



News of Terrorism and the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict

(April 22 – 28, 2015)



A wave of terrorist attacks in Jerusalem during the past week. Left: The scene of the stabbing attack at the Cave of the Patriarchs where a Border Police soldier was wounded. Right: The knives used by the armed Palestinian in the attempted stabbing attack at the Al-Za'im roadblock on the outskirts of east Jerusalem (Photos courtesy of the Israel Police Force Spokesman's Unit, April 24 and 25, 2015).

Overview

■ This past week, during which Israel celebrated Independence Day, there was an increase in terrorist attacks on its southern and northern borders and throughout Jerusalem:

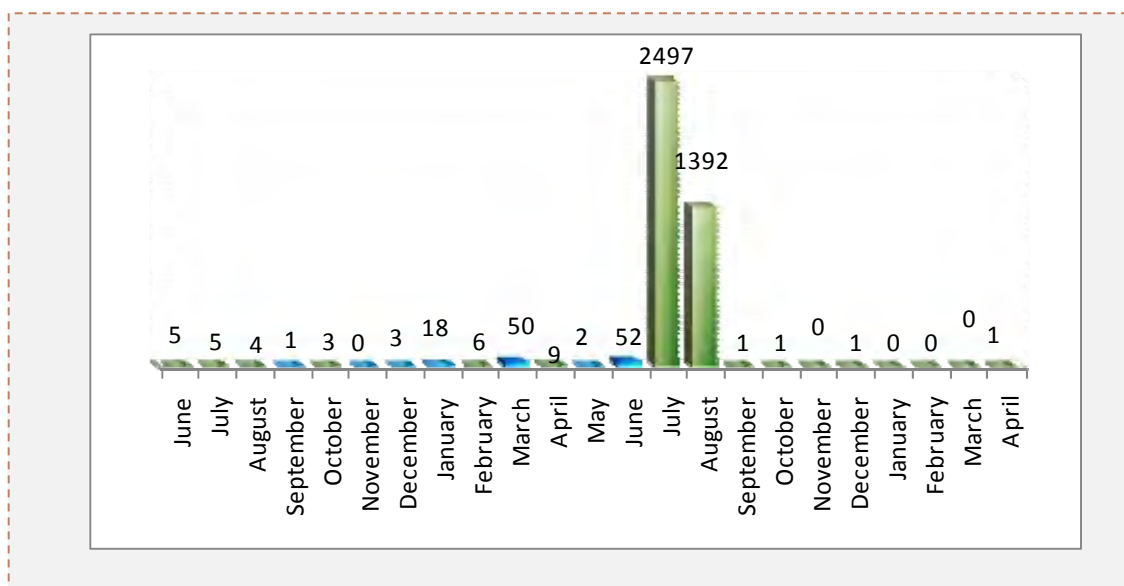
- Two rockets were fired from the **Gaza Strip** at the western Negev at the end of Israel's Independence Day. The IDF responded by shelling a Hamas military-terrorist post with tank fire. A website affiliated with Hamas' security forces criticized the rocket fire.
- There were two stabbing attacks and a vehicular attack in the **Jerusalem area and at the Cave of the Patriarchs in Hebron**. The terrorist operatives were shot by IDF soldiers. The Palestinian Authority and Fatah condemned Israel and accused it of deliberate escalation.
- An attempt to plant an IED was foiled in the region of the **Druze village of Majdal Shams, in the northern Golan Heights**. Four Syrian Druze terrorist operatives were killed. The Israeli media reported they belonged to a **Hezbollah-affiliated network headed by Samir Kuntar** (a Lebanese Druze terrorist operative who was released in 2008 in an Israeli-Hezbollah exchange deal).

Israel's South

Rocket Fire Attacking Israel

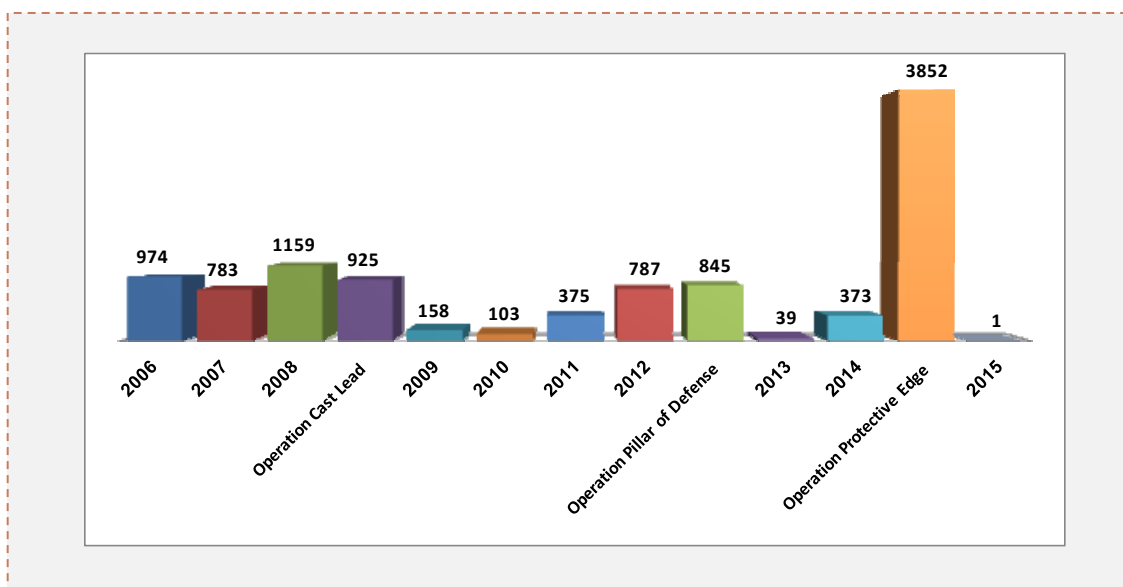
- On April 23, 2015, at the end of Independence Day, rockets were fired from the Gaza Strip into Israeli territory. One fell in an open area in the western Negev. The other fell inside the Gaza Strip. There were no casualties and no damage was reported. It is not clear which organization fired the rockets. **It was the fourth time a rocket hit was identified in Israeli territory since the end of Operation Protective Edge and the first rocket hit identified in 2015** (the last was December 19, 2014).
- Following the rocket fire **a website affiliated with Hamas' security forces criticized the attack**. According to the posting, rocket fire gave Israel an excuse to attack targets in the Gaza Strip, disrupted the military buildup and enlisted public opinion in favor of Israel. However, the posting continued, there was a positive aspect to the rocket fire, since it exposed the "fragility of Israel's deterrent power" (Almajd.net, April 23, 2015). **That may indicate that Hamas is not interested in an escalation at this time and that the rockets were fired by a rogue terrorist organization.**

Monthly Distribution of Rocket Fire (2013 – 2015)¹



¹ As of April 28, 2015. The statistics do not include mortar shell fire or rockets which misfired and fell inside the Gaza Strip.

Annual Distribution of Rocket Fire in Israel's South²



IDF Response to the Rocket Fire

■ In response to the rocket fire from the Gaza Strip the IDF shot a number of tank shells at one of Hamas' new military posts near the Gaza Strip's northern border with Israel. Because of the rocket fire, Palestinians wanting to leave the Gaza Strip to pray on the Temple Mount on Friday were not permitted to enter Israel (IDF Spokesman, April 23, 2015).

Additional Activities along the Gaza Strip Border

■ An IDF force apprehended four Palestinians who crossed the security fence from the Gaza Strip. They were taken for questioning. Two of them were apprehended on the April 24, 2015. On the night of April 24, 2015 another was apprehended, and one more on April 25, 2015 (Facebook page of Red Alert, April 25, 2015).

Judea, Samaria and Jerusalem

■ On April 24 and 25, 2015, there was a wave of terrorist attacks in the Jerusalem area and at the Cave of the Patriarchs in Hebron, among them stabbing and vehicular attacks.

² The statistics do not include mortar shell fire.

Stabbing Attack at the Al-Za'im Roadblock, East Jerusalem

- In the early morning hours of April 25, 2015, a **Palestinian tried to stab a Border Police soldier at the Al-Za'im roadblock** (on the outskirts of Jerusalem near Ma'aleh Adumim). He ran towards the soldiers stationed at the inspection post brandishing a meat cleaver and refused to halt when ordered to do so. The soldiers opened fire and killed him. The terrorist was **Ali Muhammad Abu Ghannam**, 17, from A-Tor in east Jerusalem. The incident was followed by a series of riots where Palestinians clashed with Israeli security forces. An officer in the Israel Police Force was struck in the face (Israel Police Force, April 24, 2015).
- **The Palestinian Authority (PA) condemned the killing of the terrorist.** A statement issued by the PA claimed Israel was lying and that there had been no attempted stabbing attack. The PA called on the international community to intervene and provide protection for the Palestinian people (Wafa.ps, April 25, 2015). Fatah claimed the killing was a "crime" carried out by IDF soldiers and a violation of international law (Fatah media, April 25, 2015).
- Hamas spokesman **Husam Badran** claimed the death of Ali Muhammad Abu Ghannam was a "cold-blooded murder" carried out by Israeli soldiers. He claimed it symbolized the policies of Israel's political leaders. He called for an active response from Palestinians living in Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria (Hamas website, April 25, 2015).



Left: Cartoon from a Hamas Facebook page advocating vehicular attacks against IDF soldiers (Facebook page of PALDF, April 26, 2015). Right: Hamas death notice for "the heroic shaheed" Ali Muhammad Abu Ghannam (Facebook page of PALDF, April 25, 2015)

Stabbing Attack near the Cave of the Patriarchs

- In the early evening of April 25, 2015, a **Palestinian terrorist stabbed and seriously wounded a Border Police soldier at the Cave of the Patriarchs in Hebron**. The Palestinian went to the roadblock, took out a knife and ran towards the soldiers manning it. One soldier was seriously wounded in the neck and chest. The Palestinian terrorist was shot and critically injured, and later died. He **was Mahmoud Yunis Abu Jahisha**, 17, from the village of Edna (west of Hebron).
- In a strongly worded statement, the **PA** claimed that the "murder of the Palestinian youth" was a serious, deliberate Israeli escalation whose objective was to bring violence to the region. The statement claimed that the so-called "crime," the second in 24 hours, joined Israel's previous "crimes" and would not be passed over in silence. The Palestinian leadership, according to the statement, would contact international agencies to halt the escalation (Wafa.ps, April 25, 2015).
- **Hamas** in Judea and Samaria issued a notice mourning the death of the Palestinian who attacked and wounded a soldier in "a courageous stabbing operation" (Hamas website, April 26, 2015).



Left: The notice issued by Hamas (Hamas website, April 26, 2015). Right: Mahmoud Yunis Abu Jahisha, who carried out the stabbing attack near the Cave of the Patriarchs (Facebook page of the Edna social forum, April 26, 2015).

Vehicular Attack in East Jerusalem

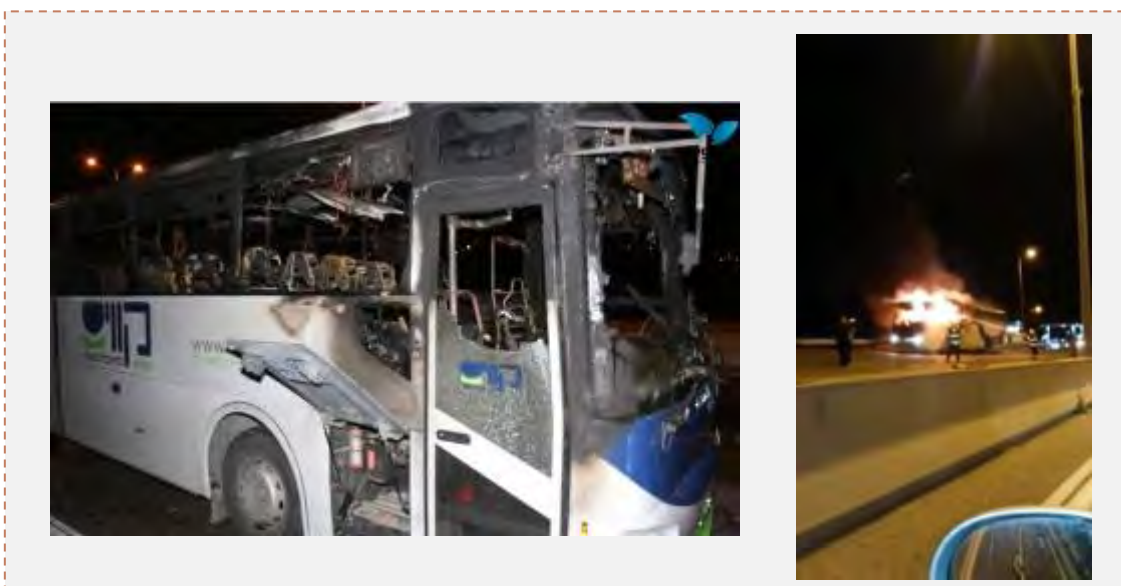
- On the evening of **April 25, 2015**, a Palestinian driving a vehicle in east Jerusalem (near A-Tur and the Mt. of Olives) **deliberately ran into a group of Border Police soldiers**. Four of them were injured, one seriously. Soldiers at the roadblock shot at the vehicle but it drove away. It was later located but the driver had escaped.

■ Following the attack there were clashes between Palestinians and Israeli security forces, and Palestinians threw stones at an ambulance that had come to evacuate the wounded and at Israeli security forces. The vehicle of the mayor of Jerusalem was stoned and damaged. On April 26, 2015, following intelligence activity, a Palestinian suspected of the attack was detained and taken for questioning. He was **Fadi Saleh al-Jamzawi**, from the Shuafat refugee camp (Israel Police Force, April 26, 2015).



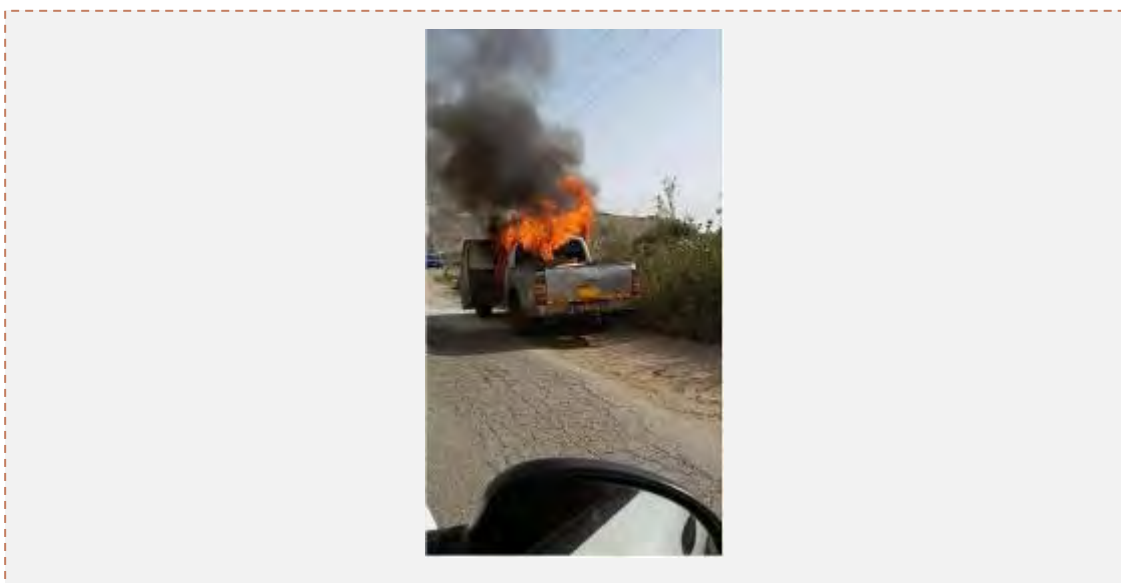
Fadi Saleh al-Jamzawi, from the Shuafat refugee camp, who carried out the vehicular attack
(Facebook page of PALDF, April 26, 2015)

- Other events:
- On the evening of **April 25, 2015**, a **Molotov cocktail was thrown at a bus on the road from Modi'in to Jerusalem**. The bus was empty; it caught fire and burned. There were no casualties.



Left: The burned-out bus (Photo by Hillel Meir for Tazpit.org.il, April 25, 2015). Right: The burning bus (Photo by Baruch Zaken, Judea and Samaria Firefighting and Rescue, April 25, 2015)

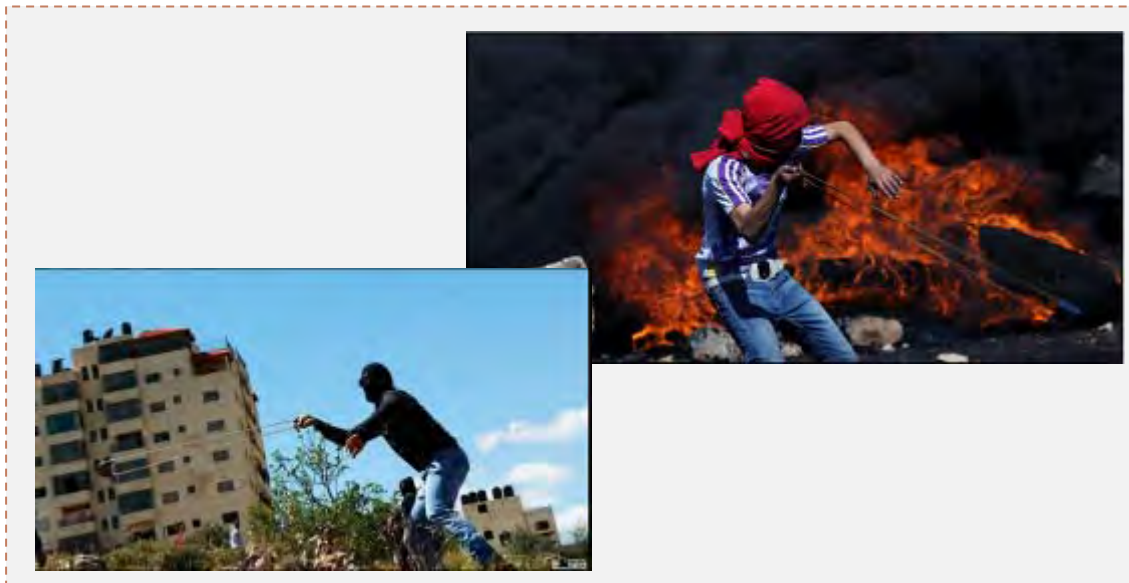
- On **April 25, 2015**, a security patrol detained a young Palestinian near the village of Eli (south of Nablus), who then tried to take the security guard's weapon. The Palestinian, 19, from Nablus, was taken for questioning (Tazpit.org.il, April 26, 2015).
- On **April 27, 2015**, a Molotov cocktail was thrown at an Israeli vehicle on the Hawara road (near Nablus). The driver sustained minor injuries. The vehicle caught fire and burned (Tazpit.org.il, April 27, 2015).



The vehicle burning near the Hawara roadblock near Nablus (Facebook page of PALDF, April 27, 2015)

"Popular Resistance" Terrorism and Violence Continue

- This past week the wave of violence and rioting continued at the usual locations in Judea, Samaria and east Jerusalem, part of what the Palestinians call the "popular resistance." The violence mainly centered on throwing stones, rocks and Molotov cocktails. In some instances Palestinians rioted, confronting Israeli security forces.
- Some of the prominent attacks were the following:
 - On **April 24, 2015**, an IDF soldier incurred minor wounds from stones thrown at his head during a riot in Nebi Saleh (near Ramallah) (Red Alert, April 24, 2015).
 - On **April 24, 2015**, a Palestinian was seriously injured after he threw stones and pieces of iron at the Israeli security forces in the village of Qaddum (east of Nablus).



Left: Palestinians throw stones at IDF forces near the Ofer jail (Paltimes.net, April 24, 2015). Right: A Palestinian throws stones at the Israeli security forces in the village of Qaddum (Wafa.ps, April 24, 2015).

"Popular Resistance" Terrorist Cell Exposed

- The Israeli security forces exposed a **terrorist cell that carried out a number of terrorist attacks as part of the so-called "popular resistance."** The attacks were carried out close to Neve Tzuf (Halamish) (northeast of Ramallah). The six members of the cell, all in their twenties, came from the village of Bayt Rima. **Their main activity was throwing pipe bombs and Molotov cocktails during January and February 2015** (Israel Security Agency, April 27, 2015).

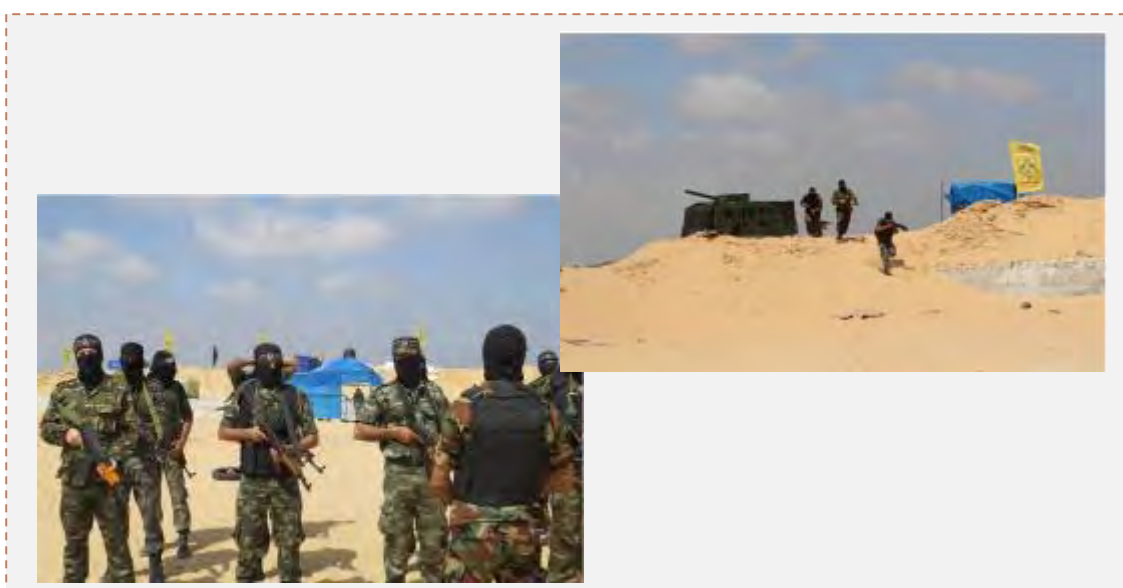
Developments in the Gaza Strip

Egyptian Preventive Activities against Tunnels

- Most of the tunnels between the Gaza Strip and the Sinai Peninsula having been destroyed by the Egyptian security forces, the **Egyptians recently began taking steps to prevent new ones from being dug**. In addition, they are reportedly using new methods to find and destroy tunnels (Maannews.net, April 27, 2015).
- On April 27, 2015, it was reported that a Palestinian worker was killed when a tunnel collapsed in the Al-Salam neighborhood of Rafah. Another such fatality was reported the previous week (Paltimes.net, April 27, 2015).

Fatah's Military-Terrorist Wing in the Gaza Strip Prepares for a New Round of Confrontations

- On April 22, 2015, the Shaheed Nabil Masoud units of the Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades (Fatah's military-terrorist wing in the Gaza Strip), held a **joint military exercise** with the Popular Resistance Committees. It was carried out **at a training camp in the northern Gaza Strip**. The exercise included simulating storming IDF posts and attacking armored vehicles (Alarab24.com and YouTube, April 22, 2015).



Fatah's military-terrorist wing conducts a joint military exercise in the northern Gaza Strip (Alarab24.com, April 24, 2015)

The Palestinian Authority

Senior Fatah Figure: the Palestinian Leadership Supports and Encourages the "Popular Resistance"

■ Referring to the riots in east Jerusalem over the weekend, during which Palestinians confronted Israeli security forces, **Amin Maqboul**, secretary of Fatah's Revolutionary Council, told the Huna Al-Quds TV channel³ that the Palestinian leadership supported the "popular resistance" against Israel and fomented it. He said the Palestinian leadership called for "popular resistance" and also supported the riots against Israel in Jerusalem and all the Palestinian cities (Quds.net, April 26, 2015).



Amin Maqboul, interviewed by Huna Al-Quds TV (April 26, 2015).

The Islamic Bloc (Hamas) Wins the Beir Zeit University Elections

■ On April 22, 2015, student council elections were held in **Beit Zeit University**. **The Hamas faction won a majority of 26 seats**, while Fatah won 19. A spokesman for the Fatah faction congratulated Hamas on its win. However, **Amin Maqboul**, secretary of Fatah's Revolutionary Council, claimed they were weighing the possibility of appointing a committee to investigate the election results (Paltimes.net, April 23, 2015). **Khaled Mashaal**, head of Hamas' political bureau, gave a speech congratulating the Islamic Bloc on its win, claiming the elections "celebrated good democracy" and that Hamas was founded on democracy and constructed its institutions democratically (YouTube, April 22, 2015).

³ A new satellite channel founded in the Gaza Strip in 2014. It has a website and a Facebook page.

■ To celebrate its win Hamas held victory parades in the Gaza Strip, Judea and Samaria. A motorcade of joyful Palestinians drove through the streets of Al-Bireh and Ramallah but was blocked by the PA's security forces (Al-Aqsa TV, April 22, 2015).



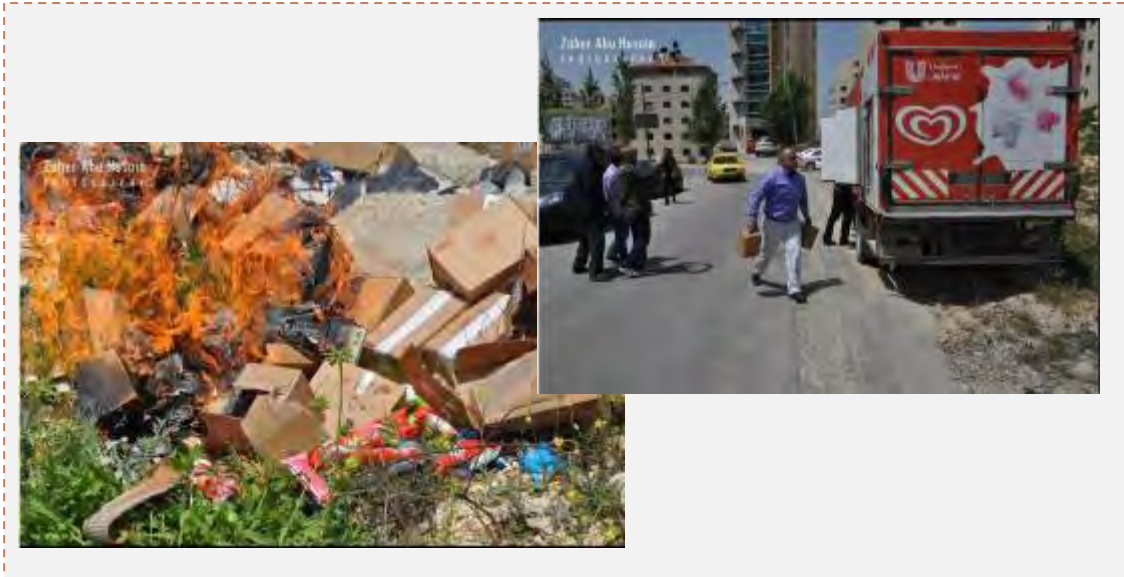
Left: Palestinians celebrating in Rafah. Right: The Hamas faction holds a rally in Beir Zeit University to celebrate its victory in the student council elections (Paltimes.net, April 23, 2015)

■ When Hamas' victory was announced the PA's forces detained **Jihad Salim**, the Islamic Bloc representative in Beir Zeit University, and his colleague **Musab Zalum**. In addition, the Islamic Bloc reported that Mahmoud Abbas had issued an order to stop all the student association elections in all the universities in Judea and Samaria (Alresala.net, April 26, 2015).

■ Hamas spokesman **Sami Abu Zuhri** condemned the detention of the two and the PA security forces' continuing security coordination with Israel. He claimed the detention of the two Hamas representatives proved that Mahmoud Abbas and the PA did not respect other opinions and did not honor the results of the elections (Alresala.net, April 26, 2015).

The PA Continues Boycotting Israeli-Manufactured Goods

■ The PA's official Facebook page posted a selection of photographs showing Fatah activists in Ramallah destroying ice cream made by Strauss, an Israeli dairy company, after they stopped one of the company's delivery trucks (Facebook page of Fatah, April 27, 2015).



Israeli Strauss ice cream is destroyed in Ramallah (Facebook page of Fatah, April 27, 2015)

The Northern Arena

IDF Force Kills Terrorist Squad on Syrian Border

- On the evening of April 26, 2015, IDF soldiers identified a **four-man terrorist squad approaching the border fence in the region of the Druze village of Majdal Shams, in the northern Golan Heights**. The squad planted an IED which was in all probability directed against IDF soldiers. Israeli Air Force aircraft struck the squad (IDF Spokesman, April 26, 2015). **All four terrorist operatives were killed**. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu praised the awareness of the IDF soldiers which led to a rapid, precise response. He said that any attempt to harm Israeli soldiers or civilians would be met with a determined response such as the one that prevented the attack in the Golan Heights (Prime minister's website, April 27, 2015).
- **The four terrorist operatives were all Syrian Druze from the village of Khader in the northern Golan Heights**. A mourning tent was set up in the Majdal Shams when it became known that two of the terrorists had been born in the village, having moved to Khader as children (Haaretz.co.il, April 28, 2015; Ynetnews.co.il, April 27, 2015). According to social media affiliated with the Syrian regime, the four belonged to the "Quneitra squad," part of the "Syrian popular resistance" in the Golan Heights. **According to the Israel media, Hezbollah established the Syrian Druze terrorist network last year and operates it indirectly**. The network is also reportedly headed by **Samir Kuntar**, a Lebanese Druze terrorist operative who was released from an Israeli prison in July 2008 as part of an Israeli-Hezbollah exchange deal (Haaretz.co.il and Thepost.co.il, April 28, 2015).