



**Intelligence and Terrorism
Information Center
Israel Intelligence Heritage
and Commemoration Center**

News of the Israeli-Palestinian Confrontation

August 1-15, 2007

Terrorist attack in the Old City of Jerusalem



Police standing next to the body of an Israeli Arab killed during a chase after he snatched a security guard's gun (Photo: Omar Awad for Reuters, August 10)

Ehud Olmert meets Abu Mazen



Ehud Olmert meets Abu Mazen in Jericho (Photo: Omar Rashid for Reuters, August 6)

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Overview

- The long-term quiet in the Old City of Jerusalem was broken by a shooting attack during which an Israeli Arab snatched a security guard's gun at the entrance to the Ateret Cohanim yeshiva, shot him in the shoulder and fled. In the exchange of fire, ten passersby were also injured. At the same time, the rocket fire at the western Negev settlements continued, at the rate of few dozen a month.
- Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert and Palestinian Chairman Abu Mazen continued their scheduled meetings. At the meeting on August 6 the Palestinians requested an easing of the situation at the crossing points roadblocks. Saeb Erikat, head PLO negotiator, stated that a series of meetings had been scheduled between the two leaders to discuss permanent arrangements in preparation for the conference in Washington this coming fall.
- On the ground, the Hamas government continues the process of consolidating its position in the Gaza Strip while the Fatah government does the same in Judea and Samaria. Both processes accompanied by violent clashes, mud-slinging campaigns and attempts by both to limit the freedom of action of the other.

Important Events

Shooting attack in the Old City in Jerusalem

🌍 In the early afternoon on Friday, August 10, an Israeli Arab approached two security guards stationed at the entrance of the Ataret Cohanim yeshiva in the old city of Jerusalem, snatched one of their weapons, shot the guard in the shoulder and tried to flee. The other guard ran after him. During the chase, the two shot at each other as they ran through the streets of the Old City. The security guard, who was slightly wounded, shot and killed the attacker. Ten innocent bystanders also suffered various degrees of wounds.

🌍 The Israeli Arab who carried out the attack was Ahmad Mahmoud Khatib from the Galilee town of Kafr Manda. Three Palestinian terrorist organizations claimed responsibility for the attack: Fatah, the Palestinian Islamic Jihad and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (Ma'an News Agency, August 11). A group calling itself the Battalions of the Free People of Galilee also claimed responsibility. The Battalions of the Free People of Galilee is the Arab terrorist group which was also responsible for the abduction and murder of IDF soldier Oleg Shaihat in July 2003. The group claimed that Ahmad Khatib wanted to avenge the death of Muhammad Khatib, Oleg Shaihat's killer, who was killed by the Israeli security forces.¹

¹ In June 2004 indictments were handed down against five members of a Battalions of the Free People of Galilee squad, residents of Kafr Cana and Kafr Manda in the Galilee. The five were accused of conspiring to perpetrate a crime under aggravating circumstances, terrorist organization activities and abductions under aggravating circumstances, etc. The squad was captured while shooting at a Border Police patrol car at the Rimon Junction in the Lower Galilee. The squad leader, Muhammad Khatib, was killed by the Israeli security forces in April 2004. It was later discovered that he was also behind the murder of IDF soldier Oleg Shaihat in July 2003. In June 2004 an IDF soldier was stabbed at the Golani Junction, an attack orchestrated by Muhammad Khatib's brother, who claimed he carried out the attack to avenge his death (Ynet, July 2004).

Rocket fire

🌐 Rocket fire aimed at the western Negev settlements continued. During the first two weeks of August **34 rockets** were fired, compared with 23 during the first half of July. One of the rockets hit a kindergarten in Sderot, which was empty because of the summer vacation. There were no casualties; nearby buildings were damaged (Ynet, August 6). Since the Hamas takeover of the Gaza Strip on June 15, there has been **an average of 13 rockets a week** (See Graph). **The overall trend of monthly distribution since May 2007 has been a decrease in the extent of rocket fire** (See the Statistical Data).

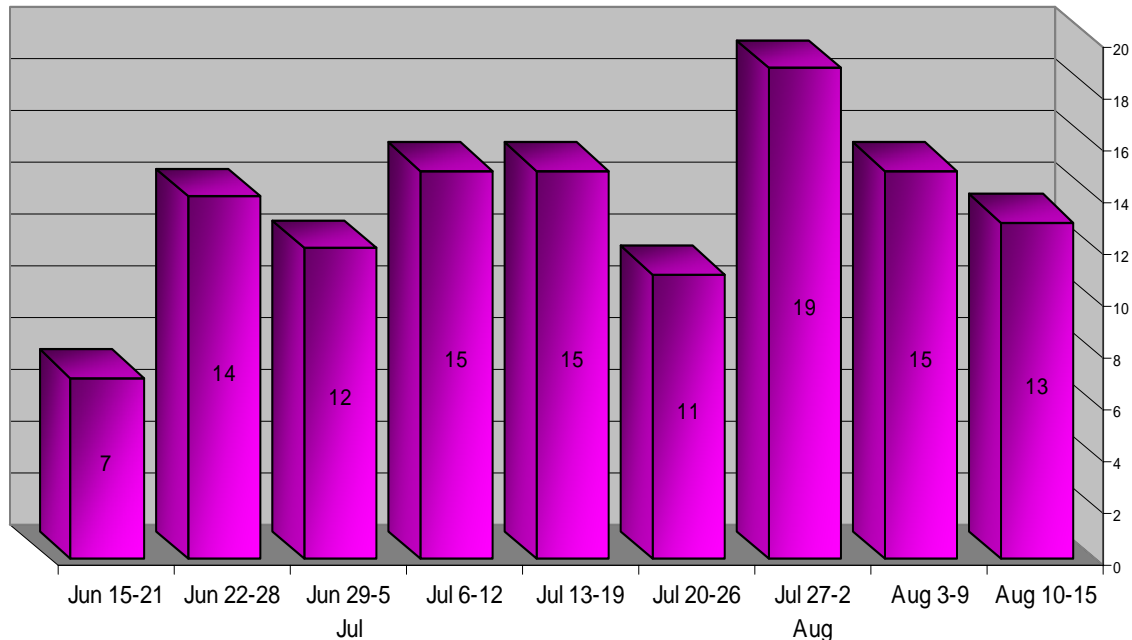


The PIJ takes responsibility for firing three rockets in retaliation for the targeted killing of a senior organization member (Al-Aqsa TV, August 3)

🌐 Responsibility for most of the rocket attacks, as in previous weeks, was claimed by the **Palestinian Islamic Jihad**. Hamas has refrained from attacking Israel with rockets and focuses on firing mortar shells, sniper fire and launching RPGs at the IDF forces operating within the Gaza Strip or near the security fence.

Rocket fire since the Hamas takeover of the Gaza Strip

Weekly distribution



Terrorist attack foiled when an explosive device was discovered at a roadblock near Nablus

🌐 A terrorist operative detained at the Salem roadblock near Nablus and interrogated by the security forces led the soldiers to an explosive device weighing 10 kg (22 lbs). The device was hidden in the carcass of a sheep lying on the road between Alon Moreh and Hawara in Samaria. Based on information provided by the detained terrorist, the IDF concluded that the device was going to be used to attack either one of the settlements in the area or IDF soldiers operating in the region (IDF Spokesman, August 6)



The explosive device and the carcass in which it was hidden (IDF Spokesman, August 6, 2007).

Counterterrorist Activities

The Gaza Strip

During the first two weeks of August the Israeli security forces continued their counterterrorist activities along the security fence and carried out pinpoint air and ground attacks against terrorist operatives in the Gaza Strip. Particularly comprehensive operations were carried on August 14 in the region of Absan al-Jadeeda (near Khan Yunis) in the southern Gaza Strip, and Beit Lahiya in the north.

According to Palestinian reports, ten Palestinians were killed in Absan, five of them Hamas operatives (Wafa News Agency, August 14). During the operation weapons were seized, including an explosive belt and a side charge, both ready for use. The activity in the northern Gaza Strip revealed a tunnel shaft 20 meters (22 yards) long inside a tomato hothouse about 750 meters (half a mile) from the security fence. In our assessment the tunnel was intended for offensive purposes, such as infiltrating terrorists or exploding it under an IDF post. During the activity the IDF detained 120 residents for questioning.



Hamis snipers shooting at IDF soldiers (Al-Aqsa TV, August 14)



Evacuating Palestinians wounded by the IDF attacks (Al-Jazeera TV, August 14)

🌍 The following events were also noteworthy:

- ✿ On August 9 IDF soldiers killed a Palestinian who approached the Sufa Crossing in the southern Gaza Strip. The soldiers suspected him of being a terrorist trying to lay a side charge and called to him to halt. When he did not comply and continued toward the crossing, the soldiers fired their weapons in the air, and as he approached closer they shot him.
- ✿ On August 8 two armed Palestinians, Hamas operatives, were killed in an exchange of fire with IDF soldiers in the northern Gaza Strip.
- ✿ On August 4 the Israeli Air Force struck a car carrying several PIJ operatives and a truck near Rafah in the southern Gaza Strip. One of the terrorists and a civilian in a passing car were killed. Five other people were injured.

Judea and Samaria

🌍 Security force counterterrorist activities continued in Judea and Samaria as well, especially in the large cities. They included detentions, weapons seizures and making an acte de présence. The following events are noteworthy:

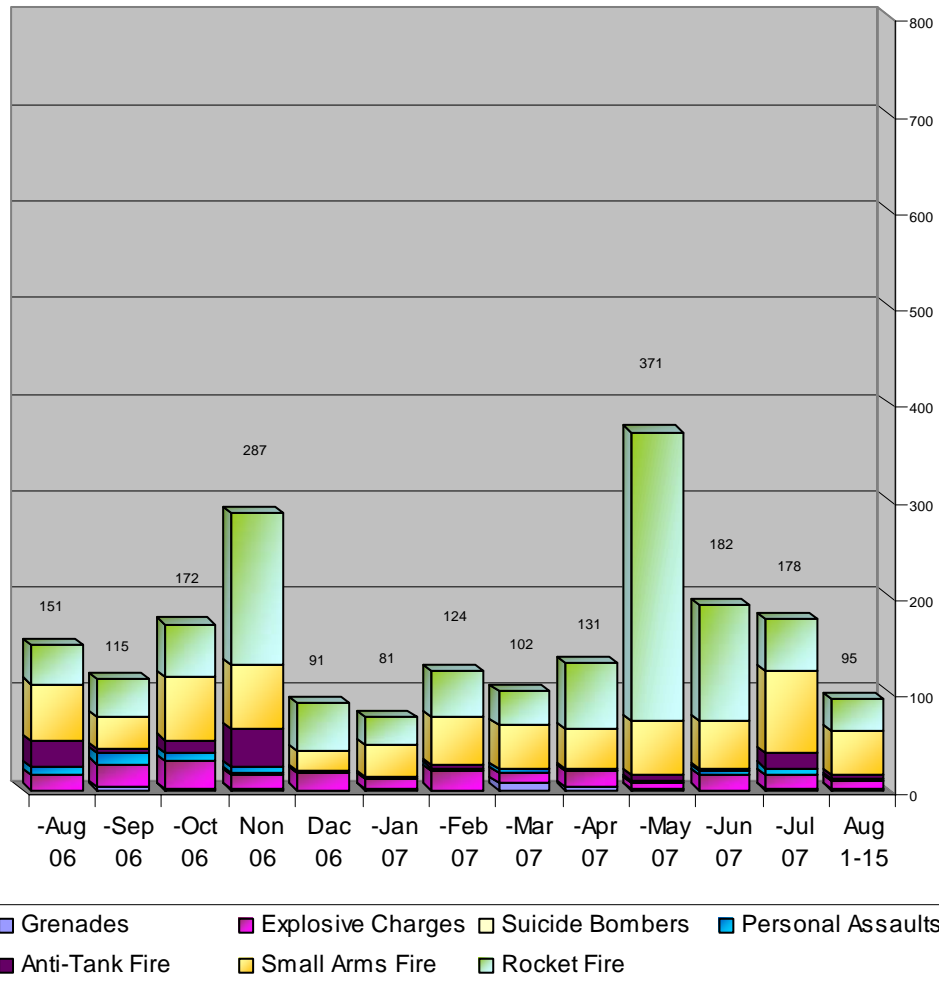
- ✿ On August 8 two side charges were used to attack an IDF force operating in Nablus and shots were fired at the soldiers. One soldier was

slightly wounded. A side charge was detonated against an IDF force operating in Beit Omar (near Bethlehem) and two Molotov cocktails were thrown at them (Ynet, August 8).

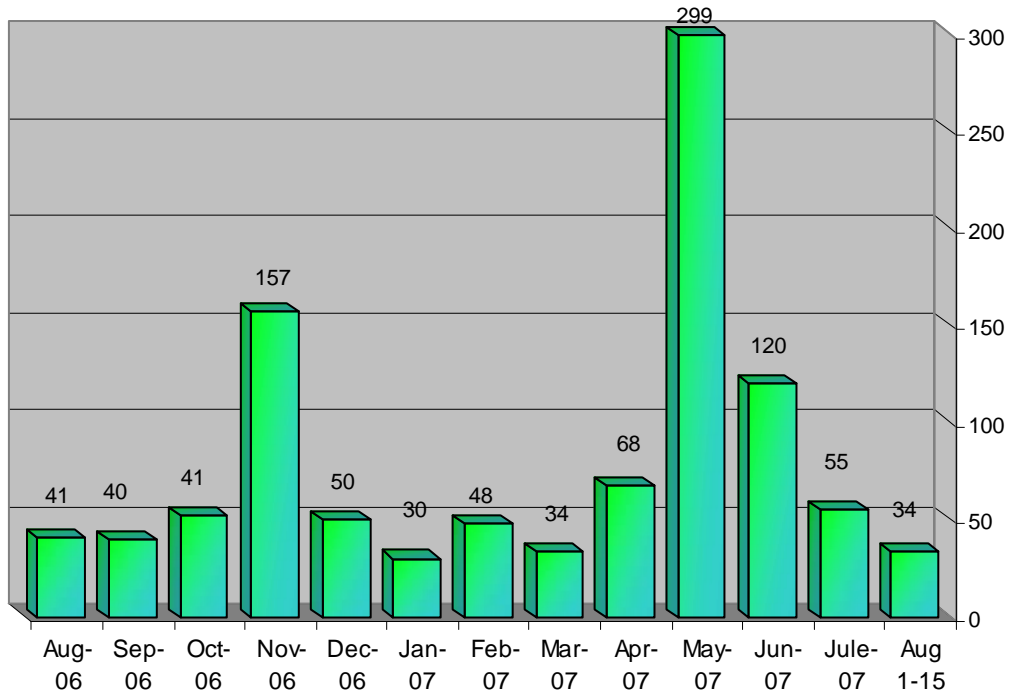
✿ On August 3 Ra'ed Ali Hassan Abd al-Addas was killed during security force activities in Nablus. He had been head of the PIJ in the Balata refugee camp, and had been on Israel's wanted list for a long time for his involvement in planning suicide bombing attacks (IDF Spokesman, August 3).

Statistical Data

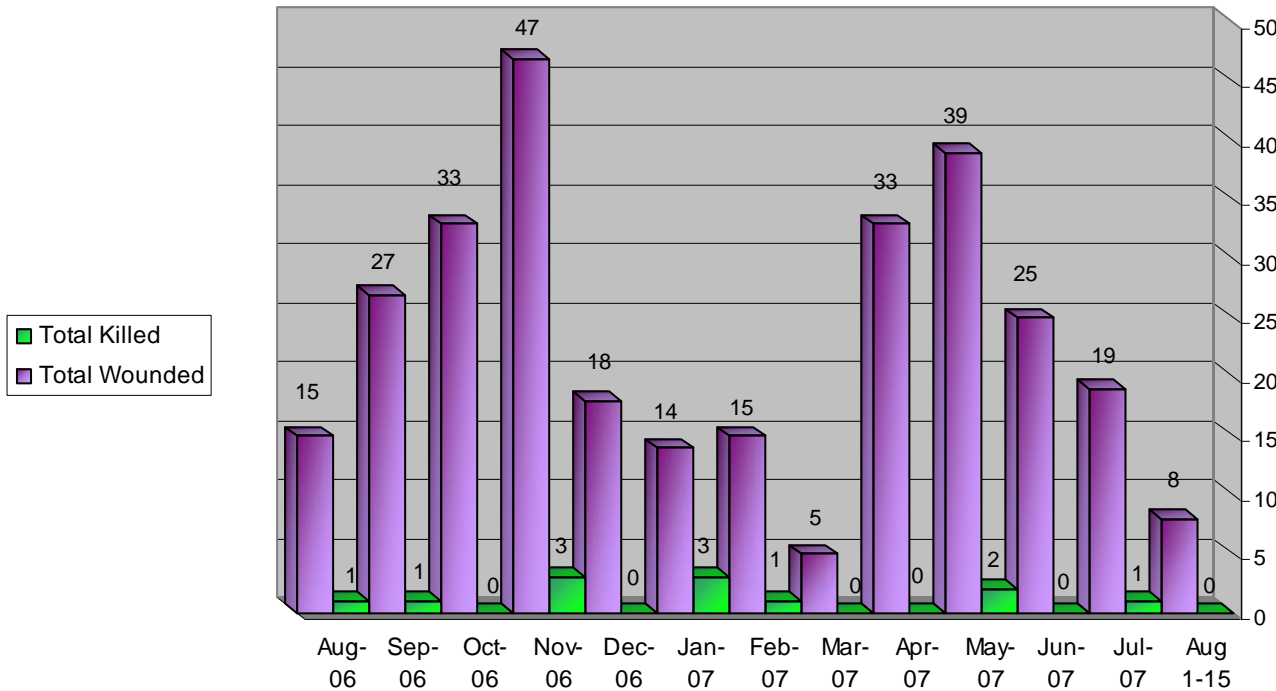
Monthly distribution of attacks



Monthly distribution of identified rocket hits²



Monthly distribution of Israeli casualties



² During the first two weeks of August, in addition to rocket fire, 15 mortar hits were identified.

The crossings between Israel and the Gaza Strip

🌐 **The crossings between Israel and the Gaza Strip operate partially, on an emergency basis.** Most of the traffic involves bringing in humanitarian aid to prevent the deterioration of the economic situation and on letting those stuck at the Rafah Crossing back into the Gaza Strip.

🌐 The situation at the crossings as of August 15 was the following:

✿ **The Erez Crossing:** The crossing is open and serves primarily as a passage for foreign nationals and the evacuation of the ill and wounded. Since June 19, 1,662 individuals needing medical treatment have passed through.

✿ **The Karni Crossing:** Open primarily for goods exported out of the Gaza Strip.

✿ **The Nahal Oz Crossing:** Open and used to import fuel and cooking gas into the Gaza Strip.

✿ **The Sufa Crossing:** The main crossing for supplies, since June 19, 3,755 trucks have passed through.

✿ **The Kerem Shalom Crossing:** Since June 19, 573 trucks have passed through.

The Rafah Crossing

🌐 The Rafah Crossing is still closed. However, the passage of Gaza Strip residents stuck at the crossing continues through the Nizana Crossing into Israel and through the Erez Crossing into the Strip. As of August 14, 6,374 individual had passed through. Red Cross supply trucks arriving at the Rafah Crossing use the Kerem Shalom Crossing to enter the Gaza Strip (Al-Akhbar, August 12).

Ehud Olmert Meets Abu Mazen

🌐 Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert held a regularly scheduled meeting with Palestinian Authority Chairman Abu Mazen in Jericho on August 6. It was the first time since the Palestinian terrorist campaign began seven years ago (the second intifada) that an Israeli prime minister entered the PA-administered territories. The main topics of discussion were the Palestinian requests for easing the situation at the roadblocks and humanitarian aid.

🌐 Sources close to Abu Mazen expressed satisfaction with the meeting's outcome. Saeb Erikat, head of the PLO's negotiating team, held a press conference after the meeting, and stated that the two leaders had decided to hold a series of talks to discuss final status arrangements in preparation for the conference in Washington this coming November (Al-Hayat al-Jadeeda, August 7). Hamas spokesmen, on the other hand, criticized the meeting. According to Sami Abu Zuhri, its objective was to make the ugliness of the Israeli occupation more beautiful in the eyes of the world (AP, August 6).

The Internal Palestinian Arena

Struggles between Hamas and Fatah continue

🌐 The Hamas government continues the process of consolidating its position in the Gaza Strip while the Fatah government does the same in Judea and Samaria. Both are accompanied by violent clashes, mud-slinging campaigns and attempts by both to limit the freedom of action of the other.

🌐 Salam Fayyad's government continues to take administrative steps to restrict Hamas' activities in Judea and Samaria and to make it difficult for the Hamas government in the Gaza Strip to govern. Some of the steps taken were:

- 1) Revoking appointments of Hamas members in the government's apparatuses;

- 2) Attempts to supervise the contents of the sermons given in the mosques;
- 3) Refusal to recognize the results of the lottery for the *hajj* (pilgrimage) to Mecca held by Hamas;
- 4) Separating the results of the matriculation exams in Judea and Samaria from those in the Gaza Strip;
- 5) Closing the branch offices of the ministries of the interior and planning in the Gaza Strip.

🌍 In addition to administrative wrestling, both sides took action on the ground:

✿ In the **Gaza Strip**, Hamas' Executive Force continued to operate intensively to restrict Fatah activists, and to tighten their exclusive control over events in the Strip. To that end the Executive Force continued its detentions and abductions, took over offices, kindergartens and charitable societies, and confronted students. It also banned demonstrations, meetings and weddings attended by many people.



Executive Force operatives paying a visit to the offices of Al-Arabiya TV after Hamas operatives invaded them and confiscated equipment (Al-Arabiya TV, August 13).

✿ In **Judea and Samaria**, Abu Mazen's security services detained Hamas activists and limited Hamas-supporting students in the universities. In protest, on August 10 Hamas held demonstrations throughout the Gaza

Strip. Senior Hamas figures threatened to carry out suicide bombing attacks against the Palestinian security forces in Judea and Samaria.

🌐 **Prominent among the violent incidents were the following:**

✿ On the night of August 12, there was a powerful explosion near to the headquarters of the Executive Force in Gaza City. It was apparently the result of an explosive device placed in a garbage can.

✿ On August 12 a Hamas operative was arrested by the Palestinian Authority near Jenin. He publicly admitted collaborating with Israel and aiding in killing terrorists. Hamas claimed his confession was extracted by torture.

✿ On August 10, the Executive Force vandalized a wedding in the town of Beit Hanoun and , detained Fatah operatives. The Hamas operatives claimed they had information that some of the guests belonged to Fatah and had operated against Hamas. Following the detentions a group of women held a protest march and were dispersed by the Executive Force. Twenty individuals were injured in the two events.



Operatives of Hamas's Executive Force confronting Fatah members at the wedding in Beit Hanoun (Palestinian TV, August 10)

✿ On August 1 a charge exploded in the Junaid prison in Nablus. A Hamas spokesman claimed responsibility for the explosion and threatened more attacks against the security forces in Judea and Samaria if the attacks against Hamas operatives continued.

✿ In a broad action in the town of Al-Shugukh (near Hebron) Abu Mazen's security services detained 14 Palestinians on suspicion of belonging to Hamas's Executive Force.

Clashes between Hamas and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad

🌐 The Gaza Strip also witnessed violent incidents between Hamas' Executive Force and PIJ operatives, part of Hamas' policy of enforcing its control and authority over all the Palestinian terrorist organizations operating in the Gaza Strip.

🌐 On August 1 a clash broke out between the Executive Force and PIJ operatives in the Sajaiya neighborhood in Gaza City. It began when the Executive Force attempted to detain a PIJ operative who had fired his gun during a wedding. One Executive Force operative was killed in the clash and seven were wounded. Five PIJ operatives were detained. The clash then spread to other neighborhoods.

Hamas continues to firmly establish its military force in the Gaza Strip

🌐 A naval wing of 100-150 men was established, apparently under the control of the Executive Force. Its mission is securing the Gaza Strip coastline, preventing criminal activities, especially drug smuggling and preventing Palestinians from collaborating with the IDF (Al-Sharq al-Awsat, August 10). An interior ministry spokesman claimed that Ismail Haniya had ordered the reorganization of the naval force, which had previously been under the control of the PA, with the participation of its former operatives and supported by the Executive Force (Felesteen, August 12).

🌐 The interior ministry is supposed to carry out **a partial merger of the police force and the Executive Force** (Felesteen, August 12). In our assessment the merger is intended to legitimize the activities of the Hamas-affiliated Executive Force.

🌐 The police in the Gaza Strip called upon **Palestinian women** to join the force as matrons and interrogators of women prisoners (Al-Aqsa TV, August 9). A spokesman for the interior ministry of Ismail Haniya's government said that 100 women had been absorbed into the police force in the Gaza Strip (Ramatan News Agency, August 9).