



Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center  
at the Center for Special Studies (C.S.S)

## News of the Israeli-Palestinian Confrontation

(December 1-15, 2005)



Andrei Garmitzky mourns his wife, one of the five Israeli civilians killed in the Palestinian Islamic Jihad suicide bombing attack at the entrance to the Sharon shopping mall in Netanya (Photo: Gil Cohen, Reuters).



Members of the Palestinian Authority's security forces arresting a Palestinian Islamic Jihad operative, one of many arrests made after the attack in Netanya (Photo: Al-Jazeera TV, December 8)

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### **Main points**

- During the first half of December Palestinian terrorism escalated. The main event was the suicide bombing attack in Netanya carried out by the **Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ)**, the terrorist organization which, sponsored by Iran and Syria, has sought more than any other to sabotage the lull. There was also a sharp increase in the launching of rocket and mortar shells from the Gaza Strip at western Negev settlements.
- The Israeli security forces implemented a series of activities to foil attacks, including the detention of terrorist-operatives in the West Bank, especially those belonging to the PIJ's terrorist infrastructures in northern Samaria. The Israeli Air Force attacked terrorist-operatives in the Gaza Strip responsible for rocket fire. Four high-ranking terrorist-operatives were killed, three belonging to Fatah and one to the Popular Resistance Committees (PRC).
- After the suicide bombing attack in Netanya, Abu Mazen instructed the Palestinian security services to detain PIJ activists in Judea and Samaria. That was a change from the PA's usual response of merely condemning an attack. Nevertheless, only time will tell if it is a new policy or a unique action resulting from media waves and external pressures.

## Important events on the ground

### PIJ suicide bombing attack in Netanya



The suicide bombing attack at the Sharon shopping mall in Netanya

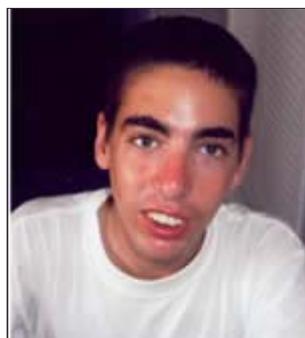
(Al-Jazeera TV, December 5, 2005)

- On December 5 the PIJ carried out a suicide bombing attack at the entrance to the Sharon shopping mall in Netanya, killing five Israeli civilians and wounding more than 50.
- The suicide bomber was **Lutfi Amin 'Abd al-Latif Abu Sa'ada**, from the village of 'Alar in the Tulkarm district. The organization issued a statement saying that he had acted in response to Israeli actions, primarily the killing of several of the organization's commanders in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.
- The PIJ, which is sponsored by Iran and Syria and whose attacks are orchestrated from Damascus, has carried out most of the suicide bombing attacks during the lull (four out of five) with the intention of sabotaging it and escalating the ongoing violent Israeli-Palestinian confrontation.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> For further information see our Special Bulletin ["The Palestinian Islamic Jihad \(PIJ\) carries out another suicide bombing attack at the entrance to the shopping mall in Netanya, killing five Israeli civilians and wounding more than 50"](#)

### An IDF soldier stabbed to death at the Qalandiya checkpoint and a stabbing attack foiled in Hebron

- On December 8, Sergeant Nir Kahana was stabbed to death by a Palestinian terrorist at the Qalandiya checkpoint (south of Ramallah). The terrorist reached the checkpoint, drew a knife and stabbed Sergeant Kahana during the security check. He was detained and remanded for questioning by IDF security forces. In the wake of the murder the Qalandiya checkpoint was closed to all Palestinian traffic, with the exception of humanitarian cases.



Sergeant Nir Kahana

(Photo courtesy of the IDF spokesman)

## Two IDF soldiers injured during an action in Nablus

- During an IDF action in Nablus to detain operatives wanted for interrogation, terrorists opened fire and threw an explosive charge which wounded two IDF soldiers. (The PIJ issued a statement saying that a group of its terrorists had detonated a side charge in an attack on an Israeli jeep.) The soldiers returned fire, killing the terrorist who had thrown the charge and wounding several others. Palestinian sources reported that 11 civilians had been wounded ( **It should be noted that PA spokesman often call terrorist-operatives killed by the IDF “civilians.”**) in confrontations with IDF soldiers in Nablus on December 13 ( **Ma'a News Agency** , December 13, 2005).

## An attempt to smuggle weapons through the Hawara checkpoint foiled

- On December 9 the IDF foiled another attempt to smuggle weapons through the Hawara checkpoint (south of Nablus ). The body-search of a 15-year old Palestinian boy revealed two charges ready for throwing (including explosives, shrapnel and a fuse).
- It should be noted that during the past few months a number of attempts were made by the Palestinian terrorist organizations operating in Nablus to smuggle weapons through the Hawara checkpoint. To increase their chances of success, they frequently use young boys.

## An attempted rocket launch in northern Samaria?

- On the afternoon of December 11 a group of terrorists apparently tried to launch a rocket from northern Samaria , firing it from the area around the village of Al-Yamun (northwest of Jenin). A statement issued by **Fatah/Al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigade** s claimed that a “Jenin 1” rocket was fired at a site identified as moshav Ram-On in the Jezreel Valley , to avenge the targeted killing of high-ranking Fatah and PIJ terrorists.

## An attempt to smuggle weapons from Egypt to the Gaza Strip by sea foiled

- On December 10 the Israeli Navy foiled an attempt to smuggle weapons from Egypt into the Gaza Strip by sea at Rafah. An Israeli Navy boat came upon two Palestinians swimming from Egypt towards the Gaza Strip equipped with wetsuits and fins, suitable for a long stay in the water. They had unidentified objects with them which were suspected of containing weapons.
- While they were hailed and guns were fired in the air to detain them, shots were fired at the Israeli boat from the Gaza Strip shore. The Israeli soldiers opened fire, killing one of the Palestinians and apparently wounding the other. The Palestinian who was killed was **Nazir Yussuf Ahmad Farhat** , from Rafah, known as an arms smuggler. The Egyptians and Palestinians were informed of the incident, **which joins a list of recently foiled attempts to smuggle weapons into the Gaza Strip by sea** .

## A tunnel is exposed near Erez through which terrorists intended to infiltrate into Israel

- During engineering work carried out on December 9, the IDF exposed a tunnel close to a security block set up near the protective fence in the northern Gaza Strip. **Palestinian terrorists intended to use it to infiltrate into Israel in order to carry out a terrorist attack**. The tunnel was dozens of meters deep. It was hidden by a garbage dump several meters high, where the terrorists planned to hide from the IDF. It was the first such tunnel discovered by the IDF since the disengagement.<sup>2</sup>



The opening of the infiltration tunnel exposed by IDF forces  
(Photo: Abir Sultan, courtesy of the IDF Spokesman)

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<sup>2</sup> The last time an infiltration tunnel was discovered was on December 7, 2004, near the goods crossing at the Karni crossing point.

## A sharp increase in the number of rocket shells fired into Israel

- During the first half of December there was a sharp rise in the number of rocket and mortar shells fired at Israeli settlements in the western Negev ( **47** incidents during the first half of December compared with **43** in November and 26 in October. See the graph below.) The various Palestinian terrorist organizations claimed responsibility for the incidents, representing them as revenge for Israel 's preventive actions.
- In our assessment, the terrorist organizations use rocket attacks in an attempt to **maintain the “balance of fear,”** which they assume will make it difficult for Israel's security forces to carry out preventive actions and will also provide the terrorist infrastructures in Judea and Samaria with more freedom of action.
- The Palestinian Interior Ministry again warned that locally-produced rocket shells endanger the lives of civilians (PA Interior Ministry Internet site, December 10). **Beyond issuing the warning, the PA did nothing effective to stop the attacks.**

## A Hamas weapons laboratory is exposed in Nablus

- On the night of December 14-15 IDF forces exposed a weapons laboratory in Nablus in the house of **Sameh Samir Sa'id 'Iyyad** , a Hamas operative who was detained by the IDF on November 1, 2005.
- Based on information he supplied, a well-camouflaged weapons laboratory was revealed in his house. It contained an **explosive belt ready for detonation** , 60 kg ( 132 lbs ) of explosives, an empty **Qassam** rocket shell (without explosives), two cell-phone-operated electronic detonation devices, a small explosive charge and the chemicals and other materials used in making explosives. The laboratory was exploded by IDF sappers.



The contents of the laboratory



The entrance to the laboratory

(Photos courtesy of the IDF Spokesman)

- During interrogation Sameh 'Iyyad admitted to having worked closely with **Amjad Muhammad Rashid Hanawi** , a senior Hamas terrorist-operative who was killed in Nablus during an IDF action on November 14, 2005. He helped Hanawi set up the laboratory in his house and brought in explosives and raw materials. He was also present in the laboratory when Hanawi prepared charges and explosives.
- The laboratory manufactured explosives and devices which Hamas terrorist-operatives then attempted to transfer to terrorist infrastructures working outside of Nablus. **Finding a Qassam rocket shell in the laboratory is additional indication that after the disengagement, Hamas (and the other Palestinian terrorist organizations) are trying to move their weapons production capabilities, especially the manufacture of Qassam rockets, to the West Bank .**



Hamas tries to transfer production capabilities of Qassam rockets in the West Bank:  
the shell found in the laboratory in Nablus (Photo courtesy of the IDF Spokesman)

## A terrorist attack is foiled at the Karni crossing point

- On the afternoon of December 14 the Israeli Air Force attacked a vehicle carrying four armed terrorist-operatives **on their way to carry out an attack** at the Karni crossing point in the Gaza Strip. The four, who belonged to the PRC, were killed. One of them, **Hamdan Muhammad Ahmad Mohna** , from Gaza , had worked at the crossing point in the past and exploited his familiarity with the terrain to plan the attack. From the series of explosions in the vehicle following the Air Force attack, it can be assumed that it was also transporting weapons and explosives (Photo taken by remote control

UAV, courtesy of the IDF Spokesman).

- It should be noted that although both the Karni and Erez crossing points are **lifelines for the Gaza Strip population, throughout the ongoing violent Israeli-Palestinian confrontation they have been targets preferred by the Palestinian terrorist organizations** , which work against the interests of the Palestinian population.



After the targeted killing of the four PRC terrorist-operatives  
(Palestinian TV, December 14)

- After the attack the PRC admitted that four of its operatives had been killed. Abu 'Abir, a PRC spokesman, stated that "today the lull was gone with the wind" and threatened that "a sea of rockets would fall on Sderot" (Radio Sawt Al-Quds, December 14).
- Abu 'Alaa, Palestinian prime minister, condemned the Air Force action which, he said, led to the deaths of four "civilians" and called upon the international community to intervene as soon as possible (Palestinian News Agency, December 14). The Palestinian Ministry of the Interior and National Security also condemned the killing of four "civilians." It should be noted that PA spokesmen often call terrorist-operatives killed by the IDF "civilians," making them seem innocent, and completely ignoring the fact that they belong to terrorist organizations involved in terrorist attacks against Israel .)
- On the evening of December 14 a number of Qassam rockets were fired at settlements in the western Negev . There were no casualties and no damage was done. Fatah/AI-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades and the PRC claimed responsibility for the attacks.

## Preventive actions carried out by Israeli security forces

### Overview

- **In response to the suicide bombing attack in Netanya the Israeli security forces took a number of steps** : a closure was imposed on Judea and Samaria, Gazan workers and merchandise were not permitted to enter Israel, inspection at the checkpoints was stepped up, the amount of vehicle traffic in the West Bank was reduced and there were widespread detentions of Palestinian terrorist-operatives, particularly of PIJ operatives in northern Samaria. In addition, because of the sharp rise in rocket attacks, targeted killings of terrorist-operatives involved in directing rocket fire were reinstated in the Gaza Strip.



Weapons (including night vision equipment)  
found in Bethlehem on December 8 during the  
detention by IDF forces of Fatah/Tanzim operatives  
(Photo courtesy of the IDF Spokesman)

- On December 12 Israeli decided **to ease restrictions on the Palestinian population** by giving entrance permits to:
  - Sixteen thousand workers and 12,500 merchants from the West Bank as well as 1,000 workers for the Atarot industrial zone (in northern Jerusalem ) and 500 for Jerusalem .
  - Seven thousand workers and 2,000 merchants from the Gaza Strip.
  - The Palestinians expressed their satisfaction with the reopening of the Erez crossing point to workers. However, the workers complained of the inflexible security arrangement which made their crossing difficult (Al-Iyam, December 13).

### High-ranking Palestinian terrorists in the Gaza Strip attacked from the air

- On December 8, as part of an effort to neutralize the terrorist-operatives directing rocket fire into Israel from the northern Gaza Strip, the Air Force attacked a house in Beit Lahia in the northern Gaza Strip where Fatah/Al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades operatives were staying, **killing three high-ranking Fatah terrorists** :
  - **Iyad Hussein Saud Najjar** , 33 from the Jabaliya refugee camp, Hassan Madhoun's replacement; Madhoun was a senior Fatah/Al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades terrorist-operative killed on November 1, 2005. <sup>3</sup> Iyad Najjar recently engaged in directing various attacks, including rocket and mortar fire and the laying of side charges, and recruited terrorist-operatives to carry out a large-scale attack in collaboration with the PRC, Hamas and the PIJ. He also initiated contact with terrorist-operatives in Baghdad to coordinate terrorist attacks against Israel .
  - **Khadr Fuad Ismail Rayyan** , a central figure in the terrorist-operative wing of Fatah which was commanded by Hassan Madhoun. He aided Hassan Madhoun to plan terrorist attacks both in the Gaza Strip and within Israel and was involved in recruiting suicide bombers. He also took participated in dispatching Wafaa al-Bas, a would-be female suicide bomber, on a mission to attack an Israeli hospital, which was foiled at the Erez checkpoint when explosives were discovered on her person (June 20, 2005). <sup>4</sup> In recent weeks he was involved in directing rocket and mortar fire at Israel and the laying of explosive charges. He also participated in planning a large-scale attack in collaboration with the PRC, Hamas and the PIJ.
  - **Iyad Quddas** , 33, also aided Hassan Madhoun. He was involved in planning and directing terrorist attacks (including infiltrations into Israel ), collaborated with the PRC and Hamas. His house served as a sewing workshop where vests for terrorist organizations were sewn. It also served as a meeting place for terrorist-operatives planning attacks and a base from which operatives left to launch rocket attacks against Israel . Recently he recruited potential terrorists for mass-murder attacks and initiated contacts with terrorist-operatives in the West Bank to coordinate terrorist attacks against Israel .
  - On the evening of December 7 the Israeli Air Force attacked a Subaru carrying **Mahmoud Suliman al-'Arkan** , a PRC terrorist-operative. He was killed and others were injured. Mahmoud al-'Arkan, 29, formerly served in the Palestinian naval police. In June 2005 he was involved in firing anti-tank missiles at men working on an engineering project near an outpost southeast of the Israeli settlement of Rafiah Yam. An IDF soldier was killed in the attack and two others were wounded. During the disengagement he and his followers continued carrying out attacks along the Philadelphi route and at the Sufa crossing point (firing rifles, throwing hand grenades, laying explosive charges). After the disengagement Mahmoud 'Arkan was involved in planning and carrying out shooting attacks against IDF soldiers and in smuggling arms for his own and other terrorist organizations.



The remains of Mahmoud al-'Arkan's vehicle after the attack

(Photo: Al-Jazeera TV, December 7)

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<sup>3</sup> For further information see our Special Bulletin "[Hassan Madhoun, senior Fatah/Al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades operative in the Gaza Strip, died in an Israeli Air Force targeted killing](#)"

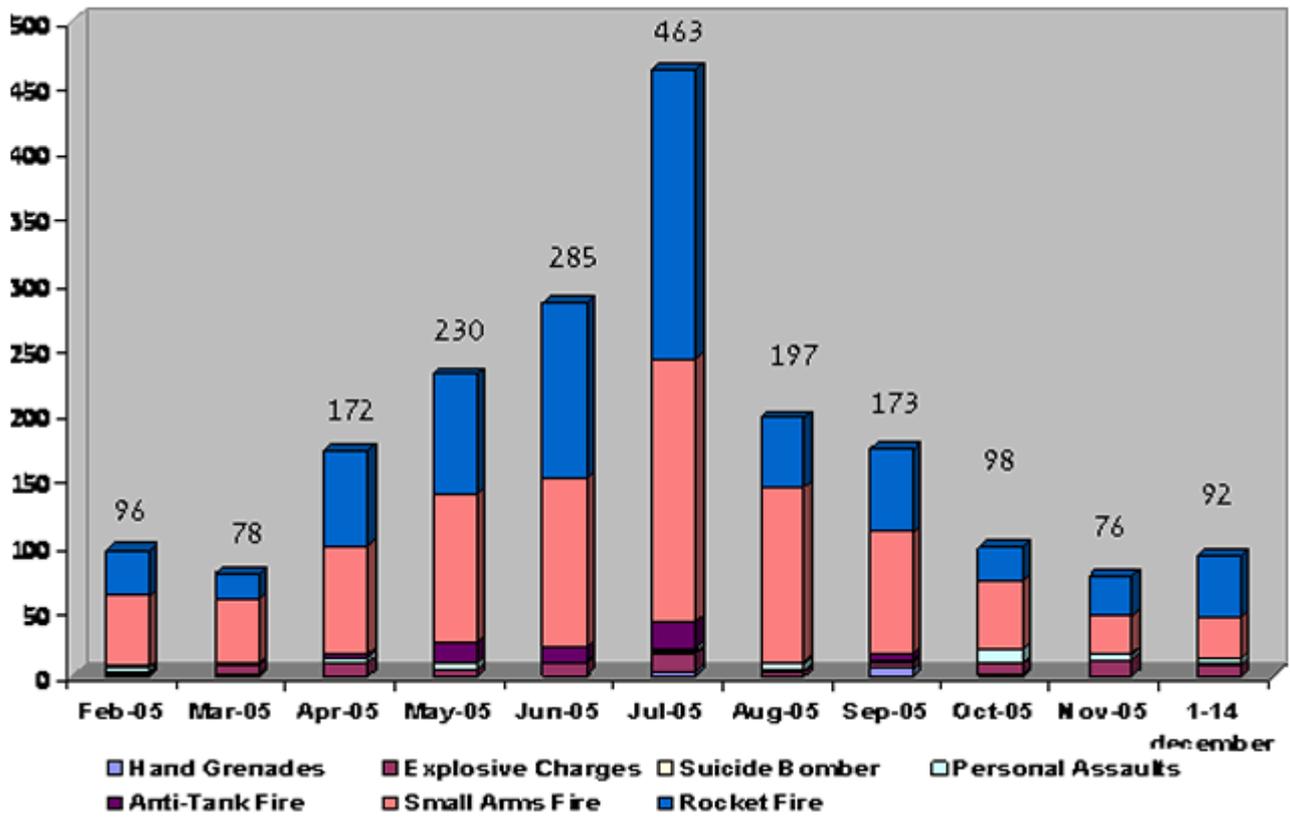
<sup>4</sup> For further information see our Special Bulletin "[A suicide bombing attack planned to be carried out in Israel by a Palestinian female suicide bomber was thwarted at the Erez crossing in the Gaza Strip](#)"

## The functioning of the Rafah border crossing

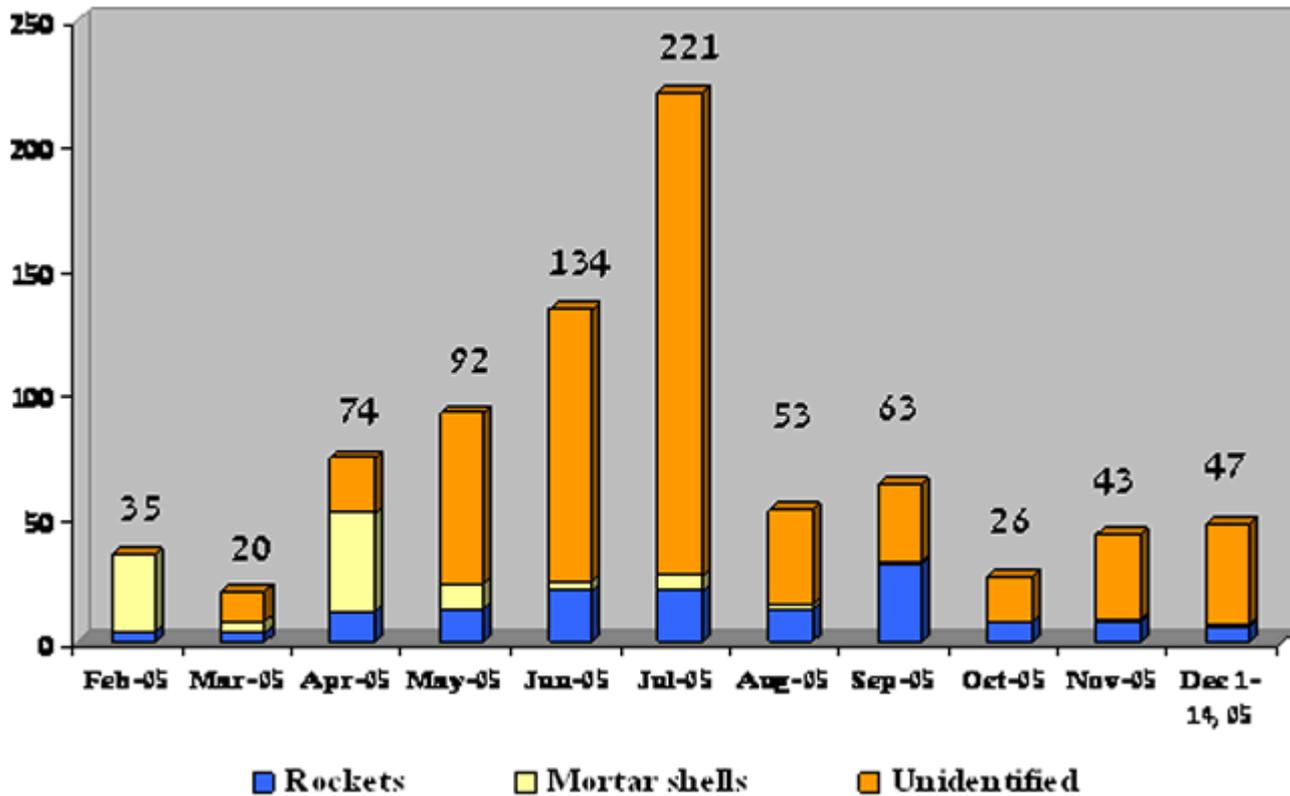
- Between November 26, when the Rafah border crossing opened, and December 7, about 4,900 pedestrians entered the Gaza Strip and 7,590 exited. The numbers are expected to rise in the near future. The PA has begun to arrange the exit of several thousand pilgrims to Mecca beginning December 22, and is examining the possibility of operating the crossing 24 hours a day.
- With the opening of the crossing to pedestrian traffic Israel raised objections to the implementation of the security aspects of the agreement of principles, especially since the transfer of data and visual information from the crossing point to the joint coordination room at Kerem Shalom were not satisfactory. Israel complained to the Europeans and Americans, who demanded the Palestinians respect the provisions of the agreement.
- It should be noted that during the past few days there has been an improvement in the transfer of data from the Rafah crossing point to the joint coordination room. The transfer of visual information still suffers from technical difficulties and a solution is being sought. An additional security problem is **preventing terrorist-operatives from entering to Gaza Strip** through the Rafah crossing point, about 15 having already returned since it opened.

## Statistical Data

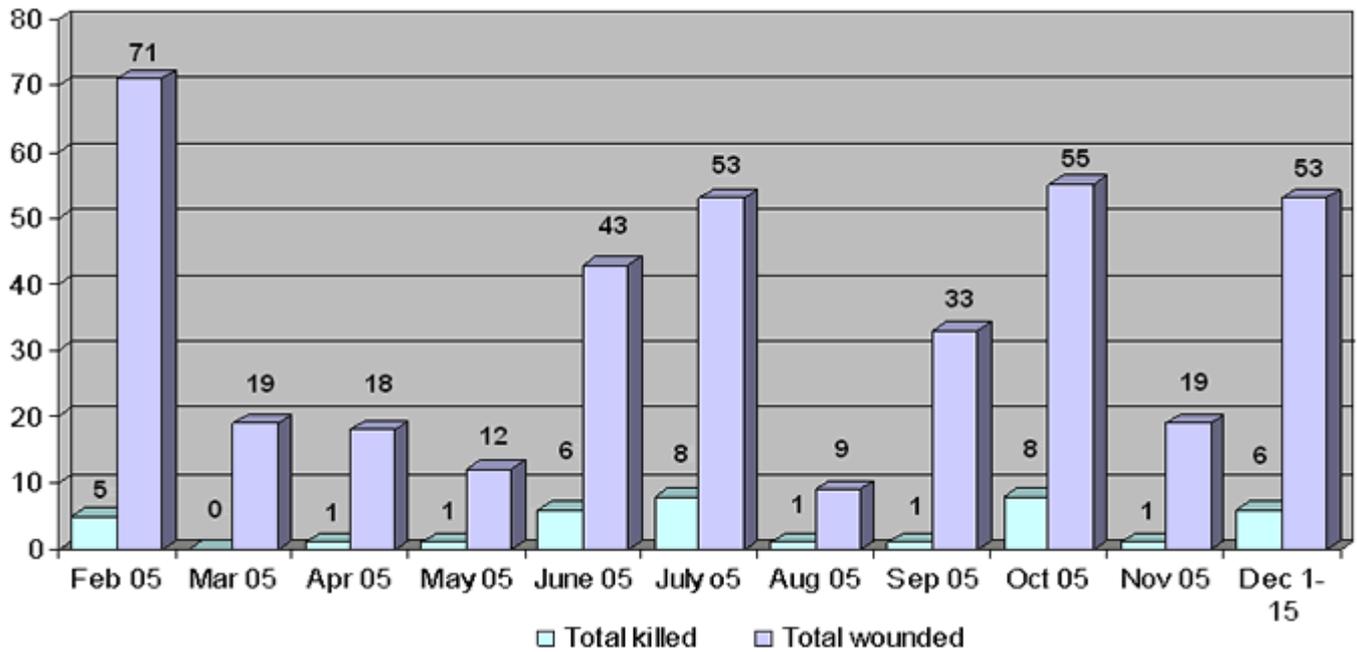
Monthly distribution of the attacks carried out since the Sharm el-Sheikh summit (February 2005)



Attacks carried out since the Sharm el-Sheikh summit



## Monthly distribution of Israeli casualties since the Sharm el-Sheikh summit



### Detentions and protests



A Palestinian terrorist organization news conference held to protest the detentions (Photo: Al-Arabiya TV, December 9)



The Palestinian security services detaining a PIJ activist (Photo: Al-Jazeera TV, December 8)

- The detentions were met with **protests in the West Bank and Gaza Strip** (demonstrations, processions, etc.). Hamas, Fatah/Al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades and the PRC held a joint press conference in Gaza to condemn the wave of detentions, which they represented as capitulation to the dictates of Israel and the United States , and demanded the detainees be released. The PIJ announced that its activists were being tortured and demanded their immediate release. **Sheikh Khaled al-Batash** , a senior PIJ figure in the Gaza Strip, demanded their release and threatened that if the detentions continued his organization would **respond by attacking Israel** and destroy the lull (Paltoday, December 8). Fatah/Al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades and the PRC also threatened to end the lull (which they do not respect in any case) if the detentions do not stop (Ma'a News Agency, December 7).
- In our assessment, **the detentions are without precedent in nature and scope for the Abu Mazen era** . However, they are not directed against terrorist-operatives, and the activists detained were of the lowest rank and had no connection to the suicide bombing attack in Netanya. On the other hand, the very fact that the PA decided to undertake such a broad campaign and focused on activists belonging to the PIJ, the terrorist organization most active in carrying out suicide bombing attacks during the lull, **may indicate a change in the PA's methods of operation** .

- The PA detentions raise the question of whether a new trend has begun or whether they represent a short-lived change carried out in the wake of the media damage done by the suicide bombing attack in Netanya and resulting external pressures. Only time will tell if the detentions will continue and include the PIJ's terrorist-operative infrastructures, if the detainees will remain in custody or be promptly released through the PA's notorious revolving door, and most important, **if the activities of the Palestinian security services will be effective enough to put an end to the policy of independent terrorism** followed by the terrorist organizations, led by the PIJ.

## Hamas leader Khaled Mashal meets with Iranian leaders to deny Israel's legitimacy and support terrorism



Khaled Mashal meets with Khamenei (left) and other Iranian leaders – a denial of Israel 's legitimacy and a support for terrorism ( Photos: Mehr News Agency, December 13)

- Khaled Mashal, head of Hamas's political office, visited Iran and met with Iranian leaders. Iranian president Ahmadinejad and Rafsanjani, Chairman of the Expediency Discernment Council, <sup>5</sup> stressed their support for the “resistance movements” (i.e., the Palestinian terrorist organizations), and called upon them to maintain their unity. He noted that “resistance” was the only path open to the Palestinian to achieve their rights (Irna and Isna News Agencies, December 12).

<sup>5</sup> The Expediency Discernment Council of the System ( [Persian](#) : مجمع تشخیص مصلحت نظام ), is an establishment in the [Constitution of Islamic Republic of Iran](#) . Its purpose is to resolve differences or conflicts between the [Majlis](#) and the [Council of Guardians](#) , and also to serve as a consultative council to the [Supreme Leader](#) .

- In interviews with Iranian TV station Al-'Alam (December 14) and other Iranian media, Khaled Mashal **repeatedly praised the statements of the Iranian president** in which he denied Israel's legitimacy, saying that they “expressed truth and reality” and were an expression of the conscience of the Palestinian and Arab and Muslim peoples. Regarding the lull, he said that it was a necessary Palestinian step as part of a general Palestinian agreement, but that it would end with the new year and that the path of resistance (i.e., terrorism) should be returned to.

### Khaled Mashal: Hamas does not intend to renew the lull



Hamas leader Khaled Mashal: “This lull was enough for us...”

- Hamas leader **Khaled Mashal** , in a speech given in Syria in honor of the anniversary of the founding of the Popular Front (PFLP), spoke of his organization's position regarding the lull. He noted that no benefit was to be derived from the path of negotiations and that Hamas would choose the **path of resistance** (i.e., anti-Israel terrorism.) He added, "Today we...are waiting for the lull to breathe its last and die...We are on the eve of 2006 and we are asked to renew the lull...I think that what I have to say expresses the general line of all the factions of the Palestinian resistance [i.e., Palestinian terrorist organizations]. **I say that this lull was enough for us...** " (Al-Jazeera TV, December 9). In an interview with Radio Al-Shark on December 10 he stated that not renewing the lull would not necessarily lead to an escalation [of violence]. "**We will conduct our national campaign in a way that will befit the Palestinian situation. Sometimes we will calm [the violence] and sometimes we will escalate [it].**"<sup>6</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Other Hamas voices were heard in PA-administered territories. For example, Hassan Yussuf, a senior Hamas activist in the West Bank, said in an interview with Kol Israel that he called upon all the Palestinian factions to adhere to the lull (Ma'a News Agency, December 7, 2005).

### Responses to Khaled Mashal

- Khaled Mashal's declarations led to a wave of responses in favor of and against the lull:
  - Abu Mazen, **representing the PA** , stated in a speech in Gaza that the truce [sic] had been agreed upon for an **unlimited period of time and that it had to continue** (Ma'a News Agency, December 10). At a government meeting, PA prime minister Abu 'Alaa called for all the forces and factions to adhere to the national consensus regarding the lull (Palestinian New Agency, December 11). PLO negotiator Sa'eb 'Erekat called for a continuation of the lull which, he said, served Palestinian national interests, and noted that "no faction is entitled to behave as though it were a substitute for the Palestinian Authority (Radio Sawa, December 11).
  - **Fatah/AI-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades** and its terrorist-operatives in the Gaza Strip, in the wake of Israel 's targeted killings, **issued statements against the lull** . On December 11 they said that they opposed a renewal of the lull and that it was Israel which violated it (Ma'a News Agency, December 11, 2005). **Munzir 'Abd al-Salam 'Abdallah** , a senior operative in the northern Gaza Strip, who said he commanded the organization's "rocket units," stated that **from the beginning his units were not committed to the lull** and that they were now **working to develop rockets with a range of 18 km** (a little more than 11 miles ) which could reach most of the Israeli settlements along the Gaza Strip. **Mustafa 'Abd al-Hamid 'Abd al-Kahlut** , also a senior operative, stated that his organization had a series of long-range rockets and that his organization would also carry out suicide bombing attacks deep within Israel (Ma'a News Agency, December 11).
  - Adam Ereli, Deputy **United States** State Department Spokesman, said on December 9 that the central problem was not the question of a cease fire. He noted that as long as there were armed groups with the capability and intention of carrying out terrorist attacks they were a threat to international order. He called upon the PA to take concrete action regarding groups such as Hamas or the PIJ to prevent them from continuing their policy of harming the interests of the Palestinian people.

### Continuing signs of anarchy in the Gaza Strip and West Bank

- The Palestinian security services prepared to broaden their campaign of restoring public order in the Gaza Strip, particularly in **Rafah** (as of December 11). However, in the meantime **signs of anarchy continue** , which, during the first half of December, included riots participated in by armed gunmen and violent clashes between local clans.
- Especially conspicuous was a **clash between two clans in Beit Hanoun** in the northern Gaza Strip at the beginning of December, which included exchanges of gunfire and the use of anti-tank missiles and hand grenades. Reinforced police units sent to the location had difficulty in ending the incident. Six individuals were reported dead (including one Palestinian policeman) and dozens were wounded by gunfire. The clash waned and then broke out again on December 12.
- Violent incidents continued to accompany the Fatah primaries (before the Palestinian Legislative Council elections). On December 13, armed, masked, younger generation Fatah/AI-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades activists broke into a number of election centers of the Central Committee for the Palestinian Legislative Council elections in the Gaza Strip and Nablus .

They ransacked the centers, fired into the air and stole documents. Abu Mazen and senior PA (and even Fatah) officials condemned the attacks. The Central Committee announced that it was closing all its offices in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.