



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

## **News of Terrorism and the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict**

**April 15-21, 2009**

**Hamis encourages terrorism**



Hamis poster in honor of "Jerusalem, capital of Arab culture" events, encouraging front-loader attacks (Hamis forum, March 7, 2009).

### **Overview**

- This past week as well terrorist attacks of various types were carried out in different locations, apparently by lone terrorists not organized or directed by Palestinian terrorist organizations. Conspicuous were a Palestinian armed with a knife who entered the community of **Beit Hagai** (south of Mt. Hebron), and a hit and run attack targeting two Border Policemen at the entrance to the village of **Hizmeh** (northeast of Jerusalem). The **Gaza Strip** remained relatively quiet.
- On the diplomatic front, American envoy George Mitchell visited Jerusalem and Ramallah. During his stay, the fundamental disagreement over the two-state solution was again raised. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu emphasized that "recognition of Israel as a national state of the Jewish people is a matter of substance and principle that enjoys wide recognition in the country and around the world." Mitchell reiterated American policy supporting Israel as a Jewish state. Palestinian Authority spokesmen rejected the principle, as they did at the Annapolis meeting.
- At the Durban II conference in **Geneva**, Iranian president Ahmadinejad, a serial Holocaust denier and leader of a country which blatantly violates human rights, exploited the stage to vilify Israel and the United States and the West and to indulge in anti-Semitic rhetoric. European Union representatives left the hall during his speech.

## Increase in the number of lone terrorist attacks

■ There has recently been an increase in the number of terrorist attacks carried out by lone Palestinians, usually with cold weapons (knives and axes) or with vehicles. As of this writing, the attacks do not seem to be organized or coordinated by Palestinians terrorist organizations, but rather carried out on the initiative of the terrorists themselves, after having been exposed to intensive brainwashing by the media, the mosques and the educational system. In any event, the Palestinian terrorist organizations, especially Hamas, praise and encourage such attacks.

■ During the past week the following attacks and attempted attacks were carried out:

● **April 18:** A Palestinian driving a Mercedes tried to run over two Border Policemen at **the roadblock at the entrance to the village of Hizmeh** (northeast of Jerusalem). The car came from the opposite lane and hit the two policemen and a taxi they were examining, wounding one seriously and the other only slightly. The terrorist, a Palestinian Islamic Jihad operative, is Abadin Abd al-Salam Musa, 37, from the village of Azariya.

● **April 18:** A young Palestinian armed with a knife attacked four Indian tourists on the Via Dolorosa in the Old City of Jerusalem. One of them sustained head wounds. The terrorist escaped and was later detained by the police.

● **April 17:** A Palestinian armed with a knife entered the community of **Beit Hagai** (south of Mt. Hebron) to carry out a stabbing. In response one of the residents shot and killed him; another sustained mild injuries. The Palestinian terrorist was Hijazi Muhammad Sadr, 18, from Hebron's Al-Zeitun neighborhood (Palestinian Television, April 17, 2009). He was apparently working alone. An organization (in all likelihood fictitious) calling itself "the Jerusalem Army" claimed responsibility for the attack and threatened to carry out others (Palestinian News Network website, April 17, 2009).

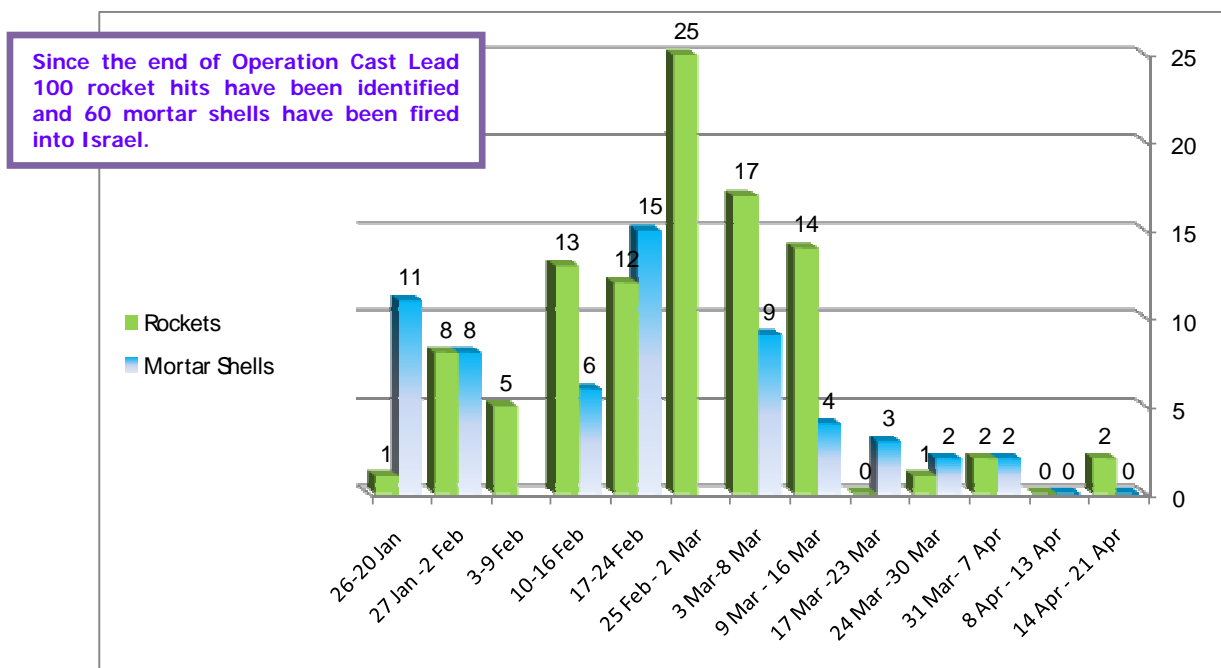
● **April 14:** During a security check conducted by IDF soldiers at a checkpoint in **Bir Zayt** (north of Ramallah), a Palestinian was found to be carrying a knife. It was confiscated and the Palestinian was detained (IDF Spokesman, April 14, 2009).

## The Gaza Strip

### Rocket and mortar shell fire

■ The trend toward a decrease in rocket and mortar shell fire continued this past week. Two rockets were fired at the western Negev, on April 15 and 17, falling in open fields. There were no casualties and no damage was done. No organization claimed responsibility for the attacks.

## Weekly distribution of rocket and mortar shell fire since the end of Operation Cast Lead



### Israeli Air Force attacks

■ The Israeli Air Force attacked a booby-trapped building in the town of Dir al-Balah in the central Gaza Strip (IDF Spokesman, April 16, 2009). The Palestinian media reported that the two-story house was destroyed and the surrounding area was damaged. There were no casualties (Ma'an News Agency, April 16, 2009).

### Judea and Samaria

■ The IDF forces counterterrorism activities in Judea and Samaria continue, including the detentions of suspected terrorists. Stones and Molotov cocktails continue to be thrown:

- **April 17:** Two Palestinians threw stones at houses in the community of Beit El (north of Ramallah). An IDF force arrived and opened fire, killing one and causing minor injuries to the other.
- **April 17:** Stones were thrown at an Israeli bus east of Qalqiliya. There were no casualties but the bus was damaged.
- **April 16:** Two Molotov cocktails were thrown at two Israeli vehicles east of Qalqiliya. There were no casualties and no damage was done.

## The Gaza Strip after Operation Cast Lead

### The crossings between Israel and the Gaza Strip

■ Deliveries of humanitarian assistance continue through the crossings between Israel and the Gaza Strip. The crossings were open during the Passover holiday for the passage of merchandise and fuel. The Erez crossing was open for Gazans with medical problems and for employees of international aid organizations.

### Opening the Rafah crossing

■ The Egyptian authorities opened the Rafah crossing for three days, from April 18 to April 20. Passage was selective and limited to holders of entrance visas into Egypt and other countries, students attending school in Egypt, the sick and wounded and other humanitarian cases (Middle East News Agency, April 16, 2009). Several hundred Palestinians crossed through, and tens of tons of humanitarian assistance were delivered, including medicine, mobile clinics, and three ambulances sent by Jordan (Middle East News Agency, April 19, 2009).

■ When it became known that the crossing was open, dozens of Palestinians rushed to Rafah to enter the Gaza Strip (Middle East News Agency, April 18, 2009). The Egyptian security services reportedly increased the number of forced deployed there because of the demonstration held by the so-called "government committee to lift the blockade" (*Al-Yawm Al-Sabaa*, April 16, 2009).

### Threats to abduct Israeli soldiers heard on "Prisoners' Day"

■ On April 17, "Palestinian Prisoners' Day" was marked in Judea and Samaria. Rallies and processions were held in Judea and Samaria and the Gaza Strip, and issue of exchanging Gilad Shalit, the abducted Israeli soldier, for Palestinian prisoners was again raised. Hamas spokesmen gave speeches stating that they would not reduce the demands presented to Israel. They also **threatened that other Israeli soldiers would be abducted** if no progress were made in the prisoner exchange deal.



One of the Prisoners' Day processions held in the Gaza Strip (Al-Aqsa TV, April 16, 2009).

■ Hamas spokesmen made the following statements:

● **Mahmoud al-Zahar**, a senior Hamas figure, gave a speech saying "it is Hamas's "right" to abduct soldiers until we free all the prisoners." He also referred to the disagreements which surfaced in the negotiations with Israel regarding the prisoner exchange deal, reiterating Hamas's position (Al-Aqsa TV, April 18, 2009).



Mahmoud al-Zahar at a Prisoners' Day rally (Al-Aqsa TV, April 18, 2009).

● **Khaled Mashaal**, head of the Hamas political bureau in Damascus, speaking at the Al-Yarmuk refugee camp in Syria, sent a strong message to the Israeli prime minister, saying that he had to release Palestinian prisoners in return for Gilad Shalit, and that one of Hamas's options to facilitate the release of its own prisoners was to **abduct other Israeli soldiers** (Al-Jazeera TV, April 20, 2009).



**Khaled Mashaal speaks at the Al-Yarmuk refugee camp in Syria:**  
**"We will never forget our prisoners, and their release is out top priority..."**  
 (Al-Jazeera TV, April 20, 2009).

- **Ismail Haniya**, head of the Hamas de-facto administration, said that the prisoner exchange deal was "treading water," and that the "resistance" [i.e., the terrorist organizations] would not stop its efforts to release the prisoners from Israeli jails (Al-Jazeera TV, April 17, 2009).
- **Hamas issued a statement** for Prisoners Day saying that its military wing had open options, as did the other organizations, to release Palestinian prisoners from Israeli jails, a hint at abducting soldiers.
- **Musheir al-Masri**, Hamas secretary in the Legislative Council, said in a speech that the only way to release the Palestinian prisoners from Israeli jails was to abduct other soldiers, and not " security coordination, hugs and kisses" (Hamas's Palestine-Info website, April 13, 2009).

### Egypt's counterterrorism activities continue

■ Since a Hezbollah network was exposed operating on its soil, Egyptian security forces have increased their activities to counter terrorist networks and the smuggling of weapons in Sinai. On April 20 there were exchanges of fire between the Egyptian police and smugglers in Sinai (*Al-Yawm Al-Sabaa*, April 20, 2009). In addition:

- During this past week several smuggling tunnels in the Rafah region were exposed and a large amount of fuel intended for the Gaza Strip was confiscated.
- In the northern Sinai Palestinians were detained and weapons were found (Reuters, April 15, 2009; Iran's Fars News Agency, April 18, 2009).
- Five smugglers who had \$200,000 in their possession were detained. They were trying to smuggle the money into the Gaza Strip for Hamas (*Al-Yawm Al-Sabaa*, April 16).
- A weapons store was discovered in the central Sinai peninsula, which held 39 anti-aircraft missiles (*Al-Misaa*, April 20, 2009).

## The Diplomatic Front

### George Mitchell visits the Middle East

■ George Mitchell, American president Obama's envoy to the Middle East, held his first round of visits in Israel and the Palestinian Authority. He met with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on April 16, Foreign Minister Avigdor Lieberman on April 16, and Defense Minister Ehud Barak on April 15. On April 17 he met with Palestinian Authority Chairman Mahmoud Abbas and Prime Minister Salam Fayyad. He then left for Egypt to meet with Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak on April 18.



Left: Benjamin Netanyahu shaking hands with George Mitchell (Photo: Amos Ben-Gershom for the Israeli Government Press Office, April 16, 2009). Right: George Mitchell and Ehud Barak (Photo: Ariel Hermoni for the Israel Ministry of Defense, April 15, 2009).

■ During the meetings the fundamental disagreement regarding the two-state solution which surfaced at the Annapolis meeting was raised again:<sup>1</sup>

- Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu made it clear that his approach was consistent, and that was insistent in his approach that "recognition of Israel as the national state of the Jewish people is a matter of substance and principle, and it enjoys wide recognition in Israel and around the world," however, " the prime minister [of Israel] has never set this as a precondition for the opening of negotiations and dialogue with the Palestinians" (Prime Minister's Office, April 20, 2009).

- George Mitchell, after having met with Foreign Minister Avigdor Lieberman, said that he had "reiterated to the foreign minister that U.S. policy favors, with respect to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, **a two-state solution** which will have a Palestinian state living in peace alongside **the Jewish state of Israel**" [ITIC emphasis] (Reuters, Jerusalem, April 16, 2009).

- Palestinian Authority spokesmen **vehemently rejected** the idea of recognizing Israel as a Jewish state, **as they had during the Annapolis meeting**. They claimed that making such a demand enabled Israel to reject the two-state solution and not honor previously-

<sup>1</sup> For further information see our April 19, 2009 bulletin "Basic disagreement concerning the two-state solution" at [http://www.terrorism-info.org.il/malam\\_multimedia/English/eng\\_n/html/ipc\\_e024.htm](http://www.terrorism-info.org.il/malam_multimedia/English/eng_n/html/ipc_e024.htm).

signed agreements. Saeb Erekat, chief of the PLO negotiating team, claimed that the United States and other countries refrained from recognizing Israel as a Jewish state, ignoring the **unequivocal** American statements made at the Annapolis meeting which did recognize Israel as a Jewish state (such as President George Bush's speech at the Annapolis meeting;<sup>2</sup> and Mitchell's statement quoted above).

- The Syrian media, controlled by the regime, were pressed into service to support Palestinian refusal to recognize Israel as a Jewish state. The Syrian media grossly elaborated on the seriousness of the demand, claiming that it expressed Israel's "culture of aggression," and called on the United States and the international community to exert pressure on Israel to "change its behavior."

## The Internal Palestinian Arena

### Palestinian Authority security services' counterterrorism activities

- The Palestinian Authority's security services continue taking intensive steps to counter Hamas military-terrorist networks. On April 16 they uncovered a cache of **arms in a mosque in Tulkarm**, on April 8 they uncovered an **explosives laboratory in the basement of a mosque in Qalqiliya**, and also found **a weapons cache is a hiding place in an apartment in Qalqiliya near the border security fence**. Hamas has denied that it has undertaken military-terrorist activities in Judea and Samaria and has accused the PA's security services of collaboration with Israel.<sup>3</sup>



Gas bottles found in an explosives laboratory in the basement of a mosque in Qalqiliya (Al-Jazeera TV, April 14, 2009).

- **Sheikh Hamed al-Bitawi**, senior Hamas figure in Nablus, member of the Palestinian Legislative Council and head of the Palestinian Scholars' League, was shot by a low-ranking operative of the Palestinian security services, apparently for personal reasons. In an interview given

<sup>2</sup> On November 27, 2007, he said that "The United States will keep its commitment to the security of Israel **as a Jewish state and homeland for the Jewish people**." [ITIC emphasis]

<sup>3</sup> An information bulletin dealing with the exposure of an operational terrorist network of Hamas in Qalqiliya will soon appear in English.



later, al-Bitawi attacked the security services, claiming that they did not protect members of the Palestinian Legislative Council. Al-Bitawi is known for extremist and inciting speeches in which he has supported suicide bombing attacks.



Left: Hamed al-Bitawi in hospital (Ma'an News Agency, April 19, 2009).  
Right: Bitawi in better days... (February 22, 2001).

■ Hamas exploited the attack on Hamed al-Bitawi to attack the Palestinian Authority. According to Hamas, it was a politically-motivated assassination attempt. In response, Hamas organized a procession in Gaza Strip. A speech was given by Hamas member **Ismail Radwan**, who called for the guilty to be brought to trial and for the release of all Hamas prisoners held by the PA (Al-Bayan Center website, April 19, 2009). **Musheir al-Masri** said that Mahmoud Abbas and the Palestinian security services were responsible and that the incident was part of the ongoing lack of security in Judea and Samaria (Filastin al-'An website, April 19, 2009). **Ismail Haniya**, head of the Hamas de-facto administration, condemned the event, calling it a "despicable, awful crime" (Al-Aqsa TV, April 20, 2009).



Rally in support of al- Bitawi organized in the Gaza Strip (Al-Aqsa TV, April 19, 2009).

## The internal Palestinian dialogue

■ The internal Palestinian dialogue is slated to be renewed next week. To that end a series of internal discussions have been held to formulate positions for the coming round of talks. **Abu Alaa'** said that the dialogue would be renewed earlier and would begin on April 23 (AP, April 14, 2009). Immediately thereafter Hamas issued a denial, and **Ismail Radwan** announced that the movement knew nothing about a change in date and that the dialogue would begin on April 26. **Mahmoud al-Zahar** said that the internal Palestinian dialogue was expected to begin next week. In preparation, a series of consultations had been held during his visit to Jordan, and he said that many understandings had been reached and that only a few problems remained. He said that Hamas had discussed productive solutions and new ideas which had been presented to achieve a version that could be agreed on (Al-Quds TV, April 16, 2009). **Khalil al-Hayeh**, senior Hamas figure, said that the suggestions proposed by Hamas at the dialogue in Egypt would include the establishment of an ad-hoc government for the specific needs of internal Palestinian reconciliation; afterwards, the other issues would be discussed. However, he said that Hamas would accept only a "package deal" which would include the topics which had not been agreed on (Al-Fajar website, April 19, 2009).



The Palestinian reconciliation as seen by the Jordanians (*Al-Ghad*, April 8, 2008).

### Exploiting the events of "Jerusalem, capital of Arab culture" for propaganda and to encourage terrorism

■ In March the events of "Jerusalem, capital of Arab culture, 2009," officially began. The festival has been held since 1996, when the ministers of culture of the Arab states adopted the European custom of announcing a "culture capital" every year. A series of events was organized by the Palestinian Authority in Judea and Samaria and by the Hamas administration in the Gaza Strip. During the second half of April, the Palestinian Authority initiated art workshops, exhibitions, plays, sports competitions, an Arab music festival in the neighborhoods in East Jerusalem and in other locations in Judea and Samaria.

■ The Hamas de-facto administration in the Gaza Strip has been very active, and has enlisted "culture" to further its political interests. It has exploited the events for propaganda and incitement

against Israel, using, as usual, various conspiratorial claims: the decision of the Jerusalem municipality to destroy illegally-built buildings in the Silwan network is part of “the plot to make Jerusalem an entirely Jewish city,” and archaeological excavations carried out by Israel are represented as “the plot to destroy Al-Aqsa mosque.” Hamas even issued a **flyer encouraging hit and run attacks** and has linked them to the events of “Jerusalem, capital of Arab culture, 2009” (See front page).

## Iran

### Inflammatory, anti-Semitic speech given by Iranian president at the Durban II conference

■ On April 20 the Durban II conference opened in Geneva, attended by Iranian president Ahmadinejad. During his speech, given on the eve of Holocaust Remembrance Day, most of the representatives from the European Union countries pointedly left the hall. The president of France castigated Ahmadinejad for the speech, calling it “intolerable.” The Secretary General of the UN, who had spoken with Ahmadinejad before the speech, said he was sorry that the forum had been used to cast aspersions and cause disagreements. Following Ahmadinejad’s meeting with the president of Switzerland, Israel recalled its ambassador to Switzerland for consultations.



Ahmadinejad speaks at the Durban II conference  
(Al-Arabia TV, April 20, 2009)

■ Ahmadinejad, a serial Holocaust denier and president of a country that methodically violates human rights, exploited the Geneva forum to attack the foundations of the State of Israel and to criticize the United States, using anti-Semitic themes in his speech (April 20, 2009):

- According to Ahmadinejad, a “racist government” [i.e., Israel] was established after the Second World War on the pretext of Jewish suffering. [At that point, many diplomats rose and left the hall.] He repeatedly stated that a racist country was occupying the land of

Palestine and accused the United States, the West and the Security Council of having contributed to its establishment.



EU diplomats leave the hall during Ahmadinejad's speech (Al-Jazeera TV, April 21, 2009).

- The war in Iraq, he claimed, was planned by the "Zionist regime" and its allies in the former American administration. The American actions in Afghanistan and Iraq indicate egocentricity, racism and oppression at the expense of the countries' sovereignty. He also accused the United States of being responsible for the global economic crisis because it forced its economic policies on the countries and governments which serve the rich.

- "World Zionism personifies racism that falsely resorts to religion, and abuses religious sentiment to hide their hatred," he said, adding that efforts must be made to stop the "torture" committed by the Zionists and their supporters and to support resistance to "barbaric racism."



Syrian propaganda supporting Iran: Israel silences world criticism of its "racism" through accusations of anti-Semitism (*Tishrin*, Syria, April 21, 2009).