



**Intelligence and Terrorism
Information Center**

News of Terrorism and the Israeli- Palestinian Conflict

August 4-11, 2009



Left: Mahmoud Abbas after being elected chairman of the Fatah movement (Wafa News Agency, August 10, 2009). Right: Mahmoud Abbas casts his vote for Fatah institutions (Fatah website, August 11, 2009).

Overview

- This past week one rocket hit was identified in an open area near an Israeli village in the western Negev, the first in three weeks. In addition, mortar shells and light arms were fired at Israelis near the security fence. In response Israeli Air Force planes attacked a weapons smuggling tunnel in the Rafah region.
- The Fatah conference which opened on August 4 ended on August 9 with elections for the movement's the central committee and revolutionary council. Before the elections there were interpersonal struggles between the old guard, the middle generation and the younger generation. The middle generation gained strength at the expense of the old guard. Mahmoud Abbas was reelected as movement chairman; there were no other candidates.
- Mahmoud Abbas' speech, the conference statement and remarks made by various senior Fatah figures all mentioned the issue of the so-called "resistance" and its limits within the peace process. Mahmoud Abbas supported the continuation of negotiations with Israel (based on Palestinian conditions and concepts) but noted that the Palestinian people retained the "right of legitimate resistance" (making it clear that he meant unarmed popular protest, for example the protests at Bili'in and Na'alim). Other speakers made it clear that the movement did not reject any option, including an armed struggle, reiterated that all forms of "resistance" were the "legitimate right" of "occupied peoples," and that Fatah had adhered to "resistance" since its inception.

Important Events

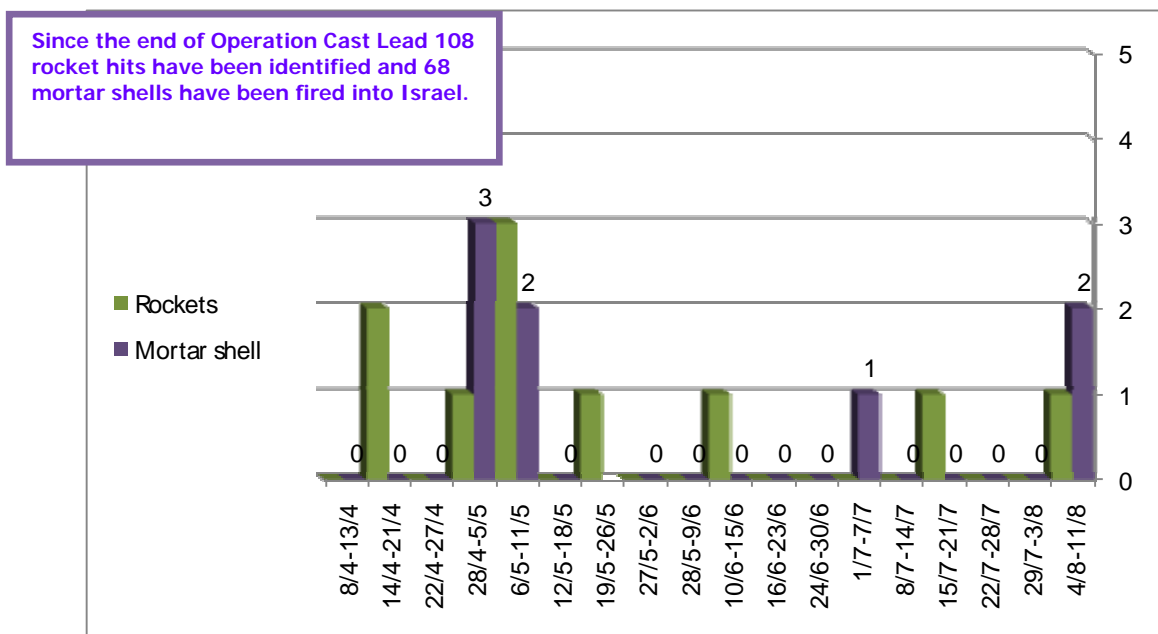
Gaza Strip

Rocket and mortar shell fire

■ This past week a rocket hit was identified near one of the villages in the western Negev. In addition, two mortar shells and light arms were fired at Israel civilians working near the security fence. There were no casualties and no damage was done:

- On **August 10** a rocket hit was identified in an open area near a village in the western Negev, **the first in three weeks** (since July 16). No organization claimed responsibility.
- On **August 10** Israeli civilians working near the Karni crossing were attacked by small arms fire. The military-terrorist wing of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine claimed responsibility for the attack (Abu Ali Mustafa Brigades website, August 10, 2009).
- On **August 9** two mortar shells fell near the Erez crossing inside the Gaza Strip. The attack occurred as a Palestinian heart patient was being transferred to an Israel ambulance on his way to medical treatment in Israel. There were no casualties and no damage was done (IDF Spokesman, August 9, 2009). A network calling itself the Imad Moughnieh Squads of the Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades claimed responsibility for the attack (Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades website, August 10, 2009).

Rocket and mortar shell fire into Israeli territory since the end of Operation Cast Lead¹



¹ The statistics do not include the mortar shells fired at IDF soldiers patrolling the border fence which fell inside the Gaza Strip.

■ In response, Israeli Air Force airplanes attacked a weapons smuggling tunnel in the Rafah area (IDF Spokesman, August 10, 2009).

Judea and Samaria

Bomb found in Palestinian youth's tools near Nablus

■ The terrorist organizations continue trying to carry out attacks. On August 8 an IDF force found an improvised bomb among the tools of a Palestinian youth at a checkpoint south of Nablus. The bomb was detonated in a controlled explosion by Border Police experts and the Palestinian youth was transferred to the security forces (IDF Spokesman, August 9, 2009).

Global terrorism

Egyptian newspaper reports exposure of terrorist squad which planned to attack the Israeli ambassador to Egypt

■ On August 8 the Egyptian daily *Al-Masri Al-Youm* reported that four months ago a global jihad squad was detained in Egypt after an attack in a Cairo market which killed a French tourist. According to the paper, a breakthrough was recently made in the investigation when it was discovered that the squad planned to assassinate Shalom Cohen, the Israeli ambassador to Egypt. The plan was to either to attack his car, throw bombs at his home or shoot him as he got out of his car. According to the members of the squad who were detained, the plan was prevented by the strict security around the ambassador (*Yedioth Ahronoth*, August 9, 2009).

The Gaza Strip after Operation Cast Lead

Hamas' rocket launching policy

■ According to an article printed in the Hamas paper *Felesteen* entitled "**The rockets of the resistance and their launching strategy**," Hamas and the other organizations regard the lull in the fighting as a tactic of their combat plan to fight Israel. The lull is legitimate if it is a part of the overall "resistance" and makes it possible to hold intensive training exercises, said the article. It ended with Hamas' call for a mechanism for military coordination among all the organizations operating in the Gaza Strip. What was particularly important, according to the article, was coordinating rocket fire so that "instead of one faction firing ten rockets, four factions fire 40 rockets" (*Felesteen*, August 2, 2009).

The Rafah crossing opens for five days.

■ Egypt opened the Rafah crossing for five days beginning August 3, and 7,530 Palestinians passed through, 4,274 on their way to Egypt and the others returning to the Gaza Strip (Website of the National Democratic Party [the ruling party in Egypt], August 8, 2009). During the first three

days four ambulances entered Rafah, three from the welfare committee of the Egyptian doctors' union and one from the Jordanian engineers' union (*Al-Hayat*, August 8, 2009).

Hamas responses to the Human Rights Watch accusation of war crimes

■ Human Rights Watch recently issued a report accusing Hamas of war crimes because that it fired rockets from populated areas at Israel civilians and civilian structures (Human Rights Watch website, August 6, 2009). Hamas spokesmen responded by accusing the organization of being pro-Israeli and criticizing Hamas' so-called "right" to fire rockets at civilians as part of the "resistance:"

● **Fawzi Barhoum, Hamas spokesman**, said that "resistance to Israel is part of [our] self defense." He called on Human Rights Watch to join the organizations collecting evidence to bring Israel to trial (Al-Bayan Center website, the Gulf States, August 2009).

● **The information bureau of Ismail Haniya's de facto administration** said that the report was "completely political and not objective," and that rocket fire into Israel was "a natural response to Israel's continued attacks." The office also said in a statement that "all forms of the Palestinian resistance are the legitimate right of the Palestinians."

● **Ismail Radwan, senior Hamas figure** in the Gaza Strip, told the Russian TV channel in Arabic that the report was biased in favor of Israel. He also rejected the claim that Hamas used civilians as human shields and fired rockets from within inhabited areas (Russia al-Youm website, August 6, 2009).

The tunnel industry

■ Smuggling activity into the Gaza Strip continues. The Palestinian Center for Democracy and Conflict Resolution reported that the tunnel industry **employed 16,000 people who worked in 800 tunnels**. In addition, according to the report, about 1,000 minors were employed and made up about 25% of the victims of tunnel accidents (Agence France Presse, July 12, 2009).

■ The tunnels have recently claimed many victims, leading to public criticism of the Hamas de-facto administration for not having taken measures to end the tunnel accidents. Israel was also held responsible for the victims because of the continuing "siege." The Haniya administration was criticized for operating tunnels and charging taxes without making provisions for the safety of the workers (Chinese News Agency, July 30, 2009).

■ Egypt continues taking measures against smuggling from its territory into the Gaza Strip. The Egyptian security forces confiscated a truck carrying 1,000 wireless devices worth five million Egyptian pounds, or about \$900,000, because it was feared they were destined for Hamas (*Al-Yawm Al-Sabaa*, August 10, 2009). The Egyptian authorities were also reported to have prevented 20 sacks of TNT and weapons from being smuggled into the Gaza Strip (Masrawy News website, August 6, 2009).

The Internal Palestinian Arena

The sixth Fatah conference



Fatah conference representatives cheer Mahmoud Abbas after he is elected movement chairman (Wafa News Agency, August 10, 2009).

Overview

■ The Fatah conference, which began on August 4, was supposed to choose the leadership for the movement's various institutions and to ratify its political platform, which related to a great extent to the conflict with Israel. In effect, the discussions focused more on interpersonal power struggles, especially between the younger generation and the old guard leadership, and less on ideological issues. The draft version of the political platform which was issued on the eve of the conference² was not dealt with extensively. **The mere fact of holding the conference was an impressive achievement for Mahmoud Abbas, who, as sole candidate, was reelected Fatah chairman.**³ Mahmoud Abbas represented the event as historic and sending a message of unity to the Fatah movement.

■ Two thousand, three hundred and fifty-five representatives participated in the conference. It elected 18 ad hoc committees which discussed their issues and presented their conclusions to the plenum. The end of the conference was postponed to August 11 to allow Fatah members from the Gaza Strip to present their positions and participate in the voting.⁴ According to conference spokesman Nabil Amru, many changes were made in Fatah's regulations, such as changes in the number of members in the central committee and the revolutionary council, and in voting procedures (Al-Jazeera TV, August 8, 2009). **In the central committee elections, the middle generation gained strength at the expense of the old guard.**

² For further information see our August 4, 2009 bulletin "News of Terrorism and the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict (July 28-August 4, 2009)" at http://www.terrorism-info.org.il/malam_multimedia/English/eng_n/pdf/ipc_e045.pdf. Some of the terminology of the draft of Fatah's political platform was changed. Some of the changes were ratified by the plenum and some were sent to the new revolutionary council for ratification.

³ In response to Mahmoud Abbas' election, Hamas spokesman Sami Abu Zuhri said that as far as Hamas was concerned, it would not make anything better for Fatah in that it was perpetuating the situation of "political collapse and submission to foreigners" (German News Agency, August 8, 2009).

⁴ During the conference the **Hamas security forces continued harassing Fatah members living in the Gaza Strip** (after having prevented them from leaving for the conference). Fatah claimed that Hamas had not only detained them but had confiscated their computers and cellular phones to prevent them from voting (Wafa News Agency, August 7, 2009).

■ In general the discussions were peaceful, with the exception of a number of personal disagreements between candidates for the various institutions and their supporters. For example, an argument broke out between the camps of Jibril Rajoub, Abu Alaa' and Marwan Barghouti on the one hand, and the camp of Muhammad Dahlan from the Gaza Strip on the other because of the quota of conference members from the Gaza Strip in the central committee and the revolutionary council (*Al-Hayat*, August 6, 2009). The affair of the non-participation of Fatah representatives from the Gaza Strip, which accompanied the preparations for the conference and the discussions held, illustrated the **deepening separation** between Judea and Samaria and the Gaza Strip and the great **alienation** between the Palestinian Authority (and Fatah) and Hamas.

False accusations against Israel of being responsible for the death of Arafat

■ During the conference it was unanimously decided that Israel was behind the death of former Fatah leader and Palestinian Authority chairman Yasser Arafat.⁵ Following the decision, the conference resolved to establish an "investigation committee" headed by Nasser al-Qidwah, Arafat's nephew. Conference spokesman Nabil Amru said that Arafat's death would remain "open" and that the movement was in contact with elements in the countries where Arafat received treatment to acquire information (Palestinian Television, August 6, 2009).

The voting



The struggle between the generations: the revolutionary council and the central committee, in which the younger generation says "We are young and tomorrow is ours."

■ The most disputed issue of the conference was the elections to the movement's institutions, and for that reason it was extended for a number of days. The central issues of contention were the Gaza Strip's representation in Fatah's institutions and the status of Muhammad Dahlan (most of whose supporters remained in the Gaza Strip and who was accused of being responsible for the Hamas takeover).⁶ In the end it was decided that 25 Fatah members from the Gaza Strip would be

⁵ Yasser Arafat died on November 12, 2004, in a Paris hospital. Two weeks before his death he left Ramallah for France with permission from Israel following the deterioration of his health. In the past various elements in Fatah and beyond have accused Israel of his death. On the eve of the conference Farouk Qadoumi, a member of Fatah's central committee and bitterly opposed to Mahmoud Abbas, accused Mahmoud Abbas and Muhammad Dahlan of conspiring with Israel and the United States to assassinate Arafat (*Al-Jazeera TV*, July 15, 2009).

⁶ In the end, Muhammad Dahlan was elected to the central committee.

added to the revolutionary council and five to the central committee, so that one third of the members chosen would be from the Gaza Strip (*Al-Ayyam*, August 5, 2009).

■ On August 9 the ballot boxes officially opened and the representatives, headed by Mahmoud Abbas, begin voting for central committee members. There were 96 candidates for the **central committee** and 617 for the **revolutionary council**. The voting was held in the Gaza Strip and in Judea and Samaria, although the voting in the Gaza Strip began one day earlier. Fatah members in the Gaza Strip voted by telephone. On August 10 the polls closed without exceptional incidents.



Fatah representatives waiting in line to vote (Wafa News Agency, August 10, 2009).

Reports from the ad hoc committees

■ Eighteen ad hoc committees met during the conference and then presented their recommendations to the plenum for ratification. The most important recommendations were the following:

● **The committee for Jerusalem and holy and religious sites:** The committee determined that **“occupied Jerusalem” [i.e., all of Jerusalem, not just East Jerusalem] was an integral part of the “Palestinian homeland.”** Fatah objected to any agreement or negotiations in stages regarding Jerusalem which ignored its “permanent national rights and international legitimacy.” **The restoration of all Jerusalem** is a line in the sand as far as Fatah is concerned, drawn by Yasser Arafat, and no one can cross it. The committee condemned “Israel’s crimes in the occupied city and its attempts to Judaize or isolate it” [from the rest of Judea and Samaria]. The committee called for support for the “firm stance” of the Palestinians in Jerusalem for the sake of preserving its Arab Palestinian identity, and formulated a mechanism for furthering Fatah’s role in Jerusalem through the rehabilitation and strengthening of Fatah supporters in the city (The conference’s official website, August 8, 2009).

● **The political committee:** The committee was headed by Nabil Shaath and ratified 14 articles which imposed restrictions on the Palestinian negotiating team, should negotiations

with Israel be reinstated. They included the **cessation of building** [in Judea and Samaria] **and lifting the “siege” of the Gaza Strip** (PalToday website, August 6, 2009).

- **The committee for the settlements and the fence** [the security fence built by Israel]: The committee called for total opposition to the existence of the Jewish settlements, including those in Jerusalem. It determined that there would be **no return to the negotiating table without a full stop to building in the settlements**. The committee called for a struggle to be waged against the settlements and the fence which would be carried out through “the resistance of the masses” (*muqawamah jamahiriyyah*), a term which was coined by Mahmoud Abbas to mean unarmed popular protests against Israel, like those against the security fence⁷ (The conference’s official website, August 8, 2009).

- **The information committee**: The information committee called for Fatah’s public diplomacy to be improved. It recommended that a Fatah information council of media personnel be set up, which would be given broad authority. It was also decided to establish a media institution which would include the satellite television station, the land channel, local radio, a daily newspaper and a website which would be supervised by Fatah’s central information department.

The limits of the “resistance” as expressed by the Fatah conference

- The conference raised the issue of the limits of violence and terrorism [“resistance”] within the peace process. On the one hand, it is a sensitive issue for Fatah, which wants to distinguish itself from Hamas⁸ and from the use of terrorism against civilians, and in addition does not want to complicate its relations with the United States and the international community and put an end to the peace process. On the other hand, the general mood among the conference participants (as was evidenced by repeated statements made by Fatah activists) was that the concept of “armed struggle,” to which Fatah had adhered since its establishment, was not to be abandoned. The solution found was to stress unarmed protest, the term coined by Mahmoud Abbas in his opening speech, without abandoning the concept of armed struggle as the legitimate right of the Palestinian people, and as an option which might be adopted in the future.

- The following are examples of the issue of resistance and its interpretation as they surfaced at the conference:

- **On the eve of the conference** Fatah published a **draft of its political platform** (which has since undergone changes which have not yet been made clear). With regard to “resistance,” the draft tried to differentiate between the methods used by Fatah and those

⁷ *Muqawamah jamahiriyyah* was an expression used by Mahmoud Abbas in the speech which opened the conference. It describes unarmed measures within the struggle against Israel like those against the security fence in Bil’in and Na’alin. The term is familiar to the Arab world and the Palestinians although it is not often used. He may have used it to satisfy those in Fatah in favor of an armed campaign but also to add the dimension of massive spontaneous participation. It can also be interpreted (not literally) as civil disobedience and in certain contexts can also make violent actions seem justified.

⁸ **Musa Abu Marzuq**, deputy head of the Hamas political bureau in Damascus, called on Fatah to make “the path of resistance” the watchword of the conference (Al-Jazeera TV, August 5, 2009).

used by Hamas by representing Fatah as refraining for harming civilians.⁹ According to the platform, “a distinction must be made between terrorism which kills civilians for political purposes and the legitimate resistance to a foreign occupation and the struggle for freedom, independence and self-determination...” (the platform does not elaborate as to what “legitimate resistance” is or what its limits are).

- According to the **official statement** of the conference, as an integral part of its political platform, saying that despite adherence to the option of a just peace and striving to achieve it, **the movement does not disqualify any option, and believes that “resistance” in all its forms is the legitimate right of occupied people against the occupation** (Wafa News Agency, August 8, 2009).

- In his opening speech of August 4, Mahmoud Abbas expressed **support for continued negotiations with Israel** despite all the difficulties involved, and **the adherence of the Palestinian people to the option of peace**. However, he noted that the **Palestinian people reserved their right to “legitimate resistance,”** anchored, he said, in international law, and gave as an example the demonstrations at Na’alin. He elaborated on the meaning of “legitimate resistance” by using the expression *Muqawamah jamahiriyyah* (resistance of the masses) in describing popular, unarmed, protest demonstrations against Israel. He said that **“the resistance of the masses which is carried out by our people against the settlements, the separation fence, and the destruction and confiscation of houses,** is an example of our people’s ability to invent various methods of struggle which can penetrate the conscience of the world and receive support. I bless and esteem our masses in Jerusalem, Bili’in, Na’alin and Ma’sra (south of Bethlehem) and other places where **unarmed demonstrators** take to the streets, their only weapons their hope and determination and faith in victory, to show their resistance to the occupation” (The conference’s official website, August 4, 2009).

- **Senior Fatah figures** were asked to respond to Israel’s criticism of the conference’s use of the term “resistance,” saying that Fatah adhered to the peace process and the two-state solution, clarifying the term “resistance” and its place in the process as follows:

- ✓ Conference spokesman **Nabil Amru** convened a press conference where he said that the type of “resistance” Mahmoud Abbas meant was **limited violence or non-violent resistance of the type seen every day at Na’alin and Bili’in and in other locations to protest the fence [the security fence erected by Israel], to protest the settlements,** the Judaization of Jerusalem and the evacuation of civilians from their houses. All those, he said, were legitimate forms of resistance. He added that military resistance was legitimate but if the activities in the settlements stopped completely and there was a willingness to enter into a peace process which would focus on the Palestinian state, Fatah would adhere to it (Egyptian TV, August 4, 2009).

⁹ For further information see our August 4, 2009 bulletin “News of Terrorism and the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict (July 28-August 4, 2009)” at http://www.terrorism-info.org.il/malam_multimedia/English/eng_n/pdf/ipc_e045.pdf.

✓ **Isam al-Ahmed**, head of the Fatah faction in the Palestinian Legislative Council, when asked about **a practical translation for the part of Mahmoud Abbas' speech which dealt with the armed struggle, answered that nothing new had been said**. He said that Fatah would not give up its options in the struggle, including armed struggle. He added that on that very issue the movement had been founded and that it had not abandoned it and would not abandon it (FTV News, August 5, 2009). He said that the Palestinian people had the right to struggle for their self-determination using any means and methods according to circumstances and their options.

✓ **Marwan Barghouti**, senior Fatah figure, a member of the Fatah faction in the Palestinian Legislative Council and serving a life term in Israel, said that resistance to the Israeli occupation was a national duty, "a legitimate right anchored in divine laws." He said that the "resistance," which would only end with the "end of the occupation," had won international legitimacy and was anchored in international law (The conference's official website, August 6, 2009). **Fadwa al-Barghouti**, his wife, said that her husband asked that the Fatah platform be based on the integration of resistance and negotiations (Middle East News Agency, August 7, 2009).

✓ **Nabil Shaath**, a member of Fatah's central committee, said that **the Fatah platform confirmed the right of the Palestinian people to use all forms of struggle and resistance to restore their rights** (The conference's official website, August 7, 2009). He added that it described different ways to struggle against Israel, for example, stone-throwing, a boycott of Israeli products, a civil uprising, an international campaign, etc. (*Al-Ayyam*, August 10, 2009).

✓ The issue of the "resistance" also appeared in **editorials** in newspapers affiliated with the Palestinian Authority. On August 10 *Al-Ayyam* noted that the new political platform identified Fatah as a movement which would continue the struggle, did not reject any option, neither talks with Israel nor the option of "resistance" [i.e., terrorism]. In an editorial printed on August 8, *Al-Ayyam* wrote that Fatah would not give up the principle of the "resistance" and would not turn into a political party of the Palestinian Authority. On August 9 *Al-Quds* wrote that the day after the conference Fatah and the Palestinians would have to face certain challenges, among the "the limits of the Palestinian resistance."

The internal Palestinian dialogue

■ According to the August 9 issue of *Al-Sharq Al-Awsat*, Fatah is not planning to punish Hamas or retaliate for its not having permitted Fatah members to leave the Gaza Strip for the conference. That position is being taken to make it possible for the dialogue to continue between Hamas and Fatah and for the two sides to meet as planned in Cairo on August 25. Khaled Mashaal said (in a phone conversation from Damascus to honor outstanding students in Khan Yunis) that Hamas

wanted reconciliation [with Fatah] but that it had to be based on “adherence to the path of resistance and jihad...” (Hamas’s Palestine-Info website, August 8, 2009).

Palestinian Authority activity directed against institutions controlled or influenced by Hamas continues

■ The Palestinian Authority’s intensive activities against Hamas’ civilian infrastructure (the *da’wah*) continues, with an emphasis on the mosques and “charitable societies.” The Palestinian Authority’s Ministry of Religious Endowments recently decided that mosques within the Palestinian Authority would be subordinate to the ministry itself. Based on the decision, only imams and preachers appointed by the Palestinian Authority would be permitted to deliver Friday sermons in the mosques (Palestinian News Network, August 5, 2009).

■ In addition, the security forces continue operating against the “charitable societies” controlled or influenced by Hamas. Hamas claimed that the security forces in Ramallah and Hebron initiated a program which included regulating the status of schools which belong to the charitable societies, employing Palestinian Authority workers in those schools, supervising the curricula and making changes in them [by inference, schools controlled by Hamas], and firing charitable society workers and replacing them with workers appointed by the security forces (Filastin al-’An website, July 19, 2009). It was also reported that five teachers in the Jenin district had been fired from their Ministry of Education jobs because of their Hamas affiliation (Hamas’s Palestine-Info website, August 8, 2009).

■ After a pause, apparently because of the conference, the Palestinian Authority security forces detained 42 Hamas activists, focusing on Ramallah and Hebron (Hamas’s Palestine-Info website, August 8, 2009). In addition, on August 5 the security forces in Qalqilya detained many Hamas activists, among them Hashem al-Masri, deputy head of the urban council, and Isam Shawar, a journalist (Hamas’s Palestine-Info website, August 6, 2009).

The Political Arena

A Hamas delegation leaves the Gaza Strip for a political visit

■ On July 8 a Hamas delegation headed by Mahmoud al-Zahar left the Gaza Strip. It began its tour in Egypt, where its members met with senior Egyptian personnel. According to the Palestinian and Arab media, they discussed the abducted Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit and the internal Palestinian dialogue (*Al-Sharq Al-Awsat*, Al-Bayan Center website, Ma’an News Agency, August 10, 2009).

■ At a press conference, Mahmoud al-Zahar denied that progress had been made regarding Gilad Shalit. As to the internal Palestinian dialogue, he said that a reconciliation had to be reached which would serve as the foundation for Palestinian Authority elections. “The only way is [to hold] elections...Otherwise much blood will be shed in the Palestinian Authority territory, which will lead to more conflicts...” (Al-Aqsa TV, August 10, 2009). The delegation’s next stop is expected to be

Syria, where they will meet with the Hamas leadership to consult about the internal Palestinian dialogue in preparation for its renewal on August 25, and from there to other Arab countries (Palestinian News Network, August 8, 2009).