



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

News of Terrorism and the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict

February 4 – March 3, 2009

At Sharm el-Sheikh donations are pledged to rebuild the Gaza Strip...



American Secretary of State Hillary Clinton at the conference of donor nations (Al-Jazeera TV, March 2, 2009)

...while in the western Negev rocket fire increased.



The rocket which hit a school in Ashqelon (Photo courtesy of the Ashqelon municipality, February 28, 2009).

Overview

- This past week there was a significant increase in the amount of rocket fire targeting western Negev populated areas, a continuation of the gradual increase since the end of Operation Cast Lead. In one attack a rocket hit a school in the city of Ashqelon. The attack took place on Saturday when there were no children in attendance; the building incurred heavy damage. In our assessment, if the increase in rocket attacks continues, it may lead to a new escalation on the ground.
- Even as rocket fire increased, a well-attended international conference was held in Sharm el-Sheikh to collect donations for rebuilding the Gaza Strip. A total sum of about \$4.5 billion was pledged, and the United States pledged the unprecedented amount of \$900 million for the Gaza Strip and the civilians of Judea and Samaria.
- However, in our assessment the transfer of the funds may be difficult and problematic for the following reasons: the escalation on the ground, which Hamas does not stop; the lack of a solution for the issue of abducted Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit prevents the opening of the crossings between Israel and the Gaza Strip; the internal Palestinian rivalry may make it difficult for the Palestinian Authority to operate inside the Gaza Strip (Hamas is expected to try to channel the funds to its own ends); the lack of an agreed-on and efficient mechanism for distributing the funds and supervising the realization of projects for rebuilding the Gaza Strip.

Important Events

Gaza Strip

Daily rocket fire continues

■ During the past week there was a **significant increase** in the amount of rocket fire targeting western Negev towns and villages. **Twenty-five** rocket hits were identified (compared with **12** the previous week). Two **175mm upgraded** long-range rockets hit the city of Ashqelon on February 28. One hit a school building and caused serious damage. No mortar shells were fired.

■ The most prominent attacks were the following:

- **February 26: Three rockets** hit Israeli territory. Two were located in the city of Sderot. One hit a house and the other fell in an open area near the industrial zone. Three people were treated for shock; the house incurred damage.



House in Sderot hit by a Qassam rocket (Photo by Meital Ohayon, www.sderotmedia.com, February 26, 2009).

- **February 27: Two rocket hits** were identified in Israeli territory. There were no casualties and no property damage was reported.
- **February 28: Seven rocket hits** were identified. Two long-range rocket hits were located in the city of **Ashqelon**. One of them hit a **school** (which was empty at the time because there are no studies on Saturday). The building incurred serious damage and shrapnel penetrated the walls of several classrooms. Seven civilians living nearby were treated for shock. The rockets were upgraded **175mm rockets** with a maximum range of 18 kilometers (11 miles).



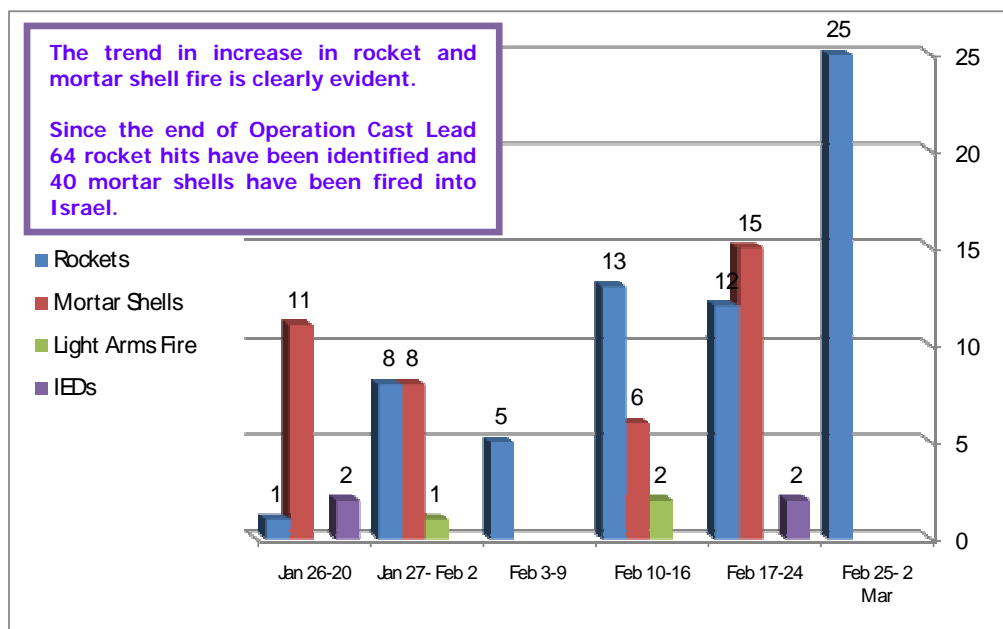
The rocket which hit the school (Photo courtesy of the Ashqelon municipality, February 28, 2009).

- **March 1: Nine rocket hits** were identified in towns and villages in the western Negev. One hit a house in the city of **Sderot**. No casualties were reported.

No Claims of Responsibility

- In most instances, the terrorist organizations continue to refrain from publicly claiming responsibility for the attacks. In some cases a **fictitious** organization called “the Hezbollah Battalions in Palestine” have claimed responsibility (Ma’an News Agency, March 1, 2009).

Weekly Distribution of Terrorist Attacks Since Operation Cast Lead



IDF Response

- In response to the rocket attacks the Israeli Air Force struck smuggling tunnels in the Rafah region (February 25 and 27). Hits were identified and some of the tunnels were destroyed (Qudsnet website, February 25, 2009).

Judea and Samaria

Terrorist attacks in Judea and Samaria continue

- Molotov cocktail and stone-throwing attacks continued in Judea and Samaria. IDF forces continued their counterterrorism activities and seized weapons and ammunition. The main events were the following:

- **March 1:** An Israeli civilian sustained mild injuries when stones were thrown at his car north of Ramallah.
- **February 28:** An Israeli civilian sustained mild injuries when stones were thrown at her car near the Jewish settlement in Hebron.
- **February 28:** In the morning, 20 bullets for an M-16 assault rifle were found in the possession of a Palestinian youth during a security search carried out by Border Policemen at a checkpoint near the Jewish community in Hebron.
- **February 26:** A Molotov cocktail was thrown at an Israeli vehicle west of Ramallah. There were no casualties and no property damage was reported.
- **February 25:** During searches carried out by IDF soldiers near the village of Yabrud, west of Jenin, three Palestinians who threw stones were detained. A security search revealed a **pipe bomb** in the possession of one of the Palestinians. It was detonated in a controlled explosion.

The Gaza Strip after Operation Cast Lead

The crossings between Israel and the Gaza Strip

■ Daily deliveries of humanitarian aid continued to flow into the Gaza Strip through the crossings this week. The average number of trucks entering the Gaza Strip was more than 100 a day. In addition, Palestinians with humanitarian needs continued exiting through the Erez crossing.

The Rafah crossing

■ The crossing was open for three days to accommodate the passage of Palestinians with humanitarian problems, patients and students, and reclosed on February 24. More than 2,100 Palestinians used the crossing, 1,500 to leave and the rest to enter (Middle East News Agency, February 25, 2009). After February 24 the traffic was one way, and sick and wounded Palestinians who had received treatment in Egypt continued reentering the Gaza Strip (Middle East News Agency, February 26, 2009).

Boats Expected to Set Sail at the End of March

■ The “national committee to lift the siege of the Gaza Strip” announced that boats headed for the Gaza Strip were expected to leave their home ports at the end of March. The committee also demanded the release of the ship Tali, which was prevented from reaching the Gaza Strip by the Israeli Navy, and is still being held in the port of Ashdod (*Al-Safir*, February 28, 2009).

Report of Anarchy in the Distribution of Humanitarian Aid in the Gaza Strip

■ The Hamas-affiliated PalMedia website posted an exceptional article on February 23 criticizing the anarchy plaguing the distribution of humanitarian aid delivered to the Gaza Strip (and an implied criticism of the de facto Hamas administration). The following are the main points of the posting, entitled “**Who will stop the anarchy of the aid to Gaza?**” written by Samir Hamto, who writes for the Palestinian *Al-Hayat Al-Jadeeda*:

- In the eagerness to provide aid to those who suffered damage during Operation Cast Lead, a situation of **anarchy, randomness and disorder** has been revealed by the NGOs, the [Hamas] administration [in the Gaza Strip], or by UNRWA and other external organizations.
- Committees for assessing damages and a high committee for aid to those who were harmed have been established, but their activity is not felt on the ground. **People receive promises including “sums beyond their wildest dreams,”** but the promises are empty.
- The NGOs operating in the Gaza Strip obtained large contributions but **there is no supervision of their allocation**, and the aid does not reach those genuinely in need of it.
- According to the posting, organizations and institutions “close to certain elements” have recently begun active work and funds have been transferred to them by international groups. **They operate without having to present an exact mapping of the damages or take a census of those entitle to receive aid.** That is because the objective is only to obtain the money and **it makes no difference if the lists of injured parties are false or inexact.**



Posting written by Samir Hamto on the PalMedia website (February 21, 2009).

■ In our assessment, the “**anarchy of the aid to Gaza**” is liable to grow because of the large sums of money promised at the Sharm el-Sheikh conference for the rebuilding of the Gaza Strip. The donor countries will have **to set up a mechanism to ensure that the funds are in fact used to promote the rebuilding of the Gaza Strip** (and not, for instance, the rebuilding of Hamas), and to establish a mechanism for the supervision of the use of the funds. Otherwise, by implication, large amounts of money are liable to go to local powerful groups in the Gaza Strip, especially Hamas, and not to the needy population.

Intensive Egyptian Activity to Prevent Smuggling

■ According to Israeli media reports, Israeli security sources estimate that in the weeks which have passed since the end of Operation Cast Lead, large quantities of weapons and explosives have been smuggled into the Gaza Strip through the tunnels in the Rafah area. They include Grad rockets, anti-aircraft missiles and many tons of standard explosives (*Haaretz, Yedioth Ahronoth*, February 26, 2009).

■ Egypt, for its part, continues to report on its anti-smuggling activities. According to one report, between February 27 and 28 the Egyptian security forces exposed and sealed nine tunnels running under the Egypt-Gaza border (*Al-Jarida*, March 1, 2009). According to another, on March 2 the Egyptian security services exposed ten tunnels south of Rafah and three storehouses of explosives. The storehouses held hundreds of kilograms of explosives and in one of them 20 rockets were found as well (*Al-Dustour*, March 2, 2009).

Hamas Terrorist Operatives Interviewed by Al-Jazeera TV

■ On February 28 Al-Jazeera TV broadcast another episode of its weekly show, Open Dialogue, from the Gaza Strip. The show's host, **Ghassan bin Jado**,¹ interviewed Hamas operatives, among them Abu Obeida, spokesman for the Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades.

■ During the program, which was part of Hamas's effort to foster the narrative of its “victory” in Operation Cast Lead, the armed operatives displayed a B-29 rocket launcher which, they claimed, was used during the operation. Bin Jado then went to a rocket launching site where armed terrorists showed him how they load rockets into launchers dug into the ground, and exhibited a fuse and detonator located at a distance from the rockets.

¹ **Ghassan bin Jado** is the director of the Al-Jazeera TV office in Lebanon and has close working ties with Hezbollah. During the second Lebanon war Hezbollah gave him exclusive permission to interview its operatives in south Lebanon. In an interview with NTV on February 28, 2009, **bin Jado said that after Egypt officially prevented him from entering the Gaza Strip, he decided to go in on his own**. He refused to reveal how he succeeded, but it can be assumed that he was smuggled in through one of the tunnels, probably with the cooperation and support of Hamas, thereby circumventing the Egyptian prohibition.



Hamas terrorist operatives displaying B-29 rocket launcher and a rocket, from the bin Jado video (Al-Jazeera TV, February 28, 2009).



Hamas terrorist operatives display rocket launchers dug into the ground (Al-Jazeera TV, February 28, 2009).

The Diplomatic Front

Conference of Donor Countries at Sharm el-Sheikh

■ On March 2 an international conference was held at Sharm el-Sheikh to collect donations for the rebuilding of the Gaza Strip after Operation Cast Lead. Seventy representatives came from all over the world, including leaders from the Middle East. The following are the main points of the conclusions reached, read by the Egyptian foreign minister after the conference (Al-Jazeera TV, March 2, 2009):

- The participants expressed worry that no lull arrangement had yet been reached, and gave their support to Egypt for its efforts to achieve one. They also stressed the importance of a national Palestinian reconciliation, noting that they regarded it and the lull arrangement as necessary conditions for the success of the efforts to rebuild the Gaza Strip.
- They demanded that Israel open the crossings immediately, permanently and unconditionally to allow for the success of the aid activities.
- They pledged about **\$4.5 billion** to rebuild the Gaza Strip.

■ The following statements were made:

- The **Palestinian Authority**: PA chairman Mahmoud Abbas praised the Egyptian position and Egypt's contribution to promoting the internal Palestinian dialogue, and said he hoped an internal agreement would be reached as soon as possible. He added that the PA viewed itself as responsible for the residents of the Gaza Strip, and had allotted more than half of its resources to that end. He said he expected the international community to demand from the government which would be formed in Israel that it commit itself to the two-state solution and to the agreements which Israel had already signed.



Palestinian Authority chairman Mahmoud Abbas speaking at the conference in Sharm el-Sheikh (Al-Jazeera TV, March 2, 2009).

- **Egypt**: Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak spoke at the opening of the conference. Regarding the lull arrangement, he said that although Israel had changed its mind about its commitment and had decided to link the lull arrangement with the prisoner exchange deal, **Egypt would continue its contacts with Israel to convince it to change its position and reach a lull agreement as soon as possible**. He mentioned the Saudi Arabian king's pledged contribution of **one billion dollars**, and that a number of factors would support the rebuilding of the Gaza Strip: the signing of a lull agreement, an internal Palestinian reconciliation and a Palestinian national unity government which would supervise the rebuilding; placing the UN at the center of the rebuilding efforts and strengthening the role of UNRWA.



Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak speaking at the opening of the conference (Al-Jazeera TV, March 2, 2009).

- **France**: French President **Nicolas Sarkozy** said that France would fund two hospitals in the Gaza Strip and provide aid to those harmed in Operation Cast Lead. He also said that the Gaza Strip could not exist unless the crossings were opened, but that such a step would necessitate a simultaneous **closing of the smuggling tunnels**. As to the issue of the abducted Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit, he said that France would not accept a situation in which his life was threatened. He added that exchanging him for Palestinian prisoners was a **top priority, and called for his release as soon as possible**.

- **The United States:** American Secretary of State Hillary Clinton said the United States would pledge \$900 million, that the contribution had been planned in coordination with the Palestinian Authority, and that it was meant for both the Gaza Strip and the West Bank. She said the United States was committed to the establishment of a Palestinian state, and said the current crisis in the Gaza Strip should not be separated from the efforts to achieve an comprehensive peace.
 - **Russia:** Russian foreign minister **Sergey Lavrov** asked that the leadership of the Palestinian Authority be respected so that the international aid for the rebuilding of the Gaza Strip could be efficiently exploited. **Russia pledged 50 APCs and two civilian helicopters to the PA**, as well as flour and drugs.
 - **Italy:** Italian Prime Minister **Silvio Berlusconi** said that his country had allotted \$100 million for the rebuilding of the Gaza Strip. He said that Italy intended to propose a “Marshall Plan” which would include the erection of an airfield and an increase of tourism to the Palestinian Authority.
 - **The UN:** Secretary General **Ban Ki-Moon** said that the basis for rebuilding the Gaza Strip was a sustainable ceasefire. He called the situation at the crossings “unbearable” but said that illegal weapons had to be prevented from entering the Gaza Strip. He expressed support for the efforts of the Palestinian Authority to rebuild the Gaza Strip, saying that the potential for rebuilding could not be realized without internal Palestinian reconciliation. He called on the conference participants to contribute to the West Bank with the same generosity they had shown toward the Gaza Strip.
- Other contributions were pledged as well, including: the **European Union** pledged \$554 dollars which would be disbursed during 2009; **Germany** pledged 150 million euros; **Japan** \$200 million; the **UAE** \$174 million and **Turkey** \$50 million.

Hamas’s response

- The Hamas response to the conference was favorable, but the senior figures expressed resentment at not having been invited, saying that **any measure taken without Hamas participation was doomed to failure**. For example:
- **Usama al-Muzeini** said that the funds had to be given to those who needed them, and until that happened, the Hamas administration had to have a central role “because it is an expert on the subject and was under fire along with the Palestinian civilians.” He said that Hamas’s option would be to form a committee of all the factions represented in the Palestinian Legislative Council along with international and private groups.

- Hamas spokesman **Fawzi Barhoum** said that ignoring the legal sovereignty of Hamas (i.e., the Hamas administration) in the Gaza Strip was a mistake and a deliberate attempt to sabotage the rebuilding (Reuters, March 2, 2009).
- Palestinian Legislative Council representative **Salah Bardawil** said that if the objective of the conference was “to erase what the occupation had destroyed and cover up crime,” it was a waste of time. He pointed the finger of guilt at the Palestinian Authority, saying that Hamas had demanded that the rebuilding of the Gaza Strip not be turned into a political tool (PalMedia website, March 2, 2009).
- Palestinian Legislative Council representative **Musheir al-Masri** said that Mahmoud Abbas was determined to turn the arena into one of struggle and disagreement, by calling on the next [PA] government to recognize Israel by means of the ratification of agreements already signed. He added that Hamas would not allow the Palestinian Authority to extract political concessions just because of the need to rebuild the Gaza Strip.

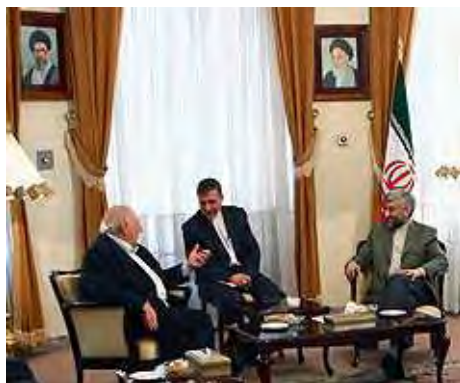
The “Counter” Conference in Iran: “Palestine Is a Symbol of the Resistance”

■ On March 4 and 5 an international conference in support of the Palestinian people is expected to be held in Iran. Its theme will be “Palestine is a symbol of the resistance – Gaza is an expression of crimes.” It is an **Iranian attempt to provide a counterweight for Egypt in support for the Palestinian cause and to place the issue of “resistance”** (i.e., the continuation of anti-Israeli terrorism) **at the center**. It has been reported that 20 Islamic parliamentary heads and representatives from 80 countries will attend, including jurists.

■ **Ali Akbar Mokhtashemipour**,² one of the organizers, said that the conference would meet to express Iran’s solidarity and support for the Palestinian people, and to put the “Zionist crimes” on the world agenda. He added that in the past the Western countries thought that Israel acted only in self-defense, but following the operation in the Gaza Strip “they have reached the conclusion that the Zionist regime is the most oppressive on earth.” Mokhtashemipour said he hoped the decisions adopted by the conference would prevent a repetition of “similar catastrophes.”

■ **Note:** Ahmed Jibril, secretary general of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine – General Command, is currently in Tehran. On March 2 he met with Kattam Jalili, secretary of Iran’s high council for national security.

² ‘Ali Akbar Mokhtashemipour is secretary general of an organization called “the Committee to Support the Palestinian people,” is one of the founders of Hezbollah and was formerly Iranian ambassador to Syria.



Ahmed Jibril at a meeting with Kattam Jalili
(Mehr News Agency, March 2, 2009).

Iran Asks Interpol for International Arrest Warrants for Senior Israelis

■ Iran's attorney general, the **Ayatollah Ghorbanali Dorri-Najafabadi**, asked Interpol to issue international warrants and put out a Red Notice³ for 15 senior Israeli figures for "war crimes in the Gaza Strip." The list includes the prime minister, the foreign minister, the chief of staff, the head of the central command, the commanders of the various corps and the commanders of the field units. According to the Iranian announcement, the request was issued after a phase of "investigations." It was also reported that files are currently being prepared on more than 100 Israelis (ISNA News Agency, Iran, March 1, 2009).

■ In our assessment, the Iranians are engaging in **propaganda** intended to defame Israel and at the same time trying to **defy** Interpol's standing warrants for senior members of the Iranian regime issued for their activity in the terrorist attack in Argentina in 1994. In March 2007, following a request from the Argentinean attorney general, Interpol issued international extradition warrants for a senior Hezbollah terrorist (**Imad Moughnieh**, who has since been killed) and five senior Iranian figures for their involvement in the terrorist attack on the Jewish community center (the AMIA building) in Buenos Aires on July 18, 1994, which killed 85 people and wounded more than 240.⁴ The five were:

- **Ahmad Vahidi**, formerly commander of the Qods Force and today deputy head of defense.
- **Mohsen Rezai**, commander of the Iranian Revolutionary Guards, formerly and currently secretary of the Expediency Discernment Council.
- **Ali Fallahijan**, formerly Iran's minister of intelligence and security, today advisor to Khamenei.
- **Mohsen Rabbani**, Iranian cultural attaché in Buenos Aires at the time of the attack.

³ Requests (provisional) arrest of wanted persons, with a view to extradition.

⁴ For further information see our March 28, 2007 bulletin entitled "Following an appeal from the Argentinean Attorney General, Interpol issued international extradition warrants for five senior Iranians and one senior Hezbollah operative" at http://www.terrorism-info.org.il/malam_multimedia/English/eng_n/pdf/argentina_e0307.pdf, and our November 14, 2007 bulletin "Iran as a terrorism-sponsoring state" at http://www.terrorism-info.org.il/malam_multimedia/English/eng_n/pdf/iran_141107e.pdf.

- **Ahmad Reza Asghari** (also known as Mohsen Randjbaran), third secretary of the Iranian embassy in Buenos Aires at the time of the attack.

Reactions to the Forthcoming New Israeli Government

- Palestinian Authority chairman Mahmoud Abbas told Javier Solana, the European Union's representative for the common foreign and security policy, that he demanded the Israeli government "adhere to its past commitments: **two states for two peoples** and its international commitments so that we don't go back to the starting point" (Al-Jazeera TV, February 28, 2009).
- On February 27, in an interview televised by Palestinian TV on the eve of declaring Jerusalem "the capital of Arab culture, 2009," Mahmoud Abbas said that "Jerusalem is the capital of Palestine and will remain its capital forever." He added that "the Palestinian residents of the city are being expelled from their houses as if Lieberman⁵ were already in the government." He also said that it was too early to tell if there was a partner on the Israeli side, "but the minute a government is formed which says that the issue of Jerusalem is not on the negotiation agenda and is not committed to stopping the settlements, that will be the red line as far as the Palestinians are concerned."

The Internal Palestinian Arena

The Fatah-Hamas dialogue

- On February 26 the first round of talks of the internal Palestinian dialogue ended. The Hamas delegation was headed by Musa Abu Marzuq and Mahmoud al-Zahar and the Fatah delegation by Abu Alaa; 11 other Palestinian organizations, Egypt and the Arab League also sent representatives.



Left: The participants of the internal Palestinian dialogue. Right: The Hamas representative (Egyptian TV, February 26, 2009).

⁵ Head of a right-wing Israeli political party called Israel Beitenu which is expected to join Benjamin Netanyahu's new government.

■ The talks were opened by **Omar Suleiman**, head of Egyptian general intelligence, who called for the Palestinians to close ranks to realize their hopes of a sovereign Palestinian state with Jerusalem as its capital. He said that he felt that both sides wanted to end the schism, and presented the efforts made by Egypt during the past months to achieve a lull arrangement and reconciliation, efforts which, he said, had not borne fruit.



Omar Suleiman, head of Egyptian general intelligence, speaking at the opening of the internal Palestinian dialogue (Egyptian TV, February 26, 2009).

■ After the talks Abu Alaa and Musa Abu Marzuq held a joint press conference where they reported **the formation of five dialogue committees**, each of which would have representatives from the various organizations. They were expected to begin operations on March 10 and finish by the end of the month. Resolutions would only be passed unanimously. The committees are the following (*Al-Sabil*, March 2, 2009):

- **Elections committee:** will set a date for Palestinian Legislative Council elections and deliberate the election law.
- **PLO committee:** will monitor the rehabilitation of the PLO.
- **Security services committee:** will determine posts, source of authority and methods of operation for the security services.
- **Government committee:** will present suggestions for forming the government, programs for the government and its posts.
- **National reconciliation committee:** will deal with all the issues of national reconciliation and the prevention of a return of the confrontations.

■ On the eve of the dialogue, as a goodwill gesture the Palestinian Authority released dozens of Hamas-affiliated prisoners from jails in Judea and Samaria (Ma'an News Agency, February 24, 2009). However, Hamas sources continue to complain about the continuation of the detention of its activists by the Palestinian Authority services (Al-Bayan website, March 2, 2009).

Musa Abu Marzuq visits the Gaza Strip

■ On February 28 the Arab media reported that **Musa Abu Marzuq**, deputy chairman of the Hamas political bureau in Damascus secretly visited relatives in Rafah, in the southern Gaza strip. He was accompanied by three other Hamas members from “abroad,” who had come for the Hamas-Fatah reconciliation talks in Egypt (*Al-Basha'air*, February 28, 2009).

■ Musa Abu Marzuq, according to *Al-Quds Al-Arabi* on March 2, confirmed he visited the Gaza Strip and met with senior figures in Hamas and other organizations operating in the Gaza Strip. He refused to disclose the substance of the talks but “well-informed sources” confirmed that the objective of his visit was to discuss the lull arrangement and the issue of Gilad Shalit, and claimed that the visit had been fully coordinated with Egypt.