



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

## **News of Terrorism and the Israeli- Palestinian Conflict**

**May 5-12, 2009**



**Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak  
(Israeli Government Press Office, May 11, 2009).**

### **Overview**

- During the past week a number of rockets and mortar shells were fired at the western Negev. Hamas's policy of restraint is still in effect and the number was relatively small.
- On May 11 Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu met with Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak at Sharm el-Sheikh. Mubarak expressed satisfaction after the meeting and said that Egypt expected progress to be made in the Israeli-Palestinian peace process, based on the two-state solution. Netanyahu said he was interested in the earliest possible renewal of talks with the Palestinians and called for Israeli-Palestinian economic and security cooperation.
- On May 11 Mahmoud Abbas announced his intention to establish a transitional government within 24 hours. Hamas and the other terrorist organizations were severely critical, claiming that such a government would wreck the national Palestinian dialogue.

## Important Events

### Gaza Strip

#### Rocket and mortar shell fire

■ During the past week there were **small amounts** of rocket and mortar shell fire. Four rocket and six mortar shell hits were identified, all of them in non-inhabited areas. There were no casualties and no damage was done.

- **May 6:** A rocket hit was identified in the western Negev and a mortar shell fell near one of the communities. Hamas's Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades claimed responsibility for the mortar shell attack, saying it targeted IDF soldiers operating in the Gaza Strip (Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades website, May 6). Responsibility for the attack was also claimed by the Abu Ali Mustafa Brigades of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (Abu Ali Mustafa Brigades website, May 7), and by the Army of the Nation (Army of the Nation website, May 6, 2009).
- **May 7:** A mortar shell fell near a community in the west Negev.
- **May 8:** A mortar shell hit was identified near a community in the west Negev.
- **May 10:** A rocket hit was identified in an open area near a community in the west Negev.
- **May 11:** A rocket hit was identified in an open area near a community in the west Negev.

■ Hamas's rocket launching policy was recently made public by Khaled Mashaal, chairman of the Hamas political bureau in Damascus. Speaking for Westerners, he was reported by *The New York Times* as taking a pragmatic tone, stressing Hamas's current policy of restraint. However, in a speech aimed at Hamas supporters in the Gaza Strip, he said that the "resistance" [i.e., the terrorist organizations] remained a strategic alternative for Hamas [in its aspirations] to restore "Palestinian rights" and that Hamas would make no concessions regarding the "resistance."<sup>1</sup>

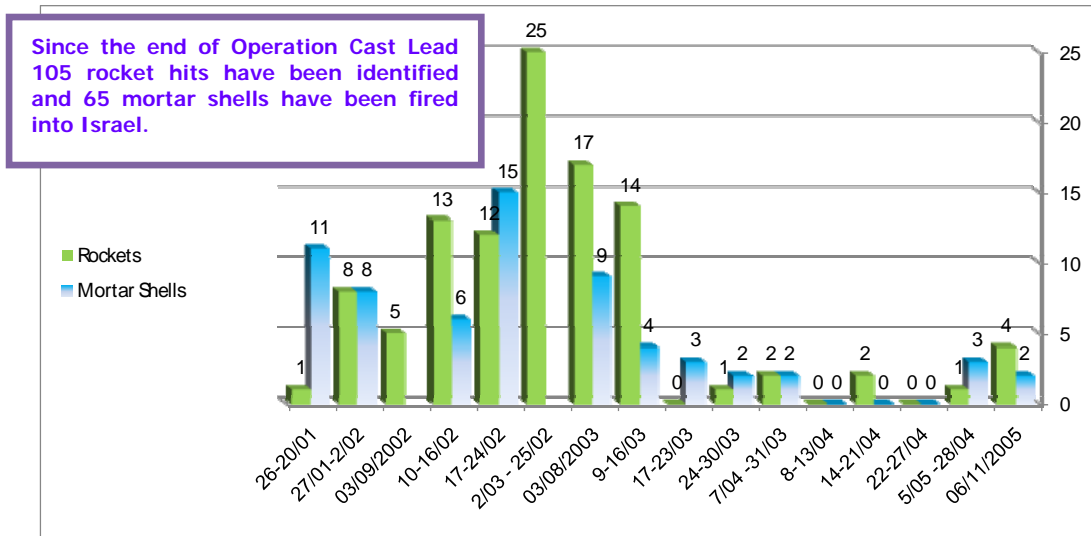
#### Israeli Air Force attack

■ On May 6 Israeli Air Force planes attacked three tunnels used to smuggle weapons into the southern Gaza Strip (IDF Spokesman, May 6, 2009). The Palestinian media reported that four Palestinians were wounded (Ma'an News Agency, May 6, 2009).

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<sup>1</sup> A bulletin about Khaled Mashaal's statements will appear shortly on the ITIC website.

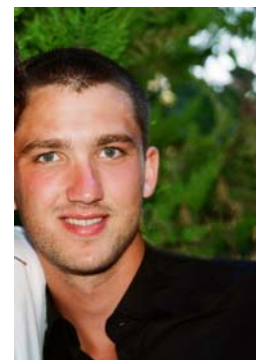
## Rocket and mortar shell fire since the end of Operation Cast Lead



## Judea and Samaria

### IDF soldier killed by friendly fire during riot in the village of Bir Zeit

■ On May 7 Sergeant Noam Adin Richter-Levy, 20, from the village of Mitzpe Netofah, was killed by friendly fire during an IDF operation in the village of Bir Zeit, north of Ramallah (Ynet, May 12, 2009). During the operation, an IDF force met with opposition from Palestinians and a riot broke out.



Sergeant Noam Adin Richter-Levy (Photo courtesy of the IDF Spokesman)

### Five life sentences for terrorist who aided suicide bombing attack at the Sharon shopping mall in Netanya

■ On May 11 the Israeli military court in Samaria sentenced Adham Yunis to five terms of life imprisonment and 20 additional years for his involvement in the suicide bombing attack at the Sharon shopping mall in Netanya in July 2005. In the attack, five Israeli civilians were killed and

more than 90 were wounded. Yunis came from the village of Ilar near Tulkarm and was a Palestinian Islamic Jihad operative.

■ As a PIJ operative he maintained contact with the organization's headquarters in Syria and received money for funding his military-terrorist activities. He escorted the suicide bomber to the mall, telling him to wait before detonating his device so that he, Yunis, could get as far away as possible. The suicide bomber roused the suspicions of a police officer standing near the entrance and she alerted a security guard. The bomber detonated his device, killing five Israeli civilians and wounding 91 (IDF Spokesman's website, May 11, 2009).

## The Gaza Strip after Operation Cast Lead

### Hamas's new interior minister notes the achievements of Sayid Siyyam

■ Fathi Hamad, Hamas's new interior minister, reported on the "achievements" of his predecessor, Sayid Siyyam, who was killed in Operation Cast Lead, saying that "among his greatest achievements was **the creation of collaboration between the current security forces and the Palestinian resistance** [i.e., terrorist organizations]...which was established against the Zionist enemy...which is why [the enemy] bombed security force headquarters" (Hamas police website, May 7, 2009). His remarks again illustrate the close links between the security forces of the Hamas de-facto administration and the Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades, the organization's military-terrorist wing.



Fathi Hamad, new interior minister of the Hamas de-facto administration

### Reports of Egyptian measures taken against the tunnel industry

■ On May 9 the Lebanese daily *Al-Akhbar* reported that Egyptian tunnel owners entered the Gaza Strip through the tunnels and met with Palestinian tunnel owners in Rafah. They came to discuss the "difficult situation created..., especially after the war." One of the smugglers said that one of the participants stressed that in the near future "it is important to lengthen the tunnels, to find houses relatively far from the border on the Egyptian side for tunnel entrances, to provide

massive protection and to prevent [the tunnels] from being discovered by Egyptian security forces." According to the paper, Egypt replaced some of the security forces stationed near the Gaza Strip border with personnel from Cairo after corruption had been discovered among the original forces.

- During the past week the Egyptian security forces uncovered five smuggling tunnels. On May 11 they found a cache of weapons in Sinai, earmarked for smuggling into the Gaza Strip. The cache included 80 mortar shells, 20 rockets and a large quantity of bullets (Reuters, May 11).

## The Political Front

### The Israeli Prime Minister meets the Egyptian President

- On May 11 Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak met at Sharm el-Sheikh. At a press conference held after the meeting, **President Mubarak** called the atmosphere "sincere and constructive." According to Mubarak, Prime Minister Netanyahu stressed the commitment of Israel's government to peace. Mubarak said that Egypt expected Israel to take an "active stance" which would lead to peace through the two-state solution. He said that additional issues discussed were reinforcing the calm in the Gaza Strip, opening the crossings, rebuilding the Gaza Strip and ways of achieving an exchange of Israeli and Palestinian prisoners (Middle East News Agency, May 11, 2009).

- **Prime Minister Netanyahu** said the following about the peace process with the Palestinians: "We wish to resume the peace talks between ourselves and the Palestinians as soon as possible and I fervently hope that they will be renewed in the coming weeks which in turn will set in motion the processes which will strengthen the economic cooperation between us and of course the activities of the Palestinian security apparatus that serve the security for both peoples" (Israeli Prime Minister's Office website, May 11, 2009).

- In the **Palestinian Authority**, the remarks made by Prime Minister Netanyahu were received skeptically. **Nabil Abu Rudeina**, Palestinian presidential spokesman, said that "we want practical results and not another round of negotiations... Negotiations with Israel can only take place if Israel recognizes the two-state solution, stops the settlements and removes the roadblocks. Talking about improving the economic situation is insufficient" (QudsNews website, May 11, 2009).

## The Internal Palestinian Arena

### **Mahmoud Abbas, speaking before the Judea and Samaria Fatah leadership, announces the establishment of a transitional government within 48 hours**

■ On May 11 Palestinian Authority Chairman Mahmoud Abbas spoke before the Judea and Samaria Fatah leadership. He spoke of the failure of the dialogue with Hamas and announced his decision to **form a transitional government within 48 hours**. The main points of his speech were the following:

- **The national dialogue:** All the undecided issues were discussed in Cairo: the PLO, elections, a national unity government, national reconciliation and rebuilding [the Gaza Strip]. He admitted that the last round of talks had failed but added that “we are not giving up, we are not surrendering.”
- **A call for the establishment of a national unity government:** He called for a national unity government in which Hamas and Fatah would participate, and which would receive international commitments, be able to rebuild the Gaza Strip and hold elections, according to the constitution, on January 24, 2010.
- Because of the failure of the dialogue and attempts to establish a national unity government, **it had been decided to form a transitional government within 48 hours**, “because there has to be a government to direct public affairs.” He added that as soon as the dialogue was successful, the transitional government would resign.
- **Convening Fatah’s sixth general assembly:** The assembly will be held on July 1, 2009, within the Palestinian Authority (“on the soil of the homeland”)<sup>2</sup>, not in Jordan or Egypt, although both would be happy to host it. The number of participants will be raised to 1,200 to provide just representation for all sectors of the “Palestinian homeland.” However, **the assembly will not convene if Israel prevents the residents of the Gaza Strip or “abroad” from entering the West Bank**, since “the absence of even one member of the movement” will prevent its being held.

■ Mahmoud Abbas referred to **other aspects of the conflict with Israel**. He noted his adherence to the Arab peace initiative as ratified at the Beirut summit in 2002, opposition to changes in the initiative, stressing the refusal to waive the “right of return,” demands that the Israeli government recognize the two-state solutions and completely stop the building in the settlements and “what it is doing in Jerusalem,” and a reiteration of his opposition to recognizing Israel as a Jewish state: “We said [at the Annapolis meeting] that we recognize the State of Israel and nothing more than that, and that [the Israelis] are free to define themselves.” He accused

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<sup>2</sup> According to media reports, the assembly will be held in Bethlehem.

Israel of creating obstacles to the Pope's visit and criticized the rocket fire from the Gaza Strip, saying it had to stop because it was ineffective and interfered with rebuilding the Gaza Strip.

## Reactions to Mahmoud Abbas's announcement that he would establish a transitional government

■ Hamas and the other terrorist organizations strongly criticized Mahmoud Abbas for his intention to establish a transitional government:

- **Fawzi Barhoum**, Hamas spokesman, said that the announcement was a "premature death certificate" for the Palestinian national dialogue. He said it reflected "a spiteful intention and lack of desire to reach an agreement, which was liable to make the split permanent and cause "legal and constitutional anarchy" to continue (Hamas's Palestine-Info website, May 11, 2009).
- **Musheir al-Masri**, senior Hamas figure, called the announcement "murder of the efforts of the Palestinian dialogue." He blamed Mahmoud Abbas "and his cronies" for the failure of Egypt's mediation efforts (BBC Arabic TV, May 7, 2009).
- **The Popular Front** announced it would only participate in the new government if it were a national unity government. The proposed government, it said, would only worsen the split. A **Democratic Front** spokesman said that the organization supported a national unity government, while another specifically said that it would not participate. Several **independent figures** said they would refuse to participate in a transitional government which would "make the split permanent."

## 400 Hamas operatives detained by the Palestinian security forces

■ **Majid Faraj**, commander of military intelligence for the West Bank, said that the Palestinian Authority was holding **400 Hamas operatives** for security and criminal reasons. As to Israeli-Palestinian collaboration, he said that there was collaboration with Israel in security matters, but based on the interests of the Palestinian people and nothing else. "we aspire to transfer control of the security of the Palestinian Authority in the West Bank, especially Area A, to the hands of the Palestinian Authority... to stop Israeli incursions... to remove the roadblocks, and to stop the persecutions and killings..." (*Al-Ahram*, May 5, 2009).

## **The Palestinian Authority exploits the Pope's visit to make political and propaganda capital and to attack Israel, especially regarding sovereignty over Jerusalem**

■ The visit of Pope Benedict XVI to Israel and the Palestinian Authority-administered territories has been exploited by the Palestinians as an opportunity to make political and propaganda capital and to attack Israel on a number of issues, especially **sovereignty over Jerusalem**. According to the claim of speakers affiliated with the Palestinian Authority, the presence of Israel in East Jerusalem does not give it sovereignty or any rights, and they must object to what they define as "Israel's attempt to take over the Pope's visit to Jerusalem." Therefore, they have stated, they will not coordinate his visit to the Palestinian Authority-administered territories with Israel and will set up an alternative media center. They also criticized the hanging of Israeli flags along the route to be taken by the Pope during his visit to East Jerusalem.

■ During the Pope's visit an embarrassing incident occurred when he met with Christian, Islamic and Jewish representatives, a meeting which was supposed to promote interfaith dialogue and understanding. **Sheikh Taysir Tamimi, president of the Palestinian Authority's Sharia [Islamic] courts and in effect the most senior religious figure in the PA**, exploited the opportunity to "plant seeds of division and confrontation between Israelis and Palestinians, as well as between Jews, Muslims and Christians," according to Israeli Minister Stas Misezhnikov, responsible for the Pope's visit to Israel.<sup>3</sup> Tamimi interrupted the meeting to say that Israel destroyed Palestinian cities and established settlements on Palestinian lands, that Jerusalem would remain the capital of Palestine and that all religious figures all over the world should join forces to protect the Palestinians. In response to his remarks, the Pope left the meeting.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Sheikh Taysir Tamimi has a long history of anti-Israeli incitement, especially on the Temple Mount.

<sup>4</sup> An information bulletin about the Pope's visit will appear shortly on the ITIC website.