**Israel targets top Hamas leader as cease-fire collapses**

By: Nidal al-Mughrabi & Jeffrey Heller

Reuters

July 15, 2014

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-palestinians-israel/israel-targets-top-hamas-leader-as-cease-fire-collapses-idUSKBN0FI04420140715>

Israel resumed its air strikes in the Gaza Strip on Wednesday a day after holding its fire in deference to an Egyptian-proposed cease-fire deal that failed to get Hamas militants to halt rocket attacks.

Attacks in the Gaza Strip killed at least three Palestinians in the early hours of Wednesday and destroyed the house of Mahmoud Zahar - who is believed to be in hiding elsewhere - in the first apparent targeting of a top Hamas political leader.

The week-old conflict seemed to be at a turning point on Tuesday, with Hamas defying Arab and Western calls to cease fire and Israel threatening to step up an offensive that could include an invasion of the densely populated enclave of 1.8 million.

Under a blueprint announced by Egypt - Gaza’s neighbour and whose military-backed government has been at odds with Islamist Hamas - a mutual “de-escalation” was to have begun at 9 a.m. (0600 GMT), with hostilities ceasing within 12 hours.