



News of Terrorism and the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict

February 21 – 26, 2013



Remains of the rocket which landed south of Ashqelon, the first rocket hit identified in Israeli territory since the end of Operation Pillar of Defense (November 2012) (Picture by Edi Israel, February 26, 2013, reprinted courtesy of NRG)

Overview

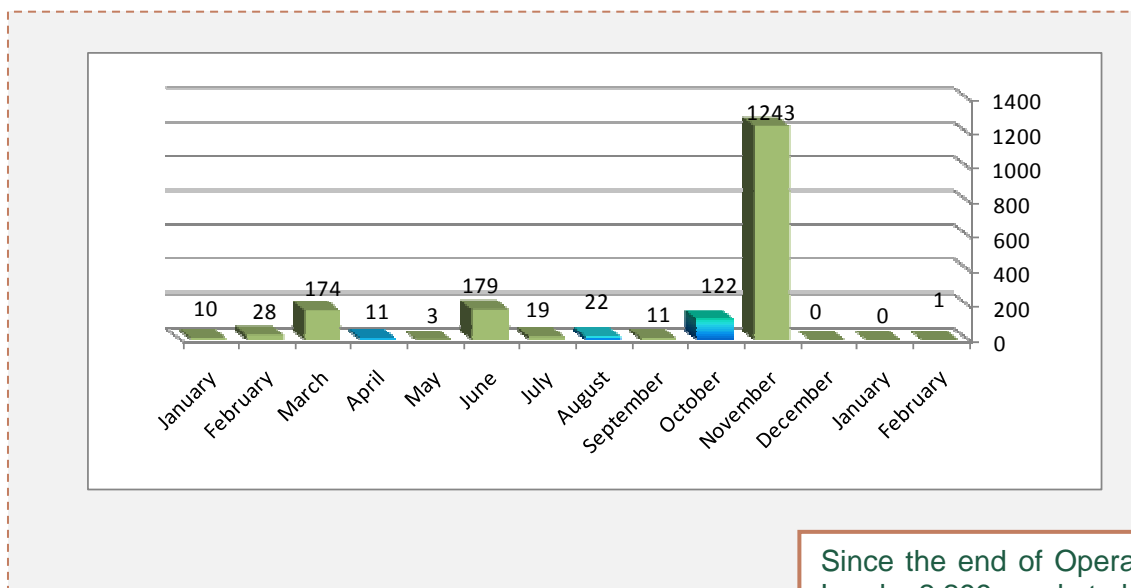
- On the morning of February 26, 2013, a rocket hit was identified south of the Israeli city of Ashqelon. It was the first rocket fired from the Gaza Strip into Israeli territory since November 21, 2012, the end of Operation Pillar of Defense.
- This past week Palestinians continued rioting to show solidarity with the terrorist operatives imprisoned in Israeli jails, leading to confrontations with the Israeli security forces. The death of Arafat Jaradat, a young Palestinian man, in an Israeli prison aggravated the situation. There were confrontations throughout Judea and Samaria, especially in the regions of Hebron and Bitunya, near the Ofer Prison (southwest of Ramallah). Arafat Jaradat's funeral, organized by the Palestinian Authority (PA), was attended by an estimated 10,000 Palestinians.
- The PA worked to contain the events and prevented the situation from deteriorating. However, senior Palestinian figures, Mahmoud Abbas among them, have made inciting statements which enflame emotions and ensure that the issue of the prisoners remains on the Palestinian agenda (possibly with an eye to the upcoming visit of American President Barack Obama). The heads of Hamas in the Gaza Strip contributed to enflame emotions, calling for the abduction of Israeli soldiers and the beginning of a third intifada.

The Situation in the Gaza Strip

First Rocket Fired since Operation Pillar of Defense

■ On the morning of February 26, 2013, a rocket hit was identified south of **Ashqelon**. The remains of the rocket were found on a road in an uninhabited area. There were no casualties and no damage was reported. It was the first rocket fired from the Gaza Strip since November 21, 2012, the end of Operation Pillar of Defense.

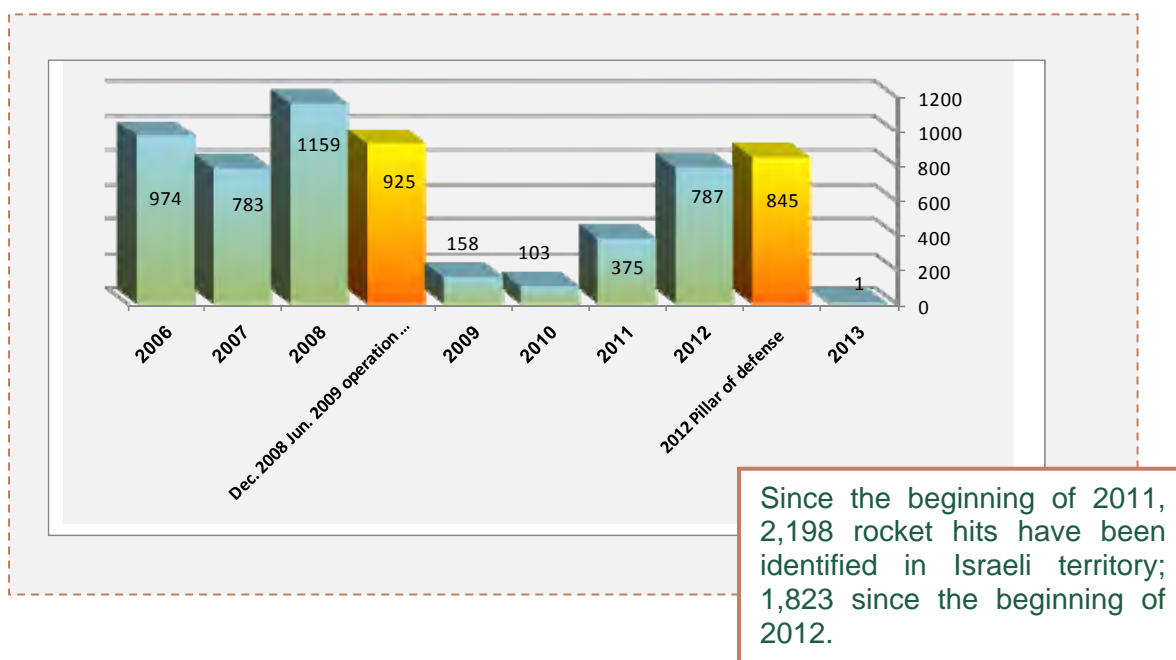
Rocket Hits in Israeli Territory since the Beginning of 2011¹



Since the end of Operation Cast Lead, 2,299 rocket hits have been identified in Israeli territory.

¹ As of February 26, 2013. The statistics do not include mortar shell fire.

Annual Distribution of Rocket Fire²



Judea and Samaria

Solidarity with the Palestinian Terrorists Imprisoned in Israel

Overview

■ This past week Palestinians continued rioting throughout Judea and Samaria to show solidarity with the hunger-striking terrorist operatives imprisoned in Israeli jails, leading to confrontations with the Israeli security forces. The riots increased in scope and extent following the death of Arafat Jaradat, a young Palestinian man, in the Megiddo Prison. The riots continued throughout the week, peaking during Jaradat's funeral in his village, near Hebron.

■ During the riots Palestinians confronted Israeli security forces in various focal points throughout Judea and Samaria. Palestinians were reported injured, most of them from inhaling tear gas. Demonstrations were held in the Gaza Strip as well. The heads of the PA in Judea and Samaria and the de-facto Hamas administration in the Gaza Strip are working to keep the issue of the terrorist operative prisoners on the Palestinian

² The statistics do not include mortar shell fire.

political agenda. However, in the PA the events are being contained and so far have been kept from spinning out of control.³

- Despite the PA's attempts to contain the situation, in point of fact **statements made by the Palestinian leadership serve only to inflame emotions and keep the issue of the terrorist operatives in Israeli jails on the Palestinian political agenda** (possibly with an eye to the upcoming visit of American President Barack Obama). Particularly conspicuous was a statement by Mahmoud Abbas, who blamed Israel for the death of Arafat Jaradat and accused it of using live ammunition to kill children (in spite of the fact that so far the results of Jaradat's autopsy have proved inconclusive and the initial findings did not determine the cause of death).
- Following the riots, Israel demanded that the PA act to calm the situation. The message was transmitted to the PA by Yitzhak Molcho, the Israeli prime minister's personal envoy. In addition, Netanyahu instructed that the PA receive tax revenues from January 2013 to prevent another pretext for rioting (Ynet, February 24, 2013).

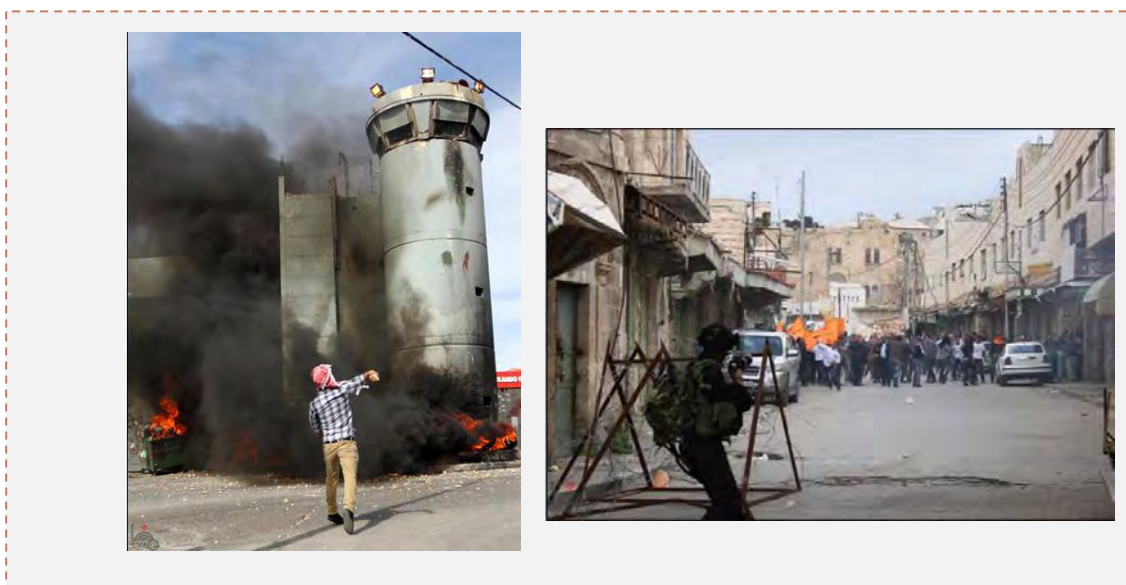
The Day-by-Day Events

- **Thursday, February 21, 2013** – There were riots and confrontations between Israeli security forces and Palestinians at the **Bitunya roadblock** near the Ofer Prison, where an estimated 1,000 Palestinians attempted to approach the facility. Palestinians also rioted in **east Jerusalem, Hebron, Jenin and Tulkarm**. Several Palestinians and two Israeli journalists were injured. Dozens of Gazans participated in solidarity rallies throughout the Gaza Strip (Ynet, Ma'an News Agency, Wafa News Agency, February 21, 2013).
- **Friday, February 22, 2013** – Coordinated riots were held in the main cities in Judea and Samaria after the Friday prayers in the mosques. **Dozens of young Palestinians rioted, throwing stones and Molotov cocktails at Israeli security forces**. A mass demonstration was held in **Shuhadaa Street in Hebron**. Dozens of young Palestinians burned tires and threw stones at the **Bitunya roadblock, near the Ofer Prison**. Riots were also held in **Nablus and Tulkarm**. After the Friday prayers, Palestinians on the **Temple Mount** threw

³ **Nabil Shaath**, a member of Fatah's Central Committee, said that the PA leadership was concerned lest the situation deteriorated. However, he added, he did not think anyone in the Palestinian leadership was planning a third intifada. He said Palestinian activity had to be organized and non-violent, and be held in conjunction with international activity and reconciliation with Hamas (Ma'an News Agency, February 24, 2013).

stones at Israeli security forces at the entrance to the Mughrabi Gate. In response, Israeli security forces broke into the plaza in front of Al-Aqsa mosque to restore quiet (Ynet, February 22, 2013).

- **Saturday, February 23, 2013 – Arafat Jaradat**, a Palestinian who was not on a hunger strike, died at the Megiddo Prison (northern Israel). Jaradat, 29, had been detained the week before for having thrown stones at an Israeli civilian during Operation Pillar of Defense. In addition, in a violent confrontation between Palestinians and Israeli settlers from Shilo and Esh Kodesh near the village of **Qassra** (south of Nablus), at least two Palestinians were shot and seriously wounded. IDF sources reported that an examination indicated that no Israeli soldier had fired live ammunition. The Palestinians claimed that settlers had shot the two (Ynet, February 23, 2013).



Left: A Palestinian youth throws a Molotov cocktail at an IDF pillbox near the Tomb of Rachel in Bethlehem (Wafa News Agency, February 25, 2013). Right: Palestinians demonstrators in Shuhadaa Street in Hebron. Some of them hold orange flags of the Palestinian National Initiative, a leftist Palestinian movement headed by Mustafa Barghouti (Wafa News Agency, February 25, 2013).

- **Monday, February 24, 2013** – An estimated 4,500 Palestinian terrorist operatives imprisoned in Israeli jails went on a hunger strike to protest the death of Arafat Jaradat. In Judea and Samaria. Hundreds of Palestinians rioted at the entrance to the village of Sa'ir (north of Hebron), where Jaradat lived. Demonstrations were also held in the Gaza Strip in solidarity with the prisoners (Ynet, February 24, 2013).



Left: Palestinian youths burn tires and throw stones at Israeli security forces near the Hawara roadblock, south of Nablus. Right: Rioting Palestinian youths confront Israeli security forces near the Jalame checkpoint in northern Samaria (Wafa News Agency, February 24, 2013).

- **Monday, February 25, 2013** – The protest focused on the mass funeral of Arafat Jaradat, held in the village of Sayeir, in the Hebron district, and **attended by an estimated 10,000 Palestinians**. It was organized by the PA, and **Arafat Jaradat was buried with full military honors**; senior Fatah figures were in attendance. During the funeral there were confrontations between Palestinians and Israeli security forces. A young Palestinian was wounded in a riot which broke out in the Al-Ayda refugee camp in Bethlehem during the afternoon.



Funeral of Palestinian terrorist operative Arafat Jaradat, held in the village of Sa'ir (Wafa News Agency, February 25, 2013).

Results of the Autopsy of Arafat Jaradat's Body

■ On February 24 an Israeli pathologist performed an autopsy on the body of Arafat Jaradat; also present was Palestinian pathologist Dr. Saber Alaloul. According to a report issued by the Israeli minister of health, "**no signs of external trauma were found on the body** apart from those pertaining to resuscitation [attempts] and a small graze on the right side of his chest. No evidence of disease was found during the autopsy. Two internal hemorrhages were detected, one on the shoulder and one on the right side of the chest. Two ribs were broken, which might indicate resuscitation attempts." At this stage, according to the report, "**until microscopic and toxicology reports are in, the cause of death cannot be tied to the autopsy findings**" (Spokesman for the Israeli Ministry of Health, February 24, 2013).

PA and Fatah Reactions

■ **Senior PA and Hamas figures were quick to blame the government of Israel for the death of Arafat Jaradat**, claiming that the findings of the autopsy showed that he died as the result of torture (despite the fact that so far the autopsy has not revealed the cause of death). **Issa Qaraqa**, PA minister for prisoner affairs, claimed that the initial results indicated that Arafat Jaradat had been tortured and that his death was a cold-blooded murder and should be considered a war crime. He said that consultations were being held **to take legal steps in international forums** (Al-Ayam, Voice of Palestine Radio, February 25, 2013).



Qadoura Fares (left), chairman of the Palestinian prisoners' club, and Issa Qaraqa (right), Palestinian minister of prisoners' affairs, hold a press conference in Ramallah. They claimed that the results of Arafat Jaradat's autopsy showed that he died as a result of torture (Wafa News Agency, February 24, 2013).

■ On February 25, 2013, **Mahmoud Abbas** held a meeting in his office in Ramallah with the Palestinian minister of the interior and the heads of the security services to discuss the situation resulting from the riots. Mahmoud Abbas instructed all those involved to preserve security, the interests of the Palestinian people and the health and safety of the Palestinians. He said that "**it is Israeli policy to create tension and draw the region into anarchy**" (Al-Hayat Al-Jadeeda, February 26, 2013).

■ Senior PA and Fatah figures said the following:

- Speaking in Ramallah, **Mahmoud Abbas** was severely critical of Israel, which he accused of responsibility for the death of Arafat Jaradat. He added that **Israel harmed children and used live ammunition to kill them**, and had to be held responsible for its actions (Wafa News Agency, February 25, 2013). In a condolence message sent to the members of the Jaradat family, Mahmoud Abbas condemned the event and criticized Israel's treatment of Palestinian prisoners in its jails. He promised to take action in the UN regarding the prisoners, as well as in human rights organizations and the international community, to provide them with the protection they deserved (Wafa News Agency, February 25, 2013).

- **Jibril Rajoub**, a member of Fatah's Central Committee, said that **Israel bore responsibility for the death of Arafat Jaradat**. He added that the Palestinians would continue their "popular resistance" and all forms of protest, and would appeal to all the international organizations (Voice of Palestine Radio, February 24, 2013).

- **Issam al-Ahmed**, a member of Fatah's Central Committee, said that the PA intended to appeal to the UN Security Council for a deliberation about the Palestinian prisoners in Israeli jails. He said that the Palestinian leadership supported the "[popular] resistance" and was helping to organize and deploy it. He also said that the Palestinians were conducting a frontal struggle against the [so-called] Israeli "occupation" and its military institutions, and that they had unanimously decided to **escalate the "popular resistance"** (Ma'an News Agency, February 25, 2013).

Reactions in the Gaza Strip to the Events

■ The heads of Hamas and the other terrorist organizations in the Gaza Strip said that if one of the hunger-striking prisoners died, **there would be military escalation and that the organizations would increase rocket fire into Israeli territory** (Ma'an News Agency, February 21, 2013). **They also threatened to abduct Israeli soldiers.**



Hamas protest march in Rafah after the death of Arafat Jaradat (Filastin Al-'An, February 25, 2013).

- The heads of Hamas said the following:
- **Ismail Haniya**, head of the de-facto Hamas administration, called on the military-terrorist wings of the various organizations in the Gaza Strip **to abduct Israeli soldiers**. He claimed that those who had abducted Gilad Shalit and carried out the prisoner exchange deal were capable of effecting the release of other prisoners (Ma'an News Agency, February 25, 2013).
 - **Salah al-Bardawil**, senior Hamas figure, said, regarding Gilad Shalit, that Hamas had abducted dozens of Israeli soldiers and that the most recent abduction had been successful, leading to the release of 1,048 prisoners in return for one soldier (Palestine Online website, February 23, 2013). On another occasion **he called on the Palestinians to begin the third intifada**. He condemned the security coordination between Israel and the PA, and called on the military-terrorist wings of the Palestinian organizations to act to release all the prisoners in Israeli jails (Safa News Agency, February 25, 2013).

- **Khader Habib**, senior Palestinian Islamic Jihad figure, said that the policy of medical negligence and ignoring the demands of the Palestinian prisoners illustrated how serious Israel's criminal actions were. He said that a **worsening of the prisoners' conditions would lead to "an immediate military escalation"** (Palestinian Online, February 23, 2013).



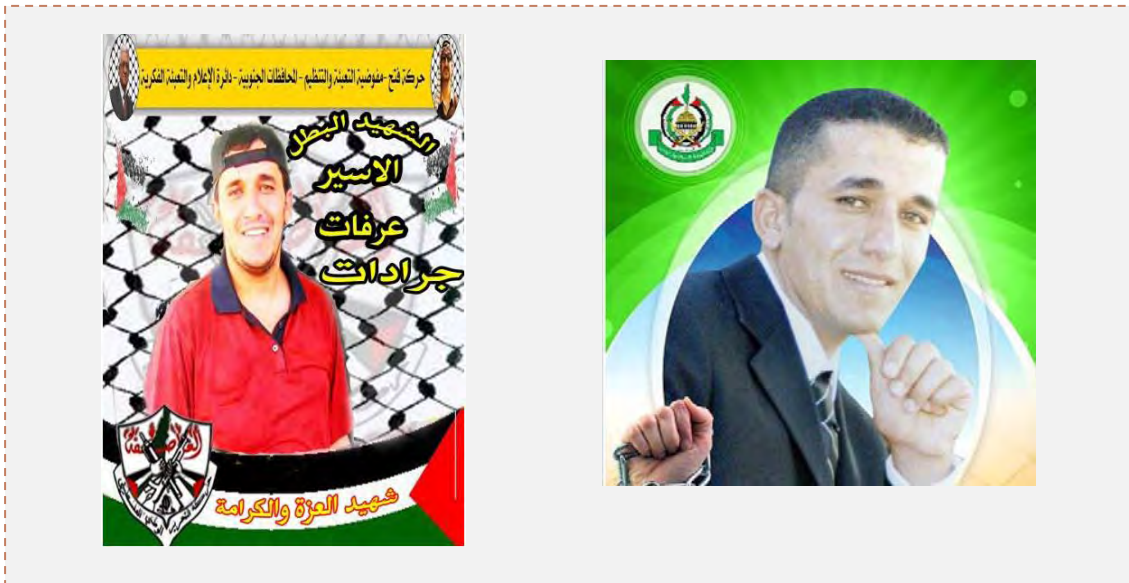
From Hamas in Judea and Samaria's Ajnad Facebook page: "The prisoners' intifada...our third intifada" (February 26, 2013).



From Hamas in Jerusalem Day's Ajnad Facebook page, a call to cancel the security coordination between Fatah and the "Zionist enemy" (February 25, 2013).

Fatah vs. Hamas: Arafat Jaradat as a Political Asset

■ The death of Arafat Jaradat led to a media battle between Fatah and Hamas for his organizational affiliation. Pictures of Jaradat with the Hamas' logo were posted to the Ajnad Facebook page, which represents Hamas in Judea and Samaria (Ajnad Facebook page, February 25, 2013). **Fatah also posted his picture on its affiliated websites, along with an official death notice** (Fatah Al-Yawm, February 25, 2013). In effect, **most of the Palestinian media reported that Arafat Jaradat had been affiliated with the Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades, Fatah's military-terrorist wing.**



Left: Official death notice issued by Fatah in southern Judea and Samaria (Fatah Al-Yawm, February 25, 2013). Right: Official death notice issued by Hamas (Ajnad Facebook page, February 25, 2013)

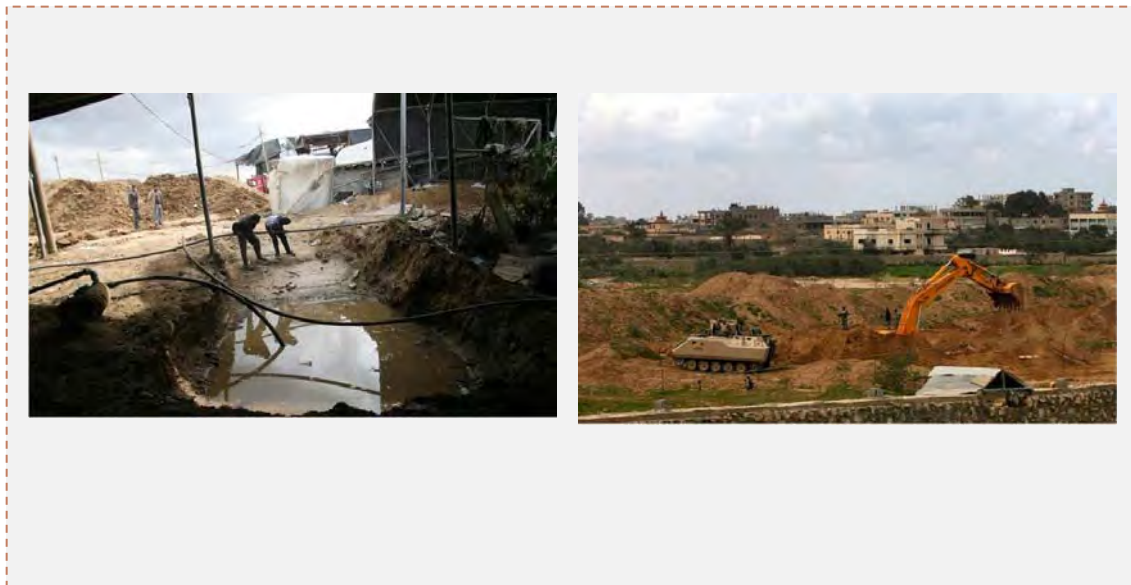
Developments in the Gaza Strip

Renovating the Rafah Crossing

■ **Maher Abu Sabha**, director general of the crossings authority in the de-facto Hamas administration, said that in the coming days the second stage of renovating the Rafah crossing, at a cost of \$1,800,000, would begin. The Islamic Development Bank was providing most of the money for the project. He said a lounge for travelers would be built as well as a cafeteria and waiting room for VIPs, and lighting would be improved (Alresala.net website, February 23, 2013).

Continuing the Destruction of Tunnels

- **Egypt continues its efforts to destroy tunnels under the Egypt-Gaza Strip border in the Rafah region.** According to reports, the Egyptian army engineering corps in collaboration with Egyptian border patrol forces has destroyed 200 tunnels, most of them in the Rafah region. Most of the tunnels have been **flooded with ground water** (Al-Masri Al-Youm, February 23, 2013).
- Gazans have expressed concern regarding the influence of the Egyptian army's activity on the Gazan economy, and the possibility of a rise in prices (Al-Istiqlal, February 26, 2013). The de-facto Hamas administration, worried by the events, has been monitoring Egyptian statements about closing the tunnels (Ma'an News Agency, February 25, 2013). The Hamas ministry of the interior issued a notice stating that the border with Egypt was secure and that "the tunnel industry" was in an exceptional situation because of the [so-called] "siege" of the Gaza Strip. The announcement also stated that the tunnels were fully supervised and under control (Website of the Hamas ministry of the interior, February 25, 2013).



Egyptian army activity along the Egypt-Gaza Strip border, including locating and flooding smuggling tunnels in Egyptian Rafah (Filastin Al-'An, February 19, 2013).

Successful Appeal of Italian Correspondent's Murderers

■ The military court in the Gaza Strip accepted the appeal of the two murderers of Italian correspondent **Vittorio Arrigoni**, and reduced their sentences from life imprisonment to 15 years. In his appeal, **Muhammed Zaqut**, the murderers' lawyer, claimed they should only be found guilty of abduction, not of murder. In response to the reduction of their sentence to 15 years, he said it should have been reduced further, to ten years (Agence France-Presse, February 19, 2013). Four Palestinian human rights organizations operating in the Gaza Strip called on the court to make public, as rapidly as possible, their reasons for reducing the murderers' sentence (Ma'an News Agency, February 20, 2013).

■ The two were accused of abducting and murdering Italian correspondent Vittorio Arrigoni, an activist in the International Solidarity Movement (ISM), an organization which played an important role in the campaign to delegitimize Israel. He was abducted on April 15, 2011, by an extremist Islamist network called Al-Tawhid wal-Jihad, affiliated with the global jihad. In return for his release the group demanded the release of two of their leaders who were being detained by Hamas' security forces. Vittorio Arrigoni's body was found a few hours after his abduction.



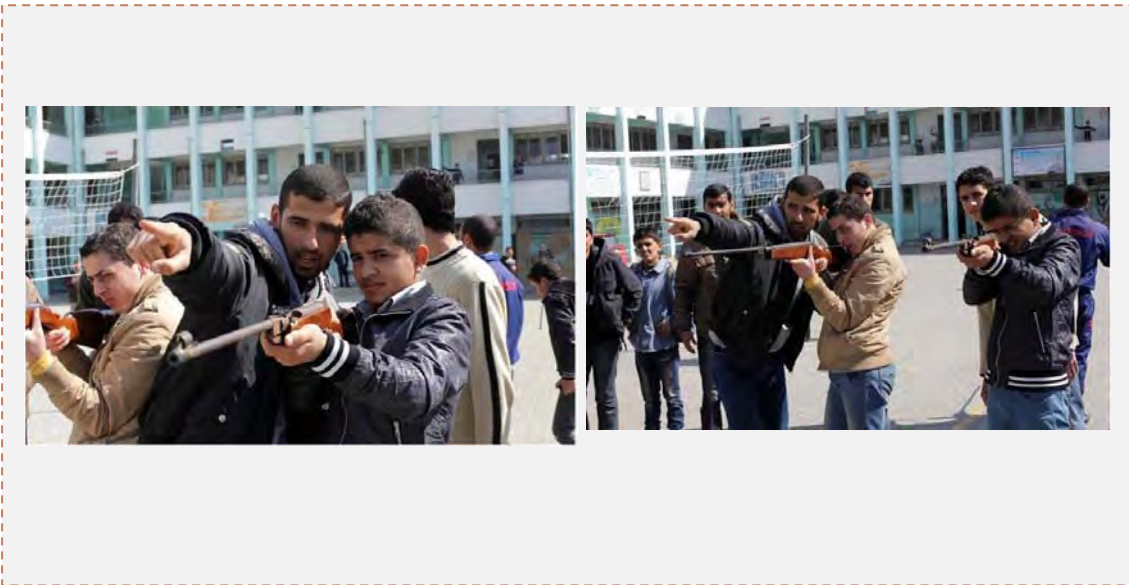
Video of Vittorio Arrigoni a few minutes before his death (YouTube)



Video posted by Al-Tawhid wal-Jihad about the abduction of Vittorio Arrigoni, in which the demand is made to release the leader of their organization, Hashem Saidani, held by Hamas (YouTube)

Gazan School Children Learn to Become Snipers

■ The Hamas-affiliated website Filastin Al-'An posted pictures of operatives belonging to the Hamas Islamic Block (Hamas' student cells in the universities) **training Gazan school children to become snipers by firing hunting rifles** (Filastin Al-'An, February 21, 2013). **Note:** Hamas recently increased its military-terrorist activity and the battle for the hearts and minds of Gazan youth to foster the path of anti-Israeli terrorism within the next generation. As part of the project, Hamas institutionalized semi-military training camps for children.⁴



Hamas Islamic Block operatives teach Gazan school children how to shoot hunting rifles (Filastin Al-'An, February 21, 2013).

⁴ For further information see the February 4, 2013 bulletin [“Education for terrorism: Hamas increases its military and propaganda activities among Gazan youth to raise a younger generation able to continue its anti-Israeli path of terrorism and ensure Hamas control of the Gaza Strip.”](#)