



Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Operation Protective Edge: The facts



Operation Protective Edge lasted seven weeks, beginning on 8 July and ending on 26 August 2014. The operation continued until its goals were reached - restoring sustained peace and quiet to the citizens of Israel, while striking hard at the terrorist infrastructure of Hamas and the other Palestinian terrorist groups in Gaza.

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— Events leading up to Operation Defensive Edge: Unprovoked rocket fire at Israel

The current round of hostilities began on Thursday, 12 June, when terrorist organizations in the Gaza Strip launched another round of rocket fire, directed primarily at communities in southern Israel. In the 26 days from 12 June to 7 July, about 300 rockets were fired at Israel from the Gaza Strip.



— Israel acts in response to Hamas aggression

The current operation in Gaza is not of Israel's choosing. Time and again, Israel acted - and refrained from acting - in order to avoid a confrontation. In contrast, Hamas has consistently taken actions designed to inflame the situation further and extend the hostilities.



— Israel sought a diplomatic solution

During this time, Israel demonstrated great restraint. Its measured responses were intended to restore calm, without the need for a major military action while Israel concentrated its main efforts on the diplomatic arena.



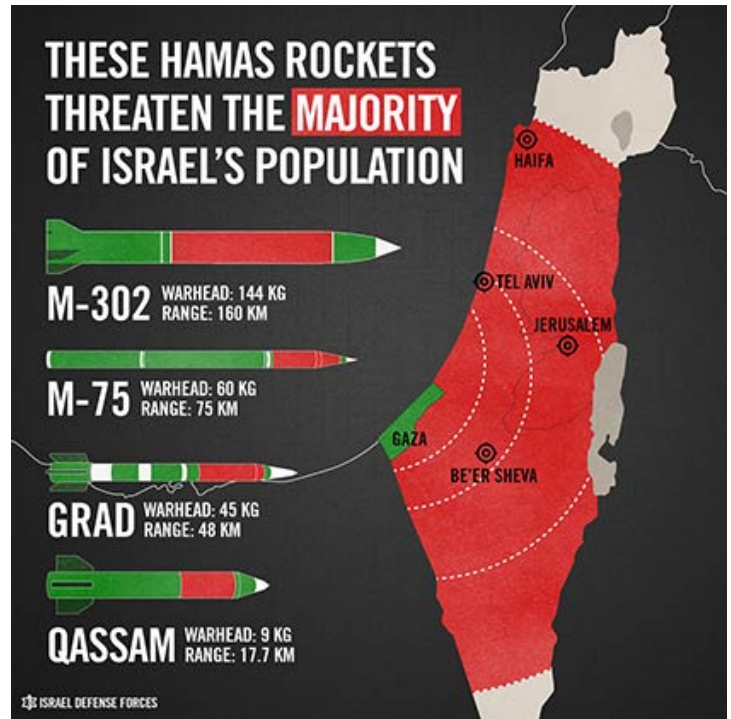
— Hamas is responsible for the current situation

Many of the rockets were fired directly by Hamas terrorists at Israeli civilians. Hamas is also accountable for rockets launched by other terror groups because it has controlled Gaza since 2007. Each launch of these indiscriminate weapons that targets civilians is a war crime.



— Millions of Israelis threatened by rockets

Millions of Israeli civilians are under rocket attack. Like all other nations, Israel has the right of self-defense. From 8-17 July, some 1,500 rockets were launched at Israel, 300 of which were intercepted by the Iron Dome missile defense system.



— Israeli operation was launched in response to rocket attacks

Operation Protective Edge was launched solely as a defensive response to the increasing rocket attacks directed at Israeli territory from Gaza.



The objective of Operative Protective Edge

The objective of the operation is to restore stability and quiet to the residents of Israel, to damage Hamas's capabilities and to destroy the terror infrastructures directed against Israel and its citizens.



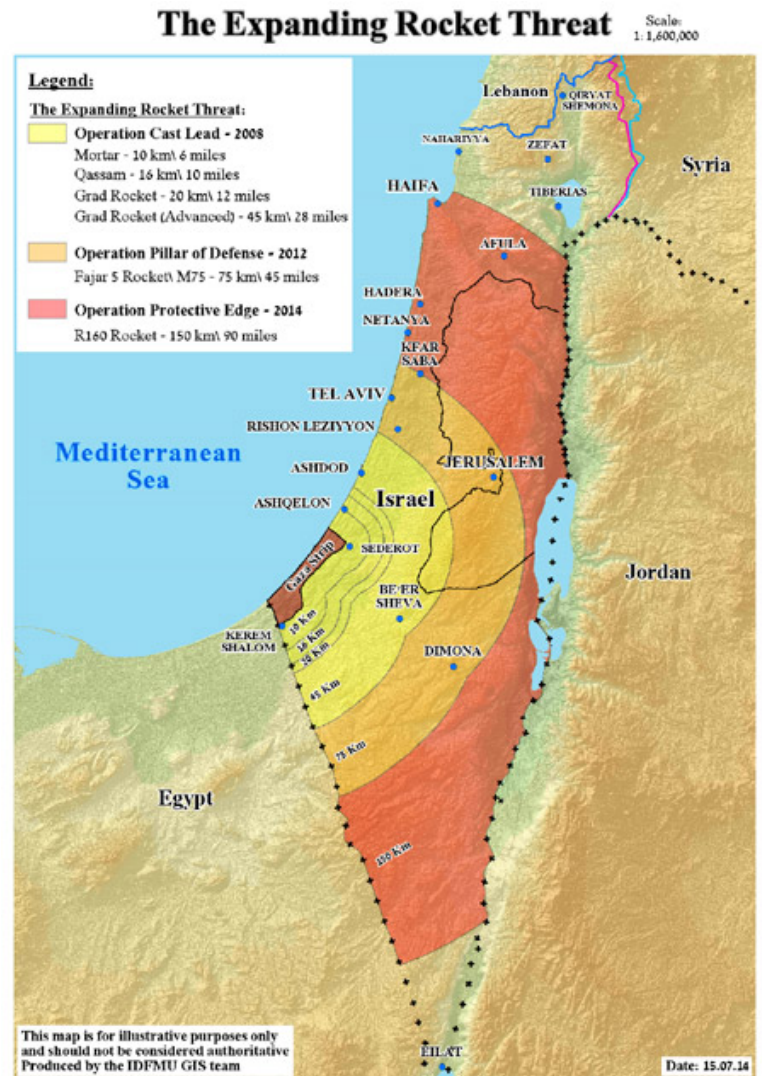
Israel launches first stage of operation: Air attacks

When the attacks reached over 80 rockets a day, Israel had no choice but to take action against the incessant launchings at its civilian population. On 8 July, Israel responded with Operation Protective Edge.



Greater range of the rockets

The vast majority of Israel's population is in range of these missiles, which have targeted villages, towns and major cities such as Jerusalem, Tel Aviv and Haifa as well as the southern cities of Be'er Sheva, Ashdod and Ashkelon.



— The Egyptian proposal

On 15 July, Israel accepted the Egyptian proposal for a ceasefire and halted all its military activities in the Gaza Strip. Hamas rejected the ceasefire, launching a rocket barrage of 50 rockets at Israeli towns and cities. Only at 15:00 - after six hours of continuous and indiscriminate fire at Israel - did the IDF respond.



— Israel accepts ceasefire, Hamas rejects it

Israel did not seek this conflict and repeatedly sought ways to allow for sustained quiet to be achieved diplomatically, accepting every ceasefire offered.



— Hamas responsible for consequences

Hamas bears responsibility for the consequences of its rejection of the ceasefire, proposed by Egypt and supported by the Palestinian Authority and the international community: the Arab League, Saudi Arabia and the UN.



— Hamas also violated humanitarian lulls

Hamas also continued firing during several humanitarian lulls, including one proposed by the UN to allow Gazans to shop for supplies and receive humanitarian and medical aid



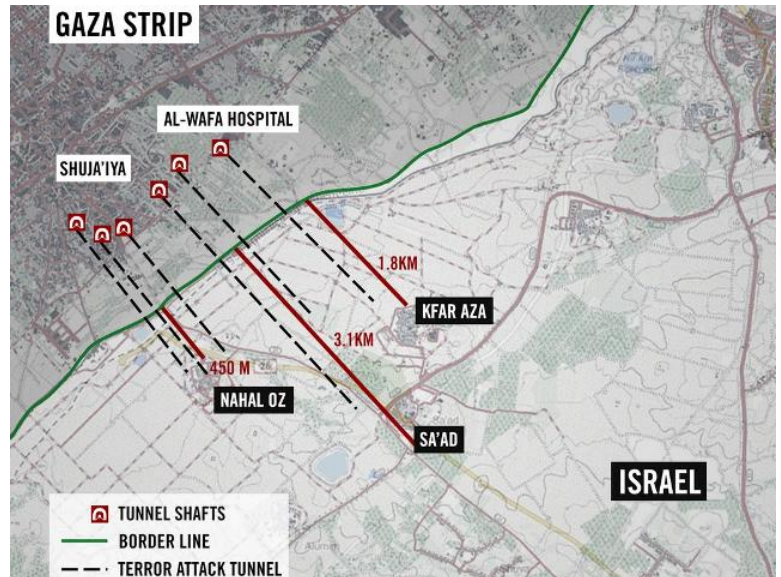
— Stage two: The ground operation

On 17 July, Israel began a ground phase of the operation after Hamas terrorists infiltrated into Israel through a terror tunnel to perpetrate a large-scale attack against Israeli citizens in a kibbutz near the Gaza border.



Objective: Strike at terror tunnels

Hamas built an extensive network of elaborate tunnels to carry out terrorist attacks on Israeli communities and bases near the Gaza Strip. The ground operation was ordered to strike at the terrorist tunnels leading from the Gaza Strip to inside Israeli territory.



What exactly is the "tunnel threat"?

Hamas' tunnel network is a vast underground city with dozens of access points located throughout Gaza. Hamas uses these tunnels as weapons caches, bunkers, command centers and a concealed transportation artery for terrorists and weapons, including rocket launchers. Some of these tunnels lead directly from Gaza to Israeli communities near the border, enabling terrorists

to infiltrate, kidnap and attack Israeli civilians. The residents of southern Israel live in constant fear knowing that, at any time, a terrorist could emerge from a tunnel near their house.



— Where does Hamas build these tunnels?

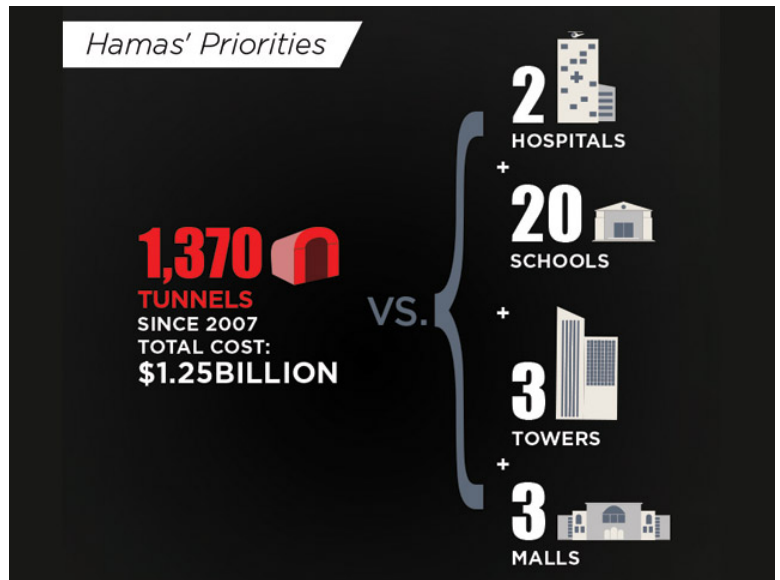
Hamas exploits the Palestinian population of Gaza by building tunnels beneath densely populated areas. Many times, the tunnels' access points are hidden between schools, mosques, hospitals and other civilian buildings. Hamas deliberately embeds its terrorist infrastructure inside civilians neighborhoods, knowing that the IDF is reluctant to strike civilian areas.



— How can Hamas afford to build tunnels?

While new houses and other civilian structures go unbuilt, Hamas has invested millions of dollars and other resources in building and operating its massive tunnel network.

Since January 2014, 4,680 trucks carrying 181,000 tons of gravel, iron, cement, wood and other supplies have passed through the Kerem Shalom Crossing from Israel into Gaza. These materials are co-opted by Hamas for tunnel construction.



— The tunnels cannot be destroyed using air power alone

Israel's ground operation has recorded significant achievements: dozens of tunnels leading from Gaza into Israeli territory have been discovered and destroyed. The ground operation is critical because the tunnels cannot be destroyed using air power alone. Not taking this action would have left Israel's citizens exposed to the danger of additional terrorist infiltrations from Gaza.



— Hamas uses Palestinian civilians and children as human shields

The fact that Hamas is ready to sacrifice its own children should not be exploited as a moral pretext to prevent Israel from protecting its children and from exerting its legitimate right for self-defense. Hamas takes aid money, and instead of building kindergartens in Gaza, uses it to dig tunnels for attacking kindergartens in Israel.



— Hamas is responsible of the destruction of homes in Gaza

Hamas booby-traps private homes in Gaza and uses them as rocket-launching locations, firing positions for snipers, weapon caches as well as using their cellars as entrances to the terror tunnels.



— Hamas even uses Gazan mosques as terrorist facilities

Throughout Operation Protective Edge, IDF forces have discovered Hamas terrorists using mosques as terrorist facilities. Hamas exploits the IDF's sensitivity towards protecting civilian structures, particularly holy sites, by hiding command centers, weapons caches and tunnel entrances in mosques.



— Accusations regarding UNRWA facilities in Gaza

On numerous occasions, senior UN officials and the media have rushed to blame Israel for fatalities in UNRWA facilities. Every time, these accusations were issued just hours after an incident occurred and well before any sort of reasonable inquiry could take place. Israel is a democratic nation and as such does not shy away from accepting responsibility. Yet by blaming Israel before the facts are determined, the international community is playing into the hands of a terrorist organization that intentionally puts civilians in harm's way.



— Israel extends humanitarian ceasefire, Hamas fires on Israeli cities

Israel respected the humanitarian ceasefire (26 July) from 8 am to 8 pm, but a few minutes after 8 pm Hamas resumed the rocket barrage at Israel's cities. Israel nevertheless decided to extend the ceasefire until midnight Sunday night (27 July). Hamas continues to fire at Israeli civilians. For the fifth time since the start of the operation, Israel has accepted and Hamas rejected a ceasefire proposal or humanitarian pause.



— Hamas violates humanitarian ceasefires

On August 1, Israel accepted the UN/US proposal for a 72-hour humanitarian ceasefire. Hamas violated the ceasefire an hour-and-a-half after it went into effect when, at 09:30, an attack was carried out against IDF forces operating to decommission a terror tunnel.

By repeatedly firing rockets during humanitarian ceasefires, Hamas and the other terrorist factions demonstrated their contempt for human life, including that of Gaza's civilians who are being used as human shields and denied humanitarian assistance.



— Israel continues to transfer humanitarian aid to Gaza

Israel will continue its efforts to transfer humanitarian aid to the Gaza Strip, provided the ceasefire is respected and the border crossings that allow for the transfer of goods are not attacked by rockets, as has been the case many times in recent weeks.



— Part of conflict between Islamist extremism and the free world

Like ISIS, Hamas is part of a movement that seeks to violently impose Islamist rule devoid of pluralism

and basic human rights, especially those of women, minorities and gays.

There is little difference between Hamas and other Islamist terrorist organizations, including al-Qaeda, Hizbullah, ISIS, Boko Haram and the Nusra Front. They sanctify death while Israel sanctifies life. They trample human rights while Israel protects democracy and equality.

Hamas' brutality was further exposed with the summary executions (August 22) of at least 18 Palestinian residents of Gaza. The cold-blooded shooting of civilians after being paraded in broad daylight in front of a crowd assembled in a public square bears a chilling resemblance to the executions carried out by ISIS in Iraq and Syria.



— Rehabilitation of Gaza must be linked to demilitarization

The rehabilitation and development of Gaza is linked to disarming the terrorist organizations in Gaza from rockets, tunnels and other threats.

Although Hamas has been firing its missiles against Israeli civilians for years, the recent confrontation revealed the full extent of the terror infrastructure in the Gaza Strip. Hamas has acquired or produced a huge arsenal of rockets with varying ranges, anti-tank rocket-propelled grenades (RPGs), large amounts of explosives, [offensive terror tunnels](#) and a great number of light weapons.

In order to prevent the terrorist organizations in Gaza from rearming with even deadlier weapons, which will inevitably result in renewed hostilities, the Gaza Strip must be demilitarized.



— Goods entering Gaza must be controlled

The vast terror infrastructure which developed in Gaza in recent years became possible only through the misuse of funds and raw materials that entered the Gaza Strip for civilian use. The extent of Gaza's terror infrastructure confirmed Israel's intelligence assessments and its calls for tightening controls over the import of dual-use goods such as concrete and building materials used to construct terror tunnels and infrastructures.

This is why, paradoxically, the only way to increase the flow of goods into Gaza is by tightening control over what goes in. Better mechanisms have to be put in place to ensure that building materials going into Gaza do not end up being used for the construction of attack tunnels.



— Israel accepts the Egyptian ceasefire proposal

On August 5, Israel accepted the Egyptian ceasefire proposal. Exactly three weeks earlier (15 July), three days prior to the start of the ground operation, Israel also accepted the Egyptian proposal. Hamas rejected it outright.

Hamas continued to violate every humanitarian ceasefire, repeatedly resuming the launching of rockets at Israel. After a respite lasting from August 10-19, Hamas once again resumed massive rocket barrages. Israel continues to maintain that it will not negotiate under fire.



— Israel left Gaza in 2005 and does not want to return

Israel did not want to re-enter the Gaza Strip. It left Gaza completely in August 2005 in the hope of never returning. Instead of developing the Gaza Strip, the Hamas regime has turned it into a terror fortress and established a fundamentalist dictatorship whose declared goal is the destruction of Israel.

In light of Hamas' rocket attacks, and the dangerous attempts to infiltrate Israeli territory, Israel must defend its citizens and will continue to act as necessary until quiet is achieved.



— The appointment of William Schabas to head UN "commission of inquiry"

The appointment of a strongly biased critic of Israel as chairman of the UN Human Rights Council's "commission of inquiry" demonstrates that Israel cannot get a fair hearing from the UNHRC. The Council

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is once again betraying its own mission when instead of serving human rights, it lends its legitimacy to terrorist groups like Hamas.

Given his outspoken anti-Israeli positions, including previous calls for prosecuting Israeli leaders, Mr. Schabas should have disqualified himself from presiding over the commission. His choice as head of the commission clearly predetermines its outcome and unveils the true intentions of the UNHCR as well as the lack of integrity of Mr. Schabas.



— A new diplomatic horizon

Israel looks forward to achieving a new diplomatic horizon and to restarting peace negotiations with a Palestinian government committed to peace, to ending terrorism and to fulfilling previous Palestinian commitments. Israel hopes that Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas plays a constructive role.



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