip, including standard long-range rockets and anti-tank and anti-aircraft missiles. Terrorists who had undergone training in Iran and other countries entered the Gaza Strip. In addition, squads of terrorists were dispatched to the Sinai peninsula and Israel, some of whom were captured by the Egyptians.

Important Events

Suicide Bombing Attack in Dimona

- Last week terrorist attacks focused on the suicide bombing attack carried out in the commercial center of Dimona. Two suicide bombers armed with explosive belts arrived in the city at 10:30 in the morning on February 4. One of them detonated the explosive belt he was wearing, killing 73-year old Lyubov Razdolskaya and wounding ten civilians, one of them (the husband of the murdered woman) critically.

- The other suicide bomber, who was supposed to detonate his explosive belt a few minutes later, was wounded by the first explosion. He was shot and killed by a police officer, preventing him from blowing himself up. His explosive belt was neutralized by a robot.



Evacuating the wounded to Soroka Hospital in Beersheba (Info-live TV, February 4).

- On the evening of February 4 an anonymous informant told Reuters that the attack had been carried out by a squad belonging to the Izzedine al-Qassam Brigades, **Hamas's** terrorist operative wing, from **Hebron** (Reuters, February 4). Hamas claimed responsibility for the attack and said that suicide bombers were Mohammed Salim al-Kharbawi and Shadi Muhammad al-Zghayer, both from Hebron (Ali Waked, Ynet, February 5). Initially Fatah's Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine claimed responsibility. They published names of two Gaza Strip

residents and issued their “wills.” In our assessment, it may have been a mistake, and the responsibility was claimed for a different suicide bombing squad which had left the Gaza Strip when the fence was breached and lost contact with its dispatchers.

■ **The last suicide bombing attack in Israel was on January 29, 2007, when a suicide bomber from the Gaza Strip blew himself up at local bakery in the southern city of Eilat, killing three Israelis.** The attack was carried out by the Palestinian Islamic Jihad collaborating with a Gaza-based Fatah network. **The last suicide bombing attack carried out by Hamas was on August 12, 2005, when a suicide bomber blew himself up at the Central Bus Station in Beersheba, wounding 40 civilians.** He came from Dahariya, south of Hebron. After the attack the television networks broadcast false claims of responsibility issued by the PIJ.¹

Rocket and Mortar Shell Fire Continues

■ During the past week rocket and mortar shell fire targeting western Negev towns and villages and IDF forces **continued at the “routine” level of 2-3 rockets and a number of mortar shells a day.** Responsibility for the attacks was claimed by the Palestinian Islamic Jihad. Ten rocket hits were identified in Israeli territory, and 10 mortar shells were fired.

■ On February 5 there was an escalation in rocket fire. Hamas launched close to 20 rockets aimed at Sderot and Ashqelon. The rocket fire caused a number of injuries. (As of the evening of February 5).

¹ For further information see our February 5 Bulletin entitled “Suicide bombing attack in the Dimona commercial center kills one city resident and wounds many ” at http://www.terrorism-info.org.il/malam_multimedia/English/eng_n/html/ct_040208e.htm and http://www.terrorism-info.org.il/malam_multimedia/English/eng_n/pdf/ct_040208e.pdf.

Counterterrorist Activities

Judea and Samaria

Fatah-Tanzim terrorist network responsible for shootings is exposed²

■ In recent weeks combined Israeli security force operations exposed a Fatah-Tanzim network in the village of Qadoum in the Qalqilya district. Ten terrorist operatives, members of the network, were detained by the Israeli security forces.

■ The network was responsible for a series of shootings carried out during the past year along the roads in the Qalqilya district. Among their attacks was the November 19, 2007 shooting near the village of Al-Funduq in the Nablus district in which Ido Zoldan, a resident of Shavei Shomron, was killed.³ In addition, they carried out shooting attacks at the Jinsafut junction on April 10, 2007 and near the village of Al-Funduq on September 14, 2006, during which three Israeli civilians were wounded. Members of the network also shot at the settlement of Kedumim and traded in weapons.

■ Two brothers from the network admitted during interrogation that they had traded in weapons with an Jewish Israeli civilian who was about 50 and lived in one of the northern Samaria settlements. The Israel civilian provided them with four rifles, they said, three bullet-proof vests and ammunition. The weapons were turned over to terrorist operatives from Fatah's Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades in the region of Nablus. The Israeli civilian was detained on January 21, 2008, and indicted on February³.

Terrorist operatives killed in an exchange of fire in Qabatiya

■ Israeli counterterrorist activities continue in Judea and Samaria. The most prominent event was an exchange of fire between the IDF and Palestinian terrorists in Qabatiya,

² According to Israel Security Agency reports.

³ For further information see our date Bulletin entitled "Terrorist attacks and the propaganda campaign to undermine the Annapolis meeting" at http://www.terrorism-info.org.il/malam_multimedia/English/eng_n/pdf/ct_201107e.pdf.

south of Jenin on February 4. Two PIJ operatives were killed and another was critically wounded (Palestinian media, February 4).

Hamas calls for escalation of terrorist attacks in Judea and Samaria

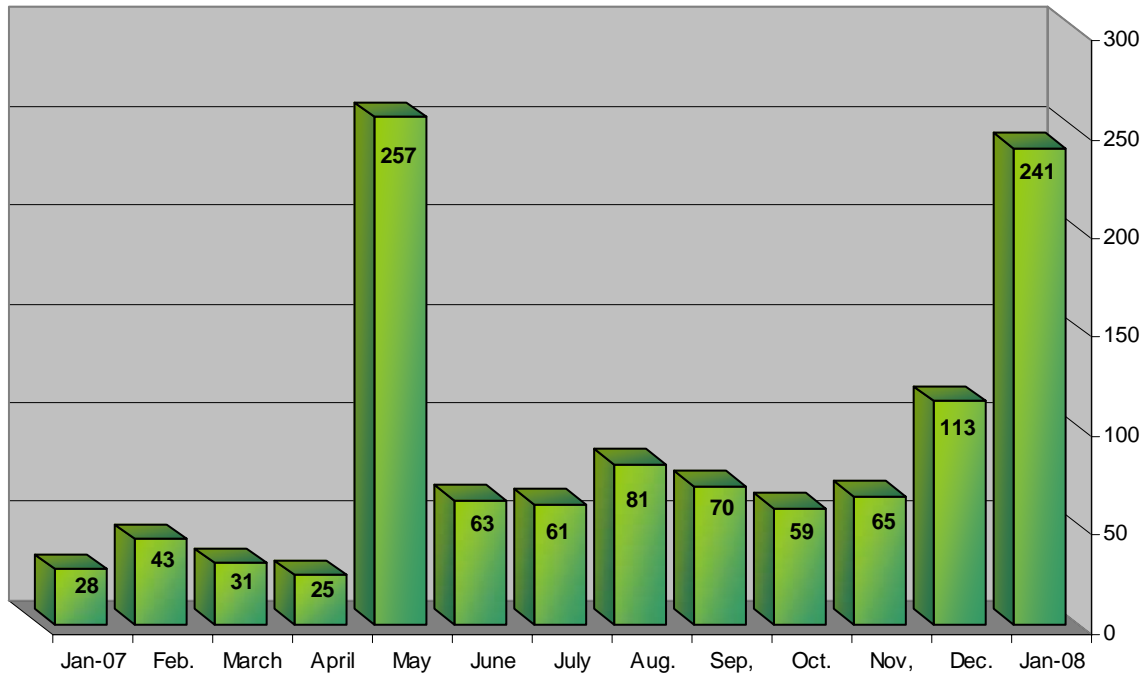
■ Hamas continues to threaten terrorist attacks in the Jerusalem area as well as Judea and Samaria. After the Israeli announcement that a residential neighborhood would be built in the Sheikh Jerah area of Jerusalem, Hamas called upon the terrorist organizations, especially the Izzedine al-Qassam Brigades, to “escalate the resistance in occupied Jerusalem and the [West] Bank...and to regard all the Zionist military targets and the settlements as targets for their action” (Palestine-info Website, February 2).

The Gaza Strip

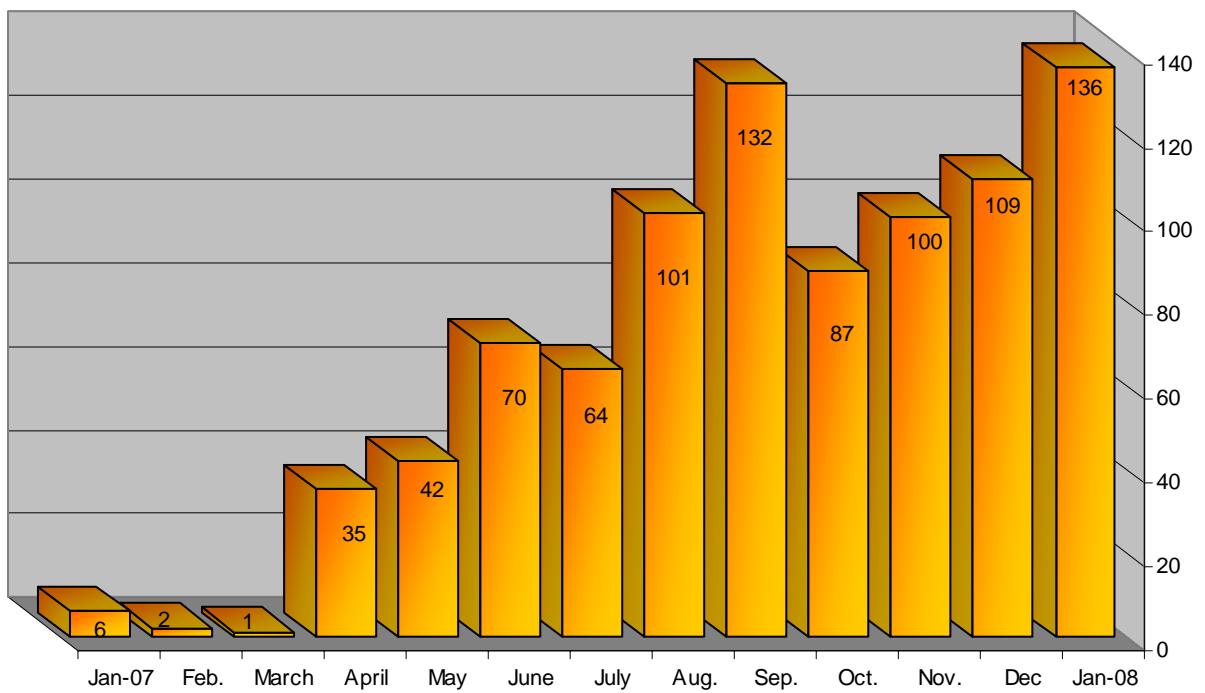
- The IDF continued its counterterrorist activities in the Gaza Strip:
 - **February 4:** The Israeli Air Force attacked a vehicle in the town of Beit Lahia, killing **Omar Qarmout**, a senior operative in the Popular Resistance Committees. Two other operatives were wounded (Ramattan News Agency, February 4).
 - **January 31:** A terrorist operative was killed during an exchange of fire with an IDF patrol near the fence at the Kerem Shalom Crossing. According to Palestinian media reports, he was a Fatah/Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades operative on his way to attack IDF forces (Palestine-info Website, January 31).

Statistical Data

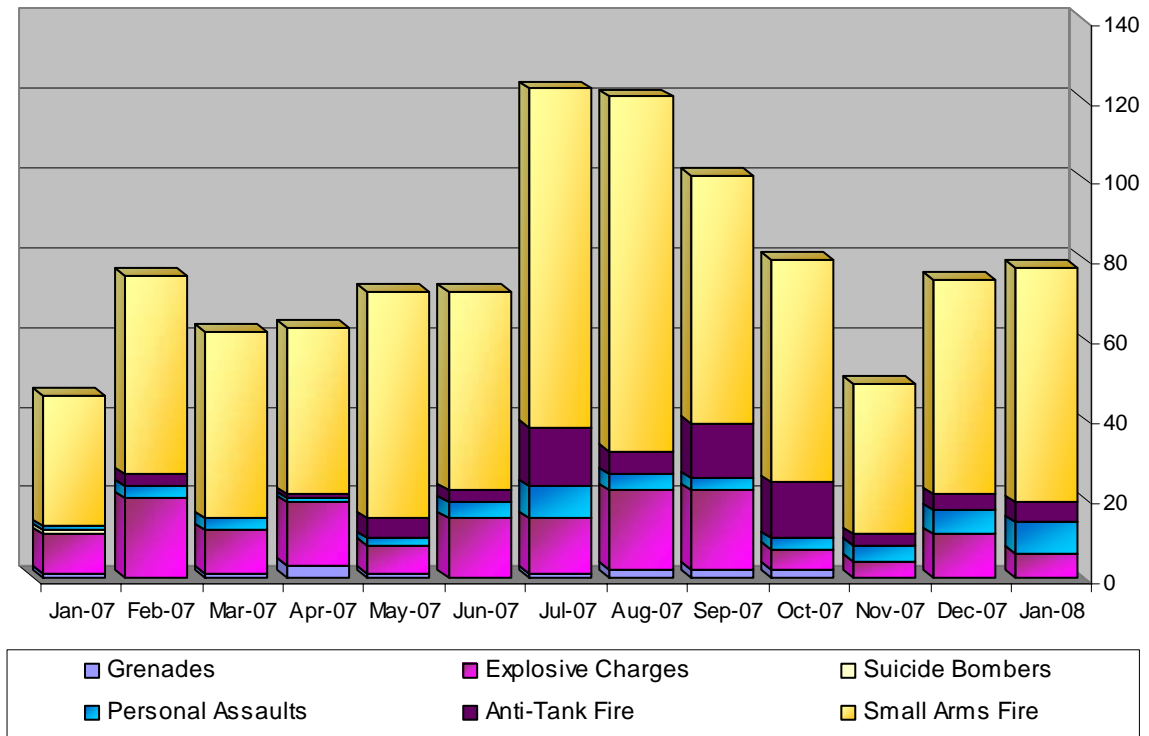
Monthly distribution of identified rocket hits



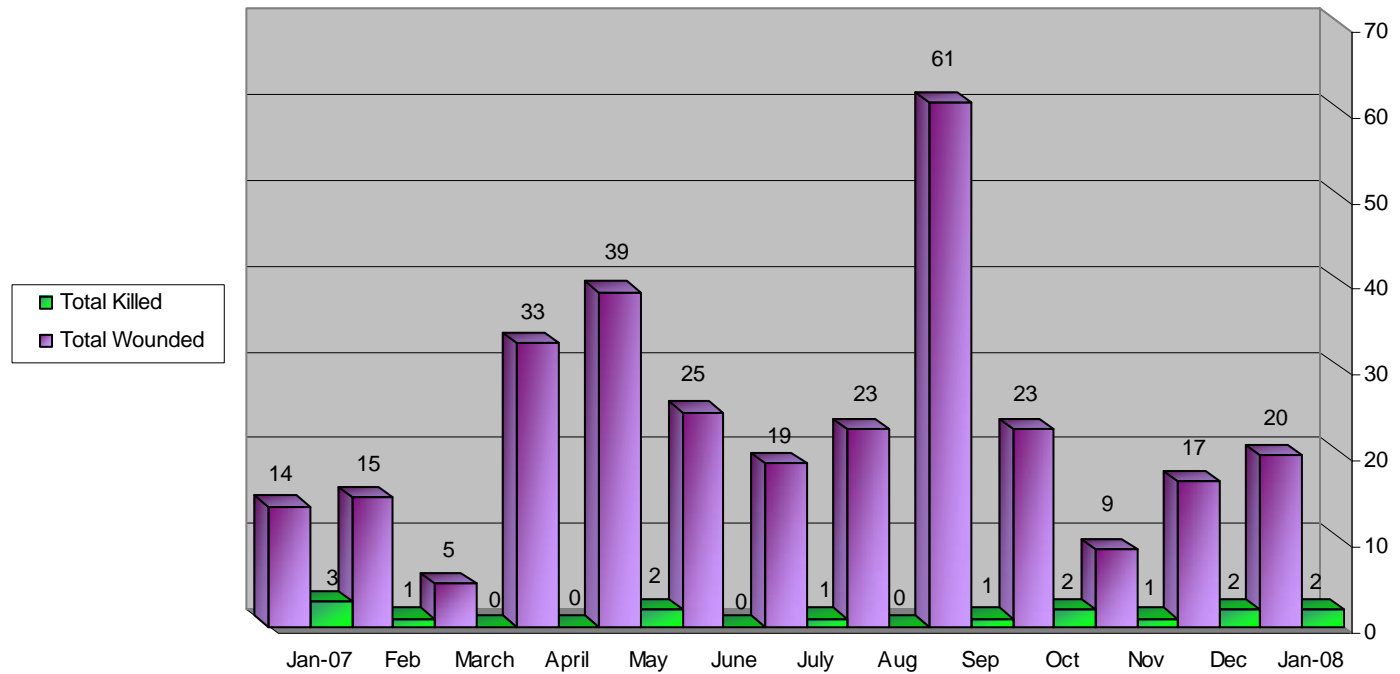
Monthly distribution of identified mortar shell hits



Monthly distribution of types of attacks⁴



Monthly distribution of Israeli casualties⁵



⁴ The statistics do not include rocket and mortar shell attacks, which appear in separate graphs.

⁵ The statistics do not include cases of shock.

The Gaza Strip Crossings

The crossings into Egypt – the situation on the ground

■ In the early morning hours of February 3, after 12 days of Gazans streaming into Egyptian Rafah, in collaboration with Hamas operatives Egyptian security forces closed the breaches in the border fence between Egypt and the Gaza Strip. The Egyptian security forces stretched barbed wire coils and erected iron blockades to seal off the breaches.

■ The gap in the Salah al-Din gate (near the Rafah Crossing) temporarily remained partially open to enable Palestinians who were still in El-Arish and Egyptian Rafah to return to the Gaza Strip, and to enable Egyptians in the Gaza Strip to cross back into Egypt (Ma'an News Agency, February 4). The Egyptians have concentrated Palestinians still in the El-Arish area to send them back to the Gaza Strip together (Agence France Presse, February 4).



Palestinian entrance into the Gaza Strip before the breaches were closed by the Egyptians (Al-Jazeera TV, January 30).

■ After the breaches were closed the **confrontations** between Egyptian police and Hamas operatives near the Rafah Crossing **were renewed**. On the evening of February 4, during an attempt to breach to fence by force, a Palestinian civilian was killed and a number of Egyptian policemen were wounded (Agence France Presse, February 4).

Egyptian security forces detained Palestinian terrorist operatives dispatched from the Gaza Strip to attack Israeli targets

■ The breaches in the Egyptian-Gazan fence were immediately exploited by Hamas, and, it is reasonable to assume, by other terrorist organizations, to smuggle advanced weapons into the Gaza Strip and to dispatch terrorist squads to the Sinai peninsula to attack Israeli targets in Sinai and in Israel.

■ The Egyptian security services detained a number of squads and lone terrorist operatives: a Palestinian with explosives in his possession was detained on February 4 at the Rafah Crossing (Reuters, February 4). Two Palestinian brothers, **Hani and Rami Hamdan**, who had infiltrated through the open Rafah Crossing, were detained and an explosive device was found in their possession. The two, who were apprehended in an Egyptian village south of Rafah, were on their way to El-Arish, **and from there they planned to continue to tourist sites on the southern coast of the Sinai peninsula to carry out an attack** (AP, February 2). They were apprehended after a hunt carried out by the Egyptian security services, during which **15 Palestinians were detained in El-Arish, 12 of them Hamas operatives carrying weapons and explosive devices** (AP, February 1).

■ On January 30 the Egyptian security services **detained two squads of Palestinian terrorist organizations in Taba**. They had explosive belts and other weapons in their possession, and intended to carry out suicide bombing attacks in Israel and at tourist sites in Sinai (Al-Ahram, January 30; Al-Sharq Al-Awsat, February 1).

Smuggling weapons and terrorist operatives into the Gaza Strip

■ **The breaches in the Gaza Strip border enabled the terrorist organizations to smuggle in large quantities of weapons.** On February 3 Israel Security Agency chief Yuval Diskin told a government meeting that during the past few days large quantities of weapons had been smuggled into the Gaza Strip through the open fence along the Philadelphi route. He said that “no exact quantities can be indicated. Apparently standard weapons were smuggled in, **including long-range rockets, anti-tank and**

anti-aircraft missiles, and substances it is usually difficult to introduce into the Gaza Strip” (Ynet, February 3).

■ He noted that the gaps in the fence led to the return of many terrorist operatives belonging to all the terrorist organizations from **Iran, Syria and Egypt**. Significantly, they have gathered a great deal of knowhow and were trained in Iran and other locations, and are now in the Gaza Strip (Ynet, February 3).

Talks between Hamas and Egypt regarding organizing movement through the Rafah Crossing

■ On January 31 and February Hamas and senior Egyptian officials held talks about organizing the movement of Palestinians through the Rafah Crossing. The Hamas delegation was headed by **Khaled Mashal**, who came from Damascus, and **Mahmoud al-Zahar**, from the Gaza Strip. At the same time talks were held between the Egyptians and the PA delegation headed by Abu Mazen. After two days of talks during which no agreement was reached, Khaled Mashal returned to Damascus, stating that a new round of talks would soon take place (Reuters, February 1).

■ The talks were stalled by Hamas’s intransigent position. The movement seeks to retain control of the Rafah Crossing by cancelling the Crossings Arrangement of 2005. Hamas agrees to integrate members of Abu Mazen’s security services in the crossing’s operation, but with full knowledge that they will have no genuine influence. **Abu Mazen continues to adhere to the Crossings Agreement and refuses to agree to Hamas’s conditions.**

■ In addition, Hamas seeks to create new relations with Egypt by **disengaging its economy from Israel** and supplying the needs of the Gaza Strip through Egypt. **Ahmed Yussuf**, Ismail Haniya’s political advisor, said that Hamas was putting together a proposal for Egypt to supply the entire Gaza Strip with electricity and fuel, and that exports and imports between Egypt and the Strip would be arranged. Ahmed Yussuf

also expressed Hamas's willingness to change its currency from the Israeli shekel to the Egyptian pound (Al-Sharq Al-Awsat, February 2).

Hamas's reactions

■ In addition to the talks with Egypt, Hamas has signaled **that it has the option of using violence and of activating the Palestinian populace** if the talks with Egypt fail:

- Hamas's terrorist operative wing threatened that **if the border with Egypt were hermetically sealed, this time its operatives would "blow up the entire border fence and not just parts of it"** (Agence France Presse, February 1).
- **Palestinian prime minister Ismail Haniya** stated that the Gaza Strip would not return to the status quo ante even if the talks between Hamas and Egypt failed. He said that the Palestinian people had "many courses of action and would use them if the talks failed." He also said that the talks might fail because of the impossible conditions posed by Abu Mazen (Felesteen, February 1).
- **Hamas spokesman Sami Abu Zuhri** condemned the Egyptian security forces' killing of the Palestinian at the Salah al-Din gate and said that "our people will not agree to remain in the large prison of the Gaza Strip" (PalMedia Website, February 4).
- On February 1 Hamas organized a **women's demonstration** at the Rafah Crossing, whose slogan was "Free women reject the Crossings Agreement." They shouted their objections to any attempt to restore the status quo ante (Palestine-info Website, February 2).



Left picture: women demonstrating at the Rafah Crossing; the demonstration was organized by Hamas (Al-Aqsa TV, February 2).

Right picture: Hamas demonstration near one of the holes in the Egyptian-Gazan border fence (Al-Arabiya TV, February 1).

Egyptian reactions

■ The Egyptians refuse to accept Hamas's proposals because it would mean their taking responsibility for the Gaza Strip. **Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak** said that "Gaza is not and will never become part of Egypt" (La Repubblica, January 31). A **highly-placed Egyptian source** said that "we do not have the responsibility to return to Gaza, to take responsibility for Gaza or to take the place of the Israelis in being responsible for the million and a half Palestinians in Gaza" (Yediot Aharonot, February 3). **Egyptian presidential spokesman Suleiman Awad** said that Egypt was determined to prevent a repetition of events such as the breach of the Palestinian-Egyptian border and that he has sent an unequivocal message to the Hamas government to that effect (Middle East News Agency, February 3).

■ In addition to official statements, there was **severe criticism of Hamas** in the Egyptian press and on the Egyptian street:

- **Al-Akhbar editor Muhammad Barakat** said that the entrance of terrorist operatives into Egypt armed with explosives and explosive belts "could not express good will because explosives and explosive belts are intended only for terrorism and destruction." Another editorial deplored the statements made by Mahmoud al-Zahar to the effect that Hamas had "created a new situation." He said that al-Zahar was ignoring the breach of the border and the injury of Egyptian policemen, and had not thanked President Mubarak and Egypt for allowing Palestinians to cross the border (Al-Akhbar, February 4).
- **Al-Gumhuriya editor Muhammad Ali Ibrahim** blamed Khaled Mashal for saying that the breach in the Rafah border eased international pressure on Israel and for involving Egypt in a complex situation. He said that Hamas was "forcing a Palestinian-Egyptian confrontation instead of a Palestinian-Israeli confrontation." He also noted that Khaled Mashal's remarks regarding the Camp David agreement "show that he intends to cancel the agreement and get Egypt involved in a war" (Al-Gumhuriya, February 4).
- **The Egyptian daily newspaper Al-Ahram al-Masai** reported that anger had replaced the joy felt in the Egyptian street when it was made known that

Palestinians had been permitted to enter Egyptian. The entrance of armed men and terrorist operatives, and the attempts to organize terrorist squads to carry out attacks on Egyptian territory angered Egyptians. “Instead of thanking us, the Palestinians pay us back by bringing weapons and explosive belts into Egypt” (Al-Ahram al-Masai, January 30).

The Crossings between Israel and the Gaza Strip

■ On January 30 the Israeli Supreme Court rejected an appeal against restricting supplies electricity and fuel to the Gaza Strip. **The judges determined that since Israel had disengaged from the Gaza Strip it had no effective control over what occurred there.** They also determined that Israel had no commitment “to deal with the welfare of the residents of the Gaza Strip or to allow [the provision of] unlimited amounts of goods and merchandise” but rather the supply of **vital and humanitarian goods** (Israel Supreme Court Website, January 30). In effect, fuel, gas and humanitarian goods continue passing through the Sufa and Nahal Oz Crossings, and pedestrians with severe humanitarian needs are permitted to use the Erez crossing.