



Intelligence and Terrorism
Information Center

News of Terrorism and the Israeli- Palestinian Conflict

January 26-February 2, 2010



Police robot neutralizes barrel of explosives on Ashqelon beach (Photo by Edi Israel, reprinted courtesy of NRG, February 1, 2010).

Overview

- This week barrels of explosives were discovered on the Ashqelon and Ashdod beaches. Apparently the terrorist organizations in the Gaza Strip were planning to blow them up near an Israeli Navy boat.
- The western Negev was quiet. No rocket hits were identified and no mortar shells were fired.
- Senior Hamas legal figures presented the main arguments of Hamas' response to the Goldstone Report. They focused on Hamas' attempt to justify its rocket fire into Israel, defined by the Goldstone Report as a war crime, while delegitimizing the State of Israel.

Important Events

Gaza Strip

Terrorist Attack at Sea Prevented

■ On the morning of February 1 the Israeli police reported a suspicious object on the beach at Ashqelon in the south of Israel. Police demolitions experts who arrived at the scene discovered **a barrel containing 15-25 kg, or 33-55 pounds, of explosives**. A similar barrel was discovered on the beach at Ashdod, north of Ashqelon, in the evening. Police forces searched Israel's beaches for other explosives. **Apparently terrorists operating in the Gaza Strip had planned to detonate the barrels near Israeli Navy boats**, and they had been washed ashore.

■ On the night of January 29 explosions were heard at sea about two kilometers, or 1.24 miles, from the Gaza shore. Fatah-Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades, the Popular Resistance Committees and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad's military-terrorist wing all claimed responsibility for **eight IEDs exploded** at sea (Ma'an News Agency, January 30, 2010). The two explosive barrels found on February 1 may have been part of the above eight and were washed ashore.

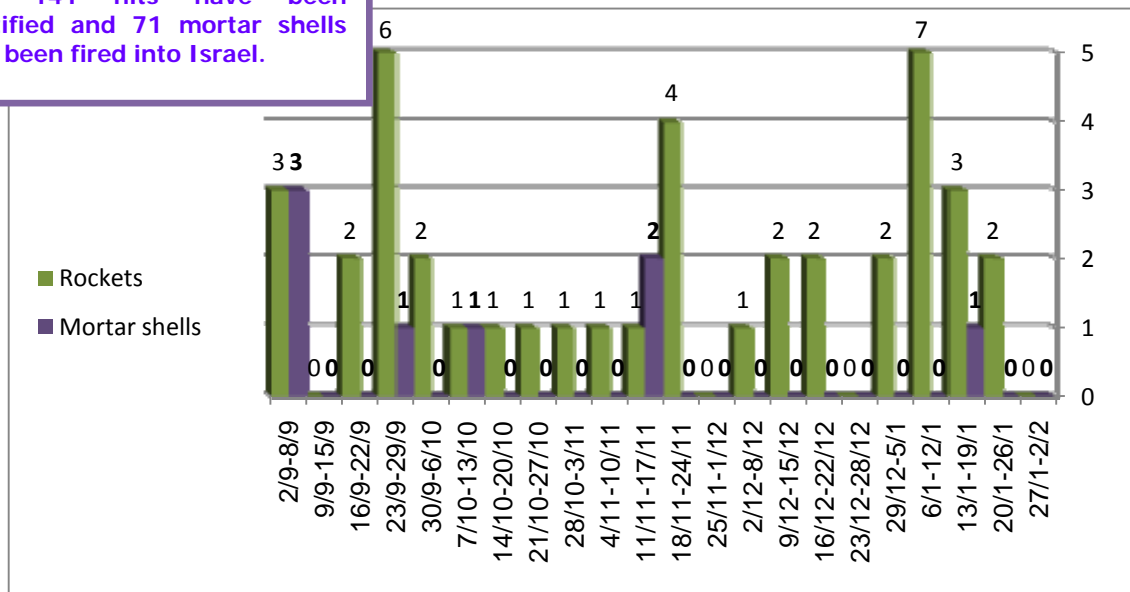
Fire from the Gaza Strip

■ This past week no rocket hits were identified in Israeli territory and no mortar shells were fired.

■ On February 1 light arms were fired at farmers about three kilometers, or 1.8 miles, northeast of the Karni crossing. The IDF returned fire. The Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine claimed responsibility for the attack (PFLP website, February 1, 2010).

Rockets and Mortar Shells Fired into Israeli Territory¹

Since the end of Operation Cast Lead 141 hits have been identified and 71 mortar shells have been fired into Israel.



Coordination Meeting of Terrorist Organizations in the Gaza Strip

■ Sources affiliated with Fatah issued the minutes of a meeting which they said had taken place on January 24, 2010, and attended by representatives of Hamas, the Palestinian Islamic Jihad, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine and the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine. According to the minutes, Hamas initiated a discussion about ceasing rocket fire from the Gaza Strip into Israeli territory and the possibility of setting up a joint body to coordinate operational activities against Israel from Judea and Samaria (Al-Kawfiya Press website, January 28, 2010).

Judea and Samaria

Counterterrorism Activities

■ The Israeli security forces continued preventive counterterrorism activities this past week, detaining Palestinians suspected of terrorist activities. There were several incidents of stones and Molotov cocktails thrown at Israeli vehicles. A prominent incident took place **on January 31 at the Qalandia roadblock** north of Jerusalem. The driver of a truck who had been attacked by stone-throwing Palestinians sped toward the IDF roadblock on the wrong side of the road and hit a number of parked vehicles. The soldiers stationed there, thinking he was trying to break through the roadblock, shot and seriously wounded him.

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

- The following incidents also occurred, during which two Israeli civilians were injured.
 - **February 1** – A Molotov cocktail was thrown at an Israeli vehicle northeast of Ramallah. There were no casualties but the vehicle was damaged (IDF Spokesman, February 1, 2010).
 - **January 31** – Stones were thrown at an Israeli vehicle at a Hebron checkpoint. There were no casualties but the vehicle was damaged (IDF Spokesman, January 31, 2010).
 - **January 30** – Shots were fired at an IDF patrol near the security fence. Fatah-Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades claimed responsibility for the attack (Oudsnet website, January 31, 2010).
 - **January 30** – Stones were thrown at an Israeli vehicle northwest of Ramallah. A child sustained minor injuries. Stones were thrown at an Israeli vehicle northeast of Ramallah. An Israeli woman sustained minor injuries and was treated at the scene (IDF Spokesman, January 30, 2010).
 - **January 30** – Six pipe bombs were found in the possession of a Palestinian at the checkpoint east of Nablus (IDF Spokesman, January 30, 2010).
 - **January 28** – Two Molotov cocktails were thrown at an Israeli vehicle west of Ramallah. There were no casualties and no damage was done (IDF Spokesman, January 28, 2010).
 - **January 27** – Stones were thrown at an Israeli bus southwest of Bethlehem. There were no casualties but the bus was damaged (IDF Spokesman, January 27, 2010).

Israeli Security Forces Expose Hamas Network in East Jerusalem

■ On January 3 two young men, **residents of East Jerusalem** and holding Israeli ID cards, were detained at the central bus station in Beersheba. Interrogation revealed them to be **Hamas operatives** who had been recruited during their studies and work in **Jordan and Dubai**. Returning to Israel, they began gathering information, taking photographs and videos, and preparing lists and maps of potential targets for terrorist attacks. They also gathered information about security procedures and the number of potential victims at each site.

■ The sites included the central bus stations in Jerusalem, Mevaseret Zion (a Jerusalem suburb) and Beersheba, the Malha shopping mall in Jerusalem, Tel Aviv hotels and beach locations, and the military base at Tel Hashomer. They had the information with them when they were detained. They were supposed to receive weapons and explosives for terrorist attacks. To that end they had found a cave near Jerusalem which they enlarged and equipped to be able to hide themselves and the ordnance they expected to receive (Israel Security Agency, February 1, 2010).

■ The two were:

- **Murad Nimr**, 25, a resident of Sur Bahr in East Jerusalem. He studied engineering in Jordan between 2003 and 2007, where he was recruited to Hamas. During his recruitment he met with Hamas representatives in **Saudi Arabia**. In 2008 he moved to **Dubai**, where he worked as an engineer. During that time he continued meeting Hamas operatives in various places, including **Turkey**. In 2009 he returned to Israel and began carrying out the task he had been assigned, collecting information about possible targets for terrorist attacks.
- **Murad Kamal**, 24, a resident of Wadi Joz in East Jerusalem, studied pharmacy in **Jordan** and was recruited to Hamas by Murad Nimr.



Left: Murad Nimr; right: Murad Kamal (Pictures courtesy of the Israel Security Agency).

■ East Jerusalem residents, especially students, are **favorite targets** for recruitment to Hamas and the other terrorist organizations. That is because their Israeli ID cards enable them to move relatively freely throughout Israel in general and Jerusalem in particular. Jordan, Saudi Arabia, the Gulf Emirates and other Arab and Muslim countries where East Jerusalemites work and study are **centers for Hamas recruitment and handling**, as the current affair illustrates. East Jerusalem residents are exploited for various missions, including intelligence collection and terrorist attacks. In recent years there has been an increase in the number of East Jerusalemites involved in terrorist activities.²

Egypt

Egyptian Security Services Prevent Terrorist Attack at the Grave of Rabbi Abuhatzaira

■ According to reports from Egypt, the Egyptian security services exposed an Egyptian terrorist network of 23 operatives who planned to attack a number of targets, including Israeli and Jewish

² For further information see the July 24, 2009 bulletin "[Jerusalem as a focus for terrorism](#)".
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tourists visiting the **grave of Rabbi Yaakov Abuhitzeira at Damanhur near Alexandria**.³ They also planned to attack American ships passing through the Suez Canal, and gathered information about banks in Cairo and Alexandria. The network had a large quantity of weapons and explosives. Some of the operatives trained in southern Sudan and were ideologically affiliated with the Muslim Brotherhood (*Ma'ariv*, February 1, 2010).

The Gaza Strip

The Crossings between Israel and the Gaza Strip

- This past week the crossing were open and 259 trucks entered the Gaza Strip.

Reactions to the Death of Mahmoud al-Mabhouh

- **Mahmoud Abd al-Larawf al-Mabhouh**, senior operative in the Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades, Hamas' military-terrorist wing, was found dead in his hotel room in **Dubai** on January 20. He had been a Hamas terrorist operative for more than 20 years, in the past responsible for the abduction and murder of two Israeli soldiers, and headed Hamas' weapon smuggling network.

- The Hamas movement and its spokesmen have accused Israel of responsibility for his death and promise to avenge him (in statements made by senior Hamas figures and in an official announcement by Hamas posted on its website, Palestine-Info, January 29, 2010). They said the following:

- **Khaled Mashaal**, head of the Hamas political bureau, speaking at al-Mabhouh's funeral in Damascus, said that **Hamas vowed to avenge his death** and that there would be no change in the movement's strategic policy of "resistance" [i.e., terrorism]. He also made anti-Semitic remarks, such as "the Zionists killed the prophets and their messengers," calling the Jews "enemies of people of all religions" (Al-Jazeera TV, January 29, 2010).

³ In 1879, Abuhitzeira made his way from his native Morocco to Eretz Israel via Algeria, Tunisia and Libya. While passing through the Egyptian city of Damanhur, he became ill and died. He is revered by Moroccan Jews and many go to pray at his grave on the anniversary of his death.



Khaled Mashaal at al-Mabhohuh's funeral in Damascus (Al-Aqsa TV, February 1, 2010).

- **Mahmoud al-Zahar**, a member of the Hamas political bureau in Damascus, said that Hamas could also respond outside the internal arena and that it would decide “the rules of the game.” However, he declined to state what the nature of its response would be (Radio Al-Aqsa, January 30, 2010).
- **Abu Obeida**, Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades spokesman, warned that “the Zionist enemy will not evade punishment” and that the time and nature of the response would be chosen in the future (Al-Aqsa TV, January 29, 2010).
- **Musheir al-Masri**, one of Hamas’ spokesmen, said that the Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades would respond at a fitting time and place “on the Israeli home front.” He said the price for assassinating al-Mabhohuh would be high (Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades website, January 31, 2010).
- **Osama Hamdan**, Hamas representative in Lebanon, said that Hamas would not be drawn into the harsh response expected by Israel, and would not harm senior Israeli figures abroad (Al-Majda, January 31, 2010).

The Political Struggle

The Palestinian Authority-Affiliated Press Encourages Popular Protest Activities (the Bila’in Syndrome)

■ The press affiliated with the Palestinian Authority **continued its encouragement** of the so called “**popular protest activities**” carried out against Israel (the Bila’in syndrome). The main points of articles published in recent weeks by columnists affiliated with the Palestinian Authority and Fatah were the following:

- **Hamada Faraana**, writing in *Al-Ayam* on January 10, related to the participation of members of Fatah’s Central Committee and Revolutionary Council in what he called “popular protest activities” in the villages of Bila’in, Ni’lin and al-Maasra. He said that their participation in the activities held on the first Friday of January 2010 was especially worthy of attention.

He expressed hope that future demonstrations would be “quiet, wise, persistent and [well-] planned,” and would be carried out with other political forces in the “national coalition” headed by the PLO and the Palestinian Authority.

- **Yihiya Rabah**, writing in *Al-Hayat al-Jadeeda* on January 21, said that the entire State of Israel was becoming a tool in the hands of the settlers. He said the Israeli government wanted to foster the trend in order to become the neutral mediator between the Palestinians, “the owners of the land,” and the settlers. He added that the **area of contention was liable become larger** and that the international community would have to “protect the existence of the Palestinians.” He also said that the Palestinians had “the right to defend themselves” from the settlers in the West Bank, who behaved according to their own special rules.

- **Hassan al-Batal**, writing in *Al-Ayam* on January 24, said that “the Bila’in syndrome had spread” and that other villages had joined the protests. He said it was not a “third intifada,” but rather the first intifada in which Israelis and foreign nationals participated, which gave a certain kind of protection to their Palestinian comrades. He said that “there is no quiet in the Old City [of Jerusalem] and no quiet in the points of friction spreading from Bila’in and its neighbors.” This intifada, he said, is a “popular resistance” and a “passive resistance,” as opposed to the second one, most of which was armed and violent.

Hamas’ Response to the Goldstone Report⁴

- **Muhammad Faraj al-Ghoul**, justice minister of the de facto Hamas administration in the Gaza Strip, recently said that **Hamas’ response to the Goldstone Report would be issued “very soon.” The response, he said, was 52 pages long**, and contained the findings of a “committee of experts” which had been appointed by the Hamas administration. The Palestinian Authority also issued its own preliminary response to the Goldstone Report through its UN representative, **Riad Mansour**.

- **Dia al-Din Madhoun**, a judge in the de facto Hamas administration who heads Hamas’ documentation committee (Al-Tawthiq), presented the main Hamas claims, as follows (Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades website, January 27, 2010):

- **Hamas aimed its rocket and mortar shell fire at military targets belonging to the “occupation,” not at civilian areas.** The rockets of the “resistance” [i.e., the terrorist organizations] are **not exact, and despite the “effort not to harm civilians,” they are likely to be a little off target.** The small number of civilians killed by rocket fire proves that civilians were not targeted.

⁴ A full analysis of the Hamas response will shortly appear on the ITIC website.
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- **In any case, most of the areas in which the rockets fell are not part of the so-called “enemy state” [i.e., Israel]. It was Israel which committed a crime by removing civilians to combat areas and settling them on land which is not theirs.**

- **The Goldstone Report convicted the “Zionist occupation” and found the “resistance” [i.e., the terrorist organizations] innocent of the accusation of using civilians as human shields.** The Report’s claim that the “resistance” had committed war crimes by targeting civilians was baseless, and will be refuted by the principle of international law which grants occupied people the legitimate right to resist an occupying enemy.

- **Hamas’ claims are baseless. During Operation Cast Lead the overwhelming majority of rockets were deliberately aimed at large areas such as towns and cities for the express purpose of killing, terrifying and demoralizing civilians. No distinction was made between military and civilian targets, and even the Goldstone Report recognized that the fire was indiscriminate and aimed at civilians for the purpose of spreading fear and disrupting daily life.**

- **The head of Hamas’ documentation committee repeatedly claimed that the Goldstone Report refuted the claims that Hamas used civilians as human shields.** That is in fact one of the Achilles’ heels of the Report, **and is being thoroughly exploited by Hamas propaganda.** Israel has a great deal of hard evidence proving that **Hamas formulated a combat doctrine based on using civilians as human shields and including a wide variety of tactics which were implemented in Operation Cast Lead:** forcing civilians to remain in neighborhoods in which the IDF was operating, assimilating terrorist operatives wearing civilian clothing into residential neighborhoods, having groups of children help them escape from areas of combat, making extensive military use of residential dwellings and public institutions (hospitals, schools, mosques), firing rockets in close proximity to residential dwellings and public institutions, etc.

Mahmoud Abbas Is Prepared to Return to the Negotiating Table If Israel Commits to a Three-Month Freeze in Settlement Building

- **Palestinian Authority chairman Mahmoud Abbas, interviewed during his visit to Britain, told the daily *Guardian* that the Palestinian Authority was prepared to renew negotiations if Israel would commit to a total freeze of building in the settlements for three months.** With regard to Israel he said the following:

- **He said he was prepared to renew direct negotiations if Israel froze building in the settlements for three months and agreed to the 1967 borders as the basis for land swaps.** He said that “These are not preconditions, they are requirements in the road map. If they are not prepared to do that, it means they don’t want a political solution.”

● He said he did not know why the United States had “backed off” from its demand of a total freeze in the settlements, and that he would consult with Arab allies before giving his answer to American envoy George Mitchell regarding a renewal of negotiations. He said progress would be made if Israel agreed to “the framework of a two-state solution based on the 1967 borders and an end to the occupation, with timelines [sic] and mechanisms”⁵ (*Guardian*, January 31, 2010).



Palestinian Authority Chairman Mahmoud Abbas meets British Prime Minister Gordon Brown (Wafa News Agency, January 29, 2010).

The Internal Palestinian Arena

Khaled Mashaal Tries to Mend Fences with Egypt and Defends Hamas' Ties to Iran

■ On January 26 Khaled Mashaal, head of the Hamas political bureau in Damascus, was interviewed by the Egyptian TV station **Al-Yawm**. He spoke about a variety of topics on the Hamas-Egypt agenda resulting from the recent tension following Egypt's building a barrier and the death of an Egyptian soldier⁶ (Al-Yawm TV, January 26, 2010). His main points were the following:

- **The investigation into the death of the Egyptian soldier:** Hamas appointed a committee to investigate the circumstances surrounding the shooting of the Egyptian soldier. However, he said, the demonstration at the Rafah crossing expressed the Gazans' pain and their quiet protest against the barricade being built by Egypt.
- **Hamas' ties with Egypt:** The struggle against Israel cannot be waged without Egypt. He denied that Hamas thought Egypt was plotting with Israel and the United States against it and asked for a more active, central Egyptian role, especially if Egypt acted for the good of the residents of the Gaza Strip with respect to the “siege” and the construction of the barrier.
- **Hamas' ties with Iran:** He claimed that Hamas was a national liberation movement which was not subservient to any external factor and was prepared to receive support from

⁵ <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2010/jan/31/mahmoud-abbas-israel-west-bank>.

⁶ For further information see the January 14, 2010 bulletin “Tension between Egypt and Hamas following the construction of an underground barrier along the Egyptian-Gaza Strip border” at http://www.terrorism-info.org.il/malam_multimedia/English/eng_n/pdf/hamas_e094.pdf.

anyone if there were no strings attached. He also claimed that if the United States or the European Union were to offer assistance with no preconditions, Hamas would agree to accept it. He added that **“if Iran presented conditions, we would not agree to accept its aid. We receive aid from Iran because it is unconditional.”** He also said that Hamas had agreed to lulls in the fighting with Israel a number of times under Egyptian aegis, **despite the Iranian interest in having the fighting continue.** “Hamas’ closest and most important environment is Arab, and after that Muslim and Western. **Just as there is no vacuum in physics, there is no vacuum in politics, and if the Arab states become weak, Turkey and Iran become strong.”**

● **Internal Palestinian reconciliation:** He claimed that **Hamas adhered to [the idea of] national reconciliation** and expected Egypt to join it in examining its reasons for refusing to sign the Egyptian reconciliation initiative. He rejected the Palestinian Authority’s claims that Hamas refused a reconciliation, saying that “if Hamas were happy with the current situation, why would it go to Cairo for a round of talks?”



Khaled Mashaal, head of Hamas’ political bureau interviewed by Egyptian TV (Al-Yawm TV, January 26, 2010).