



Intelligence and Terrorism
Information Center

News of Terrorism and the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict

October 20-27, 2009



Mahmoud Abbas declares elections to be held on January 24, 2009
(Al-Hayat Al-Jadeeda website, October 24, 2009).

Overview

- The past week's events focused on a new wave of public disturbances in Jerusalem. Rioters on the Temple Mount threw stones at policemen and tourists, and police had no choice but to force their way onto the Temple Mount. The disturbances spread to the neighborhoods of Ras al-Amoud in East Jerusalem and were accompanied by Hamas- and Palestinian Authority-inspired incitement.
- The most prominent political event was an announcement by Palestinian Authority Chairman Mahmoud Abbas that presidential and Palestinian Legislative Council elections would be held on January 24, 2010, throughout "Palestine" (Judea, including East Jerusalem, Samaria and the Gaza Strip). The announcement followed Hamas' refusal to sign the Egyptian reconciliation document. Hamas was quick to condemn the announcement, saying that it would not permit elections to be held in the Gaza Strip.

Important Events

Gaza Strip

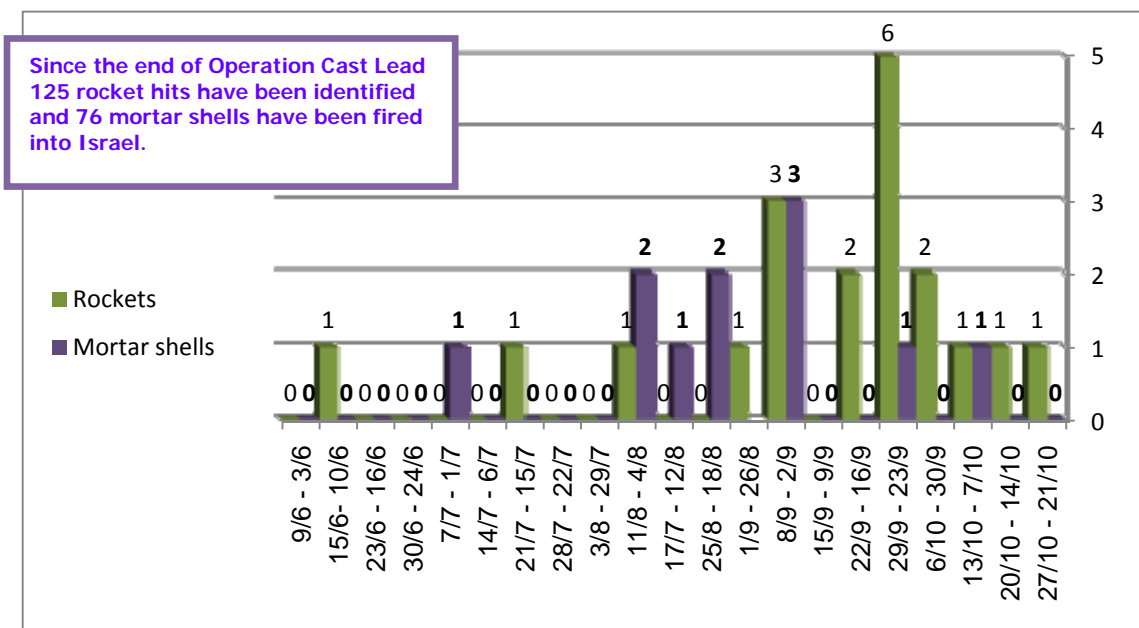
Rocket and mortar shell fire

■ During the past week **one rocket hit** was identified in an open area near a town in the western Negev on October 21. There were no casualties. A network calling itself the “Salvation Battalions” claimed responsibility for a rocket fired at southern Israeli town of Netivot. It is not clear what rocket was referred to (Hamas’ PALDF forum, October 22, 2009).

■ In addition, on two occasions IDF forces engaged in routine activities near the security fence were shot at:

- **October 20:** Three mortar shells were fired at an IDF force near the security fence. There were no casualties and no damage was done. The Popular Resistance Committees claimed responsibility for the attack (Qawm website, October 21, 2009).
- **October 21:** Shots from light arms were fired at an IDF force near the security fence. There were no casualties.

Rocket and mortar shell fired into Israeli territory¹



Israeli Air Force strike

■ On October 22, in response to the rocket fire, the Israeli Air Force struck a site for weapons manufacture in the Toufah neighborhood in Gaza City and two tunnels used to smuggle arms into the Gaza Strip near Rafah.

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

Media reports claim Hamas acts against rocket launching squads

■ In accordance with its current policy of restraint, Hamas' security forces reportedly continued preventing rockets from being launched. This past week, according to the media, Hamas security forces detained Munzir Muhsen, apparently a senior commander in Fatah's Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades' rocket unit (Sky Press, October 26, 2009).

Another round of public disturbances on the Temple Mount

■ After two weeks of relative quiet, there was **another round** of public disturbances on the Temple Mount. They began on Sunday, October 25, after Taysir al-Tamimi, the head of the Palestinian Authority's [religious Muslim] Sharia' court, declared it "a day of rage in support of Jerusalem" and called for increased Muslim presence in Al-Aqsa mosque. His call was followed by others for Palestinians to go to the mosque to defend it from the "settlers" (Wafa News Agency, Al-Aqsa TV, October 23, 2009).

■ The disturbances began in the early morning, shortly after the Temple Mount was opened to tourists and non-Muslim visitors. The rioters threw stones and Molotov cocktails at police and tourists and spilled oil, apparently in an attempt to cause policemen to slip and fall. In light of the disturbances, the police, who had planned for such a possibility, had no choice but to **force their way onto the Temple Mount**, where dozens of young Muslims were inside Al-Aqsa mosque. The Palestinian media reported more than 30 wounded, in all probability an exaggeration.

■ The disturbances later spread to the **Ras al-Amoud** neighborhood of East Jerusalem. During the day nine policemen sustained slight injuries and one was evacuated to the hospital. Twenty-one rioters were detained, among them **Hattem Abd al-Qader**, who holds the Fatah Jerusalem Affairs portfolio, against whom there was a three-week restraining order preventing him from entering Jerusalem. Following the disturbances the police closed the Temple Mount both to Muslim worshippers and to visitors.

■ The events on the Temple Mount were widely covered by the Palestinian media. Hamas organized protest marches in the Gaza Strip, accompanied, as usual, by strong incitement against Israel and the Palestinian Authority.



Demonstration organized by Hamas in Rafah, broadcast by Al-Aqsa TV as "Jerusalem in danger" (October 26, 2009).

■ Statement by prominent Hamas figures were the following:

● **Khaled Mashaal**, head of the Hamas political bureau in Damascus, denounced the events at a press conference, saying that the objective of Israel's actions was to take Jerusalem off the negotiating table. He claimed that Jerusalem belonged to its Muslim and Christian residents and that the "Zionists" had no right to it. He also said that the events were a reason to postpone any peace initiative (Al-Jazeera TV, October 25, 2009).

● **Ismail Radwan**, Hamas spokesman in the Palestinian Legislative Council, speaking at a protest rally, denounced Israel and accused the Palestinian Authority of collaborating with it. He said that Jerusalem and the Palestinian territories would only be liberated by the so-called "resistance" [i.e., terrorism and violence], and called on the Palestinians to use every means at their disposal to defend Al-Aqsa mosque (Al-Aqsa TV, October 25, 2009).



Ismail Radwan speaking at the protest rally
(Al-Aqsa TV, October 25, 2009).

● **Fawzi Barhoum**, Hamas spokesman, said that the events were **part of an Israeli plan to build the Third Temple on the Temple Mount**. He said such a thing would not be possible without a green light from the United States, and demanded that the Arab countries which had diplomatic relations with Israel expel its ambassadors (Markaz al-Bayan website, October 25, 2009).

● **Mustafa al-Sawaf**, editor of Hamas' *Felesteen*, called for another intifada, more violent than the last. He said terrorist attacks should be freely carried out throughout the West Bank and Jerusalem, and that the interests of the Jews and all those who support them should be attacked in order to defend Al-Aqsa mosque (*Felesteen*, October 26, 2009).

■ The Palestinian Authority also reacted strongly to the disturbances. Presidential spokesman **Nabil Abu Rudeina** asked the international community to exert pressure on Israel to stop its activities on the Temple Mount, and stop allowing "soldiers and extremist Jews" to defile the sanctity of the holy places (Wafa News Agency, October 25, 2009).

Judea and Samaria

Counterterrorism Activities

- The Israeli security forces continued their counterterrorism activities this past week, detaining Palestinians suspected of terrorist activities. Attacks continued during the week, particularly the throwing of stones and Molotov cocktails at Israeli vehicles.

- A serious incident took place on October 25 when a young Palestinian woman, 21, stabbed an Israeli guard at the **Qalandia checkpoint (north of Jerusalem)**, seriously wounding him. When an electronic inspection revealed a knife in her purse she was approached by a guard. She then withdrew a knife she had hidden under her clothes and stabbed him. She was detained and taken for questioning (Ynet, October 25, 2009).

- In addition, the following attacks were carried out:
 - **October 23:** A Molotov cocktail was thrown at an Israeli vehicle east of Qalqiliya. There were no casualties and no damage was done (IDF Spokesman, October 23, 2009).
 - **October 22:** A young Palestinian who had thrown stones at the border fence west of Jenin was detained. Two IEDs were found in his possessions (IDF Spokesman, October 22, 2009).
 - **October 20:** Two knives and two Molotov cocktails ready for throwing were found in the tools of two Palestinian youths at the Beqaot checkpoint north of Jericho (IDF Spokesman, October 20, 2009).
 - **October 20:** Stones were thrown at an Israeli bus southwest of Bethlehem. There were no casualties but the bus was damaged. Stones were thrown at Israeli vehicles south of Bethlehem. There were no casualties but the vehicles were damaged (IDF Spokesman, October 20, 2009).

Developments in the Gaza Strip

The crossings

- During the past week the crossings between Israel and the Gaza Strip were open and routine deliveries of supplies continued. A total of more than 450 trucks entered the Strip.

- Egypt announced its intention to open the Rafah crossing between November 1 and 3 for the passage of Palestinians (Hamass' Paltoday website, October 25, 2009).

Anti-Israeli Political Warfare

The PLO calls for and intensified diplomatic struggle against Israel following the Goldstone Report and the disturbances in Jerusalem

■ **The PLO's Central Council** called on the Palestinian Authority and human rights organizations to take joint action in implementing the conclusions of the Goldstone Report through deliberations in the UN **Security Council** and by lodging an official complaint with the **International Court in the Hague**. The council called for the Security Council to take action against Israel on the grounds that the disturbances at Al-Aqsa mosque were a so-called "racist attack" which indicated Israel's intention to attack the sanctity of Islam in the city (*Al-Hayat Al-Jadeeda*, October 26, 2009).

■ **Issa Qaraqe**, minister of prisoners' affairs in the Palestinian Authority, called for the PA's "achievements" with the Goldstone Report to be used as leverage to bring Israelis to trial for "war crimes against Palestinian prisoners in Israeli jails." He also called for an international committee to be appointed to the same end (*Al-Hayat Al-Jadeeda*, October 21, 2009).

The Internal Palestinian Arena

Mahmoud Abbas announces his intention to hold general elections of January 24, 2010

■ On October 23 Palestinian Authority Chairman Mahmoud Abbas issued a presidential edict calling for general elections to the presidency and the Palestinian Legislative Council to be held in all parts of "Palestine" (Judea including East Jerusalem, Samaria and the Gaza Strip) on January 24, 2009. The summary of the PLO's Central Committee, where he announced the edict, stated that the PLO permitted Fatah to renew its attempts to hold a dialogue with Hamas, but only on the basis of the final version of the reconciliation agreement formulated by Egypt.



Mahmoud Abbas with Dr. Hana Nasser, head of the PLO's Central Elections Office (*Al-Hayat Al-Jadeeda*, October 27, 2009).

■ Mahmoud Abbas and his spokesmen made it clear that issuing the edict was the result of Hamas' refusal to sign the reconciliation agreement and that the Palestinian Authority was

committed to the date stated in the edict, which had been determined by fundamental Palestinian law. Presidential spokesman Nabil Abu Rudeina stated that according to the Egyptian reconciliation agreement elections were to be held on June 28, 2010, but because of Hamas' refusal to sign, the Palestinian Authority was committed to the date forced upon it by fundamental Palestinian law (Interview of Nabil Abu Rudeina with Egyptian TV, October 23, 2009).

■ Senior Hamas figures and media were quick to denounce the presidential edict in the strongest possible terms:

■ After a conference of Palestinian terrorist organizations in Damascus, **Khaled Mashaal**, head of the Hamas political bureau, told a press conference that the edict was neither legitimate nor legal. He claimed it would widen the internal Palestinian schism and that elections would be held only after a reconciliation had been reached (Hamas' Palestine-Info website, October 24, 2009).



Khaled Mashaal holds a press conference in Damascus (Al-Jazeera TV, October 25, 2009).

● **Musa Abu Marzuk**, deputy head of Hamas' political bureau, said that elections would not be held, "not in the Gaza Strip and not anywhere else, without a national reconciliation [taking place] first." He claimed that "Mahmoud Abbas' decision is not legitimate because **he himself** is not legitimate." He further claimed that the decision widened the rift [between Hamas and Fatah] and that it "continued [Mahmoud Abbas'] withdrawal of support for the Goldstone Report." He said that Hamas was free to make its own decisions regarding the Gaza Strip, as opposed to Mahmoud Abbas, who was under Israeli control (Al-Jazeera TV, October 23, 2009).

● Hamas spokesman **Sami Abu Zuhri** claimed that the edict was a response to the demands of the United States and had been issued following Mahmoud Abbas' conversation with American President Obama on October 23. He claimed that any elections held would be confined to the West Bank, which would widen the rift between the Palestinians (Al-Quds TV, October 23, 2009).²

² **Saeb Erekat**, head of the Palestinian negotiating team, said in response that "without the Gaza Strip there will be no Palestinian state and no elections." He again stressed the fact that elections could not be held in the West Bank and not the Gaza Strip (Interview with the BBC in Arabic, October 24, 2009).

■ Behind Mahmoud Abbas' edict was the Hamas statement of October 16 regarding its rejection of the Egyptian reconciliation agreement, which was supposed to have been signed on October 26. **In practical terms**, the Palestinian Authority cannot hold free elections in the Gaza Strip in view of Hamas' opposition and control. **In political terms**, the edict can be seen as an attempt to exert pressure on Hamas by representing it as sabotaging the Egyptian reconciliation efforts and fearing elections. In any event, Mahmoud Abbas left a window open for changing the date noted in the edict according to progress made by Egyptian attempts at negotiation.



In the ruined Gaza Strip Palestinians ask for bread and receive a presidential edict from Mahmoud Abbas (Hamas' Felesteen, October 25, 2009).

Palestinian Authority security detentions continue

■ This past week the Palestinian Authority security forces continued their activities against activists and institutions affiliated with Hamas and other organizations. There were reports of Hamas activists detained in the Salfit and Qalqiliya districts and of two senior Hamas activists detained in the region of Ramallah. It was also reported that 22 new teachers in the Ramallah and Hebron districts were fired because of their Hamas affiliation (Hamas' Palestine-Info website, October 26, 2009). Furthermore, eight Palestinian Islamic Jihad activists in the region of Qabatiya (south of Jenin) were detained. They were taken for interrogation regarding the transferral of funds to prisoners and their families (Safa website, October 25, 2009).

■ In view of the activities of the Palestinian security forces, Hamas announced it would boycott the upcoming elections to the student council at Al-Najah university (Ma'an News Agency, October 20, 2009). The reason was apparently the detention of several dozen Hamas student council activists in recent months.