

January 27, 1957

### Subversive Activity in the Gaza Area

#### General

The local population, permanent residents and refugees, who were very fearful for their future during the early days of the occupation given the IDF's surprising victory and several belligerent actions that followed in the area – have shown full obedience to the authorities. Some have recently recovered. This partial shift in the public climate was caused by:

- a) Our difficulties in the diplomatic arena
- b) The IDF withdrawal from the Sinai Desert
- c) Fear of Egyptian retribution should they return to the area
- d) Inciteful radio broadcasts from Cairo
- e) Actions of agitators who spread rumors

#### The incidents

Five weeks after the surrender of Gaza, an anti-Israeli pamphlet, dated November 29, 1956, marked No 1 and signed by the "National Movement" was circulated in the city. Three more, sequentially numbered pamphlets (2-3-4) circulated subsequently, until January 19, 1957. The content of these pamphlets revolved around: a). Condemnation and evacuation of IDF forces; b). Establishment of an independent Arab state in the Gaza area, with ties to Egypt; c) Cooperation with the UN. The pamphlets were not widely circulated.

When the IDF began its withdrawal from the Sinai Desert, more anti-Israeli sentiments emerged. Several known Israeli collaborators received threatening letters. A handful of handwritten pamphlets were posted on walls in Gaza, Deir al-Balah and Khan Yunis. Several slogans were painted on walls as well, mostly in schools, calling to refrain from attending school. These occurrences were not indicative of a unified, solid organization.

In the past two weeks, several educated youths from Khan Yunis and Rafah have attempted to organize with the object of acting as a Fifth Column, and receive directions from the Egyptian forces in al-Arish. They have already held several meetings to discuss necessary measures, and the possibility of sending a delegate to al-Arish.

#### "The National Movement"

News received when the action first began indicated a communist initiative in cooperation with nationalist elements and the Muslim Brotherhood.

The course of action chosen was the immediate elimination of this activity, without waiting for further information that would expose the entire structure of the organization. Phase I of the arrests was undertaken in Gaza in January of this year, in conjunction with IDF raids on the city. Some 20 suspects were interrogated. This

interrogation, which was conducted quite liberally, failed to yield the desired results, as the suspects denied membership in the Movement. Since it was evident that most of them were lying, some were kept in custody and some were released. Some of those released have since fled.

Phase II of the arrests was conducted on 19-20 January 1957, following the capture of two individuals who distributed the "National Movement" pamphlets. The two were captured by chance, after acting suspiciously on the street. Their vigorous interrogation led to the arrest of six more activists and the latter's interrogation flagged 25 additional activists, 13 of whom have been arrested. The remaining activists, including two described as major activists, have fled. All the detainees underwent initial interrogation, and all but one admitted to belonging to the National Movement or having connections to it. They also verified suspicions with respect to some of the persons arrested during Phase I.

Additional arrests were made on Saturday, January 26, 1957. These have resulted in the seizure of two duplicating machines and some 300 printed pamphlets that had yet to be distributed.

Efforts are now underway to locate the hiding place of the escapee Movement members.

The thorough interrogation of the detainees, which has just begun, and an examination of Egyptian secret service archives reveal the following:

- The instigators of the National Movement and its organizers are communists.
- These communists were intermittently persecuted by the Egyptians. Their treatment improved after the signing of the Egyptian-Czech arms deal, but they remained under surveillance until the last day of Egyptian rule over Gaza (surveillance reports on some of the members were written as late as November 1, 1956).
- Their activity under Egyptian rule was very limited. They distributed several pamphlets against the local administration, sometimes signing as "The Communist Party" and sometimes using other names such as The Refugee Committee etc.
- The idea of establishing the National Movement followed attempts to draw circles affiliated with the Brotherhood and the Ba'th Party into the fight against Israel, which resulted in cooperation between the communists and the Muslim Brotherhood.
- The National Movement had managed to branch out into Gaza, Deir al-Balah and Khan Yunis, but no overall organizational framework has been formed yet, with the exception of several small communist cells that have been used for this purpose.
- The number of known activists and people affiliated with the Movement so far is close to 40.

#### Other hostile activity:

The vagueness surrounding the future of Israeli rule in the area, incitement against Israel and our difficulties in the diplomatic arena have made the population extremely conscious of local rule. Rumors run rampant, and the public climate shifts frequently. A few handwritten pamphlets or a few threatening letters could influence and provoke the population. The Arab street tends to obey agitators, even when their identity is not clearly known. The public identifies them as agents implementing the orders of Cairo Radio and as such, they are highly regarded. Public awareness is particularly conspicuous in Gaza City, followed by the refugee camps and then the rural areas.

This is a convenient breeding-ground for subversive action, of different sorts, conducted by different small groups. They do not require a developed organization in order to achieve their goal – to prevent calm in the region.

There is no indication of any activity on direct orders from the Egyptians, but it is safe to assume that such activity will occur as they establish themselves closer.

The aforesaid group of youths from Kahn Yunis and Rafah will be handled at the appropriate time.

### Conclusion

Two possible centers of managing active and passive resistance in the area emerge:

- a) Organized factions: communists, Muslim Brotherhood, parties, various clubs and organizations from Egyptian times.
- b) Various small circles of the intelligentsia.

Elimination of activity by factions belonging to the first category may bring relative calm to the area. However, members of the second category would presumably continue to cause trouble for the authorities for a long period of time, so long as the current circumstances enabling their activity prevail.

[signed]  
Unit Chief