



Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center
at the Center for Special Studies (C.S.S)

A suicide bombing attack planned to be carried out in Israel by a Palestinian female suicide bomber was thwarted at the Erez crossing in the Gaza Strip. The terrorist infrastructure of Fatah's Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades in the northern Gaza Strip stood behind the terrorist attack, which was probably meant to take place in an Israeli hospital. The incident is yet another link in a long chain of Palestinian terrorist attacks thwarted since the lull in the fighting began.



The “martyrdom culture”: Palestinian female suicide bomber Wafa al-Bass in a televised interview (courtesy of Zvi Yechezkeli, Israeli TV's *Channel 10*)

Details of the incident

- In the early morning hours of June 20, 2005, a 21-year-old Palestinian female suicide bomber arrived at the Erez crossing in the Gaza Strip, wearing (extra) stockings that contained approximately 20 lbs. of explosives. The female terrorist, who aroused the suspicion of the Israeli security forces, was taken to a security check during which the explosive stockings were uncovered. She attempted several times to detonate herself at the crossing and, having been unsuccessful, was brought to questioning.¹
- The arrested suicide bomber is **Wafa Samir Ibrahim al-Bass**, a resident of the Jabalia refugee camp in the northern Gaza Strip, born in 1984. In her questioning, she admitted to being affiliated with **the Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades (Fatah's operative wing)**. She also stated that she had been dispatched by the organization's infrastructure in the northern Gaza Strip to carry out a suicide bombing attack in an Israeli hospital, with the intention of killing Israeli civilians². In an interview granted to a *Channel 10* reporter, Wafa al-Bass pointed out that ever since she was a little girl, her dream had been, and still was, to be a shahid (“martyr”) and die for Allah's sake (Israeli TV's *Channel 10*, June 20, 2005).

The reaction of Fatah's Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades

- In the wake of the thwarted suicide bombing attack, a senior figure in Fatah's Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades, nicknamed **Abu Yussuf**, declared that Wafa al-Bass's attempt to detonate herself at the Erez crossing was carried out “within the context of the relentless active resistance [i.e., terrorist activities against Israel] and in light of the Israeli violations [presumably, of

the lull in the fighting] that render Palestinian blood worthless...” He further added that the planned attack was also a **response to a statement made by US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice**, who accused several Palestinian organizations of being terrorist organizations and avoided granting any payoff to the Palestinians (*Ma'an* website, www.maannews.net/arabic/ , June 20, 2005).

- Still another senior figure in Fatah's Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades, nicknamed **Abu Muss'ab**, told *Ynet*³ reporter Ali Waqed (June 21, 2005) that “**today's attempt has failed, but the next attempt will be a success and it will make the Israelis tremble**”. The interviewer then asked Abu Muss'ab: “But if the terrorist attack had succeeded, it would have ruined any chance the Sharon-Abu Mazen summit may have for success and would have been a death blow to the disengagement [plan]”. He was answered: “**The political agenda is no concern of ours. These are all discussions about meaningless agreements, and efforts upon efforts to subdue the Palestinian people into relinquishing our rights...**” Later on, Abu Muss'ab also threatened to send “**not [just] one female suicide bomber, not [just] one male suicide bomber, but an unlimited quantity of suicide bombers to every stretch of land in occupied Palestine ...**”



The Palestinian suicide bomber removing part of her clothes at the Erez crossing (left and center) while attempting (in vain) to activate the explosive stockings (right) (photos by the IDF Spokesman, courtesy of Israeli TV's Channel 10).

Implications

- This incident is yet another link in a long chain of terrorist attacks thwarted since the lull in the fighting (*tahdia*) was declared. It is also part of a **significant escalation** in the activities of the Palestinian terrorist organizations, which has taken place **on the eve of the long-awaited Sharon -Abu Mazen Jerusalem summit (June 21, 2005)**. Taking part in this escalation are **all** the Palestinian terrorist organizations, which continue issuing declarations of support for the lull and, at the same time, continue their efforts to perpetrate terrorist attacks against Israel . These include suicide bombing attacks that, had they been successful, could have derailed the fragile lull. It is also our assessment that the escalation that has taken place recently was aimed at **disrupting the planned Jerusalem summit between Abu Mazen and Ariel Sharon**. The belligerent statements issued by Fatah's Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades spokesmen after Wafa al-Bass's suicide bombing attack had been thwarted are testimony to **their intent to continue the attempts to derail the lull**.
- Clearly evident, against the background of the efforts to derail the lull in the fighting, is the continuing **powerlessness of the Palestinian Authority**. Indeed, it must have had obvious interest in creating a comfortable atmosphere for the Sharon-Abu Mazen summit. However, **it has not taken effective measures to halt the escalation and impose its authority on the various Palestinian terrorist organizations, which attempt to foil Abu Mazen's political moves aimed at renewing the peace process with Israel** . It should be noted that information on planned terrorist attacks and the terrorist operatives involved was delivered by Israeli security officials to the Palestinian Authority on many occasions. That information was delivered to **all the echelons** of the Palestinian Authority, from Abu Mazen himself down to the Palestinian security apparatuses. However, these appeals did not result in effective attempts on the part of the Palestinian Authority to thwart Palestinian terrorist activity.

Taking advantage of Israeli humanitarian measures to perpetrate acts of terrorism against Israel

- The thwarted suicide bombing attack at the Erez crossing is yet another example of the use made by Palestinian terrorist organizations of Israel 's humanitarian measures towards the Palestinian people for the perpetration of devastating terrorist attacks. In the incident at hand, operatives of Fatah's Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades took advantage of Wafa al-Bass's

medical authorization, allowing her to cross into Israeli territory to undergo a medical examination at the Soroka Hospital⁴.

- It should be noted that it is not the first time that the Palestinian terrorist organizations use entry permits into Israeli territory, granted to Palestinians in need of special and urgent medical care, for perpetrating acts of terrorism. Following are several examples of **previous attempts** by Palestinian terrorist organizations to smuggle terrorists into Israeli territory under the pretense of urgent and special medical care (not available by the Palestinian authorities' medical services):
 - On December 20, 2004, **Hamad Abd al-Karim Hamad Abu Lihya**, a resident of the Jabalia refugee camp, was arrested in the town of Baqa al-Gharbiya (the West Bank). In August 2004, he was smuggled by **Hamas** into Israeli territory to carry out a suicide bombing attack. During his questioning, he admitted that he had entered Israel through the Erez crossing **using counterfeit documents attesting he was allegedly ill with cancer**, and in need of special and urgent medical care in a hospital in the center of Israel.
 - In early December 2004, Israeli security forces thwarted an attempt by two Palestinian terrorists, **Hassan Ahmed Ali Toum** and **Muhammad Diab Nimr Ja'rur**, to infiltrate into Israeli territory to carry out terrorist attacks. Both had been dispatched from the Gaza Strip by **Fatah's Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades**. **One of them, Hassan Toum, entered Egypt through the Rafah crossing after presenting documentation on medical treatment he was allegedly supposed to receive in Egypt**. He infiltrated into the Negev (the southern part of Israel, much of it is a desert land) from Egypt and was arrested on December 12. His questioning revealed that the purpose of his entry into Israeli territory was to murder an Israeli citizen and bury his body in order to negotiate with Israel the release of Palestinian prisoners. Furthermore, he intended to set explosive charges on a railway in the Netanya region (north of Tel Aviv).
 - On March 10, 2005, Israeli security forces in Ramallah arrested **Muhammad Bahisi**, a **Hamas** operative and resident of the Gaza Strip, who planned to perpetrate a suicide bombing attack in Israel. **He arrived in the West Bank under the cover of a potential kidney donor**. In his questioning, he admitted that he had been recruited to Hamas' operative infrastructure in the West Bank and also received military training in order to be dispatched to a suicide bombing attack in Israeli territory.

¹ See the Information Bulletin (published on our website) on: "[Involvement of women in suicide bombing attacks](#)" (March 2004).

² In interviews granted to the press, she later changed the version she had given during her questioning and stated that she had planned to carry out an act of suicide martyrdom in a crowded place rather than in a hospital.

³ The website of the Israeli daily *Yedioth Ahronoth*.

⁴ In the past (December 2004 – January 2005), Wafa al-Bass was hospitalized at the Soroka Hospital in Beersheba, where she underwent medical treatment of severe burns she had received as a result of a gas tank explosion in her house. Soroka Hospital is the main hospital in the southern part of Israel, which also caters for Palestinians residing in the Gaza Strip.