



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

News of Terrorism and the Israeli- Palestinian Conflict

January 27 – February 3, 2009

Hamas gets a hug...



Khaled Mashaal, head of Hamas's political bureau, meets Iranian Leader Ali Khamenei (Mehr News Agency, Iran, February 1).

...and does not impose the ceasefire on the other terrorist organizations.



Grad rocket fired at Ashqelon on February 3 (Photo: Edi Israel, courtesy of NRG, February 3).

Overview

- The two weeks since the end of Operation Cast Lead have clearly illustrated the **fragility** of the ceasefire and the **explosiveness** of the post-war situation. The ceasefire has been violated almost daily with rocket and mortar shell fire and attacks on IDF forces operating near the border security fence. Hamas does not directly participate in the violations but also does not deter attacks by other terrorist organizations, and as far as Israel is concerned, **Hamas is responsible for all the violations**. So far, the IDF has responded with pinpoint attacks on terrorist operatives and facilities.
- Egypt continues its efforts to have its initiative accepted. Senior Hamas figures have told the media that there is still a considerable gap between Israel's and Hamas's positions. Hamas is willing to accept a one-year lull arrangement in return for opening the border crossings, but has publicly stated that it will not accept the prohibition of arms smuggling into the Gaza Strip and is not willing to link negotiations for the release of abducted Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit to the Egyptian initiative.

Important Events

Gaza Strip

■ The two weeks since the end of Operation Cast Lead have clearly illustrated the **fragility of the unilateral ceasefire in the Gaza Strip and the explosiveness of the post-war situation**. Despite Hamas's public agreement to a time-limited ceasefire, and despite the IDF withdrawal from the Gaza Strip, attacks on the western Negev continue. The terrorist organizations carry out almost daily sporadic rocket and mortar shell fire and attack IDF soldiers carrying out routine operations along the border security fence (light arms fire, IEDs).

■ During the past week **nine rocket** hits and **eight mortar shell** hits were identified in Israeli territory, and IDF soldiers were shot at near the Kissufim crossing in the central Gaza Strip. Two soldiers sustained minor injuries. Responsibility for the attacks was claimed by Fatah, the Palestinian Islamic Jihad and one of the Popular Resistance Committees factions. Hamas did not take part in the ceasefire violations but on the other hand does not prevent the other organizations from carrying them out, although it is the dominant power in the Gaza Strip and could do so if it chose.¹

■ The major incidents were the following:

- On **February 1** there were a number of ceasefire violations: Early in the morning three rockets were fired at the western Negev, one falling between two kindergartens, and another in an open field. Two hours later armed Palestinians shot at an IDF patrol moving along the border security fence in the Kissufim region in the central



Rocket which fell in a Negev village near a kindergarten
(Photo: Roei Idan, courtesy of Ynet, February 1).

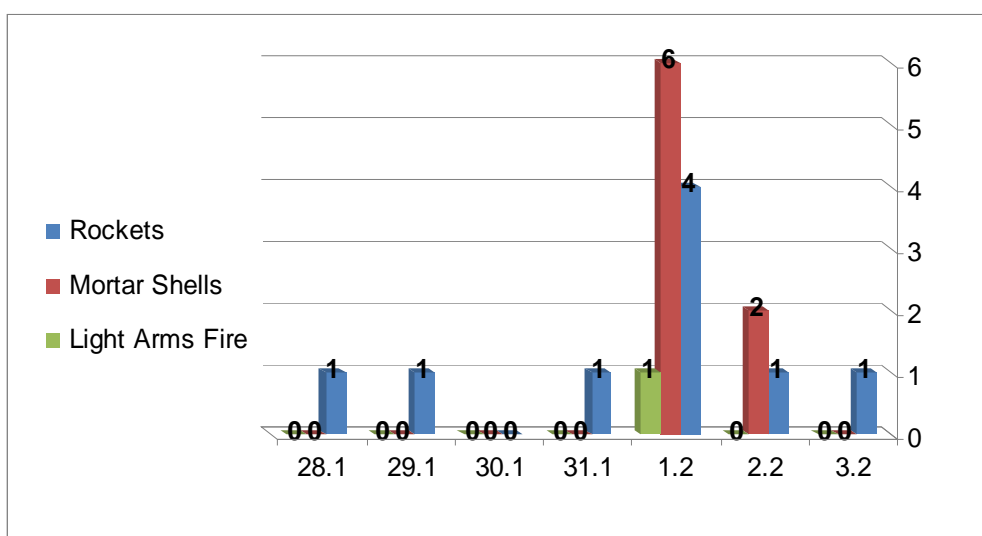
Gaza Strip. The soldiers returned fire; there were no Israeli casualties. Two hours later (1100 hours) four mortar shells were fired and fell in the western Negev near the northern Gaza Strip. At 1730 hours two mortar shells were fired at the western Negev; two IDF soldiers sustained minor shrapnel wounds. During the day, **ten rockets and mortar shells** were fired into Israeli territory.

- On **February 2** a rocket and two mortar shells fell in Israeli territory.

¹ According to the Israeli morning newspaper Haaretz, General Amos Yadlin, chief of military intelligence, reported on the situation at a government meeting on February 1. He said that Hamas had been deterred and respected Israel's holding its fire but that it did not prevent other terrorist organizations from launching terrorist attacks. He added that Hamas had internalized the extent of the blow it received and was debriefing its operatives about the war, and that in contradiction to media reports, it had begun taking stock of its strategic mistakes and operational failures (*Haaretz*, February 2, 2009).

- On the morning of **February 3** a rocket fell between two buildings in Ashqelon. Three civilians had to be treated for shock and several vehicles were damaged.
- In response to the terrorist organizations' systematic violations of the ceasefire, **the IDF carried out pinpoint attacks against terrorist operatives and facilities**. Among the terrorist targets attacked by the Israeli Air Force were a weapons manufacturing facility (January 28), a Hamas security post northeast of Nusseirat (February 1), six smuggling tunnels in Rafah (February 1), and a squad of rocket launchers, one of whose operatives was killed (February 2).

Terrorist Attacks in the Gaza Strip



Ceasefire Violations

Number	Date	Event	Organization Claiming Responsibility	Israel's Response	Notes
1	Jan. 20	Terrorists opened fire at an IDF force south of the Kissufim crossing.			There were no casualties and no property damage was reported.
2	Jan. 20	Terrorists shot at an IDF force near the border security fence in the central Gaza Strip.		The IDF force returned fire.	There were no casualties and no property damage was reported.
3	Jan. 20	Eleven mortar shells were fired at IDF forces and into Israeli territory.			There were no casualties and no property damage was reported.
4	Jan. 25	A terrorist squad tried to carry out a rocket attack against Israel.	PFLP		The Palestinian media reported that Hamas prevented the rocket

		One rocket was fired and fell inside the Gaza Strip.			fire.
5	Jan. 27	An IED was detonated to attack an IDF patrol north of Kissufim.	A network linked to the global jihad.	The IAF struck a motorcyclist in the Khan Yunis area and weapons smuggling tunnels in Rafah.	A soldier was killed and three were wounded, one of them critically, two sustaining minor injuries.
6	Jan. 28	A rocket fell in Israeli territory near the southern Gaza Strip.	Fatah and the PIJ	The IAF attacked a facility for weapons manufacture in Rafah.	There were no casualties and no property damage was reported.
7	Jan. 29	A rocket fell in an open area near the city of Sderot.			There were no casualties and no property damage was reported.
8	Jan. 31	A rocket fell south of the city of Ashqelon.			There were no casualties and no property damage was reported.
9	Feb. 1	Four rockets were fired at western Negev towns and villages.		The IAF attacked a Hamas security post northeast of Nusseirat	There were no casualties and no property damage was reported.
10	Feb. 1	Armed Palestinians shot at an IDF force in the Kissufim area in the western Negev.			There were no casualties and no property damage was reported.
11	Feb. 1	Six mortar shells were fired into Israeli territory.		The IAF attacked six smuggling tunnels in Rafah.	Two IDF soldiers sustained minor shrapnel injuries.
12	Feb. 2	A rocket and two mortar shells were fired into Israeli territory.	A PRC group claimed responsibility for the mortar shells.	The IAF attacked the rocket launching squad, killing one operative.	There were no casualties and no property damage was reported.
13	Feb. 3	A rocket fell between two buildings in the city of Ashqelon.			Several vehicles were damaged.

Judea and Samaria

Killing of a terrorist operative south of Mt. Hebron prevents mass casualty attack

■ On February 2 an IDF force identified a suspicious vehicle driving in an open area south of Mt. Hebron. The driver did not heed the soldiers' orders to halt and continued driving, suddenly braking and opening fire. The soldiers returned fire and **killed the terrorist**.

■ Examination revealed a Kalashnikov assault rifle, a 9mm gun with a bullet in the barrel and several ammunition clips (IDF Spokesman's website, February 2, 2009). The terrorist had been riding along a trail used by Palestinian terrorist operatives in the past on their way to Israel, including those who carried out the suicide bombing attack in Dimona last year (February 4, 2008).² It is therefore probable that the Palestinian was on his way to carry out a mass-casualty shooting attack within Israeli territory.

Other events

■ There were several attacks in Judea and Samaria during the past week, including shootings, Molotov cocktails and stone-throwing. In addition, the Israeli security forces continued their counterterrorism activities, during which weapons were seized. The most serious events were the following:

- **January 27:** Palestinians threw stones at an Israeli vehicle southwest of Nablus; a similar incident occurred southwest of Bethlehem.
- **January 28:** Palestinians threw stones at an Israeli bus south of Hebron. There were no casualties; the bus was damaged.
- **January 31:** A Molotov cocktail was thrown at an Israeli vehicle near Bayta al-Fawqa, south of Nablus. There were no casualties and no damage to the vehicle was reported. An IDF search of the area revealed another Molotov cocktail ready for throwing. In another event Palestinians threw stones at an Israeli vehicle near Funduq, east of Qalqilya. There were no casualties; the vehicle was damaged.
- **January 31:** Palestinians opened fire at an Israeli bus near the village of Silwad, northeast of Ramallah. There were no casualties and no damage to the bus was reported. Fatah's Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades claimed responsibility for the shooting (Qudsnet website, January 31, 2009).
- **February 1:** IDF soldiers identified five Palestinian terrorists near the village of Bayt Fajjar, south of Bethlehem. Arriving at the scene the soldiers found an improvised weapon, a knife and four Molotov cocktails ready for throwing. Earlier, four Molotov cocktails were thrown at an Israeli bus near the village of Al-A'arub, southwest of Bethlehem. There were no casualties and no damage to the bus was reported.

■ **On January 30 there were public disturbances in Judea and Samaria** in several locations: In one instance dozens of Palestinians gathered in the Abu Sneina neighborhood of Hebron and threw Molotov cocktails and stones at Israeli security forces. In another instance, 150 Palestinians, foreign nationals and Israelis congregated **near the border security fence near**

² For further information see our February 3, 2008 bulletin entitled "[Suicide bombing attack in the Dimona commercial center kills one city resident and wounds many](#)"

the village of Na'alín, west of Ramallah, and threw stones at the fence. Seventy Palestinians, foreign nationals and Israelis congregated **near the border security fence near Bil'in**, west of Ramallah. Sixty Palestinians, foreign nationals and Israelis congregated **near the border security fence near the village of Jayyus**, northeast of Qalqilya. The rioters threw stones at the fence and at the Israeli security forces. In each instance the IDF used riot control equipment to disperse the crowds.

The Gaza Strip After Operation Cast Lead

Humanitarian aid continues flowing in the Gaza Strip through Israel

■ Israel continues delivering humanitarian aid to the Gaza Strip through its border crossings, despite the daily violations of the ceasefire. During the past week an average of **200 trucks** entered the Gaza Strip every day through the Kerem Shalom and Karni crossings, and fuel continued flowing into the Gaza Strip through the Nahal Oz fuel terminal. **The activity was suspended** on the morning of January 27 **after the IED attack in the Kissufim region in the central Gaza Strip**, which killed an IDF soldier and wounded three others, one of them critically.

The humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip

■ During the past week the various relief agencies operating in the Gaza Strip continued rebuilding the Gaza Strip, treating the wounded and distributing humanitarian aid. In addition, a Jordanian field hospital began its operations, its staff having entered the Gaza Strip through the Erez crossing. The hospital is capable of performing operations, including complicated procedures, and can treat 1,000 sick and wounded patients a day (*Al-Quds*, January 27, 2009). Turkey brought a mobile hospital to the port of El-Arish, to enter the Gaza Strip through the Rafah crossing. The cost of the hospital is \$2 million and it includes 192 mobile clinics (Ahwan Online, January 31, 2009).

■ A spokeswoman for the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs said that all ten UNRWA distribution centers in the Gaza Strip had opened and were completely operational. Most of the Gazans who had been in UN emergency shelters returned to their homes and less than 500 were still there. She also said that the crossings were open, but that they had to be open 24 hours a day (UN website, January 27). UNRWA announced that it was increasing the number of Gazans entitled to aid from 750,000 to 900,000, that is, 65% of the total number of Gaza Strip residents. Among those entitled to aid would be Palestinian Authority employees, who have not received salaries because of the currency crisis in the Gaza Strip (Agence France Presse, January 28, 2009).

■ **John Holmes**, Under-General-Secretary for UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, said that he could understand Israel's security concerns but claimed that a solution could be

found even if the Gaza Strip crossings were opened and without harming the basic needs of the Palestinian population (BBC, January 29, 2009). On January 31, he told Al-Jazeera English TV that the Israelis were cooperating with the humanitarian aid deliveries. He called for the number of trucks entering the Gaza Strip to be increased to 500-600 a day, despite Israel's security concerns. (**Note:** Trucks entering the Gaza Strip have to undergo security inspections to prevent weapons and other equipment for the terrorist organizations from being smuggled in.³) In an article in the February 2 issue of the International Herald Tribune, Holmes said that the **UN intended to step up its monitoring of the flow of UN funds into the Gaza Strip to prevent Hamas from taking control of them and diverting them to military use.** He said that he was not familiar with any such incidents, but that the UN would take action, having received complaints from Israel.

- The regional director for the Middle East of the UN's World Food Programme claimed that the way the crossings were operated made it difficult for the organization to work, and emphasized the distress in the Gaza Strip. He added that his organization had amassed **enough equipment at the crossings for the next three weeks** (Relief Web, January 30, 2009).

The Rafah crossing

- Humanitarian aid, drugs, doctors and ambulances continue entering the Gaza Strip through the Rafah crossing. Correspondents from the Arab, Muslim and global media⁴ also enter the Gaza Strip through the Rafah crossing, as do representatives of the groups involved in the rebuilding the Gaza Strip. In addition, wounded Palestinians leave the Gaza Strip for treatment in Egypt and other countries. Since the beginning of Operation Cast Lead, hundreds of wounded Gazans and their escorts have left the Gaza Strip.

- On February 1 it was reported that Egypt would no longer allow foreign correspondents to enter the Gaza Strip through the Rafah crossing, and would prevent delegations from the Arab countries from entering as well. In addition, by **February 5** foreign correspondents and delegation would have leave the Gaza Strip, and would not be permitted to use the Rafah crossing after that. Doctors could enter, the wounded could leave and Gazans delayed in Egypt could return **as usual** (Al-Basha'air, February 1, 2009).

³ During Operation Cast Lead attempts were made to smuggle technological equipment into the Gaza Strip for terrorist organization use. For further information see our January 13 bulletin entitled "Operation Cast Lead Update No. 13" at http://www.terrorism-info.org.il/malam_multimedia/English/eng_n/pdf/hamas_e039.pdf.

⁴ Apparently, **Egypt has imposed restrictions on the entrance of Iranian correspondents.** A source in the Iranian Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance said there were not a single Iranian correspondent in the Gaza Strip, only local reporters working for the Iranian media. The source added that many Iranian media workers had asked to go to the Gaza Strip, but that Egypt had not granted them entry (ISNA News Agency, January 30). Apparently several journalists who had been denied entry by Egypt had tried to infiltrate the Gaza Strip through the smuggling tunnels, and not through the Rafah crossing, which requires authorization.

Attempts to send boats to the Gaza Strip continue

■ The organization calling itself “**Free Gaza**” announced that another one of its boats was expected to reach the Gaza Strip at the beginning of March. Organization activists said they would try to send both passenger and cargo ships, which would bring medical equipment and building materials (Free Gaza website, January 29).

■ A **Lebanese ship**, which was supposed to leave Tripoli for Cyprus on January 31 and reach the Gazan shore on February 2, was held back by stormy weather. On February 2 it was replaced by another ship following technical difficulties (Lebanese News Agency, February 2, 2009). There are 75 individuals on board and it is carrying large quantities of humanitarian aid (Palestinian News Network website, January 30, 2009).

■ On January 29 the Iranian ship *Shahed* anchored in Beirut after it had been prevented from reaching the Gaza Strip. It docked in Beirut after the Egyptian authorities asked it to leave the port of El-Arish. Its cargo consisted of drugs, medical equipment and food. According to Iranian Al-Alam TV, attempts will be made to deliver the aid to the Gaza Strip by a Lebanese relief organization via Jordan (Al-Alam TV, January 29, 30, 2009). According to a January 28 Al-Alam TV report, some of the cargo was unloaded at El-Arish and delivered to the Gaza Strip **after Iran had been obliged to remove marks which identified the goods as Iranian**.

Hamas Gives the Gazans Cash

■ Hamas’s efforts to strengthen its status in the Gaza Strip include the continuing distribution of money to Gaza Strip residents. So far, there would seem to be a discrepancy between the amounts Hamas publicly promised and what the movement is actually giving out. Hamas stated that it would give 4,000 euros to every family whose house had been destroyed during Operation Cast Lead, but Gazans have complained they have received only 1,000 euros per family. They also said they had been told it was only a down payment, to be used to cover their most urgent immediate needs (Reuters, January 27). On February 1 the Haniya administration’s communications office informed owners of houses which had been destroyed that they had to apply at the post offices in the Gaza Strip for the rest of the money (Palestine-info website, February 2, 2009).

■ According to reports from the Gaza Strip, the humanitarian aid Hamas provides for the Gazans **is exploited for political purposes**. The residents who go to receive their money are forced to listen to political speeches made by Hamas activists, who boast that the Israeli “military machine” was defeated and that the Gaza Strip will be rebuilt by **Hamas** (AP, January 30, 2009).

Raising Money to Rebuild the Gaza Strip and Fighting over Its Allotment

■ UN Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon said he intended to raise \$613 million to aid the Gaza Strip. The **European Union's Commissioner** for Development and Humanitarian Aid said that the EU expected to donate 58 million euros to aid the Palestinians, of which 32 million would be earmarked for rebuilding the Gaza Strip, 20 million would go to aid the West Bank and 6 million would go to the Palestinians in Lebanon (EU news website, January 27).

■ **American President Obama** said the United States would contribute \$20 million dollars in addition to the \$40 million already contributed for relief agencies operating in the Gaza Strip (Reuters, January 30, 2009). **Australia** will contribute \$5 million to NGOs to help Gazans, in addition to the \$5 million already contributed (*Al-Ayyam*, January 30, 2009). A senior coordinator in the UN's FAO asked for a contribution of \$6.5 million to rehabilitate agriculture in the Gaza Strip (Agence France Presse, January 30, 2009).

■ In the background, the fierce struggle between Hamas and the Palestinian Authority over to **whom the money to rebuild the Gaza Strip will be channeled** continues. Hamas administration prime minister Ismail Haniya said he agreed that the Arab League and other countries could oversee the rebuilding of the Gaza Strip and that an "objective" Palestinian-Arab committee should be appointed to that end. He added that his administration would pave the way for every group interested in rebuilding the Gaza Strip, and that Hamas did not insist on receiving the money itself [**by which he meant that Hamas would actually supervise how the money was allotted**]. In addition, Haniya criticized the European position, which he said "places responsibility for what happened on the Gaza Strip on the Palestinians." He roundly criticized France, saying that he had expected it would send hospital ships and deliver humanitarian aid instead of sending boats to prevent smuggling (PalMedia website, January 27, 2009).

■ **A spokesman for the Egyptian foreign ministry** said that on March 2 an international conference would to be held in Cairo called "The International Cairo Conference for the Support of the Palestinian Economy to Rebuild Gaza." He said that Egypt had fully coordinated the issue with the Palestinian Authority [and by implication, not with Hamas]. The conference would be attended by foreign ministers and various international elements (Middle East News Agency, January 30, 2009). The United States announced it would send a representative (State Department website, January 30, 2009)

■ In contrast, the **Muslim Brotherhood** in Egypt, of which Hamas is the Palestinian branch, set up a fund to rebuild the Gaza Strip with the aim of raising \$50 million and sending the money directly to **Hamas**. A senior Muslim Brotherhood official said that the money would be delivered to

the Hamas administration, which was “responsible for caring for the Palestinian people, which has been harmed...” (Al-Masri Al-Youm, January 19, 2009).

Rebuilding and Reactivating the Smuggling Tunnels

■ On January 26 the Jordanian daily paper **Al-Dustour** reported on the flourishing tunnel industry and the smuggling activities **even after Operation Cast Lead**. During the past few weeks large quantities have piled up in warehouses on the Egyptian side of the tunnels. The smugglers’ trucks drive along side roads to the tunnel sites and evade the Egyptian security forces deployed along the Egypt-Gaza border. In addition, according to one of the smugglers, some of the trucks are represented as carrying humanitarian aid to the Gaza Strip, and even have the appropriate signs hung on them, making it possible for them to pass through Egyptian security force checkpoints on the road between El-Arish and Rafah.

■ According to tunnel operators, about 40% of the tunnels are being used again , and in less than a month 90% will be back in action (*Al-Ayyam*, January 27.) On January 30, four Palestinians were injured when two tunnels collapsed (Qudsnet website, January 31, 2009).



Activity in the smuggling tunnels under the Egypt-Gaza border (Al-Arabiya TV, February 1).

■ While the terrorist organizations and smugglers are rehabilitating the tunnel industry, Egypt has begun actively taking steps to prevent smuggling from its territory. For example, on January 31, Egypt began deploying an array of cameras and motion sensors along the border as part of its efforts to prevent smuggling (Reuters, January 31). On February 2, the Egyptian security forces blew up several dozen tunnels under the Egypt-Gaza border (*Al-Dustour*, February 2, 2009).

■ The Egyptian anti-smuggling actions were supported by the international community. On January 29, an **American delegation**, headed by the military attaché in Egypt, toured the Egypt-Gaza border for the second time. The delegation, which included military engineers, examined the area in preparation for the installation of American tunnel-detecting equipment (**Al-Sharq Al-Awsat**, January 30, 2009). On January 30, the Egyptian *Al-Yawm Al-Sabaa* reported that a German

military delegation had inspected the tunnel area and the Rafah terminal to follow the efforts being made to stop the tunnels' activity and oversee the maintenance of the German equipment installed for that purpose.

The Terrorist Organizations: "Business as Usual"

■ The terrorist organizations have returned to their usual activities of military training and other military activities in the Gaza Strip. As part of their battle for hearts and minds, they invited members of the Arab and Islamic media active in the Gaza Strip to view their activities. Examples follow:



A correspondent from Iran's Al-Alam TV accompanies Jerusalem Battalions operatives as they train (Al-Alam TV, February 1).



An Al-Jazeera TV correspondent accompanies Jerusalem Battalions training exercises (Al-Jazeera TV, February 1).



Al-Arabiya TV correspondent covers training exercises carried out by the Salah al-Din Battalion of the Popular Resistance Committees, in which they simulate abducting an IDF soldier (Al-Arabiya TV, February 2).

The Diplomatic Arena

Contacts for the Egyptian Initiative Continue

- Egypt continues its efforts to achieve a new lull arrangement within the Egyptian initiative. The Hamas delegation arrived in Cairo again on February 2 to present Hamas's answers to proposals made in the previous meeting. The delegation is expected to meet with Egyptian general intelligence head Omar Suleiman. The Gaza Strip is represented by **Ayman Taha**, **Jamal Abu Hashem** and **Salah Bardawil**. The "external [Damascus] leadership" is represented by **Imad al-Alami** and **Muhammad Nasrallah**.
- According to statements made by Hamas heads before the meeting, the movement has still not decided on a final position regarding the Egyptian initiative and there are still serious gaps between the two sides. From what has been said so far, Hamas and the other terrorist organizations would agree to **a one-year lull arrangement in return for the opening of all the border crossings and the lifting of the "siege."** On the other hand, Hamas does not agree to the Israeli (and international community) demand that no weapons be smuggled into the Gaza Strip, and it is not willing to link the issue of Gilad Shalit to the Egyptian initiative.
- The most significant statements were the following:
 - **Khaled Mashaal**, currently visiting Iran, said that the lull would be implemented in return for the lifting of the "siege" and the opening of the crossings. He said that Hamas opposed releasing Gilad Shalit in return for opening the crossings, and that he would be returned only in exchange for the release of the Palestinian prisoners demanded by Hamas (Al-Jazeera TV, January 28).

- **Muhammad Nizal**, a member of the Hamas political bureau, said that the movement would tell the Egyptian leadership it agreed to a lull arrangement limited to one year in return for an agreement which would ensure the lifting of the “siege” and the opening of the crossings. He added that Hamas refused to accept Israel's demand to end the weapons smuggling and that it refused to link the opening of the crossings to the issue of Gilad Shalit. He said that Gilad Shalit would be released in return for the release of prisoners and detainees held in Israeli jails (*Al-Ghad*, February 2).
- **Sami Abu Zuhri** said that the delegation had gone to Egypt to make clear Hamas's position regarding the conditions of the lull arrangement, and that Hamas's final position would be defined in light of the results of the meeting in Cairo. He said that Hamas rejected Israel's demand not to smuggle weapons in to the Gaza Strip because “the resistance [i.e., terrorist] movement and the occupied people have the right to weapons.” He also said that Hamas refused to admit the deployment of international forces in the Gaza Strip (*Al-Jazeera TV*, February 2).
- **Musa Abu Marzuq**, deputy head of the Hamas political bureau in Damascus, said that the new lull arrangement would be short because **“resistance” [i.e., terrorism] would be the natural state of affairs between Israel and the Palestinians as long as the “occupation” existed**. He said that the dates for the beginning of the [new] lull arrangement which had been discussed so far did not commit Hamas and that the date would be determined only after the arrangement and its conditions had been approved. He also said that the lull arrangement would be valid **only for the Gaza Strip** and that in the West Bank the “resistance” [i.e., terrorism] would continue and “had to escalate” (*Al-Shuruq al-Yawmi*, Algeria, January 31).
- **Salah Bardawil**, a member of the Hamas delegation to Cairo, said that Israel demanded a 500-meter (1/3 mile) buffer zone within the Gaza Strip along the border, and that the delegation had reported Hamas's rejection of the demand. He claimed that such a proposal would serve as an excuse for Israel to kill Palestinians and farmers who approached the [border security] fence. He added that Hamas rejected a link between lifting the “siege,” opening the crossings and the issue of Gilad Shalit. As for the Rafah crossing, he said that Hamas had no objection to an understanding with the Europeans for an arrangement, on the condition that it included lifting the “siege” and opening the crossing (*Al-Biyan Center website*, January 29, 2009).

Khaled Mashaal Visits Iran

- On February 1, a Hamas delegation headed by the chief of the political bureau in Damascus, **Khaled Mashaal**, arrived in Iran for a visit. The delegation met with senior figures in the Iranian regime, among them **Leader Khamenei** and Iranian president Ahmadinejad.



Left: Khaled Mashaal meets Ahmadinejad. Right: The Hamas delegation with Iranian Leader Ali Khamenei (Mehr News Agency, Iran, February 1).

- The Iranian leadership expressed its support for Hamas:
 - Iranian Leader Khamenei praised the Gazans' fighting spirit, but said that the war in Gaza had not ended and that "the political, psychological and propaganda warfare continued." He said that Hamas and the other [terrorist] organizations had to be "completely prepared for all possibilities, among them a renewal of the fighting" (Iran's Fars News Agency, February 1, 2009).
 - Khaled Mashaal met with **Hashemi Rafsanjani**, chairman of the Expediency Discernment Council, who praised the fortitude of the Gazans, and said that "Israeli's true nature was revealed before the world" (Islamic Republic News Agency, February 2, 2009).
 - Meeting with Khaled Mashaal, **Saeed Jalili, secretary of the Iranian National Security Council**, referred to the war in the Gaza Strip as the "victory of the resistance" and a "legend of heroism," adding that "the influence and the long term of the victory of the resistance will slowly become clear. Public opinion, which will demand justice, now officially recognizes the resistance as a model for dealing with tyrannical powers." He praised the "jihad spirit of the resistance of Palestine" and said that Israel could not stand up before "such mighty spirit and greatness." "**Iran,**" he said, "**is a genuine partner in the Gazans' historic victory**" (ISNA News Agency, February 2, 2009).
 - **Khaled Mashaal**, in a speech before students at Tehran University, thanked Iran for its support of Hamas, adding that "Iran gives victory to the resistance [i.e., terrorist] and liberation [sic] movements throughout the world, especially in Palestine." He said Israel had lost the war and while the blow to the Palestinians had been hard, "the victory was greater" (Al-Alam TV, February 2, 2009).



Khaled Mashaal (left) at the University of Tehran (Al-Alam TV, February 2).

■ **Ismail Haniya, Hamas administration prime minister**, sent a note to Iranian president Ahmadinejad **blessing Iran for its support of the Palestinians**, noting that “Iran helped the Palestinians [to tread] on the path of the resistance [i.e., terrorism].” He added that the “victory” in the Gaza Strip was actually the second “victory” for the resistance, the first being the second Lebanon war. He also called on Iran to **continue its aid to the Palestinian people in rebuilding the Gaza Strip** (PressTV website, January 31, 2009).

The Internal Palestinian Arena

Khaled Mashaal Enrages PA by Announcing Hamas Will Establish a Source of Authority As an Alternative to the PLO

■ Speaking in Doha, Qatar, during a “Victory in Gaza” ceremony, Khaled Mashaal, chairman of Hamas’s political bureau in Damascus, rejected the PLO as the source of authority for the Palestinian people. He said that it was not logical that the source of Palestinian authority not represent Palestinians either in or outside Palestine, and not represent their “right to return.” He added that **the PLO, in its present structure, was not a source of authority but rather a tool for deepening the Palestinian schism**. He said that “I announce at Doha what we, the forces of the resistance and the factions, are deliberating. We will work to build a national source of authority which will represent the ‘internal’ and ‘external’ [Palestinians] and will comprise all the forces and trends of the Palestinian people, and the national figures” (Al-Jazeera TV, January 28, 2009).



Khaled Mashaal, Yussuf al-Qardawi (chairman of the International Union of Muslim Scholars) and Salah Bardawil (Hamas faction speaker in the Palestinian Legislative Council) at a “victory in Gaza” rally in Doha, Qatar (Al-Jazeera TV, January 28)

■ His remarks caused a storm within Palestinian politics. Figures in the Palestinian Authority, Fatah and among the Palestinian left attacked him:

- **Mahmoud Abbas** claimed that Khaled Mashaal wanted to destroy an institution which had existed for 44 years and which had won recognition from more than 120 countries, including Arab and Muslim countries. He said that “if he wants to destroy this symbol he will make a fool of himself, because no one will support him, not the Palestinians and not others” (Palestinian TV, January 30, 2009). In another interview he admitted that the PLO needed organizational changes, but that Khaled Mashaal meant to destroy it to its foundation. “ Hamas should retract what Khaled Mashaal said” (Egyptian satellite TV, February 1, 2009).
 - **Fahmi Zaarir**, Fatah spokesman for Judea and Samaria, said that Khaled Mashaal’s remarks proved that Hamas was fundamentally a destructive movement (*Al-Hayat Al-Jadeeda*, February 1, 2009). **Bilal al-Shajasheir**, secretary general of the Palestinian National Council, said that on January 31 council members had held a meeting in Jordan where they condemned the remarks made by Khaled Mashaal and emphasized the exclusivity of the PLO [as the leaders of the Palestinian people] (Wafa News Agency, February 1, 2009).
 - **Fatah’s Recruitment and Organization Commission** issued a formal statement strongly attacking Khaled Mashaal. It said that “Fatah refuses to be drawn into battles over the PLO’s legitimacy,” but that the Palestinians would stop any attempt to harm that legitimacy. In addition, “ Hamas is seething with hatred for the Palestinian Authority, the PLO and Fatah, and incites the Palestinians against them” (Wafa News Agency, February 1, 2009).
 - The Palestinian **block of leftist parties** said that creating an alternative to the PLO was an irresponsible idea and liable to harm the rights of the Palestinian people. It demanded that Khaled Mashaal retract his statements (*Al-Hayat Al-Jadeeda*, February 1, 2009).
- Hamas figures (in most cases not from the front rank), on the other hand, tried to calm the storm set in motion by Khaled Mashaal. **Ahmed Yussuf**, political advisor in the foreign ministry in the Ismail Haniya administration, said Khaled Mashaal’s remarks were an expression of the urgent need for a reform in the PLO (Ma’an News Agency, February 1, 2009). **Nasser al-Din al-Shaar**, senior Hamas activist in Nablus, claimed that “he wasn’t seeking to establish a replacement for the PLO, but only to make all of its institutions more efficient” (Ma’an News Agency, February 1, 2009). **Ghazi Hamad**, formerly Ismail Haniya’s spokesman, said that the Palestinian arena did not need another rift (*Al-Jazeera TV*, January 31, 2009). **Muhammad Nizal**, a member of Hamas’s political bureau, said that Khaled Mashaal meant the establishment of a “national framework” which would include groups not belonging to the PLO (*Al-Jazeera TV*, January 31, 2009).

Hamas Continues Oppressing the Opposition in the Gaza Strip

■ Hamas's security forces continue their arrests of Fatah activists in the Gaza Strip. The Palestinian media have reported many detentions, attacks and threats against individuals affiliated with Fatah. On February 2, an Al-Jazeera English TV broadcast reported that because of the damage done to Hamas prisons during Operation Cast Lead, Hamas was using private apartments as temporary cells. Their locations remained secret to keep them from being attacked, according to the report.

The Lebanese Arena

Hassan Nasrallah Promises to Avenge the Death of Imad Moughnieh

■ The following topics came up in a press conference held by Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah (Al-Manar TV, January 29, 2009).

- **The file of Lebanese prisoners and MIAs was still open as far as Hezbollah was concerned:** Hassan Nasrallah dwelt on the Israeli-Hezbollah prisoner exchange deal carried out on January 29, 2008. He claimed that Israel still had the bodies of 350 Lebanese and Palestinians who had been killed in Lebanon and northern Israel. He said that Hezbollah had not abandoned the issue and called on the Lebanese government to deal with it. In our assessment, his reference to the file of the missing missing Lebanese may be a kind of excuse and propaganda preparation for more attempts by Hezbollah to abduct Israelis.
- **The demand that the Lebanese force [a Christian militia headed by Samir Jaja] provide information about four missing Iranian diplomats:** Nasrallah noted that Hezbollah had been given "an entire file" of the investigations carried out by Israel. The Israeli conclusion, he said, was that the four had been abducted by "[Christian] Lebanese forces" in 1982 and subsequently killed. He added that while it was impossible to rely on what the Israelis said, it was clear that the four had been abducted by Lebanese forces and held by them for a least some time. He called on the "Lebanese forces" [i.e., their leader, Samir Jaja) to provide proof as to whether or not they had abducted the four Iranians and whether they had killed them or delivered them to the Israelis. He pretended that he was not raising the issue to make political capital or open old wounds (although it is clear that his remarks were part of the fierce political battle raging between Hezbollah and the anti-Syrian opposition in Lebanon).
- **A call not to make aid for the rebuilding of the Gaza Strip conditional on politics:** Nasrallah stressed the fact that the events in the Gaza Strip were a "great victory" for the Palestinian resistance [i.e., Hamas and the other terrorist organizations] and a failure for Israel, which was not willing to admit it lost the war. He rejected political conditions for

rebuilding the Gaza Strip and asked for unconditional support (which would make it possible to smuggle weapons into the Gaza Strip and rebuild Hamas's military might).

- **The assassination of senior Hezbollah terrorist Imad Moughnieh:** Nasrallah claimed that the results of the Hezbollah investigation showed that Israel and the "Mossad" were responsible for his death. He refused to reveal details of the "investigation" because it had not yet been completed. **He promised to avenge Imad Moughnieh's death** "to teach his killers a lesson...and to preserve the lives of those still alive..." **Revenge, he said, was "necessary,"** but he did not state how it would be effected.

- **Harsh attacks against Egypt:** In response to a question from the floor, he sharply criticized the Egyptian regime for keeping the Rafah crossing closed. "I condemn that regime because it lies to the Arab-Islamic world and says it has opened the crossing." He accused the Egyptian authorities of refusing to allow an **Iranian ship** carrying 20 tons of food and medicines to unload its cargo on Egyptian soil and deliver it through the Rafah crossing. "During the war and after the war, the Egyptian regime has been a partner in the siege of Gaza..." He cast doubts on the Egyptian regime as an honest broker between the Palestinians and Israel, because it was trying to exert pressure on the Palestinians. He called closing the Rafah crossing "one of the greatest crimes in history."

- **His speech drew ferocious attacks from Egypt:** A "senior Egyptian source" said that Nasrallah took orders from Tehran and represented the faction that wantonly amused itself by playing with the blood and lives of innocent victims, according to dictates it received from abroad (Middle East News Agency, January 30, 2009). **Usama Saraya**, who edits the Egyptian newspaper *Al-Ahram*, said that "Nasrallah is a liar," his remarks did not interest Egypt, and he was "subservient to Iran." He said that "Iran and Hezbollah and some of the Hamas extremists sitting in Damascus joined together to end the lull, which led to everything that has happened in the Gaza Strip (Lebanese FTV, January 30, 2009). The **establishment Egyptian press** also called Nasrallah a "liar," an "agent of Iran," a "little militia and gang man" and a "virus which has infected the Arab body and which we have to cleanse ourselves of" (*Al-Ahram*, *Al-Gumhuriya*, and other papers, January 31, February 1, 2009).