



News of Terrorism and the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict

June 25 – July 1, 2014



The three Israeli youths who were abducted and murdered. Left to right: Eyal Yifrah, Gil-Ad Shaer, Naftali Frenkel

Overview

- The bodies of the three youths who were abducted and murdered were found in the region of Halhul (northwest of Hebron) after 18 days of intensive searching. They were apparently murdered shortly after their abduction and their bodies were hidden, perhaps with the intention of using them as bargaining chips at a later date. This week the names of the suspected abductors were released. They are Marwan Qawasmeh and Amer Abu Eisha. Operation Brothers' Keeper continues as the Israeli security forces search for them.
- During the operation the terrorist organizations operating in the Gaza Strip escalated their rocket fire into the western Negev (52 rocket hits have been identified since the beginning of the operation, not including the mortar shells and rockets that fell by mistake inside the Gaza Strip). The IDF responded with the targeted killing of terrorist operatives and by attacking more than 60 terrorist targets in the Gaza Strip. Most of the rockets were fired by rogue terrorist organizations, although in one instance (June 30, 2014), Hamas operatives were apparently involved.

The Three Abducted Youths

Locating the Bodies

- After 18 days of intensive searches carried out by Israeli security forces and civilian volunteers, in the early evening of **June 30, 2014**, **the bodies of Gil-Ad Shaer, Naftali Frenkel and Eyal Yifrah were found**. They had been buried in a shallow depression, apparently dug by the abductors in a field near a **gulch (wadi) between Beit Kahil and Halhul** (northwest of Hebron).
- The site was covered with plastic sheeting, stones and bushes. The glasses and a sandal of one of the victims, found on the ground, focused the area of the search. The bodies were sent to Israel's forensic science facility for identification and the families of the victims were notified (IDF Spokesman, June 30, 2014). The intensive searches in the Halhul region resulted in **violent clashes between the Israeli security forces and local Palestinians, who threw rocks at them**.



The search focusing on the region around Hebron led to the discovery of the bodies (Tazpit.org.il, June 30, 2014).



Damage done to IDF vehicles by rocks thrown in Halhul (Tazpit.org.il, June 30, 2014).

■ **The exact circumstances surrounding the murder of the abductees are still unclear and so far no official statement has been made.** The conclusion is that the three were murdered a short time after they hitched the ride, and that their abductors then drove with their bodies to the outskirts of Dura (southwest of Hebron). When they got there they burned the car, put the bodies into another vehicle and drove off. Several hours later they buried the bodies near Halhul and went underground. **In ITIC assessment they planned to negotiate with Israel for the bodies at a later date, after pressure had lessened.**



The burned car used in the abduction of the three youths in Gush Etzion (Radio Al-Aqsa website, June 13, 2014).

The Identity of the Abductors

■ The two terrorist operatives suspected of the abduction and murder of the three youths have not yet been apprehended and the search for them continues. On June 26, 2014, their names were revealed: they are **Marwan al-Qawasmeh and Amer Abu Eisha, both Hamas operatives from Hebron**. They have been missing since the day of the abduction. **They were classified as wanted as soon as the abduction was made known and the Israeli security forces have been searching for them since then** (IDF Spokesman, June 26, 2014).

■ The following is information about the two operatives:

- **Marwan Qawasmeh** – Born in 1985, barber, worked in a barbershop in Hebron, was detained by the Israeli security forces five times in the past. During a former interrogation he revealed that he had been recruited into the ranks of Hamas in Hebron and had undergone military training and been involved in attempts to carry out terrorist attacks.
- **Amer Abu Eisha** – Blacksmith, was detained in Israeli twice in the past. His brother was killed by the IDF in 2005 when he threw an IED at an IDF force.



The two Palestinian terrorists suspected of the abduction and murder of the Israeli youths; they disappeared on the day of the abduction. Left: Marwan Qawasmeh. Right: Amer Abu Eisha (Paltoday.ps, June 26, 2014).

■ Reactions to the publication of the names of the two and the suspicions about them:

- **Amar Abu Eisha's father** said that the suspicions were "the invention of the occupation," that his son had been abducted by Israel and that he feared for his life (Maannews.net, June 27, 2014). His mother claimed that the last time she spoke to him was the evening of the abduction. **She said that if he was in fact**

one of the abductors she was proud of him (Al-Arabi Al-Jadeed, June 27, 2014). The Qawasmeh family refused to speak to the media.

- **Hamas** claimed that publishing the names of the suspects showed Israel's confusion and the failure of its intelligence service, which used the media to spread rumors to lessen the pressure exerted on the government by the Israeli public (Gaza al-'Aan, June 26, 2014). **Sami Abu Zuhri** said that publishing the names of the suspects showed Israel's continued confusion and its attempt to whitewash its failure to achieve its stated objectives (Palestine-info.info, June 26, 2014).

Terrorist Operatives Detained in Operation Brothers' Keeper

- So far, during Operation Brothers' Keeper **more than 400 Palestinians suspected of terrorist activities have been detained. Of them, 57 were released in the Gilad Shalit prisoner exchange deal, and thus did not serve their full prison terms.** As soon as they were detained, a committee met in a Samaria military court. The committee is examining whether or not to revoke the lenient terms of their release (IDF Spokesman, June 28, 2014).

Rocket Fire into Israeli Territory Escalates

- During Operation Brothers' Keeper there was an escalation in rocket and mortar shell fire from the Gaza Strip into Israel's south. **This past week 40 rocket hits were identified in the western Negev.** Since the beginning of the operation, **52 rocket hits have been identified in Israeli territory** (the number does not include rockets and mortar shells that fell inside the Gaza Strip):

- On **July 1, 2014**, five rocket hits were identified. Vehicles and a packing house in one of the towns in the western Negev were damaged. A woman was treated for shock. Fatah's Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades claimed responsibility for the rocket fire (Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades Facebook page, July 1, 2014).
- On **June 30, 2014**, 12 rocket hits were identified. **Some of them may have been fired by operatives of Hamas' military-terrorist wing. If Hamas was in fact responsible for rocket fire, it was the first time since Operation Pillar of Defense (November 2012).**
- On **June 29, 2014**, four rocket hits were identified, two of which were intercepted by the Iron Dome aerial defense system.

- On **June 28, 2014**, six rocket hits were identified. Two were intercepted by the Iron Dome aerial defense system. **One hit a paint factory in the industrial zone of the southern city of Sderot.** Four workers who were in the factory at the time managed to escape; three of them sustained minor injuries. One Israeli was injured by the concussion from the blast. The factory burned to the ground. The Popular Resistance Committees (PRC) claimed responsibility for the rocket fire targeting Sderot (Facebook page of Paltimes.net, June 28, 2014).



Left: The military-terrorist wing of the PRC claims responsibility for the rocket fire into Israel. According to the announcement, it was a response to Israel's activities against the Palestinians in the Gaza Strip, Judea and Samaria, and against the Palestinian prisoners in Israeli jails (Facebook page of Gaza al-'Aan, June 29, 2014). Right: Smoke from the fire at the paint factory in Sderot caused by a rocket hit (Photo by Noga Benodiz for Tazpit.org.il, June 29, 2014).

- On **June 27, 2014**, three rocket hits were identified in the western Negev. There were no casualties and no damage was reported. Half an hour later three more rockets were fired, targeting the southern coastal city of Ashqelon. Two were intercepted by the Iron Dome aerial defense system, and the third fell in an open area. There were no casualties and no damage was reported.
- On **June 25, 2014**, two rocket hits were identified in the western Negev. One fell near a cowshed, causing damage. Two other rockets were intercepted by the Iron Dome aerial defense system near Ashqelon.
- On **June 24, 2014**, three rocket hits were identified, two of which were intercepted by the Iron Dome aerial defense system. There were no casualties and no damage was reported.

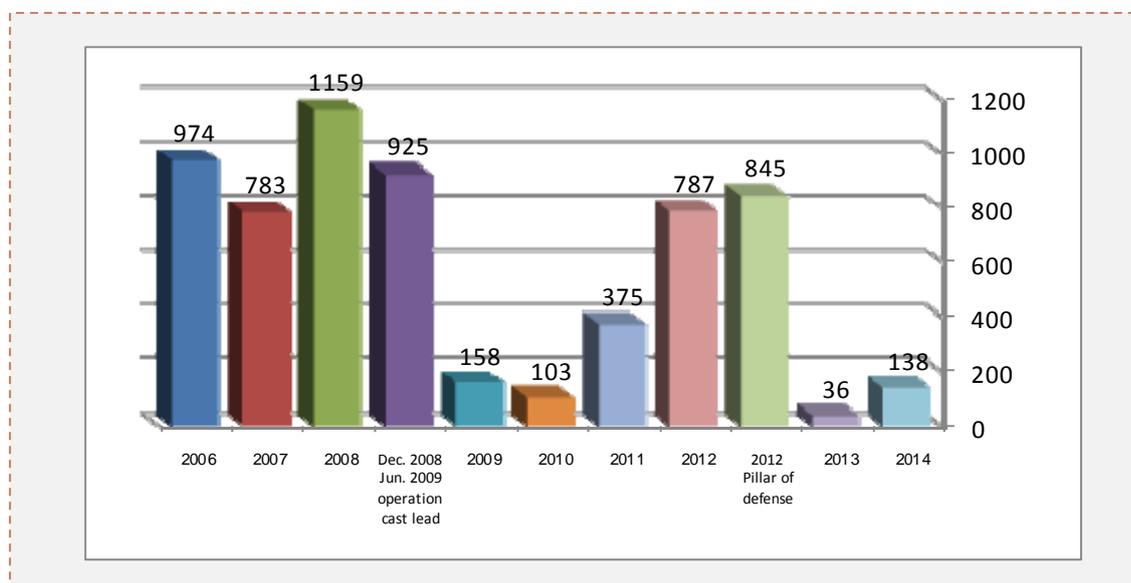
Rocket Fire into Israel

Rocket Hits in Israeli Territory since January 1, 2013¹



Since the end of Operation Pillar of Defense (November 2012), 177 rocket hits have been identified in Israeli territory, including eight rockets fired at the southern Israeli city of Eilat.

Annual Distribution of Rocket Fire in Israel's South²



¹ As of July 1, 2014. The statistics do not include mortar shell fire and rocket hits inside the Gaza Strip.

² The statistics do not include mortar shell fire.

IED Explodes

■ On **June 28, 2014**, an IED exploded near the security fence in the southern Gaza Strip near an IDF force carrying out routine security activities. The IED exploded on the Gazan side of the fence. There were no casualties; an IDF vehicle sustained minor damage. IDF tanks fired in response (Ynetnews.co.il, June 28, 2014).

■ The Palestinian media reported that six residents of Khan Yunis were injured by IDF fire (Maannews.net and Paltimes.net, June 27, 2014).

IDF Response to Rocket Fire

Strikes on Terrorist Operatives

■ In response to the rocket fire, Israeli Air Force (IAF) aircraft carried out a large number of strikes against terrorist squads preparing to fire rockets into Israeli territory:

■ On the afternoon of June 27, 2014 **IAF aircraft struck two terrorist operatives** driving in a car in the Shati refugee camp in the northern Gaza Strip. **They were senior PRC figures who had recently been involved in firing rockets into Israeli territory.** The Palestinian media reported that the two were **Osama Hassan Musa al-Hasoumi**, 29, from Beit Lahia, and **Muhammad al-Fasih**, 24, from Sheik Radwan (Maannews.net and Paltimes.net, June 27, 2014). The PRC's military-terrorist wing denied that the two operatives who had been killed belonged to their organization, and **claimed that they were Salafist-jihadists** (Gaza al-'Aan, June 27, 2014).



Left: Muhammad al-Fasih and Osama al-Hasoumi, both killed, shown at a site for the manufacture of rockets in the Gaza Strip (Majd news agency, June 28, 2014). Right: The vehicle of the two terrorist operatives after the IDF strike (Wafa.ps, June 27, 2014).

- On **June 29, 2014**, IAF aircraft struck a terrorist squad making final preparations to fire rockets into Israeli territory (IDF Spokesman, June 29, 2014). The Palestinian media reported **the death of one Hamas terrorist operative from the Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades and the wounding of three more in a strike east of Khan Yunis** (Safa.ps, Paltoday.ps, June 29, 2014). Hamas' military-terrorist wing issued a death notice for **Muhammad Zayid Abeid**, 27, from Dir al-Balah. According to the notice, **he belonged to the Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades' Dir al-Balah Battalion** (Facebook page of Gaza al-'Aan, June 30, 2014).

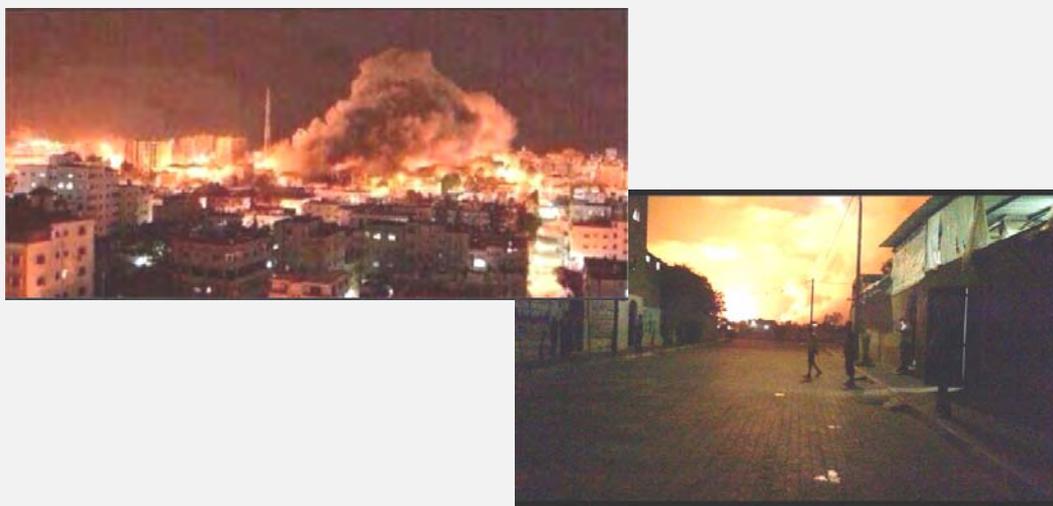


Hamas' death notice for Muhammad Zayid Abeid (Facebook page of Gaza al-'Aan, June 29, 2014)

Strikes on Terrorist Targets

■ **IAF aircraft struck more than 60 terrorist targets in the Gaza Strip** (IDF Spokesman, June 2014):

- Before dawn on **June 30, 2014**, after the bodies of the three Israeli youths had been found, IAF aircraft struck 34 terrorist targets in the Gaza Strip, some of them belonging to Hamas' military-terrorist wing. The Palestinian media reported strikes on posts belonging to the military-terrorist wings of Hamas, the PRC and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) in the northern and southern Gaza Strip. It was also reported that four Palestinian civilians had been injured (Alresala.net, July 1, 2014).



Left: IAF strike on the night of June 30 (Fatah Facebook page, July 1, 2014). Right: Before-dawn IAF strike near Rafah (Facebook page of Gaza al-'Aan, July 1, 2014)

- On **June 29, 2014**, IAF aircraft struck a number of terrorist targets in the Gaza Strip, among them sites for the manufacture of weapons (in the northern and central Gaza Strip), recessed rocket launchers (southern Gaza Strip) and several others terrorist targets.
- On the night of **June 28, 2014**, IAF aircraft struck a site for the manufacture of weapons in the northern Gaza Strip and a site in the southern Gaza Strip where terrorist activities were carried out. Earlier, IAF aircraft struck three recessed rocket launchers in the central Gaza Strip (IDF Spokesman, June 29, 2014). The Palestinian media reported a strike on a post belonging to Hamas' military-terrorist wing west of Khan Yunis, a concrete factory in Rafah used as a post, and a post near the power station in Nuseirat. Several civilians sustained minor injuries (Safa.ps, Maannews.net, Alresala.net, June 29, 2014).

- On **June 28, 2014**, IAF aircraft struck three terrorist targets and a site for the manufacture of weapons (IDF Spokesman, June 28, 2014).
- On the night of **June 27, 2014**, two terrorist targets and a site for the manufacture of weapons in the central Gaza Strip, and a weapons warehouse in the southern Gaza Strip were struck. The Palestinian media reported a number of attacks, among them on an Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades post in the southern Gaza Strip and a naval police post in the central Gaza Strip. It was reported that three Palestinians were wounded (Paltoday.ps, Safa.ps, June 28, 2014).
- On **June 25, 2014**, IAF aircraft struck five recessed rocket launchers in the northern Gaza Strip, a center for terrorist activity in the central Gaza Strip and a site for the manufacture of weapons in the southern Gaza Strip (IDF Spokesman, June 25, 2014).
- On **June 24, 2014**, IAF aircraft struck a number of terrorist targets. The Palestinian media reported an attack on a post of the Jerusalem Brigades, the PIJ's military-terrorist wing, an Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades post and a naval police post in the Nuseirat refugee camp. Two naval police operatives were reported injured (Paltimes.net, Alresala.net, Maannews.net, June 24, 2014).

Reactions to the Murder of the Three Israeli Youths

Israel

- On the evening of June 30 the Security Cabinet met to discuss responses. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu began the meeting by saying that the three youths had been abducted and murdered in cold blood by people who acted like animals. He added that **Hamas was responsible and Hamas would pay** (Prime minister's website, June 30, 2014).
- The media reported that the IDF's Central Command had held a meeting to assess the situation. The Command decided **to leave a large number of the reinforcements on the ground**, in case there were clashes and riots caused by the efforts to find the abductors. It was also decided that the area would be **closed to Palestinian traffic and that the houses of terrorist operatives would be destroyed**.

The Palestinian Authority (PA)

■ **Nabil Abu Rudeina**, presidential spokesman, said that on the evening of July 1, 2014, PA Chairman Mahmoud Abbas would hold an emergency meeting of the Palestinian leadership to discuss political developments and the implications of the recent events (Wafa.ps, June 30, 2014). So far Mahmoud Abbas has not made a formal statement regarding the discovery of the bodies of the three Israeli youths.

Hamas

■ Senior Hamas figures, who since the abduction had been careful not to claim responsibility, **continue to claim that the event is an "Israeli invention" and that they are prepared to any Israeli response:**

- **Ismail Haniya**, senior Hamas figure, said that the Israeli prime minister had accused Hamas of responsibility for the abduction and deaths of the youths and threatened it, and would pay the price. He said Hamas was not frightened by Netanyahu's threats and would fight against any Israeli attempt to harm Palestinians (Aa.com.tr, June 30, 2014).
- **Sami Abu Zuhri**, Hamas spokesman, said that the "story" about the abduction and killing of the three youths was only backed up by Israeli claims and that Israel was trying to exploit the "story" to carry out acts of aggression against the Palestinian people. He said that so far no organization had claimed responsibility for the abduction. Israel's threats, he said, did not frighten the Palestinians and the Palestinians could defend themselves. He added that **Hamas did not want a confrontation with Israel** but that one had been forced upon it and Israel had to be prepared to pay a higher price than previously (Al-Jazeera, June 30, 2014). He used his Facebook page to accuse Netanyahu of responsibility for escalation, and "if he [Netanyahu] starts a war against Gaza **the gates of hell will open for him**" (Sami Abu Zuhri's Facebook page, June 30, 2014).
- **Husam Badran**, Hamas spokesman, said that if the Israeli "story" about the abduction and killing were true, then it was a great success and achievement for the "resistance" [i.e. terrorist organizations] in Judea and Samaria. He said the Israeli "story" was an indication of political, security and military tension in Israel. He said that Hamas took Israel's threats seriously, but the Palestinian "resistance" could stop Israel (Al-Aqsa, June 30, 2014).

Initial International Reactions

UN

■ A few hours after the deaths of the three Israeli youths were announced, **UN Secretary General Ban-ki Moon** said in a statement that "There can be no justification for the deliberate killing of civilians," and that he hoped "Israeli and Palestinian authorities will work together to bring the perpetrators swiftly to justice."³

The European Union

■ EU High Representative **Catherine Ashton** said "we condemn in the strongest terms their killing. We express our sincere condolences to their families and friends and share their grief. We trust the perpetrators of this barbaric act will swiftly be brought to justice. We call for restraint of all parties concerned in order not to further aggravate the fragile situation on the ground"⁴ (EU website, June 30 2014).

United States

■ **American President Barack Obama** said in a statement that "On behalf of the American people I extend my deepest and heartfelt condolences to the families of Eyal Yifrach, Gilad Shaar, and Naftali Fraenkel – who held Israeli and American citizenship...The United States condemns in the strongest possible terms this senseless act of terror against innocent youth. From the outset, I have offered our full support to Israel and the Palestinian Authority to find the perpetrators of this crime and bring them to justice, and I encourage Israel and the Palestinian Authority to continue working together [and] to refrain from steps that could further destabilize the situation."⁵

■ **Secretary of State John Kerry** issued a similar statement, saying that "We all had so much hope that this story would not end this way." He added that "We condemn this despicable terrorist act in the strongest possible terms. The killing of innocent youths is an outrage beyond any understanding or rationale, and the perpetrators must be

³ <http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2014/sgsm15990.doc.htm>

⁴ <http://www.i24news.tv/en/news/israel/35993-140701-condolences-and-calls-for-restraint-after-teens-found-dead>

⁵ <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2014/06/30/statement-president-deaths-naftali-fraenkel-eyal-yifrach-and-gilad-shaar>

brought to justice."⁶ State Department Spokesperson Jen Psaki said that the United States was "in touch with both sides and [has] been urging continued security cooperation, that the Israelis and the Palestinians continue to work with one another on that, and we certainly would continue to urge that despite – in spite of, obviously, the tragedy."⁷

Britain

■ British Prime Minister **David Cameron** said in a statement that he was "deeply saddened by the news that the bodies of the three Israeli boys kidnapped on 12 June have been found this evening. This was an appalling and inexcusable act of terror perpetrated against young teenagers. Britain will stand with Israel as it seeks to bring to justice those responsible."⁸

⁶ <http://www.state.gov/secretary/remarks/2014/06/228623.htm>

⁷ <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/dpb/2014/06/228570.htm>

⁸ http://ejpress.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=49511