



News of Terrorism and the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict

April 3 – 9, 2013



Remains of the rocket that landed in the western Negev (Photo by Edi Israel, used courtesy of NRG, April 3, 2013).

Overview

- On three separate occasions this past week a number of rockets and mortar shells fell in Israeli territory. The attacks were part of a trend of increasing rocket fire from the Gaza Strip which, in our assessment, is being carried out by rogue terrorist networks, especially those affiliated the global jihad. Hamas continues its policy of restraint, maintained since the end of Operation Pillar of Defense.
- Violence continues in Judea and Samaria, a manifestation of the so-called "popular resistance." Two Palestinian youths were killed during an attack on an IDF post near Tulkarm. Mahmoud Abbas accused Israel of trying to sow anarchy and cause security in Judea and Samaria to deteriorate.
- American Secretary of State John Kerry met with Mahmoud Abbas in an effort to renew the peace process. The Palestinian media reported that Mahmoud Abbas again demanded a freeze on Israel's construction in Judea and Samaria and the release of the Palestinian terrorist prisoners as preconditions for renewing the negotiations.

The Situation in the Gaza Strip

Rocket Fire into Israeli Territory

■ This past week at least three rockets and several mortar shells landed in Israeli territory on three separate occasions. There were no casualties and no damage was reported. The attacks were the following:

- **On April 2, 2013**, a number of mortar shells were fired at the western Negev from the Gaza Strip. One of them landed in an area between two Israeli villages. Remains from others were found in an open area inside the Gaza Strip (IDF spokesman, April 3, 2013). There were no casualties and no damage was reported. It was the first time mortar shells had been fired since the end of Operation Pillar of Defense (November 21, 2012). **"The Shura Council of the Jihad Fighters in the Environs of Jerusalem," a network affiliated with the global jihad, claimed responsibility for the mortar shell fire.** According to the Council's announcement, the attack was a response to the death of Palestinian terrorist prisoner Maysara Abu Hamdia.

- **On April 3, 2013**, as children were leaving home for kindergarten and school, a number of rockets were fired into Israeli territory from the Gaza Strip. Two of them fell in open areas (Facebook page of the Israel Police Force). There were no casualties and no damage was reported.

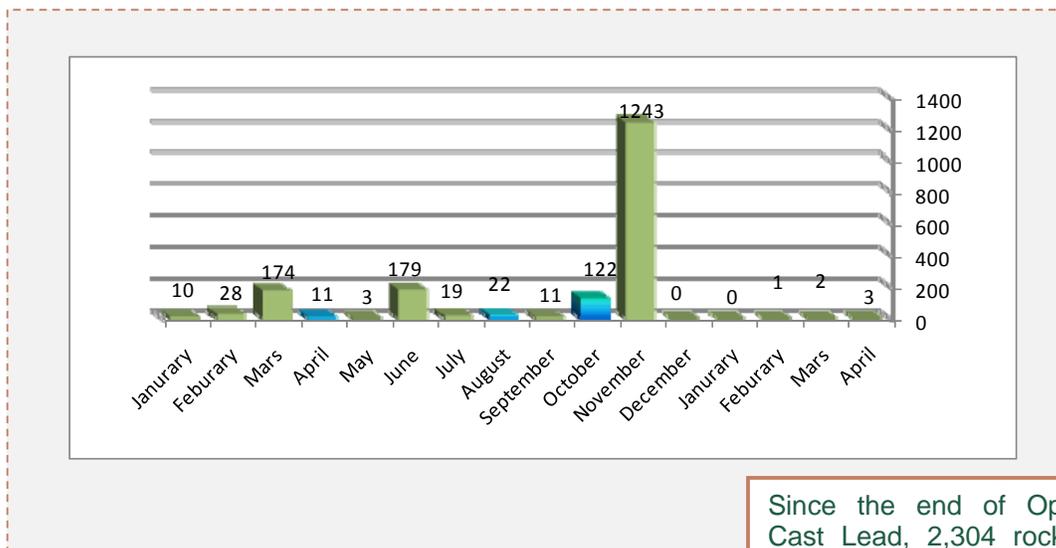
- **On the evening of April 7, 2013, during the annual ceremonies for victims of the Holocaust**, a rocket was fired from the Gaza Strip and landed in an open area in the western Negev. There were no casualties and no damage was reported.

■ **On April 2, 2013**, the remains of a rocket were found in a kindergarten in the southern Israeli city of Sderot. The rocket penetrated the roof and ceiling and partially exploded inside the kindergarten. In our assessment, it was one of the rockets fired on March 21, 2013. The remains of the rocket were discovered only later because the children were on Passover vacation and the kindergarten was empty, preventing a catastrophe.

Israel's Response

■ In response to the mortar shell fire, on the night of April 2, 2013, Israeli Air Force aircraft attacked two terrorist targets in the northern Gaza Strip, **for the first time since the end of Operation Pillar of Defense** (IDF spokesman, April 3, 2013). According to the Palestinian media, there were no casualties resulting from the attacks (Ma'an News Agency and Filastin Al-'Aan, April 3, 2013). On April 7, following the rocket fire, the Kerem Shalom crossing was closed to merchandise entering the Gaza Strip and the activity of the Erez crossing was limited (Website of the Coordinator for Government Activities in the Territories, April 8, 2013).

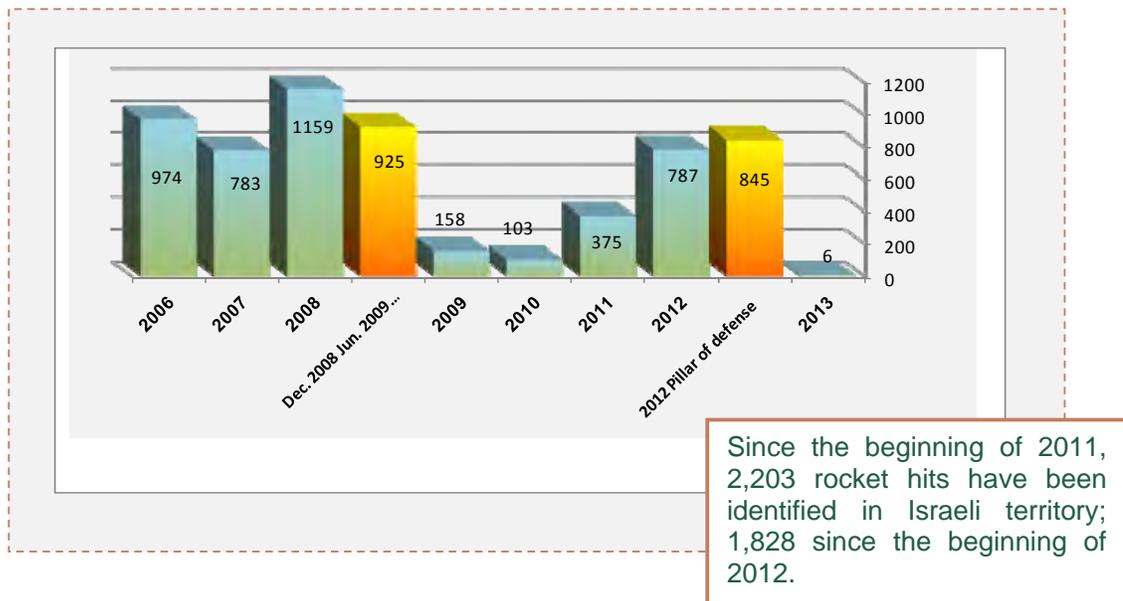
Rocket Hits in Israeli Territory since the Beginning of 2012¹



Since the end of Operation Cast Lead, 2,304 rocket hits have been identified in Israeli territory.

¹ As of April 9, 2013. The statistics do not include mortar shell fire.

Annual Distribution of Rocket Fire²



Judea and Samaria

Two Palestinians Killed Attempting to Attack IDF Post

- On **April 4, 2013**, four Palestinians youths approached an IDF post near Tulkarm and **threw Molotov cocktails at the soldiers stationed there**. An IDF force pursued and opened fire. Two of the Palestinians, aged 17 and 18 from the village of Anabta, were killed, and one Palestinian incurred minor injuries (IDF spokesman, April 7, 2013).
- A senior Israeli source said that according to the initial investigation, **a number of Palestinians had planned the attack and gone to the IDF post armed with Molotov cocktails**. Attempting to pursue and trap them endangered the lives of the IDF force and thus the soldiers had opened fired (IDF spokesman, April 7, 2013).
- The deaths of the two Palestinians were condemned by the Palestinian Authority. **Mahmoud Abbas** accused Israel of trying to sow anarchy and cause security in the PA to deteriorate. He said the two Palestinians had participated in a "non-violent demonstration." At a meeting of Fatah's Revolutionary Committee, Mahmoud Abbas said that it was unacceptable that a non-violent demonstration ended with two deaths. Palestinian Prime Minister Salam Fayyad condemned the IDF for shooting at "peaceful demonstrators" and appealed to the international community to intervene and condemn Israel's firing live ammunition at Palestinians (Wafa News Agency, April 4, 2013).

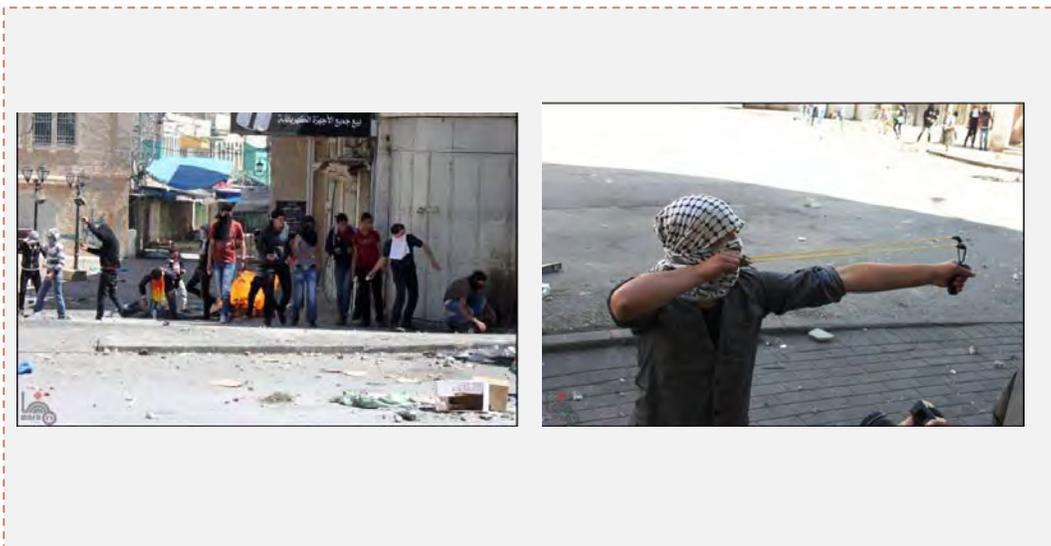
² The statistics do not include mortar shell fire.

The Issue of the Terrorist Prisoners

Maysara Abu Hamdia, Terrorist Who Died of Cancer in an Israeli Jail

■ On **April 2, 2013**, Maysara Abu Hamdia died in the Soroka Hospital in Beersheba. The cause of death was complications arising from cancer of the throat. Maysara Abu Hamdia was a terrorist who recruited an operative who planned to carry out a suicide bombing attack in a coffee house in Jerusalem in 2002. He was convicted of attempted murder and sentenced to life imprisonment. After his death terrorist operatives imprisoned in several Israeli jails rioted and there were violent confrontations between rioters and the Israeli security forces at several locations in Judea and Samaria.

■ On **April 3, 2013** Abu Hamdia was buried with full military honors in Hebron. The PA organized the funeral. He was called a shaheed and promoted to the rank of general. Thousands attended the funeral, during which masked, armed Palestinians fired into the air and called for revenge against Israel. After the funeral violent confrontations between Palestinians and the Israeli security forces continued in Hebron and various other locations. The rioters set tires on fire and threw stones, one of which the leg of a newspaper photographer, injuring him. In the Ramallah area an Israeli policeman and Israeli civilian woman sustained minor injuries when stones were thrown at them.



Palestinians in Hebron burn tires and throw stones at the Israeli security forces following the death of Palestinian terrorist prisoner Abu Hamdia (Wafa News Agency, April 2, 2013).

■ A symbolic military funeral was also held for Abu Hamdia in the Gaza Strip by the ministry of the interior of the de-facto Hamas administration. Hamas internal security service operatives carried a "coffin" (Website of the ministry of the interior of the de-facto Hamas administration, April 4, 2013). The "funeral" was attended by Abu Obeida al-Jarrah, commander of the national security service of the de-facto Hamas administration (Filastin Al-'Aan, April 4, 2013). Hamas also erected a mourning tent in the Saraya compound in Gaza City (Shihab website, April 2, 2013).



Left: The mourning tent set up in the Saraya compound in Gaza City (Filastin Al-'Aan, April 3, 2013). Right: The funeral held in the Gaza Strip for Abu Hamdia (Filastin Al-'Aan, April 3, 2013).

Reactions in the Palestinian Media

■ The death of the terrorist prisoner led to a wave of accusations against Israel from Fatah and Hamas, and put the issue of the Palestinian prisoners back on the Palestinian agenda:

- At an extraordinary session of Fatah's Revolutionary Committee **Mahmoud Abbas** said that the issue of the prisoners was currently the Palestinian populace's top priority (Wafa News Agency, April 3, 2013).



The extraordinary session of Fatah's Revolutionary Committee (Wafa News Agency, April 3, 2013)

- **Issa Qaraqqa**, PA minister of prisoner affairs, said that the **Palestinians had the right to appeal to the international court** to complain about the way the Israeli Prison Authority maintained the security prisons. He said his ministry had sent a letter to Mahmoud Abbas's office asking for Israel to be brought before the International Criminal Court in The Hague (Wafa News Agency, April 4, 2013). He said the PA's preliminary autopsy of Abu Hamdia showed that he had suffered from medical neglect for many years (Ma'an News Agency, April 4, 2013).
 - **Khaled Mashaal**, chairman of Hamas' political bureau, said his death was proof of Israel's cruelty, immorality and lack of humanity (Al-Aqsa TV, April 4, 2013). **Musheir al-Masri**, a Hamas member of the Palestinian Legislative Council, called on the Palestinian people to avenge his death. He said everything was possible, especially **abducting Israeli soldiers** (Alresala.net website, April 2, 2013).
 - **Atallah Abu al-Sabah**, minister of prisoner affairs in the de-facto Hamas administration, called for a third intifada against Israel, adding that after the death of Abu Hamdia, the time had come for Israel to stop enjoying quiet and security (Safa News Agency, April 2, 2013).
- In the media campaign following the death of Maysara Abu Hamdia, the Internet and the social networks showed pictures and postings glorifying him as having died a shaheed. One picture showed a patient handcuffed to a hospital bed. The picture was

captioned "The prisoner commander shaheed Maysara Abu Hamdia" and below it a picture of Abu Hamdia. Further examination showed that the patient in the picture was not Abu Hamdia, but rather a wounded Syrian in a hospital in Jordan, first posted to the Internet on December 8, 2012.



Left: The picture of Abu Hamdia "handcuffed" to his bed (Arabi al-Waha forum, April 2, 2013).
 Right: The original picture of the wounded Syrian in a Jordanian hospital (Arabic Facebook page of the IDF spokesman, April 4, 2013).

Dispute over Maysara Abu Hamdia's Affiliation

■ Since the death of Maysara Abu Hamdia Hamas and Fatah have disputed his affiliation, each side attempting to prove that he was one of theirs. Hamas' websites posted pictures and information identifying him as a Hamas operative. One was a formal announcement issued by the Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades stating that Abu Hamdia had been one of its operatives and had participated in a number of its attacks on Israel (Safa News Agency, April 2, 2013). It also included him in its list of shaheeds (Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades website and Ajnad Facebook page, April 2, 2013). Fatah also posted announcements claiming Abu Hamdia as one of its own.



Left: The Hamas posting of the death of Maysara Abu Hamdia (Ajnad Facebook page, April 2, 2013). Right: The Fatah posting of the death of Maysara Abu Hamdia (Fatah al-Youm, April 2, 2013)

Developments in the Gaza Strip

Tension between Hamas and Egypt

■ Tension and mutual accusations between Hamas and Egypt continue. According to Palestinian sources, the Egyptian security forces have added procedures regarding the expulsion from Egypt of Gazans who arrive at the Cairo airport without visas. The Palestinians claim that according to the new regulations, every Palestinian must be accompanied by an Egyptian security guard until he enters the Gaza Strip through the Rafah crossing (PalPress website, April 7, 2013). As to Egypt's destruction of the smuggling tunnels under the Gaza-Egypt border, **Alaa' al-Rafati**, minister of the national economy in the de-facto Hamas administration, said that so far the destruction of the tunnels has had only a slight impact on the Gazan economy (only 20% of all the smuggling) and that there was no shortage of supplies in the Gaza Strip (Sama News Agency, April 7, 2013).

Hamis Activity against the Salafist-Jihadi Networks in the Gaza Strip Continues

■ The security services of the de-facto Hamas administration continue detaining Salafist-jihadi operatives in the Gaza Strip. According to sources close to the Salafist-jihadi networks, **this past week two of their operatives were detained because of**

rockets fired into Israeli territory. According to **Abu Abdallah al-Maqdasi**, a senior member of one of the networks, 47 Salafist-jihadi operatives are imprisoned in Hamas facilities (PalPress website, April 9, 2013).

■ An Internet forum of global jihad networks calling itself the "Ibn Taymiyyah Information Center" issued a press brief stating that the Salafists in jails in the Gaza Strip had gone on a **hunger strike** to protest their imprisonment. "**The Shura Council of the Mujahideen of the Environs of Jerusalem**" demanded Hamas intervene immediately to release the Salafist prisoners lest Israel attack prisons where there were inmates it wanted (PalPress website, April 4, 2013).

■ A spokesman for the ministry of the interior of the de-facto Hamas administration denied that rocket fire into Israeli territory had led to detentions. The Hamas administration itself was part of the "resistance" [anti-Israeli terrorist campaign] and did not detain those participating in it. Furthermore, according to the spokesman, Hamas encouraged such activities. However, the actions of the security services were meant to preserve general security and coordinate joint responses to all acts of aggression (Agence France-Presse, April 4, 2013).

Hamas Positions Reflected in Interviews of Senior Figures

■ **Ghazi Hamad**, under foreign minister in the Hamas administration, related to various issues in an interview with Shlomi Eldar, a correspondent for Al-Monitor (April 4, 2013):

- **The armed campaign:** Khaled Mashaal, he said, is giving the "popular resistance" a chance during the internal Palestinian reconciliation talks held with Fatah, but as far as he is concerned, the "armed struggle" is the "legitimate right" as long as the [Israeli] "occupation" continues.
- **Establishing a Palestinian state:** Hamas does not support the two-state solution. It agrees to the establishment of a Palestinian state with the 1967 borders with Jerusalem as its capital, along with a solution for the problem of the Palestinian refugees.
- **Recognition of Israel:** Hamas does not recognize the State of Israel. There has been no change in the movement's position on this issue.
- **The lull agreement:** All the [terrorist] organizations are prepared to maintain the lull in the fighting based on what was agreed on in Cairo after Operation Pillar

of Defense. However, there are those who want to violate the agreement. **Hamas does not allow any one of them to violate the ceasefire.** As long as a general agreement for a lull in the fighting exists, everyone, without exception, is committed to respecting it.

■ **Osama Hamdan**, responsible for Hamas' international relations, also related to a number of issues related to Hamas policy (Al-Mayadeen TV, April 4, 2013):

- **Negotiations with Israel:** Hamas will continue as **a resistance** [i.e., terrorist] **movement whose program is to liberate Palestine from the [Mediterranean] sea to the [Jordan] river. There is no value or significance to negotiations with Israel.** In addition, today, after twenty years of negotiations, **it has been proven that the negotiations are useless** and detrimental to the Palestinians.
- **Ties to the Muslim Brotherhood:** The Hamas movement grew out of the Muslim Brotherhood but has no organizational ties to it, only links based on mutual respect. Sheikh Yusuf al-Qaradawi is the source of Islamic authority and Osama Hamdan accepts his religious rulings without hesitation.
- **Recognition of a Palestinian state with the 1967 borders:** That can be seen as a tactical move and Hamas will continue with it until the liberation of all the land of Palestine [i.e., the destruction of the State of Israel].

The Palestinian Authority

Mahmoud Abbas Meets with the American Secretary of State

■ American Secretary of State John Kerry held a third round of meetings in the Middle East to renew the peace process. On April 7 he met in private with Mahmoud Abbas in Ramallah (Al-Ayam, April 8, 2013). They discussed the peace process and the possibility of creating a positive atmosphere for contacts with Israel. Mahmoud Abbas again presented the Palestinians' preconditions for renewing the negotiations: **a freeze on construction in the settlements and the release of the Palestinian terrorists held in Israeli prisons** (Ma'an News Agency, April 7, 2013).

■ According to media reports, Kerry asked Mahmoud Abbas to return to the negotiating table, in return for which Israel would not freeze revenues owed to the PA, would broaden the areas under PA control, especially Area C, and allow freedom of [Palestinian] construction in Area C (Ma'an News Agency, April 7, 2013).

■ After the meeting Mahmoud Abbas left for Jordan and from there continued to Qatar. In Qatar he participated in a meeting of the Arab League's monitoring committee to discuss plans for a visit of a delegation of Arab League foreign ministers to the United States to present the Arab position on the Israeli-Palestinian negotiations (Al-Ayam, April 8, 2013).



Mahmoud Abbas and John Kerry meet in Ramallah (Wafa News Agency, April 7, 2013).

The Emir of Qatar Burned in Effigy at the University in Tulkarm

■ **Activists of the Fatah student faction at Khadouri University in Tulkarm** held a display of the "execution" of Khaled bin Khalifa, the Emir of Qatar. It was part of the student council election campaign. According to the spokesman for the student faction, the Emir of Qatar was burned in effigy because he supported Hamas and Khaled Mashaal (Quds Press, April 1, 2013).

■ The event was condemned by both the PA and Hamas. **Mahmoud Abbas** said that burning an effigy of the Emir of Qatar did not represent the position of the State of Palestine or the Fatah movement, and that it violated the rules of Palestinian political behavior and Palestinian morality. He said the PA had strong, close relations with Qatar (Wafa News Agency, April 3, 2013). Hamas spokesman **Sami Abu Zuhri** said that Mahmoud Abbas's criticism was insufficient and did not absolve him of responsibility for the event. He called on Mahmoud Abbas to detain those responsible (Palinfo website, April 4, 2013).



The elections at the university in Tulkarm. Left: Students belonging to Hamas exhibit a model of a rocket. Right: Fatah activists hang the Emir of Qatar in effigy as part of the display of his "execution" (Ma'an News Agency, April 1, 2013).

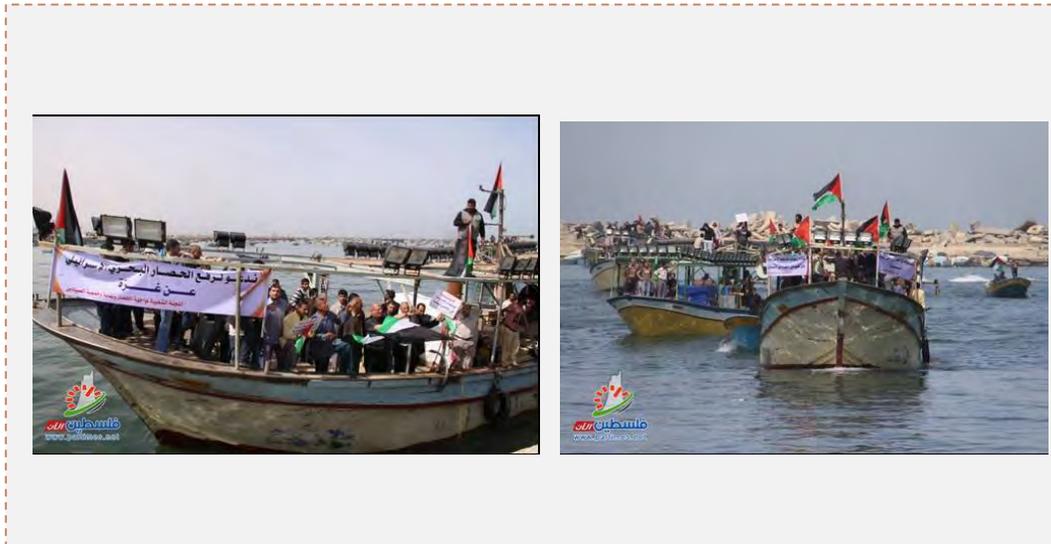
Propaganda Events

Naval Propaganda Event Planned for the Gaza Strip

■ Foreign pro-Palestinian ISM activists in the Gaza Strip **continue preparing to send a boat named "Gaza Ship" loaded with goods to a European port.** Canadian activist David Heap said the voyage was planned for the summer and its objective was to draw international attention to the [so-called Israeli] "siege" of the Gaza Strip. According to other activists, the construction of the boat has reached its final stages. It is being built on the skeleton of an old vessel using parts from abandoned fishing boats. Once it has been finished it will be loaded with products manufactured in the Gaza Strip. It will also carry a number of Palestinian and foreign activists (Al-Jazeera, April 3, 2013).

Anti-Israeli Demonstration at the Port of Gaza

■ Dozens of Gazans participated in a water-borne demonstration at the fishing port to protest Israel's narrowing the size of the Gaza Strip's fishing zone (a decision made by Israel after the March 21 rocket attack on the western Negev). **Jamal al-Khudari**, chairman of the Popular Committee to Break the Siege, told a press conference that if the "siege" continued, activities in solidarity with the Palestinians would be renewed, including the flotilla campaign (Safa News Agency, April 7, 2013).



Protest sea voyage of Gazan fisherman (Filastin Al-'Aan, April 7, 2013).

Preparations for Nakba Day

■ Preparations are being made in Lebanon for Nakba Day events, which will take place on May 15. On April 2, 2013 representatives of the Return March Committee and other organizations held a meeting in the Bourj el-Barajneh refugee camp. Several events were decided on, among them a mass rally in Beirut and a visit to the memorial at Maroun al-Ras;³ boats will sail along the Sidon shore flying the Palestinian flag, and paper lanterns will be released in the sky over Al-Naqoura (Al-Manar TV, April 3, 2013).

³ In 2011 the main Nakba Day event was held in the south Lebanese village of Maroun al-Ras, close to the Israeli border, under the auspices of Hezbollah and the existence of the Lebanese army. Thousands participated, most of them Palestinians bussed in from other locations. As the ceremony ended, the participants marched toward the Israeli border holding signs and calling for the return to Palestine. A violent confrontation broke out between groups of demonstrators who approached the border and IDF soldiers, resulting in the deaths of ten demonstrators and the wounding of dozens (some of them wounded by gunfire from the Lebanese army, which also tried to contain the event and prevent the demonstrators from breaking into Israeli territory).