



**The Meir Amit Intelligence  
and Terrorism Information Center**

## **News of Terrorism and the Israeli- Palestinian Conflict**

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### **February 2-8, 2011**



**Ismail Haniya, head of the de facto Hamas administration, welcomes Ayman Nofel on his return to the Gaza Strip after he escaped from an Egyptian prison (Ma'an News Agency, February 6, 2011).**

#### **Overview**

- Sporadic fire from the Gaza Strip into the western Negev continued this past week. One rocket hit and seven mortar shell hits were identified in Israeli territory. There were no casualties and no damage was done.
- Palestinian terrorists who escaped from Egyptian jails returned to the Gaza Strip. One of them was Ayman Nofel, Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades commander of the central Gaza Strip sector. He was welcomed by Ismail Haniya, head of the de facto Hamas administration.
- Following the explosion at the terminal of the gas pipe which runs from Egypt to Jordan, "Egyptian sources" accused the Army of Islam of involvement in both that attack and others carried out in Egypt. The Army of Islam is a jihadist network which operates in the Gaza Strip and was also accused by the Egyptian authorities of involvement in the attack on the Coptic church in Alexandria.

# Important Terrorism Events

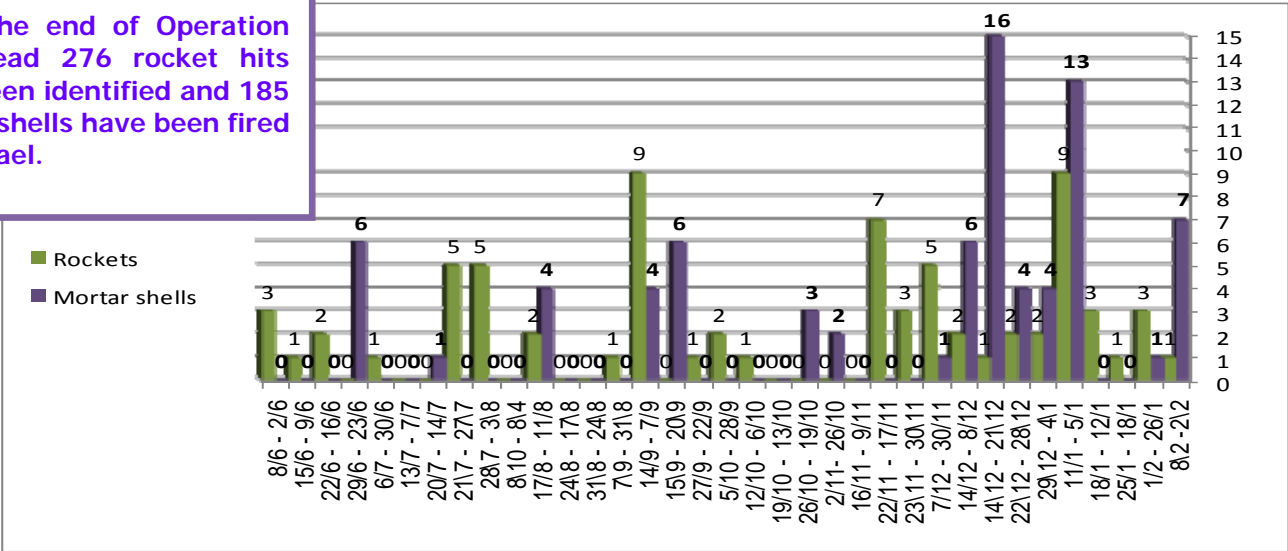
## Gaza Strip

### Rocket and Mortar Shell Fire

■ **This past week one rocket hit was identified in Israeli territory** (February 4). It landed in an open area in the western Negev. Two mortar shell hits were identified on February 6, and five more on February 8. There were no casualties and no damage was done.

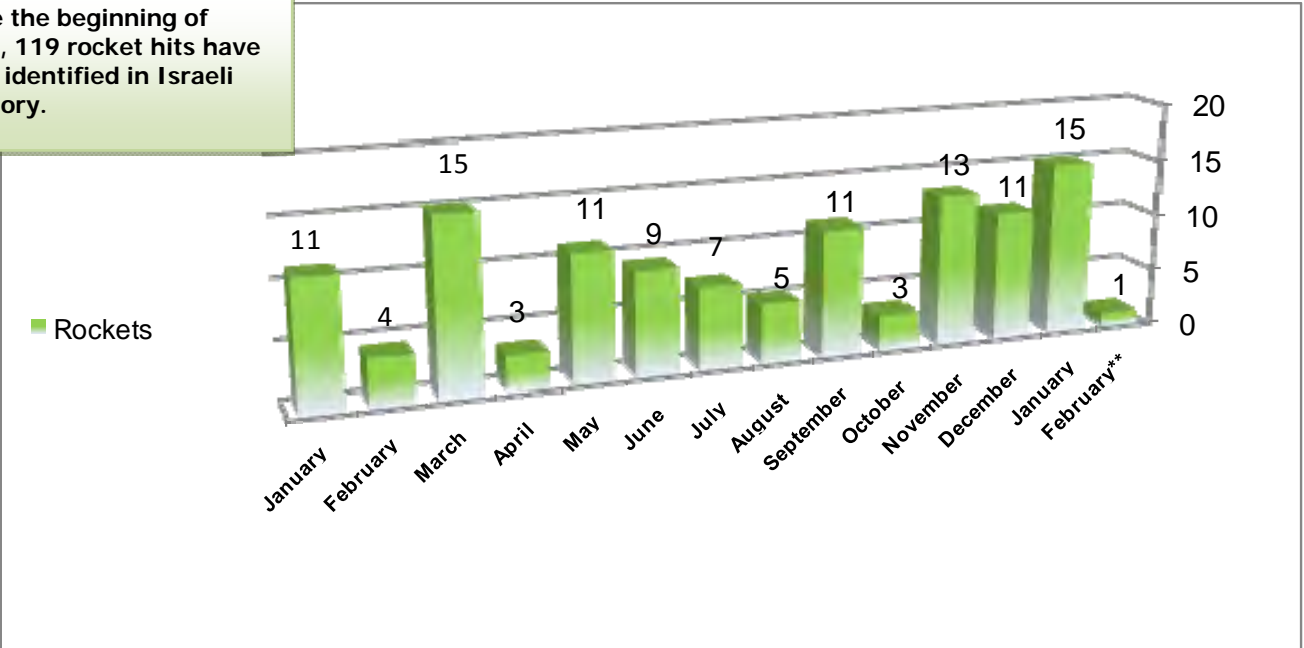
### Rockets and mortar shells fired into Israeli territory<sup>1</sup>

Since the end of Operation Cast Lead 276 rocket hits have been identified and 185 mortar shells have been fired into Israel.



### Rocket Fire - Monthly Distribution

Since the beginning of 2010, 119 rocket hits have been identified in Israeli territory.

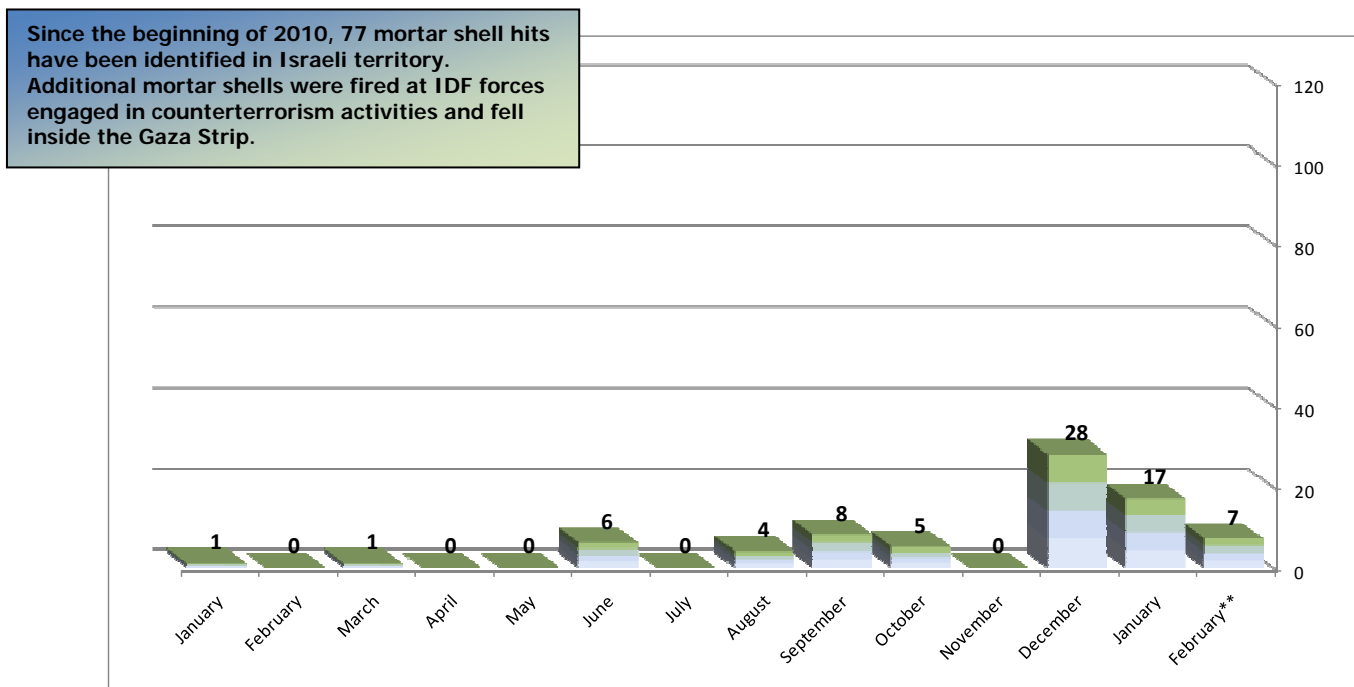


<sup>1</sup> The statistics do not include the mortar shells fired at IDF soldiers patrolling the border fence which fell inside the Gaza Strip.

\* Rocket hits identified in Israeli territory and not in the Gaza Strip.

\*\* As of February 8, 2011.

### Mortar Shell Fire -- Monthly Distribution



\* Mortar shell hits identified in Israeli territory and not in the Gaza Strip.

\*\* As of February 8, 2011.

### Judea and Samaria

#### The Situation on the Ground

■ This past week demonstrations and riots were held at the usual friction points, particularly in the villages of Bila'in and Ni'lin. They expressed solidarity with the Egyptian people in their "popular struggle" against the Egyptian regime. The demonstrators were Palestinians, Israeli civilians and foreigners. They threw stones at the Israeli security forces, who responded with riot control measures (Ma'an News Agency, February 4, 2011).

■ **Salam Fayyad**, Palestinian prime minister, denounced the "escalation" which began, he claimed, with "violent events" carried out by Israeli settlers against Palestinians. He called on the international community to protect the Palestinians (Wafa News Agency, February 2, 2011).

## Developments in the Gaza Strip

### The Crossings

■ This past week between 316 and 140 trucks carrying merchandise and thousands of tons of diesel fuel and gasoline entered the Gaza Strip every day. In addition, 12 tons of strawberries and 563,600 flowers meant for export left the Gaza Strip through the crossings into Israel (Website of the Israeli government coordinator for the territories, February 8, 2011).

### The Hamas Administration Claims a Shortage of Fuels Following the Events in Egypt

■ The Palestinian media reported that since the Egyptian uprising began a significant number of the smuggling tunnels under the Egyptian-Gaza Strip border are no longer being used. According to the tunnel owners, smuggling has been made difficult for the following reasons:

- There is greater deployment of Egyptian security and army forces in the area, hampering the free operation of the tunnels.
- The Sinai Peninsula Bedouins are exploiting the situation and **organizing into armed gangs to hijack trucks carrying merchandise** (Al-Ayam and Qudsnet, February 6, 2011).

■ Following the decrease in tunnel smuggling, the de facto Hamas administration has claimed that since the beginning of February **a shortage of diesel fuel and gasoline has been felt at most of the gas stations in the Gaza Strip**. Ibrahim Jabbar, deputy economic minister in the de facto Hamas administration, said that large quantities of fuel were imported into the Gaza Strip and that the crisis will be resolved in the coming days. However, the ministry instituted fuel rationing (Hamas' Safa News Agency, February 5 and 7, 2011).

### Ayman Nofel, Senior Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades Figure, Escapes from Egyptian Jail and Returns to the Gaza Strip

■ The Palestinian and Arab media reported that since the beginning of the Egyptian uprising 27 Palestinians have escaped from Egyptian prisons and that most of them returned to the Gaza Strip. **Among them was Ayman Nofel, Hamas' Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades commander for the central Gaza Strip sector**. Ayman Nofel was welcomed back to the Gaza Strip by Ismail Haniya, head of the de facto Hamas administration (Al-Akhbar, February 3; Hamas' Palestine-info website, February 5; Ma'an News Agency, February 6, 2011).

### Egyptian Sources Accuse the Army of Islam of Blowing Up the Egyptian Gas Pipe and of Other Terrorist Attacks

■ Egyptian "security sources" stated that operatives belonging to the Army of Islam, a global jihad-affiliated network operating in the Gaza Strip, were apparently involved in several attacks

recently carried out in Egyptian territory, including blowing up a building which belonged to Egyptian national security interrogations in El Arish (February 4), **blowing up a terminal of the pipe which transports gas from Egypt to Jordan** (February 5) and blowing up a church in Rafah (February 6) (Al-Ahram and the Masrawi website, February 6, 2011).<sup>2</sup>

### Egypt Fears Hamas and Hezbollah Subversion and Terrorist Attacks

■ Following the recent events, Egypt has expressed fears that Hamas, Hezbollah and other organizations will exploit the situation to **carry out terrorist attacks, smuggle weapons into the Gaza Strip and harm the Egyptian authorities**. For that reason the Egyptian attorney general's office announced the arrest of five men. Two of them were Palestinians who had infiltrated into Egypt from the Gaza Strip with weapons which apparently belonged to Hamas' Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades. According to another report, eleven Hamas operatives were arrested with weapons, explosives and ammunition in their possession. The claim was also made that Palestinians were captured who had distributed inflammatory propaganda to demonstrators (Al-Yawm Al-Saba'a, February 2; Al-Akhbar, February 3, 2011).

## The Political Struggle

### Severe Palestinian Authority Criticism of Israeli Measures to Ease the Palestinian Economy

■ On February 4, 2011, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Tony Blair, International Quartet envoy to the Middle East, agreed on a series of measures to ease the Palestinian economy. They included the expanding of a Palestinian security presence in the B areas and advancing the construction of schools and Palestinian dwelling units in East Jerusalem (Ynet, February 4, 2011).

■ **Saeb Erekat**, chief of the PLO's negotiating department, called the decision Israeli "lies and cheap games." He called on the Israeli prime minister to stop construction in the settlements and to recognize a Palestinian state within the 1967 borders instead of "avoiding responsibility and spreading lies" (Qudsnet website, February 5, 2011).

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<sup>2</sup> For further information about the involvement of the Army of Islam in terrorist attacks in Egypt, see the February 2, 2011 bulletin, "Exporting terrorism and subversion from the Gaza Strip: in our assessment terrorist organizations in the Gaza Strip may exploit the recent events to increase arms smuggling and infiltrate operatives into Egypt. The Gaza-based jihadist Army of Islam has already been accused of the attack on the Coptic church in Alexandria" at [http://www.terrorism-info.org.il/malam\\_multimedia/English/eng\\_n/pdf/jpc\\_e165.pdf](http://www.terrorism-info.org.il/malam_multimedia/English/eng_n/pdf/jpc_e165.pdf)

## Senior Palestinians Disappointed with the International Quartet's Decision

- On February 5 the International Quartet held a meeting (attended by the UN Secretary General, the Russian foreign minister, American Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, American special envoy to the Middle East George Mitchell and International Quartet envoy to the Middle East Tony Blair). The statement issued after the meeting stressed the need to end the so-called "occupation which began in 1967" through negotiations, to resolve the issues still on the agenda and to implement the two-state solution. The International Quartet expressed support for ending the negotiations by September 2011 and disappointment over the end of the building freeze in the settlements (European Union Council website, February 5, 2011).
- **Senior members of the Palestinian Authority expressed disappointment with the result of the meeting and its final statement**, which "fell short of expectations." **Yasser Abd Rabbo**, secretary of the PLO's executive committee, said that the Palestinians had expected a "political breakthrough" but that the statement was biased in favor of Israel and did not advance the peace process in any way (Palestinian Authority TV, February 5; Kuwaiti News Agency, February 7, 2011). **Saeb Erekat** also said the International Quartet's statement fell short of Palestinian expectations, and noted that "the only real danger" to stability in the Middle East was "the Israeli occupation" (Agence France-Presse, February 5, 2011).

## The Palestinian Authority's Continued Activity in the International Arena

- The Palestinian Authority continues its diplomatic campaign for recognition of a Palestinian state within the 1967 borders. **Nassim al-Alam**, in charge of international relations for Fatah, recently visited Central American countries and met with officials in San Salvador (Wafa News Agency, February 6, 2011). **Riyadh al-Maliki**, Palestinian Authority foreign minister, said the PA was in contact with countries belonging to the European Union to gain recognition for the future Palestinian state (Voice of Palestine Radio, February 6, 2011)
- This past week **Surinam** recognized a "free, independent" Palestinian state "within the 1967 borders (Ma'an News Agency, February 2, 2011) and **Belgium** announced it was raising the Palestinian delegation's status to that of embassy. In addition, **Riyadh al-Maliki** said that an agreement had been signed with Kurdistan for a Palestinian consulate (Voice of Palestine Radio, February 6, 2011).

## Reactions to the Events in Egypt

- The Palestinian Authority and Hamas are carefully following the events in Egypt but so far have retained a low media profile. This past week the first Egyptian-related demonstrations were held in the Palestinian Authority and Gaza Strip, some of them in support of Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak and some of them against him.
- On February 2 a demonstration was held in Ramallah in support of President Mubarak attended by, according to reports, hundreds of participants (PalPress website, February 2, 2011). However, on February 5 hundreds of Palestinians demonstrated in Ramallah in support of the Egyptian people and against President Mubarak. Dozens of Palestinians participated in a demonstration in Bethlehem (Ma'an News Agency, February 5, 2011).



Demonstration in support of the Egyptian people in Ramallah  
(Hamas' Safa News Agency, February 5, 2011).

- **In the Gaza Strip**, hundreds of Palestinians demonstrated in front of the Egyptian embassy to express solidarity with the Egyptian demonstrators and against the Mubarak regime (PIJ Paltoday website, February 3, 2011).