



Intelligence and Terrorism
Information Center

News of Terrorism and the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict

December 22-29, 2009



The late Meir Avshalom Hai's car, hit by gunfire from an ambush in northern Samaria (Photo by Gil Bismut, published courtesy of ZAKA).

Overview

- This past week events focused on the shooting attack in which an Israeli civilian was killed. Two days later an IDF force entered the Kasbah (old city) in Nablus to detain the terrorists who had carried out the attack in Samaria. The three, Fatah-Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades operatives, refused to surrender and were shot and killed in the ensuing exchanges of fire. Senior figures in the Palestinian Authority denounced the IDF's activity and appealed to the international community to exert pressure on Israel to stop its [so-called] "aggressive activities."
- Hamas initiated a media campaign in response to Egypt's building a barrier along its border with the Gaza Strip (referred to by Hamas as "the wall"). Hamas warned the Egyptians of harsh consequences which would follow and organized protest demonstrations. According to reports, there were some attempts to interrupt the fence's construction.

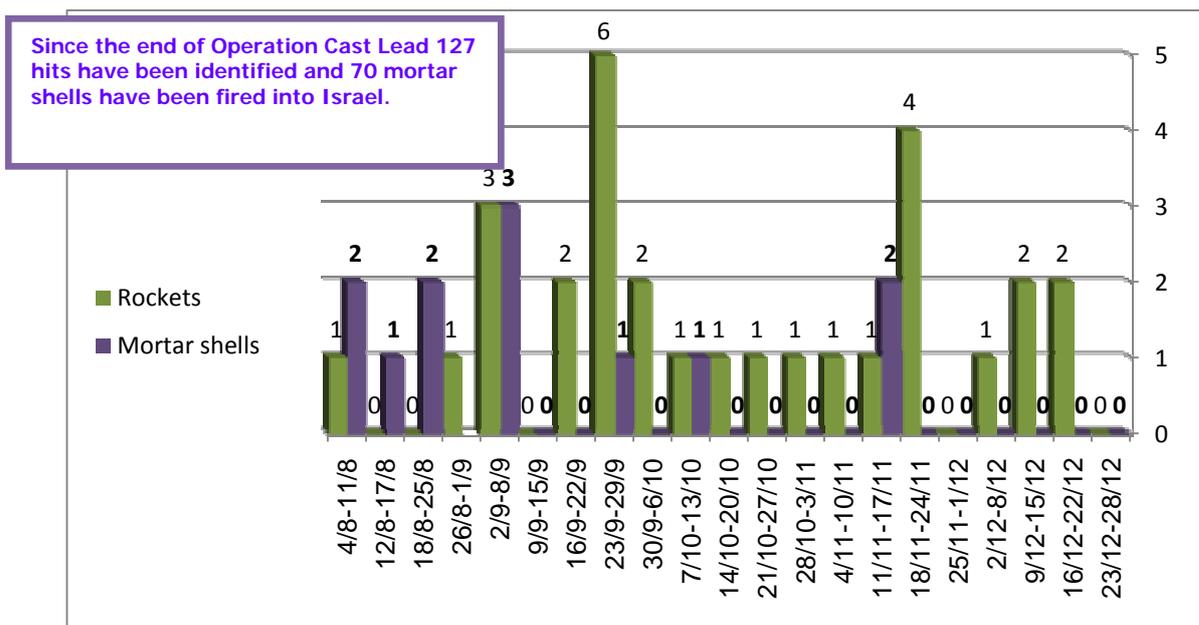
Important Events

Gaza Strip

Rocket and Mortar Shell Fir

- This past week the western Negev was quiet.
- On December 25, an IDF force discerned four armed terrorists approaching the security fence in the northern Gaza Strip near the Erez crossing. When they did not respond to a call to stop the force opened fire, **killing three**. On December 28, three IEDs were discovered at the site of the attack and were detonated by the IDF. (IDF Spokesman's website, December 29, 2009).
- Sources in the Gaza Strip denounced the killing and some even (falsely) claimed that the terrorists were innocent Palestinians gathering iron and stones, or innocent Palestinians who were trying to enter Israeli to find work (Ma'an News Agency, Al-Quds Radio, December 26, 2009).

Rocket and mortar shells fired into Israeli territory¹



Judea and Samaria

Israeli Driver Shot to Death

- On the afternoon of Thursday, December 24, Palestinians hiding in ambush shot at an Israeli vehicle on the road between the northern Samaritan villages of Einav and Shavei Shomron. The driver was hit in the head and a short time later pronounced dead. He was Meir Avshalom Hai, 45, a resident of Shavei Shomron, married and father of seven (IDF Spokesman, December 24, 2009).

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

■ A number of organizations claimed responsibility for the attack: Fatah-Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades (which apparently did in fact carry out the attack), the military-terrorist wing of the Palestinian Islamic Jihad (Hamas' Paltoday website, December 25, 2009) and others.

■ Immediately after the attack IDF forces combed the area to locate the shooters. Two days later IDF forces entered the Kasbah (old city) in Nablus to detain the terrorists who had carried out the attack. Several hours later the soldiers surrounded the houses in which the terrorists were hiding, and when they refused to surrender, opened fire. In the ensuing exchanges of fire the three terrorists were killed. In the hiding place of one of them the soldiers found the gun used to shoot Meir Avshalom Hai.



Some of the weapons found in Nablus (IDF Spokesman, December 27, 2009).

■ **The three terrorists were Fatah-Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades operatives**, two of whom had formerly been imprisoned in Israel. One, on the most-wanted list of Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades operatives, had been involved in many terrorist attacks, was suspected of involvement in the murder of a tanker-truck driver and had served a term of seven years in an Israeli prison. He was released in January 2009. Another had been released in the wanted terrorists arrangement of 2007, according to which the released prisoners were supposed to cease all involvement in terrorist activity.

■ Senior figures in the Palestinian Authority condemned the IDF activity and appealed to the international community to exert pressure on Israel to stop its activities. Palestinian Prime Minister **Salam Fayyad** claimed that the activity was a serious escalation whose objective was to harm the security and stability the PA had achieved. He also appealed to the international community to force Israel to stop its [so-called] "aggression" (Wafa News Agency, December 26, 2009). **Nabil Abu Rudeina**, presidential secretary, said that Israel's aim had been to evade its political commitments and to undermine the stability the PA's security forces had achieved (Wafa News Agency, December 26, 2009). The Palestinian media gave the IDF activity in Nablus extensive coverage, calling the killing of the three "executions" and making a point of the fact that two of the dead terrorists had been part of the wanted prisoners arrangement.



**Funeral of the Fatah-Al-Aqsa Martyrs
Brigades operatives (Al-Ayam, December 27, 2009).**

- Senior Hamas figures also condemned the action and linked it to the killing of the three Palestinian terrorists in the northern Gaza Strip. They also accused the Palestinian Authority and its security forces of collaborating with Israel (Hamas' Palestine-info website, December 26, 2009).

Counterterrorism Activities

- The Israeli security forces continued their counterterrorism activities this past week, detaining Palestinians suspected of terrorist activities. This past week incidents continued, mainly involving stones and Molotov cocktails thrown at Israeli vehicles. Two youngsters sustained moderate injuries.

- The more noteworthy incidents were the following:

- **December 28:** Stones were thrown at an Israeli vehicle west of Ramallah. There were no casualties and no damage was done. The Palestinian who threw the stones was detained by an IDF force (IDF Spokesman, December 28, 2009).
- **December 27:** A Molotov cocktail was thrown at an Israeli bus southwest of Hebron, seriously wounding an Israeli woman. Stones were thrown at an Israeli vehicle south of Ramallah. There were no casualties but the vehicle was damaged. Stones were also thrown at Israeli vehicles southwest of Bethlehem and southeast of Nablus. There were no casualties but the vehicles were damaged (IDF Spokesman, December 27, 2009).
- **December 26:** Stones were thrown at an Israeli civilian northeast of Hebron; the civilian sustained minor injuries. Another Israeli civilian was wounded by stones thrown at his car southwest of Bethlehem. Molotov cocktails were thrown at Israeli vehicles northeast of Ramallah and southwest of Bethlehem. There were no casualties and no damage was done (IDF Spokesman, December 26, 2009).
- **December 25:** A Molotov cocktail was thrown at an Israeli vehicle southeast of Qalqilya. An Israeli woman was injured and treated at the site (IDF Spokesman, December 25, 2009).

- **December 24:** Stones were thrown at an Israeli boy southwest of Nablus, seriously injuring him. He was taken to a hospital for treatment (IDF Spokesman, December 24, 2009).

Developments in the Gaza Strip

Humanitarian Assistance Convoy Has Difficulties Reaching the Gaza Strip

■ As the first anniversary of Operation Cast Lead approached, a number of convoys of humanitarian assistance and delegations planning to express solidarity were supposed to reach the Gaza Strip. The two most important ones were **Lifeline** from Britain, bringing humanitarian assistance and protesters from France calling themselves the **Gaza Freedom March**. The organizers experienced difficulties as the Egyptian foreign minister rejected their requests to enter the Gaza Strip through the Rafah crossing (*Al-Quds Al-Arabi*, December 28, 2009).

■ Activists who arrived from France demonstrated in front of the French embassy in Cairo and angered the Egyptians, who claimed that Egypt had never promised the convoy it could enter the Gaza Strip (BBC Radio, December 28, 2009). Husam Zaki, spokesman for the Egyptian foreign ministry, denied the allegations that Egyptian had denied the activists entry into the Gaza Strip, saying that he condemned their behavior toward the Egyptian authorities, especially the media uproar they had created in order, he said, to exert pressure on Egypt (Egyptian TV, December 25, 2009).

■ The delegations are still waiting for the Egyptian authorities to allow them to enter the Gaza Strip.

Constructing a Barrier along the Egyptian-Gaza Strip Border

■ Hamas and the Gazans continue to protest the construction of a barrier (referred to by Hamas as "the wall") along Egyptian's border with the Gaza Strip. During Hamas' media campaign against Egypt, senior figures in the movement admitted smuggling arms into the Gaza Strip. **Khaled Mashaal**, head of the Hamas political bureau in Damascus, said that constructing the "steel wall" was a sign of Israel's intention to attack the Gaza Strip in the near future in retaliation for its failure during Operation Cast Lead. He said that the wall would keep food and drugs from entering the Gaza Strip but **would not prevent the smuggling of arms** because alternative routes would be found (*Felesteen*, December 22, 2009). **Mahmoud al-Zahar** also admitted that **Hamas smuggled weapons into the Gaza Strip**, but promised that the arms would not be aimed at Egypt regardless of what happened (*Al-Sharq*, December 22, 2009).

■ Hamas (and other groups in the Gaza Strip) also expressed their opposition:

- On December 25, after the Friday prayers, Hamas organized marches from mosques in Gaza City to Palestine Square, where a demonstration was held. Hamad al-Raqab, Hamas spokesman in Khan Yunis, appealed to Egypt to stop building the wall, which he said “broke all diplomatic rules” (Ma’an News Agency, December 25, 2009).



Hamas demonstration in Gaza City against the “steel wall”
(Hamas’ PALDF forum, December 25, 2009).

- Hundreds of children demonstrated at the Rafah crossing to protest the “wall.” They shouted slogans against the “wall” and the Egyptians (Qudsnet website, December 26, 2009).



Children demonstrate at the Rafah crossing (Al-Aqsa TV, December 26, 2009).

- Hamas also recruited environmental groups to testify to the influence of building the wall on water and plant life.
- **On the ground** there were several attempts to interrupt the construction, apparently the initiative of individuals and not organized activities. Mahmoud al-Zahar, a senior Hamas figure, also denounced the interruption (*Al-Masri Al-Yawm*, December 24, 2009).

The Anniversary of Operation Cast Lead

■ On December 27 propaganda activities began in the Gaza Strip to mark the anniversary of Operation Cast Lead. The activities will continue for 22 days and include various events such as demonstrations; a day of volunteering for adolescents; artistic events to commemorate the “shaheeds” and to strengthen the myth of the Palestinians’ firm stance and victory; an exhibition of pictures documenting the so-called “Israeli war crimes” sponsored by the Tawthiq (documentation) Committee; “educational” activities in the schools; a day for donating blood; marches among the mosques which were destroyed and rebuilt; ceremonies in honor of the families of “shaheeds;” a procession of the disabled, wounded and “shaheed” families; a conference to document children who were wounded; laying the cornerstone of a park where a tree will be planted for every “shaheed;” a final festival whose theme will be “[After it all] Gaza was victorious!” and more (Muslim Brotherhood website, December 24, 2009).



Marking the anniversary of Operation Cast Lead in Gaza City (Felesteen website, December 28, 2009).



Ahmed Bahar places a wreath on the memorial of those killed in Operation Cast Lead (Felesteen website, December 28, 2009).

■ Several senior Hamas figures stressed the Palestinian victory and adherence to the path of “resistance” [i.e., terrorism] in their speeches:

- **Ismail Haniya**, head of the de facto Hamas administration, said that Israel had not achieved its goals and that the Palestinian people had recovered, the Hamas government and security forces had carried out their duties and that the “resistance” still existed. He also

claimed that rebuilding the Gaza Strip had not yet been completed since [the necessary] funds had not reached the Strip because of what he called the “politicizing” of the rebuilding.



Ismail Haniya speaking from a closed studio on the anniversary of Operation Cast Lead (Felesteen website, December 28, 2009).

- **Abu Obeida**, spokesman for the Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades, said that Israel had despaired of trying to harm Hamas’ military might and that the Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades continued the path of “resistance” [i.e., terrorism] and jihad. He said the “resistance” had been greatly aided by the Palestinian public’s unity, patience and firm stance (Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades website, December 27, 2009).



Events marking the anniversary of Operation Cast Lead in the Jabaliya refugee camp (Al-Quds TV, December 26, 2009).

- Throughout Judea and Samaria the day was marked with quiet processions. The Palestinian Authority’s presidential office said in an announcement that Israel’s [so-called] “aggression” against the Gaza Strip would not have happened **if Hamas has not overthrown the Palestinian Authority**, and appealed to Hamas to sign the Egyptian reconciliation document as soon as possible (Wafa News Agency, December 27, 2009).

The Political Struggle

Statements from Senior Figures in the PLO and Fatah

■ **Abu Alaa**, in charge of Jerusalem affairs for the PLO, said that in the absence of negotiations other options might present themselves, such as the “resistance” and popular action like that which was currently occurring in Jerusalem (*Al-Akhbar*, December 25, 2009). **Hatem Abd al-Qader**, who holds Fatah’s Jerusalem portfolio, said that the movement planned to appoint a popular committee of young people to guard the neighborhoods in East Jerusalem at night so prevent Jewish settlers from taking over buildings belonging to Palestinians (Voice of Palestine Radio, December 27, 2009).

The Palestinian Authority Recycles Accusations of Israeli Organ Thefts

■ The Palestinian Authority **continues slandering Israel by accusing it of organ theft**. The figure behind the mud-slinging campaign is **Issa Qaraqe**, minister of prisoner affairs.

■ In a meeting on December 21, 2009, Salam Fayyad government voted to appoint a committee “to expose” the circumstances under which Palestinian organs were stolen. Accordingly, Qaraqe will appoint a “technical team” which will collect information and reveal the facts. A “legal team” will also be appointed **to raise the issue in international forums**. According to Qaraqe, he has evidence from Palestinian doctors that organs were taken from the bodies of Palestinians.

■ **The de facto Hamas administration in the Gaza Strip** joined the mud-slinging campaign and also decided it would “investigate” the issue. It ordered its Tawthiq (Documentation) Committee, which is supposed to investigate Israel’s [so-called] “war crimes,” to deal with the matter of organ theft as well.