



**The Meir Amit Intelligence  
and Terrorism Information**

## **News of Terrorism and the Israeli- Palestinian Conflict**

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**(April 25 - May 1, 2012)**



**Four IEDs discovered by IDF soldiers at the Beqaot checkpoint  
(IDF Spokesman, April 25, 2012)**

### **Overview**

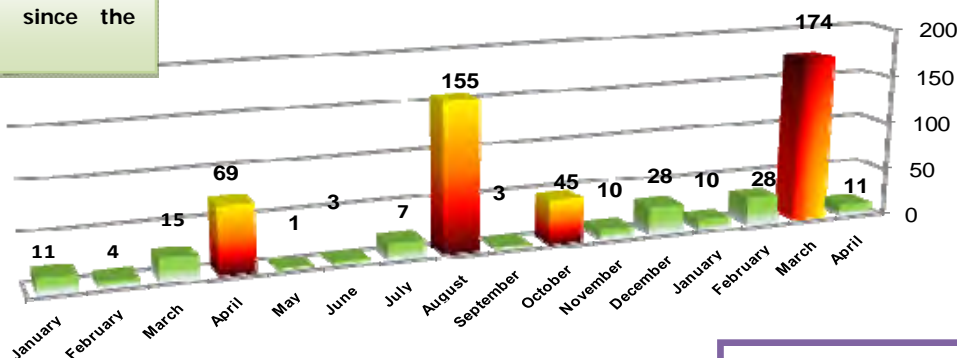
- Rocket fire into the western Negev continues. This past week two rocket hits were identified. In Judea and Samaria there were attempts to smuggle weapons through the Beqaot and Hawara security forces checkpoints.
- In Israeli jails, 1,450 prisoners are on a hunger strike. An Israel Prison Service committee was appointed to discuss their demands and is expected to present its findings within 10 days (NRG, April 30, 2012). Mahmoud Abbas and Khaled Mashaal announced that the Palestinian Authority intended to raise the issue of the Palestinian prisoners in the international arena, including the UN.

## Rocket Fire in the Western Negev

- This past week **two rocket hits** were identified in the western Negev:
  - On **April 26**, Independence Day, a rocket fire fell in an open area in the western Negev. There were no casualties and no damage was done.
  - On **April 30** a rocket fell in an open area near the Israeli town of Sderot. There were no casualties and no damage was done.

## Rockets Fired into Israeli Territory<sup>1</sup>

Since the beginning of 2011, 548 rocket hits have been identified in Israeli territory; 223 since the beginning of 2012.



Since the end of Operation Cast Lead 805 rocket hits have been identified in Israeli territory.

Notes: The figures for March include 50 rockets intercepted and destroyed by the Iron Dome aerial defense system during the most recent round of escalation. In April three rockets were fired at Israel's southernmost city of Eilat.

## Judea and Samaria

### An IDF Force Discovers IEDs

- There has recently been an increase in attempts to smuggle improvised weapons through Israeli security forces checkpoints:
  - On **April 24** (Memorial Day eve) four IEDs were seized at the Beqaot checkpoint. In the late afternoon two Palestinians arrived at the checkpoint (located north of Jericho and east of Nablus) carrying a suspicious bag. Soldiers stationed at the checkpoint

<sup>1</sup> The statistics do not include rockets fired which fell inside the Gaza Strip. As of May 1, 2012.

inspected the bag and found four IEDs. The two Palestinians were apparently taken by car from the Nablus region and left near the checkpoint, which they wanted to pass through on foot.

- On the evening of **April 28** an IDF force stationed at the Hawara checkpoint (south of Nablus) stopped a Palestinian with two IEDs on his person. He was taken for questioning. The two IEDs were detonated by an explosives expert.

## Fatah Wins Student Council Elections in Judea and Samaria Universities

■ Student council elections were recently held at the universities in Judea and Samaria. **At most of them the factions affiliated with Fatah won by large majorities.** For example, at **Al-Quds University** Fatah's student wing won 32 of 51 seats (Dunia al-Watan, April 24, 2012). At the **University of Bethlehem** it won 22 of 31 seats and at the **Palestine Polytechnic University** in Hebron, 18 of 31 seats (Ma'an News Agency, April 25, 2012).

■ In response, **Hamas spokesman Sami Abu Zuhri** said that at several of the universities the results had been **falsified**. He also accused the Palestinian Authority security forces of having threatened student voters, warning them not to vote for the Islamic factions, and even accused them of having taken students for interrogation. All of the above, he claimed, were responsible for "a limited victory for Fatah," adding that the way the elections were conducted increased concerns over the PA's ability to hold general elections (Sami Abu Zuhri's official Facebook page, April 30, 2012).

## The Issue of the Palestinian Prisoners

### The Continuing Hunger Strike

■ According to an Israeli political source, **for the past two weeks 1,450 Palestinian prisoners in Israeli jails have been on a hunger strike.** The prisoners presented a series of demands to the Israel Prison Service, which appointed a committee to examine the issue. The committee has completed its work and is expected to present its findings within 10 days (NRG, April 30, 2012).

■ The issue of the prisoners' hunger strike is being dealt with by senior Palestinian Authority and Hamas officials, who have been very active. To that end, a telephone conversation was

held by Mahmoud Abbas and Khaled Mashaal, head of Hamas' political bureau. The two stressed the need to act through public and diplomatic channels (Hamas' Palestine-info website, April 27, 2012). Speaking in Tunisia Mahmoud Abbas said that **he had decided to appeal to the UN concerning the issue of the Palestinian prisoners**. He claimed that Israel and the Palestinian Authority had official agreements regarding the release of prisoners (Wafa News Agency, April 30, 2012).

■ The prisoners' demands were presented by Hamas (among them release from solitary confinement and the restoration of privileges they had enjoyed in the past) as agreements which were not honored in the Gilad Shalit prisoner exchange deal (Hamas' Palestine-info website, April 28, 2012). The issue of the prisoners was also discussed by a Hamas leadership delegation, headed by Khaled Mashaal, with high-ranking Egyptians in Cairo. After the meeting the Egyptian foreign minister and Khaled Mashaal held a press conference, where they reported having agreed on a unified Palestinian position regarding the Palestinian efforts made for the prisoners. They also reported that **the Palestinian Authority would promote the issue in the international arena** to exert pressure on the Israel government (Al-Jazeera, April 29, 2012). At the same time, **senior Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad officials repeated their calls for the abduction of Israeli soldiers** (Sama News Agency, April 25, 2012).

■ **Izzat Rishq**, a member of Hamas' political bureau, called on human rights organizations and the media to interview Gilad Shalit to hear about how the Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades, Hamas' military-terrorist wing, treated him during the five years he was imprisoned in the Gaza Strip. He claimed that would expose the gap between the way he was treated by Hamas and the way Israel treated Palestinian prisoners. **Note: The comparison is ridiculous**. Palestinian terrorist operatives in Israeli jails are imprisoned according to legal decisions after legal deliberations and the prisoners receive legal counsel. Gilad Shalit, on the other hand, was, according to media reports, held isolated in difficult conditions. He was not permitted to meet with representatives of the Red Cross or have contact with the outside world, thus violating accepted international norms, including those of the 1949 Third Geneva Convention.



Izzat Rishq (Hamas' Palestine-info.uk website, April 29, 2012)

## Hamas' Political Activity

### Khaled Mashaal in Egypt

■ **Khaled Mashaal**, head of Hamas' political bureau, led a political delegation to Egypt to meet with the heads of Egyptian General Intelligence and of the Arab League. According to Sami Khater, a member of Hamas political bureau, three main issues were discussed at the meetings:

- The hunger strike of the Palestinian prisoners in Israeli jails
- The reconciliation with Fatah
- Rebuilding the Gaza Strip



**Khaled Mashaal meets with the secretary general of the Arab League in Egypt (Hamas' Palestine-info.uk website, April 29, 2012)**

■ At the same time another delegation left the Gaza Strip for Cairo. It included Hamas members of the Palestinian Legislative Council and was headed by Ahmed Bahar. The delegation exited the Gaza Strip through the Rafah crossing with the intention of participating in the talks Khaled Mashaal held with Egyptian intelligence. From Egypt the delegation was supposed to continue to Bahrain (Ma'an News Agency, April 28, 2012).

### The Fuel Crisis in the Gaza Strip Continues

■ Despite the arrival in Egypt of a fuel tanker from Qatar, the energy crisis in the Gaza Strip has not yet been resolved. **Taher al-Nunu**, spokesman for the de-facto Hamas administration in the Gaza Strip, said that the ship had been anchored in Egypt for a week but the fuel had not reached the Gaza Strip because of "a number of problems." He called on Egypt to facilitate the delivery of the fuel to the Gaza Strip so that the power plant could be put into operation (Al-Quds, April 25, 2012). **Muhammad Awad**, foreign minister in the de-facto Hamas administration, also appealed to the Egyptian authorities to allow the fuel to be delivered to the

Gaza Strip through the Rafah crossing and not the Kerem Shalom crossing, as planned (Palestineonline website, April 28, 2012).

- Concurrently Egypt announced it would export natural gas to the Gaza Strip. To that end a 30-kilometer (18.6-mile) pipeline would be laid to the Egyptian-Palestinian border. According to the Egyptians, the Sinai Peninsula tribes who 14 times blew up the pipeline which also delivers gas to Israel, said they were willing to help lay the pipeline for the Palestinians (Al-Haqiqqa al-Dawlia, April 25, 2012).

## Internal Palestinian Affairs

### Mahmoud Abbas Meets with Salam Fayyad

- **Mahmoud Abbas**, Palestinian Authority chairman, met with **Salam Fayyad**, the Palestinian prime minister, on April 24. It was the first time the two had met since Salam Fayyad refused to deliver the Palestinians' letter to Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu (April 17). According to reports, **the two discussed the changes which were expected to occur in the Palestinian Authority government** (Al-Quds, April 26, 2012).

- It was reported that during the meeting Mahmoud Abbas authorized Salam Fayyad to make changes in his government. The main issue was the appointment of **Nabil Qassis**, former president of Birzeit University, to the post of **minister of the treasury**, leaving Salam Fayyad with only the position of prime minister. It was also reported that a number of ministers would be replaced (Ma'an News Agency, April 30, 2012).

## The Palestinian Authority's Political-Public Diplomacy Activities

### Mahmoud Abbas' Political Activity

- **Mahmoud Abbas** recently visited a number of North African countries, spending four days in Tunisia. While there he met with Moncef Marzouki, president of Tunisia, and discussed the Palestinian position on the renewal of negotiations with Israel, the possibility of a renewed Palestinian submission to the UN for international recognition and the issue of the internal Palestinian reconciliation ((Al-Ayam, April 29, 2012). From Tunisia Mahmoud Abbas is expected to go to Libya.



Mahmoud Abbas on a visit to Tunisia (Wafa News Agency, April 29, 2012)

## Responses to the Israeli Government Decision to Settle the Status of the Outposts

■ The announcement made by the Israeli government regarding its decision to settle the status of three outposts (Sansana, Rehalim and Brukhin) was met with severe criticism in the Palestinian Authority. On April 24 **Nabil Abu Rudeina**, spokesman for the presidential office, denounced the decision and called on the government of Israel to stop its "unilateral activities." He added that the PA leadership was waiting for Israel's formal answer to the letter sent by Mahmoud Abbas, and if it did not respond to the Palestinian demands in the proper spirit, the Palestinians had "open options" (Wafa News Agency, April 24, 2012).

■ **Saeb Erekat**, a member of the PLO's Executive Committee and its chief negotiator, said that the decision of the Israeli government was a "gross violation of international law" and that Israel had to choose between peace and the settlements. He added that the Palestinians were examining the possibility of appealing to the UN Security Council to condemn the settlements, their being legitimized and the establishing of new ones (Voice of Palestine Radio, April 24, 2012).

## Propaganda Events

### Preparation for Nakba Day

■ Palestinians continue preparations for Nakba Day (May 15). **Muhammad al-Ian**, a coordinator for the Nakba Day events, said that **the main rally would be held in Ramallah's Yasser Arafat Square, and would feature speeches and other events.** He said that in addition to the demonstrations, rallies and marches, there would be local activities whose objective would be "**to instill the culture of return**" [i.e., the return of the Palestinian refugees] in the younger generation (Voice of Palestine Radio, April 30, 2012). It is currently unclear to what degree Palestinians will participate in the planned events.

- The PLO authorized a series of activities for Nakba Day in the Gaza Strip, among them an exhibition of photographs, documentary movies, marches and demonstrations. The main march will be held in **Gaza City on May 15** and all the Palestinian organizations will be in attendance (Ma'an News Agency, April 29, 2012).
- So far it is unknown whether the planned activities include marches to Israel's borders like the ones held last year on Nakba Day.

### Plans for More Fly-Ins

- The organizers of the last fly-in said in an announcement that they were planning to organization a large campaign on **August 23, 2012** to express solidarity with the Palestinian people and to answer the Israeli response to "international activity" (i.e., the provocative fly-in of March 30, 2012). Participating are 23 Palestinian institutions and 15 international activists, who called on activists around the globe to join them in the campaign and to reach Judea and Samaria (Airflotilla3 website, April 25, 2012).