



Intelligence and Terrorism
Information Center

News of Terrorism and the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict

November 17-24, 2009



Palestinian Authority Chairman Mahmoud Abbas shakes hands with Argentinean President Cristina Kirchner during his visit to South America (Wafa News Agency, November 23, 2009). In various interviews he praised the so-called "popular resistance" expressed by the demonstrations in Bil'in and Na'alim protesting the security fence, but said that the Palestinians followed the path of peace and negotiations, and did not want a new intifada.

Overview

- Rocket and mortar shell fire into Israeli territory from the Gaza Strip increased this past week, with four rocket and two mortar shell hits. In response, on three separate occasions the Israeli Air Force attacked terrorist tunnels and sites for manufacturing weapons. Hamas spokesmen represented the attacks as so-called "Israeli escalation" and threatened they would not sit idly by.
- A delegation of senior Hamas figures arrived in Cairo for meetings with the Egyptians and the German mediator regarding the release of Gilad Shalit. According to reports in the media, the prisoner exchange deal is nearing completion. Hamas said in a statement that the conditions were not yet ripe. The Israeli prime minister also lowered expectations, saying that the details for the release of Gilad Shalit had not yet been agreed on.

Important Events

The Gaza Strip

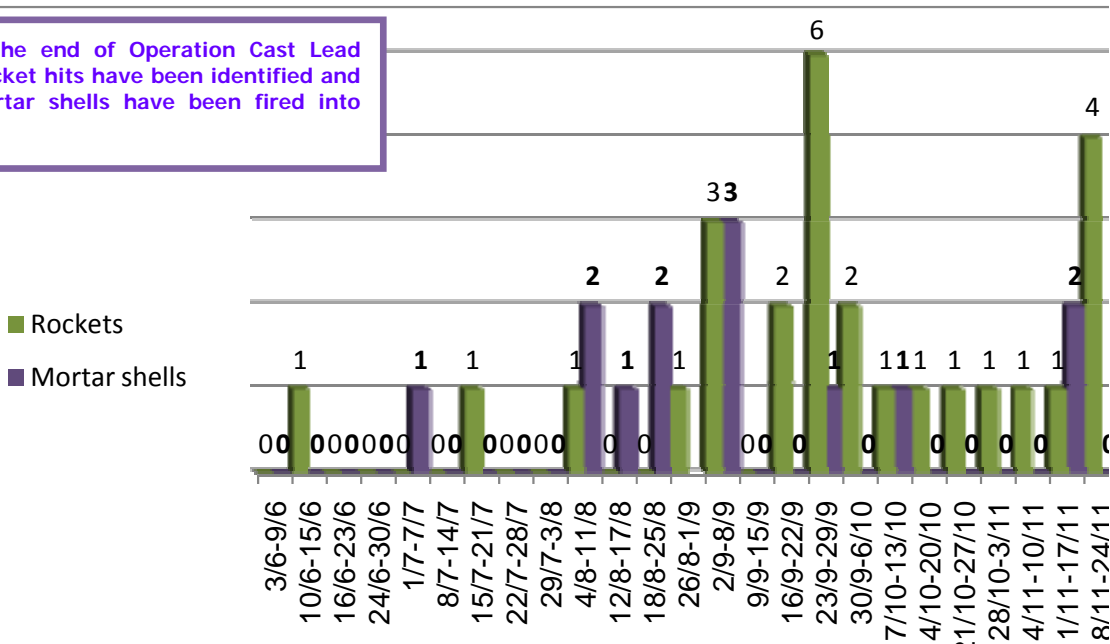
Rocket and mortar shell fire

■ This past week there was an increase in the amount of rocket and mortar shell fire into Israeli territory from the Gaza Strip. Four rocket hits were identified in open areas near towns. There were no casualties and no damage was done. On November 16 two mortar shell were fired. There were no casualties and no damage was done.

■ On November 18 an IED was used to attack an IDF force near the security fence south of the Karni crossing. There were no casualties (IDF Spokesman, November 18, 2009). Light arms were used to attack an IDF force near the Kissufim crossing. There were no casualties. A network calling itself "the supporters of the Sunnah in the wings of Jerusalem" [i.e., Palestine], affiliated with the global jihad , claimed responsibility (Hamas' PALDF forum, November 18, 2009).

Rocket and mortar shells fired into Israeli territory¹

Since the end of Operation Cast Lead 122 rocket hits have been identified and 70 mortar shells have been fired into Israel.



Israeli Air Force response

■ In response to the rocket fire the Israeli Air Force attacked terrorist targets on three separate occasions:

- On November 19 a site for the manufacture of weapons and two tunnels used to smuggle weapons into the Gaza Strip were attacked (IDF Spokesman, November 19, 2009). According

¹ The statistics do not include the mortar shells fired at IDF soldiers patrolling the border fence which fell inside the Gaza Strip.

to Palestinian media reports, three Palestinians were wounded (Qudsnet, PalPress, November 19, 2009).

- On November 22 two Hamas sites for the manufacture of weapons were attacked, one in the northern Gaza Strip and the other in the center. In addition, a tunnel in the southern Gaza Strip used to smuggle weapons was also struck (IDF Spokesman, November 22, 2009). The Palestinian media reported that several Palestinians were wounded and property was damaged.
- On November 24 a site in the Zeitun neighborhood of Gaza City used for the manufacture of weapons and two smuggling tunnels in the Rafah area were attacked.

Hamas responses

■ Sources within Hamas reacted strongly to the the Israeli Air Force activity, representing the strikes as a serious “Israeli escalation:”

- **Salah al-Bardawil**, Hamas spokesman in the Palestinian Legislative Council, said that the objective of the “Israel escalation” was to test the reaction of “international policy” and to examine the influence of the Goldstone Report on the international community (Hamas’ Palestine-Info website, November 22, 2009).

- **The Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades**, Hamas’ military-terrorist wing, warned that in light of the so-called “Zionist escalation” they did not intend to sit idly by, and would respond to every new instance of “aggression” (Sama website, November 22, 2009).

- **Hamad al-Raqab**, Hamas spokesman in Khan Yunis, said that the attacks proved that Israel was not interested in regional stability. He added that the response to the attack would come “at the right time and place” (Hamas’ Paltoday website, November 22, 2009).

■ Sources within the Palestinian Islamic Jihad and the Popular Resistance Committees also responded, saying that they regarded the Israeli Air Force attack as a preliminary to broader Israeli activity in the Gaza Strip (Hamas’ Paltoday website, November 22, 2009).

Judea and Samaria

Counterterrorism Activities

■ The Israeli security forces continued their counterterrorism activities in Judea and Samaria this past week, detaining Palestinians suspected of terrorist activity. There were many incidents, mainly involving stones and Molotov cocktails thrown at Israeli vehicles. As a result, two Israeli civilians sustained minor injuries:

- **November 23:** Stones were thrown at an Israeli vehicle northeast of Ramallah. An Israeli woman sustained minor injuries. Stones were also thrown at an Israeli vehicle in the Jewish community in Hebron. An Israeli civilian sustained minor injuries (IDF Spokesman, November 23, 2009).

- **November 22:** Stones were thrown at an Israeli bus southeast of Nablus. There were no casualties but the bus was damaged (IDF Spokesman, November 22, 2009).
- **November 21:** Stones were thrown at an Israeli vehicle south of Nablus. There were no casualties but the vehicle was damaged (IDF Spokesman, November 21, 2009). Stones were also thrown at Israeli vehicles north of Hebron and northeast of Qalqiliya (IDF Spokesman, November 21, 2009).
- **November 20:** A Molotov cocktail was thrown at an Israeli vehicle south of Nablus. There were no casualties and no damage was done (IDF Spokesman, November 20, 2009).
- **November 19:** A Molotov cocktail was thrown at Israeli buses northeast of Nablus and southwest of Bethlehem. There were no casualties and no damage was done. A Molotov cocktail was thrown at an Israeli vehicle northwest of Ramallah. There were no casualties and no damage was done (IDF Spokesman, November 19, 2009).
- **November 18:** Stones were thrown at an Israeli vehicle west of Bethlehem. There were no casualties but the vehicle was damaged (IDF Spokesman, November 18, 2009).
- **November 17:** Stones were thrown at an Israeli vehicle in the Jewish community in Hebron. There were no casualties and no damage was done. Stones were also thrown at the Qalandia checkpoint south of Ramallah. There were no casualties but a vehicle was damaged (IDF Spokesman, November 17, 2009).

The crossings

- The crossings between Israel and the Gaza Strip were open all week and 528 trucks entered to make deliveries.
- The Rafah crossing was open on November 18-19, and 300 Palestinians returned from Egypt to the Gaza Strip. Egypt announced its intention to open the crossing again on November 23-24 for the Eid al-Adha holiday (Qudsnet, November 19, 2009).

The Political Struggle

Mahmoud Abbas praises the “popular resistance” but claims Palestinians will not initiate a new intifada

- Interviewed by the BBC (See below) Mahmoud Abbas praised the “resistance” of the Palestinians at Bil’in and Na’alin, as opposed to Hamas, which does not “resist.” Sources within Fatah close to Mahmoud Abbas reported that following the failure of the negotiations with Israel, the Palestinian leadership decided to wage a “popular struggle” to force Israel to accept the Palestinians’ demand for a state (Qudsnet, November 20, 2009).

■ The idea of “popular resistance” was expressed during Fatah’s sixth conference on August 2, 2009, when Mahmoud Abbas said that the Palestinians would wage a “popular resistance” against the Israeli settlements, the separation fence and the expropriation of their houses. Mahmoud Abbas praised “those in Bil’in, Na’alin and Jerusalem who are struggling against the settlements and the occupation” (Fatah conference website, August 2, 2009).

■ In a different interview Mahmoud Abbas said that “the Palestinians will not initiate a new intifada against Israel in spite of their frustration and the freezing of America’s peace efforts.” He said that the Palestinians did not want a replay of the 2000-2005 intifada, which caused them great suffering, and that they thought only about the road to peace and negotiations (Ma’an News Agency, November 24, 2009).

Mahmoud Abbas interviewed by the BBC

■ Interview by the BBC in Arabic on November 21, Mahmoud Abbas said that his decision not to seek reelection in the upcoming elections was final and that he was not planning to announce his candidacy. He said that the Palestinians wanted the **Security Council to ratify the Road Map**, and that he therefore was not afraid of a United States veto because, it would contradict Security Council Resolution 1515.² He added the following:

● He said that **apparently the elections for the Palestinian Authority institutions would be postponed** because of Hamas’ objections and the threats to use force to prevent them from being held. He rejected the possibility that Hamas’ Aziz Dweik (chairman of the Palestinian Legislative Council) would be nominated as Palestinian Authority chairman once Mahmoud Abbas’ tenure of office ended, because, he said, Hamas had illegally taken over the Gaza Strip.

● He **accused Hamas of negotiating with Israel in Geneva (with American mediation) about a state with temporary borders**. He claimed that Israel wanted negotiations with Hamas and not the Palestinian Authority because the PA wanted a Palestinian state with the 1967 borders and a just solution within the final status agreement (centering around the issue of the refugees), and that the PA objected to a state with temporary borders. **Mahmoud Abbas said that if the Palestinians were required to make concessions, he would object.**

Negotiations for the Release of Gilad Shalit

² Security Council Resolution 1515 calls for the implementation of the Road Map and the vision of the two-state solution.

■ On November 23 a senior Hamas delegation arrived in Cairo from the Gaza Strip. It included Mahmoud al-Zahar, senior Hamas figure, and Ahmed al-Jaabari, head of the Hamas military-terrorist wing. On November 23 “Hamas sources” told an Al-Arabia TV correspondent that the delegation would meet with the German negotiator to discuss the final wording of the prisoner exchange agreement. The sources also said that the delegation was expected to meet with two senior members of Egyptian general intelligence, aides of intelligence head Omar Suleiman.

■ The delegation’s arrival was accompanied by reports in the Palestinian, Arab, Western and (Israeli) Arab media that the deal was close to completion. Hamas, on the other hand, said in a statement to the press that the reports were “Israeli leaks” whose objective was to exert pressure on Hamas (Hamas’ Palestine-Info website, November 23, 2009). Sources within Hamas told an *Al-Quds Al-Arabi* correspondent that progress had been made but that did not mean that conditions for the exchange were ripe. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu also spoke of lowered expectations, telling a meeting of the Knesset Likud faction that the details of Gilad Shalit’s release had not yet been finalized. He said that it did not depend only on Israel, and that the other side was thinking it over and that it was not yet certain what would happen, what the Palestinians would propose and what Israel would agree to (*Haaretz*, November 24, 2009).

The Internal Palestinian Arena

Hamas’ policy of restrained rocket fire

■ **Fathi Hamad**, minister of the interior of the Hamas de-facto administration, held a press conference at which he discussed Hamas’ policy of restraint regarding rocket fire into Israeli territory. He said (apologetically) that his ministry did not prevent [terrorist] attacks from being carried out from the Gaza Strip, but that they had to be “**coordinated**,” “especially after the last war and the need to help people get back on their feet.” He said that at this point an agreement had been reached with the various organizations whereby they would not launch rockets. However, he added that “if [IDF armored] vehicles come and there is an invasion of our borders, it will be possible to respond” (Al-Quds TV, November 21, 2009).

■ His remarks were prompted by Hamas’ **policy of restrained rocket fire** which has been in effect for the past half year, the result of a variety of considerations, one of which is the desire for a time-out which will allow the movement to rebuild the military-terrorist and civilian infrastructures damaged by Operation Cast Lead. Nevertheless, his remarks led to various denials and clarifications:

● **Fawzi Barhoum**, Hamas spokesman, said that “Fathi Hamad’s remarks were misunderstood.” He claimed that Hamas did not prevent the existence of the “resistance” [i.e., terrorist activities], as accused by Mahmoud Abbas, but that it honored the strategy of not firing rockets, which all the organizations had agreed to (Russia Today, November 22, 2009).

● **Abu Obeida**, Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades spokesman, denied that Hamas’ military wing had issued an announcement indicating that all the organizations had agreed [to stop firing rockets] (Al-Jazeera TV, November 22, 2009).

● **Khaled al-Batash**, senior Palestinian Islamic Jihad figure, wondered about the seriousness of the agreement [to prevent rocket fire] in light of the Israeli Air Force attacks in the Gaza Strip on the night of November 22. He said that the Palestinian Islamic Jihad reserved the right to continue the “resistance” [i.e., terrorist attacks] against Israel (Al-Jazeera TV, November 22, 2009).



Fathi Hamad, interior minister of the de facto Hamas administration, at a press conference (Hamas’ Palestine-Info website, November 22, 2009).