



**The Meir Amit Intelligence and
Terrorism Information Center**

News of Terrorism and the Israeli- Palestinian Conflict

December 14-20, 2011



The second stage of the deal for the release of abducted Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit is completed: Palestinian terrorists released from Israeli jails wait at the Rafah crossing to enter the Gaza Strip (Al-Aqsa TV, December 18, 2011).

Overview

- This past week Israeli-Palestinian events focused on the second stage of the deal for the release of Gilad Shalit. Five hundred and fifty Palestinian terrorists released from Israeli jails were handed over to the Palestinian Authority and Hamas. The implementation of the second stage reignited criticism from Fatah over Hamas' handling of the negotiations with Israel.
- Palestinian spokesmen again stressed the need to release the remaining terrorists imprisoned in Israel, emphasizing additional abductions.
- The 24th anniversary of the founding of Hamas was marked by a large rally in Gaza City. Ismail Haniya, head of the de-facto Hamas administration, noted the movement's commitment to "armed resistance" (i.e., terrorism, as opposed to the so-called "popular resistance"). He claimed the "armed resistance" was the only way to "liberate the land of Palestine from the [Mediterranean] sea to the [Jordan] river."

Implementing the Second Stage of the Shalit Deal

- On December 18, 2011, the second stage of **the deal to secure the release of Gilad Shalit was implemented. An additional 550 Palestinian terrorists were handed over to the Palestinian Authority and Hamas.** The prisoners' families rioted for hours at the Palestinian Authority's Betunia crossing, resulting in the prisoners' being transferred a different way in the evening and not through the crossing. The transfer was effected with the aid of the International Red Cross (IDF Spokesman, December 18, 2011).
- The implementation of the second stage reignited the public controversy between Fatah and Hamas regarding how Hamas compiled the list of prisoners to be freed. **Issa Qaraqe**, the Palestinian minister for prisoners' affairs, criticized Hamas' conduct in the negotiations with Israel, claiming that all the expectations for the release of long-time prisoners, the disabled and the sick had not been realized (Ma'an News Agency, December 15, 2011). Hamas spokesman **Fawzi Barhoum** responded to the criticism, saying that anyone who thought the deal was not sufficiently important should suggest a different way of operating. He said the release of each prisoner was a great national achievement, regardless of individual organizational or political affiliations (Safa News Agency, December 15, 2011).
- The prisoners were welcomed with ceremonies in Ramallah and the Gaza Strip. A festive welcome was held at the Rafah crossing where **Ahmed Bahar**, the deputy chairman of the Palestinian Legislative Council, spoke, praising Hamas' military-terrorist wing which, he said, had forced Israel to accept its terms (Al-Aqsa TV, December 18, 2011). A state reception was held in **Ramallah** for the terrorists, attended by a delegation of Palestinian Legislative Council representatives. **Ahmed al-Tayyib**, presidential secretary general, welcomed the released prisoners (Wafa News Agency, December 18, 2011).



Terrorists return to the Gaza Strip as part of the deal to release Gilad Shalit (Hamas' Palestine-info website, December 18, 2011).

- With regard to the prisoner exchange deal, various speakers noted the need for an effort to be made to release the other Palestinian terrorist prisoners held in Israel jail, **stressing the need for more abductions**.
 - **Abu Obeida**, spokesman for Hamas' military-terrorist wing, said that the prisoner exchange deal was a success and victory for Hamas and the "resistance" [i.e., the path of terrorism]. He said that so far 20% of the prisoners had been released "in return for one Israeli soldier." He said it was **not the end of the line** and that the issue of the prisoners was at the top of the "Palestinian resistance's" priority list (Al-Aqsa TV, December 18, 2011).



Abu Obeida speaks about the prisoner exchange deal
(Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades website, December 18, 2011).

- **Atallah Abu al-Subh**, minister for released prisoners in the de-facto Hamas administration, told the prisoners released in the deal **that they could only have been released by the "resistance"** [i.e., terrorism], with deals like the last one.
- **Jamal Mheisen**, a member of the PLO's Central Committee, warned that the fact that Israel had agreed to release prisoners only after an Israeli soldier had been abducted was **an opening for future abductions**. However, he said that Fatah did not encourage that (Palestinian TV, December 18, 2011).¹

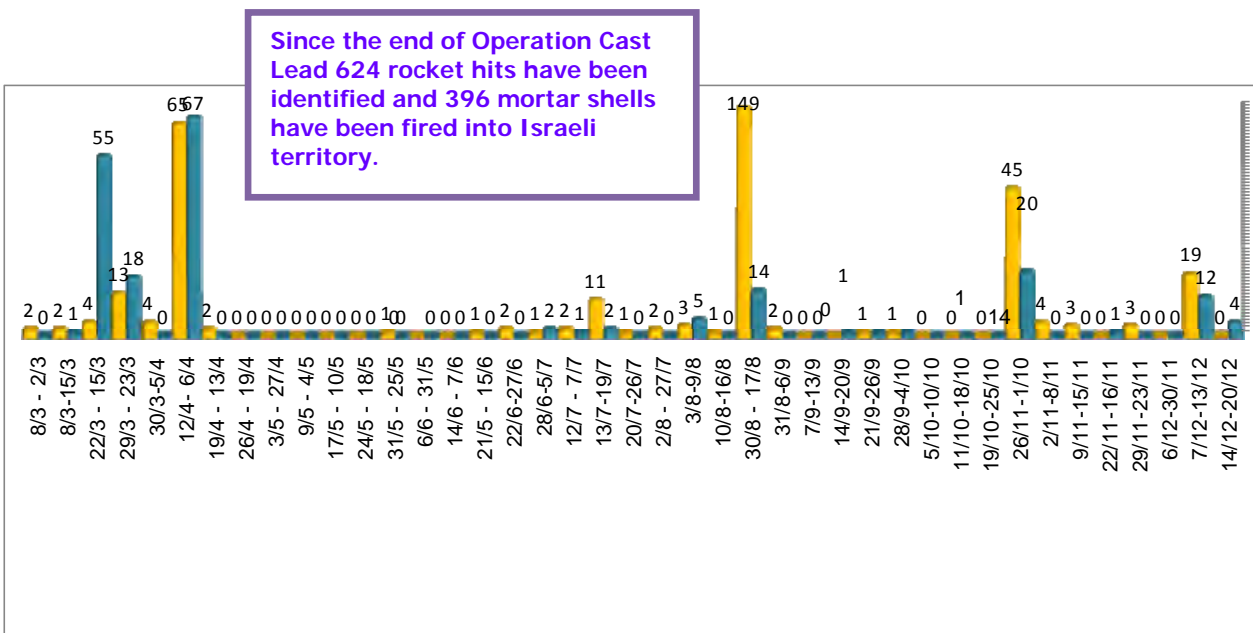
¹ After his remarks were quoted by the Israeli media, Mheisen said he wanted to make it clear that he had been misunderstood and that Fatah aspired to release the prisoners by means of negotiation and not by abducting soldiers. He said that Israel's stubbornness in releasing prisoners was liable to encourage the prisoners' families to abduct [Israeli] soldiers to be able to release their relatives, but stressed that Fatah did not ask them to do it (Qudspress website, December 19, 2011).

Important Terrorism Events Israel's South

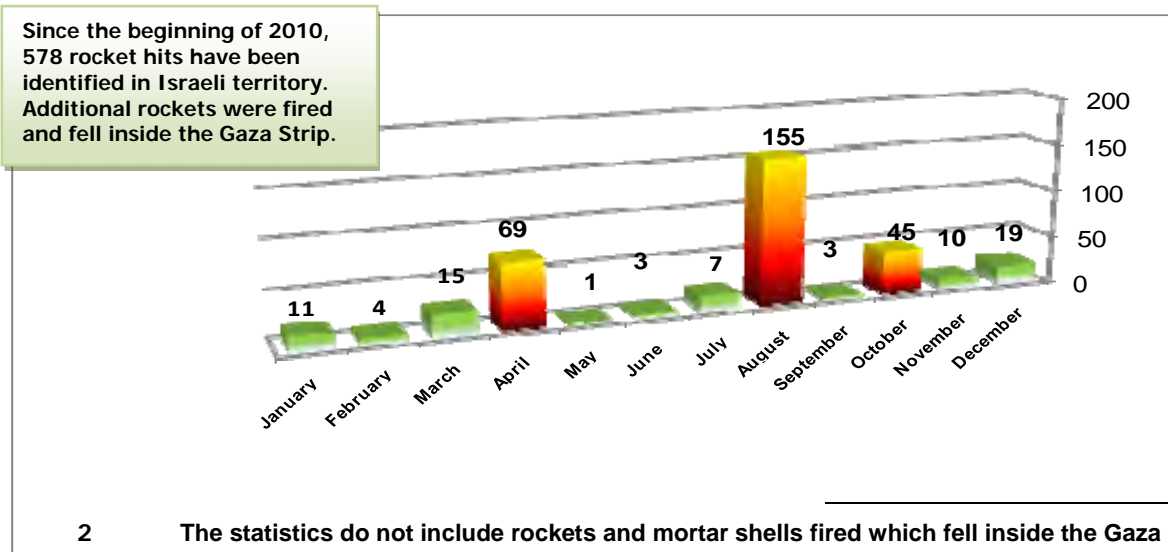
Mortar Shells Fired into Israeli Territory

- This past week four mortar shells were fired into Israeli territory. They landed in open areas in the western Negev. There were no casualties and no damage was done.

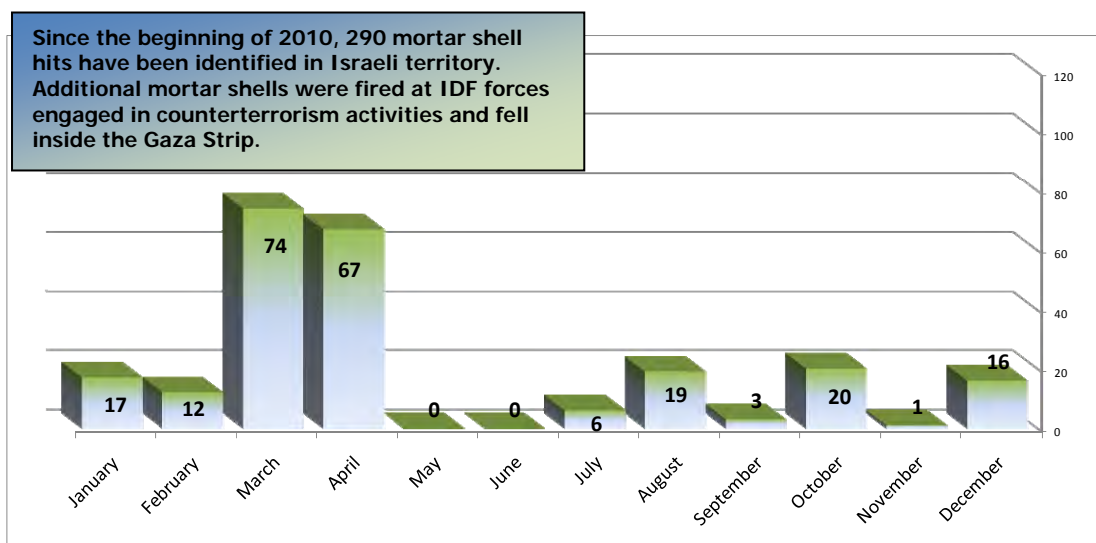
Rockets and Mortar Shells Fired into Israeli Territory²



Rocket Fire – Monthly Distribution



Mortar Shell Fire – Monthly Distribution



Judea and Samaria

The Situation on the Ground

- This past week the IDF carried out routine counterterrorist activities in Judea and Samaria, detaining Palestinians suspected of terrorist activities and confiscating weapons. During the week Molotov cocktails and stones were thrown at IDF soldiers and Israeli civilians in Judea and Samaria.
- On December 15 a civilian Israeli woman sustained slight injuries when stones were thrown at an Israeli bus southeast of Qalqilya. She received medical treatment at the site of the attack (IDF Spokesman, December 15, 2011).

Developments in the Gaza Strip

Marking the Anniversary of Hamas' Founding

- To mark the 24th anniversary of the founding of Hamas, a rally was held in the Al-Katiba al-Khadraa Square in Gaza City. According to Hamas, it was attended by 350 thousand people. Its theme was "Loyalty [belongs] to free men...Jerusalem, we are coming." Speakers included many important Hamas figures, such as Ismail Haniya, head of the de-facto Hamas administration in the Gaza Strip, and Yehya Sunwar, a released terrorist.



Pictures posted on the Hamas website from the rally held to mark the 24th anniversary of the movement's founding (Hamas' Palestine-info website, December 14, 2011).

- Ismail Haniya made it clear **that Hamas had not abandoned the principle of "armed resistance"** [i.e., terrorism] and that **reconciliation with Fatah would not come at the expense of the movement's principles**. The main points of his speech were the following (Al-Aqsa TV, December 14, 2011):
 - **The principle of "armed resistance:"** Hamas, he said, **still promoted "armed resistance"** as the only way and the strategic choice for liberating **"Palestine from the [Mediterranean] sea to the [Jordan] river."**
 - **Regional uprisings:** According to Haniya, the **"Arab spring" would help the Palestinian cause**. One of the important results of the revolutions in the Arab world was the fall of the "lackey regimes" which had "plotted" against the Gaza Strip and besieged it. Those regimes, he said, were disappearing, the Palestinian cause had returned as a focal point of interest, Jerusalem was again a top priority and Hamas was both publicly and officially supported.
 - **The internal Palestinian reconciliation:** Haniya claimed that **the delay in advancing the reconciliation was caused mainly by the Palestinian Authority's yielding to external pressures**. Hamas, he said, adhered to national unity in the reconciliation but it would not reconcile with Fatah at the expense of the ideology of the "resistance" [i.e., the path of terrorism] and the rights of the Palestinians.
 - **Response to Israel's claim that the Sinai Peninsula had turned into a source of terrorist attacks:** Haniya said that Hamas and Egypt had joint responsibility for maintaining stability and security in the Sinai Peninsula and accused Israel of an attempt to "create disturbances" in the region. He said Egyptian security was Palestinian security and Gaza's security was Egypt's security.



Ismail Haniya speaks at the rally marking the 24th anniversary of the founding of Hamas

(Hamas' Palestine-info website, December 14, 2011).

- To mark the anniversary, the Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades, Hamas' military-terrorist wing, issued figures reflecting the activities of the movement since its founding. According to its website, the Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades boasts of having sacrificed 1,848 *shaheeds*, having fired 11,093 rockets into Israeli territory, and having killed and wounded 7,776 of the "Zionist enemy and the IDF" (Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades website, December 14, 2011).

Hamas-Syrian Relations

Activist Announces Hamas Leaving Syria

- **Ali Barake**, Hamas representative in Lebanon, said in a newspaper interview that several Hamas activists had left Syria. He said that only junior ("administration") activists who were not Syrian residents had left, such as individuals who had been born in the Gaza Strip and elsewhere, because of the "natural" problems of carrying out their work. He added that Hamas-Syrian relations were firm and that Hamas was in favor of a political, peaceful solution for Syria's current internal crisis (Hamas' Felesteen, December 16, 2011). **It was the first official Hamas announcement relating to the exodus of Hamas from Syria after previous denials.**

Hamas-Fatah Relations

Contacts for a Hamas-Fatah Reconciliation Continue

- **On December 18 a meeting was held in Cairo attended by Fatah and Hamas representatives in preparation for the December 20 meeting**, which will confirm the agreements reached so far. One of the decisions made on December 18 was to

postpone appointing a reconciliation committee until the organizations meet on December 20. Another decision was to appoint a central elections committee, whose composition would also be discussed on December 20 (Safa News Agency, December 19, 2011).

- Regarding the central issue of the path of terrorism [the so-called "resistance"], **fundamental differences were revealed:**
 - **Mahmoud Abbas**, currently visiting Brussels, claimed in an interview that during the most recent meeting in Cairo Hamas had agreed with Fatah that there had to be a lull in the fighting from the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, and that the "resistance" had to be "popular" and not armed (Euronews website, December 16, 2011).
 - On the other hand, **Salah al-Bardawil**, head of Hamas' information office, denied that any dialogue or discussion had been held with Mahmoud Abbas about the "resistance" and **denied that any agreement had been reached which would obviate a "military resistance" against Israel**. He stressed that according to the national reconciliation document The Palestinians agreed that the "resistance" was the legitimate right for [implementing] the "liberation" of Palestine and that the organizations were proceeding with the "resistance" in such a way that it would serve Palestinian interests. He said that while the "popular resistance" had been chosen as a priority, **that did not mean that "military resistance" was not on the table** (Hamas' Palestine-info website, December 18, 2011). **Note:** Ismail Haniya, head of the de-facto Hamas administration, also emphasized in his speech for the anniversary of Hamas' founding, that Hamas was committed to "armed resistance."
- **Mahmoud al-Zahar**, member of Hamas' political bureau, remains pessimistic about the Hamas-Fatah reconciliation. He said there had been no significant progress made in the five articles of the agreement and even the issue of the liberation of the prisoners had not been translated into action. Moreover, he said, since May Mahmoud Abbas had not found the time to deal with the reconciliation because of his move in the United Nations, and only a month ago had he found time for it (Voice of Palestine Radio, December 14; Middle East News Agency, December 13, 2011).
- In addition, the committee of the families of political prisoners in the West Bank **revealed a list of 76 names of people detained by the Palestinian Authority's security forces since Mahmoud Abbas and Khaled Mashaal met in Cairo**. The committee said in an announcement that most of the detentions of those referred to as "political prisoners" were carried out by the Palestinian Authority's preventive security force. According to the announcement, the families demanded that the Palestinian

Authority immediately release all those detained, in accordance with the reconciliation agreement (Hamas' Palestine-info website, December 17, 2011).

Lebanon

Lebanese Army Finds Four Rockets in the Eastern Sector

- The Lebanese army said in an announcement that following a report by a farmer working near the Israeli border in the eastern sector of south Lebanon, four 107mm rockets had been found. The rockets were hidden in water pipes and were not ready for launching. Lebanese army units encircled the area and prevented media personnel from covering the event. So far it is not known to whom the rockets belong and if they were intended for firing into Israel (Lebanese News Agency, Al-Manar TV, Radio Nur, December 19, 2011).



UNIFIL and Lebanese army forces at the scene. Right: One of the rockets (Al-Manar TV, December 19, 2011).

Convoys and Propaganda Displays

Networks Organize for Propaganda Displays during the First Half of 2012

- Preparations continue around the world for organizing a number of propaganda displays slated for the the first half of the new year. For organizing and especially enlisting participants and raising contributions, "information" conferences are being organized in various cities and dedicated websites have been started in many languages. **So far the degree of interest in participating in the events is unknown and the status of practical preparations for them is unclear.**
- Some of the events planned are the following:
 - **A world march to Jerusalem:** The march is scheduled for **March 30, 2012**. In preparation, a conference will be held in Rome on January 14. Conferences have already been held in Jordan, Austria, India and Turkey. The conference organizer said in an announcement that to simplify the process of

collecting money and organizing activists, coordinators would be appointed in Europe, similar to those already operating in the United States and Asia (lpk-bonn.de website, December 13, 2011).

- **A protest fly-in to Ben-Gurion International Airport:** The fly-in is scheduled **for April 15, 2012**. It will be similar to the previous one. On December 16 a number of preparatory conferences were held in France and Belgium. One of the conferences in France advertised that a troupe from the Gaza Strip would perform during the evening. According to the event's Facebook page, 98 individuals confirmed their participation. The fly-in's organizers are asking for contributions to help activists pay for their tickets (Fly-in website).
- **Events for Nakba Day 2012:** The events are planned **for May 15, 2012**. The organizers are planning events similar to those held in 2011, and they claim that more than a million Palestinian refugees and Arab and foreign solidarity activists will gather at Israel's borders, coming from every direction by land, sea and air. They claim they will hold non-violent marches whose theme will be the "return to our homes which were taken from us in 1948." According to the announcements, they will appeal to international institutions, first of all the United Nations, to provide protection for the marches, and to send an international force to prevent Israel from attacking the marchers. They are also asking businessmen to help finance the march (Nakba Day events Facebook page).
- **"Freedom Flotilla Italia:"** On December 11 a coordinating meeting was held in Rome. The next meeting is planned for Stockholm, where flotilla management and routes will be discussed. The intention of the organizers is for the flotilla to pass through a number of European ports, among them two in Italy (Organization website, December 19, 2011). At this point the proposed date of the flotilla is unknown.



Logo of the Italian flotilla (Organization website).