



News of Terrorism and the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict

February 13 – 19, 2013



Palestinians riot in solidarity with terrorist operatives imprisoned in Israeli jails: students from Beir Zeit University throw Molotov cocktails at the gate of the Israeli Ofer prison (Wafa News Agency, February 12, 2013).

Overview

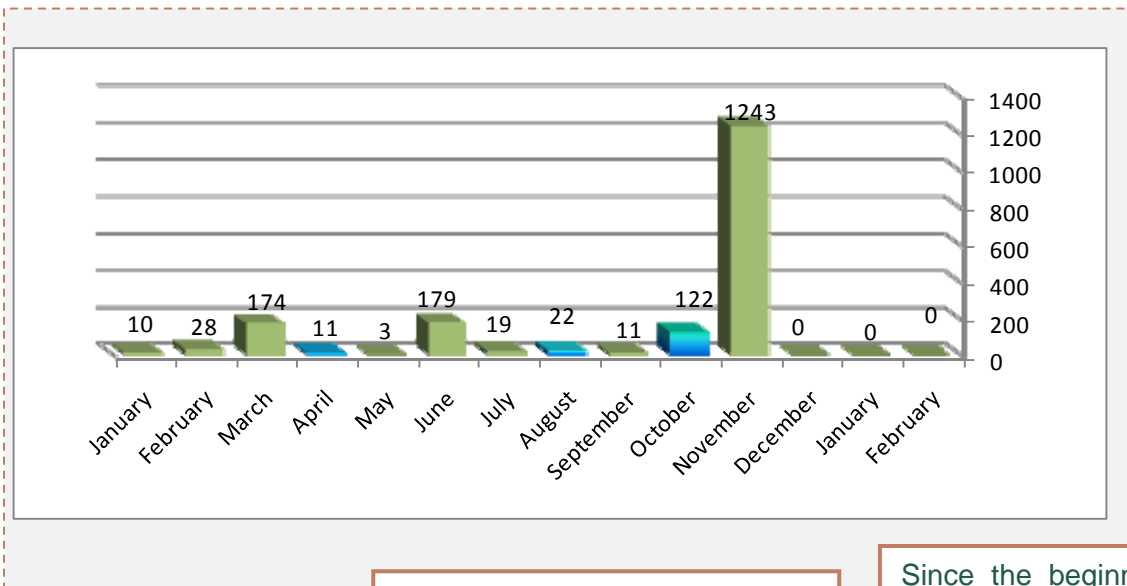
- The ceasefire in the Gaza Strip achieved at the end of Operation Pillar of Defense three months ago continues. Demonstrations and rallies were held in Judea, Samaria and the Gaza Strip in solidarity with the hunger-striking Palestinian terrorist operatives. Some of the demonstrations in Judea and Samaria turned into riots when Palestinian protesters confronted Israeli security forces.
- Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah gave another speech with a deterrent message for Israel. He warned Israel that Hezbollah had the capability to attack Israel "from Kiryat Shemonah to Eilat" and that its airports, ports and power plants were within range of Hezbollah's missiles ("All that is necessary is a few missiles...to plunge Israel into darkness").

The Situation in the Gaza Strip

Rocket Fire

- Hamas and the other terrorist organizations in the Gaza Strip continue to implement the understandings reached at the end of Operation Pillar of Defense. **Since 2300 hours on November 21 no rockets or mortar shells hit Israeli territory.**

Rocket Hits in Israeli Territory since the Beginning of 2011¹

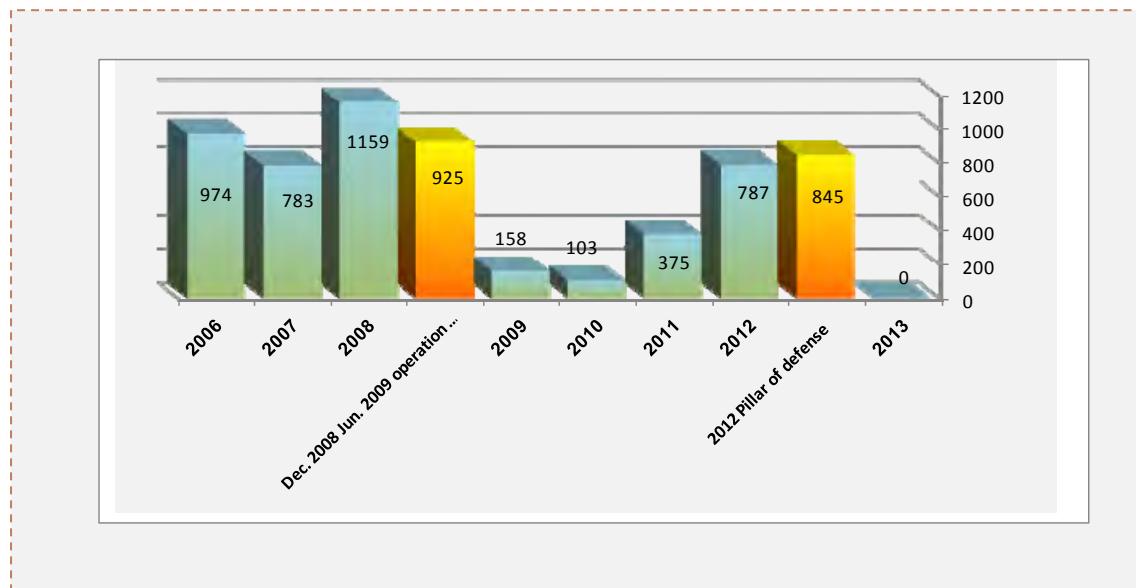


Since the end of Operation Cast Lead, 2,298 rocket hits have been identified in Israeli territory.

Since the beginning of 2011, 2,197 rocket hits have been identified in Israeli territory; 1,822 since the beginning of 2012.

¹ As of February 19, 2013. The statistics do not include mortar shell fire.

Annual Distribution of Rocket Fire²



Demonstrations of Solidarity with Imprisoned Palestinian Terrorists

Protests in Judea, Samaria and the Gaza Strip

■ This past week demonstrations and rallies were held throughout Judea, Samaria and the Gaza Strip to express solidarity with Palestinian terrorist operatives imprisoned in Israeli jails. The demonstrations were motivated by the hunger strikes of four Palestinian prisoners, two of them previously released in the Gilad Shalit prisoner exchange deal and re-imprisoned. **Issa Qaraqa**, minister of prisoners' affairs in the Palestinian Authority (PA), said that if the hunger strike continued, the Palestinian people would "march toward an intifada of freedom." He added that regional and international pressure was being exerted on Israel and that Mahmoud Abbas was personally monitoring the events (Ma'an News Agency, February 18, 2013).

■ **The protests came to a head on Friday, February 15**, when Palestinians held a number of demonstrations to show solidarity with the terrorist operatives imprisoned in Israel. **Some of the demonstrations in Judea and Samaria turned into riots when Palestinians confronted the Israeli security forces.** An IDF soldier was injured when stones were thrown at him at a riot held near the Ofer prison (west of Ramallah). Several Palestinian rioters were also injured (Ynet, February 15, 2013).

² The statistics do not include mortar shell fire.

■ Solidarity demonstrations and rallies were also held in the **Gaza Strip**. Some of the statements made attempted to link the issue of the prisoners to the continuation of the lull in Palestinian violence, and **warned that they would renounce the lull agreement if anything happened to any one of the hunger strikers**. **Khaled Mashaal**, head of Hamas' political bureau, called the family of hunger striker **Samer al-Issawi** and spoke to his parents and sister. He stressed that the entire Palestinian people identified with him and the other hunger-striking prisoners. Mashaal said he was in contact with the head of Egyptian general intelligence to have the Egyptians exert pressure on Israel to release al-Issawi (Website of Hamas' information bureau, February 14, 2013).

■ On Monday, February 18, **Palestinians in Judea, Samaria and the Gaza Strip held more demonstrations**. The largest was in Hebron, where a mass march was organized by the Palestinian prisoners' club. Marchers held pictures of prisoners and waved signs praising their "firm stand" and condemning the silence of the international community.



Left: Mass march in Hebron in solidarity with the hunger-striking prisoners. Right: Palestinian youths confront the Israeli security forces at the Hawara roadblock near Nablus (Wafa News Agency, February 18, 2013).



Palestinians block the trans-Judea and Samaria road (Route 60) to the passage of Israeli vehicles. It was one of the demonstrations of solidarity with the terrorist operative prisoners (Wafa News Agency, February 18, 2013).

Judea and Samaria

Other Events

- Other prominent events in Judea and Samaria were the following:
 - On **February 15, 2013**, nine Palestinian youths were detained after they threw stones at Israeli vehicles in the region of Karnei Shomron (central Samaria), causing injuries (IDF spokesman, February 15, 2013).
 - On **February 14, 2013**, a Palestinian broke through a roadblock near Karnei Shomron and tried to run over a policeman. The policeman shot at the vehicle's tires but the Palestinian kept driving toward him. The policeman then shot at the vehicle itself, wounding the driver, who was taken to a hospital (Ynet, February 14, 2013). **Note:** The Karnei Shomron region has lately become a hotspot of stone- and Molotov cocktail-throwers.



Palestinian youths burn tires at the Jalame checkpoint (north of Jenin) (Wafa News Agency, February 15, 2013).

Detention of Terrorist Operatives Who Attacked an IDF Soldier and Stole His Weapon

[Bullet] The Israeli security forces exposed a five-man terrorist squad of Fatah Tanzim operatives, residents of Qalandia and A-Ram, who infiltrated an IDF base in north Jerusalem on December 21, 2012. Two of the terrorists, armed with a toy gun and fire extinguishers, mounted the watchtower. One of them sprayed the face of the soldier on guard and the other stole his M-16 assault rifle. The soldier was wounded during the attack. According to the indictment, the members of the squad sold the rifle (IDF spokesman, February 12, 2013).

Developments in the Gaza Strip

- **Islam Shahwan**, spokesman for the ministry of the interior of the de-facto Hamas administration, reported that for the past ten days Egyptian security forces had been **closing tunnels along the Egyptian border at Rafah by flooding them with sewer water**. He said the Hamas administration had not been advised in advance. He also said that the action endangered the Gaza Strip, whose economy rested on the tunnels, and that the Hamas administration would take practical steps to respond to the step taken by the Egyptians (Filastin al-Yawm, February 17, 2013).

- Egyptian sources reported that the Egyptian defense minister had ordered the Rafah region be turned into a strategic military zone. To that end an Egyptian engineering unit had dug several wells along the border to flood the tunnels (Al-Youm

Al-Sabea, February 15, 2013). **Sidqi Sobhi**, chief of staff of the Egyptian army, said that in addition to being a means of delivering basic goods **they were also used to smuggle weapons which threatened Egypt's security** and therefore they were being destroyed (Al-Arabiya TV, February 18, 2013).

■ **Khalil al-Hayya**, a member of Hamas' Executive Committee, criticized the Egyptian action, saying that closing the tunnels while the so-called Israeli "blockade" of the Gaza Strip was effectively an Arab decision in support of the oppression of the Palestinian people (Palinfo website, February 16, 2013). A senior Egyptian security source responded that Egypt was determined to take steps against the tunnels along the Egypt-Rafah border and **that they had become an economic tool serving a number of merchants and had no connection with relieving the suffering of the Gazans**. The same source said there were **an estimated 225 tunnels, each with a number of openings**, some of them located inside buildings, so that it was a question of about 550 tunnel openings (PalPress website, February 16, 2013).

Hamas Delegation Expelled from Bulgaria – A Political Blow to Hamas

■ A delegation of members of the Hamas faction of the Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC) exited the Gaza Strip for Bulgaria to participate in a political conference. The delegation included **Ismail al-Ashqar**, deputy chairman of the Hamas faction in the PLC, and **Salah al-Bardawil** and **Musheir al-Masri**, both PLC members (who also have spokesman and information roles). Arriving in Bulgaria, the delegation was received by **Muhammad Abu Aassi**, head of the Bulgarian Center for Middle East Studies (Alresala.net website, February 14, 2013). On arrival, **Salah al-Bardawil** said that the delegation would also meet with senior Bulgarian officials (Filastin Al-'An, February 13, 2013).

■ Despite the fact that Hamas wanted to make the visit appear as a formal state visit, the Bulgaria foreign ministry made it clear that **the Hamas delegation had been invited to Bulgaria by an organization and not the government, and that it was not an official visit**. The delegation was requested to leave Bulgaria, and they were expelled to Turkey. In response to the expulsion of the delegation, senior Hamas figures said that diplomatic conventions had been violated and that Bulgaria had surrendered to pressure from the "Zionist lobby" (Ma'an News Agency, February 15, 2013).



Left: Members of the Hamas delegation in Bulgaria (left to right): Musheir al-Masri, Salah al-Bardawil, Ismail al-Ashqar (Shihab website, February 13, 2013). Right: The delegation holds a press conference at the Rafah terminal on their return to the Gaza Strip (Hamas' Felesteen, February 17, 2013).

Reactions

■ **Salah al-Bardawil**, Hamas spokesman and a member of the delegation, said that the delegation's expulsion had been **a political decision, the result of pressure from Israel** (Alresala.net website, February 15, 2013). At a press conference held at the Rafah terminal when the delegation returned to the Gaza Strip, he called on Arab and Palestinian groups to condemn the incident and to state a clear position against the expulsion of the Hamas delegation. It was, he said, "in violation of every law and diplomatic convention," because it was carried out against parliamentarians, who had diplomatic immunity and who had entered Bulgaria on official visas (Ma'an News Agency, February 16, 2013). **Ahmed Bahar**, deputy chairman of the PLC and member of the Hamas faction, said that "the event grievously humiliated the Palestinian people and was a despicable Bulgarian surrender to Zionist pressure" (Dunia Al-Watan, Al-Fajar Al-Jadeed TV, February 16, 2013).

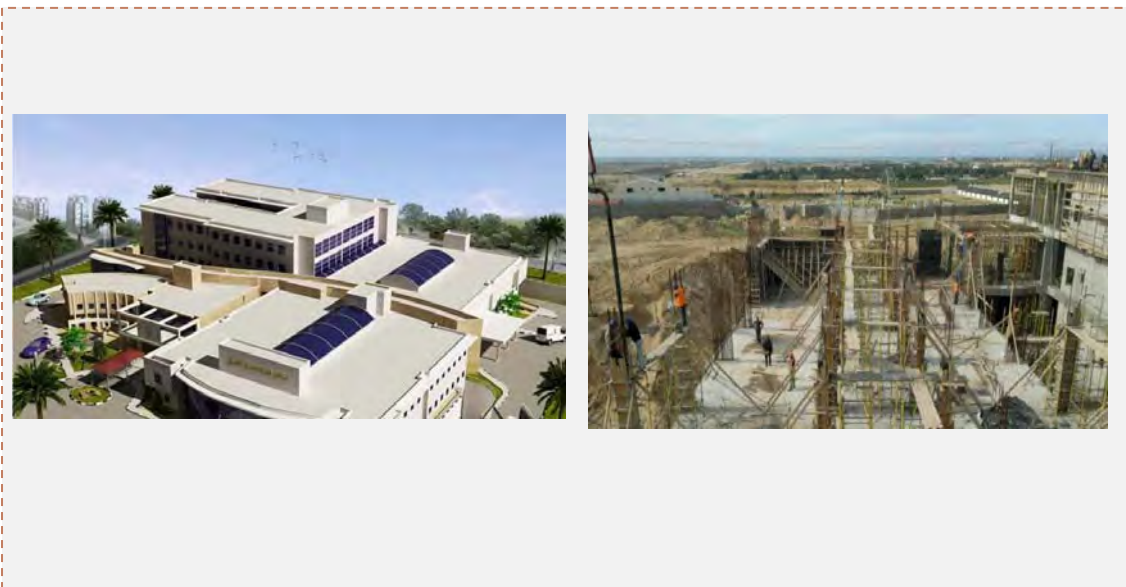
■ **Riyadh al-Maliki**, PA foreign minister, said that the arrival of the Hamas delegation in Bulgaria **came as a surprise to the PA**, and that their visit to Bulgaria had not been coordinated with the Palestinian legation there or with official Palestinian representatives (Voice of Palestine Radio, February 17, 2013).

Conclusion

■ For Hamas, a visit to Bulgaria, a member of the European Union, was supposed to have been a precedent that would help it institute formal relations between Hamas and the EU, even if Hamas refused to fulfill the Quartet's conditions. The visit was also supposed to have been a diplomatic blow to the PA, which had no prior knowledge of it (following a wave of visits of public figures to the Gaza Strip). **Thus, the expulsion of the delegation was, in our assessment, a political and public blow to Hamas' efforts.**

Turkey Builds a Hospital in the Gaza Strip

■ On February 13, 2013, **Jemal al-Khadiri**, a Hamas member of the PLC who is also chairman of the board of trustees of the Islamic University in Gaza City, toured the building site of the Turkish-Palestine Friendship Hospital. The hospital is being **built on the ruins of the Israeli settlement Netzarim**, and is funded by Recep Tayyip Erdogan, the Turkish prime minister. He will reportedly visit the Gaza Strip at the end of the year to inaugurate the hospital. It will have 170 beds and employ both Palestinian and Turkish doctors (Ma'an News Agency and Filastin Al-'An, February 16, 2013).



Left: An artist's rendering of the hospital. Right: The hospital in progress (Facebook page of the Turkish-Palestine Friendship Hospital, February 17, 2013).

■ **Izzat al-Rishq**, a member of Hamas Executive Committee, said that on February 19 a delegation of senior Hamas figures headed by Khaled Mashaal, chairman of the Hamas Executive Committee, had left the Gaza Strip for an official visit to Turkey,

where they would meet with Erdogan, the Turkish prime minister (Shihab website and Ma'an News Agency, February 19, 2013).

Report Says Gazan Salafist-Jihadists Are Fighting Alongside Rebels in Syria

■ According to **Abu al-Inaa' al-Ansari**, a leader of one of the Salafist-jihadi networks operating in the Gaza Strip, between 20 and 30 young men, members in the Gazan, had **recently left for Syria**. Their objective was **to participate in the fighting alongside global jihad networks which fight on the side of the rebels, such as Jabhat al-Nusra**. Palestinian sources reported that there had recently been an increase in the number of young men who left the Gaza Strip and went to Syria. They were mainly members of Salafist networks which had splintered off from the security services of the de-facto Hamas administration. It was also reported that a number of months ago two young Palestinians from the Gaza Strip had been killed in battle in Syria and that several others had been wounded (Al-Quds, February 17, 2013).

Operation Pillar of Defense – Update

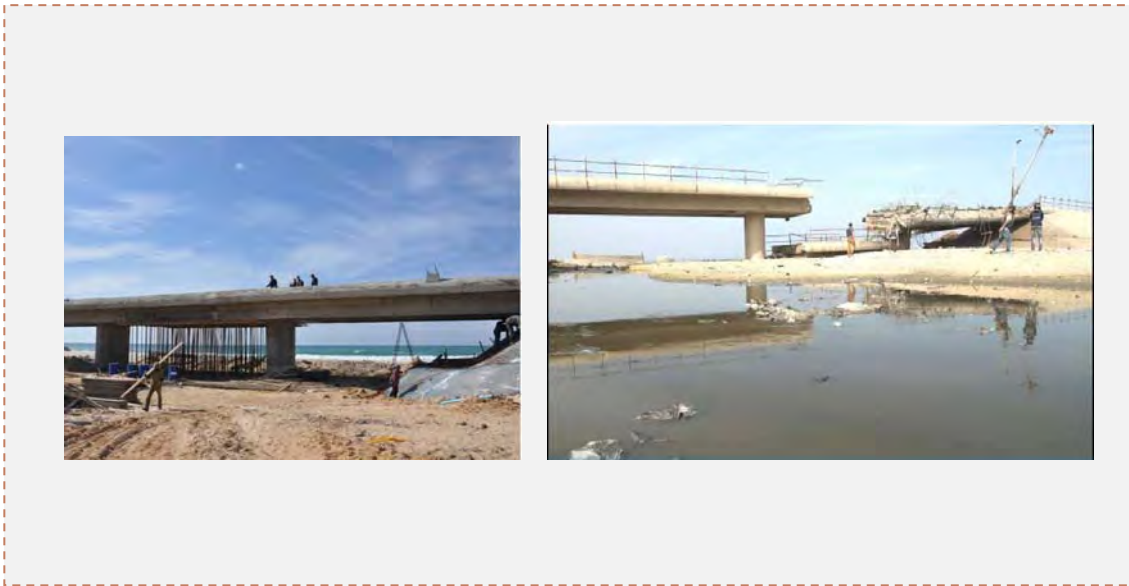
Iranian Remark about Military Support for Hamas

■ **Ali Larijani**, chairman of the Iranian parliament, admitted that Iran was equipping the Palestinians with weapons and protecting Hamas and Hezbollah. He said that, as opposed to others, **Iran did not hide its support for the Palestinians** (Sama News Agency, February 13, 2013).

Rebuilding the Gaza Strip

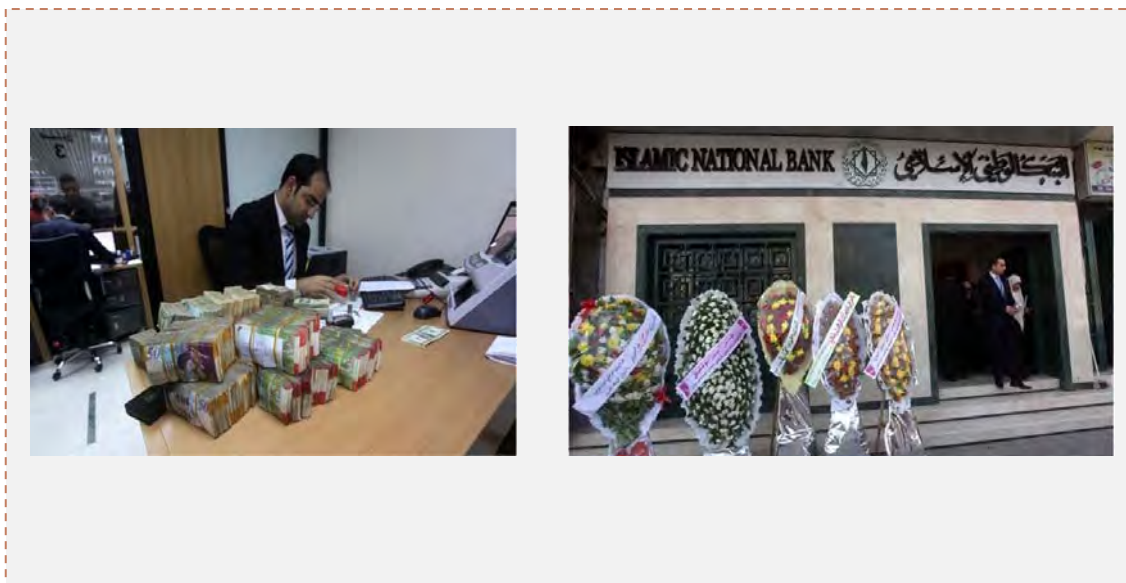
■ **Yasser Abd al-Rahman al-Shanti**, deputy minister of housing and public works in the de-facto Hamas administration, said that on February 21 the Gaza Wadi bridge, which links the northern and southern Gaza Strip, would open to vehicles. The bridge was being rebuilt after it had been damaged in November 2012 during Operation Pillar of Defense. The construction, he said, was being financed by Human Appeal International in the United Arab Emirates.³ He also thanked the HAI in the Emirates (Paltoday website, February 17, 2013).

³ Human Appeal International is a charity established in 1984, headed by the ruler of Oman, Sheikh Hamid bin Rashad al-Naimi. It has branches in many Arab countries and in India, as well as in Denmark, Australia and Britain. It was outlawed in Israel at the time by the minister of defense.



Left: The Gaza Wadi bridge, damaged during Operation Pillar of Defense (Hamas' Felesteen, November 27, 2012). Right: The bridge under construction.

- On February 10, 2013, the main branch of the **Islamic National Bank** in the Rimal section of Gaza City, which suffered severe damage in Operation Pillar of Defense, reopened. The official reopening ceremony was attended by **Ziyad al-Zaza**, deputy head of the de-facto Hamas administration (Hamas forum website, Filastin Al-'An, website of the National Islamic Bank, February 10, 2013). The bank was established by Hamas in March 2009, and has two branches in Gaza City and another in Khan Yunis. Its director general is **Hazem al-Masri** and the chairman of the board of directors is **Ibrahim Jabber** (Website of the Islamic National Bank in Gaza, February 10, 2013).



The Islamic National Bank reopens (Filastin Al-'An, February 11, 2013).

The Palestinian Authority

Preparations for President Obama's Visit to the PA

■ In preparation for President Barack Obama's visit to the PA, an official PA delegation went to Washington to update American officials on the Palestinian position regarding negotiations with Israel. One member of the delegation was **Saeb Erekat**, the chief Palestinian negotiator, and another was **Muhammad Ashtiya** member of Fatah's Central Committee. The delegation will present the Palestinian positions regarding an end to construction in the settlements, the release of the Palestinian terrorist operatives in Israeli jails, and the source of authority for any future negotiations (PalPress website, February 17, 2013).

Mahmoud Abbas Visits Pakistan

■ This past week Mahmoud Abbas visited Pakistan. He met with the president and other officials of the administration. He also participated in laying the cornerstone for the Palestinian embassy in Pakistan. He told the president of Pakistan that he hoped to receive him "in Jerusalem, the capital of the Palestinian state," and to pray with him in Al-Aqsa mosque (Al-Hayat Al-Jadeeda, February 18, 2013).



Mahmoud Abbas meets with the Pakistani president in Islamabad (Wafa News Agency, February 17, 2013).

Lebanon

Hassan Nasrallah's Speech

- Hezbollah leader **Hassan Nasrallah** gave a speech on February 16 at a memorial ceremony for three Hezbollah leaders (Abbas Musawi, Ragheb Kharb, Imad Mughnieh). His speech was relayed on a giant screen. Nasrallah spoke about the challenges facing Hezbollah in light of recent developments (Radio Al-Nur, February 16, 2013).
- **The speech centered on sending a message of deterrence to Israel**, another in a series of such messages sent in previous speeches. Nasrallah emphasized that Hezbollah could attack Israel "from Kiryat Shemonah to Eilat" and that **its airports, ports and power stations were within range of Hezbollah's missiles**: All that is necessary is a few missiles...to plunge Israel into darkness...Will Israel be able to stand six months of darkness?...the economy of Israel and the people of Israel..."
- Other issues raised by the speech were the following:
 - **The attack in Bulgaria** – Nasrallah said that there were those who were quick to blame Hezbollah and to issue a verdict against it in the name of the European Union. That might have been expected, because based on those accusations Israel would start a war against Israel. However, past experience had shown that if Israel wanted to start a war it did not need an excuse or to wait for the results of an investigation, but it would go to war based on its own considerations.

- **Hezbollah's military capabilities** – Hezbollah, said Nasrallah, was well armed. Today it had all the weapons it needed for a possible war with Israel. It did not need weapons from Syria or Iran.
- **Hezbollah's support of the Palestinians** – Hezbollah, he said, had given the Palestinian intifada and the Palestinian [terrorist] organizations **both material and moral support**, and was still supporting them. The Palestinians should follow the example of the Lebanese "resistance" [i.e., Hezbollah] which in 2000 had succeeded in freeing itself [the year the IDF withdrew from the security zone in south Lebanon], and the "resistance" which had succeeded in freeing the Gaza Strip [the disengagement, 2005], and there was no reason it would not continue to succeed.



Left: The memorial service for Hezbollah leaders (Al-Ahad, February 17, 2013). Right: Hassan Nasrallah's broadcast speech (Maqawamah website, February 17, 2013).