



**Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center
at the Israel Intelligence Heritage
& Commemoration Center (IICC)**

News of the Israeli-Palestinian Confrontation

(April 28-May 5, 2009)



**Searching for the suspect who allegedly stabbed a soldier in Ramat Gan on May 3
(courtesy of nrg, May 4, photo by Amir Meiri)**

Overview

- This week several shooting attacks occurred against local communities in the western Negev, and an explosive device was detonated near the Erez Crossing. IDF Air Force fighters attacked several tunnels in the southern Gaza Strip. In spite of that certain awakening, it can still be said that the relative calm on the ground still continues. The Palestinian media even reported that Hamas was attempting to communicate to the other terrorist organizations the importance of maintaining restraint on the ground. In the city of Ramat Gan, a soldier was stabbed in his neck while getting off a bus. A Palestinian who was suspected in the stabbing was arrested the next day. The identity of the stabber is still unknown.
- In a speech given for the Preparatory Committee of the Palestine Youth Parliament, Abu Mazen reiterated his objection to the recognition of Israel as the national Jewish state. Abu Mazen's speech followed Israeli media reports (April 16, 17) that Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Foreign Minister Avigdor Lieberman said that the Palestinian Authority should recognize Israel as a Jewish state.

Important Events

The Gaza Strip

Rocket fire and mortar shelling

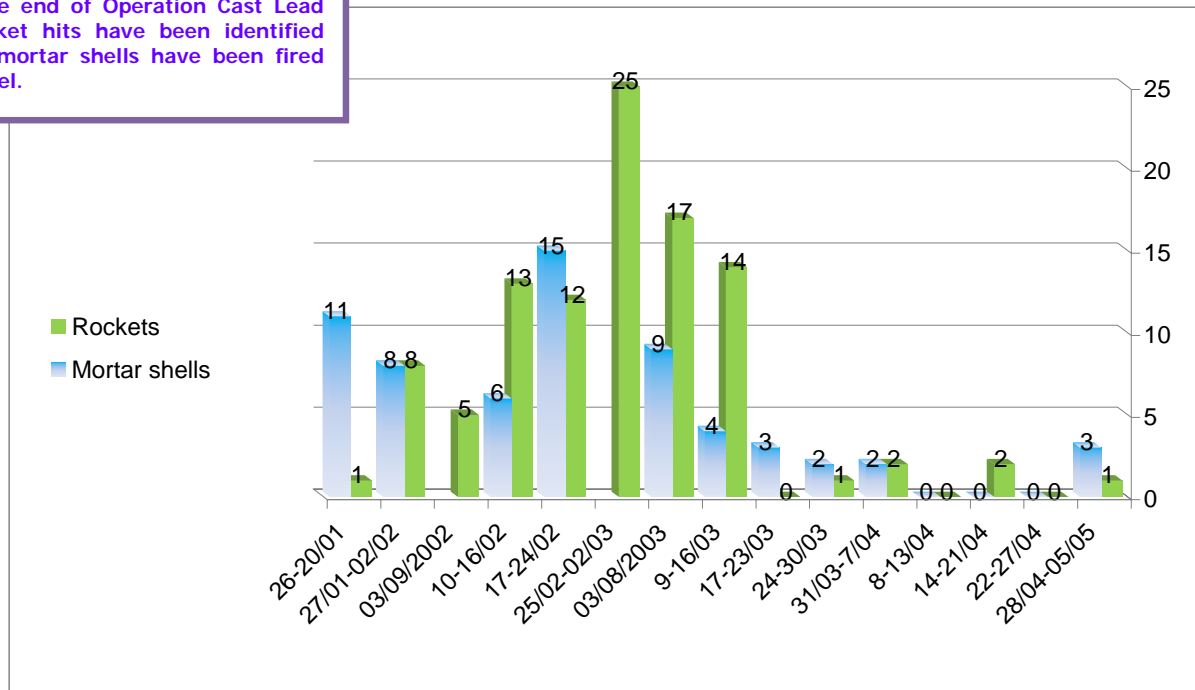
- Several shootings took place over the past week:
 - **On May 2**, three mortar shell hits were detected in an open territory near a community in the western Negev region. There were no casualties and no damage was caused to property. The Popular Resistance Committees claimed responsibility (Radio Sawt al-Haqq website, May 2).
 - **On May 4**, a rocket landed in an open territory near a community in the western Negev region. There were no casualties and no damage.

Detonation of an explosive device near the Erez Crossing

- On April 29, an explosive device was activated near the Erez Crossing inside the Gaza Strip. There were no casualties. A joint squad of the military wing of the PIJ and Fatah's Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades-Ayman Jouda units claimed responsibility for activating the explosive device, in retaliation for Israel's activity in the Gaza Strip and in the West Bank (Qudsnet website, April 29).

Rocket fire and mortar shelling since the end of Operation Cast Lead

Since the end of Operation Cast Lead 101 rocket hits have been identified and 60 mortar shells have been fired into Israel.



IDF Air Force strike

■ On May 1, IDF Air Force fighters attacked tunnels in the southern Gaza Strip, which were used for smuggling arms (IDF Spokesman, May 1). Palestinian media reported that two Palestinians who were inside the tunnels were killed in the attack, and three other civilians were lightly injured (Maan News Agency, May 2).

■ In an interview granted by tunnel owner "Abu Abdallah" to a Reuters reporter, he said that following Operation Cast Lead, the tunnel network had decreased considerably because of Israel's attacks and because of Egypt's counter-activities. He claimed that Egypt's counter-activities were more effective than the Israelis', because the Egyptians did not only destroy the tunnels themselves but also prevented smuggled goods from coming into Egyptian cities near the Gaza Strip (Reuters, April 30).

Judea and Samaria

■ In the past week, terrorist attacks continued in the form of throwing Molotov cocktails and throwing rocks. The main events follow:

● **May 3**—a Molotov cocktail was thrown on an Israeli bus near Beit Ummar, southwest of Bethlehem. There were no casualties but the bus was damaged.

● **April 30**—rocks were thrown on an Israeli vehicle southwest of Jenin. There were no casualties but the vehicle was damaged.

● **April 29**—an Israeli citizen was very lightly injured when rocks were thrown on a vehicle in which he was driving near Hebron.

Israel

Soldier stabbed in his neck in Ramat Gan

■ On May 3, a soldier was stabbed in his neck while getting off a bus in the city of Ramat Gan. He was moderately injured. The suspect stabber managed to flee the scene. On the next day, May 4, a Palestinian was arrested for allegedly perpetrating the attack and handed over to the investigation of the Israeli security forces (ynet, May 4). A network referring to itself as “Army of Jerusalem” claimed responsibility (probably falsely) for the stabbing (Oudsnet website, May 3). The identity of the stabber is still unknown.

The Gaza Strip after Operation Cast Lead

The situation at the crossings

■ Humanitarian assistance continued making its way through the crossings between Israel and the Gaza Strip. On average, about 100 trucks passed through each day. Also, cooking gas and fuel were transported through the fuel terminal in Nahal Oz.

Media reports that Hamas is trying to encourage a policy of restraint in rocket fire

■ Palestinian sources told the Al-Hayat newspaper that Egypt had delivered a message to the Hamas administration saying that Israel would respond by force if the rocket fire continued. The sources added that Hamas communicated the message to the PIJ, the PFLP, and the Democratic Front, with which it met on April 21. In the meeting, Hamas stressed that **it didn't mean a cessation of the resistance (terrorism) but rather an adjustment in the extent of rocket fire, "which threatens the interests of the Palestinian people and the stability of the Gaza Strip"**. Hamas added that the **"situation on the ground was calling for a lull right now..."** In the meeting, it was decided to set up a joint operations room for the four organizations, and it was agreed that the Hamas Interior Ministry would handle the violations committed by other organizations (Al-Hayat, May 3).

■ **Mushir al-Masri**, a Hamas leader in the Gaza Strip, noted that even though consultations with Gaza Strip organizations were taking place, Hamas asked no organization to cease the rocket fire, since all organizations considered "resistance" to be a strategic option. Mushir al-Masri **stressed the importance of the lull in the fighting**, adding that it was a **component in the resistance plan**. He added, however, "Every lull has its price and its conditions" (Sama News Agency, May 3).

■ According to a Palestinian website, in the week of April 25 Hamas started deploying security forces along the border with Israel to prevent rockets from being fired on Israel (Palestine, Our Home website, April 29). Another Palestinian website reported that on May 1, the Hamas security forces arrested PIJ operatives, members of the Abu Tir family, east of Khan Younes, claiming that they were trying to fire rockets on Israel (Al-Ahed website, May 1).

Hamas is planning to file charges against Israelis to the international courts

■ **Diya al-Madhoun**, the chairman of the Hamas administration's so-called Documentation Committee, said that the committee (which was established following Operation Cast Lead) completed the "documentation" of the Israeli "crimes" and started formulating lawsuits to be submitted to international courts. He said that about 1500 "crimes" were "documented" in more than 700 cases, including execution, abduction, murder, destruction of mosques, and hitting medical teams (Palestine-info, April 27).

The “Convoy of Hope” en route from Milan to the Gaza Strip

■ On May 2-4, the seventh Palestinian convention in Europe convened in Milan, Italy. At the end of the convention, a convoy which included 12 ambulances and about 30 trucks loaded with medical supplies and humanitarian equipment embarked to the Gaza Strip, accompanied by volunteers and European MPs and politicians. The convoy is bound for the Egyptian port of Alexandria, after which it will set out to the Gaza Strip via the Rafah Crossing (Maan News Agency, May 4).

■ At the same time, pro-Palestinian organizations continue transporting aid to the Gaza Strip through the sea. On May 1, the Free Gaza organization announced that on June 1, the “Fleet of Hope” would sail to the Gaza Strip. It will include ships carrying humanitarian aid, construction materials, and electronic equipment, such as generators, to the Gaza Strip. On May 4, the Free Gaza organization announced that Dignity, a ship which was supposed to take part in the sailing, sank off the coast of Larnaka. The organization also said that despite the sinking of the ship, the plans would not be cancelled (the organization’s website, May 4).

Iranian assistance to families of killed Palestinians

■ The Hamas-associated Al-Ansar charitable society, with the cooperation of the Palestinian branch of the Iranian Martyr’s Foundation (Al-Shahid), started distributing over 2 million dollars to families of killed Palestinians in the Gaza Strip and in the West Bank. Abu Hassan, the director of the charitable society, said that 5600 families would receive assistance as part of that project, sponsored by the Martyr’s Foundation, which is an Iranian government institution operating in Lebanon as well. The director of the charitable society thanked Iran for its material and moral support of martyrs’ families (Qudsnet website, April 29). Distributing financial assistance to martyrs’ families and helping rebuild damaged infrastructures are used by Iran as leverages to increase its influence in the Gaza Strip.

Hamas grants religious legitimacy to torturing prisoners

■ The Hamas organ **Felesteen** has recently published an article containing interviews with Hamas-associated clerics about **Islam’s view on torturing prisoners** in general, and prisoners suspected of assisting **Israel** in particular. **Taysir Ibrhaim**, a lecturer on Islamic religious law in

the Islamic University of Gaza City, said that “Islamic religious law contains a set of punishments based on the laws of the Quran, but it also provides enough leeway for a country to impose penalties which are not defined in accordance with Quranic laws”. He noted that generally “Muslims’ bodies are safe, unless there is very strong and concrete proof [of committing serious crimes]”.

■ Another lecturer, Dr. **Maher al-Sousi**, said that “when a person is suspected of committing a great crime that would cause damage to the entire society, **it is permissible to torture him, if need be**, provided it will cause no humiliation, or result in damage to his soul or to one of his organs, or to their amputation”. Dr. Al-Sousi further noted that when it comes to prisoners suspected of cooperation with Israel, “if there is proof that any of them is a collaborator, then that is a special situation **and they may be tortured for that**. If there is a suspicion that he has information and that he is involved with a network, **it is permissible to torture him in that manner**... Then again, the interrogators must have a good argument for doing so” (Felesteen, April 19).

The political scene

Palestinian Authority Chairman Abu Mazen reiterates the Palestinian Authority’s refusal to recognize Israel as the national state of the Jewish people

■ In a speech given to the Preparatory Committee for the Palestine Youth Parliament, which convened in Ramallah on April 27, 2009, Palestinian Authority Chairman Abu Mazen said that the Palestinians were committed to the PLO’s obligations and that they were willing to carry on with the peace negotiations based on the Arab Peace Initiative, the two-state solution, and the Roadmap. At the same time, Abu Mazen reiterated his refusal to recognize the Jewish character of the State of Israel: “As for the Jewish state, we say ‘the State of Israel’. You Israelis are free [to do as you wish], call it as you please, but I will not accept [the definition of Israel as a Jewish state]. This issue was discussed at length in Washington [i.e., during the Annapolis summit] and

we told them [i.e., the Israelis]: We are only saying 'the State of Israel', and you are free to call it [as you please]" (Wafa News Agency, April 27, 2009).¹

■ After the meeting of the Preparatory Committee, Abu Mazen received a gift, a big embroidery in the form of a map of Palestine. Looking at the map, one finds that, as usual, there is no mention of the State of Israel. The picture of Abu Mazen receiving the map appeared on the following day on the front page of the PA organ Al-Hayat al-Jadeeda.



Abu Mazen receiving the map of Palestine (Al-Hayat al-Jadeeda, April 28).

The internal Palestinian scene

The internal Palestinian dialogue

■ The round of talks which began on April 26 was stopped and postponed to mid-May. Mahmoud al-Zahar noted that the talks were postponed to allow the delegations to hold internal consultations. Palestinian Authority spokesman Nabil Abu Rodeina said that Abu Mazen was probably going to establish his new government following the next round of talks (Al-Sharq al-Awsat, May 2). Hamas criticized Abu Mazen's decision. The Hamas chief of administration Isma'il Haniyeh said that it would pose difficulties to the success of the talks. Hamas spokesman Fawzi

¹ See our April 28, 2009 Information Bulletin: "[Palestinian Authority Chairman Mahmoud Abbas reiterates the Palestinian Authority's refusal to recognize Israel as the national state of the Jewish people](#)".

Barhoum announced that the decision meant a “second coup against the legitimate regime and the destruction of the dialogue efforts”.

■ In an interview to the Voice of Israel, Palestinian Authority Welfare Minister Mahmoud al-Habbash said that the removal of the Hamas administration from the Gaza Strip is a national need and a religious duty. “We need to find a way to reestablish PA control over the Gaza Strip and to do it this year,” he said, adding that Gaza Strip residents must exert popular, non-violent pressure on Hamas in order to force it into a unity government.

■ Hamas spokesmen criticized Mahmoud al-Habbash's statement. Hamas spokesman in the Gaza Strip Isma'il Radwan said that the statement showed that the Palestinian Authority officials did not want unity (Pal-Today, May 3). Hamas spokesman Fawzi Barhoum said that the statement meant to perpetuate the rift and continue the war against the Palestinian people, adding that Al-Habbash was a hated figure in the Gaza Strip and was not going to remain in office following the establishment of the new government (Palestine-info, May 3).

The US steps up its training of Palestinian security forces

■ US Security Coordinator Keith Dayton said that the US was going to significantly increase its training of the Palestinian security forces, and added that by May 2010 three additional battalions of those forces would undergo training. Each battalion would include about 500 people, and the training, funded by the US, would be held at a Jordanian police base near Amman. The US would provide non-military equipment such as vehicles, and the weapons would be provided by Arab countries. The plan also includes funding the construction of bases for the security forces (Reuters, April 28).