News of Terrorism and the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict
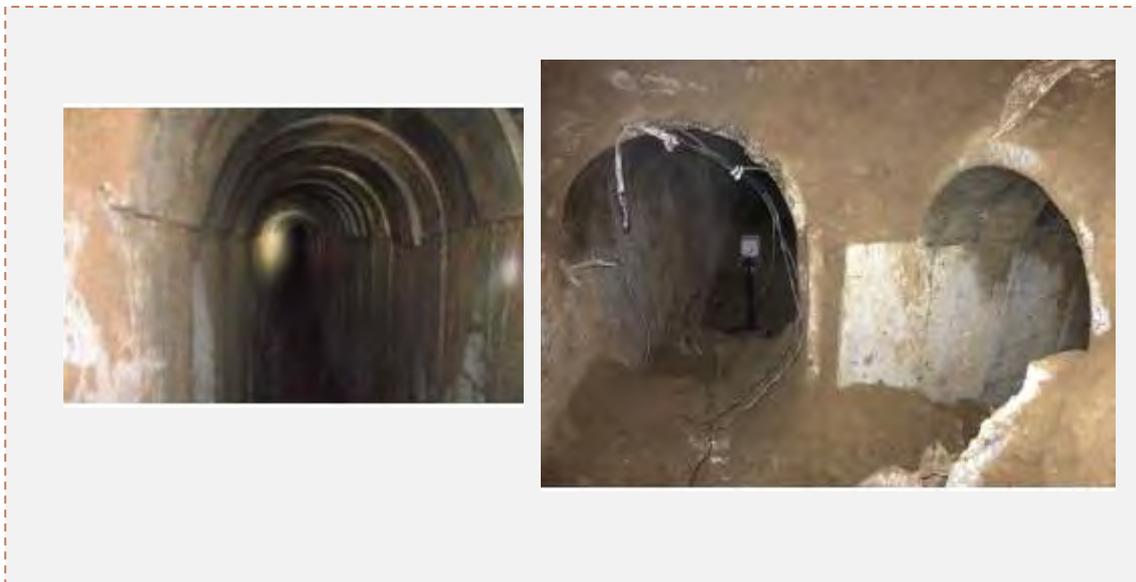
July 2 – 8, 2014

Left: Hole made by a rocket in a house in the western Negev (Israel Police Spokesman's Office, July 7, 2014). Right: A rocket explodes in the western Negev (Israel Police Spokesman's Office, July 7, 2014)

Overview

■ This past week rocket fire from the Gaza Strip into Israeli territory continued to escalate. It began in the second half of June during Operation Brothers' Keeper, conducted to find the three abducted Israeli youths (who were eventually found, murdered by their abductors).

■ The IDF responded with air strikes, its targets including a tunnel which operatives of the Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades, Hamas' military-terrorist wing, planned to use for a terrorist attack in Israeli territory. Hamas and the other terrorist organizations responded by an additional increase in their rocket fire. Israel's Security Cabinet sanctioned the initiation of Operation Protective Edge. On the night of July 7, 2014, the Israeli Air Force attacked approximately 50 terrorist targets in the Gaza Strip. On July 8 there was a greater escalation.

■ On July 2, 2014, Muhammad Abu Khdeir, a 16 year-old Palestinian boy from the Shuafat neighborhood north of Jerusalem, was abducted and brutally murdered. The Israel Police Force detained six Israeli youths on suspicion of murder. Israeli Prime Minister Benyamin Netanyahu expressed outrage at the murder and said that Israel had acted immediately to apprehend the murderers and they would be brought to trial. After the murder riots broke out in east Jerusalem and to other focal points in Israel, carried out by Israeli Arabs.

Operation Protective Edge (as of noon, July 8)

■ **Since the second half of June 2014**, when Operation Brothers' Keeper began, **the terrorist organizations operating in the Gaza Strip, including Hamas, have bombarded Israel with intensive rocket fire**. The rocket fire, **the most extensive since Operation Pillar of Defense** (November 2012), increased significantly after July 7, when Israeli Air Force (IAF) aircraft attacked a Hamas tunnel used for terrorist purposes. The Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades, Hamas' military-terrorist wing, planned to use the tunnel to carry out an attack inside Israel (IDF Spokesman, July 7, 2014). Six Hamas terrorist operatives who were in the tunnel at the time of the attack were killed.[1] Hamas threatened revenge and the rocket fire attacking Israel increased on June 8.

A Hamas terrorist tunnel extending from the Gaza Strip into Israel, discovered in March 2014 (IDF Spokesman, March 21, 2014).

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[1] In addition to stockpiling rockets and mortar shells for attacks on Israel, Hamas has created a network of underground tunnels throughout the Gaza Strip for terrorist purposes. One such tunnel was used for the abduction of Gilad Shalit. There has been a growing awareness in Israel of the existence of the tunnels since Operation Pillar of Defense (November 2012). In 2013 three terrorist tunnels were discovered near the border security fence. Another one, which had been dug into Israeli territory, was discovered in the southern Gaza Strip in 2014. An Israeli intelligence officer serving near the border with the Gaza Strip said the tunnels were a "strategic weapon" for Hamas. They were constructed to be used for abducting Israeli civilians and/or soldiers, infiltrating into Israeli communities near the Gaza Strip and killing Israelis (IDF Spokesman, July 8, 2014).

■ As a result of the continuous massive rocket fire attacking Israel's south, on July 7, 2014, the Security Cabinet voted to sanction Operation Protective Edge. On the night of July 7, 2014, approximately 50 terrorist targets in the Gaza Strip were struck. The Israeli strikes and the terrorist organizations' rocket fire continued on the morning of July 8, 2014.

Notice issued by Hamas' military-terrorist wing with pictures of the six terrorist operatives from Rafah, whom Hamas claimed were killed in an IAF strike on July 7, 2014. Left to right: Juma Abu Shalouf, Ibrahim Abadin, Abdul-Rahman al-Zamili, Mustafa Abu Mur, Khaled Abu Mur and Ibrahim Balawi (Qassam.ps, July 7, 2014).

Hamas Increases Rocket Fire in Response to Deaths in Tunnel

■ In response to the deaths of its operatives in the tunnel, Hamas significantly increased its rocket and mortar shell fire into Israel and used longer-range rockets. **On July 7, 2014, 120 rocket hits were identified in Israeli territory, 60 of them during the evening**. Hamas said in a statement that the rocket fire included long-range rockets used to attack the southern Israeli cities of Ashdod, Ashqelon, Yavne, Netivot and Ofakim. Several Israeli civilians sustained minor wounds and damage to property was reported. The Iron Dome aerial defense system intercepted more than ten long-range rockets. **A considerable number of the rockets were fired by Hamas' military-terrorist wing**.

The Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades claims responsibility for 35 rockets fired at Netivot, Ofakim, Ashqelon and Ashdod (Qassam.ps, July 7, 2014).

■ Hamas spokesman **Sami Abu Zuhri** posted a notice on his Facebook page in which he said that the rockets were a "natural reaction" to "Israeli crimes" against the Palestinians. He also said that Israel had to receive the message that Hamas would react and that the future would be worse (Facebook page of Sami Abu Zuhri, July 7, 2014). **Ahmed al-Mudallal**, a senior figure in the Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ), said that the "resistance" [i.e., Palestinian terrorist organizations] in the Gaza Strip was fully prepared to deal with any Israeli aggression or new war against the Gaza Strip. He said that "equation of the struggle" between the "resistance" and the IDF had changed (Alresala.net, July 7, 2014). **Daoud Shihab**, PIJ spokesman, said that PIJ had announced a general mobilization to respond to "Israeli aggression" (Paltoday.ps, July 7, 2014).

The Israeli Government Decides to Initiate Operation Protective Edge

■ After the massive barrage of rockets and mortar shells from the Gaza Strip, which increased during July 7, 2014, the Security Cabinet held a meeting in the evening and voted to respond to the attacks (Operation Protective Edge). The Cabinet recommended preventive measures and strikes on the terrorists' infrastructure from the air, but that Israel not be drawn into more extensive action (Ynetnews.co.il, July 7, 2014).

Left: Remains of a rocket (Regional council in the western Negev, July 6, 2014). Right: Damage done to a chicken coop and fuel container by a rocket that hit the western Negev.

■ **Israeli Minister of Defense Moshe Yaalon said that Israel was prepared for a campaign against Hamas and that it would not end in a matter of days**. He said Hamas wanted to exact a price from the Israeli home front, and therefore patience was necessary and civilians would have to act accordingly. The IDF, he said, would continue its attacks and Hamas would pay a heavy price (Haaretz.co.il, July 8, 2014).

■ **Following the government decision the IDF significantly increased its operational activities in the Gaza Strip**. On the night of July 7, 2014, IAF aircraft struck approximately 50 terrorist targets (IDF Spokesman, July 8, 2014), including:

- **Four houses of Hamas military-terrorist wing operatives** who had been involved in terrorist activities, including rocket and mortar shell fire into Israeli territory.

- **Batteries of rocket launchers and hidden launchers**.

- **Attack tunnel shafts**.

- **Training camps**.

- **Weapons storage sites**.

■ According to the Palestinian media, the operatives whose houses were attacked were **Iyad Sakik**, a senior Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades' rocket-launching operative who participated in rocket fire from Gaza City into Israel; **Abdallah Hshas**, a senior Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades' rocket-launching operative in Rafah, involved in the past in launching rockets and in the current round of escalation as well; **Samer Abu Daka**, senior Hamas military-terrorist wing operative from the town of Abasan east of Khan

Yunis (IDF Spokesman, July 8, 2014); and **Muhammad al-Abadllah (Abu Hafez),** from the village of Qarara, north of Khan Yunis. He is a Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP) operative and chairman of the association of fuel station owners in the Gaza Strip (Alwatanvoice.com, July 8, 2014).

Attacks on houses of Iyad Sakik and Muhammad Abdallah, Hamas terrorist operatives who were involved in firing rockets into Israeli (IDF Spokesman, July 8, 2014).

■ In response to the strikes on the houses of its operatives, Hamas' military-terrorist wing said in a statement that **the attacks had "crossed the red line."** If the IDF did not immediately stop attacking houses, Hamas, it warned, **would increase the range of its attacks and act "unexpectedly"** (Qassam.ps, July 8, 2014).

■ The IDF renewed its air strikes on the morning of July 8. At the same time, the terrorist organizations renewed their rocket and mortar shell fire into Israeli territory, including attacks on Ashdod and Ashqelon. So far (noon, July 8, 2014), **19 Palestinians have been killed in Israeli air strikes, at least 14 of whom were terrorist operatives, most of them from Hamas' military-terrorist wing**.
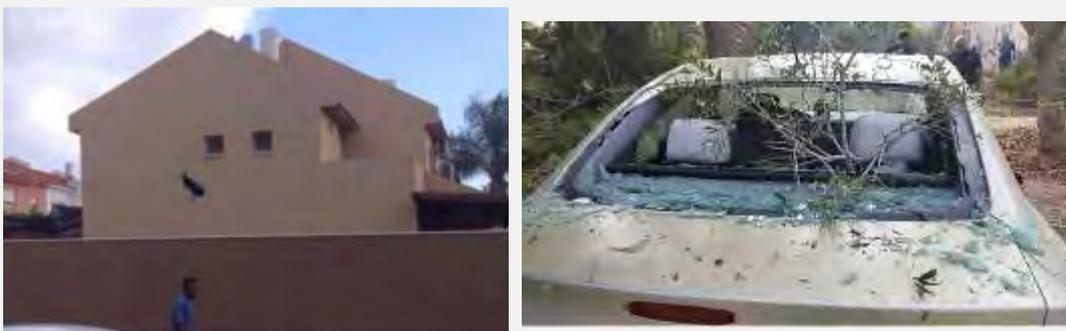
The results of IAF strikes on terrorist targets in the Gaza Strip (Wafa.ps, July 3 and 6, 2014).

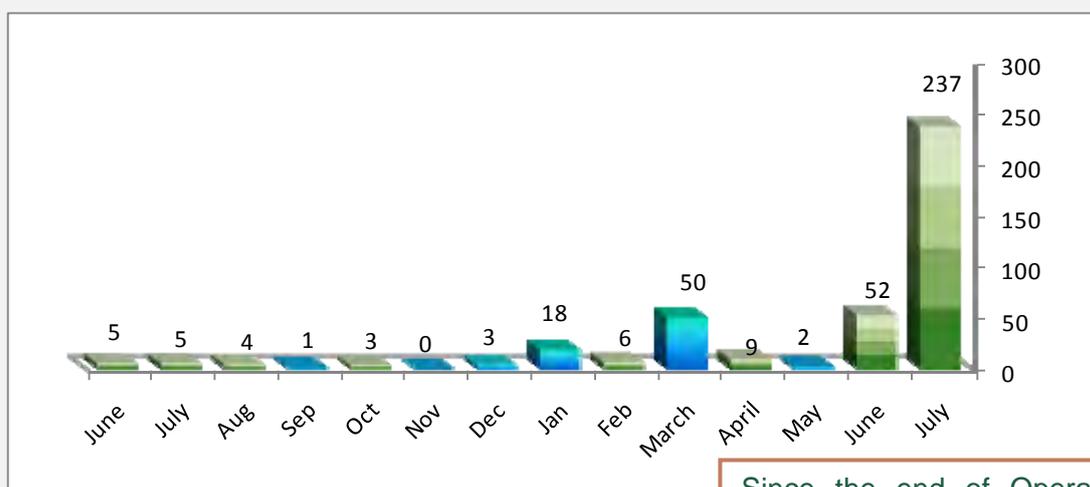## Escalation of Rocket Fire into Israel

Weekly Summary

■ **Between July 2 and July 7, 2014, approximately 230 rocket hits were identified in Israeli territory**, as well as **dozens of mortar shell hits**. Most of the rocket fire targeted the towns and villages near the Gaza Strip, **as well as the city of Sderot**, which had been singled out as focal target in the current stage of the escalation. Some of the rockets targeted the regions of **Ofakim** and **Netivot**. One rocket was fired at **Beersheba**, Israel's largest southern city, on July 5, 2014, the first time it had been attacked since Operation Pillar of Defense (November 2012). The Iron Dome aerial defense system intercepted many of the rockets. Several civilians suffered minor injures and damage to property was reported.

Left: Damage to a house in Sderot (Photo: Sara Haziza for Tazpit.org.il, July 3, 2014).
Right: Damage to a car (Western Negev regional council spokesperson, July 7, 2014).

■ For the first time since Operation Pillar of Defense, **Hamas participated in and claimed responsibility for rocket fire**. Other terrorist organizations claiming responsibility were the DFLP, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), Fatah's Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades and others.
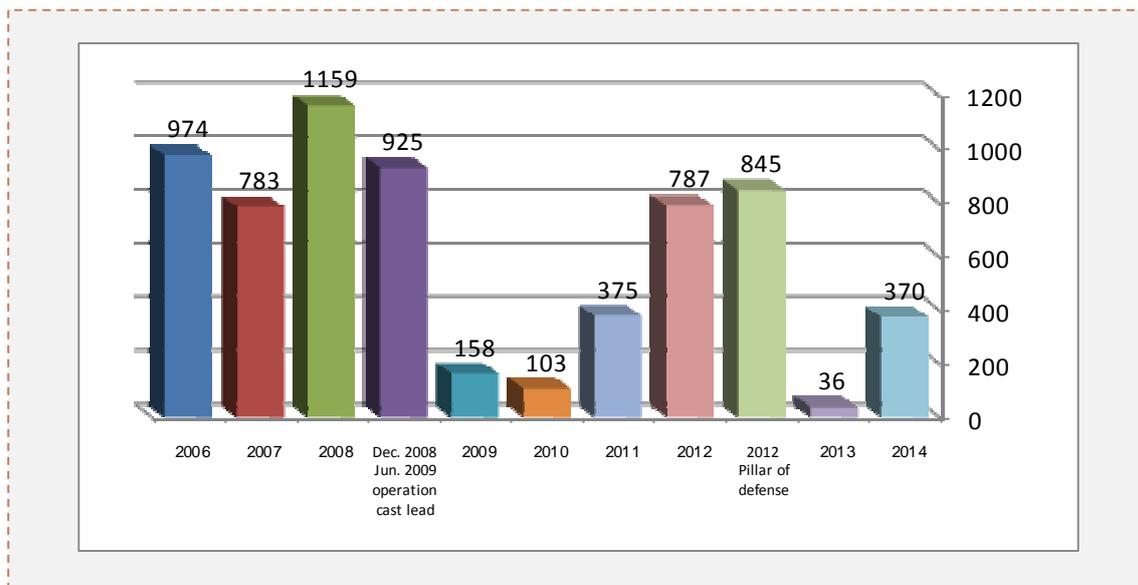
Rocket Hits in Israeli Territory since June 1, 2013[2]

Since the end of Operation Pillar of Defense (November 2012), 409 rocket hits have been identified in Israeli territory, including eight rockets fired at the southern Israeli city of Eilat.

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[2] As of July 8, 2014. The statistics do not include mortar shell fire and rocket hits inside the Gaza Strip.

Annual Distribution of Rocket Fire in Israel's South[3]

Year	Value
2006	974
2007	783
2008	1159
Dec. 2008 Jun. 2009 operation cast lead	925
2009	158
2010	103
2011	375
2012	787
2012 Pillar of defense	845
2013	36
2014	370

Reactions in the Gaza Strip

■ In the wake of the deterioration of security in the Gaza Strip, Palestinian sources reported that senior **Hamas leaders had gone underground,** fearing they would be attacked by Israel (Qudspress.com, July 3, 2014). According to the sources, no senior Hamas figure attended the demonstrations in the Gaza Strip, not among the demonstrators and not among the speakers (Qudspress.com, July 3, 2014).

■ **Abu Obeida**, spokesman for Hamas' military-terrorist wing, held a press conference where he said that the campaign with Israel was "open." He said the previous campaigns had been "a walk in the park" compared with what could be expected now. He added that Israel's threats did not frighten Hamas but rather encouraged it to continue its deployment and prepare additional targets (which he called a "bank of targets") (Al-Aqsa, July 3, 2014). Hamas sources posted propaganda videos on YouTube with threats intended to frighten the Israeli population – for example, **a call to the "settlers" in Beersheba (Note: All Israelis are called "settlers" by Hamas) to flee "before it is too late"** (YouTube, July 5, 2014).

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[3] The statistics do not include mortar shell fire.

Left: A video of a location for the manufacture of long-range rockets. Right: A Hamas video warning the residents of Beersheba to flee "Before it is too late" (YouTube, July 5, 2014).

■ **The union of Hamas-affiliated newspapermen** appealed to the media in the Gaza Strip **not to photograph or publish information** about the rocket fire carried out by the military wings of the various organizations. The request was made, they said, to keep the organizations from playing into the hands of Israeli propaganda (Alaqsavoice.ps, July 8, 2014). In ITIC assessment, the call was the result of lessons Hamas learned during Operation Pillar of Defense. During the operation Israel published pictures of rocket and mortar shells being launched, proving they used the Gazan civilian population as human shields.

Hamas threats. Left: Abu Obeida, Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades spokesman. Right: Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades notice threatening Israel (Qassam.ps, July 7, 2014).
"All [Israeli] cities are close to Gaza"

Judea and Samaria

Israelis Murder a Palestinian Boy

■ Before dawn on July 2, 2014, hours after the funeral of the three Israeli youths who were abducted and murdered in Gush Etzion, the burned body of a Palestinian boy was found in the woods in the neighborhood of Har Nof in west Jerusalem. The boy was **Muhammad Abu Khdeir**, 16, from Beit Hanina, who had been abducted earlier in Shuafat, north of Jerusalem. An autopsy was performed at the forensic medical facility in Abu Kabir (south Tel Aviv) in the presence of a Palestinian doctor (Maannews.net, July 3, 2014). The results of the autopsy indicated that the had been burned to death.

Muhammad Abu Khdeir

■ Four days later **Israeli police arrested six Israeli youths, aged 16 to 22, on suspicion of murder**. According to the Israeli media, interrogation revealed that the murder was premeditated and that the previous day the accused had tried to abduct a nine year-old boy walking in the street in Beit Hanina with his mother and brother. The mother fought them off and the child ran away. The following day they went to the same spot, abducted Muhammad Abu Khdeir and murdered him.

■ **Israeli Prime Minister Benyamin Netanyahu** told Hussein Abu Khdeir, the boy's father, that "**I would like to express my outrage** and that of the citizens of Israel over the reprehensible murder of your son. We acted immediately **to apprehend the murderers**. We will bring them to trial and they will be dealt with to the fullest extent of the law. We denounce all brutal behavior; the murder of your son is abhorrent and

cannot be countenanced by any human being"[4] (Prime minister's website, July 7, 2014).

■ **Defense Minister Moshe Yaalon** said that he was ashamed and shocked by the murder. He said the murderers were degenerates and did not represent the Jewish people and its values, and that **they would be treated as terrorists**. He added that Israel would not permit Jewish terrorists to destroy the fabric of society between the various communities and harm the innocent simply because they were Arabs (Facebook page of Moshe Yaalon, July 6, 2014).

Riots Following the Murder

■ Following the murder, riots broke out between Palestinians and Israeli security forces. The confrontations began in front of the boy's house in Beit Hanina and spread to the Shuafat refugee camp in east Jerusalem. Rioters set garbage cans on fire and torched stations of Jerusalem's light rail public transportation system. Its route was blocked by Palestinian rioters who threw stones and IEDs at the Israeli security forces. In the wake of the riots all the entrances of Beit Hanina were closed off and the Palestinians declared a general strike.

■ After a short period of calm, on the afternoon of Friday, July 4, 2014, the riots recommenced following the boy's funeral. There were riots in all the neighborhoods of east Jerusalem. Scores of rioters threw rocks, Molotov cocktails, detonators and fireworks at the Israeli security forces. The police responded with riot control measures. Several dozen Palestinians were injured, as were several policemen. Dozens of Palestinians were detained. During the riots Palestinians tried to destroy Shuafat's local infrastructure, and even tried to destroy the electricity poles providing power for the light rail public transportation system.

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[4] http://www.pmo.gov.il/English/MediaCenter/Spokesman/Pages/spokesAbuHdir070714.aspx

Riots in Jerusalem (Facebook page of the Israel Police Force, July 4, 2014)

Riots in Jerusalem (Wafa.ps, June 5, 2014).

■ The protest riots spread to the northern Israeli Arab communities of Wadi Ara and Nazareth, the villages in the Meshulash (the southeast Sharon plain in the central part of Israel) and the Western Galilee. Rioters blocked roads, set tires on fire, threw stones and confronted the security forces with violence.

Mahmoud Abbas' Response

■ In a conversation with the father of the boy, **Mahmoud Abbas** said that "the cowardly, disgraceful crime" would be seriously monitored and its perpetrators would be brought to trial (Al-ayyam.com, July 3, 2014). He said that if Israel wanted peace it had to prosecute those who had committed the murder and put an end to the settlement project. He asked Israeli Prime Minister Benyamin Netanyahu to condemn

the abduction as the Palestinians had condemned the abduction and murder of the three youths in Gush Etzion (Al-ayyam.com, July 3, 2014).

Muhammad Abu Khdeir's parents meet with Mahmoud Abbas in Ramallah (Wafa.ps, July 7, 2014).

■ Mahmoud Abbas gave Robert Serry, the UN envoy to the Middle East, a communiqué for Secretary General Ban-ki Moon. In it he demanded the formation of an international committee to investigate Israel's so-called "terrorist crimes" against the Palestinian people, including the burning of the boy from Shuafat (Al-ayyam.com, July 7, 2014)
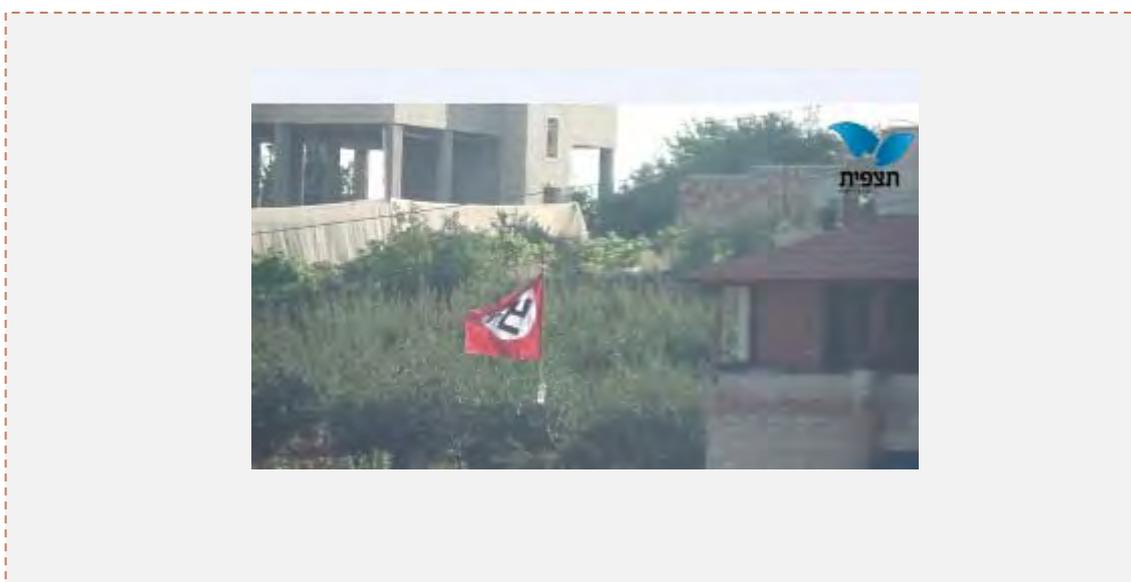
Strong Anti-Israeli Incitement Follows the Murder of the Boy

■ After the death of Muhammad Abu Khdeir, the Palestinian media was flooded with strong **anti-Semitic** anti-Israeli sentiments. For example, **Wassam Afifa**, editor-in-chief of Hamas' *Al-Risala*, wrote that the murder of the boy reminded him of the Jewish custom to use the blood of children in preparing matzos for the Passover holiday, in the spirit of the blood libel of the Middle Ages (Al-Risala, July 3, 2014).

■ One of Hamas' websites posted notices with anti-Israeli incitement which had anti-Semitic themes, among them Israeli flags with swastikas instead of the Star of David, as well as ultra-Orthodox Jews dancing around the burning body of the boy. The Arabic reads "Zionist settlers abducted, tortured, killed and burned the Jerusalem child Muhammad Abu Khdeir on the morning of Wednesday, 2/7/14." The English reads "Don't burn our boys" (Palestine-info.info, July 6, 2014).

Inflammatory notices with anti-Semitic themes posted on the Internet by Hamas after the murder of the Arab boy in east Jerusalem (Palestine-info.info, July 6, 2014)

A flag with a Nazi swastika flies in Beit Umar, near Hebron (Photo by Avraham Weiss for Tazpit.org.il, July 6, 2014).

Report of Terrorist Attacks, June 2014

■ According to the monthly report of the Israel Security Agency for June 2014 (ISA website), there was a slight decrease in the number of terrorist attacks carried out in Judea and Samaria, compared with the previous month. A total of 100 attacks were carried out in Judea, Samaria and Jerusalem (compared with 105 in May 2014). There were 89 terrorist attacks in Judea and Samaria (compared with 98 in May) and 11 in Jerusalem (similar to the previous month).

■ The most prominent terrorist attack was the abduction and murder of the three youths. In addition, most of the attacks involved Molotov cocktails (71 attacks) 23

involved IEDs, and five involved shots fired from light arms.[5] Three Israelis were killed (the three abducted youths) and one IDF soldier was shot at the Tapuah junction in Samaria.

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[5] The total number does not include the dozens of incidents of rocks and stones thrown in Judea, Samaria and Jerusalem.