



## Terror in Gaza: Twelve months since the Hamas takeover

**16 Jun 2008**

**June 2007 - June 2008**

Since the Hamas takeover of the Gaza Strip one year ago, in mid-June 2007, a total of 1508 rockets and 1799 mortar bombs have struck Israel.



Israel continues to supply Gaza with fuel: tanker at Nahal Oz depot (photo: COGAT)

### Summary of main events emanating from the Gaza Strip since June 2007

#### **I. Rocket and mortar fire at targets in Israel**

**16 June:** One man was wounded when a Grad-type rocket fired from the Gaza Strip landed in the Old Muslim Cemetery near Ashkelon's city market, and several other people suffered from shock. Hamas took responsibility for the strike.

**12 June:** Today, a strong explosion destroyed a house in Bet-Lehia in the northern Gaza Strip. Although the IDF had nothing to do with this event. Hamas accused Israel of causing the explosion and "in response" launched 43 projectiles (3 Grad rockets, 18 Kassam rockets and 22 mortar bombs) at Israel.

As a result of the Hamas fire, a 59-year-old Israeli woman was lightly wounded in a direct hit on her home in Yad Mordechai, and a Palestinian man was wounded near the Erez crossing.

**11 June:** The Nirlat paint factory in Kibbutz Nir-Oz was hit by mortar fire for the second time in a week. One person was injured and a fire broke out at the factory.

**10 June:** The IDF reported that thirty missiles, 4 Kassam rockets and 26 mortar bombs were launched at the western Negev. No one was injured.

**June 8:** A farmer was lightly wounded by a Kassam rocket in the western Negev.

**June 7:** Gaza terrorists fired 14 mortar bombs at Jewish communities in the western Negev over the course of the Sabbath. The shells were aimed primarily at Kfar Aza and Nahal Oz. No injuries were reported in the attacks.

**June 6:** A barrage of Kassam rockets slammed into the western Negev city of Sderot and the surrounding area on Friday afternoon. One of the Kassams exploded near Sapir College, damaging a building on the campus as well as six cars. Nine mortar bombs were fired at the western Negev in several attacks earlier in the day. A building was damaged, but no one was injured.

**5 June:** [Amnon Rosenberg](#), 51, of Kibbutz Nirim was killed and four co-workers were wounded when a 120-mm mortar bomb exploded outside the Nirlat paint factory in Kibbutz Nir-Oz, southwest of Sderot. Hamas claimed responsibility for the attack.

**4 June:** A Kassam rocket hit a fuel tank on the Palestinian side of the Nahal Oz fuel depot, causing an explosion. As a result of the explosion, a Palestinian was seriously injured and the crossing was closed. The Head of the Coordination and Liaison Administration at Erez was asked for, and gave, permission to evacuate the injured man to an Israeli hospital for treatment, and he was taken to Barzilai Medical Center in Ashkelon. The fuel depot was temporarily closed.

**3 June:** Five farmers (including two Bedouins, one Thai) were wounded by a barrage of five Kassam rockets that fell on the fields and a henhouse in Moshav Yesha in the northwestern Negev.

**31 May:** Rockets hit an agricultural village in the northwestern Negev and wounded two foreign workers, one of them seriously.

**29 May:** Five mortar bombs were launched at Israel; one caused damage to a house in Kfar Aza (where Jimmy Kedoshim was killed on May 9, 2008).

**26 May:** 2 Kassams, 3 mortar bombs (IDF). 24/5: Two 122mm. Grad rockets were fired at Netivot, a southern city increasingly targeted lately. 23/5: Two rockets were fired at Sderot; Hamas claimed responsibility (Al-Quds website, 23 May). 18/5: Two Kassam rockets struck empty fields in Israel (IDF daily update).

**14 May:** A [Grad rocket struck the third floor of a crowded shopping mall](#) in Ashkelon, crashing down on a children's health clinic on the floor below and causing extensive damage to the building. Four people were seriously injured, including a two-year-old girl and her mother who were at the clinic, two were moderately injured and many people suffered post-traumatic stress reactions. In all, 100 people were evacuated for treatment to Barzilai Medical Center. The Iranian-made rocket was launched from Dugit, a former Jewish fishing village in the northern Gaza Strip that was evacuated and destroyed in August 2005.

In the evening, rockets hit a synagogue and a kindergarten in Sderot; several people were treated for shock.

**12 May:** [Shuli Katz](#), 69, from Kibbutz Gevaram, was killed when a Kassam rocket fell a few meters from where she was standing in Moshav Yesha, 15 km (9 miles) east of the Gaza Strip.

In the morning, two Kassam rockets hit Ashkelon, one falling near a school. Damage was done to several buildings. Two mortar bombs also struck Israel, launched from the Gaza Strip.

**11 May:** Three rockets and three mortar bombs landed in Israeli territory. A rocket narrowly missed a busload of students in the parking lot of Sapir College in Sderot. A car was damaged. Earlier this year, student Roni Yichye was killed by a Hamas-fired rocket in the same parking lot.

**9-10 May:** Twenty-six rockets and ten mortar bombs struck Israel over the weekend. Two struck the Tnuvele dairy factory. One of the Kassams exploded close to an apartment building, causing serious damage to the structure and several nearby buildings. The attack also caused a dangerous gas leak. Miraculously, no one was physically injured although a number of people suffered emotional trauma.

In another miracle earlier in the day, a Kassam rocket scored a direct hit on a house while family members were inside and, although the home was damaged, no one was physically injured.

A Kassam also slammed into the courtyard of Sapir College on the outskirts of the city and damaged a building. Another rocket exploded next to a yeshiva in Sderot. There, too, the building was damaged but no one was hurt.

In all, five people were injured in the attacks over the weekend.

**9 May:** [Jimmy Kedoshim](#), a member of Kibbutz Kfar Aza for 30 years, was killed by a direct mortar bomb hit while working in his garden.

A second mortar shell exploded next to the kibbutz community hall. Three other people were wounded, including an IDF soldier who sustained moderate injuries. Two other people were lightly wounded and several more people suffered severe emotional shock.

**6-7 May:** In the past 24 hours, three Kassam rockets and two mortar bombs were launched from the Gaza Strip.

**5 May:** In the past 24 hours, there were two intensive barrages of Kassam rocket attacks aimed at Sderot and the western Negev communities. Two rockets landed in Sderot, hitting a cemetery and damaging headstones while one hit a supermarket, causing structural damage. There were five shock victims. Today, 5 May, three rockets fell in Sderot; one hit a potato chip factory and one landed in an agricultural field near Sapir College. Civilian workers were shot at in the southern Gaza Strip; no injuries or damage reported.

**1-2 May:** Agricultural workers were fired upon near the fence in the southern Gaza Strip. In addition, rockets or mortar bombs fell on Sapir College, a private home, a grocery store, a playing field, and near the Sderot cemetery (IDF Spokesperson).

**29 April:** A Kassam rocket scored a direct hit on a house in Sderot; another Kassam damaged a clinic in Kissufim.

**28 April:** Two rockets landed in Sderot, one next to a school, one a direct hit on a house (no injuries, except for trauma and emotional shock). Two rockets fell in the Ashkelon area, more on kibbutzim in Eshkol Regional Council, with damage to buildings. Mortar bombs struck fields around the Kerem Shalom crossing.

**25 April:** Two security guards were shot to death by a terrorist at the Nitzanei Shalom industrial park in central Israel, not far from Tulkarm (east of Netanya).

**21 April:** Rockets were fired at Sderot and Ashkelon. **19-20 April:** Seven Kassam rockets and dozens of mortar bombs were fired at Israel over the weekend.

**14 April:** Two Kassams and one mortar bomb fell northwest of Sderot. On **12-13 April**, a mortar bomb hit near Nir Oz. On **11 April**, terrorists fired a machine gun at an agricultural worker in the fields of Kibbutz Nir Oz, damaging the bullet-proof glass enclosing the cabin of his tractor. Attacks on agricultural workers in the northwestern Negev have been increasing, causing many workers to wear bullet-proof vests while working in the fields.



**9 April:** Two civilians employed at the Nahal Oz fuel depot were murdered in a terrorist attack. The terrorists first launched a barrage of 24 mortar bombs at the nearby communities of Nachal Oz and Alumim as a distraction, and four of them infiltrated near the Karni crossing, shot at the unarmed workers and fled back to the Gaza Strip when the IDF responded. The terrorists attacked despite the fact that the Nahal Oz depot is the only source of fuel supply for the Gaza Strip.

Attacks on Gaza Belt communities continued on Wednesday following the Nachal Oz attack, with Kassam rockets and mortar bombs; no injuries were reported.

**8 April:** Terrorists in the Gaza Strip fired 32 mortar bombs and three Kassam rockets at Israeli territory during the day. Two more rockets were fired at Ashkelon at night. No injuries or damage was reported.

**6 April:** Two Grad missiles were fired at the coastal city of Ashkelon.

**4 April:** A civilian was wounded by Palestinian fire near Nir Am and taken to Barzilai hospital (IDF).

**28 March:** Two Kassam rockets struck the Negev: one hit a kindergarten in a kibbutz in the Shaar Hanegev region. The teacher and the children managed to reach a protected room and no one was injured.

**26 March:** A barrage of 22 rockets landed in the western Negev. Three people were wounded from shrapnel, one a Sudanese refugee. One of the rockets caused heavy damage to a house and nearby buildings in a kibbutz south of Sderot.

An Israeli farmer was wounded when terrorists in Gaza fired at Kibbutz Ein HaShlosa (where, on 15 January this year, a volunteer from Ecuador was murdered in the fields in a similar attack).

**20 March:** A rocket hit Kibbutz Nir-Am, breaking windows. **13 March:** A Kassam rocket caused damage to a soccer field and a shed. **12 March:** Rockets damaged buildings in Sderot. **11 March:** A rocket hit an industrial park south of Ashkelon.

**6 March:** A direct rocket hit on a house in Sderot seriously wounded a grandfather watching his two granddaughters. Three others were lightly wounded.

**4 March:** A rocket destroyed a house in Sderot in the early morning; no one was home. The Kassam attack was launched from the northern Gaza town of Beit Hanoun, located less than a mile away from Sderot.

**3 March:** A seven-story apartment building in Ashkelon sustained a direct hit by a Grad missile. Three other buildings in the area were damaged by the blast. A number of Kassam rocket barrages hit elsewhere in the western Negev. All victims were taken to Ashkelon's Barzilai Medical Center (32 treated for trauma and four for light injuries). One little girl was injured by flying shrapnel.

A second Grad missile slammed into a playground, narrowly missing a nursery for toddlers under age 3. The nursery teacher told Voice of Israel radio that the children were in the middle of eating breakfast when she heard the Color Red incoming rocket alert siren (which gives residents a 15-second warning). The children's teachers managed to take them to a bomb shelter. No one was injured, but they had to calm down the hysterical toddlers.

An especially **sharp escalation** of rocket attacks occurred **between 27 February and 2 March**, with 182 rockets striking Israel. In addition to Kassam rockets, longer-range **GRAD missiles** were launched on Ashkelon, Netivot and the whole area (19 in this 5-day period).

Ashkelon, with over 107,000 residents, is more densely built than Sderot. Therefore, rockets are likely to cause more damage there. Over 26,000 children go to school in Ashkelon.

**2 March:** 25 rockets; a Grad-type katyusha hit Netivot, near the grave of a holy man. Three Grads were fired at Ashkelon; two hit the city center, one hit a house. 5 people were lightly wounded, 15 treated for anxiety. **1 March:** 22 wounded; property damage.

**29 Feb (or 28):** Three-year-old Arab girl was killed when a rocket launched by Hamas terrorists fell short and struck near where she was standing outside her house in Bein Hanoun.

**28 Feb:** 20 rockets; 5 long-range rockets on Ashkelon; one hit Barzilai Hospital's helipad and two landed near the power station. Barzilai Hospital serves the entire region, including the Arab population; the power station supplies electricity to the region, including to parts of the Gaza Strip.

**27 Feb:** 48 rockets struck Israel. One hit Sapir College and **killed student Roni Yihye**, married and father of 4. He was the 14th victim of a rocket since the attacks began in 2004. Damage was caused to Sderot industrial zone.

**25 Feb:** One-year-old baby injured; 10-year-old boy seriously injured – doctors were able to save his arm with surgery.

**17 Feb:** A rocket hit the yard of a house in Sderot, sending five people into shock and damaging the building.

**9 February:** Eight-year-old Osher Twito and his brother Rami, 19, were seriously wounded when a Kassam rocket fired by terrorists in the northern Gaza Strip exploded as they were walking on a street in Sderot on Saturday evening. **Doctors were forced to amputate one of Osher's legs** but succeeded in saving the second. ([update March 26, Haaretz website](#))



Rami Twito (photo: Reuters)



**8 February:** Hamas claimed responsibility for the rockets that targeted the power station in Ashqelon, which provides the Gaza Strip with most of its electricity (*Al-Qassam website*, Feb. 8).

**7 February:** The Associated Press, reporting a claim that Israel targeted a Gaza agricultural school, exposed the fact that rockets were being fired from inside the school, using it as a shield. Associated Press Television News footage showed the school to be a series of huts in a rural area. A rocket-launching device was spotted between some olive trees, indicating terrorists had used the school for cover to launch attacks.

Seventeen rockets and three mortar bombs hit the western Negev, one setting fire to a garage adjacent to a private home. Hamas's armed wing, Izzadin Kassam, claimed responsibility for firing the rockets that hit Sderot.

**6 February:** A rocket landed in a playground in Kibbutz Beerli, wounding two girls, age two and age 12 years.



**5 February:** One of the rockets fired at Sderot scored a direct hit on a private house. A 14-year-old girl was wounded by shrapnel. One rocket hit a power line in Sderot, knocking out electricity in parts of the city for two hours.

Terrorists fired at Jewish farmers of Kibbutz Nir Oz, just east of Khan Yunis and over the border. No one was hurt, but damage was caused to a tractor.

**15-28 January:** There were **170 identified rocket hits** (150 of them in the four-day period 15-18 January; Hamas claimed responsibility for most) and 83 mortar bomb hits.

**15 January 2008:** Twenty-eight rockets hit the western Negev. One scored a direct hit on a home, wounding five people, including Lior Ben-Shimol, age 5, from Sderot, and a 19-year-old boy who was lightly injured from shrapnel. One of the rockets that fell in Sderot hit a high-tension power line, causing a black-out for several hours.

A 20-year-old Ecuadorian citizen, **Carlos Chavez, was shot and murdered** by a Palestinian sniper near the security fence, while working as a volunteer on a potato farm near Kibbutz Ein Hashlosa in the northwestern Negev.

**13 January:** Eight mortar bombs were fired at Israeli, including one that exploded in Netiv HaAsarah, just north of Gaza, causing damage to a building. On **10 January**, a rocket hit close to the dining hall in Kibbutz Yad Mordechai, north of the Gaza Strip.

**9 January:** Palestinian Authority terrorists in Gaza launched a barrage of mortar bombs and Kassam rocket fire at Israeli communities in the western Negev, coinciding with the arrival of US President George W. Bush for a three-day visit. One of the missiles slammed into a house, landing in a young child's bedroom. Miraculously, the three-week-old baby had been taken by his mother to the shelter as soon as the Color Red alert siren sounded.

**3-4 Jan. 2008:** An Iranian-supplied Katyusha rocket fired from Gaza towards the Israeli port city of Ashkelon landed further north than any rocket since the rocket fire began seven years ago - 16.5 kilometers (10 miles). No one was hurt in the attack, though the missile landed only some 50 meters (55 yards) from a residential neighborhood.

The Katyusha fired at Ashkelon, a Grad model 122 millimeters (nearly 5 inches) in diameter, was the fifth such rocket fired towards Ashkelon. The Katyusha rocket has a range of 20 kilometers (12.4 miles); its use could bring 1/4 million Israelis within rocket range (International Herald Tribune).

A Kassam rocket fired from Gaza landed in the yard of a residential home in Sderot. A woman who had been hanging laundry ran for cover when she heard the Color Red early warning alarm, and the rocket fell just several feet from the laundry lines. The woman, and several other Sderot residents, were evacuated to a hospital and treated for shock.

On **31 December**, a barrage of 14 mortar bombs and one Kassam landed in open areas in the northern and southern Negev. No damage or injuries were sustained.

On **25 December**, an exceptionally large barrage of rockets was launched, with 23 identified hits. Rockets were fired at at Kerem Shalom and Sufa crossings and towards Ashkelon. In addition, rockets were fired toward Sderot in the morning while children were on their way to school.

On **23 December**, a rocket landed in the courtyard of a Carlsberg beer factory in Ashkelon, a port city with 120,000 residents.

On **20 December**, a Kassam rocket struck 40 meters from a Sderot school. Eighteen people were treated for shock, including ten children.

On **16 December**, a Kassam rocket landed near a house in Kibbutz Zikim, causing damage to the house and wounding a two-year-old baby in the face.

In the **183 days** from the middle of June until the middle of December, **428 rockets and 590 mortar bombs** were fired from the Gaza Strip at Israeli civilians and soldiers. The IDF reported that, since June, a **rocket is launched at Israel every three hours**.



A barrage of rockets was launched between December 12 and 14 (peaking with **26 identified rocket hits on December 12**), most of them in and around Sderot. On **December 13** a direct rocket hit destroyed a private residence, critically injuring a woman living there. The Palestinian Islamic Jihad claimed responsibility for most of the rocket launches; the rest were claimed by Fatah-Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade and the Popular Resistance Committees.

**Mortar fire** also continued, for a total of 68 bombs in the first half of December, compared to 100 during the entire month of November (78 of them were fired in the second half of November, presumably because of the Annapolis conference). In the past few months, the number of mortar bombs has increased dramatically (from one in March, to an average of 105 a month since August).

On **November 27-28** (during the Annapolis meeting) five rockets and 12 mortar bombs were fired at Israeli communities.

On **November 16-17**, a number of rockets were fired at Sderot, causing great damage to a factory and several vehicles. On **November 22**, following warnings that terrorists were trying to infiltrate into Israeli territory through tunnels, the gates of the communities bordering the Gaza Strip were closed and the residents were confined to their homes, while IDF helicopters scanned the area from the air. Six mortar bombs landed in the farming community of Netiv Haasarah, just north of the Gaza Strip and rockets and mortar bombs (at least 20 that day) fell on other Negev communities.

**November 11:** Terrorists from the Palestinian Islamic Jihad in Gaza fired three Kassam rockets at Israel, scoring a direct hit on a cowshed in Kibbutz Zikim. Six cows were killed and four others were injured, and damage was caused to the structures.

**November 6:** a Kassam rocket hit a residential home in Sderot, sending four residents to the Shock Treatment Center for treatment. Another rocket hit the city at the same time, without incident. On **November 1:** A volley of rockets was fired at Sderot and the western Negev settlements, with at least nine identified hits in Israeli territory.

On Monday, **October 29th**, at approximately 9 am, a cell of terrorists fired three mortar bombs at Israeli territory. The bombs were launched from the courtyard of an elementary school for boys in Beit Hanoun, in northern Gaza.

The [use of an elementary school as a shield for terrorist activity](#) is a blatant violation of international humanitarian law, which absolutely prohibits the location of military facilities – which in times of conflict become legitimate military targets – in the vicinity of the civilian population. Additionally, humanitarian law (Article 51 (7) of Protocol 1) prohibits belligerents from using civilians to shield military objectives or operations from attack.

The use of civilians as human shields in direct violation of international laws is routine among the Palestinian terrorist organizations, especially in the Gaza Strip. It has many variations: rocket and mortar fire at Israel from populated areas; conducting exchanges of fire with the IDF from civilian dwellings and public institutions; installing terrorist facilities in densely populated areas;

and enlisting Palestinian civilians, including women and children, where there is fighting going on and encouraging them to serve as human shields.

This violation of international humanitarian law, which was caught on film, is yet another example of the Palestinian use of children and their schools as shields for their terrorist activity. In the film, the terrorists can be seen loading the mortar, and then running for cover into the school as the projectile is launched.

On **October 25**, a rocket landed adjacent to a kindergarten; three people were treated for shock. On **October 23**, a rocket hit a private residence in Sderot and caused extensive property damage.

**October 7:** A Grad missile, launched from the Gaza Strip, landed near the southern Israeli town of Netivot, about 15 km inside Israeli territory. This was the first time since 16 July 2006 that a rocket was fired on Netivot. The 122 mm Grad heavy artillery rocket, apparently produced in the former Soviet Union and smuggled into Gaza from Egypt, is an improved version of the infamous Katyusha rocket recently used by the Hizbullah to bombard northern Israel from Lebanese territory. The use of this weapon marks a significant escalation in the Palestinian campaign of terror against Israeli civilians, both in the range of the missile and the destructive force of the missile's warhead.

**September 26:** On the eve of the Sukkot holiday a particularly high number of rocket and mortar attacks was recorded: nine rockets and 22 mortar bombs.

**September 11:** A Palestinian rocket launched from the region of Beit Lahiya in the northern Gaza Strip exploded in an Israeli army base, wounding 69 recent recruits undergoing basic training, one critically, four seriously, and the rest moderately or lightly.

**September 3:** An exceptional number of Kassam rockets were launched at Sderot on the second day of school. The Palestinian Islamic Jihad claimed responsibility for the rocket fire, exulting that it was a "gift" to the children of Israel for the opening of the school year. . A total of nine rockets fell on the town between 6 am and 1 pm, two of them at 7:50 in the morning, when thousands of children and babies with their parents were on their way to schools and day-care centers. Shortly afterwards, a rocket landed next to a kindergarten, causing damage to the building and sending 12 children to the hospital to be treated for shock.

**August 28:** A rocket hit a bedroom in Sderot, moderately wounding a resident standing nearby. Several people were treated for shock. On **August 25**, a car went up in flames as a result of rocket fire. There was a direct hit on a house in Sderot on **August 24**.

**August 21:** Kassam rockets hit a factory in Sderot's industrial area, causing extensive damage. Three Kassam rockets struck the western Negev, one hitting a kindergarten in Sderot. Luckily, the children were not present at the time, due to the summer vacation, and no injuries were reported.

On **July 26 and 27**, rockets and mortar bombs landed in the western Negev, causing a fire, considerable property damage and slightly wounding a woman in Sderot.

**July 23:** There was a direct rocket hit on a house in Kibbutz Carmia. An eight-month-old baby girl was slightly wounded and her mother and grandmother had to be treated for shock; considerable damage was done to the building. On **July 22**, a rocket hit the Sapir College near Sderot, slightly wounding an Israeli woman.

## **II. Terrorist Attacks on the IDF and Israeli Counter-Terrorist Operations**

The IDF is constantly on the lookout for rocket-launching squads as well as rocket-manufacturing and storage facilities and continues to attack them from the air and from the ground in order to destroy, or at least damage, the terrorists' capabilities. If it were not for the success of IDF efforts in interdicting many terrorist attacks, there would be many more civilian casualties on the Israeli side.

The fact that rockets are launched from populated areas – even areas normally immune from counterattack, such as schoolyards – and the practice of using civilians as human shields account for civilian casualties on the Palestinian side and are the responsibility of Hamas, which could remove its operatives from populated areas if it was interested in doing so.

Some of the significant events:

**17 June:** As part of a joint IDF and ISA operation today, three aerial attacks were carried out in the Khan Yunis-Dir el-Balah area, in which the IDF struck Army of Islam terrorists involved in recent attempts to execute a large-scale terror attack against Israeli targets.

The Army of Islam, an extreme Islamist organization that represents Al-Qaeda in the Gaza Strip, was involved in numerous attacks against Israel, including:

- The abduction of the soldier Gilad Shalit and the killing of two other soldiers in a joint attack with Hamas on Kerem Shalom Crossing, June 25, 2006,.
- The abduction of British reporter Alan Johnston, who was incarcerated for 4 months, released only on July 4, 2007.
- A joint attack with Hamas in December 2005 in which five Israeli civilians were killed.

**16 June:** The IDF conducted three strikes against rocket-launching squads and terrorist targets in northern and southern Gaza during the evening and night.

**13 June:** Soldiers fired on an armored tractor (apparently booby-trapped) that Palestinians drove close to the security fence near the Erez crossing. The IDF assessment is that a large attack was interdicted.

A rocket-launching squad in the central Gaza Strip was attacked from the air shortly after firing mortar bombs at Israel. Another aerial attack in northern Gaza, near Beit Lahiya, prevented a terrorist squad from launching rockets towards Israel.

Thirteen Palestinians were killed in various incidents in the Gaza Strip, making this the hardest day of fighting in more than a month.

**12 June:** IDF forces identified two armed terrorists in the process of planting an explosive device near the security fence in northern Gaza. The force fired on, and hit, the terrorists. In another incident in the same area, an armed terrorist was discovered and shot; on his body were found an AK47 assault rifle and ammunition. Because of the incident, the Erez crossing (where Gaza residents seeking medical treatment in Israel cross) was closed for several hours.

A huge explosion destroyed a house in Beit Lahiya, in northern Gaza Strip). The IDF announced that it had nothing to do with the explosion, and estimates that it was caused by a "work accident" (either from the careless handling of explosive material in a home laboratory, or a failed attempt to launch a missile at an army helicopter). See IV below, Human Shields.

**11 June:** The IAF hit a mortar-bomb squad near Jabaliya in the northern Gaza Strip. Two-three terrorists were killed in several IAF and IDF counter-terrorist attacks.

**10 June:** The IDF conducted an operation against terrorist facilities in Khan Yunis. Israel Air Force pilots also attacked the mortar launchers closest to Kibbutz Nahal Oz, the community that absorbed the most intense attacks of the morning (see above). Eyewitnesses said two terrorists were killed and one was injured in the strike. A second strike was aimed at a target in Sujaya, east of Gaza City. One enemy operative was killed and two were injured in that operation.

**8 June:** In counterterrorism operations, one Hamas terrorist was killed and two others wounded. Four rocket launchers were discovered near the security fence in the southern Gaza Strip.

**6 June:** The IDF struck a Hamas post in Northern Gaza. One terrorist was killed and at least 17 others were wounded in a skirmish in central Gaza. Both operations were carried out following today's deadly attack at kibbutz Nir Oz in which a 51-year-old civilian was killed and several others were wounded.

**3 June:** A soldier engaged in engineering work near the security fence was wounded by terrorist shooting. An IED and three mortar bombs were fired at the work site. IDF retaliated against a launching site from which Kassam rockets had been fired that wounded 5 agricultural workers. Light weapons were fired near Nahal Oz fuel depot.

**2 June:** A soldier observed two people crawling close to security fence in northern Gaza Strip. As a result, the Karni and Nahal Oz crossings were closed.

**1 June:** An IDF soldier was critically wounded by terrorist fire during a night action in the southern Gaza strip. Two of Hamas's Izzadin al-Qassam Brigades operatives were wounded in the incident (Al-Qassam Website).

**29 May:** During an IDF operation against the terrorist infrastructure in southern Gaza Strip, more than 10 mortar bombs were fired at IDF forces. The IDF struck two mortar bomb launching squads from the air. An IDF soldier was lightly wounded.

**28 May:** An IDF soldier was critically wounded in a counterterrorist operation in the southern Gaza Strip when the Israeli force was fired upon by terrorist operatives.

Sixty Palestinians suspected of terrorist activity were rounded up by IDF forces in the Gaza Strip and brought to Israel for questioning.

The IAF attacked a rocket-launching squad in the southern Gaza Strip. Ten mortar bombs were fired at the IDF force, lightly wounding one soldier. Two terrorists were killed.

**26 May:** Ten infiltrators were caught on the Egyptian border.

**23 May:** An IDF force observed two armed terrorists on their way to plant an IED near the security fence in central Gaza Strip. The terrorists opened fire and the soldiers returned fire and killed them. Bullet-proof vests, light weapons and hand grenades were found on the terrorists.

An IDF soldier was moderately injured during an operation against the terror infrastructure in the southern Gaza Strip. Palestinians fired mortar bombs at the soldiers.

Yesterday, in a separate IDF activity in northern Gaza strip, an anti-tank launcher and a number of missiles were discovered in the back yard of a school in Sajaiya.

**22 May:** A truck loaded with explosives blew up this morning at the Erez Crossing in northern Gaza, causing damage but no injuries. The blast was so powerful that windows shattered in houses several kilometers away. Army experts said the truck was carrying several hundred kilograms of explosives. The suicide bomber who was driving the truck was killed in the explosion. An IDF spokesman said that the correct response of the soldiers at the crossing prevented a serious terrorist attack.

Following the attack, a jeep with armed gunmen, which was apparently to be used to abduct soldiers during the attack, was fired on by an IAF helicopter and one of the terrorists was killed.

Had the attack succeeded, it would have caused many casualties among the soldiers and civilians working for the Coordination and Liaison Administration at the Erez Crossing. Erez is the crossing point where medical evacuations of Gaza residents are carried out.

The explosion completely destroyed the main lines which provide electricity from the power plant in Ashkelon to large parts of the northern Gaza Strip (Beit Lahia, Beit Hanun, Al-Atatra and Jabaliya).

**21 May:** The Israeli Air Force attacked a vehicle carrying a terrorist cell which had launched rockets at Israel a short time previously. Also, an IDF force uncovered an IED planted near the security fence in northern Gaza and detonated it in a controlled explosion.

**20 May:** An aerial strike was conducted against a terror cell in northern Gaza's Beit Lahiya almost immediately after two rockets were fired by the cell into the western Negev. Both the IDF and PA sources confirmed that one terrorist was killed and two were wounded. No damages or injuries were reported in the attack that precipitated the air strike.

#### **14 May**

Following the attack on the Ashkelon mall, IAF conducted two air strikes Wednesday night against targets in Gaza City. Two terrorists were killed and four wounded.

Earlier in the day, four terrorists were killed and 14 wounded in IDF operations in Jabalya (northern Gaza Strip) and Khan Yunis (southern Gaza Strip) (*INN.com* 15/5/08).

Late Tuesday or early Wednesday (**13-14 May**), in the course of IDF counterterrorist operations, mortar bombs were fired at IDF forces and the commander was lightly wounded (IDF Spokesperson).

**12-13 May:** The IDF attacked a Kassam rocket-launching cell minutes after it had launched rockets towards Israel and was preparing to launch more.

**10 May:** In response to the continuous launching of rockets and mortar shells at Israeli communities in the western Negev (in particular, an attack on Kibbutz Kfar Aza Friday evening, 9 May, in which a civilian was killed by mortar fire), IAF attacked two Hamas posts in the Rafah area on Friday night (9-10 May) and killed 5 Hamas terror operatives.

Saturday morning (10 May), the IAF attacked a terrorist cell near the security barrier in a separate strike.

**6-7 May:** The IDF attacked a cell of armed terrorists in the southern Gaza Strip.

**1 May:** In a joint IDF and ISA operation in Rafah, the Israeli air force targeted and killed Nafez Manzur, a Hamas terror operative. Manzur was involved in the attack in which Gilad Shalit was captured and two IDF soldiers were killed, in the infiltration attack in Kerem Shalom in July 2006. He was also involved in the suicide bombing attack in Kerem Shalom crossing on Passover this year and in firing rockets at Israeli communities and posts in the western Negev (*IDF Spokesperson*, 1.5.2008).

A workshop for manufacturing arms in the southern Gaza Strip was attacked by IDF forces.

**28 April:** Several terrorists, as well as a mother and four children, were killed in **Beit Hanun** during IDF counterterrorist operations in northern Gaza.



The inquiry group appointed by the GOC Southern Command, Major General Yoav Galant, to investigate the circumstances of the incident in Beit Hanoun brought the following to light:

During IDF operations to locate and arrest wanted terrorists in Beit Hanun on the morning of 28 April, complex fighting occurred in which armed gunmen fired mortar shells, anti-tank missiles, light weapons and explosive devices at IDF forces from within densely populated areas. Three IDF soldiers were lightly wounded during the fighting.

Four gunmen firing at the soldiers were spotted carrying back packs loaded with ammunition. One gunman carrying one of the back packs was targeted and hit from the air. As a result a strong secondary explosion occurred. Immediately after the explosion the second gunman was targeted and hit, causing an even bigger explosion.

#### **Conclusions of the IDF investigation:**

- The attacks against the gunmen were accurate and the gunmen were hit.
- The secondary explosions triggered by the weaponry and ammunition carried by the gunmen were bigger than the ones caused by the ammunition used by the IDF.
- The possibility that the family was hit by other IDF fire was eliminated since this was the only incident recorded that day in which attacks were carried out in the area.
- The professional opinion of the IDF states that the family was hit during the explosion of the second missile that ignited the secondary explosions.

It should be emphasized that the armed gunmen were operating near the family's house, therefore endangering their lives.

The IDF wishes to express sorrow for any harm to unassociated civilians caused due to terrorist organizations operating from populated centers, using them as human shields (IDF Spokesperson, 2 May 2008).

**27 April:** IDF forces located and captured two Palestinian Authority terrorists who slipped through the security barrier north of the Kissufim Crossing Saturday night.

**26 April:** IDF soldiers captured a wanted local Hamas kingpin in the northern Gaza town of Beit Lahiye. According to local sources, terrorists around the home of Hassan Marouf opened fire at the troops when they came to arrest him.

**21 April:** IAF and IDF forces killed three terrorists in two different strikes. Large quantities of weapons, including anti-tank missiles, were found in their possession.

**19-21 April:** Following rocket and mortar bomb attacks, the IAF struck at a terrorist cell in Rafiah on the southern Gaza border, at squads in the northern Gaza neighborhood of Jabalya and at other targets, killing a total of eight terrorists over the weekend.

**19 April,** the eve of the Passover festival: A broad-scale combined attack was prevented. Under the cover of early-morning fog, as well as gun and mortar bomb fire directed at Kibbutz Kerem

Shalom and nearby soldiers, an armored personnel carrier broke through the gate at the Kerem Shalom Crossing. Terrorists drove two vehicles disguised as IDF jeeps and loaded with explosives through the break. One blew up close to the guard tower and the second near a group of IDF soldiers. Thirteen soldiers were wounded by flying shrapnel; four terrorists were killed.

This was the fifth such attack in 10 days on crossing points into Gaza through which humanitarian supplies for the PA population are delivered.

**16 April:** Three IDF soldiers were killed this morning in a confrontation with armed Palestinian gunmen identified approaching the security fence south of Nahal Oz, between the fuel terminal and Kibbutz Beerli. Two soldiers were moderately wounded and another soldier was lightly wounded during the incident. The wounded soldiers were evacuated to a hospital for medical treatment.

During a separate anti-terrorist operation near the security fence in the northern Gaza Strip, Palestinian gunmen opened fire at IDF forces from within a mosque used for storing explosives and explosive devices. The use of mosques for terrorist activity demonstrates how terrorist organizations use holy sites and civilian centers to carry out attacks, exploiting the uninvolved Palestinian population.

During the operation, a number of mortar shells and anti-tank missiles were fired at IDF forces. One soldier was moderately wounded. IDF forces identified hitting 10 armed gunmen during exchanges of fire that included a number of aerial attacks.

**14 April:** An IAF strike killed the commander of the DFLP's military wing in northern Gaza. He was involved in infiltration plans and rocket attacks against Israel.

**9 April:** One IDF soldier, Sgt. Sayef Bisan, 21, was killed and two lightly wounded in a defensive operation against the terror infrastructure in southern Gaza.

Later, in response to the murderous attack on the civilian-run Nachal Oz fuel depot, IDF forces comprised of air and ground forces, including at least one tank unit, shelled terrorist targets in northern Gaza. Two of the terrorists were killed. The other two terrorists were killed shortly afterwards in another IAF strike. A total of nine Gaza Arabs were killed in the attack on Nachal Oz and the two IAF strikes that followed. At least six of those killed were armed terrorists who were directly involved in the attack.

**8 April:** During an IDF operation against terrorists near the border fence between Israel and the northern Gaza Strip, terrorists opened fire on the IDF force. The IDF soldiers returned fire, killing three gunmen. Rocket-propelled grenades and AK-47 rifles were found on the two terrorists.

A **tunnel** shaft, approximately 3.5 meters deep, in a house located 700 meters from the security fence, was discovered in the morning in a joint IDF and ISA operation against the terrorist infrastructure in the northern Gaza strip. The tunnel was apparently dug in order to carry out a

terror attack within Israel. In another incident, the force fired towards armed gunmen who approached them. During the operation, 30 mortar shells were fired at the soldiers

**4 April:** Four terrorists were killed Sunday afternoon in fierce fighting with IDF troops in central Gaza.

A similar fierce battle took place near the city of Khan Yunis. Terrorists used anti-tank missiles and mortar shells in a clash with IDF soldiers. Six terrorists were killed in the fighting; there were no casualties among Israeli troops. Sources linked to the ruling Arab Hamas party in Gaza announced that an Arab farmer had been killed in an IDF attack. However, local Arabs told the Associated Press that the man had actually been killed by a terrorist rocket that fell short of its target.

**29 March:** Israeli Air Force pilots struck a rocket-launching cell near the town of Jabaliya in northern Gaza. IDF sources confirmed that the air strike targeted a terror cell responsible for firing rockets and mortars at Jewish communities in southern Israel.

**28 March:** Two terrorists killed: a Hamas gunman was killed and another wounded during a firefight with soldiers near Kissufim in central Gaza Strip. And in northern Gaza near the Jewish town of Netiv HaAsarah, located barely 100 meters from the security barrier with Gaza, an armed Palestinian was killed after he approached the security fence and threw a grenade at soldiers there.

**27 March:** Two terrorists were killed while making Kassam rockets (a "work accident").

**24-18-15-13 March:** Terrorists placed IEDs along the border; some exploded and others were detonated in monitored explosions. No one was hurt in any of the incidents. The IAF carried out aerial attacks against armed rocket squads.

**14 March:** An IDF helicopter was slightly damaged by machine gun fire from the ground. Hamas claimed responsibility.

Security forces launched a wide-scale search for a Gazan man, who had been granted humanitarian passage through Israel for medical treatment in Egypt, after he evaded security forces at the Erez Crossing. It was feared that he intended to carry out a terrorist attack inside Israel. He was later apprehended in the northern Israeli town of Nazareth.

**9 March:** St.Sgt. [Liran Banai](#), critically wounded on 6 March, died of his wounds.

**6 March:** Two soldiers were killed and two wounded by an IED detonated by remote control near their jeep while on routine patrol along the security fence near Kissufim. Later, a squad that was seen placing an IED near the same site was attacked by an IDF force and 3 terrorists were killed.

**4 March:** The IAF attacked two rocket-launching terrorist cells in separate strikes (retaliation for the rocket that destroyed a house in Sderot an hour earlier). Soldiers confirmed hits on both cells. The IDF said the attacks targeted terrorists who were launching rockets at Israel from areas north of Jabalya and east of Gaza City. Two terrorists were killed.

**The Security Cabinet was warned Monday that the Grad rockets used to attack Ashkelon came from Iran.**

Security officials added that the Air Force has bombed out the largest explosives laboratory in the Gaza region.

**28 Feb. – 3 Mar:** In response to a sharp escalation of rocket fire from the Gaza Strip, **the IDF conducted a four-day intensive military operation that eliminated more than 100 terrorists in Gaza** between Thursday 28 February and Monday 3 March, when the ground forces withdrew. **The IDF operation targeted facilities for manufacturing and storing weapons; the neighborhoods from which most of the rockets are launched; terrorist squads on their way to launch rockets; and Hamas institutions.**

IDF Chief of Staff Gabi Ashkenazi told ministers that the IDF distributed notices in Gaza before the operation warning the civilian population in rocket-launching areas of the upcoming attacks.

General Ashkenazi told ministers: "In one incident we saw an elderly Palestinian leaving Jabaliya with a wagon, in which was hidden a Grad missile. He stopped 'as if coincidentally' next to an orchard. Two militants then arrived there, took the missile, positioned it on the launcher - and fired."

The IDF chief added that despite the operation, the IDF would continue its efforts to prevent a humanitarian crisis in Gaza and ensure a regular supply of food and medicines through the border crossings.

**3 March:** An Israeli missile struck a rocket launch squad near the northern Gaza town of Beit Hanoun, killing one man. A second missile struck a donkey cart loaded with rockets.

**Friday night (29 Feb.):** Infantry, armored and engineering corps, with air support, began operations in northern Gaza Strip – Sejaiya neighborhood in Gaza City and Jabalya refugee camp. Troops also searched for arms, including in private houses. This was a limited operation, not the major operation that was expected. **On Shabbat, 1 March, two soldiers were killed,** Staff Sergeant Eran Dan-Gur and Staff Sergeant Doron Asulin, both 20 and both of the Givati Brigade. Seven soldiers were wounded.

**28 Feb:** IAF made 23 air attacks on terrorist targets, mostly Hamas. One attack was on a **truck carrying 160 rockets**. Also targeted were structures that housed Hamas institutions, such as Haniya's offices and police stations.

**24 Feb:** In the southern Gaza Strip, IDF exposed five smuggling tunnels and detained 40 operatives suspected of terrorist activities. During the operation there were exchanges of fire with armed terrorists in the region. Near Beit Hanoun, in northern Gaza, IAF attacked rocket launchers and armed terrorists moving towards the security fence in central Gaza (IDF Spokesperson's website).

**17 Feb:** During an exchange of fire between armed terrorists and IDF forces in southern Gaza, an IDF soldier was critically wounded. During the action, the IAF killed a number of terrorists belonging to Hamas.

**14 Feb:** In a counterterrorist action near the Erez industrial zone, the IDF destroyed 20 structures that had been used for attacks against IDF forces. Terrorists fired a mortar bomb at the soldiers; there were no injuries.

**9 February:** The IDF retaliated for rocket attacks with a strike on a terrorist squad spotted near ready-to-fire rocket launchers in the nearby Gaza town of Beit Hanoun in northern Gaza.

**6 February:** The IAF conducted air strikes against a weapons storehouse and a rocket factory and, with support of IDF ground forces, attacked squads in rocket-launching areas of northern Gaza. Five Hamas operatives and an Islamic Jihad member were killed in two Israeli strikes in Jabalya and Beit Hanoun.

**5 February:** An IAF helicopter struck a building that housed Hamas's Executive Force (police) in Khan Yunis, killing seven Hamas-Al Aqsa Martyrs Brigades terrorists.

**22-27 January:** Four terrorists killed in several incidents; two were involved in firing rockets at Israel and one in an exchange of fire near the Sufa crossing. The Israeli Air Force attacked a building in Rafah; there were two IAF attacks on vehicles carrying terrorists and possibly explosives.

**15 January:** Elite troops from the Golani Brigade's Egoz Unit, backed by tanks and Engineering Corps squads, swept into central Gaza in the early morning in pursuit of Kassam rocket squads and terror infrastructure the IDF feared was being built up along the border fence.

Nineteen Palestinians - including three civilians, according to hospital officials in Gaza - were killed in the ensuing gun battles and air strikes. One was Hussam Zahar, 24, son of hard-line Hamas leader Mahmoud Zahar, who is viewed as the mastermind behind the violent Hamas takeover of the Gaza Strip in June.

**14 January:** Israel Airports Authority security personnel on Monday discovered two tons of a chemical substance, used to manufacture explosives and rockets, in a truck that was supposedly bringing humanitarian aid into the Gaza Strip through the Kerem Shalom crossing.

**9 January** - The Israel Air Force targeted an Islamic Jihad terrorist cell that was firing mortar bombs from Beit Lahiyeh in northern Gaza, killing two terrorists and wounding six others, according to both Israeli and PA sources.

**7 January:** A man and woman, residents of the Palestinian Authority, approached an army installation adjacent to the Gaza region's Erez Crossing while holding hands and pretending to be a couple out on a walk. When the "couple" was in proximity to the IDF position, however, they both drew firearms and began shooting at soldiers. IDF forces returned fire, killing them both. Soldiers found explosives on the woman's body after the attack. No Israelis were injured in the attack.

In a second attack in the same region later in the day, terrorists opened fire on a group of Israeli journalists. The four journalists, working for various news agencies, were standing on a hill near the Erez Crossing when they came under attack. None of the journalists were hurt in the shooting, but a car they were using was hit by several bullets.

Senior IDF officers criticized the terrorist factions for their frequent attacks on Israeli-controlled crossings into Gaza, such as that at Erez. The attacks make it difficult for Israel to transfer food and medicine into Gaza, and sometimes delay the transfer of crucial aid.

**6 January:** Five soldiers were wounded by an anti-tank missile in the central Gaza Strip. On **5 January**, an explosives lab was discovered in Gaza. Over the weekend, 42 rockets and 14 mortar bombs were fired at Israel.

**1-3 January:** The Israel Air Force bombed Gaza in retaliation for rocket attacks, including a Katyusha rocket that landed further north than any rocket ever fired from Gaza. Eight Palestinian terrorists were killed in clashes with Israeli forces; the last one was in the midst of trying to fire anti-rocket rockets when he was killed. IDF forces also fired on and hit Palestinian gunmen approaching the security fence in central Gaza.

On **29 December**, the IDF released the information that, a few weeks ago, 6 tons of potassium nitrate were discovered in a humanitarian aid truck. The chemical, used for making explosives and rocket propellants, was packed in sugar bags with EU markings. The truck was on its way to the Gaza Strip.

The Israel security forces carried out a series of counterterrorist activities in the Gaza Strip, focusing on senior terrorist operatives belonging to the Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ), the organization launching most of the rockets at the western Negev towns and farming villages. The activities were successful and caused damage to the PIJ's operational infrastructure.

On **27 December**, terrorists fired an RPG at IDF forces in southern Gaza. The soldiers responded with small arms fire, killing three terrorists. There was also an air strike against a vehicle carrying explosives and terrorist operatives en route to execute an attack.

Aerial attacks against Kassam launchers and rocket-launching squads were carried out throughout the Gaza Strip. On **20 December**, a day-long counterterrorism operation in central



Gaza ended with seven Hamas and PIJ terrorists killed and three soldiers injured, one seriously. The IDF Spokesperson expressed hope that the success of the operation would prevent terrorists from approaching the Gaza security fence, which has been the site of numerous attempted attacks in recent weeks.

On **17-18 December** four aerial attacks were carried out, killing 12 terrorists, including a senior Islamic Jihad terrorist (Majed Harazin) in charge of rocket launching.

**First half of December:** The IDF, including the air force (IAF), carried out numerous counterterrorist activities throughout the Gaza Strip from Khan Yunis and the Sufa crossing in the south, through Dir al-Balah in the central Gaza Strip, and near Beit Lahia in northern Gaza. Four IDF soldiers were injured and twelve Hamas terrorists were killed in various operations.

**December 11** showed particularly intensive activity – in the southern Gaza Strip, terrorists fired at IDF forces and launched anti-tank missiles (two soldiers were injured); the Israeli Air Force attacked a Hamas position in the central Gaza Strip (three Hamas operatives were killed); and, in response to mortar fire on Kibbutz Nahal Oz, IDF forces attacked a terrorist squad in the northern Gaza Strip.

**Second half of November:** Israeli security forces continued preventing terrorist activity close to the security fence. Daily fighting continued between the IDF and terrorist squads. Many attempts were made to attack IDF forces or to infiltrate into Israel territory. Conspicuous were the attacks centering on the Erez industrial zone, during which terrorist operatives infiltrated into buildings there. During this two-week period, at least 13 terrorists engaged in terrorist activities – such as launching rockets or mortar bombs, attacking IDF soldiers or placing charges near the security fence – were killed by IDF forces.

**November 11:** Israeli soldiers and General Security Services (GSS) agents uncovered seven smuggling tunnels in 36 hours. The tunnels, which are used for smuggling terrorists and arms from Egypt to be used against Israel, were found in the southern city of Dahania during operations to stop rocket and mortar shell attacks from the area. The forces also discovered that the area around the tunnels had been booby-trapped. The tunnels and the explosive devices were disposed of in controlled explosions by IDF sappers.

**October 30:** Near Khan Yunis, the air force struck a Hamas Executive Force position, killing four terrorist operatives.

On **October 29** an IDF force conducting a security sweep near the security fence came upon a terrorist ambush, in which First Sergeant (Res.) **Ehud Efrati was killed**. Efrati, 34, was married and the father of three. Two other IDF soldiers were slightly injured (IDF Spokesperson website, October 29).

At a briefing, Brig.Gen Moshe Tamir, IDF Commander of the Gaza division, explained the **IDF's operational goals**: "The action (on October 29th) is part of the Gaza brigade's operations to keep the Hamas terror organization away from the security fence...The operations are conducted 2-3 km from the fence in order to prevent the digging of tunnels, planting of explosive

devices, infiltration into Israeli communities, shooting attacks against Israeli farmers on their land near [the Israeli side of] the fence, and the firing of rockets and mortal bombs at Israel...

"The Hamas is continuing to arm itself and improve its abilities; today it has more weaponry... There is no magical solution to the threat from the Qassam rockets. By keeping the pressure on Hamas, we reduce their ability to attack Israeli civilians" (IDF Spokesperson, October 29, 2007).

**October 28:** The air force attacked terrorists in Sajaiya three times, killing six terrorist operatives. On **October 26** an IDF force operating in the northern Gaza Strip came upon an armed terrorist squad. Two terrorists were killed in the ensuing firefight and two IDF soldiers were slightly wounded.

**October 25:** An IDF force operating in the southern Gaza Strip encountered two armed terrorists, and killed them in the ensuing clash. The terrorists had in their possession large quantities of explosives and anti-tank missiles. On **October 22**, one terrorist operative was killed and three wounded in an air force attack in the region of Beit Hanoun in the northern Gaza Strip.

**October 17:** IDF forces killed an armed terrorist in the course of a counterterrorist operation east of Khan Yunis in the southern Gaza Strip. **Sergeant Ben Koveni, 20, was killed** by terrorist fire.

During the **first half of October**, the IDF and the IAF responded to shooting, grenade and Kassam rocket attacks. Several terrorists were killed and others wounded in the operations.

**September 12:** A terrorist from the Gaza Strip wearing an explosive belt was apprehended shortly after infiltrating into Israel through the Egyptian border. During questioning he said that he had been sent to carry out an attack in the Israeli city of Beersheba.

**September 6:** An attempt by a terrorist squad to infiltrate into Israeli territory was foiled. The goal of the squad, according to the IDF Southern Brigade commander, was to kidnap soldiers at an IDF post north of Kibbutz Kissufim and to attack the kibbutz. The squad of seven terrorists, who arrived in two vehicles equipped with explosive vests, hand grenades and rocket-propelled grenades was discovered about 250 meters (about 275 yards) from the security fence in the central Gaza Strip. IDF ground forces and Israel Air Force aircraft attacked, triggering several large explosions in the vehicles, which proved to be car bombs loaded with hundreds of kilograms of explosives. Six of the terrorists were killed and one managed to escape.

In a separate incident the same day, an IDF officer was lightly wounded and four terrorists were killed during an operation against Kassam rocket launchers in the Khan Yunis area. On **September 5**, IDF forces discovered and seized 11 rocket launchers in the northern Gaza Strip aimed at Israel and ready for firing.

**August 29:** The IDF struck several rocket launchers aimed at Israel in the Beit Hanoun industrial area in northern Gaza. Three Palestinians were killed in the strike. An IDF statement said, in part: "The IDF received information that the Palestinians handling the launchers were teenagers. The IDF wishes to express sorrow for the cynical use the terror organizations make of the active participation of teenagers in terror attacks."

**August 28:** An IDF force detained a 15-year-old Palestinian near Beit Hanoun who attempted to attack them. A body search of the youth revealed two concealed explosive devices ready for detonation.

**August 25:** IDF forces foiled an attempted terrorist attack on the settlement Netiv Ha'asara, north of the Gaza Strip. Two terrorists dressed in IDF uniforms and exploiting the early morning fog, managed to climb over the security fence using a rope ladder. They then shot at a soldier in a guard post of the Liaison and Coordination Administration near the Erez Crossing. While advancing towards Netiv Ha'asara, the terrorists were killed by an IDF force. Light arms, hand grenades and two explosive devices were found in their possession. Two IDF soldiers were slightly wounded in the incident.

**August 21:** Three Islamic Jihad terrorists were killed by IDF fire near the security fence. Weapons, including sniper rifles, were found near the bodies.

IDF ground forces fired upon two figures seen handling a rocket launcher near Beit Hanoun and discovered that two teenage boys had been killed. The IDF has evidence that children and teenagers are involved in retrieving Kassam launchers after the rockets have been fired, placing roadside bombs, and other terrorist activities.

**August 20:** The Israeli Air Force struck a vehicle carrying a squad of rocket-launching terrorists near the Al-Bureij refugee camp (central Gaza Strip). Six Hamas terrorist operatives were killed. In the northern Gaza Strip the IDF attacked a squad of terrorists engaged in launching rockets into the western Negev.

**August 15:** During counter-terrorist activities in the Beit Hanoun area, a tunnel shaft was discovered in a tomato hothouse, about 700 meters (4/10 of a mile) from the northern Gaza Strip security fence. A generator sunk into the earth and tools used to dig the tunnel were also found. The IDF detonated the tunnel. The terrorist organizations in the Gaza Strip, especially Hamas, have built a vast number of tunnels in recent years. The tunnel, of which only about 20 meters (22 yards) had been dug when it was exposed, was intended to be used to infiltrate terrorists into Israel or to set off explosives under an IDF post.

**July 26:** Two terrorists threw hand grenades at an IDF force near the border fence in the northern Gaza Strip. The force returned fire and killed them **July 22:** Two Hamas operatives threw a hand grenade at an IDF force near the Erez crossing. The soldiers returned fire and killed the terrorists, who had been planning to ambush the security forces operating in the area (Hamas/Izzedine al-Qassam Brigades Website, July 22, 2007).

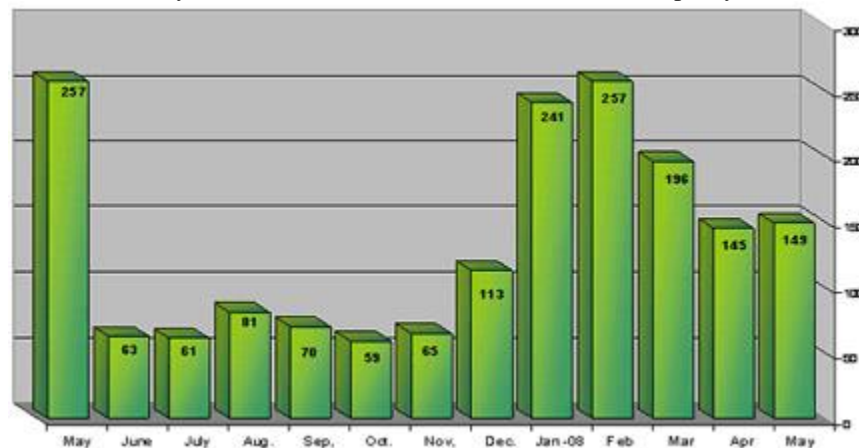
**July 12:** Staff Sergeant **Arbel Raich, 21 years old, was killed** when his unit was attacked near the al-Bureij refugee camp during a counter-terrorist operation in the central Gaza Strip. Two additional soldiers were wounded. Hamas claimed responsibility for the attack and Hamas spokesman Fawzi Barhoum praised the killing (Al-Aqsa TV, July 12). In an exchange of fire between an IDF force and armed Hamas terrorists on **July 5**, a number of terrorists were killed.

**June 24-27:** In firefights and air strikes against Hamas and Islamic Jihad terrorists engaged in launching rockets at Negev settlements and in shooting at Israeli soldiers with light arms and anti-tank missiles, at least 13 Palestinians were killed and several wounded. Two IDF soldiers were slightly wounded in the counter-terrorist operations.

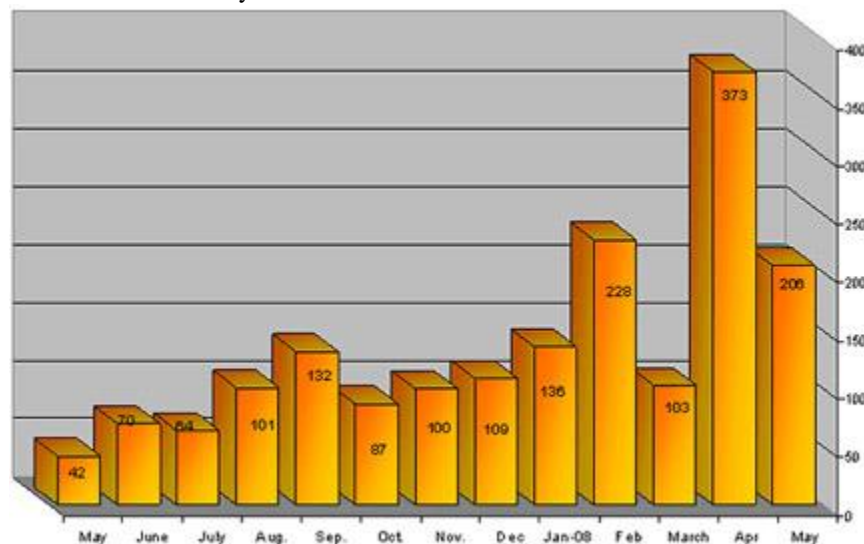
**June 18-19:** Near Kissufim, in the central Gaza Strip, and near the Erez Crossing in the northern Strip, terrorists tossed hand grenades and fired at IDF soldiers, who returned fire. An armed Palestinian and a civilian were killed, at least 12 others were wounded, and a soldier was wounded in the exchange of fire.

### III. Statistical Data:

Monthly distribution of identified rocket hits over the past year



Monthly distribution of identified mortar bomb hits



#### IV. Human Shields

The Palestinian Center for Human Rights (PCHR), an organization based in Gaza, released a statement expressing deep concern "about the recurrence of internal explosions as a result of weapons being manufactured and stored in areas populated by civilians. These actions are threatening the lives and property of Palestinian civilians." The statement was prompted by the huge explosion that destroyed a large house in northern Gaza (12 June 2008), killing an infant and a boy as well as at least six terrorists who were preparing for a "special jihad mission" (Izzaddin al-Kassam Brigades press release, 13 June 2008).

The terrorist organizations operating in the Gaza Strip make frequent use of civilians as human shields. One of many such incidents occurred on **April 13**, when the IAF struck several houses of senior terrorist operatives. Hamas used its website to ask Gaza Strip civilians to go to the house of the commander of the Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades in Gaza City, where it had been announced that the IDF was planning to blow up the house.

In several instances, Al-Aqsa TV called upon civilians to form a human shield around houses that the IDF had threatened to blow up:

- the home of Abu al-Hatal in Sajaiya or al-Sha'af neighborhood (1 March).
- the northern Gaza Strip house of shaheed Othman al-Ruziana (29 Feb.);
- the house of Ma'amoun Abu Amer in Khan Yunis (an hour later, dozens of Khan Yunis residents were reported to have gathered on the roof of Abu Amer's house – Pal-today website, 28 Feb.);
- the northern Gaza Strip house of shaheed Musab al-Jaabir (29 Feb.);

Hamas PM **Ismail Haniya** boasted that hundreds and thousands of Palestinians had left their homes in the middle of the night and gone up on the roofs of the houses that the Israeli "occupation" had threatened to blow up (Aljazeera TV, 29 Feb.).

Minister for Public Security, **Avi Dichter** (3 March): "In a state of war with a terror entity we must not shirk from hitting terrorists who try to carry out a terror attack from within an envelope of civilians. Civilians who provide a human shield for terrorists are terrorists, plain and simple."

#### V. Hamas' offensive strategy and its military buildup

The former Hamas foreign minister, **Mahmoud a-Zahar**, explaining **why Hamas in the past two years has favored rocket attacks over suicide bombings**, told the Sunday Telegraph's correspondent (21 August 2007), "Which do you think is more effective, martyrdom operations or rockets against Sderot? Rockets against Sderot will cause mass migration, greatly disrupt daily lives and government administration and can make a much huger impact on the government. We are using the methods that convince the Israelis that their occupation is costing them too much. We are succeeding with the rockets. We have no losses and the impact on the Israeli side is so much."

**Moshe Kaplinsky**, Deputy Chief of Staff, told the New York Times (28 August 2007) that Hamas was building a force similar to that of Hezbollah in south Lebanon. He said that several

hundred Hamas **terrorist** operatives had been sent abroad for **military training**, most of them to **Iran**.

An example of this was released for publication on **19 May 2008**: Alaa Jihad Ouad Abu Madif, a resident of the southern Gaza Strip, was arrested on 15 April in a joint IDF–ISA operation. Abu Madif's interrogation throws light on the deep Iranian involvement in the encouragement of terror against Israel and in its support, its financing, and its military training for the activists of the various terror organizations operating in Gaza against Israel. The interrogation also revealed the support Syria gives terrorist operatives in the Gaza Strip by allowing them to use Damascus as a transition point on their way to and from training in Iran.

Abu Madif participated in a month-long military training course in Iran in May 2007. The course included weapons training, target practice, assembly and operation of explosive devices and indoctrination lessons defining Israel and the USA as the sources of evil. They were also instructed in covert activities, such as discovering and losing a tail, etc.

Upon his return to Gaza after the Hamas takeover, (September-October 2007) Abu Madif participated in a series of rocket attacks against Israel, and agreed on two separate occasions to participate in a suicide bombing attack against IDF forces at the Kissufim crossing. He was filmed for these attacks, but they were never carried out.

The Turkish daily *Sabah* reported on 10 March 2008 that Hamas operatives are undergoing training in Iran. A member of the Izzeddin el Kassam Brigades, the armed wing of the Hamas, stated that its members undergo **training in Iran and Syria**: "Hamas engineers from Gaza are being sent to Syria and Iran for training in rocket manufacturing. Until today over 400 of our engineers have returned after having undergone rocket training. **These missiles are being manufactured in workshops underneath secret houses**. 'Carriers' are carrying them to the points determined by the watchmen. If there are no helicopters or UAVs, we are firing them to towards the target."

Israel Security Agency chief **Yuval Diskin** told the government (February 3, 2008) that, during the past few days, large quantities of weapons had been smuggled into the Gaza Strip through the open fence along the Philadelphi route. He said that "no exact quantities can be indicated. Apparently standard **weapons were smuggled** in, including long-range rockets, anti-tank and anti-aircraft missiles." Also, according to Diskin, many terrorist operatives have returned from training in Iran, Syria and Egypt and are now in the Gaza Strip.

Hamas taxes the estimated 150 smuggling tunnels leading from Egypt into the Gaza Strip, charging the owners \$3000 each a day. The tunnels bring in a total of \$150 million annually, while the value of men, weapons and other merchandise smuggled in each year total close to a half-billion dollars. Five tunnels were blown up when their owners refused to pay the fee; the others quickly paid up, giving Hamas a monopoly on the tunnels.

The tunnels are run in a systematic manner and categorized according to the goods that pass through them – weapons, cash, Hamas military commanders who seek to return to Gaza, food, medicine, computer equipment, and dangerous drugs.



In a report for the Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs (vol. 7 no. 25, 19 December 2007), former IDF Southern Command chief Maj.Gen. (res.) Yom Tov Samia stated, "The Palestinians have brought into Gaza more than 30,000 rifles during the past two years, more than six million rounds of ammunition, more than 230 tons of explosives, and scores of anti-tank and anti-aircraft missiles."

## **VI. Hamas behavior towards their brethren in Gaza**

Fatah members in the Gaza Strip appealed to PA President Mahmud Abbas for help in ending Hamas's campaign of intimidation and terror against them. The letter complained that the Islamic movement was continuing to target them and that scores of Fatah activists in the Gaza Strip had been summoned for questioning by Hamas security forces over the past few weeks, including top Fatah officials (*Jerusalem Post* 15 June 2008).

**16 May:** Unknown assailants detonated a bomb outside a Christian school in Gaza City before dawn Friday. The Zahwa Rosary School, which is run by Catholic nuns, caters mainly to Muslim students. The school had been ransacked in June 2007, along with the nuns' adjacent convent, during a week of intense fighting that ended with Hamas' seizure of power.

The bombing was the latest in a string of attacks on Christian institutions in the overwhelmingly Muslim territory. In the most serious attack, a local Christian activist was murdered in October. His killers have not been found (AP/Jerusalem Post).

On **November 12, 2007**, at a rally commemorating the third anniversary of Yasser Arafat's death attended by at least 250,000 people, Hamas security forces opened fire on the crowd. Seven Palestinians were killed and 150 wounded, some critically. Afterwards, Hamas police carried out a wave of arrests of Fatah activists throughout the Gaza Strip.

The well-organized rally, attended by hundreds of thousands of people, was evidently interpreted by Hamas as an expression of public protest against its regime.

## **VII. Statements by Hamas Leaders**

### **Hamas's continued opposition to negotiations**

Hamas spokesmen expressed their views at a mass rally celebrating the 20th anniversary of the movement (December 15, 2007). A recurring theme in the day's speeches was that there are two tracks in the struggle to destroy the Jewish State; but that Hamas's armed attacks are more effective than Fatah's negotiations – as was proven by Israel's retreat from the Gaza Strip. Hamas prime minister Ismail **Haniyya** stressed, "The option of the resistance and jihad is the shortest way to liberate Palestine, and to restore Jerusalem and Palestinian rights. Not the path of negotiations, not the path of bargaining..." Haniyya said that realizing "the right of resistance" would prevent the implementation of the first stage of the Road Map.

**Musheir al-Masri**, member of the Palestinian Legislative Council: "the Jews have to return to where they came from, we are digging graves for them... We will remain firm until the liberation

of Palestine, all Palestine, from the [Mediterranean] sea to the [Jordan] river..." (Al-Aqsa TV, December 14).

**Khaled Mashal**, head of Hamas' "political" bureau in Damascus: Since the movement was founded in 1987, "it restored the honor of the option of resistance" in contrast to those who believed in "the option of an arrangement and negotiations." Hamas created "new models" of heroism, sacrifice and suicide bombings... The lesson Hamas taught Israel and the world was that "the land [of "Palestine"] will only be liberated by the rifle..."

### **Hamas position on "*hudna*" and "*tahadiya*"**

(The following definitions and assessment are taken from "The Egyptian initiative for a lull in the fighting," a report by the Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center, published May 6, 2008.)

The term *hudna* [ هدنة ] is taken from Islamic tradition, and means an agreement or contract which entails the cessation of all fighting for a specific period of time and under conditions which have been agreed upon. A Muslim leader is permitted to announce a *hudna* during a war against infidels. **The *hudna*'s objective is a temporary cease fire to improve the Muslim positions for a new round of fighting** and to improve their resources. It is a stage in *jihad* and does not express either willingness or a commitment to solve a conflict or even to preserve a truce. It is limited in time, and **the Muslim side can violate it** or extend the time limit if it serves Muslim interests. For that reason, the *hudna* is considered a tactical move integral to fighting the enemy until in due time he is overcome.

*Tahadiya* [ تهدئة ] on the other hand, is a modern, secular term that has no religious Islamic validity. It means "lull in the fighting," that is, **lowering the intensity of a confrontation** through a mutual commitment to stop the fighting, **which does not necessarily include the complete cessation of all military activities** (such as collecting intelligence, procuring arms, etc.). It can be translated "as a quiescent period in the fighting," even though the media often mistranslate it as "truce." It is less binding than a *hudna* and permits Hamas and other organizations to carry out military activities except for engaging in actual fighting.

**May 2008:** Egypt has been working to broker a *tahadiya* between Israel and the Palestinians. (Because it is far less binding, as explained above, Hamas prefers a *tahadiya* to a *hudna*.) Hamas is interested in the lull, which includes opening the Gaza Strip crossings on Hamas terms, as a means of strengthening and stabilizing its control of the Gaza Strip, as well as enabling it to accelerate its military buildup in preparation for a future confrontation with Israel.

According to **Khaled Mashal**, head of Hamas's political bureau in Damascus, Hamas regards the lull as "a tactic, a stage in the resistance, and nothing more" (*Al-Jazeera TV*, April 27). Senior Hamas activist **Mahmud al-Zahar** claimed that arms smuggling is in the hands of Israel and Egypt. Regarding the manufacture of weapons, he said, "that cannot be supervised," implying that the lull in fighting does not include any commitment on the part of Hamas to stop manufacturing and smuggling weapons (*Al-Aqsa TV*, April 29).

**Osama Hamdan**, Hamas's representative in Lebanon, said (19 May) that Israel is mistaken if it thinks a truce with Hamas would mean that the "resistance operations" would end. "The confrontation with the [Israeli] Occupation will continue despite the talk about a *tahdiya*," he said. "As far as Hamas is concerned, all options remain open" (*Jerusalem Post*, 20 May, 2008).

**December 2008:** In the wake of the intensive activity carried out by the Israeli security forces in the Gaza Strip and the media reports of a possible extensive IDF incursion into the Strip to stop the rocket fire on Israel, Hamas talked about implementing a potential hiatus (*hudna*) in the fighting. However, the statements are not uniform, which may indicate differences of opinion.

Prime Minister Ismail Haniyya told a reporter for Israel TV's Channel 2, "we have no problem in negotiating with Israel at least about two topics, Kassam rocket fire and targeted killing, to achieve a mutual *hudna*" (Dec. 18).

However, Ahmed Yussuf, a political advisor in the foreign ministry of Haniyya's government, said it was a question of a short-term lull and not a cease fire (*hudna*). "Resistance [i.e., terrorism] will remain an option. As long as the Occupation exists, the resistance will exist" (*al-Jazeera TV website*, Dec. 24).

An important figure in the PIJ (the organization responsible for most of the rocket attacks), Khaled al-Batash, said, "no one can impose a lull on the PIJ because it is a resistance movement" (*Nidaa al-Quds website*, Dec. 23).

#### **Other statements by Hamas and related organizations:**

After the Hamas-perpetrated suicide bombing in Dimona (4 February), in which an Israeli woman was killed and ten civilians were wounded, senior Hamas official in the Gaza Strip Osama al-Muzeina said that if it seemed as though there were fewer suicide bombing attacks, Dimona proved that it was an illusion. Asked whether there would be more suicide attacks, he answered "all possibilities are open" (*Filastin al-An website*, 6 February). Another senior Hamas official, Yahya Musa, said that more attacks would follow the one in Dimona and that a new terrorist campaign (*intifada*) would break out (*Al-Aqsa TV*, 6 February).

Following the breaching and resealing of the border fence between Egypt and the Gaza Strip, Hamas threatened that, if the border with Egypt were hermetically sealed, this time its operatives would "blow up the entire border fence and not just parts of it" (*Agence France Presse*, February 1, 2008).

**Khalid al-Batish**, a high-ranking member of the Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ), declared that his organization will not be bound by anything that may come out of the Annapolis conference and that the PIJ would continue to carry out attacks ('resistance'), even if an agreement is reached to establish a Palestinian state in the 1967 borders. In his view, "all of Palestine is occupied and not only the territories captured in 1967" (*Al-Quds al-Araby*, 3 October).

## **Hamas celebrates 60th *Nakba* Day**

Hamas exploits *Nakba* Day for a propaganda campaign against Israel and the Jewish people. Its television station broadcasts programs glorifying Hamas terrorist operatives, and a special effort is invested in children's programs, which are rife with hatred for Israel. The message, repeated over and over in order to brainwash the children, is: "the Palestinians will soon return to Jaffa, Acre, Lod, Ramle and Ashdod, and also to Tel al-Rabia (Tel Aviv in Arabic)" (from a children's program broadcast by *Al-Aqsa TV*, May 2, 2008).

## **VIII. ISA Summary of terror 2007**

In contrast to the impressive decrease in successful terrorist suicide and shooting attacks in Israel, which the IDF attributes to the security fence, quality intelligence and operational freedom of action throughout Judea and Samaria, rocket and mortar attacks continue from the Gaza Strip. In 2007, 1,263 rockets and 1,511 mortar bombs struck Israel, compared to 1,722 rockets and 55 mortar bombs in 2006. Two residents of Sderot were killed in 2007. The ISA estimates that since the Hamas takeover in the middle of June 2007, 80 tons of explosives have been smuggled into the Gaza Strip from the Sinai.

## **IX. Hamas-manufactured 'fuel crisis'**

**May 10:** The Palestinians shut down the power plant in the Gaza Strip, claiming there was no more diesel fuel to keep it working. On May 5, the Nahal Oz crossing, where fuel is delivered from Israel to the Gaza Strip, was closed after a mortar bomb was fired at the crossing from the Gaza Strip. On May 12 it was reopened and the fuel supply was renewed.

It is important to note that the Gaza power plant supplies only about 26% of the Gaza Strip's electricity, Israel provides about 70%, and Egypt 7%. Therefore, shutting down the power plant cannot cause a complete power outage and the authorities (Hamas) are able to direct the electricity to ensure that vital services continue.

Col. Nir Press, head of the Coordination & Liaison Administration to the Gaza Strip addressed the issue of UNRWA fuel shortages (**24 April 2008**). Excerpts from his statement: "The [fuel] deposits accumulated in the Palestinian fuel depot at Nahal Oz amount to one million liters. The Palestinians have not withdrawn any fuel during the past month, and are not supplying the fuel necessary for humanitarian and civilian requirements. In this manner, the Palestinians, led by the Hamas organization, are creating shortages, misery and disaster."

When the first fuel tanker arrived (24 April) to withdraw fuel for UNRWA, according to the transfer arrangement, tens of thousands of Palestinians blocked one of the main intersections leading to the fuel depot, preventing the tanker from reaching the depot and thus preventing the supply of fuel (*Coordination and Liaison Administration, Erez*, 24 April 2008).

"Members of Hamas in the Gaza Strip opened fire on Sunday (**27 April**) on fuel trucks that were full of fuel destined for hospitals in the territory," the Palestinian health ministry said in a statement issued in Ramallah.

Israel halted deliveries of fuel to Gaza on **April 9** after Palestinian militants attacked the Nahal Oz terminal, through which all of Gaza's fuel needs are delivered. It says it cannot deliver any more fuel as the tanks on the Palestinian side of the terminal are full because Hamas will not allow the distribution of the one million litres of petrol and diesel stored there" (AFP 27 April 2008; [http://news.yahoo.com/s/afp/20080427/wl\\_mideast\\_afp/mideastconflictgaza](http://news.yahoo.com/s/afp/20080427/wl_mideast_afp/mideastconflictgaza)).

On **January 20**, following a massive Hamas rocket attack on Israel, most of the crossings between Israel and the Gaza Strip were temporarily closed and no merchandise or fuel was allowed into Gaza. The Erez Crossing remained open for cases of humanitarian aid.

[Hamas exploited the situation to create an impression of a humanitarian crisis in the Gaza Strip.](#)

The crossings were closed on January 20; already on January 22, they were partially reopened, with limited amounts of supplies (such as diesel and cooking fuel, milk, flour and drugs) being allowed through. Israel did not provide gasoline for cars, however, since gasoline stores were diverted by Hamas for use in its rocket-launching apparatus.

## **X. Egypt-Gaza border**

Another event orchestrated by Hamas with impeccable timing was the collapse of the security fence on the Egypt-Gaza border. The breaching of the fence seemed to be a spontaneous reaction to the pressure created inside Gaza by Israel's closing the border crossings (see above). In fact, work on demolishing the fence had been going on for months – long before Israel placed a blockade on Gaza. As soon as the fence was breached, hundreds of thousands of Gazans streamed into Egypt, spending millions of dollars in a week-long shopping spree.

One of Hamas's goals in breaching the fence was to force the Rafah crossing (which is controlled by Egypt) to be opened and to create a new arrangement for control of the border, effectively canceling the [Agreed Principles for Rafah Crossing November 15, 2005](#) achieved by Israeli and Palestinian negotiators after Israel withdrew from Gaza in August 2005. A breached border fence and the possibility of a reopened Rafah Crossing under Hamas control would enable the terrorist organizations to keep up a steady stream of [advanced weapons and Iranian-trained operatives](#) into the Gaza Strip, including global jihad terrorists, who have easy access to weapons and supporters in the Sinai Peninsula (*Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center, IICC*, 29 January 2008).

While Gaza is bounded on the Israeli side by a relatively secure perimeter barrier, the border between Egypt and Israel is much more open. Security officials estimate that hundreds of people, most of them African refugees, smugglers and migrant workers, manage to cross the border illegally every month.

## **XI. The crossings between Israel and the Gaza Strip**

On 30 January, in its response to an appeal against restricting supplies of electricity and fuel to the Gaza Strip, the Israeli Supreme Court determined that since Israel had disengaged from the Gaza Strip it had no effective control over what occurred there. The judges also determined that Israel had no commitment "to deal with the welfare of the residents of the Gaza Strip or to allow unlimited amounts of goods and merchandise" to pass through, but only vital and humanitarian goods (*Israel Supreme Court website*, January 30). At present, fuel, gas and humanitarian goods continue to pass through the Sufa and Nahal Oz Crossings, and pedestrians with serious humanitarian needs are permitted to use the Erez crossing.