



Intelligence and Terrorism
Information Center

News of Terrorism and the Israeli- Palestinian Conflict

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June 25, 2009: Three years since the abduction of Gilad Shalit
(Israeli Foreign Ministry website, June 29, 2009).

Overview

- Quiet in the western Negev continued this past week, and no rockets or mortar shells were fired into Israel.
- June 25 marked the third anniversary of the abduction of Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit. Israeli Defense Minister Ehud Barak said that the news items regarding Gilad Shalit were incorrect and might even be harmful. He said that "the less we talk and the more we focus on action, the better." Hamas statements indicated decreased expectations regarding progress in the contacts for his release.
- Fatah and Hamas reported progress in the reconciliation talks being held in Cairo, leading up to the Egyptian target date of July 7. The Palestinian and Arab media reported that both sides had promised to release detainees although new mutual detentions were carried out in Judea and Samaria and the Gaza Strip.

Important Events

Gaza Strip

Rocket fire into Israel

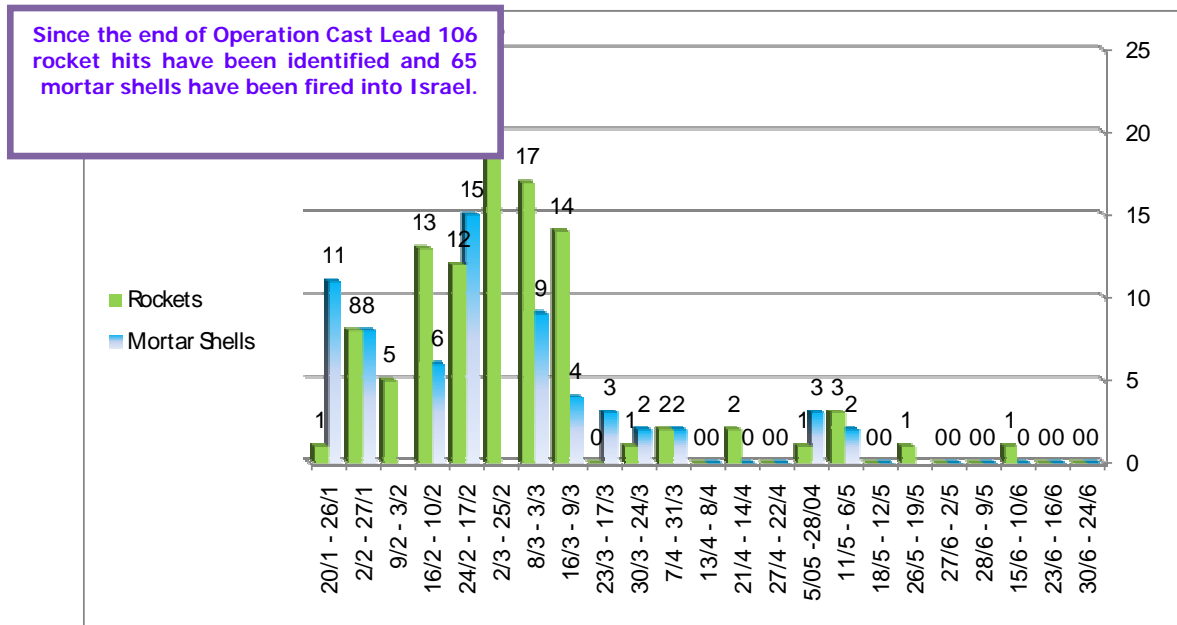
■ Quiet continues in the western Negev. During the past week no rocket hits were identified and no mortar shells were fired into Israeli territory. The media report that Hamas prevents the rogue terrorist organizations from firing rockets: on June 22 there were confrontations between Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad operatives following Hamas's refusal to allow them to attack the western Negev with rockets (Fatah-affiliated forum, June 23, 2009).

Incidents near the border security fence

■ On June 25 light weapons were fired at the Nahal Oz fuel terminal; there were no casualties. The military-terrorist wing of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine claimed responsibility for the attack (Abu Ali Mustafa Brigades website, June 25, 2009).

■ On June 29 two Palestinians were observed placing an IED 2 kilometers southwest of the Karni crossing. An IDF force fired mortar shells at them and later combed the area of the Gaza Strip near the border security fence. Two mortar shells were fired at the force; Hamas claimed responsibility for the shooting.

Rocket and mortar shell fire since the end of Operation Cast Lead



Judea and Samaria

- IDF forces continued their counterterrorism activities in Judea and Samaria this past week, detaining several dozen Palestinians suspected of terrorist activity.
- The main events which occurred:
 - **June 28:** Three Molotov cocktails were thrown at an Israeli bus southwest of Bethlehem. A fire broke out near the bus and was extinguished by IDF soldiers. There were no casualties.
 - **June 26:** Two IDF soldiers and a Border Policeman were slightly injured by stones thrown during a demonstration near the villages of Na'alín and Bil'in, west of Ramallah.

Easing conditions for Palestinians in Judea and Samaria

- On June 25 Israel announced that as a goodwill gesture to the Palestinian Authority, it would **reduce IDF activity to a minimum** in four important cities in Judea and Samaria: Ramallah, Jericho, Bethlehem and Qalqilya. According to the announcement IDF forces would enter the cities only in the event of an emergency security situation. The step is intended to make it possible for the Palestinian Authority's security forces to extend their presence and improve their effectiveness in preserving public order.

■ Sources within the Palestinian Authority responded by saying the move had no security significance. They said that they had not yet received Israeli guarantees regarding the withdrawal of Israeli forces from the cities (Ma'an News Agency, June 25, 2009). Sources in Nablus, on the other hand, praised the move recently taken by the IDF at the roadblocks, especially the Hawara roadblock south of the city. According to residents, removing the roadblocks has a positive effect on the economy and security and contributes to advancing the peace process (Al-Hayat Al-Jadeeda, June 27, 2009).

The Gaza Strip after Operation Cast Lead

The situation at the crossings

■ During the past week the crossings between Israel and the Gaza Strip were open to the passage of goods and people. Deliveries of humanitarian assistance continue at an average rate of 100 trucks a day. Egypt opened the Rafah crossing for three days, June 27-29, for Palestinians passing to and from the Gaza Strip (Ma'an News Agency, June 27, 2009). During that time several hundred Palestinian civilians used the crossing. The interior ministry of the Hamas de-facto administration expressed its satisfaction with the volume of civilian traffic and the conduct of the Egyptian authorities (Middle East News Agency, June 27, 2009).

■ Ismail Haniya, head of the Hamas de-facto administration, visited the Rafah crossing for its opening and appealed to Egypt to keep it open to ease the Gazans' distress. He added that his administration was willing to cooperate regarding the opening of the crossing. He said that the Hamas administration agreed to an Egyptian and European Union presence at the crossing, as well as the presence of the Palestinian Authority's presidential guard and the Hamas administration (Hamas's Palestine-Info website, June 27, 2009).

■ It was also reported that Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak authorized a project for the rebuilding of the crossing, which was damaged during Palestinian demonstrations in 2008. The crossing would be rebuilt with improved equipment for screening individuals and equipment. The project would be funded by the United States, which has allotted the sum of \$23 million for the acquisition of security equipment and to train the Egyptian forces which would be deployed at the crossing (*World Tribune*, June 28, 2009).

Humanitarian assistance to the Gaza Strip from organizations abroad

■ The voyage of a boat belonging the Free Gaza organization, which was supposed to set sail from the port of Larnaca in Cyprus on June 25, was delayed for lack of necessary authorization. Hamas's "committee to lift the siege" blamed Israeli pressure on the Cypriot government for the delay (Free Gaza website, June 25, 2009). On June 29 the boat Spirit of Humanity left Larnaca for the Gaza Strip (Free Gaza website, June 29, 2009).



Left: The Spirit of Humanity. Right: The ship sails from Larnaca (Free Gaza website, June 29, 2009).

■ The American branch of Viva Palestine issued an invitation via its website for people wanting to join the organization's humanitarian assistance convoy, which will leave New York at the beginning of July and enter the Gaza Strip via Egypt. A similar convoy will leave Britain (Viva Palestine website, June 24).

Hamas continues strengthening its control over the Gaza Strip

■ As part of its efforts to strengthen its control over the Gaza Strip, Hamas has recently tightened its inspection of the institutes of higher learning. Its administration operates mainly against Al-Azhar University and the Palestine College, two institutions affiliated with Fatah. The Hamas de-facto administration has weakened those institutions financially by overseeing the funds they receive and by insinuating its own people into the teaching staff.

The issue of the abducted Israeli soldier, Gilad Shalit

■ June 25 marked three years since the abduction of Gilad Shalit. As opposed to last year, the issue was not widely covered by the Palestinian media. Hamas evidenced a trend toward lowering its expectations and to refute items in the media about progress in the contacts. Israeli Defense Minister Ehud Barak also said that the news publicized was not only incorrect but liable to be harmful as well. He said that "the less we talk and the more we focus on action, the better" (Israel Foreign Ministry, June 28, 2009).

- Hamas officially stated that no progress had been made in the contacts and that the Hamas movement had had nothing to do with news items regarding the matter (Hamas's Palestine-Info website, June 23, 2009).

- **Senior Hamas figures** (Khaled Mashaal, Ismail Haniya, Osama al-Zeini) denied the news items relating to progress in the negotiations. Osama al-Zeini said that since Benjamin Netanyahu had been elected as Israeli Prime Minister, no new proposal had been made regarding Gilad Shalit. He said that contrary to what had appeared in the media, no serious negotiations were being held (Al-Bayan Center website, June 28, 2009).



Osama al-Zeini (Hamas's Palestine-Info website, June 29, 2009).

- **The ministry of prisoners' affairs in the Hamas de-facto administration** officially announced that it demanded the media stop speculating about prisoner exchanges which, it claimed, was having a negative influence on the morale of Palestinian prisoners in Israeli jails and on their families (Qudsnet website, June 28, 2009). Hundreds of family members of Palestinians in Israeli jails held a demonstration at the Erez crossing, calling for the lifting of the closure of the Gaza Strip and the release of Gilad Shalit only in return for the release of **all the Palestinian prisoners** incarcerated in Israel (Agence France Presse, June 24, 2009).



The Gaza Strip marks the third anniversary of the abduction of Gilad Shalit (Hamas's Palestine-Info website, June 29, 2009).

The Political Arena

Mahmoud Abbas's speech

■ The following are the main points made by Mahmoud Abbas in a speech at the laying of the cornerstone of the Al-Reihan housing project in Ramallah (Palestinian Television, June 29, 2009).

- **The internal Palestinian dialogue in Cairo:** Clear instructions were given to the delegation which left for Cairo: "We want this dialogue to succeed at any cost." For that reason the Palestinian Authority released some of the detainees in its jails.

- **Implementing the Road Map:** The Palestinian Authority has met its commitments according to the first article of the Road Map, while Israel has not stopped building the settlements. "That is not a precondition, we are not proposing conditions, the issue is anchored in the Road Map."

- **The two-state vision:** The Palestinian Authority recognizes the State of Israel based on the 1967 borders. Israel must recognize the two-state vision without making demands which will empty it of all meaning [i.e., the Palestinian refusal to recognize the State of Israel as a national Jewish state].

- **The Arab states' normalizing relations with Israel:** Normalization will come about only in return for the establishment of a Palestinian state and Israel's withdrawal from the Golan Heights and the Shebaa farms. After that, according to Mahmoud Abbas, 57 states, one third of the states of the world, will say to Israel, "We are prepared to have [diplomatic] relations with you."

Khaled Mashaal's speech

■ On June 26 Khaled Mashaal, chairman of Hamas's political bureau in Damascus, delivered a speech containing Hamas's position on a number of political issues. It was not particularly inflamed but it also did not exhibit the smiling face Hamas has recently shown.



Khaled Mashaal delivers his speech (Hamas's Palestine-Info website, June 29, 2009).

- The main points of the speech were the following (Al-Aqsa TV, June 26, 2009):
 - **American policy:** The change in American policy as expressed in President Obama's speech in Cairo on June 4 was positive. However, a speech full of promises is not enough, there has to be serious action and initiatives on the ground.
 - **Principles of the political arrangement:** Without explicit reference to the two-state vision, Mashaal noted that Hamas did not recognize a Jewish State of Israel, because that meant negating the [Palestinians'] so-called "right of return."
 - **Hamas's conditions for a peace arrangement:** The conditions would include a full Israel withdrawal to the 1967 borders, dismantling the settlements, establishing an independent Palestinian state with full sovereign within the 1967 borders and with Jerusalem as its capital, the full implementation of the "right of return" of all the Palestinian refugees.
 - **The speech made by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu:** Netanyahu announced that the building in the settlements would continue and by so doing "emptied the Palestinian state." Mashaal said Netanyahu had also negated the right of the Palestinian people to Jerusalem and the "right of return," complaining that despite Netanyahu's position, no Western country had criticized the speech.
 - **The "resistance" [i.e., terrorism]:** He stressed continued adherence to the "armed resistance" as a means to establish the Palestinian state.
 - **The prisoner exchange deal:** Israel's intransigence is what has sabotaged the prisoner exchange deal so far. Mashaal said Hamas was still willing to make the deal.
 - **The internal Palestinian dialogue:** Hamas is committed to reconciliation through dialogue under Egyptian aegis but the activities of the Palestinian Authority security forces against Hamas in Judea and Samaria are detrimental to the efforts.

- Palestinian spokesmen, affiliated with both Fatah and radical Islam, were critical of Khaled Mashaal's speech:
 - **Azzam al-Ahmed**, head of the Fatah faction in the Palestinian Legislative Council, said that Khaled Mashaal had nothing new to say except his message to the United States, intended to achieve an opening for Hamas-American relations, for which Fatah congratulated him (Al-Jazeera TV, June 25, 2009).
 - **Marwan al-Hamid**, Mahmoud Abbas' adviser, said that with his speech Khaled Mashaal had joined the Palestinian national program determined by the PLO in 1988. He said he wondered why it had been necessary to wait 20 years before adopting it (Russian TV Al-Youm, June 25, 2009).

- **The Liberation Party**, a radical Islamic party,¹ issued an announcement denouncing Khaled Mashaal's speech, noting that statements about a Palestinian state with the 1967 borders indicated "a surrender of historical Palestinian lands" (*Al-Ghad*, June 29, 2009). In response the Hamas security forces detained a number of the party's activists in the Gaza Strip (*Al-Hayat Al-Jadeeda*, June 29). Hassan al-Madhoun, of the Liberation Party's information office, announced that Hamas had released all the party's activists detained on June 28 (PalToday website, June 29, 2009).

Israel releases Aziz Dweik, Hamas activist and chairman of the Palestinian Legislative Council

- On June 23 Israel released Hamas activist Aziz Dweik, former chairman of the Palestinian Legislative Council. He served a three-year term and a military court refused to extend his imprisonment. Dweik was detained in August 2006 by the IDF forces in Ramallah. In December 2008 he was convicted of membership in a terrorist organization and sentenced to three years imprisonment. He will apparently return to his post as Council chairman (*Al-Quds TV*, June 23, 2009). The Hamas faction in the Council held a meeting headed by Ismail Haniya, and one of the topics discussed was ways to reactivate the Council in Judea and Samaria (*Al-Bayan Center website*, June 29, 2009).



Aziz Dweik, Hamas activist and chairman of the Palestinian Legislative Council, released from custody (Hamas's Palestine-Info website, June 29, 2009).

- With his release, he called on Israel to accept the Hamas proposal for a long-term lull in the fighting despite Hamas's refusal to recognize Israel. He claimed that the proposal was intended to lead to permanent peace in the Middle East and therefore Israel had to back down and make it possible for a Palestinian state to be established with the 1967 borders. He added that after the lull "a generation will arise which will distance itself from every sort of conflict and seek reconciliation" (*Reuters*, June 27, 2009). He later denied having made such a statement (*Felvesteen*, June 27, 2009).

¹ The Liberation Party is a radical pan-Islamic political party, originally Palestinian, whose objective is to reestablish the Caliphate (which ended in 1924) and to enforce religious Islamic law on its citizens. The party is in favor of "liberating Palestine" through jihad and objects to any political arrangement with Israel. It does not have a military-terrorist wing but actively pursues a path of indoctrination and incitement within the Palestinian populace.

The Quartet's announcement regarding the conflict

■ After a meeting on June 26, the Quartet issued a statement welcoming the commitments of the Israeli Prime Minister and the Palestinian Authority Chairman to the establishment of a Palestinian state. According to the statement, a durable peace would be achieved only through the realization of the two-state vision, peace agreements between Israel, Syria and Lebanon, and the normalization of relations between the Arab states and Israel. The statement called on **Israel** to freeze building in the settlements, to dismantle the outposts built after March 2001 and to refrain from “provocative activities” in East Jerusalem. It called on the **Arab states** to recognize Israel and on the **Palestinian Authority** to continue its efforts to **improve security and establish institutions which would serve the future Palestinian state**.

■ The Quartet emphasized their commitment to resolving the Arab-Israeli conflict through “land in return for peace,” the Road Map, the two-state vision and previous UN Security Council resolutions. They also praised Israel for reducing restrictions on movement in Judea and Samaria and for its intention to promote and support the Palestinian economy (Department of State website, June 27, 2009).

■ The Palestinian Authority issued a press release praising the Quartet's statement and recommendations. It also called on the international community to pressure Israel to meet its commitments, especially those in the Road Map (Wafa News Agency, June 26, 2009).

The Internal Palestinian Arena

The internal Palestinian dialogue

■ On June 28 and 29 three meetings were held in Cairo by the Fatah and Hamas delegations, also attended by Omar Suleiman, head of Egyptian general intelligence. Among the issues discussed were the mutual detentions of Hamas activists in Judea and Samaria and Fatah activists in the Gaza Strip, elections in the Palestinian Authority and the establishment of a joint security force. Both sides reported that significant progress had been made (Al-Jazeera TV, Wafa News Agency, June 24, 2009). Their intention is to reach a reconciliation by July 7, the date set by Egypt.

■ As a result of the Cairo talks, Mahmoud Abbas ordered the release of 100 Hamas detainees. Hamas, on the other hand, promised to release 20 Fatah activists detained in the Gaza Strip

(website of the de-facto Hamas administration's interior ministry, June 28, 2009). However, the Palestinian Authority's security forces continued detaining Hamas activists, claiming that they had been instructed by the "external" [i.e., Damascus] leadership to carry out terrorist attacks. The Palestinian Authority also warned the Hamas leadership in Syria and the leaders of the Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades in the Gaza Strip that "we will protect the national project" and that "Hamas had better not continue its evil path." Hamas's security forces, according to the Wafa News Agency, detained 150 Fatah activists and former members of the security forces in Khan Yunis (Wafa News Agency, June 29, 2009).



The Palestinian Authority's national security force trains in the Jenin and Tubas districts (Wafa News Agency, June 23, 2009).

Fatah's revolutionary council meets in Ramallah

■ Fatah's revolutionary council met in Ramallah, with 81 of the 120 members in attendance. Members from the Gaza Strip had been prevented by the Hamas de-facto administration from attending. Three senior Fatah members who currently reside abroad, including Farouq Qadoumi and Abu Maher, challenged the legitimacy of the meeting, although Mahmoud Abbas ignored criticism and held it anyway (Wafa News Agency, June 24, 2009). The decision was made to hold Fatah's sixth conference in Bethlehem on August 4, Yassir Arafat's birthday (*Al-Hayat Al-Jadeeda*, June 25, 2009).

Events in Iran

The events in Iran and some reactions

Overview

■ Protest demonstrations continue throughout Iran although to a lesser degree than previously. Demonstrators are primarily students, women, the young and the educated. Most of the demonstrations are in Tehran where they are suppressed by the internal security forces, the Revolutionary Guards and the Basij militia, which do not hesitate to detain scores of demonstrators and use guns against them. Beside violent dispersal the regime has taken other steps, such as

shutting down the newspapers and magazines, and blocking Internet sites and cellular communications networks.

■ The Iranian interior ministry has forbidden demonstrations, forcing Mir Hussein Moussavi to cancel planned events. The Revolutionary Guards issued a statement warning the “enemies of Iran,” especially the United States, Britain and Israel, against intervening in Iran’s internal affairs. It was preferable, according to the statement, for those countries to focus on their own affairs and on the situation in the Middle East (Mehr News Agency, Iran, June 23, 2009).

The American president’s condemnation of violence

■ **American President Barack Obama** held a press conference at which he strongly condemned the threats, beatings and imprisonments in Iran, saying that the United States would examine developments before deciding what steps to take. He called the allegations that the United States and other Western countries had instigated protests over the election “patently false.” He said that the United States and the rest of the world were “appalled and outraged” by the violence used against the demonstrators.

■ He added that he deplored the tactics used by the regime and expressed support for the courage and sacrifice shown by the demonstrators, and that those working for justice were on “the right side of history.” He said that the world was following the events in Iran and that the actions of the regime would influence not only Iran’s future but its relations with the international community. However, he was careful to note that the United States respected the sovereignty of the Iranian republic and would not interfere in Iran’s internal affairs and that the events were the business of the Iranian people (White House website, June 23, 2009).

■ **Iranian President Ahmadinejad** criticized the American position toward the events in Iran, saying that Iran would not allow intervention in its internal affairs. As to Obama, he said that the American president had made a big mistake. He said that America’s current conduct was incompatible with the desire for a dialogue with Iran. Despite his criticism, he said that Iran was still interested in a bilateral dialogue and in cooperation, but on the condition that Obama and his administration “change their behavior and repair their methods” (Mehr News Agency, Iran, June 26, 2009).

Support for Ahmadinejad

Syria

- On June 29 an article by **Bouthaina Shaaban**, Syrian President Assad's advisor (who holds the rank of minister), published an article in the London-based *Al-Sharq Al-Awsat*. In it she attacked the position of the Western countries toward the events in Iran and what she called their double standard, while she expressed support, if measured and careful, for Ahmadinejad.

- She claimed that without exception the Western media had adopted the viewpoint of those who had lost the elections by a wide margin. He said that the Western media had given their "complete support" to "rioters, people who set buses on fire and loot stores," turning the term "mob" into a positive term, while they methodically ignored the "violence and barbarity" of the Israel army against Palestinian civilians.

- She also accused Ahmadinejad's western rivals of wanting to escalate an "artificial crisis" in Iran, create a schism within the religious establishment and destroy the Islamic regime. She claimed that those were the objectives of the West and Israel, which regard toppling the Iranian regime as a "strategic goal" toward which they are making plans and enlisting funds.

Hezbollah

- **Sheikh Naim Qassem, Hezbollah's deputy general secretary**, echoed Iranian propaganda, saying that it was obvious that the riots in Iran were being orchestrated from abroad and were the result of an "intelligence plot" by the West and the United States to embarrass Iran. He also said that Iran had again succeeded in overcoming an "external plot." As to Hezbollah, he said that the organization honored the choice of the Iranian people and did not intend to interfere in Iran's internal affairs (Agence France Presse, June 26, 2009).

The New Lebanese Government

- After two days of Parliamentary consultations, Lebanese President Michel Suleiman charged Sa'ad Hariri, the Sunni leader of the March 14 Coalition, with forming the new government. Hariri, who won the election, was elected by 86 members of the Lebanese Parliament for the role of prime minister. Nabih Berri, Shi'ite chairman of the Amal movement, was elected by a large majority for a fifth term as Chairman of the Lebanese Parliament.

■ **Noaf al-Moussawi**, Hezbollah member of the Lebanese Parliament, said that Hezbollah wanted to cooperate with Hariri in a “national unity government” which would realize “genuine partnership in ruling” [i.e., Hezbollah would receive a “blocking third” which would give it and the pro-Syrian camp veto power]. He **threatened** that if a national unity government were not formed, it would mean “paralysis and tension” similar to the period of political crisis [which ended with battles in the street and led to the Doha agreement in May 2008] (BBC Radio, June 27, 2009). The March 14 Coalition has so far rejected the “blocking third” for Hezbollah, although in the future it is liable to surrender to Hezbollah’s threats of violence.