

Operation “Guardian of the Walls”: Summary and key terms

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Hamas

Officially designated as a terror group by the European Union, United Kingdom, Canada, US, Australia and others. Hamas has taken control of Gaza in 2006 through a bloody coup, killing many Palestinians in the process, taking out the legal government of the Palestinian Authority. Since taking over Gaza, Hamas has transformed it into a platform for launching terror attacks, bombings and rocket fire on Israeli territory. It has also, on occasions, launched terror attacks on Egyptian territory. This is the reason why both Israel and Egypt closed their border with Hamas-controlled Gaza Strip and will only allow the passage of scanned goods, authorized workers, international organizations, journalists and humanitarian cases.

Palestinian Authority Elections

A few months back, the President of the Palestinian Authority, Mahmoud Abbas (Abu Mazen) has announced he will hold general elections in the Palestinian territories. Then, last month, he called the elections off, blaming Israel. Since Hamas was deprived of a possibility to topple Abbas through elections, they started to put the pressure on Palestinians in order to show that they were the leading force.

East Jerusalem and Sheikh Jarrach

Tensions were high in a neighborhood of East Jerusalem called Sheikh Jarrach, where a few Palestinian tenants whose lease expired were supposed to leave their homes or be evicted. The matter was still being reviewed in court when protests erupted. (See [here](#) for an explanation of the legal case).

Exploiting the protests and the beginning of the month of Ramadan (a time of religious fervor for Muslims), Hamas activists provoked violent incidents and clashes with residents and police in Jerusalem. Moreover, they instigated violence on Temple Mount/Haram A-Sharif, where Muslims gather for prayers every Friday. Hurling rocks and blocks (carefully prepared in advance) on police and Jewish worshippers on the Kotel plaza, throwing fire bombs and shooting fireworks at the police and at Jewish worshippers, the rioters left the police no choice but to intervene, in order to put an end to the violence. Many rioters took shelter inside the mosque of Al-Aqsa, throwing projectiles and shooting fireworks from within the sacred site.

Hamas then initiated a widespread propaganda campaign, pretending Israel was "attacking" Al-Aqsa and calling on Muslims to join the battle for the "defense" of the mosque. Hamas campaign culminated with ultimatums to the Israeli government to "withdraw its forces from Sheikh Jarrach and Al-Aqsa". This ultimatum was preceded by sporadic rocket shooting on Southern Israel, but when the self-styled ultimatum expired, Hamas fired a barrage of rockets on Jerusalem.

Rockets and Iron Dome

Israel had to respond in order to stop the rockets and deter Hamas from shooting more. No country would allow a terror group to shell indiscriminately its civilians, let alone its capital, without proper reaction. International law allows all of defensive military operations as long as they are aimed at removing a direct threat. Therefore, all Israeli strikes against missile

launchings and those who operate them is considered legal and proportionate under international law. Hamas has fired so far approximately 1100 rockets, about one third of which fell short and caused damage and casualties among Palestinians in Gaza. There is a simple way to stop Israeli strikes: as soon as Hamas stops shooting rockets, Israel will immediately cease its counter-strikes. Israel has no other aim than to keep its population safe and have Hamas stop its indiscriminate rocket fire.

To date: 1500 rockets fired by Hamas at Israel, of which 350 fell short and caused casualties in Gaza itself . 7 Israelis were killed, over 200 injured at various degrees. In Gaza, according to Palestinian sources, there are 67 dead. The operation draws mixed international responses: from criticism to support.