

ISRAEL: ATTACK IN JERUSALEM: THE HAND OF TEHRAN?

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Today, just after 03:00 PM (01:00 GMT) a **bomb exploded in Jerusalem, injuring at least 25 peoples** (at least 4 to 8 of them seriously). Shortly after 05:00 local, it was reported that a **woman died** from her wounds.

The attack occurred outside the **International Convention Center (*Binyanei Haouma*)**, in front of the **Central Bus Station (*Tarana Merkazit*)** at the **northwest entry of the city**. Two buses were hit. The blast was heard throughout Jerusalem.

Despite what was earlier thought, **this was not a suicide attack**: the bomb was apparently tied to a telephone pole, **which means that at least one active terrorist, and maybe a terrorist cell is alive in Jerusalem. Other terrorist attacks could, thus be feared until this terrorist or cell is annihilated.**

It is worthwhile reminding that this is the **first successful bomb attack against a bus in Jerusalem for years.**

1) Attacks multiply

This attack occurs as **tension is rising in Israel** with fresh mortar attack from Gaza hitting the south of the country since a week.

Incidents have multiplied since a few days:

- This Wednesday **March 23**, two Grad-type Katyusha rockets were fired at Be'er Sheva and seven mortar shells fell at the Eshkol region (Claimed by **The Islamic Jihad**)
- Tuesday **March 22**, four mortars were fired toward the northern Negev region. A third Qassam was fired towards Eshkelon and finished in an open area outside the city. The same day IDF forces confronted a group of terrorists preparing to fire an ant tank missile
- Saturday, **March 19**, an estimated 50 mortars were fired from the Gaza Strip on Israeli border communities. Two people were said to have been injured as most of the rockets fell in the southern Negev Desert. This last attack was the **heaviest shelling in more than two years.** (Attack was claimed by the **Ezzedine Al-Qassam Brigades**, the armed wing of **Hamas**)
- Saturday **March, 5**: a Qassam rocket fired from the Gaza strip fell on the western Negev
- Sunday **February 27**: a Qassam was fired at the Eshkol Regional Council

- Wednesday **February 24**: 2 Grad rockets fired at the Israeli cities of Be'er Sheva and Netivot

ESISC already assessed that Hamas could benefit from the “revolutionary” situation in Egypt **especially as the new Egyptian authorities could ease the border blockade enforced on Gaza since 2007, with the assistance of ousted president Hosni Mubarak.**

To recall, the latter’s fall **was acclaimed by the Hamas as “a victory for the will of the people and a turning point in the future of the region.”**

2) The hand of Teheran?

It must be underlined that **most of the recent attacks came after the beginning of the Gulf Council Cooperation operation in Bahrain**, were the GCC stopped an unrest largely manipulated by Iran.

In a **special classified report sent to our clients** on March 16, ESISC stated that Iran will certainly retaliate. Here’s a part of this report.

QUOTE

(...) Based on our own experience and on the contacts we had with Intelligence sources (...), we know that **usually, Tehran avoid direct confrontation and try to NEVER be imposed an operational agenda. So, it is unlikely that Iran will openly intervene in Bahrain** which would lead to direct confrontation with Saudi Arabia and a virtual war risk with disastrous consequences.

Tehran will very likely use one (or SEVERAL) of the following **“indirect” options** (classed from the most likely to the less likely):

- 1) Push Bahraini hardliners to provoke and confront Saudi troops in Bahrain and Bahraini security forces**
- 2) Use terrorism in the Gulf area to destabilize the region and make Saudi Arabia, other Gulf Sunni states and their American “godfather” uncomfortable**
- 3) Push Hezbollah to adopt a stronger stance in Lebanon**
- 4) Push Hezbollah and/or Hamas to attack Israeli interest in the Middle East**
- 5) Push its proxies groups in Yemen or Iraq to be more aggressive, thus trying to force the U.S. to “contain” the Saudis**
- 6) Do nothing and wait another moment and another place to settle the counts**
- 7) Openly enter the Bahraini game**

All those options have their advantages and disadvantages.

The three main disadvantages Tehran wants avoid are:

- To **openly expose Iran** and be exposed to more isolation and/or retaliation
- To **lose locally what it has gained in the last 5 years** (especially in Iraq and Lebanon)
- To **give the United States a reason to reinforce its military presence** in the Gulf (including Iraq).

The main advantage, is to offer Iran – if it plays “correctly” (“openly enough” to mobilize Shiite masses in the Middle East but covertly enough to use its usual “plausible denial” and avoid any backlash) a **new increasing of its influence in the region.**

We assess:

- **The less likely is an open intervention in Bahrain**
- **If one/several of the 5 first options doesn't/don't match exactly the Tehran criteria they will go to the 6th option.**

It must be underlined that yesterday (March 15) **Israel Defence Forces (IDF)** boarded a **Liberian flagged cargo** transporting “**Iranian arms for the Hamas**”¹ and that today the **Turkish Air Force** intercepted an **Iranian plane** loaded with **arms for The Hezbollah through Syria**. This could indicate that Tehran was already planning the options 3 and 4 BEFORE the GCC intervention in Bahrain.

END OF QUOTATION

3) Conclusions and assessment

Hamas and Hezbollah don't need to be particularly incited to attack Israel, as this could be described as their “**core business**”. It must also be understood that **Hamas has its own agenda**. The Palestinian authority will soon know a **new election** and to conduct fresh attack against Israel makes sense for an organisation which says that it is **the only real resistance against “Zionism”**.

But in the same time, it is very clear that **the global unrest in the Arab world change some aspects of the equation**. With the ousting of President Mubarak in Egypt the **Muslim Brotherhood as a new political card to play and it could hope makes significant progress** in the future. And the **Hamas is a “branch” of the Egyptian Muslim Brothers**.

¹ IDF posted pictures of the arms at the following address : [IDF SPOX FLICKR: Photos of Weapons Found On-Board the Victoria](#)

Last but not least, **the two “godfathers” of Hamas (and Hezbollah) , Syria and Iran**, two states having used terrorism as a political tool for decades **have their own interests:**

- **Syria**, as other Arab countries, **is confronted to a intern unrest and create a new crisis between Israel and the Palestinians could be a good idea**
- **Iran was directly defied by the Sunni sates Gulf in Bahrain ant it must do something to keep the advantage** it has. For Teheran too, a new Middle East crisis should be good news.

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We assess that it will be of particular importance to observe the evolution of Palestinian terrorism in the next days to understand in today’s attack and the last days incidents are isolated facts or are part of a global confrontation strategy.

It will also important to detect and observe all signs showing that Tehran and Damas are increasing their effort to rearm Hamas and Hezbollah and offer more support to those proxy organisations.