



News of Terrorism and the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict

May 30-June 5, 2012



Left: IDF Staff Sergeant Netanel Moshiahvili, shot to death by a Palestinian terrorist operative who infiltrated into Israeli territory from the Gaza Strip. Right: Weapons found in the terrorist's possession (IDF Spokesman, June 1, 2012).

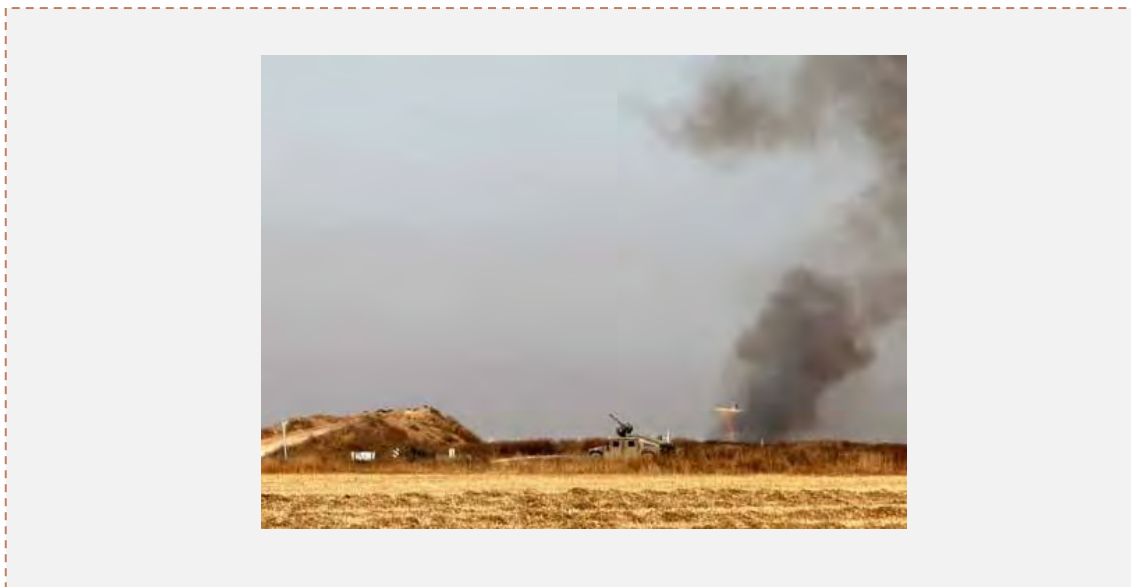
Overview

- This past week events focused on the killing of an IDF soldier by a Palestinian terrorist operative who infiltrated into Israeli territory from the central Gaza Strip and opened fire on an IDF force. In addition, three rocket hits were identified in the western Negev. The Israeli Air Force struck a number of terrorist targets in the Gaza Strip.
- Israel transferred the remains of 91 terrorist operatives to Mahmoud Abbas as a goodwill gesture. Some of them had participated in mass-casualty suicide bombing attacks in Israel. The bodies were received with formal honors, indicating that suicide bombing attacks and attackers are revered and esteemed by Palestinian society and Palestinian politics.

Important Terrorism Events Israel's South

IDF Force Clashes with Palestinian Terrorist Operative

- In the early morning hours of June 1 an IDF force identified signs of an infiltration into Israeli territory from the central Gaza Strip. The force arriving at the site was shot at by a lone Palestinian terrorist. As a result, he killed IDF Staff Sergeant Netanel Moshiashvili, 21, from the southern Israeli city of Ashqelon (IDF Spokesman, June 1, 2012).
- An investigation of the incident revealed that the terrorist operative had cut the fence and infiltrated into Israeli territory, where he waiting in ambush for an IDF force to arrive. He surprised the force, opening fire and killing Staff Sergeant Moshiashvili. The soldiers returned fire and killed him. **Weapons were found in his possession**, including a Kalashnikov assault rifle, ammunition and hand grenades. They may have indicated that a later attack was planned to be carried out on one of the villages near the Gaza Strip security fence.



The site of the clash in the central Gaza Strip (Photo by Yehuda Lahiani for NRG, June 1, 2012).

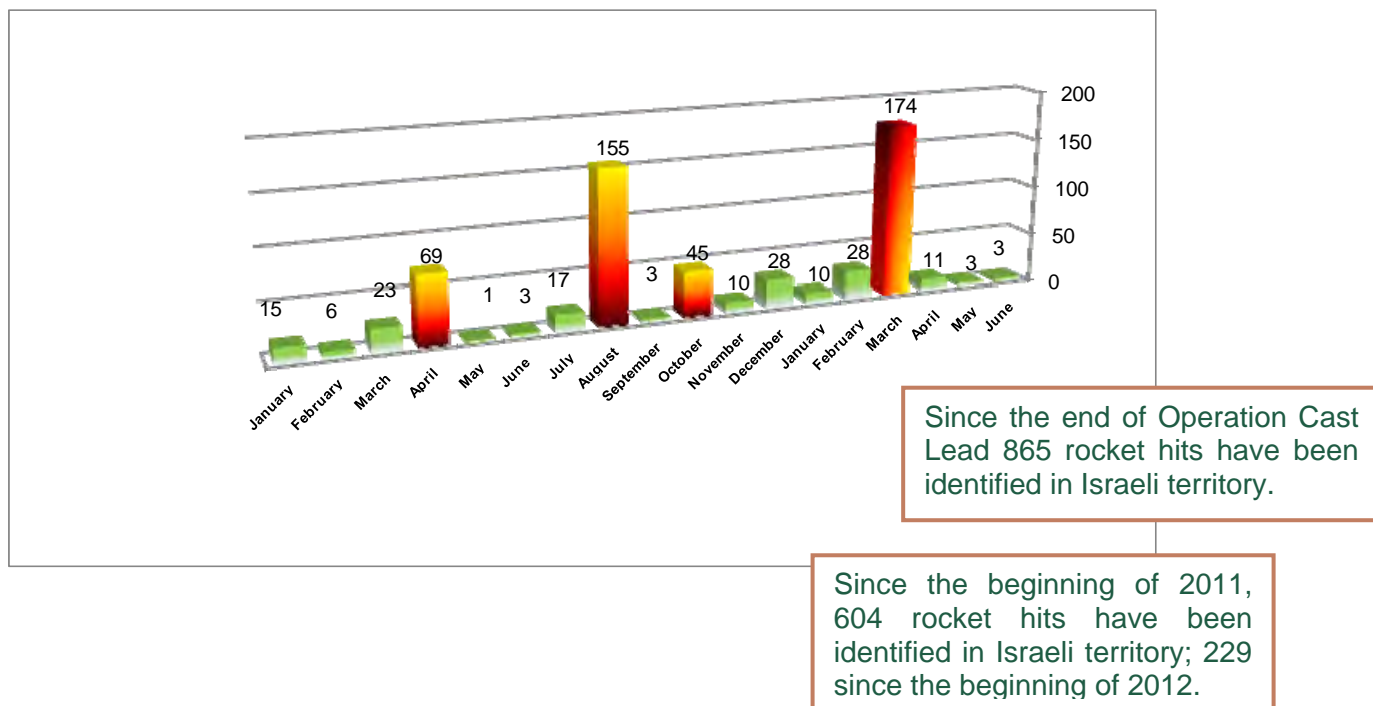
- Abu Ahmed, spokesman for the Palestinian Islamic Jihad's Jerusalem Brigades, said that the dead terrorist was **Ahmed Abu Nasr**, a PIJ operative. However, he claimed that he had not carried out the attack as a Jerusalem Brigades operative. He praised the action and said it was the "right of the Palestinian people," but added that it was not connected to the PIJ (Sawt al-Quds, the PIJ website, June 1, 2012).
- Others in the Gaza Strip praised the attack:

- **Musheir al-Masri**, spokesman for the Hamas faction in the Palestinian Legislative Council, said that the [so-called Israeli] "occupation" was responsible for the escalation. He said that Hamas was committed to a lull in the fighting based on national agreement (Hamas' Palestine-info website, June 1, 2012).
- **Ismail Radwan**, Hamas spokesman, said that the "resistance" [i.e., the terrorist organizations] had the right to protect the Palestinian people when Israeli damaged civilian dwellings (Palestine Online website, June 1, 2012).
- **The Popular Resistance Committees** said in an announcement that the attack was "the natural response of [the Palestinian] people to the crimes of the Israeli enemy" (Safa News Agency, June 1, 2012).

Rocket Fire

- This past week three rocket hits were identified in Israeli territory in the western Negev. On the night of June 3 two rockets landed in open areas in the western Negev; there were no casualties and no damage was done. On the night of June 4 a rocket landed in a wheat field near the southern Israeli city of Ashqelon, setting the field on fire. There were no casualties.

Rockets Fired into Israeli Territory¹



Notes: The figures for March 2012 include 50 rockets intercepted and destroyed by the Iron Dome aerial defense system during the most recent round of escalation. In April 2012 three rockets were fired at Israel's southernmost city of Eilat.

Israeli Air Force Response

■ In response to the attack on the IDF force and the rocket fire, Israeli Air Force aircraft struck a number of terrorist targets in the Gaza Strip:

- In the early afternoon of **June 1** IAF aircraft struck a terrorist squad which was shooting at an IDF force (IDF Spokesman, June 1, 2012). The Palestinian media reported two dead and two wounded, operatives of the Popular Resistance Committee' military-terrorist wing (Qawm website, Safa News Agency, Alresalah.net website, Ma'an News Agency, June 1, 2012).
- On the night of **June 2**, in response to the attack near the security fence which killed Staff Sergeant Moshiashvili, IAF aircraft struck **three sites where weapons were manufactured** in the central Gaza Strip and **two tunnels used for terrorist purposes** in the northern and southern Gaza Strip. The targets belonged to Hamas and the PIJ (IDF Spokesman, June 3, 2012). The Palestinian media reported that seven Palestinians in the Nuseirat refugee camp had

¹The statistics do not include rockets fired which fell inside the Gaza Strip. As of June 5, 2012.

sustained minor wounds (Alresalah.net website, Ma'an News Agency, Paltoday website, June 3, 2012).

- On the night of **June 3** IAF aircraft struck a **site where weapons were manufactured and a tunnel used for terrorist activities**, both in the northern Gaza Strip (IDF Spokesman, June 4, 2012).

Judea and Samaria

Border Policeman Stabbed at the Entrance to the Cave of the Patriarchs

■ On the evening of June 4 a Palestinian came to the Cave of the Patriarchs in Hebron to pray. He approached a border policeman guarding the entrance, took out a sharp object and stabbed the policeman in the head. The policeman sustained minor wounds and was taken to a hospital for treatment. Another border policeman shot the stabber, critically wounding him (Ynet, June 4, 2012).

Events on the Ground

■ This week as well there were riots at the traditional friction points in Judea and Samaria, especially the villages of Bila'in, Nili'in and Nebi Saleh. Rioters threw stones at the IDF forces, who in certain instances used riot control equipment to disperse the demonstrators.

Israel Transfers Remains of Terrorists to the Palestinian Authority

■ On May 31, 2012, Israeli transferred to the Palestinian Authority **the remains of 91 terrorist operatives** which had been temporarily buried in Israel. Seventy-nine were returned to Judea and Samaria and 12 to the Gaza Strip. The act was a gesture of goodwill by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to Palestinian Authority Chairman Mahmoud Abbas. Israel did not publish the names of the terrorists whose remains were transferred. According to Palestinian sources, **some of the terrorists had been involved in suicide bombing attacks in which many Israelis were killed.**

■ **Issa al-Qaraqa**, minister of prisoners' affairs in the Palestinian Authority, said that the bodies would be buried with formal Palestinian Authority funerals in the districts from which they came. The governors of the various districts and local senior figures would be present (Al-Hayat Al-Jadeeda, May 31, 2012). The Palestinian Authority and the de-facto Hamas administration in the Gaza Strip held official military ceremonies to receive the bodies. A formal ceremony was held in the Muqataa in Ramallah, attended by Mahmoud Abbas, members of the PA leadership and the families of the dead terrorists (Wafa News Agency, May 31, 2012).



Coffins of the terrorists on display at the Muqataa in Ramallah (Wafa News Agency, May 31, 2012).

■ Palestinian Authority leaders Mahmoud Abbas and Salam Fayyad did not make public statements. However, the message sent by the official ceremonies and the programs broadcast by the Palestinian media was that **the dead terrorists who had carried out suicide bombing attacks were revered and esteemed by Palestinian society and Palestinian politics.**

Exposure of Another Terrorist Cell Planning to Abduct Israeli Civilian²

■ At the beginning of May 2012 the Israel Security Agency exposed a terrorist cell which was **planning to abduct an Israeli civilian to be used as a bargaining chip to secure the release of imprisoned Palestinian terrorists.** The cell operatives were from Hebron and the Gaza Strip. Some of them were sentenced to life imprisonment and are in Israeli jails. The abduction was planned from an Israeli jail by a resident of Khan Yunis, who worked illegally in the southern Israeli port city of Ashdod after his release.

■ A network calling itself the **"Holy Warriors Battalions"** is suspected of planning the abduction. It is a splinter faction of Fatah's Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade which adopted a more extremist, radical ideology. According to an Israel Security Agency report, the network is headed by a Gazan named **Assad Atia Ibrahim Abu Sharia**, who was recently involved in several instances of rocket-firing and in placing IEDs near the

² From the website of the Israel Security Agency, June 4, 2012.

security fence. The network operates in the Gaza Strip with the **knowledge and under the aegis of Hamas**, from which it even receives funding, weapons and guidance. In response the exposure of the cell, the network spokesman, Abu Balal, held a press conference where he warned Israel not to harm its senior figures (Holy Warriors Battalions website, May 31, 2012).

The Situation in the Gaza Strip

The Energy Crisis

■ The Gaza crossings authority said in an announcement that the **Egyptians had not yet authorized the delivery to the Gaza Strip of the fuel** sent by Qatar. According to the Gazan authority, it is possible that on Thursday, June 7, delivery will be permitted through the Kerem Shalom crossing. The Egyptian authorities say "technical matters" are responsible for the delay. Israel has already agreed to let the trucks enter through the Kerem Shalom crossing (Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades website, June 5, 2012).



Fuel tanker en route to the Gaza Strip (Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades website, June 5, 2012)

The Fatah-Hamas Reconciliation

Meeting between Khaled Mashaal and Mahmoud Abbas Postponed

■ The reconciliation between Hamas and Fatah continues in fits and starts. **Izzat al-Rishq**, a member of Hamas' political bureau, announced the postponement of the

meeting between Khaled Mashaal and Mahmoud Abbas. It was planned for June 6 but postponed to June 20, and was initially supposed to announce the establishment of an interim government. Apparently the movements disagree about the composition of the government and the need to swear it in before members of the Palestinian Legislative Council (Al-Jazeera TV, May 31, 2012).

Israel and the Palestinians

Palestinian Responses to Remarks by Israeli Defense Minister Ehud Barak

■ Ehud Barak, Israeli defense minister, said in a speech at the Israeli Institute for National Security Studies (INSS) that if negotiations for the final status arrangement between Israel and the Palestinian Authority reached a dead end, **it would be worthwhile to consider interim arrangements or even unilateral measures in Judea and Samaria.**

■ **His remarks were strongly criticized** by senior Palestinian Authority figures, who said that they themselves were committed to the "permanent, just" solution of establishing a Palestinian state with the 1967 borders:

- **Nabil Abu Rudeina**, spokesman for Mahmoud Abbas, said that any unilateral Israeli step was unacceptable. He said such a policy would lead to the continuation of the struggle and put an end to the two-state solution (Wafa News Agency, May 30, 2012).
- **Wassel Abu Yusuf**, spokesman for the PLO's Executive Committee, said that Ehud Barak's remarks were proof that Israel was trying to "deceive" the international community and was making preparations for a Palestinian state with temporary borders on part of the territories without Jerusalem as its capital (The PIJ's Paltoday website, May 30, 2012).

Propaganda Events

Nakba Day Events

■ Despite the calls, especially via the social networks, for Naksa Day events [on June 5, the anniversary of the Six Day War, marked in the Arab-Muslim world], interest seemed limited. **The intention was to hold local events, especially in the centers of cities in Judea and Samaria** (Ramallah and Hebron) and in the refugee camps in Syria and Lebanon.

■ One of the events planned was a **demonstration in Amman in front of the Israeli embassy**. Its theme was to be "the march of the return – Jordan" and it was planned for the evening of June 5. The social networks organizing the demonstration posted calls for the closing of the embassy and the expulsion of the ambassador, and promises that during the demonstration the embassy would be broken into and Israeli flags would be burned (Facebook, May 29, 2012).

The Anniversary of the Events Aboard the Mavi Marmara

■ On May 31 events were held in Istanbul to mark the second anniversary of the *Mavi Marmara*. The main event was a march in Taksim Square in the heart of Istanbul. According to the IHH website, it was attended by about 30,000 people. The marchers held signs commemorating the dead, expressing solidarity with the Palestinians and criticizing Syrian President Bashar Assad.



The march in Taksim Square (IHH website, June 3, 2012)

■ IHH head **Bülent Yıldırım** gave a speech in which he spoke of the indictment issued by the Turkish government.³ He said that not only the four Israeli commanders would be tried, but that his organization intended to locate everyone involved in the events aboard the ship. He said the struggle against those who had committed the "crime" would take years.

■ **Raed Salah**, head of the northern faction of the Islamic movement in Israel, who was present at the ceremony, said that

³ On May 23, 2012, the Turkish attorney general issued indictments for four Israeli commanders who were involved in the events aboard the *Mavi Marmara*.

■ "the Israeli murderers would drown in blood and tears," and that "terrorist, occupying Israel lost the war against the Gaza Strip in spite of all its modern weapons." He added that the *Mavi Marmara* would sail again to liberate Damascus, Homs, Hama and Gaza.



Raed Salah speaks at the ceremony in Istanbul (IHH website, June 3, 2012).

Swedish Anti-Israel Activists Plan to Send a Ship to the Gaza Strip

■ Swedish anti-Israel activists, headed by Dror Feiler,⁴ plan to send another ship, the *Estelle*, to the Gaza Strip. At the end of May the ship docked at the Finnish port of Vaasa. It is supposed to set sail for the Gaza Strip from the northern Swedish port of Umea and to sail for 5,000 miles, passing through a number of ports in the Baltic Sea, the Atlantic Ocean and the Mediterranean Sea. The organizers plan to hold rallies and events in every port the ship docks at to provide the public with information about the situation in the Gaza Strip. The organization is currently soliciting donations to finance the voyage (Ship to Gaza Sweden website, May 29, 2012).

⁴ Dror Elimelech Feiler is a Swedish activist, spokesman for an organization called The Swedish Ship to Gaza. He participated in previous flotillas, including the *Mavi Marmara*. He was born in Israel in 1951; his father was a leftist activist. Feiler holds Israeli citizenship. He has lived in Sweden since 1973, where he heads a leftist organization called Jews for Israeli-Palestinian Peace, and often participates in anti-Israel propaganda events.



Dror Feiler and the Estelle (Ship to Gaza Sweden website, June 3, 2012).