



**Intelligence and Terrorism
Information Center**

News of Terrorism and the Israeli- Palestinian Conflict

August 18-25, 2009



Hamas security forces guarding the smuggling tunnel struck by the Israeli Air Force on August 24. The attack came in response to mortar shells launched into Israel territory (Photo: Ibrahim Abu Mustafa for Reuters, August 25, 2009).

Overview

- In the northern Gaza Strip the IDF opened fire at three suspicious Palestinians who were apparently trying to plant an IED near the security fence, killing one. Following the incident two mortar shells were fired into Israeli territory. In response the Israeli Air Force attacked a tunnel to smuggle weapons into the Gaza Strip from Egypt.
- Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, on the eve of a visit to Britain and Germany for political talks and a meeting with American special envoy George Mitchell, told a government meeting that there was a will to reactivate talks with the Palestinians. He added that generally speaking it was assumed they could be reactivated at the end of this coming September, but it also depended on understandings between Israel and the Americans. Nabil Abu Rudeina, spokesman for Mahmoud Abbas, called Netanyahu's remarks an Israeli attempt to deceive world public opinion and serve as a cover for continued settlement in the Palestinian territories.

Important Events

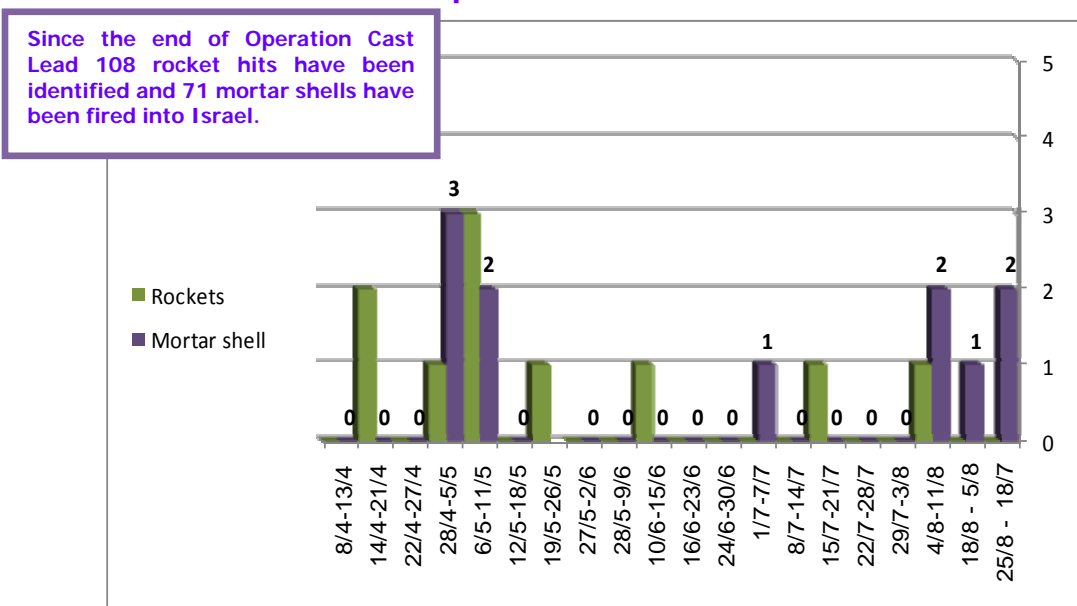
Gaza Strip

Rocket and mortar shell fire

■ On August 24 two mortar shells were fired into Israeli territory. One landed in an IDF base north of the Gaza Strip, slightly wounding a soldier. An hour before the shells were fired three suspicious Palestinians were identified near the security fence, apparently trying to plant an IED. An IDF force implemented standard procedures. After the three refused to leave the area the force opened fire, killing one Palestinian. The other two fled (IDF Spokesman, August 24, 2009).

■ In response the Israeli Air Force attacked a tunnel used to smuggle weapons into the Gaza Strip from Egypt. The Palestinians reported that the attack resulted in four dead and an unidentified number of wounded (QudsNews website, August 25, 2009).

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



Judea and Samaria

Easing security restrictions for Ramadan

■ In view of the holy Muslim month of Ramadan, the IDF and the civilian administration instituted a series of measures to ease the lives of the Palestinians in Judea and Samaria. In addition, the civilian administration instructed IDF forces to show consideration for the feelings of the Palestinians and insofar as was possible, not to eat or drink near them. As part of the measures:

- A roadblock north of Jenin and another south of Ramallah have been opened daily until midnight.

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

- Palestinian families with relatives in Israel will be allowed to visit them for a week.
- Men over the age of 50 and women over the age of 45 are allowed to pray on the Temple Mount.
- The Allenby bridge between Israel and Jordan is open daily to the passage of individuals and merchandise from 8:00 a.m. until midnight.

The Gaza Strip after Operation Cast Lead

The crossings

- Deliveries of humanitarian assistance continue through the crossings between Israel and the Gaza Strip at the rate of more than 100 truck a day.

Hamas makes arrangements to help the needy during the Ramadan fast

- This year the holy Muslim month of Ramadan, during which the faithful fast, began on August 21 in the Palestinian territories. During Ramadan the local, Arab and international charitable societies customarily increase assistance to the needy. The Hamas de-facto administration has also made arrangements to distribute aid both through various administration agencies and by supporting the vast network of Gaza Strip charitable societies, some of which are Hamas-affiliated.
- The Hamas administration's Ministry of Welfare plans to distribute aid this month to 70,000 needs families (*Felsteen*, August 19, 2009). Senior administration officials contributed part of their salaries to the needy, and the total amount is estimated at \$1 million (Safa News Agency, July 31, 2009). In view of complaints of high prices, Hamas has increased its supervision of the merchandise in the markets. The National Economic Ministry of the Hamas de-facto administration has even claimed that the prices of basic commodities have fallen.

The school year begins in the Gaza Strip with the increased Islamization of the educational system

- The school year began in the Gaza Strip on August 23. More than 250,000 male and female students began their studies at 383 Hamas administration schools throughout the Gaza Strip, and at more than 200,000 in UNRWA schools. The lack of teachers, partially caused by the resignation of teachers who refused to accept Hamas authority, was, in among other ways, offset by hiring teachers on personal contracts, in our assessment teachers who support Hamas (Ministry of Education website of the Hamas de-facto administration, August 23, 2009).

■ The new school year was accompanied by other indications of the **continuation of the Islamization of the educational system in the Gaza Strip**.² **Mahmoud Abu Haseira**, Hamas head of the educational system for the western Gaza Strip, called on female students to wear traditional Islamic dress. He said that the educational system required all female students to wear “wide clothing,” adding that the presence of men would be barred in schools for girls of all ages, including teachers and principals. He said that was because Palestinian society in the Gaza Strip was Muslim, and that Islam taught that “sisters and brothers” be separated from the age of seven³ (Agence France Presse, August 23, 2009; the Jordanian daily *Al-Ghad*, August 24, 2009).



A delegation of the Hamas faction in the Palestinian Legislative Council visits schools in the Gaza Strip as the new school year begins (Al-Aqsa TV, August 23, 2009).

The Peace Process

Benjamin Netanyahu and the Palestinian response

■ On August 23, at a government meeting on the eve of his trip to Britain and Germany for diplomatic talks and for a meeting with special American envoy George Mitchell, Israeli Prime Minister **Benjamin Netanyahu** said that the Americans and others, as well as the Israelis, want to reactivate the talks with the Palestinians. In general, he said, it was considered possible to do so before the end of September, but it depended on understandings between Israel and the Americans, and of course with the Palestinians. He added that there were still well-known issues of non-agreement, and that it was unclear to what degree the Arab states would be partners in getting the process started (Israeli Prime Minister’s office website, Hebrew, August 23, 2009).

² For further information see our July 28, 2009 bulletin “The Islamization process promoted by Hamas in the Gaza Strip and its social and political implications on the local, the Middle Eastern, and the international scenes” at <http://www.terrorism-info.org.il/site/content/t1.asp?Sid=13&Pid=324>.

³ It is an accepted by Islam that seven-year old boys and girls aged eight to nine become adults and are responsible for their actions, with the exception of financial affairs.



Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu leave for a meeting in London with American special envoy George Mitchell (Photo: Amos Ben-Gershon for the Israeli Government Press Office, August 24, 2009).

- **Nabil Abu Rudeina**, spokesman for Mahmoud Abbas, called Netanyahu's remarks an Israeli attempt to deceive world public opinion and serve as a cover for continued settlement in the Palestinian territories (Agence France Presse, August 24, 2009).

The Internal Palestinian Arena

Bilateral release of prisoners for Ramadan

- It was recently reported that Hamas and Fatah intended to release prisoners in a mutual goodwill gesture for Ramadan and in view of the possible renewal of the internal Palestinian dialogue. **The Hamas de-facto administration** announced its intention to release 100 prisoners from its jails, 50 of them Fatah activists, who were detained for "security crimes" (*Felesteen*, August 19, 2009). According to a report on a Fatah-affiliated forum, the Hamas security forces have already released 12 Fatah activists (Al-Fatahawi forum, August 21, 2009). **Musheir al-Masri**, secretary of the Hamas faction in the Palestinian Legislative Council, told Iranian television that the release of the Fatah detainees was meant to "prepare the atmosphere for the internal Palestinian dialogue and so that Fatah would release more than 1,000 security detainees in the [West] Bank" (Al-Alam TV, August 21, 2009). However, it was reported that for Ramadan **Mahmoud Abbas** had instructed the security forces to release 200 Hamas detainees held in Palestinian Authority jails. It was also reported that the Palestinian preventive security forces in the Qalqilya district had already released 12 Hamas detainees (Ma'an News Agency, August 23, 2009).

The Palestinian Authority increases security supervision in Judea and Samaria during Ramadan

- The Palestinian Authority's Ministry of Religious Endowments and its security forces have undertaken various preventive measures for Ramadan to keep Hamas from exploiting the holiday for activities against the PA. The Ministry of Religious Endowments issued an order to close the mosques after prayers during Ramadan. The order forbids holding lectures, religious instruction and

mass fast-breaking meals in mosques. In addition, the imams of the various mosques have been instructed to give sermons following a unified formula (Hamas' Palestine-Info website, August 22, 2009).

The Fatah-Hamas dialogue is postponed

■ Egypt has officially announced that the seventh round of Fatah-Hamas talks has been postponed until the end of Ramadan. During the month Egypt will continue its mediation attempts to prepare the ground for a reconciliation agreement between the sides. Spokesmen from both sides related the dialogue to the elections to the Palestinian Authority institutions. **Palestinian Prime Minister Salam Fayyad** said that should the dialogue fail, the elections would be held on the legal date. He said that "the subject is not open to discussion" (*Al-Hayat Al-Jadeeda*, August 21, 2009). On the other hand, Hamas spokesman **Fawzi Barhoum** said that the Hamas leadership objected to holding general elections for the Palestinian Authority institutions without a reconciliation agreement which would include agreement on all the issues on the agenda (Hamas' Palestine-Info website, August 22, 2009).