



Intelligence and Terrorism
Information Center

News of Terrorism and the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict

June 9-15, 2009



Left: Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu delivers a speech at Bar-Ilan University (Photo: Avi Ohayun for the Israeli Government Press Office, June 14, 2009). Right: Netanyahu's speech a slap in the face for Obama (*Al-Ayyam*, June 15, 2009).

Overview

- The relative quiet in the western Negev continued this past week. Senior Hamas figures continued publicly supporting its policy of restraint, saying there was a “national consensus” behind it and that it served the Palestinians’ highest interests (i.e., aided the rebuilding process Hamas was attempting to promote in the Gaza Strip).
- Diplomatic activity focused on the speech given by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu at Bar-Ilan University on June 14. He expressed his readiness to see the establishment of a Palestinian Authority state alongside a Jewish state on condition that it be demilitarized and that the Palestinians recognize the State of Israel as the national homeland of the Jewish people. Palestinian Authority and Hamas spokesmen, as well as Arab countries, denounced the speech, sometimes using strong language. The American administration praised the speech, calling it an “important step” (a bulletin on the speech and reactions to it will be issued separately).

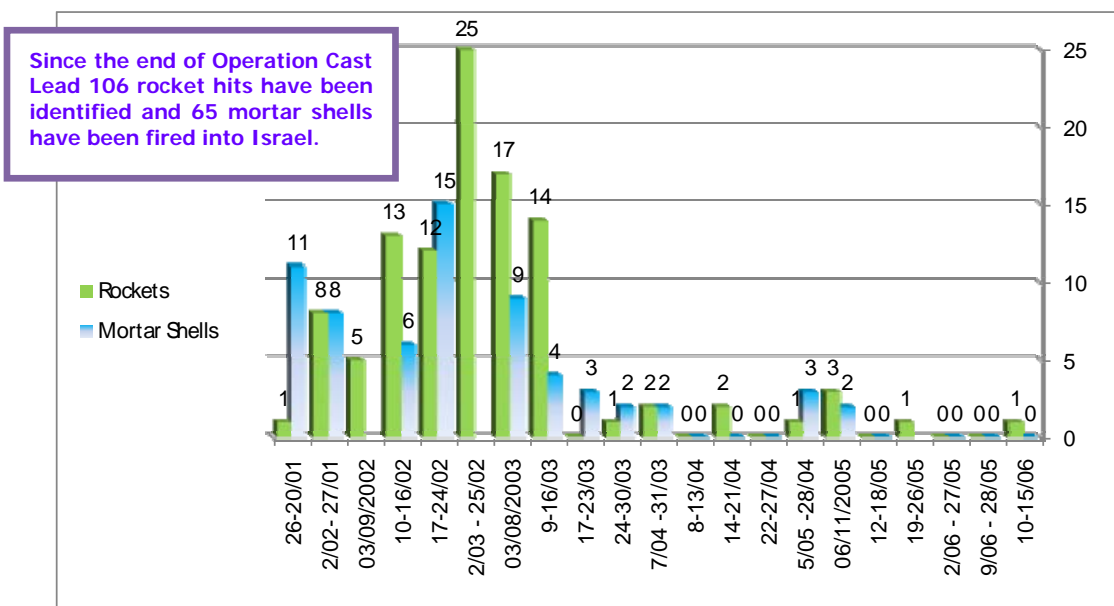
Important Events

The Gaza Strip

Rocket and mortar shell fire

■ During the past week one rocket hit was indentified in the western Negev. There were no casualties and no damage was done. It was the first rocket hit this month, the last falling on May 19. No organization claimed responsibility for the attack.

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



Israeli Air Force attacks

■ In response to the rocket fire, on the night of June 14 Israeli Air Force aircraft attacked two tunnels in the Rafah area (southern Gaza Strip) used to smuggle weapons.

Judea and Samaria

■ Stone-throwing continued in Judea and Samaria this past week. On **June 10** an Israeli civilian was seriously wounded by stones thrown at his car south of Hebron. He received first aid and was transferred to a hospital for further treatment (IDF Spokesman's website, June 10, 2009).

■ The Israeli security forces continued their counterterrorism activities. On **June 11**, in an action in the village of Qalil south of Nablus, the IDF uncovered two M-16 rifles, a Kalashnikov assault rifle, a pistol, ammunition and other military equipment. The weapons and equipment were confiscated (IDF Spokesman's website, June 11, 2009).

Facilitating life for the Palestinians in Judea and Samaria

■ **Connecting to the electrical grid:** On June 8 the IDF allowed the village of Qadoum, near Qalqiliya, to be connected to the Israeli electrical grid. It was another goodwill gesture to facilitate life for the Palestinian population. Palestinian villages which used generators and suffered from repeated power outages now receive Israeli electricity. The lines was prepared and the village was connected after coordination between the Israeli civilian administration, the local Palestinian authorities and the Palestinian civilian liaison (IDF Spokesman's website, June 11, 2009).

■ **Easing restrictions on entrance into Israel:** On June 7 Palestinians with special authorization were allowed to enter Israel through checkpoints which until then had been intended for Israelis alone. The authorizations were received this past year by merchants and businessmen after a security examination showed they did not pose a threat. "This is genuine help for them," said the head of the Israeli coordination and liaison administration in Ramallah. "These men encourage the economy in Judea and Samaria and it is important to allow them to move more easily" (IDF Spokesman's website, June 11, 2009).

The Gaza Strip after Operation Cast Lead

The crossings between Israel and the Gaza Strip

■ During the past week humanitarian assistance was delivered to the Gaza Strip through the crossings at the rate of 100 trucks a day. On June 11 the Kerem Shalom crossing was closed to allow for a new pipeline for diesel fuel and cooking gas to be laid. The construction of the pipeline was coordinated with the Palestinian Authority and carried out by Israeli and Palestinian crews (IDF Spokesman, June 11, 2009).

Egypt activities to prevent smuggling continue

■ Egyptian security forces continued activities to prevent smuggling into the Gaza Strip. This past week more than ten tunnels were uncovered and destroyed. Tunnel owners said that many of them had been forced to stop working on the tunnels lest the Egyptian security forces find them and blow them up. Several said they had begun using improvised methods because of the activities of the Egyptian authorities (*Al-Ayyam*, June 11, 2009). Egyptian authorities have also begun using sewage to flood the tunnels (PalToday website, June 13, 2009).

■ The tunnel industry continues claiming victims. On June 10 a young Palestinian was killed when a tunnel collapsed in Rafah (Wafa News Agency, June 10, 2009). On June 11 another Palestinian died from lack of air (Sawt Al-Aqsa website, June 11, 2009). On June 12 a tunnel

collapsed in the Rafah region without casualties, but on June 13 an 18 year-old Palestinian was electrocuted in one of the tunnels (Wafa News Agency, June 13, 2009).

The Political Arena

The main points made by the Israeli prime minister (Responses to the speech will appear in a separate bulletin)

■ On June 14 Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu delivered a political speech at Bar-Ilan University. It lasted 25 minutes and focused on the Palestinian-Israeli conflict (the issue of the Iranian threat and the danger it poses to the region and the world were mentioned briefly at the beginning). In the speech, which reflected a broad Israeli consensus, Netanyahu presented the main points of his political vision regarding the resolution of the conflict and expressed his readiness to see a Palestinian state established alongside the Jewish state, on condition that it be demilitarized and that the Palestinians recognize the State of Israel as the national homeland of the Jewish people.

■ Netanyahu appealed to the leaders of the Arab states to speak of peace and make peace. He also called on the Palestinians to begin immediate negotiations without pre-conditions, stressing Israel's commitment to international agreements and its aspiration to live with the Palestinians in peace and security as good neighbors. He said that the root of the conflict was and remained the Arab refusal "to recognize the right of the Jewish People to its own state in its historical homeland," but mentioned that both Egypt and Jordan had left the circle of hatred when they signed peace agreements.

■ He said that the Palestinians continued to make demands incompatible with a desire to end the conflict. Israel, he said, had tried to promote peace through withdrawals, with an agreement and without one, through partial withdrawal and full withdrawal from the Gaza Strip. In return Israel was rewarded with a wave of suicide bombers, thousands of rockets fired into its territory and continued hatred. He said that Hamas continually reiterated its intention to "liberate" the land of Israel ("Ashqelon and Beersheba, Acre and Haifa"), adding that even Palestinians moderates were not ready to recognize the State of Israel as the national homeland of the Jewish people.

■ Netanyahu noted **two fundamental conditions** for ending the conflict with the Palestinians: The **first**, "the Palestinians must truly recognize Israel as the state of the Jewish people." The **second**, "demilitarization. Any area in Palestinian hands has to be demilitarized, with solid security measures... We do not want missiles on Petah Tikva, or Grads on the Ben-Gurion international airport." The Palestinians would not be allowed to bring in rockets and missiles, to have an army, to close Israel's airspace or sign treaties with countries or factors like Iran and Hezbollah. **In return**,

Israel would be willing, as part of a future peace agreement, to accept a demilitarized Palestinian state alongside the Jewish State of Israel.

■ He added that the territorial issue between Israel and the Palestinian would be discussed in the final status agreement, and “until then we have no intention to build new settlements or set aside land for new settlements. But there is a need to have people live normal lives.” “Jerusalem,” he continued, “must remain the united capital of Israel with continued religious freedom for all faiths.” Israel, he said, would make every effort to “facilitate freedom of movement for the Palestinians,” to make their lives easier and increase their welfare. However, he added, “the Palestinians must decide between the path of peace and the path of Hamas.” The Palestinian Authority must establish the rule of law in the Gaza Strip and overcome Hamas, because “Israel will not sit at the negotiating table with terrorists who seek its destruction.” He ended by appealing to the rulers of the Arab world and to the Palestinians to continue the path of Menachem Begin and Anwar Sadat, of Yitzhak Rabin and King Hussein.

The Internal Palestinian Arena

The Palestinian Authority continues preventive activities in Judea and Samaria

■ The Palestinian Authority’s security forces continued their intensive preventive activities against Hamas networks in Judea and Samaria, especially in the Qalqiliya district. On June 12 Faza’ Sawafata, an Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades terrorist operative, gave himself up. According to the Ma’an News Agency, he surrendered in Tubas, in northern Samaria, after an understanding was reached between Hamas and the head of Egyptian intelligence, according to which the Palestinian Authority was responsible for his life (Ma’an News Agency, June 12, 2009).

■ On June 8 Palestinian security forces in Qalqiliya confiscated two tons of chemicals used in the manufacture of explosives. The Ma’an News Agency reported that the chemicals were discovered through intelligence information and the confessions of Hamas operatives detained by the Palestinian security forces (Ma’an News Agency, June 8, 2009). According to the report, on the same day the Palestinian preventive security services arrested a Palestinian in Nablus affiliated with Hamas who had a million euros in his possession and plans for digging tunnels under the security forces’ headquarters.

■ Brigadier General Adnan al-Damiri told an interviewer that Hamas was not a banned political movement and that “the operatives pursued by the Palestinian security forces, without taking into consideration their political affiliation or employment, are those in whose possession illegal arms were found, who launder money or incite civil war.” He said that the Palestinian Authority security forces had seized documents in various places in the West Bank which indicated the intention of

Hamas operatives to attack them and the Palestinian Authority's institutions. Most of the documents, he said, called on Hamas operatives to fight back if the Palestinian security forces tried to detain them (*Al-Quds Al-Arabi*, June 13, 2009).

Developments in the internal Palestinian dialogue

■ [Bullet] On June 9 Omar Suleiman, head of Egyptian general intelligence, met with a Hamas delegation headed by Khaled Mashaal, chairman of the Hamas political bureau in Damascus, as part of the reconciliation talks between Hamas and Fatah (Middle East News Agency, June 9, 2009). Mashaal announced that at the meeting Hamas had agreed to set up a committee under Egyptian aegis to free the Fatah detainees in the Gaza Strip and West Bank (*Felesteen*, June 10, 2009).

■ [Bullet] On June 14 simultaneous meetings were held by the Fatah-Hamas reconciliation committee in Gaza and Ramallah. The first meeting dealt with what was called “the issue of political detentions.” **They mutually agreed to end political detentions and exchanged lists of detainees in preparation for their release** (Ma’an News Agency, June 14, 2009). At a joint press conference, Ibrahim Abu al-Naja (Fatah) and Ayman Taha (Hamas) announced that their respective movements had agreed to continue the reconciliation committee meetings to reach an agreement on all the issues in preparation for signing a reconciliation agreement on July 7.



Members of the reconciliation committee in Ramallah enter the conference room (Palestinian Television, June 14, 2009).

■ During the meeting in Ramallah, five Hamas representatives from the Palestinian Legislative Council were delayed in Bethlehem by operatives of the Palestinian preventive security services. The incident ended after the five appealed to the Hamas members meeting in Ramallah, who secured their release (*Al-Aqsa TV*, June 14, 2009). Hamas roundly denounced the affair: Hamas spokesman Fawzi Barhoum called it a deliberate attempt to make the dialogue fail (Hamas's Palestine-Info website, June 14, 2009).

Initial Palestinian reactions to the Iranian so-called president's victory

■ On June 12 Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, the incumbent Iranian president, won the elections and will serve for another four-year term. His rivals claimed the elections were fixed. Hamas and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad, two terrorist organizations supported by Iran, **congratulated** Ahmadinejad on his victory and expressed their hope that Iran would continue supporting the Palestinians. A favorable reaction was also heard in the Palestinian Authority. All the reactions

ignored the allegations of tampering and the wave of protests sweeping over Iran. Some of the reactions were the following:

- **Hamas:** Hamas spokesman **Fawzi Barhoum** said that the results were an expression of Iranian democracy. He added that they would convince many to change their policies toward the Iranian regime. He expressed hope that Iran would continue to support the Palestinians “in view of all the challenges,” claiming that Hamas aspired to good relations with everyone to achieve broad support of the Palestinian cause (Hamas’s Palestine-Info website, June 13, 2009). **Muhammad al-Madhoun**, Ismail Haniya’s chief of staff, said that the Gaza Strip had received the message sent by the elections, and it was that “people have opinions and their opinions are clear. They refuse to be overcome and deprived, all over the world, especially the deprivation of the Palestinian people” (Al-Alam TV, June 13, 2009).

- **The Palestinian Islamic Jihad:** Interviewed by Iran’s Al-Alam TV, **Khaled al-Batash**, senior Palestinian Islamic Jihad figure, welcomed the election results. He said the Iranian people had showed their faith in the path of the Islamic revolution and their support for Ahmadinejad and his policies in every area, including Iran’s nuclear program and Palestinian-Israeli conflict. He added that the Palestinian people were of the opinion that Iran was their main pillar of strength in their struggle and in the Palestinian jihad, and that therefore they were interested in Iran’s stability and development (Al-Alam TV, June 13, 2009).

- **The Palestinian Authority:** **Saeb Erekat**, head of the PLO negotiating department, expressed hope that the Iranian president-elect and the new Iranian government would continue to donate to the Palestinian cause of establishing a Palestinian state with East Jerusalem as its capital, and would support the national Palestinian reconciliation. He added that the Palestinians were interested in having Iran on their side in general and not favoring a particular faction (hinting at Iran’s support of Hamas).

Remarks from Khaled Mashaal

- Khaled Mashaal, head of Hamas political bureau in Damascus, during his last visit to Cairo, spoke about many issues on his political agenda trying, as he often has in the recent past, to send “softened” political messages to Egypt and the United States (without making any concessions whatsoever regarding Hamas’s basic positions):

- **Responses to Barack Obama’s speech and Hamas’s relations with the new American administration:**

- 1) Mashaal noted that President Obama used new and improved terminology, in comparison with to the previous administration. However, the test would be a change in American policy on the ground. He called Obama’s attention to the fact that he had not defined the Palestinian state in terms of area, borders, capital city, the “right of return” and a time table for establishing the state, all of which were, he said,

“essential points” which the president had to relate to (*Al-Sharq Al-Awsat*, June 11, 2009).

2) According to Mashaal, Hamas had made it known to Omar Suleiman that it was willing to cooperate with every genuine opportunity that would end the Israeli occupation and restore the Palestinians’ national “rights,” including the return of the refugees (*Al-Sharq Al-Awsat*, June 11, 2009). In an interview he said that Hamas “will not be a stumbling block to any political process motivating a genuine peace process based on the Palestinians’ demands for freedom, independence, the establishment of a Palestinian state within the 1967 borders and the return of the Palestinian refugees...” (Middle East News Agency, June 10, 2009).

3) In answer to a question from the floor, he said that contacts were being made with unofficial Americans, for example former American president Jimmy Carter.¹ He said that “no one can achieve anything when it comes to the Israeli-Arab conflict without including Hamas” (Al-Aqsa TV, June 9, 2009).

● **Meeting with Omar Suleiman and Hamas’s relations with the Palestinian Authority:** Mashaal described his meeting with Omar Suleiman as “excellent” (*October*, June 12, 2009). He strongly denounced the “heinous oppression” waged by the Palestinian Authority’s security forces in the West Bank against the “resistance” and the “weapons of the resistance.” He accused the Palestinian Authority of exploiting the attack on Hamas’s welfare and political institutions as an attempt to uproot it. He said Omar Suleiman had promised to deal with the issue (*Al-Sharq Al-Awsat*, June 11, 2009). He claimed that differences between Hamas and the Palestinian Authority could be bridged and that Hamas was willing to be flexible, but that first of all the “security persecutions” in the West Bank had to stop (Hamas website, Middle East News Agency, June 10, 2009).

● **Rocket fire from the Gaza Strip:** In response to Fatah accusations that Hamas prevented rocket fire from the Gaza Strip, Mashaal **defended Hamas’s policy of restraint**, saying that “we are not taking away anyone’s right to oppose the occupation in the West Bank and Gaza, but **we are seeking a national agreement about managing the resistance, especially after the difficult campaign in the Gaza Strip**...There are those who want to be seen as more righteous than we and to defend the holiness of the resistance to achieve other goals and to make the situation in Gaza more complicated...” (*Al-Sharq Al-Awsat*, June 11, 2009).²

¹ On June 11 Khaled Mashaal met with former American president Jimmy Carter. According to the Arab and Palestinian media, they discussed Hamas’s relations with Washington, the internal Palestinian dialogue, the issue of Gilad Shalit and developments in Israel. Before the meeting Gilad Shalit’s father met with Carter and gave him a letter which Carter intends to transmit to his son (Ynet, June 12, 2009).

² **Mahmoud al-Zahar**, a senior Hamas figure in the Gaza Strip, was more explicit when he told a correspondent from *Al-Quds* that “Hamas will maintain the current lull in the fighting as long as the Israeli occupation maintains it and does not trespass in any way that necessitates a response from the resistance.” However, he added, “nevertheless, we have not prevented anyone from firing rockets, but as long as required the resistance will be part of the national consensus in a way that will serve the highest interest” (*Al-Quds*, June 12, 2009).

- **Developments in the Gilad Shalit prisoner exchange deal:** Mashaal said that Egypt had invested a great deal of effort to bring the deal to fruition. However, he claimed, Israel had sabotaged those efforts at the end of Olmert's term of office. He said that Hamas remained firm in its demands and blamed Netanyahu for trying to get out of the deal (*October*, June 12, 2009).

- **Hamas's connections with Iran:** Khaled Mashaal defended Hamas's connections with Iran, saying that Hamas had made its decisions independently based on Palestinian national interests [i.e., Hamas did not accept dictates from Iran]. He admitted that Hamas had been subject to accusations and pressure because of those connections [possibly a reference to Egypt], but that it was the right of Hamas and the Palestinians to ask for support against the "occupation" (*October*, June 12, 2009).

The Lebanese Arena

Hezbollah loses the Lebanese Parliament elections (update)

- The question of **the legitimacy of Hezbollah's weapons**, raised by Hassan Nasrallah immediately after the elections (June 8), remained on the internal Lebanese agenda. Some of the remarks in the Lebanese media were the following:

- An article in a Lebanese newspaper affiliated with Hezbollah supposed that the organization's retention of its weapons ("the arms of the resistance") would be a minimum Hezbollah demand in the new government. According to the article, a positive response to the demand was likely to cause Hezbollah to waive the stipulation that it be given a "blocking third" veto power (*Al-Akhbar*, June 13, 2009).

- Michel Suleiman, Lebanese president, said that the Lebanese president was a guarantor of the "arms of the resistance," regarding both the coalition and the opposition [that is, Hezbollah had nothing to fear in the matter]. He added that he was trying to promote mutual understanding regarding the issue, which had to be reached through agreement and not by vote (*Al-Akhbar*, June 12, 2009).

- A source close to Sa'ad Hariri said that Hariri expected the coexistence between the "resistance" [Hezbollah] and the state to be preserved. According to the source, Hariri was willing to give Hassan Nasrallah all the guarantees he wanted and to agree to any wording of the government's basic policies regarding the "arms of the resistance" (*Al-Watan*, Qatar, June 11, 2009).

Initial reactions in Iran and Syria to Hezbollah's defeat

Iran

■ The Lebanese Parliament elections were not widely covered by the Iranian media. In view of Hezbollah's failure to win and following their broad coverage, the Iranian media issued moderate reports from Lebanon and avoided commentary. That was particularly evident in items appearing in media affiliated with Iran's conservative camp, which contented themselves with providing information about the election results and **sought to play down their importance**. The conservative media claimed that to a large extent the results reflected the success of the great efforts invested by the West and pro-Western countries to prevent a Hezbollah victory in Lebanon.

■ On June 8 Iran's Fars News Agency accused Saudi Arabia of buying many votes for a thousand dollars each and of having transported more than 40,000 Lebanese living abroad to Lebanon to vote and influence the election results. On June 9 the Iranian daily *Kayhan* merely provided a short informative report while accusing the United States and Saudi Arabia of buying the victory for the March 14 Alliance.

Syria

■ The Syrian media tried to play down the significance of the elections while representing them as a strictly internal Lebanese affair (*Tishrin*, June 10, 2009). The editor of *Al-Thawra*, in an attempt to make the most of the failure of Hezbollah and other Syrian supporters to win the election, [falsely] claimed that Syria had again proved that it did not interfere in internal Lebanese affairs. He also called for a government to be formed based on a national dialogue and to turn Lebanon's energy against Israel (*Al-Thawra*, June 10, 2009).

■ An article in the daily *Al-Watan* on June 10 **warned that any attempt to exploit the elections to limit Hezbollah's arms was doomed to failure**. It stated that no changes would be made in Hezbollah's weapons because they would continue as the weapons of the Lebanese majority. It warned against anyone trying "new adventures" to impose an embargo on the "arms of the resistance" "in coordination with external factors." It ended by saying that such attempt would lead to failure and that the future would prove that.