



Intelligence and Terrorism  
Information Center

## News of Terrorism and the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict

June 15-23, 2009

The Israeli Defense Minister in Egypt...



...and Palestinian Authority Chairman in Syria.



Left: Israeli Defense Minister and Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak meet in Egypt (Photo: Ariel Hermoni for the Israeli defense ministry, June 21, 2009).

Right: Palestinian Authority Chairman Mahmoud Abbas and Syrian President Bashar Assad meet in Damascus (Al-Arabiya TV, June 21, 2009).

### Overview

- Hamas's policy of restraint regarding rocket and mortar shell fire continued this past week as well, and no attacks were carried out against the western Negev.
- On June 21, Israeli Defense Minister Ehud Barak met in Egypt with President Hosni Mubarak and members of the Egyptian higher echelons. They discussed the situation in the Gaza Strip, Judea and Samaria and the new situations in Iran and Lebanon following their elections. They also discussed the issue of the release of abducted Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit, who has been in captivity for three years, although no details were made public.
- Mahmoud Abbas met with Syrian President Bashar Assad in Damascus to discuss the peace process following the speech given by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

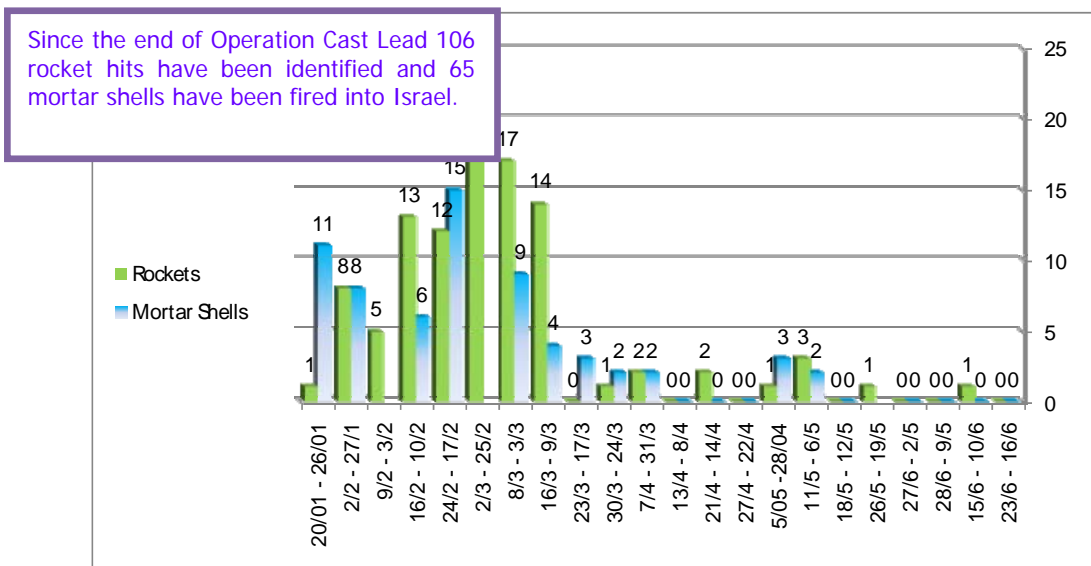
## Important Events

### Gaza Strip

#### Rocket and mortar shell fire

- During the past week no rocket hits were identified in the western Negev.
  
- On June 21, an IDF force on routine patrol uncovered four IEDs placed along the border security fence in the Kissufim region of the western Negev. As the IEDs were being disarmed, two mortar shells were fired and light arms were used to attack the soldiers. There were no casualties. A Popular Resistance Committees faction claimed responsibility for the attack (Qudsnet website, June 22, 2009).

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



#### Hamas's attack policy

- In a surfers' chat on Hamas's PALDF forum, Abu Obeida, Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades spokesman, answered questions. Asked about suicide bombing attacks, he said that the option to carry them out still existed and was considered legitimate by Hamas. However, he said, it was not easy to carry them out and it depended on complex factors and suitable security conditions. He also said that during Operation Cast Lead Hamas had had a number of "surprises" for Israel, such as firing long-range rockets. However, he said, Hamas had "more surprises," which for the time being were being kept under wraps because of the circumstances on the ground (Hamas's PALDF forum, June 21, 2009).

## Judea and Samaria

■ IDF forces continued their counterterrorism activities in Judea and Samaria, detaining dozens of operatives suspected of terrorist activities, even as attempts to carry out terrorist attacks continued. The prominent incidents were the following:

● **June 18:** A Molotov cocktail was thrown at an Israeli vehicle east of Qalqilya. There were no casualties and no damage was done (IDF Spokesman, June 18, 2009).

● **June 17:** A Palestinian woman tried to stab an IDF soldier at the Te'enim checkpoint near Tulkarm. An IDF force subdued her and confiscated the knife (IDF Spokesman, June 17, 2009).

### Continued easing of conditions for Palestinians in Judea and Samaria

■ On June 17 the Vered Jericho crossing (south of the city of Jericho) opened for the free passage of Palestinians from Jericho to the Jordan Valley (IDF Spokesman, June 17).

## The Gaza Strip after Operation Cast Lead

### "Free Gaza" sets sail again

■ On June 25 Free Gaza is planning to send two more boats to the Gaza Strip carrying 40 pro-Palestinian activists (Free Gaza website). One of the boats will carry 15 tons of cement and building materials (Reuters, June 18, 2009).

### International conference to collect donations for rebuilding the Gaza Strip

■ On June 17 and 18 an international conference for the reconstruction of the Gaza Strip met in Istanbul. Under Turkish aegis, the conference was attended by more than 1,000 private individuals, representatives of NGOs and charitable societies, some of them official (such as the Saudi Arabian Amir Naif fund, the Qatar charitable institution and the Red Crescent). The Gaza Strip was represented by the mayor of Gaza City (Al-Quds TV, June 17, 2009).

■ Decisions were made for the aid, programming and funding of more than 400 projects. For example, an agreement was signed by a Turkish company for the construction of 2,000 housing units in the Gaza Strip at a cost of \$20 million. During the conference a total of €350 million was pledged, of them €290 million by the Turkish government.

■ Kanaan Obeid, head of the Arab and International Authority for Rebuilding the Gaza Strip, criticized Egypt for its refusal to allow a delegation from the Gaza Strip to attend the conference, and expressed hope that Egypt, the other Arab countries and Turkey would make it possible to import the “results of the conference” into the Gaza Strip. He said there were plans to supply the Gaza Strip with a million tons of cement and half a million tons of iron (Al-Quds TV, June 17, 2009). Note: the conference held at Sharm el-Sheikh for rebuilding the Gaza Strip allotted enormous sums of money which have not been used, primarily because of the disagreement between Hamas and the Palestinian Authority as to who will control the money.



The final session of the international conference for the rebuilding of the Gaza Strip (Al-Jazeera TV, June 18, 2009).

## Hamas continues strengthening its control of the Gaza Strip

■ The Hamas de-facto administration continues entrenching its control of the Gaza Strip and implementing the process of Islamization. It has begun overseeing the exit of administration workers from the Gaza Strip in order to prevent unmonitored exits [by implication, to Judea and Samaria, which are under Palestinian Authority control] (Hamas de-facto administration interior ministry website, June 18). It also enforces an Islamic religious code on the Gaza Strip: on June 17 the interior ministry, in collaboration with the endowments and religious affairs ministry, began composing “a guide for the Islamic policeman” to create a system of Islamic rules and laws controlling the activities of the police force (Hamas de-facto administration’s interior ministry website, June 17, 2009).

■ Hamas has also taken over focal points of civilian power in the Gaza Strip which were not previously under their control: on June 16 Hamas took over the Friends of the Sick charitable society, and according to Fatah sources, appointed an administrative committee of its own to run it despite the fact that such a committee already existed (Wafa News Agency, June 16, 2009).<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> For further information about the processes of Islamization and further entrenching of Hamas control over the Gaza Strip, see our June 2009 bulletin “The Gaza Strip after Operation Cast Lead: The rebuilding of the civilian and military infrastructure in the Gaza Strip carried out by Hamas” at [http://www.terrorism-info.org.il/malam\\_multimedia/English/eng\\_n/pdf/hamas\\_e074.pdf](http://www.terrorism-info.org.il/malam_multimedia/English/eng_n/pdf/hamas_e074.pdf).

## Former US President Carter visits the Gaza Strip

■ On June 16 former US President Jimmy Carter arrived in the Gaza Strip for a visit. He met with Ismail Haniya, head of the Hamas de-facto administration. Haniya's political adviser, Yussef Rizka, said that Carter had not brought messages directly from the Obama administration. He also said that Carter had offered to head a group of important individuals who would host an internal Palestinian dialogue in Geneva should the one in Cairo fail. He made the same proposal to Omar Suleiman, head of Egyptian general intelligence, who did not express an objection (IslamOnline website, June 16, 2009). During the meeting, Carter presented his hosts with a letter from Gilad Shalit's family, and Hamas promised to deliver it (Al-Arabiya TV, June 16, 2009).

■ Sources in Hamas represented Carter's visit to the Gaza Strip as an official American measure. Senior Hamas figure Musheir al-Masri said that "Carter is not operating only on his own, and I am certain that he is working within the framework of American administration policy." He also said that in the near future Hamas expected to hold public meetings with other Americans and Europeans and that the process of positive change would continue (Ynet, June 16, 2009).

■ According to a report by Amit Cohen on Ma'ariv's website on June 16 quoting "a Palestinian security source" Hamas prevented an attempt on Carter's life during his visit to the Gaza Strip. According to the report, Hamas's security forces uncovered two IEDs placed along the road leading from the Erez crossing into the Gaza Strip, put there to blow up Carter's convoy. Initially the Hamas police denied the items issued by the Israeli media, but according to a forum run by Hamas's security forces, two operatives were detained on the grounds that they had placed the IEDs and wanted to attack Carter, and that one of them had died in prison on June 20<sup>2</sup> (Security forces website, June 20, 2009).

## The Political Arena

### Ehud Barak meets the Egyptian president

■ On June 21 Israeli Defense Minister Ehud Barak visited Egypt. During the visit he met with Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak, Defense Minister Field Marshal Tantawi and head of Egyptian general intelligence, Omar Suleiman. They were joined in a meeting by Egyptian Foreign Minister Ahmed Abu al-Ghait. Barak was accompanied by head of the political-security department of the

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<sup>2</sup> It is unclear who was behind the attempted attack. It might possibly have been carried out by Islamist groups affiliated with the global jihad. According to a report of doubtful reliability, elements within the Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades are suspected of having been behind it (Al-Kufiya website, June 22, 2009).

Israeli Defense Ministry, General (Res.) Amos Gilad. They discussed the situations in the Gaza Strip, Judea and Samaria, and the situations in Iran and Lebanon after the elections.

■ After the meeting Ehud Barak told assembled correspondents that the talks had dealt with many challenges, among them the current situation in Iran, its nuclear program and the influence it would have on the Middle East, the results of the elections in Lebanon, the situation in the Gaza Strip, American President Obama's initiative for regional peace, the negotiations with the Palestinians and Gilad Shalit. In answer to a question from the floor regarding Gilad Shalit, Ehud Barak answered that "at this point there are no negotiations and I would prefer not to make any pronouncements on the subject" (Defense Ministry, June 21, 2009).



Defense Minister Ehud Barak briefs the press (Ariel Hermoni for the Israeli Defense Ministry, June 21, 2009).

## The Internal Palestinian Arena

### The internal Palestinian dialogue

■ The Hamas-Fatah dialogue is still not running smoothly. Hamas and Fatah representatives held meetings of the reconciliation committee in both Gaza City and Ramallah to discuss political detentions (Ma'an News Agency, June 17, 2009). In a goodwill gesture to promote the success of the discussions, Mahmoud Abbas authorized the Palestinian Authority's security forces to release 20 Hamas detainees (Al-Shaala website, June 20, 2009). Sources within Fatah assured Hamas it was the first round of a series of releases which would continue in the future (*Felsteen*, June 22, 2009).

■ However, the Palestinian Authority's security forces continued detaining Hamas activists in Judea and Samaria. In retaliation, Hamas's security forces detained Fatah activists in the Gaza Strip (Al-Ahed website, June 20, 2009). Because of the detentions, sources within Hamas said they doubted whether a reconciliation could be reached between Hamas and Fatah in the near future. Sami Abu Zuhri, senior Hamas figure, said that the fact that Fatah has not stopped the detentions proved that they were not serious (BBC radio, June 19, 2009).



■ Khaled Mashaal, head of the Hamas political bureau in Damascus, said that there were a number of obstacles preventing a reconciliation. He noted the intervention of the United States and the international quartet, which impose pre-conditions on the Palestinians [i.e., Hamas], and the activities of the Palestinian Authority's security forces against Hamas in Judea and Samaria. Nevertheless, he said, the only option was national reconciliation (*Al-Sharq*, Qatar, June 20, 2009).

### **Mahmoud Abbas visits Syria**

■ On June 20 Palestinian Authority Chairman Mahmoud Abbas met in Damascus with Syrian President Bashar Assad and the heads of the Syrian administration. They discussed the internal Palestinian efforts at reconciliation, the results of Mahmoud Abbas's visit to the United States and the conditions for the peace process expressed by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in his speech at Bar Ilan University. Mahmoud Abbas and Assad stressed the need for a united Arab position regarding Israeli policy which, they claimed, raised obstacles to the establishment of a sovereign Palestinian state (Wafa News Agency, June 20, 2009). After the meeting, Saeb Erekat, head of the PLO's negotiating department, said that the two had agreed on everything related to the principle of "peace in return for comprehensive withdrawal and not before" (Al-Arabiya TV, June 20, 2009).

## **Responses to the speech given by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, continued**

### **Egypt**

■ Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak responded to the speech in the *Wall Street Journal*. He appealed to Israelis, Palestinians, the Arab countries and the international community to exploit the historic opportunity to reach an agreement. He said that "the priority should be to resolve the permanent borders of a sovereign and territorially contiguous Palestinian state, based on the 1967 lines, as this would unlock most of the other permanent status issues, including settlements, security, water and Jerusalem," and that "Israel's relentless settlement expansion...together with its closure of Gaza," must end. He required of the Palestinians that they "continue to develop their institutional capacity while overcoming their division to achieve their aspirations for statehood" (*Wall Street Journal*, June 19, 2009).

■ The Egyptian establishment press praised Mubarak's article, representing it as a firm response to Netanyahu, claiming he had returned the ball to Israel's court. The press also referred to the article as the initiation of a new Egyptian public diplomacy which appealed directly to the decision-makers in the United States which, it claimed, was usually attentive only to the positions presented by Israel (*Al-Gumhuriya*, June 21, 2009).

## The Palestinian Authority

■ Palestinian Authority Prime Minister Salam Fayyad gave a speech at Al-Quds University in Abu Dis, Jerusalem, in response to Netanyahu's speech at Bar-Ilan University, in which he discussed the Palestinian Authority's position regarding the renewal of the negotiations. He called on Israel to freeze building in the settlements, to lift the "siege" of the Gaza Strip and to end its security activities in Judea and Samaria which, he said, harmed the Palestinian Authority's efforts to ensure security. He also said that the Palestinians had to take a number of steps to establish a state side-by-side with the State of Israel, the first of which was rebuilding their security and economic institutions, adding that in his opinion the process could be completed within two years (Palestinian Television, Kuwait News Agency, June 22, 2009).



Palestinian Authority Prime Minister Salam Fayyad (Egyptian TV, June 22, 2009).

## Syria

■ The Syrian media continued its attacks, claiming it showed Israel's lack of a genuine desire for regional peace. They also stated that the speech clearly rejected international decisions regarding peace, especially everything related to the "right of return" and recognition of Israel as a Jewish state (Syrian News Agency, June 15, 2009). According to an editorial in the Syrian establishment newspaper *Tishreen*, the speech proved that there was no real partner for peace and that peace was not a relevant issue in the foreseeable future (*Tishreen*, June 20, 2009).

## Lebanon

■ Lebanese President Michel Suleiman said that the Israeli position expressed by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu was rigid in every aspect regarding the issue of peace and finding a solution for the problem of the Palestinian refugees. He said that in his opinion, in view of Netanyahu's position, the Arab leaders had to unite to implement the Arab peace initiative. He also appealed to the international community, especially the United States and Europe, to exert more pressure on the Israeli government (Lebanese News Agency, June 15, 2009).



## Global responses to the events in Iran

### Overview

■ Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's questionable victory in the elections and the violent riots following the accusations made by the opposition that the election was rigged were perfunctorily covered by the Arab media. Arab leaders and their official media usually did not take a stand on the issue. The Palestinian, Syrian and Lebanese media congratulated Ahmadinejad on his victory and gave scant coverage to information about the demonstrations and bloody clashes taking place in Iran. Other media (e.g., the Saudi Arabian) prominently reported both the claims that the elections were rigged and the ensuing protest demonstrations.



Clashes in Iran (pictures taken by passersby and uploaded to the Internet).

### Saudi Arabia and the Persian Gulf States

■ Official sources in Saudi Arabia did not publicly comment on the events. The media owned or controlled by the regime focused on informative reports and gave more coverage to Ahmadinejad's opponents:

- **Al-Arabiya TV**, owned by Saudi Arabia, was the first to report the riots and reformist claims that the elections had been rigged. It was also the first to report on Iranians killed in the riots and to broadcast pictures. As a result, the Iranians closed Al-Arabiya TV's offices in Tehran.



Young man wounded in the rioting (Al-Arabiya TV, June 17, 2009).

● *Al-Sharq Al-Awsat*, a newspaper published in London but owned by Saudi Arabia, reported that the conflict between Mir Hussein Moussavi and Ahmadinejad was a threat to the existence of the Islamic Republic in Iran. Tareq al-Majid wrote that the riots broke out because of a struggle over power, the deteriorating economic situation, the lack of personal freedom and government oppression. He said that the question was now the legitimacy of the Iranian regime, and that it was clear that a large part of the population was not interested in exporting the revolution and or in Iranian hegemony around the world (*Al-Sharq Al-Awsat*, June 21, 2009).



Left: Moussavi, a headache for Ahmadinejad (*Al-Ra'i*, Kuwait, June 22, 2009). Right: Iranians entangled in the theocracy's beard (*Al-Sharq Al-Awsat*, June 21, 2009).

## Qatar

■ *Al-Jazeera TV*, owned by Qatar and routinely sympathetic to the terrorist organizations and radical Islam, has offered only laconic reports of the events in Iran while hinting at its support of the Iranian regime. Commentators broadcasting the events reported the outbreak of the riots in the context of the election results and not as a broader protest against the Iranian regime.

## Egypt

■ The Egyptian media have generally not voiced an official opinion but there is support for Moussavi's reform movement. For example, according to *Al-Gumhuriya*, "Moussavi's supporters used clubs to drive Ahmadinejad's supporters from the streets of Tehran" (*Al-Gumhuriya*, June 16, 2009).

## Syria

■ The Syrian leadership did not issue an official reaction. The Syrian media, controlled by Assad's regime, have represented Ahmadinejad as an admired regional leader and have ignored the violent riots taking place. Editorials stated that anyone criticizing the elections results was interfering in Iran's internal affairs.

## Lebanon

■ George Alam wrote in *Al-Safir* that Ahmadinejad's victory was likely to have a direct influence on the contacts between the coalition and the opposition for forming the new Lebanese government and choosing a chairman for the Parliament, since Ahmadinejad and his political influence on Lebanon had to be taken into consideration. He said that the Lebanese coalition camp was of the opinion that Ahmadinejad's victory might make Hezbollah more popular in Lebanon, encourage contacts for forming a national unity government and include the issue of support for the "resistance" [i.e., terrorism] within governmental guidelines. He added that the optimism of the March 14 Alliance (which won the elections) was turning into vigilance, and that the Alliance was currently examining the regional significance of Ahmadinejad's election (*Al-Safir*, June 16, 2009).



Khamenei sits on the ballot box while the Iranian masses demonstrate for liberty (*Al-Mustaqbal*, Lebanon, June 20, 2009).

## The Palestinians

### The Palestinian Authority

■ The daily *Al-Hayat Al-Jadeeda*, affiliated with the Palestinian Authority, noted that the riots would not end soon because it was a question of a struggle within the Iranian regime and not a matter of crowds in the street. Columnist Hafez al-Barghouti compared the events to those in the Palestinian Authority, claiming that the split in the Iranian leadership was similar to that in the Palestinian leadership, and the reason the regime was toppling. However, he added that the Palestinians were not a factor in what was happening in Iran (*Al-Hayat Al-Jadeeda*, June 21, 2009).

### Hamas and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad

■ Hamas's newspaper *Felesteen* and its website Palestine-Info have given almost no coverage to the events in Iran, and try to keep the Palestinian issue at the top of their agenda.

■ Ramadan Shalah, secretary general of the Palestinian Islamic Jihad, sent a note to Iranian Supreme Leader Khamenei and to President-elect Ahmadinejad, congratulating them on the election results. He said he marveled at their "victory," calling it a victory for the Palestinians as well and for "all the world's oppressed and free people" (PalToday website, June 16, 2009).