



Intelligence and Terrorism  
Information Center  
Israel Intelligence Heritage  
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## News of the Palestinian-Israeli Conflict

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August 5-12, 2008



Violation of the lull arrangement: a rocket that fell in Sderot (Hamutal Ben-Shitrit for [www.sderotmedia.com](http://www.sderotmedia.com), August 11).

### Overview

- This past week there were three rocket violations of the lull arrangement. Delivery of merchandise from Israel to the Gaza Strip through the crossings continued uninterrupted. No progress was made in the negotiations for the release of Gilad Shalit or in contacts for the opening of the Rafah crossing.
- In the internal Palestinian arena, violent confrontations between Hamas and Fatah stopped. Hamas is working to calm the situation and improve its image. It released 200 Fatah activists and 60 members of the Hilles clan whom it detained, and reopened civilian institutions affiliated with Fatah closed during the confrontations

## Important Events

### The Gaza Strip

#### Three violations of the lull arrangement

■ During the past week there were three violations of the lull arrangement involving rocket fired into Israeli territory. No casualties or property damage were reported. No terrorist organization claimed responsibility for the attacks.



The rocket which fell in Sderot (Hamutal Ben-Shitrit, [www.sderotmedia.com](http://www.sderotmedia.com), August 11).

- **August 6** – A rocket hit was identified near the village of Kissufim. A mass rally was being held nearby at the time.
- **August 9** – A rocket hit was identified in an open field in the Shaar Hanegev Regional Council area.
- **August 11** – A rocket hit was identified near a residential area in Sderot.

## Counterterrorism Activities

### The Gaza Strip

■ This past week as well the IDF refrained from carrying out counterterrorism activities in the Gaza Strip.

### Judea and Samaria

■ This past week the Israeli security forces continued their routine counterterrorism activities in Judea and Samaria. There were public disturbances and attempts to attack both IDF forces and civilians, particularly with stones and Molotov cocktails.

#### Israel opens two additional local crossings in Judea and Samaria

■ As part of easing restrictions on the residents of Judea and Samaria, Israeli Defense Minister Ehud Barak and Chief of Staff Gabi Ashkenazi authorized the opening of two additional local crossings in Judea and Samaria:

- On **August 9** the **Ganot local crossing** (near the settlement of Shavei Shomron) was opened to the free passage of Palestinian vehicles daily between 6 a.m. and 6 p.m. The

road is now open from Nablus to the Palestinian villages to the north, including Sebastia, Burqa and Deir Sharaf. The move will enable Palestinians to reach Nablus and the villages to the south more easily and quickly (IDF Spokesman's website, August 9).

- On **August 7** the **Yehuda Junction local crossing** was opened to the free passage of Palestinian trucks between Hebron and the Tarqumia crossing. It will be open daily between 5 a.m. and 7 a.m., and 9 a.m. and 1 p.m. (IDF Spokesman's website, August 7).
- Along with the opening of the local crossings, Israel and the Palestinian Authority held two joint security coordination meetings. After the meetings both sides announced that understandings had been reached which would promote the buildup of the Palestinian security forces, facilitate the construction of police stations and allow for additional deployment of Palestinian police throughout Judea and Samaria (IDF Spokesman's website, August 5 and 11).

## The lull arrangement – Update

### The situation at the crossings

■ This past week the crossings between Israel and the Gaza Strip continued open to the passage of merchandise and Palestinians. An average of 90 trucks a day passed through the Sufa crossing delivering foodstuffs, medical equipment and raw materials. There were also regular deliveries of aggregates and various types of grains through the Karni crossing. Note: Since the beginning of the lull arrangement the amount of foodstuffs into the Gaza Strip from Israel has doubled.

■ **Muhammad Adwan**, in charge of public relations for Hamas's crossing authority, said that Israel had increased the number of trucks entering the Gaza Strip. However, he added that "in view of the tightness of the blockade, the Gaza Strip needs more..." He denied that Hamas dealt directly with Israel, saying that all deliveries were coordinated between private Gazan merchants and businessmen and their Israeli counterparts (Al-Risala, August 4).



**Muhammad Adwan, spokesman for the Gaza Strip crossings (Al-Risala, August 4).**

## The Rafah crossing

- Hamas continues exerting pressure on Egypt to open the Rafah crossing. On August 10 Hamas activists marched to the crossing, and the event was widely covered in all Hamas's media. Egypt increased its forces to prevent riots and an attempt to break through the crossing. In addition, about 150 Palestinians, delayed on both sides of the border, began a hunger strike to pressure Egypt into coordinating with Hamas to let them leave the Gaza Strip to receive medical treatment (Palestine-info website, August 6).
- Exploiting the protests and using the march to send a media message, a number of Hamas sources condemned Egypt for refusing to open the Rafah crossing. Hamas spokesman **Fawzi Barhoum** said that “the lack of a decision to open the Rafah crossing is de facto Egyptian and Arab participation in the blockade of the Gaza Strip” (PNN website, August 10). The Hamas weekly **Al-Risala** reported that in the coming days more marches to the Rafah crossing can be expected to demand the opening of the crossing (August 11).



Left: Egyptian security forces on the Egyptian side of the Rafah crossing. Right: Hamas march in Rafah, August 10 (PALDF Forum, August 10).

- Hamas also accused Egypt of preventing the Hamas members of the Palestinian Legislative Council delegation from leaving the Gaza Strip, citing political reasons and the pressure exerted on the movement. Hamas Legislative Council faction spokesman **Salah al-Bardawil** said that for more than two weeks Egypt had ignored the Hamas request to allow its delegation to leave the Gaza Strip to visit various Arab countries (Felesteen, August 7).
- Egyptian security sources rejected the Hamas complaint, noting that opening the Rafah crossing for humanitarian reasons did not depend on the negotiations between Hamas and Israel. They added that during the past few days they had coordinated for at least 50 Palestinians with humanitarian issues to leave, and that the crossing would shortly be opened

for three days to allow the passage of students and patients needing medical attention (Al-Bshair, August 10).

### The abducted Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit

■ On August 5 and 7 an Israeli security delegation went to Egypt to meet high-ranking officials to discuss the issue of an exchange of prisoners between Israel and Hamas (Reuters, August 5; Al-Quds, August 7). On August 6 Egyptian sources told Al-Hayat that no progress had been made. The sources noted that Israel had returned to its position of agreeing to release only 71 prisoners from the Hamas list of 450.

■ Various Hamas spokesmen had the following to say:

- Senior Hamas spokesman **Osama al-Muzeini** said that “the file [dealing with abducted Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit] will not be opened” until Israel fulfills all its commitments to the lull arrangement. He said that Hamas had “learned to how manage the issue in a way that leaves the enemy helpless, regardless of what he does” (Filastin al-’An website, August 5).
- Hamas leader **Mahmoud al-Zahar** said that the names of the prisoners to be released would be determined ahead of time and that Israel would have to release them before Hamas would take any steps. He added that Hamas had given **Israel a partial list to test the Israeli response**. Israel’s “unsatisfactory response” led to Hamas’s decision to close the issue “until the criteria changed” (Al-Manar TV, August 9).
- **A high-ranking Hamas source**, speaking on condition of anonymity, said that Hamas had told Egypt it had three conditions for renewing negotiations regarding Gilad Shalit: the release of three Hamas operatives held by Egypt; the opening of the Rafah crossing, whose closing serves Israeli interests and means the continuation of the blockade of Palestinians in the Gaza Strip; and pressure exerted by Egypt on Israel to fulfill its commitments to the lull arrangement, especially in light of the fact that Egypt has supplied sponsorship for the agreement and is responsible for it (Al-Quds Al Arabi, August 7).

## The Internal Palestinian Arena

### After the evacuation of members of the Hilles clan from the Gaza Strip, Hamas is working to calm the situation and improve its image

- After the violent events in the Saja'iya neighborhood of Gaza City, Hamas is now working to calm the situation and improve its image. The Hamas administration has announced the end of the security campaign in Saja'iya. It has also announced the release of 200 Fatah activists whom it detained, and 60 members of the Hilles clan. In addition, Hamas has stated it would reopen twenty of civilian institutions and sports clubs closed during the confrontations (Felesteen, August 8). The administration also instructed the government ministries to estimate the damages caused to the neighborhood and to help with rebuilding (Filastin al-Yawm, August 6). **Mahmoud al-Zahar** said that all the members of the Hilles clan who wanted to return to the Gaza Strip could do so and would not be prosecuted (Filastin al-Yawm, August 6). A Hamas administration spokesman noted that all those who had left the Gaza Strip were invited to return and would not be convicted (PalMedia website, August 6).
- On the other hand, marches in support of the steps taken by the Haniya administration against the Hilles clan were held in Gaza City (Al-Aqsa TV, August 6). **Musa Abu Marzuq** said that the steps "completed the movement's June 2007 takeover" (Filastin al-Yawm, August 4). Hamas's military-terrorist wing noted that the campaign had been an "achievement" for the Palestinian people in "getting rid of the gangs" and congratulated the interior ministry and the Hamas administration for its actions (PalMedia website, August 4).



March in support of the Haniya administration following the campaign against the Hilles clan (Al-Aqsa TV, August 6).

- Members of the Hilles clan evacuated from the Gaza Strip through Israel to Jericho have complained of the treatment they received at the hands of the PA and Fatah leaders. According to clan spokesmen, they are chiefly frustrated by the fact that they reached Judea and Samaria after Israeli mediation and without PA intervention. They also said that being sent to Jericho instead of Ramallah was humiliating. One Hilles clan member said that it was not the clan's fault that Hamas had taken over the Gaza Strip, and that the PA security services should have prevented it. However, he said that there were no differences of opinion between the clan and Abu Mazen (Al-Hayat Al-Jadeeda, August 6).

- It should be noted that there is a serious rivalry between Ahmed Hilles, Fatah head in the Gaza Strip (and the other heads of the clan) and Muhammad Dahlan. Because of that rivalry and because of the clan's good relations with Hamas, Hilles members did not intervene on the side of Fatah in the battles when Hamas took over the Gaza Strip. However, their non-intervention did not prevent Ahmed Hilles from being attacked and wounded during the recent confrontations with Hamas. He has been hospitalized in Israel.

### **PA security force activities against Hamas activists**

- This past week as well the PA security forces continued their activities against activists and institutions affiliated with Hamas in Judea and Samaria. In Hebron they raided a number of charitable societies and two printing houses, confiscated funds and computers, and detained some of the activists working there. All of the institutions were ordered closed after information had been received that they held propaganda material inciting against the PA (Ma'an News Agency, August 8). Similar actions were held in Nablus and Ramallah (Filastin al-'An website, Palestine-info website, August 7).

### **Islamist activity in the Gaza Strip**

- On August 6 masked men attacked the holiday village of Abd al-Rahman in the northern Gaza Strip. The attackers broke into the village's offices, rounded up workers and guards and beat them. They also stole monitors and other computer equipment. After setting fire to the desks and chairs they fled. The damage has been estimated at \$10,000 (Felesteen, August 7).

- An organization calling itself "The Brigades of the Unity of Allah in Jerusalem" claimed responsibility for the attack. The organization, which recently began operating, has stated that it attacks sites where "corruption and defilement" are spread. Since the Hamas takeover of the Gaza Strip, there has been a rise in the number of attacks Islamist groups, some of them affiliated with the global jihad, on institutions and individuals identified with the West and its culture.

- Following the recent confrontations in the Gaza Strip between Hamas and the Army of Islam, Abu Al-Hassan al-Maqdasi, high-ranking in the Army of Islam,<sup>1</sup> said that a joint committee had been established to resolve the differences of opinion between the organizations. He said that a number of solutions had already been found and that the committee would continue its activities to resolve future problems (PalPress website, August 6).

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<sup>1</sup> The Army of Islam is a Palestinian group operating in the Gaza Strip and composed of several dozen operatives. They identify with the global jihad and are headed by Mumtaz Dughmush, member of an extremely powerful clan in the Gaza Strip, who left the Popular Resistance Committees.