



**Intelligence and Terrorism
Information Center**

News of Terrorism and the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict

December 30, 2009 - January 5, 2010



Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak meets with Mahmoud Abbas in Sharm el-Sheikh (Wafa News Agency, January 4, 2010).

Overview

- This past week sporadic rocket and mortar shell fire from the Gaza Strip continued targeting Israeli territory. In addition, a number of armed Palestinian operatives opened fire at an IDF patrol. The attacks were carried out by the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine and the Popular Resistance Committees. Hamas continued its policy of restraint in terrorism.
- On January 4, 2010, Palestinian Authority Chairman Mahmoud Abbas met with Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak in Sharm el-Sheikh. President Mubarak updated Mahmoud Abbas on his December 29, 2009 conversation with Israeli prime minister Benyamin Netanyahu. After the meeting Mahmoud Abbas said that the Palestinian Authority was not imposing new conditions on the renewal of the negotiations, but that the building in the settlements had to stop and that Jerusalem had to be included in any political arrangement.

Important Events

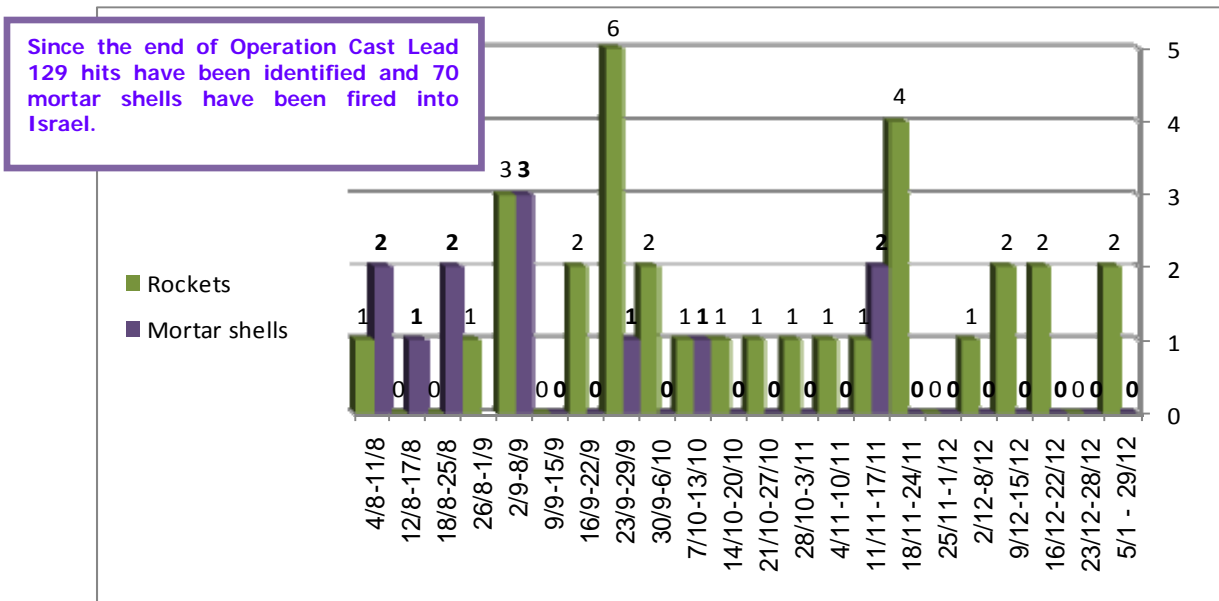
Gaza Strip

Rocket and Mortar Shell Fire

- During the past week two rocket hits were identified in Israeli territory:
 - On **December 30, 2009** a rocket hit was identified in an open area in the western Negev.
 - On **January 2, 2010** a rocket hit was identified in the southern Israeli city of **Netivot**. Responsibility was claimed by the military-terrorist wing of the **Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine** on its website (December 31, 2009). It was the first time a rocket had been fired at Netivot since Operation Cast Lead. There were no casualties. One women was treated for shock.
 - On January 1, 2010, four mortar shells were fired at Kerem Shalom and a rocket at Kissufim. A **Popular Resistance Committees** faction claimed responsibility (Qaum, PRC official website, January 1, 2010).
 - On January 4, 2010, a mortar shell was fired at an IDF force near the security fence (PRC official website, January 4, 2010) and the PFLP (PFLP military-terrorist wing website, January 4, 2010).

- On December 31, 2009, a **number of armed Palestinians opened fire** at an IDF force patrolling near the security fence in the northern Gaza Strip. There were no casualties. The force, with support from the Israeli Air Force, returned their fire (IDF Spokesman, December 31, 2009).

Rockets and Mortar Shells Fired into Israeli Territory¹



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

Israeli Air Force Strikes

- In response to the rocket fire, the Israeli Air Force struck two tunnels, one each in the northern and southern Gaza Strip. The tunnels were constructed about one kilometer, or 6/10 of a mile, from the security fence and were intended to be used to infiltrate terrorist operatives into Israeli territory to attacks Israeli civilians or IDF soldiers (IDF Spokesman, January 2, 2010).
- The Palestinian media reported that three or four Palestinians sustained slight to serious injuries as a result of the attacks. According to one report, three terrorist operatives of Hamas' Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades were wounded (Hamas' Palestine-info website, January 2, 2010).

Judea and Samaria

Counterterrorism Activities

- The Israeli security forces continued their preventive counterterrorism activities this past week, detaining Palestinians suspected of terrorist activity. During the week terrorist incidents continued, primarily involving stones thrown at Israeli vehicles.
- The most prominent incidents were the following:
 - **January 3:** Stones were thrown at an Israeli vehicle southwest of Bethlehem. There were no casualties but the vehicle was damaged (IDF Spokesman, January 3, 2010).
 - **January 2:** Stones were thrown at an Israeli vehicle west of Bethlehem. There were no casualties but the vehicle was damaged (IDF Spokesman, January 2, 2010).
 - **January 1:** Stones were thrown at an Israeli vehicle southwest of Bethlehem. There were no casualties but the vehicle was damaged (IDF Spokesman, January 1, 2010).
 - **December 31:** Stones were thrown at Israel's vehicle south of Bethlehem and northwest of Ramallah. There were no casualties but the vehicles were damaged (IDF Spokesman, December 31, 2009).
 - **December 30:** Two Molotov cocktails were thrown at an Israeli vehicle southeast of Nablus. There were no casualties but the vehicle was damaged (IDF Spokesman, December 30, 2009).

Developments in the Gaza Strip

Egypt Makes It Difficult for Assistance Convoy to Reach the Gaza Strip

- The Lifeline-3 convoy experienced difficulties in reaching the Gaza Strip after Egypt refused to allow it to enter through the Rafah crossing. Pro-Hamas British MP George Galloway, who heads

the convoy, said that the difficulties Egypt raised made it a part of the [so-called] “siege” of the Gaza Strip (Al-Jazeera TV, December 29, 2009). The head of the Jordanian delegation to the convoy reported that its first plane had landed in El-Arish but that the second had changed course and landed in Syria because of a technical difficulty (Amoun News Agency, January 4, 2010). It was also reported that a Turkish ship had arrived in El-Arish from Latakia, Syria (Chinese News Agency Xinhua, January 3, 2010).

Gaza Freedom March Fails to Enter Gaza Strip

- After their efforts to enter the Gaza Strip had failed, the organizers of the Gaza Freedom march held a demonstration in Cairo in front of the Israeli embassy and erected protest tents. They also appealed to President Mubarak to allow the 1,400 marchers to pass through the Rafah crossing (Agence France-Presse, December 30, 2010). About two dozen activists held a rally in El-Arish to protest Egypt’s refusal to allow them to enter the Gaza Strip (Al-Basha’ir, December 29, 2009).

- When all their efforts had failed and the Egyptian authorities did not permit the marchers to enter, the organizers reported that most of them went home. They said that 250 remained in Cairo and would continue trying to enter the Gaza Strip (Agence France-Presse, January 4, 2010).

Construction of a Barrier on the Egypt-Gaza Strip Border

- The dispute in Egypt over the construction of a barrier along the Egypt-Gaza Strip border continues. Members of the Egyptian opposition denounced the barrier and Muslim Brotherhood activists organized protest demonstrations (*Al-Yawm Al-Saba’a*, December 30, 2009). Non-establishment newspapers also denounced construction of the barrier.

- However, the establishment press in Egypt justified the construction of the barrier and strongly criticized Hamas and the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt for waging “**an Iranian-directed mud-slinging campaign against Egypt**” (*Al-Gomhuriyya*, December 29, 2009). An editorial claimed Hamas was trying “to export its crisis to Egypt” (*Al-Gomhuriyya*, January 4, 2010). The paper stated that despite the fact that the building activities were being secured by Egyptian security forces, it did not mean that the border was being closed. The editor-in-chief of *Al-Gomhuriyya* claimed that the barrier was being built to stop Israel’s claims to the United States that the tunnels under the border were being used to smuggle weapons into the Gaza Strip, which might lead to America’s imposing sanctions on Egypt (*Al-Gomhuriyya*, January 4, 2010).



Hamas criticism of the Egyptian barrier (Hamas' *Filastin al-'Aan*, January 4, 2010).



Women at the Rafah crossing protesting the barrier (*Filastin al-'Aan*, December 29, 2009).

The Gilad Shalit Prisoner Exchange Deal

- A Hamas delegation headed by **Mahmoud al-Zahar** returned to the Gaza Strip after consulting with the movement leadership in Damascus about continuing contacts for the prisoner exchange deal. On their return they stated that Hamas had not closed the door on the deal and that consultations would continue (Ma'an News Agency, December 31, 2009).
- **Musa Abu Marzuq**, deputy head of Hamas' political bureau, told *Filastin al-'Aan* that Hamas would continue negotiating the deal to release Gilad Shalit even without the German mediator (Hamas' *Filastin al-'Aan*, January 2, 2010). According to a Ynet report, on January 5 the German mediator entered the Gaza Strip to receive Hamas' response to Israel's proposals (Ynet, January 5, 2010).

The Internal Palestinian Arena

Hamas Shows Interest in Renewing the Internal Palestinian Dialogue

- Hamas has recently sent signals it was ready to renew the internal Palestinian dialogue:
 - **Salah al-Bardawil**, a senior Hamas figure, said that Egypt had agreed in principle to discuss Hamas' reservations regarding the reconciliation document, and that now a mechanism had to be devised for the discussions. He said the agreement had been reached during a stop made in Cairo by the Hamas delegation headed by Mahmoud al-Zahar after returning from consultations with the movement leadership in Syria.
 - A Hamas delegation headed by **Khaled Mashaal** visited Saudi Arabia, where its members met with the Saudi Arabian foreign minister and discussed the internal Palestinian reconciliation (Kuwait News Agency, January 4, 2010).
- **Hossam Zaki**, spokesman for the Egyptian foreign ministry, said that Egypt felt a certain amount of progress had been made and that during the last round of talks the sides had agreed on almost all issues. He said that what had prevented completing the negotiations was the pressure exerted on Hamas by "countries belonging to the radical axis" (Palestinian TV, December 28, 2010).

■ In the meantime, the Palestinian security forces continued their activities against Hamas-affiliated activists and targets throughout Judea and Samaria (Hamas' Palestine-Info website, January 4, 2010). The Palestinian Authority media reported Hamas' security forces had broken into the houses of Fatah activists in the Gaza Strip and detained many, including senior activists (Wafa News Agency, December 31, 2009). Hamas also continued its propaganda campaign against the PA.



Cartoon protesting Hamas' ban on demonstrations in the Gaza Strip celebrating the 45th anniversary of the founding of Fatah. Left, the Gaza Strip, right, the West Bank (Al-Quds, January 3, 2010).

The Peace Process

Mahmoud Abbas Meets Hosni Mubarak

■ On January 3 Mahmoud Abbas arrived in Sharm El-Sheikh for a series of meetings about the renewal of peace negotiations. On January 4 he met with Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak, who updated him about his meeting with Israeli prime minister Benyamin Netanyahu on December 29 and about ideas for renewing the negotiations. Mahmoud Abbas and Hosni Mubarak also discussed the upcoming visits of Egyptian Foreign Minister Abu al-Gheit and General Intelligence Chief Omar Suleiman to the United States. Mahmoud Abbas said that in principle the Palestinian Authority had no objection to renewing the negotiations and would not impose conditions, **but** that they would renew them only after Israel stopped building in the settlements. He also said that he would prefer to discuss the issue after Abu al-Gheit and Omar Suleiman had returned from the United States (Wafa News Agency, January 4, 2010).

■ **Mahmoud Abbas** later held a press conference where he reiterated the Palestinian Authority's position, noting that Jerusalem had to be included in any political arrangement (Egyptian TV, January 4, 2010).

■ **Saeb Erekat**, chief PLO negotiator, said that there was a definite possibility that the negotiations would be renewed if the United States exerted pressure on Israel to fulfill its obligations. He said that in the near future intensive contacts with the United States and the members of the International Quartet would be held to achieve that goal (*Al-Shuruq*, January 2, 2010).