



## News of Terrorism and the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict

May 14 – 21, 2013



**IDF jeep burns after being attacked with a Molotov cocktail on Nakba Day (Fatah Facebook page, May 15, 2013). The four soldiers in the jeep exited the jeep and escaped with minor injuries.**

### Overview

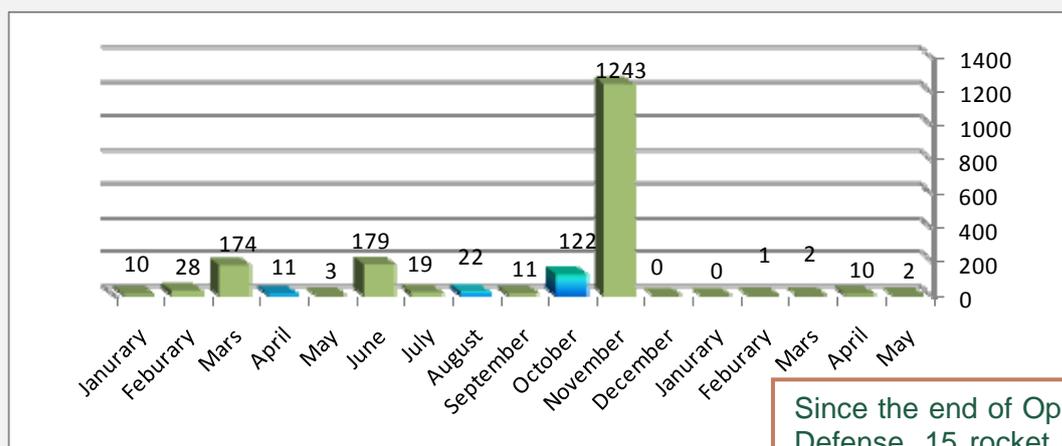
- This past week one rocket hit was identified in Israeli territory, landing in the western Negev. Violent confrontations and friction continued in Judea and Samaria between Palestinians and Israeli security forces, peaking on Nakba Day (which passed with almost no exceptional events).
- Following the abduction of seven Egyptian soldiers and policemen, the Egyptian security forces took steps on the ground making contact difficult between the Sinai Peninsula and the Gaza Strip. On **May 16** the Rafah crossing was closed and it was reported that 2,400 Palestinians were delayed on the Egyptian side. The Egyptian security forces also increased their activities to destroy the smuggling tunnels under the Egyptian-Gazan border near Rafah.

## The Situation in Israel's South

### Rocket Fire on the Southern Border

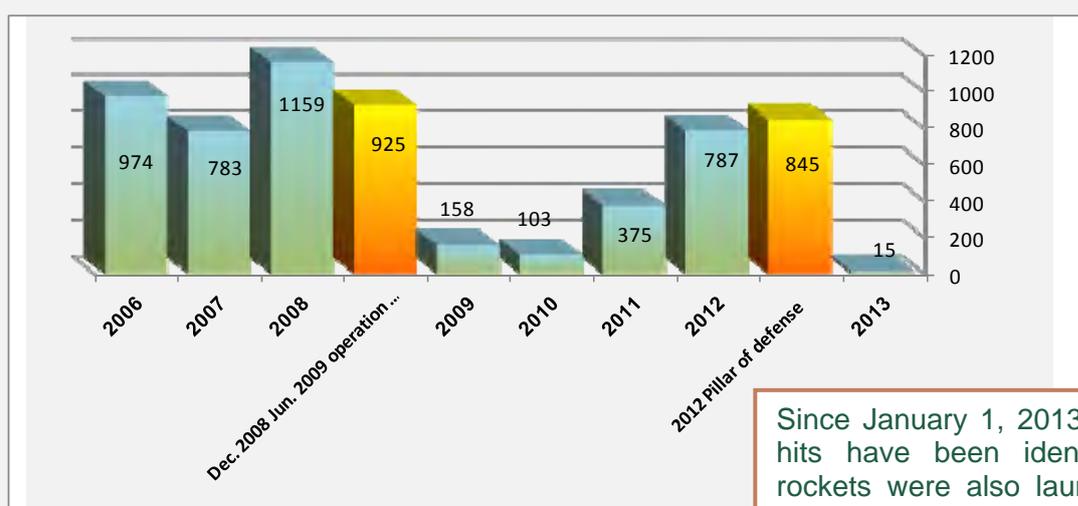
■ This past week one rocket hit was identified in Israeli territory. The rocket fell during the Shavuot holiday, May 15, 2013, in an open area the western Negev. There were no casualties and no damage was reported.

### Rocket Hits in Israeli Territory<sup>1</sup>



Since the end of Operation Pillar of Defense, 15 rocket hits have been identified in Israeli territory. Two additional hits were identified in the southern Israeli city of Eilat.

### Annual Distribution of Rocket Fire<sup>2</sup>



Since January 1, 2013, 15 rocket hits have been identified. Two rockets were also launched from the Sinai Peninsula at Eilat, Israel's southernmost city.

<sup>1</sup> As of May 21, 2013. The statistics do not include mortar shell fire.

<sup>2</sup> The statistics do not include mortar shell fire.

## Judea and Samaria

### Violence Continues

- This past week violence and riots continued between Palestinians and the Israel security forces at the traditional friction points, part of the so-called "popular resistance." They peaked on **Nakba Day, May 15** (See below).



Palestinian adolescents throw stones at Israeli policemen in the Bab al-Amud neighborhood in Jerusalem (Wafa News Agency, May 17, 2013).

### Arms Cache Uncovered

- On the night of **May 20** the Israeli security forces uncovered a large cache of arms in the home of a Palestinian in the village of Qalil (south of Nablus). They included a hunting rifle, a pistol, parts of other weapons, ammunition and military equipment.

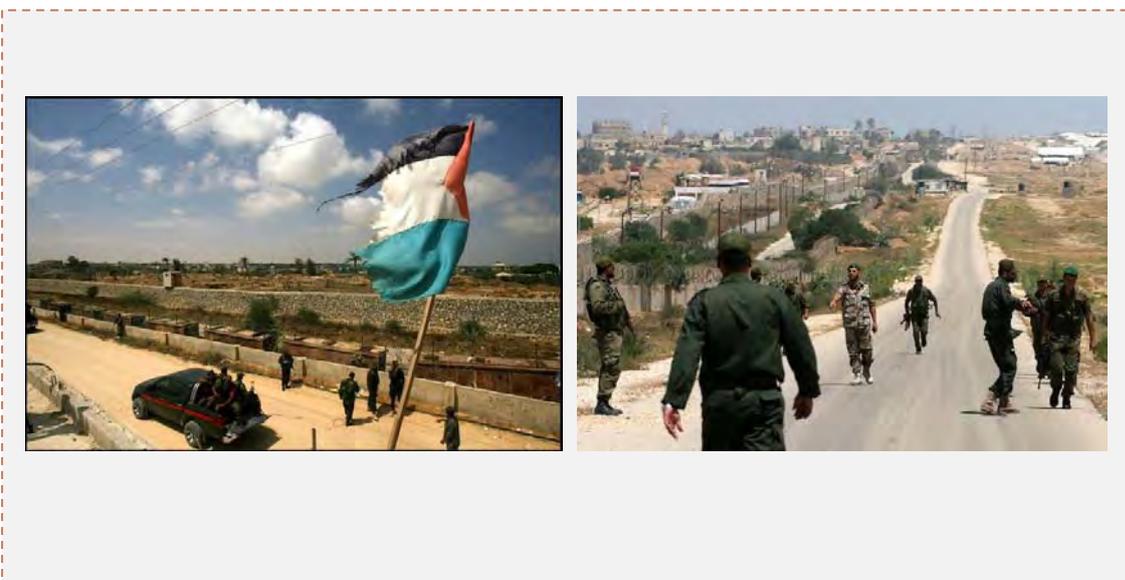


The arms found in the village of Qalil (IDF spokesman, May 21, 2013)

## Developments in the Gaza Strip

### Egyptian Soldiers Abducted in the Sinai Peninsula

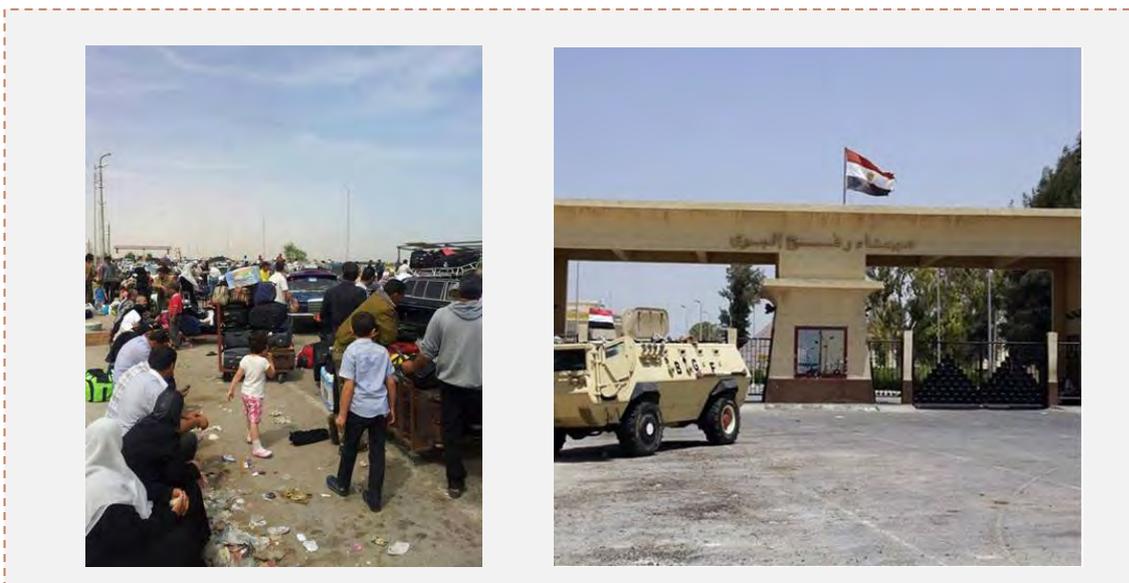
- On **May 16, 2013**, seven Egyptian soldiers and policemen were abducted on the road from El Arish to Rafah. Their captors demanded the release of prisoners in return for the release of the hostages. **Hamas** denied any involvement in the abduction. Senior Hamas figure **Salah al-Bardawil** said that the abduction was an internal Egyptian matter and that Hamas had no connection to it (Qudsnet website, May 16, 2013). The ministry of the interior of the de-facto Hamas administration condemned the abduction of the Egyptian soldiers, noting that it was prepared to help Egypt expose the circumstances surrounding the event (Shihab website, May 16, 2013). Sources within the Mujahideen Shura Council in the Environs of Jerusalem, a Gazan-based organization affiliated the global jihad, said that they also had no involvement in the abduction (PalPress website, May 16, 2013).
- In the wake of the abduction, the Egyptians reinforced their forces in the Sinai Peninsula, possibly in preparation for a military operation to release the captives (Al-Watan, May 19, 2013). Hamas' security forces increased their security along the Gaza Strip border with Egypt, especially around the smuggling tunnels. That was done primarily to prevent the abducted soldiers from being smuggled into the Gaza Strip (Al-Masri Al-Youm, May 16, 2013).



The security forces of the de-facto Hamas administration deploy along the Rafah border with Egypt (Filastin Al-'Aan, May 21, 2013).

■ In response to the abduction of the soldiers and policemen, the Egyptians took steps on the ground to make contact difficult between the Gaza Strip, Egypt and the Sinai Peninsula:

- **Closing the Rafah crossing:** On May 16, immediately following the abduction, the Rafah crossing was closed to traffic in both directions, remaining closed (Alresala.net website, May 20, 2013), and preventing the return of many Gazans (including senior figures) to the Gaza Strip. In the assessment of the ministry of the interior of the de-facto Hamas administration, **at least 2,400 Gazans have been delayed on the Egyptian side of the crossing** (Ma'an News Agency, May 19, 2013). **Fathi Hamad**, the Hamas minister of the interior, and **Taher al-Nunu**, Hamas administration spokesman, said that Ismail Haniya was monitoring the crisis at the Rafah crossing and in contact with the highest echelons of the Egyptian government to renew the crossing's activity (Palinfo website and the Qudsnet website, May 19, 2013).



**Left: Gazans wait on the Egyptian side of the Rafah crossing. Right: An Egyptian APC blocks access to the Rafah crossing (Facebook page of the ministry of the interior of the de-facto Hamas administration, May 20, 2013).**

- Destroying tunnels:** The Egyptian security forces increased their activity to destroy the smuggling tunnels under the border between Egypt and the Gaza Strip near Rafah (Filastin al-Yawm, May 20, 2013). One of the tunnels destroyed was built to smuggle vehicles. It was 450 meters long, or .28 miles, and three meters wide, or 3.3 yards (PalPress website, May 19, 2013). The border authority of the Hamas administration's ministry of the interior announced unexpectedly on May 20 that it was closing the smuggling tunnels and declaring the region a closed military zone (Al-Kofia Press, May 20, 2013).

### **Hamas Intentions for the Global March to Jerusalem**

- Ahmed Abu Halbia**, a Hamas member of the Palestinian Legislative Council and head of the committee for the Global March to Jerusalem (GMJ), held a press conference. He said that on **June 7**, after the Friday prayer in the mosques, marches would be held in the Gaza Strip as part of the GMJ to mark the 46<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the "occupation of east Jerusalem." **The marches, he said, would start at the region of Beit Hanoun in the northern Gaza Strip at the point closest to the border with Israel.** He said the committee intended to enlist a large number of participants for the march. However, he said, severe measures would be taken against those who tried to exploit it to infiltrate into the buffer zone and "provide Israel with an excuse to initiate a military attack against the Palestinian people" (Ma'an News Agency, May 19, 2013).

## The Palestinian Authority

### Mahmoud Abbas Visits Egypt

- **Mahmoud Abbas**, chairman of the Palestinian Authority (PA), paid a three-day visit to Egypt during which he met with Egyptian President **Mohamed Morsi**, Secretary General of the Arab League **Nabil al-Arabi**, and others. He also met with **Ramadan Shallah**, secretary general of the Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) (Paltoday website, May 16, 2013).
- At a meeting with the editors of the large Egyptian newspapers, Mahmoud Abbas said that the PA had expressed its willingness to the Americans to renew the negotiations if Israel froze construction in the territories, particularly in Jerusalem. He said that the PA demanded economic rights from the Americans, for example rights to the gas deposits off the Gazan coast and the potash in the Dead Sea (Wafa News Agency, May 16, 2013).



Mahmoud Abbas and Mohamed Morsi meet in Egypt (Wafa News Agency, May 16, 2013)

## The Northern Front

### The Syrian Mufti Visits the Hezbollah Memorial Site in Nabatieh

- **Sheikh Ahmad Badr Al-Din Hassoun**, the Mufti of Syria, visited south Lebanon on May 18, 2013. He made a stop at Melita, the Hezbollah memorial site in Nabatieh, accompanied by senior Hezbollah figures and members of the families of dead Hezbollah terrorist operatives. In response to the calls to open a front against Israel in

the Golan Heights, he said they were waiting to open all the fronts. He said he was praying to Allah, and that when the Golan Heights front opened they would be the first to enter (Bint Jbeil website, May 18, 2013).



The Syrian Mufti visits the Hezbollah memorial site in Nabatieh, south Lebanon (Bint Jbeil website, May 18, 2013)

## Propaganda Events

### Nakba Day

- Nakba Day, May 15, passed almost without exceptional event. The events in Judea, Samaria and the Gaza Strip, as well as the neighboring Arab states, drew relatively few participants. Demonstrations and rallies were held in the main cities in Judea and Samaria. No particular event was reported in the Gaza Strip with the exception of a rocket fired into Israeli territory.
- The IDF spokesman reported the Central Command had concluded that the day had been calm compared to last year. That was the result, according to the announcement, of the close coordination with the Palestinian security forces and of the containment of all the events in the various sectors by security forces (IDF spokesman, May 16, 2013).
- During Nakba Day 24 events were held in Judea and Samaria; **Molotov cocktails were thrown at 15 of them**. There were a number of prominent events (IDF spokesman, May 16, 2013):

- In the **town of Bitunya** (near Ramallah) there was a violent riot. Beginning in the early morning, an estimated 400 Palestinians gathered and threw stones and Molotov cocktails. One Border Policeman sustained minor injuries.
- At the **Qalandia roadblock** (north of Jerusalem) an estimated 100 Palestinians rioted, burned tires and threw stones at the roadblock.
- In **Umm Salmona** (south of Bethlehem) rioters attempted to approach the Israeli village of Neve Daniel but were stopped by the Israeli security forces.
- Near the **village of Hursa** (south of Hebron) a Molotov cocktail was thrown at an IDF jeep, causing it to overturn and burst into flame. The four soldiers in the jeep exited and escaped with minor injuries (IDF spokesman, May 16, 2013).



**Palestinian youths confront IDF forces near the Ofer prison (Wafa News Agency, May 15, 2013)**

■ A march was held in **Gaza City**, attended by representatives of the various Palestinian organizations. A rally was held, attended by several hundred Gazans. There were also activities for children and adolescents with a Nakba Day theme, a display of the legacy of Khan Yunis, and other events.



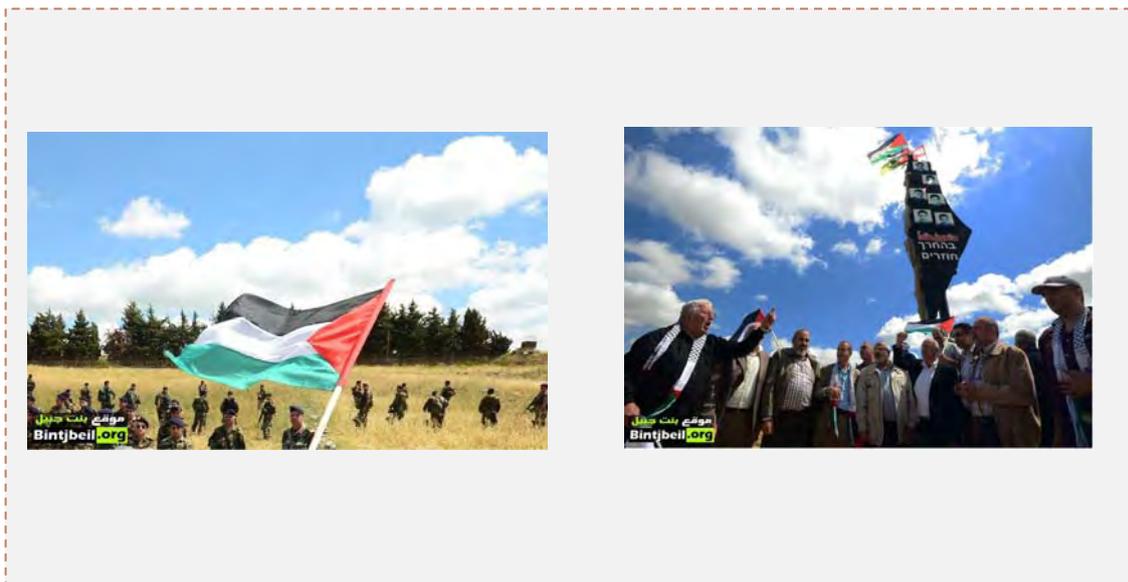
Left: The main Nakba Day rally in Gaza City (Palinfo website, May 16, 2013). Right: An Israeli flag is burned during a torchlight Nakba Day march in Gaza City (Palinfo website, May 14, 2013)

- Nakba Day events were also held in the Arab states:
  - **Egypt:** A conference was held to discuss the Nakba. It was attended by **Musa Abu Marzouq**, a member of the Hamas political bureau, **Ramadan Shallah**, secretary general of the PIJ, and others. The two gave speeches criticizing the PA's policy of negotiating with Israel, and stressing that the "resistance" [i.e., terrorist campaign] had not yet ended (Paltoday website, May 16, 2013). The Muslim Brotherhood issued a formal statement for Nakba Day attacking the so-called Israeli, Western-supported "occupation of Palestine." The statement also noted that even today Israel was an aggressive entity destabilizing the Middle East and extending its control over the lands of the Palestinian people, especially Jerusalem.
  - **Syria:** A convention was held in Damascus to mark Nakba Day, during which the Syrian deputy minister of information said that the Palestinian cause was a moral cause and an existential issue and was part of the collective Syrian consciousness. He also appealed to the Arab states to confront Israel (Syrian News Agency, May 19, 2013).
  - **Lebanon:** A ceremony was held in Maroun al-Ras in memory of those killed during the "march of return" in 2011,<sup>3</sup> near the memorial erected in their honor (in proximity to the border with Israel). Before the ceremony Lebanese army forces

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<sup>3</sup> On Nakba Day in 2011 a ceremony was held under Hezbollah aegis at Maroun al-Ras. After the ceremony participants marched to the Israeli-Lebanese border, and a group of them confronted IDF soldiers stationed there. As a result, ten people were killed and several dozen were wounded (some of them by Lebanese army fire).

deployed in the area to prevent activists from approaching the Israeli border (Bint Jbeil website, May 16, 2013).



Left: The Nakba Day ceremony near the memorial for those killed in 2011. Right: Lebanese army soldiers deploy to secure the rally and prevent Lebanese from approaching the border (Bint Jbeil website, May 16, 2013).

### The Gaza Ark Initiative – Update

- The organizers of the Gaza Ark initiative announced they had purchased a fishing boat with the contributions they collected, and that they were currently organizing to overhaul it and turn it into a cargo boat. They claimed the project would cost \$300,000, of which \$90,000 had so far been donated. The Gaza Ark initiative is an attempt being made by pro-Palestinian organizations over the past several months to launch a boat loaded with products from the Gaza Strip to defy the so-called "Israeli siege" of the Gaza Strip.

### The Mavi Marmara Trial in Turkey Continues

- Even after Israel apologized to the Turks, and even after Israel and Turkey began negotiations for reparations for the families of the injured, the show trial in Turkey against four senior Israelis involved in the *Mavi Marmara* affair continues.
- On May 20 the fifth hearing of the show trial in Istanbul began. The Turkish media reported that during March the Turkish ministry of foreign affairs, through the Turkish embassy in Israel, had appealed to the Israeli ministry of foreign affairs to subpoena the four senior Israelis involved to appear in the court in Istanbul on May 20 to testify.

One of the lawyers said that if the four did not appear, the court could issue international arrest warrants for them<sup>4</sup> (Turkishny.com website, May 19, 2013).

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<sup>4</sup> For further information see the December 31, 2012 bulletin ["The Turkish show trial in absentia of four senior Israelis involved in the events aboard the Mavi Marmara is expected to be renewed in February 2013."](#)