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The Meir Amit Intelligence and
Terrorism Information Center

The Agreement for the Liberation of Abducted Israeli Soldier Gilad Shalit – Initial Report¹



The Israeli government holds a special meeting called to vote on the agreement to liberate Gilad Shalit (Photo: Avi Ohayon for the Israeli Government Press Office, October 11, 2011).

Overview

1. On October 11, 2011, the Israeli government held a special meeting where a large majority (26 in favor, three against) voted in favor of the agreement with Hamas for the release of abducted IDF soldier Gilad Shalit, held in Hamas captivity without Red Cross visits since June 2006. The agreement was supported by the heads of the Israeli defense

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establishment, including the Chief of Staff, the head of the Israel Security Agency and the head of the Mossad.

2. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu began the meeting with the announcement that an agreement had been reached which would "**return Gilad Shalit to Israel alive and well.**" According to an announcement, the negotiations, which were held in the past with the German mediator, were renewed in recent weeks in Cairo with **Egyptian government mediation**. They led to the initialing of an agreement on Thursday, October 6, and on October 11 the final agreement was signed.²

3. There was, said Netanyahu, "an inbuilt tension between the desire to bring back an abducted soldier, or citizen, and the need to maintain the security of the citizens of Israel... The agreement I am bringing to the Government expresses **the right balance between all of these considerations**"³ (ITIC emphasis). The government decision authorizing the agreement was based on recognition of the fact that the recent dramatic events in the Middle East opened, for a short time, a window of opportunity during which, for the first time, Hamas agreed to be more flexible than in the past. The Israeli concern was that not exploiting the opportunity might endanger Gilad Shalit's welfare and future.

4. The Israeli newspaper Haaretz reported that David Meidan, the prime minister's special negotiator, said that Israel had accepted Hamas' assurances that **Gilad Shalit would be restored safe and well and that his health was good** (Haaretz, October 12, 2011).

Initial Report on the Contents of the Agreement

5. The following are the facts currently known about the agreement, based on authoritative Israeli defense and political sources:

1) Gilad Shalit will be liberated in return for the release of **1027 Palestinian terrorists**, including 27 women terrorists.

2) The terrorists will be released in **two stages**: the **first stage** of 450, plus 27 women terrorists; and the **second stage** of 550 terrorists, the list of whose names o be determined by Israel.

3) **Information about the first 450 terrorists:**

A. **One hundred and ten yes will be released to Judea and Samaria and East Jerusalem.** Half of them will be subject to security restrictions. Among

²Statements by Benjamin Netanyahu at the beginning of the special government session.

³Ibid.

them are **57 Hamas terrorist operatives**; the rest belong to Fatah and other terrorist organizations. During negotiations the final number of terrorists released to Judea and Samaria was reduced from 200 to 110.

B. Two hundred and three terrorist operatives, residents of Judea and Samaria, will be sent to the Gaza Strip or abroad.

C. One hundred thirty-one terrorists will return to the Gaza Strip.

D. Six Israeli Arabs will return to their homes. Most of them have already served long sentences or are no longer young.

4) Twenty-five of the 27 women terrorist operatives will be permitted to return to their homes. Two of them will be deported, one to the Gaza Strip and one abroad. The two who will be deported are:

A. Amna Muna: The terrorist responsible for the seduction, abduction and murder of Israeli teenager Ofir Rahum, 16, from Ashqelon, whom she met on the Internet in 2001.

B. Ahlam Tamimi: Drove the suicide bomber who blew himself up at the Sbarro restaurant in Jerusalem to the target. The attack killed 15 people.

5) Among those to be released in the first stage are 279 prisoners sentenced to life imprisonment.

6) Several leaders and high-ranking terrorist operatives, most of them from Hamas, two from Fatah and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, will not be released:

A. Marwan Barghouti: Was formerly head of **Fatah's** Tanzim in Judea and Samaria. Responsible for many terrorist attacks, including the attack in Sea Food Market restaurant in Tel Aviv, the explosion in the Armon David banquet hall in Hadera and the attack at the Ben-Yehuda street mall in Jerusalem. Sentenced to five consecutive terms of life imprisonment and 40 additional years in prison after having been found guilty of five counts of murder and attempted murder.

B. Abdallah Barghouti: Was an important Hamas operative who manufactured IEDs for suicide bombing attacks. Convicted of involvement in many mass-casualty attacks, among them the attack at Cafe Moment and the Sbarro restaurant in Jerusalem. Also involved in the suicide bombing attack on the #4 bus in Tel Aviv and at the Sheffield Club in Rishon Letzion. His terrorist activities resulted in the deaths of 66 people. Sentenced to 67 consecutive terms of life imprisonment.

C. Ibrahim Hamed: Was commander of **Hamas'** military-terrorist wing in Judea and Samaria. Responsible, among other things, for the suicide bombing attacks in Zion

Square, Cafe Moment and Cafe Hillel in Jerusalem. Also involved in the attack at a bus stop used by soldiers near a military base southeast of Tel Aviv and the attack at the club in Rishon Letzion.

D. **Abbas Sayyid**: Was **Hamas** commander in Tulkarm. Responsible for dispatching the suicide bomber who blew himself up at the Passover Seder in the Park Hotel in Netanya in 2002, killing 30 Israeli civilians; Israel responded with Operation Defensive Shield. Sentenced to 35 consecutive terms of life imprisonment.

E. **Ahmed Saadat**: Was head of the **PFLP** in Judea and Samaria. Responsible for the murder of Israeli Minister Rehavam Zeevi. Sentenced to 30 years in prison.

F. **Jamal Abu al-Hajah**: High-ranking member of **Hamas'** military-terrorist wing in Jenin. Responsible for the suicide bombing attack in Safed in 2002, which killed nine Israeli civilians. Sentenced to nine consecutive terms of life imprisonment.

G. **Hassan Salameh**: Was one of the heads of **Hamas'** military-terrorist wing in Judea and Samaria. Planned the wave of attacks in Israel after Israel killed Hamas operative Yehya Ayash, "the engineer." Among the suicide bombing attacks he planned were two on #18 buses in Jerusalem and one at a bus stop at the Ashqelon Junction. Responsible for the deaths of 46 people and the wounding of scores more. Sentenced to 38 consecutive terms of life imprisonment.

6. Some of the terrorist operatives released will be subject to **security restrictions**, which will include a ban on leaving for abroad and a ban on entering Israeli territory. Terrorists living in East Jerusalem will be forbidden from entering Judea and Samaria and they will have to present themselves to the police every week. They **will also have to commit themselves in writing not to engage in activities against the State of Israel**, and whoever violates the commitment will be punished by Israel.

The Negotiations Leading to the Agreement

7. Correspondents were briefed by Yoram Cohen, head of the Israel Security Agency, and David Meidan, the prime minister's special envoy to the negotiations, and were told the following (quoted by the Walla and Haaretz, Israeli websites, October 11, 2011):

1) **During the past few months six rounds of secret negotiations were held.** Last week, on October 5, **the final round was held in Egypt and a draft was initialed for finalizing the agreement**; it did not include the names of prisoners. Three days ago one more round of negotiations began, ending on the morning of October 11 after 24 hours of deliberations.

2) The breakthrough came after **Hamas altered its position in July 2011**. The first change was the agreement that certain important terrorists from Judea and Samaria

would not be released. The second was a reduction in the quantity of those to be released to their homes in Judea and Samaria to a number Israeli security could digest.

3) **The agreement was signed with in an Egyptian presence.** David Meidan, the Israeli prime minister's envoy, praised the Egyptian mediator, saying that "the Egyptian mediator coerced both us and Hamas. The Egyptians deserve high praise for carrying out the agreement." He also praised the work of German mediator Gerhard Konrad, despite the fact that Hamas had rejected his proposal.

4) **David Meidan signed the agreement for Israel, and Nizar Awadallah signed for Hamas.** (Note: Nizar Awadallah is a member of Hamas' political bureau.) Present in the Hamas delegation was Ahmed Jaabari, head of Hamas' military-terrorist wing in the Gaza Strip, but he did not sign. (Note: According to the October 12 edition of the Arabic newspaper Al-Hayat, Ahmed Jaabari led the Hamas delegation.)

5) The head of the Israel Security Agency said that **his ability, as head of the service, to recommend the agreement came because a total of 110 terrorists would be released to Judea and Samaria, 55 of them Hamas operatives, and the rest would leave the area.** "That does not mean that they will not be active," he said, **"but the security risk will be reduced.** We chose those who present security challenge we are capable of dealing with." He said that there would be restrictions on the movement of half of those who will be released to Judea and Samaria, they will be forbidden to leave the country, and will be subject to other restrictions.

Hamas' Reaction

8. On October 11, 2011, Khaled Mashaal, head of Hamas' political bureau in Damascus gave a speech concerning the agreement. It was broadcast on four main Palestinian channels: Al-Aqsa TV, Al-Quds TV, the Palestinian Authority's PTV and the Paltoday website.



Khaled Mashaal gives speech (Hamas' Palestine-info website, October 11, 2011)

9. **The main points of Khaled Mashaal's speech were the following:**

1) After five years of difficult negotiations, with Egyptian mediation the exchange agreement was achieved. In return for Gilad Shalit 1000 male and 27 female Palestinian prisoners will be released in two stages. Within a week, 450 will be released in the first stage, and 550 within two months thereafter.

2) **The agreement is a "great achievement" for Hamas, both "quantitatively and qualitatively."** Thus, after the agreement no female prisoners will remain in Israeli jails. Another illustration of the extent of the "achievement" was that 315 of the 450 who will be released in the first stage had been sentenced to life imprisonment, some of them to one term and some to ten. Other prisoners who will be released were sentenced to long terms of dozens of years.

3) **The agreement illustrated the unity of the Palestinian people and was a "national Palestinian achievement."** The list of prisoners to be released included **prisoners from the West Bank, the Gaza Strip, Jerusalem, Israel ("the 1948 territory") the Golan Heights and the Palestinian dispersal.** It also included **all the factions** [i.e., all the Palestinian terrorist organizations] and not only those who abducted Gilad Shalit.

4) Unfortunately, Hamas had not been able to include all 8000 prisoners, thus "our joy is mixed with pain and sorrow." However, the agreement was what Israel could be forced to do for the return of one captured soldier. **He stressed that Hamas was committed to continuing its efforts to release all the Palestinian prisoners in Israeli jails, and that "who releases 1027 will release 8000 more..."**

5) Khaled Mashaal **thanked those who had helped effect the agreement**, among them Hamas' Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades, and the other organizations which participated in the action in which Gilad Shalit was captured. He thanked Egypt and its General Security Service, which, he said, had "fulfilled its national duty." He also thanked countries and individuals who helped complete the agreement, especially **Qatar, Turkey and Syria.** At the end he also thanked the German mediator.

10. Other high-ranking Hamas figures also repeatedly represented the agreement as a "historic achievement" and a "great victory" for the "Palestinian resistance" [i.e., the terrorist organizations], and as a "crushing blow" for Israel. **Ismail Haniya**, head of the de-facto Hamas administration in the Gaza Strip, said that he had spoken with the Muslim Brotherhood's General Guide in Egypt, who had blessed the Palestinians on their historic moment (Al-Quds TV, October 11, 2011).

11. **Abu Attaya**, spokesman for the Salah al-Din Brigades of the Popular Resistance Committees' military wing, said that Gilad Shalit's abduction would not be the last, **but that**

other actions would follow of abducting Israeli soldiers, "until all the prisoners have been released from Israeli jails" (Popular Resistance Committees website).



Crowds of Gazans, some of them armed, wave Hamas flags to celebrate the expected release of Palestinian terrorist operatives after the news of the agreement is made public (Hamas' Palestine-info website, October 11, 2011)

The Palestinian Authority's Reaction

12. **Mahmoud Abbas**, currently visiting South America, praised the agreement, saying that the Palestinians had waited for it for a long time. He said he hoped all the Palestinian prisoners would be released from Israeli jails and complimented Egypt on its mediation (Al-Hayat Al-Jadeeda, October 12, 2011).

13. **Yasser Abd Rabbo**, secretary of the PLO's executive committee, said that the Palestinians prisoners' hunger strike and the support they received contributed to the finalization of the agreement. He praised the organizations which participated in realizing the agreement (without mentioning Hamas by name), as well as Egypt and Europe (Palestinian TV, October 11, 2011).