



**Intelligence and Terrorism
Information Center Israel Intelligence
Heritage and Commemoration Center**

News of the Israeli-Palestinian Confrontation

February 19-26, 2008



The site of the rocket hit which wounded Yossi Haimov (Hamutal Ben-Sheetrit for the Sderot Media Center, February 25).



The 10-year old Sderot boy, Yossi Haimov, badly wounded by the rocket being comforted by his 8-year old sister: "Where's mommy?" (Picture courtesy of Israel's Channel 10 TV, February 25).

Overview

- This past week Hamas initiated a series of popular protests accompanied by a media campaign to make international public opinion aware of the Gazans' plight. The highlight was supposed to a human chain of tens of thousands of Gaza Strip residents which would stretch along the Israel-Gaza border from Beit Hanoun in the north to Rafah in the south. However, contrary to Hamas expectations, there were only a few thousand demonstrators. Hamas blamed the inclement weather and the massive presence of Israeli security forces.
- At the same time, terrorist attacks originating in the Gaza Strip continue, the genuine source of the Gazans' suffering. On the day of the human chain six rockets were fired at Sderot and western Negev towns and villages, resulting in the wounding of a 10-year old boy; several civilians were also treated for shock.

Important Events

Rocket Fire at Western Negev Towns and Villages Continues

■ Rocket and mortar shell fire at western Negev towns and villages continues. During the past week **22 rocket hits** were identified in Israeli territory, compared with 45 the week before. In addition, **40 mortar shells** were fired at IDF forces and villages near the security fence. The rocket fire on February 25 badly wounded a 10-year old boy. About 15 civilians were treated for shock during the past week.

■ The Palestinian Islamic Jihad, Popular Resistance Committees and Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine claimed responsibility for most of the rocket fire. Hamas continues to claim responsibility mortar shell fire, directed not only against IDF forces operating in the Gaza Strip, but also at the villages near the border security fence. For example, on February 18 Hamas claimed responsibility for firing mortar shells at “the Zionist settlement of Nahal Oz” (Al-Qassam Website, February 18).



A rocket which hit the yard of a house in Sderot (Alex Zeger for the Sderot Media Center, February 25).

Shootings, Molotov Cocktails, Pipe Charges and Stones in Judea and Samaria

■ During the past week the Palestinians continued their attempts to attack Israeli civilians and IDF forces in Judea and Samaria:

- **Shootings:** On February 19 Palestinian terrorists opened fire on an Israeli bus near the village of Bayta al-Tahta, southwest of Nablus. There were no injuries; the bus was damaged. A Fatah/Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades faction calling itself “The squads of *shaheed* Fadi Kafisha”¹ claimed responsibility for the attack (Ma’an News Agency, February 19).

¹ Fadi Kafisha was a senior Fatah terrorist operative in Nablus, killed by the IDF in August 2006.

- **Molotov cocktails and pipe charges:** On February 24 a Molotov cocktail was thrown at an Israeli vehicle southeast of Nablus. No one was injured and no damage was done to the vehicle. On February 23 a pipe charge was thrown at an IDF force in the village of ‘Anabta, east of Tulkarm. No one was injured and no damage was done.
- **Stones:** There were many instances of stones thrown at IDF soldiers operating in Judea and Samaria, but **also at civilians**. On February 24 stones were thrown at Israel vehicles southeast of Qalqilya. No one was injured and no damage was done. On February 19 stones were thrown at an Israeli bus northeast of Ramallah, damaging it; there were no injuries.

Counterterrorist Activities

The Gaza Strip

Intensive Counterterrorist Activities Continue in the Gaza Strip

- During the past week Israeli security forces continued counterterrorist activities in the Gaza Strip, attacking rocket launchers and exposing tunnels used for smuggling weapons:
 - **February 24:** In the southern Gaza Strip the IDF exposed five tunnels used for smuggling weapons in and out of the Strip and detained 40 operatives suspected of terrorist activities. During the operation there were exchanges of fire with armed terrorists in the region (IDF Spokesman’s Website, February 24).
 - **February 24:** The Israeli Air Force attacked rocket launchers in the region of Beit Hanoun in the northern Gaza Strip. In two other incidents the IAF attacked armed terrorists moving close to the security fence in the central Gaza Strip (IDF Spokesman’s Website, February 24).
 - **February 21:** The IDF attacked and hit a rocket launcher in Beit Hanoun which was ready to fire rockets into Israeli territory (IDF Spokesman’s Website, February 21).

Judea and Samaria

Senior Popular Front (PFLP) Operative Detained

■ On February 23 in the Eyn Beit Ilma refugee camp in Nablus the Israeli security forces detained **Majdi Sabhi Qassem Mabruq**, a senior operative of the PFLP. During the action Palestinians opened fire on the soldiers; there were no casualties. When Majdi Mabruq was captured he had in his possession an M-16 assault rifle mounted with a telescopic lens, full magazines and fragmentation grenades.

■ Majdi Mabruq, 31, is commander of the Abu Ali Mustafa Brigades, the terrorist operative wing of the PFLP, in the Eyn Beit Ilma refugee camp. He was involved in planning suicide bombing attacks and shooting at IDF forces. In addition, he dealt with the manufacture of explosive devices in collaboration with operatives of the Hamas's terrorist operatives wing, in recruiting squads from villages in the Nablus district and in transporting weapons, ammunition and explosive devices to terrorist squads (IDF Spokesman's Website, February 23). He was also involved in the planning of a suicide bombing attack in Tel Aviv for Yom Kippur (September 22, 2007). The attack was prevented by an intensive security force activity in Nablus on September 18, during which IDF soldier Ben-Zion Henman was killed.²



The building in Tel Aviv where the police found the explosive belt which was supposed to be used by the suicide bomber (Yuval Arel for the Israeli Police Department).

² For further information see our September 24, 2007 Bulletin entitled "A suicide bombing attack in Tel Aviv was prevented by the detention of a Hamas operative which led to the discovery of an explosive belt" at http://www.terrorism-info.org.il/malam_multimedia/English/eng_n/html/ct_230907e.htm.

Action against a Hamas “Charitable Society” in Hebron

■ On February 24 the Israeli security forces acted against institutions of the **Islamic Charitable Society in Hebron**. Hamas’s “charitable societies” are an effective tool for increasing support for the organization, spreading its ideology, locating and recruiting operatives, encouraging terrorism and transferring funds to terrorist activities. The activities of Hamas’s “charitable societies” are carried out under the cover of social welfare activities, but in effect are intended to strengthen Hamas’s power and grip on areas of Judea and Samaria.

■ The Islamic Charitable Society in Hebron transferred funds to terrorist operatives and their families and indoctrinated adolescents with ideas of jihad (i.e., terrorism and violence directed against Israel), financially supported the families of *shaheeds* and prisoners and worked to spread Hamas’s ideology among the residents of the Hebron region. To counter its activities the IDF ordered the closing of a number of its economic institutions in Hebron and the confiscation of some of its property, which were a source of income for the Hamas movement (IDF Spokesman’s Website, February 25).

The Gaza Strip Crossings

Hamas Initiated a Popular Protest Accompanied by a Media Campaign to Increase Awareness of the Plight of the Residents of the Gaza Strip

■ **In view of the distress of the Gaza Strip residents,** Hamas organized a series of popular protests accompanied by a media campaign through the Popular Committee to Fight the Blockade, headed by Jamal al Khudhari.³ The protests were meant to create Arab and international awareness of the Gazan’s distress. The



Jamal al-Khudhari, head of the Popular Committee to Fight the Blockade (Al-Jazeera TV , February 25).

³ The Popular Committee is an organization established by Ismail Haniya’s government to initiate protests against the blockade of the Gaza Strip and to update the international community about the humanitarian situation there. It is operated by Hamas.

Committee recently organized a number of events in the Gaza Strip:

- Business strikes, processions and protest demonstrations where the difficulties of the blockade were emphasized.
- Incidents with propaganda value, such as a symbolic turning off of lights and rallies in the Gaza Strip, Judea and Samaria and abroad.
- The highlight of the Committee's activity was supposed to be a human chain of tens of thousands of Gazans holding hands from Beit Hanoun in the north to Rafah in the south on

■ In preparation for February 25, acting Israeli Prime Minister Tsippi Livni and Defense Minister Ehud Barak issued a statement emphasizing the fact that Israel would protect its territory and prevent the crossing of its sovereign borders, putting responsibility for what would happen squarely on the shoulders of Hamas, which, said the statement, was placing the civilian population on the front, and not for the first time.

■ On the ground, IDF forces were reinforced along the Gaza Strip border with policemen and riot control equipment to prevent Palestinians from forcing their way into Israel. In effect, **contrary to what Hamas expected**, only a few thousand Gazans participated in the chain instead of the expected tens of thousands, many of them school children bussed to the site and women brought there by Hamas. Hamas blamed the poor showing on the inclement weather and the massive presence of Israeli security forces .



The Dutch identify with the Palestinians:
 "Freedom of movement must not be prohibited"
 (Fregaza.ps Website, February 25).

Hamas's Battle for Hearts and Minds Sends Contradictory Messages: Palestinian Misery and Death to Israel

Heightening Arab and International Awareness of the Plight of the Palestinians in the Gaza Strip



Hamas's human chain protesting Israeli sanctions (Al-Jazeera TV, February)

Murderous Terrorism from the Gaza Strip Continues



Poster in English and Hebrew promising more terrorist attacks

Lack of Progress in Hamas-Egyptian Negotiations

■ Contacts between Hamas and the Egyptian government continue. A Hamas delegation headed by Mahmoud al-Zahar arrived in El-Arish to meet a security delegation from Egypt to discuss the operation of the Rafah Crossing and the release of terrorist operatives who were detained by Egypt. The Palestinian delegation returned to

the Gaza Strip after a series of discussions with senior Egyptian officials **without having reached an agreement** (Ma'an News Agency, February 23).

■ Meanwhile, Egypt released the first group of detainees it was holding, apparently in an attempt to placate Hamas. On February 25, 21 Palestinians were released, 12 of them Hamas operatives. Most of the detainees had been caught with weapons and explosive devices during the collapse of the border fence between Egypt and the Gaza Strip (AP from El-Arish, February 25).

The Annapolis process

The Meeting between Ehud Olmert and Abu Mazen

■ On February 19 Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert again met with Palestinian Authority Chairman Abu Mazen at the prime minister's residence in Jerusalem. After the meeting **Saeb Erekat**, PA chief negotiator, said that no significant progress had been made and that there would be another meeting in two weeks. He added that during the meeting Abu Mazen had raised the issue of Palestinian prisoners held in Israel and the Israeli blockade of the Gaza Strip (Agence France Presse, February 20).

■ At the same time, **Yasser Abd Rabbo**, Secretary General of the PLO's executive committee, said that if progress were not made during the coming year, the Palestinians would weigh the possibility of a unilateral declaration of statehood, as was done by **Kosovo** (Reuters, February 20). **Abu Alaa**, head of the PA's negotiating team, was reserved regarding Abd Rabbo's statement, saying that although so far there had been no significant progress in the negotiations, they were serious and dealt with all the important issues (AP, February 20).

The Internal Palestinian Arena

Fatah Operatives Who Participated in the Amnesty Plan Escaped From and Returned to PA Prison

■ Fourteen Fatah/Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade operatives who were part of the amnesty plan violated the terms of the agreement and escaped from the Juneid prison west of Nablus, apparently with the help of the guards.⁴ The operatives claimed that they had escaped to protest the conditions in the prison. They said they could not accept the conditions of their imprisonment and preferred to return to terrorist activity rather than stay in jail (Hamás's PALDF forum, February 21).

■ The escaped terrorists planned to hold a press conference to complain about the conditions in the prison but in the end it was canceled. They returned after three hours outside the prison walls and the governor of the Nablus district announced that the "wanted prisoners crisis" had ended (Ma'an News Agency, February 24).

■ In response to the escape Tawfiq Tirawi, the commander of Palestinian general intelligence in Nablus, announced his resignation but later changed his mind. Senior members of Fatah's terrorist operative wing expressed their faith in him and praised his activities in preserving security and order in the city (Nablus TV Website, February 23). Israeli "political sources" reacted sharply to the event and said that **it was additional proof of the PA's helplessness and its failure to deal seriously with terrorism** (Haaretz, February 22).

⁴ The operatives surrendered to the Palestinian security forces a month and a half ago following an IDF action in the Old City in Nablus. For further information see our February 12 Bulletin entitled "Recently the second stage of the July 2007 amnesty plan for wanted terrorists ended. The stage concluded successfully, with most of the more than 200 wanted terrorists having kept to its terms. The Palestinian security services' contribution to the plan's success was limited" at http://www.terrorism-info.org.il/malam_multimedia/English/eng_n/html/ct_110208e.htm.

Majed al-Barghouti Dies in a PA jail

■ Hamas activist Majed al-Barghouti, an imam and preacher from the village of Kouber (west of Ramallah), died while in the Palestinian prison in Ramallah. His death infuriated members of Hamas, who claimed that he had been tortured. The PA claimed that he died of a heart attack, as proved by autopsy.

■ Al-Barghouti's death initiated a Hamas incitement campaign against the PA. Hamas featured to the event in its media and organized a series of anti-PA demonstrations. Some of them were held in villages in the western Ramallah district, where roads were closed and tires set on fire (Filastin al-'An Website, February 22).

■ Al-Barghouti's funeral was held in his village and attended by 3,000 people, most of them Hamas supporters. They shouted slogans against Fatah, PA chairman Abu Mazen and Tawfiq Tirawi, commander of Palestinian general intelligence (Haaretz, February 25). During the funeral there were confrontations between mourners and members of the Palestinian security forces, who detained dozens of young men and beat some of the participants with night sticks (PalMedia Website, February 24).



Left: Demonstration in Gaza to protest Barghouti's death (Al-Jazeera TV, February 23). Right: Confrontations between the Palestinian security services and Hamas operatives in Ramallah (Al-Aqsa TV, February 24).

Continued Attacks on Christian Institutions in the Gaza Strip

■ On February 20 another Christian institution was attacked in the Gaza Strip. Late at night unidentified armed men broke into the **Baptist School** in the center of Gaza City and vandalized classrooms, beat the guards and shot at them. One of the guards was badly wounded in the leg (Nablu TV, February 21). **It was another event in a series of attacks on Christian institutions in the Gaza Strip or institutions identified with Western Culture.**

■ The Hamas government ministry of the interior announced that it had detained two men who apparently belonged to the Army of Islam and were involved in the bombing of the YMCA library on February 15.⁵ The ministry further emphasized that it was in possession of the names of all the members of the squad and that the security forces were looking for them. The ministry condemned the attacks on the Christian institutions and stressed the fact that Christians were an integral part of Palestinian society (Hamas government interior ministry Website, February 24).

⁵ For further information see our February 21 Bulletin entitled “YMCA library building in Gaza City blown up: another incident in a series of attacks on Western and Christian targets in the Gaza Strip by groups associated with the global jihad and radical Islam” at http://www.terrorism-info.org.il/malam_multimedia/English/eng_n/html/gj_200208e.htm.