



News of Terrorism and the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict

April 9 – 13, 2014¹



The crisis in the Israeli-Palestinian negotiations: John Kerry's desperate attempt to rescue the peace process (Al-Ahed, Jordan, April 9, 2014)

Overview

- This past week two mortar shells were fired into the western Negev from the Gaza Strip. One fell in the heart of an Israeli village. There were no casualties. The Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine claimed responsibility for shelling and for placing an IED. Several dozen Palestinians gathered near the security fence in the northern Gaza Strip, threw stones and attempted to approach the fence.
- The crisis in the Israeli-Palestinian negotiations continues. The American-sponsored meetings between the negotiating teams have still not led to a breakthrough. In response to the Palestinian Authority's appeal to join international institutions Israel announced it would reduce the number of direct meetings with PA members and freeze the transfer of tax revenues to the PA. Senior PA figures strongly condemned the Israeli measures.

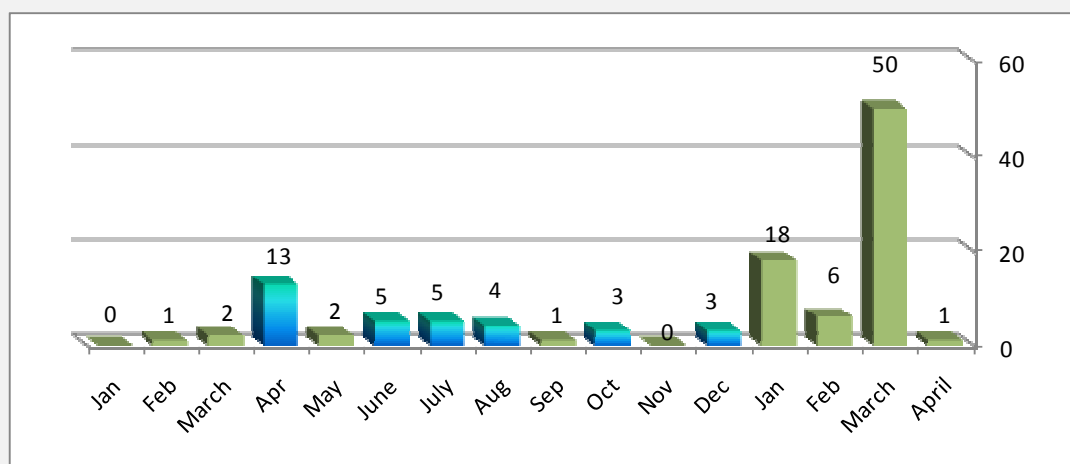
¹ This week's update is early because of Passover. The next update will be issued on April 31.

The Security Situation in Israel's South

Rocket Fire

- This past week **two mortar shells were fired from the Gaza Strip into the western Negev**. One, fired on April 9, 2014, fell in the heart of an Israeli village. There were no casualties and no damage was reported. The other mortar shell was fired on April 13, 2014.
- The Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) claimed responsibility for shelling and placing an IED (PFLP Facebook page, April 13, 2014).

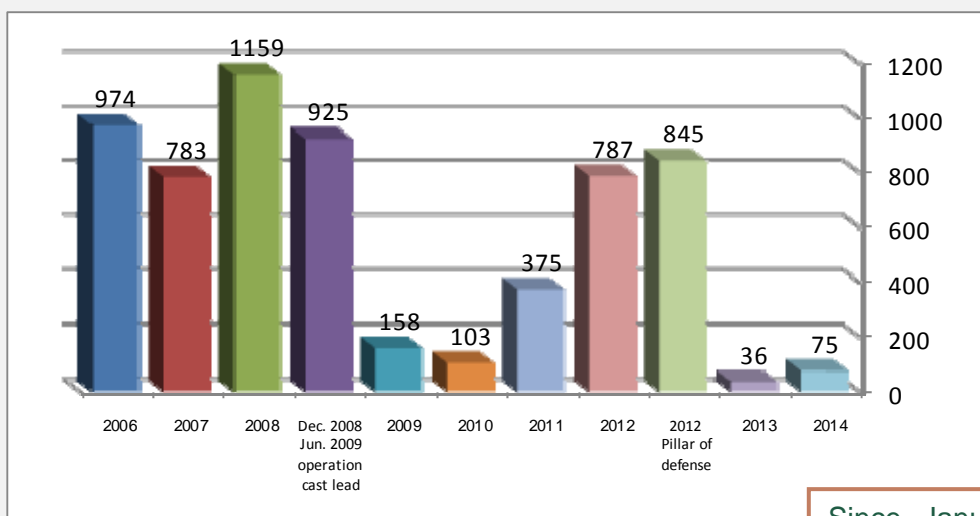
Rocket Hits in Israeli Territory since January 1, 2013²



Since the end of Operation Pillar of Defense (November 2012), 114 rocket hits have been identified in Israeli territory, including eight rockets fired at the southern Israeli city of Eilat.

² As April 13, 2014. The statistics do not include mortar shell fire and rocket hits inside the Gaza Strip.

Annual Distribution of Rocket Fire in Israel's South³



Since January 1, 2013, 114 rocket hits have been identified.

Palestinians Confront IDF Forces in the northern Gaza Strip

- On **April 11, 2014**, several dozen Palestinians gathered near the border security fence in the northern Gaza Strip (near the village of Nahal Oz). They threw stones at the Israeli security forces and attempted to approach the fence. The Palestinian media reported that several Palestinians had been injured by inhaling smoke (Paltoday.ps, date, 2014).



Palestinians throw stones at IDF forces near the security fence in the northern Gaza Strip (Paltoday.ps, April 11, 2014).

³ The statistics do not include mortar shell fire.

Judea and Samaria

Palestinian Violence Continues

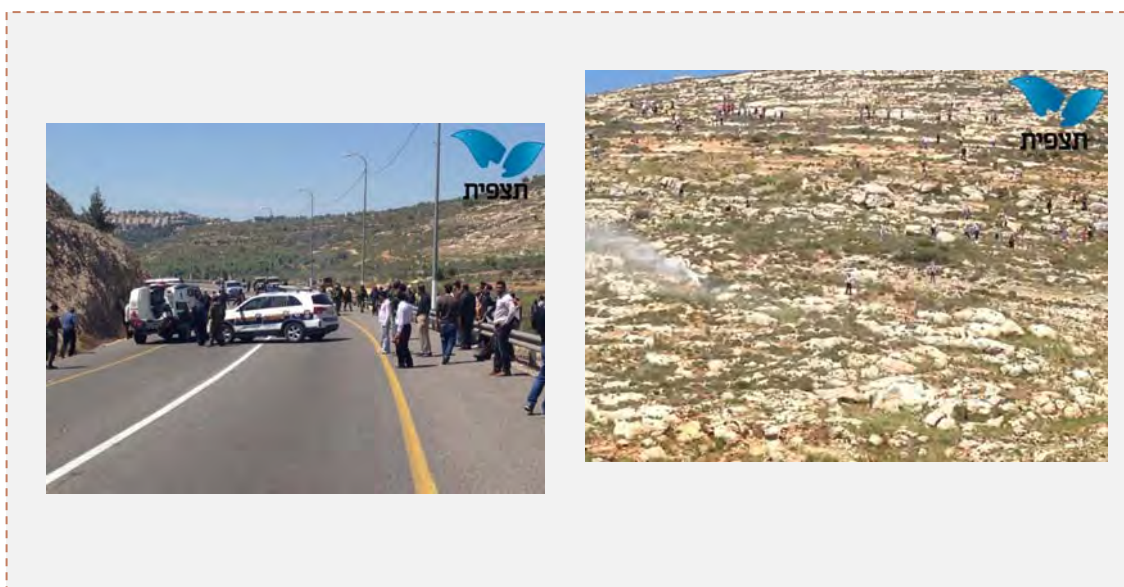
- This past week violent incidents continued in Judea and Samaria, part of the so-called "popular resistance." Stones were thrown at Israeli civilians and Israeli security forces and Molotov cocktails were thrown at vehicles on main roads. The Friday riots held at the traditional friction points (Bil'in, Ni'llin, Nebi Saleh, Qadoum, Beit Umar, etc.).
- The main events were the following:
 - On **April 12, 2014**, riots were held in the village of **Nebi Saleh**. One of the rioters, who attempted to throw a Molotov cocktail at the Israeli soldiers, sustained minor injuries from Israeli fire. In the wake of the riot the security forces closed the entrance to the village (Tazpit News Agency, April 14, 2014).



The closed entrance to Nebi Saleh (Photo by Ehud Amitun for the Tazpit News Agency, April 14, 2014).

- On the night of **April 13, 2014**, three Molotov cocktails were thrown at the Jewish quarter in the **Abu Tor** neighborhood in Jerusalem, causing a fire. Slight property damage was reported (Tazpit News Agency, April 14, 2014).
- On **April 11, 2014**, several dozen Palestinians gathered near the village of Shilo (southern Samaria), threw stones and blocked the road

between Shilo and Eli. During the riot the Palestinians confronted Israeli security forces (Tazpit News Agency, April 11, 2014).



Right: Palestinians block the road between Shilo and Eli. Left: Rioting Palestinians (Photos by Shlomo Matatiah for the Tazpit News Agency, April 11, 2014).

IDF Response to the Events in Yitzhar

■ Following the violent events between the residents of the Israeli settlement of Yitzhar and the Israeli security forces, the IDF stationed a company of Border Police forces there. Taking operational considerations into account, it was decided to house the forces in the Yitzhar yeshiva (IDF Spokesman, April 11, 2014).

Developments in the Gaza Strip

Hamas-Egypt Relations

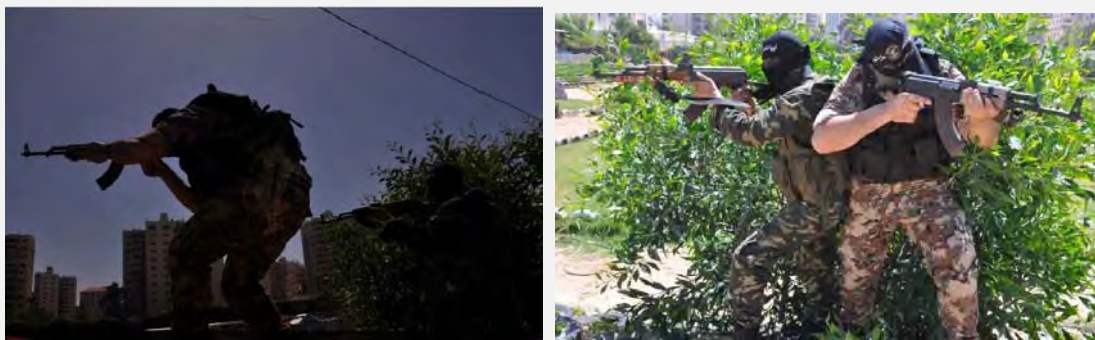
■ Legal sources in Egypt reported that a committee appointed by the Egyptian Ministry of Justice was **mapping the assets held by Hamas in Egypt**. Its objective was to implement the decision handed down by an Egyptian court, after Hamas was outlawed, to confiscate the movement's assets and close its headquarters (Palpress.ps, April 9, 2014).

■ **Iyad al-Bazam**, spokesman for the ministry of the interior of the de-facto Hamas administration, announced the dismantling of the network of tunnels after the Egyptian authorities had closed all the tunnels on the Gaza Strip's southern border. He said the Hamas ministry of the interior had cancelled every entity connected to the tunnels and what currently existed was a "department of border security within the ministry of the

interior and national security" (Website of the Hamas administration ministry of the interior, April 9, 2014).

Military Exercises Inside a Populated Area

■ The Paltoday.ps website, affiliated with the Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ), posted pictures documenting armed operatives of the Popular Resistance Committees in the Gaza Strip carrying out military exercises. Nearby civilian residences can be clearly seen in the background (Paltoday.ps, April 8, 2014).



Military exercises held near a populated civilian area in the Gaza Strip (Paltoday.ps, April 8, 2014).

The Palestinian Authority

The Crisis in the Israeli-Palestinian Negotiations Continues

■ Despite repeated attempts to resolve the crisis in the Israeli-Palestinian negotiations and the continuing American-sponsored meetings between the sides, the gaps are still wide and there has been no breakthrough. On April 9, 2014, PA chairman Mahmoud Abbas went to Egypt to discuss continuing the negotiations.

■ Following an ad hoc meeting of Arab League foreign ministers, which Mahmoud Abbas attended, full responsibility for the crisis in the negotiations was assigned to Israel and a statement was issued giving full support to the Palestinian positions. The Arab League renewed its promise to provide the Palestinians with an economic security net to counteract Israel's economic sanctions, opposed any request to recognize the Jewish nature of the State of Israel and called on the PA and the United States to continue the negotiations and extend them in accordance with Palestinian principles. The Arab League foreign ministers further stressed that joining international

institutions was a right of the Palestinian people and that Israel had no influence on it (Al-Ayam, April 10, 2014; Al-Sharq Al-Awsat, April 9, 2014).



Mahmoud Abbas at an emergency meeting of the Arab League foreign ministers in Cairo (Al-Hayat Al-Jadeeda, April 10, 2014).

■ In response to the PA's request to join international institutions, Israel announced it would impose sanctions on the PA. Israeli Prime **Minister Benjamin Netanyahu instructed all the government ministers and directors of government ministries to no longer meet with their Palestinian counterparts.** The only exception was Minister of Justice Ms. Tzipi Livni, who conducts the negotiations, and security contacts. The prime minister later announced the imposition of **economic sanctions** on the PA. They included freezing the transfer of tax revenues to the PA and the forfeit of funds to offset PA debts to the Israel Electric Company and other Israeli companies (Haaretz, April 9 and 10, 2014).

■ Senior PA sources responded strongly to the Israeli decision. "A senior source" said that the PA planned to appeal to international institutions and to sue Israel because of the sanctions (Al-Quds Al-Arabi, April 12, 2014). In addition:

- **Rami Hamdallah**, PA prime minister, held a series of urgent consultations with the members of his government to examine the consequences and implications of the Israeli decision. He said that "such punishment will not deter [the Palestinians] from achieving their objective of founding a Palestinian state with the 1967 borders and Jerusalem as its capital" (Al-Ayam, April 10, 2014).
- **Saeb Erekat**, a member of Fatah's Central Committee and the PA representative to the negotiations, said that the Israeli decision was

"robbery and the theft of money belonging to the Palestinian people," as well as a felony and violation of international procedures (Agence France-Presse, April 10, 2014).

- **Riyadh al-Maliki**, PA foreign minister, said the PA had not been updated about Israel's decision. However, it strongly condemned the Israeli measures and demanded that the international community also condemn Israel for breaking the law and violating international agreements (Xinhua News Agency, April 11, 2014).
- **Ahmed al-Majdalani**, PA labor minister, said that the steps taken by Israel would not make the Palestinians back down or withdraw. He also said that in any case today there was no direct coordination between the PA and Israeli ministries, and that all coordination was carried out through the [Palestinian] ministry for civilian affairs. Therefore, the steps taken by Israel were only intended to satisfy Israeli public opinion and exert pressure on the United States (Quds.net, April 10, 2014).

■ As to the PA's joining international institutions, according to **Saeb Erekat**, Mahmoud Abbas had received a letter signed by the president of Switzerland saying that the "state of Palestine" had joined the four Geneva Conventions. According to Palestinian sources, that meant that Palestine was now considered as an "occupied country" and in the future would be able to sue Israel in the International Court in The Hague (Al-Jazeera, April 11, 2014). Mahmoud Abbas had also received a letter from the UN Secretary General stating that the documents for joining 13 international agreements and conventions had been received on April 2, 2014. Saeb Erekat said that according to the letter by July 2014 the PA would have full membership in 13 conventions (Agence France-Presse, April 11, 2014). However, **Riyadh al-Maliki**, the PA foreign minister, said that Palestinian membership in international agreements and conventions would still require fulfilling a number of conditions, and therefore he advised the foreign ministry to appoint a governmental committee to meet the requirements and take the necessary steps after the conventions had been joined (Al-Ayam, April 12, 2014).



John Kerry tries to revive the negotiating table (Al-Quds, April 12, 2014).

Tawfiq al-Tirawi Calls for "Resistance" and the Struggle against Israel

■ On April 2, 2014, **Tawfiq al-Tirawi**, a member of Fatah's Central Committee, was interviewed by Hezbollah's Al-Manar TV in Lebanon. The interview dealt with the Palestinian issue. Noted were the following (Al-Manar TV, April 2, 2014):

- He said he was pessimistic about the future of the negotiations. He called for a "united national strategy" to be formed which would start with the "popular resistance." He said negotiations were an option but not the only option, and that they had to be conducted side-by-side with the "resistance."
- He said that the Palestinian organizations were currently unable to lead a struggle on the ground against Israel because of their internal rift. Asked about the use of force [i.e., "armed resistance"] he said that the right to the use of force had to be exercised, but its nature and timing had to be chosen.
- He said the two-state idea had no chance. Therefore, he called on the Palestinian leadership to implement the idea of "one Palestinian state from the [Jordan] river to the [Mediterranean] sea." He said it was the only solution that Fatah had been advocating since 1968.



Tawfiq al-Tirawi interviewed by Al-Manar TV (Al-Manar TV, April 2, 2014)

Sympathy for Saddam Hussein on Fatah's Official Facebook Page

■ On April 9, 2014, Fatah's official Facebook page noted the 11th anniversary of the fall of Baghdad and the toppling of the statue of former Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein. According to the page, "Baghdad did not fall but what fell was the honor of the Arab-Islamic nation." In response surfers who sympathized with Saddam Hussein's regime posted comments such as "A thousand mercies and light upon you, oh Abu Uday [i.e., Saddam Hussein, father of Uday]. May you repose in paradise," "May Allah have mercy on you, Saddam Hussein," "May Allah punish those who gave you death Saddam the Hawk and leader of the Arabs," etc. (Fatah's official Facebook page, April 9, 2014).



Sympathy expressed for Saddam Hussein on Fatah's official Facebook page (April 9, 2014).

The Northern Arena

Hezbollah Claims Responsibility for IED in the Shabaa Region

- Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah was interviewed by the Lebanese daily Al-Safir. One of the topics he related to was Hezbollah policy of terrorist attacks against Israel. He claimed he was giving Al-Safir an exclusive by saying that **Hezbollah had been behind the IED planted in Shabaa, calling it the organization's response to "Israeli aggression."**⁴
- Nasrallah claimed Hezbollah had a new policy it carried out against Israel. He also claimed that Hezbollah's message to Israel was clear, that Hezbollah meant to respond [to Israeli attacks] and would not agree to a change in the "confrontation rules" and understandings achieved during the years. He said that **any attack [by Israel] on a [Hezbollah] military target would be answered with an attack on a military target.** He also said that the action in Shabaa was a clear statement from Hezbollah that it was not afraid of a war with Israel ((Al-Safir, Lebanon, April 7, 2014).

⁴ On the evening of March 14, 2014, an IED was detonated near an IDF patrol in the Har Dov region, in the eastern sector of south Lebanon. One of the patrol vehicles drove over the IED. There were no casualties. Three soldiers were evacuated to a hospital to rule out concussions. **No organization claimed responsibility for the attack.** Reports in the Israeli media based on military sources hypothesized at the time that Hezbollah had placed the IED (Haaretz, Yedioth Aharonoth, March 16, 2014).

The Global Jihad

The American State Department Designates Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis a Terrorist Organization⁵

■ The American State Department designated **Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis a foreign terrorist organization**. According to the announcement, the organization, founded in 2011 after the Egyptian uprisings, "shares some aspects of [Al-Qaeda's] ideology" (although it does not have formal ties to Al-Qaeda) and was **responsible for attacks on Israel and on the Egyptian security services**. Thus there is "a prohibition against knowingly providing, or attempting or conspiring to provide, material support or resources to, or engaging in transactions with this organization."⁶

⁵ <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2014/04/224566.htm>

⁶ For further information about the activities of Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis, see August 13, 2012 [bulletin "The Gazan-based Salafist jihadi network Tawhid wal-Jihad carried out the terrorist attack on the Israeli-Egyptian border on June 18, 2012, in which an Israeli civilian was killed."](#)