



New of the Terrorism and Israeli-Palestinian Conflict

May 9-15, 2012



Mahmoud Abbas meets with Yitzhak Molcho, the Israeli prime minister's envoy
(Wafa News Agency, May 13, 2012)

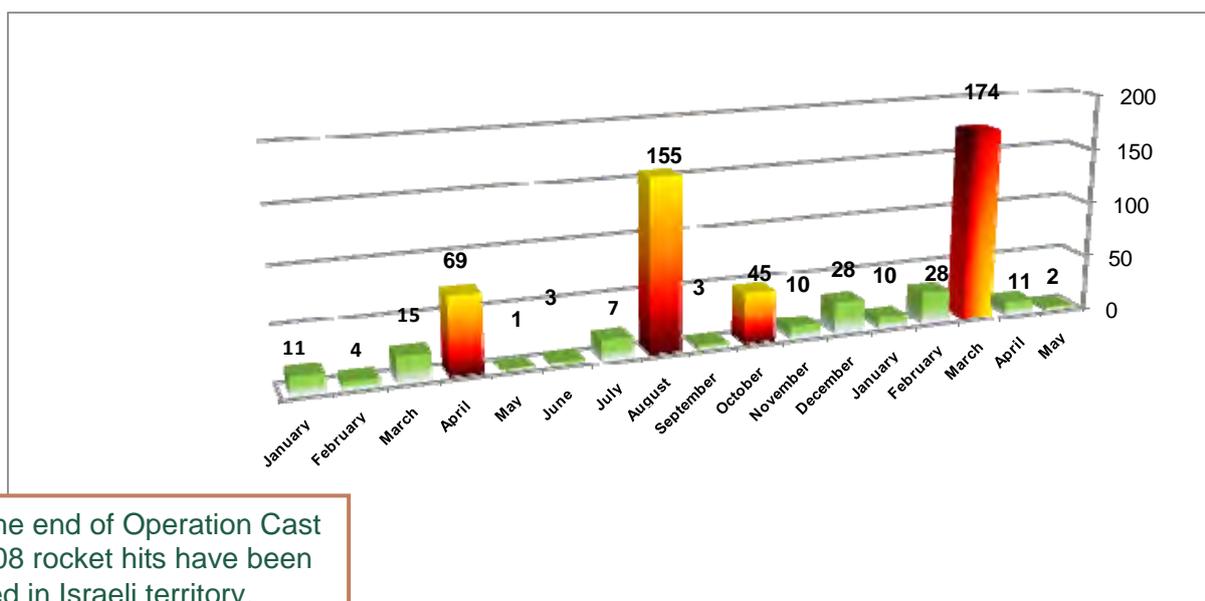
Overview

- One rocket hit was identified in the western Negev. In Judea and Samaria there has been a rise in the number of violent demonstrations in which Palestinians rioted against IDF forces.
- Israel and the Palestinian terrorists incarcerated in Israeli prison facilities reached understandings which **ended the hunger strike**: the prisoners pledged not to engage in supporting terrorist activities, while Israel agreed to a series of improvements in prison conditions.
- On and around May 15 the Palestinians marked Nakba Day. In Judea and Samaria young Palestinian men, some of them masked, confronted IDF forces. In various locations in Judea, Samaria, the Gaza Strip, the Arab countries and around the world local demonstrations and rallies were held.

Important Terrorism Events – Israel's South

- This past week one rocket hit was identified in Israeli territory. The rocket fell in an empty area in the western Negev. There were no casualties and no damage was done.

Rockets Fired into Israeli Territory¹



Since the end of Operation Cast Lead 808 rocket hits have been identified in Israeli territory.

Since the beginning of 2011, 551 rocket hits have been identified in Israeli territory; 226 since the beginning of 2012.

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

The Situation on the Ground

- Recently there has been an increase in terrorist activity and riots in Judea and Samaria, reflected by the growing numbers Palestinians detained by IDF forces and of IEDs seized. There has also been an increase in the number of violent demonstrations in which rioters confronted IDF forces. **The village of Betunia (south of Ramallah) has recently become a focal point of violent demonstrations** (IDF Spokesman, May 15, 2012).

¹ The statistics do not include rockets fired which fell inside the Gaza Strip. As of May 15, 2012.



IDF soldiers conduct anti-terrorism activities near the security fence in Judea and Samaria (IDF Spokesman, May 15, 2012)

The Hunger Strike of the Imprisoned Palestinians Ends

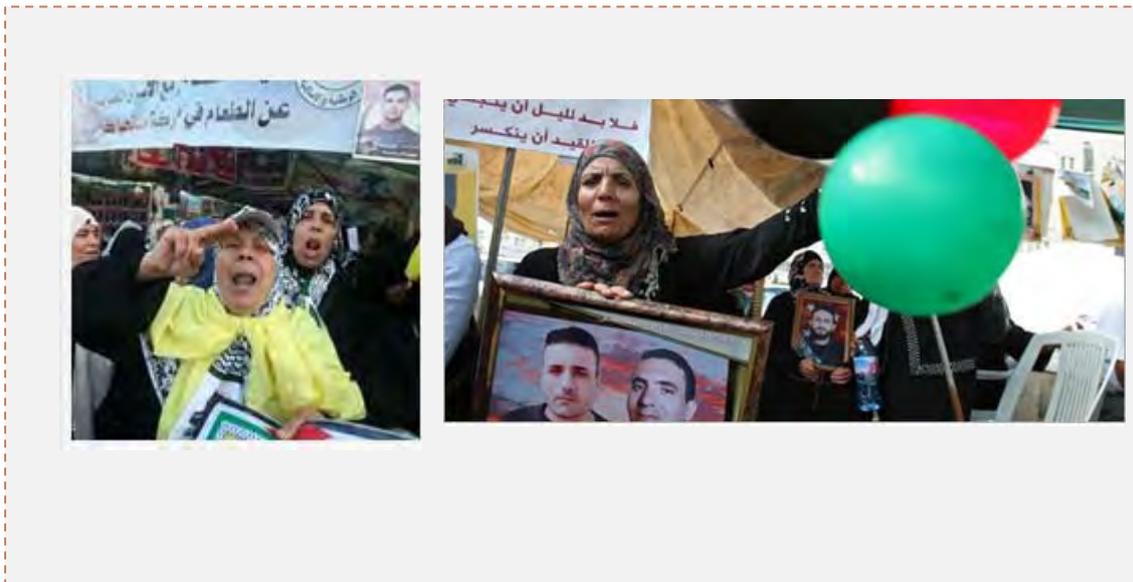
- On May 14, an understanding was reached between Israel and the leaders of the Palestinian terrorists incarcerated in Israeli prison facilities. It was reached through the involvement of the Egyptian security services and the Palestinian Authority. According to it, **the prisoners would stop all their activities inside Israeli jails in support of terrorist activity, and end their hunger strike.** In return Israel agreed to a series of improvements in prisoner conditions. They included that prisoners held separately would return to the general wings and that first-degree families from Judea, Samaria and the Gaza Strip would be permitted to visit (Israel Security Agency website, May 15, 2012).
- The understanding was achieved in the spirit of the one signed in 2000 and honored by both sides for a long period of time. It commits all the security prisoners in all prison facilities in Israel, including those who will be imprisoned in the future. The following are some of its provisions are the following (Israel Security Agency website, May 15, 2012).
 - Security prisoners **will refrain from support of terrorist activity**, including recruitment, guidance, financing, coordination between recruited terrorist operatives and providing support for recruited terrorist operatives.
 - In return, Israel agrees to improve prisoner conditions, as noted above.

- All activity against Israel security carried out within prison walls or a renewal of the strike will result in the cancellation of the improvements Israel committed itself to.

■ **The Israel Prison Service** said in an announcement that **a number of steps would be taken to improve the prisoners' conditions**, following the recommendation of a team appointed to examine prisoner requests before the strike broke out. It was also announced that after the hunger strike ended the prisoners would be monitored by a medical staff to prevent possible complications arising from the strike.

■ Throughout all the deliberations, Israel made it clear that measures used in connection with security prisoners were **a matter of necessity, dictated by the prisoners' involvement in terrorist activities against Israel**. The measures used by Israel have consistently been compatible with the demands of international law and conventions.

Responses



Gazans express their joy over the end of the Palestinian terrorists' hunger strike (Pictures from Hamas websites, May 14, 2012)

■ Hamas and the Palestinian Authority regard the understanding as reflecting the success of the prisoners' strike and a victory over Israel. However, sources within the Palestinian Islamic Jihad claimed that the agreement lacked certain elements, was not sufficiently clear and did not include two PIJ administrative detainees (Khaled al-Batash interviewed by the Paltoday website, May 14, 2012).

■ Senior members of the Palestinian Authority and Hamas made the following statements:

- **Mahmoud Abbas** congratulated the prisoners and their families on what he called their "victory" and thanked all those who had supported the prisoners (Wafa News Agency, May 14, 2012).
- **Issa al-Qaraqa**, minister of prisoners affairs in the Palestinian Authority, also congratulated all those who had been involved in reaching the agreement, especially the prisoners who had participated in the battle against the "oppressive occupier" [i.e., Israel] (The PIJ's Paltoday website, May 14, 2012).
- **Khaled Mashaal**, head of Hamas' political bureau, praised the Palestinian prisoners who had fought and forced Israel to surrender to their demands (Al-Quds TV, May 15, 2012).
- **Ismail Haniya**, head of the de-facto Hamas administration in the Gaza Strip, praised the prisoners for their "firm, historic stand" and for having had their demands acceded to. He also thanked Egypt for the active part it played in reaching the agreement (Hamas' palestine-info website, May 14, 2012).
- **Salah al-Bardawil**, senior Hamas figure, praised what he called the "victory" achieved under Egyptian aegis, stressing that the victory came on the heels of another, the release of more than 1000 male and female prisoners [i.e., the Gilad Shalit prisoner exchange deal] (Al-Aqsa TV, May 14, 2012).

The Situation in the Gaza Strip

Concern in the Gaza Strip over Israel's Intention to Stop Delivering Electricity

- Sources in the Gaza Strip reacted strongly to the suggestion made by Israeli Minister of Environmental Protection Gilad Erdan to stop providing the Gaza Strip with electricity because of the strain on the Israeli electrical grid during the summer months:
 - Hamas spokesman **Fawzi Barhoum** said that the measure was planned to tighten the closure of the Gaza Strip and worsen the suffering of the Gazan population, and gave witness to "Israel's [moral] bankruptcy, the result of the firm stance of the residents of the Gaza Strip" (Hamas' palestine-info website, May 13, 2012).
 - The Hamas energy authority warned of the consequences of cutting off electricity to the Gaza Strip because, it claimed, doing so would paralyze life in the Gaza Strip (Ma'an News Agency, May 13, 2012).

Hamas' Political Activity

Hamas-Iran Relations

- **Taher al-Nunu**, spokesman for the de-facto Hamas administration, said that there was Hamas-Iran cooperation and that an agreement to that effect had been agreed on during Ismail Haniya's visit to Iran. He called the relations between the two "excellent." Hamas, he said, appreciated the Iranian position regarding the Palestinian cause and the various ways it showed its support for the Palestinians. He added that Hamas and Iran have firm strategic relations (Al-Alam, May 12, 2012).
- In an interview two days earlier, **Ismail Haniya**, head of the de-facto Hamas administration in the Gaza Strip, said that if Israel attacked Iran, Hamas would not go to war against Israel. He said that "Hamas is a Palestinian movement that acts within the Palestinian arena and it carries out its political and field actions in a way that suits the interests of the Palestinian people...Iran did not ask anything from us and we think that Iran is not in need of us." (Reuters, Gaza, May 10, 2012). Later on **Taher al-Nunu** said that Haniya's remarks about Iran had not been exact and that Hamas operated "exclusively according to the highest interests of the Palestinian people" (Safa News Agency, May 12, 2012).

Israel and the Palestinians

Israel's Answer to Mahmoud Abbas

- On May 12, **Yitzhak Molcho**, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's personal envoy, met in **Ramallah** with Palestinian Authority Chairman Mahmoud Abbas and gave him a letter from Netanyahu, written in response to Mahmoud Abbas' letter presented to Netanyahu by Palestinian Authority representatives on April 17. During the meeting Mahmoud Abbas repeated that the renewal of negotiations demanded the cessation of construction in the settlements, including Jerusalem, and acceptance of the two-state solution (Wafa News Agency, May 12, 2012).
- At the conclusion of the meeting the sides issued the following joint statement: "Israel and the Palestinian Authority are committed to achieving peace and the sides

hope that the exchange of letters between President Abbas and Prime Minister Netanyahu will further this goal."²

- On May 13 the PLO's Executive Committee held a meeting chaired by Mahmoud Abbas to discuss the contents of Israel's answer. The Executive Committee said in an announcement that the Israeli letter did not contain clear answers regarding the main issues delaying the resumption of the peace process, particularly the issue of construction in the settlements, which "continues deviously," especially in Jerusalem and the surrounding areas. It also said that there had been no mention of the 1967 borders or a commitment to release the Palestinian prisoners (Palestinian TV, May 13, 2012).

Egyptian Counterterrorism Activity

Egypt Prevents Arms Smuggling from Libya to the Sinai Peninsula

- On May 10 Egyptian security forces operating in the region of Alexandria halted **three vehicles containing weapons being smuggled from Libya** and detained the drivers. Among the weapons seized were 40 anti-tank missiles, 17 PRG launchers, light arms and ammunition, and binoculars. After the vehicles had been apprehended joint Egyptian army and police forces raided a number of houses in village in the central Sinai Peninsula in a search for individuals involved in smuggling arms. Four suspects were detained with satellite communications equipment and international telephone numbers in their possession.

Propaganda Events

Nakba Day Events

- Throughout the week Palestinians have marked Nakba Day with a series of events in Judea, Samaria and the Gaza Strip, and in other countries. So far the events are apparently local in character and the dominant theme, as in previous years, is the so-called "right of return." **Initial reports** of the events are the following:

- **Judea and Samaria:** The main rally was held in Ramallah. At 12 noon sirens were heard for 64 seconds. Demonstrations, marches and rallies were also held in various other cities. **During the day young men, some of them masked, threw**

² <http://www.pmo.gov.il/PMOEng/Communication/Spokesman/2012/05/spokeabbas120512.htm>

stones at IDF forces and set fire to tires at various locations in Judea and Samaria (IDF Spokesman, May 15, 2012).

- **The Gaza Strip:** A rally was held in the Shati refugee camp. It was, attended by Ismail Haniya, head of the de-facto Hamas administration, who gave a speech in which he said that today **there were six million Palestinian refugees "in the Palestinian dispersal"** and that the land of Palestine had been occupied by a "herd" of Zionists with the excuse of "a land without a people and a people without a land." He stressed the so-called "right of return," saying that the hand of anyone who played with the right of return would be struck down by the hands of the Palestinian refugees. He also said that the Palestinians would not cede any part of Palestine and to that end **they had to hold a Qur'an in one hand and a rifle in the other** (Al-Aqsa TV, May 11, 2012).

- **Lebanon:** Nakba Day was marked with a series of events in the refugee camps, a general strike was supposed to be held and a protest tent was supposed to be erected (The PIJ's Paltoday website, May 11, 2012). The Palestinian Islamic Jihad issued an invitation to Lebanese civilians to participate in the "return rally" held in the Al-Rashidiya refugee camp, "the closest to the Israeli border" [the refugee camp is near the city of Tyre] (Website of the Al-Rashidiya refugee camp, May 10, 2012). **Note:** Attempts to hold events outside the refugee camp were rejected by the Lebanese authorities. For example, on May 12 Lebanese army forces prevented five buses of Palestinian demonstrators from refugee camps in south Lebanon from going to the south Lebanon village of Maroun al-Ras (located about one kilometer, or .62 miles, from the Israeli border). That was because they had not received authorization to hold an event there and they were requested to return by the Lebanese army (Al-Nahar, May 13, 2012).

- **Jordan:** Various events were planned. The main one was a protest rally held in front of the Al-Kalouti mosque, close to the Israeli embassy. The Muslim Brotherhood were supposed to hold a march.

- **Around the world:** Rallies and demonstrations were planned to be held in front of Israeli missions and delegations (among them in Los Angeles, Paris and London.)

The Viva Palestina Aid Convoy from Europe

- After having been delayed by the Turks, on May 9 the Viva Palestina convoy entered Syria on its way to the Gaza Strip. The members of the convoy were received in Latakia by its governor and the secretary of the local branch of the Baath party. The

members of the convoy thanked the Syrians for hosting them and denounced the pressures exerted on Syria and the sanctions imposed by the Western and other countries (Syrian News Agency, May 9, 2012). **Note:** the issue of the Viva Palestina convoy's passage through Syria was a matter of disagreement among the convoy members, and some of them decided not to enter the country and flew to Egypt instead.



Left: One of the convoy's activists in Syria, photographed in front of one of the Syrian army vehicles which accompanied the convoy throughout its stay in Syria. Right: The convoy leaves Turkey and enters Syria (Kiaoragaza.net website, May 11, 2012)

- On May 11 the convoy reached Jordan. After negotiations with the Jordanian authorities, 22 activists received authorization to sleep in Amman. Kevin Ovenden, George Galloway's representative, said that the convoy would purchase an ambulance and trucks in Jordan and that a number of activists would join the convoy at the airport. From Jordan they would go to the port of Aqaba and from there to the Egyptian port of Nueiba.

The Ansar 2 Convoy from Jordan

- On May 16 the Ansar 2 convoy of the Jordanian LifeLine Committee is expected to reach the Gaza Strip. The convoy is supposed to be composed of 90 activists representing trade unions, political parties and the Jordanian media (Jordanian News Agency, April 30, 2012). Ribhi Haloum, the convoy coordinator, said that there was no coordination between the Viva Palestina and Ansar 2 convoys and that the Jordan convoy had already received the necessary permits from the Egyptian authorities to enter the Gaza Strip (Al-Dustour, May 13, 2012).

The Anniversary of the *Mavi Marmara*

- The end of May marks the two year anniversary of the violent incidents instigated by IHH operatives against IDF soldiers aboard the *Mavi Marmara*. The IHH plans to mark the day with a mass march in the center of Istanbul. The organization used the Turkish media to issue an invitation to the march, whose theme will be "marching to liberate Jerusalem." The event will take place on the evening of May 31 in Taksim Square in the heart of Istanbul. **Note:** The IHH was outlawed in Israel and Germany because of its involvement in financing terrorism.



Invitation to the event marking the second anniversary of the *Mavi Marmara* (IHH website, May 14, 2012).