

Date and Time: Friday, May 3, 2024 4:05:00PM EEST

Job Number: 223445308

Documents (100)

1. [*Hamas talks truce; attacks continue*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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News

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Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2007 to Sep 30, 2008

2. [*Hamas's apologist*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2007 to Sep 30, 2008

3. [*A YEAR RESHAPES HAMAS AND GAZA*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2007 to Sep 30, 2008

4. [*Israelis abduct Hamas chief*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2007 to Sep 30, 2008

5. [*Hamas tightens grip on Gaza Strip*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2007 to Sep 30, 2008

6. [*Gaza is Hamas' 'habitat of inhumanity'*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2007 to Sep 30, 2008

7. [*Hamas raids compound of rivals 11 are killed*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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News

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Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2007 to Sep 30, 2008

8. [*Did crisis become a Hamas PR victory?*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2007 to Sep 30, 2008

9. [*Will Carter's Hamas foray bear fruit?*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2007 to Sep 30, 2008

10. [*Hamas loyalists turn funeral into a protest*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2007 to Sep 30, 2008

11. [*Hamas Strikes at Gaza Clan Known for Criminal Activity*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2007 to Sep 30, 2008

12. [*Hamas celebrates as troops pull out*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2007 to Sep 30, 2008

13. [*IDF cracks down on Hamas institutions, including charities*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

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Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2007 to Sep 30, 2008

14. [*Gaza clansmen exiled as Hamas grabs Fatah bastion*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2007 to Sep 30, 2008

15. [*Hamas offers 10-year truce*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2007 to Sep 30, 2008

16. [*Despite Isolation, Gazans Show Allegiance for Hamas*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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News

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Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2007 to Sep 30, 2008

17. [*Hard-nosed leader goes soft on Hamas COMMENT & DEBATE*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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News

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Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2007 to Sep 30, 2008

18. [*Hamas rounds up Fatah men in Gaza after blast kills seven*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2007 to Sep 30, 2008

19. [*Hamas loyalists turn funeral in to protest*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2007 to Sep 30, 2008

20. [*Hamas's human shields*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2007 to Sep 30, 2008

21. [*A year under Hamas, a new form for Gaza*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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22. [*Nine dead, 90 wounded in Hamas-Fatah clash in Gaza. 180 fleeing Fatah supporters allowed to enter Israel as Hamas forces eliminate last major stronghold in Gaza Strip*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2007 to Sep 30, 2008

23. [*Palestinians divided by latest violence from Hamas*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2007 to Sep 30, 2008

24. [*Egypt Warns Hamas About Border Violence*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2007 to Sep 30, 2008

25. [*Hamas shows off gunmen in glossy magazine*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2007 to Sep 30, 2008

26. [*Defiant Hamas rules by fear in isolated Gaza*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2007 to Sep 30, 2008

27. [Hamas pierces Egyptian border, opening Gaza](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2007 to Sep 30, 2008

28. [Hamas Pierces Egypt Border, Opening Gaza](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2007 to Sep 30, 2008

29. [Thousands of Hamas supporters turn funeral for slain cleric into angry protest](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2007 to Sep 30, 2008

30. [Prisoner exchange stalled; Israeli Soldier; Hamas insists on release of 1,400 Palestinians](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2007 to Sep 30, 2008

31. [Gaza policewoman shows limits of women's status under Hamas On drug raids, she wears long robe and head scarf that reveals only her eyes. But Hamas also has boosted women's roles in athletics and TV.](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2007 to
Sep 30, 2008

32. [As Israeli Forces Withdraw From Northern Gaza, Hamas Celebrates Its Rocketry](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2007 to
Sep 30, 2008

33. [Israel chooses 450 prisoners to exchange for Gilad Schalit. Hamas rejects list without even seeing it](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2007 to
Sep 30, 2008

34. [Two Hamas gunmen die in shootout with Israelis](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2007 to
Sep 30, 2008

35. [HAMAS EXPECTS EGYPT TO CLOSE GAZA GAP TODAY](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2007 to
Sep 30, 2008

36. [Egypt battles to turn the tide as Hamas knocks new hole in wall](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2007 to Sep 30, 2008

37. [Huge rally in Gaza erupts in violence Hamas and Fatah battle on anniversary of Arafat's death](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2007 to Sep 30, 2008

38. [HAMAS AND OTHERS SABOTAGE PEACE](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2007 to Sep 30, 2008

39. [Hamas boy band seeks to bring harmony to Gaza](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2007 to Sep 30, 2008

40. [Israel withdraws from Gaza Strip; Hamas claims 'victory;' Israelis say deterrence objective achieved](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2007 to Sep 30, 2008

41. [Israeli missiles hit Hamas offices in Gaza](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2007 to Sep 30, 2008

42. [Schalit talks set to resume in Cairo this week - Israel . Hamas, Islamic Jihad threaten to end cease-fire](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2007 to
Sep 30, 2008

43. [Deadly gunfights mar Arafat memorial 7 killed, 80 hurt in Gaza as Fatah-Hamas clashes most violent in months](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2007 to
Sep 30, 2008

44. [Is resistance futile? Gaza begins to wonder But Hamas gains from Israeli attacks](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2007 to
Sep 30, 2008

45. [Israel allows in Palestinians fleeing from Hamas; Fatah fugitives taken to hospital or assisted in escape to Ramallah after a day of fighting](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2007 to
Sep 30, 2008

46. [Gaza fears Israeli push to smash Hamas MIDDLE EAST SUMMIT](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2007 to
Sep 30, 2008

47. [*Israel responds to Hamas rockets, killing 54*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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News

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Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2007 to
Sep 30, 2008

48. [*US: Mashaal's truce offer to Carter is meaningless. Ex-president brokers Hamas pledge to send letter from
Schalit to parents*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2007 to
Sep 30, 2008

49. [*Mashaal: Schalit is alive, Holocaust toll 'exaggerated'. Hamas leader offers agreement to stop civilian
attacks against Israel*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2007 to
Sep 30, 2008

50. [*Hamas attack may signal hardline stance before talks; Woman wounded as mortars, rockets fired into Israel*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2007 to
Sep 30, 2008

51. [*Egyptian troops wound 90 as Gazan protesters storm Rafah border crossing. 'Hamas responsible for the
riots,' Cairo diplomat declares*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2007 to

Sep 30, 2008

52. [*A distressing case of plus ça change The Weekend's TV INSIDE HAMAS SUN CHANNEL 4 TROPIC OF CAPRICORN SUN BBC2*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2007 to
Sep 30, 2008

53. [*As another Kassam hits Sderot , Livni urges IDF response. Hamas, calling attacks 'anti-national,' accuses Fatah of firing rockets to keep crossings closed*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2007 to
Sep 30, 2008

54. [*SPIRIT OF HOPELESSNESS HANGS OVER GAZA AS HAMAS STEPS UP ROCKET ATTACKS. POPULATION FEELS THE BRUNT OF ISRAELI RETALIATION*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2007 to
Sep 30, 2008

55. [*World - Hamas slams Livni party election win*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2007 to
Sep 30, 2008

56. [*Comment & Debate: Truce or bloodbath: Ignoring its own people's wishes in attacking Gaza, Israel leaves Hamas no choice but to fight back*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2007 to
Sep 30, 2008

57. [Israeli attacks take toll in Gaza; More than 60 dead in retaliation for Hamas rockets](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2007 to
Sep 30, 2008

58. [Gazans pour into Egypt after fence is blown up Gaping hole breaches Israel 's tight closure of border, gives a boost to Hamas.](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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News

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Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2007 to
Sep 30, 2008

59. [IN MEMORY OF YASSER ARAFAT On the third anniversary of the leader's death, a rally in his honour ends in chaos. Donald Macintyre reports Fatah and Hamas at war](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2007 to
Sep 30, 2008

60. [Massive forces sent to prevent Gazans from storming border. Defense officials fear planned Hamas 'human chain' today will flood into Israel](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2007 to
Sep 30, 2008

61. [Hamas vows more attacks Palestinians fire in air in celebration while U.S. , Abbas condemn massacre at Jerusalem seminary](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2007 to Sep 30, 2008

62. [*Alleged Hamas Activist Turns to 'The Israel Lobby'*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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News

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Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2007 to Sep 30, 2008

63. [*Hamas calls for shared border control with Egypt . 300,000 Gazans pour into Sinai after holes blasted in Rafah fence*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2007 to Sep 30, 2008

64. [*Role of Hamas in 'collective punishment'*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2007 to Sep 30, 2008

65. [*'Peace buried under Gaza rubble'; At least 61 Palestinians killed in Gaza Strip as Israeli forces pummel Hamas stronghold*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2007 to Sep 30, 2008

66. [*Gaza violence threatens peace process; 60 killed in attacks on Hamas. Intensified conflict may cause negotiations to collapse, Israelis and Palestinians say*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2007 to
Sep 30, 2008

67. [Israel kills 61 in Gaza in bloodiest day in years; Hamas rocket attacks blamed for provoking fighting](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2007 to
Sep 30, 2008

68. [Hungarian president: Peace process must continue. Peres says Hamas brings tragedy on its own people](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2007 to
Sep 30, 2008

69. [Middle East: Inside Gaza: Strike orders paralyze public services: Patients caught up in middle of Fatah and Hamas tug of war: One of the few journalists in Gaza reports on the Fatah-imposed doctors' strike in force last month for a series of exclusive Guardian films](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2007 to
Sep 30, 2008

70. [Amnesty report blames conditions in PA on Israel . Half of 330 Palestinians killed in '07 were civilians. IDF says Hamas bears direct responsibility. NGO Monitor: Report ignores context of Palestinian terror](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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News

Narrowed by
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Sep 30, 2008

71. [*Israel : Hizbullah deal may toughen Hamas demands for Schalit. Zahar: Kuntar's release will pave way for freeing prisoners with 'blood on their hands'*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2007 to Sep 30, 2008

72. [*Israeli forces kill two Hamas men in Gaza, wound dozens in West Bank raid*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2007 to Sep 30, 2008

73. [*Israel opens border to fleeing Fatah; 150 Palestinians lay down weapons*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2007 to Sep 30, 2008

74. [*Fatah fighters stripped of dignity*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2007 to Sep 30, 2008

75. [*They're dictators and terrorists - but look what clean streets!*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2007 to Sep 30, 2008

76. [*Gaza infighting sees 180 Palestinians flee to Israel*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2007 to Sep 30, 2008

77. [*Palestinian hostilities flare in Gaza*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2007 to Sep 30, 2008

78. [*Four dead as bloody Gaza clashes spill onto streets*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2007 to Sep 30, 2008

79. [*180 Palestinians flee to Israel after Gaza clashes*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2007 to Sep 30, 2008

80. [*Weekend in Hamastan*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2007 to Sep 30, 2008

81. [*Palestinian infighting claims 9*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2007 to Sep 30, 2008

82. [*The heat's on Abbas*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2007 to Sep 30, 2008

83. [*U.N. Border Force May Be All That Can Stop Chaos in Gaza OPINION*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2007 to Sep 30, 2008

84. [*INCOMPETENT OR CRUEL*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2007 to Sep 30, 2008

85. [*6 Palestinians Killed in Gaza At Fatah Rally*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2007 to Sep 30, 2008

86. [*New glossy magazine praises fighters*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2007 to Sep 30, 2008

87. [Gaza truce brings a sliver of hope](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2007 to Sep 30, 2008

88. [Militants exploit political opening in border](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2007 to Sep 30, 2008

89. [World - Israeli soldiers loot Palestinian charity](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2007 to Sep 30, 2008

90. [Pressed by Rice, Palestinian Leader Agrees to Return to Peace Talks With Israeli](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2007 to Sep 30, 2008

91. [Funeral turns into angry West Bank protest](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2007 to Sep 30, 2008

92. [*Gazans stream through widening border hole*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2007 to Sep 30, 2008

93. [*Gaza's deadly guardians*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2007 to Sep 30, 2008

94. [*What Olmert has to complete before exiting*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2007 to Sep 30, 2008

95. [*Eli Hurvitz: Our poor education is more dangerous than Hizbullah and Hamas Teva chairman: The Jewish state suffers from ignorance and thuggery.*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2007 to Sep 30, 2008

96. [*Abbas and Olmert to resume talks*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2007 to Sep 30, 2008

97. [*Palestinians smash through Egypt border*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2007 to Sep 30, 2008

98. [*Gazans raze wall at Egypt border Hordes rush in to buy food and fuel, then return home*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2007 to Sep 30, 2008

99. [*Infant among dead as Gaza blast kills seven people*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2007 to Sep 30, 2008

100. [*Two sides of the price tag for Schalit*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2007 to Sep 30, 2008

Hamas talks truce; attacks continue

Deseret Morning News (Salt Lake City)

April 22, 2008 Tuesday

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Length: 1264 words

Byline: Karin Laub Associated Press

Body

JERUSALEM -- Former President Jimmy Carter said Monday that the Islamic group **Hamas** was willing to accept the Jewish state as a "neighbor next door," but the militants did not match their upbeat words with concrete steps to halt violence.

Hamas, which advocates Israel's destruction, instead recycled previous offers, including a 10-year truce if Israel takes the unlikely step of withdrawing from the West Bank and Jerusalem first.

Hamas has repeatedly confounded observers with its conflicting messages. Actions on the ground -- seven rockets were fired on Israel from **Hamas**-ruled Gaza Monday, including one that wounded a 4-year-old boy -- contradicted the Islamic militant group's positive words about coexistence and a truce.

And a leader of the **Hamas** military wing, which carried out a twin suicide bombing on the Gaza border Saturday, said his group would step up attacks against Israel in coming days.

The salvo of rockets came despite a last-minute phone call from Carter, urging a one-month halt to attacks on Israel, to gain some international goodwill and defuse tensions.

"I did the best I could," Carter said of his conversation with **Hamas** supreme leader, Khaled Mashaal, pressing him to declare a one-month truce. "They turned me down, and I think they're wrong."

Carter, who delivered a speech in Jerusalem Monday summing up his visit, said top **Hamas** leaders told him during seven hours of talks in Damascus over the weekend that they are willing to live next to Israel.

Hours later, however, Mashaal sent mixed messages. He stressed that while the militants would accept a state in the 1967 borders, meaning alongside Israel, the group would never outright recognize the Jewish state.

The Bush administration and Israel, which shun **Hamas** as a terrorist group, have criticized the Carter mission as misguided. In Washington, a State Department official said Monday that it does not appear **Hamas** has changed its positions.

In Jerusalem, Carter defended his trip, saying peace in the region will be possible only if Israel and the U.S. start talking to **Hamas** and Syria, which supports several militant groups. He also called on the Bush administration to push harder to renew Israeli-Syrian peace talks.

"The present strategy of excluding **Hamas** and excluding Syria is just not working," said Carter, who brokered a historic 1979 peace treaty between Israel and Egypt.

Hamas talks truce; attacks continue

Analysts said Hamas apparently decided to send Carter off largely empty-handed, despite the possibility he might have paved an opening to a hostile West, because it prefers doing business with leaders in the region who can deliver concrete achievements. Egypt has been shuttling between Israel and Hamas for nearly two years trying to broker a cease-fire, a prisoner swap and an opening of Gaza's border crossings.

Over the weekend, Carter met twice with Hamas' five-member politburo, headed by Mashaal. Carter said he won a written pledge from Hamas to accept any peace deal with Israel, even if Hamas disagrees with some of the terms, as long as it's approved in a Palestinian referendum.

Carter said Hamas leaders told him they're also ready to accept the Jewish state's right to "live as a neighbor next door in peace" one day. Since its founding 21 years ago, Hamas has carried out scores of suicide attacks in Israel and has fired hundreds of rockets from Gaza at Israeli border towns.

The pledge did not reflect a new Hamas position, though it's significant that it was made in writing. Hamas leaders have said in the past they would establish "peace in stages" if Israel were to withdraw to the borders it held before the 1967 Mideast War. Hamas has been evasive about how it sees the final borders of a Palestinian state, and has not abandoned its official call for Israel's destruction.

The Hamas promise does not say who would participate in a peace referendum. Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza would be far more likely to approve a deal than exiles in camps in Lebanon and Syria, especially if a treaty does not affirm the "right of return" of refugees to homes in what is now Israel.

A vast majority of Israelis see the repatriation of millions of Palestinians as a threat to the Jewish state's survival, because Jews eventually could be outnumbered.

Mashaal praised Carter for ignoring the broad international boycott of Hamas, which is viewed by Israel and the West as a terrorist organization. "That doesn't mean we agree on all things," the Hamas leader said of Carter. "But we appreciate this brave voice, coming from the West, and coming from America."

Despite the warm words, Hamas rejected Carter's appeal to halt rocket fire on Israel for a month and to speed up the release of a captured Israeli soldier, as a show of good faith.

Mashaal wouldn't budge on the rockets, even during the last-minute phone call by Carter Monday morning.

Carter said that in that call, Mashaal insisted on a reciprocal cease-fire.

"I told them (Hamas), 'Don't wait for reciprocation, just do it unilaterally,' Carter said. "This would bring a lot of credit to you around the world, doing a humane thing."

Seven rockets hit Israel on Monday, but other militant groups claimed responsibility not Hamas. In one strike, a 4-year-old boy was hurt in the shoulder in the town of Sderot on Gaza's border.

Also, a leader of the Hamas military wing said attacks on Israel would intensify.

The leader, identified as Abu Jandal, told the Hamas-linked newspaper Al Risala that a suicide bombing at an Israeli position on the Gaza border on Saturday was just a warmup. In the attack, Hamas militants blew up two jeeps carrying hundreds of kilograms (pounds) of explosives, wounding 13 soldiers.

"The previous attacks were just a walk in the park," he told the newspaper.

Concerning a prisoner swap, Carter said the current indirect talks between Israel and Hamas, via Egypt, were making only very slow progress. He said Israel is willing, in principle, to free 1,000 prisoners for Cpl. Gilad Shalit, captured by Hamas-allied militants in 2006. However, so far Israel has only approved 71 names from a list of 450 prisoners suggested by Hamas.

At this pace, Carter said, the negotiations could drag on for years.

Hamas talks truce; attacks continue

He proposed that Hamas agree to a release of women, minors and Hamas legislators in the first phase, in order to speed up the swap, but was turned down.

Mouin Rabbani, an independent analyst, said Hamas used Carter to convey the message that, under certain conditions, it is willing to accept a two-state solution. "Where he demanded specific actions, they didn't respond because he wasn't in a position to deliver anything in return," Rabbani said.

In Washington, the State Department said there is no indication that Hamas wants peace with Israel. "It is pretty clear to us that there is no acceptance on the part of Hamas of any kind of negotiated settlement," said deputy spokesman Tom Casey.

Casey said there had been contradictory statements from Hamas officials over whether they would accept the result of a referendum on a peace deal. Earlier Monday, a senior Hamas official in Gaza, Sami Abu Zuhri, said Hamas would not necessarily accept the outcome of a referendum.

Casey also refuted Carter's insistence that no one in the State Department had advised him against meeting with Hamas officials, saying that Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs David Welch had specifically done so in a telephone conversation in late March.

Still, the State Department is open to hearing from Carter about the talks, Casey said.

Carter said he would write a report on his trip and send it to the Bush administration.

Load-Date: April 22, 2008

End of Document

Hamas's apologist

The Jerusalem Post

April 22, 2008 Tuesday

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Section: OPINION; Pg. 13

Length: 729 words

Highlight: Editorial

Body

Jimmy Carter, the 83-year-old former US president, has been on a "study mission" to our region, visiting Israel, the Palestinian Authority, Egypt, Syria and Jordan. On Monday, back in Jerusalem, Carter announced what he'd learned: The Arabs want peace; the problem is Israel.

Carter met with Hamas leaders in Cairo and Damascus and held a joint session with both factions in Damascus. He came out of those sessions convinced that Hamas wants peace.

The former president sounds like a moral relativist, for whom there are no universal truths by which to judge behavior. This is manifested in the juxtapositions he so effortlessly makes. Speaking Monday, he denounced the Palestinians' "despicable terrorism" against Sderot. Yet when Israel tracks down and arrests the "despicable" terrorists, Carter gets equally passionate about the need to release them - 11,600 (Carter's numbers) now in Israeli prisons, "many of them women and children."

To Carter's muddled thinking, Palestinians and Israelis are equally responsible for the conflict. After all, Palestinians launch Kassams into Israeli kindergartens, and Israelis live over the Green Line.

Since Annapolis, Carter claims, there's been no real progress because of "settlements" and "roadblocks" and because Israel has turned Gaza into one big prison. That Jews also have claims in Judea and Samaria, that checkpoints have proven to keep terrorists from blowing up buses and cafes, that every last Israeli soldier and "settler" has been yanked out of Gaza - none of this turned up in Carter's study mission.

But he did conclude that "despair leads some people on both sides to resort to violence."

Carter professes to understand why Israel is "reluctant" to negotiate with Hamas. The organization refuses to renounce violence, has "yet" to recognize Israel and doesn't accept the 1993 Oslo Accords. But Carter forgives all this. He "understands" that Hamas feels "some violence is necessary" to keep the Palestinian issue alive, and that when the organization is sidelined, the "cycle of violence" is exacerbated.

Carter spent seven hours with Hamas leaders during which they told him they would accept Israel's existence if it withdrew to the 1949 Armistice Lines; if any deal reached between Prime Minister Ehud Olmert and PA President Mahmoud Abbas was approved in a Palestinian referendum; and if Hamas had the prerogative to disagree with the referendum results.

Hamas's apologist

To sum up Carter's assessment: Hamas wants peace. It is ready now for a cease-fire - even one that doesn't immediately include the West Bank. It also supports the Arab League peace plan that could flood Israel with millions of refugees - a scheme no Israeli government could accept.

That Hamas carried out an attack against the Kerem Shalom border crossing on Saturday, wounding 13 soldiers - while its leaders were telling Carter they supposedly wanted peace - is irrelevant, Carter insists, because the mission had been planned "months in advance."

WE ARE grateful to Carter for raising the issue of Gilad Schalit with his interlocutors. The former president promises that Hamas will now allow the kidnapped soldier to write a second letter to his parents. At the same time, he should know that Palestinian prisoners in Israeli jails have routine access to the Red Cross and can write to their loved ones even without presidential intervention.

Carter, of all people, ought also to know how far Israel is prepared to go for peace. It ceded every inch of the Sinai to Anwar Sadat. But the Egyptian leader first demonstrated that he genuinely sought an accommodation with Israel.

When King Hussein embraced Yitzhak Rabin, a peace treaty resulted 100 days later.

One could imagine a situation in which Israel would talk with Hamas. After all, when Yasser Arafat claimed to be ready to end the "armed struggle," Israelis desperately tried to reach an accord with him. A Hamas that is prepared for real compromise will always find Israel ready.

Shortly after meeting with Carter, though, a Hamas spokesman declared that the Islamists remained committed to "resistance" and opposed Egyptian cease-fire proposals.

Carter's "study mission" failed to uncover the obvious: Hamas is a toxic opponent of peace. Too bad that in the twilight of his public life, Carter has undermined the relative moderates among the Palestinians and become an apologist for violent religious fanatics.

Load-Date: October 4, 2011

A YEAR RESHAPES HAMAS AND GAZA

The New York Times

June 15, 2008 Sunday

Late Edition - Final

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Section: Section A; Column 0; Foreign Desk; Pg. 1

Length: 1712 words

Byline: By ETHAN BRONNER; Taghreed el-Khodary contributed reporting.

Dateline: GAZA

Body

Cursing God in public here -- a fairly common event in this benighted and besieged strip of Palestinian land -- can now lead to prison. So can kissing in public. A judge ruled last week that a bank could not collect its contracted interest on a 10-year-old loan because Islam forbids charging interest.

One year ago, gunmen from **Hamas**, an Islamist anti-Israel group, took over Gaza, shooting some of their more secular Fatah rivals in the knees and tossing one off a building. Israel and the West imposed a blockade, hoping to squeeze the new rulers from power. Yet today **Hamas** has spread its authority across all aspects of life, including the judiciary. It is fully in charge. Gazans have not, as Israel and the United States hoped, risen up against it.

"The Palestinian criminal code says there should be no improper behavior in the streets," the new chief justice, Abed al-Raouf Halabi, explained in an interview, pulling the code book from his breast pocket.

"It is up to judges to interpret what that means," he said. "For us that means no cursing, no drinking and no kissing in public. In the past these things were ignored."

Gaza has always been poor and pious, distinct from the more secular and better off West Bank. But a year of **Hamas** rule has made it more so. The notion of Gaza as an enduringly separate entity is solidifying, making it less likely that Palestinians might agree even among themselves on peace with Israel.

Compared with a year ago here in Gaza, more **women** are covered, more men are bearded, Internet sites are filtered and non-**Hamas** public gatherings are largely banned. With the Israeli closure greatly reducing the supply of fuel, spare parts and other vital goods, less sewage is treated and more fish are contaminated. Gazans feel trapped and helpless.

But assessing exactly how bad it is -- how angry or loyal people feel, how effective or cruel the closure has been, how truly impoverished Gaza has become -- is a delicate and politically fraught activity as three recent days of reporting here and dozens of interviews showed.

Those who reject Israel's policy as evidence of its ill will make it sound like Gaza has turned into Somalia. It has not. At the same time, those who consider it their role to defend Israel in all it does make it sound as if the 70 truckloads of goods that Israel permits in daily have prevented any real suffering. They have not.

A YEAR RESHAPES HAMAS AND GAZA

Even more politically complicated is the question of how the closure has affected Hamas's authority and popularity. Many in the West and Israel would very much like to believe Hamas is in trouble. And it is easy to find people here who hate the government and its black-clad police, even among some who voted for Hamas in the January 2006 elections that gave it a majority in the Palestinian legislature and led to 18 months of tense power sharing before the takeover.

But those in Israel who watch most closely -- Arabic speaking security officials -- say that while the closure is pressing Hamas, it is not jeopardizing it.

"Gaza is totally under Hamas's control," said one of three such major officials, all of whom agreed to speak only if identified in this vague manner, and all of whose assessments were the same.

"What happened in Gaza a year ago was not really a coup," a second official said. "Hamas's takeover was a kind of natural process. Hamas was so strong, so deeply rooted in Palestinian society through its activities in the economy, education, culture and health care, and Fatah was so weak, so corrupt, that the takeover was like wind blowing over a moth-infested structure."

For months before the takeover, life in Gaza, with its 1.5 million inhabitants, was deeply insecure as Fatah and Hamas gunmen fought for control of the streets and institutions. Hamas had a parliamentary majority but Fatah, through the presidency of Mahmoud Abbas, still officially controlled the security apparatuses and ministries.

Now, even many of those who detest Hamas say that security has returned to daily life as a result of its takeover.

"Hamas is strong and brutal but very good at governing," observed Eyad Serraj, a British-trained psychiatrist who runs a group of mental health clinics and is a secular opponent of Hamas. "They are handing out coupons for gas. They have gotten people to pay for car registration. They are getting people to pay their electricity bills after years of everyone refusing to. The city and the hospitals are cleaner than in many years."

While the West Bank-based government of President Abbas bars its nearly 80,000 employees from showing up at work in Gaza to protest the takeover, it continues to pay their salaries here. With no work and a steady wage, there is a once-a-month rush on the A.T.M.'s and a fair amount of disposable income spent in handsome coffee shops surrounded by Poinciana trees now in bloom. New restaurants have opened recently to take advantage of this phenomenon.

The relative scarcity of goods makes it both harder and easier for Hamas to maintain control. It is harder because the basic role of government, to provide for its people, is a challenge. It is easier, however, because what little comes through is inevitably channeled through Hamas, which collects a tax on it.

Many of the goods in Gaza now come through smuggler tunnels from the Egyptian Sinai. There are scores of such tunnels and while the Israeli and American authorities have complained that the tunnels provide a pathway for arms, their more central role is for computers, cigarettes, gasoline and clothing. Hamas taxes everything that comes through.

At a Gaza City clothing store for women and girls, the owner, Wael, 31, who considered it unsafe to give his last name, said that while he used to get his goods from Israel and Turkey, now everything in his shop comes from Egypt in flour sacks smuggled in the tunnels. The markup on a bundle of \$5,000 worth of goods is \$3,000, he said, some of it for the smuggler, some of it for taxes to Hamas.

"Everything that has happened here has been a terrible mistake," he says of the election victory and subsequent takeover. "It is a mistake for Islamists to get into power. But what can we do? Hamas is even stronger than a year ago. They can take me and put me away whenever they want."

That is apparently what happened to Mohamed Zughbur, a Fatah supporter who was taken from his home two months ago by Hamas forces, imprisoned and tortured and accused of collaboration with Israel, according to Moustafa Ibrahim, a researcher for the Palestinian Independent Commission for Citizens' Rights.

A YEAR RESHAPES HAMAS AND GAZA

He said that when his organization complained to the Hamas authorities, they pointed to the United States and the Guantanamo Bay prison; a collaborator, they said, can not be treated with kid gloves. He and other advocates say that Gaza was not exactly a model of individual liberty when Fatah was in power, but the changes of the past year are real and likely to get worse.

While few dispute that Hamas has changed Gaza, a more complicated question is whether ruling Gaza has changed Hamas. Many in the movement and even outside it say that it is less ideological than it was at its founding or even a year ago.

Whereas Hamas says it will never recognize Israel, its leaders say that if Israel returned to the 1967 borders, granted a Palestinian state in Gaza, the West Bank and East Jerusalem and dealt with the rights of refugees, Hamas would declare a long-term truce. This is not that different from what the rest of the Arab world says or the Fatah position in peace talks with Israel.

Jawad Tibi, a health minister under the Fatah government and a Fatah advocate in the southern Gaza town of Khan Yunis, is angry at Hamas. Still, he said, "Hamas is talking about a 30-year truce which is no different really from what we want. Hamas is Fatah with beards."

Sayed Abu Musameh is one of the founders of Hamas and now a member of the legislature. One of the old guard moderates, he is also on the board of Hamas's first research organization just opening here. It is called Beit al Hikma, the House of Wisdom, and seeks to build bridges with the West.

"We are not seeking all of Palestine, only the '67 borders," he said. "Then there would be a truce for a very long period to pave the way for the next generation to resolve the issues we are paralyzed to resolve."

He added that Hamas's rocket attacks on southern Israeli communities are a mistake and that the group's links to Iran are out of necessity, not desire. He said that while the top Hamas leadership did not agree on these last two points, he was not the only advocate to believe them and more would do so if there were encouragement.

Americans who have visited the top Hamas leader in Syria, Khaled Meshal, including former President Jimmy Carter and Henry Siegman of the U.S./Middle East Project, say a real change is under way, especially regarding the group's willingness to live next to Israel. So far, few American or Israeli officials have taken their assertion seriously.

Indeed, Israel's security officials who seem realistic about Hamas's control in Gaza dismiss the idea that Hamas has changed in any fundamental way worth Israel's time. They see the talk of a truce as tactical, not strategic, especially given the toxic words of its leaders and media and the continuing rocket and mortar attacks on Israel.

As a result, Gaza seems set to continue as is for some time -- isolated, polluted, unhappy, days filled with waiting on line for provisions, but not explosive.

Noha Abu Ramadan, an office manager, typifies Hamas's supporters. Covered in Muslim modesty, she efficiently works a telephone, fax machine and cellphone while greeting a pair of visitors.

"Isn't it nice to have such light traffic?" she joked about the lack of fuel. "It keeps the accident rate down." Asked her view on how things were going, she grew more serious.

"Israel is trying to pressure us to make us forget that the real problem is the occupation," she said. "Hamas was elected like any government and never given the chance to govern. Life is hard here but it has never exactly been perfect. We can take it. The Koran teaches that in the end we will be victorious."

Graphic

PHOTOS: Palestinians stood in line to fill gas canisters in Rafah, on the Gaza Strip. An Israeli blockade has reduced supplies in the territory. (PHOTOGRAPH BY ABID KATIB/GETTY IMAGES)(A12)

The new chief justice, Abed al-Raouf Halabi, says the criminal code calls for "no improper behavior" like kissing in public.

Members of the **Hamas** Naval Police patrol the Port of Gaza in Gaza City. Some credit **Hamas** with improving security. (PHOTOGRAPHS BY NAAMAN OMAR/RAPPORT, FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES)(A12)

Load-Date: June 15, 2008

End of Document

Israelis abduct Hamas chief

The Sunday Times (London)

September 30, 2007

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Section: OVERSEAS NEWS; News; Pg. 26

Length: 445 words

Byline: Marie Colvin and Uzi Mahnaimi Tel Aviv

Body

THE SECRET Israeli raid into the heart of Hamas-controlled Gaza could hardly have been more audacious.

It was still light when Mahawash al-Qadi, a senior officer in Hamas's militia, drove home from Friday prayers three weeks ago at about 7pm. A broken-down lorry blocked his route so he turned into another track.

Neighbours said he would have had no inkling of what was to come: his wife and mother were with him, and his own men control security along Gaza's eastern border with Israel.

Al-Qadi's path was blocked again after a sack of potatoes was spilt into the path of his Subaru. Suddenly four men dressed in the black T-shirts, blue camouflage trousers and black boots of the Executive Force, the Hamas police, leapt into the road ahead of him.

But they were no allies: they were Israeli special forces in disguise. They bundled the women out of the car and drove away at speed. The women said later they heard a helicopter taking off within moments. Al-Qadi has not been heard of since, but is assumed to be in Israeli custody.

His capture nearly caused another rupture between Hamas -which seized control of Gaza in June after five days of bloodshed that left 110 dead -and Fatah, the secular organisation it ousted. Hamas mistakenly believed Fatah had reopened the conflict by kidnapping al-Qadi and orders were given to retaliate.

Al-Qadi had been a senior operative in Hamas since the first Palestinian intifada, or uprising, in the late 1980s. He led night-time patrols on the Israeli border, supervised Hamas's explosives and rocket manufacture and had taken over as the local militia chief.

To the Israelis, however, the most interesting thing about him was that he ran the zone where Palestinians had forced Gilad Shalit, 21, an Israeli soldier, through a tunnel under the border in June 2006. Hamas wants its prisoners in Israel released in return for Shalit's freedom.

The Gaza operation signalled a robust new approach by the Israel Defence Forces (IDF) under Ehud Barak, the recently appointed defence minister. The raid was a success but its goal -the release of Shalit -failed. When Hamas realised they had been tricked, they raced to Shalit's hiding place in southern Gaza, according to Gaza sources.

Al-Qadi knew Shalit's location so the captive was moved before a rescue mission could be mounted.

Israelis abduct Hamas chief

The new approach has its roots in Barak's own unconventional career. In 1973 he disguised himself as a buxom blonde and led a commando unit into Beirut to kill Palestinian officials in their beds.

He shows no sign of backing down in his hunt for Shalit. "The moment of a large, complicated and prolonged operation in Gaza is approaching," he warned last week.

Load-Date: September 30, 2007

End of Document

Hamas tightens grip on Gaza Strip

The Telegraph-Journal (New Brunswick)

August 5, 2008 Tuesday

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Section: NEWS;NEWS; Pg. A4

Length: 761 words

Byline: Karin Laub THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Body

Hamas claimed Monday to have "uprooted" the last major pocket of armed resistance to its 14-month rule in the Gaza Strip, saying it seized mortars, grenade launchers and other weapons from a once powerful clan allied with the rival Fatah movement.

Dozens of members of the Hilles clan were being held by the Islamic militants of Hamas, while dozens more who fled to Israel to avoid capture during weekend fighting were given asylum Monday in the Fatah-ruled West Bank.

In a small sign of defiance, Hilles families sent children outdoors wrapped in bright yellow Fatah flags, saying they hoped the sight would annoy Hamas fighters patrolling the neighbourhood on foot and in pickup trucks.

Saturday's attack on the Hilles stronghold in Gaza City's Shijaiyeh neighbourhood, which killed 11 people and wounded dozens, marked a fresh setback for Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas, the head of Fatah.

Abbas' leadership in the West Bank already was weakened by his failure to win concessions from Israel in peace talks. The defeat of the Hilles clan, one of Fatah's last high-profile bastions in Gaza, underscored Hamas' tight control in the coastal territory seized by its fighters in bloody fighting last year.

Abbas still has a base of support in Gaza, including tens of thousands who draw government salaries from the West Bank, but the movement has been stripped of offices, media outlets and, most importantly, its armed forces.

Islam Shahwan, spokesman for Hamas police, said in an interview that the weekend raid - the bloodiest Hamas-Fatah fighting since the Gaza takeover - sent a "clear message to all concerned."

"We do believe this was the last stronghold in Gaza," he said, referring to potential Hamas opponents among the territory's myriad clans. "This stronghold had to be uprooted."

Shahwan said that more than 100 Hilles men had been detained and that Hamas forces seized a large weapons stockpile, including mortars, assault rifles, land mines and rocket-propelled grenade launchers.

The Hilles clan, native to Gaza and one of the largest in the territory, has thousands of members. About 4,000 live in the Shijaiyeh area, close to Israel's heavily guarded border with Gaza.

More than 180 clansmen ran toward Israeli positions Saturday afternoon when it became clear Hamas was about to take control of the neighbourhood. After some delays, in part because of Hamas fire toward the border, Israel let in the fugitives, including wounded men.

Hamas tightens grip on Gaza Strip

A two-day odyssey ensued, with Abbas wavering whether he should allow the refugees to settle in the West Bank. He ruled out the idea Sunday, arguing Fatah needed to maintain a presence in Gaza and could not abandon the territory to Hamas.

More than 30 Hilles men were sent back to Gaza, and Hamas immediately arrested about half of them. Fearing Hamas retribution, a dozen in that group - still wearing the dark blue coveralls given them by Israeli troops - stayed in an Israeli-controlled buffer zone just inside Gaza.

The Israeli army then decided those returning to Gaza would face imminent danger and said Hilles men should not be sent back against their will.

In the end, 92 Hilles men, including the 12 who waited at the border, were taken to the West Bank town of Jericho on Monday. Sixty others went back to Gaza voluntarily, 16 remained in Israeli hospitals and 13 were in Israeli custody, the Israeli military said.

After nightfall Monday, more Hilles refugees arrived at an Israeli checkpoint on the outskirts of Jericho. Dressed in training pants and white undershirts, they were searched and then handed over to Palestinian intelligence officers in Jericho.

Sufian Abu Zaydeh, a Gaza native and former Palestinian cabinet minister from Fatah, said the forced exile of the Fatah supporters was a sign of Gaza's desperation.

"When a man stands between two choices: to be killed by his people or to be arrested by his enemy, and he reaches a conclusion that it is better to be arrested by his enemy, it shows you how cruel the situation is in Gaza," he told Israel's Army Radio.

In the Shijaiyeh district, the weekend fighting left some of the clan members' homes in shambles. Residents showed reporters two homes they claimed were ransacked by Hamas police.

Clothes were strewn on the floor, china cabinets knocked over, TV screens shot through with bullets, and glass tables and windows smashed. Several women showed ripped photographs of loved ones and said computers, money and gold jewelry were stolen. One home had "Al Qassam special unit" scrawled across the wall in spray paint, a reference to Hamas' armed wing.

Load-Date: August 5, 2008

Gaza is Hamas' 'habitat of inhumanity'

The Atlanta Journal-Constitution

May 9, 2008 Friday

Main Edition

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**The Atlanta
Journal-Constitution**

Section: @ISSUE; Pg. 15A

Length: 528 words

Byline: MARTY N. KOGON, STEVEN A. RAKITT

For the Journal-Constitution

Body

Former President Jimmy Carter wrote that "the world is witnessing a terrible human rights crime in Gaza" ("Innocents caught in the cross fire," @issue, May 8). But the world should bear witness to the fact that Israel and the United States are the misplaced objects of this accusation.

The situation in Gaza certainly cries out for moral outrage at the true perpetrators of human suffering. We should know that the despairing plight of the Gazans is a strategic political and military objective of Hamas, a means to achieving its goal for the destruction of the state of Israel. Why else would Hamas:

- * ensure that its people suffer by siphoning off fuel and electricity provided by Israel itself;
- * expose women and children to the risks of injury and death by placing rocket launching pads in courtyards and schools;
- * steal untold millions of dollars in humanitarian aid in order to acquire thousands of weapons or to enrich the leadership;
- * incite young children to martyrdom as part of its educational curriculum and television programming.

The people of Gaza are pawns in Hamas' war against Israel. Hamas uses teenagers to incite riots, manipulates developmentally disabled young adults to don suicide belts and fabricates the reasons behind the deaths of innocent people.

Hamas knows well the 60-year history of Israel's statehood, that Israel has never initiated acts of war but has only resorted to defensive and retaliatory measures when provoked or attacked. Hamas knows that Israel will make concessions for peace.

Gaza is Hamas' 'habitat of inhumanity'

That is the time when Hamas will strike, prompting Israel to retaliate, and then parading the suffering people of Gaza as hapless victims before the cameras, in order to provoke denunciations by Israel's critics. There is no sincerity behind Hamas' agreements for a cease fire. These are just tactical steps for rearming itself militarily and repositioning itself politically.

Israel wrestles with the moral dilemmas of defending her people while trying to minimize Palestinian suffering. She weighs the hardships created by constructing a safety barrier or placing roadblocks against the security needs of her citizens. She brings medical patients from Gaza into Israel even though she knows that some "patients" have used their medical passes to commit suicide bombings. For Hamas there is no moral dilemma. Israel must go, and if Gazans are to be sacrificed in the process, so be it.

President Carter, sadly, fails to recognize that Hamas in Gaza has built a habitat of inhumanity.

Hamas is consumed by its hatred for Israel and obsessed by a religious calling that is causing it to pull down the pillars of state upon its own people.

It must be held morally accountable for the consequences of its actions.

President Carter and too many other people are blind to the evil and corruption that is Hamas.

Let us hope that their sight will be restored. They will then see an Israel that is striving to live in peace with its Palestinian and Arab neighbors, where the light of hope and prosperity may embrace all the peoples in the region.

* Marty N. Kogon is chairman of the board and Steven A. Rakitt is president of the Jewish Federation of Greater Atlanta.

Graphic

Photo: Marty N. Kogon is chairman of the board of the Jewish Federation of Greater Atlanta./ImageData* ImageData*

Photo: Steven A. Rakitt is president of the Jewish Federation of Greater Atlanta./ImageData*

Load-Date: May 9, 2008

Hamas raids compound of rivals; 11 are killed

The International Herald Tribune

September 17, 2008 Wednesday

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Section: NEWS; Pg. 2

Length: 599 words

Byline: Taghreed El-Khodary and Isabel Kershner - The New York Times Media Group

Dateline: GAZA

Body

Ten members of a large Palestinian clan, including a one-year-old infant, and a **Hamas** police officer were killed late Monday and early Tuesday when **Hamas** forces clashed with gunmen from the family in its compound here, witnesses said.

The assault on the powerful Dagmush clan, notorious for both militant and criminal activity, marked an apex in the campaign by **Hamas**, the Islamic group that rules Gaza, to impose internal order, and it was welcomed by many ordinary people here.

Earlier Monday, a member of the clan shot and killed another **Hamas** policeman while resisting arrest in the old market area of Gaza, providing a pretext for the subsequent raid by **Hamas** on the Dagmush compound in the Sabra neighborhood of the city.

About 45 Dagmush members were wounded, including several **women** who were shot in the knees by **Hamas**, relatives said.

Although hundreds of potential fighters from the clan remain at large, **Hamas** is believed to have dealt the family a severe blow. The strongman Mumtaz Dagmush, who leads the Army of Islam, a Qaeda-inspired militia in Gaza, was said to be badly wounded and receiving treatment within the family compound.

Witnesses added that **Hamas** had confiscated three truckloads of weapons from the compound, and that its forces were in control of the neighborhood and were searching for more.

The Army of Islam was the group that kidnapped the BBC correspondent Alan Johnston, who was released in July 2007 after 16 weeks in captivity.

Together with **Hamas** and the Popular Resistance Committees, a militia sponsored by another branch of the Dagmush family, the Army of Islam also took responsibility for capturing an Israeli soldier, Corporal Gilad Shalit, in a cross-border raid in June 2006.

Hamas is still holding Shalit and wants to exchange him for hundreds of Palestinian prisoners from Israeli jails, including many convicted of deadly terrorist attacks.

Hamas raids compound of rivals 11 are killed

The Army of Islam has been blamed for a series of attacks in Gaza on Internet cafés, music stores and other Western-style places of entertainment. More generally, the Dagmush clan is infamous for dealing in drug and weapons.

It was also considered the last large clan challenging Hamas authority in Gaza after Hamas cracked down in early August on the Hillis clan that is loyal to the rival Fatah faction.

After the crushing of the Hillis clan, Mahmoud Zahar, a senior Hamas figure in Gaza, said that the Dagmush's comeuppance was "only a matter of time."

The latest battle centered on two buildings in the Sabra neighborhood.

Inside Mumtaz Dagmush's home Tuesday afternoon, blood and brain matter was still splattered on the tiles. Relatives said that one of Mumtaz Dagmush's brothers, Ibrahim, 18, and two cousins had been "executed," shot in the head.

Many children were trapped in the houses; relatives said the infant had also been killed by Hamas fire.

A neighbor, Radwan Issa, 30, who used to work for the pro-Fatah authority in Gaza, said he was shocked by the actions of Hamas. "What they did was brutal," he said.

But many Gazans expressed relief.

"Nobody is above the law," said Muhammad Fares, 54, a businessman, describing the Dagmush clan as killers and drug dealers. "For this I give Hamas credit. I feel safer now."

Hamas took over Gaza last year, routing the pro-Fatah forces loyal to the Palestinian president, Mahmoud Abbas.

Separately, Abbas, whose authority is now limited to the West Bank, was scheduled to meet with Prime Minister Ehud Olmert of Israel on Tuesday night in Jerusalem for talks on a peace agreement.

**

Taghreed El-Khodary reported from Gaza, and Isabel Kershner from Jerusalem.

Load-Date: September 18, 2008

Did crisis become a Hamas PR victory?

The Jerusalem Post

January 22, 2008 Tuesday

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Section: NEWS; Pg. 1

Length: 559 words

Byline: KHALED ABU TOAMEH

Highlight: ANALYSIS

Body

As far as some Palestinian Authority leaders are concerned, Israel has handed **Hamas** a public relations victory by decreasing fuel supplies to the Gaza Strip in response to the rocket and mortar attacks.

The PA leadership in Ramallah was hoping that the latest crisis would trigger an intifada against **Hamas** in the Gaza Strip.

Some of PA President Mahmoud Abbas's top aides were convinced that the countdown to **Hamas**'s collapse would begin immediately after large parts of the Gaza Strip were plunged into darkness Sunday night.

But the PA leaders were in for an unpleasant surprise.

Instead of seeing anti-**Hamas** demonstrators, the PA officials in the Mukata presidential compound got televised footage of children and **women** holding candles in the dark streets of Gaza City.

Al-Jazeera and other Arab TV networks carried live coverage of the peaceful protesters, many of whom blamed not only Israel, but the PA government and the rest of the Arab countries for their plight.

The pictures coming out of the Gaza Strip were so damning for the PA that some of its representatives accused Al-Jazeera of serving **Hamas**'s interests and inciting against Abbas.

To add fuel to the fire, Al-Jazeera also provided a platform to several commentators and analysts who lashed out at Abbas, accusing him of "collusion" with Israel.

They also took Abbas to task for failing to suspend peace talks with Israel in response to Israel's punitive measures.

Almost all of those who appeared on the various Arab TV stations refrained from blaming **Hamas**.

As far as a majority of Palestinians and Arabs are concerned, the suffering of the 1.5 million Palestinians in the Gaza Strip is largely the result of a plot concocted by Israel, the US and their allies in Ramallah to bring down the **Hamas** government and extract political concessions from the Palestinians.

The fact that the Palestinians in the Gaza Strip have not taken to the streets to demand the resignation of the **Hamas** government shows that the Islamist movement's power there remains as steady as ever.

Did crisis become a Hamas PR victory?

The talk about Hamas's dwindling popularity has once again proven to be nothing but wishful thinking.

Exactly two years after Hamas won the parliamentary elections, there is still a majority of Palestinians, especially in the Gaza Strip, who identify with the movement and its ideology.

The tens of thousands of Palestinians who participated in rallies marking Hamas's 20th anniversary several weeks ago show that the movement remains as popular as ever. In contrast, Fatah was unable to attract large crowds when it celebrated its 43rd anniversary earlier this month.

PA officials did not conceal their dismay over Hamas's "manipulation" of the suffering of the Palestinians to score points among the Arab and Islamic masses.

They said Israel made a "mistake" by resorting to collective punishment instead of going after those directly involved in the firing of rockets and mortars. Some of them even went as far as accusing Hamas of staging the entire crisis for political gain.

In an attempt to counter the Hamas propaganda machine, Abbas dispatched his prime minister, Salaam Fayad, to a number of EU countries to try to persuade them to exert pressure on Israel to ease restrictions on the Gaza Strip. Abbas also announced that he was behind Israel's decision late Monday to allow diesel fuel and medicine into the Gaza Strip.

Graphic

Photo: WOMEN AND CHILDREN in Ramallah hold a candle-light vigil yesterday in support of Gazans whose electricity has been curtailed. Have the sanctions led to a resurgence in Hamas popularity? (Credit: Muhammad Muheisen/AP)

Load-Date: October 4, 2011

Will Carter's Hamas foray bear fruit?

Christian Science Monitor

April 22, 2008, Tuesday

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Section: WORLD; Pg. 7

Length: 973 words

Byline: Joshua Mitnick Correspondent of The Christian Science Monitor

Dateline: Jerusalem

Body

After defying the US-led boycott on Hamas by meeting its leaders in Damascus, Syria, former President Jimmy Carter told Israelis in Jerusalem Monday that the Islamist militants assured him they would respect a peace treaty ratified by the Palestinian public.

Despite this stated shift in Hamas's rejection of a peace treaty with Israel, the Nobel Peace Prize laureate cautioned that he is not about to coax Israel and Hamas together in the same way he shepherded Israelis and Egyptians to their watershed peace treaty in 1979.

"I don't ever intend to be a mediator between any of the disputing groups ... that's not my goal," he said in a speech. "I don't have any expectation that I would be an acceptable spokesperson for either the US or Israel."

At the end of his Middle East tour, the remark highlights a key question about President Carter's freelance diplomacy: What value is there to talks with groups like Hamas - called a "terrorist organization" by the US and Israel - when the messenger himself does not speak on anyone's behalf?

Israel and Hamas already have a channel of talks via Egypt, which is being used to negotiate a prisoner swap to free Israeli Cpl. Gilad Shalit from nearly two years of captivity in Gaza. The Egyptians are also thought to be mediating talks on a cease-fire and the reopening of the border between Gaza and Egypt.

Carter, who was snubbed by Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert on the trip, reported that Hamas rejected his suggestion that it declare a unilateral truce with Israel and free Corporal Shalit in return for the release of jailed Hamas political leaders and Palestinian women and children prisoners. But, he said, Hamas did agree to forward a letter from Shalit to his parents and to a two-stage prisoner exchange in which the captured soldier would be transferred to Egypt in between waves of prisoner releases by Israel.

Carter also insisted that Hamas would accept a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in an accord negotiated by the Palestinian Authority (PA) President Mahmoud Abbas if it were put to a referendum or a Palestinian legislature is elected with a majority in support.

While Hamas leaders have said they support a long-term truce with Israel along the 1967 borders of the West Bank and Gaza, they have consistently rejected a peace treaty.

Will Carter's Hamas foray bear fruit?

"This is enormous," says Gershon Baskin, copresident of the Israel Palestine Center for Research and Information. "It's the first indication that Hamas is turning its back on its own covenant of never recognizing Israel."

But Magnus Ranstorp, the author of several books on Hamas, is doubtful that the Islamists have made the ideological shift.

"They have fought a long time and they have a very long-range vision of the future, and one has to be aware of that in gauging their true intentions. Their red lines have not changed," says Dr. Ranstorp, of the Center for Asymmetric Threat Studies at the Swedish National Defense College. He says that it's more likely Hamas seeks new legitimacy through Carter's visit.

"What I see is, 'this is how we can get back into the international community, and to use Carter's visit to gain some momentum,' " he says. "They could do something that wasn't expected or thought possible. But I am still a skeptic."

Hamas accepts the establishment of a Palestinian state on land occupied by Israel in the 1967 Arab-Israeli conflict but would not recognize the Jewish state, Hamas leader Khaled Meshaal said Monday, Reuters reported. Commenting on efforts by Carter to persuade Hamas to back peace talks between Mr. Abbas and Israel, Mr. Meshaal said his Islamist group would "respect Palestinian national will even if it was against our convictions."

Though the former president is remembered fondly in Israel for the Egyptian peace treaty, he has outraged many with his book linking policies in the Palestinian territories to the South African system of racial apartheid.

"He's saying we should talk and he's talking. Whether this brings tangible benefits depends on both sides of the conflict and how they view Carter," says Meir Javedanfar, a Tel Aviv-based Middle East expert. "The Israelis are quite happy with the Bush administration's approach to the conflict and see no need to back Carter. On the other hand, he is more useful to Hamas because he's risking so much trying to bring them into the equitation."

Carter's mission coincided with an upsurge in border fighting between Israel and Hamas, with the militants launching attacks that killed three soldiers. Israel's retaliation left more than 20 Palestinians dead, including a Reuters cameraman.

Nicholas Pelham, a senior analyst at the International Crisis Group, says Carter's mission erodes the taboo of engaging Hamas and could help Israel "climb down the tree" from the three requirements - recognize Israel, accept previous agreements, and forswear violence - for speaking to the militants.

To be sure, Abbas's PA has been skeptical. "If Carter intended to convince Hamas to accept the commitment of the PA, like to the two-state solution, that's fine," says Palestinian negotiator Saeb Erekat. "But at the end of the day, Carter is the head of the Carter institute in Atlanta."

Even those who recognize a need to engage Hamas have questioned Carter's preference of public diplomacy. Yair Hirschfeld, an Israeli political scientist who helped run the secret talks between Israel and Yasser Arafat's Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) that became known as the Oslo Accord, said talking to the media should come last.

Still, Carter's announcement about Hamas's flexibility on the Shalit swap is meaningful. "It's not the way I would have prepared it. But ... the proof of the pudding is in the eating," says Mr. Hirschfeld.

Ilene R. Prusher contributed reporting from Jerusalem.

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Load-Date: April 21, 2008

Hamas loyalists turn funeral into a protest

Deseret Morning News (Salt Lake City)

February 25, 2008 Monday

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Length: 726 words

Byline: Abed Khabeisa Associated Press

Body

KOBAR, West Bank -- Thousands of angry Hamas loyalists marched Sunday at the funeral of a Muslim preacher who died in Palestinian custody, turning the ceremony into a rare show of defiance against President Mahmoud Abbas.

The demonstration was an unusual sight in the West Bank, where Abbas' Palestinian Authority has become increasingly autocratic since his Hamas rivals seized power in the Gaza Strip in June. Since then, police there have cracked down on protests perceived to challenge the rule of Abbas, who heads Fatah.

Some 3,000 Hamas loyalists crowded the village of Kobar, carrying the body of Majed Barghouti, who died Friday in a lockup run by intelligence officials.

Mourners waved the green flags of the militant Muslim group as they carried Barghouti's body, boldly chanting in support of Hamas and its armed wing, the Qassam Brigades, a group banned in the West Bank.

At a separate march for women, mourners wrapped green Hamas bandannas around their headscarves and loudly condemned Abbas' intelligence chief, Tawfik Tirawi, whom they blame for Barghouti's death.

"Tirawi, you are a coward, you are the Americans' deputy," the women chanted. "We will crush your head, collaborator," they said.

Tirawi did not respond to requests for comment Sunday.

A protest planned by Hamas loyalists in the West Bank town of Ramallah, where Abbas' government is headquartered, was quickly dispersed by club-swinging Palestinian police.

But the noisy funeral showed that the Islamic militant Hamas is a force in the West Bank, though Abbas is in control and his regime is indirectly bolstered by Israeli forces who regularly operate against Hamas and other militant groups.

Early Monday, today, an Israeli airstrike in southern Gaza killed two Hamas militants and wounded three, according to Hamas and Palestinian medical officials. The Israeli military said an aircraft targeted a group of gunmen spotted in the area.

Hours later, a second airstrike killed a third Hamas gunman and wounded two others, Hamas said. The military confirmed the attack.

Hamas loyalists turn funeral into a protest

Addressing an economic conference in Saudi Arabia Sunday, Palestinian Prime Minister Salam Fayyad appealed for Arab support. He also put some blame on Israel for the failure of the Abbas regime to show a strong presence on the ground in the West Bank.

"Israel continues to raid our cities, undermining the credibility of our forces in the eyes of the population and demoralizing them," Fayyad's office quoted him as saying. He also criticized Israel's blockade on Gaza.

On Sunday, Israeli officials pointed to incremental progress in peace talks with Palestinians -- appointing joint committees to deal with secondary issues like water, the environment, economic and judicial matters. However, both sides said this was far from a breakthrough, because core issues like Jerusalem, Palestinian refugees and final borders were not involved.

Israel also was taking precautions to keep a Hamas demonstration planned for Monday against its Gaza blockade from turning into a mass breakout like last month's storming of the Gaza-Egypt border.

The Israeli military said its forces operating in southern Gaza Sunday discovered five smuggling tunnels. Soldiers detained 40 Palestinians for questioning.

Barghouti, 44, was a mosque preacher in Kobar and spent several years in Israeli prisons. He was among hundreds of Hamas activists detained by Abbas' security forces in the West Bank following the violent Hamas takeover of Gaza in June. Dozens remain in custody.

Barghouti had an inflamed liver and a serious heart problem when he died, said Justice Minister Ali Khashan. He could not say if Barghouti died because of mistreatment and declined to discuss the case because of the ongoing investigation.

Hamas spokesman Taher Nunu dismissed the investigation, called for by Abbas. "He was tortured to death," Nunu told a news conference in Gaza.

Four men who were arrested alongside Barghouti told his family that they were all tied up in painful positions during interrogation, and that intelligence officers demanded to know where the detainees had hidden weapons.

In a statement published in Palestinian newspapers, the intelligence service said Barghouti had complained of chest and abdominal pain and was examined by a hospital doctor two days before his death. Intelligence officials would not comment Sunday on the allegations.

Load-Date: February 25, 2008

Hamas Strikes at Gaza Clan Known for Criminal Activity

The New York Times

September 17, 2008 Wednesday

Late Edition - Final

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Section: Section A; Column 0; Foreign Desk; Pg. 16

Length: 495 words

Byline: By TAGHREED EL-KHODARY and ISABEL KERSHNER; Taghreed El-Khodary reported from Gaza, and Isabel Kershner from Jerusalem.

Dateline: GAZA CITY

Body

Eleven members of a large Palestinian clan, including a 1-year-old, were killed along with a Hamas police officer late Monday and early Tuesday, when Hamas forces clashed with gunmen at the family's compound here, witnesses said.

The assault on the powerful Dagmush clan, notorious for both militant and criminal activity, signaled an apex in the campaign by Hamas, the Islamist group that rules Gaza, to impose internal order, and it was welcomed by many people here. The Dagmush family was considered the last large clan challenging Hamas authority in Gaza, after Hamas cracked down in early August on the Hillis clan, which is loyal to Hamas's rival, Fatah.

Earlier Monday, a member of the Dagmush clan fatally shot a Hamas police officer while resisting arrest in the old market area of Gaza City, prompting a Hamas raid on the clan's compound in the city's Sabra neighborhood.

In the firefight, the second officer and the 11 clan members were killed, and about 45 Dagmush members were wounded, including several women who were shot in the knees by Hamas forces, relatives said. Witnesses added that Hamas had confiscated three truckloads of weapons from the compound, and that its forces were in control of the area and searching for more arms.

Although hundreds of potential fighters from the clan remain at large, Hamas is believed to have dealt it a severe blow. Mumtaz Dagmush, who leads the Army of Islam, a militia in Gaza inspired by Al Qaeda, was said to be badly wounded and receiving treatment within the family compound. The Army of Islam kidnapped the BBC reporter Alan Johnston; he was released in July 2007 after 16 weeks in captivity. Together with Hamas and the Popular Resistance Committees, a militia sponsored by another branch of the Dagmush family, the Army of Islam also took responsibility for capturing an Israeli soldier, Cpl. Gilad Shalit, in a cross-border raid in June 2006.

Hamas is still holding Corporal Shalit and wants to exchange him for hundreds of Palestinian prisoners from Israeli jails, including many convicted of deadly terrorist attacks.

The Army of Islam has been blamed for a series of attacks in Gaza on Internet cafes, music stores and other Western-style places of entertainment. More generally, the Dagmush clan is infamous for dealing in drugs and weapons.

Hamas Strikes at Gaza Clan Known for Criminal Activity

Inside Mumtaz Dagmush's home in the Sabra neighborhood on Tuesday afternoon, blood was still splattered on the tiles. Relatives said that one of his brothers, Ibrahim, 18, and two cousins had been fatally shot in the head. Many children were trapped in the houses; relatives said the infant was also killed by Hamas fire.

A neighbor, Radwan Issa, 30, who used to work for the pro-Fatah authority in Gaza, said he was shocked by the actions of Hamas. "What they did was brutal," he said.

But many Gazans expressed relief. "Nobody is above the law," said Muhammad Fares, 54, a businessman. "For this I give Hamas credit. I feel safer now."

<http://www.nytimes.com>

Load-Date: September 17, 2008

End of Document

Hamas celebrates as troops pull out

Gulf Daily News

May 1, 2008

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Length: 531 words

Body

GAZA CITY: More than 20,000 Hamas supporters took to the streets in celebration as the Israeli troops pulled out after killing 120 people, including several children and women.

Hamas declared "victory" and vowed to continue firing rockets into Israel, launching one into the main southern city of Ashkelon shortly after the troops withdrew, wounding one person.

Some snapped festive photographs with gunmen as the chant, "The invaders fled and the army of Jews was defeated" rang out from loudspeakers.

Addressing the crowd, Hamas strongman Mahmoud Zahar threatened to strike even deeper in Israel if the offensive resumes.

"Invading one inch of the Gaza Strip means that the battle and confrontation will continue and will expand even further than it has reached," he said.

Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert vowed that Israel would continue its army operations in Gaza even as most troops withdrew from the territory run by the Islamist movement Hamas.

In yesterday's violence, Israel carried out a series of airstrikes, targeting weapons manufacturing and storage facilities, a Hamas headquarters and police station. A total of six fighters were killed.

In Jebaliya, Palestinian medical teams found three bodies in rubble after troops left and medical officials said another three people injured previously died of their wounds yesterday.

Gaza militants continued to fire rockets into southern Israel. Israeli rescue workers said three rockets struck Ashkelon, with one scoring a direct hit on an apartment building. No casualties were reported. There were small clashes across the West Bank and east Jerusalem between Israeli troops and Palestinian youths protesting Israel's Gaza operations.

Two Palestinians seriously wounded in onslaught died in Egyptian hospitals. It named the dead men as Ghassan Abd Rabbo, 18, and Aref Daghmach, 28.

Hamas celebrates as troops pull out

Israeli officials refuse to comment on whether their pilotless planes are used in airstrikes, but Palestinians say the drones have been a major weapon in Israel's latest offensive in Gaza.

In another development, **Hamas** warned yesterday it will only release an Israeli soldier seized by Palestinian militants in 2006 if Israel accepts all the conditions set by the Islamist movement.

"The Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit will not be released if Israel does not accept all our conditions," Mahmud Al Zahar, a senior **Hamas** leader in Gaza told a crowd gathered to protest Israel's Gaza assault.

"If you want to close this chapter, release the (Palestinian) prisoners," Zahar said. Shalit was captured in June 2006 on the edge of the Gaza Strip by three Palestinian militant groups, including the armed wing of **Hamas**.

I US President George W Bush has not given up on securing a Middle East peace deal by year's end, the White House said yesterday, as it called for an end to **Hamas** rocket attacks on Israel.

"We have a clear message: The Palestinian people have a choice to make," national security spokesman Gordon Johndroe said as Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice headed to the region.

"It's a choice between terrorism, or a choice between a political solution that leads to a Palestinian state living side by side in peace and security with Israel," said Johndroe.

Load-Date: June 30, 2008

IDF cracks down on Hamas institutions, including charities

The Jerusalem Post

July 8, 2008 Tuesday

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Section: NEWS; Pg. 4

Length: 529 words

Byline: YAAKOV KATZ, AP contributed to the report.

Body

Israel has decided to increase its efforts to topple the Hamas civilian infrastructure in the West Bank and Gaza Strip and, on Monday, IDF troops stormed Nablus, shutting down a girls' school, a medical center and two other facilities of a Hamas-affiliated charity.

The operation came after Defense Minister Ehud Barak signed an order banning 36 charities - based across the globe - due to the alleged assistance they provide to Hamas's terror operations.

Officials said that the order signed by Barak was the most comprehensive directive issued in Israeli history in the war on terror financing and was a continuation of previous bans imposed on the Interpal Charity in England, the Al Aqsa Fund in Europe and the Holy Land Foundation in the United States as well as other funds and charities in Holland, Italy, Denmark, Sweden and France.

All of these charities are part of the "Union of Good" - an umbrella organization for foundations operated by Hamas around the world, especially in Europe and the Gulf states. The organization was outlawed by the defense minister in 2002 due to its support of Hamas.

In the early-morning Nablus raid dozens of jeeps, two bulldozers and two trucks entered Nablus at around one in the morning. Witnessess said that computers, documents, cash and furniture were seized during the raid. "We consider the Israeli decision to shut down charities that take care of families of martyrs, orphans and poor people as a moral crime," Hamas spokesman Fawzi Barhoum said in Gaza.

"It's an inhumane act against poor sectors in the Palestinian society." He made no mention of the truce.

In recent months, Israel and Fatah security forces have gone after West Bank charities, money changers, women's cooperatives, media outlets and schools with suspected ties to Hamas. "The Israelis have confiscated all computers, documents, televisions and even mobile phones from the school," said school principal Fidda Draikh. "Now we need to look for an alternative place to educate these girls. We cannot leave them without a school."

Security officials said that in 2007 over \$120 million were transferred to the Palestinian territories and was used to fund terrorist activity, including 30 percent which Hamas designated for its Dawa charity foundations. The money, the officials said, came from a number of states including the US, Iran, Jordan, Syria, Australia, South Africa and countries in Europe.

Dozens of foundations operated abroad by Hamas, in coordination with the dozens of Hamas charitable associations active in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, form a well organized and coordinated support network

IDF cracks down on Hamas institutions, including charities

that includes Hamas's fundraising arm abroad and the vital civilian and infrastructure networks in the territories, officials said.

Recently, it has become clear that Union-affiliated foundations are trying to raise funds not only for Hamas's charitable associations in Judea, Samaria and the Gaza Strip, but for the activities of the Hamas government as well. Officials said Barak's new order would require the Israeli and world banking systems to take steps in order to avoid criminal activity by cooperating and working with the newly-outlawed charities.

Graphic

Photo: A PALESTINIAN woman surveys the damage at a Hamas- operated girls' school in Nablus shut down by the IDF Monday. (Credit: Nasser Ishtayeh/AP)

Load-Date: October 4, 2011

End of Document

Gaza clansmen exiled as Hamas grabs Fatah bastion

Telegraph Herald (Dubuque, IA)

August 5, 2008 Tuesday

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Section: A; Pg. 5

Length: 984 words

Byline: The Associated Press

Body

GAZA CITY, Gaza Strip (AP) - Hamas claimed Monday to have "uprooted" the last major pocket of armed resistance to its 14-month rule in the Gaza Strip, saying it seized mortars, grenade launchers and other weapons from a once powerful clan allied with the rival Fatah movement. Dozens of members of the Hilles clan were being held by the Islamic militants of Hamas, while dozens more who fled to Israel to avoid capture during weekend fighting were given asylum Monday in the Fatah-ruled West Bank. In a small sign of defiance, Hilles families sent children outdoors wrapped in bright yellow Fatah flags, saying they hoped the sight would annoy Hamas fighters patrolling the neighborhood on foot and in pickup trucks. Saturday's attack on the Hilles stronghold in Gaza City's Shijaiyeh neighborhood, which killed 11 people and wounded dozens, marked a fresh setback for Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas, the head of Fatah.

Abbas' leadership in the West Bank already was weakened by his failure to win concessions from Israel in peace talks. The defeat of the Hilles clan, one of Fatah's last high-profile bastions in Gaza, underscored Hamas' tight control in the coastal territory seized by its fighters in bloody fighting last year. Abbas still has a base of support in Gaza, including tens of thousands who draw government salaries from the West Bank, but the movement has been stripped of offices, media outlets and, most importantly, its armed forces. Islam Shahwan, spokesman for Hamas police, said in an interview that the weekend raid - the bloodiest Hamas-Fatah fighting since the Gaza takeover - sent a "clear message to all concerned." "We do believe this was the last stronghold in Gaza," he said, referring to potential Hamas opponents among the territory's myriad clans. "This stronghold had to be uprooted." Shahwan said that more than 100 Hilles men had been detained and that Hamas forces seized a large weapons stockpile, including mortars, assault rifles, land mines and rocket-propelled grenade launchers. The Hilles clan, native to Gaza and one of the largest in the territory, has thousands of members. About 4,000 live in the Shijaiyeh area, close to Israel's heavily guarded border with Gaza. More than 180 clansmen ran toward Israeli positions Saturday afternoon when it became clear Hamas was about to take control of the neighborhood. After some delays, in part because of Hamas fire toward the border, Israel let in the fugitives, including wounded men. A two-day odyssey ensued, with Abbas wavering whether he should allow the refugees to settle in the West Bank. He ruled out the idea Sunday, arguing Fatah needed to maintain a presence in Gaza and could not abandon the territory to Hamas. More than 30 Hilles men were sent back to Gaza, and Hamas immediately arrested about half of them. Fearing Hamas retribution, a dozen in that group - still wearing the dark blue coveralls given them by Israeli troops - stayed in an Israeli-controlled buffer zone just inside Gaza. The Israeli army then decided those returning to Gaza would face imminent danger and said Hilles men should not be sent back against their will. In the end, 92 Hilles men, including the 12 who waited at the border, were taken to the West Bank town of Jericho on Monday. Sixty others went back to Gaza voluntarily, 16 remained in Israeli hospitals and 13 were in Israeli custody, the Israeli military said. After nightfall Monday, more Hilles refugees arrived at an Israeli checkpoint on the outskirts of Jericho. Dressed in

Gaza clansmen exiled as Hamas grabs Fatah bastion

training pants and white undershirts, they were searched and then handed over to Palestinian intelligence officers in Jericho. Sufian Abu Zaydeh, a Gaza native and former Palestinian Cabinet minister from Fatah, said the forced exile of the Fatah supporters was a sign of Gaza's desperation. "When a man stands between two choices: to be killed by his people or to be arrested by his enemy, and he reaches a conclusion that it is better to be arrested by his enemy, it shows you how cruel the situation is in Gaza," he told Israel's Army Radio. In the Shijaiyeh district, the weekend fighting left some of the clan members' homes in shambles. Residents showed reporters two homes they claimed were ransacked by Hamas police. Clothes were strewn on the floor, china cabinets knocked over, TV screens shot through with bullets, and glass tables and windows smashed. Several women showed ripped photographs of loved ones and said computers, money and gold jewelry were stolen. One home had "Al Qassam special unit" scrawled across the wall in spray paint, a reference to Hamas' armed wing. Shahwan, the Hamas police spokesman, said complaints of theft would be investigated. He argued that outsiders could have come in to steal from the homes during the chaos of fighting. Hamas declared the raided neighborhood a closed military zone and barred photographers and camera crews from taking pictures. Shahwan said the ban was for the safety of journalists, saying Hamas police were still searching the area for explosives. The rising tensions between Hamas and Fatah were triggered by a July 25 bombing at a Gaza City beach hut where Hamas activists were holding a picnic. The blast killed five Hamas men and a 6-year-old girl. Since then, both Hamas in Gaza and Fatah in the West Bank have rounded up dozens of political opponents, amid growing reports of beatings and mistreatment of detainees by both sides. Hani Busbus, a political analyst in Gaza, said Fatah cannot be written off completely in the Gaza Strip. "There's still around 30 to 40 percent of Gazans who support Fatah," he said. "On the ground, Fatah will be smaller: It doesn't have it's security strongholds, a military wing, and it doesn't have any activities or institutions. But ideologically, the movement is still here." --- Associated Press Writer Dalia Nammari in Jericho, West Bank, contributed to this report.

Load-Date: August 5, 2008

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Hamas offers 10-year truce

Gulf Daily News

June 11, 2008

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Length: 275 words

Body

DAMASCUS: **Hamas** says the Palestinian militant group offers Israel a 10-year "hudna," or truce, as an implicit recognition of Israel, if it withdraws from lands it seized in 1967. **Hamas** accepts the establishment of a Palestinian state on land occupied by Israel in 1967 but would not recognise the Jewish state,

Hamas leader Khaled Meshaal said yesterday. **Hamas** would accept a deal creating a Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza Strip if it was approved by Palestinians in a vote, former US president Jimmy Carter said yesterday.

Crackdown on drivers

MANAMA: Bail ranging from BD100 to BD300 is being imposed on traffic violators reported our sister paper Akhbar Al Khaleej. Other options include 48-hour police custody and revoking driving licences, General Traffic deputy director general Shaikh Abdulrahman bin Sabah Al Khalifa yesterday said. He also revealed that parents of young violators were being summoned and updated on their children's flouting of traffic rules and regulations.

Cyst op successful

Manama: A medical team at Sulmaniya Medical Centre (SMC) performed a successful complex brain surgery. They removed a cyst blocking the nerves leading to the brain from a 40-year-old **female** patient. SMC Brain surgeon and Neurologist Dr Taha Al Durazi told our sister paper Akhbar Al Khaleej that the patient was suffering from headaches for more than ten years.

Diplomatic ties broken

ADDIS ABABA: Ethiopia broke off diplomatic relations with Qatar yesterday, saying it has become "a major source of instability in the Horn of Africa". "Qatar has left no stone unturned to cause harm to Ethiopia's national security," the Foreign Ministry said.

Load-Date: July 2, 2008

Hamas offers 10-year truce

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Despite Isolation, Gazans Show Allegiance for Hamas

The New York Times
December 16, 2007 Sunday
Late Edition - Final

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Section: Section 1; Column 0; Foreign Desk; Pg. 14

Length: 623 words

Byline: By STEVEN ERLANGER and TAGHREED EL-KHODARY

Steven Erlanger reported from Jerusalem, and Taghreed El-Khodary from Gaza City.

Dateline: GAZA

Body

About 200,000 Gazans rallied in support of **Hamas** on Saturday, the 20th anniversary of its founding.

It was a significant show of force from **Hamas**, which took over Gaza six months ago in a rapid rout of Fatah forces. The rally was intended to display popular "samoud," or steadfastness, in the face of the diplomatic and economic isolation of Gaza, which Israel has declared a "hostile entity." It was easily as large as one a month ago for its rival, the Fatah faction, on the anniversary of the death of Yasir Arafat, and estimates ranged up to 250,000 people.

Central Gaza City was filled with green flags and political slogans, and a large banner reading, "We will not recognize Israel," adorned the back of the stage.

There were fiery speeches from **Hamas** notables, filled with the rhetoric of defiance toward Israel and the United States, coupled with calls for renewed national unity with the West Bank, run by the Palestinian president, Mahmoud Abbas, his Fatah faction and an appointed prime minister, Salam Fayyad.

The **Hamas** prime minister, Ismail Haniya, whose government was fired by Mr. Abbas, said: "Your message today is that the movement will not surrender in front of such an embargo. We will not break. The root of the movement is like a good tree in good soil." He said that the suffering of Gaza's 1.5 million people from that isolation "will not achieve its goal, which is our collapse."

He said **Hamas** had succeeded in the first and second uprisings, or intifadas, against Israel, in forcing Israeli troops and settlers to withdraw from Gaza, in winning legislative elections in January 2006 and forming a government, "due to the will of the people, the will to resistance and steadfastness." **Hamas**, he said, "has created a great transformation in the history of the Palestinian cause."

Mr. Haniya also called for dialogue with Fatah and for renewed unity with other factions.

Mr. Abbas has said he will resume talks with **Hamas** if it gives up power in Gaza, returns security buildings to Fatah and apologizes, which Mr. Haniya and **Hamas** seem to have no intention of doing. Fatah and the independent government in Ramallah banned **Hamas** from having any similar demonstrations in the West Bank.

Despite Isolation, Gazans Show Allegiance for Hamas

The Fatah rally for Mr. Arafat in the same Gaza City square on Nov. 12 was also huge, the largest show of support for Fatah since its defeat last June. It was marred by violence, with six people killed and 100 wounded in clashes with **Hamas** police and security officials.

The crowd featured many who are poor and devout, with many veiled **women** and masked men. Layali al-Kher, 27, said there was little money in her family, because restrictions on cement and raw materials have led to the closing of factories and a halt to construction. "But this siege was not imposed by **Hamas** but on them, so why should we criticize them?" she asked. "They've put **Hamas** in a bottle and they are trying to suffocate it. But they have achieved a lot: the streets are safe, the traffic is controlled. They have adapted quickly and have a strong will."

A **Hamas** legislator, Mushir al-Masri, told the crowd that after 20 years, the roots of **Hamas** "stretch into the heart of the nation and every part of the land."

"Twenty years," Mr. Masri said, "from the stone to the knife, the bullet to the bomb, the mortar to the rocket, and from the martyrdom operations to the tunnels of hell."

On Monday, in Paris, Mr. Abbas and Mr. Fayyad will attend a donors conference of Western countries who are likely to pledge the \$5.6 billion in budgetary and development support over the next three years, in large part to try to show Gazans that Fatah's willingness to negotiate a peace with Israel is a preferable path.

<http://www.nytimes.com>

Load-Date: December 16, 2007

End of Document

Hard-nosed leader goes soft on Hamas; COMMENT & DEBATE

The Age (Melbourne, Australia)

May 17, 2008 Saturday

First Edition

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Section: INSIGHT; Opinion; Pg. 9

Length: 994 words

Byline: Mark Leibler - Mark Leibler is national chairman of the Australia/Israel & Jewish Affairs Council

Body

Malcolm Fraser unfairly pointed the finger of blame at the Israelis.

MALCOLM Fraser's opinion piece in last Saturday's Age was marred by contradictions, factual errors and a naivete about world events inconsistent with the hard-nosed, realistic prime minister I knew in the 1970s and '80s.

Mr Fraser implied that the problem in the Middle East is principally Israeli settlement building, and the main solution is direct Israeli talks with Hamas.

Yet Israel is not building any new West Bank settlements, and has not for many years. The current controversy involves a few hundred apartments within a few existing settlements, taking no additional land. It is absurd to see these few homes as the principal roadblock. After all, Israel withdrew all settlements from Gaza in 2005 and has been rewarded with rocket attacks.

Meanwhile, Fraser argues, negotiating with Hamas would provide them with "an alternative to violence". However, an alternative offering a seat at the diplomatic table has long been available, but rejected by Hamas leaders.

Fraser implies that because Hamas won a plurality in the 2006 election, it must be treated as a negotiating partner. However, Hamas' democratic credentials were hardly boosted by its violent Gaza coup last year - the result of long-standing internal Palestinian rivalries, not, as Fraser claims, something that Israel and the US somehow forced Hamas into.

More importantly, the diplomatic boycott imposed by the vast majority of the international community - including the UN and EU, not just America and Israel - was not against Hamas per se, but against its policies. Hamas insists on acting as a terrorist organisation eternally at war with Israel. Thus it is treated as one. Hitler also took power democratically. Should we therefore have let him invade Poland and murder Europe's Jews?

Israel and the international community have made it clear they are prepared to engage with Hamas if it renounces terrorism and recognises Israel's right to exist and previous Israeli-Palestinian peace agreements.

In government, Fraser fully supported a comparable Western policy opposing direct engagement with the Palestine Liberation Organisation until it met similar minimum conditions.

Hard-nosed leader goes soft on Hamas COMMENT & DEBATE

Parallels with Northern Ireland are nonsensical because the IRA never sought to destroy Britain, as Hamas explicitly does Israel, and forswore terrorism for a place in negotiations.

Fraser accuses Israel's supporters of not believing Hamas. On the contrary, we do believe its charter and its ongoing statements regarding its genocidal plans for Israel - backed materially by an Iran that also wants to "wipe Israel off the map". Its violent actions prove they are not mere rhetoric.

Indeed, Hamas rejects direct negotiation with Israel. It only says it might support an agreement with Israel negotiated by Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas if approved by a referendum involving Palestinians worldwide. Further, Hamas leaders add that such arrangements must only be "transitional" (presumably, pending Israel's destruction) and do not necessarily promise to abide by the agreement. How is this helpful?

Hamas' proposed "ceasefire" is widely recognised, based on the statements of Hamas leaders, as a ploy to gain time to consolidate its Islamic dictatorship and military power in Gaza. Why would Israel agree to such a ceasefire if its terms simply allow Hamas to position itself for more effective and "efficient" terrorism later?

Mr Fraser implies that Israel has lost the moral high ground because more Palestinians than Israelis have died in the conflict in recent years.

But this numerical difference is entirely a matter of capability. Hamas is trying to kill as many Israeli civilians as possible - children, women, the elderly - limited only by Israel's largely successful countermeasures.

Israel only targets those waging war on Israeli civilians and soldiers. It isn't easy because Palestinian terrorists illegally shelter among the Palestinian populace, leading to occasional regrettable civilian casualties.

This calculus whereby one simply counts the dead without context implies that when Hamas fires rockets into Israel's civilian towns, destroys people's homes, makes normal daily life impossible and causes injuries - but doesn't actually kill anyone - Israel should not shoot back at the rocket teams. It might unbalance the "score"! Under this ridiculous approach, why would Hamas ever stop firing rockets at Israel?

The way forward, of course, is to persuade Palestinian extremists that violence, suicide terror and rocket attacks are counter-productive, and to support a two-state solution. The Howard government recognised this, the Rudd Government recognises this, and the bipartisan parliamentary motion saluting Israel's 60th anniversary in March explicitly called for this outcome. But they also recognise something else which should not be obscured in the name of "even-handedness" - Israel offered a two-state solution in 1948, at Oslo in 1993, at Camp David in 2000 and at Annapolis last year. Moreover, polls consistently show that Israeli public opinion overwhelmingly supports this goal. Right now, the Olmert Government and the democratically elected Mahmoud Abbas are negotiating a "framework agreement" outlining such a resolution.

There is no indication that this goal will be achieved by engaging with or appeasing Hamas before it meets the sensible conditions set by the international community. Worse, every attempt to engage and legitimise Hamas makes it more difficult for Abbas to make the compromises needed for a genuine peace.

To move forward, Hamas must adopt the conditions set by the international community, or else be marginalised in Palestinian society. Achieving either will require enormous patience, toughness and realism, qualities the Malcolm Fraser I used to know always exhibited. I wonder what happened to him.

Mark Leibler is national chairman of the Australia/Israel & Jewish Affairs Council.

Load-Date: May 16, 2008

Hamas rounds up Fatah men in Gaza after blast kills seven

The Jerusalem Post

July 27, 2008 Sunday

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Section: NEWS; Pg. 1

Length: 806 words

Byline: KHALED ABU TOAMEH

Body

Hamas's security forces launched a massive crackdown over the weekend on Fatah supporters and institutions in the Gaza Strip following an explosion that killed seven people, five of them members of **Hamas**'s armed wing, Izzadin Kassam.

Fatah representatives and human rights organizations said at least 160 men had been rounded up, while 40 Fatah-affiliated institutions were either raided or shut down.

A Fatah-affiliated group called Al-Awdah claimed responsibility for the explosion that killed the five **Hamas** men.

However, Fatah officials in Ramallah strongly denied responsibility and said the killings were part of a "settling of scores" among **Hamas** militiamen.

The crackdown on Fatah is the largest of its kind since **Hamas** took full control of the Gaza Strip in June 2007.

The explosion took place outside a cafeteria on the beach in Gaza City, where the **Hamas** militiamen were picnicking.

Eyewitnesses said a bomb planted beneath their vehicle was detonated by remote control, killing all five gunmen and a seven-year-old girl identified as Sereen Safadi.

The five men were identified as Ammar Musbeh, a prominent leader of Izzadin Kassam from the Shajayieh neighborhood of Gaza City, who had previously escaped several attempts on his life by the IDF; Iyad al-Hayah, a nephew of senior **Hamas** official Khalil al-Hayah; Nidal al-Mabid; Osama al-Hilu; and Hassan al-Hilu.

At least 22 people were wounded by the explosion, including Munzer al-Ghamari, director of the **Hamas**-controlled Ministry of Waqf [Islamic Trust] Affairs, eyewitnesses reported.

Earlier, a bomb went off outside the home of Marwan Abu Ras, a top **Hamas** official in the Gaza Strip. No one was hurt and no damage was reported. **Hamas** policemen arrested a Fatah activist on suspicion of involvement in the attack.

In a third incident, a bomb went off outside Al-Jazeera Cafe in Gaza City, killing one person. Sources in the **Hamas** Ministry of Interior said the victim, who was not identified, was killed when he tried to plant the bomb outside the cafe. They said the assailant belonged to a radical Islamic group that had been targeting cafes, restaurants, hair salons and Christian institutions in the Gaza Strip over the past two years.

Hamas rounds up Fatah men in Gaza after blast kills seven

Speaking at the funeral of the Hamas victims, Hayah accused Fatah and its "treacherous" leadership in Ramallah of being behind the killings.

"We have no doubt that Fatah and the traitors sitting in Ramallah were behind this crime," he said. "We urge the [Hamas] security forces to take tough measures to punish the culprits and to ensure that they are executed."

Thousands of Hamas supporters carrying the movement's green flags attended the funeral, which quickly turned into an anti-Fatah demonstration. Hamas militiamen fired AK-47 rifles into the air as others chanted slogans condemning Fatah and its leader, Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas, as "Zionist agents."

The Hamas government, which held an emergency meeting Saturday to discuss the violence, accused Fatah of standing behind a "terrorist scheme targeting the mujahedeen [warriors] and their leaders."

Vowing to avenge the death of the Hamas men, the government accused Abbas and his aides of "misleading" the Palestinian public by talking about the need for reconciliation with Hamas.

Ahmed Abdel Rahman, a senior Fatah official and adviser to Abbas, condemned the killings as "irresponsible," saying Fatah opposed the use of violence.

He added that he did not rule out the possibility that the explosion was the result of an internal dispute, noting that this would not be the first time Hamas militiamen had been involved in such killings.

Fatah officials claimed that the five Hamas men were known as supporters of Ahmed Ja'abari, commander of Izzadin Kassam, who is currently involved in a power struggle with Imad Aqel, a senior member the armed wing.

The Fatah officials said Aqel's supporters have been trying recently to remove Ja'abari from the leadership of Izzadin Kassam.

Ashraf Juma'ah, a Fatah legislator from the Gaza Strip, condemned the killings and said "Israeli agents" were responsible.

The Gaza-based Palestinian Center for Human Rights said at least 160 Fatah members and supporters had been arrested by Hamas since Friday's explosion. Almost all the detainees were from Gaza City or the northern Strip, the center said.

Ziad Abu Amr, an independent legislator who was foreign minister in the former Hamas-Fatah unity government, said Hamas policemen raided his office in Gaza City, and confiscated his car, documents and equipment.

Hamas's security forces also stormed dozens of Fatah-affiliated institutions across the Gaza Strip, including many nongovernmental organizations that provide services to the Palestinian public.

Among the institutions targeted by Hamas were some that help the handicapped, women, orphans, farmers, students and refugees.

Graphic

2 photos: MOURNERS CARRY the body of a Hamas gunman yesterday, after he was killed by an explosion on a Gaza City beach Friday. A HAMAS policeman stands guard as others inspect a car damaged in the blast that killed seven people, including five Hamas gunmen, in Gaza City on Friday. (Credit: AP. Ashraf Amra/AP)

Hamas rounds up Fatah men in Gaza after blast kills seven

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Hamas loyalists turn funeral in to protest

Prince George Citizen (British Columbia)

February 25, 2008 Monday

Final Edition

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Section: NEWS; Pg. 22

Length: 346 words

Byline: Associated Press

Dateline: KOBAR, West Bank

Body

Thousands of angry **Hamas** loyalists marched Sunday at the funeral of a Muslim preacher who died in the custody of government interrogators, accusing the Palestinian Authority of killing the man and turning the ceremony into a rare show of defiance against President Mahmoud Abbas.

The demonstration was an unusual sight in the West Bank, where Abbas' Palestinian Authority has become increasingly autocratic since his **Hamas** rivals seized power in the Gaza Strip in June. Since then, police have cracked down on protests perceived to challenge Abbas' rule.

The noisy funeral showed that the militant group is a force in the West Bank, though Abbas is in control, his regime is indirectly bolstered by Israeli forces who regularly operate against **Hamas** and other groups.

Some 3,000 **Hamas** loyalists crowded the village of Kobar, carrying the body of 44-year-old Majed Barghouti, who died in a lockup run by intelligence officials Friday, a week after he was arrested. **Hamas** officials said they did not trust a government investigation announced by Abbas.

Mourners waved the green flags of the militant Muslim group as they carried Barghouti's body, boldly chanting in support of **Hamas** and its armed wing, the Qassam Brigades, a group banned in the West Bank. At a separate nearby march for **women**, mourners wrapped green **Hamas** bandannas around their headscarves and loudly condemned Abbas' intelligence chief, Tawfik Tirawi, whom they blamed for Barghouti's death.

Also Sunday, Israeli officials pointed to incremental progress in peace talks with Palestinians -- appointing of joint committees to deal with secondary issues like water, the environment, economic and judicial matters. However, both sides said this was far from a breakthrough, because core issues like Jerusalem, Palestinian refugees and final borders were not involved.

Addressing an economic conference in Saudi Arabia on Sunday, Palestinian Prime Minister Salam Fayyad appealed for Arab support. He also put some blame on Israel for the failure of the Abbas regime to show a strong presence on the ground in the West Bank.

Load-Date: February 25, 2008

Hamas loyalists turn funeral in to protest

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Hamas's human shields

The Jerusalem Post

March 5, 2008 Wednesday

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Section: OPINION; Pg. 13

Length: 760 words

Highlight: Editorial

Body

As the latest IDF operation in Gaza ended, Defense Minister Ehud Barak began consulting Israel's topmost legal authorities about how to respond to rocket assaults launched on Israeli civilians from areas with large numbers of civilians in Gaza.

Not every state under attack would evince such extraordinary care regarding the lives of populations in enemy entities, especially when the enemy has made noncombatants its primary target. This, more than all else, underscores the injustice inherent in the widespread condemnation overseas of Israel's self-defense. Israeli policy-makers are extremely sensitive to the moral bind in which Gazan terrorists unconscionably place Israel.

Hamas tacticians cynically exploit Israel's humanitarian predisposition, trusting it to be too decent to discard its concern for the lives of Gazans - a concern that is the direct reverse of the willful intent of Gazan terrorists to cause as much death and destruction to as many Israeli civilians as they can.

This underlying moral disparity between the sides - all too often completely ignored by Israel's critics abroad - takes on particularly sinister attributes when terrorist rockets are purposely launched from crowded civilian sites to deter Israel from striking back at the rocket cells.

This makes it a lose-lose situation for Israel. If it responds vigorously, it will be censured for the likely loss of life. If it doesn't respond, it abandons increasingly larger numbers of its own civilians to "the Palestinian roulette." On Monday, for instance, a Grad missile exploded outside a day care center in Ashkelon. Only by a miracle did scores of babies and toddlers escape grievous harm.

Simultaneously, Israel's predicament constitutes a win-win situation for Gaza's **Hamas** overlords. If they cause casualties to their own civilians, Israel will be pilloried by world opinion. If Israel is daunted from defending its own population, **Hamas** can continue its rocket barrages with impunity.

Hamas's brazen use of human shields is directly facilitated by the international community's reluctance to address the issue and denounce the premeditated endangerment of ordinary people. According to all rules of warfare, including the Geneva Convention, this is nothing short of a war crime. When the crimes of Gaza's terrorists against their own people are consistently overlooked around the world, it can only encourage the Islamists' immorality.

By staying silent on this fundamental moral issue, the international community becomes an accomplice to bloodshed both among the directly targeted Israelis and the unintentionally harmed Gazans.

Hamas's human shields

This is hardly a new phenomenon. Arab terrorists have a long and dishonorable history of hiding behind women and children and of using even schools and houses of worship to protect themselves.

Back in November 2006, Gazan women were used as human shields to allow besieged Hamas gunmen to flee from Israeli forces in Beit Hanun. Armed terrorists barricaded themselves in a mosque that was surrounded by IDF troops and tanks. Women gathered outside in response to an appeal on the local radio station for females to protect Hamas fighters. The terrorists managed to escape in women's garb by blending in among those they knew Israeli soldiers wouldn't attack.

That same month, the IAF warned Muhammad Weil Baroud, responsible for firing Kassam rockets at Israel, to evacuate his home in Beit Lahiya in advance of an air strike. Instead, hundreds of locals, mostly women and children, were recruited to Baroud's house. Israel suspended the air strike, lest these human shields be harmed. In response to the incident, Hamas crowed: "We won. From now on we will form human chains around every house threatened with demolition."

The above episode illustrates the potential problems with Deputy Defense Minister Matan Vilnai's proposal to bulldoze houses from which rockets are fired. The same goes for suggestions such as warning systems giving Gazan civilians time to get out. Even smoke bombs directed at precise coordinates to further warn civilians to depart - in advance of live fire and the destruction of launch sites - could be thwarted by human shields.

Principled despite its vilified reputation, Israel wrestles with a wrenching quandary callously imposed upon it. But Israel shouldn't be the only one to grapple with the ruthlessness of terrorists toward their human shields. Democracies the world over need to internalize what is taking place here, to pin blame where it is due, and to condemn Hamas for its heartlessness toward its own people.

Load-Date: October 4, 2011

A year under Hamas, a new form for Gaza

The International Herald Tribune

June 16, 2008 Monday

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Section: NEWS; Pg. 5

Length: 1278 words

Byline: Ethan Bronner - The New York Times Media Group

Dateline: GAZA

Body

Taghreed el-Khodary contributed reporting.

*

Cursing God in public here - a fairly common event in this benighted and besieged strip of Palestinian land - can now lead to prison. So can kissing in public. A judge ruled last week that a bank could not collect its contracted interest on a 10-year-old loan because Islam forbids charging interest.

One year ago, gunmen from Hamas, the Islamist, anti-Israel militant group, took over Gaza, shooting some of their more secular Fatah rivals in the knees and tossing one off a building. Israel and the West imposed a blockade, hoping to squeeze the new rulers from power. Yet today Hamas has spread its authority across all aspects of life, including the judiciary. It is fully in charge. Gazans have not, as Israel and the United States hoped, risen up against it.

"The Palestinian criminal code says there should be no improper behavior in the streets," the new chief justice, Abed al-Raouf Halabi, explained in an interview, pulling the code book from his breast pocket.

"It is up to judges to interpret what that means," he said. "For us that means no cursing, no drinking and no kissing in public. In the past these things were ignored."

Gaza has always been poor and pious, distinct from the more secular and better-off West Bank. But a year of Hamas rule has made it more so. The notion of Gaza as an enduringly separate entity is solidifying, making it less likely that Palestinians might agree even among themselves on peace with Israel.

Compared with a year ago here in Gaza, more women are covered, more men are bearded, Internet sites are filtered and non-Hamas public gatherings are largely banned. With the Israeli closure greatly reducing the supply of fuel, spare parts and other vital goods, less sewage is treated and more fish are contaminated. Gazans feel trapped and helpless.

But assessing exactly how bad it is - how angry or loyal people feel, how effective or cruel the closure has been, how truly impoverished Gaza has become - is a delicate and politically fraught activity, as three recent days of reporting here and dozens of interviews showed.

A year under Hamas, a new form for Gaza

Those who reject Israel's policy as evidence of its ill will make it sound like Gaza has turned into Somalia. It has not. At the same time, those who consider it their role to defend Israel in all it does make it sound as if the 70 truckloads of goods that Israel allows in daily have prevented any real suffering. They have not.

Even more politically complicated is the question of how the closure has affected Hamas's authority and popularity. Many in the West and Israel would very much like to believe Hamas is in trouble. And it is easy to find people here who hate the government and its black-clad police, even among some who voted for Hamas in the January 2006 elections that gave it a majority in the Palestinian legislature and led to 18 months of tense power sharing before the takeover.

But those in Israel who watch most closely - Arabic-speaking security officials - say that while the closure is pressing Hamas, it is not jeopardizing it.

"Gaza is totally under Hamas's control," said one of three such major officials, all of whom agreed to speak only if identified in this vague manner, and all of whose assessments were the same.

"What happened in Gaza a year ago was not really a coup," a second official said. "Hamas's takeover was a kind of natural process. Hamas was so strong, so deeply rooted in Palestinian society through its activities in the economy, education, culture and health care, and Fatah was so weak, so corrupt, that the takeover was like wind blowing over a moth-infested structure."

For months before the takeover, life in Gaza, with its 1.5 million inhabitants, was deeply insecure as Fatah and Hamas gunmen fought for control of the streets and institutions. Hamas had a parliamentary majority, but Fatah, through the presidency of Mahmoud Abbas, still officially controlled the security apparatuses and ministries.

Now, even many of those who detest Hamas say that security has returned to daily life as a result of its takeover.

"Hamas is strong and brutal but very good at governing," observed Eyad Serraj, a British-trained psychiatrist who runs a group of mental health clinics and is a secular opponent of Hamas. "They are handing out coupons for gas. They have gotten people to pay for car registration. They are getting people to pay their electricity bills after years of everyone refusing to. The city and the hospitals are cleaner than in many years."

While the West Bank-based government of Abbas, to protest the takeover, bars its nearly 80,000 employees from showing up at work in Gaza, it continues to pay their salaries here. With no work and a steady wage, there is a once-a-month rush on the bank machines, and a fair amount of disposable income is spent in coffee shops. New restaurants have opened recently to take advantage of this phenomenon.

The relative scarcity of goods makes it both harder and easier for Hamas to maintain control. It is harder because the basic role of government, to provide for its people, is a challenge. It is easier, however, because what little comes through is inevitably channeled through Hamas, which collects a tax on it.

Many of the goods in Gaza now come through tunnels from the Egyptian Sinai. There are scores of such tunnels, and while the Israeli and American authorities have complained that the tunnels provide a pathway for arms, their more central role is for computers, cigarettes, gasoline and clothing. Hamas taxes everything that comes through.

At a Gaza City clothing store for women and girls, the owner, Wael, 31, who considered it unsafe to give his last name, said that while he used to get his goods from Israel and Turkey, now everything in his shop comes from Egypt in flour sacks smuggled in the tunnels. The markup on a bundle of \$5,000 worth of goods is \$3,000, he said, some of it for the smuggler, some of it for taxes to Hamas.

"Everything that has happened here has been a terrible mistake," he says of the election victory and subsequent takeover. "It is a mistake for Islamists to get into power. But what can we do? Hamas is even stronger than a year ago. They can take me and put me away whenever they want."

A year under Hamas, a new form for Gaza

While few dispute that Hamas has changed Gaza, a more complicated question is whether ruling Gaza has changed Hamas. Many in the movement and even outside it say that it is less ideological than it was at its founding or even a year ago.

Whereas Hamas says it will never recognize Israel, its leaders say that if Israel returned to the 1967 borders, granted a Palestinian state in Gaza, the West Bank and East Jerusalem and dealt with the rights of refugees, Hamas would declare a long-term truce. This is not that different from what the rest of the Arab world says, or from the Fatah position in peace talks with Israel.

Americans who have visited the top Hamas leader in Syria, Khaled Meshal, including former President Jimmy Carter and Henry Siegman of the U.S./Middle East Project, say a real change is under way, especially regarding the group's willingness to live next to Israel. So far, few American or Israeli officials have taken their assertion seriously.

Indeed, Israel's security officials who seem realistic about Hamas's control in Gaza dismiss the idea that Hamas has changed in any fundamental way worth Israel's time. They see the talk of a truce as tactical, not strategic, especially given the toxic words of its leaders and media and the continuing rocket and mortar attacks on Israel.

As a result, Gaza seems set to continue as is for some time - isolated, polluted, unhappy, but not explosive.

Load-Date: June 16, 2008

End of Document

Nine dead, 90 wounded in Hamas-Fatah clash in Gaza. 180 fleeing Fatah supporters allowed to enter Israel as Hamas forces eliminate last major stronghold in Gaza Strip

The Jerusalem Post

August 3, 2008 Sunday

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Section: NEWS; Pg. 1

Length: 1057 words

Byline: KHALED ABU TOAMEH and YAAKOV KATZ

Highlight: Lead Story

Body

Nine Palestinians were killed - including members of Hamas's security forces - and more than 90 were wounded in fighting that erupted Saturday between Hamas and Fatah members in Gaza City.

The clashes began when hundreds of Hamas policemen raided homes belonging to the Hilles clan in the city's Shajayieh neighborhood in a bid to arrest suspects in the bombing that killed five Hamas men nine days ago.

Hamas has accused members of the clan, which has long been affiliated with Fatah, of being behind the explosion, which also killed a seven-year-old girl.

Toward Saturday night, more than 180 clan members approached the border fence with Israel near the Nahal Oz fuel crossing, laid down their weapons and asked soldiers to allow them to cross over. Military sources said the group was allowed into Israel out of "humanitarian concerns" that they would be slaughtered by Hamas.

Hamas policemen had surrounded the area where the clan lives for the past five days, demanding that the suspects be handed over. However, the clan refused to comply and instead chose to resist any attempt to enter their area.

At least 12 of those who were wounded in Saturday's fighting were under the age of 15, said Khaled Radi, spokesman for the Hamas Health Ministry. Six of them were being treated for serious wounds in the intensive care unit of various hospitals, he added.

Ihab al-Ghissin, spokesman for the Hamas Interior Ministry, said the massive security operation came after the Hilles clan refused to hand over the suspects wanted in connection with the fatal beachfront bombing.

He said the Hamas security forces seized large amounts of weapons, including rocket-propelled grenades and dynamite, during the crackdown on the clan.

Ghissin added that at least 100 members of the clan were arrested for questioning, while others managed to flee the scene.

Nine dead, 90 wounded in Hamas-Fatah clash in Gaza. 180 fleeing Fatah supporters allowed to enter Israel as Hamas forces eliminate last major stronghold in Gaza....

Islam Shaheen, spokesman for the Hamas police force, said officers discovered a weapons factory that had been run by members of the clan and former Fatah security officers. He said the operation ended successfully when the Hamas security forces managed to "liberate" the area that had previously been under the clan's control.

Col. Ron Ashrov, commander of the Northern Gaza Regional Brigade, said Saturday night that more than 180 Palestinians had been allowed into Israel, including 22 wounded, most with light injuries.

Ashrov also said the shooting into Israel by Hamas constituted a breach of the Gaza cease-fire reached in June.

The decision to allow the group to enter Israel was made in coordination with the political echelon.

Ashrov said the fighting around 5 a.m. in the Shajayieh neighborhood of Gaza City.

"We saw what was happening and stood on the side and did not get involved," he said. "At 5 p.m. a group tried approaching the fence [at Nahal Oz]. We saw that some of them were wounded and we decided to allow them to bring the wounded and evacuate them into Israel."

The evacuation, Ashrov said, ended after 9 p.m. Most of the group consisted of men, but there were also women and children. During the evacuation into Israel, the group came under mortar and sniper fire from Hamas terrorists, he said.

One of the leaders of the clan, Ahmed Hilles, was wounded as he entered Israel.

Hilles, who is one of the most senior Fatah officials in the Gaza Strip, was apparently shot in the leg by IDF soldiers, a member of his family told reporters. He said the official was in moderate condition and was being treated in a hospital in Gaza City. Other Palestinian sources claimed he had crossed into Israel

The IDF said that while it was facilitating the group's entrance to Israel, Hamas gunmen shot at the group. The IDF soldiers returned fire and it was possible that some of the Fatah men were wounded in the crossfire.

"Today's security operation was directed against one of the biggest mafias in the Gaza Strip," a top Hamas official said. "Hamas won't allow any party or individual to establish a mini-state inside the Gaza Strip."

The official said that the fall of the Hilles "stronghold" was a major victory in the war against those were trying to take the Gaza Strip back to the days of anarchy and lawlessness - a reference to the Palestinian Authority leadership in Ramallah.

A member of the clan told The Jerusalem Post by phone that the decision to surrender to Hamas was taken to spare the lives of women and children who were trapped in their homes.

He accused the Hamas policemen of firing rockets at the clan's homes.

"We left our homes to save the lives of women and children who came under attack by the bloody Hamas gangsters," he said. "Hamas has once again proven that it is a treacherous party that has a lot of Palestinian blood on its hands."

PA and Fatah leaders in Ramallah expressed deep concern over the Hamas clampdown and urged Egypt and other Arab countries to intervene to stop the bloodletting.

"What's happening in the Gaza Strip is a real massacre against innocent people," said Fatah official Fahmi Za'arir. "What's happening is part of a well-planned scheme to consolidate the divisions among the Palestinians."

Samir Mashharawi, another senior Fatah official, accused Hamas of committing "war crimes against humanity." He added that the latest Hamas measures were intended to send a message to Fatah that the Islamist movement was not really interested in resolving the ongoing crisis in the PA territories.

Nine dead, 90 wounded in Hamas-Fatah clash in Gaza. 180 fleeing Fatah supporters allowed to enter Israel as Hamas forces eliminate last major stronghold in Gaza....

In Nablus, a group of gunmen belonging to Fatah's armed wing, the Aksa Martyrs Brigades, kidnapped Muhammad Ghazzal, a senior **Hamas** representative, and threatened to execute him unless **Hamas** halted its security operation against the Hilles clan. Ghazzal was later released unharmed.

On Friday, **Hamas**'s security forces arrested several leading Fatah figures in the Gaza Strip, including Zakariya al-Agha, a veteran member of the PLO executive committee.

Hamas said the arrests were in response to the crackdown on its members by PA President Mahmoud Abbas's security forces in the West Bank. Some 200 **Hamas** members and supporters have been rounded up by the PA security forces since the beginning of the most recent crisis nine days ago.

In an attempt to ease the tensions between the two parties, Abbas on Thursday ordered the release of all the **Hamas** detainees. However, **Hamas** said the move was insufficient because only a handful of detainees had been released.

Graphic

Photo: MEMBERS OF the Fatah-affiliated Hilles clan are searched before being allowed to enter Israel via the Nahal Oz crossing as they flee a **Hamas** onslaught yesterday. (Credit: Sderot Media Center)

Load-Date: October 4, 2011

Palestinians divided by latest violence from Hamas - Correction Appended

The International Herald Tribune

March 6, 2008 Thursday

Correction Appended

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Section: NEWS; Pg. 1

Length: 1403 words

Byline: Steven Erlanger - The New York Times Media Group

Dateline: JABALIYA, Gaza

Body

In a small shop by their rocketed, bullet-pocked apartment building, the Abed Rabo family argued raucously about the impact of the 48-hour Israeli military incursion, which killed 126 Palestinians, including some of their neighbors.

"We all support resistance to the Israelis," said Hitam Abed Rabo, 33, a lawyer with the military court set up by Hamas, which she supports. "They talk about responding to rockets, but nothing justifies what the Israelis did here. They have to be confronted with strong resistance so they don't come back."

Will rockets on Israeli towns bring independence and freedom? "Yes," she said. "Absolutely."

Ayash Abed Rabo, 34, her cousin, scoffed. "These rockets are a joke," he said. "We want to live. We want peace. I don't want Israel here, and I don't want resistance."

Israeli officials say the operation was intended to show Hamas the cost of continued rocket firing, especially on Ashkelon, and to try to create further popular dissatisfaction with Hamas, the militant Islamist organization. Arguments persist over how many of the dead were truly uninvolved civilians, with Palestinians officials saying half or more than half, and Israel saying far fewer than half.

But the residents here were horrified by the numbers of civilians who died, or who they believe died, and even Fatah officials here think the popular reaction has served to strengthen Hamas, at least in the short term, turning it into a victim.

Nabil Katari, 46, is a local organizer for the Fatah youth, and his brother is a prominent local member of Hamas.

"I think Israel is strengthening Hamas by aiming at civilians," he said, a charge Israel vehemently disputes. "People always sympathize with the fighters and the victims. Israel is turning Hamas into a victim."

Worse, he said, both Hamas and Israel are exaggerating the threat and the number of weapons here.

"When we claim we have a lot and really don't have much compared to the Israelis, we serve their interests and let them justify hitting so hard," he said. "I feel something catastrophic coming."

Palestinians divided by latest violence from Hamas

The Abed Rabo family has traditional ties to Fatah, the rival faction to Hamas, like many of those along Al Quds Street here in eastern Jabaliya, where the Israeli forces concentrated and where mourning tents now line the road.

Ayash Abed Rabo owns the shop, and he, like the other 60 people in the building, many of them relatives, were kept in a single room by Israeli soldiers during the incursion. Hitam went to march on Monday in the large Hamas demonstration celebrating the Israeli withdrawal, which Hamas called a defeat.

"That celebration was a lie," Ayash said. "To celebrate what? More than 100 people killed? And only two Israelis were killed?"

Hitam broke in. "It was a celebration," she said. "We pushed them out. We aren't equal militarily, and two dead soldiers is a lot for them. And it was a celebration because our dead are martyrs and will go to paradise. They were strong and powerful."

There is anxiety in Gaza about Hamas, which has moved swiftly to consolidate its power and whose armed policemen and military forces are visible in the streets. They provide order and have ended security chaos and much crime, but they are also an intimidating force, smoothly breaking up a Fatah rally called for Wednesday by changing its venue, turning back buses of supporters trying to reach Gaza City and putting hundreds of men, armed with both guns and wooden sticks, along the streets.

Ayash Abed Rabo said: "People are afraid to express themselves fully. We spoke to you, but someone will go to them and say that you were here and that this is what was said by whom. But I'm not afraid - I haven't said anything that Mahmoud Abbas hasn't said, and he's the president."

Fawzi Barhoum, a Hamas spokesman, said in an interview that people were free to express themselves and that those who were killed died honorably. "The number of martyrs is the price of convincing world opinion about the justice of the Palestinian cause," Barhoum said.

He insisted that Hamas was in control of Gaza and coordinated its firing of rockets with other groups, but a moment later he said that Hamas would not stop other groups from firing rockets and resisting Israel in their own fashion. He also said that the number of rockets fired depended on Hamas's calculation of the Palestinian interest at the time, and that Abbas's negotiations with Israel were futile and a form of collaboration.

Barhoum, too, seemed to feel this incursion was a kind of advertisement for the future, and insisted that Israel would fail in any larger military operation.

The intense fighting here took place during the first two hours of the incursion just after midnight on Saturday, when most of the fighters were killed. Most of the time Israeli soldiers took up positions, moved from house to house, looked for weapons, interrogated young people and arrested several dozen for further questioning inside Israel.

Residents say the Israeli soldiers were more anxious than during past incursions, and gruffer. At least four young men said independently that the soldiers used them as human shields. Sometimes, they said, a soldier used their shoulders as props for his M-16 rifle.

The young men - Riad Abed Rabo, 26; his brother, Muhammad, 21; his cousin Majdi, also 21; and Hassan Abu Sabah, 32 - all said that the Israelis picked them out from the rooms in which building residents were kept, searched them, handcuffed and blindfolded them, and used them as shields before letting them go some seven to eight hours later.

The use of civilians as shields has been banned by the Israeli Supreme Court, and a military spokeswoman denied that anyone was used as a human shield, though some young men were taken down the road cuffed and blindfolded to be questioned.

About 50 meters, or 164 feet, down the street, there was another mourning tent, the site of an extraordinary political and family drama.

Palestinians divided by latest violence from Hamas

The family of Muhammad Abu Shbak, 37, lives here. Abu Shbak is a cousin and was a bodyguard of an important Fatah general, Rashid Abu Shbak, an ally of Muhammad Dahlan's and his successor as chief of Preventive Security. After numerous assassination attempts, Rashid Abu Shbak fled Gaza to Egypt. Muhammad fled to Ramallah in the West Bank when Hamas forces routed forces last June, and neither dared to return.

Mirvat Abu Shbak, 34, Muhammad's wife, stayed behind with their five children. The two eldest - Jacqueline, 17, and Iyad, 16 - were both killed in the incursion, and Mirvat insists they were shot by an Israeli sniper.

"We were sleeping at midnight when there was a lot of shooting," she said in a room of mourning women sitting on floor cushions under a patterned nylon blanket. "An Israeli sniper took a position in the house next door, and he could see me, and me him.

"I was with all my kids. At 2 a.m., Iyad wanted to go to the bathroom, and when he got up they shot him in the chest, and I could feel the bullet pressing out his back," she said.

"Jacqueline had been sleeping, and woke up and said, 'My mother, Iyad is injured,' and she moved her head a little and she was shot in the mouth, and the bullet came out the back of her head." Abu Shbak kept her composure, as her relatives patted her hand.

"There was blood everywhere and I fell to the floor," she said, "and the sniper kept shooting, every 30 seconds, and I managed to help my children crawl out of the room."

An ambulance came to remove the bodies, but the soldiers, she said, kept her with the others in a single room in her house, and she was only able to visit their graves on Tuesday.

Her husband, she said, could not have returned except with the help of the Hamas brother of Nabil Kitari, the Fatah organizer, who arranged a safe passage for Muhammad Abu Shbak, who arrived home Tuesday night.

On Wednesday, he, too, was at the mourning tent, with Khaled al-Batsh, the head of Islamic Jihad here, watching over him.

"Now I'm back, I'm not going to leave," Muhammad Abu Shbak said. "I think Hamas will be no problem. We are one people."

He seemed shaky and spoke quietly. "I give the blood of my children as a gift to national unity," he said. "All my interest now is unity. We have to end the division."

Kitari, their neighbor, thinks unity is far away. "Hamas is very closed-minded," he said. "Abu Shbak wants to stay here, but he should probably take his family and go."

Correction

An article on Thursday about reaction among Gaza residents to a weekend military incursion by Israel misstated the death toll in some editions. The number of Palestinians killed in the weekend operation was nearly 100 - not 126, which is the number of Palestinians killed in Gaza by Israeli military operations since an increase in the conflict began on Feb. 27.

Correction-Date: March 8, 2008

Load-Date: March 21, 2008

Egypt Warns Hamas About Border Violence

The New York Times

January 27, 2008 Sunday

Late Edition - Final

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Section: Section A; Column 0; Foreign Desk; Pg. 12

Length: 563 words

Byline: By STEVEN ERLANGER; Nadim Audi contributed reporting from El Arish and Rafah, Egypt.

Dateline: JERUSALEM

Body

Egyptian riot police used armored vehicles to try to restrict Gazans from taking cars into Egypt on Saturday, and the Egyptian foreign minister warned of "provocations" at the border. He said that at least 36 Egyptian security officers had been hospitalized, some in critical condition, after confrontations with Palestinians.

In a thinly veiled rebuke to the militant group Hamas, which runs Gaza, the Egyptian minister, Ahmed Aboul Gheit, said in Cairo that Egypt would show restraint but not at the cost of Egyptian lives.

"The Egyptian decision has been to allow in the sons of Gaza to ease their suffering," he said. "This was the Egyptian decision taken a few days ago and we are still holding to it."

He added that the Egyptians wanted to regulate the entry and exit of Gazans and talk with the "concerned parties" to devise a new border system. But it was unlikely that Egypt would tolerate a continued confrontation with Hamas.

After Israel severely tightened its import restrictions on Gaza, to try to force a reduction of rockets and mortar shells fired into Israel, Hamas breached the border with Egypt in nearly 20 places early Wednesday morning.

Hamas explosives blew down large sections of the wall that Israel had built just inside Gaza to protect its forces, which used to patrol along the Egyptian border in what was otherwise a no-man's land. The border itself is marked by a low concrete wall topped with barbed wire, which is easily breached.

Traffic over the border remained heavy on Saturday, but residents of the Egyptian towns Rafah and El Arish reported severe shortages of supplies and a growing fatigue with the Palestinian influx.

In El Arish, Said Aghlaby, 48, a taxi driver, said: "It's getting tiring. We can't take all these people. They're sleeping in the streets."

He said he had to wait in line seven hours for gasoline, and could not get a full tank. "I've never seen so much garbage," he said, "and I'm used to seeing garbage: I've lived in Cairo."

Mr. Aghlaby said he was happy to help the Palestinians.

"They've been through a lot of suffering, and we can't refuse to help them," he said. "But it can't go on forever."

Egypt Warns Hamas About Border Violence

In Rafah, a cafe was down to its last 12 bottles of water, which were priced at the equivalent of 90 cents, instead of the normal 27 cents.

But in Gaza, Egyptian cars and trucks were also seen, delivering supplies to stores and supermarkets as well as sightseeing.

In an interview published on Saturday, President Hosni Mubarak of Egypt, decrying the use of violence and the factional struggle among Palestinians between Fatah and Hamas, invited both groups to Cairo for talks.

Hamas accepted; the Palestinian president, Mahmoud Abbas, repeated his stance that he would not meet with Hamas until it apologized for its "coup" in Gaza and handed power back to the Palestinian Authority.

An Abbas aide, Nabil Shaath, said that Mr. Abbas would travel to Egypt after meeting the Israeli prime minister, Ehud Olmert, here on Sunday. Mr. Abbas will once again push Mr. Olmert to accept his presidential guards' taking control of the Gazan side of the crossings from Israel and of the border with Egypt, despite Hamas's control over Gaza.

Israeli troops remained on high alert along its border with Egypt, watching for militants from Gaza trying enter Israel through the Sinai desert.

<http://www.nytimes.com>

Graphic

PHOTO: Women and children by a road in Gaza near the breached border wall at the Rafah crossing into Egypt. Egyptians reported severe shortages of supplies because of the Palestinian influx. (PHOTOGRAPH BY SHAWN BALDWIN FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES)

Load-Date: January 27, 2008

End of Document

Hamas shows off gunmen in glossy magazine

The Guardian - Final Edition

February 14, 2008 Thursday

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Section: GUARDIAN INTERNATIONAL PAGES; Pg. 21

Length: 230 words

Byline: Rory McCarthy, Jerusalem

Body

Of all the strategies thought up by Hamas, this was perhaps the least expected. In an apparent publicity drive in Gaza yesterday, the Palestinian Islamist movement handed out copies of a glossy magazine showing off gunmen from its armed wing.

On the shiny green cover was a black-masked fighter, wearing camouflage fatigues and a belt of bullets and carrying an assault rifle. The magazine Qassamis, which takes its name from the Izzedine al-Qassam Brigades, the armed wing of Hamas, was marking 20 years since the movement first emerged.

Inside were adverts, pictures of fighters and a women's section, with pages decorated with lilies and hand grenades alongside photos of women wearing full-length military khaki robes during weapons training. Amid the images were boasts about the group's strength. "It has more than 10,000 fighters with weapons who are a real army under military formations," the magazine said.

The 80-page magazine was handed out free to news agencies and libraries in Gaza to "educate Palestinians", Abdul Latif Qanou, a Hamas official involved in its production, told the Associated Press.

For the first time in more than three years, Hamas claimed responsibility for a suicide bombing inside Israel last week. Israeli officials say they are "at war" with the movement and took dozens of foreign diplomats down to the Gaza border yesterday to argue their case.

Load-Date: February 14, 2008

Defiant Hamas rules by fear in isolated Gaza

The Sunday Times (London)

November 25, 2007

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Section: OVERSEAS NEWS; News; Pg. 24

Length: 863 words

Byline: Marie Colvin Gaza

Body

THE nights in Gaza belong to the Izzedine al-Qassam brigades. On pot-holed streets in the border city of Rafah last week, disciplined rows of fighters bristling with guns and rocket launchers listened to a midnight pep talk from their commander before melting into the darkness.

The militia that was once the underground military wing of Hamas, the Islamic extremist organisation, has become a feared unofficial army controlling this isolated strip of Palestinian territory.

The Qassam commander, a fighter wanted by the Israelis, sent them into the winter rain with exhortations to "remember that God is with you" and "don't fall asleep".

Every night they patrol the streets and the border with Egypt, looking for wayward citizens and ever ready for Israel to invade. The streets are deserted. Gazans fear these men.

The most impressive thing about Qassam is its armoury. Each six-man unit travels with rocket-launchers, machineguns and grenades and carries a locally made anti-tank mine similar to the explosively formed projectiles (EFPs) that have wreaked havoc against allied armoured vehicles in Iraq.

With Qassam and the Hamas police patrolling Gaza since secular members of the Palestinian Authority were driven out in June, there are no more of the unpredictable gun battles that once made the streets so lethal.

But this Hamas-imposed security has come at huge cost. Only believers feel safe; supporters of Fatah, the political organisation led by Mahmoud Abbas, the Palestinian Authority president, are routinely arrested and tortured. Journalists are harassed and un-Islamic dress can result in a beating as well. More and more women in Gaza are covering not just their hair but their faces. Many bitterly resent Hamas.

Gaza is growing more and more isolated. Israel controls the borders, land and sea, and has closed the crossings since June. Food prices have rocketed, unemployment is at 70% because no materials can be imported and nothing can be exported. Israel cut fuel supplies last month and has said it will cut electricity supplies from Sunday.

In the latest sign of its total international isolation, Hamas, although democratically elected in 2006, has been excluded from the Middle East peace conference in Annapolis, Maryland, on Tuesday.

The organisation's isolation comes from its refusal to recognise the existence of Israel, renounce violence or abide by any agreements signed between Palestinians and Israel. Yet it remains defiant.

Defiant Hamas rules by fear in isolated Gaza

Abu Atiya, the Qassam leader, said after reviewing his troops just after midnight: "Abu Mazen (the familiar name for Mahmoud Abbas) can sign anything he wants. We will not obey any agreement that does not give Palestinians their rights."

He added a warning to Abbas, who fired the Hamas government after the June coup in Gaza. "If he tries to return by force, we will fight him."

Nonetheless there were other signs last week that the divide-and-rule tactics of Israel and the West -to strengthen Abbas by showing that he can make political and economic gains while life worsens under Hamas -may be working for the first time. One Hamas leader said: "I have told the leadership the takeover of Gaza was a mistake. We have no strategy, we are just reacting to events. It was a big loss for us to attack and criticise Abu Mazen and let him fly away."

He added that Hamas was now isolated from Arab countries, too. The pragmatists, he said, accepted that a solution must involve two states, Israel and Palestine a heresy in the extremist Islamic group. "Hamas is not prepared for the political game they have to play," he said mournfully. "They see resistance, only resistance."

The pragmatists worry that support for Hamas -which won elections overwhelmingly in 2006 -is waning in Gaza, its stronghold. Every victim of its repression fuels the growing anger.

One of the most recent, Ibrahim Abu Taha, 24, lay in a bed at Al Quds hospital in Gaza City last week after Hamas forces clashed with demonstrators marking the third anniversary of the death of Yasser Arafat, the Palestinian leader. Taha, who married two months ago, held a finger over his tracheotomy tube so he could talk and said: "They started shooting. One grabbed me by my keffiyeh (headscarf), and I tried to run. He shot me." Eight died and at least 100 were injured by bullets or beatings.

Islamic fundamentalism has also begun to grate for many who may once have supported Hamas. Courts are now being convened in mosques, based on sharia (Islamic law).

Last week two university students were taken to court for having a romance. The court tried to force them to marry but their feuding families refused. In the end, the court ordered the woman's family to keep her at home and her boyfriend to leave the city for a year.

Anger is growing -at the Israelis, at Hamas and at the sense of being trapped in a prison with 1.4m inmates. This desperation may fuel extremism, just when there is the first glimmer of hope for peace in years.

"At least in prison, and I've been in prison, there are rules," said Raji Sourani, director of the Palestinian Centre for Human Rights. "But now we live in a kind of animal farm. We are penned in and they just dump in our food and medicine."

Load-Date: November 25, 2007

Hamas pierces Egyptian border, opening Gaza

Yukon News (Yukon)

January 25, 2008 Friday

Final Edition

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Section: NEWS; Pg. 18

Length: 1549 words

Byline: Steven Erlanger, New York Times Service

Dateline: RAFAH, Egypt

Body

Tens of thousands of Palestinians streamed into northern Egypt on Wednesday after Hamas militants blew up parts of the fence dividing Egypt from the Gaza Strip, forcing an end to the closing of Gaza that had followed Hamas takeover of the territory last summer.

On foot, bicycle, donkey cart and pickup truck, Gazans crossed the border for a buying spree of medicine, cement, sheep, Coca-Cola, gasoline, soap, Cleopatra and Malimbo cigarettes, satellite dishes and countless other supplies that have been cut off, especially in recent days during a complete blockade by Israel after rocket attacks from Gaza.

From the breach of the border wall before dawn until well into the evening, Palestinians crossed from Rafah in Gaza to Rafah in Egypt -- the city has been divided by the border since 1982, when Egypt accepted the return of Sinai from Israel but declined to take back the Gazan half of Rafah as well.

While the destruction of the fence was an act of defiance by Hamas against Israel, which wants Gaza isolated, and against Egypt, which sealed the border to keep Palestinians out, officials from both countries suggested that what happened here on Wednesday was not all bad.

"I told them: 'Let them come in to eat and buy food, then they go back, as long as they are not carrying weapons,'" President Hosni Mubarak of Egypt told reporters at a book fair in Cairo.

This came after his forces had pushed back protesting women from the Rafah crossing on Tuesday.

For their part, Israeli officials said that, if controlled, the border opening to Egypt might allow Israel to lock the door to a Hamas-run Gaza and let the Egyptians handle the poverty and problems of the 1.5 million people there.

Mubarak urged Hamas to get together with its rival party, Fatah, saying: "If we speak to one Palestinian party we find the other party gets angry. If we ask them to negotiate without preconditions, some of them get angry. There are many problems between them, but I do not want to get into the details."

The prospect of an open border with Egypt was widely accepted as a victory for Hamas and another embarrassment for the Palestinian president, Mahmoud Abbas, who leads Fatah and is seen as a partner with Israel and the United States and complicit in the closing of Gaza.

Hamis pierces Egyptian border, opening Gaza

Mahmoud Zahar, a senior Hamis official in Gaza, refused in an interview to take responsibility for ordering the Egyptian border opened, but said: "We are creating facts. We have to try to change the situation, and now we await the results."

With the crossings to Israel closed and minimal goods coming in, Zahar said: "Rafah is our only lung. If Rafah remains shut, it means our acceptance to be strangled, our acceptance to die. We warned the Egyptians yesterday that people are hungry and dying."

Sometimes, he acknowledged, it was necessary to create a crisis to settle another one.

It was clear that Hamis, pressed by the closing from Israel, which had produced international protests, decided to push the issue with Egypt. Muhammad Mishlahad broke down nearly a kilometre of massive concrete blocks with his big Effer crane.

"I got a call from Hamis at 6 a.m. this morning and they said they had a job for me," Mishlahad said, nearly giddy with the thrill of the day. "They asked me to come and clear the barrier."

Asked if he was afraid, he laughed and said: "Why should we be afraid? This is our state."

In Cairo, analysts said that the situation was delicate for the Egyptian authorities. "It is a dilemma for Egypt," said Emad Gad, an analyst at the Ahram Centre for Political and Strategic Studies.

"If it prevents Palestinian civilians from crossing and confronts them with force, it opens itself up to unlimited public scrutiny at home. And if it lets the Palestinians through they face the risk of not knowing who or what is coming in and criticism from Israel and the United States."

Here in Rafah, relatives from both sides met, as did business partners who usually smuggle goods through tunnels from Egypt to Gaza.

For one day at least, and probably longer, no tunnels were necessary, and Egyptian businessmen brought in goods to sell from the more distant town of El Arish.

Some enterprising Gazans ordered goods from Cairo in the morning and went across to Rafah to pick them up at noon.

Farid Abu Jabara, 45, who helps to run a Swedish foundation for Gaza's handicapped, picked up 50 air mattresses and their pumps, which he had ordered from Cairo at 7 a.m.

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"This may be a blessing in disguise," he said. "On the level of smuggling, weapons and so on, it makes no difference. But if it continues like this, it will ease tremendously the pressure on Israel on the humanitarian level."

"The humanitarian organizations will get off our backs. There won't be any shortages. So that is a good thing. We don't care if people buy food in Egypt. And terrorists come in anyway."

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Hamas pierces Egyptian border, opening Gaza

Another Israeli official said of the border: "Instead of being unofficially open, it will now be officially open. We are starting to talk about it.

Some people in the Defence ministry, Foreign ministry and prime minister's office are very happy with this. They are saying, 'At last, the disengagement is beginning to work.'

Fatan Hessin, 45, met a childhood friend, Inshira Hamdal, for the first time in years. "A few months ago I thought I would never see her again," Hessin said. "We are so tired of this life in Gaza -- closure, unemployment, poverty, violence."

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"We thank Hamas for this," Hessin said, holding on to Hamdal's hand. "I'm a Palestinian, not Fatah or Hamas. But I thank Hamas. This is the best thing they have done."

In Gaza, Zahar, the senior Hamas official, and Prime Minister Ismail Haniya called for an urgent meeting with Egypt to work out a new shared arrangement for Gaza's border crossings.

Haniya suggested that Hamas would be prepared to cede some control to Abbas, saying, "We don't want to be the only ones in control of these matters."

Zahar, however, said that Hamas and Egypt should meet to discuss the border as well, saying that Hamas is the elected government of the Palestinian Authority.

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Abbas' appointed government in the West Bank denounced Haniya's suggestion. Ashraf Ajrami, a Cabinet minister, said that Haniya was ignoring Abbas' demand that it return Gaza to his control.

"Everything Haniya is saying is simply to exploit this situation to win political gains," he said.

Gazans of all classes walked into Egypt, their numbers limited only by the dire shortage of gasoline.

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"I'm bringing my wife to have a vacation," Ala Shawa joked, after months of being unable to travel from Gaza.

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Ashour's wife, Mohsin Elloulou, said she was struck by how much poorer the Egyptians of Rafah are. "At least our streets are paved," she said of Gaza.

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Hamas pierces Egyptian border, opening Gaza

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"He told me to go," Qassem said. He showed his visa, airline tickets and entrance certificate. "I hope they let me fly from Cairo," he said.

Graphic

Photo: Shawn Baldwin, For the New York Times; BORDER SHOPPING, GAZA STYLE... Thousands of Palestinians, some carrying goods, cross into the Rafah side of the Gaza Strip on Wednesday. ;

Load-Date: January 28, 2008

End of Document

Hamas Pierces Egypt Border, Opening Gaza - Correction Appended

The New York Times
January 24, 2008 Thursday
Late Edition - Final

Correction Appended

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Section: Section A; Column 0; Foreign Desk; Pg. 1

Length: 1584 words

Byline: By STEVEN ERLANGER; Isabel Kershner contributed reporting from Jerusalem, and Mona el-Naggar from Cairo.

Dateline: RAFAH, Egypt

Body

Tens of thousands of Palestinians streamed into northern Egypt on Wednesday after **Hamas** militants blew up parts of the fence dividing Egypt from the Gaza Strip, forcing an end to the closing of Gaza that had followed **Hamas's** takeover of the territory last summer.

On foot, bicycle, donkey cart and pickup truck, Gazans crossed the border for a buying spree of medicine, cement, sheep, Coca-Cola, gasoline, soap, Cleopatra and Malimbo cigarettes, satellite dishes and countless other supplies that have been cut off, especially in recent days during a complete blockade by Israel after rocket attacks from Gaza.

From the breach of the border wall before dawn until well into the evening, Palestinians crossed from Rafah in Gaza to Rafah in Egypt -- the city has been divided by the border since 1982, when Egypt accepted the return of Sinai from Israel but declined to take back Gaza as well.

While the destruction of the fence was an act of defiance by **Hamas** against Israel, which wants Gaza isolated, and against Egypt, which sealed the border to keep Palestinians out, officials from both countries suggested that what happened here on Wednesday was not all bad.

"I told them: 'Let them come in to eat and buy food, then they go back, as long as they are not carrying weapons,'" President Hosni Mubarak of Egypt told reporters at a book fair in Cairo. This came after his forces had pushed back protesting **women** from the Rafah crossing on Tuesday.

For their part, Israeli officials said that, if controlled, the border opening to Egypt might allow Israel to lock the door to a **Hamas**-run Gaza and let the Egyptians handle the poverty and problems of the 1.5 million people there.

Mr. Mubarak urged **Hamas** to get together with its rival party, Fatah, saying: "If we speak to one Palestinian party we find the other party gets angry. If we ask them to negotiate without preconditions, some of them get angry. There are many problems between them, but I do not want to get into the details."

Hamas Pierces Egypt Border, Opening Gaza

The prospect of an open border with Egypt was widely accepted as a victory for Hamas and another embarrassment for the Palestinian president, Mahmoud Abbas, who leads Fatah and is seen as a partner with Israel and the United States and complicit in the closing of Gaza.

Mahmoud Zahar, a senior Hamas official in Gaza, refused in an interview to take direct responsibility for ordering the Egyptian border opened, but said: "We are creating facts. We have to try to change the situation, and now we await the results."

With the crossings to Israel closed and minimal goods coming in, Mr. Zahar said: "Rafah is our only lung. If Rafah remains shut, it means our acceptance to be strangled, our acceptance to die. We warned the Egyptians yesterday that people are hungry and dying." Sometimes, he acknowledged, it was necessary to create a crisis to settle another one.

It was clear that Hamas, pressed by the closing from Israel, which had produced international protests, decided to push the issue with Egypt. Muhammad Mishlahad broke down nearly a half-mile of massive concrete blocks with his big Effer crane. "I got a call from Hamas at 6 a.m. this morning and they said they had a job for me," Mr. Mishlahad said, nearly giddy with the thrill of the day. "They asked me to come and clear the barrier." Asked if he was afraid, he laughed and said: "Why should we be afraid? This is our state."

In Cairo, analysts said that the situation was delicate for the Egyptian authorities. "It is a dilemma for Egypt," said Emad Gad, an analyst at the Ahram Center for Political and Strategic Studies. "If it prevents Palestinian civilians from crossing and confronts them with force, it opens itself up to unlimited public scrutiny at home. And if it lets the Palestinians through, they face the risk of not knowing who or what is coming in and criticism from Israel and the United States."

Here in Rafah, relatives from both sides met, as did business partners who usually smuggle goods through tunnels from Egypt to Gaza. For one day at least, and probably longer, no tunnels were necessary, and Egyptian businessmen brought in goods to sell from the more distant town of El Arish. Some enterprising Gazans ordered goods from Cairo in the morning and went across to Rafah to pick them up at noon.

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Mr. Abbas's appointed government in the West Bank denounced Mr. Haniya's suggestion. Ashraf Ajrami, a cabinet minister, said that Mr. Haniya was ignoring Mr. Abbas's demand that it return Gaza to his control. "Everything Haniya is saying is simply to exploit this situation to win political gains," he said.

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<http://www.nytimes.com>

Correction

Because of an editing error, a front-page article on Thursday about the entry of tens of thousands of Palestinians into Egypt after Hamas militants destroyed part of a fence at the border with Gaza described incompletely the events regarding Gaza and Egypt three decades ago. In that era, Egypt accepted the return of Sinai from Israel but declined to take back Gaza, not just the Gazan half of the border city of Rafah. The article also misstated, in some editions, the location of the border. It separates Gaza from northern Egypt, not southern Egypt.

Hamas Pierces Egypt Border, Opening Gaza

Correction-Date: January 26, 2008

Graphic

PHOTOS: Palestinians climbed over a section of the wall at Rafah that had been torn down Wednesday morning on orders from **Hamas**. (PHOTOGRAPH BY ALI ALI/EUROPEAN PRESSPHOTO AGENCY)

Palestinians who had crossed into Egypt brought livestock, among other goods, back into the Gaza Strip on Wednesday. (PHOTOGRAPH BY SHAWN BALDWIN FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES) MAP: Rafah is split between Egypt and the Palestinian territories.

Load-Date: January 24, 2008

End of Document

Thousands of Hamas supporters turn funeral for slain cleric into angry protest

The Daily Star (Lebanon)

February 25, 2008 Monday

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THE DAILY STAR

LEBANON

Length: 680 words

Byline: Daily Star Staff

Body

Thousands of angry **Hamas** loyalists on Sunday marched at the funeral of a Muslim cleric who died in the custody of government interrogators, accusing the Palestinian Authority of killing the man and turning the ceremony into a show of defiance against President Mahmoud Abbas.

Thousands of angry **Hamas** loyalists on Sunday marched at the funeral of a Muslim cleric who died in the custody of government interrogators, accusing the Palestinian Authority of killing the man and turning the ceremony into a show of defiance against President Mahmoud Abbas.

The size and unobstructed passing of the demonstration was an unusual sight in the Occupied West Bank, where Abbas' Palestinian Authority has become increasingly autocratic since his **Hamas** rivals seized power in the Gaza Strip in June. Since then, police have cracked down on protests perceived to challenge Abbas' rule.

Some 3,000 **Hamas** loyalists crowded the village of Kobar, carrying the body of 44-year-old Majed Barghouti, who died in a lockup run by intelligence officials on Friday, a week after he was arrested. **Hamas** officials said they did not trust a government investigation announced by Abbas.

Mourners waved the green flags of the group as they carried Barghouti's body, boldly chanting in support of **Hamas** and its armed wing, the Qassam Brigades, a group banned in the Occupied West Bank.

At a separate nearby march for **women**, mourners wrapped green **Hamas** bandannas around their headscarves and loudly condemned Abbas' intelligence chief, Tawfik Tirawi, whom they blamed for Barghouti's death.

"Tirawi, you are a coward, you are the Americans' deputy," the **women** chanted. "We will crush your head, collaborator," they said. Tirawi did not respond to requests for comment on Sunday.

Barghouti had an inflamed liver and a serious heart problem when he died, said Justice Minister Ali Khashan. He could not say if the man died because of mistreatment sustained in detention, but said "individual" cases of torture are dealt with swiftly.

Thousands of Hamas supporters turn funeral for slain cleric into angry protest

Hamas spokesman Taher Nunu swiftly dismissed the investigation. "He was tortured to death," Nunu told a news conference in Gaza. Nunu called on Palestinians to disobey any orders by Abbas' government to arrest **Hamas** loyalists.

Barghouti, a father of eight, was a mosque preacher in Kobar and spent several years in Israeli prisons. He was among hundreds of **Hamas** activists to be detained by Abbas' security forces in the Occupied West Bank following the violent **Hamas** takeover of Gaza in June. Dozens remain in custody.

Four men who were arrested alongside Barghouti told his family that they were all tied up in painful positions during interrogation, and that intelligence officers demanded to know where the detainees had hidden weapons.

Shawan Jabareen, head of the Palestinian human rights group Al-Haq, said Palestinian security forces routinely beat **Hamas** loyalists, who are arrested on suspicion of owning weapons or membership in the group's armed wing.

"Torture has become a phenomenon," Jabareen said. He said his group had documented some 120 cases of mistreatment in detention.

In a statement published in Palestinian newspapers, the intelligence service said Barghouti had complained of chest and abdominal pain and was examined by a hospital doctor two days before his death.

A protest planned by **Hamas** loyalists in Ramallah, where Abbas' government is headquartered, was quickly dispersed by police who used batons to beat demonstrators.

Meanwhile, the Israeli military is preparing for a possible **Hamas**-organized march at the border fence around the Gaza Strip aimed at breaking a months-long economic blockade, local media said Sunday.

According to a report on Army Radio, **Hamas** may call for a mass march on the border to protest the near-complete Israeli closure of the territory.

Israel's Haaretz newspaper also reported on Saturday that Israeli forces have increased their presence along the border, adding that Israel fears there could be several casualties if the troops try to halt such a march.

An Israeli military spokes-man declined to comment on the reports. - **Agencies**

Load-Date: October 22, 2008

Prisoner exchange stalled; Israeli Soldier; Hamas insists on release of 1,400 Palestinians

National Post (f/k/a The Financial Post) (Canada)

December 27, 2007 Thursday

National Edition

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Section: WORLD; Pg. A19

Length: 515 words

Byline: Nidal Al-Mughrabi, Reuters

Dateline: GAZA

Body

GAZA - **Hamas** will not release a captured Israeli soldier unless Israel meets its demand to free nearly 1,400 Palestinian prisoners, including 350 with life sentences, a leader of the Islamist group in Gaza said yesterday.

Similar demands were rejected months ago by Israel, highlighting the gap that remains between the two sides in trying to reach a swap deal for Sergeant Gilad Shalit, captured by Gaza militants in a cross-border raid in June, 2006.

Hamas leader Osama al-Muzaini, one of the top officials with knowledge of the negotiations, said the list of names in any deal would contain prisoners serving life sentences, including Fatah leader Marwan al-Barghouthi, who is seen as a possible successor to Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas.

Previous efforts to reach a deal, spearheaded by Egyptian mediators, stalled after **Hamas** Islamists routed Fatah forces loyal to Mr. Abbas and seized control of the Gaza Strip in June. Egypt responded by withdrawing its diplomatic mission in Gaza.

Israeli Defence Minister Ehud Barak met with Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak in Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt, yesterday to discuss a deal with **Hamas** on Sgt. Shalit.

Mr. Muzaini told Reuters in an interview that diplomats

from three European countries had made contact with **Hamas** leaders in Gaza to try to mediate Sgt. Shalit's release. He did not identify the European countries.

Mr. Muzaini said **Hamas** would not budge on its demand for 1,400 prisoners.

"In March, we closed discussions on this issue and we have no intention of reopening them. The ball is in Israel's court," he said.

Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert's office in April referred to the **Hamas** offer as disappointing, and Mr. Olmert previously vowed not to release prisoners with "blood on their hands," a reference to attacks against Israelis.

Prisoner exchange stalled; Israeli Soldier; Hamas insists on release of 1,400 Palestinians

But Israeli ministers met this week to discuss easing criteria for freeing Palestinian prisoners as part of efforts to gain Sgt. Shalit's release.

Israeli Deputy Prime Minister Shaul Mofaz told Army Radio yesterday that Israel needs to "take every step" to secure the release of Sgt. Shalit and two other Israeli soldiers captured by Hezbollah guerrillas last year.

"Ultimately, we will have to approve a list [of prisoners]. It doesn't matter what title these people are given. What's important is to return the boys home," Mr. Mofaz said.

Mr. Muzaini said the first phase of Hamas's proposal calls for Sgt. Shalit to be handed over to Egypt in exchange for Israel releasing 350 prisoners serving life sentences, including jailed leaders from Hamas and other factions.

At the same time, Israel would release half the number of women and minors held in Israeli jails, a number Mr. Muzaini estimated at 400.

Sgt. Shalit would be returned to his family 10 days later and Israel would simultaneously release another 100 long-serving prisoners and the rest of women and minors, Mr. Muzaini said.

In the second phase of the deal two months later, Hamas wants Israel to free an additional 550 prisoners.

Hamas is seeking Egyptian and other international guarantees that the subsequent release would be carried out.

Graphic

Black & White Photo:; (See hardcopy for Photo Description) ;

Black & White Photo: Chris Mikula, CanWest News Service; A rally in Ottawa last year called for the release of Gilad Shalit, an Israeli soldier captured by Gaza militants in a cross-border raid in June, 2006. ;

Load-Date: December 27, 2007

Gaza policewoman shows limits of women's status under Hamas On drug raids, she wears long robe and head scarf that reveals only her eyes. But Hamas also has boosted women's roles in athletics and TV.

St. Louis Post-Dispatch (Missouri)

August 24, 2008 Sunday

FOURTH EDITION

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Section: NEWS; Pg. A10

Length: 507 words

Byline: By Sarah El Deeb THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Dateline: GAZA CITY, Gaza Strip

Body

In her year on the vice squad, Lt. Mariam al-Bursh has been on narcotics busts, interrogated male drug dealers and fought off a **female** assailant with her fists.

The 27-year-old is one of 53 **women** serving in the 11,000-strong **Hamas** police force, established after the Islamic militants seized Gaza by force more than a year ago.

Since taking power, **Hamas** has put some educated, motivated **women** in government jobs, promoted athletics for **women**, and boosted their presence on male-dominated TV.

Hamas says it wants to recruit the best and brightest, regardless of gender, and improve **women**'s status in Gaza's conservative society.

But al-Bursh's working conditions show the limits of **Hamas**' tolerance.

On drug busts, she is unarmed and wears a long blue-and-gray robe and head scarf that reveals only her blue eyes. When she interrogates a drug dealer, a male colleague must be present, because Muslim custom doesn't allow her to be alone with a strange man.

No problem, says Al-Bursh - the measures are meant to protect her. "These limits are to the benefit of **women**. Not against them," she says.

After **Hamas** violently routed the secular Fatah movement during last year's takeover, many feared the Islamic group, whose ultimate goal is to establish an Islamic state, would enforce a strict social code.

Gaza does seem more conservative these days, but **Hamas** officials say it's happening by persuasion, not coercion.

"We are in politics, in technology, in advanced studies. We are in parliament," said Jamila Shanti. The suggestion that **Hamas** is setting **women** back is an "old notion," she said.

Gaza policewoman shows limits of women's status under Hamas On drug raids, she wears long robe and head scarf that reveals only her eyes. But Hamas also has boo....

Shanti, 51, is one of six Hamas women elected to the 132-member Palestinian parliament.

The Hamas government says it employs more women than Fatah did. Women students outnumber males at Gaza City's Islamic University. Several girls and women appear in a children's show and a woman's program on Hamas' Al Aqsa TV.

But women's rights campaigners in Gaza claim these changes are misleading and that Hamas' long-term strategy is to restrict their rights.

Activist Nadia Abu Nahla said it's impossible to get permits for women's rights demonstrations. "This democratic mobilization is not present," she said. "Women are afraid."

Hamas offers a police hot line for women who feel harassed, and publicly scolds those who give women without head scarves a hard time.

When Fatah ruled Gaza, female police officers trained with male colleagues. Now it's a problem because the instructors are male.

Hamas has had to fine-tune the dress code, allowing the female cops to have side slits in their robes to allow for easier movement while running. Al-Bursh can now wear pants under the robe.

She says the dress code helps, because the robe gives her an air of authority and suspects can't identify her.

Her conservative family, she says, has been assured by her bosses that there won't be any "unnecessary mixing" with men.

At a recent drug bust, her job was to search the women, and she found marijuana seeds hidden in a suspect's bra. "We know the secrets of women," al-Bursh said.

Load-Date: August 24, 2008

As Israeli Forces Withdraw From Northern Gaza, Hamas Celebrates Its Rocketry

The New York Times

March 4, 2008 Tuesday

Late Edition - Final

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Section: Section A; Column 0; Foreign Desk; Pg. 12

Length: 1267 words

Byline: By TAGHREED EL-KHODARY and ISABEL KERSHNER; Taghreed El-Khodary reported from Gaza City and Isabel Kershner from Jerusalem. Steven Erlanger contributed reporting from Jerusalem.

Dateline: GAZA

Body

As Israel withdrew its forces from the northern Gaza Strip on Monday after a two-day assault on Hamas militants, and as Palestinians emerged from their houses to inspect the damage, Hamas leaders seemed to be following the playbook of their Lebanese ally, Hezbollah, in its 2006 war with Israel.

Fawzi Barhoum, a spokesman for Hamas in Gaza, said that like Hezbollah, Hamas had "gone from the stone to the rocket."

"What we learned from Hezbollah," he said, "is that resistance is a choice that can work."

The clearest example of echoing Hezbollah came Monday when thousands attended a so-called victory rally, and Mahmoud Zahar, an influential Hamas leader, briefly came out of hiding to tell the rallygoers that his organization would rebuild any house that had been damaged by the Israeli strikes.

Holding up his group as the source of reconstruction as well as resistance is precisely the message that brought local and regional acclaim to Hassan Nasrallah, the Hezbollah leader, when his organization faced down Israeli attacks in the summer of 2006 through rocket barrages on Israel.

The latest surge in hostilities between Israel and militants in the Gaza Strip left 116 Palestinians dead, according to Dr. Moawiya Hassanain of the Palestinian Health Ministry in Gaza, making it the deadliest fighting in Gaza in a year. Two Israeli soldiers were killed in the fighting in northern Gaza on Saturday, and one Israeli civilian was killed last Wednesday by rocket fire in the border town of Sderot.

But more than 200 rockets have been fired at Israel since Wednesday, according to Israeli military officials, including at least 21 longer-range Katyusha-style rockets, which are manufactured outside Gaza and brought into the strip. Palestinians and Israelis see the use of those rockets as another illustration of the growing similarity between Hezbollah and Hamas, the militant Islamic organization that controls Gaza.

As Israeli Forces Withdraw From Northern Gaza, Hamas Celebrates Its Rocketry

"We are very concerned that the role model for Hamas in Gaza is the Lebanese Hezbollah," said Mark Regev, a spokesman for Israel's prime minister, Ehud Olmert, when asked about parallels between this conflict and the one with Hezbollah.

"I have no doubt that the people who built Hezbollah's military machine are now building the military machine of Hamas," Mr. Regev added. He cited Iran, where Israeli security officials say the longer-range rockets used by both Hezbollah and Hamas were made.

Israeli officials say Hezbollah also provides Hamas with training and logistical support. They add that Hamas has also adopted other Hezbollah tactics, operating in civilian areas and in some cases storing weapons in homes, creating similar quandaries for the army that it faced in its war in Lebanon in 2006.

Soon after the forces left northern Gaza on Monday, two more of the imported rockets struck Ashkelon, an Israeli coastal city of 120,000 people about 10 miles north of the strip. One rocket hit an apartment block, causing damage but no serious injuries.

Hamas has claimed responsibility for most of the rocket fire. Hamas took over Gaza last June after routing forces loyal to President Mahmoud Abbas of Fatah.

Mr. Abbas, who is based in the West Bank, suspended peace talks with Israel as the death toll rose in Gaza, and on Monday he called on all sides to agree to a cease-fire and to allow him to act as a mediator, a day before Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice was expected to arrive in the region for talks.

There was a second day of unrest in the West Bank on Monday, with Palestinians protesting the Israeli actions in Gaza and throwing stones at soldiers and Israeli cars in various locations. An Israeli settler shot and killed a 17-year-old Palestinian on a road west of Ramallah. According to Israel Radio, the settler said he had gone out for a walk and was confronted by a group of Palestinians, some masked, who threw stones.

In what was apparently a bid to remain relevant in Gaza, and in an echo of the actions of the Lebanese government in southern Beirut after the war in 2006, Mr. Abbas also instructed his government to allocate \$5 million to compensate Gaza residents whose properties were damaged in the Israeli campaign.

Israel says its ground and air forces have been aiming only at rocket squads and weapons storage and production facilities in Gaza. Israel's army chief of staff, Lt. Gen. Gabi Ashkenazi, and its chief of military intelligence, Maj. Gen. Amos Yadlin, described 90 percent of those killed in Gaza in the last few days as terrorists.

But that figure is challenged by medical officials in Gaza, who say about half of those killed were civilians, including several young children. The Israeli human rights organization B'Tselem also issued a statement on Monday saying that by its count, at least 54 of the dead had not taken part in the hostilities.

Mr. Olmert was quoted as telling Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee of Parliament that the recent military campaign, which started with concerted airstrikes on Wednesday and continued with the ground incursion early Saturday, was "not a one-time event."

"We are in the midst of a combat action," he said, adding that "the objective is reducing the rocket fire and weakening Hamas."

On Monday evening, the Israeli Air Force struck another rocket-launching squad and the wagon in which they were transporting rockets in northern Gaza, an army spokeswoman said. Palestinian officials said one militant was killed.

Israel is mulling a much broader and longer ground operation in Gaza, the defense minister, Ehud Barak, has said in recent days. But Israeli government and military officials say they are wary of such a campaign because of the inevitably high cost in lives on the two sides and uncertainty about what might be achieved.

As Israeli Forces Withdraw From Northern Gaza, Hamas Celebrates Its Rocketry

In terms of strength, **Hamas** is still far from Hezbollah. But if Israel does not act, said Mr. Regev, the spokesman for Mr. Olmert, it will wake up one day to a much more dangerous situation in the south with a large part of the Israeli population within range of **Hamas** rocket fire.

In the Gaza town of Jabaliya, the focus of the Israeli ground operation, residents emerged from their houses to inspect the destruction left by the Israeli tanks and to bury more of the dead.

Ahmad Darabeh, 37, a teacher and father of six, described how soldiers blew open the door of his house without warning before dawn on Saturday and took up sniper positions inside. The family was confined to one room, allowed out only to the bathroom once every 10 hours, Mr. Darabeh said.

He said one of his **female** relatives, Nihad Daher, 22, who lived nearby, was killed Saturday by shrapnel when an Israeli Apache helicopter fired a missile at an armed group outside the house.

Mr. Darabeh said he was impressed by the organization of the members of the Qassam Brigades, the military wing of **Hamas**. "It was striking to see their performance this time," he said, adding that if the Israeli ground forces had not been backed up from the air, "**Hamas** could have beaten them."

The Qassam Brigades say that 37 of its members have been killed since Wednesday, and other militant groups say they lost 15.

Many Palestinians in Gaza also expressed reservations about the **Hamas** celebrations, given the number of people who had died.

Sitting outside her partly destroyed house in Jabaliya, Aisha Abd Rabbo, 85, said she did not care about the offer of compensation from Mr. Zahar, the **Hamas** leader who addressed the rally on Monday.

"All I want is the return of those who were killed," she said.

<http://www.nytimes.com>

Graphic

PHOTOS: THE ISRAELIS: Israeli soldiers approached Palestinian youths on Monday in Bethlehem, in the West Bank, after Palestinians protested Israeli military operations in the Gaza Strip. (PHOTOGRAPH BY KEVIN FRAYER/ASSOCIATED PRESS)

THE PALESTINIANS: Palestinian youths ran after fighting broke out against the Israeli soldiers in Bethlehem. More than 100 Palestinians have died in hostilities since Wednesday. (PHOTOGRAPH BY MUSA AL-SHAER/AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE -- GETTY IMAGES) MAP: Rockets reached Ashkelon, about 10 miles from the strip. Map of Ashkelon near the Gaza Strip.

Load-Date: March 5, 2008

Israel chooses 450 prisoners to exchange for Gilad Schalit. Hamas rejects list without even seeing it

The Jerusalem Post

September 26, 2008 Friday

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Section: NEWS; Pg. 3

Length: 427 words

Byline: HERB KEINON

Body

An interministerial committee presented Prime Minister Ehud Olmert on Thursday with a list of 450 names of Palestinian prisoners to be released in exchange for kidnapped soldier Gilad Schalit, in a move immediately dismissed by Hamas as insufficient.

Half of the list drawn up by the committee, headed by Vice Premier Haim Ramon, included names that were on a list of 350 to 450 security prisoners that Hamas has been demanding for Schalit. Hamas is reportedly asking for some 1,000 men, plus all the minors and women prisoners, in exchange for Schalit, held in the Gaza Strip since June 2006.

If Olmert approves the list on Friday, it would be transferred to Egyptian intelligence chief Omar Suleiman, who would pass it on to Hamas.

Hamas spokesman Fawzi Barhoum said Israel was trying to get out of the conditions for the exchange that were agreed upon previously with the Egyptians, before the negotiations collapsed. He said the present list did not even meet Hamas's minimum demands. Barhoum said Hamas was demanding that Israel release all the "veteran prisoners" and those who had been sentenced to life in prison.

The list has not been made public.

The submission of the list comes at a time of a standstill in the negotiations, which are being conducted through Egypt. The security cabinet instructed Ramon and his committee - which included Justice Minister Daniel Friedmann, Public Security Minister Avi Dichter and Minister-without-Portfolio Ami Ayalon - to draw up new, more flexible criteria last month, in a signal to Hamas it was interested in moving the negotiations forward.

Israel Radio reported that the Ramon panel announced it would not meet again to further water down the criteria and offer to trade more dangerous prisoners in exchange for Schalit.

While Israel has said in the past that its policy was not to release Palestinian prisoners with "blood on their hands," the current list is widely believed to include a number of men who fall into that category.

Earlier this month, Ramon warned Hamas that its refusal to reduce its demands would doom a deal to swap Palestinian prisoners for Schalit. He added that the onus was not just on Israel. "If there is no flexibility in Hamas's demands as well, it won't be possible to reach a deal," he said.

Israel chooses 450 prisoners to exchange for Gilad Schalit. Hamas rejects list without even seeing it

Hamas initially demanded some 450 prisoners for Schalit, but upped the ante following Israel's release in July of Lebanese terrorist/murderer Samir Kuntar, four Hizbullah prisoners and the bodies of 200 terrorists and infiltrators for the bodies of IDF reservists Ehud Goldwasser and Eldad Regev.

Load-Date: October 4, 2011

End of Document

Two Hamas gunmen die in shootout with Israelis

The Gazette (Montreal)
January 5, 2008 Saturday
Final Edition

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Section: NEWS; Pg. A20

Length: 223 words

Byline: ADEL ZAANOUN, AFP

Dateline: GAZA CITY

Body

Two **Hamas** gunmen were killed in a shootout with Israeli troops in Gaza early yesterday, hours after President George W. Bush insisted peace efforts will continue despite the violence.

Ahead of his landmark visit to the region next week, Bush called on Israel to dismantle wildcat settlement outposts in occupied Palestinian territory, in an interview with Israel's top-selling newspaper.

In Israel-Palestinian violence, two members of **Hamas**'s armed wing, the Ezzedine Al-Qassam Brig-ades, died in the firefight with troops near the northern town of Beit Hanun, the group and Palestinian medics said.

An army official said troops operating near the border fence opened fire on two armed Palestinians who were approaching the barrier between Gaza and Israel and reported hitting them.

The fighting came a day after heavy Israeli ground and air strikes killed nine Palestinians, including two **women**, in the territory where **Hamas** violently seized control in mid-June.

It was the deadliest day in Gaza since Dec. 18, when Israeli strikes killed 12 militants, including the chief of the armed wing of the radical Islamic Jihad group.

In the Israeli-occupied West Bank, a 32-year-old male Palestinian civilian was shot and critically wounded by Israeli troops who opened fire on stone-throwing demonstrators after Friday prayers, medics and witnesses said.

Load-Date: January 5, 2008

HAMAS EXPECTS EGYPT TO CLOSE GAZA GAP TODAY

Pittsburgh Post-Gazette (Pennsylvania)

February 3, 2008 Sunday

TWO STAR EDITION

Copyright 2008 P.G. Publishing Co.

Section: WORLD; WORLD BRIEFS; Pg. A-2

Length: 347 words

Dateline: RAFAH, Gaza Strip

Body

Egypt will close its breached border wall with Gaza today in coordination with **Hamas**, the Palestinian militant group that blew it up, a senior **Hamas** leader said yesterday after meeting with Egyptian officials.

But Mahmoud Zahar said the closure would be temporary while the Egyptians search for a way to reopen the border. **Hamas** blew the wall open on Jan. 23 to end a seven-month Israeli and Egypt blockade of **Hamas**-ruled Gaza.

It was not clear whether Egypt was considering the group's demand for a say in running the border.

BALLOONIST MISSING

ANCHORAGE, Alaska -- The search for a record-holding balloonist who disappeared over the Pacific Ocean south of the Aleutian arc failed to turn up the man or balloon yesterday, the third day since he went missing, according to the U.S. Coast Guard.

Michio Kanda departed Tochigi, Japan, Thursday morning, or Wednesday evening, Alaska time, on his way to Portland, Ore.

SARKOZY, EX-MODEL WED

PARIS -- French President Nicolas Sarkozy, 53, and former supermodel Carla Bruni, 40, were married yesterday in a small private ceremony at the presidential Elysee Palace, less than three months after they reportedly first met, and less than four months after his divorce from the previous first lady, Cecilia.

The newlyweds said in a statement only that they tied the knot "in the presence of their families in the strictest privacy." The mayor who performed the ceremony filled in the details.

"The bride wore white; she was ravishing, as usual," Francois Lebel, mayor of Paris' eighth arrondissement, or neighborhood, told Europe-1 radio. The groom wore a suit and tie, and he "wasn't bad, either," Mr. Lebel said.

ALSO IN THE WORLD . . .

Some 125,000 Turks, mostly **women**, protested in Ankara yesterday, denouncing the government over its plans to lift a decades-old ban on Islamic head scarves at universities ... An al-Qaida affiliate claimed responsibility for a

HAMAS EXPECTS EGYPT TO CLOSE GAZA GAP TODAY

shooting attack on the Israeli Embassy in Mauritania's capital, Nouakchott, saying it was retaliating against Israeli policies in the Gaza Strip, an Arab television station reported yesterday.

Load-Date: February 5, 2008

End of Document

Egypt battles to turn the tide as Hamas knocks new hole in wall

The Times (London)

January 26, 2008, Saturday

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Section: OVERSEAS NEWS; Pg. 45

Length: 615 words

Byline: James Hider, Gaza City

Body

Under siege and facing an increasingly restive population chafing at food and fuel shortages caused by an Israeli blockade, **Hamas** pulled off a brilliant propaganda move this week when it brought down the hated wall on the Egyptian border.

"**Hamas** should all move to Madison Avenue and ply their trade there," said Ariele Mekel, an Israeli Foreign Ministry spokesman, grudgingly comparing the Islamists to the cream of New York's PR industry.

Other Israeli officials said that with the toppling of the wall Gaza had become Cairo's headache. The move would finally complete Israel's disengagement from what it has branded a "hostile entity".

Egypt was struggling to reseal the border yesterday, turning water cannon on thousands of Palestinians crossing the frontier to buy supplies. When they fired in the air at stone-throwing youths, they got a taste of Gazan fury - armed **Hamas** fighters rushed in and the police retreated. To reinforce the point that they were in charge, **Hamas** brought in a bulldozer and ploughed another hole in the broken wall. "Until we have normal crossings we'll not allow them to close the passages," said one of the militants.

Hamas had arrived at this point through a dramatic sequence of events - many of which the Israelis, and even some Gazans, suspect were engineered by **Hamas** itself. The Islamists had stepped up the barrage of Qassam rockets on the Israeli town of Sderot after an Israeli raid that killed 20 Palestinians. In response Israel cut off supplies to Gaza through its border crossings, with vast areas plunged into darkness when it switched off electricity.

Israel denounced the blackout as a propaganda ploy, pointing out that 70 per cent of Gaza's electricity came via cables not affected by the cuts.

Hamas was quick to capitalise, with candlelit processions of **women** and children on the blacked-out streets airing instantly on the evening news on Arab networks and even Israel's two main channels. Mr Mekel said that he suspected some of the footage was pre-recorded and accused **Hamas** of turning off the power themselves.

Even some Gazans suspected that the Islamist government- which took Gaza by force last summer in a pitched battle with their more moderate West Bank rivals Fatah - could have had a hand in turning off the lights. "It's possible. Everything is possible," said Maamon Khozendar, chairman of a large Gaza petrol company and a senior member of the union that ships fuel to the power station. "**Hamas** all the time are playing a game. They want to break the closure. Sometimes you must make severe surgical operations," he said.

Egypt battles to turn the tide as Hamas knocks new hole in wall

Mr Khozendar, an independent who served five years in an Israeli jail in the 1970s as a young Fatah leader, acknowledged that the stakes were high for Hamas, politically isolated and trapped in a tiny plot of land with 1.5million mouths to feed. "Hamas have their back to the wall."

Smashing down the wall on Wednesday was a stunning reversal of the siege and hundreds of thousands of Gazans hailed the militants as heroes. As Hamas enjoyed its revitalised role in the political arena, some Israeli officials were looking at potential long-term benefits.

"This is a blessing in disguise for Israel," said one, who asked not to be named. "If Egypt leaves it like this, which I doubt, this is the dream of the Israeli Right," - to hand responsibility of Gaza to Egypt and concentrate all its attention on reaching a deal with a weakened Fatah in the West Bank. That could allow Israeli settlement blocks to stay where they are and create a small Palestinian state out of a divided Palestinian people whose most prized possession had always been their unity.

*The Gaza break-out in pictures timesonline.co.uk/mideast

Load-Date: January 26, 2008

End of Document

Huge rally in Gaza erupts in violence; Hamas and Fatah battle on anniversary of Arafat's death

The International Herald Tribune

November 13, 2007 Tuesday

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Section: NEWS; Pg. 1

Length: 846 words

Byline: Taghreed El-Khodary and Isabel Kershner - The New York Times Media Group

Dateline: GAZA

Body

At least 6 Palestinians were killed and more than 100 were wounded here Monday when a mass rally marking the third anniversary of the death of Yasser Arafat, the longtime Palestinian leader, ended in fighting between the rival factions of **Hamas** and Fatah.

Doctors at two Gaza hospitals said all of the dead and most of the wounded were Fatah supporters who had been participating in the rally.

Tens of thousands of Gaza residents had turned out to commemorate Arafat, the founder of the Fatah movement, in the largest show of support for the mainstream Palestinian organization since the Islamic group **Hamas** seized control of the territory in June.

Fatah officials estimated attendance at more than 250,000. The total population of Gaza is about 1.5 million.

Hamas and Fatah accused each other of starting the violence. Ehab al- Ghsein, a spokesman for the **Hamas**-run Interior Ministry in Gaza, said that Fatah gunmen stationed on city rooftops first opened fire at members of the **Hamas** police force, wounding four officers. Fatah supporters also started throwing stones at the police, he said.

The **Hamas** takeover of Gaza was preceded by a bloody factional war. Since **Hamas** routed the Fatah forces there, it has tried to impose order and has acted to subdue public displays of support for Fatah.

Hamas did not try to prevent the rally from taking place, in deference to the popularity of Arafat, who is viewed by many Palestinians as a symbol of national unity.

But Ghsein accused Fatah of trying to reignite internal strife. "There are those who aim to bring lawlessness back to the Gaza Strip," he said.

Hazem Abu Shanab, a Fatah leader in Gaza, rejected the **Hamas** version of events as nonsense.

"The shooting came from one side only, toward civilians who came out to support Fatah," he said.

The rally started out peacefully, with many **women** and children in the crowd, but the mutual hostility between the rival camps was palpable.

Huge rally in Gaza erupts in violence Hamas and Fatah battle on anniversary of Arafat's death

Hamas policemen took up positions on the roofs of the highest buildings and the group's members mingled among the crowd in civilian clothes.

The Hamas police confiscated Fatah flags and posters of Arafat from the cars of Fatah supporters, and rally participants shouted harsh slogans against the Islamic group, including "Shia, Shia," in reference to the support Hamas gets from Iran. The vast majority of Palestinians are Sunni Muslims.

The shooting erupted when the rally was almost over, and lasted for an hour and a half.

Fawziya Abu Karish came to the rally with her 11-year-old daughter, Amira. "I hadn't wanted to come," she said, but her brother, who was wounded in the June fighting, called her from Egypt and begged her "to go out in support of Fatah." Amira said that a man standing next to her was shot in the legs from a distance.

At Shifa Hospital, Afaf Abu Tayeh, 45, was waiting by the morgue. She had come to look for two of her sons, 16 and 17. "The Israelis were more merciful than them," she said of Hamas. "They beat children in front of my eyes."

Ashraf al-Bitar, 23, a member of the Hamas naval police, said that Hamas had to react after Fatah gunmen started shooting and their supporters stoned the police and called them "Shia."

After Hamas took over Gaza, the Palestinian president, Mahmoud Abbas of Fatah, dissolved the Hamas-led unity government in which several Fatah ministers had served and appointed a caretaker government made up mostly of independents in the West Bank. Hamas, which won parliamentary elections in 2006, does not recognize the authority of the Abbas government and rules alone in Gaza.

A new opinion poll by the Jerusalem Media and Communications Center, an independent Palestinian organization, indicated a slight rise in support for Fatah at the expense of Hamas.

Forty percent of the respondents said that Fatah was the party they trusted most, while 20 percent said they trusted Hamas. In Gaza, 43 percent favored Fatah, and 25 percent favored Hamas. In a similar survey conducted by the center in September 2006, Fatah and Hamas came in almost even, with 31 percent and 30 percent respectively. The new poll was based on a random sample of 1,200 people in the West Bank and Gaza, with a margin of error of plus or minus 3 percent.

On Sunday night, Israeli military forces detained Mariam Saleh, a Hamas legislator and the former minister of women's affairs, in Ramallah, and Khaled Tafesh, a senior Hamas member in Bethlehem, a military spokesman said. About half of the 74 Hamas legislators are now in Israeli prisons.

The Israeli prime minister, Ehud Olmert, told the Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee of Parliament on Monday that he was considering another Palestinian prisoner release before the international Middle East peace gathering that is expected to take place in Annapolis, Maryland, in the coming weeks.

The Israeli government has released about 350 Palestinians, most of whom belong to Fatah, in two batches since July, part of a series of gestures meant to bolster Abbas. There are more than 10,000 Palestinians in Israeli prisons.

**

Isabel Kershner reported from Jerusalem.

Load-Date: November 16, 2007

HAMAS AND OTHERS SABOTAGE PEACE

Pittsburgh Post-Gazette (Pennsylvania)

February 12, 2008 Tuesday

SOONER EDITION

Copyright 2008 P.G. Publishing Co.

Section: EDITORIAL; LETTERS TO THE EDITOR; Pg. B-6

Length: 253 words

Byline: ELLEN SUCOV, EUGENE SUCOV

Body

We did a double take when we read the letter by Janice Gordon ("What About Going for Peace?" Feb. 5). Following such a caption, we expected to find an informed message about the repeated efforts of Hamas and other radical Muslim groups to sabotage every serious peace initiative.

We thought there would be a description of the most recent suicide bombers who tried to kill and maim dozens of men, women and children in Israel recently but who underperformed only because of the vigilance and courage of their targets. We expected to see a copy of the headline that announced yet another dozen rocket attacks on the town of Sderot, destroying schools and wounding innocent Israelis.

But instead, there was only the usual parroting of Hamas propaganda, the misguided expression of sympathy for the squalid living conditions of the murderers and their handlers.

"Was anyone surprised that militants broke down the barrier between the Gaza Strip and Egypt so that thousands of people could acquire the basic items they need in order to sustain their lives?" asks Ms. Gordon.

Are bombs, explosives and guns really the items that those "people" need in order to sustain their lives? By now, everyone should know that's what was poured into the Gaza Strip through the hole exploded in the barrier, to be used to attack and kill Jews and Israelis.

We just returned from several months in Israel, so we are well aware of the facts. These harsh realities are apparently too difficult for Ms. Gordon to accept.

ELLEN SUCOV

EUGENE SUCOV

O'Hara

Load-Date: February 12, 2008

Hamas boy band seeks to bring harmony to Gaza

The Daily Telegraph (LONDON)

October 30, 2007 Tuesday

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Section: NEWS; International; Pg. 20

Length: 383 words

Byline: Tim Butcher

Body

HAMAS militants have launched a new weapon in their struggle with Israel: a troupe of honey-voiced singers known as Protectors of the Homeland.

Wearing crisply pressed fatigues in urban camouflage blue, the six band members gather each day to practise in an old office within the Gaza City police headquarters.

The small room throbbed with energy as their dusty 12-track amplifier screeched with feedback before being tamed by an engineer.

To the accompaniment of a backing track from a laptop computer, the men then started polishing their routine of songs, almost all of which have strong Islamic and militaristic content and titles like Change and Reform. Such uplifting lyrics as "By the shrouds of the dead we are inspired" are typical.

"It is our job to inspire the foot soldiers," said Maj Hosam Abu Abdu, a 40-year-old former police officer who now fronts the band. "We want to urge the soldiers and officers to push on, to make the effort needed in the struggle to end the occupation [of Palestinian land by Israel]."

Formed in the summer as part of the arts department of **Hamas**'s domestic security service, the Executive Force, the group has performed for police units around Gaza City.

But Maj Abu Abdu, who also uses his fine voice to call the faithful to prayer at a mosque, outlined ambitious plans for Protectors of the Homeland - to produce their first recordings for distribution, to build a theatre in Gaza City and even to start public dancing.

Being an Islamic group, the plans do not involve **women** and the band leader looked slightly shocked when asked if any of the activities might be unisex. "Not possible," he said.

All the band members said the work beat the regular duties that included, back in June, helping **Hamas** in its bloody and ultimately successful battle with the Fatah faction for control of the Gaza Strip.

Music has always played a large role in the culture of **Hamas**, with songs praising the group and its leaders, including the wheelchair-bound Sheikh Ahmed Yassin who was killed by the Israelis in 2004.

Hamas boy band seeks to bring harmony to Gaza

As well as motivating serving Hamas members, the group also performs in prisons to try to re-educate criminals. "There is a strong psychological effect in music and we use it to try to improve the spirit of those who have committed crimes," Maj Abu Abdu said.

Load-Date: October 30, 2007

End of Document

**Israel withdraws from Gaza Strip; Hamas claims 'victory;' Israelis say
deterrence objective achieved**

Edmonton Journal (Alberta)

March 3, 2008 Monday

Final Edition

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Section: NEWS; Pg. A4

Length: 557 words

Byline: Reuters; With files from Canwest News Service

Dateline: GAZA

Body

Israeli troops pulled out of the Gaza Strip today after days of fighting that killed more than 100 people and drew an appeal from Washington to end violence and rescue peace talks with the Palestinians.

The **Hamas** Islamists who control the coastal enclave declared "victory" and vowed to continue firing rockets into Israel. But the Israeli government declared it had achieved its objective of deterring attacks, which have disrupted life in border towns.

At dawn, as Gaza residents streamed out of homes where they had been pinned for days by the heavy fighting, a spokesman for the **Hamas** armed wing said it would continue firing rockets into Israel. "The enemy has been defeated," he said.

Senior **Hamas** official Sami Abu Zuhri said: "Gaza will always be a graveyard for the occupation forces."

On the eve of a visit by U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, Israel had been under pressure from its ally in Washington to halt the violence after Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas suspended U.S.-backed peace talks in protest at the bloodshed.

It carried out several air strikes overnight, killing a further three militants, according to medics and **Hamas**. The army said it had targeted workshops involved in making rockets.

Vice-Premier Haim Ramon, deputy to Prime Minister Ehud Olmert, told Army Radio: "This operation has run its course.

"The main goal of the Israeli government ... is to end the firing at targets in the south. There were dozens of deaths among the **Hamas** terrorists -- this is certainly deterrence."

Hamas officials said they found four bodies in northern areas of the Gaza Strip following the Israeli withdrawal, taking the Palestinian death toll since Wednesday to 112.

Medics and **Hamas** have said about half of those have been civilians, including **women** and children.

Israel withdraws from Gaza Strip; Hamas claims 'victory;' Israelis say deterrence objective achieved

The United Nations condemned Israel for using "excessive force" and Abbas, whose Western-backed forces lost control of Gaza to **Hamas** in June, said he would not resume talks with Olmert until it ended.

Rice is to arrive on Tuesday for scheduled, separate meetings with Abbas and Olmert. "We're encouraging Israel to exercise caution to avoid the loss of innocent life," a U.S. State Department spokesman said after Rice spoke to Abbas on Sunday.

U.S. President George W. Bush, among Israel's staunchest allies during his presidency, has pledged to try and forge a deal on Palestinian statehood before he steps down in January.

On Saturday, 61 people including 30 civilians were killed in the bloodiest day for Palestinians since their 1980s uprising.

Two Israeli soldiers were killed in the fighting and on Wednesday an Israeli civilian was killed by a rocket, the first such death since May.

Hamas says it fires rockets in self defence and that it would stop if Israel halted all military activity in Gaza and the occupied West Bank and ended its embargo on the Gaza Strip.

Earlier, Canada admonished Israel and condemned **Hamas** and other groups for unprovoked attacks.

But a strongly worded diplomatic caution from Foreign Affairs Minister Maxime Bernier, who said Canada is concerned about the Israeli measures in retaliation -- including military operations which impact civilians -- drew a sharp response.

Israeli Ambassador Alan Baker rejected the public scolding from Canada as "irresponsible allegations and insinuations" and said the use of such force is necessary.

Graphic

Photo: Getty Images; Palestinian fighters take up position during an Israeli offensive east of Jabalia refugee camp in the northern Gaza Strip on Sunday. ;

Load-Date: March 3, 2008

Israeli missiles hit Hamas offices in Gaza

Irish Examiner

March 3, 2008 Monday

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a Thomas Crosbie Holdings company

Section: WORLD

Length: 517 words

Body

A 21-month-old girl was among the dead in the new violence.

The moderate Palestinian president suspended peace talks with Israel.

Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh's office was empty at the time of the airstrike, but the raid was seen as a tough message to the Hamas leadership, which Israel holds responsible for repeated rocket barrages launched from Gaza.

A total of 54 Palestinians, roughly half of them civilians, were killed in fighting on Saturday, the highest single-day death toll in more than seven years of violence. Two Israeli soldiers also were killed.

Responding to the bloodletting, the moderate Palestinian leadership, based in the West Bank, suspended US-sponsored peace talks with Israel. US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice is due to arrive this week, but instead of promoting peace talks, she likely will try to put out the latest fire.

The bloodshed also drew condemnations internationally, including from UN chief Ban Ki-Moon, who accused Israel of "disproportionate and excessive use of force".

Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert rejected the international criticism and vowed to continue the Gaza offensive. "With all due respect, nothing will prevent us from continuing operations to protect our citizens," he told his cabinet.

Olmert's defence minister, Ehud Barak, said an even broader Gaza operation was in the cards, aimed at crushing militant rocket squads but also to "weaken the Hamas rule, in the right circumstances, even to bring it down".

Israel regularly clashes with Gaza rocket squads, but intensified its operations after militants fired salvos last week into Ashkelon, a city of 120,000. By targeting Ashkelon, 18km north of Gaza, Hamas added pressure on Israeli leaders to exact a high price for the increasing sense of insecurity felt in southern Israel.

Haniyeh's office was just one of about a dozen targets Israeli aircraft and ground troops struck before dawn.

Overnight, a 14-year-old Palestinian girl and five militants died of their wounds, and four Palestinians were killed in Israeli raids, including the baby girl, who died from shrapnel wounds.

Israeli missiles hit Hamas offices in Gaza

The bodies of two women also were unearthed from the rubble of an earlier Israeli airstrike, bringing the total death toll from the operation to 66 since Friday.

At least half were militants. Gaza health officials said about 200 people were wounded, 14 critically.

The normally bustling streets of Gaza City, the coastal strip's largest town, were eerily empty yesterday.

Schools and universities were closed. Hamas blocked off roads to government buildings and security installations to protect civilians from possible Israeli strikes.

The Israeli onslaught failed to stop rockets from battering southern Israel. Nine were fired at southern Israel by midday yesterday, including one that struck a house in the rocket-scarred town of Sderot, the military said. No one was injured. About 50 rockets and mortars were fired on Saturday, wounding six Israelis.

The Saturday toll was by far the highest since the second Palestinian uprising erupted in late 2000.

The highest previous Palestinian death toll was 38 in March 2002.

Load-Date: March 3, 2008

End of Document

Schalit talks set to resume in Cairo this week - Israel. Hamas, Islamic Jihad threaten to end cease-fire

The Jerusalem Post

July 20, 2008 Sunday

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Section: NEWS; Pg. 1

Length: 843 words

Byline: YAAKOV KATZ and KHALED ABU TOAMEH

Highlight: Lead Story

Body

After over a month of delays and only days after completing a prisoner swap with Hizbullah, defense officials said over the weekend that Israel is scheduled to renew Egyptian-mediated negotiations with Hamas this week for the release of St.-Sgt. Gilad Schalit.

The officials said that Israel had been waiting for a green light from Egypt regarding the renewal of the talks, which have been suspended since before the cease-fire between Israel and Hamas went into effect in June.

"The negotiations depend on the Egyptians," one official said, adding that there was a concern in Israel now that Hamas would raise its demands following the completion of the swap with Hizbullah.

Israeli officials said that Ofer Dekel, the former deputy head of the Shin Bet (Israel Security Agency) who was appointed chief negotiator on the prisoner exchange issue, would travel to Cairo this week to discuss renewing the talks.

On Friday, the Palestinian Ma'an News Agency reported that the issue holding up the negotiations was the identity of the prisoners Israel would release in exchange for Schalit, kidnapped in June 2006.

Hamas said over the weekend that it was convinced that "sooner or later, Israel would give in to our conditions" regarding the case of Schalit.

Abu Obaidah, spokesman for Hamas's armed wing, Izaddin Kassam, the group that is holding the IDF soldier, claimed that Israel's "intransigence" was behind the delay in achieving an agreement over a prisoner release.

Referring to the recent deal between Israel and Hizbullah, Abu Obaidah expressed hope that it would serve as an incentive for a new agreement between Israel and Hamas.

"Hamas considers the deal with Hizbullah an honorable achievement for the Lebanese resistance," he said. "This deal also proves that Israel's criterion for releasing [security] prisoners has been shattered. In the past, Israel refused to free prisoners serving lengthy sentences."

He expressed confidence that Israel would eventually succumb on the case of Schalit. "Sooner or later Israel will have to accept our conditions," he added. "Unless Israel accepts all our demands, there will be no agreement."

Schalit talks set to resume in Cairo this week - Israel . Hamas, Islamic Jihad threaten to end cease-fire

The Hamas spokesman said the case of Schalit was much more complicated than the Israel-Hizbullah deal because of the "siege" on the Gaza Strip and the large number of prisoners that Hamas was demanding.

"We are demanding the release of hundreds of prisoners serving lengthy sentences or life terms," he said. "We are also asking for all the sick prisoners, as well as the women and minors."

He said that the problem until now was Israel's "reluctance" to accept Hamas's demands. "Israel is continuing with its stubbornness," he charged. "But following the deal with Hizbullah, there are growing calls inside Israel for striking a deal with Hamas at any price."

Abu Obaidah confirmed that Hamas was under pressure to replace Egyptian mediators with German intermediaries who played a key role in bringing about the Israel-Hizbullah agreement.

"Egypt's role is very weak," he said. "In the absence of Arab and Islamic backing, Egypt alone can't put pressure on Israel to reopen the border crossings. Egypt's weakness is one of the reasons behind the delay in achieving an agreement over Schalit."

Abu Obaidah warned that failure to comply with Hamas's demands would prompt the movement to kidnap more IDF soldiers in the future to release Palestinian prisoners.

Accusing Israel of failing to abide by the cease-fire agreement by refusing to reopen the border crossings into the Gaza Strip, Abu Obaidah said he did not rule out the possibility that Hamas and the rest of the Palestinian factions would end the truce.

"We will end the truce and resume our operations against Israel to force it to reopen the border crossings," he said.

He also warned Israel against invading the Gaza Strip, saying the Palestinians were prepared more than ever to thwart such an offensive.

Hamas Interior Minister Said Siam also accused Israel over the weekend of "violating" the cease-fire by retaining the blockade on the Gaza Strip. He said that his government was in touch with the Egyptians to acquaint them with the alleged Israeli violations.

Siam also hinted that Hamas might seek the help of the Germans if the Egyptians fail to exert enough pressure on Israel to lift the blockade and reopen all the border crossings.

"There are some voices inside Hamas that are demanding that we replace the Egyptians with Germans or other international parties," he said. "But until now we remain committed to the role the Egyptian mediators are playing."

The Islamic Jihad organization also threatened to end the truce. Nafez Azzam, a senior Jihad official in the Gaza Strip, accused Israel of failing to live up to its commitments under the terms of the cease-fire accord.

"Although the Palestinians have abided by the truce, Israel is continuing to drag its feet," he said. "Israel is still preventing enough goods from entering the Gaza Strip. One can say that the situation on the ground hasn't changed much for the Palestinians one month after the truce."

Load-Date: October 4, 2011

Deadly gunfights mar Arafat memorial; 7 killed, 80 hurt in Gaza as Fatah-Hamas clashes most violent in months

The Toronto Star

November 13, 2007 Tuesday

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Section: WORLD AND COMMENT; Pg. AA03

Length: 448 words

Byline: Rushdi Abu Alouf and Ken Ellingwood, LOS ANGELES TIMES

Dateline: GAZA

Body

A memorial rally for Yasser Arafat yesterday erupted in gunfire between **Hamas** forces and followers of the rival Fatah movement in the Gaza Strip, leaving at least seven people dead and 80 injured.

It was the worst violence between the two Palestinian factions since **Hamas** routed Fatah in a military-style takeover of the coastal strip in June. The clashes left Gaza under the sole control of **Hamas**, while the West Bank remains ruled by Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas, of Fatah.

Yesterday's midday gathering was to mark the third anniversary of Arafat's death on Nov. 11, 2004, one of a series of remembrance ceremonies in the West Bank and Gaza for the former Fatah leader.

Gunfire broke out as at least 200,000 Fatah supporters, waving their faction's yellow flags and wearing Arafat-style checkered kaffiyehs, thronged a public square and streets around Al Azhar University, a Fatah stronghold in Gaza City.

Reports differed over how the violence started, with each faction blaming the other for firing first.

Fatah officials accused **Hamas** forces of opening fire from the nearby Islamic University. **Hamas** said its men were attacked by Fatah gunmen and returned fire.

After nightfall, **Hamas** forces arrested 27 Fatah activists involved in planning the rally, Fatah officials said.

The clashes seemed certain to widen the gulf between the rival groups. Abbas, who fired the **Hamas**-led government after the June fighting, has rejected new dialogue with **Hamas** until the group relinquishes control of the Gaza Strip.

Abbas has used the occasion of the anniversary of Arafat's death to renew calls for Palestinian statehood and a negotiated peace with Israel. Abbas and Israel are to take part in an American-sponsored peace conference, tentatively scheduled for later this month, aimed at kicking off full-scale negotiations.

Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert said yesterday that Israel was contemplating the release of an undisclosed number of Palestinian prisoners as a gesture to Abbas. Israel freed more than 300 of an estimated 11,000 imprisoned Palestinians in similar releases earlier this year.

Deadly gunfights mar Arafat memorial 7 killed, 80 hurt in Gaza as Fatah-Hamas clashes most violent in months

Olmert spokesperson Miri Eisin said release of "a significant number" of Palestinian prisoners was under consideration. Israeli media reported that the number would be 300 to 400, but Eisin would not confirm a figure.

In other developments, Israeli forces in the West Bank arrested two more **Hamas** members of the Palestinian parliament.

The arrests of Mariam Saleh in Ramallah and Khaled Tafesh, from the Bethlehem area, brought to 44 the number of **Hamas** lawmakers jailed by Israel since mid-2006. All remain in custody.

Saleh was the first **female** lawmaker from **Hamas** to be arrested by Israel.

Graphic

MOHAMMED ABED AFP GETTY IMAGES Fatah supporters throw stones at **Hamas** police during clashes yesterday in Gaza City, where at least 200,000 gathered for a memorial rally.

Load-Date: November 13, 2007

Is resistance futile? Gaza begins to wonder; But Hamas gains from Israeli attacks - Correction Appended

The International Herald Tribune

March 7, 2008 Friday

Correction Appended

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Section: NEWS; Pg. 7

Length: 1398 words

Byline: Steven Erlanger - The New York Times Media Group

Dateline: JABALIYA, Gaza

Body

In a small shop by their rocketed, bullet-pocked apartment building, the Abed Rabo family argued raucously about the impact of the 48-hour Israeli military incursion, which killed 126 Palestinians, including some of their neighbors.

"We all support resistance to the Israelis," said Hitam Abed Rabo, 33, a lawyer with the military court set up by Hamas, which she supports. "They talk about responding to rockets, but nothing justifies what the Israelis did here. They have to be confronted with strong resistance so they don't come back."

Will rockets on Israeli towns bring independence and freedom? "Yes," she said. "Absolutely."

Ayash Abed Rabo, 34, her cousin, scoffed. "These rockets are a joke," he said. "We want to live. We want peace. I don't want Israel here, and I don't want resistance."

Israeli officials say the operation was intended to show Hamas the cost of continued rocket firing, especially on Ashkelon, and to try to create further popular dissatisfaction with Hamas, the militant Islamist organization. Arguments persist over how many of the dead were truly uninvolved civilians, with Palestinian officials saying half or more than half, and Israel saying far less than half.

But the residents here were horrified by the numbers of civilians who died, or who they believe died, and even officials here with the rival Fatah faction think the popular reaction has served to strengthen Hamas, at least in the short term.

Nabil Katari, 46, is a local organizer for the Fatah youth, and his brother is a prominent local member of Hamas.

"I think Israel is strengthening Hamas by aiming at civilians," he said, a charge Israel vehemently disputes. "People always sympathize with the fighters and the victims. Israel is turning Hamas into a victim."

Worse, he said, both Hamas and Israel are exaggerating the threat and the number of weapons here.

"When we claim we have a lot and really don't have much compared to the Israelis, we serve their interests and let them justify hitting so hard," he said. "I feel something catastrophic coming."

Is resistance futile? Gaza begins to wonder But Hamas gains from Israeli attacks

The Abed Rabo family has traditional ties to Fatah, like many of those along Al Quds Street here in eastern Jabaliya, where the Israeli forces concentrated and where mourning tents now line the road.

Ayash Abed Rabo owns the shop, and he and the other 60 people in the building, many of them relatives, were kept in a single room by Israeli soldiers during the incursion. Hitam went to march Monday in the large Hamas demonstration celebrating the Israeli withdrawal, which Hamas called a defeat.

"That celebration was a lie," Ayash said. "To celebrate what? More than 100 people killed? And only two Israelis were killed?"

Hitam broke in. "It was a celebration," she said. "We pushed them out. We aren't equal militarily, and two dead soldiers is a lot for them. And it was a celebration because our dead are martyrs and will go to paradise. They were strong and powerful."

There is anxiety in Gaza about Hamas, which has moved swiftly to consolidate its power and whose armed police officers and military forces are visible in the streets. They provide order and have ended security chaos and much crime, but they are also an intimidating force, smoothly breaking up a Fatah rally called for Wednesday by changing its venue, turning back buses of supporters trying to reach Gaza City and putting hundreds of men, armed with both guns and wooden sticks, along the streets.

Ayash Abed Rabo said: "People are afraid to express themselves fully. We spoke to you, but someone will go to them and say that you were here and that this is what was said by whom. But I'm not afraid - I haven't said anything that Mahmoud Abbas hasn't said, and he's the president."

Fawzi Barhoum, a Hamas spokesman, said in an interview that people were free to express themselves and that those who were killed died honorably. "The number of martyrs is the price of convincing world opinion about the justice of the Palestinian cause," Barhoum said.

He insisted that Hamas was in control of Gaza and coordinated its firing of rockets with other groups. But a moment later he said that Hamas would not stop other groups from firing rockets and resisting Israel in their own fashion. He also said that the number of rockets fired depended on Hamas's calculation of the Palestinian interest at the time, and that Abbas's negotiations with Israel were futile and a form of collaboration.

Barhoum, too, seemed to feel this incursion was a kind of advertisement for the future, and insisted that Israel would fail in any larger military operation.

The intense fighting here took place during the first two hours of the incursion just after midnight Saturday, when most of the fighters were killed. Most of the time Israeli soldiers took up positions, moved from house to house, looked for weapons, interrogated young people and arrested several dozen for further questioning inside Israel.

Residents say the Israeli soldiers were more anxious than in past incursions, and gruffer. At least four young men said independently that the soldiers used them as human shields. Sometimes, they said, a soldier used their shoulders as props for his M-16 rifle.

The young men - Riad Abed Rabo, 26; his brother, Muhammad, 21; his cousin Majdi, also 21; and Hassan Abu Sabah, 32 - all said that the Israelis picked them out from the rooms in which building residents were kept, searched them, handcuffed and blindfolded them and used them as shields before letting them go seven or eight hours later.

The use of civilians as shields has been banned by the Israeli Supreme Court, and a military spokeswoman denied that anyone was used as a human shield, though she said some young men were taken down the road cuffed and blindfolded to be questioned.

About 50 meters, or around 150 feet, down the street, there was another mourning tent, the site of an extraordinary political and family drama.

Is resistance futile? Gaza begins to wonder But Hamas gains from Israeli attacks

The family of Muhammad Abu Shbak, 37, lives here. Abu Shbak is a cousin and was a bodyguard of an important Fatah general, Rashid Abu Shbak, an ally of Muhammad Dahlan's and his successor as chief of preventive security. After numerous assassination attempts, Rashid Abu Shbak fled Gaza to Egypt. Muhammad fled to Ramallah in the West Bank when Hamas forces routed forces last June, and neither dared to return.

Mirvat Abu Shbak, 34, Muhammad's wife, stayed behind with their five children. The two eldest - Jacqueline, 17, and Iyad, 16 - were both killed in the incursion, and Mirvat insists they were shot by an Israeli sniper.

"We were sleeping at midnight when there was a lot of shooting," she said in a room of mourning women sitting on floor cushions under a patterned nylon blanket. "An Israeli sniper took a position in the house next door, and he could see me, and me him.

"I was with all my kids. At 2 a.m., Iyad wanted to go to the bathroom, and when he got up they shot him in the chest, and I could feel the bullet pressing out his back," she said.

"Jacqueline had been sleeping, and woke up and said, 'My mother, Iyad is injured,' and she moved her head a little, and she was shot in the mouth, and the bullet came out the back of her head." Abu Shbak kept her composure, as her relatives patted her hand.

"There was blood everywhere, and I fell to the floor," she said, "and the sniper kept shooting, every 30 seconds, and I managed to help my children crawl out of the room."

An ambulance came to remove the bodies, but the soldiers, she said, kept her with the others in a single room in her house, and she was only able to visit their graves Tuesday.

Her husband, she said, could not have returned except with the help of the Hamas brother of Nabil Kitari, the Fatah organizer, who arranged a safe passage for Muhammad Abu Shbak, who arrived home Tuesday night.

On Wednesday, he, too, was at the mourning tent, with Khaled al-Batsh, the head of Islamic Jihad here, watching over him. "Now I'm back, I'm not going to leave," Muhammad Abu Shbak said. "I think Hamas will be no problem. We are one people."

He seemed shaky and spoke quietly. "I give the blood of my children as a gift to national unity," he said. "All my interest now is unity. We have to end the division."

Kitari, their neighbor, thinks unity is far away. "Hamas is very closed-minded," he said. "Abu Shbak wants to stay here, but he should probably take his family and go."

Correction

An article on Thursday about reaction among Gaza residents to a weekend military incursion by Israel misstated the death toll in some editions. The number of Palestinians killed in the weekend operation was nearly 100 - not 126, which is the number of Palestinians killed in Gaza by Israeli military operations since an increase in the conflict began on Feb. 27.

Correction-Date: March 8, 2008

Load-Date: March 17, 2008

Israel allows in Palestinians fleeing from Hamas; Fatah fugitives taken to hospital or assisted in escape to Ramallah after a day of fighting

Ottawa Citizen

August 3, 2008 Sunday

Early Edition

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Section: NEWS; Pg. A3

Length: 666 words

Byline: Adel Zaanoun, Agence France-Presse

Dateline: GAZA CITY

Body

GAZA CITY - Nine Palestinians were killed and dozens hurt in battles in Gaza City between forces of the rival **Hamas** and Fatah movements yesterday, prompting Israel to open its border to fleeing Fatah members.

The fighting, which lasted most of the day, was sparked when **Hamas** security forces tried to arrest suspects thought to be behind a July 25 bombing that killed five **Hamas** militants and a little girl on a Gaza beach.

The militant Islamist group blames Fatah forces loyal to Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas for the attack, but its secular rival denies any involvement. Over the past week the two sides have engaged in tit-for-tat spates of arrests.

Hamas said two of its men were killed, and medical officials reported seven more dead, mainly civilians, in yesterday's firefights, which broke out around a house belonging to the influential pro-Fatah Helis clan in the Shujwa neighbourhood of Gaza City.

More than 90 people were also wounded, including seven reported to be in serious condition, the medical sources said.

Hamas spokesman Sami Abu Zuhri charged that members of the Helis family and unidentified associates had "fired mortar rounds at the **Hamas** police as well as a rocket at Gaza City" from inside the Shujwa house.

Several members of the Helis clan "are responsible" for the deadly July 25 bomb attack and **Hamas** is determined to round up the suspects, Mr. Abu Zuhri told AFP.

But Adel Helis, a Fatah leader, denied clan members opened fire on **Hamas**.

"These are lies. We never fired rockets or mortar rounds. **Hamas** is the one committing crimes. We have asked all the Palestinian factions,

Islamists and nationalists, to use their influence so that these crimes cease," he said.

Israel allows in Palestinians fleeing from Hamas; Fatah fugitives taken to hospital or assisted in escape to Ramallah after a day of fighting

Clan leader Ahmad Helis told AFP Hamas militants "laid siege to our house, firing mortar rounds ... targeting our women and our children."

The two main Palestinian factions have been deeply divided since Hamas expelled Mr. Abbas's security forces from Gaza in a week of bloody street battles in June 2007, cleaving the territories into rival entities.

Mr. Abbas called Ahmed Helis "to express his support and denounce the Hamas attack," according to a statement from the president's office. He also told Mr. Helis "Hamas's attacks undermine my call for national dialogue between Palestinian factions."

Shortly after the fighting subsided, dozens of Fatah members, including Ahmed and Adel Helis, fled to the

Nahal Oz crossing at the border with Israel in a bid to escape to the West Bank city of Ramallah, home to Mr. Abbas's headquarters.

Israel allowed a total of 150 Palestinians who put down their guns to cross as a "humanitarian measure," an army spokesman said. The wounded were taken to hospital and the rest were transported to Ramallah.

Israel's Magen David Adom medical services treated six Palestinians for serious wounds and three more who were lightly injured, spokesman Zaki Heller said.

Defence Minister Ehud Barak authorized the rare measure following a personal request from Mr. Abbas, Palestinian Prime Minister Salam Fayyad and Egypt, a senior defence official told AFP.

Israel closed all of its crossings with Gaza following Hamas's violent takeover, but has agreed to allow basic products in under a June ceasefire.

Palestinian militants fired several mortar rounds toward the Nahal Oz crossing in violation of the truce, with four falling inside Israel and eight on the Palestinian side, an army spokesman said.

Senior Hamas official Said Siam said at a late-evening press conference that during the operation Hamas forces arrested four Fatah members involved in the July 25 explosion and that explosives and weapons had been seized.

Hamas detained more than 300 people, mostly Fatah members, after the July 25 bombing. Fatah responded by arresting Hamas militants in the Israeli-occupied West Bank.

Also yesterday, Hamas ordered the closure of Voice of the People, a radio station linked to the leftist Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine in Gaza City, a spokesman for the station said.

Graphic

Colour Photo: Amir Cohen, REUTERS; Blindfolded at the border:Israeli soldiers guard blindfolded Palestinian men who had escaped to the border with Israel at a military base just outside the Gaza Strip yesterday. ;

Load-Date: August 3, 2008

Gaza fears Israeli push to smash Hamas; MIDDLE EAST SUMMIT

The Independent (London)

November 27, 2007 Tuesday

First Edition

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The INDEPENDENT

Section: WORLD; Pg. 24

Length: 789 words

Byline: Donald Macintyre in Gaza

Body

Armoured bulldozers, guarded by a stationary escort of Israeli tanks and armoured personnel carriers half-hidden in the adjacent sandbanks, were operating all along the exposed walk south on the Palestinian side of the hi-tech Erez terminal separating Gaza from Israel yesterday.

As the great and good of the Western and Arab worlds were gathering in Annapolis, this no-man's land crossed on foot by the small privileged minority of Palestinians allowed to enter and leave since Hamas's enforced takeover in June, has been extended to almost two kilometres.

Yesterday the road seemed like a metaphor for the ever- deepening isolation of Gaza. Much of it is now rutted by the bulldozers seemingly working to destroy the cover afforded to mortar and Qassam rocket-launching crews by the eerie, bombed-out wreckage of what was once a clatteringly busy Palestinian-Israeli industrial zone. The core of women from the nearby town of Beit Hanoun, brandishing familiar Palestinian flags, demonstrating against what is universally called here the "siege" of Gaza, had to do so separated even from the forbidding border fence by a mile-wide sterile zone controlled by the Israeli military, their remote-controlled drones buzzing overhead.

Just 75 minutes later at least one militant was killed in the area in an aerial strike on what the military said was a cell launching mortars. Another 15 minutes, and two more were killed by ground fire, this time, the military said, on a well-equipped Hamas unit trying to plant explosives by the vehicles.

The scene was a reminder that there may soon be a decision on whether to mount a full-scale military operation against Hamas inside Gaza - one some Israeli commentators have speculated was merely being postponed until Annapolis was out of the way.

Otherwise, Gazans were struggling yesterday to identify their hopes and fears with an Annapolis conference at which their own de facto Hamas government is not represented and much of whose immediate focus is on alleviating conditions in the West Bank. "What did Oslo do for us?" asked Sami Ayub, 40. "After 15 years of negotiations what are they going to be able to do in Annapolis in a single day?"

Gaza fears Israeli push to smash Hamas MIDDLE EAST SUMMIT

Mr Ayub was speaking at the Beit Lahiya cemetery, from which you could see the rising smoke and hear the thuds of perhaps four tank shells close to the northern border some two kilometres away, and where he and his four brothers have provided a full grave-digging and tomb-building service for the last bleakly busy seven years. But now, because of Israel's closure of the Karni cargo crossing, he has finally run out of the cement he needs even to cover the graves properly. Mr Ayub said the desperate shortage of cement had already pushed the price of a sack up from around £2.50 to as much as £43. He has had to double the normal cost of his funeral service to £74. "At first people were very upset but now they understand. They have even brought concrete slabs from destroyed houses but that doesn't work. Now I don't know what I will do. The families will ask their Mufti if it is permitted to cover the bodies with sand."

Mr Ayub blames the Hamas takeover for the "siege," but adds that he feels "lost" between Hamas and the Ramallah-based government. "This has fallen on the head of the people," he said.

As if to rub home his point, Ahmad Shafi, head of the local farmers' co-operative, said last night he was now "very pessimistic" that Israel would implement its pre-Annapolis promise to release for export all of his members' highly perishable strawberry crop.

Nevertheless, Mr Ayub added stoutly, he will be "following closely" today's proceedings in Annapolis on television. The unreal gulf between Gaza city and Annapolis was, if anything, heightened by the Hamas-promoted activists' conference in the very room in which President Bill Clinton had in 1998 attended the historic vote to take out references to the elimination of Israel in the Palestinian National Charter. It was now decorated with banners proclaiming: "Our rights protected by resistance" and "Whoever gives up the Right of Return [for refugees] and Al Quds [Jerusalem] is not from us."

The Hamas hardliner Mahmoud Zahar told the conference: "The Land of Palestine ... is purely owned by the Palestinians. No person ... has the right to give up one inch of it."

Across the road in Tareq Abu Dayeh's "Chairman Arafat" souvenir shop, you could buy mugs commemorating "The Annapolis Conference for Peace" inscribed with the instruction: "In the case of the conference's failure you are only asked to break this mug." Just 40 had been sold so far, admitted Mr Abu Dayeh. He said: "People either say they have no money or they say 'What's the point of buying a mug I will have to break?'"

Load-Date: November 27, 2007

Israel responds to Hamas rockets, killing 54

Deseret Morning News (Salt Lake City)

March 2, 2008 Sunday

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Length: 1140 words

Byline: Ibrahim Barzak Associated Press

Body

GAZA CITY, Gaza Strip -- It was the middle of the night when the battle between Israeli forces and Palestinian militants reached Tareq Dardouna's house in northern Gaza.

Tending to four wounded people as children cried and screamed, he told of a relative who was killed.

"His body is still on the ground," Dardouna said in a telephone interview. "Ambulances tried to come, but they came under fire.... We are in a real war."

At least 54 Palestinians, about half of them civilians, were killed Saturday in the deadliest day in Gaza since the current round of fighting erupted in 2000.

Israeli forces went on the offensive to try to stop daily rocket barrages that have reached closer to its populated heartland than ever before. Two Israel soldiers were killed and seven were wounded in the clashes, the military said.

Many of the civilians were caught in crossfires, like those in Dardouna's neighborhood, but Palestinians charged the Israelis were firing indiscriminately, labeling the offensive with emotionally charged terms -- "genocide" and "holocaust."

The swelling violence came amid Israeli threats to launch a broad invasion of Gaza, and threatened to swallow up Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice's peacekeeping mission to the region next week.

In Washington, National Security Council spokesman Gordon Johndroe expressed regret for loss of civilian life on both sides but put most of the blame on the Palestinians.

"There is a clear distinction between terrorist rocket attacks that target civilians and action in self-defense," he said in a statement.

The U.N. Security Council met Saturday night behind closed doors in emergency session at the request of the Palestinians and their Arab supporters.

Early today, Israeli aircraft destroyed the office building in Gaza City used by Hamas Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh, witnesses said. Five people were lightly wounded in the raid.

While expressing regret for civilian casualties, Israeli Defense Minister Ehud Barak blamed "Hamas and those firing rockets at Israel," the statement said, pledging to continue the offensive to protect Israeli towns and cities.

Israel responds to Hamas rockets, killing 54

On Friday, Israeli Deputy Defense Minister Matan Vilnai renewed a threat to invade Gaza to crush militant rocket squads that attack southern Israel daily.

At least two dozen Palestinian civilians, including a baby, were among those killed, and militants said 25 fighters died. Health officials said about 200 people were wounded, 14 of them critically.

The overall death toll was the highest in a single day since the current round of violence erupted in September 2000. The highest previous death toll was 38 on March 8, 2002.

The intense fighting Saturday pushed the Palestinian death toll to more than 80 since fighting flared Wednesday. About half of those were civilians.

Palestinian fighters kept up a steady stream of rocket and mortar attacks on Israeli targets, firing around 50 on Saturday alone in defiance of the Israeli assault. Six Israelis were injured by rockets that reached as far as Ashkelon, a coastal city 11 miles north of Gaza.

The Israeli military said one of its airstrikes on northern Gaza targeted a parked truck loaded with 160 rockets.

On Thursday, militants raised the stakes by firing Iranian-made rockets into Ashkelon, striking closer to Israel's heartland than ever before and putting more Israelis at risk. Palestinian rocket fire earlier in the week also killed an Israeli man.

Shortly before midnight Friday in the northern town of Beit Hanoun, a 13-month-old girl was killed by shrapnel. **Hamas** blamed Israel, but residents said a militant rocket fell short and landed near the baby's house. The day's violence snowballed from that point on.

Before dawn Saturday, the battleground shifted to the town of Jebaliya and its nearby refugee camp, a center of militant activity in northern Gaza.

Soldiers backed by tanks and aircraft conducted house-to-house searches and took up positions on rooftops as they clashed with militants detonating land mines and firing heavy machine guns, assault rifles and mortar rounds.

A wounded man and boy lay in a gutter near a dead man. Ambulance workers took away the dead man as a youth appealed to paramedics to treat the wounded.

"Take them, they are still alive," he pleaded. Another man urged the wounded to "bear witness," or proclaim their Muslim faith before they die. The two began reciting a Muslim prayer near a boy whose lower body was ripped by shrapnel.

All but the most critically injured were sent home from Shifa Hospital, Gaza's largest. Beds crammed hospital corridors, and the intensive care unit was overflowing, a doctor at the hospital said. The doctors union urged its members to cancel leaves and appealed for blood donations.

The U.N. shuttered 37 schools it runs in northern Gaza because of the fighting, affecting some 40,000 students, said Christopher Gunness, a U.N. official. A three-day strike was declared in Gaza, and publicly run schools and universities were closed.

Mosques across northern Gaza and **Hamas**-affiliated radio appealed to civilians to stay home. **Hamas** closed off roads to evacuate security compounds and to keep residents away from potential airstrike targets. They also turned off street lights, apparently so militants wouldn't be seen from the air.

Chief Palestinian negotiator Ahmed Qureia said Palestinian leaders including Abbas recommended suspending peace talks at a meeting Saturday in the West Bank town of Ramallah.

Israel responds to Hamas rockets, killing 54

"I think it will be suspended," Qureia said. "What is happening in Gaza is a massacre of civilians, women and children, a collective killing, genocide," Qureia added. "We can't bear what the Israelis are doing, and what the Israelis are doing doesn't led the peace process any credibility."

Hamas remained defiant and vowed to retaliate.

In Syria, exiled Hamas leader Khaled Mashaal described Israeli attacks against civilians in Gaza as "the real Holocaust."

"If (Israeli officials) decided stupidly to invade Gaza, we will fight them with God's help," Mashaal told reporters from his base in Damascus. "We will fight them like lions."

Mashaal blamed the rival Fatah, headed by Abbas, for helping along Israel's attacks.

Israeli officials met Saturday to discuss the Gaza violence and its implications for peacemaking. Foreign Ministry spokesman Arye Mekel said talks didn't preclude fighting. Talks are "based on the understanding that when advancing the peace process with pragmatic (Palestinian) sources, Israel will continue to fight terror that hurts its people," he said.

Vice Premier Haim Ramon told Channel 2 TV that Israel should fight in Gaza, but not reoccupy it. Israel pulled its troops and settlers out of the tiny seaside territory in late 2005, but militants proceeded to fire rockets from the abandoned territory at Israeli communities. Contributing: Edith M. Lederer at the United Nations

Load-Date: March 2, 2008

End of Document

**US: Mashaal's truce offer to Carter is meaningless. Ex-president brokers
 Hamas pledge to send letter from Schalit to parents**

The Jerusalem Post
April 22, 2008 Tuesday

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Section: NEWS; Pg. 1

Length: 1673 words

Byline: TOVAH LAZAROFF and HERB KEINON, AP contributed to this report.

Highlight: Lead Story

Body

Former US president Jimmy Carter ended his nine-day trip to the region with a promise from Hamas to offer Israel tacit recognition and a 10-year truce if Israel in turn withdrew to the pre-1967 borders.

Khaled Mashaal, whose group has sworn to destroy Israel, told reporters in Damascus on Monday that Hamas would accept a Palestinian state in the West Bank with Israel as its neighbor, but stressed that his group would not formally recognize it, a move immediately dismissed by the US as meaningless.

"We agree to a (Palestinian) state on pre-67 borders, with Jerusalem as its capital with genuine sovereignty without settlements, but without recognizing

Israel," Mashaal said. "We have offered a truce if Israel withdraws to the 1967 borders, a truce of 10 years as a proof of recognition."

Mashaal said he made the offer to Carter during talks between the two men on Friday and Saturday in the Syrian capital.

Mashaal used the Arabic word "hudna," meaning truce, which is more concrete than "tahadiyeh" - a period of calm - which Hamas often uses to describe a simple cease-fire. Hudna implies a recognition of the other party's existence.

In Washington, deputy State Department spokesman Tom Casey brushed aside Hamas's offer, saying the group's past rhetoric contained "all this language about truces and other kinds of issues. But the bottom line is, Hamas still believes in the destruction of the state of Israel; they don't believe Israel has a right to exist," adding it was clear "that nothing has changed" in Hamas's attitude - including that the group still refuses to explicitly recognize Israel and denounce terrorism.

The statements by Hamas followed Carter's visit to the region, during which he spent time in Israel, Egypt, Jordan, Saudi Arabia and Syria.

Carter angered both Israel and his own government by meeting with Hamas, which is considered by both countries to be a terrorist organization. It has carried out terror attacks in Israel, and has launched rockets against the country's southern border. It has also held Cpl. Gilad Schalit captive since June 2006.

US: Mashaal's truce offer to Carter is meaningless. Ex-president brokers Hamas pledge to send letter from Schalit to parents

Top Israeli leaders, including Prime Minister Ehud Olmert, refused to meet with Carter during his stay. But Carter, who ended his visit to the region on Monday, said that it was critical to talk to Hamas.

The former president, who brokered a peace deal between Egypt and Israel in 1979, said repeatedly that in those meetings, as well as in others he held, he was simply on a fact-finding mission for the Carter Center, which he runs in the United States.

But he did more than just receive information. He tried and failed to broker deals regarding a cease-fire with Hamas and the release of Schalit.

He did, however, wrangle a promise from Hamas that it would send a letter from the young man to his parents.

The gesture was acknowledged by Mashaal on Monday, who told reporters in Damascus that he had agreed to this "humanitarian" gesture out of respect for Carter.

Schalit's father, Noam, who, along with his wife, spoke with Carter both before and after his trip to Damascus, said he would wait until receiving the letter before commenting on the gesture.

Speaking to the Israel Council on Foreign Relations, Carter said that Hamas had rejected his proposal for a rapid prisoner exchange that would allow Schalit to be moved to Egypt in exchange for the release of people held by Israel not guilty of violent crimes, including politicians, women and children.

"Hamas considered its negotiations through Egypt to be well advanced," and it had already made promises to the families of prisoners who are on the prisoner list that is already under discussion with Israel, Carter said.

But, he added, Hamas would be willing to move Schalit to Egypt after the first part of that deal brokered with Egypt had been concluded.

Israel has agreed to release 1,000 prisoners in exchange for Schalit, but the hold-up has been the identity of the prisoners on the list.

Ofer Dekel, the official charged by Olmert with dealing with the kidnapped soldiers issue, was reported as saying Monday that he had not received a briefing about Carter's activities in Damascus and his talks with Mashaal, government sources said.

They added it was clear that Industry and Trade Minister Eli Yishai would brief the government - and Dekel - on what he heard from Carter regarding Schalit.

The two men met both before and after Carter's talks with Mashaal.

Far from knocking Carter's efforts, Yishai had asked Carter to help arrange a meeting between him and Hamas to work on releasing Schalit.

Carter told Yishai that Hamas was interested in such a meeting, but did not want to talk to him at this time, out of fear it would complicate already existing negotiations.

But Carter said he would help Yishai arrange a meeting in Egypt with intelligence chief Omar Sulliman. Yishai also spoke with Carter about his involvement in a conference of Islamic and Jewish religious leaders.

But, while Yishai wanted to work with Carter, one government official said the former US president had done more harm than good, even with the promise of a new letter. The Schalit family had previously received a letter from their son last June.

According to this official, Hamas is dissatisfied that, despite holding Schalit for almost two years, they have not gotten what they want from the Israeli government - the release of high-profile terrorists - for his return.

US: Mashaal's truce offer to Carter is meaningless. Ex-president brokers Hamas pledge to send letter from Schalit to parents

In an attempt to pressure the Israeli public to pressure the government, Hamas is interested in opening up another negotiating track which bypasses Dekel and the government, and goes directly to the public.

Carter, the official said, serves this purpose, because the impression that things could move much faster if only another channel of communications were tapped is exactly the message Hamas wanted the Israeli public to hear.

The official said it was clear that Hamas was using Carter for its purposes, and that Mashaal, who knew far in advance that Carter was coming to Damascus to meet him, could very well have had a letter to give the former president from Schalit. It's all about shaping Israeli public opinion, the official said.

The official said that Hamas also used Carter to give it legitimization.

The US and European Union position is that Hamas should not be engaged until it accepts three preconditions: recognizing Israel, disavowing terrorism and accepting previous Israeli-Palestinian agreements.

In comes Carter, the official said, and he meets Hamas without its having to pay any price, which is exactly what the organization wants to have happen with the rest of the world.

But, during his Jerusalem speech, Carter defended his actions.

"It was a small step forward to reassure Cpl. Schalit's parents that he is alive and well and will be writing them a letter soon," said Carter.

He also reported that Hamas would accept any deal negotiated by Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas, even one they disagreed with, as long as it was approved by the Palestinian people through a referendum.

"Let me underscore the significance of the statement. It means that Hamas will not undermine Abbas's efforts to negotiate the agreement," said Carter.

More to the point, if the Palestinian people, through a referendum, agreed to recognize Israel, then Hamas, in effect, would do so as well, he said.

But Hamas spokesman Sami Abu Zuhri in Gaza said Hamas's readiness to put a peace deal to a referendum "does not mean that Hamas is going to accept the result of the referendum."

Such a referendum, he said, would have to be voted on by Palestinians living all over the world. They number about 9.3 million, including some 4 million living in the West Bank, Gaza and east Jerusalem.

A spokesman for Carter said the former president had already left the country and had no response to the comment.

But during his speech, Carter acknowledged that he had failed in some respects during his talks with Hamas.

The group had rejected his suggestion for a 30-day unilateral cease-fire, he said.

"They met all day yesterday to consider this proposal. They finally decided that they were dependent on Egypt as an intermediary, and that progress which had been made already with Egypt should prevail. They couldn't terminate unilaterally, because they didn't trust Israel to follow up by lessening their attacks on Gaza and the West Bank," said Carter.

Separately, Carter said that Hamas wants to negotiate an agreement with Abbas to create a government of national consensus with a unified professional security force for the West Bank and Gaza. The cabinet would be composed of technocrats, until another election was held.

Hamas has also proposed that the Rafah crossing between Egypt and Gaza be reopened with the help of EU monitors, as it was in the past, except that this time, Egypt, not Israel, would control it.

US: Mashaal's truce offer to Carter is meaningless. Ex-president brokers Hamas pledge to send letter from Schalit to parents

With respect to Syria, where Carter met with President Bashar al-Assad and senior officials, Carter said that Syria wants to conclude a peace agreement with Israel as soon as possible.

"I was impressed with their eagerness to complete an agreement on the Golan Heights. He [Assad] said that the only major difference in starting good faith talks was that Israel insisted that there be no public acknowledgement that the talks are going on, whereas Syria insisted that the talks being conducted would not be a secret."

Carter said that 85 percent of the differences had been resolved, including borders, water rights, security zones and the presence of international forces. He chastised the US for opposing talks between Syria and Israel.

Syria wants the US to play strong role, and "I hope that it will be done," said Carter.

He said that he asked the Syrians about the fate of Israeli soldier Guy Hever, who went missing in 1997, while in the area of the Golan Heights. There are those who believe he is being held by Syria.

Carter said the Syrians had no evidence of his whereabouts. They also said they knew nothing about the fate of kidnapped soldiers Ehud Goldwasser and Eldad Regev, both of whom were abducted by Hizbullah in July 2006.

Graphic

Photo: FORMER US president Jimmy Carter addresses the Israel Council on Foreign Relations in Jerusalem yesterday. (Credit: Tara Todras-Whitehill/AP)

Load-Date: October 4, 2011

Mashaal: Schalit is alive, Holocaust toll 'exaggerated'. Hamas leader offers agreement to stop civilian attacks against Israel

The Jerusalem Post
April 1, 2008 Tuesday

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Section: NEWS; Pg. 6

Length: 822 words

Byline: Jerusalem Post staff and AP

Body

Hamas has offered Israel a deal in which both sides would refrain from attacking civilian targets, the group's Damascus-based leader Khaled Mashaal said.

In an interview with Sky News broadcast Monday, Mashaal said the offer was identical to one made to Israel 10 years ago.

"We renew our offer to Israel to let the civilians on both sides not be a part of this conflict," he said. "We renew this offer today."

Mashaal asserted that if the IDF refrained from killing any Palestinian civilians, **Hamas** would only carry out attacks against Israeli military targets.

Mashaal went on to confirm that captured IDF soldier Gilad Schalit was alive.

"Gilad is alive and we are treating him well, but Israel is treating the Palestinian prisoners they hold very badly," the **Hamas** leader told the British news channel.

Speaking to AP Monday, Mashaal revealed details on Egyptian-brokered negotiations for a prisoner swap of Schalit for Palestinian prisoners held by Israel.

He said **Hamas** had agreed with Egypt on the number of Palestinian prisoners to be released - 1,000 - and on the details of the phases of the releases. But he said Israel had held up the deal because it rejected some of the names on the **Hamas** list on the grounds they have Israeli blood on their hands.

The deal was for a release in staged phases, he said: First **Hamas** would hand over Schalit to Egypt, and Israel would release 350 prisoners. Once Egypt handed Schalit over to Israel, another 100 Palestinians would be released, Mashaal said.

These would be followed an additional 550 prisoners to be released at a later stage. Separately, Israel would release all jailed **women** and children, he said. **Hamas** officials in the past have given varying numbers for the prisoners they seek released.

Mashaal: Schalit is alive, Holocaust toll 'exaggerated'. Hamas leader offers agreement to stop civilian attacks against Israel

"We gave Egypt the list of prisoners' names but Israel rejected most of them because they considered them to be prisoners with [Israeli] blood on their hands," Mashaal said. He confirmed that jailed Fatah leader Marwan Barghouti was on the list of names.

He said European mediators, whom he didn't name, were now involved in the talks.

Addressing Schalit's father, who has often appealed to Hamas to release his son, Mashaal said: "Do not blame Hamas, (Prime Minister Ehud) Olmert is responsible for your son's detention."

Mashaal also told AP that Israel exaggerates Hamas's military strength.

"Hamas's military capacity is humble, but the enemy is exaggerating it in an attempt to justify its aggression and justify more aggression and more brutality," he said. "Our weapons are humble, but we have great will. This is what makes our action effective," he said.

The IDF has said it believed the Kassam range would reach 20 kilometers by the end of this year.

Mashaal expressed concerns that Israel and the United States were preparing for a regional war.

"Israel and America are beating the drums of war in the region. The neo-conservatives in America and Israelis want a new war to overturn the balance of power and achievements gained by the resistance," he said.

In the Sky interview, Mashaal said rocket attacks were a "natural reaction" to the occupation and Israel's Apache helicopters and F-16 jets.

"We have primitive weapons. I ask the international community and the Americans to give us more advanced weapons so we can shoot more accurately," he added.

The Hamas leader stressed that it was the Palestinians' duty to fight for the resistance. "As the French fought the Nazis, and in the American revolution, as the Vietnamese people fought, as did the South African. This is ordinary behavior, it doesn't need brainwashing."

He claimed that suicide bombings only began after Jewish terrorist Baruch Goldstein shot 29 people dead in Hebron's Cave of the Patriarchs in 1994.

"Israel killed during prayers in the mosque, and as an ordinary reaction the Palestinian people started defending themselves, as a response to the Israeli crimes. I want to tell you there was no suicide bombing before in Israel," he said.

Mashaal blamed the Arab world for the Palestinians' repeated failure to defeat the "Israeli occupation" militarily. "We didn't lose as a result of not recognizing Israel or accepting their rules and conditions or the American rules and conditions. We lost because of the Arab weakness."

Mashaal continued by saying that Hamas believed the number of Jews killed in the Holocaust was "exaggerated."

"We don't deny the Holocaust, but we believe the Holocaust was exaggerated by the Zionist movement to whip up people," he said. "We don't deny the fact but we don't accept two issues. We don't accept the exaggerating of numbers and we don't accept that Israel uses this to do what it wants."

Mashaal also called for reconciliatory talks with Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas. "We invite Mr. Abbas to come for unconditional talks in Gaza. Talks on how to address the reasons for the split, to return Gaza and the West Bank to unity and solve the security problem," he said.

Mashaal: Schalit is alive, Holocaust toll 'exaggerated'. Hamas leader offers agreement to stop civilian attacks against Israel

Photo: Khaled Mashaal (Credit: AP)

Load-Date: October 4, 2011

End of Document

Hamas attack may signal hardline stance before talks; Woman wounded as mortars, rockets fired into Israel

The Calgary Herald (Alberta)

June 13, 2008 Friday

Final Edition

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Length: 482 words

Byline: Matthew Fisher, Canwest News Service

Dateline: JERUSALEM

Body

Nearly 50 mortars and rockets were fired from Gaza into Israel on Thursday, slightly wounding an Israeli woman and raising the question whether the barrage was a last gesture before a temporary ceasefire can be arranged? The sudden attack might have also been a sign that Gaza's **Hamas** rulers and other armed factions in the enclave have rejected Egyptian-brokered indirect talks on a truce in Gaza that are to begin in Cairo this weekend?

Rockets and mortars struck mostly south of the city of Ashkelon on the Mediterranean coast Thursday.

Hamas, considered a terrorist group by most western governments, claimed the sustained volley was in retaliation for an Israeli air strike Thursday on a house in northern Gaza belonging to a known **Hamas** bombmaker in which four Palestinians, including a **Hamas** official and an infant, were killed.

Israel Defence Forces emphatically denied that the attack had anything to do with the house explosion. The IDF concluded that the barrage from Gaza, which has been subjected to a tight Israeli and western economic blockade since **Hamas** won parliamentary elections 30 months ago, was designed to mask a major ground attack in the border area. A truck approaching the border at high speed had been destroyed by troops, the IDF said.

"We will not recognize Israel even if the siege persists," **Hamas**'s leader in Gaza, Ismail Haniyeh, said Thursday without direct reference to the latest violence. "We are holding on despite a siege that would have caused large countries to collapse."

Two Palestinian men were killed by Israeli troops early Thursday as they tried to plant explosives near the border, the IDF said. One man died when he was struck by a tank shell. The other apparently died during a firefight. The al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade and the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine announced that the men who died were from their factions.

Three other Palestinians were killed in an air strike Thursday as they tried to fire mortars toward an Israeli kibbutz and another Palestinian was shot and killed in a separate incident near the border, the IDF said.

Hamas attack may signal hardline stance before talks; Woman wounded as mortars, rockets fired into Israel

As Gaza's armed groups had recently changed tactics and had begun firing more mortars than rockets at Israel, the IDF was planning to deploy a more advanced radar system to track such mortars and raise an alarm, according to a report in Thursday's Jerusalem Post.

Meanwhile, Amos Gilad of Israel's Defence Ministry was to travel to Cairo on Thursday to begin indirect talks with Egyptian Intelligence Minister Omar Suleiman about a ceasefire with **Hamas** and with Islamic Jihad and other armed groups in Gaza.

Gilad's peace mission to Egypt was the result of an Israeli cabinet decision Wednesday to hold off for several weeks on a much-discussed major military incursion into Gaza to try to end months of rocket and mortar attacks that have terrorized Israeli communities near the Palestinian enclave.

Graphic

Photo: Getty Images; Palestinian **women** react after their relatives were killed during an explosion on Thursday in Beit Lahia, the northern Gaza Strip . At least four have been killed and 40 wounded after a blast that leveled a house in Gaza. ;

Load-Date: June 13, 2008

End of Document

Egyptian troops wound 90 as Gazan protesters storm Rafah border crossing. ' Hamas responsible for the riots,' Cairo diplomat declares

The Jerusalem Post

January 23, 2008 Wednesday

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Section: NEWS; Pg. 1

Length: 400 words

Byline: KHALED ABU TOAMEH

Body

Egypt delivered a strong warning to Gaza's **Hamas** government on Tuesday after thousands of Palestinians stormed the Egyptian side of the Rafah border crossing.

At least 90 Gazans, most of them **women**, were wounded by Egyptian border guards using tear gas, clubs, water cannons and live ammunition to disperse the demonstrators, who were protesting against the continued closure of the border crossing.

One Egyptian policeman was wounded in the clashes, the worst since **Hamas** took full control of the Gaza Strip in June.

"The Egyptian government has delivered a strong warning to **Hamas** following the incident," an Egyptian diplomat told The Jerusalem Post. "We hold the **Hamas** government in the Gaza Strip responsible for the riots that occurred along our border today."

The clashes erupted after the demonstrators stormed through the border terminal, chanting slogans against President Hosni Mubarak and other Arab leaders.

Huda Naim, a **Hamas** legislator who participated in the protest, accused the Egyptian border guards of unleashing dogs against the demonstrators.

She said that some of the **women** who managed to cross into Egypt were refusing to return home until Egypt reopened the terminal.

"The Egyptians are participating in the blockade imposed on the Gaza Strip," Naim said. "We appeal to President Hosni Mubarak to open the border so that patients can go to hospitals in Egypt and other Arab countries."

Hamas officials expressed deep disappointment over Egypt's refusal to help the people living in the Gaza Strip.

One official said it was "disgraceful" that the Egyptian authorities were banning Palestinians from traveling to Egypt for medical treatment.

"In the morning, we heard that the Egyptians were sending reinforcements to the border with the Gaza Strip," he said. "We thought the reinforcements were intended to help the Palestinians, who have been without water,

Egyptian troops wound 90 as Gazan protesters storm Rafah border crossing. ' Hamas responsible for the riots,'
Cairo diplomat declares

electricity and medicine. But it later turned out that Mubarak sent his troops to beat women who were staging a peaceful demonstration."

Hamas spokesman Sami Abu Zuhri said his movement was planning similar protests in the coming days despite warnings from the Egyptian authorities.

"The crisis in the Gaza Strip won't be solved with additional fuel," he said. "The problem is that 1.5 million Palestinians are living in a big prison. Our goal is to end the siege and reopen all the border crossings so that our people can breath."

Graphic

2 photos: OVER 90 GAZANS, mostly women, were injured Tuesday as demonstrators protesting Egypt's sealing of the border clashed with Egyptian police at the Rafah crossing. HAMAS SUPPORTERS scuffle with Egyptian security personnel at the Rafah crossing between Gaza and Sinai yesterday. (Credit: AP/Khalil Hamra. AP)

Load-Date: October 4, 2011

**A distressing case of plus ça change; The Weekend's TV; INSIDE HAMAS
SUN CHANNEL 4 TROPIC OF CAPRICORN SUN BBC2**

Independent Extra

February 11, 2008 Monday

First Edition

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Length: 853 words

Byline: Thomas Sutcliffe , t.sutcliffe@independent.co.uk

Body

That now-celebrated remark by Mario Cuomo about campaigning in poetry and governing in prose has to be adjusted slightly for **Hamas**, the militant Palestinian organisation, which won control of the Palestinian Authority in the 2006 elections. With **Hamas**, it would need to run something more like, "Campaign in bullets and explosives and govern in... well... er... riot gear, with pickaxe handles available for those occasions when we don't actually want to kill the electorate." It's always a tricky transition, this: beating your sword into a loose-leaf ring binder filled with details about refuse disposal and street-trading ordinances, and Rodrigo Vazquez's intriguing film, **Inside Hamas**, suggested that the organisation is not having a particularly easy time weathering the shift from popular heroes to administrative whipping boys. This is not, it has to be said, a source of great regret to anybody but the poor beleaguered people of Gaza (and if you're inclined to say, "Well, they got what they voted for," that's true), but then they didn't have a lot of choice at the time.

Even veteran **Hamas** members aren't always happy with how the organisation is doing in power. "A responsible leader should be ashamed for making us do this," muttered a disaffected member of the Executive Force, **Hamas**'s home-grown police force, after clearing illegal stallholders out of a local square. But the locals' disillusionment with their new leaders is often far fiercer. "You are the cause of our hunger... not the occupation," shouted one protester, campaigning against the tightening economic conditions. And after **Hamas** policemen had beaten people praying outside their mosques, in protest at the political manipulation of the pulpits, a furious old lady went even further. "Shame on you," she screeched, "You're worse than the Jews." "Whatever happens to remove **Hamas** from power, they cannot remove us from the hearts of the people," the former **Hamas** "prime minister" Ismael Haniya had boasted earlier in the film, but on the evidence of this film "they" didn't need to do anything at all. **Hamas** was doing a perfectly good job of destroying its own popularity.

Vazquez's access here was sometimes difficult to construe. He'd clearly been allowed to film by the **Hamas** authorities and some scenes had the flavour of a calculated photo opportunity, as when a **female** MP, Huda Naim, met senior party officials to put the case against the violent break-up of opposition protests. On another occasion, one **Hamas** policemen was angrily demanding that the cameraman stop filming while his colleagues intervened to protect the crew. But if some **Hamas** press attache had calculated that media transparency would help to present the organisation in a new and flattering light, he or she had miscalculated. The private candour of ordinary Palestinians kept chipping away at the fiction of popular solidarity that **Hamas** would like to present. In public, the mother of a young **Hamas** soldier killed while across the border congratulated her dead son on his recent

A distressing case of plus ça change The Weekend's TV INSIDE HAMAS SUN CHANNEL 4 TROPIC OF
CAPRICORN SUN BBC2

martyrdom. In private, she acknowledged that it was simply a waste of a life. And, more tellingly, the father of a young boy killed by an Israeli missile aimed at a rocket-launching site failed to toe the party line on valiant Palestinian resistance. "To claim that these rockets are a response is comical... people should be ashamed." The thought occurred that **Hamas**, politically dependent on a siege mentality and the frustrated anger of ordinary Palestinians, has a lot more to gain from a dead Palestinian child than Israel has.

In Tropic of Capricorn, Simon Reeve set out on another lateral circumnavigation of the globe, presumably having deferred the Tropic of Cancer as too much of a health hazard right now. The northern line of latitude runs through some of the more dangerous and volatile regions on the planet, whereas the southern one takes you through Madagascar, French Polynesia, Australia and South America. That said, Capricorn isn't without its hazards. In Namibia, for example, Reeve went into the bush with an improbably handsome French naturalist and found himself surrounded on all sides by hungry cheetahs, a tricky moment in itself, but even more anxiety-inducing if your pockets are full of freshly slaughtered springbok. And in Windhoek, he very nearly drank himself into a coma trying to keep pace with the Chinese businessman who are busy staging a quiet recolonisation of Africa.

The itinerary in this first episode had a little too much of the government information film about it: visiting a brick factory in Namibia and a diamond-sorting shed and government health clinic in Botswana. But Reeve is a very likeable travelling partner, with a handy gift for making the locals laugh, and he doesn't skip the awkward stuff, such as the Botswanan government's unwelcome obsession with helping the San people of the Kalahari into the 21st century, a period for which they show very little obvious relish. Indeed, judging from their life in the bush, they're not really all that interested in any century that made it into double figures. Next week, lemurs!

Load-Date: February 11, 2008

As another Kassam hits Sderot, Livni urges IDF response. Hamas, calling attacks 'anti-national,' accuses Fatah of firing rockets to keep crossings closed

The Jerusalem Post

June 27, 2008 Friday

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Section: NEWS; Pg. 1

Length: 1156 words

Byline: HERB KEINON, YAAKOV LAPPIN and KHALED ABU TOAMEH

Highlight: Lead Story

Body

While neither Prime Minister Ehud Olmert nor Defense Minister Ehud Barak released statements following a Kassam rocket attack on Sderot on Thursday, Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni issued an uncharacteristically sharp demand for an immediate military response.

The rocket hit the Sderot industrial area on Thursday afternoon, exploding near a gas station and shattering the truce for a fourth time this week. No casualties or damage to property were reported in the attack.

At the beginning of a meeting with visiting Norwegian Foreign Minister Jonas Gahr Stoere in Tel Aviv, Livni told her counterpart about the attack and said there was a similar hit two days ago.

"It doesn't interest me who fired it, we need to respond militarily and immediately to every infraction [of the cease-fire] like this," she said.

Livni said she made her position clear to both Olmert and Barak after the rocket fire on Tuesday, and that she intended to make her position known to her counterparts around the world.

Olmert's spokesman only said he held consultations regarding Israel's response. Tuesday's rocket attacks led to the closing of the Gaza crossings, and it was not immediately clear when Israel would re-open them.

One government source said it seemed that Livni's response, more typical of the Likud's Silvan Shalom or Gideon Sa'ar than the foreign minister, was made with an eye on the September Kadima primary and was an attempt to capture the party's right flank.

"This is not characteristic of Livni," the source said. "She is generally the one who wants to think twice, and is worried about [PA President Mahmoud] Abbas's standing."

The source added that Olmert and Barak, who pushed for the cease-fire earlier this month over the objections of a number of key cabinet ministers, were not interested at this time in bringing about its complete collapse with a heavy military response.

Deputy Premier Haim Ramon said the cabinet should convene once more to discuss the truce agreement.

As another Kassam hits Sderot , Livni urges IDF response. Hamas, calling attacks 'anti-national,' accuses Fatah of firing rockets to keep crossings closed

In his meeting with the Norwegian foreign minister, Ramon said he was not surprised by Palestinian violations of the cease-fire.

"If Israel does not react strongly and close the crossings [to Gaza] we will be subjected to a daily trickle of rockets in the South in an effort to force us into a pattern where any Israeli action in the West Bank is countered by Kassam fire," he warned.

Meanwhile, a Hamas spokesman in Gaza said the truce was "a Palestinian national interest" and called the rocket fire an "anti-national" action.

The spokesman warned other militant groups that Hamas would not tolerate further violations of the cease-fire, and urged Egypt to put pressure on them to honor the agreement.

Hamas also accused Fatah of seeking to ruin the Gaza cease-fire by firing rockets at Israel, and warned all the armed Palestinian factions against violating the accord that went into effect last week.

The warning came after Fatah's armed wing, the Aksa Martyrs Brigades, claimed responsibility for firing two rockets at Israel.

The Aksa Martyrs Brigades announced that its members would not honor the cease-fire and accused Hamas of "betraying" the Palestinians by striking the deal.

"Hamas is trying to impose a unilateral cease-fire on our people in the Gaza Strip," the Fatah group said in a leaflet. "This is national treason that can't be allowed to pass."

The group said it was opposed to the agreement because it did not apply to the West Bank. It called on Abbas to intervene to reach a new agreement with Israel that would also include the West Bank.

Abu Qusai, a spokesman for the Aksa Martyrs Brigades, condemned Hamas for reaching what he called a bad deal with Israel.

He said in the past, the PA leadership had managed to reach better cease-fire agreements that included the reopening of the Gaza border crossings and the withdrawal of IDF troops from certain areas in the Strip.

"Hamas's cease-fire is very different from the one we had under the Palestinian Authority," Abu Qusai said. "Hamas has separated between the West Bank and Gaza Strip."

A senior Hamas official in the Strip accused the Fatah leadership in Ramallah of "inciting" Fatah gunmen in Gaza to breach the cease-fire. He said Thursday's rocket attacks had been aimed at preventing the reopening of the border crossings.

"Fatah is not happy with the cease-fire agreement because its leaders fear that it will solidify Hamas's control in the Gaza Strip," the Hamas official said. "That's why they have instructed their men in the Gaza Strip to continue launching rockets at Israel."

According to the Hamas official, Fatah's main concern was that Hamas would be given a role in running the Rafah border crossing to Sinai, a move which would give Hamas legitimacy and turn it into a major player in the Palestinian arena.

PA and Fatah officials denied the Hamas accusations, saying Abbas fully supported the truce.

"President Abbas believes that it's important to preserve the cease-fire because it serves the interests of the Palestinian people," they said.

Hamas, meanwhile, decided to establish a "crisis committee" to follow up on the truce and document Israeli "violations."

As another Kassam hits Sderot , Livni urges IDF response. Hamas, calling attacks 'anti-national,' accuses Fatah of firing rockets to keep crossings closed

Hamas Interior Minister Said Siam said the committee would consist of representatives of various Palestinian groups and that its main mission would be to ensure that the cease-fire was preserved in accordance with the Egyptian-brokered deal.

Thursday's rocket attack came after three rockets were fired at Sderot on Tuesday, sending two **women** into shock and severely damaging a house.

"No one in Sderot believes there is a truce, neither in the municipality nor among the residents," said Shalom Halevi, a spokesman for Sderot Mayor Eli Moyal.

"We wish the government would stop being stupid and begin to take military action. We are at war, and we need to stop acting like bleeding hearts," Halevi said. "The whole world is waiting for it. But here, leaders are only looking out for themselves."

Moyal, Halevi added, had said during the opening ceremony of a games factory that he did not believe the cease-fire was credible.

The additional rocket fire means the Gaza border crossings are likely to remain closed, following a decision by Barak on Tuesday. On Wednesday, a **Hamas** spokesman said their continued closure would be seen as a violation of the truce.

But Israel is unlikely to go beyond that and declare the truce a failure, security analyst Maj.-Gen. (res.) Yaakov Amidror said.

"There is no Fatah in Gaza. The people who fired the rocket are fragments of what was once Fatah. They operate independently, and it would not be fair to blame their actions on Abbas," Amidror said.

"What these rockets show is that **Hamas** does not fully control Gaza, despite what some of us thought," he continued. "That is why **Hamas** wants this truce so badly - it wants to be Gaza's sole ruler, and it needs quiet from us in order to act internally to consolidate its rule. So **Hamas** will do all it can to continue the cease-fire."

Graphic

Photo: Livni. We need to hit back. (Credit: Ariel Jerozolimski)

Load-Date: October 4, 2011

**SPIRIT OF HOPELESSNESS HANGS OVER GAZA; AS HAMAS STEPS UP
ROCKET ATTACKS, POPULATION FEELS THE BRUNT OF ISRAELI
RETALIATION**

Pittsburgh Post-Gazette (Pennsylvania)

February 24, 2008 Sunday

TWO STAR EDITION

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Length: 786 words

Byline: Ellen Knickmeyer, The Washington Post

Body

Mohammed Wahdan, a 20-year-old Palestinian farmer, waited until his mother's four-day funeral had ended, until the last mourner had left his family's crumbling farmhouse on the edge of the Gaza Strip.

Then he picked up an ax and walked out to the family's orange grove. The trees, then full of bright fruit, overlooked fields that rolled down to a cluster of white houses in the distance, their outlines fuzzy in the winter mist.

Mr. Wahdan chopped into the dozen or so orange trees, part of his family's livelihood, sending them to the ground, one by one.

Palestinian gunmen -- members of Hamas, the armed movement that controls Gaza, and other groups -- had used the cover offered by the orange grove to launch rockets at the Israeli town of Sderot, the white houses at the edge of Mr. Wahdan's fields.

When the fighters came one morning last month, the Wahdan family pleaded with them to think of the Israeli return fire that the rockets often drew. "There are women in the house, there are children," Mr. Wahdan recalled telling them. "You run away, but if the Israeli planes come, where do we go?"

But the gunmen went on as planned, the Wahdan family said. When the fighters came back that afternoon to launch rockets that had failed to fire the first time, Khadra, Mohammed's 54-year-old mother, was rolling dough in the kitchen. She ran out to shout at the fighters.

Khadra made it to the gate of the family courtyard when an Israeli shell hit. Shrapnel killed her and the family's 15-year-old hired farmhand.

"Her last words were, 'Go away,' " Mohammed Wahdan said.

A similar scene was played out yesterday.

Three Palestinians were killed in an Israeli army missile strike in the northern Gaza Strip on yesterday afternoon, Palestinian medical officials said. It was not immediately clear whether those killed were civilians or combatants.

SPIRIT OF HOPELESSNESS HANGS OVER GAZA AS HAMAS STEPS UP ROCKET ATTACKS, POPULATION FEELS THE BRUNT OF ISRAELI RETALIATION

Local witnesses said the three were sitting outdoors, drinking tea and smoking, in an area east of Beit Hanun, near the border with Israel, when they were killed. No militant group immediately claimed them as members. The three were all men in their 20s, according to a Palestinian medical official.

But an Israeli army spokesman said ground forces had attacked a squad that was on its way to fire mortar shells at Israel.

Militants from Gaza fired four mortar shells at Israel earlier yesterday, but caused no casualties or damage, the spokesman said.

Across Gaza, public weariness has grown alongside the mounting hardships caused by Hamas' conflict with Israel. Sealed from the rest of the world by the border barriers and checkpoints of its neighbors, Gaza is a gray, rubble-filled place where people trudge through the increasingly difficult business of daily life.

Since Hamas took control of the Gaza Strip in June, routing the Fatah movement that had been its partner in a Palestinian power-sharing government, Israel and Egypt have greatly restricted traffic in and out of the territory. Israel and the United States consider Hamas a terrorist movement.

Tension between Israel and Hamas spiked last month. On Jan. 15, Israel sent ground troops, tanks, helicopters and fighter jets to Gaza to push back the rocket crews, in the heaviest fighting in Gaza in a year. At least 19 people died, including the son of senior Hamas leader Mahmoud Zahar.

Hamas pledged intensified violence against Israel. Rocket attacks surged to dozens on some days. Early this month, Hamas renewed suicide attacks in Israel for the first time since 2004, asserting responsibility for a bombing that killed a 73-year-old Israeli woman. The violence has overshadowed Israeli-Palestinian peace talks promoted by the Bush administration.

In a closed courtyard in Beit Hanoun, dozens of men gathered on a recent morning to welcome home a farmer who they said had been newly freed by Hamas after a week of interrogation.

Asked what they wanted for Gaza, one of the farmers asked first that he not be identified for fear of reprisals. Then he replied that he wanted the borders of Gaza to be reopened and the economy to recover.

The man added a third hope, his mouth twisting into a smile that held no amusement: "And for Hamas to roast on a hot grill."

When the rocket attacks increased last month, Israel intensified a policy of restricting shipments of food, fuel and other goods into Gaza to pressure Hamas to stop the attacks.

The Israeli campaign has had mixed results. On Jan. 23, gunmen acting with at least the approval of Hamas knocked down miles of border walls separating Gaza from Egypt. Even opponents of Hamas' rule shouted thanks as they streamed through the breaches into Egypt.

By mid-February, the walls were back up, guarded by Egyptian border forces. Gaza returned to its midwinter dreariness.

Notes

The Associated Press contributed to this report.

Graphic

SPIRIT OF HOPELESSNESS HANGS OVER GAZA AS HAMAS STEPS UP ROCKET ATTACKS,
POPULATION FEELS THE BRUNT OF ISRAELI RETALIATION

PHOTO: Abid Katib/Getty Images: Palestinians in Gaza City yesterday hold aperture umbrellas as a symbolic request to protect the people of the Gaza Strip. Hundreds of Palestinians attended the demonstration in front of the U.N. headquarters there against the siege of Gaza.

Load-Date: February 26, 2008

End of Document

World - Hamas slams Livni party election win

Morning Star

September 19, 2008 Friday

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Length: 392 words

Byline: Our Foreign Desk

Body

Gaza's ***Hamas*** administration warned yesterday that Israeli Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni's victory in the governing Kadima party leadership election means that Palestinians should expect more "repression and aggression."

Ms Livni, who in Israel is considered a moderate, won the Kadima party leadership election against ultra-hawkish Transport Minister Shaul Mofaz by just 431 votes, or 1.1 per cent, on Wednesday.

She will now replace embattled Prime Minister Ehud Olmert, who was forced to resign following charges of fraud and embezzlement.

The former Mossad spy, who has been leading US-backed peace negotiations with the Palestinians, will have 42 days to form a government in order to avert an early election that opinion polls suggest would bring the right-wing Likud leader Benjamin Netanyahu to power.

Hamas spokesman Fawzi Barhum said: "Livni's accession to power would signify the same policy of repression and aggression against the Palestinian people carried out by previous Zionist leaders.

"We must remain committed to resistance as a strategy to defend our rights," Mr Barhum declared.

But in the West Bank, Palestinian Authority chief Mahmoud Abbas's aide Saeb Erekat said: "Livni was deeply involved in the peace process so we think she will continue peace-seeking with us."

And Palestinian Information Minister Riad Malki was hopeful that peace talks could succeed under Israel's new leadership.

"We welcome the results of the election and we are going to deal with any new prime minister in Israel," Mr Malki affirmed.

The Islamic Jihad resistance group called on the Abbas administration to stop "all forms of talks and negotiations with the Israeli enemy.

"Regardless who stands at the head of the Zionist entity's government, nothing will change on the ground," Islamic Jihad maintained, adding: "Our struggle against the Zionists is open, until they leave our land."

Ms Livni said that she will launch informal coalition talks today, even though President Shimon Peres cannot officially ask her to try to put together a government until Mr Olmert resigns.

After she is assigned the task, she will have 42 days to form a new ruling coalition.

World - Hamas slams Livni party election win

If she succeeds, she will become Israel's first **female** prime minister since Golda Meir stepped down in 1974.

If she fails, the country will hold elections in early 2009, a year and a half ahead of schedule.

Load-Date: September 19, 2008

End of Document

Comment & Debate: Truce or bloodbath: Ignoring its own people's wishes in attacking Gaza, Israel leaves Hamas no choice but to fight back

The Guardian - Final Edition

March 3, 2008 Monday

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the**guardian**

Section: GUARDIAN COMMENT AND DEBATE PAGES ; Pg. 30

Length: 618 words

Byline: Azzam Tamimi

Body

A recent poll published in the Israeli daily Ha'aretz suggested that 64% of Israelis favoured a negotiated truce with Hamas. But in the past few days, a military onslaught that has so far claimed more than a hundred Palestinian lives, mostly women and children, has made it clear that the Israeli leadership is not interested in any peaceful exit from the current predicament.

The Ha'aretz poll may point to a lack of confidence in the government's ability to settle its problem with Gaza through the use of force, and vindicate those within the military and intelligence community who have been advising the Israeli prime minister, Ehud Olmert to talk to Hamas. A truce as once proposed by Giora Eiland, who served as national security adviser to the former prime minister Ariel Sharon, would entail a reasonable exchange of prisoners and a lifting of sanctions in exchange for a cessation of all hostilities between the two sides. Hamas would, in principle, have agreed to negotiate a truce along these terms. But it seems that Olmert's cabinet has not given up on the idea of bringing Hamas to its knees or finishing it off altogether.

The attack on Gaza comes at a time when all previous means of inciting the Strip's population against Hamas have failed. The sanctions imposed globally on Hamas and the siege that almost suffocates Gaza's 1.5 million inhabitants have neither forced Hamas to accept the three conditions set out by the Quartet (the US, the UN, Russia and the EU) nor convinced the Palestinian population to rise against it.

The enormous resources dedicated to empowering an influential group within Fatah to effect a coup against the legitimate government backfired and finally uprooted that group from the Palestinian political scene. Starving Gaza while the Ramallah-based West Bank authority receives financial and political backing from Israel and its allies in the west has failed to shift Palestinian opinion in favour of President Mahmud Abbas and his prime minister, Salam Fayyad. So, rather than heed the advice of the experts and fulfil the wish of his own public, Olmert has decided to go to war with the Gaza Strip.

Once again Olmert is taking a gamble. He might have been encouraged by the fact that, unlike Hizbullah in Lebanon, Hamas has no immediate regional backers and is less capable of confronting his troops. The rockets fired from Gaza are nothing compared with the missiles Hizbullah used in July 2006.

Comment & Debate: Truce or bloodbath: Ignoring its own people's wishes in attacking Gaza, Israel leaves
 Hamas no choice but to fight back

This is perhaps what encourages senior Israelis officials to threaten the Palestinians with a "shoah" if they continue to defy Israel. It is not clear whether the Israeli defence minister meant to use the Hebrew word for Holocaust when he warned the Palestinians of Gaza. What really matters is that the message has been delivered; this Israeli administration, which has failed to force capitulation on the Palestinians, is willing to use its war machine to burn them alive.

The Israeli establishment is incapable of learning a single lesson from past experience. **Hamas**, like Hizbullah, and the Palestinians, like the Lebanese, have no choice but to fight back until the Israelis are forced to retreat. Few people thought that Hizbullah could defeat Israel in 2006. Fewer people may think today that **Hamas** is capable of something similar. They might be surprised. The number of casualties among the Palestinians will, undoubtedly be much higher, but Israelis will die and suffer too. The only way to avoid a bloodbath is for the Israeli army to withdraw immediately from Gaza and negotiate a truce before it is too late.

Dr Azzam Tamimi, the director of the London-based Institute of Islamic Political Thought, is the author of **Hamas**: Unwritten Chapters info@ii-pt.com

Load-Date: March 3, 2008

End of Document

Israeli attacks take toll in Gaza; More than 60 dead in retaliation for Hamas rockets

The Calgary Herald (Alberta)

March 2, 2008 Sunday

Final Edition

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Section: NEWS; Pg. A7

Length: 604 words

Byline: Nidal al-Mughrabi, Reuters

Dateline: GAZA

Body

Israeli forces killed 61 people in the Gaza Strip on Saturday, the bloodiest day for Palestinians since an uprising against Israeli occupation began in 2000.

Israel, which lost two soldiers, seemed ready to press home its fiercest air and ground assault since it pulled troops back to the borders of the coastal enclave in 2005.

It blamed Hamas rockets for provoking four days of fighting, in which dozens of civilians have been among the 96 Palestinians killed.

The UN Security Council prepared to meet in emergency session.

A UN official in Gaza appealed for international action to end the "inhuman suffering" of its 1.5 million people and said killing women and children would not help Israel.

Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas, a sworn enemy of Hamas, the Islamist terrorist group which took control of Gaza from his forces in June, called the attack "more than a holocaust." Aides to Abbas said fighting could wreck new U.S.-backed peace talks.

Israeli officials said Palestinian chief negotiator Ahmed Qurie called his Israeli counterpart, Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni, to call off a meeting due on Monday. But Abbas's aides said no decision to suspend the process had been taken.

At least 30 of the dead were civilians, among them women and children, said Palestinian doctors who worked round the clock.

Two Israeli soldiers were killed and seven wounded, the army said -- its first deaths in Gaza since October.

As troops backed by tanks pushed deep into areas from where rockets are fired, they met heavy gunfire and landmines, residents said.

Israeli attacks take toll in Gaza; More than 60 dead in retaliation for Hamas rockets

Another 48 rockets hit Israel, wounding several people. An Israeli civilian was killed on Wednesday, the first since May.

Israeli Defence Minister Ehud Barak said Israel was "not happy" civilians were being hurt, but blamed Hamas for firing rockets from built-up areas and said it would "pay the price." U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice is due to visit Abbas and Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert this week.

Palestinian negotiator Saeb Erekat said: "If Israeli aggression continues, it will bury the peace process in the rubble." A spokesman for Israel's chief negotiator said: "What Israel is doing in Gaza is fighting terror and it will be continued." At least 30 gunmen were killed, medical staff and Hamas said. Among targets was the empty office of Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh, whom Abbas fired as his prime minister after the Islamists routed his western-backed forces in Gaza.

Medical staff said four people living nearby were wounded.

"Uncle, I don't want to die. I want my dad," a child screamed as doctors tried to treat burn wounds across her body in Gaza's main Shifa hospital. The girl had been in a house which the Israeli army said was used to store and make weapons.

One of the dead civilians was a mother who was preparing breakfast for her children when she was hit by gunfire, relatives and medical workers said. One missile slammed into a crowd of Palestinians, killing four civilians, medics said.

In Damascus, exiled Hamas leader Khaled Meshaal said: "I say to the Zionist leaders, if they decided to raid Gaza, they will be fought not by dozens . . . but by 1.5 million people." A senior UN official in Gaza, John Ging, appealed to world leaders to stop the fighting: "Killing Palestinian women and children will not bring security to the people of Israel," said Ging.

He also said Hamas's rocket fire would not achieve Palestinians' goals.

Daily rocket fire for months has put Olmert under pressure from voters to act. But the government, chastened by a costly war against Hezbollah guerrillas in Lebanon in 2006, is wary of an outright invasion of Gaza.

Graphic

Colour Photo: Said Khatib, AFP-Getty Images; A Palestinian medical worker rushes a baby to hospital in Gaza City on Saturday. ;

Load-Date: March 2, 2008

Gazans pour into Egypt after fence is blown up Gaping hole breaches Israel's tight closure of border, gives a boost to Hamas.

St. Louis Post-Dispatch (Missouri)

January 24, 2008 Thursday

THIRD EDITION

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Section: NEWS; Pg. A9

Length: 888 words

Byline: By Ibrahim Barzak THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Dateline: RAFAH, Gaza Strip

Body

On foot, in cars and in donkey carts, tens of thousands of Gazans flooded into Egypt on Wednesday through a border fence blown up by militants - puncturing a gaping hole in Israel's airtight closure of the Gaza Strip and giving a boost to Hamas.

In a shopping spree that was both festive and frenzied, Gazans cleared out stores in an Egyptian border town, buying up everything from TV sets to soft drinks to cigarettes.

As waves of people swarmed through the destroyed barrier - some estimated the crowd in the hundreds of thousands - Egyptian security forces lined up on one side of the border and Hamas forces lined up on the other side. None of them interfered in any way, and it appeared Hamas militants actively participated in the border breach.

That breach, though likely to be temporary, seemed certain to strengthen Hamas in its showdown with Israel, the West and its Fatah rivals - relieving some of the pain of an international blockade of the Gaza Strip after Hamas' violent takeover of the coastal territory in June.

It also raised Israeli fears of an influx of weapons and militants to Gaza and threatened to undermine crucial Egyptian participation in a Mideast peace push by President George W. Bush.

Official reaction to the day's events ranged from dismay to embarrassment to outright anger.

The United States expressed concern about the border breach. Israel demanded that Egypt take control of its border. Hamas called on its rivals to help come up with new arrangements for Gaza's crossings.

Egypt's leader said he had no choice but to let in the beleaguered Palestinians. But Arab and U.S. officials in Washington said the Egyptian government assured the United States the border would be closed quickly.

'FREEDOM IS GOOD'

For ordinary Gazans, it was a day of joy and plenty.

Gazans pour into Egypt after fence is blown up Gaping hole breaches Israel 's tight closure of border, gives a boost to Hamas.

Osama Hassan, 25, said the border opening would enable him to marry his 17-year-old fiancée next week, because they were able to get items they needed to set up a household. He bought a special mattress for his injured back, and she assembled kitchen supplies.

Hassan said he belonged to Fatah, not Hamas, but still wanted to "kiss the forehead" of Gaza's Hamas prime minister.

Hamas did not take responsibility for a series of explosions that destroyed the fence, but it seemed unlikely the systematic operation could have happened without its approval, if not active involvement.

Residents said Hamas-linked militants cut through the metal wall with blow torches a month ago - weakening the structure so it could fall easily when the blasts went off.

The appearance of the fallen wall backed up that assertion. It was neatly sliced at knee level, with the bottom section still standing and the rest toppled over.

Hamas police quickly took control of the shopping exodus, channeling the crowds through two sections of the frontier.

"Freedom is good. We need no border after today," said Mohammed Abu Ghazal, 29, an out-of-work Gazan.

Children bought soft drinks and chocolate, women scooped up cheese and cleaning products, and men stocked up on cigarettes - all expensive or unavailable in Gaza because of Israel's shutdown of cargo crossings.

Other Palestinians staggered over toppled metal plates that once made up the border fence, carrying TV sets, cell phones, tires and plastic bottles filled with fuel. Some brought in goats and chickens.

Four Palestinians in wheelchairs were pushed over the border, where ambulances picked them up for treatment in Egypt.

Masked gunmen used 17 explosive charges before dawn to tear down the border fence - erected in 2001 by Israel when it controlled Gaza.

After news of the breach spread, people across Gaza boarded buses and piled into rickety pickup trucks heading for Egypt. It was a rare chance to escape Gaza's isolation.

Moussa Zuroub, 28, carried his young daughter, Aseel, on his shoulders through the muddy streets of Rafah, which is divided by a wall into Egyptian and Gazan segments. "I'm coming just to break that ice - that all my life, I'd never left Gaza before," he said.

By nightfall, more than 1,000 Gazans reached El-Arish, an Egyptian town about 37 miles south of Rafah, walking the streets and shopping in stores that stayed open late.

Egypt is in a bind over how to respond. It has largely kept its border with Gaza closed since the Hamas takeover amid concerns of a spillover of Hamas-style militancy into Egypt. But Egypt's government is also under popular pressure at home to help impoverished Gazans.

Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak said he told his border officials to let the Palestinians cross because they were "starving" under the Israeli blockade.

However, not only have there been no cases of starvation reported, but there are no claims of starvation from officials or aid workers, and none is visible to anyone who lives or works in Gaza.

There are acute shortages of fuel in Gaza, and supplies of fresh meat and produce are running low, which have raised the specter of a humanitarian emergency.

Gazans pour into Egypt after fence is blown up Gaping hole breaches Israel 's tight closure of border, gives a boost to Hamas.

The supreme **Hamas** leader, Khaled Mashaal, said his group was willing to work with Egypt and **Hamas** rival, moderate Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas, on a shared border arrangement.

"We are concerned about that situation, and frankly I know the Egyptians are as well," State Department deputy spokesman Tom Casey said.

Keep up

STLtoday.com/world Get updates from the Middle East.

Notes

World

Graphic

PHOTO; MAP

PHOTO - Palestinians cross a destroyed section of the border wall between Rafah, in the southern Gaza Strip, and Egypt on Wednesday. Masked Palestinians blew holes into the Gaza-Egypt border wall Wednesday, and thousands of Gazans trapped in their territory by a tight blockade poured into Egypt to buy food, fuel and other supplies. The Associated Press MAP - Thousands flood into Egypt through downed Gaza wall | AP

Load-Date: January 24, 2008

IN MEMORY OF YASSER ARAFAT; On the third anniversary of the leader's death, a rally in his honour ends in chaos. Donald Macintyre reports; Fatah and Hamas at war

The Independent (London)

November 13, 2007 Tuesday

First Edition

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The  INDEPENDENT

Section: WORLD; Pg. 24

Length: 1247 words

Body

At least seven Palestinians were shot dead and scores more were injured yesterday as **Hamas** forces opened fire during a rally in Gaza City organised by the rival Fatah movement to commemorate the anniversary of Yasser Arafat's death.

Three years after the former president died in a Paris hospital - and almost six months after **Hamas**'s bloody takeover of Gaza - an estimated 200,000 to 250,000 people took part in one of the largest political rallies held in the Palestinian territories in recent memory.

But it ended in pandemonium after 90 minutes when some Fatah supporters threw stones at **Hamas** personnel, members of the **Hamas** executive force appointed by the de facto government to police Gaza shot at demonstrators, and thousands of others who had taken part in the peaceful rally scrambled for cover.

The bloody end to the gathering, only weeks before a planned US-hosted summit aims to restart the peace process, was a stark reminder of the deep divisions between the two Palestinian regimes - the internationally backed emergency government under the Fatah Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas and **Hamas**, enforcing its grip over a Gaza which has become more impoverished and isolated because of the boycott by Israel and the global community.

Hamas claimed yesterday's bloodshed was triggered by Fatah gunmen who opened fire from the nearby Al Azhar University. But this was strongly denied by Fatah, which said that all those killed were its own supporters. "Why would Fatah call a rally and then ruin it?" asked Ahmed Hilles, the senior Fatah official left in Gaza after last June's bloody in-fighting, who gave a keynote speech at the rally.

Sami Abu Zuhri, a senior **Hamas** spokesman, said four **Hamas** police officers were hurt. Some witnesses suggested the **Hamas** forces were provoked by the chant of "Shia, Shia" which rang out from the crowd, many of them waving yellow Fatah flags, in derision at what **Hamas** opponents see as the faction's increasing dependence on Iran.

IN MEMORY OF YASSER ARAFAT On the third anniversary of the leader's death, a rally in his honour ends in chaos. Donald Macintyre reports Fatah and Hamas at war

Either way, a group of demonstrators in the crowd could be seen carrying the blood-stained

CONTINUED ON PAGE 26

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 25

body of a comrade, draped in the black and white chequered scarf favoured by Fatah supporters.

As hundreds of demonstrators fled down a street near the rally site, with sporadic gunfire still ringing out behind them, a frightened woman stood by a wall with a small boy begging a passing taxi driver for a lift. Kefaya Zigara, 40, from the Beach refugee camp, said she had gone to look for her son, Abed, who wanted to see the rally. "I will have to go home and wait for him," she said. "I have no other option. I blame Hamas for this. Why did they have to be there, they should have left it alone."

Dr Walid abu Ramadan, the medical director at the Al Quds hospital, said that apart from a few women suffering from hysteria and shock, almost all the 40 injured had bullet wounds. Nearby, Taher Nasser, 20, was lying on a stretcher as a friend held a drip for him. He said: "We were shouting 'Abu Ammar, Abu Ammar' [Yasser Arafat's nom de guerre] and Hamas started throwing sound grenades. Then I got shot in the back. They were shooting from the Islamic University."

After most of the crowd had dispersed, the main junction of Arab League Street and 30th Street, close to the mosque, was littered with stones hurled by demonstrators. Fatah supporters at the hospital said the stone-throwing had started only after the shooting began, but a Hamas policeman at the scene said it began before any shots were fired.

Khaled al Nouri, 18, his head heavily bandaged, took refuge from the gunfire in the electoral commission building. He said: "When I came out, a policeman hit me. I said, 'Why are you hitting me? I have no AK-47.' But he got other policemen and they hit me again. I am not Fatah and Hamas. I just went to support my president who died three years ago. I liked him."

Ihab Ghusain, a spokesman for the Hamas-controlled Interior Ministry, said gunfire by Fatah militants started the shooting and led to firing "from all sides". He claimed Fatah had deliberately tried to "create chaos" and revive the factional fighting of last June. He added: "Everyone knows the police were there to keep order and to ensure people could easily attend the rally. Our brothers in Fatah have to take responsibility for what happened."

Hazar Abed, a doctor at Shifa Hospital, said a total of 130 people had been injured - 12 of them seriously.

Mr Hilles said: "The world has seen something different. It has seemed unarmed people being chased by armed people."

He claimed that, during the past 48 hours, Hamas forces had followed Fatah officials, confiscated loudspeaker vehicles intended to encourage Fatah supporters to attend, and warned some bus operators against ferrying demonstrators to the rally. Instead, tens of thousands of people from all over Gaza arrived in trucks, private cars and taxis and donkey carts for the event - the biggest rally in Gaza since Yasser Arafat returned in triumph from Tunis in 1994. Mr Hilles added: "This was not a mistake. It was something that was meant to happen by Hamas. We felt there was a will to ruin the rally."

However, he said Fatah would not seek revenge and added: "This should be a lesson for Hamas and not for Fatah. It should benefit from its mistake. If there is a way to end the bloodshed we will not hesitate. But is there anyone on the other side who understands this?"

A lengthy and angry statement from Mr Abbas's office said the day's "bloody events" left "no space for doubts that the coup and those behind it are not going to last". It added: "Our dignified people are capable of resisting the dictatorship of Hamas's heinous regime, and to foil and bring down those who led the coup and protect the national project."

IN MEMORY OF YASSER ARAFAT On the third anniversary of the leader's death, a rally in his honour ends in chaos. Donald Macintyre reports Fatah and Hamas at war

The fighting broke out after the main speeches and as some had begun to leave the rally. Although the event was billed to start at 1pm, the organisers decided to bring it forward to about 11.30am because of the large crowds which had already assembled by 9am.

Abu Zuhri, a Hamas spokesman, said Fatah was to blame for the day's "deaths and crimes" and repeated claims that Fatah gunmen had been posted on nearby high buildings as a provocation.

As Fatah spokesmen in Ramallah queued up to denounce the conduct of Hamas, the Fatah official Mohammed Dahlan declared that the demonstrators had been saying "no" to Hamas and added: "I call on Fatah in Gaza to continue pursuing peaceful means in confronting Hamas."

By last night, most Hamas security personnel, who had earlier manned checkpoints across Gaza and patrolled many of its streets, had withdrawn from public view after reportedly detaining 27 Fatah organisers. One witness told the Associated Press news agency that he saw 10 Fatah gunmen being turned away at the beginning of the rally by Hamas security personnel, despite Fatah's insistence that no armed men were at the rally.

On the one hand, the high turnout - which appeared to have exceeded the expectations of the Fatah organisers, many of whom are still being paid by President Abbas's emergency government - will boost hopes harboured by some observers in the international community that Hamas is losing popularity.

On the other hand, the response of Hamas forces may suggest that their strong paramilitary control of the streets and show of force yesterday will act as a deterrent to any possible uprising by their opponents in the Gaza Strip.

'Our brothers

in Fatah

have to take

responsibility

for what

happened'

Ihab Ghusain

hamas minister

Load-Date: November 13, 2007

Massive forces sent to prevent Gazans from storming border. Defense officials fear planned Hamas 'human chain' today will flood into Israel

The Jerusalem Post

February 25, 2008 Monday

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Section: NEWS; Pg. 1

Length: 665 words

Byline: REBECCA ANNA STOIL

Highlight: Lead Story

Body

In preparation for a large-scaled Palestinian protest march planned for Gaza on Monday, security forces mobilized along the security fence Sunday night in an effort to head off a replay of last month's Rafah border-storming at the Erez or Kissufim crossings.

An artillery battery was moved to the Gaza border for the first time in months, and rules of engagement were reviewed as troops prepared for the demonstration Hamas is calling a "human chain."

A joint statement issued by the Foreign and Defense ministries blamed Hamas for fanning the flames and endangering Gazan civilians.

"Hamas, not for the first time, is orchestrating a premeditated effort to put civilians on the front line. Israel does not get involved in demonstrations that occur within the Gaza Strip, but Israel will defend itself and prevent incursions into its sovereign territory. Israel is working to prevent an escalation, but has made it absolutely clear that if there is an escalation, the responsibility will be entirely on Hamas's shoulders," the statement read.

The IDF was unwilling to confirm or deny a Channel 2 news report saying soldiers would be instructed to fire at protesters' legs should they approach the security fence, in order to prevent a recurrence of what happened at the Gaza-Sinai border on January 23.

Hamas announced Sunday that it would mobilize the mass demonstration along the Salah-a-Din Route from Rafah on Gaza's Egyptian border to Beit Hanun in the north, to protest the continued embargo placed on the Strip. The protest is geared to attract more international attention than previous protests against the sanctions, due to its size and the photographic value of a chain stretching more than 60 kilometers along the entire length of the Gaza Strip.

But security forces are concerned that the protesters - or organizers - will not be satisfied with the symbolic imagery and might try to make good on threats issued by a Hamas leader last month that the Erez crossing would become the next Rafah.

In a worst-case scenario, Hamas activists could motivate the crowds to storm the Gaza security fence, particularly at "weak spots" where Israeli communities or army bases abut the strip. Areas such as the Erez crossing, Kissufim, Nahal Oz and Netiv Ha'asara are considered to be particularly at risk.

Massive forces sent to prevent Gazans from storming border. Defense officials fear planned Hamas 'human chain' today will flood into Israel

IDF Chief of General Staff Lt.-Gen. Gabi Ashkenazi held a situation assessment with officers on Sunday night, including representatives of the Home Front Command, to finalize preparations for Monday's IDF response.

Israel Police chief Insp.-Gen. David Cohen also held a late-night assessment, in which police decided to raise the national alert level. Some 6,500 police officers, one senior officer said, would be deployed to the Southern District on Monday morning to maintain order.

While some **Hamas** officials have denied organizing an attempt to breach the border, others have hinted that such a human surge - involving **women** and children - might in fact occur.

"The next time Gazan residents protest the ongoing siege, they will do so on the border with Israel, and not on the border with Egypt," Israel Radio quoted one senior **Hamas** official as saying on Sunday.

Over the weekend, the IDF was already rushing large forces to the Gaza border in anticipation of civilian unrest after gasoline supplies in the territory ran out on Saturday for all but emergency service vehicles.

Immigration Absorption Minister Ya'acov Edri (Kadima) said Sunday that the government was ready for any scenario resulting from Palestinians trying to breach the border crossings.

Also Sunday, an all-day IDF operation in the southern Gaza Strip, near the defunct Dahiniye airstrip, bore fruit in the afternoon, when Givati infantry, Armored Corps units and combat engineers uncovered five tunnels used to smuggle arms from Sinai into Gaza. In the course of the operation, 50 Palestinians were detained for questioning on suspicion of involvement in a terrorist organization.

Six Kassams were fired Sunday at the Negev.

Graphic

Photo: IDF SOLDIERS leave the area after completing an operation on Sunday in the southern Gaza Strip, near Kerem Shalom. (Credit: Sebastian Scheiner/AP)

Load-Date: October 4, 2011

***Hamas vows more attacks; Palestinians fire in air in celebration while U.S.,
Abbas condemn massacre at Jerusalem seminary***

The Toronto Star
March 7, 2008 Friday

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Section: WORLD AND COMMENT; Pg. AA01

Length: 642 words

Dateline: GAZA CITY

Body

Hamas militants in the Gaza Strip praised yesterday's deadly attack on a rabbinical seminary and thousands of Palestinians took to the streets of Gaza to celebrate.

Hamas stopped just short of claiming responsibility for the Jerusalem shootings, which left nine people dead including the gunman.

"We bless the operation. It will not be the last," **Hamas** said in a statement sent to reporters by text message.

At mosques in Gaza City and the northern Gaza Strip, many residents performed prayers of thanksgiving, only performed in cases of great victory.

About 7,000 Gazans marched in the streets of Jebaliya, firing in the air in celebration, and visited homes of those killed and wounded in the last Israeli incursion.

In the southern town of Rafah, residents distributed sweets to moving cars, and militants fired mortars in celebration.

In Lebanon, Hezbollah's Al-Manar satellite TV station said a previously unknown group called the Martyrs of Imad Mughniyeh and Gaza was responsible for the attack. The claim could not immediately be verified. Mughniyeh, a Hezbollah commander, was killed in a car bomb in Syria last month. Hezbollah has blamed Israel for the assassination.

Israeli government spokesperson Mark Regev and moderate Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas condemned the shooting. But Regev said the Palestinian government must take steps against the extremists - not just denounce their attacks.

"Tonight's massacre in Jerusalem is a defining moment," he told the Associated Press. "It is clear that those people celebrating this bloodshed have shown themselves to be not only the enemies of Israel but of all of humanity."

The United Nations, United States, Russia, France, Britain and Germany all condemned the school shooting.

U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, who had on Wednesday persuaded moderate Abbas to return to peace talks with Israel, called the attack an "act of terror and depravity."

Hamas vows more attacks Palestinians fire in air in celebration while U.S. , Abbas condemn massacre at Jerusalem seminary

Rice said she spoke with Israeli Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni to express U.S. condolences to the people of Israel and the families of the victims.

"This barbarous act has no place among civilized peoples and shocks the conscience of all peace-loving nations. There is no cause that could ever justify this action," she said.

Israel's foreign ministry condemned the "abominable" attack and urged the world to rally with it against terrorism."

The ministry said Israel "expects the countries of the world to support it in its war against those who murder students, women and children, by any means and with respect for neither place nor target."

At his West Bank headquarters, Abbas condemned the attack.

"The president condemned all attacks that target civilians, whether they are Palestinian or Israeli," the president's statement said.

Abbas had briefly suspended talks to protest an Israeli offensive in Gaza that killed more than 120 Palestinians.

The Jerusalem attack came on the same day Egyptian officials were trying to mediate a truce between Palestinian militants and Israel.

The proposal, backed by the United States, would stop rocket fire on Israel in exchange for an end to Israeli attacks on militants and the resumption of trade and travel from Gaza. An Israeli official confirmed that Israel is open to the idea of letting guards from Abbas' Fatah movement oversee Gaza's borders, one of the main tenets of the truce idea.

But the Israeli spoke before the shooting, and it was not immediately known whether his country's position would change.

The Egyptian proposal reflected a growing realization that Israel's current policy of blockade and military action has failed to weaken Hamas. Still, a deal between Hamas and Israel was far from certain, with Israel fearing the militants will use any lull to rearm and Hamas raising tough conditions, such as a demand for Israel to stop targeting militants in the West Bank as well as Gaza.

Graphic

Nati Shohat EPA CORBIS Israeli medics rush a seriously wounded young Israeli to an ambulance outside a Jewish seminary in Jerusalem after deadly attack by gunman yesterday. MOHAMMED SALEM Reuters Hamas supporters in Jebaliya camp, northern Gaza Strip, celebrate yesterday's attack on a Jewish seminary. MOHAMMED SALEM Reuters Hamas supporters in Jebaliya camp, northern Gaza Strip, celebrate yesterday's attack on a Jewish seminary.

Load-Date: March 7, 2008

Alleged Hamas Activist Turns to 'The Israel Lobby'

New York Sun (Archive)

October 29, 2007 Monday

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Section: NATIONAL; Pg. 6

Length: 768 words

Byline: JOSH GERSTEIN -, Staff Reporter of the Sun

Body

An alleged Hamas activist seeking a lenient sentence from a federal court in Chicago is turning for help to a hotly disputed book about Israel's influence in America, "The Israel Lobby."

A new legal filing on behalf of Abdelhaleem Ashqar relies heavily on the book from John Mearsheimer of the University of Chicago and Stephen Walt of Harvard University to argue that Ashqar's refusal to testify before grand juries investigating Hamas was justified by Israel's oppressive actions toward Palestinian Arabs.

"Every person in this court has been influenced by perception and mythology and kept ignorant through the hegemonical myth that Israel is the victim, defending itself against the barbaric Palestinians," Ashqar's attorney, William Moffitt, wrote before launching into a five-page synopsis of assertions in "The Israel Lobby" that American support for Israel is based on erroneous beliefs about the relationship between that nation and the Palestinians.

"There was no choice for Dr. Ashqar when subpoenaed in front of the grand jury. He could either join with his oppressors, reject his countrymen, forsake everything he believes, and never return to his beloved Palestine, or he could be labeled a terrorist. There is a special nobility in such a choice," the lawyer wrote.

Mr. Moffitt quotes the claim by Messrs. Mearsheimer and Walt that Arabs in Israel "are de facto treated as second-class citizens." The attorney also turns to the two professors' book for quotes in which an Israeli prime minister, Menachem Begin, called Palestinians "beasts walking on two legs" and an Israel general, Rafael Eitan, said, "The only good Arab is a dead Arab."

Ashqar's filing goes on, with support from "The Israel Lobby," to accuse Israel of relentless expansionism, ethnic cleansing, deliberate violence toward women and children, and killing of military prisoners. Israel's occupation of the West Bank and Gaza "was founded on brute force, repression and fear, collaboration and treachery, beatings and torture chambers, and daily intimidation, humiliation and manipulation," the brief says, quoting the Harvard and Chicago professors.

In February, a jury in Chicago acquitted Ashqar of racketeering conspiracy for his alleged involvement with Hamas. However, Ashqar was convicted of obstruction of justice and criminal contempt for his refusal to testify before a grand jury probing Hamas links in America.

Despite Ashqar's acquittal on the conspiracy charge, prosecutors are seeking a life sentence, arguing that he promoted deadly terrorist attacks. The defense dismissed as "farcical" the notion that the Palestinian Arab activist should face life in prison on a contempt of court charge.

Alleged Hamas Activist Turns to 'The Israel Lobby'

A Harvard Law School professor who has prepared a detailed rebuttal to "The Israel Lobby," Alan Dershowitz, said yesterday that he was not surprised that the book was being cited in the courts. "Walt and Mearsheimer have become the rock stars of the anti-Israel hate groups. They are quoted on Web sites all over the country and all over the world. They have become fodder for Israel bashing," Mr. Dershowitz told The New York Sun.

Mr. Dershowitz called the book "drivel" and said it would not be cited in any reputable forum, but for the esteemed affiliations of the authors. "It's the names of the institutions. They've dragged Harvard and the University of Chicago down into the mud," the law professor said. Messrs. Mearsheimer and Walt did not respond to e-mail messages yesterday seeking comment for this article.

The new court filing from Ashqar, 49, paints the former Howard University business professor as a Palestinian Arab hero whose civil disobedience has roots in the theories of Henry David Thoreau and Martin Luther King Jr. Ashqar's defense also contends that his refusal to testify was more laudable than that of a former New York Times journalist, Judith Miller, who was jailed for almost three months after refusing to identify a confidential source in an investigation into the leak of a CIA operative's identity. "Dr. Ashqar's choice displayed more bravery and principle than Judith Miller's choice," Mr. Moffitt wrote, before intimating that the Palestinian activist was resisting "genocidal oppression."

Ms. Miller was called as a prosecution witness at Ashqar's trial because Israeli authorities permitted her to witness an interrogation of one of Ashqar's co-defendants, Muhammad Salah. He is about to begin a 21-month sentence after being acquitted on the conspiracy charge but convicted of obstruction of justice. Judge Amy St. Eve, who presided over the trial, is set to sentence Ashqar on November 8.

Load-Date: October 29, 2007

Hamas calls for shared border control with Egypt. 300,000 Gazans pour into Sinai after holes blasted in Rafah fence

The Jerusalem Post

January 24, 2008 Thursday

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Section: NEWS; Pg. 1

Length: 880 words

Byline: KHALED ABU TOAMEH, AP contributed to this report.

Highlight: Lead Story

Body

Hamas leaders on Wednesday called for an "urgent and speedy" meeting with representatives of Egypt and the Palestinian Authority to work out new, shared arrangements to control the border crossing in Rafah.

The call came shortly after Palestinian gunmen blew up large parts of the wall separating the Gaza Strip from Sinai, enabling tens of thousands of Palestinians to cross freely into Egyptian territory.

Palestinian and Egyptian sources estimated that some 300,000 Palestinians entered Egypt during the day. Although many had returned home by nightfall, the sources said thousands planned to spend the night in Egypt.

According to the sources, hundreds of Palestinians who had been stranded on the Egyptian side of the border for the past seven months seized the opportunity to return to their homes in Gaza.

Palestinian sources in the Strip said dozens of gunmen belonging to several armed groups used land mines to blow at least 20 holes in the metal border fence. Later, Palestinians used bulldozers to remove barbed wire and concrete slabs and to create paths for pedestrians and vehicles.

Egyptian border guards watched from rooftops and security towers as men, **women** and children began pouring into Egypt.

Eyewitnesses said the Egyptian authorities had been caught by surprise by the large number of people entering Sinai by foot, donkey carts and cars.

Many Gazans were seen returning home with flour, cigarettes, chickens, soft drinks and motorcycles, they said. **Hamas** policemen deployed along the border carried out random checks of bags, confiscating some pistols and rifles.

Ibrahim Abu Taha, 45, a Palestinian father of seven, was in the Egyptian section of Rafah with his two brothers and \$185 in his pocket.

"We want to buy food, we want to buy rice and sugar, milk and wheat and some cheese," Abu Taha said, adding that he would also buy inexpensive Egyptian cigarettes.

Abu Taha said he could get the basic foods in Gaza, but at three times the cost.

Hamis calls for shared border control with Egypt . 300,000 Gazans pour into Sinai after holes blasted in Rafah fence

"Freedom is good. We need no border after today," said unemployed Muhammad Abu Ghazal, 29.

"This is a great day," shouted a jubilant woman carrying an infant. "We have been starving in the Gaza Strip. We urge [Egyptian] President Hosni Mubarak to keep the border open and to help the poor people in the Gaza Strip."

Mubarak said Wednesday he had ordered his troops to allow the Gazans to cross into Egypt "because they were starving."

Mubarak, who has been under heavy pressure from Palestinians and Egyptians to reopen the Rafah terminal, told reporters in Cairo that when Gazans began storming their way through the border, he ordered the Egyptian army to allow them in to purchase food.

"I told them to let them come in and eat and buy food, and then return them later, as long as they were not carrying weapons," he said. "The Palestinians in Gaza are starving due to the Israeli siege. Egyptians troops escorted them to buy food and then allowed them to return to the Gaza Strip."

He dismissed calls by Egyptian opposition parties to recall his ambassador from Israel in protest against the Israeli blockade. "If that happened, I wouldn't be able to talk to the Israelis. One has to be reasonable in such matters," Mubarak said.

Hamis leaders expressed satisfaction with the developments at the border. They also voiced readiness to work out a deal with Egypt and the PA over joint control of the Rafah border crossing.

Syria-based **Hamis** leader Khaled Mashaal said his movement would insist that the border be placed under exclusive Palestinian and Egyptian control.

"We in **Hamis** and our brothers in the Palestinian government headed by Ismail Haniyeh declare our readiness to reach an understanding with the brothers in Ramallah [the Fatah-controlled PA] and the brothers in Egypt on how to manage the border crossings," Mashaal said.

"The most important criterion for lifting the siege on Gaza is that the Rafah crossing be opened and be placed under the exclusive control of Palestinians and Egyptians without any blackmail. We don't want to control anything. We only seek freedom and relief for the Palestinian people," he said.

Mashaal appealed to the Arab countries to work toward ending the international boycott of the **Hamis** government and to lift the siege on the Gaza Strip. "I am addressing all the Arabs - don't say that there is an international agreement concerning the Rafah crossing," he said. "No one can believe that you can't lift the siege. Don't deceive yourselves."

In Gaza City, **Hamis** Prime Minister Haniyeh called for an urgent meeting with Egyptian and PA officials to work out a new agreement for running the border crossing. "We don't want to be the only ones in control of these matters," Haniyeh said. "The Palestinians are not only demanding food and fuel supplies. We want an end to the siege and the reopening of all the border crossings."

Haniyeh reiterated **Hamis**'s readiness to reach a "comprehensive and mutual" truce with Israel.

In Ramallah, PA officials rejected **Hamis**'s call for joint control of the Rafah crossing and expressed fear that Wednesday's events would harm the Palestinians' relations with Egypt. Nimer Hammad, political adviser to PA President Mahmoud Abbas, said **Hamis** was trying to embarrass the Egyptians and to "drag" the Arab world in the pursuit of its "narrow interests."

Graphic

Hamas calls for shared border control with Egypt . 300,000 Gazans pour into Sinai after holes blasted in Rafah fence

2 photos: PALESTINIANS CROSS over a destroyed section of the border wall in Rafah and make their way into Egypt on Wednesday. DEFENSE MINISTER Ehud Barak and his French counterpart, Herve Morin, salute the French flag prior to talks in Paris yesterday. (Credit: Kevin Frayer/AP. Remy de la Mauviniere/AP)

Load-Date: October 4, 2011

End of Document

Role of Hamas in 'collective punishment'

The Irish Times

August 15, 2008 Friday

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Section: OPINION; Opinion; Pg. 13

Length: 856 words

Body

OPINION: ON MAY 27th, 1942, the Deputy Reichsprotektor of Bohemia and Moravia, Reinhard Heydrich, was assassinated by the Czech underground as he drove to his office in Prague, writes **SEÁN GANNON**.

In an effort "to make up for his death", the SS rounded up the residents of the nearby village of Lidice. Some 200 men were immediately executed. The women were sent to Ravensbrück concentration camp where most subsequently died; 80 per cent of their children were gassed at Chelmno in July.

Two years later, a partisan bomb killed 33 members of an SS police battalion as it marched through central Rome. In reprisal, the city's Gestapo chief, Herbert Kappler, ordered that 10 Italians be executed for every dead German. The following day, 335 people were taken down to the Ardeatine Caves and shot in the back of the neck.

Such were the type of atrocities that the framers of the Fourth Geneva Convention had in mind when they outlawed "collective punishment" in 1949. Article 33's stipulation that no person "be punished for an offence he or she has not personally committed" refers to the active imposition of criminal penalties in reprisal for another party's guilt.

Therefore, its constant invocation by critics of Israel in the context of its lockdown of Gaza represents little more than a cynical exploitation of the language of international law, part of a well-established strategy which seeks to de-legitimise Israeli security detail by defining it in terms of policies properly opposed by all right-thinking people: "apartheid" (the security fence); "war crimes" (the targeted killing of terrorist leaders); even "ethnic cleansing" and "genocide" (almost every IDF operation).

For example, the Ireland-Palestine Solidarity Campaign claims that Israel's rather erratic restrictions on electricity and motor fuel exports to Gaza constitute "collective punishment" and a violation of international law.

However, the legality of economic sanctions in conflict situations is enshrined in the UN Charter despite their unavoidable impact on civilians. The UN embargo against Saddam Hussein's regime caused enormous suffering among ordinary Iraqis while its sanctions against al-Qaeda and the Taliban had what the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs called "a tangible negative effect" on the lives of innocent Afghans. Yet no one accuses the Security Council of imposing "collective punishment".

Furthermore, although the Fourth Geneva Convention does not technically apply to its conflict with Gaza (which is neither a high contracting party nor, despite Israel's control of its borders, Israeli occupied territory), Jerusalem is fully compliant with its requirements. The convention does not obligate the supply of goods and services to enemy populations (Israel rightly declared Gaza a "hostile entity" in September 2007) other than "essential foodstuffs, clothing and tonics intended for children under 15, expectant mothers and maternity cases". The 1977 First Additional Protocol does not list electricity or fuel among the "other supplies essential to the survival of the civilian

Role of Hamas in 'collective punishment'

population", for which transit must be facilitated. In any case, even these can be embargoed where there are serious grounds for believing they will be intercepted by enemy forces. And although this is obviously happening in Gaza (**Hamas** seized 14 truckloads of Red Crescent relief last February and has been repeatedly accused by the Palestinian Authority of diverting fuel destined for Gaza's power station and hospitals to its own private depots), Israel continues to allow the transfer of hundreds of tonnes of aid into the territory each week.

Israel's travel ban on Gaza students with overseas scholarships has also been described as a form of "collective punishment". Condemning this policy on these pages, the former director of the Irish Fulbright Commission, John Kelly, highlighted the case of seven Fulbright scholars whom he suggested were denied permission to travel to the US to study because three of them were affiliates of Gaza's Islamic University, a **Hamas** stronghold linked to a number of recent terrorist offences. Three of the 14 Fulbright scholars who applied to leave Gaza this year were indeed refused for security reasons. But the central issue is not whether such students pose a risk in themselves but whether access to an overseas college education represents "an exceptional humanitarian cause" for which Israel should break its legitimate blockade. As the universal right to an education does not extend to higher studies, it clearly does not.

This is undoubtedly a tragedy for the hundreds of students in receipt of foreign university fellowships barred from leaving Gaza, and Israel is presently reviewing its policy and examining applications on a case-by-case basis. But ultimate responsibility for the plight of those denied permission to travel lies not with the Jerusalem government, but with their own **Hamas** rulers who, in waging an indiscriminate terrorist war against all Israelis, are the region's real perpetrators of "collective punishment" crimes.

Seán Gannon is chairman of Irish Friends of Israel

Load-Date: August 15, 2008

'Peace buried under Gaza rubble'; At least 61 Palestinians killed in Gaza Strip as Israeli forces pummel Hamas stronghold

Ottawa Citizen

March 2, 2008 Sunday

Final Edition

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Section: NEWS; Pg. A3

Length: 857 words

Byline: Sakher Abu El Oun, Agence France-Presse with files from Reuters

Dateline: GAZA CITY

Body

GAZA CITY - Israeli forces killed 61 Palestinians in a land and air blitz in the **Hamas**-held Gaza Strip yesterday, medics said, amid warnings that the violence had "buried" the peace process.

It was the deadliest day since Israel's withdrawal from Gaza in September 2005 and one of the most lethal Israeli operations since the Palestinian uprising erupted in 2000.

Fifty-four Palestinians were killed in northern Gaza, and two others in an air strike in the south of the territory which is ruled by the Islamist movement **Hamas**, medics said.

At least 13 civilians, seven of them **women** and children, were among the dead and more than 150 people were wounded, Dr. Muawiya Hassanein, the head of Gaza emergency services, told AFP.

Five members of the **Hamas** "police" were killed in an Israeli air strike in the Rafah sector as they took shelter in a mosque that was hit by a missile, witnesses and medical sources in southern Gaza said.

A bodyguard of Ismail Haniya, the **Hamas** premier dismissed by Palestinian president Mahmoud Abbas, was also among the militants killed.

Of the 61 killed, 30 were fighters, according to hospital staff.

But Gaza militants still fired at least 40 rockets and mortars at southern Israel, including eight long-range rockets, which crashed in and around the town of Ashkelon, 11 kilometres north of Gaza, the Israeli army said.

Six Israelis were wounded by the rockets, one of them seriously.

Two Israeli soldiers were also killed yesterday in Gaza, and another seven soldiers wounded, including one officer, the army said, as it battled to halt the Palestinian rocket attacks on towns in southern Israel.

Senior Palestinian negotiator Saeb Erekat said the Middle East peace talks had been "buried" under the debris of the Israeli incursion.

'Peace buried under Gaza rubble'; At least 61 Palestinians killed in Gaza Strip as Israeli forces pummel Hamas stronghold

"The peace talks are buried under the rubble of the destroyed homes in Gaza," Mr. Erekat said. "The peace process has been destroyed because of the aggressions and the crimes that have been committed."

A member of Mr. Abbas's office said that the talks were now suspended. "The president decided to suspend the negotiations as a protest to the Israeli aggression," he said, declining to be named.

Meanwhile, Israel's Defence Minister Ehud Barak said Hamas, which seized power in Gaza in June, bore "full responsibility" for the bloodshed.

"Hamas bears full responsibility and will pay the price. We are not happy that civilians have been victims, but the responsibility is on Hamas and its firing of rockets at Israel," Mr. Barak said in a statement.

Israeli tanks supported by helicopters moved into northern Gaza just after midnight on Friday and by nightfall troops had fought their way nearly three kilometres inside the Gaza Strip, according to witnesses.

Israel's public television reported that the army, which suffered its first deaths since the violence escalated on Wednesday, had deployed an "entire regiment," in Gaza, which would number around 2,000 soldiers.

A spokesman for Israel's chief peace negotiator said: "What Israel is doing in Gaza is fighting terror and it will be continued."

The urban battlefields were littered with debris as frightened Gazans hid inside their homes and imams read Koranic verses over mosque loudspeakers.

"We hear the rockets and the explosions everywhere. ... We cannot leave our homes," Jabaliya resident Abu Alaa, 40, told AFP by telephone as he and his children took cover.

At Gaza's main Shifa hospital, a toddler screamed as doctors tried to treat burn wounds across her body. "Uncle, I don't want to die. I want my dad," she cried. The girl was injured in a house that the Israeli army said was used to store and make weapons.

One of the dead civilians was a mother who was preparing breakfast for her children when she was hit by gunfire, relatives and medical workers said. One missile slammed into a crowd of Palestinians, killing four civilians, medics said.

A senior UN official in Gaza, John Ging, appealed to world leaders to interrupt their weekend to stop the fighting:

"Killing Palestinian women and children will not bring security to the people of Israel," he said, cautioning Israeli commanders about the risk of committing war crimes. He also said Hamas's rocket fire would not achieve Palestinians' goals.

The latest operation raised the death toll to 91 since Wednesday.

Mr. Abbas, whose Fatah forces were driven out of Gaza when Hamas seized power, urged "international protection for the Palestinian people," in an appeal from the West Bank city of Ramallah.

Mr. Abbas warned that "innocent women, children and old people" were being targeted.

Acting at his request, the UN Security Council held consultations late yesterday at which UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon condemned Israel's "excessive and disproportionate" use of force as well as the Palestinian rocket attacks against southern Israel.

Meanwhile, White House spokesman Gordon Johndroe said the U.S. regretted all loss of life, but stressed: "There is a clear distinction between terrorist rocket attacks that target civilians and action in self-defence."

'Peace buried under Gaza rubble'; At least 61 Palestinians killed in Gaza Strip as Israeli forces pummel Hamas stronghold

U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice is due to visit Mr. Abbas and Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert next week.

Graphic

Photo: Suhaib Salem, Reuters; A Palestinian man reacts after an Israeli missile strike on his house in Gaza yesterday. Israeli forces killed 61 Palestinians in a land and air blitz yesterday. At least 13 civilians, seven of them women and children, were among the dead. 'We are not happy that civilians have been victims, but the responsibility is on Hamas and its firing of rockets at Israel,' Israel's Defence Minister Ehud Barak said. ;

Photo: Abid Katib, Getty Images; An emergency service worker helps members of a Palestinian family, after an Israeli tank attacked their house east of a Jabaliya refugee camp yesterday. ;

Load-Date: March 2, 2008

End of Document

**Gaza violence threatens peace process; 60 killed in attacks on Hamas.
Intensified conflict may cause negotiations to collapse, Israelis and
Palestinians say**

The Gazette (Montreal)

March 2, 2008 Sunday

Final Edition

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Section: NEWS; Pg. A4

Length: 707 words

Byline: GRIFF WITTE, Washington Post

Dateline: JERUSALEM

Body

The Israeli military launched a major operation against **Hamas** fighters in the Gaza Strip yesterday, killing 60 people - about half of them civilians - and sending in a large contingent of ground troops to stop rockets streaming daily out of the territory into Israel.

The violence, which also resulted in the deaths of two Israeli soldiers, imperiled an already fragile peace process just days before U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice is expected to arrive to try to jump-start the flagging talks. Both sides indicated yesterday that the intensified conflict could cause the negotiations to collapse.

The fighting was the worst yet following a significant escalation Wednesday. In the four days since an Israeli missile destroyed a van carrying five **Hamas** members suspected of plotting an attack inside Israel, 94 Palestinians have been killed and more than 300 have been injured, according to hospital sources. During the same period, at least 180 rockets and mortars shells have been fired into Israel, causing one death and 11 injuries, the Israeli military said.

Palestinian leaders called on the international community to step in to force Israel to stop the attacks and suggested that peace talks should be halted until the violence subsides.

Israeli officials have warned that there will be more to come and that operations may intensify, as long as **Hamas** continues to fire its rockets. Israeli officials say they are especially concerned that Iranian-made rockets have landed in Ashkelon, a coastal city previously out of range of the crude Qassam rockets that have been the mainstay of **Hamas** attacks. Yesterday, however, seven rockets with greater range and lethality, known as Grads, landed there.

In Gaza, conditions were grim and chaotic, as hospitals already suffering under the strain of a crushing economic boycott tried to handle a massive influx of trauma patients. Hospital officials said seven children and eight **women** were among those killed. The officials said that of the 60 dead, half were believed to be fighters and 22 had been confirmed as such.

Gaza violence threatens peace process; 60 killed in attacks on Hamas. Intensified conflict may cause negotiations to collapse, Israelis and Palestinians say

The most intense fighting raged in a densely populated area east of the Jabalya refugee camp in the northern Gaza Strip. An Israeli security official said last night that "a big Israeli force" had entered the area Friday and was waging "a wide ground operation." The official would not disclose the number of troops involved. But it was believed to be the largest incursion of Israeli forces into Gaza since Israel withdrew from the area in 2005 and the deadliest single day for Palestinians since 2000.

Early today, an Israeli airstrike destroyed the office of Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh, although he was not there. He has been in hiding for weeks.

Yesterday's Israeli raids began at 3 a.m. with a special forces operation, and the assault continued throughout the day, with tanks and Apache helicopters using heavy fire to back up ground troops. Seven Israeli soldiers were wounded in the clashes, in addition to the two dead.

Television footage showed desperate scenes at the hospitals, with doctors frantically treating incoming patients and women wailing over dead children. In the streets, ambulances whizzed by the remains of buildings that had been blown apart.

Tariq Dardona, 47, a resident of Gaza, said by telephone yesterday afternoon that he was trapped in his house along with 21 family members and the body of his brother. Dardona said his brother had been shot by Israeli forces when he refused to open the door of the home and bled for four hours before dying.

The family could not take him to a hospital because it was too dangerous to leave the house, and no ambulance would come near for fear of being fired on, he said, adding that four children in the house were injured.

David Baker, an Israeli spokesman, blamed Hamas for the civilian casualties, saying, "Palestinian terrorists are hiding behind their civilians."

Israeli officials said they had targeted the area east of the refugee camp because it was one of the primary areas for launching rocket strikes into Israel. The officials said that they targeted only individuals who were involved in firing the rockets, but that Hamas deliberately locates its military operations in heavily populated areas.

Graphic

Photo: ADIB KATIB GETTY IMAGES; Palestinians inspect a destroyed building yesterday after an Israeli strike in Gaza. The fighting was the worst yet following a significant escalation Wednesday. ;

Load-Date: June 10, 2008

Israel kills 61 in Gaza in bloodiest day in years; Hamas rocket attacks blamed for provoking fighting

Edmonton Journal (Alberta)

March 2, 2008 Sunday

Final Edition

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Section: NEWS; Pg. A6

Length: 420 words

Byline: Reuters

Dateline: GAZA

Body

Israeli forces killed 61 people in the Gaza Strip on Saturday, the bloodiest day for Palestinians since an uprising against Israeli occupation began in 2000.

Almost half the dead were civilians, including children.

Israel, which said it lost two soldiers, seemed ready to press home its fiercest air and ground assault since it pulled troops back to the borders of the coastal enclave in 2005.

It blamed rocket attacks by the Islamist **Hamas** movement for provoking four days of fighting, in which 96 Palestinians have been killed.

The UN Security Council prepared to meet in emergency session. A UN official in Gaza appealed for international action to end the "inhuman suffering" of its 1.5 million people and said killing **women** and children would not help Israel.

U.S. President George W. Bush sounded more supportive of his Israeli allies. While regretting all loss of life, his spokesman said: "There is a clear distinction between terrorist rocket attacks that target civilians and action in self-defence."

Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas, a sworn enemy of the Islamist militant group **Hamas** which took control of Gaza from his forces in June, called the attack "more than a holocaust."

Aides to Abbas said fighting could wreck new U.S.-backed peace talks. Israeli officials said Palestinian chief negotiator Ahmed Qurie called his Israeli counterpart, Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni, to call off a meeting due on Monday. But Abbas's aides said no decision to suspend the process had been taken.

Bush hopes for a deal on founding a Palestinian state before he leaves office in January. Many view that as very optimistic.

At least 30 of the dead were civilians, among them **women** and children, said Palestinian doctors who worked round the clock.

Israel kills 61 in Gaza in bloodiest day in years; Hamas rocket attacks blamed for provoking fighting

Two Israeli soldiers were killed and seven wounded, the army said -- its first deaths in Gaza since October. As troops backed by tanks pushed deep into areas from where rockets are fired, they met heavy gunfire and landmines, residents said.

Another 48 rockets hit Israel, wounding several people. An Israeli civilian was killed on Wednesday, the first since May.

Israeli Defence Minister Ehud Barak said Israel was "not happy" that civilians were being hurt but blamed **Hamas** for firing rockets from built-up areas and said it would "pay the price."

U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice is due to visit Abbas and Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert next week. Palestinian negotiator Saeb Erekat said: "If Israeli aggression continues, it will bury the peace process in the rubble."

Graphic

Photo: Reuters; A Palestinian man shouts after an Israeli missile strike on his house in Gaza on Saturday. ;

Load-Date: March 2, 2008

Hungarian president: Peace process must continue. Peres says Hamas brings tragedy on its own people

The Jerusalem Post

March 4, 2008 Tuesday

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Section: NEWS; Pg. 5

Length: 463 words

Byline: GREER FAY CASHMAN

Body

Hungarian President Laszlo Solyom, who is on an official visit to Israel, told President Shimon Peres on Monday that he hoped the current crisis between Israel and the Palestinians was a mere "pause" in the peace process.

Solyom, who is the first Hungarian head of state to visit Israel in 16 years, was given a ceremonial welcome at Beit Hanassi.

It saddened him, he said, to come to Israel at a time when the peace process was at an impasse. "I hope that this just a pause, because the peace process must continue."

Solyom, who is known as a human rights activist, said that every country must fight terrorism, because terrorism harms the basic human right to life. He added that this basic right must not be forgotten while fighting terror, either.

The Palestinian people, said Solyom, were living in a prison created by Hamas, which made their lives very difficult and complicated.

Hungary is aware that the measures available to Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas were extremely limited, said Solyom, but under the circumstances, Hungary had "no option other than to support him." Solyom stressed that Hungary wanted to become more involved in the peace process.

"You come to our country when we're fighting for the secure existence of our citizens in Sderot and Ashkelon and their right to live a normal life - more than that, to simply survive," said Peres. "Our citizens, our women and children, are unjustifiably under constant attack by a religious extremist movement which has no clear cut objective other than to kill and to murder," he continued.

"Hamas terrorists bring tragedy on their own people," he declared, telling his guest that Hamas exploited women and children by setting up rocket launchers in their midst. While Israel had no desire to kill or maim innocent civilians, he said, the terrorists' methods made it impossible to avoid harming the innocent, he explained.

Emphasizing that Israel is concerned about the humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip, Peres noted that even as IDF soldiers were conducting house-to-house searches after terrorists, supplies of flour, medicines and gasoline were being delivered to Gaza.

Hungarian president: Peace process must continue. Peres says Hamas brings tragedy on its own people

The two heads of state also discussed Iran and the need for a united front in favor of imposing severe economic sanctions to deter Iran from its uranium enrichment program.

Solyom boasted that Hungary had the third-largest Jewish population in Europe, and that Jewish community life in Hungary was flourishing. Hungary had very good economic and cultural relations with Israel, he said, but would like to enhance them. Israel is the third-largest foreign investor in Hungary with investments - mainly in real estate and advanced technology - totaling \$3 billion. Solyom said he would like to see more joint ventures in these fields.

Graphic

Photo: Hungarian President Laszlo Solyom and President Shimon Peres inspect an honor guard at Beit Hanassi on Monday, the first day of Solyom's five-day visit to Israel. (Credit: Tibor Illyes/AP-MTI)

Load-Date: October 4, 2011

End of Document

Middle East: Inside Gaza: Strike orders paralyze public services: Patients caught up in middle of Fatah and Hamas tug of war: One of the few journalists in Gaza reports on the Fatah-imposed doctors' strike in force last month for a series of exclusive Guardian films

The Guardian - Final Edition

October 24, 2007 Wednesday

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Section: GUARDIAN INTERNATIONAL PAGES; Pg. 16

Length: 887 words

Byline: Clancy Chassay, Gaza City

Body

At 11am, the flow of patients in the usually bustling corridors of Shifa hospital slowed to a trickle and then only the janitors remained. A weary mother wheeled out a stretcher on which her disabled child lay staring upwards blankly; this was her third trip to the hospital in three days and still her son hadn't received treatment.

Following **Hamas's** takeover of the Gaza strip in June, the Fatah-controlled Palestinian Authority based in Ramallah in the West Bank severed contact with **Hamas** and ordered government employees not to work under the new Gaza government. All medical workers were ordered to go home at 11am or have their salaries cut.

Outside the hospital, a group of angry patients hurled abuse at Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas. "We came here on Saturday and Sunday and on Tuesday, and nothing. It's Abu Mazen's (Mr Abbas's) decision, he wants to humiliate Gaza," said one woman.

Her friend, who had brought her small child in for treatment, erupted in anger at Mr Abbas. "He destroyed the country and brought misery on the people. He is no match for **Hamas**. I wouldn't hire him as a street sweeper, he destroyed the people. These children need treatment, what have they done to deserve this?"

As the **women** walked away, two men and a small child lingered, uncertain whether to wait or give up and leave the hospital. "We've come here to treat my little boy but our trip has been wasted. He needs an operation," said Marwan, holding his son's hand. "Why is the government punishing the doctors? There is chaos in the city."

Later that day, rows of doctors and medical workers in white coats marched through the streets of Gaza City with banners protesting at the strike order from Ramallah. Among them were **Hamas** supporters, independents - and even some who said they supported Fatah but were against the strike order.

Survival instincts

One of the doctors who left his post at the 11am deadline said he voted for **Hamas** and opposed the order but he needed to support many family members who rely on his government salary to survive. According to some estimates, the crushing international embargo on Gaza has pushed unemployment to nearly 70% of the population, and many people with jobs are having to support large extended families on one salary.

Middle East: Inside Gaza: Strike orders paralyse public services: Patients caught up in middle of Fatah and Hamas tug of war: One of the few journalists in Gaza....

Hamas has accused the Abbas government of trying to sabotage its attempt to govern Gaza. "They have one goal and that is to ensure that the **Hamas** authority in Gaza fails," said **Hamas** minister Bassam Naim.

Sitting in his office in the health ministry, Dr Naim signed a large pile of documents while responding to a series of queries from officials. "We don't have time for breakfast," he said, pointing to the plate of food eaten at his desk. Since the takeover, Dr Naim has been running four ministries - health, information, youth and sport, and detainees - with out funds. "There is an order from Ramallah for all government employees in Gaza not to collect taxes and fees, or any funds that will help the authority here to do its job. They have asked all employees in the different ministries to leave their jobs; policemen, judges, legislators, street cleaners."

The strike order on medical workers was later lifted for the holy month of Ramadan and has not since been re-imposed. "They want to return the strike order but they don't have the support of the population or the medical staff to impose the order again," said Dr Naim. "No one will accept it."

But other public workers in Gaza - police, lawyers, judges and employees from some government ministries - are still being paid by the Ramallah administration to stay at home.

Fatah leaders in Gaza insisted that the order not to work was due to an administrative problem resulting from **Hamas**'s takeover. But off the record, Fatah supporters say it was in retaliation for the **Hamas** government's replacement of many Fatah-aligned employees with **Hamas** supporters.

And officials in Ramallah have defended the order by saying they cannot pay people to work under the orders of a government engaged in criminal activity and the violation of human rights. They point to violent attacks on Fatah supporters. Fatah's spokesman in Gaza, Khazem Abu Shenab, says: "There is a strategic policy by **Hamas**, from top to bottom . . . every one of us expects to be arrested, or even beaten or tortured."

Hamas also accuses the Abbas government of blocking the entry of much needed food aid from Egypt and lobbying to ensure the Rafah crossing into Egypt remains closed.

"We have 4,500 tonnes of food aid from Egypt waiting at the crossing," says Dr Naim. "We were able to bring 16 trucks in, but hundreds of others have been blocked from coming into Gaza under clear orders from Ramallah."

He accuses Mr Abbas of being "an active participant in the siege around Gaza".

"Many patients cannot get the treatment they need abroad and many students cannot go to their universities," he says. Drugs and other medical supplies are in critically short supply.

Since its electoral victory in January 2006 the **Hamas** government has faced international isolation, and crippling sanctions have worsened dramatically since the takeover in June.

Meanwhile, as Fatah and **Hamas** engage in a daily battle for power in this tiny strip of land, ordinary Gazans are left without basic services, supplies or even the salaries with which to purchase them.

Load-Date: October 24, 2007

Amnesty report blames conditions in PA on Israel. Half of 330 Palestinians killed in '07 were civilians. IDF says Hamas bears direct responsibility. NGO Monitor: Report ignores context of Palestinian terror

The Jerusalem Post

May 29, 2008 Thursday

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Section: NEWS; Pg. 6

Length: 1107 words

Byline: JONNY PAUL, Jerusalem Post correspondent

Body

LONDON - Israel and the Palestinian Authority came in for sharp criticism in Amnesty International's annual report "The State of the World's Human Rights," released on Wednesday.

The report documented human rights abuses in 150 countries and territories around the world during 2007.

The PA section of the 380-page report highlighted the interfactional violence between Fatah and **Hamas** forces, accusing both factions of "grave human rights violations including arbitrary detention and torture."

However, it said the deteriorating economic conditions for Palestinians were exacerbated by Israel's "further tightening of their blockade on the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT)."

Frequent IDF attacks on Palestinian civil infrastructure is cited as another cause of the deterioration.

"Economic and social problems caused by decades of Israeli occupation, military attacks, stifling blockades and punitive economic measures in the OPT grew more severe," it said.

According to the report, more than 330 Palestinians - half of them civilians and including young children - were killed in Israeli attacks, mostly in the Gaza Strip, in the first four months of 2008.

Kassam rockets were described as "homemade" in the report. It said the rocket attacks had killed two Israeli civilians and wounded several others. It also mentioned that indiscriminate attacks on Israeli civilians, in which 13 Israelis were killed, had resulted in the "lowest annual fatality figure since the outbreak of the intifada in 2000."

However, the Jerusalem-based organization NGO Monitor said the context of the Palestinian campaign of terror against Israel was absent in the report.

"The report states that 'suicide bombings and shooting attacks almost ceased,' implying a fall in the occurrence of these human rights violations. This absurdly ignores the frequent attacks thwarted by Israeli forces, using checkpoints - which are condemned by Amnesty - and other means," the group said in a statement.

Amnesty report blames conditions in PA on Israel . Half of 330 Palestinians killed in '07 were civilians. IDF says Hamas bears direct responsibility. NGO Monitor....

NGO Monitor analyzed Amnesty's Middle East coverage in 2007 and said that the report presented a "gross distortion of the conflict, selectively report[ed] events to remove the context of terrorism and ignore[d] human rights issues not related to its political agenda, while repeating un- sourced and anecdotal claims."

In 2007, Amnesty singled out Israel for more condemnation than Syria, Saudi Arabia, Libya, Lebanon and Algeria, and more items were published on Israel than on Hamas, Hizbullah and the PA combined, NGO Monitor said.

"If detailed reports are used as an indicator, Amnesty ranks Israel and Iraq as equally the worst human rights abusers in the Middle East," the organization continued.

The latest Amnesty report also blamed Israel for the deaths of 40 Gaza residents, who it said died as a result of Israel refusing to allow medical supplies into Gaza or to let patients in urgent need of medical attention leave.

Following last year's Annapolis peace summit, Israel has not lifted movement restrictions in the territories, the report continued.

"Despite US-led efforts to achieve a resolution of the long-running Israeli-Palestinian conflict following talks at Annapolis in 2007, the Israeli authorities continued to build the 700-km. wall/fence, to expand illegal Israeli settlements in the West Bank, to demolish Palestinian homes in East Jerusalem, the Jordan Valley and elsewhere, and more than 500 military roadblocks continued to restrict or impede the movement of Palestinians between towns and villages throughout the West Bank," it claimed.

In response to the report's criticism, the IDF said it was doing its utmost to minimize harm to uninvolved Palestinian civilians in its struggle against terrorism.

"Terrorist organizations, such as Hamas, operate from population centers, deliberately exploiting women and children as human shields, and as such bear direct responsibility for the harm caused to civilians on both sides," said the army.

The IDF went on to emphasize that in recent years, there had been a significant decline in the number of uninvolved civilians hurt in the fighting, due to the relentless efforts of the IDF.

In response to the condemnation of checkpoints, the army said it had been conducting regular security assessments on crossings and checkpoints, and that an extensive plan to ease restrictions had been implemented by the IDF and the Civil Administration.

Regarding the Palestinian territories, the Amnesty report said that in the first half of 2007, 300 Palestinians were killed in interfactional fighting. It claimed that when Hamas seized power in Gaza in June 2007, lawlessness, unlawful killings and abductions decreased significantly.

"Members of PA security forces and armed groups affiliated to Fatah and Hamas carried out unlawful killings and abductions of rivals with impunity," it said.

Both Israel and the PA were accused of unlawful detentions and unfair trials.

"Thousands of Palestinians, including scores of children, were detained by Israeli forces in the OPT. Among those detained were dozens of former ministers in the Hamas-led PA government and Hamas parliamentarians and mayors who were seemingly held to exert pressure on Hamas to release [kidnapped IDF soldier Cpl.] Gilad Shalit," the report said.

After Hamas seized Gaza, the report added, some 1,500 people were detained. Most were released after 48 hours but were required to sign pledges promising to not participate in protests or other forms of opposition. Both Israel and the Palestinians were also accused of using torture.

Amnesty report blames conditions in PA on Israel . Half of 330 Palestinians killed in '07 were civilians. IDF says Hamas bears direct responsibility. NGO Monito....

Many of those detained by Palestinian authorities alleged they had been tortured by being beaten, tied in painful positions and threatened. Some were told they would be shot in the legs.

Tariq Muhammad Asour, a former policeman, was detained by Hamas in June. He was beaten for six hours with metal wires, sticks and a shovel and had nails driven into his shins with a hammer, according to the report.

Published to coincide with the 60th anniversary of the UN's adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the report's main focus was the broken promises of governments that in the past six decades "have shown more interest in the abuse of power or in the pursuit of political self-interest than respecting the rights of those they lead." Amnesty challenged world leaders to apologize for these human rights failures and to recommit themselves to concrete action to bring about change.

"The human rights flash points in Darfur, Zimbabwe, Gaza, Iraq and Myanmar demand immediate action," said Irene Khan, the organization's secretary-general. "Injustice, inequality and impunity are the hallmarks of our world today."

Graphic

Photo: AN IDF soldier gives a drink of water to blindfolded Palestinian detainees on the Gaza border yesterday. (Credit: Ariel Schalit/AP)

Load-Date: October 4, 2011

End of Document

Israel: Hizbullah deal may toughen Hamas demands for Schalit. Zahar: Kuntar's release will pave way for freeing prisoners with 'blood on their hands'

The Jerusalem Post

July 1, 2008 Tuesday

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Section: NEWS; Pg. 1

Length: 1565 words

Byline: YAAKOV KATZ, KHALED ABU TOAMEH and BEN SALES; Herb Keinon contributed to this report

Highlight: Lead Story

Body

Fears mounted in Israel on Monday that **Hamas** would toughen its stance in the negotiations for the release of kidnapped soldier St.-Sgt. Gilad Schalit in response to the cabinet's decision a day earlier to release murderer Samir Kuntar in exchange for reservists Eldad Regev and Ehud Goldwasser, who were abducted by Hizbullah.

These fears seemed justified as **Hamas** leader Mahmoud Zahar said on Monday that Israel's decision to free Kuntar and other Lebanese prisoners in the context of a prisoner exchange with Hizbullah would pave the way for the release of hundreds of Palestinian prisoners "with blood on their hands."

Regev and Goldwasser are believed to be dead, and as a result officials warned that **Hamas** might decide to increase its previous demand of 450 prisoners since Schalit is alive and Israel might be willing to pay more.

"They want to take advantage of the deal with Hizbullah," a defense official explained. "They see what price we are willing to pay for bodies and think they can now get more for Schalit, who is alive."

"Something important has happened, and there's no ignoring the fact that it [the cabinet decision] is a major development. Israel has agreed to release prisoners who it says have blood on their hands. We must therefore seize the opportunity and seek the release of our prisoners," Zahar said. "There should be no difference between the case of Schalit and the case of Kuntar."

Hamas and other Palestinian armed factions in the Gaza Strip expressed hope that the decision to free Kuntar signaled a change in Israel's policy of not releasing prisoners who were involved in killings.

They see the decision as a "big victory" for Hizbullah because Israel was eventually forced to succumb to the organization's demands.

Abu Mujahed, spokesman for the Popular Resistance Committees, an alliance of various armed groups in the Gaza Strip, said Monday that his group was now hopeful that Israel would release Palestinian prisoners serving lengthy sentences for their role in fatal terror attacks.

The Popular Resistance Committees was one of the groups that claimed responsibility for Schalit's abduction two years ago.

Israel : Hizbullah deal may toughen Hamas demands for Schalit. Zahar: Kuntar's release will pave way for freeing prisoners with 'blood on their hands'

"The Zionist enemy must learn the lesson," Abu Mujahed said. "If they want to see the soldier again, they must accept all our demands as they did with Hizbullah. We continue to insist that they release prisoners serving lengthy sentences, in addition to women and minors."

He expressed confidence that the release of Kuntar would be the first step toward releasing hundreds of Palestinian prisoners.

"The Lebanese resistance has triumphed," he added. "Soon our imprisoned heroes will be freed."

In a related development, Egypt has summoned Hamas representatives to Cairo next week for talks on a prisoner exchange with Israel, an Egyptian diplomat said Monday.

The diplomat said the two sides would also discuss ways of resolving the ongoing dispute between Hamas and Fatah and the current cease-fire in the Gaza Strip.

"Egypt has decided to focus its efforts on solving the case of Gilad Schalit," the diplomat told The Jerusalem Post. "As of next week, we will hold intensive talks in Cairo with all the concerned parties until we reach an agreement over a prisoner deal."

Zahar confirmed that his movement had received an invitation from the Egyptians to dispatch a delegation to Cairo for talks on Schalit. He said the talks would start as early as next week and would also deal with Hamas's demand to reopen the Rafah border crossing and release Hamas prisoners from Egyptian jails.

Israeli officials also said it was likely that Ofer Dekel, Israel's negotiator on the captives issue, would travel to Cairo to participate in the talks.

Meanwhile, senior defense officials revealed on Monday that according to recent intelligence information, Hamas was taking military action in Gaza to prevent breaches of the cease-fire. The information came even as a Kassam rocket landed in the Sha'ar Hanegev Regional Council area, causing no casualties or damage.

The officials said Hamas forces were being deployed in open fields frequently used in the past by rocket and mortar squads and have even arrested several terror operatives affiliated with the Islamic Jihad.

"They are taking action on the ground, and this is indicative of how important the cease-fire is for them," one official said. "They know that if they don't rein in the other factions, Israel will not keep its part of the deal, either."

Commenting on the prisoner swap, Prime Minister Ehud Olmert said that its approval was justified, despite negative consequences, because it would bring the captive soldiers home and would help catalyze similar indirect negotiations with Hamas over the return of Schalit.

"I stand behind this decision with all of my strength and all of my faith," said Olmert of the exchange with Hizbullah. "Alongside that, we continue to concern ourselves, with all of our strength and all of our courage, with the return of Gilad Schalit. That is also not a simple story, and it won't be an easy decision. We need to remember that."

According to the terms of the Hizbullah exchange, Israel will release Kuntar, along with four other Hizbullah fighters, an undetermined number of Palestinian prisoners, dozens of Hizbullah and Palestinian bodies, and information on the disappearance in Beirut in 1982 of four Iranian diplomats, in exchange for Goldwasser and Regev and a Hizbullah report on the fate of missing navigator Ron Arad.

Dekel, who negotiated the deal through German mediator Gerhard Konrad, is scheduled to head to Berlin later this week to sign the agreement, officials said Monday. Konrad will then take the agreement to Beirut to obtain a Hizbullah signature.

Defense officials said it was likely that the swap would take place in the next two weeks, although a final date had yet to be set.

Israel : Hizbullah deal may toughen Hamas demands for Schalit. Zahar: Kuntar's release will pave way for freeing prisoners with 'blood on their hands'

Following the signing of the agreement, Hizbullah is set to deliver its report on Arad, and Israel is to give its information on the fate of the Iranian diplomats, believed to have been killed by Christian Phalangists during Israel's invasion of Beirut in 1982.

If Konrad determines that the report on Arad lives up to acceptable standards, and Israel concurs, the prisoner swap will take place. Defense officials said the swap would take place at the Rosh Hanikra border crossing with Lebanon and not in Germany, the site of the previous swap with Hizbullah in 2004.

"Today there is a strong UNIFIL that can facilitate the swap at the border," a senior defense official said, adding that under the assumption that Goldwasser and Regev were dead, forensic teams would first test the bodies' DNA to confirm their identity before completing the swap.

Olmert, speaking to the Kadima faction, said that his primary reason for making the deal was to bring the soldiers back to Israel while he still had the ability to do so.

"I did it even though I knew criticism would be voiced and that it would be controversial in Israeli society, but I did it because I want the boys home and I wanted to release their families from this continuing and unrelenting torture," Olmert said regarding his approval of the exchange. "In no way can I say that this was a good decision. This isn't a good issue; this is a painful issue."

Although he stood by the decision, Olmert recognized the drawbacks of the deal, saying that the return of Kuntar meant that Hizbullah had achieved the original objective of the kidnappings.

"I cannot forget the fact that the actions of Hizbullah on July 12, 2006 that led to the kidnapping of our two soldiers and the killing of eight others, and what turned into the second Lebanon War, began with the intention of kidnapping people to get Samir Kuntar [back]," Olmert said. "It's not that Samir Kuntar is important, but that the circumstances surrounding this decision would create that reality."

Olmert chided the media for making it seem that no progress had been made in the negotiations until recently.

"You tried to create an impression in the public [sphere] that nothing was happening," Olmert said. "We had a need to manage this with sensitivity and intelligence, with a maximum understanding of all of the aspects of the systems we were dealing with."

Olmert said he wanted to ensure that Goldwasser and Regev were brought home, regardless of whether they were alive or dead. He said it was clear that Israel needed to push for the decision as it was, or contact with Hizbullah would be cut off and there would be no possibility of bringing them home - or if they were dead, for burial in Israel.

In completing the deal, Olmert said that the government was avoiding a repeat of what happened to Arad, who has been missing since 1986.

"I didn't want these circumstances to create a situation, God forbid, similar to that of Ron Arad. After 20 years we don't know exactly what happened to him, even though we keep looking," Olmert said.

Whatever the outcome of the exchange with Hizbullah, Olmert cautioned, Israel would encounter similar instances of captured prisoners and would have to stand strong in the face of those challenges.

"You also know this isn't the end of the road, that we're facing tough decisions and similar situations in the future, of soldiers that are in the hands of their captors," Olmert said. "A state that can devote everything to the saving of one life has a moral strength that creates solidarity that none of these other states has."

Graphic

Israel : Hizbullah deal may toughen Hamas demands for Schalit. Zahar: Kuntar's release will pave way for freeing prisoners with 'blood on their hands'

Photo: Gilad Schalit

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Israeli forces kill two Hamas men in Gaza, wound dozens in West Bank raid

The Daily Star (Lebanon)

January 5, 2008 Saturday

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THE DAILY STAR

LEBANON

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Byline: Daily Star Staff

Body

Two Hamas gunmen were killed in a shootout with Israeli troops in Gaza early Friday, hours after US President George W. Bush insisted peace efforts would continue despite the violence. Ahead of his landmark visit to the region next week, Bush called on Israel to dismantle wildcat settlement outposts in occupied Palestinian territory.

Two Hamas gunmen were killed in a shootout with Israeli troops in Gaza early Friday, hours after US President George W. Bush insisted peace efforts would continue despite the violence.

Ahead of his landmark visit to the region next week, Bush called on Israel to dismantle wildcat settlement outposts in occupied Palestinian territory, in an interview with Israel's top-selling newspaper.

Also Friday, Prime Minister Ehud Olmert made the rare acknowledgement that by continuing to build and grow settlements in the Occupied West Bank and Occupied East Jerusalem, Israel was not living up to its end of a recently revived peace plan.

In Israel-Palestinian violence, two members of Hamas' armed wing, the Ezzedine al-Qassam Brigades, died in the firefight with troops near the northern town of Beit Hanun, the group and Palestinian medics said.

An army spokesman said troops operating near the border fence opened fire on two armed Palestinians who were approaching the barrier between Gaza and Israel and reported hitting them.

The fighting came a day after heavy Israeli ground and air strikes killed nine Palestinians, including two women, in the territory where the Islamist movement Hamas seized control in mid-June.

It was the deadliest day in Gaza since December 18, when Israeli strikes killed 12 militants, including the chief of the armed wing of the hard-line Islamic Jihad group.

Also on Thursday, a Grad-type 122-millimeter rocket landed without causing injuries about 15 kilometers from the Gaza border near the coastal city of Ashkelon, the army said.

It was the farthest a rocket launched by Gaza militants had ever landed inside Israel, raising alarm bells that gunmen in the coastal territory were obtaining higher-quality weapons.

Israeli forces kill two Hamas men in Gaza, wound dozens in West Bank raid

Israel intensified its strikes and ground operations in the Gaza Strip in late November aiming to halt rocket fire. The majority of the dozens of Palestinians killed there since then have been militants.

In the occupied West Bank, a 32-year-old Palestinian civilian was shot and critically wounded by Israeli troops who opened fire on stone-throwing demonstrators after Friday prayers, medics and witnesses said.

Israel also kept up a military attack in the West Bank town of Nablus that has wounded 35 people and kept 150,000 residents confined to their homes under a curfew for three days.

Israeli troops launched the operation in Nablus Wednesday after claiming the discovery of a militant weapons lab there.

A statement from Premier Salam Fayyad's office Friday said he considers the Nablus operation "destructive to his government's efforts in the security field."

"These Israeli aggressions have a very negative influence on the efforts to revive the peace process," read the statement.

Israeli government spokesman Mark Regev said Israel could not relinquish security responsibilities to the Palestinians at this time.

"When the Palestinian security services are ready to deal with the very real security challenges in the West Bank, the Israeli forces will be willing to hand over responsibility," Regev said.

British Foreign Minister Kim Howells said in London that the bloodshed risks undermining the peace process.

Israel's latest action in Gaza and the West Bank came shortly before Bush's visit to the region in an attempt to capitalize on the already-shaky peace process launched in Annapolis in November.

"The parties are continuing to try to meet and talk, but obviously it's fraught with a lot of tension," said White House spokeswoman Dana Perino.

Bush had no plans "at this point" to hold a joint meeting with Israeli and Palestinian leaders, said National Security Adviser Stephen Hadley.

"We're not looking for headline announcements. What the president's looking for is better understanding of the challenge we face and a commitment to dealing with that challenge," Hadley added.

A Palestinian official had told reporters on Wednesday that the three leaders would meet on January 10 in Jerusalem, while an Israeli official said such a meeting was "highly likely."

Bush is set to spend three days in Israel and the Palestinian territories in the first visit here by a US president in nine years, following his predecessor Bill Clinton's trip in December 1998.

The visit is part of a January 8-16 trip to the Mideast that aims to boost the peace talks after a near seven-year hiatus with a view to creating an independent Palestinian state before Bush leaves office in January 2009.

Bush told the top-selling Yediot Ahronot that he expects Israel to dismantle wildcat settlement outposts - those unauthorized by the government - in the Occupied West Bank.

"We expect them to honor their commitments," Bush said.

In his interview with The Jerusalem Post, Olmert acknowledged that Israel was not honoring its commitments.

"There is a certain contradiction in this between what we're actually seeing and what we ourselves promised," Olmert said.

Israeli forces kill two Hamas men in Gaza, wound dozens in West Bank raid

"Obligations are not only to be demanded of others, but they must also be honored by ourselves. So there is a certain problem here," the newspaper quoted him as saying.

Olmert added, however, that Israel believes a Bush letter to the Israeli government in 2004 "renders flexible to a degree what is written in the road map." In that letter, Bush wrote that "existing Israeli population centers" should be taken into consideration when the final borders of a Palestinian state are set down.

Israel takes this to mean it will be able to retain major West Bank settlement blocs, where much of the controversial construction is going on.

Olmert also suggested that the "hand of God" has helped create an international climate favorable to Israel in the revived peace talks.

"It's not merely Bush's presidency. It's a coincidence that is almost 'the hand of God:'

that Bush is president of the United States, that Nicolas Sarkozy is the president of France, that Angela Merkel is the chancellor of Germany, that Gordon Brown is the prime minister of Britain and that the special envoy to the Middle East is Tony Blair," he told The Jerusalem Post.

"What possible combination could be more comfortable for the state of Israel?" he asked.

In related news, Jordan, which has signed a peace agreement with Israel but remains critical of settlement activity, was promised a 40-percent increase in military aid from the United States. - **Agencies**

Load-Date: June 30, 2008

Israel opens border to fleeing Fatah; 150 Palestinians lay down weapons

Edmonton Journal (Alberta)

August 3, 2008 Sunday

Final Edition

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Length: 645 words

Byline: Agence France-Presse

Dateline: GAZA CITY

Body

GAZA CITY - Nine Palestinians were killed and dozens hurt in battles in Gaza City between forces of the rival **Hamas** and Fatah movements on Saturday, prompting Israel to open its border to fleeing Fatah members.

The fighting, which lasted most of the day, was sparked when **Hamas** security forces tried to arrest suspects thought to be behind a July 25 bombing that killed five **Hamas** militants and a little girl on a Gaza beach.

Hamas blames Fatah forces loyal to Palestinian president Mahmud Abbas for the attack, but the secular group denies any involvement. Over the past week the two sides have engaged in tit-for-tat spates of arrests.

Hamas said two of its men were killed and medical officials reported seven more dead, mainly civilians, in Saturday's firefights that broke out around a house belonging to the influential pro-Fatah Helis clan in the Shujwa neighbourhood of Gaza City.

More than 90 people were also wounded, including seven reported to be in serious condition, the medical sources said.

Hamas spokesman Sami Abu Zuhri charged that members of the Helis family and other unidentified associates had "fired mortar rounds at the **Hamas** police as well as a rocket at Gaza City" from inside the Shujwa house.

Several members of the Helis clan "are responsible" for the deadly July 25 bomb attack and **Hamas** is determined to round up the suspects, Abu Zuhri told AFP.

But Adel Helis, a Fatah leader, denied clan members opened fire on **Hamas**.

"These are lies. We never fired rockets or mortar rounds. **Hamas** is the one committing crimes. We have asked all the Palestinian factions, Islamists and nationalists, to use their influence so that these crimes cease," he said.

Clan leader Ahmad Helis told AFP that **Hamas** militants "laid siege to our house, firing mortar rounds ... targeting our **women** and our children."

The two main Palestinian factions have been deeply divided since **Hamas** expelled Abbas's security forces from Gaza in a week of bloody street battles in June 2007, cleaving the territories into rival entities.

Israel opens border to fleeing Fatah; 150 Palestinians lay down weapons

Abbas himself called Ahmed Helis "to express his support and denounce the **Hamas** attack," according to a statement by Abbas's office. The Palestinian president also told Helis that "**Hamas**'s attacks undermine my call for national dialogue between Palestinian factions."

Shortly after the fighting subsided, dozens of Fatah members, including Ahmed and Adel Helis, fled to the Nahal-Oz crossing with Israel in a bid to escape to the West Bank city of Ramallah, home to Abbas's headquarters.

Israel allowed a total of 150 Palestinians who put down their guns to cross as a "humanitarian measure," an army spokesman said. The wounded were taken to hospital and the rest were transported to Ramallah.

Israel's Magen David Adom medical services treated six Palestinians for serious wounds and three more who were lightly injured, spokesman Zaki Heller said.

Defence Minister Ehud Barak authorized the rare measure following a personal request from Abbas, Palestinian prime minister Salam Fayyad and Egypt, a senior defence official told AFP.

Israel closed all of its crossings with Gaza following **Hamas**'s violent takeover, but has agreed to allow basic products in under a June ceasefire.

Palestinian militants fired several mortar rounds towards the Nahal-Oz crossing in violation of the truce, with four falling inside Israel and eight on the Palestinian side, an army spokesman said.

Senior **Hamas** official Said Siam said that during the operation, **Hamas** forces arrested four Fatah members involved in the July 25 explosion and that explosives and weapons had been seized.

Hamas detained more than 300 people after the July 25 bombing. Fatah responded by arresting **Hamas** militants in the Israeli-occupied West Bank.

Also on Saturday, **Hamas** ordered the closure of a radio station linked to the leftist Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) in Gaza City.

Graphic

Photo: Reuters; Israeli soldiers carry a blindfolded Palestinian man who had escaped to the border with Israel at a military base near Kibbutz Nahal-Oz, just outside the Gaza Strip, on Saturday. ;

Load-Date: August 3, 2008

Fatah fighters stripped of dignity

Herald Sun (Australia)

August 4, 2008 Monday

1 - FIRST Edition

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Section: NEWS; Pg. 22

Length: 201 words

Body

GAZA CITY -- Stripped and handcuffed, about 180 fleeing Palestinian Fatah fighters entered Israel after a day of battles against **Hamas**.

Nine Palestinians were killed and about 90 hurt in the fights between rivals **Hamas**, who control the Gaza Strip, and members of a pro-Fatah clan.

The Fatah supporters ran to the Nahal Oz border crossing and, in a rare move, Israel let them in after both Egypt and Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas asked it to on humanitarian grounds.

The fights began when **Hamas** tried to arrest suspects in a recent bombing that killed five **Hamas** members and a girl. Fatah denies involvement.

Hamas said two of its men died and doctors reported seven more dead, mainly civilians, in skirmishes around a house belonging to the influential pro-Fatah Helis clan.

Hamas spokesman Sami Abu Zuhri accused the clan of firing mortar rounds at **Hamas** police. Clan leader Ahmad Helis said **Hamas** ``laid siege to our house, firing mortar rounds . . . targeting our **women** and our children".

Fatah supporters began returning to Gaza last night.

The parties have been divided since **Hamas** expelled Mr Abbas's security forces from Gaza in June last year, cleaving the Gaza Strip and West Bank into rival entities.

Load-Date: August 3, 2008

They're dictators and terrorists - but look what clean streets!

The Jerusalem Post

June 27, 2008 Friday

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Section: OPINION; Pg. 10

Length: 927 words

Byline: BARRY RUBIN

Highlight: The Region. A year after its election victory, **Hamas** rules Gaza through repression and radicalism. The writer is director of the Global Research in International Affairs (GLORIA) Center at IDC Herzliya and editor of the Middle East Review of International Affairs Journal.

Body

Hamas just celebrated its first anniversary of power in the Gaza Strip amid massive misinterpretations regarding the situation there.

Ironically, **Hamas**'s victory and survival has little to do with Israel.

Instead, it rests on the rotten strategy of Yasir Arafat, who ruled the Palestinian movement for 35 years by establishing a weak, anarchic, corrupt and factionalized structure which he played like a violin. Only after Arafat's death did the Palestine Liberation Organization pay the price: Fatah collapsed in the Gaza Strip, first electorally, then militarily. Following which, having failed at governing, Fatah proved itself a failure in opposition as well.

As for **Hamas**, its power is founded on repression, radical ideology, international protection and an incompetent enemy. As one Palestinian storekeeper told an American reporter, "What can we do? **Hamas** is even stronger than a year ago. They can take me and put me away whenever they want."

FATAH IS its own worst enemy in combating **Hamas**.

President George Bush recently stated that a Fatah- ruled Palestinian state should be quickly developed since, "It will serve as an alternative vision to what is happening in Gaza."

This is rubbish. No matter how much money the West pumps in, the nationalists are not going to offer an attractive regime. Fatah's lower level of still- considerable repression as compared to **Hamas** is counterbalanced by the corruption and anarchy included in the package.

Moreover, Fatah is still up to its old tricks. When it does arrest those involved in terrorism, they are quickly released. Incitement to commit violence continues on the Palestinian Authority media, and the PA is far more eager to reconcile with **Hamas** than to make peace with Israel. Yes, the PA's survival is a US, Western, and Israeli interest but let's not get sentimental or na-ve about these weak, corrupt and largely radical allies of necessity.

AS FOR **Hamas**, it possesses three key weapons.

*ÉThe mainstream appeal of extremism and terrorism. "**Hamas** is strong and brutal but very good at governing," Eyad Sarraj told The New York Times, which described him as a British-trained psychiatrist and secular opponent

They're dictators and terrorists - but look what clean streets!

of Hamas. After all, he continues, it's distributing gas coupons, getting people to pay electricity bills, and keeping the city clean.

Suddenly, people considered "progressive" see the up side of having a police state. Imagine this kind of thinking applied to other dictatorships around the world: they are brutal, but boy do they keep law and order! Sarraj also forgets that Hamas's war policy resulted in reducing the gas and electricity supply.

In any case, Sarraj is no moderate. In 1999, he wrote that Palestinians were better off without the peace process. Refusing to recognize Israel had been their "nuclear weapon" and armed struggle their great asset. Giving these up was a mistake, Sarraj insisted, and might lead to ending the conflict without eliminating Israel.

Sarraj, while a member of Gaza's tiny left, advocated a strategy parallel to that of Hamas today. Perhaps that's why he protested Arafat's repression but now seems content to accept Hamas's, however much he dislikes its Islamism. The continued extremism of mainstream Palestinian activist opinion makes Hamas's rule seem an acceptable trade-off because of its militancy.

*ÊThe success of ideological demagoguery. As one Hamas supporter told a reporter: "Israel is trying to pressure us to make us forget that the real problem is the occupation." Of course, there is no Israeli occupation in the Gaza Strip, which is one reason why Hamas was able to seize power. "We can take it," she continued, "The Koran teaches that in the end we will be victorious."

This expresses widespread sentiment: Israel is the only enemy; everything else is irrelevant, suffering isn't important, victory is inevitable. Shortly after Hamas seized power, Sarraj told a Canadian reporter how Hamas threw Fatah men off the tops of buildings, murdered them in hospital beds, and tortured them in a "horrific" manner.

But that isn't important. Whether Hamas brutalizes Palestinians, creates conditions that destroy living standards, drags people into endless war, turns Gaza into a mini-Iran, or causes numerous casualties, its militancy and refusal to compromise is what counts. That may seem irrational to Western observers but that's how Palestinian politics work.

*ÊPretended moderation as a scam. Since Westerners can't understand the culture of ideology and extremism, they're sure Hamas will moderate. This is "proven" for them when Hamas leaders say that if Israel only returns to the 1967 borders - giving the West Bank and east Jerusalem to the Hamas-ruled state - and lets millions of Palestinians live in Israel, they'll make a truce until they decide otherwise.

That silly evaluation reminds me of an American high- school textbook which said Israel should try this idea - if it didn't work, we would all know better.

FINALLY, THERE'S the strange conclusion that since Hamas isn't about to fall from power, this proves sanctions have failed. One could argue that this shows economic and military pressures should be increased. But at least it should be understood that the sanctions' purpose is to make Hamas less able to kill even more people, take over the West Bank, damage Israel, or turn Gaza into - to stand Bush's view on its head - an "attractive alternative."

Any policy that prevents those things seems pretty valid; any Westerner favoring a strategy that strengthens Hamas should be forced to live under its rule.

<http://meria.idc.ac.il>

Graphic

Photo: Gazan women fill up on cooking gas. Hamas rule lowered living standards, but its militancy is what counts. (Credit: AP)

They're dictators and terrorists - but look what clean streets!

Load-Date: October 4, 2011

End of Document

Gaza infighting sees 180 Palestinians flee to Israel

The Australian

August 4, 2008 Monday

1 - All-round Country Edition

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Section: WORLD; Pg. 11

Length: 633 words

Body

GAZA CITY: More than 180 Fatah supporters who fled into Israel from the Gaza Strip were in Israeli custody yesterday after a dramatic escape from a **Hamas** crackdown that left nine people dead in fierce fighting.

Wary Israeli troops allowed the Gazans to cross the heavily guarded border at the weekend, stripping them first to make sure none was wearing explosives. Mortar shells hit near the crossing as the Palestinians fled their homes for the territory of their long-time enemy. The Israeli soldiers prepared stretchers, and ambulances rushed the badly wounded to nearby hospitals.

The incident punctuated one of the new realities of the conflict: Palestinian infighting has become so bitter that some Palestinians fear Israel less than they do each other.

The violence began on Saturday when **Hamas** forces launched a raid on a crowded Gaza City neighbourhood dominated by the Hilles clan, linked to Fatah. The sides battled each other with mortars and machine guns. Three **Hamas** men were killed, along with six Fatah supporters, and nearly 90 were wounded in what was one of Gaza's bloodiest rounds of internal fighting since **Hamas** seized the territory more than a year ago.

The **Hamas** raid was part of an intensifying weeklong crackdown sparked by a mysterious explosion on July 25 that killed five **Hamas** men and a six-year old girl. **Hamas** blamed Fatah and began rounding up the rival group's members. Fatah denied the charge and launched a retaliatory crackdown against **Hamas** in the West Bank.

Hamas alleged the Hilles clan was hiding those who perpetrated the attack. The Islamic group's forces prevailed after heavy fighting in the neighbourhood's streets, and many of the clan's men fled in the direction of the border fence.

The moderate Palestinian President, Fatah's Mahmoud Abbas, and the Egyptian Government contacted Israel and asked to let them through. Israeli Defence Minister Ehud Barak agreed, according to Israeli military officials.

Colonel Ron Ashrov, an Israeli military commander in the border area, said that when Israeli soldiers went to open the gate, heavy fire erupted, apparently from **Hamas** forces. Twenty-two of those who crossed were injured, he said.

Israel's Deputy Prime Minister, Haim Ramon, said yesterday that Israel had a responsibility to help supporters of Mr Abbas, who is negotiating a peace deal with Israel.

Gaza infighting sees 180 Palestinians flee to Israel

The Gazans' final destination was not immediately clear. Officials close to Mr Abbas said most would be sent to Egypt, while Mr Ramon said they would be allowed to move to Ramallah, the seat of Mr Abbas's Government.

Four mortar shells fired from Gaza landed in Israel on Saturday, the military said, violating a ceasefire between Israel and Gaza militants. The shells caused no injuries but underscored the danger that the Palestinian infighting could embroil Israel.

Fatah and **Hamas** have engaged in a bitter and often violent rivalry for several years, culminating in **Hamas**'s violent takeover of Gaza one year ago. Fatah's power in Gaza was largely erased and it was left in control only of the West Bank, where Mr Abbas rules with a Western-backed Government.

Both groups have periodically carried out arrest sweeps targeting rivals in the territories they control.

On Saturday, their opponents routed, **Hamas** men went from house to house in the clan's neighbourhood, seizing suspects and weapons. **Hamas** said more than 50 people were arrested, including some who tried to flee disguised as **women**.

"We are sending a message that no one is above the law and that no family is above the law. Gaza will enjoy peace and security," said a senior **Hamas** official.

In the West Bank, forces loyal to Mr Abbas ratcheted up their own crackdown at the weekend. On Saturday, Mr Abbas's men enforced a new ban on public assembly and expanded their arrest sweep beyond **Hamas**.

Load-Date: August 3, 2008

Palestinian hostilities flare in Gaza

Christian Science Monitor

July 28, 2008, Monday

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Section: WORLD; Pg. 6

Length: 870 words

Byline: Joshua Mitnick and Rafael D. Frankel Correspondents

Dateline: Tel Aviv and Gaza City

Body

In the worst outbreak of inter-Palestinian strife since **Hamas** took over the Gaza Strip last year, **Hamas** gunmen rounded up hundreds of Fatah activists in Gaza and threw up dozens of checkpoints over the weekend.

The militant Islamist group accused militants from the rival Palestinian leader Mahmoud Abbas's Fatah Party of a bombing that killed five Islamic activists and a young child last Friday.

The attack and retaliation reopened recent wounds in the bitter rivalry just as the sides were mulling a new round of reconciliation talks.

"There is no room now to speak about national reconciliation," says **Hamas** leader Mahmoud Al-Zahar, who accused Abbas of preferring to discuss US peace talks with Israel rather than the internal Palestinian talks. "[Abbas] is still meeting [Israeli Prime Minister Ehud] Olmert and kissing him.... His preference is the Israel-US side not the Palestinian side."

Abbas, who was in Cairo on Sunday for talks with Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak, condemned the Friday bombing and denied Fatah involvement.

After returning from the recent Arab summit in Damascus, Abbas declared that he's prepared to discuss restoring relations with **Hamas** without any preconditions - apparently dropping a demand that the Islamic militants apologize for the takeover and withdraw from the installations they seized when **Hamas** wrested control of Gaza from Fatah in 2007.

With Palestinians divided under **Hamas** rule in Gaza and the Palestinian Authority in the West Bank, analysts say that some resolution to the standoff is necessary for there to be any hope implementing any future peace treaty between Israel and the Palestinians in the Gaza Strip.

The internal Palestinian talks are expected to be held in Cairo and focus on an compromise reached between **Hamas** and Fatah emissaries early this year in Yemen. A date for the talks had never been set.

Hana Sinora, the copresident of the Israel Palestinian Center for Research and Information in Jerusalem, says the longer the sides take to resume talks, the greater the opening for a third-party spoiler who have an interest in perpetuating the standoff.

Palestinian hostilities flare in Gaza

"Now everything is up in the air," says Mr. Sinora. "What happened in Gaza on Friday is delaying the process of reconciliation, if not undermining it permanently."

A car bomb on Friday ripped apart a car carrying five members of Hamas's military wing and Sireen As Safadi.

Unlike other attacks on Palestinian militants in the Gaza Strip, Israel hasn't been fingered as the culprit. While Hamas put the blame on Fatah, Fatah spokespeople have speculated that it was a result of internal divisions within Hamas.

Earlier on Friday, a bomber blew himself up at a cafe in the center of Gaza City, and an explosion erupted at the residence of a Hamas legislator. Sinora says deposed Fatah strongmen from Gaza like Mohammed Dahlan might prefer continued conflict to a reconciliation that preserves Hamas's dominance in Gaza.

The renewed domestic strife comes amid a several-week calm in hostilities between Israel and Hamas in and around Gaza. Sinora speculated that the new pressure on the Islamic militants from within may prompt it to become less flexible in compromising on a prisoner swap to free Gilad Shalit, the Israeli soldier held in Gaza for more than two years.

The three attacks posed the most brazen challenge yet to Hamas' consolidation of security control over the last 13 months in the Gaza Strip.

The Islamic militants had been credited with restoring a measure of order in the coastal stretch of 1.5 million people after years of chaos and lawlessness under the Fatah-led Palestinian Authority.

At numerous checkpoints around the Gaza Strip, Hamas security forces were pulling over motorists and inspecting car trunks as well as personal backpacks for weapons.

Making a brief stop at a Gaza hotel, Amir Sharif - a commander of Fatah's Al Aqsa Martyrs Brigades, an armed offshoot of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) - said he had been on the move between different hideouts in fear of arrest by Hamas.

Mr. Sharif predicted that even a formal reconciliation between Hamas and Fatah would not stop ordinary Gazans from settling old scores on their own and suggested that in addition to the politics of the recent attacks, there was the historical factor of clan revenge.

"It is very difficult to put differences aside," he says. "We are Oriental people who have certain traditions that control us. We believe in revenge. Even old people and women who suffered from Hamas will want revenge."

Hamas gunmen also raided the offices of Gaza's regional governorates, confiscating computers, files, and furniture. The regional government institutions had been left under the control of Fatah officials, but Sinora speculated that that arrangement may come to an end.

Indeed, despite the string of bombings on Friday, few interpret it as the harbinger of the loosening of Hamas' grip on the Gaza Strip or of a broad military uprising by Fatah.

"Fatah doesn't have the ranks that can overturn the rule of Hamas there," wrote columnist Avi Issacharoff in Israel's Haaretz daily. "But explosions like those that occurred on Friday are liable to become routine."

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Load-Date: July 27, 2008

Four dead as bloody Gaza clashes spill onto streets

Sunday Independent (Ireland)

August 3, 2008

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Sunday Independent

Section: WORLD NEWS; Middle East

Length: 537 words

Body

Hamas forces battle Fatah clan in new crackdown on political rivals

Hamas forces yesterday battled Fatah gunmen with mortars and machine guns in a crowded Gaza City neighbourhood, leaving four dead and 80 wounded in one of Gaza's bloodiest rounds of internal fighting since **Hamas** seized the territory more than a year ago.

Twelve of the wounded were children while eight of the total injured were in critical condition, hospital officials said.

In the West Bank, controlled by Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas, troops enforced a new ban on public assembly and expanded their arrest sweep beyond **Hamas**. Club-wielding security men arrested dozens of supporters of a non-violent Islamic group, the Liberation Party, and broke up their rally in downtown Ramallah. A cameraman was prevented by Mr Abbas' security forces from filming the beatings.

Each side has been cracking down on political opponents with growing intensity, since a car bomb in Gaza last week killed five **Hamas** activists in an attack **Hamas** blamed on Fatah. Since then, the Islamic militant **Hamas** in Gaza and Abbas loyalists in the West Bank have carried out mass arrests.

Hamas yesterday targeted the Fatah-linked Hilles clan, alleging that suspects in last week's bombing had found refuge in a Hilles-controlled area in Gaza City's Shijaiyeh neighbourhood. Under heavy morning fog, **Hamas** forces took up positions in the neighbourhoods.

Heavy battles with mortars and machine guns ensued, leaving three **Hamas** policemen and a Hilles member dead. Throughout yesterday, loud explosions were heard across Gaza City.

By the afternoon, **Hamas** had asserted control of Shijaiyeh, deploying hundreds of police who went house to house in search of weapons and suspects. In all, more than 50 people were arrested, including some who had tried to flee disguised as **women**, **Hamas** said.

More than two dozen members of the clan who fled the fighting were allowed through a Gaza crossing into Israel, Israeli military officials said.

A clan leader and senior Fatah member, Ahmed Hilles, was among those who had reached Israel, according to a Palestinian official close to the events, who spoke on condition of anonymity.

Four dead as bloody Gaza clashes spill onto streets

Earlier, while still pinned down by the fighting, Mr Hilles had tried to explain why the clan fought back. "You have to decide: Either be trampled under **Hamas**' shoes, or stand in dignity," he said by phone, with gunshots crackling in the background.

In the West Bank, Mr Abbas' forces widened their sweep to include members of the Liberation Party, a pan-Islamic movement that has sharply criticised the moderate West Bank leadership but says it espouses non-violent change. In the past, members of the movement were able to march in the West Bank without hindrance.

A senior security official said there is growing fear **Hamas** is using the Liberation Party as a front in the West Bank.

Party spokesman Baher Saleh said dozens of members had been arrested since Thursday.

In other developments, five Palestinians were killed and 18 wounded in a smuggling tunnel under the Gaza-Egypt border after Egyptian troops blew up the entrance, officials said yesterday.

The tunnel entrance was destroyed late Friday, near the Gaza border town of Rafah.

Load-Date: August 3, 2008

180 Palestinians flee to Israel after Gaza clashes

The Australian

August 4, 2008 Monday

3 - All-round Metro Edition

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Section: WORLD; Pg. 11

Length: 654 words

Body

GAZA CITY: The majority of more than 180 Fatah supporters who fled into Israel from the Gaza Strip were in Israeli custody yesterday after a dramatic escape from a Hamas crackdown that left nine people dead in fierce fighting in Gaza.

Wary Israeli troops allowed the Gazans to cross the heavily guarded border on Saturday, stripping them first to make sure none was wearing explosives.

Mortar shells hit near the crossing as the Palestinians fled their homes for the territory of their long-time enemy. The Israeli soldiers prepared stretchers, and ambulances rushed the badly wounded to nearby hospitals.

The incident punctuated one of the new realities of the conflict: Palestinian infighting has become so bitter that some fear Israel less than they do each other.

The violence began on Saturday when Hamas forces launched a raid on a crowded Gaza City neighbourhood dominated by the Hilles clan, linked to Fatah. The sides battled each other with mortars and machine guns. Three Hamas men were killed, along with six Fatah supporters, and nearly 90 were wounded in what was one of Gaza's bloodiest rounds of internal fighting since Hamas seized the territory more than a year ago.

The Hamas raid was part of an intensifying week-long crackdown sparked by a mysterious explosion on July 25 that killed five Hamas men and a six-year old girl. Hamas blamed Fatah and began rounding up the rival group's members. Fatah denied the charge and launched a retaliatory crackdown against Hamas in the West Bank.

Hamas alleged the Hilles clan was hiding those who perpetrated the attack. The Islamic group's forces prevailed after heavy fighting in the neighbourhood's streets, and many of the clan's men fled in the direction of the border fence.

Israeli Defence Minister Ehud Barak agreed to let them through after the moderate Palestinian President, Fatah's Mahmoud Abbas, and the Egyptian Government contacted Israel.

Border commander Colonel Ron Ashrov said that when Israeli soldiers went to open the gate, heavy fire erupted, apparently from Hamas forces.

Twenty-two of those who crossed were wounded.

180 Palestinians flee to Israel after Gaza clashes

Israel's Deputy Prime Minister, Haim Ramon, said yesterday that Israel had a responsibility to help supporters of Mr Abbas, who is negotiating a peace deal with Israel.

Most of those who crossed will be returned to Gaza. A group of about 30 was sent back yesterday, and Israeli officials said last night the rest would be returned to Gaza rather than be allowed to relocate to the West Bank. The officials said this was in keeping with a request from Mr Abbas. The wounded would be allowed to remain in Israeli hospitals.

Nimr Hammad, a political adviser to Mr Abbas, said anyone wanted by Hamas would be allowed to remain in the West Bank for their safety, while the rest would be returned ``to their families and their homes".

Four mortar shells fired from Gaza landed in Israel on Saturday, violating a ceasefire between Israel and Gaza militants. The shells caused no injuries, but underscored the danger that the Palestinian infighting could embroil Israel.

Fatah and Hamas have engaged in a bitter and often violent rivalry for several years, culminating in Hamas' violent takeover of Gaza a year ago.

Fatah's power in Gaza was largely erased and it was left in control only of the West Bank, where Mr Abbas rules with a Western-backed Government.

Both groups have periodically carried out arrest sweeps targeting rivals in the territories they control. On Saturday, their opponents routed, Hamas men went from house to house in the clan's neighbourhood, seizing suspects and weapons. Hamas said more than 50 people were arrested, including some who tried to flee disguised as women.

``We are sending a message that no one is above the law and that no family is above the law. Gaza will enjoy peace and security," said a senior Hamas official.

In the West Bank, forces loyal to Mr Abbas ratcheted up their own crackdown at the weekend.

Load-Date: August 3, 2008

Weekend in Hamastan

The Jerusalem Post

August 4, 2008 Monday

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Section: OPINION; Pg. 13

Length: 729 words

Highlight: Editorial

Body

Trying to distinguish between the good guys and the bad in the latest bout of Gaza fighting is bit like trying to decide who to hire as a babysitter - the Boston Strangler or Jack the Ripper.

Hamas may have been elected fair and square, yet its true orientation is totalitarian. No surprise, then, that it has been using the cease-fire with Israel, in effect since June 16, not only to prepare for the next round against the Jewish state, but to smother rival factions.

Thus **Hamas** shut down the Gaza offices of the Ma'an news agency (an outfit funded largely by Denmark) as well as the Sha'ab radio station, run by the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine. Even Islamic Jihad has been put on notice to watch its behavior.

It's not as if **Hamas** faces much opposition. Perhaps its most significant challenge comes from the Dughmush clan, which enriched itself by smuggling weapons and contraband through tunnels dug under the Philadelphi Corridor into Sinai, and the equally lucrative hostage- taking business. Clan leaders help found the Popular Resistance Committees, a terror group active in the second intifada and probably involved in capturing Gilad Schalit.

It would not be surprising, therefore, to discover that Dughmush was behind the July 25 car-bombing along the Gaza beachfront which killed five **Hamas** operatives, injured scores of passersby and took the life of a little girl. If so, expect his clan to be the next **Hamas** target.

FOR ITS OWN Machiavellian reasons, **Hamas** blames exiled Fatah strongman Muhammad Dahlan for the bombing. On Saturday it went after the Hilles clan, described by the media as "loosely affiliated with Fatah movement."

Hamas cut off the clan's Gaza City stronghold. In the ensuing fighting, nine Palestinians were killed; a residential building was reportedly blown up, with people still in it; and **Hamas** sharpshooters aiming from minarets in nearby mosques targeted anyone trying to flee.

Hamas even used tunnels dug in the area - originally for use against Israel - to surprise the clan. At least 100 people were injured, including a dozen children. Many more were taken into **Hamas** custody. Under withering **Hamas** fire, about 180 members of the clan, led by headman Ahmed Hilles, sought to enter Israel via the Nahal Oz crossing, leaving their **women** and children behind.

At the request of Egypt and the Palestinian Authority - and as a humanitarian gesture - Israel allowed the Hilles men in, with the intention of sending them on to Mahmoud Abbas's Ramallah headquarters.

Weekend in Hamastan

But in the murky world of Palestinian politics, relationships are seldom straightforward. Far from being Dahlan stooges, the Hilles had actually tried to assassinate Dahlan, together with Abbas, in November 2004, shortly after Yasser Arafat died and Abbas went to Gaza to receive visitors in Fatah's mourning tent. Abbas and Dahlan survived, but two of their bodyguards didn't.

Yesterday, after the dust had settled, Abbas did an about-face: At his request, Israel "repatriated" to Gaza many of the men who had sought his protection in Ramallah.

ISRAEL AND the West would do well to internalize, given this internecine Palestinian violence, that Hamas's rule in Gaza is the best indicator to date of how Palestinians would run their affairs in a fully independent Palestine. We need also to recognize the failure of institution-building and due process in the Abbas component of the PA thus far, as illuminated by the torture of Hamas functionaries, on Fatah's behalf, by the Aksa Martyrs Brigade.

Dismally, despite the brutal nature of its Gaza rule, Hamas remains more popular in the West Bank and Gaza than Abbas. This ongoing triumph of bellicosity and intransigence over relative moderation is greatly assisted by Abbas's abject failure to root out corruption from Fatah.

In such a climate, there aren't enough checkpoints in the West Bank Israel can dismantle to "help" Abbas. Indeed, IDF pullbacks and eased security conditions in the West Bank would simply set the stage for a Hamas takeover and leave Israel more vulnerable to terrorism.

Plainly, lifting international sanctions on Hamas would be a flagrant reward for Islamist violence and tyranny. At the same time, Hamas is a permanent fixture in Palestinian politics. Rather than closing its eyes to this reality, Israel must more thoroughly integrate awareness of it into its security and diplomatic strategy.

Load-Date: October 4, 2011

Palestinian infighting claims 9

Deseret Morning News (Salt Lake City)

August 3, 2008 Sunday

Copyright 2008 The Deseret News Publishing Co.

Length: 848 words

Byline: Ibrahim Barzak and Dalia Nammari Associated Press

Body

GAZA CITY, Gaza Strip -- **Hamas** forces battled Fatah-linked fighters with mortars and machine guns in a crowded Gaza neighborhood Saturday, leaving at least nine dead in the worst Palestinian infighting in nine months.

About 88 people were injured, 12 of them children, hospital officials said.

Loud explosions and gunfire could be heard throughout the day in the Gaza City neighborhood of Shijaiyeh, a stronghold of the Fatah-allied Hilles clan. **Hamas** accuses the clan of hiding suspects responsible for a car bombing last week that killed five activists of the Islamic militant group.

Hamas and the largely secular, Western-backed Fatah have waged a violent struggle for control of Gaza for years. But there have been few signs of Fatah resistance since **Hamas** seized control of the strip in June 2007.

Relations between the factions deteriorated sharply last week after the car bombing that killed **Hamas** militants in Gaza and each side has been cracking down on political opponents with growing intensity. **Hamas** in Gaza and Fatah loyalists of Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas who control the West Bank have carried out mass arrests.

In the West Bank, Abbas' troops enforced a new ban on public assembly and expanded their arrest sweep beyond **Hamas**. Club-wielding security men arrested and beat dozens of supporters of a non-violent Islamic group.

The Gaza clashes began when **Hamas** raided Shijaiyeh under heavy morning fog. Security forces stormed several high-rise buildings and rounded up rooftop snipers, gunmen and wounded fighters, said Islam Shahwan, a **Hamas** police spokesman.

Heavy battles with mortars and machine guns ensued. Three **Hamas** policemen and a Hilles member were killed, hospital officials said.

It was the deadliest internal Palestinian fighting since November when **Hamas** police killed seven people in a Fatah-organized memorial rally for the late Yasser Arafat.

Ahmed Hilles, a clan leader and Fatah official, said **Hamas** police cut off electricity as they launched the raid. He explained why the clan fought back.

"You have to decide: Either be trampled under **Hamas**' shoes or stand in dignity," he told The Associated Press by telephone, with gunshots crackling in the background. Hilles fled to Israel later in the day, Israeli military officials confirmed.

Palestinian infighting claims 9

By Saturday afternoon, **Hamas** police had seized control of Shijaiyeh, home to some 100,000 people. They deployed hundreds of police who went house to house in search of weapons and suspects. In all, more than 50 people were arrested, including some who had tried to flee disguised as **women**, **Hamas** said.

Senior **Hamas** official Siyad Siam said those arrested included men allegedly involved in last week's attack. **Hamas** forces found explosives like those used in the bombing, as well as machine guns and other weapons, Siam told a press conference in Gaza City late Saturday.

"We are sending a message that no one is above the law and that no family is above the law," Siam said. "Gaza will enjoy peace and security."

More than 180 Palestinians who fled the fighting were allowed through a Gaza crossing into Israel, said an Israeli commander in the border area, Col. Ron Ashrov. The transfer began when a group, including injured people and armed men, ran up to the Gaza fence, Ashrov said.

Israeli soldiers were fired upon as they went to open the fence, apparently by Palestinians, Ashrov said. Twenty-two of those who crossed were injured, he said. Some of those who entered were youths, he said.

The unusual Israeli involvement to save Palestinians fleeing infighting was agreed to by Israeli Defense Minister Ehud Barak after Abbas and the Egyptian government requested the Israeli action, military officials said on condition of anonymity since no official announcement was made about the request.

Officials close to Abbas said Israel had agreed to allow only three of those who had fled to enter the West Bank, and the rest would be sent to Egypt.

Four mortar shells fired from Gaza landed in open fields in Israel Saturday causing no injuries, the army said. The mortars underscored the danger that the Palestinian infighting could embroil Israel.

In the West Bank, security forces armed with clubs arrested and beat dozens of supporters of a non-violent Islamic group, the Liberation Party, and broke up their rally in downtown Ramallah. An AP Television News cameraman was prevented by Abbas' security forces from filming the beatings.

The pan-Islamic Liberation Party has sharply criticized the moderate Fatah leadership, but says it espouses non-violent change. In the past, members of the movement were able to march in the West Bank without hindrance.

A senior security official said there is growing fear **Hamas** is using the Liberation Party as a front in the West Bank.

Since Thursday, dozens of Liberation Party members have been arrested, said its spokesman, Baher Saleh.

Deeb al-Ali, chief of the national security forces in the West Bank, said all political gatherings were banned because of the growing tensions with **Hamas**.

"We have to stop rallies and marches or anything that leads to mass gatherings," he said.

Load-Date: August 3, 2008

The heat's on Abbas

The Jerusalem Post

March 7, 2008 Friday

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Section: FEATURES; Pg. 15

Length: 865 words

Byline: KHALED ABU TOAMEH

Highlight: Hamas may have been dealt a severe blow on the battlefield against the IDF, but it is emerging victorious in the war to win the support of the Arab and Islamic masses. PALESTINIAN AFFAIRS

Body

Palestinian Authority officials in Ramallah had two main reasons to be disappointed this week.

First, many of them were hoping that the IDF's five- day military operation in the northern Gaza Strip would spark a popular uprising against the Hamas regime, sending tens of thousands of Palestinians into the streets to demand an end to the Hamas rule.

Second, the PA leadership was disappointed by the US stance toward the latest developments. Mahmoud Abbas and his top aides were hoping that the US administration would show some kind of understanding for their decision to temporarily suspend peace talks with Israel to protest the IDF operation.

But last Tuesday, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice told Abbas that he must resume the talks immediately and unconditionally. Consequently, he was forced to drop his demand for a cease-fire with Israel as a prerequisite for returning to the negotiating table.

"The Palestinian Authority is today much weaker than it was before the Israeli operation," remarked a senior Abbas aide following the meeting with Rice. "In the eyes of many Palestinians and Arabs, Hamas emerged victorious from the confrontation with the Israeli army and we are been accused of 'collusion' with Israel. And now that the Americans are forcing us to resume the negotiations with Israel under fire, we will look even worse."

As if to add fuel to the fire, Rice's visit to Ramallah coincided with the publication of a Vanity Fair investigative report revealing that President George W. Bush and Rice had approved a covert scheme to help Abbas's Fatah party overthrow Hamas soon after the Islamist movement came to power in the January 2006 parliamentary election.

The report, denied by the White House, received wide coverage in the mainstream media in the Arab world, seriously embarrassing Abbas and prompting his advisers to spend a lot of time denying the charges that they had received US weapons and money to bring down Hamas.

JUDGING FROM the reactions of most Palestinians, it was difficult to find many who did not believe the report was true.

It was published on the same day that Hamas was celebrating its "victory" in the last round of fighting. As such, the report came as a gift to Hamas, which was quick to translate it and distribute it to dozens of media outlets throughout the Arab and Islamic world.

The heat's on Abbas

Vanity Fair has actually backed Hamas's allegations that Fatah, with the help of the Americans, has been plotting to topple the Hamas government ever since the movement won the free parliamentary election.

As soon as the IDF launched its last offensive in the Gaza Strip, Hamas leaders and spokesmen rushed to announce that that operation was designed more to remove Hamas from power than stop the rocket attacks. Hamas even went as far as accusing Abbas and the PA leadership in Ramallah of giving Israel a "green light" to carry out the operation.

"Mahmoud Abbas and his Fatah gangsters in Ramallah are hoping to return to the Gaza Strip in Israeli tanks," charged Sami Abu Zuhri, a prominent Hamas spokesman. "But they are living under an illusion. Our people will never allow them to return to the Gaza Strip with Israel's help."

Hamas has clearly managed to convince many Palestinians and Arabs that the movement has fallen victim to an American-Israeli conspiracy backed by Abbas and some Fatah leaders in Ramallah.

This explains why Al-Jazeera and most of the Arab world's popular TV stations seemed to be taking sides with Hamas over the past week. However, the Arab media in general did not only show sympathy with Hamas, but went on to launch scathing attacks on Abbas and the rest of the Arab heads of state, accusing them of being part of the alleged plot to bring down Hamas.

Scenes of children and women being pulled out of the rubble of destroyed houses in the Gaza Strip were often accompanied by interviews with Palestinians and Arabs in different countries who hurled abuse after another at Abbas and other Arab leaders. Hamas may have been dealt a severe blow on the battlefield, but it has obviously scored many points in the battle to win the support of the Arab and Islamic masses.

In addition, the mere fact that the top Hamas leaders are still alive despite the IDF operation and Israel's threats to eliminate them has also boosted Hamas's standing - at the expense, of course, of Abbas and his leadership.

Moreover, the IDF operation appears to have further radicalized the Palestinians, with even many moderates calling on Abbas to boycott the talks with Israel until a cease-fire is reached. Even if the talks resume soon, the Palestinian negotiators will have to toughen their position in line with the popular sentiment on the Palestinian street.

Abbas is also under immense pressure from his own Fatah loyalists to stick to his decision to suspend the talks. A top Fatah official in Ramallah expressed outrage over Rice's demand that Abbas return to the negotiating table without conditions. "She doesn't realize that she's causing Abbas a lot of damage by forcing him to resume the talks while Israel is continuing its attacks," he said. "And the weaker you are, the harder it is to display any kind of flexibility in the negotiations."

Graphic

Photo: IGNITING THE atmosphere. Hamas has managed to convince many Palestinians and Arabs that the movement has fallen victim to an American-Israeli conspiracy backed by Abbas and some Fatah leaders in Ramallah. (Credit: AP)

Load-Date: October 4, 2011

U.N. Border Force May Be All That Can Stop Chaos in Gaza; OPINION

The Forward

March 14, 2008

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Section: News; Pg. A1

Length: 1056 words

Byline:

Edward Walker, a former ambassador to Israel and to Egypt, is a professor of global and political theory at Hamilton College.

Body

For months Israel has criticized Egypt's inability to seal off its border with Gaza, and without a doubt the border has been penetrated by tunnels and smugglers. But as the Egyptian ambassador to Washington pointed out to me the other day, it is not an easy task to seal that border and, in fact, Israel had never been able to do so during its long occupation of Gaza. As the Egyptians have noted in the past, they have had neither the manpower nor the weapons needed to do an adequate job on the border because of the security restrictions imposed by Egypt's peace treaty with Israel. As much became clear in late January,

Israel will invariably demand that Egypt seal its border with Gaza, but what can Cairo really do?

when **Hamas** blew holes in the fence separating Gaza from Egypt and thousands of Palestinians poured into Egypt to buy critically short supplies and other goods that had been blocked by the Israelis. After the buying frenzy was over, Egypt was able to restore order with the support of **Hamas**, and has since reportedly doubled its force on the Gaza border to as many as 1,500 guards with Israel's silent acquiescence.

There is no reason to believe, however, that even an enlarged contingent of Egyptian guards could or would prevent **Hamas** from blowing open the border at will in the future. This constitutes a critical chink in the Israeli blockade, one that has serious long-term consequences for Israel.

The January breakout from Gaza opened a door for **Hamas** to smuggle in improved rockets that are now reaching the city of Ashkelon. The fact is that **Hamas** retains the option of opening the border to resupply their inventory of long-range weapons from Iran at any time in the future. It will not be hard for **Hamas** to break through the border again and organize thousands of Gazans to cross into Egypt if the promise is for basic supplies and luxuries that have been denied by the Israeli blockade.

Under the conditions prevalent at an uncontrolled border, the resupplying of weapons is nearly inevitable. And when the border opens, foreign volunteers from Al Qaeda or other terrorist organizations may be able to slip through. Indeed, a smattering of reports about an Al Qaeda presence in Gaza have already surfaced, and Israel's chief of military intelligence has said that Syrian- and Iranian-trained terrorists infiltrated Gaza after the border was breached.

U.N. Border Force May Be All That Can Stop Chaos in Gaza OPINION

In short, the situation is getting worse and far more dangerous for Israeli civilians living in close proximity to Gaza. Israel and, if news reports are correct, the United States will inevitably raise the stakes for Egypt by demanding that it seal the border. But the question is: What can Egypt do to stop the traffic?

What is certain is that the Egyptians will not open fire on Gazan women, children and civilians. So where is the security for Israel in all of this?

As the conflict over Gaza heats up and Israeli incursions and attacks increase

the civilian body count, Arab public opinion will only become more inflamed by the graphic television images being broadcast out of the Strip. As it is, sympathy is building for Hamas and its hold on Gaza is strengthening. If the longterm policy of the United States and Israel is to discredit Hamas and build up the West Bank-based Fatah leadership under Mahmoud Abbas, then the Gaza policy is an absolute failure.

For Egypt, it is hardly a comforting proposition to have an open border with Hamas, which is an offshoot of the Muslim Brotherhood, Egypt's main opposition movement, and is increasingly identified with Iran and some would say Al Qaeda. But with public opinion aroused in Cairo, there are limits to what the Egyptians can do. The reality is that in this situation there is no security for Egypt either.

The progressive improvement in Hamas's inventory of rockets and the escalating violence against Israeli cities will be an intolerable situation for any Israeli government. Hamas will invite through its actions further large-scale Israeli ground operations, possibly leading to the reoccupation of Gaza, if not today then in the future.

Negotiations between Palestinians and Israelis will be the first casualty. The second casualty will be the twostate solution.

No matter how you look at it, Hamas wins. Hamas wins by losing Gaza, where in any event it cannot offer a better life for the Palestinians due to American and Israeli policies. Hamas also wins by standing up to Israel and against President Bush's Middle East policy. And Hamas wins because of the political undertow that will further discredit Abbas and a policy of moderation. Hamas wins because we will be entering the third intifada.

There may be nothing we can do about this. There certainly is nothing Egypt can do. But it is not inconceivable that the international community could step in, through the United Nations, to save all the parties from themselves.

A robust U.N. force with a Chapter VII mandate could control the Gaza- Egyptian border, provide a rational and controlled exit-and-entry point for Gazans and their goods, and starve Hamas of its military potential rather than its humanitarian or political capabilities. But this can only happen if Israel and the United States come to recognize that military operations cannot destroy the idea of Hamas, that Hamas represents a sizable constituency in Gaza and a growing constituency in the West Bank, and that Israel military operations are making Hamas stronger politically, not weaker.

A properly constructed U.N. force could take the pressure off Egypt, talk directly with Hamas and relieve the economic pressure on all Gazans at the same time as it reduced the threat of more sophisticated arms flowing to the most radical elements of Hamas and other radical and militant organizations. And by opening a channel to Hamas and reducing the pressure of the blockade, a cease-fire might become possible.

A U.N. force on the Egypt-Gaza border is not, of course, the solution to the broader problems facing Israel and the Palestinians, but we have hit a tipping point where the region is sinking into a future of increasing violence and casualties on all sides a future that none of the parties to the conflict should want.

Load-Date: March 10, 2008

INCOMPETENT OR CRUEL

The Australian

April 28, 2008 Monday

2 - All-round First Edition

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Section: FEATURES; Pg. 9

Length: 456 words

Body

The petrol crisis shows the true colours of Hamas

THE continuing tragedy of Gaza is that it was supposed to offer Palestinians an opportunity to show they were ready for self-government after Israel withdrew in August 2005. Unfortunately, the Strip has descended into poverty and chaos, a launching pad for thousands of rockets targeted at Israel's civilian population.

After months of heavy losses to superior Israeli commando raids, which have killed more than 420 people, mainly Palestinian terrorists, in the past eight months, Hamas is proposing a six-month truce. Israeli Defence Minister Ehud Barak, obviously, would welcome a cessation of rocket attacks. But, understandably, he is taking his time to respond, fearing Hamas would use the break to rearm.

What is clear at present is that Hamas is light years away from having the nous and goodwill, even towards its own people, to lead a Palestinian State. Fuel supplies on the Strip have dried up, forcing the United Nations Relief and Works Agency to suspend food aid to 650,000 impoverished residents.

The Israeli Government claims Hamas has created a dishonest crisis in an attempt to court international leverage. Hamas is blaming Israel for the crisis, but its arguments are not convincing. Late last year, Israel flagged fuel rationing as a means to combat rocket attacks. But it insists that enough fuel is stored in Gaza to cover essential humanitarian needs. Israel also says that it tried to transfer fuel directly to UNRWA, but was thwarted by a farmers' demonstration supported by Hamas.

Tensions further escalated a few weeks ago when two Islamic Jihad terrorists killed two Israelis at the fuel terminal that supplies Gaza. At the time, Islamic Jihad said the fuel coming from Israel was "dripped in humiliation" and not wanted.

Hamas leaders also admit that at least part of the shortage stems from a three-week strike by Gaza suppliers, who claim that moving small volumes of fuel is uneconomical. As the elected Government, however, it is the responsibility of Hamas to overcome such obstacles and get the fuel moving so that food aid given by the world in good faith reaches its people.

If, however, it is political pointscoring motivating Hamas's failure to get the fuel and food moving, it is further proof, if any was needed, of the organisation's true nature. Hamas is responsible for hundreds of murderous suicide bombings and other terrorist attacks on Israel. This time, however, it seems prepared to let its own men, women and children go hungry. In doing so, it is showing the world that anybody who believes that Israel is the worst

INCOMPETENT OR CRUEL

enemy of the Palestinian people needs to think again. The impasse does not advance hopes of a workable, two-state solution.

Load-Date: April 27, 2008

End of Document

6 Palestinians Killed in Gaza At Fatah Rally

The New York Times

November 13, 2007 Tuesday

Late Edition - Final

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Section: Section A; Column 0; Foreign Desk; Pg. 1

Length: 1056 words

Byline: By TAGHREED EL-KHODARY and ISABEL KERSHNER; Taghreed El-Khodary reported from Gaza, and Isabel Kershner from Jerusalem.

Dateline: GAZA, Nov. 12

Body

At least six Palestinians were killed and more than 100 wounded here on Monday when a rally by the relatively pro-Western Fatah movement to mark the third anniversary of the death of its founder, Yasir Arafat, ended in armed clashes with its rival, **Hamas**.

Doctors at two Gaza hospitals said all of the dead and most of the wounded were Fatah supporters who had taken part in the rally.

Tens of thousands of residents of the Gaza Strip had turned out for what became the largest show of support for Fatah since the Islamist group **Hamas** seized control of the territory in June.

As Israel and the West have squeezed the strip in recent months, opinion surveys have indicated that the popularity of **Hamas** may be declining while that of Fatah may be growing.

After **Hamas** took over Gaza, the Palestinian president, Mahmoud Abbas, of Fatah, dissolved the **Hamas**-led unity government, in which several Fatah ministers had served, and appointed a caretaker government made up mostly of independents in the West Bank. **Hamas**, which won parliamentary elections in January 2006, does not recognize the authority of the Abbas government and rules alone in Gaza.

A newly released opinion poll by the Jerusalem Media and Communications Center, an independent Palestinian organization, indicated a rise in support for Fatah at the expense of **Hamas**.

Forty percent of the respondents said that Fatah was the party they trusted most, while 20 percent said they most trusted **Hamas**. Most of the rest said they trusted no party. In Gaza, 43 percent favored Fatah, and 25 percent **Hamas**.

In a similar poll by the center in September 2006, Fatah and **Hamas** came in almost neck and neck, with 31 percent and 30 percent. (The new poll was based on a random sample of 1,200 respondents in the West Bank and Gaza, with interviews conducted in person from Nov. 3 to 6, and with a margin of error of plus or minus three percentage points.)

6 Palestinians Killed in Gaza At Fatah Rally

"Hamas has proved today that it has the military power in the Gaza Strip, but Fatah has proved that it is still alive," a Fatah member said, speaking on condition of anonymity because of the tense situation in Gaza. "Just remember the hundreds of thousands who participated today."

Fatah officials estimated attendance at the rally at more than 250,000. The total population of the Gaza Strip is about 1.5 million.

Hamas and Fatah accused each other of starting the violence. Ehab al-Ghsein, a spokesman for the Hamas-run Interior Ministry in Gaza, said Fatah gunmen on city rooftops fired first, wounding four members of the Hamas police. Fatah supporters also started throwing stones at the police, he said.

The Hamas takeover of Gaza was preceded by a bloody factional war. Since Hamas routed the Fatah forces in the strip, it has tried to impose order and to subdue public displays of support for Fatah.

Hamas did not try to block the rally, in deference to the popularity of Mr. Arafat, who to many Palestinians is a symbol of national unity.

But Mr. Ghsein accused Fatah of trying to reignite the internal strife. "There are those who aim to bring lawlessness back to the Gaza Strip," he said.

Hazem Abu Shanab, a Fatah leader in Gaza, rejected the Hamas version of events as "nonsense."

"The shooting came from one side only, toward civilians who came out to support Fatah," he said.

The rally started out peacefully, with many women and children in the crowd, but the hostility between the rival camps was palpable from the start.

Hamas policemen had taken up positions on the roofs of the highest buildings, and the group's members mingled among the crowd in civilian clothes. The Hamas police confiscated Fatah flags and posters of Mr. Arafat from the cars of Fatah supporters, and rally participants shouted provocative slogans against the Islamist group, including "Shia, Shia," in reference to support Hamas gets from mostly Shiite Iran. A vast majority of Palestinians are Sunni Muslims.

The shooting erupted when the rally was almost over, and the violence lasted an hour and a half.

Fawziya Abu Karish attended the rally with her 11-year-old daughter, Amira. "I hadn't wanted to come," she said, but her brother, who was wounded in the June fighting, called her from Egypt and "begged" her, she said, "to go out in support of Fatah." Amira said a man standing next to her was shot in the legs from a distance.

At Shifa Hospital in Gaza City, Afaf Abu Tayeh, 45, was waiting by the morgue. She was there to look for two sons, ages 16 and 17. "The Israelis were more merciful than them," she said of Hamas. "They beat children in front of my eyes."

Ashraf al-Bitar, 23, a member of the Hamas naval police, contended that Hamas had to react after Fatah gunmen started shooting and their supporters stoned the police and called them Shia.

At a mass memorial rally for Mr. Arafat in the West Bank city of Ramallah on Sunday, Mr. Abbas denounced what he called the "black coup" in Gaza and was received enthusiastically by the crowd.

But the split between Gaza and the West Bank hung like a specter over the proceedings. Tamer Hamayel, 19, from a village outside Ramallah, said such a situation would have been impossible were Mr. Arafat still alive. "Abu Ammar held the Palestinians together," he said, referring to the late leader by his nom de guerre.

On Sunday night, Israeli forces detained Mariam Saleh, a Hamas member of Parliament and former minister of women's affairs, in Ramallah, and Khaled Tafesh, a senior Hamas member in Bethlehem, a military spokesman said. About half of the 74 Hamas legislators are currently in Israeli jails.

6 Palestinians Killed in Gaza At Fatah Rally

The Israeli prime minister, Ehud Olmert, told the Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee of the Israeli Parliament on Monday that he was considering another release of Palestinian prisoners before the international Middle East peace gathering expected to take place in Annapolis, Md., in coming weeks.

"The prime minister is well aware of the importance of the prisoner issue to the Palestinians," said Miri Eisin, a spokeswoman for Mr. Olmert.

The Israeli government has already released about 350 Palestinian prisoners, mostly belonging to Fatah, in two batches since July, part of a series of gestures meant to bolster Mr. Abbas. More than 10,000 Palestinian prisoners are in Israeli jails.

<http://www.nytimes.com>

Graphic

PHOTOS: Some of the thousands who gathered before violence erupted yesterday at a rally marking the anniversary of Yasir Arafat's death. (PHOTOGRAPH BY HATEM MOUSSA/ASSOCIATED PRESS) (pg. A1)

Palestinians cried out for help as they cradled a youth wounded yesterday at a rally in Gaza. Doctors said that all of the dead, and most of the more than 100 wounded, were Fatah supporters. (PHOTOGRAPH BY MOHAMMED ABED/AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE -- GETTY IMAGES) (pg. A8)

Load-Date: November 13, 2007

End of Document

New glossy magazine praises fighters

Gulf Daily News

May 1, 2008

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Length: 230 words

Body

GAZA: The cover boy gracing Gaza's new glossy magazine wears military khakis and a bullet belt and carries one of the territory's hottest accessories - an assault rifle.

His face is covered with a black mask, as are many of the faces in Qassamis, the new magazine published by **Hamas** to show off its Islamic fighters. The 80-page magazine also comes with sleek advertisements and a **women's** section.

It is another addition to the militant group's media efforts, reflecting the movement's growing power in Gaza, where it seized control last June.

Hamas, which has sent dozens of suicide bombers into Israel and does not recognise a role for a Jewish state in an Islamic Middle East, is labeled a terror group by Israel, the US and EU.

The magazine was delivered to news organisations by a **Hamas** employee. It was distributed to libraries sympathetic to **Hamas**, apparently targeting a highbrow readership.

The magazine, which is free of charge, aims to "educate Palestinians" about the role of the military group, said Abdul Latif Qanou, a **Hamas** official who helped oversee its publication.

It wants to show "the development of our fighting capabilities and show progress on the ground", he said.

Hamas officials would not say how many copies they have printed or whether there would be future editions. **Hamas** also would not disclose how much it cost to publish the expensive looking magazine.

Load-Date: June 30, 2008

Gaza truce brings a sliver of hope

Sunday Business Post

June 22, 2008

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THE SUNDAY BUSINESS POST
IRELAND'S FINANCIAL, POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC NEWSPAPER

Section: IRELAND

Length: 971 words

Body

The current ceasefire in Gaza will be a real test of **Hamas**'s ability to keep the peace and to steer the region towards some normality, writes Toni O'Loughlin in Jerusalem.

For the past year, **Hamas** has been imposing law and order on Gaza's chaotic streets, but its ceasefire with Israel is a major test of the Islamists' ability to rule rival militias and to end the siege on the economically-crippled Palestinian territory. When Gaza's rocket and mortar squads awake this morning, many will be impatient with the deal.

After several days of withholding fire, many of Gaza's shops are still shuttered, factories are dormant, cars are without fuel, raw sewage still floods the sea and their militant comrades in the West Bank remain the target of Israel's army.

While Israel will begin easing its blockade today, allowing a trickle of commercial goods to pass through the cargo crossings for the first time in a year, it will be six months before trade flows are fully restored, assuming the quiet holds. **Hamas** fighters signed up to the deal with the backing of headquarters in Damascus, saying they were "completely and comprehensively" committed.

But Islamic Jihad, whose members pride themselves on being the most militant fighters, has been dragged reluctantly by **Hamas** to the bargaining table.

On the eve of the ceasefire, in a last show of force before downing their weapons at 6am last Thursday, black-clad militants bombarded nearby Israeli towns with 40 rockets and ten mortars. Israel responded with an air raid, the two sides underscoring the fragility of the deal.

An attempt at a truce in November 2006 lasted just weeks, while a lull in March this year lasted just days before disintegrating. Palestinians call the ceasefire by its Arabic name, tahadiya, meaning temporary lull, but the chances that it will become hudna, a long-term truce, are slim.

Hours after the guns were to fall silent, an Israeli patrol boat fired near Palestinian fisherman on a routine trip out to sea in which they strayed near an Israeli-imposed security zone, as they often do.

Gaza truce brings a sliver of hope

The following day in the West Bank, right-wing Jewish settler youths built and launched a crude rocket at a nearby Palestinian village. In Gaza, where 1.5 million people are still locked in, Palestinian children attempted to squeeze under the fence into Israel.

The seeds, cement, metal, beef and fuel that will be delivered to Gaza today are a mere fraction of what is needed to kick-start businesses.

Hamas wants to break Israel's stranglehold and fantasises about turning Gaza's only border crossing with Egypt into a safe passage to the rest of the world. But until the Islamists cut a deal on a prisoner swap with Israel, the Rafah crossing will remain shut.

Hamas wants to swap Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit, whom it captured in a cross-border raid two years ago for hundreds of Palestinian prisoners, including **women**, children, activists and mass murderers.

Negotiations will start again on Tuesday in Egypt, which has been hosting talks between the warring parties. But it's unclear whether Israel will choke off the commercial flows in and out of Gaza, should the discussions get bogged down again.

Israel and the west have been trying to drive **Hamas** from power ever since it won elections in 2006. Financial and diplomatic isolation turned to economic destruction when Israel blockaded Gaza after **Hamas** ousted its more secular rival, Fatah, in bloody street clashes a year ago.

The siege broke the economy and wearied the people, yet boosted the Islamists. They then violently cracked down on clan leaders and gun ownership and continued firing rockets onto Israel's southern towns.

Hamas also seized control of the smuggling tunnels in the south, taxing and regulating the armaments, cash, fuel and commercial goods that were secretly brought underground from Egypt.

In the meantime, they set about controlling the traffic, patrolling street crime and getting the courts to function, all the while, blaming Israel for their shortcomings. Now, by negotiating to end the siege, Israel risks legitimising the enemy it wants to defeat.

Since the beginning of the year several unofficial European delegations have visited Gaza to sit with **Hamas**, which is now in the process of setting up its first think-tank, Beit Al Hikma, or House of Wisdom, to reach out to the west.

"We care very much about the west's recognition of **Hamas**," said Sayed Abu Musameh, a founder of **Hamas**, who was elected to the PA legislature.

But the risk of legitimising **Hamas** may be unavoidable if Israel is to avoid the major military retaliation it has been threatening for months in response to the ongoing torment of missile attacks from Gaza.

"**Hamas** has to be dealt with as a fact of life," said Eran Lerman, a former Israeli intelligence officer and consultant security expert. Legitimising **Hamas** means potentially undermining Israel's preferred Palestinian leader, the western-backed president and head of Fatah, Mahmoud Abbas, who has failed to extract anything from the Jewish state in eight months of peace talks.

Abbas now wants to reconcile with **Hamas** and is no longer insisting that the Islamists give up control of Gaza before talks begin. Yet **Hamas**, while commanding about 40 per cent of the vote according to its own pollsters, is highly sensitive to community sentiment, which is deeply resentful in some parts of Gaza, such as frontline neighbourhoods, where militants fire their rockets.

Indeed, if the quiet continues and Gaza's businesses begin to reopen, fewer will be dependent on **Hamas** for its benevolence.

"People will be involved in business, the young generation will go to work," said Mamoun Khonzendar, who runs one of Gaza's biggest fuel companies.

Gaza truce brings a sliver of hope

"Instead of going to **Hamas** for 1,000 shekel to launch rockets, they will be able to go to work as builders or farmers."

Load-Date: June 22, 2008

End of Document

Militants exploit political opening in border

The Australian (Australia)

January 25, 2008 Friday

1 - All-round Country Edition

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Section: WORLD; Pg. 8

Length: 628 words

Byline: Abraham Rabinovich

Body

Jerusalem

THE breaches blown open by **Hamas** in the wall enclosing the Gaza Strip have also exploded the efforts to contain **Hamas** politically and will require a fundamental rethink by Israel, Egypt and the Palestinian Authority about how to tackle the Islamic organisation.

In what Israeli analysts acknowledge was a brilliant manoeuvre, **Hamas** exploited the opening given it by Israel's sealing of the strip to rally world opinion on its side and then push home its advantage by blowing in the gateway to Egypt. The embarrassed Egyptians could not stem the tide of Palestinians flowing through and a new Middle East dynamic may have emerged.

When the lights went dark in Gaza after Israel announced a temporary cessation of fuel deliveries this week, Israeli officials maintained that several days of fuel supply remained in Gaza and that the blackout was artificial. Within hours, **Hamas** claimed four people had died in hospitals because of the lack of electricity.

Well organised demonstrations were almost immediately held with youths and **women** carrying candles and placards. Palestinian journalists said yesterday when they were summoned to a **Hamas** cabinet meeting, they found ministers sitting at a table with candles burning in front of them even though it was daytime. Curtains had been drawn to permit the photograph of an embattled leadership. These moves created international sympathy for the Gazans, particularly in the Arab world, where mass demonstrations were held.

The Tel Aviv newspaper Ha'aretz reported yesterday that **Hamas** operatives had for months been digging holes along the metal barrier separating Gaza from Egypt's Sinai Peninsula to permit the planting of explosives for the right moment. Before dawn on Wednesday, a score of holes appeared in the wall and hundreds of thousands of Palestinians poured across the border.

Since Israel's withdrawal from Gaza in 2005, a cumbersome arrangement had been in place at the single crossing point at Rafah between the Gaza Strip and Egypt, with Egyptian guards and international observers manning the terminal and cameras permitting Israeli security officials to monitor the crossings.

Militants were able to avoid the terminal by digging tunnels under the border to bring in armaments. But the difficulties involved in getting through the terminal, and its frequent closing, meant Gaza's population was effectively cooped up once Israel closed its own entry points into Gaza except for supplies.

Militants exploit political opening in border

When Israel closed its border this week even to supplies in retaliation for the rocketing of its cities from the Gaza Strip, the siege became hermetic.

Israel's hopes of forcing Hamas to its knees have been upended. Egypt will have a hard time sealing the border again in view of popular pro-Palestinian sentiment in its own streets. Egypt is formally committed to the sovereignty of President Mahmoud Abbas's rule in Gaza, even though it is entirely in Hamas hands, and will now have to deal directly with Hamas to re-organise border arrangements.

Hamas leaders have invited Mr Abbas to participate in such arrangements -- which would mean Mr Abbas ending his own boycott of Hamas. The Islamist organisation would like the PA's involvement to enhance its own legitimacy. The US, which has made its anti-Hamas stand clear, has little option but to see how the situation plays out. Israel says its siege will continue but its effect will be greatly diminished if the Egyptian border remains open. In any case, Hamas's stature has been enhanced.

``In destroying the wall," wrote Ha'aretz correspondents Avi Issacharof and Amos Harel, ``(Hamas) demonstrated once again that it is a disciplined, determined entity and an opponent that is exponentially more sophisticated (than President Abbas's Palestinian Authority)."

Load-Date: January 24, 2008

End of Document

World - Israeli soldiers loot Palestinian charity

Morning Star

July 8, 2008 Tuesday

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Length: 408 words

Byline: Our Foreign Desk

Body

Israeli soldiers shut down a girls school, charities and a medical centre in Nablus yesterday before making off with computers, documents, cash and furniture.

Dozens of military jeeps, two bulldozers and two lorries rumbled into the town before dawn and headed for the offices of the Solidarity charity, delivering an order to shut the facility for three years.

The raid appears to have been part of an intensified crackdown on **Hamas** in the West Bank by Israel and Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas, who leads the Fatah party.

The chairman of the Solidarity charity is Nablus Mayor Adli Yaish of **Hamas**, who has been languishing in an Israeli jail since the military rounded up **Hamas** politicians, after the June 2006 capture of an Israeli soldier by **Hamas**-affiliated guerillas in Gaza.

The troops shut down Solidarity's headquarters, as well as an elementary school for 160 girls and a sports club.

Head teacher Fidda Draikh reported that Israeli troops had "confiscated all computers, documents, televisions and even mobile phones from the school.

"Now we need to look for an alternative place to educate these girls. We cannot leave them without a school," said Ms Draikh.

The medical centre that has been closed bears the same name as the charity, but it is run by a different charitable organisation.

Director Dr Hafez al-Sadr, who said that the centre is not connected to **Hamas**, reported that office equipment had been smashed and computers, documents and the equivalent of about \$6,000 (£3,000) in Israeli and Jordanian currency had been seized.

Troops also raided the Nablus offices of the Palestinian Authority's Ministry of Religious Affairs.

Israel is trying to negotiate a peace deal with the Palestinian Authority and it is not clear why the ministry was targeted.

Ministry official Sheik Hassan Hilali said that the Israelis "have nothing to look for here. It's a bad sign of how they perceive peace."

World - Israeli soldiers loot Palestinian charity

Israeli troops and Mr Abbas's security forces have gone after West Bank charities, money changers, women's co-operatives, media outlets and schools with suspected ties to Hamas in recent months.

Hamas won a landslide victory in the Palestinian parliamentary elections of January 2006.

After Hamas guerillas had defeated a coup attempt by Fatah in Gaza in June last year, Fatah ejected elected Hamas officials from their positions in the West Bank Palestinian National Authority government and replaced them with rival Fatah members and independents.

Load-Date: July 8, 2008

End of Document

Pressed by Rice, Palestinian Leader Agrees to Return to Peace Talks With Israeli

The New York Times

April 1, 2008 Tuesday

Late Edition - Final

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Section: Section A; Column 0; Foreign Desk; Pg. 12

Length: 646 words

Byline: By HELENE COOPER

Dateline: AMMAN, Jordan

Body

Mahmoud Abbas, the Palestinian president, said Monday that he would return to the bargaining table next week for face-to-face peace talks with Ehud Olmert, the Israeli prime minister.

The two have not met since the Israeli incursion into Gaza began a month ago.

Mr. Abbas suspended negotiations for about a week after Israel struck against Palestinian positions in Gaza in retaliation for a rocket attack on the Israeli city of Ashkelon. Since then, Palestinian negotiators have held talks with their Israeli counterparts but the leaders have not.

The on-again-off-again talks are part of the steep climb that Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice has begun in her effort to help achieve a comprehensive peace agreement between Arabs and Israelis before President Bush's term expires. Standing next to Mr. Abbas at a news conference after a meeting here, Ms. Rice criticized Israel for its continued settlement expansion in the West Bank.

Authorities in Jerusalem announced plans on Monday to build 600 new homes in the occupied West Bank settlement of Pisgat Zeev.

"Settlement activity should stop, and expansion should stop; it is not consistent with road-map obligations," Ms. Rice said, referring to the 2003 peace plan, which calls for the Palestinians to disarm militants and eliminate terrorist organizations and for Israel to freeze the building of settlements. Neither side has met those obligations.

"My strong view is that the best thing we can do is focus on getting this agreement," Ms. Rice said. Mr. Abbas took umbrage when two reporters asked him separately whether he planned to accept an invitation from the exiled Hamas leader, Khaled Meshal, to visit Gaza, territory seized by Hamas last summer. "There is no answer to that question," Mr. Abbas snapped. "It does not need an answer."

Palestinian Authority figures said later that Mr. Meshal's invitation was an insult to Mr. Abbas, and that, as Palestinian president, Mr. Abbas did not need an invitation to Gaza, especially one worded, as Mr. Meshal's was, as having "no conditions."

Pressed by Rice, Palestinian Leader Agrees to Return to Peace Talks With Israeli

Beatings at Campus in Gaza

GAZA -- Hamas police officers and supporters on Monday beat a number of professors and students of Al Azhar University, the last bastion of Fatah in Gaza, injuring several, witnesses said. Hamas denied that it had acted improperly and said that the police had restored order.

The students and staff were protesting a rally that Hamas was holding inside the university campus in memory of Sheik Ahmed Yassin, the founder of Hamas, who was killed in an Israeli airstrike in March 2004.

Before dawn on Monday, Hamas activists entered the compound and set up equipment for the rally, hanging pictures of Hamas leaders and Hamas flags. When members of the academic staff protested outside, Hamas police officers them with clubs, said Ayman Shaheen, a professor of political science. Mr. Shaheen said he had been hit twice.

A number of female students were then attacked at the rally by participants who mostly came from outside, many armed with clubs, witnesses said. Tahrir Abu Latifa, 19, a student of commerce, was taken to Gaza's main Al Shifa Hospital unconscious but was able to leave a few hours later.

"I was removing a poster that said, 'Hamas forces will win over Al Azhar,' " she said, "then men surrounded me and hit me on my head and all over my body."

Ehab al-Ghsein, a spokesman for the Hamas-run Interior Ministry in Gaza, said the police intervened when the rally threatened to become unruly. "The issue is between the administration of the university and the Islamic bloc," he said, referring to a small group of Al Azhar students who support Hamas.

Sharif Abu Shamala, 24, who leads the university's Islamic bloc, said the women had provoked the audience by shredding a Hamas flag. In such cases "it is hard to control what happens," he said.

<http://www.nytimes.com>

Graphic

PHOTO: Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and Mahmoud Abbas, the Palestinian president.(PHOTOGRAPH BY ALI JAREKJI/REUTERS)

Load-Date: April 1, 2008

End of Document

Funeral turns into angry West Bank protest

The Record (Kitchener-Waterloo, Ontario)

February 25, 2008 Monday

Final Edition

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Section: NEWS; Pg. D8

Length: 320 words

Byline: The Associated Press

Dateline: KOBAR, WEST BANK

Body

Thousands of angry **Hamas** loyalists marched yesterday at the funeral of a Muslim preacher who died in the custody of government interrogators, accusing the Palestinian Authority of killing the man and turning the ceremony into a rare show of defiance against President Mahmoud Abbas.

The demonstration was an unusual sight in the West Bank, where Abbas's Palestinian Authority has become increasingly autocratic since his **Hamas** rivals seized power in the Gaza Strip in June. Since then, police have cracked down on protests perceived to challenge Abbas's rule.

The noisy funeral showed that the militant group is a force in the West Bank, though Abbas is in control, his regime indirectly bolstered by Israeli forces who regularly operate against **Hamas** and other groups.

Some 3,000 **Hamas** loyalists crowded the village of Kobar, carrying the body of 44-year-old Majed Barghouti, who died in a lockup run by intelligence officials Friday, a week after he was arrested.

Hamas officials said they did not trust a government investigation announced by Abbas.

Mourners waved the green flags of the militant Muslim group as they carried Barghouti's body, boldly chanting in support of **Hamas** and its armed wing, the Qassam Brigades, a group banned in the West Bank.

At a separate nearby march for **women**, mourners wrapped green **Hamas** bandanas around their head scarves and loudly condemned Abbas's intelligence chief, Tawfik Tirawi, whom they blamed for Barghouti's death.

Also yesterday, Israeli officials pointed to incremental progress in peace talks with Palestinians -- appointing of joint committees to deal with secondary issues like water, the environment, economic and judicial matters. But both sides said this was far from a breakthrough, because core issues like Jerusalem, Palestinian refugees and final borders were not involved.

In Gaza, **Hamas** was planning a mass march on an Israeli crossing for today to protest the blockade.

Load-Date: February 25, 2008

Funeral turns into angry West Bank protest

End of Document

Gazans stream through widening border hole

The Record (Kitchener-Waterloo, Ontario)

January 26, 2008 Saturday

Final Edition

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Section: FRONT; Pg. A5

Length: 886 words

Byline: SARAH EL DEEB, The Associated Press

Dateline: RAFAH, GAZA STRIP

Body

Hamas-backed militants driving bulldozers knocked down more fortifications yesterday along the Gaza-Egypt border -- a brazen challenge to Egyptian riot police, who abandoned their positions after attempting to reseal the frontier using human chains, dogs and water cannons.

Militants in black clothing, some of them masked, stood atop a bulldozer as it knocked down concrete slabs under the watchful eyes of **Hamas** security officials, who turned a blind eye and were later seen patrolling on the Egyptian side of the border.

Thousands of Palestinians flooded into Egypt, pushing through several openings as Egyptian troops retreated to their bases on the other side of the border. Palestinians positioned cranes next to the border and lifted crates of supplies into Gaza, including camels and cows.

Hamas, after blasting open the border wall earlier in the week, offered further proof yesterday that it simply cannot be ignored -- driving home in no uncertain terms that a high price will be paid by anyone who seeks to shape Gaza's border arrangements without the militants' consent.

The day's events also underscored a great dilemma faced by Egypt: if it acts forcefully against the Gazans, it could anger its own people, who are sympathetic to the Palestinians' plight. But if it does nothing, it risks infiltration by Islamic militants.

Earlier yesterday, **Hamas** gunmen fanned out along the Gaza side of the border, attempting to create order. For the first time since the border wall was torn down in a series of blasts on Wednesday, Gaza's **Hamas** rulers deployed their most elite forces to contain the rowdy crowd.

Hamas is clearly seeking to flex its muscles ahead of a potential new border agreement with Egypt that the militants hope will help end a two-year-old blockade imposed by Israel and the West.

The group called for a three-way meeting among **Hamas**, Egypt and the Fatah movement of President Mahmoud Abbas to try to come up with a new border arrangement for Gaza.

"If the leadership in Ramallah refuses this call, we will not stand idle until the siege overruns life in Gaza," **Hamas** said in a statement.

Gazans stream through widening border hole

The border breach provided a significant popularity boost to **Hamas**, which can claim it successfully broke through the closure that has deprived the coastal strip of normal trade and commerce.

"**Hamas** did this and when Egypt found resistance, it let up," said a joyous Reem Sahloul, 28, of Khan Younis. "**Hamas** proved stronger than the (Egyptian) army."

Egyptian forces shot in the air, fired water cannons and -- in a particularly forceful display -- deployed dogs to hinder the flow of Gazans into Egypt. Dogs are considered impure by observant Muslims.

As bulldozers ripped down the wall and Gazans jumped over, soldiers ran with their dogs to chase the infiltrators. **Hamas** militants then opened fire on the dogs, killing three of them.

An Egyptian soldier was slightly wounded in the leg, likely from gunshots fired by **Hamas** militants on the Gazan side, an Egyptian officer said on condition of anonymity because he was not allowed to talk to the media. Five policemen were also injured by stones hurled by Gazans.

Egyptian ambulances rushed into a patch of land separating Egypt from Gaza to pick up the injured, with **Hamas** militants clearing the area of people so they could arrive and do their job.

Egypt has rejected any suggestion of assuming responsibility for the crowded, impoverished territory -- a hot issue in light of comments this week by Israeli officials who said the border breach could relieve the Jewish state of its burdens in Gaza.

Israel withdrew its troops and settlers from the territory in 2005, but it still controls access into and out of Gaza, in addition to its airspace and harbours. Israel also provides the fuel needed to run Gaza's only power plant -- the withholding of which is currently causing severe power outages.

In an interview published yesterday, President Hosni Mubarak decried the situation in Gaza as "unacceptable" and called on Israel to "lift its siege" and "solve the problem."

"They should get things back to normal according to previous agreements and understandings," Mubarak told the weekly Al-Osboa. He also invited rival Palestinian factions to Cairo for talks, but did not mention a date.

Sami Abu Zuhri, a **Hamas** spokesperson, said Palestinians had to keep the barrier open "until the crossings are reopened."

"The gaps shouldn't be closed because they provide urgent assistance to the Palestinians," he said.

Both Egypt and Israel restricted the movement of people and goods in and out of Gaza after **Hamas** won parliament elections in 2006, and further tightened the closure after **Hamas** seized control of the area by force last June.

Gazans took full advantage of the open border to stock up on desperately needed supplies and renew links to the other side.

The influx included a gaggle of Palestinian **women** in finely embroidered dresses and fresh makeup, heading to relatives' weddings in Egypt they said had been hastily moved up to allow Gazan family members to attend.

By mid-afternoon, Egyptians eased up on the attempts to restrict the cross-border movement. Hundreds of riot police suddenly left a border crossing at Rafah, to march back into the Egyptian side of the divided town, and Gazans again streamed by the hundreds through the regular crossing.

Graphic

Gazans stream through widening border hole

Photo: THE ASSOCIATED PRESS , Palestinians cross to the Egyptian side of Rafah over the border wall, which was blown up by Palestinian militants earlier this week in the southern Gaza Strip.

Load-Date: January 26, 2008

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Gaza's deadly guardians

The Sunday Times (London)

September 30, 2007

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Section: FEATURES; Sunday Times Magazine; Pg. 50

Length: 4226 words

Byline: Marie Colvin

Body

A radical Islamist state has emerged from the smoking ruins of Gaza, threatening a new war with nearby Israel. Marie Colvin ventures into the lair of the **Hamas** extremists imposing their hardline doctrine on Palestinians trapped there. Photographs by Seamus Murphy

Hamas wants you to believe it has created a benevolent sanctuary where once chaos reigned. At the beginning of the journey into Gaza it's easy to believe that things are better.

There is no longer a Palestinian immigration desk after the long walk from the air-conditioned Erez terminal on the Israeli side, past concrete blast walls, and down a dusty track in the furnace heat. But further down the road, **Hamas** gunmen have taken over the checkpoints. They are polite and well turned out in blue camouflage trousers, clean black T-shirts, shiny black boots.

Once hostile, they now smile at returning foreigners who fled after the kidnapping of Alan Johnston, the BBC reporter, and the savage bloodletting between the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) forces and **Hamas** in June that left the fundamentalist party in absolute power.

So does everyone else in Gaza. It's like hearing the first songbird of spring. The welcome starts in the taxi. "Gaza is safe now. We have security, praise be to God," says Munir, my driver for years, who always in the past shook his head and moaned about how terrible everything was.

It's the same at the Al Deira hotel, mostly empty, where once aid workers, diplomats, journalists and sophisticated Gazans mixed on the terrace overlooking the Mediterranean. "Everything is safe now. You are welcome," says Amir at the front desk.

For the first time on a trip to Gaza, I was stopped going the wrong way down a one-way street, by one of the young **Hamas** volunteers in yellow vests now standing up to drivers in a culture that considers a red light to be a mere suggestion to slow down.

The rubbish still smells, but now it is piled neatly in the streets. Families stroll late at night. Gone is the gunfire that used to punctuate days and nights and often escalated into street battles that left innocents dead on the pavements.

Then you start talking to people in private.

Gaza's deadly guardians

Young men show you bruised limbs and welts on their feet; every girl wears a hijab head covering and, for the first time, women wear niqab Saudi-style face coverings that reveal only the eyes. And people whisper.

Welcome to Hamastan.

Ahmed Al-Naba'at, 24, sits in his courtyard in an oversized Barcelona shirt. He looks too young to be the father of the three young children who toddle barefoot round the tiny dirt courtyard.

His feet still hurt. Hamas came for him at 2am.

About 30 armed men, their faces masked but wearing the black uniforms and badges of the Izzedine al-Qassam Brigade, the military wing of Hamas, had surrounded the house. They covered his eyes and took him away in a car.

"They took me somewhere, I don't know, a room," Naba'at says. He has high cheekbones and the near-black skin of his Sudanese ancestry. "They were screaming and beating me, punching me, slapping me on the face," he says. "Then they tied my legs together and started falaka" a traditional Arabic torture where the soles of the feet are beaten with sticks. "I relaxed."

He sees the surprise in my face. "I thought they were going to kill me," he explains. "When I realised it's just falaka, I thought, okay, it's just torture."

Qassam dumped him near his home, hours later. It took him half an hour to walk what usually takes two minutes. "You were lucky," interjects his unsympathetic father, who is sitting against a courtyard wall. "Most of the people they beat, they throw them unconscious in the street and they are not found until the morning."

His crime? Earlier that night at a party for a friend's wedding, Naba'at had danced and played a song popular in Gaza an over-romanticised ballad to Samih al-Madhoun, a Fatah commander executed by Hamas during the fighting. Hamas cameramen had filmed as Madhoun was dragged down the street amid spitting crowds, shot in the stomach, beaten and shot some more. It was shown on Hamas television that night.

The overblown ballad of his death "Your blood is not for free Samih/You left behind an earthquake/We will not forget you Samih" is such a Gazan hit that many young people have it on their mobile phones. Hamas, predictably, is furious. Three of Al-Naba'at's friends who had danced at the wedding were also beaten.

Al-Naba'at, who left school at 14 and worked as a farm labourer and painter, has little recourse. He is too afraid to sleep at home any more. His father is clearly exasperated like many of the older generation, he thinks his sons should shut up. He points to another son, 17-year-old Mustafa. Hamas came after him when he burnt a Hamas flag: they arrested his father and twin brother until he gave himself up.

Hamas is not just going after the poor. Azil Akhras is a sophisticated 24 year-old woman with heavily kohled eyes, thick, flowing black hair and rouged lips, comfortable in her jeans and tight red shirt. Life used to be shopping, going out maybe to Roots, a popular Gaza nightclub even though it now serves only soft drinks and going to the beach. Her life changed dramatically three months ago when Hamas took over Gaza.

"Now, I cover my head when I go in a car. Hamas is at the checkpoints. Last week, they stopped a girl who was not covered and they beat her brother when he tried to protect her."

She and her sister must be careful; they are alone. Their father, a former government health minister, has fled Gaza to escape Hamas. He has holed up in Ramallah, the West Bank capital, and is unable to return.

It's not just shopping trips she misses. A university graduate, Akhras had wanted to sit her master's degree; she wanted to travel. "I had an idea, I wanted to be famous in history. Maybe a journalist," she says. "Now, there's no chance, I can't even go outside." She resents Hamas's repression. "If I decide to cover (my head), it will be for my God, not some Qassam soldier."

Gaza's deadly guardians

Gazans are living in a climate of fear. The place is eerily serene, not only because of the presence of disciplined **Hamas** security forces on the streets but, as in all successful police states, because everyone has started policing themselves, afraid of the consequences of stepping over a line not defined in formal law.

Hamas took power after five days of vicious, internecine fighting with the security forces of the PNA, who mostly belong to the rival Fatah organisation co-founded by Yasser Arafat, the late president.

Tension had escalated into clashes between the secular Fatah, who governed for a decade and whose members staff the civil service and security forces, and **Hamas**, after the religious party won national elections in March 2006.

The differences were exacerbated by Gaza's isolation. The international community cut funds to the Palestinian government after the **Hamas** election victory. Israel blocked the millions in tax revenue it was supposed to pass on for imports, and closed the borders intermittently. The economy went into freefall.

A national unity government formed in February failed to end the confrontation. But the speed of the coup in Gaza was shocking.

Hamas fielded only about 7,000 members of the Executive Force, its police force, which was backed by the Izzedine al-Qassam Brigade, the military wing of the party, against the 70,000-strong government forces loyal to Mahmoud Abbas, the Palestinian president.

There are many reasons for the swift collapse: the government security forces hadn't been paid for 18 months and were demoralised by the corruption of their own leaders. Their commanders fled, and many foot soldiers found that their guns were locked in storage. **Hamas** was better armed, better trained, and fought with the single-mindedness of those with a cause.

It was the worst ever clash among Palestinians: 110 died, and the population is still shocked by the brother-on-brother nature of the battle. Today there is a deadlock, and essentially two Palestinian governments. Abbas fired the **Hamas**-led coalition government and named a new emergency cabinet, but its powers run only in the West Bank. **Hamas** ministers refused to step down.

By Palestinian law, the government must be renewed by the parliament, but **Hamas** dominates the legislature and, anyway, it lacks a quorum: about one third of its members are in Israeli jails for belonging to **Hamas**.

The evidence of the ferocity of the fighting can be seen across Gaza city. The headquarters of the Preventive Security Service, the PNA's main security force, was the last stronghold. Now occupied by the Executive Force, there are gaping holes in the walls from bullets and rockets.

Abbas's presidential house is guarded by **Hamas** police who brew tea under new posters of **Hamas** members killed in the fighting. They shake their heads at the marble floors and luxurious furnishings, contrasting it with the home of Ismail Haniya, the **Hamas** prime minister, who lives in the al-Shati refugee camp.

At the Muntada, the Palestinian version of the White House, **Hamas** fighters stroll the corridors, and dust gathers on Abbas's rosewood desk, where Arafat once sat.

Hamas is extending its control. Nobody is safe if the example of Ashraf Juma, one of their more articulate opponents, is anything to go by. Juma is a senior member of Fatah, who refused to leave his home or office in Rafah, Gaza's southernmost city on Egypt's border. He is one of the most popular politicians in Gaza: when **Hamas** won the election, sweeping Gaza, he was one of the few elected from the Fatah list.

He was leader of the al-Aqsa hawks during the first intifada (uprising), and hands out money from his own pocket to the needy of both Fatah and **Hamas** (these days it's from his brother's, a wealthy businessman). His latest project is to find £ 5,000 for school uniforms for poor children.

Gaza's deadly guardians

None of it was any protection from **Hamas**. It began on the internet. Juma was criticised on the official **Hamas** website for supposedly sending Abbas the names of people whose salaries should be cut because they were **Hamas** members. Then critical leaflets were distributed in the local mosque. "Someone called from **Hamas** and said, 'Leave your office. This is a preparation for an attack on you,' " he says, sitting at home in a white short-sleeved shirt, dark trousers and sandals.

The next day, as he and his office staff finished evening prayers, blue police cars pulled up, disgorging men in the uniform of the Executive Force. They also wore black masks.

As he opened the door, he saw his secretary, Osama, trying to fend them off with a table. The gunmen began screaming and shot Osama in the thigh. They started beating him in the hallway before running off. "You were my sons. I served you," he shouted after them.

Juma shakes his balding head, and describes how the situation turned almost farcical. As word spread that he had been attacked, hundreds of people poured into Shifa hospital and packed the emergency room and courtyard.

"There were so many people, the doctors couldn't work properly. Look, they put stitches in wrong," he says, ducking his head to show newly healed scars. The crowds carried him out of the hospital before the doctors had finished, afraid that **Hamas** would return, and grabbed Osama from the operating room before his broken hand and gunshot wound were treated.

They almost killed their hero. Juma fell unconscious, Osama writhed in pain. Hundreds poured into the streets, denouncing the Executive Force. A doctor finally came and treated both of them at home.

It was a night of terror for many. Ismael, 29, an English teacher for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency, sits in the front room of the house he had just painted for a marriage that now will never happen.

"My last hours before they came were happy," recalls Ismael, who doesn't want his last name used because **Hamas** threatened to kill him if he told the story.

"I had just gotten engaged and I spent from 7.30pm to 11pm talking with my friends about what we would do for the celebrations," he says.

Suddenly, his house was surrounded by armed men in black with Qassam Brigade emblems. "One tried to hit me with a stick, and I said, 'What are you doing? I have done nothing.' "

They took him first to the Sayed Sayel Executive Force post. "They put me against a wall and started shouting, 'Have you been to a demonstration?' he says. "They became hysterical, shouting, 'You have been making riots here,' beating me with sticks, metal bars, stones."

His ordeal had just begun. "They said, 'What about the orphans?' " Ismael supports two orphans, Allah, who is nine and needs an eye operation, and Dina, who is 11, while trying to get them medical help through an American charity. **Hamas** said he should have no contact with foreigners.

They beat Ismael for an hour and a half, moving him at one point during the night to Idara Madaneh, the civil administration building in Jabaliya camp. He was blindfolded, but two young teenagers who had been taken in ran to him, screaming "Teacher! Teacher!", probably recognising him from school.

"Then **Hamas** started beating me on the arm I was using to try to protect the children," he says.

He was finally released at 4am with a warning not to talk, and not to go to a hospital. A doctor friend came round and treated him secretly.

Photographs from the June beating show welts on his back, ferocious bruises on his left arm, and a swollen right arm and elbow. He won't show me his legs out of modesty, but says they were black, and his knees are still not right.

Gaza's deadly guardians

But that was not the worst. His fiancée's family heard of the incident and believed he was a political activist against Hamas, which would endanger her future. Her father revoked his permission to marry and he has not spoken to his fiancée, a fellow teacher, since then. "My sister tells me she is crying and crying," Ismael says. Can't they marry when things calm down? "No chance. This is our tradition." For the first time in a long story, he brushes away a tear.

"Most of the educated people here feel they are living in a country that doesn't belong to them," he says when he recovers.

Hamas is not triumphalist in its takeover, as was the first prophet of militant Islam, Ayatollah Khomeini, who immediately set himself up against the West and all who didn't want to follow his unforgiving brand of Islam.

But then he had oil, 50m people, an army, air force and navy, and control of his own borders. Hamas is isolated and depends on international aid, with little but farming, fishing and a hostile neighbour that controls its borders, sea and skies.

This heavily armed statelet is squeezed between Israel's southern border and Egypt's northern border, separated by a chunk of Israel from the West Bank, the bigger, richer other half of the Palestinian "state".

The West Bank is still occupied by Israeli soldiers and Jewish settlers: they withdrew from Gaza two years ago, but still control the borders and ban all air and sea traffic, except for tiny wooden fishing boats allowed to go out six miles.

Since the Hamas takeover in June, Israel has not opened the main crossing points for even a day, and the economy has collapsed. The United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) estimates unemployment at 80% among the 1.4m inhabitants. There are no exports; a trickle of food bought by private Palestinian merchants from their Israeli counterparts is allowed across at the tiny Sufa crossing. It must be one of the strangest commercial dealings in the world. The Israeli army moves in pallets from about 100 trucks a day, shooting at anyone who approaches before they withdraw behind the fence; then there is a bizarre Mad Max-style race by forklifts to get the merchandise left in the no-man's-land.

In three months, an estimated 70,000 jobs have been lost in the construction industry alone. UNRWA has had to stop £ 47m in projects funded by donors apartments for those whose homes were destroyed by Israeli fire, oxidation projects for Gaza's overflowing sewage-treatment plants. Everyone is desperate. "This place is a powder keg waiting to explode," said John Ging, UNRWA's Gaza director.

Instead of the open defiance of Khomeini's Iran, Hamas has developed a parallel system: show a reasonable face to the world in the hope of ending Gaza's isolation, while enforcing the unforgiving law of the state of Hamastan at home.

Ismail Haniya, the silver-haired Hamas prime minister, could be a poster boy for moderate Islam. When I see him, he is sitting with Arab journalists, and gently lecturing them like the professor he once was. Aware he stands little chance with the West, he is seeking Arab support.

He tells them that negotiations are possible under certain conditions with Mahmoud Abbas, who is welcome to come back to Gaza. No women will be forced to wear the hijab that is a personal choice. Well, of course there can be no negotiations with Israel, although that could happen if they recognise Palestinian rights.

There is duplicity even in the detail, however: Haniya may say that women are free not to cover their heads, but before I go to his office an aide calls to tell me to be sure to wear a headscarf.

And recognising Palestinian rights is Hamas-speak for "We want all of the land of mandate Palestine, from the Mediterranean to the Jordan River," a maximalist position that ignores the fact that most Palestinians have moved on from 1948 to accept the existence of Israel, and would settle for a two-state solution. Negotiations are moribund, but Fatah-led governments have signed agreements with Israel recognising the reality that two states is the only solution.

Gaza's deadly guardians

Haniya may be the smooth-talking **Hamas** frontman but he lacks real power. A former professor of religion, he was a compromise choice fielded by Khaled Mesha'al, the exiled **Hamas** leader based in Damascus. "When we were negotiating, whenever a difficult point came up, Haniya had to leave the room to call Mesha'al," one of Abbas's top lieutenants said.

The real power lies with Mahmoud Zahar, who is in the strange position of being a foreign minister who can't travel from Gaza (Israel has closed the borders even to government officials).

A militant once expelled by Israel, he was expected to be prime minister after the **Hamas** victory, but Mesha'al apparently considered him too radical, and more of a threat than Haniya.

Sitting on a couch in the foreign ministry damaged in an Israeli bombing, he is scathing about Abbas. "(He) committed big crimes against the law, against human interest." Zahar is dressed in a light-grey safari suit, his beard neatly trimmed, his shoes polished. He exudes confidence and scorns any need for **Hamas** to reach out for a compromise. "Abbas is acting as an agent of America and Israel."

The power that stretches beyond his title peeps out. "We have information that Fatah are organising themselves into cells," he says. "We will find them and we will crush them."

There is no sense of urgency in finding a solution to the desperate need of the average Gazan with a large family and no work.

"We are not in a hurry. Palestinians are used to being under siege. I believe sooner or later the West will change its mind," he says calmly.

Again, during the interview, his power beyond that of the average diplomat is revealed when he takes a phone call about the siege of the powerful Dagmouch clan, the kidnappers of Alan Johnston, the BBC journalist. Earlier in the week the clan killed two **Hamas** policemen.

"Tell them that by 10pm we will go in if they have not agreed. We will enter their houses one by one."

Across town that very siege is under way. **Hamas** has again surrounded the Dagmouch neighbourhood as they did to get Johnston back. They have cut off the water and electricity.

Few in Gaza have any sympathy for the Dagmouches. One of the leaders of the clan and Johnston's main kidnapper, Mumtaz Dagmouch spouts extremist Al-Qaeda rhetoric, but his so-called Army of Islam has about 20 members and is better known for theft, gun smuggling and kidnapping. Fatah let Gaza's powerful families run wild, sometimes using them against **Hamas**.

Hamas has taken them on. Breaking the Dagmouches is crucial to consolidating power.

The discipline of **Hamas** on the front line of the siege of the concrete-block houses in the neighbourhood is in contrast to Fatah's members who won't talk until they get word from a commander over the walkie-talkie. Once allowed to talk, Abu Yehia, the local commander, doesn't have much to say. "We are imposing law and order. This is our duty. Islam tells us that."

Hamas is demanding that the Dagmouches surrender the guilty members of the family, and give back stolen weapons.

That night, the family does surrender, led by Mumtaz Dagmouch. He is double the size of the average Gazan, tall, broad-shouldered, with a shaggy dark beard and wild hair. He and his entourage screech their pick-up trucks into the Preventive Security compound, jump out waving guns and, seeing me, starts waving his M16, shouting: "Get this journalist out of here!" With both sides jostling and shoving, for moments it seems there will be a shoot-out.

Dagmouch finally hands over bags of guns, then marches with his bodyguard into the darkened police headquarters and starts pounding on the commander's door, shouting: "I gave you my weapons, let me in there."

Gaza's deadly guardians

The M16 is in the air again, 50 men all shoving with guns and elbows, and shouting.

Eventually, he calms down and half an hour later is talking to Abu Dahab, the **Hamas** commander.

Dagmouh tells me, "We've just had an English guest staying with us for a while," referring to Alan Johnston, the kidnapped journalist. I asked him why he kidnaps, and if his activities other than kidnapping will be affected under **Hamas**. He shrugs: "Business is business," he says.

Now that **Hamas** has solidified power, they are putting in place their system of keeping it. One part of this is a new "ladies unit", reminiscent of the one in Iran where fierce, make-up-free **women** drag other **women** out of cars and away for re-education. Ominously, **Hamas** have failed so far to set up a court system, so cases are being heard by an Islamic judge.

The one thriving industry is the arms industry.

I visit a Qassam area leader in Yibne camp in southern Gaza who has been "cooking" for three days making the explosive mixture that goes in the rockets they fire into Israel.

He takes me to one of the many armouries they have and shows me the extraordinary range of weapons they manufacture locally, mostly in underground factories. What they can't make, they smuggle through tunnels from Egypt.

The armoury is in a small, concrete block house, indistinguishable from its neighbours in the squalid maze of the camp. The home-made weapons I see include foot-wide land mines, tank-busting missiles, guns, rocket-propelled grenades, all stored amid the clutter of a bedroom with flowers on the shelf above the bed and a teddy bear lying belly-up on the floor.

He is nervous while we are there the Israelis target such places if they get information from collaborators, but he opens up when we go to another house for tea, although he won't give his name. He is unconcerned about his outside image, and this is the true voice of **Hamas**.

"Of course we will create an Islamic state. This is called for in the Holy Koran," he says. What would that mean, I ask him.

Well, for one, sharia law. "For a murder, death, not this life sentence there is now. A thief should have his hand cut off. An adulteress must be stoned," he says, in a chillingly nonchalant voice.

"There is no possibility of recognising Israel," he says. "All the land is ours. We are taught this by our leaders and they will never compromise."

His certitude comes from how **Hamas** recruits. It gets them young; my informant started at 14. Only when he proved himself "mentally and spiritually" was he allowed to join Qassam and receive military training.

And not all girls are like Azil Akhras. Gehad Nehan, 19, is studying law at the **Hamas**-dominated Islamic University in Gaza. She wears glasses, a hijab, and is covered in a navy-blue robe down to her thick black shoes. "**Hamas** has taken over the police stations and now the life is good."

She insists **women** are equal, but as she talks, a different reality is revealed. At the university, she says, "the boys say woman is weak, her work must be in the home. I say this is wrong".

Even getting to study was a struggle. "My father hits me and he punishes me and says I should not go to the university. It's difficult."

But despite having described Hamastan as virtually a perfect state, she has the yearning of all here to leave. "I want to travel all over the world and see people and how they live."

Those who have already travelled are the most angry at **Hamas**.

Gaza's deadly guardians

One restaurant owner begins by extolling Hamas for improving security. He sits at a banquette in his eatery in a yellow polo shirt. Christmas streamers still hang from the ceiling, and Whitney Houston is on the soundtrack.

"And they cancelled all family connections," he adds. "Before, if someone was connected to the government, they could eat and just not pay.

"But they are not the future for the Palestinian people," he insists. "We need a government that can deal with the international community." Despite growing dissatisfaction such as his, there is little sign that the green flags of Hamastan will be coming down any time soon

Load-Date: October 6, 2007

End of Document

What Olmert has to complete before exiting

The Jerusalem Post

August 19, 2008 Tuesday

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Section: OPINION; Pg. 16

Length: 923 words

Byline: GERSHON BASKIN

Highlight: Domestic political concerns should not be on the list of considerations in making the decision to pay the price for Schalit's release. The writer is co- CEO of the Israel/Palestine Center for Research and Information.

Body

Ehud Olmert did the right thing by deciding not to participate in the Kadima primaries. His premiership has been filled with critical errors for which there is a political price to pay. His lack of popularity is not simply a result of the many suspicions of corruption but of bad decisions and lack of performance on many of the issues that he promised the public that he would target

Olmert still has some time left in office to correct some of his mistakes and to close some issues which there is a moral responsibility on his shoulders to complete.

The number one issue is bringing Gilad Schalit home. I have been involved in the behind the scenes talks on this issue since a few days after his abduction on June 25, 2006. After dozens of phone conversations with various people in Gaza, on July 22, 2006 I was contacted by my interlocutors from Hamas offering a package deal in exchange for Schalit. It included a full cease-fire and a prisoner exchange - the terms being the same as we know today. I transferred the message to Olmert via a close relative of his. I received an answer several hours later stating that before anything, Hamas must produce a sign of life from Schalit. Olmert further asserted that Israel would not negotiate with terrorists.

From July 22 to September 9, I continued to carry on daily contacts with the Hamas people in Gaza and Damascus to get that sign of life. I was informed by Olmert's relative that Israel was sure he was alive - the main reason for the "sign of life" was to prove that there was a channel which could produce results. On September 9, with my direct involvement, a handwritten letter from Gilad was delivered to the Egyptian representatives in Gaza proving that he was alive and that there was a channel through which negotiations could be conducted.

On August 15, 2006 I received a fax from Hamas in Gaza with a list of its demands for the release of Schalit. That evening the newly appointed "point man" for the prisoner release negotiations, Ofer Dekel, traveled to Hila in the North to meet the Schalit family. I sent that fax from Hamas to Noam Schalit to present to Dekel. Several days later I handed Dekel the hard copy of the fax.

The Hamas demands have not changed since. It did take some additional six months before Hamas produced its list of names of prisoners that it demanded be released, but its conditions have not changed, nor will they change in any substantial way, at least as far as I can assess.

What Olmert has to complete before exiting

HAMAS WAS ready to enter into a cease-fire in July 2006. Israel rejected that offer then and instead waited for two years before agreeing. During those two years, thousands of Kassam rockets were shot at the innocent civilians living around the Gaza Strip. Since the abduction of Schalit, some 1,100 Gazans have been killed by Israeli security forces. Gaza was placed under full economic and military siege, and in June 2007 Gaza fell to complete control by **Hamas**. During this entire period, the IDF and Shin Bet (Israel Security Agency) have assessed over and over again that there is no military option for releasing Schalit without him and many others being killed.

Every time I read in the newspapers that negotiations over Schalit have been frozen, I almost laugh. What negotiations? There is nothing to negotiate over, except perhaps on the margins. Maybe **Hamas** will agree that some of the more difficult Palestinian prisoners to release be sent to Gaza for a limited period instead of to the West Bank. Maybe **Hamas** will remove a few specific names from the list in exchange for increasing the number of prisoners. These are all minor factors.

I have been asked over and over by **Hamas** representatives in Gaza and in Damascus if Olmert will pay the price. I have explained over and over how difficult it is for any prime minister to pay such a high price. The Egyptian mediators have asked me to propose ideas how to advance the negotiations. I have sent many ideas and many suggestions. The bottom line remains the same: **Hamas** is willing to wait until Israel pays the full price it demands.

NOW IT is up to Olmert. No doubt there are great risks when Israel releases more than 1500 Palestinian prisoners. The biggest risk may not actually be releasing convicted terrorists and murderers, but releasing the **Hamas** parliamentarians who will then enable the convening of the Palestinian Legislative Council and declare the Abbas-Fayad government null and void. They could also act to hold new elections or to block new elections, for Palestinian president and parliament. The entire deal will strengthen **Hamas**'s position throughout the Middle East. This is not only difficult for Israel, it poses significant difficulties for Egypt as well, as the Egyptian mediators have told me several times.

All of this is quite true; nonetheless, Olmert has a moral responsibility to bring Gilad Schalit home. He was abducted on his "watch," and before Olmert leaves the Prime Minister's Office he must bring him home. Domestic political concerns should be off of the list of considerations in making the decision to pay the price for Schalit's release. He has to face his own conscience and to continue to look the Schalit family, and in fact all of us, in the eyes and say: "I did everything possible to bring Gilad home."

It is probably too late for Olmert to make good on most of his other promises (removing outposts, freezing settlement building, reaching an agreement with Abbas, cleaning up government, election reform, etc.), it is not too late for him to bring Gilad Schalit home.

Graphic

Photo: PALESTINIAN **WOMEN** hold pictures of prisoners held in Israeli jails. **Hamas** is willing to wait until Israel pays the full price. (Credit: AP)

Load-Date: October 4, 2011

Eli Hurvitz: Our poor education is more dangerous than Hizbullah and Hamas; Teva chairman: The Jewish state suffers from ignorance and thuggery.

Globes [online] - Israel's Business Arena

December 10, 2007 Monday

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Length: 291 words

Byline: Ran Rimón

Body

Teva Pharmaceutical Industries Ltd. (Nasdaq: TEVA; TASE: TEVA) chairman Eli Hurvitz voiced scathing criticism of Israel's educational system during his address to the "Globes" 2007 Israel Business Conference yesterday. "In recent years, every time there was a budgetary shortfall, there was a mutual agreement, we won't pay and you can cut the number of tuition hours. It wasn't long before standards started falling as well. Today, the Jewish state suffers from a combination of ignorance and thuggery. We have bad education, which is becoming more dangerous than Hamas and Hizbullah," he said.

"The poorest groups in Israel get the worst education and they do not participate in the building of the Israeli economy," Hurvitz continued. "They don't work, and as long as this remains the case, we have no chance of reaching high rates of growth. There is only one way this can be achieved, and that is by a high percentage of employment in the economy. The figures are exceptionally dire amongst haredim (ultra orthodox), and Arab women."

Turning his attention to current macro economic policy Hurvitz remarked, "Once, from the founding of the state to 1973, Israel had GDP per capita growth of 5.7% a year. There was a highly disorganized culture of getting the job done quickly. We increased the budget recklessly. Since 1985, everything we've done through reform was worth the price. Since then, we've seen an average GDP per capita growth in any given long-term period of 1-1.5%. The last two years have made us confident that things have changed. This is the result of sound macroeconomic policy."

Published by Globes [online], Israel business news - www.globes.co.il - on December 10, 2007

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Load-Date: December 10, 2007

Abbas and Olmert to resume talks

The International Herald Tribune

April 1, 2008 Tuesday

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Section: NEWS; Pg. 4

Length: 639 words

Byline: Helene Cooper - The New York Times Media Group

Dateline: AMMAN

Body

Taghreed El-Khodary contributed reporting from Gaza.

*

The Palestinian president, Mahmoud Abbas, said Monday that he would return to the bargaining table for face-to-face peace talks with Prime Minister Ehud Olmert of Israel next week. The two have not met since the Israeli incursion into Gaza began a month ago.

Abbas suspended negotiations for about a week after Israel struck against Palestinian positions in Gaza in retaliation for a rocket attack on the Israeli city of Ashkelon. Since then, Palestinian negotiators have held talks with their Israeli counterparts, but the leaders have not.

The on-again off-again talks are part of the steep climb Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice has begun in her effort to reach a comprehensive peace agreement between Arabs and Israelis before President George W. Bush's term in office expires. Standing next to Abbas at a news conference after a meeting here, Rice criticized Israel for its continued settlement expansion in the West Bank.

The authorities in Jerusalem announced plans Monday to build 600 new homes in the occupied West Bank settlement of Pisgat Zeev.

"Settlement activity should stop and expansion should stop; it is not consistent with road-map obligations," Rice said, referring to the internationally agreed framework for actions required of Israelis and Palestinians, which was formally unveiled in 2003. The so-called road map calls for the Palestinians to disarm militants and eliminate terrorist organizations, and for Israel to freeze the building of settlements. Neither side has met those obligations.

"My strong view is that the best thing we can do is focus on getting this agreement, because then we won't have these discussions about what belongs in Israel and what belongs in Palestine," Rice said. "We will know."

Abbas, meanwhile, took umbrage when two reporters asked him separately whether he planned to accept the invitation from the exiled **Hamas** leader Khaled Meshaal to visit Gaza, which was seized by **Hamas** last summer.

"There is no answer to that question," Abbas snapped. "It does not need an answer." When a second reporter asked him again, he said that he had already responded to that question.

Abbas and Olmert to resume talks

Palestinian Authority figures said later that Meshaal's invitation was an insult to Abbas, and that, as Palestinian president, Abbas did not need an invitation to Gaza, especially one worded, as Meshaal's was, as having "no conditions."

In another development Monday, **Hamas** police officers and supporters beat a number of professors and students of Al Azhar University, the last bastion of the rival faction Fatah in Gaza, injuring several, witnesses said. **Hamas** denied that it had acted improperly and said the police restored order.

The students and staff were protesting a rally that **Hamas** insisted on holding inside the university campus in memory of Sheikh Ahmed Yassin, the founder of the militant Islamic group who was killed in an Israeli airstrike in March 2004.

Al Azhar University has continued to operate, despite having been raided five times since **Hamas** routed Fatah forces and took control of Gaza last June.

Before dawn Monday, **Hamas** activists entered the compound and set up equipment for the rally, hanging pictures of **Hamas** leaders and **Hamas** flags. When members of the academic staff protested outside, **Hamas** police officers beat them with clubs, said Ayman Shaheen, a professor of political science. Shaheen said he was hit twice.

"All they know is the language of force," Shaheen said of **Hamas**. "We try to talk to them but they don't listen."

A number of **female** students were then attacked at the rally by participants who mostly came from outside, many armed with clubs, witnesses said. Tahrir Abu Latifa, 19, a student of commerce, was taken to Gaza's main Al Shifa Hospital unconscious but was able to leave a few hours later.

Load-Date: April 8, 2008

Palestinians smash through Egypt border

The Australian (Australia)

January 24, 2008 Thursday

1 - All-round Country Edition

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Section: WORLD; Pg. 9

Length: 598 words

Byline: Correspondents in Rafah, Gaza Strip

Body

TENS of thousands of Gazans, trapped in their territory by a blockade, poured into Egypt to buy supplies yesterday after masked Palestinian gunmen blew holes in the border wall.

Egyptian guards and **Hamas** police took no action as Palestinians hurried over the border and began returning with food, cigarettes and fuel, although Egyptian security forces closed down all side roads in Rafah, the town that straddles the border, to control the flow.

Hamas security officials said about two-thirds of the 12km wall was demolished.

The chaotic scenes came on the sixth day of a complete closure of Gaza, imposed by Israel and backed by Egypt, in response to a spike in Gaza rocket attacks on Israeli border towns.

Hours earlier, gunfire erupted as a group of mostly **female** Gazan demonstrators, protesting the Israeli blockade, forced their way over the Egyptian border crossing. The **women** were detained by Egyptian troops but released after baton-wielding **Hamas** police broke up the protest.

Gaza's **Hamas** rulers have orchestrated daily demonstrations on the Gaza-Egypt border, to pressure Egypt to open the passage.

On Tuesday, Israel eased the closure slightly, transferring fuel to restart Gaza's only power plant, and also sent in some cooking gas, food and medicine. Israel has pledged to continue limited shipments because of concerns that a humanitarian crisis could develop in the already impoverished coastal territory.

But Gazans are still facing critical shortages of electricity, fuel and other supplies. The territory has been largely cut off from the world since June, when **Hamas** seized power in Gaza by force.

Before dawn yesterday, Palestinian gunmen began blowing holes in the border wall running along the Gaza-Egypt border. **Hamas** security quickly took control of the frontier, channelling traffic through two holes in the border.

Gazan Ibrahim Abu Taha, 45, a father of seven, was in the Egyptian section of Rafah with his two brothers and 700 shekels (\$219).

``We want to buy food, we want to buy rice and sugar, milk and wheat and some cheese," he said.

Palestinians smash through Egypt border

He said such basic foods were triple the price in Gaza.

Faced with a crippling Israeli blockade, **Hamas** appears to be applying pressure on Egypt, which has co-operated with Israel's sanctions by keeping the Rafah border closed. Scenes of privation in Gaza could force Egypt to ease the border closure, allowing the **Hamas** regime to relieve its isolation.

A **Hamas** security officer who identified himself as Abdel Rahman, 29, said he was out of Gaza for the first time.

"I can smell the freedom," he said. "We need no border after today." He denied weapons were being smuggled in from Egypt.

"You can buy weapons in Gaza, guns and RPGs," he said, adding it was easier to find weapons in Gaza than cancer medicine or Coke.

Weapons are generally brought into Gaza through tunnels under the Gaza-Egypt border.

The identity of the gunmen who breached the border was unclear.

But a **Hamas** statement supported the move: "Blowing up the border wall with Egypt is a reflection of the ... catastrophic situation which the Palestinian people in Gaza are living through due to the blockade."

Over the past few days, pictures of blacked-out Gaza City, children marching mournfully with candles and people lining up at closed bakeries evoked appeals from governments, aid agencies and the UN for an end to the closure, though Israel maintained that **Hamas** created an artificial crisis.

The Israeli government has pledged 250,000 litres of diesel fuel would be transferred into Gaza daily, but the crossings would remain closed to other goods and people.

Load-Date: January 24, 2008

Gazans raze wall at Egypt border; Hordes rush in to buy food and fuel, then return home

The International Herald Tribune

January 24, 2008 Thursday

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Section: NEWS; Pg. 1

Length: 811 words

Byline: Steven Erlanger and Graham Bowley - The New York Times Media Group

Dateline: RAFAH, Egypt

Body

Graham Bowley reported from New York. Isabel Kershner contributed reporting from Jerusalem.

*

Thousands of Palestinians streamed from the Gaza Strip into Egypt on Wednesday after a fence at the Rafah border crossing was toppled, going on a buying spree of fuel, medicine, soap, cigarettes and many other supplies that have been cut off during days of blockade by Israel.

The scene at the border was one of a great bazaar, with Palestinians piling donkeys, carts and motorcycles high with goats, chickens, televisions, concrete and other goods they had been unable to buy in Gaza.

Israel ordered the closing of its border crossings into Gaza last week, halting all shipments except for emergency supplies, after a sustained and intense barrage of rocket fire into Israel by militant groups in the Gaza Strip, which is controlled by **Hamas**. Israel allowed in some fuel, medical supplies and food on Tuesday, as temporary relief, but it has said that its closing policy remains in place.

Initial reports suggested that **Hamas** militants had used explosives to blow a hole in the corrugated-iron border fence at Rafah. The Rafah crossing into Egypt has been shut since **Hamas** took over Gaza in a short war with Fatah last summer.

Witnesses reported hearing explosions early Wednesday morning and said that **Hamas** then sent bulldozers to push the fence over. Some reports said **Hamas** militants had blown as many as 15 holes along the fence. Later television footage showed that the fence had been toppled in several sections.

People began pouring over the fence before dawn, said one witness, Fatan Hessin, 45. She had crossed into Egypt to be reunited with a childhood friend.

"I am not **Hamas** or Fatah, but I thank **Hamas** for this," she said.

Arye Mekel, a spokesman for the Israeli Foreign Ministry, said: "I think **Hamas** has been planning this for a long time. Maybe they thought this would be an opportune time." He was referring to the mounting international concerns over Israel's blockade.

Gazans raze wall at Egypt border Hordes rush in to buy food and fuel, then return home

Hamas supporters held a protest in Rafah on Tuesday, when dozens of protesters, many of them **women**, tried to push through the crossing into Egypt in two waves and were forced back by Egyptian police officers and soldiers, sometimes using a water cannon and shooting into the air.

On Wednesday, President Hosni Mubarak of Egypt said he had ordered his troops to allow Palestinians to cross because the Palestinians were starving, The Associated Press reported.

"But today a great number of them came back, because the Palestinians in Gaza are starving due to the Israeli siege," he said, according to The AP.

Gaza's population of 1.5 million depends on imports for most basic supplies. After the border fence fell, Egyptian merchants took goods to the Egyptian side of Rafah to sell, and some Palestinians were bringing home televisions and computers.

Bags of concrete were in particular demand, since building materials have been in short supply for months because of restrictions Israel imposed after the **Hamas** takeover of Gaza. Israel suspects **Hamas** of using concrete to build tunnels.

Gas stations on the Egyptian side of the border were besieged, according to the BBC.

There were few signs of police officers directing the crowds, and Egyptian border guards stood aside to let the Palestinians cross.

Riot police waited a few streets away.

The Rafah crossing has been a point of controversy between Egypt and Israel. **Hamas** and Egypt have opened the crossing briefly on a few occasions, most recently to permit about 2,000 Palestinians to make the annual Muslim pilgrimage to Mecca, in Saudi Arabia.

But Israeli officials contend that **Hamas** exploits these occasions to bring weapons and money into Gaza from Egypt.

Mekel, the Israeli Foreign Ministry spokesman, said of the latest breach: "The danger is that **Hamas** and other terror organizations will take advantage of the situation to smuggle in weapons and men and make a bad situation in Gaza worse."

Aid officials had warned earlier this week that Gaza, gripped by fuel and electricity shortages, was two or three days from a health and food crisis.

The United Nations Relief and Works Agency, which provides assistance to Palestinian refugees and their descendants, announced Monday that it would have to suspend its food aid to 860,000 Gaza residents by Wednesday or Thursday if the crossings from Israel into Gaza were not reopened, because the group was running out of the nylon bags it uses to measure and distribute staples, like flour.

On Tuesday, Israel pumped about 750,000 liters, or about 200,000 gallons, of industrial diesel into Gaza, part of the 2.2 million liters it said it would provide for one week only to Gaza's main power station, which had shut down after its tanks ran dry.

On Tuesday afternoon, the plant started one of its three turbines, bringing power to parts of Gaza City that had been dark or running on generators.

Load-Date: January 30, 2008

Infant among dead as Gaza blast kills seven people

The Daily Star (Lebanon)

June 13, 2008 Friday

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THE DAILY STAR

LEBANON

Length: 594 words

Byline: The Daily Star

Body

Palestinian militants bombarded southern Israel on Thursday after a **Hamas** commander's house in northern Gaza was blown up in a blast which killed seven people, including a four-month-old baby. The attacks started right after the explosion, which Palestinian medics said also wounded 51 people, among them **women** and children.

GAZA CITY: Palestinian militants bombarded southern Israel on Thursday after a **Hamas** commander's house in northern Gaza was blown up in a blast which killed seven people, including a four-month-old baby.

The attacks started right after the explosion, which Palestinian medics said also wounded 51 people, among them **women** and children, in and around the two-story building.

The Israeli military said nearly 50 rockets and mortar rounds were fired from the Gaza Strip following the explosion, which **Hamas** blamed on the Jewish state despite its denial of involvement.

"Only yesterday, Israel decided to give a chance to the Egyptian initiative which could have brought calm to the south," the Israeli prime minister's spokesman Mark Regev told AFP.

"The barrage of rockets today shows that **Hamas** has no interest in calm and is committed to violence, terror and murder."

However, at Wednesday's meeting, the Israeli security cabinet also ordered the military to make the necessary preparations for a major ground offensive against Gaza if the Egyptian-brokered truce talks fail to bear fruit, prompting **Hamas** to ridicule the genuineness of its stated desire for a cease-fire.

A senior Israeli defense official was in Cairo on Thursday for a new round of the Egyptian-mediated negotiations.

The Islamist **Hamas** movement seized power a year ago in the Gaza Strip, an impoverished sliver of land, ousting forces loyal to secular Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas who refused to accept defeat in democratic elections.

Witnesses and **Hamas** said Thursday's blast that leveled the house in Beit Lahiya was caused by an Israeli air strike, but the army denied any involvement, saying it could have been an accidental blast.

Infant among dead as Gaza blast kills seven people

The Israeli military "has no connection whatsoever to the events the Palestinians are describing. Our air force and land forces did not operate at that time," spokeswoman Major Avital Leibowitz told AFP.

Hamas' Al-Aqsa television channel said the house belonged to a local commander of the armed wing of the Islamist movement, and added that he was not at home at the time.

Many of the victims belonged to one family, said Muawiya Hassanein, who heads the Gaza emergency services.

"We blame this crime on the Israeli occupation," **Hamas** spokesman Taher Nunu said in Gaza City. "We are used to Israel not admitting to its crimes."

Another **Hamas** official, Mushir al-Masri, told Al-Aqsa: "The enemy must pay the price. We will not remain passive after this horrible crime."

Two Gaza militants were killed by Israeli forces earlier on Thursday in operations before the house blast and a clash after the explosion, Palestinian emergency services said.

One militant was killed in an air strike near Khan Yunis and another died in a firefight with Israeli troops in the Beit Lahiya area, they said.

The Israeli Army confirmed the air strike and said soldiers fired on Palestinians who approached the fence separating Israel from Gaza, hitting one.

At least 501 people, nearly all Palestinians and including more than 100 civilians, have been killed since peace talks between Israel and the Palestinian leadership resumed last November, according to an AFP count. That tally does not include the dead in Thursday's house blast. - AFP, with The Daily Star

Load-Date: October 23, 2008

Two sides of the price tag for Schalit

The Jerusalem Post

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Byline: GERSHON BASKIN

Highlight: If Olmert doesn't agree to release 450 terrorists, every Israeli soldier will know that his government will not go the distance to bring him home. ENCOUNTERING PEACE. The writer is Co-CEO of the Israel/Palestine Center for Research and Information.

Body

During this festive Pessah holiday of freedom my thoughts, like so many thousands of others, have been with Gilad Schalit and his family. Held in captivity somewhere in Gaza for 667 days, there is still no clear sign in sight that his release is imminent. Why has it taken so long to secure his release?

For one, we are dealing with a political-Islamic- radical movement that while willing and even anxious to negotiate his release, is not willing to negotiate directly, even in a secret back channel. Although kidnapped by what are apparently three separate groups, Hamas has been charged with the negotiations, pretty much since the beginning of the negotiating process. Hamas issued its demands very soon after the abduction of Schalit. The only compromise that Hamas has shown since that time concerns the release of information on his welfare and actual proof that Gilad is alive and well. Initially Hamas demanded the release of all Palestinian women and minors in Israeli prisons, numbering some 450, in exchange for information.

Having been directly involved in the negotiations prior to the appointment of Ofer Dekel by Ehud Olmert, I can say that Hamas was convinced to release a sign of life without receiving anything in exchange, mainly because it was a way to prove that there actually was a channel for negotiations that had a direct connection to the people holding Schalit. On September 9, 2006, 75 days after his abduction, a hand-written letter from Gilad finally reached the hands of the Egyptian mediators who at that time were still based in Gaza.

Hamas was led to understand that there would be some kind of confidence-building measure undertaken by Israel following the release of that letter. On September 12, 2006 it was announced that an Israeli military court had ordered the release of 16 Hamas politicians being held since the kidnapping. It is not clear if this order had been initiated by Olmert in response to the letter from Schalit.

At the end of the day, the court order was reversed and none of the Hamas politicians were released at that time. The captors of Schalit immediately passed on a message (to me) that Israel was not taking the situation seriously and was in fact endangering the life of Schalit.

THE VERY first messages that I was requested to deliver to Prime Minister Ehud Olmert concerning Schalit included Hamas demands for a package deal that would include a full bilateral cease-fire and the release of Palestinian prisoners from Israeli prisons. To the best of my knowledge, those demands have not changed in the past 667 days and to the best of my assessment they will not change. It took quite some time, but Hamas did also

Two sides of the price tag for Schalit

eventually release a list of names of Palestinians being held in Israeli prisons. Recently I did receive some indication that Hamas might be willing to lessen the number (not significantly) but not what they call the "quality" of the prisoners, if the package deal is completed. Now, the package that they are talking about includes not only a full bilateral cease-fire for Gaza and the West Bank but also the opening of the Rafah border with Egypt and at least one of the crossings between Gaza and Israel (most likely Karni) and the prisoner exchange.

Israel has been carrying on the negotiations through the Egyptians (mainly), trying to change the criteria of which prisoners could be released. Numerous attempts to come up with new kinds of criteria and definitions have been suggested by Israel to the Hamas through the Egyptians. A non-Egyptian negotiator who had been involved in the mediation attempts told me that the entire discussion is ridiculous. Israel has been talking about things like "how much blood they have on their hands, or whose blood they have on their hands, or if the blood goes up to their wrists or up to their elbows." Hamas' response, directed to me both from Damascus and from Gaza on at least five separate occasions, has been "Israel is not being serious about the negotiations - apparently they don't want Schalit to be released."

Each time I transferred messages back to the Israeli side I was told by official Israelis that those messages are part of the negotiations, a means of applying more pressure on Israel. Today, 667 days after the abduction of Schalit, we are no closer to an agreement than we were at the beginning (unless of course the work of Jimmy Carter proves to be successful). Hamas has not changed its demands, and it will not change its demands.

IN MY assessment, Hamas will not release Schalit without a cease-fire agreement. They perceive Schalit to be the life insurance policy that they are holding for the Hamas leaders in Gaza. They will not give up that policy without having a cease-fire in place. They demand a cease-fire in the West Bank as well because they assess that if there are Hamas and other leaders killed in the West Bank the cease-fire in Gaza will immediately breakdown as well. They are demanding a policy of economic revival because with the continuation of the economic siege on Gaza a cease-fire won't hold as well.

There is a package deal on the table. In the first stage Israel will have to release some 450 Palestinians from Israeli prison. The majority of them are considered to be hard-core terrorists. Many of them are veterans and already senior citizens who have been sitting in prison for many years, but many other are young and their hands are drenched in Jewish blood.

This is the price for the release of Schalit. It might be possible that Israel will not pay this price. It could be possible that Olmert believes that the price is too high to pay. It may very well be that Olmert does not have the political courage or political ability to pay such a heavy price. I would estimate that Schalit will remain in captivity as long as that price is not paid. His fate could end up like that of Ron Arad. If Israel had a military option for releasing Schalit, they would have played that a long time ago.

The other side of the price tag, if not paid, is the knowledge that every Israeli soldier will take into battle with him that in the end of the day, the Israeli government will not do everything possible to bring him home, if God forbid, he falls into captivity. We can only wonder what that will do to the motivation of soldiers to enlist in combat units.

A deal for Schalit's release could be completed in a relatively short period of time - it could have been done a long time ago as well. If Israel is not willing to pay the known price, it is unlikely that Schalit will come home at any time in the near future. It is, by no doubt, a very tough decision, but it is time for Olmert to make it.

Graphic

Photo: GILAD SCHALIT. Hamas demands for his release also include a full bilateral cease-fire.

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