



Center for Special Studies  
Intelligence and Terrorism  
Information Center

## News of the Israeli-Palestinian Confrontation March 16-31, 2006

### The New Hamas Government



Ismail Haniya sworn in as prime minister  
(Al-Jazeera TV, March 29)



Abu Mazen's expression says it all.  
(Al-Jazeera TV, March 29)

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### Main points

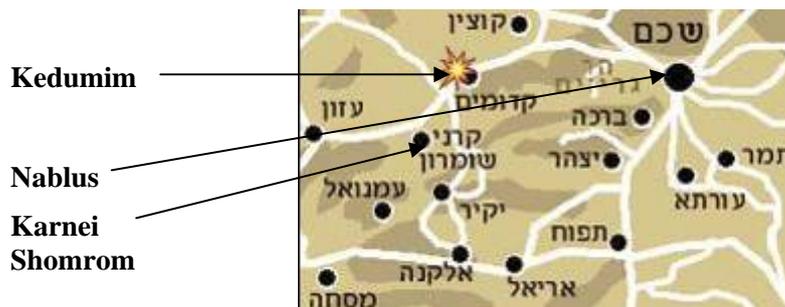
- Recent events focused on the Fatah/Al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades suicide bombing attack at the entrance to the settlement of Kedumim (west of Nablus in Samaria), which killed four Israeli civilians. In addition, the Israeli security forces foiled terrorist organization attempts, especially those of the Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) to infiltrate terrorist-operatives into Israel to carry out mass-murder attacks, including suicide bombing attacks. Some of the attacks were planned for the time-frame of Israel's election day.
- On election day, March 28, the PIJ set a precedent by firing a long-range 122 mm Katyusha rocket at Ashqelon. It traveled only 4 km (about 2.5 miles), apparently because of technical difficulties. The fact that the terrorist organizations have such rockets, whose range is as great as 20.4 km (about 12.7 miles), seriously increases the threat of rocket fire from the Gaza Strip at population centers and installation in the Negev.
- On March 29, the Ismail Haniya's new Hamas government was sworn into office. It is comprised of veteran Hamas activists, who hold key positions, technocrats and professionals. An obvious effort has been made to present an attractive government which will be able to undertake internal reforms and break out of Hamas's international isolation. The Hamas political platform clearly reflects the movement's radical Islamic ideology, and contradicts Abu Mazen's basic guidelines and the minimum demands of the government of Israel and the international community. It does not include recognition of the State of Israel, the disarming of Hamas, its renouncing of terrorism or ratification of previous Israeli-Palestinian agreements and understandings.

## Important Events

### Suicide bombing attack at the entrance to the settlement of Kedumim (first report)

■ At 9:50 on the night of March 30 a suicide bomber blew himself up inside a civilian Israeli vehicle, killing four Israeli: a married couple and two hitchhikers. The couple was apparently on its way home to Kedumim, west of Nablus. On the way to the settlement of Karnei Shomrom they picked up three hitchhikers, one of them a Palestinian suicide bomber disguised as an ultra-Orthodox Jew. Six minutes later, at the junction near Kedumim, the suicide bomber detonated the 10-kg (22 lb) explosive device he had hidden in his bag.

### Map of the area of explosion site (Ynet, [www.ynet.co.il](http://www.ynet.co.il), March 31)



### Victims



Shaked Lasker



Re'ut Feldman



Helena Halevy



Rafi Halevy

■ **Fatah/Al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades claimed responsibility for the attack.** The suicide bomber was **Ahmad Mahmoud Musharaqa**, 24, unmarried, a resident of Al-Burj, near Al-Dura in the Hebron district. He was a wanted terrorist-operative who had lived in hiding since the beginning of the ongoing violent Israeli-Palestinian confrontation. Recently he had also been detained and interrogated by the Palestinian security forces. It is possible that terrorist-operatives from Nablus were also involved in the attack.



The suicide bomber Ahmad Mahmoud Musharaqa (Alarabia TV, 31 March)

■ Hamas and the new government did not condemn the suicide bombing attack, and thus far, the movement's leaders have not related to it, although Hamas spokesmen emphasized “the right of the Palestinian people to protect itself” and called upon Israel to calm the situation and “avoid provocation.”

### **Potential mass-murder attacks within Israel thwarted**

■ During the past two weeks the Israeli security forces thwarted a number of attempts made by the terrorist organizations to infiltrate terrorists into Israel to carry out attacks, including suicide bombing attacks. The organization at the forefront of the attempts was the PIJ, which was responsible for most of the suicide bombing attacks during 2005. Some of the foiled attacks were to have been carried out **around the time of the Israel Knesset elections**. Hamas did not take part in the attempts.

■ The following attacks were thwarted:

✱ **A shooting attack:** On March 7, **Samih Maher Salameh Haddad** was arrested at the Erez crossing as he tried to enter Israel. He was to have received an automatic

weapon to carry out a shooting attack. He carried falsified medical documents, which were supposed to enable him to pass through the crossing. During interrogation he admitted that he had been recruited by the PIJ. He then underwent training and even participated in a number of Qassam rocket attacks.<sup>1</sup>



**Samih Maher Salameh Haddad**

- ✿ On March 21, after a car chase down the Tel Aviv-Jerusalem highway, a vehicle was captured, in which a 7-kilo (15.4 lb) explosive belt was found. One of the passengers arrested was a PIJ terrorist-operative who had been planning to carry out a suicide bombing attack.
  
- ✿ On March 22, the IDF arrested a PIJ operative in Ramallah who had been planning to carry out a suicide bombing attack in Israel. At the time of his arrest he was on his way to Jerusalem to pick up the explosive belt.
  
- ✿ On March 29, the IDF arrested an 18-year old Palestinian at the Beqa'ot checkpoint east of Nablus. An examination of his person revealed an explosive belt weighing 6 kg (about 13 lbs).

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<sup>1</sup> For further information see our Special Bulletin “A terrorist cell exposed in Nablus ,” [http://www.terrorism-info.org.il/malam\\_multimedia/English/eng\\_n/pdf/gj\\_jordan\\_e.pdf](http://www.terrorism-info.org.il/malam_multimedia/English/eng_n/pdf/gj_jordan_e.pdf).



**The explosive belt found on the youth at the Beqa'ot checkpoint (Photo: IDF spokesman)**

### **Rocket fire from the Gaza Strip to Israeli population centers in the western Negev**

■ During March there was no significant change in the number of located rockets fired from the Gaza Strip into Israel. A total of 68 hits were recorded,<sup>2</sup> as opposed to 75 during February.

■ An exceptional attack occurred on March 28, election day, shortly before 5:30 in the morning, **when for the first time a 122 mm Katyusha rocket was fired from the Gaza Strip into Israel**, falling near the industrial zone in Ashqelon. **Such rockets have a range of 20.4 km (12.7 miles)**. However, apparently because of a technical fault in its motor, it only traveled about 5 km (just over 3 miles). The PIJ claimed responsibility for the attack, and a spokesman for the organization said they were the first to acquire the long-range missiles. (Ma'a News Agency, March 29). There were no casualties and no property damage was caused.

■ It should be noted that the Qassam rockets fired at Israel from the Gaza Strip have a range of about 9 kms (about 5.6 miles). The presence of long-range rockets in the hands of the terrorist organizations in the Gaza Strip (most probably smuggled in from the Sinai peninsula) significantly increases the threat they pose to the population centers and installations in the Negev, putting Kiriyyat Gat and Nitzanim in the range of fire.

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<sup>2</sup> As of the morning of March 31.



] **Left: The crater caused by the rocket.**

**Right: The rocket's remains**

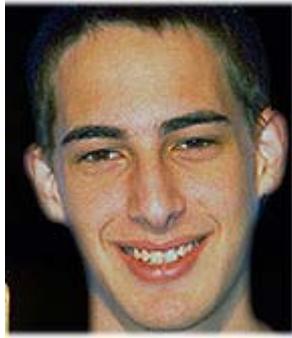
■ During the afternoon of March 30 two rockets were fired from the northern Gaza Strip. One fell in Kibbutz Carmia, causing one of the residents to go into shock. The PIJ claimed responsibility for the attack. The IDF responded with artillery fire from the air and sea.

### **Side charge placed near the fence in the Gaza Strip**

■ On March 23, IDF soldiers engaged in surveillance identified four terrorist-operatives placing a side charge near the fence separating Israel from the Gaza Strip, intending to detonate it as an IDF patrol passed by. Israeli soldiers, working in conjunction with the Air Force, opened fire, killing three of the terrorists. An explosive device weighing 25 kg (55 lbs) was found at the site. The terrorists belonged to the PIJ.

### **Terrorist cell responsible for terrorist attacks in Israel exposed in the Jenin district**

■ During an Israeli security forces action in Jenin on March 16, six PIJ terrorist-operatives and Fatah/Tanzim operatives were arrested. Among them were four PIJ operatives who had been involved in five suicide bombing attacks in 2005, in which 22 Israeli civilians were killed. **The terrorist infrastructure was planning additional attacks.** During the action Staff-sergeant Ido Shapira was killed.



**Staff-sergeant Ido Shapira (Photo: Army radio Internet site)**

- The PIJ terrorist-operatives arrested in Jenin were involved in the following attacks:
  - ✱ **February 25, 2005:** The suicide bombing attack at the Stage Club in Tel Aviv, which killed 5 Israelis.
  
  - ✱ **July 12, 2005:** The suicide bombing attack at the Sharon shopping mall in Netanya, which killed 5 Israelis.
  
  - ✱ **October 26, 2006:** The suicide bombing attack in the Hadera market, which killed 6 Israelis.
  
  - ✱ **December 5, 2005:** The second 2005 suicide bombing attack at the Sharon shopping mall, which killed 5 Israelis.
  
  - ✱ **December 29, 2005:** Two potential suicide bombers who were planning to carry out a double attack in Rosh Ha'ayin were arrested at an IDF checkpoint south of Tulkarm. They blew themselves up, killing the soldiers' commanding officer.

### **Terrorist cell exposed in the Hebron district**

- On March 1, **Ihab Ahmad Musa Tity**, a resident of Al-Aroub (a village north of Hebron), was arrested by the Israeli security forces. He was a PIJ terrorist sent from the Gaza Strip to the West Bank to set up a terrorist-operative infrastructure in the Hebron district, which was to use a variety of methods to carry out attacks against Israel. In 2000, Ihab Tity moved to the Gaza Strip to study at a university. In 2004 he was recruited by

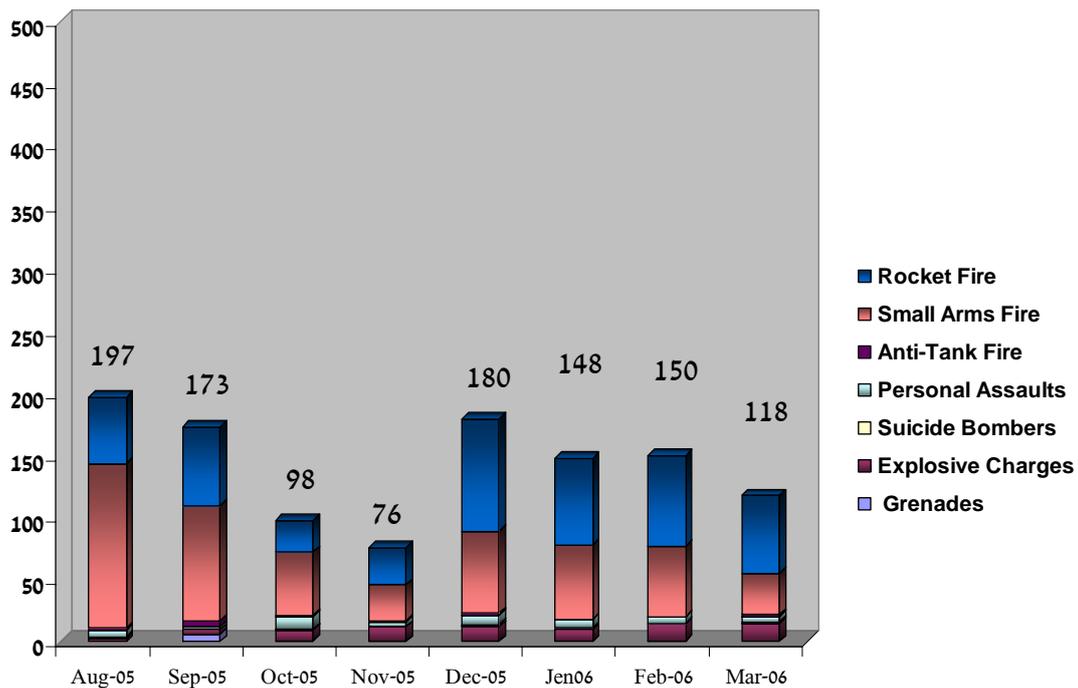
the PIJ and during 2005 underwent military training which qualified him as an explosives expert.<sup>3</sup>

### Popular Resistance Committees leader killed in car bomb

■ On March 31, Popular Resistance Committees (PRC) leader ‘Abd Abu Yussuf Qoqa was killed in a car bomb in the Gaza Strip. During the funeral procession a violent confrontation developed between the PRC and the Palestinian security forces, resulting in an unspecified number of dead and wounded. The PRC has accused the Palestinian security forces of being responsible for the killing. Israel has also been accused but has denied all involvement.

## Statistical data<sup>4</sup>

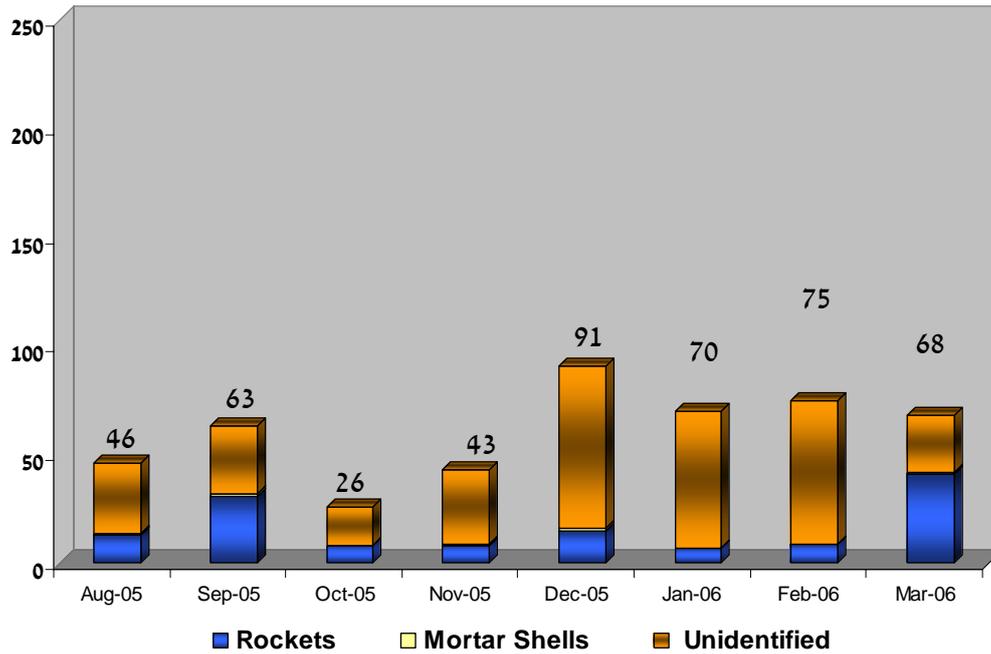
### Monthly distribution of the attacks carried out since the disengagement



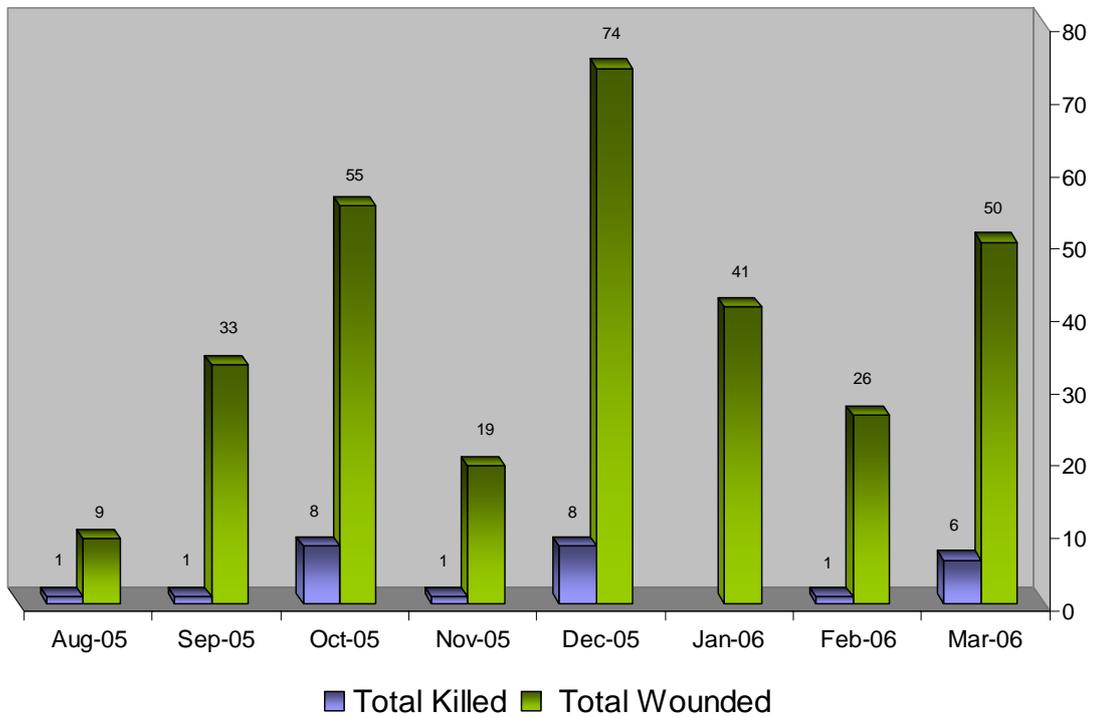
<sup>3</sup> For further information see our Special Bulletin “A terrorist cell exposed in Nablus,” at [http://www.terrorism-info.org.il/malam\\_multimedia/English/eng\\_n/pdf/gj\\_jordan\\_e.pdf](http://www.terrorism-info.org.il/malam_multimedia/English/eng_n/pdf/gj_jordan_e.pdf).

<sup>4</sup> As of the morning of March 31, 2006.

## Monthly distribution of rocket and mortar shells



## Monthly distribution of Israeli casualties



## Opening the Karni Crossing

■ On March 21, after eight additional days of closure (for the third time since the beginning of 2006), the Karni crossing was gradually opened to permit the passage into the Gaza Strip of food, humanitarian-aid products, commercial products and agricultural produce. The crossing had been closed after repeated warnings that the terrorist organizations were planning to carry out an attack there.

## The Internal Palestinian Arena

### The new Hamas government is sworn into office

■ On March 29, approximately two months after Hamas's sweeping victory in the Palestinian Legislative Council, the government was sworn into office in Gaza. Abu Mazen, who had been at the Arab summit meeting in Sudan, was present at the ceremony. The swearing-in was conducted by conference call, since some of the ministers live in the West Bank and others in the Gaza Strip.

■ The new government is comprised of veteran Hamas activists, who hold the key positions, technocrats and Hamas-affiliated professionals. An obvious effort has been made to present an attractive government, which includes young, well-educated members and will be able to undertake the reforms the Palestinian people expect. **Conspicuous by their absence are representatives from the other Palestinian organizations.** Hamas, which had hoped to stand at the head of a broad coalition government, was forced to form the government without a single senior political partner (Fatah) and even without minor partners (such as the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine.)<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> For further information see our Special Bulletin "The new Hamas government and its political platform," at [http://www.terrorism-info.org.il/malam\\_multimedia/English/eng\\_n/pdf/hamas\\_gov\\_e.pdf](http://www.terrorism-info.org.il/malam_multimedia/English/eng_n/pdf/hamas_gov_e.pdf).



**The new Hamas government is sworn into office: Upper left, Abu Mazen with Ismail Haniya, with Mahmoud al-Zahar (foreign minister) to the left and Said Siyam (interior and national security minister) to the right. Upper right, Naif Rajoub (religious endowments minister). Bottom, group picture of ministers who are Gaza Strip residents (From the Hamas Internet site, March 30).**

■ The government's composition is intended to show the Palestinian population (and the Arab/Muslim world and the international community) a government which is attractive, professional and responsible. However, **its hard core, which controls the three most important ministries, is made up of experienced veteran Hamas activists.** They rose to positions of leadership after many years in the ranks, and were even arrested a number of times by the Israeli security forces. That hard core, which is concentrated in the Gaza Strip, will have more influence on the way the government carries out its policies than all the technocrats in their professional ministries.

■ The Hamas government's political platform, which was also expressed in the sometimes ambiguous statements made by the movement heads, clearly reflect its radical Islamic ideology and its rigid fundamental positions, as they were expressed in the

Hamas charter of 1988.<sup>6</sup> They contradict the basic principles laid down by Abu Mazen in his letter of appointment to the new government, and do not fulfill the minimum demands made by the Israeli government and the international community, i.e., recognition of the State of Israel, disarming Hamas, renouncing terrorism and violence and ratifying the agreements and understandings arrive at by Israel and the Palestinians.<sup>7</sup>

■ In his inaugural speech, Ismail Haniya proposed instituting a dialogue with the international community, especially with the Quartet, without preconditions (i.e., without fulfilling the minimum demands set out before Hamas). He said that Hamas’s heading the government “could be the beginning of a solution to the crisis in the area, if the Palestinian people and their rights were recognized.” To those who came to celebrate the swearing-in in Gaza, Ismail Haniya said that “the government ministers are potential *shaheeds*” (Ma’a News Agency, March 29).

■ After the government had been sworn in, Abu Mazen said that in the long run, the Hamas government would have to adjust its platform and that he would allow Hamas a number of months to do so that it would be consistent with the PLO’s platform, which includes the recognition of Israel (Reuters, March 30).



**The three leading figures of the Hamas dream-team government: Ismail Haniya (center) (Al-Jazeera TV, March 28)**

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<sup>6</sup> For further information see our Special Bulletin “The Hamas Charter (1988),” at [http://www.terrorism-info.org.il/malam\\_multimedia/English/eng\\_n/pdf/hamas\\_charter.pdf](http://www.terrorism-info.org.il/malam_multimedia/English/eng_n/pdf/hamas_charter.pdf).

<sup>7</sup> For further information see our Special Bulletin “The new Hamas government and its political platform,” at [http://www.terrorism-info.org.il/malam\\_multimedia/English/eng\\_n/pdf/hamas\\_gov\\_e.pdf](http://www.terrorism-info.org.il/malam_multimedia/English/eng_n/pdf/hamas_gov_e.pdf).

## International responses to the establishment of the Hamas government

■ **The American government** instructed its diplomats and workers not to have any contact with the new government or with any entity subordinate to it after it had been sworn in. That was done to exert pressure and to motivate the Hamas government to recognize Israel and renounce violent activities against it. That decision is likely to limit the aid the United States gives the Palestinians, including in the field of security (Reuters, March 29).

■ The French Foreign Minister said that **the ball was now in Hamas's court** and that the international community viewed fulfillment of its minimum demands as the condition for relations with it. He noted that it was very important that Hamas recognize the government of Israel and especially the Oslo Accords, and that it “explicitly and publicly renounce violence” (French Embassy in America Website, March 27<sup>8</sup>). The European Union Commission repeated its call for Hamas to fulfill the three minimum demands posed for it by the international community (Die Welt, March 27).



] A cartoon depicting the Hamas government (Al-Mustaqbal, March 28)

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<sup>8</sup> [http://www.info-france-usa.org/news/statmnts/2006/larsen\\_un\\_blazy\\_statements032706.asp](http://www.info-france-usa.org/news/statmnts/2006/larsen_un_blazy_statements032706.asp).

# **The new Hamas government faces the challenges before it**

## **Economic crisis**

■ On of the most pressing problems the new Hamas government will have to deal with is the PA's serious economic situation. Even in his inaugural speech, prime minister Ismail Haniya said that the PA would need much more aid than had been allotted it by the Arab League, and that it was suffering from a very serious budget crisis.

■ On March 29 the Palestinian Legislative Council held an emergency meeting to discuss the budget. Omar 'Abd al-Razzeq, the new minister of finance, said that he intended to ask the Council to extend the legal period for ratifying the government budget until the end of June, because the previous government had not submitted its plans for the annual budget. It should be noted that at the Khartoum summit the PA's representatives and the Islamic Development Bank presented the delegates with a financial report. According to it, the Palestinians needed an immediate, additional \$350 million to enable the PA to provide essential services (Palestine Net Site, March 28).

■ On the eve of his swearing-in, Omar 'Abd al-Razzeq said that the near future would be difficult and that the Palestinian people would be required to tighten its collective belt. He added that the new government was planning many budget cuts, and that it was willing to enter into discussions with the Quartet and with international organizations without any preconditions. He expressed his hope that the economic agreements in force between Israel and the Palestinians would continue and said he was willing to have contacts with Israel regarding everything that had to do with customs duties (Washington Post, March 27).

## **Anarchy continues**

■ The new Hamas government will also be forced to cope with the problem of anarchy in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank. Fatah and the Palestinian security apparatus were involved in most of the confrontations which occurred recently; both are uncertain as to their futures. Some of the events were the following:

✿ Ten armed men belonging to Fatah/Al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades broke into the military hospital in the village of 'Absan (in the Khan Yunis district of the Gaza Strip) and demanded employment in the security apparatus (Ma'a News Agency, March 20).

✿ In the middle of the city of Gaza, 25 armed men staged a protest in front of the government office buildings. A firefight developed when police tried to prevent them from entering offices (Ma'a News Agency, March 20).

✿ Armed men tried to enter the offices of the electric company in Al-Nuseirat refugee camp (Ma'a News Agency, March 20).

## **The Hamas delegation continued its world tour**

■ The Hamas delegation, headed by Khaled Mashal, chief of the Hamas political bureau, continued its tour of the Arab/Muslim states, visiting Yemen (March 20), Bahrain (March 21) and Libya (March 23), where they met with Libyan leader Muammar Qaddafi and his foreign minister. The delegation discussed aid for the Hamas government with senior Libyans, especially financial aid (Hamas Internet site, March 23).



**Libya's Muammar Qaddafi greeting Ismail Haniya (Al-Jazeera TV, March 25)**

■ From Libya the delegation went to Kuwait (March 24) where it met with high-ranking members of the Kuwait government. Khaled Mashal described the visit as

“successful and beneficial.” During the visit it was announced that the delegation had received promises and commitments regarding moral and financial support from the Kuwait government (Al-Khaleej, UAE, March 26).

## **The elections in Israel through Palestinian eyes**

■ The Palestinian public expressed great interest in Israel’s elections. The Palestinian media followed the campaign closely and reported the results extensively. Palestinian spokesmen expressed their hope that it would be possible to advance the peace process and called upon Israel to abstain from implementing the unilateral disengagement plan and to return to the negotiating table. On the eve of the elections, Abu Mazen called upon Israelis to vote for “the option of peace.” He also warned Israel of what he called “unilateral solutions” (i.e., the unilateral partial plan) (Ramatan News Agency, March 27).

■ Nabil Abu Rudineh, Abu Mazen’s advisor, called upon the next Israeli government to start immediate negotiations with the PLO to implement the road map. He added that the Arab summit currently taking place in Sudan had stressed the need for the continuation of the peace process with Israel and recognition of it in return for a full withdrawal to the 1967 borders (Al-Ayam, March 29).

## Increased anti-Israeli incitement in the Palestinian media



**An anti-Israeli, anti-Semitic, anti-American cartoon drawn by Hamas-sympathetic Omayya Joha. The Arab world as a golf-ball about to be putted into the Israeli cup by the United States (and the Jews). (Al-Hayat Al-Jadeeda, the official Palestinian newspaper, March 22). It should be noted that there has recently been an increase in anti-Israeli incitement on Palestinian television.**