



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

News of Terrorism and the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict

March 3-9, 2009



**Another front-loader terrorist attack in Jerusalem
(Photos by Gershon Klachkin and Anshil Beck, courtesy of Zaka)**

Overview

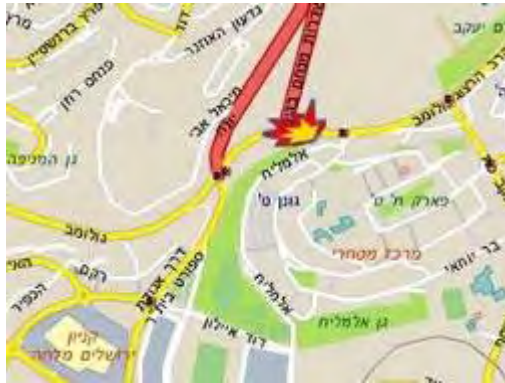
■ Events this week focused on the **front-loader terrorist attack** in Jerusalem, the fourth during the past year. Two policemen in a patrol car the terrorist tried to crush sustained slight wounds. The terrorist, a resident of Beit Hanina in northern Jerusalem, was shot by police and a civilian and died on the way to the hospital. Rocket and mortar shell fire from the Gaza Strip continued, with a slight decrease in rocket fire compared to the previous week (17 identified hits as opposed to 25). There was an increase in mortar shell fire. Since the end of Operation Cast Lead, **81 rockets and 49 mortar shells** have been fired.

■ On March 7 Palestinian Authority prime minister Salam Fayyad announced he and his government were resigning. His resignation will go into effect no later than the end of March. He and Mahmoud Abbas represented it intended to facilitate the reconciliation dialogue between Fatah and Hamas, which is expected to be renewed in Cairo. Hamas, on the other hand, claimed that the resignation had no connection to the dialogue and that from the beginning, Salam Fayyad's government was not legitimate.

Important Events

Front Loader Terrorist Attack in Jerusalem

■ On the afternoon of March 5 a Palestinian driving a front loader near the Teddy Stadium in Jerusalem rammed into a police patrol car and lowered the blade in an attempt to crush it. The patrol car had been called out because of a traffic accident and was parked at the side of the street. The loader crossed the intersection, rammed into the car a number of times and rolled it along, jamming it against a street light and a bus on the other side of the street. Both policemen in the car sustained slight injuries. The terrorist put the loader in reverse to continue the attack but was shot by three policemen and a taxi driver. He was critically wounded and died on the way to the hospital.



Map of the scene of the attack, close to Jerusalem's Teddy Stadium and the Malha Mall in southern Jerusalem.



The scene of the attack in Jerusalem (Photos by Gershon Klachkin and Anshil Beck, courtesy of ZAKA)

■ The terrorist was **Mari' al-Rudyda**, 24, from Beit Hanina in northern Jerusalem. According to claims made by family members, he did not belong to any organization and was not particularly religious. Responsibility for the attack was claimed by a group calling itself "the Battalions of the Free Sons of the Galilee," which also claimed responsibility for all the terrorist attacks carried out in Jerusalem over the past year. According to the statement the group issued, the objective of the attack was to immortalize the name of Alaa' Abu Dheim, who carried out the massacre at Mercuz

Harav Yeshiva in Jerusalem in March 2008 (Qudsnet website, March 5, 2009). In our assessment the claims of responsibility were fictitious and no organized network was behind them.¹

■ It was the fourth attack using vehicles in Jerusalem during **the past year**. Two of the previous attacks involved construction vehicles and one involved a BMW. In each case the attack was apparently the result of individual initiative of Arabs living in the eastern neighborhoods of Jerusalem.² The previous attacks were the following:

● **July 2, 2008:** A resident of **Sur Bahr** in East Jerusalem drove a front loader along Sarei Israel Street plowing into everything in his way. From there he turned into Jaffa Road and attacked passersby. After a short time a policeman, a security guard and an off-duty soldier shot him and stopped his spree. Three civilians were killed and more than 40 wounded, most of them sustaining mild injuries.

● **July 22, 2008:** A Palestinian terrorist from the village of **Umm Tuba**, southeast of Jerusalem, took a tractor from a construction site in the Yemin Moshe neighborhood of Jerusalem and began racing along a main street, ramming into vehicles on the way. A civilian shot him but he continued driving, hitting private cars and a bus. After 250 meters a Border Policeman shot and killed him. Twenty-eight civilians were wounded, one of them critically.

● **September 2, 2008:** At 11 o'clock at night a terrorist from **Jabel Mukaber** drove a BMW at high speed along Shivtei Israel Street into the center of the city, drove up onto the sidewalk, plowed into pedestrians in IDF Square and then hit a wall. Seventeen people were injured, including a group of 14 soldiers. Three were seriously injured and the rest sustained minor injuries. The soldiers' commanding officer shot and killed the terrorist.

The Gaza Strip

Daily rocket and mortar shell fire continues

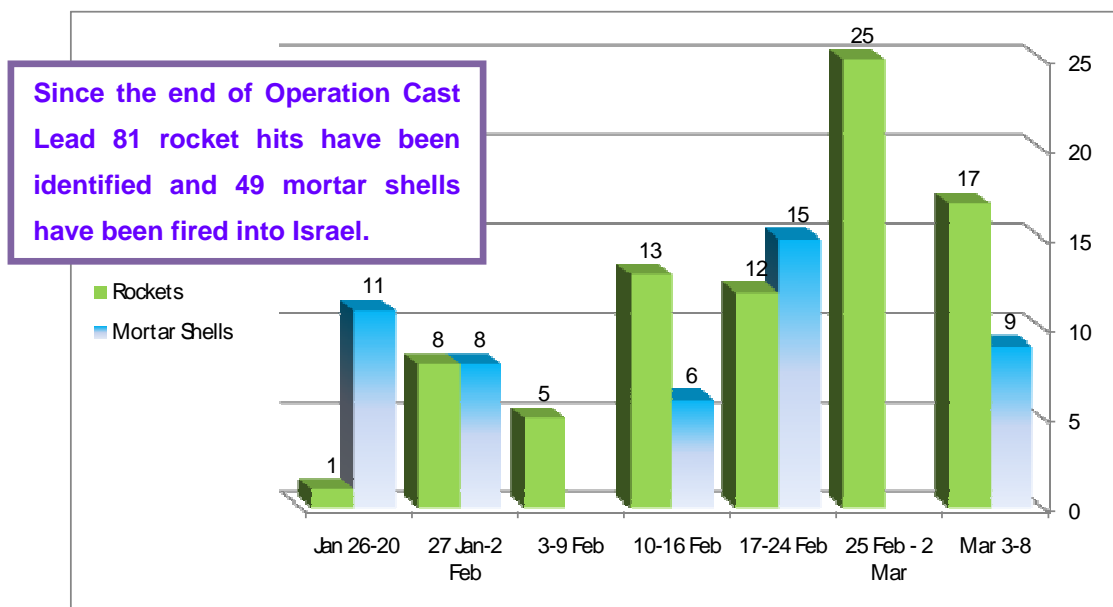
■ Daily rocket and mortar shell fire targeting western Negev populated areas continued. **Seventeen rockets** were fired (compared with **25** the previous week), one of them hitting the city of **Netivot**. There were no casualties or property damage. During the week **nine mortar** shells were launched (compared with **none** the previous week).

¹ The organization calling itself "the Free Sons of the Galilee" claimed responsibility for the terrorist attacks carried out recently in Jerusalem. In June 2004 five of members of a Free Sons of the Galilee squad, residents of Kafr Manda and Kafr Kanna in the Galilee, were indicted for conspiracy to carry out a crime, terrorist organization activity and illegal assembly for purposes of abduction. The squad was captured while shooting at a Border Police car at the Rimon junction in the Lower Galilee. The squad leader, Muhammad Khatib, was killed by security force fire in April 2004. It later became known that he was also behind the murder of IDF soldier Oleg Shaichat in July 2003. In July 2004 an IDF soldier was stabbed at the Golani junction, an attack planned by Khatib's brother, who claimed it was in retaliation for Muhammad's death (Ynet, July 2004). In our assessment, the claims of responsibility for the attacks in Jerusalem were spurious and that no organized body was behind them.

² For further information see our October 6, 2008 bulletin entitled "Jerusalem as a focus for terrorist attacks: increase in terrorist activity in Jerusalem and in the involvement of East Jerusalem residents" at http://www.terrorism-info.org.il/malam_multimedia/English/eng_n/pdf/ct_e007.pdf.

■ On March 5 an anti-tank missile was fired at an IDF patrol moving along the border security fence. In response the Israeli Air Force attacked the squad. The Palestinian Islamic Jihad claimed responsibility for the missile attack.

Weekly Distribution of Rocket and Mortar Shell Fire Since Operation Cast Lead



Claiming responsibility

■ In some instances a group calling itself the “Hezbollah Battalions in Palestine” continued claiming responsibility for rocket attacks (Ma’an News Agency, March 5, 2009). It is a **fictitious** organization and has claimed responsibility for many such attacks.³ In an exceptional step, the Palestinian Islamic Jihad (Jerusalem Battalions website, March 5, 2009) and the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine also claimed responsibility for a number of attacks (Qudsnet website, March 5, 2009). They said the attacks were in retaliation for an Israeli Air Force attack which killed organization members.

The IDF response

■ In response the Israeli Air Force struck a number of times, and for **the first time since the end of Operation Cast Lead** targeted a senior PIJ operative. The operative, **Khaled Harb**

³ Hamas sources recently reported that the squads of the Hezbollah Battalions in Palestine include operatives who have left the Jerusalem Battalions, the Palestinian Islamic Jihad’s military-terrorist wing, and operatives from the Salah al-Din Brigades of the Popular Resistance Committees. The members of the squads refer to themselves as “following in the footsteps of Musab al-Zarqawi” (global jihad operative killed by the Americans in Iraq). According to the same sources, **Hamas made it clear to the members of the organization that they had to stop firing rockets, otherwise they would be monitored and detained** (Al-Sharq Al-Awsat, March 8, 2009).

Khaled Shaalan, had been involved in firing long-range rockets into Israeli territory, recently at the city of Ashqelon (IDF Spokesman, March 4, 2009). The IAF also attacked **smuggling tunnels in Rafah** and along the Egypt-Gaza Strip border (March 3, 4, 5 and 7, 2009), and a **weapons storehouse** in the northern Gaza Strip (IDF Spokesman, March 7, 2009).



Left: Khaled Shaalan's vehicle after the attack (Al-Jazeera TV, March 7, 2009).
Right: Attack on tunnels in Rafah (YouTube, March 5, 2009).

Hamas's policy on rocket fire

■ With respect to the continued rocket fire, General Amos Yadlin, chief of military intelligence, told a government meeting that it was not Hamas but **other organizations** which were firing rockets. He said Hamas preferred steps which would bring about a lull arrangement, leading to the opening of the crossings and making it possible to rebuild the Gaza Strip. He added that Hamas was trying to enforce a ban on rocket fire with detentions and the confiscation of weapons, but that it was not acting with great enthusiasm. Hamas, he said, wanted to preserve a certain level of rocket fire, which it felt would promote the lull arrangement (*Haaretz*, March 9, 2009).

■ Palestinian sources reported that Hamas had asked the Palestinian Islamic Jihad to stop firing rockets, claiming that as long as negotiations for a lull arrangement and the internal Palestinian dialogue continued, Israel should be prevented from having "excuses for renewed escalation" and that a deterioration of the situation should be avoided. However, Hamas sources noted that the PIJ had "full rights" to respond with rocket fire to the killing of its operatives (Ynet, March 5, 2009). In any event, the continuation of methodical rocket and mortar shell fire indicates **that Hamas does not effectively enforce the ceasefire**.

Judea and Samaria

“Cold” attacks in Judea and Samaria continue

■ This past week stones and Molotov cocktails were thrown, but there were fewer than week before. The most important attacks were the following:

- **March 7:** A civilian sustained minor injuries from stones thrown at him near Hebron. Later during the day stones were thrown at an Israeli vehicle near the Jewish community in Hebron and at an Israeli vehicle southeast of Qalqilya. In the latter two attacks there were no injuries but the vehicles were damaged.
- **March 6:** Forty Palestinians demonstrated at the border security fence near the village of Jayyus (northeast of Qalqilya) and threw stones at IDF forces. The soldiers dispersed the demonstrators and the area was declared a closed military zone.
- **March 3:** A Molotov cocktail was thrown at an Israeli vehicle near Na’alin (northwest of Ramallah), which also served as a focal point for demonstrations. There were no casualties but the vehicle was damaged.

The Gaza Strip after Operation Cast Lead

The crossings between Israel and the Gaza Strip

■ During the past week daily deliveries of humanitarian aid continued into the Gaza Strip through the Israeli crossings at the rate of **more than 100 trucks a day**. Palestinians with humanitarian needs continued leaving Gaza through the Erez crossing.



The British aid convoy crosses through the Rafah crossing into the Gaza Strip (Al-Alam TV, March 9, 2009).

Egyptian Anti-Smuggling Activities

■ Egypt continues intensive activity to prevent smuggling along its border with the Gaza Strip. On March 5 Egyptian security forces uncovered and blocked six tunnels in the Rafah region (Middle East News Agency, March 5, 2009).

Additional Complaints about the Way Hamas Distributes Humanitarian Aid

■ Complaints continue to be heard that Hamas distributes humanitarian only to its own people. A surfer on a Fatah forum claimed that Hamas distributes cooking gas only to the houses of its own members: "Today with my own eyes I saw a [Hamas] military jeep bringing gas canisters. I checked and discovered that they were delivering only to Hamas members, in front of everyone and with no shame at all." He added that the Palestinians knew that every day a hundred tons of cooking gas were delivered to the Gaza Strip, and asked "is it possible that there isn't even half a canister for us?" (Fatah forum, March 5, 2009).

Hamas Declares that Terrorism Will Be Continued

■ On March 5 Hamas's military-terrorist held a well-attended rally in Rafah with the theme "loyalty to the families of the shaheeds." During it young boys appeared wearing Hamas uniforms and Hamas representatives gave belligerent speeches. Hamas spokesman Muhammad Saqr said that "Gilad Shalit feels lonely and he wants to be with the people who love him. It will not take long for the Al-Qassam [Brigades] to bring him people [i.e., captured Israelis], should there be any aggression [directed] against the Gaza Strip" (Al-Qassam website, March 6, 2009).



Rally organized by Hamas's military-terrorist wing in Rafah (Hamas's PALDF Forum, March 5, 2009)

The Diplomatic Front

The International Conference Held in Iran for the Support of the Palestinians

■ On March 4 and 5 Iran hosted an international conference in support of the Palestinians as a counterweight to the conference of donor nations held in Sharm el-Sheikh. According to Majlis (Iranian Parliament) chairman **Ali Larijani**, the conference dealt with two main issues: the situation in the Gaza Strip after the Israeli attack and finding effective ways to help the Gazans (Islamic Republic News Agency, March 3, 2009). Syria, Lebanon and various Muslim countries sent representatives to the conference, and there were delegations of senior figures from terrorist organizations, including Hamas, the Palestinian Islamic Jihad and Hezbollah.



Left: Iranian president Ahmadinejad.
Right: The conference in Iran (Iran's Fars News Agency, March 5, 2009).

- Senior Iranian figures attacked the conference at Sharm el-Sheikh:
 - On the eve of the conference chairman of the judicial authority **Shahrudi** said that **Iran had taken on itself to protect the Palestinians from Israel**. He claimed the conference of donor nations was trying to belittle the achievements of the resistance [i.e., Hamas and the other terrorist organizations]: "In its arrogance, the world rejected Hamas's achievements" (Islamic Republic News Agency, March 5, 2009).
 - Chairman of the International Committee to Support Palestine **Mohtashemi-Pur** called the conference at Sharm el-Sheikh "a fake effort." He said that the countries which had organized it supported Israel's "crimes" in Gaza. He added that during the conference in Iran 50 experts in international law had worked at uncovering various aspects of "Israeli crimes" committed in recent decades, especially during the operation in the Gaza Strip (Islamic Republic News Agency, March 3, 2009).

■ Iranian Supreme Leader **Ali Khamenei** spoke about the second Lebanon war and the Israeli operation in Gaza. He ridiculed Israel because of in spite of its having American support and using American weapons it “suffered a double defeat” in both wars. He criticized the Security Council for not supporting the preservation of global security, and said that “the liberation of Palestine will be achieved by resistance [i.e., terrorism and violence]...and not by pleas to the UN and world powers.” He called Israel “a cancerous growth” and as for the Holocaust, he said that it was an excuse “to occupy the lands of Palestine.” He also criticized the United States for the Obama administration’s support of Israel, terrorism and the slaughter of the Palestinian people (Islamic Republic News Agency, March 8, 2009).

■ During the conference, Majlis chairman **Ali Larijani** held a number of meetings with his Syrian colleague **Mahmoud al-Barash**. Larijani told him that “joint steps must be taken to support the Palestinian people” (Iran’s Fars News Agency, March 6, 2009). It can be assumed that Iran and Syria will try to translated such statements into practical aid for Hamas and the other terrorist organizations operating in the Gaza Strip.

Street in Tehran named after Imad Moughnieh

■ During the conference Iran decided to name one of Tehran’s streets after senior Hezbollah military operative **Imad Moughnieh**,⁴ who was killed in Damascus. It is in the vicinity of **Ahmed Quseir** and **Khalid Islambuli** streets.⁵

Iran and the Terrorist Organizations Express Support for the Sudanese President, Wanted for War Crimes

■ On March 4 the International Criminal Court in the Hague announced its decision to issue an arrest warrant for Sudanese president **Omar Hassan al-Bashir** for crimes against humanity and war crimes committed in Darfur.

■ **Iran and the Palestinian terrorist organizations were quick to support the Sudanese president.** Iranian, Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad delegations went to Sudan to show solidarity with him (Filastin al-'An website, AP, March 6, 2009). Majlis chairman **Ali Larijani** held a press conference at which he strongly criticized the decision, calling it illegal and saying it violated international norms (Islamic Republic News Agency, March 7, 2009). Hamas political bureau head **Khaled Mashaal** held a telephone conversation with al-Bashir and expressed his objection to the warrant (Hamas’s Palestine-info website, March 5, 2009).

⁴ For further information see our February 13, 2008 bulletin entitled “Imad Fayeze Moughnieh, No. 2 at Hezbollah and responsible for its military and terrorist operations in Lebanon and abroad, died when his car exploded” at http://www.terrorism-info.org.il/malam_multimedia/English/eng_n/html/ct_130208e.htm.

⁵ **Ahmed Quseir** was a suicide bomber who blew himself up at the Israeli military administration building in Tyre on November 11, 1982, the first suicide bomber. **Khalid Islambuli** assassinated Anwar Sadat. Egypt protested Iran’s naming the street after him, one of the reasons for the intense tensions between Egypt and Iran.



Rallies in the Gaza Strip in support of Sudanese president with Hamas flags flying in the background.

The Internal Palestinian Arena

Salam Fayyad and his government resign

■ On March 7 Palestinian Authority prime minister **Salam Fayyad** announced that he and his government were resigning. He represented the move as support for the efforts to form a national unity government which would reunite the “Palestinian homeland” (Wafa News Agency, March 8, 2009). Salam Fayyad said that his resignation would go into effect with the formation of the Palestinian national unity government, but no later than the end of March.

■ In response to the announcement, **Mahmoud Abbas** said that the announcement was linked to the reconciliation efforts, and thanked him for the service he had given to the Palestinian Authority. He asked Salam Fayyad to continue as prime minister until the results of the talks were clear. The PLO’s executive committee also expressed its appreciation for the step taken by Salam Fayyad and noted that it was meant to serve the internal Palestinian reconciliation process and the establishment of a national unity government. **Azzam al-Ahmed**, head of the Fatah faction in the Palestinian Legislative Council, said that if no agreement were reached for the formation of a national unity government, Salam Fayyad would retain the title of interim prime minister (*Al-Sharq Al-Awsat*, March 8, 2009).

■ Nevertheless, Palestinian sources claimed that Salam Fayyad had resigned because of disagreements between his government and the Fatah leadership. Another suggestion was that it was a PA attempt to embarrass the Hamas de facto administration and to force it to take a similar step (i.e., the resignation of Ismail Haniya) and if necessary to make it responsible should the dialogue fail (*Filastin al-Yawm*, March 7, 2009).

■ **Hamas** expressed satisfaction over Salam Fayyad’s resignation. Hamas spokesman **Fawzi Barhoum** claimed that there was no connection between the talks and the intention to form a national unity government, but rather differences of opinion with Mahmoud Abbas. He added that it was a question of the end expected of a government which was not legitimate in the first place.

Taher al-Nunu, spokesman for the Haniya de facto administration, said that as far as Hamas was concerned, there was no legitimate government in Ramallah, and therefore Salam Fayyad's resignation was purely a media event (Alquds TV, March 7, 2009).

The Fatah-Hamas dialogue

■ The efforts to achieve an internal Palestinian reconciliation are expected to be renewed on March 10 in Cairo. On March 8 the Hamas delegation, headed by **Mahmoud al-Zahar**, arrived in Egypt. Delegations of Fatah and other Palestinian organizations are expected to arrive before the beginning of the dialogue. In the meantime the Fatah-Hamas propaganda war continues and the Palestinian Authority's security services continue detaining Hamas activists (see below).

■ Hamas has expressed willingness to be flexible regarding government portfolios and the way the government ministries will be run. Senior Hamas figure **Ayman Taha** said that the movement was willing to make concessions to ensure the success of the dialogue (*Al-Jareeda*, March 3, 2009). On the other hand, the demand for the recognition of Israel is expected to meet with objections from Hamas. **Mahmoud al-Zahar** stated that the future [Palestinian] government would not recognize Israel and that "recognition [of Israel] has not been and will not be on the agenda of the new government." He added that "**Hamas will not recognize agreements signed between the PLO and Israel**" (*Al-Watan*, March 5, 2009). Note: When PA chairman Mahmoud Abbas met with American Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, she made it clear that the United States would not have diplomatic relations with a Palestinian government in which Hamas participated which did not recognize the conditions of the International Quartet, which include recognition of Israel (*Al-Sharq Al-Awsat*, March 5, 2009).

Palestinian Authority security service activities in Judea and Samaria continue

■ Despite the internal Palestinian dialogue, the intensive activities of the Palestinian Authority's security services against Hamas and other terrorist organization operatives continued. During the past week Hamas activists were detained in Nablus, Tulkarm and other cities. At the same time, activities continue to restore public order. In the town of Salfit, east of Qalqilya, and in neighboring villages, an operation was held to take dozens of illegal vehicles off the road and a number of Palestinians with criminal records were detained (Ma'an News Agency, March 6, 2009).

■ With an eye to the internal Palestinian dialogue and the view of the PA security services activities in Judea and Samaria, a Hamas-affiliated website posted an updated list of Hamas detainees. According to the site, the PA has **339 Hamas members** in custody (*Al-Kashf*, March 8, 2009).

Hamas continues claiming the leading role in rebuilding the Gaza Strip

■ After the committee of the donor countries which met in Cairo on March 2 issued its conclusions, Hamas heads criticized the committee and its decisions. Most of the criticism concerned the fact that Hamas representatives had not been invited to participate in the programs for rebuilding the Gaza Strip and the intrusion of political considerations into the way the funds would be transferred. During a visit to Iran, **Mahmoud al-Zahar**, a senior Hamas figure in the Gaza Strip, said that the Western countries did not have the right to make it a condition that the funds for rebuilding the Gaza Strip would not be given to Hamas. That was "because it is impossible to separate Hamas from the Gaza Strip" (Al-Alam TV, March 3, 2009). **The remarks made by Hamas reflect its intention of turning international funds for the rebuilding of the Gaza Strip into a tool for increasing its political influence in the Palestinian Authority in general and Gaza in particular.**