



Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center
at the Israel Intelligence' Heritage
& Commemoration Center (IICC)

News of the Israeli-Palestinian Confrontation

March 16-31

The summit meeting in Riyadh reaffirms the Arab peace initiative but ignores Palestinian terrorism...



Abu Mazen, Palestinian Authority chairman, and Ismail Haniya, prime minister of the Palestinian national unity government, arriving at the Riyadh summit meeting (Saudi Arabian TV, March 27)

...and on the ground the increase in rocket fire is led by the Palestinian Islamic Jihad, which strongly opposes the Arab initiative.



A PIJ squad firing rockets into Israel (PIJ Website, March 30)

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Overview

- The main event of the past two weeks was the Riyadh Arab summit meeting's reaffirmation of the 2002 Arab peace initiative. The initiative is based on Israel's full withdrawal from the territories occupied in 1967 and the establishment of an independent Palestinian state with East Jerusalem as its capital. In return, a peace agreement will be signed between the Arab states and Israel. The initiative also includes a paragraph relating to the achievement of a "just solution" for the problem of the Palestinian refugees based on Resolution 194 of the UN General Assembly of December 1948. The Arab initiative makes no mention of the cessation of terrorist attacks against Israel.
- Israel stated it hoped that the decisions of the Riyadh summit meeting would contribute to the efforts to advance the peace process with the Palestinians and the Arab world. Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert expressed his faith that within the next five years it would be possible to achieve peace in the Middle East. He did not reject the Arab initiative but had reservations regarding the mention of UN Resolution 194. Abu Mazen praised the initiative warmly and expressed his adherence to the Resolution 194's recommendations concerning the refugees. Tactical considerations prevented Hamas, which objects to the Arab initiative on principle because it includes recognition of the State of Israel, from expressing blatant opposition (while at the same time its senior officials continue proclaiming the right to continue terrorist attacks against Israel and their adherence to the concept of the Palestinians' "right to return"). The **Palestinian Islamic Jihad** expressed its total opposition to the Arab initiative, manifesting it by firing rockets into Israel from the Gaza Strip.

Important Events

The Gaza Strip

Hamas snipers shoot at Israelis near the fuel terminal in the Gaza Strip

- During the past two weeks **Hamas snipers** shot at Israelis near the fuel terminal next to Kibbutz Nahal Oz. On March 19 they critically wounded an Israeli working for the electric company; on March 26 there was more sniper fire but no casualties. Hamas claimed responsibility for the attacks; such attacks have been rare since the disengagement (August 2005).
- Hamas spokesmen claimed that the attacks were carried out in retaliation for Israeli activity and stressed that the movement had not abandoned its policy of “resistance” (i.e., violence and terrorism).
 - ✿ **Abu Obeida**, spokesman for the Izzedine al-Qassam Brigades, Hamas’s terrorist-operative wing, said that the **Izzedine al-Qassam Brigades were not bound by the ceasefire**. However, he also said that the gunfire was not aimed at the new government and that Hamas had made no political decision to escalate its military activity (Ma’an News Agency, March 19).
 - ✿ **Fawzi Barhoum**, a Hamas spokesman, justified the rocket fire at Nahal Oz by saying that his movement had **not abandoned military activity even though in power**. He said that Hamas adhered to “the program of resistance until the liberation of the Palestinian lands” (Filasteen Mubasher Website, March 26).

Increase in rocket fire into Israel

- During the second half of March there was an increase in the number of rockets fired at Israeli settlements in the western Negev (22 identified hits). The increase came after the relative reduction in attacks of the first two weeks of March (12

identified hits). On Wednesday, March 28, **the day the Arab summit meeting opened in Riyadh**, seven rockets were fired simultaneously. The PIJ claimed responsibility, as it did for most of the rocket attacks during March. **The Palestinian Authority makes no effort to prevent such attacks, which are a violation of the Gaza Strip ceasefire agreement.**

- In response to the volley of seven rockets, an IDF force attacked a PIJ terrorist squad in the northern Gaza Strip which was about to fire another volley. The force shot at them before they could launch the rockets, wounding four (AP, March 28).

Judea and Samaria

Stabbing attack prevented

A knife was found in the possession of a Palestinian woman who aroused the suspicions of IDF soldiers stationed at the Hawara roadblock (near Nablus). The soldiers succeeded in detaining the terrorist. During interrogation she admitted that she had intended to kill an IDF soldier at the roadblock.

Counterterrorist activities

- IDF forces continued their counterterrorist activities in Judea and Samaria:

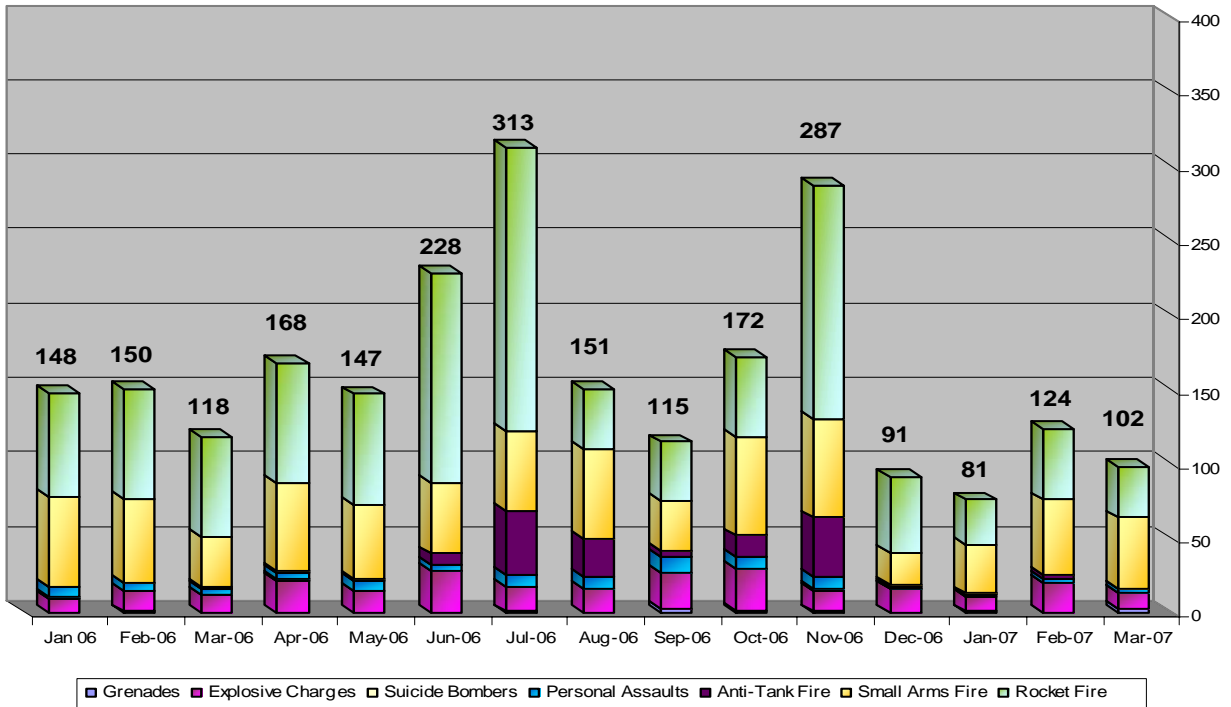
- ✿ On March 27 the IDF exchanged fire with terrorists during an operation in Nablus, killing two Fatah-Tanzim operatives. The two had been involved in detonating several explosive charges in Nablus, including one which killed an IDF soldier and wounded five in July 2006.

- ✿ On March 28 Muhammad Qatanah, PIJ head in Nablus, was detained.

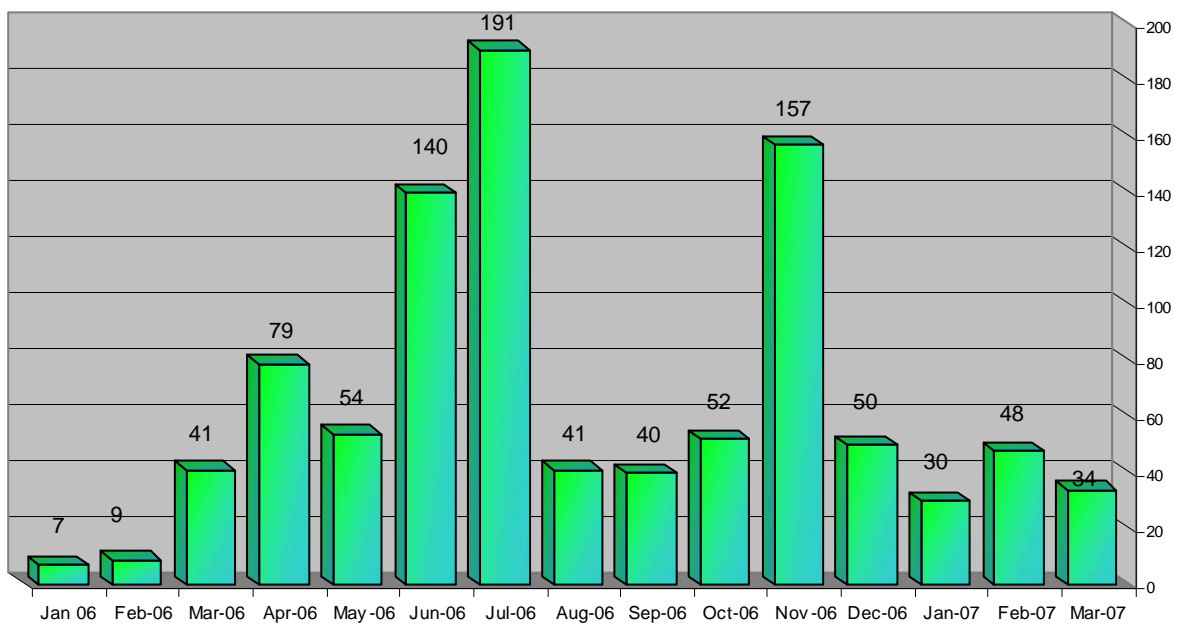
- ✿ On March 28, during counterterrorist activities in Qalqilya, Israeli security forces detained 19 Hamas operatives, two of them senior.

Statistical Data

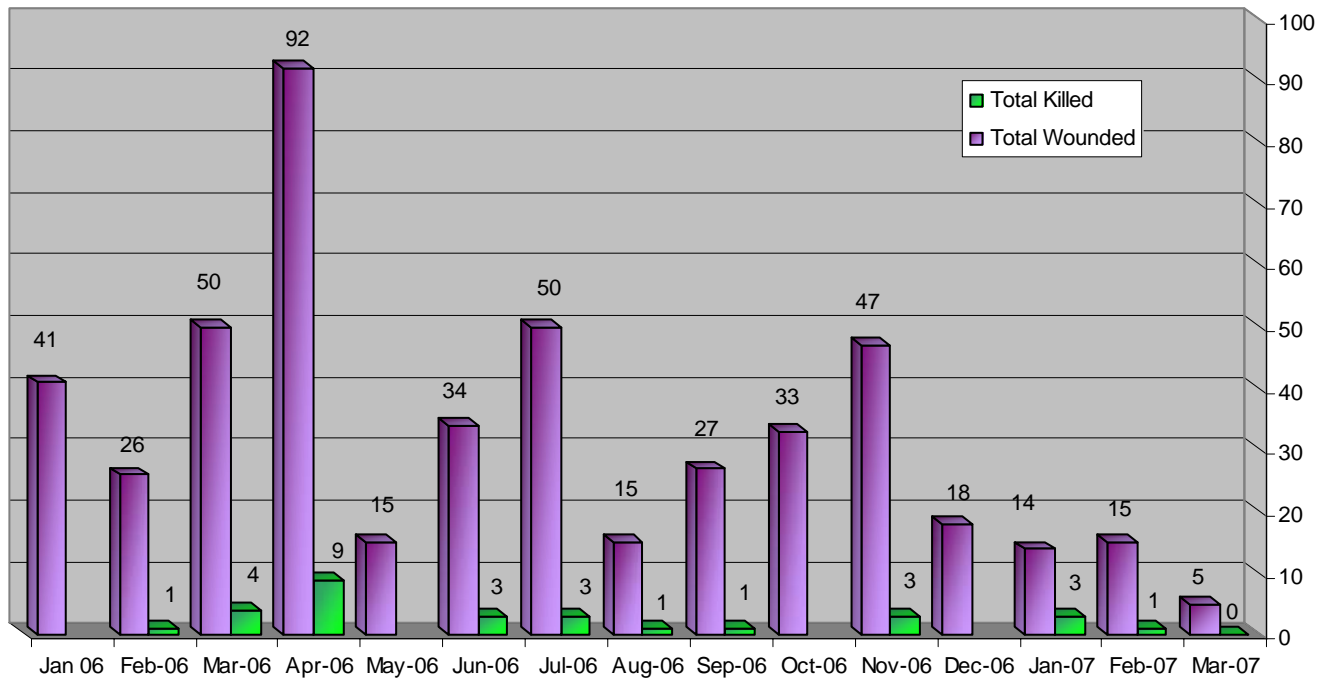
Monthly distribution of attacks



Monthly distribution of rocket hits



Monthly distribution of Israeli casualties



The Arab Summit Meeting in Saudi Arabia Reaffirms the Arab Peace Initiative



King Abdullah of Saudi Arabia greets Abu Mazen and Ismail Haniya on their arrival in Riyadh (Hamas Website, March 27)

- The 19th Arab summit meeting took place in Riyadh, the capital of Saudi Arabia, on March 28 and 29. It was overshadowed by the escalation of the regional struggle between the radical Iranian-Syrian axis and the pragmatic, pro-Western states

(chiefly Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Jordan) and by the internal tensions in the various arenas (chiefly Iraq, the Palestinian arena and Lebanon). The decisions reached by the participants stressed the need for Arab unity and for joint Arab action to deal with both the internal and external challenges facing the Arab world.

- One of the topics dealt with was the reaffirmation and renewed marketing of the Arab initiative, which was ratified at the Arab summit meeting in Beirut in March 2002. The objective was to send a message of renewed Arab unity, to ease the struggle against the Iranian threat (although the decisions reached **avoided** directly mentioning Iran) and to establish Saudi Arabia's status as the leader of the Arab world.
- The Arab peace initiative adopted by the Beirut summit meeting was based on the Saudi Arabian initiative proposed by the current king of Saudi Arabia, Abdullah bin Abd al-Aziz, who was then crown prince. It came into being at the end of 2001 after a full year of the Palestinian terrorist campaign (the "second intifada"). Saudi Arabia hoped to use it to brake the escalating Palestinian-Israeli conflict and at the same time to improve its relations with the United States and the West in the aftermath of September 11, 2001. The Saudi Arabian initiative was revealed in an interview given by crown prince Abdullah to New York Times columnist Thomas Friedman in February 2002. The initiative was later changed (stiffening its position regarding Israel) until it was accepted by all the Arab states in Beirut, when it became "the Arab initiative."
- The Riyadh summit meeting ratified, among other things, the complete text of the Arab initiative, including the paragraph dealing with the Palestinian refugees,

which is unacceptable to Israel.¹ The initiative, according to the final statement made by the leaders of the Arab states in Riyadh, is intended to prepare the way for a peaceful settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict relying on legitimate international decisions, and on the principle of land in return for peace.



Abu Mazen and Ismail Haniya with King Abdullah. The summit meeting enabled Hamas to position itself at the center of the pan-Arab stage as Abu Mazen's equal (Hamas Website, March 27).

Main points of the Beirut summit meeting

- The following are the main points adopted by the summit meeting in Beirut in March 27-28, 2002:²
 - ✿ The Arab League Council asks Israel to reexamine its policies and to turn to peace, announcing that a just peace (*al-salam al-'adil*) is its strategic option.
 - ✿ The Arab League Council demands that Israel take the following steps:
 - **A full withdrawal** (*al-insihab al-kamil*) from the occupied Arab lands, including the "Syrian Golan," to the June 4, 1967 lines and from the lands still occupied by Israel in south Lebanon.³

¹ **The paragraph does not appear in the original Saudi Arabian initiative.** In the interview with Thomas Friedman, Abdullah mentioned only Israel's full withdrawal from the occupied territories in return for the full normalization of relations, and no mention was made of the Palestinian refugees. The following appeared in the February 17, 2002 issue of the New York Times: "full withdrawal from all the occupied territories, in accord with U.N resolutions, including in Jerusalem, for full normalization of relations." **The paragraph relating to the refugees was added at the Beirut summit meeting under pressure from Syria and radical Arab countries.**

² Based on the version appearing in Arabic on the Arab League Website. See http://www.arableagueonline.org/las/arabic/details_ar.jsp?art_id=1777&level_id=202#.

- **Finding a just solution (*hall 'adi*) for the Palestinian refugee problem to be agreed upon in accordance with UN General Assembly Resolution 194.**⁴
- **Acceptance of the existence of an independent, sovereign Palestinian state** on the Palestinian territories occupied since June 4, 1967 in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, with East Jerusalem as its capital.
- ☀ [In return,] the Arab states will do the following:
 - [The Arab states will] consider thereby that the **Arab-Israeli conflict has ended and enter into a peace agreement** between them and Israel while assuring security for all the countries in the region.
 - [The Arab states] will establish **natural relations** (*'alaqat tabi'iyya*)⁵ with Israel as part of an overall peace.
 - [The Arab states] will guarantee a **rejection of all forms of permanent settlement of the Palestinians** [i.e., refugees] [in the Arab countries] (*al-tawtin*) which contradicts the special circumstances [current] in the Arab host states.
- ☀ The Arab League calls upon the government of Israel and all Israelis to accept this initiative to preserve the chance for the establishment of peace and to prevent bloodshed,⁶ in a way that will enable the Arab states and Israel to live in

³ Israel does not “occupy” lands in south Lebanon. It is clearly a hint to the Shebaa Farms (Har Dov), which are part of the northern Golan Heights and do not belong to Lebanon. It can be assumed that the Lebanese government demanded the reference be inserted into the initiative. Representing Israel as “occupying” Lebanese territory is exploited by Hezbollah for reinforcing the claim that its continued terrorist attacks are legitimate.

⁴ Paragraph 11 of UN General Assembly Resolution 194 (December 11, 1948), reads as follows: “The refugees wishing to return to their homes and live at peace with their neighbours should be permitted to do so at the earliest practicable date, and that compensation should be paid for the property of those choosing not to return and for loss of or damage to property which, under principles of international law or in equity, should be made good by the Governments or authorities responsible” (from the UN Website). It should be noted that the Arab initiative does not specifically use the expression “the right to return.”

⁵ The wording avoids using the broader, charged term “normalization” (*tatbi*). “Natural relations” is general and does not necessarily denote the nature of the relations which would be instituted between the Arab states and Israel. It does however hint that such relations might be established or that the Arab boycott of Israel would be or might be lifted. However, it also enables the Arab states to maintain a “cold peace” of the sort currently in force between Israel and Egypt. Those relations express formal recognition of Israel and establishing diplomatic relations, but they are shallow and do not include social or cultural relations.

⁶ Beyond a general, non-binding expression the initiative makes **no mention of the cessation of Palestinian terrorism against Israel**, and at a time (the eve of the suicide bombing attack at the Park Hotel in Netanya) when Palestinian terrorism had reached unprecedented heights.

peace side by side and provide a secure future of prosperity and stability for future generations.

- The Riyadh summit meeting announced the creation of a “mechanism” to market the Arab peace initiative. A special committee of ministers was to be set up (a usual step in Arab summit meetings) which would establish “working teams.” The teams would make the contacts necessary to advance the initiative with the UN General Secretary, the member nations of the Security Council, the Quartet and other elements aware of the peace process (hinting at Israel, which is not specifically mentioned) (Al-Jazeera TV, March 29).

Preliminary Responses to the Riyadh Summit Meeting’s Reaffirmation of the Arab Initiative

Israel

- A Foreign Ministry spokesman, in a preliminary response noted the following on March 29:

“Israel is sincerely interested in pursuing a dialogue with those Arab states desiring peace with Israel to promote a process of normalization and cooperation. Israel hopes that the Riyadh Summit will contribute to that effort.

Israel’s position with regard to the peace process with the Palestinians is founded on fundamental principles, the most central of which is the existence of two nation-states, each addressing the national aspirations of its own people – Israel for the Jewish people and Palestine for the Palestinian people – and with both states coexisting in peace, free of the threat of terrorism and violence.

To that end a direct dialogue between Israel and the Palestinians is necessary.”

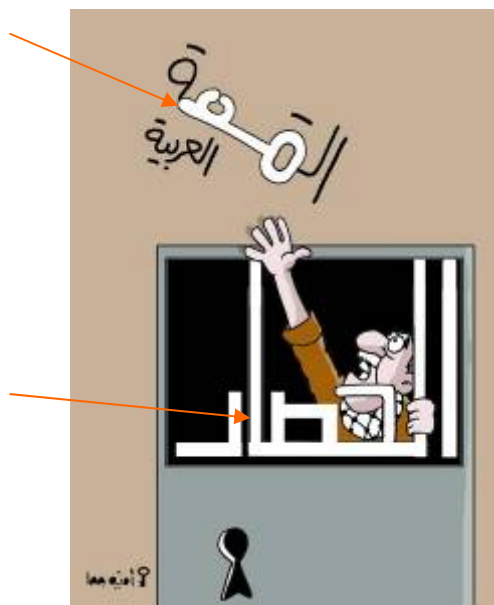
- On March 28 Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert told the Israeli daily Hebrew newspaper Haaretz he had faith that during the next five years it would be possible to reach a comprehensive peace agreement with the Arab states and the Palestinians. He related positively to the Saudi Arabian initiative but had reservations about the Arab

initiative which mentioned UN Resolution 194. Olmert stated that the Saudi Arabian initiative contained interesting ideas “and we are willing to discuss them and hear from the Saudi Arabians about their position and to tell them what our position is.” He added that he would be happy to participate in a regional conference which would support negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians (Haaretz, March 30, 2007). In an interview with Time Magazine the prime minister said that if he could meet with King Abdullah he would surprise him with what he had to say. He added that the Saudi Arabian peace initiative’s approach was very interesting (Haaretz, April 1).

The Palestinians

The Arab summit

The blockade



Palestinian hopes that the Arab summit meeting will help relieve some of the international pressure on them (the “blockade”). The cartoon was drawn by Omayya Joha, known for her Hamas affiliation. It makes no reference to the hope that the summit meeting will help advance peace between Israel and the Palestinians (Hamas Website, March 30)

Palestinian Authority chairman, Abu Mazen

■ Palestinian Authority chairman Abu Mazen and national unity government prime minister Ismail Haniya headed the Palestinian delegation to the Riyadh summit conference. As opposed to Hamas officials and spokesmen, who tried to keep from

revealing their real attitude to the Arab initiative (See below), Abu Mazen warmly praised the initiative and called upon the Arab states to make a serious effort to market it to the international community.

■ The points of Abu Mazen's statement regarding the Arab initiative were the following (taken from Palestinian TV and the Palestinian News Agency, March 27):

✿ The Arab peace initiative is the greatest opportunity to find a solution for the crisis in the Middle East. Any failure would mean the destruction of hope for peace in the future.

✿ No changes should be made in the initiative because it is "completely balanced" and ensures the "rights" of both sides. The Palestinians will receive a country of their own and a "solution for the refugee problem," and the Arab and Muslim countries will normalize their relations with Israel.

✿ The initiative should be marketed to the nations of the world because, according to Abu Mazen, it has not been properly understood or explained, and has even been "corrupted by a number of factors" (Abu Mazen was careful not to clarify who or what the factors were or how they had "corrupted" the initiative).

✿ In principle, there is no way of escaping from having contacts with Israel. He said he had recently set up a schedule of bi-weekly meetings with prime minister [Olmert], at which mutual problems would be raised, as would fundamental problems related to the final status agreement.

✿ As to the issue of the refugees, Abu Mazen said (according to the Palestinian News Agency) that "We adhere to the literal text of UN General Assembly Resolution 194 of 1949 [sic, i.e., 1948]." He said that the resolution was also represented in the Arab initiative, which called for "a just and agreed solution for the refugees according to Resolution 194."

■ In a speech given at the final session of the summit meeting Abu Mazen praised the reaffirmation of the Arab initiative and called for the **establishment of a mechanism** for implementing it and finding suitable ways to turn the initiative from a statement of principles to a practical program (Palestinian News Agency, March 29).

- **Salam Fiyjad**, the finance minister of the national unity government, urged the Arab leaders to provide the PA with urgent financial aid and to support its budget (Al-Hayat Al-Jadeeda, March 29). He said that the PA needed \$2.7 billion for the 2007 fiscal year and expressed his hope that the Arab and European countries would help cover the PA's budgetary deficit.

Hamas

- Hamas opposed the Arab initiative on principle because it included recognition of Israel and the end of the conflict. Nevertheless, Hamas prime minister Ismail Haniya joined the delegation to Riyadh, and so far Hamas spokesmen have not expressed blatant opposition to the initiative, preferring to remain vague and not reveal their true position regarding it.
- In our assessment, there are a number of reasons for Hamas' position: Hamas does not desire a confrontation with Saudi Arabia, Egypt and the other countries which support both the initiative and the Palestinian national unity government; it is interested in preserving internal Palestinian unity following the Mecca Accord and the establishment of the national unity government; Hamas expects the Arab initiative to help relieve international economic and political pressures; and outweighing all of the above is Hamas' awareness that its opposition to the initiative and its support for the continuation of the use of terrorism (**which the Arab initiative does not mention at all**) significantly reduce the chances of its being implemented.
- Senior Hamas officials expressed the movement's adherence to its extremist, uncompromising principles regarding the conflict with Israel (**principles which contradict the Arab initiative**) and at the same time avoided indulging in discussions of the Arab initiative and rejecting it outright. For example:
 - ✿ **Khaled Mashaal**, head of Hamas' political bureau, while on a visit to Algiers where he participated in the Conference of the Jerusalem International Foundation, denied that Hamas had abandoned its military jihad when it took

over the government and said that it was determined to continue with the “resistance” (i.e., violence and terrorism). However, he noted the need to be enterprising and to go from “political defense” to “political offense” (El-Khabar, Algeria, March 27). On another occasion he said that “the series of concessions has to be stopped. We will agree to no concessions regarding Jerusalem, Al-Aqsa and the right to return” (Kuwaiti News Agency reporting from Algiers, March 26).

✿ Ismail Haniya, national unity government prime minister, told a Reuters reporter that his organization would not oppose the Arab initiative, but that **it would never give up the Palestinian refugees’ “right to return.”** He called upon the leaders of the Arab states not to compromise regarding the basic rights of the Palestinians, central to which was the refugees’ “right to return” (Reuters, Riyadh, March 28).

✿ **Muhammad Nizal**, a member of Hamas’ political bureau, who also attended the Algerian Jerusalem conference, said it was still too early to speak of Hamas’ position regarding the Arab initiative. That was because, he said, Israel was opposed to the initiative from the start and that therefore it would not be wise to enter into sterile, meaningless political arguments about the initiative (Hamas Website, March 27).

✿ **Khalil Abu Leila**, responsible for Hamas’ foreign relations, said that he did not believe that the “Zionist entity” would agree to the Arab initiative. Therefore, he said, the PLO should be given another chance to deal with the “Zionist entity,” but that it would have to be done without the Arabs’ making concessions in return for Israel’s agreement to the initiative (Al-Aqsa satellite TV, March 27). He noted that Hamas would not participate in any political process “and if the [Arab] initiative was accepted... the PLO would handle the negotiations, which would be sterile and useless” (Al-Quds Al-Arabi, March 28).

The Palestinian Islamic Jihad

■ Unlike the vagueness of Hamas spokesmen, the result of the movement’s unity governmentl commitments, **the PIJ expressed determined opposition to the Arab peace initiative** because of the decisions which recognize the right of the State of Israel to exist. **Ziyad Nakhleh**, deputy secretary of the organization (who lives in

Damascus), told the Iranian TV channel Al-'Alam that the Arab leaders meeting in Riyadh were not authorized to make concessions to the "Zionists" regarding "historical Palestine." He added that the PIJ's position was that the idea of a Palestinian state within the 1967 borders side by side with Israel should not be discussed (Al-'Alam, March 28).

The international arena

- A State Department spokesman congratulated the Riyadh summit meeting for having ratified the 2002 Arab initiative for a settlement to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. "That is something we view as very positive...The United States has no interest in seeking revision to the initiative..." The foreign ministers of the European Union and the UN Secretary General also expressed support for the Arab initiative.

The Internal Palestinian Arena

The Palestinian national unity government starts work

- The Palestinian national unity government met for the first time on March 19 with Abu Mazen presiding at a video conference between Gaza and Ramallah. According to Mustafa Barghouti, the government's information minister, the meeting focused on formulating plans to lift the international siege and to improve civilian security (Al-Hayat Al-Jadeeda , March 19).

- Ministerial authority was also transferred to the various new ministers. In addition, plans were made (according to a presidential decree issued by Abu Mazen) to reestablish the national security council, headed by Muhammad Dahlan (whom Hamas continues to oppose). According to the decree there will be **Hamas representatives** on the council, among them prime minister Ismail Haniya and Hani al-Qawasmi, the new interior minister (Al-Ayyam, March 19).

■ While elements within Fatah praised Muhammad Dahlan's appointment, it caused a wave of angry reactions within Hamas. The Hamas faction's spokesman in the Palestinian Legislative Council claimed that not only should the appointment never have been made, but that it was illegal as well, in that according to the Palestinian basic law it was impossible for a member of the Legislative Council to receive another government appointment (Ma'an News Agency Website, March 19). The matter of Dahlan's appointment was transferred to the Legislative Council's committee for law and justice (Al-Ayyam, March 20).

Violent confrontations and anarchy continue, even after the establishment of the national unity government

- Even after the establishment of the national unity government, and despite the calls from senior Fatah and Hamas officials to preserve national unity and rise above disputes, **violence and anarchy continued to plague the Gaza Strip.** Operatives in the field on both sides and members of local clans continued fighting amongst themselves and paid no attention to the mediation efforts of senior Fatah and Hamas figures. The propaganda war between the sides was also renewed.
- Prominent among violent manifestations were the following:
 - ✿ On March 21 two Force 17 (Fatah) were shot at and wounded.
 - ✿ On March 21 there were abductions on both sides: operatives of the Palestinian Preventive Security, a lecturer at the Islamic University in Gaza (who was released three days later) and a judge affiliated with Hamas.
 - ✿ On March 21 there were violent confrontations between Fatah and Hamas operatives in Beit Lahia, during which an attempt was made to fire a rocket at the house of a Hamas operative. One man was killed and eight were wounded.
 - ✿ On March 22 a Hamas operative and a four year-old boy were killed during violent confrontations between Executive Force operatives and one of the clans in Gaza City.

- ✿ On March 24 armed Executive Force operatives opened fire on national security headquarters in Khan Yunis.
- ✿ On March 25 five members of the Arafat family from Khan Yunis were wounded when Executive Force operatives opened fire on them.
- ✿ On March 28 a commander of the Izzedine al-Qassam Brigades and the Executive Force in Khan Yunis was wounded when shots were fired at his vehicle in Gaza City. On the same day a Izzedine al-Qassam Brigades operative and two of his body guards were wounded in the northern Gaza Strip when shots were fired at them.
- ✿ On March 27 the convoy of interior minister Hani al-Qawasmi was attacked with gunfire by angry civilians when it arrived at the Bedouin village of Um al-Nasr after a local sewage reservoir collapsed. A number of individuals in the convoy were wounded.

Israel and the International Arena

The position of the Quartet and the United States regarding the national unity government

- The foreign ministers of the Quartet issued a statement following the establishment of the Palestinian national unity government, praising the lull in the internal Palestinian confrontations. **However, they made it clear that the Quartet demanded that the three basic conditions it had set down be fulfilled**, and that it encouraged the national unity government to approach their position. The Quartet also made it clear that the government would be examined not only on the basis of its published platform, but on the basis of its actions. The foreign ministers also announced that the current temporary international mechanism for financial support would be extended for three months.
- During a hearing held in the House of Representatives on March 21, American secretary of state Condoleezza Rice said that the renewed request for aid to the

security apparatus controlled by Abu Mazen would be transferred to the Congress in the coming days. Elements within the American administration estimated that the amount of the aid would be decreased and that there would be more supervision over the money because the administration was afraid some of it would fall into the hands of Hamas (New York Times, March 21).

Marketing the new government to the international community

- As part of the efforts being made to market the new government and to attempt to ease international pressures, Hamas foreign minister **Ziyad Abu Amro** met with his Belgian counterpart. Following the meeting Abu Amru said that the Palestinians would make every effort to clarify their position to make it easier for friends in Europe who were interested in normalizing relations with them (Al-Quds, March 25). Salam Fiyad, the Palestinian finance minister, is also expected to leave for Europe to examine ways of easing pressures and transferring financial support to the PA (Al-Ayyam, March 24).

The American secretary of state on another round of visits

- [On March 26 American secretary of state Condoleezza Rice arrived in the Middle East to meet with members of the Israeli and Palestinian governments in an attempt to define the topics necessary for an Israeli-Palestinian agreement to a dialogue for to the establishment of a Palestinian state. After the meeting with Abu Mazen, Condoleezza Rice reiterated America's commitment to finding a solution based on the two-state concept. She said the Road Map had to be followed, but that did not prevent a discussion of their goal.
- On March 27, in summing up her visit to the Middle East, Rice said that it had been decided to establish a **bi-weekly discussion channel** between Ehud Olmert and Abu Mazen. She said it would be used to discuss concrete, daily issues (such as Palestinian freedom of movement, managing the crossings and preventing weapons from being smuggled into the Gaza Strip) and to formulate a "political

horizon” in accordance with the Road Map. However, she also said that it was too early to discuss negotiations for a permanent solution and that the bilateral channel would not replace American mediation (English Al-Jazeera TV and AP, March 27).