



Intelligence and Terrorism
Information Center

News of Terrorism and the Israeli- Palestinian Conflict (February 17-23, 2010)



Riots in Hebron following the decision of the Israeli government to include the Cave of the Patriarchs and Rachel's Tomb in a project for the preservation of national heritage sites (Wafa News Agency, February 22, 2010).

Overview

- This past week the western Negev was quiet. In Judea and Samaria there was an increase in the number of Israeli vehicles attacked with stones and Molotov cocktails.
- The decision of the Israeli government to include the Cave of the Patriarchs and Rachel's Tomb in a project for the preservation of national heritage sites led to a wave of violent protests and angry responses from Palestinian Authority, Fatah and Hamas spokesmen. The most serious were in Hebron, where there were riots and protest marches on February 22 and 23.

Important Events

Gaza Strip

Rocket and Mortar Shell Fire

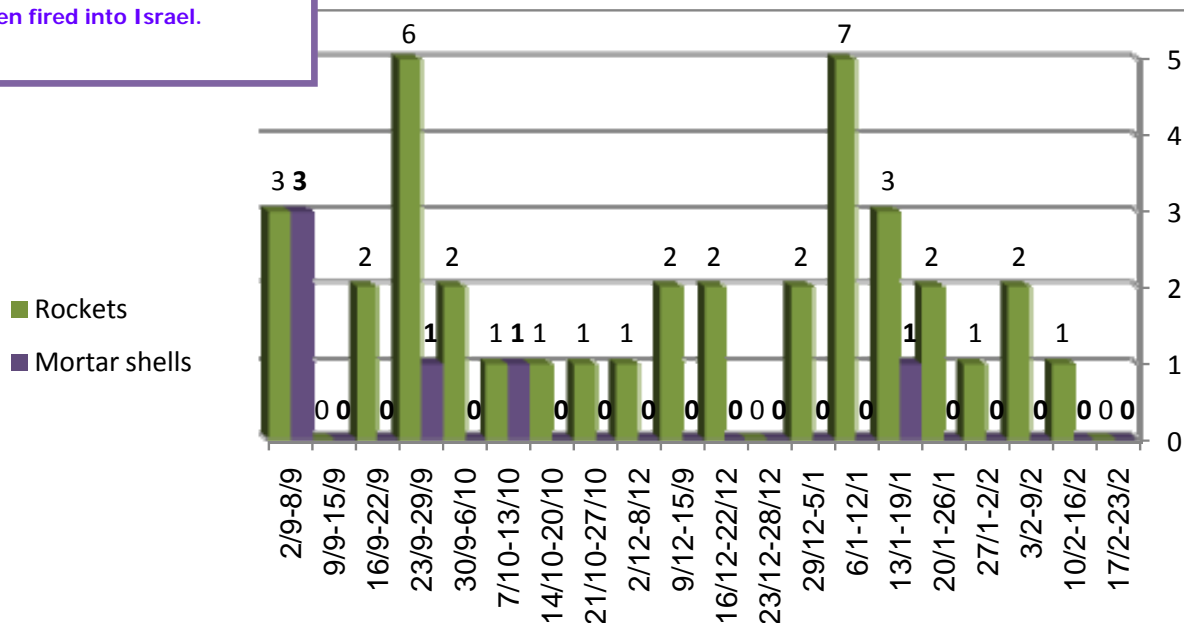
■ During the past week no rocket or mortar shell hits were identified in Israeli territory. Two hits (apparently mortar shells) were identified near the security fence inside the Gaza Strip. The military-terrorist wing of the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine claimed responsibility for the rocket fire, aimed at an IDF force (Oudsnet website, February 18, 2010).

■ There were two additional incidents:

- **February 18** – An IED was detonated to attack an IDF patrol, causing minor injuries to a soldier. Another IED was discovered during a search of the area. The military wing of the Palestinian Liberation Front claimed responsibility (Oudsnet website, February 18, 2010).
- **February 20** – A suspicious squad of Palestinians was identified and an IDF force opened fire. The military wing of the DFLP and Fatah’s Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades claimed responsibility. According to an announcement number of operatives were wounded (Al-Shura News Center website, February 20, 2010).

Rockets and Mortar Shells Fired into Israeli Territory¹

Since the end of Operation Cast Lead 145 hits have been identified and 71 mortar shells have been fired into Israel.



¹ The statistics do not include the mortar shells fired at IDF soldiers patrolling the border fence which fell inside the Gaza Strip.
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Responsibility Claimed for Rocket Fire in “Support” of the Cave of the Patriarchs

■ **The Salah al-Din Brigades**, the military-terrorist wing of the Popular Resistance Committees, claimed responsibility for firing an RPG at an IDF patrol in the Beit Lahia region. The network stated that it had attacked the soldiers to “support” the Cave of the Patriarchs and “the holy places” because of the Israeli government decision to include them in a project for the preservation of national heritage sites (PRC website, February 22, 2010). **No such event was identified on the ground.**

Judea and Samaria

Counterterrorism Activities

■ This past week the Israeli security forces continued their preventive counterterrorism activities in Judea and Samaria, detaining Palestinians suspected of terrorist activities and confiscating weapons. **There was an increase in the number of Israeli vehicles attacked with stones and Molotov cocktails.** One Israeli civilian sustained minor injuries.

■ The incidents included:

- **February 22** – A Palestinian arrived at a checkpoint south of Nablus armed with a gun and threatened an Israeli civilian. IDF soldiers overcame him. Examination proved the gun to be a toy. In another incident, an IED and a knife were found among the tools of a Palestinian at a checkpoint east of Nablus (IDF Spokesman, February 22, 2010).
- **February 22** – Stones were thrown at an Israeli vehicle southwest of Bethlehem. There were no casualties and no damage was done. A Molotov cocktail was thrown at an Israeli vehicle southeast of Qalqilya. There were no casualties but the vehicle was damaged (IDF Spokesman, February 22, 2010).
- **February 21** – Stones were thrown at an Israeli bus southwest of Bethlehem. There were no casualties but the bus was damaged (IDF Spokesman, February 21, 2010).
- **February 18** – A Molotov cocktail was thrown at an Israeli bus southwest of Bethlehem. There were no casualties but the vehicle was damaged (IDF Spokesman, February 18, 2010).
- **February 17** – Stones were thrown at three Israeli vehicles west of Bethlehem. There were no casualties and no damage was done. Stones were also thrown at an Israeli vehicle southeast of Bethlehem, causing minor injuries to an Israeli civilian and damaging the vehicle. Stones were thrown at Israeli vehicles southeast of Qalqilya. There were no casualties and no damage was done. A Molotov cocktail was thrown at an Israeli vehicle west of Ramallah. There were no casualties but the vehicle was damaged (IDF Spokesman, February 17, 2010).
- **February 17** – A Border Police force at a checkpoint northwest of Jenin discovered four pipe bombs hidden in the tools of a Palestinian youth.

Palestinian Security Forces Find Rocket

■ As part of the cooperation between the Palestinian Authority security forces and the IDF, the PA security forces recently turned over to Israel a **rocket which had apparently been manufactured in Judea or Samaria**. It would have been launched into the center of Israel. The Palestinian security forces discovered the rocket following advance information (IDF Spokesman, February 22, 2010).

Rightwing Extremists Barricade Themselves in the Ancient Synagogue in Jericho

■ On February 22, 35 rightwing extremists infiltrated into the ancient synagogue in Jericho (administered by the Palestinian Authority). They were forcibly evacuated by the Israeli security forces and taken for interrogation (*Haaretz*, February 22, 2010).

Developments in the Gaza Strip

The Crossings between Israel and the Gaza Strip

■ This past week the crossings were open, **allowing for the passage of 244 trucks**.

The Political Struggle

Palestinian Responses and Protests against the Israeli Government's Decision to Include the Cave of the Patriarchs and Rachel's Tomb as Part of a National Heritage Preservation Project

■ On February 21, during a special government meeting at Tel Hai in the north of Israel, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu announced that the government of Israel would include the Cave of the Patriarchs in Hebron and Rachel's Tomb in Bethlehem in a project for the preservation of national heritage sites. The announcement was met with strong protests in the Palestinian Authority. Notable were a Fatah-organized strike which closed the stores in **Hebron**, and riots which broke out in the city.

■ The Israeli and Palestinian media reported there were protest marches in Hebron on February 22. About 100 Palestinians marched to the Cave of the Patriarchs and threw stones at IDF soldiers. One soldier sustained slight injuries. In addition, the Fatah branch for the Hebron district announced a general strike of all Hebron's key institutions, including schools and universities (NRG, Ynet, Ma'an News Agency, February 21, 2010). There were also reports of riots on February 23 in Shuafat in East Jerusalem which were dispersed by the Israeli security forces (Wafa News Agency, February 23, 2010).



Riots in Hebron after the Israeli government decision to include the Cave of the Patriarchs and Rachel's Tomb in a project for the preservation of national heritage sites (Wafa News Agency, February 22, 2010).

- Some of the Palestinian Authority, Fatah and Hamas responses were the following:
 - **Saeb Erekat**, head of the PLO's negotiating team, said in an Al-Jazeera TV interview that he strongly denounced the "grave" decision. He said that **Israel could not make a show of sovereignty over the Cave of the Patriarchs or Rachel's Tomb because they were part of the territories occupied in 1967**. He added that the Palestinian Authority was trying to get the international community to make decisions recognizing a Palestinian state with the 1967 borders (Al-Jazeera TV, February 21, 2010).
 - **Sheikh Taysir al-Tamimi**, a judge in the Shari' [Islamic religious law] Supreme Court said that the decision "was a declaration of war on the holy places of Islam in Palestine and will lead to a regional religious war which will threaten the security of the Middle East and the entire world." He also said the decision was part of the Israeli prime minister's "aggression toward Al-Aqsa mosque and his plan to take it over, destroy it and build a synagogue [instead]" (Wafa News Agency, February 21, 2010).
 - **Salah al-Bardawil**, spokesman for the Hamas faction in the Palestinian Legislative Council, said that the decision set a serious precedent whose intention was to Judaize Jerusalem. He added that it had to be met not only with the mobilization of Palestinians, but with an emergency mobilization of Arabs and Muslims (Hamas' Palestine-info website, February 21, 2010).
 - **Kifah al-Awiwi**, secretary of the Fatah branch in Hebron, said that the Cave of the Patriarchs was an Islamic mosque and that the Jews had no right to interfere in its affairs. He called for the preservation of Hebron's and the Cave of the Patriarch's Arab character and for every effort to be made to "refute the claims of the Israeli government that its only agenda is settlement" (Ma'an News Agency, February 21, 2010).

Remarks Made by Salam Fayyad at Bila'in

■ **Salam Fayyad**, Palestinian prime minister, spoke at a rally held on February 19 at Bila'in to commemorate the anniversary of the struggle against the Israeli "separation" fence. His themes included:

- **Support for the struggle of the residents of Bila'in.** He called on them to continue until "the end of the occupation."
- **Praise for the support the struggle had won in the international arena and even in Israel**, for its spread to all areas of the West Bank close to the fence, and for the shaheeds who died during the struggle.
- **Praise for the concept of "popular resistance."** He said it had led to many European countries' distinguishing between products manufactured in the settlements and those manufactured by Palestinians. He added that countries like Norway and Denmark no longer invested in companies which had connections with the settlements.
- **A call for continued action for the establishment of the Palestinian state** by framing institutions and completing the infrastructure necessary for a state. He added that he was referring of all the areas of the West Bank including what was known as Area C, i.e. the Jordan Valley and East Jerusalem, which he called "the eternal capital" of the state of Palestine (Palestinian Authority TV, February 19, 2010).