



Intelligence and Terrorism
Information Center

News of Terrorism and the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict

March 10-16, 2010



Palestinians throw stones at Israeli security forces in Wadi Joz near East Jerusalem (Baz Ratner for Reuters, March 16, 2010).

Overview

- After three weeks of quiet in the western Negev, two rockets were fired into Israeli territory this past week. **Jerusalem** remained a focus of unrest and rioting, accompanied by a **Hamas and Fatah incitement campaign**. The dedication on March 15 of the rebuilt Hurva synagogue in Jerusalem's Old City was exploited to incite the Palestinian public with the **false claim** that Israel was going to destroy Al-Aqsa mosque and build the Third Temple in its stead.
- Senior figures in the Palestinian Authority used the current crisis over building housing units in Ramat Shlomo in north Jerusalem to increase the pressure on Israel. Mahmoud Abbas said that the Israeli government's decision to build in Ramat Shlomo was a "severe blow" to the efforts made during the past months to relaunch the indirect negotiations. In the meantime, George Mitchell, the American special envoy to the Middle East, postponed his proposed visit.

Important Events

Gaza Strip

Rocket and Mortar Shell Fire

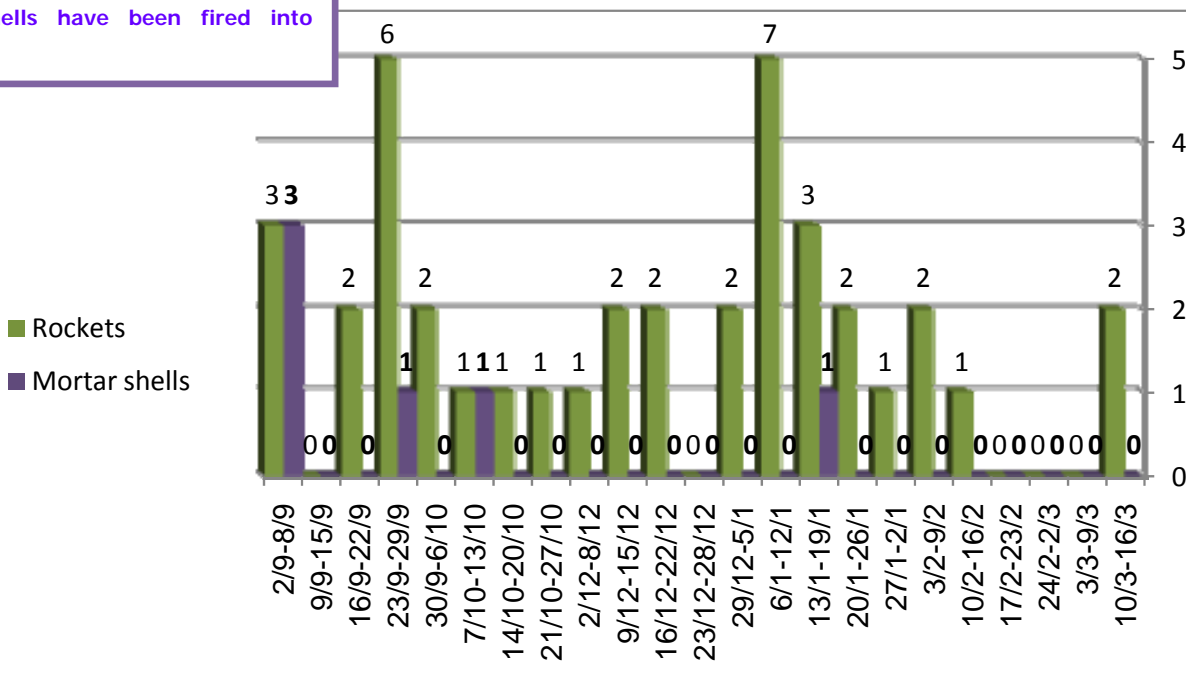
■ After three weeks of quiet in the western Negev, this past week two rockets were fired into Israeli territory.

- On **March 11** a rocket hit was identified at a structure in one of the villages in the western Negev. There were no casualties. A network affiliated with the global jihad calling itself "Supporters of the Sunna" claimed responsibility for the attack (Qudsnet website, March 12, 2010).
- On **March 13** a rocket hit was identified in an open area between two villages in the western Negev. There were no casualties and no damage was done. A network affiliated with the global jihad and calling itself "The Supporters of the Sunna on the Wings of Jerusalem" claimed responsibility for the attack (Al-Fallujah website, March 14, 2010).

■ On March 14 light arms were fired at a motorized IDF patrol moving along the border security fence. There were no casualties.

Rockets and Mortar Shells Fired into Israeli Territory¹

Since the end of Operation Cast Lead 147 hits have been identified and 71 mortar shells have been fired into Israel.



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

The Israeli Air Force Attacks Targets in the Gaza Strip

■ In response to the rocket fire, on March 11 Israeli Air Force aircraft attacked a weapons manufacturing site on the outskirts of Khan Yunis in the southern Gaza Strip. Tunnels in the Rafah area used to smuggle weapons into the Gaza Strip were also attacked.

Hamas Supported by Local Residents in Efforts to Restrain Rocket Fire

■ Surfers on a Fatah forum wrote that the Hamas security services have enlisted families living near the border security fence to report rocket firing squads reaching the area. In return for the information the services promised to protect the residents, provide them with monthly salaries, walkie-talkies, cellular phones and weapons (Fatah forum, March 14, 2010).

Judea and Samaria

Jerusalem as a Focus for Riots

■ This past week rioting continued in Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria. There were a large number of violent demonstrations in many locations. The demonstrators confronted the Israel security forces and threw stones and Molotov cocktails. A Border Policeman sustained minor injuries. **The rioting peaked on March 15 and 16.**

■ **On March 15 the rebuilt Hurva synagogue, originally constructed in the early 18th century, was dedicated in Jerusalem.** The tension in Jerusalem increased after Palestinians called for “the ground to burn.” In addition, the Islamic Movement in Israel organized dozens of buses to transport demonstrators to Jerusalem. Large Israeli police and Border Police forces secured the area to prevent violent clashes from breaking out. Despite the tension, the dedication ceremony was relatively quiet.

■ **March 16** was designated “a day of rage and defense of Al-Aqsa Mosque and Jerusalem” following a Hamas incitement campaign, resulting in general unrest and violent clashes (See below). According to Palestinian reports about 100 demonstrators were injured and several dozen were detained. During the riots there were also calls to return to an armed struggle against Israel. “Rage day” was also marked with a demonstration in the Hamas-controlled Gaza Strip.



Palestinians riot in East Jerusalem (Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades website, March 16, 2010).

Counterterrorism Activities

- The Israeli security forces continued their preventive counterterrorism activities, detaining several dozen Palestinians suspected of terrorist attack and confiscating weapons.

- During the riots and demonstrations Palestinians continued throwing stones and Molotov cocktail at Israeli vehicles:
 - **March 16** – Stones were thrown at an Israeli bus southeast of Ramallah, and at a number of Israeli vehicles south of Nablus. There were no casualties but the vehicles were damaged (IDF Spokesman, March 16, 2010).
 - **March 13** – IDF soldiers at a checkpoint near the Jewish settlement in Hebron found knives in the tools of Palestinians (IDF Spokesman, March 13, 2010).
 - **March 12** – An IDF force at a checkpoint southwest of Nablus found a 30cm (12”) knife among the tools of a Palestinian.

The Political Struggle

The Palestinian Authority Uses the Building Crisis in Jerusalem to Increase Pressure on Israel

- Senior figures in the Palestinian Authority have used the tension between Israel and the United States (created by the announcement that Israel would build housing units in Ramat Shlomo in north Jerusalem) to increase pressure on Israel.
 - **Mahmoud Abbas**, chairman of the Palestinian Authority, holding a joint press conference with American Vice President Joe Biden, strongly criticized the Israeli government’s decision to build housing units in the northern part of East Jerusalem. He said it “destroys faith and is a severe blow to the efforts made during the past months to relaunch the indirect negotiations” (Al-Jazeera TV, March 10, 2010).

- **Saeb Erekat**, chief PLO negotiator, said that the Palestinian side respected the position of the members of the Arab monitoring committee and that **the Palestinians had not abandoned the talks**. He added that the American administration was familiar with the Palestinian position that it was hard to begin negotiations after the Israeli decision to build 1,600 housing units in East Jerusalem.
- **Salam Fayyad**, Palestinian prime minister, meeting with Joe Biden, demanded that pressure be brought to bear on Israel to make it “stop breaking international law” (*Al-Hayat al-Jadeeda*, March 11, 2010).
- **Muhammad Dahlan**, in charge of information for Fatah's central committee, said that in the near future the Palestinian Authority should appeal to the Security Council to unilaterally declare the establishment of a Palestinian state with the 1967 borders. He said that only such a step would deter Israel from continuing “its takeover of the lands of Judea, Samaria and Jerusalem” (Palpress, March 11, 2010).
- **Amr Moussa**, secretary-general of the Arab League, held a press conference after a meeting of the League committee to monitor the Arab peace initiative on March 11. He told those in attendance that Palestinian Authority Chairman Mahmoud Abbas had informed him the PA would not initiate negotiations under the present conditions. He added that with such conditions they would be useless and that Israel was responsible for their not being renewed (Al-Jazeera TV in English, March 11, 2010). In the meantime, the American administration announced that special envoy George Mitchell would postpone his proposed visit to the Middle East.

Hamas Incitement Campaign Encourages Rioting in Jerusalem



Palestinians throw stones in East Jerusalem (Hamas' Palestine-info website, March 16, 2010).

- **Hamas has initiated a campaign to enflame emotions over Jerusalem and encourage riots**. It called for marking March 16 as a “day of rage and defense of Al-Aqsa mosque and Jerusalem.” The dedication of the rebuilt Hurva synagogue on March 15 was exploited by Hamas

and Fatah to incite the Palestinian public with the **false claim** that Israel was planning to destroy Al-Aqsa mosque and built the Third Temple on the ruins.

- **Khaled Mashaal**, head of the Hamas political bureau in Damascus, said that “dedicating the Hurva synagogue meant the destruction of Al-Aqsa mosque and the building of the Third Temple.” He called on the Palestinians to undertake a long-term campaign to protect Jerusalem, the mosque and the holy places of Islam and Christianity. He added that Israel was “playing with fire and liable to inflame the entire region.” He repeatedly stated that the rapprochement between the Palestinian Authority and Israel “encouraged and supported the settlements and the Judaization of Jerusalem and the holy places” (Al-Quds TV, March 15, 2010).

- **Musa Abu Marzuq**, a member of the Hamas political bureau, claimed that the dedication of the Hurva synagogue was part of a plan to turn Jerusalem into a completely Jewish city and to build the Temple where Al-Aqsa mosque now stands. He called on Palestinians, especially those living in Jerusalem and Israel (“the territories of 1948”) to go to Jerusalem to confront Israel, whether through prayer or by throwing stone and other objects (Al-Manar TV, March 13, 2010).

- **Izzat al-Sharq**, member of the Hamas political bureau, said that building the Hurva synagogue was like a declaration of war because it was a direct threat to the Al-Aqsa mosque. He said that “Al-Aqsa mosque is the red line, and Israel’s crossing it will cause a volcano of Islamic rage to explode” (Hamas’ Palestine-Info website, March 15, 2010).

■ **The Palestinian Authority and Fatah participated in encouraging protest activity in Jerusalem by representing the dedication of the synagogue as an Israeli attempt to damage Al-Aqsa mosque.** On March 16, in an exceptional move, PA-controlled Palestinian television broadcast the confrontations live from Jerusalem and interviewed various Palestinian public figures who praised the “firm stand” taken in Jerusalem.

■ Two of the more prominent statements regarding the events in Jerusalem were the following:

- **Hatem Abd al-Qader**, who holds Fatah’s Jerusalem portfolio, was interviewed by Radio Palestine and said that the participation of representatives of the coalition of the Israel government in the dedication of the synagogue was proof that “it is the first step in erecting the Third Temple on the ruins of Al-Aqsa mosque” (Voice of Palestine Radio, March 15, 2010).

- **Taysir al-Tamimi**, a judge in the Sharia high court, called on Muslims around the world to declare a general mobilization to protect Al-Aqsa mosque from “the attempts of the Jews to break into it.” He said that dedicating the [Hurva] synagogue was a challenge to Muslims around the world (PNN, March 15, 2010).

Hamas Reactions to the Detention of Maher Ouda

- On March 13 in Ramallah the Israeli security forces detained Maher Ouda, a senior operative of the Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades, Hamas' military-terrorist wing. Operating from Hamas headquarters in Ramallah, he was responsible for planning and directing two mass-murder suicide bombing attacks which took place on September 9, 2003. One was carried out at the Hillel Coffee Shop in Jerusalem and killed seven Israelis and wounded 70. The other was carried out at a bus stop at an Israeli army base and killed nine Israelis and wounded 14.

- Hamas spokesmen exploited Ouda's detention to cast accusations at the Palestinian Authority:
 - **Hamas headquarters in Judea and Samaria** said in an announcement that "the Israel Security Agency officers who failed to detain Ouda dozens of times would not have succeeded this time if not for the security efforts of the Palestinian security services in the [West] Bank" (Hamas' Palestine-Info website, March 14, 2010).
 - **Salah al-Bardawil**, spokesman for the Hamas faction in the Palestinian Legislative Council, claimed that the detention "reflected the hypocrisy of the Palestinian Authority, which talks about reconciliation while it hands a national hero over to Israel" (Hamas' Paltoday website, March 14, 2010).
 - **Musheir al-Masri**, a member of the Palestinian Legislative Council, said in a interview with Hamas' Al-Aqsa TV that Ouda's detention deep within Palestinian Authority territory indicated "the treasonous role played by the Palestinian Authority in its security coordination with Israel (Al-Aqsa TV, March 24, 2010).



**The Hillel Coffee Shop in Jerusalem, site of a suicide bombing attack
(Filastin al-Muslima, October 2003).**