



The Meir Amit Intelligence and
Terrorism Information Center

News of Terrorism and the Israeli- Palestinian Conflict

August 31 – September 6, 2011



Mahmoud Abbas, chairman of the Palestinian Authority, meets with members of the campaign declaring that the Palestinians deserve a state. The chair, upholstered in UN blue, says "Palestine" above and "Palestine's Right" below an embroidered chair enclosed by the UN emblem's olive branches (Wafa News Agency, September 6, 2011)

Overview

- This past week sporadic rocket fire attacking the western Negev continued. The IDF responded by striking terrorist targets in the Gaza Strip.
- On the political and propaganda level, the Palestinian Authority continues making preparations for its move in the United Nations, which is expected to be accompanied by "popular activity" on the ground.
- This past week the Palmer Report was issued, revealing the findings of the UN Panel of Inquiry into the events aboard the Mavi Marmara. It stated unequivocally that Israel's naval blockade of the Gaza Strip was a legitimate security measure which was compatible with international law. Israel approved the Report, while Turkey rejected it and announced it would pursue steps to penalize Israel. Hamas, the Palestinian Authority and the PLO rushed to denounce the Report and praise the Turkish position.

Important Terrorism Events

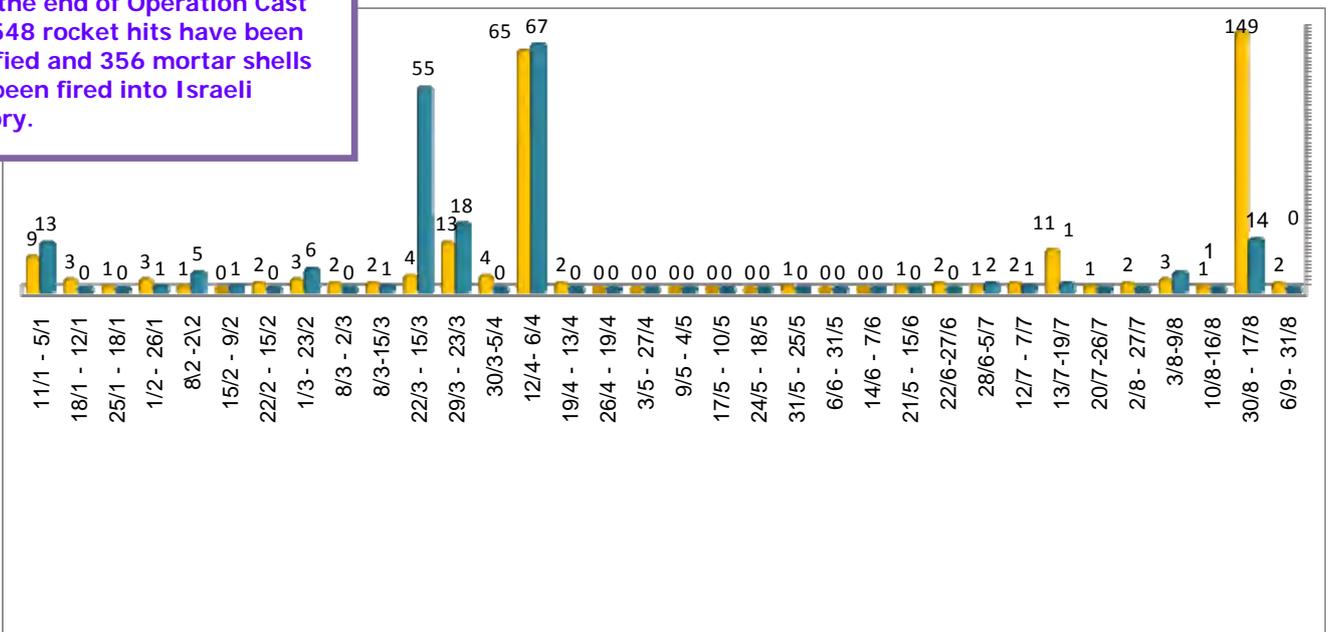
Israel's South

Sporadic Rocket Fire Attacking the Western Negev Continues

■ This past week two rocket hits were identified in Israeli territory. One fell in an open area in the western Negev on August 31. The second fell in an open area in the western Negev on September 5. There were no casualties and no damage was done.

Rockets and Mortar Shells Fired into Israeli Territory¹

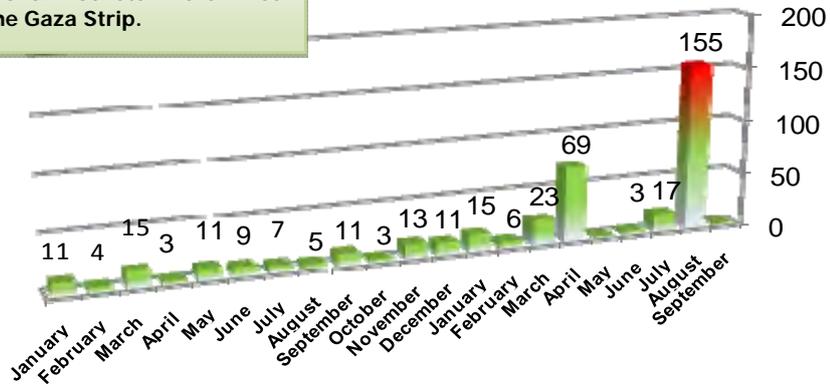
Since the end of Operation Cast Lead 548 rocket hits have been identified and 356 mortar shells have been fired into Israeli territory.



¹ The statistics do not include rockets and mortar shells fired which fell inside the Gaza Strip. As of September 6, 2011.

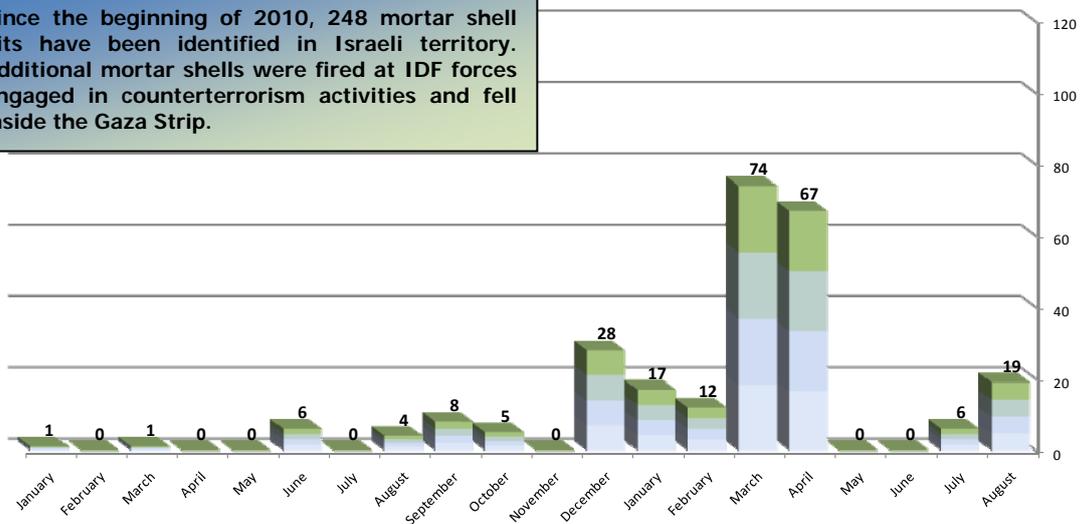
Rocket Fire – Monthly Distribution

Since the beginning of 2010, 503 rocket hits have been identified in Israeli territory. Additional rockets were fired and fell inside the Gaza Strip.



Mortar Shell Fire – Monthly Distribution

Since the beginning of 2010, 248 mortar shell hits have been identified in Israeli territory. Additional mortar shells were fired at IDF forces engaged in counterterrorism activities and fell inside the Gaza Strip.



Israeli Air Force Attacks

■ On September 5, following the rocket attacks, Israeli aircraft struck a site for the manufacture of weapons in the central Gaza Strip (IDF Spokesman's Website, September 5, 2011).



The site struck by the IDF (Safa News Agency, September 5, 2011)

Judea and Samaria

The Situation on the Ground

■ On the night of September 5 a mosque was burned and vandalized in the village of Qasra, southeast of Nablus. The Palestinians claimed Israeli settlers were responsible.

■ Sources in the Palestinian Authority reacted strongly to the attack. Salam Fayyad, prime minister the PA, said Israel was responsible. Nabil Abu Rudeina, spokesman for the PA presidency, claimed the attack was a provocation whose objective was to foil the planned Palestinian appeal to the UN. Mahmoud al-Habash, PA endowments minister, claimed that if the situation continued there would be "a religious war in the holy places" (Wafa News Agency, September 5, 2011).



The burned mosque (Wafa News Agency, September 6, 2011)

Developments in the Gaza Strip

The Crossings

■ This past week between 229 and 278 trucks carrying merchandise entered the Gaza Strip every day. In compliance with a request from the Palestinians, the Kerem Shalom crossing was closed for the Eid al-Fitr holiday (Website of the Israeli government coordinator for the territories, September 6, 2011).

Egypt Destroys Tunnels Along the Gaza Strip Border

■ Egyptian "security sources" reported that an action (Operation Eagle) intended to restore Egyptian security control of the Sinai Peninsula had entered its "second phase" (Al-Yawm Al-Saba'a, September 2, 2011). According to the Palestinian media, Egypt has begun destroying and blocking dozens of smuggling tunnels along its Gaza Strip border. So far three tunnels have been destroyed. According to one of the reports, tunnels were destroyed in residential areas as well, causing buildings to collapse and damaging structures, including mosques (Ma'an News Agency and Al-Yawm Al-Saba'a, September 3, 2011) .

■ According to "Egyptian sources" which remained anonymous, the destruction of the tunnels followed secret contacts between the Egyptian authorities and the de-facto Hamas administration in the Gaza Strip, to eliminate tunnels not under Palestinian control but rather under the control of Egyptian smugglers. On the other hand, Hamas' official organ Felesteen denounced the destruction of the tunnels, claiming that it was a continuation of Mubarak's policies and contradicted the declarations of the new Egyptian regime. It also claimed that the tunnels were used to smuggle in "legitimate merchandise" only and appealed to Egypt to lift the siege of the Gaza Strip completely (Hamas' Felesteen, September 4, 2011).

The Palestinian UN Initiative

Fatah's Central Committee Agrees Appeal to the UN for Recognition of the Palestinian State

■ Fatah's Central Committee met and agreed to appeal to the UN for recognition of the Palestinian state. Mahmoud Abbas, Palestinian Authority chairman, said that "[the Palestinians] are going [with confidence] to the Security Council. Whatever the outcome, we will return to the leadership to decide the next step." He added that the appeal to the UN was not a replacement for negotiations, because achieving recognition [for the Palestinian state] would require negotiations with Israel to complete [the vision of] independence (PNN website,

September 5, 2011).

- Muhammad Ishtiya, a member of Fatah's Central Committee, said that despite the recommendations of several Arab states, at its last meeting the Committee had decided to pursue the Palestinian appeal in the UN. He said that on September 23 Mahmoud Abbas would speak before the UN's General Assembly and ask that the member states recognize "Palestine" as a full UN member (Al-Ghad, September 4, 2011).

- Saeb Erekat, a member of the PLO's Executive Committee, again stated that Mahmoud Abbas would personally present the Palestinian request to the UN's Secretary General, who would send it to the Security Council for deliberation. He said that the objective of the appeal to the UN was not to declare independence or request recognition from various countries, but a request for recognition as an independent state and member of the UN whose borders were the 1967 borders, and thus it would be considered an occupied state and be entitled to international protection. He said that freezing construction in the settlements and East Jerusalem would make it possible to return to the negotiating table, but that the Palestinian move in the UN would continue (Al-Quds TV, September 4, 2011).



Mahmoud Abbas, chairman of the Palestinian Authority, chairs the meeting of Fatah's Central Committee which decided to pursue the move in the UN (Wafa News Agency, September 3, 2011).

The Israeli Prime Minister Calls on Mahmoud Abbas to Negotiate

- At a meeting with the Belgian prime minister, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu called on Mahmoud Abbas to enter into direct negotiations with him immediately, in Jerusalem, Ramallah or even Brussels. He emphasized that peace could not be imposed from outside, and that Israel was prepared to make painful concessions in negotiating with the Palestinians (Israeli prime minister's website, September 5, 2011).

Mahmoud Abbas Meets with Ehud Barak

- PA chairman Mahmoud Abbas said that he had met with Israeli Foreign Minister Ehud Barak in Jordan two weeks ago. Information about the meeting was not released. Mahmoud Abbas said he hoped negotiations with Israel would be renewed, but that it had been decided before

the meeting that the Palestinians would appeal to the UN because the talks [with Israel] had reached a dead end (Israel Channel 10 News and Reuters, September 5, 2011).

Convoys and Flotillas to the Gaza Strip – Update

The Palmer Report

■ On September 2, 2011, the Palmer Report was issued, after its contents had been leaked the previous day by the New York Times. The most important finding of the Panel of Inquiry was that **Israel's naval blockade of the Gaza Strip is "a legitimate security measure" and compatible with international law**. The source of declaration, according to the report, was the "real threat" to Israel's security from "extremist groups" [i.e., terrorist organizations] in the Gaza Strip.

■ The report was critical of Turkey, the flotilla participants and Israel: Turkey, stated the report, could have done more to warn the participants about the potential dangers of their actions. **IDF soldiers, when they boarded the *Mavi Marmara*, faced "significant organized and violent resistance."** However, the Report criticized **Israel** for having taken over the vessel on the high seas using "excessive and unreasonable" force. The Report also claimed that Israel did not treat the passengers well after they had been detained.

■ The Report advised Israel to issue a **"statement of regret" in light of the flotilla's consequences**, and called on Israel to offer reparations to those injured in the confrontation aboard the *Mavi Marmara*. It advised Israel to continue its efforts to ease restriction of movement to the Gaza Strip, and advised the humanitarian organizations operating in the Gaza Strip to help the residents to do so **using "established procedures" overland, and in consultation with the Israeli government and the Palestinian Authority**. The Report called on the governments of Israel and Turkey to rehabilitate their diplomatic relations for the sake of stability, peace and the security of the Middle East and the world.

Initial Reactions to the Report

■ **Israel announced it would adopt the Palmer Report** with the exception of reservations noted by the Israeli representative to the panel. According to the Israeli prime minister, **the Report unequivocally states that the State of Israel acted in accordance with international law**. He said that Israel did not have to apologize because IDF soldiers defended themselves against violent IHH operatives nor for Israel's preventing weapons from being smuggled into the Gaza Strip. However, he expressed Israel's regret at the loss of life and hope that the disagreement with Turkey could be overcome (Israeli prime minister's website, September 4, 2011).

■ **Turkey rejected the UN report and announced it would take a series of steps to penalize Israel, including the lowering of its diplomatic relations with Israel.** Turkey also announced its intention to take other steps, including freezing the security links between the two countries and **turning to the International Criminal Court in the Hague** to appeal the legality of the blockade of the Gaza Strip. Prime Minister Erdogan also said Turkey would freeze its governmental economic relations with Israel.

■ **IHH**, which was responsible for the violence aboard the *Mavi Marmara* (and was criticized by the Palmer Report) protested the Report, especially the fact that it confirmed the legality of the "siege" of the Gaza Strip. It said in a statement that the report which "expressed what the UN wanted to express," was the report of the UN Human Rights Commission in Geneva, which, the IHH statement claimed, "defined the siege of the Gaza Strip as illegal," and proved [sic] that Israel had planned from the beginning to harm and kill passengers aboard the *Mavi Marmara*. It said that it was now necessary to appeal to the international courts (Islam gundem website, September 2, 2011).

■ **Spokesmen for the Palestinian Authority and Hamas** rushed to denounce the Palmer Report. They interpreted it as providing Israel with justification for continuing the naval blockade of the Gaza Strip and harming the project of the convoys which brought assistance to the Gaza Strip:²

■ **Hamas spokesmen** called on the International Criminal Court in the Hague to correct "the UN's serious error," praised the Turkish effort to bring Israel to trial in international courts and called for more convoys to be sent to the Gaza Strip. Hamas spokesman **Fawzi Barhoum** claimed that the Report gave Israel "justification to continue...using force against solidarity activists," and said that in his opinion, following the Report new Israeli "aggression" in the Gaza Strip could be expected (Al-Quds TV, September 4, 2011).

■ The **PLO** said in an announcement that it would coordinate with the Turkish government to appeal to the International Court in the Hague to overturn the Palmer Report.

■ In the **Palestinian Authority, Salam Fayyad**, PA prime minister, expressed worry over the UN's providing justification for the "siege" of the Gaza Strip.³

2 Justification for the convoys has already suffered a blow from the international community. The United States and other Western countries expressed reservations over the last flotilla and warned their citizens not to participate. A spokesman for the US State Department said that the flotilla might be considered "provocative" and "dangerous," adding that there were effective ways to support the Gaza Strip and flotillas were unnecessary. She also said that Israel had the right to defend itself from weapons smuggling.

3 For further information about Palestinian reactions to the Palmer Report, see the September 4, 2011 bulletin "Initial Palestinian Responses to the Palmer Report" at http://www.terrorism-info.org.il/malam_multimedia/English/eng_n/pdf/hamas_e149.pdf.