



The Meir Amit Intelligence  
and Terrorism Information Center

## News of Terrorism and the Israeli- Palestinian Conflict

February 16-22, 2011



Demonstration held in Ramallah to protest the American veto in the Security Council (Wafa News Agency, February 20, 2011)

### Overview

- This past week one rocket hit was identified in Israeli territory. In addition, an IDF force killed three terrorist operatives who were placing an IED near the Gaza Strip security fence.
- The United States vetoed a Palestinian proposal in the UN Security Council to condemn the Israeli settlements in Judea and Samaria. The Israeli prime minister praised the veto, saying that Israel remained committed to advancing peace both with its neighbors in the region and with the Palestinians. Senior Palestinian Authority and Fatah figures denounced the veto. Protest demonstrations, attended by thousands of Palestinians, were held in Ramallah and other cities in Judea and Samaria.

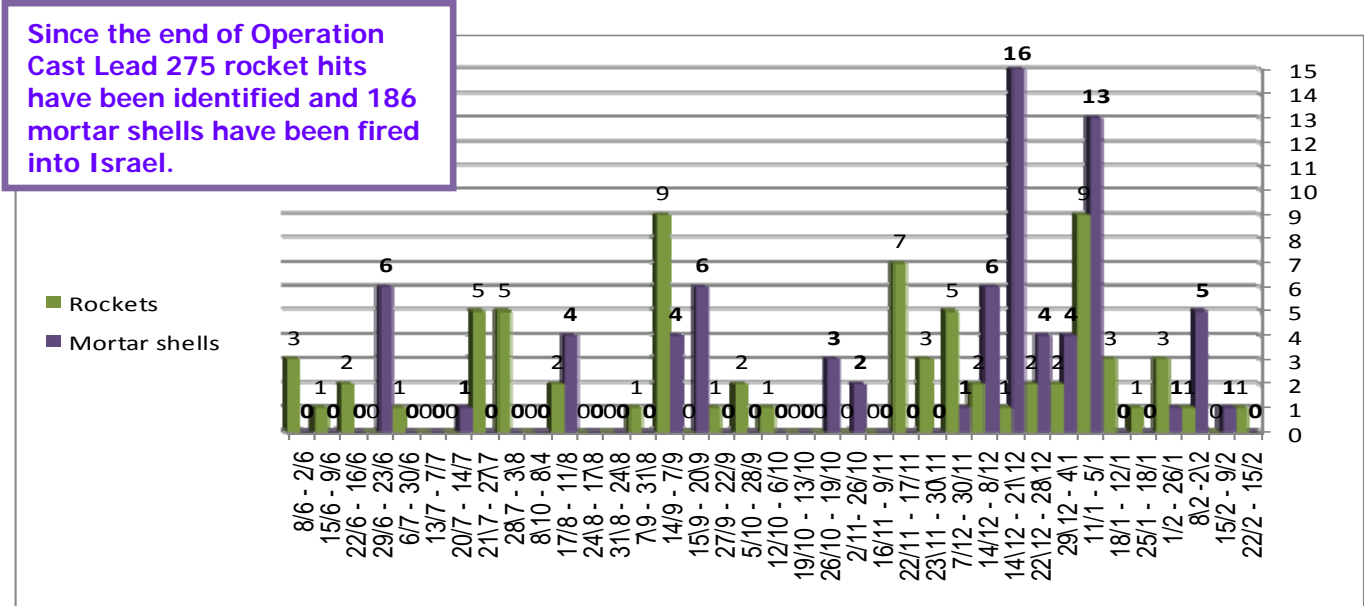
# Important Terrorism Events

## Gaza Strip

### Mortar Shell Fire

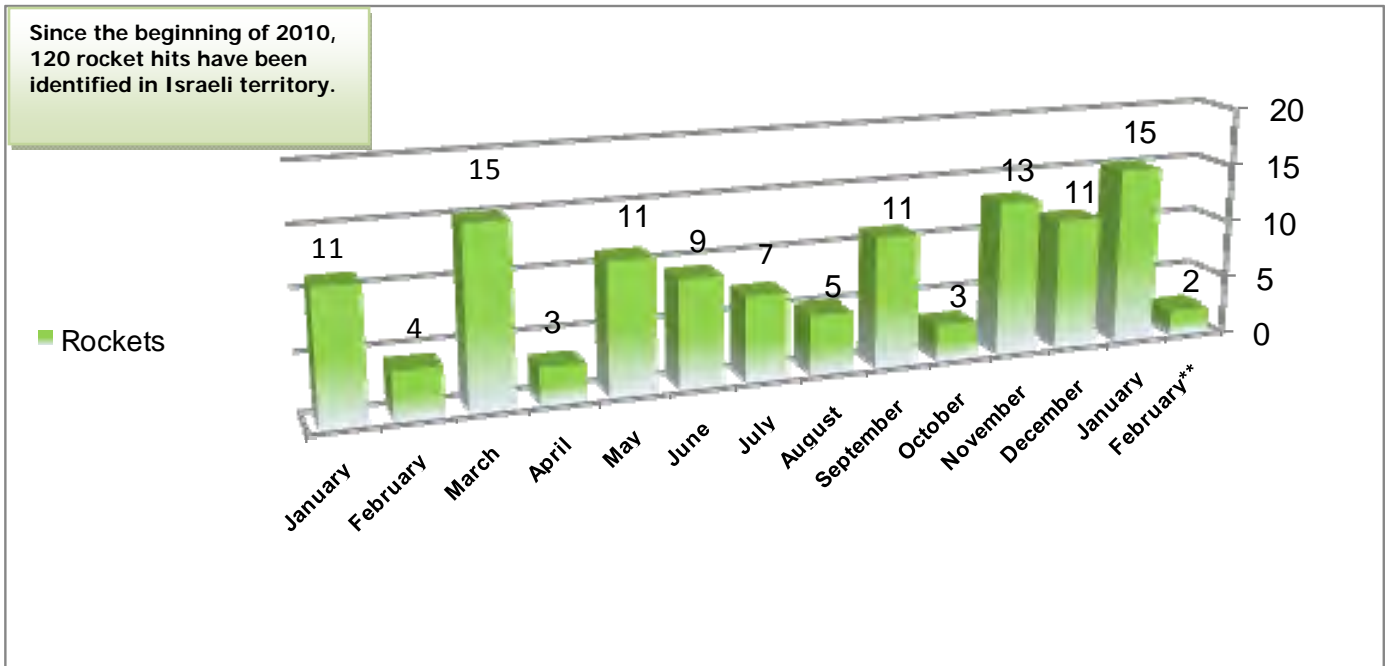
■ This past week one rocket hit was identified in Israeli territory (February 19). The rocket fell in an open area in the western Negev; there were no casualties and no damage was done. A global jihad-affiliated network calling itself the Uniqueness of Allah and Jihad claimed responsibility for the attack (Network website, February 19, 2011).

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



<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.

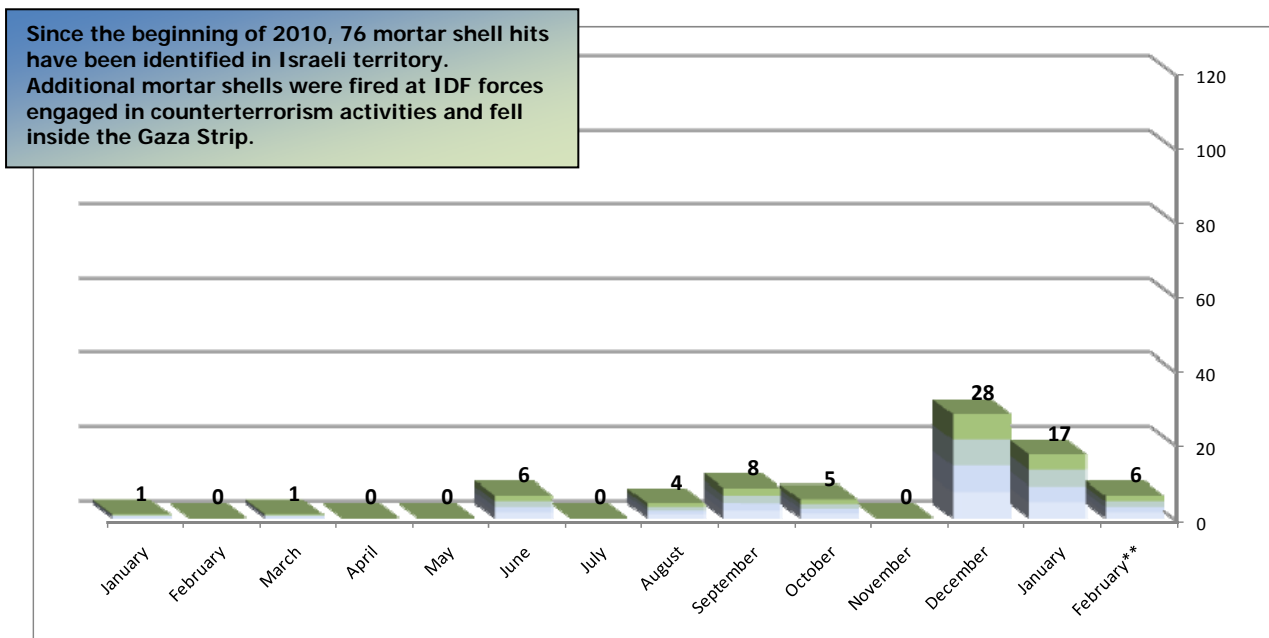
## Rocket Fire -- Monthly Distribution



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

\*\* As of February 22, 2011.

## Mortar Shell Fire -- Monthly Distribution



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

\*\* As of February 22, 2011.

## IED Attack on IDF Forces

■ On February 17 an IDF force identified a terrorist squad near the security fence in the northern Gaza Strip. The squad was placing an IED. The IDF force shot at the squad, killing three operatives. The Palestinian media reported that three "fishermen" were attacked and killed by IDF forces. The de facto Hamas administration in the Gaza Strip denounced the so-called Israeli "crime." The Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine announced that one of the operatives killed was a DFLP member and had been killed while carrying out "a fighting mission" (IDF Spokesman, Hamas' Palestine-info website and the DFLP website, February 17, 2011).

## Judea and Samaria

### The Situation on the Ground

■ This past week demonstrations and riots were held at the usual friction points, especially in the villages of Bila'in and Ni'lin. They were larger than usual this week in order to mark their sixth anniversary, and hundreds of demonstrators participated. They included, as usual, Palestinians, Israeli civilians and foreigners. The demonstrators threw stones at the IDF forces, who responded with riot-control measures. The media reported that a number of demonstrators had been injured. According to an IDF report, a 17 year-old boy holding a sharp instrument and approaching the IDF forces was shot in the leg with a rubber bullet (Ynet, February 18, 2011).

## Developments in the Gaza Strip

### The Crossings

■ This past week between 67 and 331 trucks carrying merchandise entered the Gaza Strip every day. In addition, more than 500,000 flowers meant for export left the Gaza Strip through the crossings into Israel (Website of the Israeli government coordinator for the territories, January 18, 2011).

■ On February 18 and 19 the Rafah crossing, which had been closed since the beginning of the demonstrations in Egypt, was opened for short periods to enable Palestinians stranded in Egypt to return home. On February 20 **the Egyptian government announced that the crossing would remain open to traffic into the Gaza Strip for an unlimited time** (Ma'an News Agency and Al-Ayam, February 20, 2011).



Palestinians wait at the Rafah crossing (Al-Ayam, February 20, 2011)

■ The Palestinian media reported that the national economic ministry of the de facto Hamas administration decided to forbid or limit the import of Israeli clothing, furniture, various paper products, soft drinks, canned goods and other food items, and various chemicals into the Gaza Strip. That was because such items are smuggled in through the tunnels and to ease the market for local trade and industry (PalPress website, February 13, 2011).

### Ismail Haniya Invites Sheikh Yussef al-Qardawi to Visit the Gaza Strip

■ Ismail Haniya, head of the de facto Hamas administration in the Gaza Strip, invited Sheikh Yussef al-Qardawi, who recently returned to Egypt from Qatar, to visit the Gaza Strip. Ismail Haniya also thanked al-Qardawi in the name of the Hamas administration for his support of the Palestinian cause and for his February 18 **call for mass rallies in Egypt to lift the Israeli "siege" of the Gaza Strip**. Sheikh al-Qardawi, who is affiliated with the Muslim Brotherhood and considered one of the most important living Sunni Muslim clerics, is the source of religious authority for Hamas. According to a Hamas website, **al-Qardawi accepted the invitation**, promised to try to visit and praised the Gaza Strip's firm stance (Hamas' Palestine-info website, February 19, 2011).

■ On February 18 Qardawi, who was expelled from Egypt in 1997 and found refuge in Qatar, appeared at a mass rally in Tahrir Square in Cairo and delivered the Friday sermon. His speech, which dealt with the Egyptian revolution, sent a message of unity between Muslims and Christians. **However, he ended his speech with a call for the "liberation" of Al-Aqsa mosque and asked the Egyptian army to open the Rafah crossing and allow convoys to enter the Gaza Strip** (Al-Jazeera TV, February 18, 2011).

## The Political Front

### Reactions to the American Veto in the Security Council

■ On February 18 the UN Security Council considered a Palestinian proposal calling for a condemnation of the Israeli settlements in Judea and Samaria. The United States exercised its veto during the vote. The other members of the Council voted in favor of the proposal. According to media reports, before the vote President Obama called Palestinian Authority Chairman Mahmoud Abbas and asked him not to put the proposal to a vote (Ma'an News Agency, February 17, 2010).

■ **Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu** praised the American veto. He said that "Israel deeply appreciates this decision and we remain committed to advancing peace both with our neighbors in the region and with the Palestinians."<sup>2</sup>

■ **Senior Palestinian Authority figures** denounced the American veto. **Saeb Erekat**, member of the PLO's executive committee, claimed it was "amazing" and could not be justified, and asked demanded the United States prove it opposed the settlements (Kuwaiti News Agency, February 19, 2011). **Tawfiq al-Tirawi**, also a member of the PLO's executive committee, claimed that the veto exposed the true face of the United States and was an expression of "the lie of freedom and democracy" which the United States asked from the rest of the world. He also called for a "day of rage" in the Palestinian Authority on Friday, February 25 (Ma'an News Agency, February 19, 2011).

■ **Yasser Abd Rabbo**, PLO secretary general, said that **the Palestinians would now appeal to the UN General Assembly for a condemnation of Israel**. He later added that the proposal to condemn the settlements would be brought before the Security Council again. He hinted that the Palestinians had "additional political means" and expected to use them (Agence France-Presse, February 19, 2011).

■ On February 20 thousands of Palestinians demonstrated in Ramallah and other cities in Judea and Samaria to protest the American veto (Wafa News Agency, February 20, 2011).

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<sup>2</sup> <http://www.pmo.gov.il/PMOEng/Communication/Spokesman/2011/02/spokestart200211.htm>



Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine demonstration in Nablus to protest the American veto (Wafa News Agency, February 20, 2011)

## The Internal Palestinian Arena

### Remarks about Possible Palestinian Leadership Elections

- **Mahmoud Abbas**, chairman of the Palestinian Authority, said that PA elections would have to include all the Palestinian territories, including Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip. If the Gaza Strip did not participate, he said, elections could not be held (Wafa News Agency, February 17, 2011).
- **Sami Abu Zuhri**, Hamas spokesman (and other Hamas spokesmen), responded to Mahmoud Abbas by saying his remarks reflected the PLO's "confusion" (Hamas' Palestine-info website, February 17, 2011). **Musa Abu Marzuq**, deputy chairman of Hamas' political bureau, again said that the Palestinian Authority was unreliable and illegitimate, and therefore could not supervise elections. He said **that Hamas rejected the PA call for elections** (Hamas' Palestine-info website, February 17, 2011).

### The Palestinian Authority Forms a New Government

- In view of the resignation of the Palestinian government and the attempts to form a new one, Palestinian Authority Prime Minister **Salam Fayyad** called on Hamas to join a unity government. In return, he promised that security control of the Gaza Strip would remain in Hamas hands until the elections, on condition that Hamas abandoned the use of violence (AP and QudsNews, February 20, 2011).
- **Salah al-Bardawil**, senior Hamas figure, rejected Fayyad's proposal, claiming that he did not represent any Palestinian leadership and was not authorized to speak about public issues. He added that Hamas was not involved in violence and therefore did not have to agree to Fayyad's demand (Hamas' Palestine-info website, February 20, 2011).