



The Meir Amit Intelligence
and Terrorism Information
Center

News of Terrorism and the Israeli- Palestinian Conflict

(October 27-November 2, 2010)



Yemeni policemen guarding the FedEx offices in Sana'a, the Yemeni capital, after packages were sent from it to synagogues in Chicago (Photo: Khaled Abdallah for Reuters, October 30, 2010).

Overview

- This past week the relative quiet in the western Negev continued. No rockets were fired. Mortar shells were fired at an IDF force engaged in routine security activities near the security fence. Mahmoud al-Zahar, senior Hamas figure, defended Hamas' restrained rocket fire policy and attacked the rogues operatives, who he said, might cause anarchy (*Al-Hayat*, October 30, 2010).
- **There were two prominent global terrorist events this past week:** An attack attempted by an Al-Qaeda network in Yemen was prevented after the organization airmailed bombs to two synagogues in Chicago (October 29, 2010). A suicide bombing attack was carried out in Istanbul (October 31, 2010) wounding 32 people, 15 of them police. No organization has claimed responsibility for the attack. In common Turkish assessment, the Kurdish PKK was behind the attack.
- On the political front, Mahmoud Abbas and other senior Palestinian Authority figures again said there would be no return to direct negotiations unless Israel froze construction in the settlements. They again raised the issue of an appeal to the UN for recognition of a Palestinian state.

Important Terrorism Events

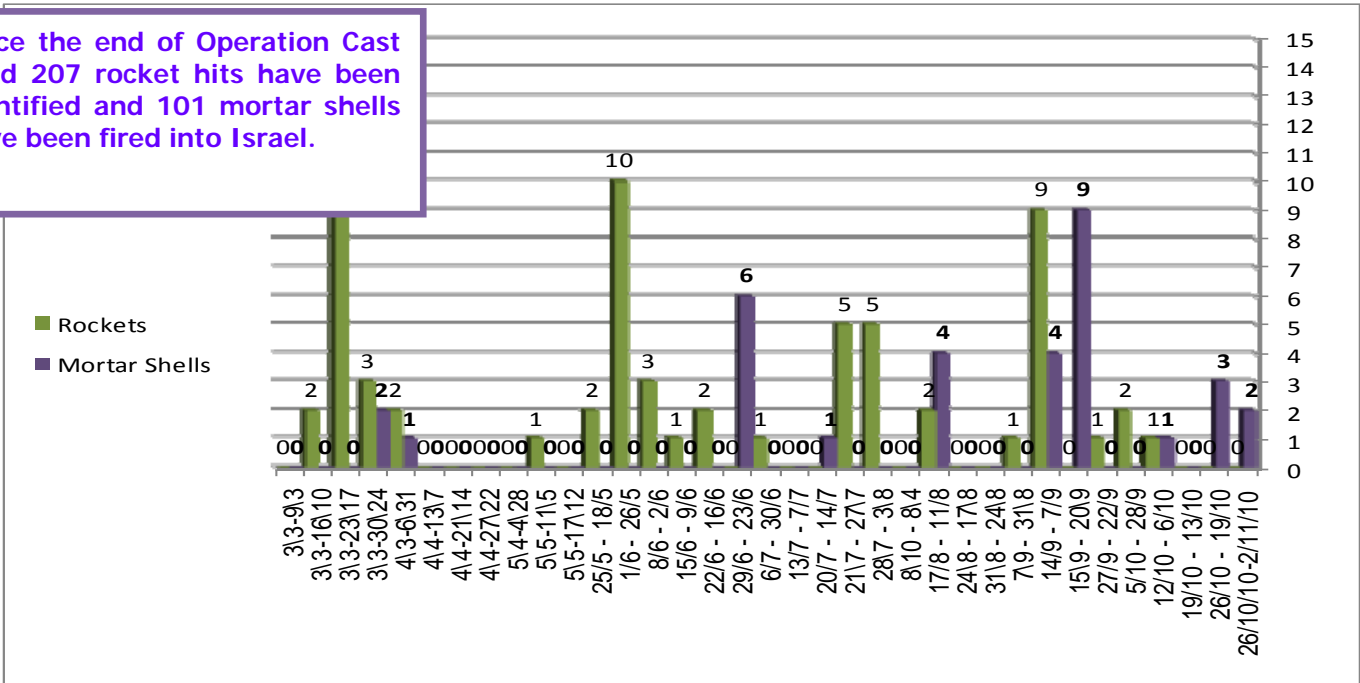
Gaza Strip

Mortar Shell Fire

■ This past week two mortar shell hits were identified in Israeli territory, on October 27 and 28. The shells were fired at an IDF force conducting routine security activity. There were no casualties and no damage was done. The military wing of the Popular Resistance Committees claimed responsibility for the October 27 attack (PRC military wing website, October 27, 2010).

Rocket and mortar shells fired into Israeli territory¹

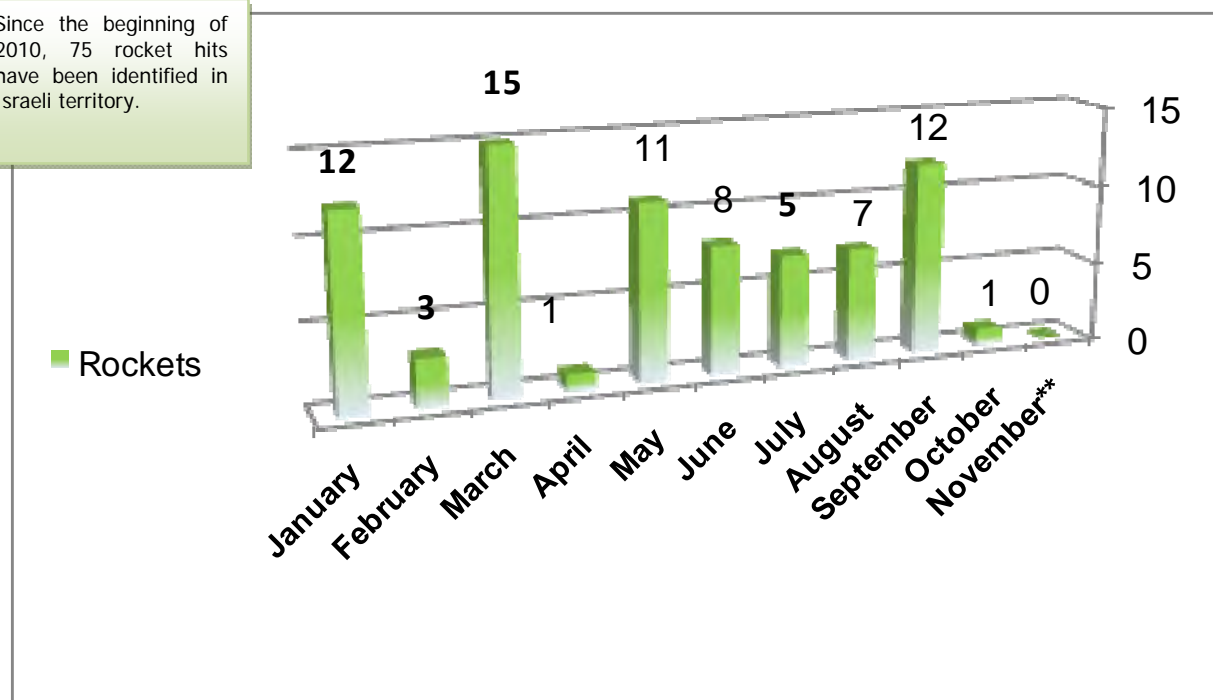
Since the end of Operation Cast Lead 207 rocket hits have been identified and 101 mortar shells have been fired into Israel.



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

Rocket Fire 2010, Monthly Distribution*

Since the beginning of 2010, 75 rocket hits have been identified in Israeli territory.



* Rocket hits identified in Israeli territory. A similar number misfire and customarily land inside the Gaza Strip.

**As of November 2, 2010.

Hamas' Rocket Fire Policy

■ Interviewed by the London-based *Al-Hayat*, senior Hamas figure **Mahmoud al-Zahar defended Hamas' restrained policy of rocket fire**. He justified the detention of rocket firing squads in the Gaza Strip which did not accept Hamas authority. He said that after Operation Cast Lead an Egyptian-brokered agreement had been signed with all the factions. When rogue operatives violated the agreement by launching rockets of their own accord, they would, he said, open the door to anarchy. He also said that **those rocket launching operatives were rebelling against their own factions**. He added that some of the factions which had complained that Hamas did not let them launch rockets into Israel territory had not fired so much as once shell throughout Operation Cast Lead, and were now trying to market themselves by firing rockets (*Al-Hayat*, October 30, 2010).²

² For further information see the November 1, 2010 bulletin, "Mahmoud al-Zahar, senior Hamas figure, recently attacked the West's values and permissive lifestyle (i.e., secularism, gender equality, tolerance of homosexuality) and expressed adherence to the goal of the annihilation of the State of Israel through jihad" at http://www.terrorism-info.org.il/malam_multimedia/English/eng_n/pdf/hamas_e132.pdf.



Mahmoud al-Zahar (Safaimages website, October 28, 2010).

Judea and Samaria

Counterterrorism Activities

- The Israeli security forces continued their counterterrorism activities, detaining Palestinians suspected of terrorist activities and seizing weapons.

- **Demonstrations and riots continued in various locations in Judea and Samaria and near the security fence, participated in by Palestinians, Israeli civilians and foreign nationals.** At one of the focal points of friction, Nebi Salah (northwest of Ramallah), a Border Policeman sustained minor injuries when a stone was thrown at him (IDF Spokesman, November 2, 2010).

- The most prominent events were the following:
 - **November 1** – Stones were thrown at Israeli vehicles near Ni'lin (west of Ramallah) and west of Jenin. The vehicles were damaged (IDF Spokesman, November 2, 2010).
 - **October 30** – A gun was found among the tools of a Palestinian at a checkpoint near Nablus (IDF Spokesman's website, November 2, 2010).
 - **October 30** – An Israeli vehicle was shot at near Bethlehem. There were no casualties and no damage was done (IDF Spokesman, October 30, 2010).
 - **October 29** – There were riots in the Silwan neighborhood of East Jerusalem, during which stones were thrown at Israeli vehicles (Safaimages website, October 29, 2010).



Masked Palestinian youths throw stones at an Israeli vehicle in the Silwan neighborhood of East Jerusalem (Safaimages website, October 29, 2010).

- **October 28** – Molotov cocktails and improvised guns were found among the tools of three Palestinians at a checkpoint near Nablus (IDF Spokesman, October 28, 2010).
- **October 28** – Stones were thrown at an Israeli vehicle near Kiryat Arba (Hebron). There were no casualties but the vehicle was damaged (IDF Spokesman, October 28, 2010).

The Peace Process

Senior Palestinian Authority Figures Again Raise the Possibility of an Appeal to the UN if the Construction in the Settlements Continues

■ **Mahmoud Abbas**, chairman of the Palestinian Authority, again stressed that the Palestinians would not return to direct negotiations unless Israel froze construction in the settlements. He also again raised the possibility that the Palestinians would appeal to the Security Council for recognition of a Palestinian state. He said it would happen "within a few months" (Ynet, October 28, 2010).

■ **Nimr Hamad**, Mahmoud Abbas' advisor, and **Saeb Erekat**, head of the PLO's negotiating department, made remarks similar to Mahmoud Abbas'. They said that if the appeal to the Security Council to recognize a Palestinian state with the June 4, 1967 borders failed, they would appeal to the General Assembly (Ma'an News Agency, October 26 and November 2, 2010). In response, Philip Crowley, spokesman for the American State Department, said that the Palestinian appeal would not "solve the conflict" (US State Department website, November 1, 2010).

UNRWA Director in New York Calls on Palestinians to Acknowledge They Will Not Return to Their "Homes" in Israel

■ At the National Council on U.S.-Arab Relations in Washington on October 22, 2010, Andrew Whitely, outgoing director of the UNRWA office in New York, called on Palestinians to acknowledge the fact that the probability of their returning to "Palestine" was low. He said they would do better to **abandon the "cruel illusions" that they would someday return to their homes [i.e., in Israel], and "to start debating their own role in the societies where they are."** He said that only a few Palestinians and UNRWA personnel were willing to discuss the issue publicly, but **"the right of return is unlikely to be exercised to the territory of Israel to any significant or meaningful extent"** (ITIC emphasis throughout) (*Jerusalem Post* website, October 23, 2010).

■ His exceptional remarks drew immediate reactions:

- **In an official announcement, UNRWA unequivocally distanced itself from the statements made Whitley**, saying that "statements in no way reflect the policies or positions of the Agency and are the personal views of Mr. Whitley" (UNRWA website, November 1, 2010).
- **Saeb Erekat**, head of the PLO's negotiating department, sent a letter to Robert Serry, UN Special Coordinator for the Middle East, expressing the Palestinians' "deep disappointment" with Whitely's remarks. **He said that the Palestinians would not waive their "right to return" to their homes and lands, and claimed that the "right" was anchored in international law and UN resolutions** (*Jerusalem Post*, October 31, 2010).

Hamas Leader Khaled Mashaal Calls for Continuing the Armed Campaign against Israel

■ Speaking before the Al-Quds Institute in Damascus, **Khaled Mashaal**, head of the **Hamas** political bureau, said that "resistance [i.e., terrorism and violence] is the only way to liberate Jerusalem, return the refugees and establish the Palestinian state." He also said that "the weapon of Gaza is still raised and **the weapon of the [West] Bank will soon be raised.**" He called on Fatah to end its split with Hamas and adopt the "option of resistance" (Hamas' Palestine-info website, October 29, 2010).

■ **Khaled Mashaal met with the Iranian intelligence minister** during his visit to Damascus. After the meeting he said that "anyone who takes a stand against the Zionist regime will be victorious." Khaled Mashaal said that during the meeting they discussed several topics, including the "struggle against the Zionist regime" (IRNA News Agency, October 31, 2010).



Khaled Mashaal (left) meets with the Iranian intelligence minister (IRNA News Agency, October 31, 2010).

Developments in the Gaza Strip

The Crossings

- This past week between 140 and 284 trucks carrying merchandise entered the Gaza Strip every day (Website of the Israeli government coordinator for the territories, November 2, 2010).

Flotillas to the Gaza Strip

Egypt Continues Restrictions on Entrance of Convoys and Activists

- The Egyptian authorities, who recently permitted the Viva Palestina convoy to enter the Gaza Strip, continue supervising the crossing and imposing restrictions on the entrance of activists and convoys into the Gaza Strip. The following reports were received:

- **Five Viva Palestina activists were detained by the Egyptian security forces when they left the Gaza Strip for Egypt** (after 17 convoy participants had been barred from entering). Among those detained were three members of the Mauritanian Parliament, two European nationals and one Tunisian (*Filastin al-'Aan*, October 25, 2010). The reason for their detention is unknown.
- **A convoy from North African countries, including Libya, was halted at the Egypt-Libya border and the Egyptian authorities did not permit it to continue.** The convoy's organizers are currently examining the possibility of sailing to the port of El Arish. The convoy is led by a **British subject of Libyan descent named Muhammad Hadad**, and includes 30 vehicles and 101 activists, including eight who were on the

Freedom Fleet flotilla in May 2010. Seven convoy activists were aboard the Mavi Marmara, including Kenneth O'Keefe, a former US Marine (Al-Aqsa TV, October 30; salem-news.com website, October 26; tehranimes.com website, November 1, 2010).

Jordanian Participation in the Flotillas

■ **Freedom Flotilla 2:** Wael al-Saqa, chairman of the Jordanian LifeLine committee, said that it would participate in the Freedom Flotilla 2 flotilla (the upgraded flotilla currently being organized by the anti-Israeli coalition and expected to set sail in the spring of 2011). **He said that the Jordanian committee would finance a ship at a cost of one million Jordanian dinars (about \$1.4 million), which would be one of the 12 ships in the flotilla.** He also said that the committee would participate in Viva Palestina's LifeLine 6, whose sailing date has not yet been determined (*Al-Dustour*, October 27, 2010). **There are many prominent Muslim Brotherhood members among the Jordanian activists.**

Global Terrorism

Al-Qaeda Terrorist Attack on Synagogues in the United States Prevented

■ At the end of October Al-Qaeda in Yemen sent two powerful bombs to synagogues in Chicago. The bombs, sent by air, were detected and the attack was prevented. It was another in a series of Al-Qaeda attacks against American targets, which, had it been successful, might have resulted in mass casualties.

■ On October 29 two powerful bombs were discovered in packages sent by air from Yemen to the United States. The packages contained printers in whose cartridges the bombs had been hidden. One was discovered at a Fedex branch in Dubai and the other aboard a UPS plane at an airfield near Nottingham in Britain. **Both were addressed to synagogues in Chicago.** One was to have been detonated by remote control using a cellular phone and the other had a timing device. It is possible that the bomb was supposed to be exploded in the air.

■ One of the packages was sent from Yemen on October 28 and arrived in Dubai via Qatar on a Qatar Airways flight. If it could not be delivered it was supposed to be sent to the address of a woman living in Sana'a. The Yemeni security forces arrested the woman, Hanan al-Samawi, 22, an engineering student in Sana'a University, along with her mother (both of whom may have already been released). The American Homeland Security Department issued a warning stating that the dispatchers of the bombs were apparently linked to two institutions

in Yemen: the Yemen American Institute for Languages-Computer Management and the American Center for Training and Development (*New York Times*, October 31, 2010).

■ **An examination of the explosives showed that they were Pentaerythritol tetranitrate, or PETN, and had been cleverly hidden in the printer cartridges** (*New York Times*, October 31, 2010). **It was also reported that the explosive was almost identical to that used by the Nigerian terrorist Omar Farouq Abd al-Mutlab**, who tried to blow up a plane flying from Amsterdam to Detroit on Christmas Eve 2009.

■ Sources also reported that the bombs were made by **Ibrahim Hassan al-Asiri**, who was imprisoned in Saudi Arabia after he sent his brother to assassinate the Saudi deputy interior minister. He escaped to Yemen two years ago and **has since been in constant contact with Sheikh Anwar al-Awlaqi** (a senior religious figure in charge of external relations for Al-Qaeda in the Arab Peninsula). The Yemeni security forces are trying to capture both Ibrahim al-Asiri and Sheikh al-Awlaqi (Reuters, November 2, 2010).

■ Sources close to the investigation **reported that the intelligence information about the bombs came from the Saudis**. The information, which was precise, included the serial numbers of the packages, making it possible to track and locate them before they reached their destinations (*Haaretz*, October 31, 2010).

Suicide Bombing Attack in the Heart of Istanbul

■ On October 31 a suicide bomber blew himself up close to a bus belonging to the police in the Taksim Square international the center of Istanbul. The suicide bomber was killed and 32 people were wounded, 15 of the policemen, most of them sustaining minor injuries. **It was the third time a bomb exploded in Taksim Square, the main square in Istanbul**. In 1999 a suicide bombing attack wounded three policemen and 10 civilians. An attack in 2001 killed two officers in the police force (*Hurriyet*, October 31, 2010).

■ The attacker, a man about 35 years old and holding a black computer carrying case, tried to get on a police bus which was in the square to bring a change of shifts. When the police prevented him from entering the bus he put his hand into the case and detonated the bomb. Another bomb was found on his body and defused. According to the police, the fact that the bomb was inside the case prevented a catastrophe (*Hurriyet*, October 31, 2010).

■ So far no organization has claimed responsibility for the attack, which occurred on the last day of the ceasefire agreement declared by the Kurdish PKK. In Turkey it is commonly

believed that the PKK was behind the attack. However, a spokesman for the organization claimed it was not involved (Hurriyet, October 31, 2010).



Left: Police explosives experts examine the site of the explosion. Right: The site of the suicide bombing attack (<http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/gundem/16183201.asp?qid=373>, October 31, 2010).