



News of Terrorism and the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict

October 30 – November 5, 2013



The IDF blows up the terrorist tunnel in the southern Gaza Strip, from a video issued by the IDF spokesman. Five IDF soldiers were injured, one critically, during the action (IDF spokesman, November 1, 2013). For the video click <http://newsletter.mysmtp.co.il/click.php?cl=videoidf.co.il%2F011113-1.wmv>

Overview

- This past week terrorist events focused on the IDF's detonation of the tunnel dug for terrorist purposes discovered in the southern Gaza Strip approximately one month ago. Five IDF soldiers were wounded, one critically. Four Hamas terrorist operatives were killed in a clash that developed as a result of the explosion. Hamas spokesmen indulged in belligerent rhetoric, while Hamas signaled it did not want an escalation.

- In Judea and Samaria terrorist attacks continued as part of the so-called popular resistance. Molotov cocktails and stones were thrown at Israeli security forces. The customary Friday riots and demonstrations at the traditional friction points were exploited to condemn the Balfour Declaration, whose 86th anniversary was marked on November².

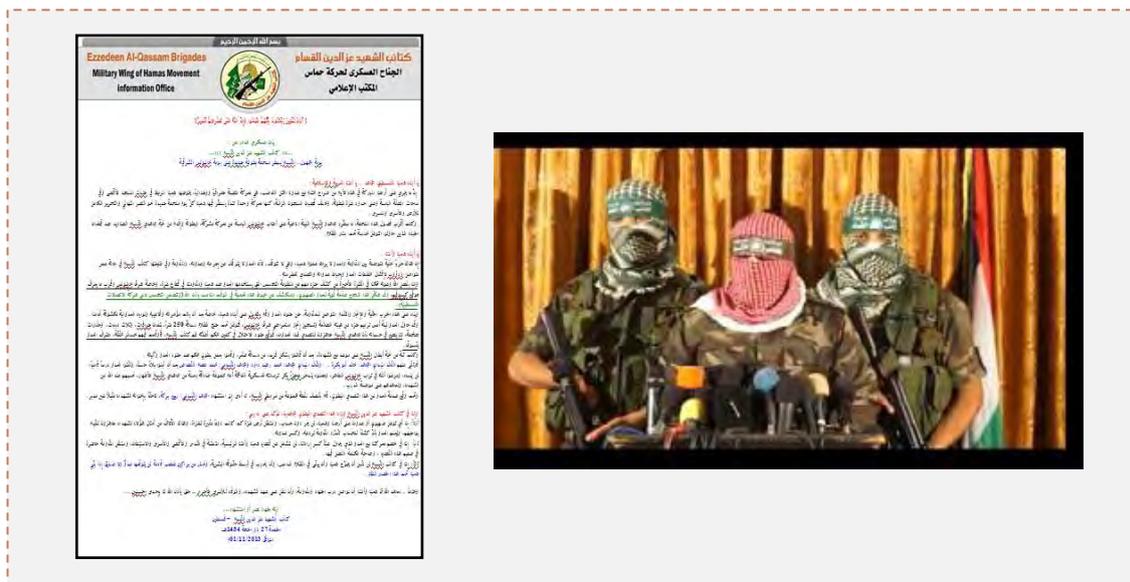
The Situation in Israel's South

Five IDF Soldiers Injured as Terrorist Tunnel Blown Up

■ On the night of October 31 an IDF force blew up part of a tunnel dug for terrorist purposes discovered in the southern Gaza Strip approximately a month ago. During the action an IED in the tunnel exploded, possibly having been hit by a drill. **The explosion wounded five IDF soldiers, one of them critically.** A clash developed during which an IDF force opened fire on a squad of Palestinian terrorist operatives east of Khan Yunis. Several operatives belonging to Hamas' military-terrorist wing were killed in the exchange of fire. Somewhat later Israeli aircraft attacked the tunnel (IDF spokesman, November 1, 2013).

■ **It was the most serious clash with Hamas since Operation Pillar of Defense** (November 2012). General Sami Turgeman, Commander of the Southern Front, said that the action had been directed against a tunnel constructed by Hamas which invaded Israeli territory. He said that any action taken by Hamas against Israel would be met with a painful reprisal (IDF spokesman, November 1, 2013).

■ **The Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades, Hamas' military-terrorist wing, announced the death of the four operatives during the clash and its aftermath.** A press conference organized by Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades spokesman **Abu Obeida**, where he claimed that the IDF forces had been victims of a "sophisticated ambush" and that the operatives of the resistance had "taught the enemy a painful lesson." He said that any incursion of Israeli forces into the Gaza Strip or any Israeli aggression would be met with a response and that there were "thousands of shaheeds ready to carry out their duty" (Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades website, November 1, 2013). Hamas spokesman **Sami Abu Zuhri** posted a note of congratulations on his Facebook page for the Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades, which have wounded and killed IDF soldiers, and called the Gaza Strip "Israel's hell."



Left: Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades spokesmen hold a press conference. Right: Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades announcement claiming responsibility for the clash east of Khan Yunis (Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades website, October 1, 2013).

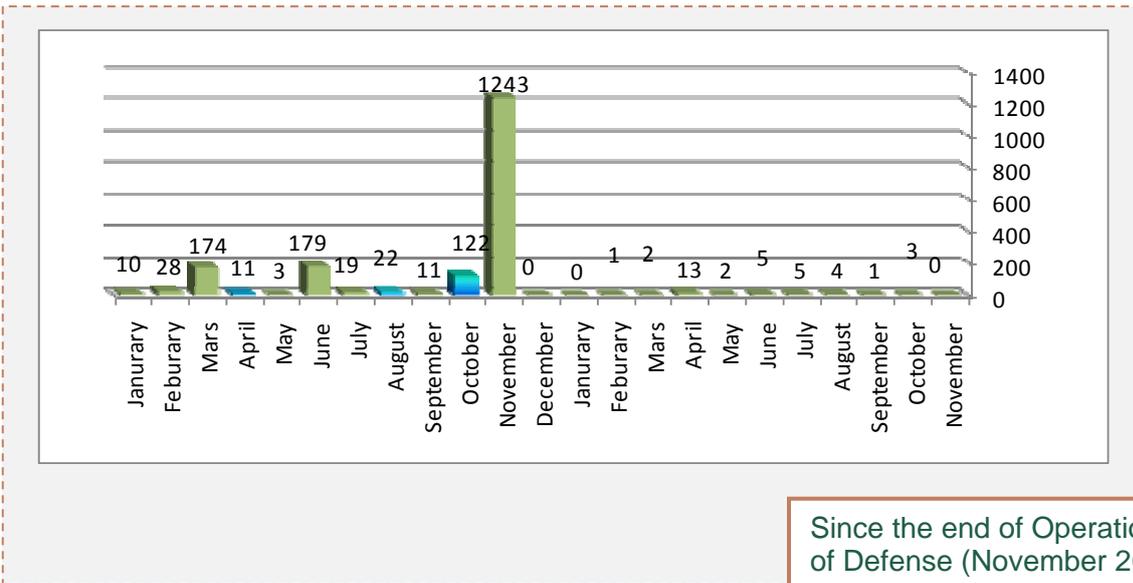
■ At the same time, Hamas publicly signaled it did not want an escalation. Bassem Naim, Ismail Haniya's advisor for external affairs, said that contacts were being held with the Egyptian authorities to defuse the situation. He said Egypt would mediate between Israel and Hamas if another escalation occurred. He added that Hamas had asked Israel, through Egypt, to allow its medical teams to remove the bodies from the site of the clash (Al-Youm Al-Sabea, November 3, 2013).

■ On **November 4, 2013**, Hamas issued to the media the photographs of two secret documents claiming that the Palestinian general intelligence had given the Israel Security Agency (ISA) information about two tunnels dug in the Gaza Strip. One was the tunnel recently discovered east of Khan Yunis dug by operatives of Hamas' military-terrorist wing. The other was dug by operatives of the Palestinian Islamic Jihad's (PIJ) military-terrorist wing east of Gaza City (Filastin Al'Aan, November 4, 2013). In our assessment issuing the documents was a propaganda spin to defame the PA and relieve Hamas of responsibility for the IDF's exposure of the tunnel dug for terrorist purposes.

Rocket Fire

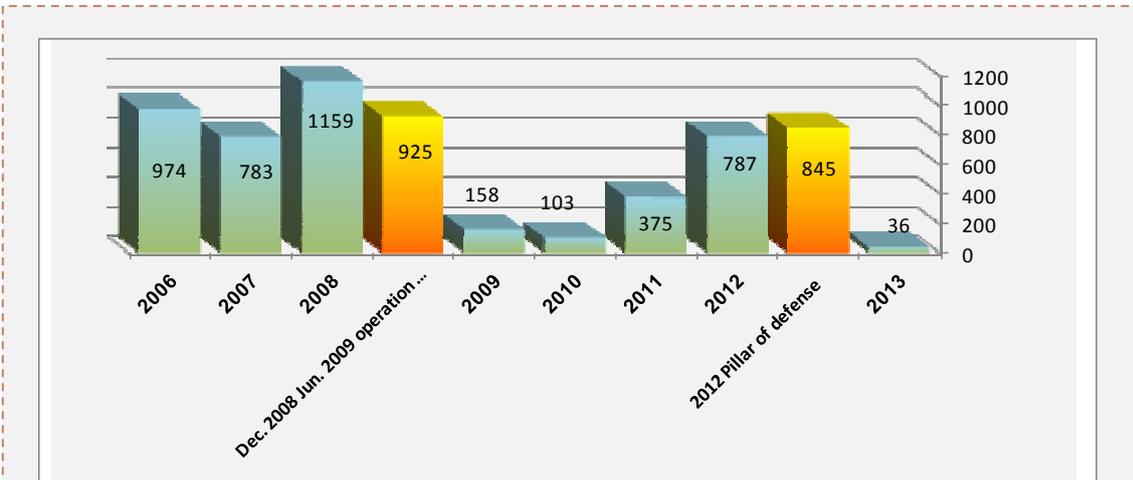
■ On November 1, 2013, a mortar shell was launched into the western Negev. It was apparently fired in response to the clash at the terrorist tunnel, and fell in an open area. There were no casualties and no damage was reported (Spokesperson for the western Negev, November 1, 2013). The military-terrorist wing of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) claimed responsibility for the attack (PFLP website, October 31, 2013).

Rocket Hits in Israeli Territory since January 1, 2012¹



Since the end of Operation Pillar of Defense (November 2012), 36 rocket hits have been identified in Israeli territory, including five rockets fired at the southern Israeli city of Eilat.

Annual Distribution of Rocket Fire²



Since January 1, 2013, 36 rocket hits have been identified.

¹ As of November 5, 2013. The statistics do not include mortar shell fire.

² The statistics do not include mortar shell fire.

Judea and Samaria

Detentions in Qabatiya

■ During a series of detentions of terrorist operatives carried out in Qabatiya (southwest of Jenin) on the night of October 31, IEDs and stones were thrown at IDF forces participating in the action. The soldiers returned fire (IDF spokesman, November 1, 2013). The Palestinian media reported the death of Ahmed Imad Tazaza, a 20 year-old Palestinian, which occurred during the confrontation at the entrance to Qabatiya (Ma'an News Agency and the Safa News Agency, November 1, 2013). The PA condemned the death and blamed Israel (Wafa News Agency, October 31, 2013), although apparently he was not killed by IDF fire.

Violence Continues in Judea and Samaria

■ Violence continued in Judea and Samaria, part of the so-called popular resistance. Stones were thrown at Israeli civilians and Israeli security forces, as were Molotov cocktails. The most prominent incidents were the following:

- On **October 30, 2013**, during a routine check at the Bqaot crossing (south of Jericho), an IDF force found a knife and two clubs in the car of a Palestinian (IDF spokesman, October 30, 2013).
- On **October 30, 2013**, stones were thrown at Israeli vehicles at the Izhar Junction (south of Nablus). There were no casualties. One of the vehicles was damaged (Tazpit News Agency, October 30, 2013).

■ The Friday riots, traditional opportunities for friction in Judea and Samaria, were exploited for demonstrations and protests marking the anniversary, on November 2, of the Balfour Declaration (1917).



From Fatah's official Facebook page: "We will not forget the cursed declaration, the Balfour Declaration. It was given by whom it did not belong to someone who did not deserve it, 2/11/1917" (Facebook page of Fatah's office of enlistment and organization, November 1, 2013).

Summary of Terrorist Attacks, October 2013

- According to an ISA report the number of terrorist attacks carried out in Jerusalem increased slightly in October. During the month a total 131 attacks were carried out in Judea, Samaria and Jerusalem, compared with 129 in September. Ninety-nine attacks were carried out in Judea and Samaria, compared with 104 in September, and 32 in Jerusalem, compared with 25 in September. **Most of the attacks were carried out as part of the popular resistance.**
- Most of the attacks involved Molotov cocktails (116 or 131 attacks).³ The most glaring attack was the murder of an Israeli civilian on October 10, 2013, in the northern Jordan Valley. In addition, two civilians and two soldiers were wounded.

Developments in the Gaza Strip

The Fuel Situation Worsens

- **The shortage of fuel in the Gaza Strip is worsening.** The energy authority of the de-facto Hamas administration announced the closing of the power station after it ran out of fuel. Reserves were depleted after the PA reneged on its commitment to provide cut-rate diesel fuel for the power station and Egypt refused to deliver fuel donated by Qatar to the Gaza Strip, because of security considerations. The closing of the power station will lead to an increased number of power outages in the Gaza Strip (Palinfo website, November 2, 2013).

³ The ISA report does not include scores of incidents of stone throwing.

■ In addition, on November 2, 2013, the Egyptian security forces announced they had exposed a large network involved in smuggling fuel into the Gaza Strip. They also exposed and destroyed two tunnels for infiltrating people and smuggling merchandise in two houses in Rafah (Al-Youm Al-Sabea, November 2, 2013).

The Crossings

■ On November 2, 2013, Egypt reopened the Rafah crossing, after its having been closed for more than a week. According to Palestinians, so far it can be used only by people holding foreign or Egyptian passports and patients in need of medical care. Students will be allowed to use it after November 6 (Ma'an News Agency, November 2, 2013).

■ **Maher Abu Sabha**, head of the crossing authority in the de-facto Hamas administration, expressed satisfaction over the improvement in the Rafah crossing's operation when it reopened. New arrangements were put in place, mainly meant for people with humanitarian needs. However, he said that the current reopening of the Rafah crossing did not answer the needs of the general population (Filastin al-Yawm, November 2, 2013).

PIJ Rally

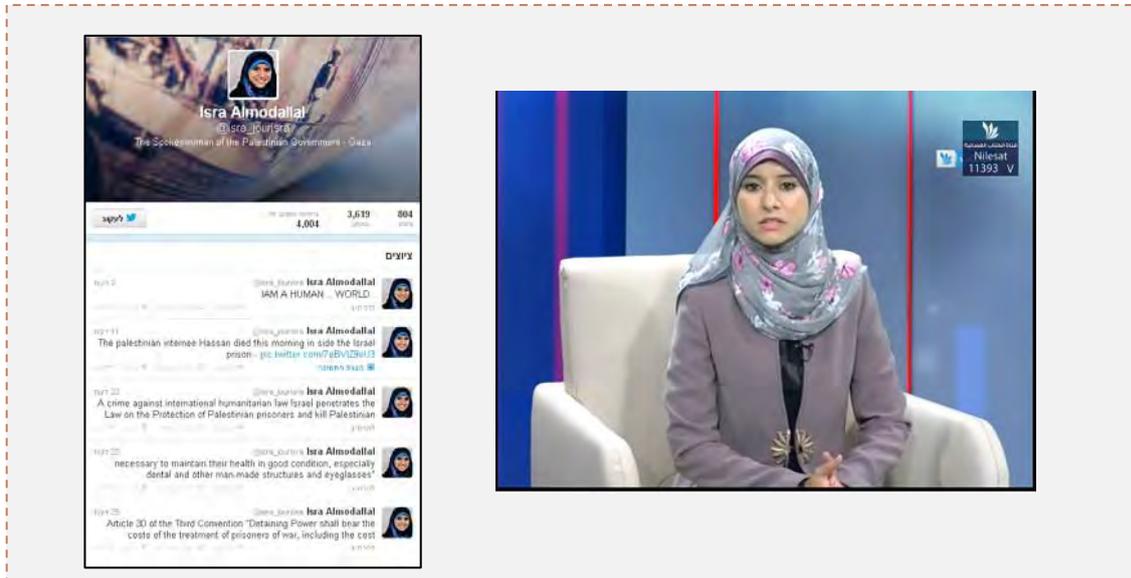
■ On November 1, 2013, the PIJ held a rally in Gaza City to mark the 32nd anniversary of its founding the 18th anniversary of the death of Fathi Shqaqi, its founder. Senior PIJ figure **Khaled al-Batash** spoke at the rally, praising the wounding of the IDF soldiers east of Khan Yunis, and stressing the need to leave the "coal of the resistance burning" to deal with Israel (Ma'an News Agency and the Paltoday website, November 1, 2013).

Hamas Appoints an English-Speaking Spokesperson

■ The de-facto Hamas administration appointed **Ms. Asraa al-Mudallal** as its official English spokesperson. Ihab al-Ghussin, Hamas administration spokesman, said that she was appointed to **improve Hamas' public diplomacy in the West**.

■ Asraa al-Mudallal is 23, a journalist, and until her appointment worked for the Al-Qitab TV station, which broadcasts from the Gaza Strip. In the past she worked for Iran's Press TV. **She was brought up and educated in England** and has a BA in journalism and communications from the Islamic University in Gaza City. She said that she would focus on diplomatic, political and humanitarian issues, which were more relevant for the Western media. She also said that she did not reject ties with the Israeli media, but that depended on receiving agreement from the Hamas administration. She also said she wanted to learn Hebrew (Paltoday website and Agence France-Presse, November 2, 2013).

- After she was appointed she launched her official Twitter account. In one of her first Tweets she attacks Israel after the death of Hassan al-Turabi, a Palestinian cancer patient, who died in an Israeli jail (Asraa al-Mudallal's Twitter account, November 5, 2013).



Left: Asraa al-Mudallal (Al-Qitab TV, Gaza Strip, August 6, 2013). Right: Al-Mudallal's official Twitter page (November 5, 2013).

The Palestinian Authority

Palestinian Terrorists Released

- On the night of October 20, 2013, in the second phase, 26 Palestinian terrorist prisoners were released. Twenty-one were released to Judea and Samaria and five to the Gaza Strip. The PA held a formal reception at the Muqata'a in Ramallah. The reception was attended by Mahmoud Abbas and other senior PA figures.
- Speaking before the assembled audience, Mahmoud Abbas said **there would be no peace agreement with Israel without the release of the last of the prisoners from Israeli jails**. He said the PA insisted that all the prisoners return to their homes. Fatah spokesman **Ahmed Assaf** boasted that the deal had "crossed all the red lines" set by Israel, especially its refusal to release prisoners with "blood on their hands" (Al-Hayat Al-Jadeeda, October 30, 2013).



The reception held for the Palestinian terrorist operatives at the Muqata'a in Ramallah, attended by Mahmoud Abbas (Wafa News Agency, October 30, 2013).

■ Five prisoners, released to the Gaza Strip, were spontaneously received by several hundred Gazans at the Erez crossing, but no official reception was held. Hamas issued a short statement of welcome, stressing that the release of the prisoners was everyone's duty (Safa News Agency, October 29, 2013).

Palestinians Pessimistic about the Negotiations

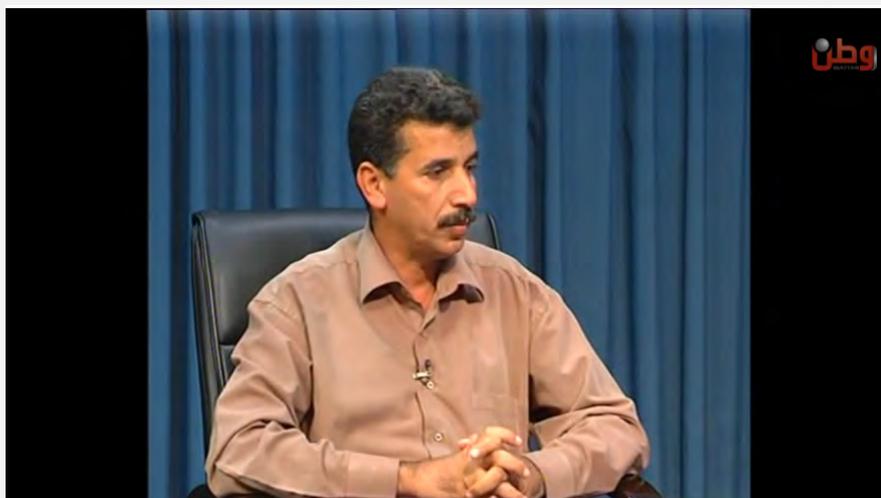
■ Regarding the upcoming visit of American Secretary of State John Kerry to the Middle East, senior figures in the PA expressed **pessimism** about the visit's contribution to the negotiations, claiming that Kerry was not be able to influence the Israeli position. **Mahmoud al-Aloul**, a member of Fatah's Central Committee, said that if there were no change the Palestinians would harden their position in the negotiations with the Israelis. He said the Palestinians could still withdraw from the negotiations (Al-Quds Al-Arabi, November 4, 2013). However, Fatah's Central Committee, headed by Mahmoud Abbas, said that the Palestinians would continue the negotiations until the end of the nine months allotted to them (Al-Quds Al-Arabi, November 4, 2013).

■ **Saeb Erekat**, a member of the PLO's Executive Committee and head of the Palestinian negotiating team, and Muhammad Shtayyeh, a member of the team, tendered their resignations to Mahmoud Abbas to protest the Israeli announcement that it would construct housing, which meant, they said, Israel was reneging on its commitments to the peace process (Ma'an News Agency, October 31, 2013). On the other hand, **Wassel Abu Yousef**, a member of the PLO's Executive Committee, denied that they had resigned. An American official said that the Palestinians had reported that they were still committed to the time frame of nine months and that they intended to attend the next round of talks (New York Times, November 1, 2013).

■ Many PA spokesmen blamed Israel for the failure of the negotiations, especially because Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu authorized the construction of 1,500 dwelling units in east Jerusalem. **Nabil Abu Rudeina**, spokesman for the office of the PA president, said that Israel's policy of construction was destroying the peace process. It also sent a message to the international community that Israel was a state that did not respect international law and continued to place obstacles in the path of the peace process (Al-Ayam, October 31, 2013).

TV Show about the Popular Resistance

■ On November 2, 2013, **Salah al-Khawaja**, a senior activist in the Popular Committees Against the Fence and Settlements in Judea and Samaria, participated in a TV show about the popular resistance broadcast by the Al-Watan channel in Ramallah. As to the essence of the popular resistance, he said that every people had the right to end an occupation of its country and could use a variety of means to resist, **"including an armed struggle and not just popular resistance."** He said that the essence of the popular resistance was not "to present the Israelis with roses but to adhere to the land and to defend it" (Al-Watan TV, Ramallah, November 2, 2013).



Salah al-Khawaja, a prominent activist on the ground, appears on a TV show about the popular resistance (Al-Watan TV, Ramallah, November 2, 2013)