



News of Terrorism and the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict

October 17-23, 2012



Left: The Estelle docks in Crete, from there setting sail for the Gaza Strip (Shihab, October 17, 2012). Right: The Estelle enters the southern Israeli port of Ashdod after the Israeli Navy captured it (Photo by Edi Israel, courtesy of NRG, October 20, 2012).

Overview

- This past week rocket and mortar shell fire from the Gaza Strip continued to target southern Israel. Five rocket hits were identified in Israeli territory, one of them hitting the yard of a residential dwelling. **Note:** Rocket fire continued throughout the night of October 23 and into the morning of October 24. In response Israeli Air Force aircraft struck terrorist targets, including rocket-launching squads.
- On October 20 the Israeli Navy took control of the *Estelle* an estimated 30 miles from the Gaza Strip. There were 30 passengers aboard the ship, three of them Israelis. The ship was dispatched by networks and activists affiliated with the campaign to delegitimize Israel. Its objective was to violate the naval closure of the Gaza Strip and challenge Israel. The takeover of the ship did not provoke any particular media or diplomatic reaction and it seems that the international community has reservations regarding flotillas to the Gaza Strip.
- The emir of Qatar, Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa, arrived to participate in launching Qatari-financed projects to rebuild the Gaza Strip. It was the first time an Arab leader had visited the Gaza Strip since the Hamas takeover in 2007. The visit was a political blow to the Palestinian Authority and may indicate the deepening of the rift between the Gaza Strip on one hand and Judea and Samaria on the other.

Propaganda Events

Israeli Takeover of the *Estelle*

■ On the morning of October 20 the Israeli Navy took control of the *Estelle* at an estimated distance of 30 miles from the Gaza Strip. The ship had been dispatched by networks and activists affiliated with the campaign to delegitimize Israel, and its objectives were to violate the naval closure of the Gaza Strip and challenge Israel. The ship was boarded by IDF soldiers following a political decision and in accordance with international law after direct appeals to the ship had shown themselves to be of no avail. **The takeover was carried out without exceptional event, although several passengers attempted to employ techniques of passive resistance.** The ship and its passengers were taken to the southern Israeli port of Ashdod (IDF Spokesman, October 20, 2012).

■ In June 2012 the *Estelle* set sail from a port in Sweden en route to the Gaza Strip. It made several stops along the way, exploited by anti-Israeli activists for solidarity demonstrations. **There were 30 passengers aboard the ship, five of them members of European parliaments and three of them Israelis** (Shihab, October 18, 2012). The takeover of the ship did not provoke any particular media or diplomatic reaction and **the international community apparently still has reservations regarding flotillas to the Gaza Strip.**

■ Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu praised the IDF activity to enforce the naval blockade of the Gaza Strip in keeping with international law. He said that "even **the people who were on the ship know that there is no humanitarian crisis in Gaza.** Their entire objective was to create a provocation and blacken Israel's name. If human rights were really important to these activists, they would sail to Syria..." [ITIC emphasis].¹

■ In response **Hamas** strongly condemned Israel's takeover of the ship, calling it "a crime against humanity and against the Palestinian people." **Jamal al-Khudari**, chairman of Hamas-affiliated Popular Committee for Resisting the Siege [of the Gaza Strip], claimed that the takeover of the *Estelle* would only increase the rate at which such events were held and raise the number of activists who showed solidarity with the Palestinians (Al-Aqsa TV, October 20, 2012). In addition, **Fawzi Barhoum**, Hamas

¹ <http://www.pmo.gov.il/English/MediaCenter/Spokesman/Pages/spokehesgeryami201012.aspx>

spokesman in the Gaza Strip, accused Israel of "aggression [directed] against the ship" and called for many more flotillas to be dispatched to the Gaza Strip as a response to Israel's so-called "crime" (Filastin al-'Aan, October 20, 2012).



Press conference held in the Gaza Strip to protest the Israeli takeover of the Estelle, attended by anti-Israeli professor Noam Chomsky (in the white hat) (Filastin al-'Aan, October 20, 2012).

Important Events Israel's South

Rocket Fire and Attacks on Israeli Forces Continue

- This past week rocket and mortar shell fire continued to target Israel's south. During the week **five rocket hits were identified in Israeli territory**. One of the rockets fired on October 16 fell in the yard of a residential dwelling in the western Negev. Two civilians were treated for shock. Responsibility for some of the rocket and mortar shell fire was claimed by the military wings of the Popular Resistance Committees and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (Qawm and Ma'an News Agency, October 17 and 21, 2012).
- On October 23 an IDF officer was seriously wounded during an IDF security activity near the security fence in the central Gaza Strip (IDF Spokesman, October 23, 2012).

IDF Strikes

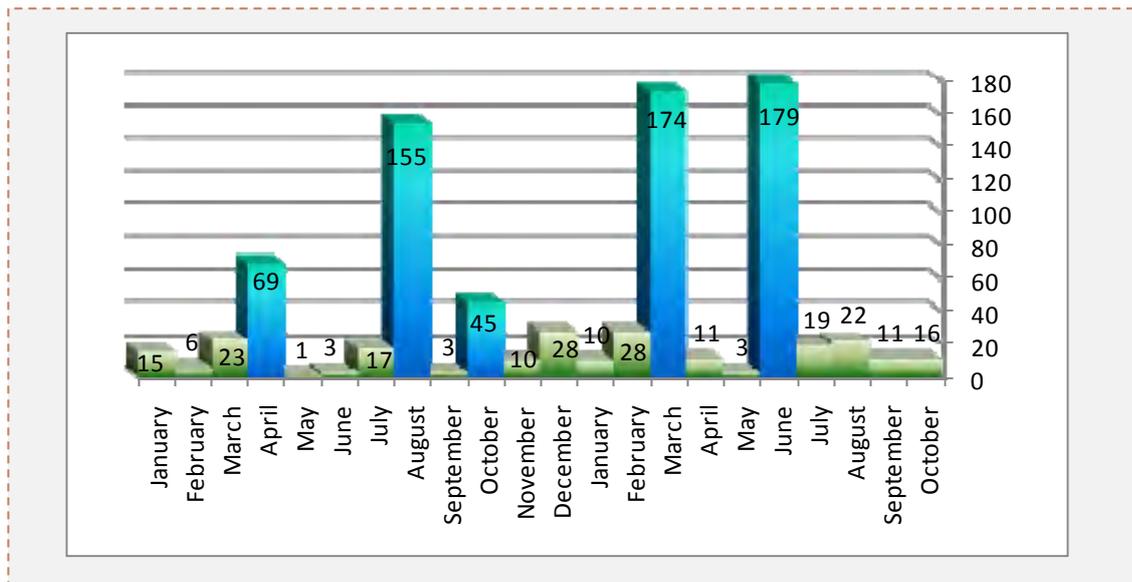
- In response to the rocket and mortar shell fire, Israeli Air Force aircraft struck a number of terrorist targets and rocket-launching squads:

- **October 22** – IAF aircraft struck two terrorist squads in the northern Gaza Strip which were making final preparations to launch rockets into Israeli territory (IDF Spokesman, October 22, 2012). The Palestinian media reported three dead: Abd al-Rahman Darwish Abu Jalala (25, from Beit Lahia); Yasser Jumaa al-Tarabien (26, from Beit Hanoun), **a terrorist operative in Hamas' military wing**; and Khalil Kafarna (29, from Beit Hanoun), **a terrorist operative in the Popular Resistance Committees military wing** (Ma'an News Agency, October 22, 2012).
- **October 18** – The IAF struck a center of terrorist activity in the northern Gaza Strip (IDF Spokesman, October 19, 2012).
- **October 17** – The IAF struck a training camp belonging to Hamas' military-terrorist wing in the Sheikh Zayid area of the northern Gaza Strip. According to reports the site was heavily damaged (Ma'an News Agency, October 17, 2012).



Hamis terrorist operative Abd al-Rahman Abu Jalala, killed in the IAF strike in the northern Gaza Strip (Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades website, October 22, 2012).

Rockets Fired into Israeli Territory Since the Beginning of 2011²



Since the end of Operation Cast Lead, 1,115 rocket hits have been identified in Israeli territory.

Since the beginning of 2011, 852 rocket hits have been identified in Israeli territory; 567 since the beginning of 2012.

Judea and Samaria

Riots at the Friction Points

■ This past week as well there were violent demonstrations at the traditional friction points throughout Judea and Samaria. Rioters threw stones at the IDF forces, who in certain instances used riot control equipment to disperse the demonstrators. In addition, in a number of instances stones and Molotov cocktails were thrown at Israeli civilian and security vehicles.

² As of October 23. The statistics do not include mortar shell fire.



Palestinian activists and foreign anti-Israeli activists block a road in the Bethlehem district (the village of Al-Ma'sara) during a weekly riot against the security fence, October 19 (Wafa News Agency, October 19, 2012).



Palestinians from the village of Beit U'r el-Tihta and foreign anti-Israeli activists block Route 443 from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem to protest the harassment carried out by Israeli settlers during the olive-picking season (Wafa News Agency, October 16, 2012).

Events in the Gaza Strip

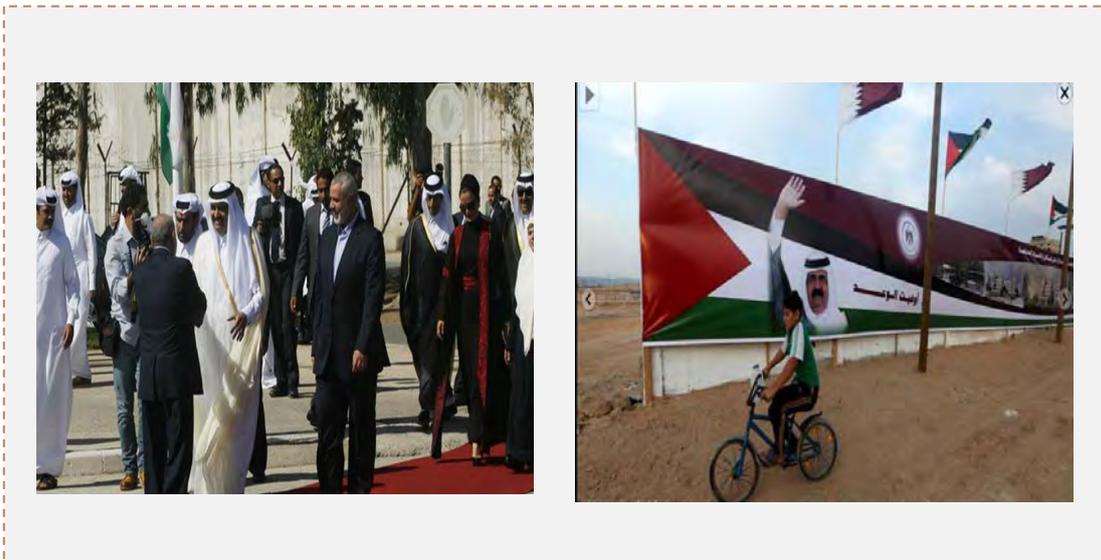
The Visit of the Emir of Qatar

- The emir of Qatar, Sheikh **Hamad bin Khalifa**, arrived in the Gaza Strip on October 23, accompanied by his wife and one of his sons. During his short stay **he participated in ceremonies launching Qatari-financed projects to rebuild the Gaza Strip**. For the first stage of the project Qatar has donated \$256 million (Ma'an News Agency, October 21, 2012).

■ It was the first visit to the Gaza Strip by an Arab head of state since Hamas took over the Gaza Strip by force in June 2007. As such the visit serves Hamas' political interests beyond the amount of money provided. Both the visit and Qatar's generous financial support were a political blow to the Palestinian Authority and in our assessment will probably contribute to deepening the rift between the PA and the Gaza Strip.

■ Hamas represented the visit as "important and historic," and praised Qatar's support of the Palestinian cause. On October 20, three days before the emir's visit, **Ismail Haniya**, head of the de-facto Hamas administration in the Gaza Strip, called the emir to express his gratitude. Haniya updated the Emir regarding a phone conversation he had had with Egyptian President Mohamed Morsi and Egypt's positive position on the issue (Al-Risala, October 20, 2012).

■ The Palestinian media reported that on the eve of his visit the emir called Mahmoud Abbas and extended an invitation to join him in the Gaza Strip. In our assessment that was done to publicly soften the political blow to Mahmoud Abbas caused by the emir's visit to the Gaza Strip. However, Mahmoud Abbas thanked the emir for his support in rebuilding the Gaza Strip, but at the same time called for the end of the division in the Palestinian camp and demanded he urge Hamas to implement the reconciliation agreement signed in Doha (Wafa News Agency, October 21, 2012). Fatah in the Gaza Strip did not attend the reception given for the emir (Shihab, October 22, 2012).



Left: The emir of Qatar visits the Gaza Strip (Filastin al-'Aan, October 23, 2012). Right: Banner hung in the street in the Gaza Strip for the emir's visit (Palestine-info website, October 21, 2012).

Hamas Detains Salafist-Jihadi Operatives in the Gaza Strip

■ On the night of October 12 the IDF killed two terrorist operatives affiliated with global jihad networks in the Gaza Strip. One of them, Hisham Ali Saidani, was a senior operative of Tawhid wal-Jihad and one of the founders of a new umbrella-organization calling itself the Shura Council of Jihad Fighters in Greater Jerusalem, composed of networks affiliated with the global jihad.³

■ Following the death of the two terrorists the Salafist-jihadi networks operating in the Gaza Strip issued a statement accusing the de-facto Hamas administration of collaborating with Israel (PalPress, October 17, 2012). One of their Gazan spokesmen called on the de-facto Hamas administration to immediately release network operatives and stop persecuting them so that they might continue attacking Jews (Al-Ghad, Jordan, October 14, 2012). In addition, a Salafist-jihadi operative nicknamed **Abu Abd al-Muhajer** reported that they were continuing their program **to establish an Islamic emirate** in the Gaza Strip despite the blows inflicted on them by Israel and the Hamas administration, which was "strangling them" (Al-Sharq Al-Awsat, London, October 19, 2012).

■ On October 18, after the Salafist-jihadi media attack on Hamas, Hamas' security forces raided the houses of a number of senior Salafist-jihadi operatives and detained them. Among those detained were Abdallah al-Ashqar, aka Abu al-Muhtaseb al-Maqdasi, from the Nuseirat refugee camp, reported as wanted by Israel; and Muhammad al-Hasanat from Deir al-Balah (PalPress, October 18, 2012).

The First Anniversary of the Gilad Shalit Prisoner Exchange Deal

■ On October 18 Hamas marked the first anniversary of the Gilad Shalit prisoner exchange deal, exploiting the **events to reinforce its standing with the Palestinian people**. Press conferences were held throughout the Gaza Strip, as were marches in Gaza City and the northern Gaza Strip, as well as the main event in Gaza City, which was attended by senior members of Hamas (Filastin al-'Aan, October 18 and 19, 2012). Palestinian terrorists released in the deal were interviewed on video, as was one of the women released, Ahlam al-Tamimi.⁴ In addition, thousands of Izz al-Din al-

³ For further information see the October 18, 2012 bulletin "[Implications of the death of Hisham Saidani, a top global jihad operative in the Gaza Strip, who died in a targeted killing carried out by the IDF.](#)"

⁴ **Ahlam al-Tamimi** was a terrorist operative born in Jordan who assisted the suicide bomber who blew himself up in the Sbarro restaurant in Jerusalem on August 9, 2001. Fifteen Israeli civilian were murdered

Qassam Brigades operatives were deployed throughout the Gaza Strip and held military displays (Filastin al-'Aan, October 18, 2012).

- The following statements were made by senior Hamas figures during the events:
 - **Ismail Haniya**, head of the de-facto Hamas administration, applauded the day the Palestinian prisoners were released. He said that the abduction of Gilad Shalit was the first victory of the resistance [i.e., terrorism]. Additional victories in this context were their success in keeping him hidden in the Gaza Strip for five years and insisting on the conditions for his release (Al-Aqsa TV, October 18, 2012).
 - **Abu Obeida**, spokesman for Hamas' military-terrorist wing, held a press conference on October 18 in Rafah, where he said that the Gilad Shalit deal had proved to everyone the justice of the way Hamas dealt with the issue of the prisoners. He said that "the Israeli enemy will only surrender to the resistance." He also promised that the next prisoner exchange deal would liberate all the Palestinian prisoners whom Israel had refused to release in the Gilad Shalit deal (Filastin al-'Aan, October 18, 2012).
 - **Yahya Musa**, a member of the Hamas faction of the Palestinian Legislative Council, reported on the efforts made by Hamas to repeat the Gilad Shalit deal and to fulfill its commitments to the prisoners. **Other Hamas sources also stressed the need to abduct other Israeli soldiers** (Al-Risala, October 17, 2012).

in the attack, five of them from one family. She was imprisoned in Israel and began serving 16 consecutive terms of life imprisonment. She was released in the Gilad Shalit prisoner exchange deal.



Left: A Palestinian child participates in a Hamas military display in the Gaza Strip (Hamas forum, October 18, 2012). Right: Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades operatives deploy throughout the Gaza Strip as part of the events marking the release of the Palestinian terrorists in the Gilad Shalit deal (Qudsnet and Shihab websites, October 18, 2012).

The Palestinian Authority

Local Municipal Elections

- On October 20, 2012, elections for local municipalities in the Palestinian Authority in Judea and Samaria alone were held. **Hamas announced it would boycott the elections and refused to allow them to vehicle held in the Gaza Strip.** Elections were last held seven years ago, and were postponed twice during the past two years (in July 2010 and July 2011).
- Elections were held **in 93 of 353 municipalities** (as well as in all the large cities). In most of the municipalities (especially in the villages) elections were not held because only one list of candidates was offered. Of eligible voters, 54.8% voted (Wafa News Agency, October 20, 2012).
- An initial examination of the announcements of the central election committee indicates that the formal **Fatah candidates won in most of the large cities** (Hebron, Bethlehem, Tulkarm, Qalqilya, Jericho). On the other hand, **in Nablus and Jenin the winners were independent candidates** who had split from Fatah but were still affiliated with it, and who had run on tickets parallel to the official Fatah tickets. Particularly prominent were Ghassan al-Shakaa in Nablus and Walid Abu Muis in Jenin, both old-line Fatah activists, who ran on tickets parallel to the formal Fatah tickets (Website of the PA's Central Election Committee, October 21, 2012).



Left: Members of the Palestinian security forces vote on October 18. Right: A Palestinian votes in Ramallah (Wafa News Agency, October 20, 2012).

The PA Confiscates a Secret Hamas Archive in Nablus

■ Palestinian sources reported that on October 16 the Palestinian Preventive Security Force in Judea and Samaria exposed a secret archive in Nablus belonging to Hamas' military wing. Its location was revealed by intelligence information, and it was found in an apartment in one of the buildings in the city. The archive consisted of computers and disks, and was confiscated by Palestinian Preventive Security (Ma'an News Agency, October 16, 2012). **Abu Obeida**, spokesman for the Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades, Hamas' military-terrorist wing, denied the report and claimed that Hamas was used to the lies told by Palestinian Preventive Security (Filastin al-'Aan, October 16, 2012).

PA Move in the UN

■ On October 16 **Mahmoud Abbas** sent a communiqué to President Obama stressing the Palestinian commitment to the two-state idea, adding that the Palestinian appeal to the UN was not a unilateral decision. **Nimr Hamad**, Mahmoud Abbas' political advisor, reported that Mahmoud Abbas had made it clear that the Palestinian move in the UN was not intended to isolate Israel. He said the Palestinians were currently focusing on enlisting support for the move from the European Union (PalPress, October 16, 2012).

Failure of the Palestinian Move in UNESCO

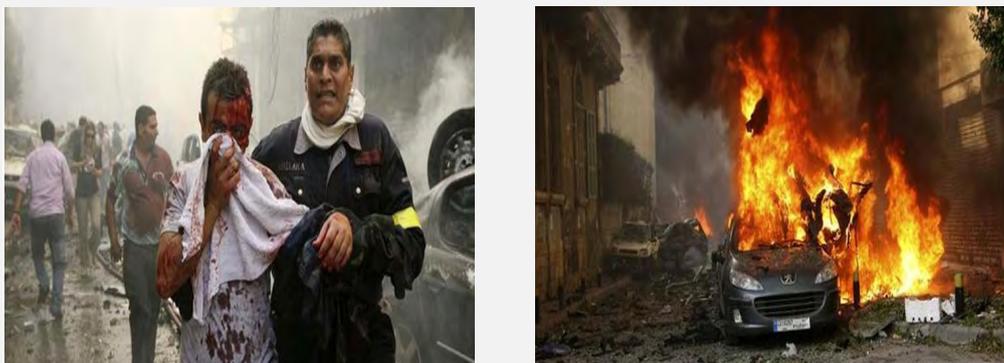
■ The PA failed in its attempt to promote an anti-Israeli move at a meeting of UNESCO's advisory board in Paris on October 17. According to **Riyadh al-Maliki**, Palestinian foreign minister, **Russia** rejected five Palestinian proposals for the next

meeting, to be held in six months. Two of them were appointing a permanent UNESCO representative in Jerusalem and proposals declaring the Tomb of the Patriarchs and the Tomb of Rachel as world heritage sites. Also rejected were proposals dealing with educational institutions in Judea and Samaria (the so-called "occupied Arab territories"), rebuilding and developing the Gaza Strip, and a proposal regarding the Mugrabi Bridge on the Temple Mount (Ma'an News Agency and the Palestine News Network, October 17, 2012).

Lebanon

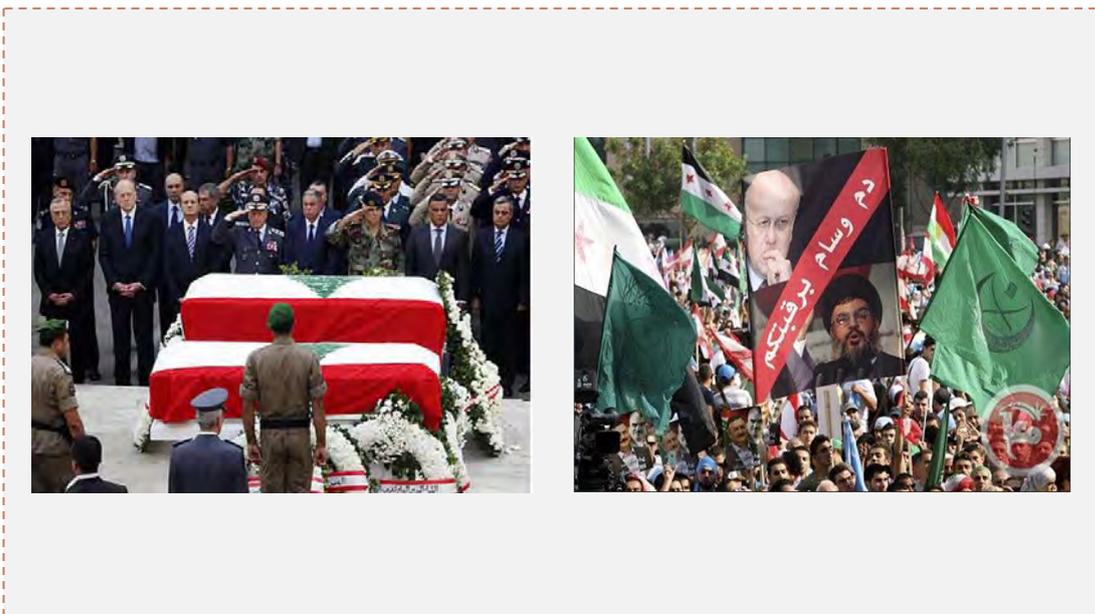
Head of Domestic Intelligence Chief Wissam al-Hassan Assassinated

- On **October 19, 2012** a car bomb exploded in the Christian Al-Ashrafia neighborhood of Beirut, killing three men. One of them was **Wissam al-Hassan**, head of the Lebanese Internal Security Force Information Branch, who was, in our assessment, the target of the attack. The explosion wounded more than 100 passersby and caused serious damage to buildings in the area. According to Lebanese security sources, the car bomb contained between 60 and 70 kilograms (132 to 154 lbs.) of a TNT-like explosive.
- **Wissam al-Hassan was a sworn rival of Hezbollah and Syria.** He played a key role in accusing Hezbollah of the assassination of Rafiq Hariri, Lebanese prime minister, and he was the right-hand man of Saad Hariri, the leader of the anti-Syrian, anti-Hezbollah March 14 camp. **His assassination has increased the tensions between the rival camps in Lebanon and may worsen Lebanon's internal instability.**



Pictures from the scene of the car-bomb explosion in Beirut (Filastin al-'Aan, October 20, 2012).

■ Wissam al-Hassan received a state funeral attended by the senior members of the Lebanese administration and tens of thousands of supporters of the March 14 camp. During the funeral there were confrontations between participants and the Lebanese security forces after attempts were made to storm the prime minister's office. Following the events, Lebanese army forces had been deployed to restore order. **Fouad al-Siniora**, leader of the Al-Mustaqbal faction, which opposes Syria and Hezbollah, spoke at the funeral and called on Lebanese Prime Minister Najib Miqati to resign. He said if he remained in office it would mean support for criminals and assassins (Fouad al-Siniora's official website, October 21, 2012).



Left: Wissam al-Hassan's funeral, attended by senior members of the Lebanese administration (Shihab, October 21, 2012). Right: Mourners wave a banner accusing Hassan Nasrallah and Lebanese Prime Minister Miqati of responsibility for al-Hassan's assassination (Ma'an News Agency, October 21, 2012).

■ The opposition camp in Lebanon accused Syria and Hezbollah of responsibility for the assassination. For example, **Saad al-Hariri**, former Lebanese prime minister and leader of the March 14 camp, and **Walid Jumblatt**, leader of the Lebanon's Druze, specifically accused the Assad regime of responsibility for al-Hassan's death (Al-Jazeera, October 21, 2012). **Samir Geagea**, leader of the Christian Lebanese forces, blamed the assassination on the Assad regime and its allies, that is, Hezbollah (Al-Watan, October 19, 2012). Banners and signs were waved at the funeral, accusing Hezbollah of responsibility for al-Hassan's death.

■ **Opposition forces in Syria** claimed that Syrian Army officers were responsible for the assassination of Wissam al-Hassan. They said he had been followed for a month before the explosion. They also claimed that the decision to assassinate him had been made by the Syrian Army command two days after the detention of former Lebanese minister Michel Samaha in August 2012 (All4syria news Agency, October 22, 2012). However, **Hezbollah** and its representatives in the Lebanese parliament strongly denounced al-Hassan's assassination, claiming that it had been an attack on national unity and meant to destabilize Lebanon (Al-Intiqad, Lebanon, October 19, 2012).

■ Lebanon's internal tension **spilled over from Beirut to Tyre and Tripoli**, where there were exchanges of fire and main roads blocked. The Lebanese Army was deployed at the trouble spots. So far more than 11 people have been reported killed in Tripoli (Al-Manar TV, Lebanon, October 23, 2012).