



The Meir Amit Intelligence and  
Terrorism Information Center

## News of Terrorism and the Israeli- Palestinian Conflict

September 7-13, 2011



The Palestinian Authority launched a campaign to accompany its appeal to the UN. The campaign is called "Palestine: State Number 194." The banner at the right reads "194 is the number of our state [in the UN] and the number of the Resolution dealing with our [right of] return" (Wafa News Agency, September 8, 2011). 194 is the number of a UN resolution adopted in 1948 which the Palestinians regard as giving them justification for the so-called "right of return" of the Palestinian refugees to the territory of the State of Israel.

### Overview

- This past week terrorist events focused on sniper fire from the Gaza Strip targeting the Israeli village of Netiv Ha'asara. An IDF force was shot at this week on the Israeli-Egyptian border in the same region where a terrorist attack was carried out three weeks ago. In both incidents there were no casualties.
- On September 8 the Palestinian Authority launched a propaganda campaign to support its appeal for UN membership. The campaign has been accompanied by mass popular protests in Judea and Samaria and beyond. The PA represents the protests as nonviolent and aspires to contain them. Nevertheless, in our assessment they have a potential for violence.
- The Palestinian Authority has not reacted to the break-in of the Israeli embassy in Cairo. Hamas praised the event but kept a low media profile. Hezbollah and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad congratulated the Egyptian people, an attempt to represent the event as a popular action against normalization with Israel. A Hezbollah activist said that the event showed that "whoever bets on the Americans eventually falls."

## Israel's South Important Terrorism Events

### Rocket Fire into the Western Negev

- This past week no rocket or mortar shell hits were identified in Israeli territory.

### Palestinian Snipers Attack the Village of Netiv Ha'asara

■ Snipers from the Gaza Strip shot at the Israeli village of Netiv Ha'asara, located near the Erez crossing (northern Gaza Strip). The shots were fired at the village center. About ten bullets were found. There were no casualties but some of the buildings were damaged (Ynet, September 9, 2011). The identity of the organization behind the attack is unknown.

■ A spokesman for the military wing of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine nicknamed Abu Jamal claimed that operatives belonging to his organization had begun sniper fire attacks. He said the organization had previously carried out sniper attacks. He added that it had been carried out "thanks to a modern, advanced, precise weapon" the organization received, which could hit a long-range target and did not endanger the shooter. It was also, he said, thanks to the training the operatives had undergone in precision shooting, concealment and evasion (Al-Ayam, September 11, 2011).

### IDF Force on the Egyptian Border Attacked

■ **An IDF force reported being shot at** in the region of Netafim on the Israeli-Egyptian border. There were no casualties and no damage was done. So far the identity of the shooter or shooters is unknown. The attack occurred in the same region as the terrorist attack three weeks ago in which eight Israeli civilians were killed (Ynet, September 12, 2011).

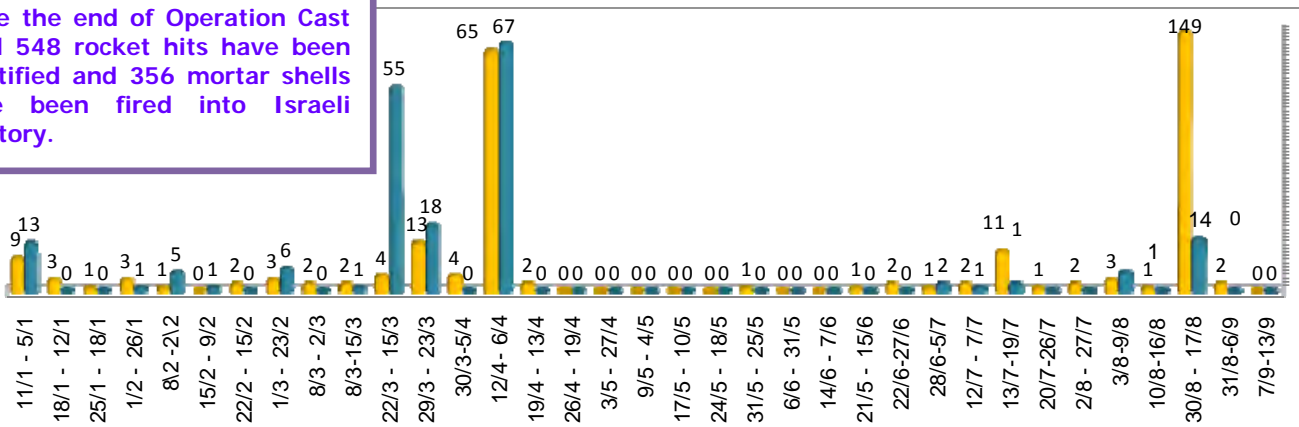
### Clash between the IDF and a Popular Resistance Committees Squad

■ A squad of terrorist operatives attacked IDF forces with mortar shell fire east of Khan Yunis in the northern Gaza Strip. The forces were engaged in routine security operations along the Israeli border with the Gaza Strip. In response Israeli aircraft struck the squad launching the mortar shells (Ynet, September 6, 2011). The PRC's military wing claimed responsibility for the clash (Qawm website, September 6, 2011).

■ The Palestinian media reported that **Israel's retaliatory fire killed Khaled Ahmed Abu Sahmoud, a ranking member of the PRC's military wing** and commander of the east Khan Yunis artillery unit. Four additional operatives were seriously wounded (Wafa News Agency, Al-Risala and Ma'an News Agency, September 6, 2011). **Abu Mujahed, PRC spokesman**, accused Israel of not honoring the lull and called on the other Palestinian terrorist organizations to reexamine the lull in the fighting with Israel. He threatened a quick response to the killing of Khaled Abu Sahmoud (Alresala.net website, September 6, 2011).

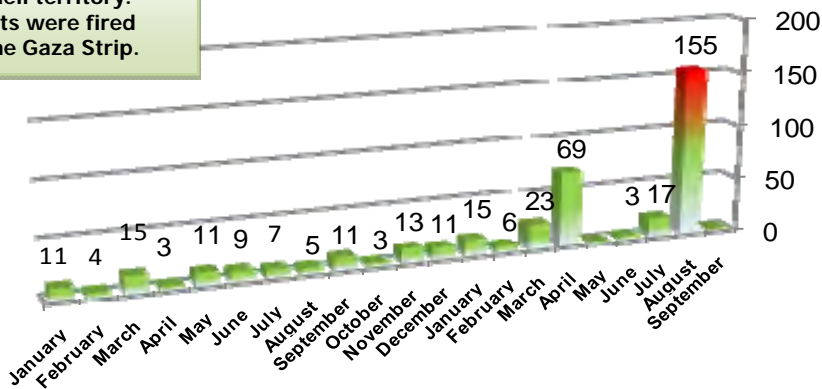
## Rockets and Mortar Shells Fired into Israeli Territory<sup>1</sup>

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



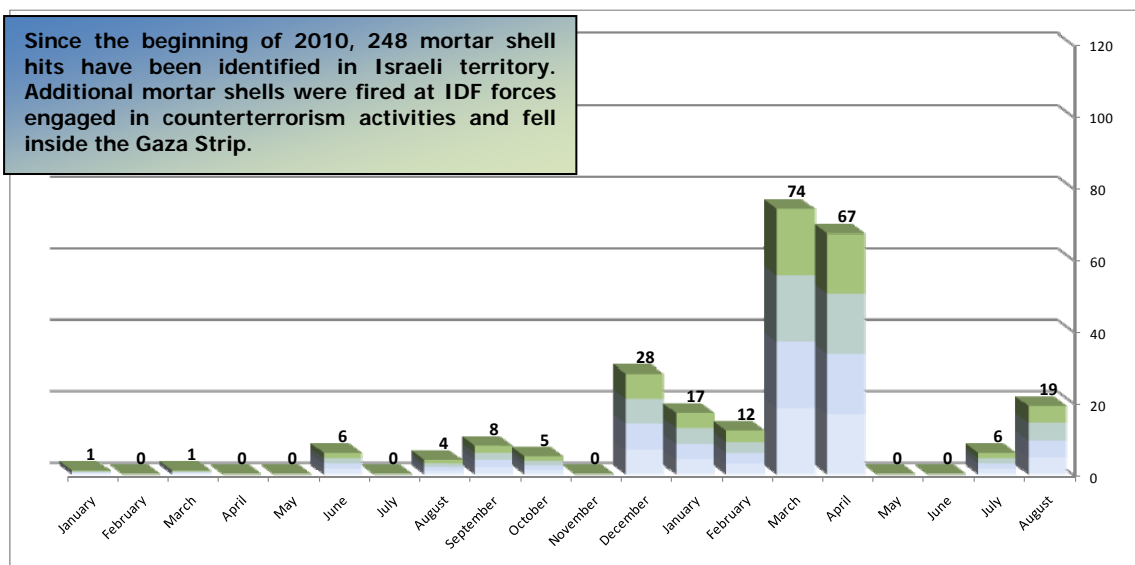
## Rocket Fire – Monthly Distribution

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



<sup>1</sup> The statistics do not include rockets and mortar shells fired which fell inside the Gaza Strip. As of September 12, 2011.

## Mortar Shell Fire – Monthly Distribution



## Judea and Samaria

### The Situation on the Ground

■ Demonstrations and marches were held in Judea and Samaria, most of part of the Palestinian campaign "Palestine: State Number 194," being waged to support the Palestinian move in the UN. Several hundred people participated in them.

### Hamas Terrorist Cells Exposed in Judea and Samaria

■ Since May 2011, the Israel Security Agency, in collaboration with the IDF and the Israel Police Force, has exposed **13 Hamas terrorist cells in Judea and Samaria**. Dozens of Hamas operatives were detained. The cells, some of whose members were terrorist operatives formerly incarcerated in Israeli prisons, were at various stages of preparations for carrying out terrorist attacks. Their focal points of operations were Hebron and Jerusalem.

■ Interrogations of the detained terrorists revealed that they **had mainly planned to abduct Israelis to be used as bargaining chips**. Mass-casualty attacks were also planned, and one of them was in fact carried out: in March 2011 a cell based in Hebron detonated an IED near the International Convention Center in Jerusalem, killing a British woman and wounding dozens of Israeli civilians. The cells' other actions were prevented and their operatives were detained.

■ One of the most serious plots exposed was **a suicide bombing attack** planned by a cell based in Hebron and Jerusalem, **to be carried out in the Pisgat Zeev neighborhood of Jerusalem on August 21, 2011**. The prospective suicide bomber was Sayid Qawasmeh, 20,

a resident of Hebron and Hamas operative. He was detained on August 22 on the Temple Mount. The charge he was supposed to use in the attack weighed about 6 kgs (about 13 lbs) and was fashioned from a fire extinguisher filled with explosives and covered with small iron balls. The cell also planned an abduction in the region of Gush Etzion or Hebron, and had already carried out observations near the Gush Etzion junction. In addition, they planned a number of mass-casualty attacks.<sup>2</sup>



The charge, composed of a fire extinguisher covered with iron balls. Found in East Jerusalem in the house of Hamas operatives (Photo courtesy of the Israel Security Agency)

## Developments in the Gaza Strip

### The Egyptian Security Forces Destroy Tunnels

- **Egypt continues its security activities along the border with the Gaza Strip.** Tunnels which, according to the Egyptians, were used to smuggle weapons into the Gaza Strip have been destroyed. Egyptian bulldozers brought to the region of the border (Rafah) have begun digging deep trenches near the tunnels. Armed border police have been stationed in the area (Al-Safa, September 5, 2011).
- "Palestinian security sources" reported that a special Egyptian force arrived in army camps in cities near the Gaza Strip. According to the sources, the force was composed of between 400 and 450 uniformed soldiers, and their mission was to ward off any possible confrontation with armed men and smugglers while the tunnels were being destroyed (Alresala.net, September 8, 2011).
- **Yasser Othman, the Egyptian ambassador to the Palestinian Authority,** said that the Egyptian army had begun a security campaign in the Sinai district near the Gaza Strip **to restore order and security and to destroy the tunnels along the border** without damaging the economic and humanitarian status of the Gaza Strip. He said that the intention was to destroy all the tunnels used to smuggle weapons, drugs and other contraband materials.

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<sup>2</sup>A bulletin elaborating the exposure of the terrorist cells will soon appear on our English website.

However, he also said that Egypt was not and would not be a side in the siege of the Gaza Strip and that the security campaign would contribute to the lifting of what he called "the Israeli siege." As to the construction of the iron barrier, which was suspended when the protests broke out, he said there were currently no plans to complete it (Al-Risala, September 5, 2011).

### Moving Hamas' Offices from Syria to Egypt

- The media recently reported that given the situation in Syria, Hamas might move its offices away from Damascus, and one option was **transferring them to Egypt**. In response, **Yasser Othman**, Egyptian ambassador to the Palestinian Authority, said that **so far no such suggestion had been made** in all the contacts between Egypt and the Palestinians. He added that Egypt would not take any step that would deepen the internal Palestinian rift (Ma'an News Agency, September 9, 2011).

- In light of the reports, Hamas issued a press release stressing that the media coverage of Hamas' intention to remove its offices from Damascus was **completely without foundation** (Hamas' Palestine-info website, September 12, 2011).

- **Ranking Hamas figures also responded:**

- **Mahmoud al-Zahar** said in a telephone interview in reference to the events in Syria, that **as a result of the events "all the Palestinians were in trouble,"** that the possibility of moving Hamas headquarters from Syria had been raised, and that Egypt was being considered as an option (Ma'an News Agency, September 9, 2011). In another interview **he denied the reports** and said that Syria had not asked Hamas to leave and that Hamas had not asked the Egyptians for permission to transfer their activities to Egypt. As to Hamas operatives residing in Syria, he said that the Gaza Strip was open to them but that each one could make up his own mind (Al-Hayat, September 10, 2011).

- **Musa Abu Marzouk**, deputy head of Hamas' political bureau, said that the movement's offices were still located in Damascus and that **there were no plans to move them** (Al-Sharq Al-Awsat, September 10, 2011).

- **Osama Hamdan**, in charge of Hamas' international relations, also denied that Hamas was planning to move away from Damascus because of the events in Syria. He emphasized that Hamas was not involved in Syria's internal affairs and **was not planning to leave Syria** (Qudspress, September 12, 2011).

### Ismail Haniya Praises Turkey

- **Ismail Haniya**, head of the de-facto Hamas administration in the Gaza Strip, was interviewed by the Turkish News Agency. He said that **Hamas had great expectations from Turkey** and regarded it as a major player in a number of fields: support for the Palestinian struggle against Israel, implementation of the internal Palestinian reconciliation, lifting the siege

of the Gaza Strip and rebuilding it. He justified firing rockets into Israeli territory from the Gaza Strip by saying that they were nothing compared to the weapons Israel used against the "civilians" of the Gaza Strip (Anatolia News Agency, September 11, 2011).

## The Diplomatic Front

### The Appeal to the UN

- Palestinian Authority preparations continue for the appeal to the UN. To that end, on September 8 **the Palestinian Authority launched a propaganda campaign called "Palestine: State Number 194"** to win support for the appeal. It began with a communiqué sent to the UN Secretary General via the UN delegation in Ramallah. On September 9 and 10 demonstrations (of dozens to several hundred demonstrators) were held at some of the usual friction spot in Judea and Samaria (such as Bila'in, Nili'in and Nebi Saleh). The campaign will continue until the declaration and is expected to be accompanied by broad popular protests in the Palestinian Authority and abroad, **represented by the Palestinian Authority as nonviolent, but which in our assessment have the potential for violence.**<sup>3</sup>

- **In the meantime, important Palestinian Authority figures continue making statements to allay fears, stressing that the appeal to the UN will not harm the continuation of negotiations with Israel.** Meeting with Israeli cultural figures accompanied by journalists at his office in Ramallah, Mahmoud Abbas said that the Palestinians did not want to delegitimize Israel but wanted legitimization for Palestinian existence through independence. He said they were appealing to the UN because they wanted the right of self-determination. He also said that the negotiations with Israel had reached a dead end because the Israeli government refused to stop construction in the settlements and did not maintain a clear, well-defined source of authority for the peace process. He added that throughout the negotiations Israel had not suggested anything. He reiterated that the Palestinian leadership was prepared to return to negotiations based on the 1967 borders and freezing construction in the settlements, with no connection to the results the Palestinians achieved in the UN (Wafa News Agency, September 5, 2011).

- In preparation for the appeal to the UN, Mahmoud Abbas met with Dennis Ross and David Hale, the special American envoys to the Middle East. According to the Arab media, the meeting was "stormy" and the Americans went beyond the bounds of diplomatic politeness when they expressed the United States' strong objections to the Palestinian appeal for membership in the UN. However, Mahmoud Abbas remained determined but stressed that the Palestinian move did not contradict a renewal of negotiations about the final status arrangement (Al-Sharq Al-Awsat,

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<sup>3</sup>For further information see the September 13, 2001 bulletin "The Palestinian Authority launched a propaganda campaign to support its appeal to the UN" at [http://www.terrorism-info.org.il/malam\\_multimedia/English/eng\\_n/pdf/pa\\_e007.pdf](http://www.terrorism-info.org.il/malam_multimedia/English/eng_n/pdf/pa_e007.pdf).

September 10, 2011). On September 12 Mahmoud Abbas left for Egypt, where he met with Catherine Ashton, the European Union foreign minister. While in Egypt Mahmoud Abbas may consult with the head of the Turkish government, currently visiting the country (Wafa News Agency, September 10, 2011).



Mahmoud Abbas and Catherine Ashton meet in Cairo (Wafa News Agency, September 12, 2011)

## Initial Responses to the Attack on the Israeli Embassy In Cairo

- Official sources in the Palestinian Authority did not react to the break-in of the Israeli embassy in Cairo. **Hamas** praised the attack, but so far has kept a low profile. **Ali Barake**, Hamas representative in Lebanon, said that the break-in and tearing down the Israeli flag showed that the position of the Egyptian people had not changed and that they were working "with the resistance" [i.e., terrorist organizations] (Al-Intiqad, September 12, 2011). **Dr. Issam Shawar, writing in Hamas' daily newspaper Felesteen**, said that what happened at the Israeli embassy in Cairo was a prediction of what would happen to the State of Israel. He said that Israel, planted in "an Arab-Islamic ocean," would fall as the wall around the embassy, planted in the heart of the Egyptian people, had fallen. He said the Arabs were not committed to the idea of coexistence, which existed only "among losers who give up their principles and ideology" (Felesteen, September 11, 2011).
- **Ahmed Mudallal, high-ranking figure in the Palestinian Islamic Jihad**, said that the events emphasized the burden the peace treaty with Israel had placed on the shoulders of the Egyptian people. He added that the Israeli embassies in Egypt and other Arab countries were nothing but "nests of spies" who caused conflict between the people and the regimes. He called on the Arab states which maintained diplomatic relations with Israel to end them immediately (Hamas' Palestine-info website, September 11, 2011)
- **In Lebanon Hezbollah and Palestinian Islamic Jihad activists praised the break-in of the Israeli embassy:**



● **Hezbollah activist Hassan Kharisha** said that the free people of Egypt had expressed their wishes and supported the demands of the Palestinian people, and that he believed other countries would follow in their footsteps and all the Arab-Muslim peoples would expel the Israeli ambassadors from their countries and close their doors to Israelis (Radio Al-Nur, September 11, 2011).

● **Hezbollah activist Muhammad Yaghi, responsible for the Bekaa Valley district**, said that what happened in Cairo was nothing new for the Egyptian people and the Arabs, and that no one could stand up to them. He added that "**anyone who bets on the Americans will eventually fall**" (Al-Intiqad, September 10, 2011).

● **Abu Imad al-Rifa'i, Palestinian Islamic Jihad representative in Lebanon**, said that what happened in Egypt would have repercussions for the entire Arab world. He said that the break-in of the Israeli embassy showed the nobility of the Egyptian people and would bring salvation to the Palestinians (Al-Intiqad, September 12, 2011).