

**Middle East Notes**  
**Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns**  
**July 24, 2014**

*Please note: Opinions expressed in the following articles do not necessarily reflect the opinion of the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns.*

[Read previous weeks' Middle East Notes.](#)

The next Middle East Notes will be available on September 4. Periodic updates on the Gaza situation will be available on the [MOGC website](#).

For daily information, use the following links:

[www.haaretz.com](http://www.haaretz.com)

[www.maannews.net/eng](http://www.maannews.net/eng)

[www.peacenow.org/](http://www.peacenow.org/)

[www.tikkun.org/tikkundaily](http://www.tikkun.org/tikkundaily)

<http://www.al-monitor.com>

This week's Middle East Notes includes 25 articles focused on the background, development and escalation of the present Hamas/Israel armed engagement. Due to the rapidity of developments and time constraints, these articles are offered with no initial summaries.

- On July 22, the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns joined several other groups in signing [this letter to President Obama and Congress](#), urging an end to the violence and an investigation into the use of U.S.-supplied weapons and military equipment during this conflict to ensure full accountability under existing U.S. law if human rights abuses have been committed with this equipment.

**1a) Churches for Middle East Peace (CMEP) Bulletin, July 11, 2014**

Following a series of horrific kidnappings-murders and weeks of systematic Israeli security operations against Hamas focused in the West Bank leading to several deaths, Hamas escalated its rocket fire into Israel from Gaza following the death of a Hamas operative by an Israeli airstrike June 29, ending two years of only sporadic violence between Israel and Gaza.

In the past week more than 250 rockets and mortar shells have been fired from Gaza into Israel; the IDF has launched over 800 strikes and over 100 Palestinians in Gaza have been killed, many of them non-combatants. Jerusalem, Tel Aviv, and Dimona, the home of Israel's nuclear reactor have all been targeted by Hamas rockets, so far without loss of life or major damage.

There is fear that both sides are locked in a cycle of violence with a growing risk of an Israeli ground offensive into Gaza with far greater loss of life. Netanyahu told the Knesset July 10 he is "not talking to anybody about a cease-fire" with Hamas right now and called up 40,000 troops. President Obama has offered to mediate a ceasefire but so far without much response.

The violence presents domestic political challenges for both Prime Minister Netanyahu and President Abbas. To Netanyahu's right, Foreign Minister Avigdor Lieberman – who would like to be Prime Minister one day – used the crisis to announce he was dismantling the political partnership of his party with Netanyahu's party because the Prime Minister was not being tough enough on Hamas. A day later Netanyahu ordered preparations for a ground offensive.

[\*\*\*Read the entire Bulletin, including links to a variety of news sources, on CMEP's website.\*\*\*](#)

## **1b) [Churches for Middle East Peace \(CMEP\) Bulletin, July 18, 2014](#)**

Negotiations over terms of a ceasefire faltered July 17 with the return of Israeli negotiators from Egypt and the announcement that Israel has launched a ground offensive in northern Gaza. After meeting with President Abdullah Gul in Turkey on Thursday, Abbas returned to Cairo. Abbas is asking France to lobby Qatar and Turkey to pressure Hamas into accepting the original Cairo cease-fire proposal.

The question of violence between Gaza and Israel has been mired in Palestinian, Arab, and regional politics. The failure of U.S.-mediated negotiations this spring left President Abbas vulnerable to domestic political criticism that he had failed to make progress towards ending the Israeli military occupation in return for his security cooperation with Israel and the U.S. In order to strengthen his political position he entered into an agreement to form a coalition government with political rival Hamas. Hamas, also trying to strengthen its position, was looking for a way out of its political isolation from Arab governments.

The strong Israeli reaction against the Palestinian coalition, that included Hamas, led it to attack Hamas' infrastructure and arrest many Hamas operatives in the West Bank following the murder of three Israeli students in June, which Israel blamed on Hamas. Abbas condemned the abductions and his security forces cooperated with the Israelis looking for the students.

Since the last outbreak of violence in 2012, Hamas has reportedly sought to maintain a relative calm with Israel. Following Israel's West Bank crackdown, Hamas increased rocket fire from Gaza into Israel, enhancing its visibility and political position vis-à-vis Abbas. This rocket fire is a kind of political speech, calling attention to Hamas and allowing them to assert an identity separate from Ramallah. ...

### **Church statements**

- **ELCJHL calls for immediate cessation of hostilities in Gaza [ELCJHL]:** Witnessing the bombardments, hearing the sirens, listening to the cries of mothers and children, seeing the ambulances carrying the wounded and people living in absolute fear, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land cries out to God. We also raise our voice to all Christian sisters and brothers, along with all people of goodwill, to end this latest round of violence between the State of Israel and the Palestinian people. In these days, many of us are quite depressed and frustrated, left wondering where this country is headed, along with much of the Middle East. As a church that has always strongly condemned violence as a means of solving conflicts, we were deeply troubled by the kidnapping and murder of the three Israeli teenagers and the kidnapping and burning alive of the Palestinian teenager. We strongly condemn both of these actions as inhumane and despicable acts.
- **National Council of Churches opposes Israeli invasion of Gaza [National Council of Churches]:** NCC President and General Secretary Jim Winkler said, "The overwhelming military superiority possessed by Israel, exhibited by days of air strikes against Gaza and the consequent deaths of hundreds of Palestinians and the wounding of thousands more, guarantees the besieged and impoverished people who live there will suffer much more
- **Concern over violence in Gaza [World Council of Churches]:** We strongly condemn the indiscriminate attacks by Israeli military on the civilian population in Gaza, as we absolutely condemn the absurd and immoral firing of rockets by militants from Gaza to populated areas in Israel. The Central Committee of the World Council of Churches ... has expressed deep sorrow and concern over the increasing levels of tension and violence that have again reached frightening proportions following the tragic death of young people in Israel and Palestine.
- **Diocese of Jerusalem praying for peace in Gaza and region [The Episcopal Diocese of Jerusalem]:** As bombing in Gaza continues, Bishop Suheil is in regular communication with Al Ahli Hospital there to ensure that staff and families are safe. The Diocese of Jerusalem continues to hold the people of Gaza and the region in its prayers, hoping that the violence will end soon.

## **2) Gaza death toll "rises above 600"**

**Ma'an News Agency, July 22, 2014**

GAZA CITY (Ma'an) -- The death toll in Gaza rose above 600 on Tuesday as emergency teams pulled dead bodies from the rubble of homes destroyed by Israeli strikes on the 15th day of the assault. The latest victims, whose bodies were pulled from rubble of destroyed buildings in the Gaza City neighborhoods of Shajaiyeh and Zaytoun, were identified as 65-year-old Muhammad Khalil Ahel and Hamada Eleiwa.

Another unidentified man was killed in an airstrike that targeted a car in Beit Lahiya in the northern Gaza Strip. Three other victims, who have yet to be identified, died in the Tuffah neighborhood of Gaza City as a result of Israeli artillery shelling, health ministry spokesman Ashraf al-Qidra said. Before that, al-Qidra said 22-year-old Mahmoud Salim Mustafa Daraj succumbed to his wounds in Jabalia refugee camp in the northern Gaza Strip. The deaths brought the number of Palestinians killed by Israeli fire on Tuesday to 33.

Palestinian medical sources earlier announced the death of Ahmad Abu Seido by Israeli shelling on a park in eastern Gaza City. Rescue teams before that removed body of another man from rubble in Shujaiyya neighborhood. Al-Qidra had earlier announced another victim as four-year-old girl Muna Rami al-Kharawt in the northern Gaza Strip.

The bodies of two women were also removed from the debris of their homes in the Zaytoun neighborhood of Gaza City, al-Qidra said. He identified the two victims as 70-year-old Fatima Hasan Azzam and 50-year-old Maryam Hasan Azzam.

Additionally, emergency teams pulled the body of Muhammad al-Hindi from a destroyed building in Tal al-Hawa in southern Gaza. After midnight Tuesday, over a dozen Palestinians were killed after Israeli airstrikes and artillery hit their homes.

Israeli media had earlier quoted a Hamas official as saying there were negotiations for a five-hour humanitarian ceasefire to begin at 10 a.m. Israeli officials rejected the proposal, the Israeli newspaper Ha'aretz reported. Since the start of the offensive, more than 100,000 Gazans have fled their homes, seeking shelter in 69 schools run by the Palestinian refugee agency UNRWA.

Overall, 27 soldiers have died in the past four days, with 13 killed on Sunday alone in what was the bloodiest single day for the Israeli military since the Lebanon war of 2006.

Two Israeli civilians have also been killed by rocket fire.

Hamas' main condition for halting its fire is a lifting of Israel's eight-year blockade on the enclave, but it also wants "the release of those recently detained" in the West Bank, Ismail Haniyeh, the movement's top Gaza-based official, said late on Monday.

Cross-border rocket fire has continued despite the operation, with 116 rockets hitting Israel on Monday, one striking the greater Tel Aviv area, and another 17 shot down.

### **3) Gaza and Israel: The road to war, paved by the West** **Nathan Thrall, New York Times, July 17, 2014**

JERUSALEM — As Hamas fires rockets at Israeli cities and Israel follows up its extensive airstrikes with a ground operation in the Gaza Strip, the most immediate cause of this latest war has been ignored: Israel and much of the international community placed a prohibitive set of obstacles in the way of the Palestinian “national consensus” government that was formed in early June.

That government was created largely because of Hamas’s desperation and isolation. The group’s alliance with Syria and Iran was in shambles. Its affiliation with the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt became a liability after a July 2013 coup replaced an ally, President Mohamed Morsi, with a bitter adversary, Gen. Abdel Fattah el-Sisi. Hamas’s coffers dried up as General Sisi closed the tunnels that had brought to Gaza the goods and tax revenues on which it depended.

Seeing a region swept by popular protests against leaders who couldn’t provide for their citizens’ basic needs, Hamas opted to give up official control of Gaza rather than risk being overthrown. Despite having won the last elections, in 2006, Hamas decided to transfer formal authority to the Palestinian leadership in Ramallah. That decision led to a reconciliation agreement between Hamas and the Palestine Liberation Organization, on terms set almost entirely by the PLO chairman and Palestinian Authority (PA) president, Mahmoud Abbas.

Israel immediately sought to undermine the reconciliation agreement by preventing Hamas leaders and Gaza residents from obtaining the two most essential benefits of the deal: the payment of salaries to 43,000 civil servants who worked for the Hamas government and continue to administer Gaza under the new one, and the easing of the suffocating border closures imposed by Israel and Egypt that bar most Gazans’ passage to the outside world.

Yet, in many ways, the reconciliation government could have served Israel’s interests. It offered Hamas’s political adversaries a foothold in Gaza; it was formed without a single Hamas member; it retained the same Ramallah-based prime minister, deputy prime ministers, finance minister and foreign minister; and, most important, it pledged to comply with the three conditions for Western aid long demanded by America and its European allies: nonviolence, adherence to past agreements and recognition of Israel. Israel strongly opposed American recognition of the new government, however, and sought to isolate it internationally, seeing any small step toward Palestinian unity as a threat. Israel’s security establishment objects to the strengthening of West Bank-Gaza ties, lest Hamas raise its head in the West Bank. And Israelis who oppose a two-state solution understand that a unified Palestinian leadership is a prerequisite for any lasting peace.

Still, despite its opposition to the reconciliation agreement, Israel continued to transfer the tax revenues it collects on the PA’s behalf, and to work closely with the new government, especially on security cooperation.

But the key issues of paying Gaza’s civil servants and opening the border with Egypt were left to fester. The new government’s ostensible supporters, especially the United States and Europe, could have pushed Egypt to ease border restrictions, thereby demonstrating to Gazans that Hamas rule had been the cause of their isolation and impoverishment. But they did not. Instead, after Hamas transferred authority to a government of pro-Western technocrats, life in Gaza became worse.

Qatar had offered to pay Gaza’s 43,000 civil servants, and America and Europe could have helped facilitate that. But Washington warned that American law prohibited any entity delivering payment to even one of those employees — many thousands of whom are not members of Hamas but all of whom are considered by American law to have received material support from a terrorist organization. ...

[Read the entire piece here.](#)

#### **4) Worst and bloodiest day since the beginning of the offensive Palestinian Centre for Human Rights (PCHR), July 20, 2014**

Israeli occupation forces have continued their brutal and immoral offensive on the Gaza Strip for the 13th consecutive day, and have continued the policy of collective punishment in disregard for the international law and humanitarian law, which ensure protection for civilians in times of war, and in violation of the principles of necessity, proportionality and distinction. Israeli forces have continued their aerial, ground and sea attacks throughout the Gaza Strip, causing more civilian casualties and damaging civilian facilities, including houses.

Since last night, Israeli forces have launched unprecedented attacks on al-Shuja'iyah neighborhood in the east of Gaza City. The neighborhood has been subjected to intensive aerial and ground shelling. Dozens of Palestinian civilians have been killed or wounded, and medical crews and the ICRC have not been able to attend them. Women were seen taking their children out to flee from the area, and some of them were killed. People who were not able to leave the area have been trapped under the Israeli shelling and their destinies are unknown. This morning, Israeli forces ordered Palestinians living in Khuza'a village, east of Khan Yunis, to leave their homes and move to the center of the town. The number of forcibly displaced Palestinian civilians in border areas has amount to approximately 130,000. This number is expected to rise in light of the indiscriminate Israeli shelling of populated area, and threats to the populations to leave their homes. The majority of displaced people have sheltered in UNRWA schools and centers, which cannot provide them with minimum services. So, their living conditions are expected to deteriorate.

Due to the indiscriminate and intense Israeli shelling, several public and service institutions, including municipalities, have suspended their activities, as three municipalities workers were killed in Rafah al-Boreij. This decision will lead to a real crisis in regards to providing drinking water, cleaning and sanitation. Additionally, more than one third of the Gaza Strip's population lack electricity supplies as Israeli forces damaged major electricity lines and obstructed their repair.

From 10:00 on Saturday, 19 July 2014 to 10:00 on Sunday, 20 July 2014, according to what PCHR has been able document, 65 Palestinians, 50 of whom are civilians, including 13 children and eight women, were killed. Additionally, 282 Palestinians, mostly civilians, were wounded – this number includes 64 children and 72 women. Israeli warplanes also targeted and destroyed 30 houses.

The latest developments since Sunday, July 20 have been as follows:

**The Northern Gaza Strip:** Israeli warplanes launched 15 airstrikes and Israeli tanks and gunboats fired dozens of shells targeting houses, agricultural plots and open areas. As a result of these attacks, 14 Palestinians, including 13 civilians, were killed – the civilian victims include five children and two women. Additionally, 111 others, including 26 children and 32 women, were wounded. Israeli warplanes also destroyed four houses.

**Gaza City:** Israeli forces committed mass killings in al-Shuja'iyah neighborhood in the east of Gaza City. PCHR could document 29 Palestinian civilian deaths, including five women, seven children, a paramedic and a journalist. There are reports that more than 50 people were killed and hundreds were wounded, but PCHR has not been able to verify this number because of the extremely dangerous situation in the area.

**The Central Gaza Strip:** Israeli warplanes launched 20 airstrikes and tanks fired dozens of shells targeting houses, agricultural lands and open areas. As a result of these attacks, a Palestinian woman and nine members of Palestinian armed groups were killed. Additionally, 86 Palestinians including 20 women and 11 children, were wounded. Israeli warplanes also bombarded 6 houses and destroyed three of them. ...

[Read the entire piece here.](#)

### 5a) [The State of Two States - Week of July 6](#)

The conflict between Israel and Hamas reached a critical level Monday, as Israel officially initiated Operation Protective Edge. Since the start of the operation, over 350 rockets have been launched at Israel, and 100 Palestinians have been killed as a result of Israeli airstrikes. IPF expressed support for Israel as it remains vigilant in protecting its citizens and in taking appropriately measured actions to stop these rocket attacks. It is our hope that calm will soon be restored. **[See link above for full listing.]**

- "A national struggle does not justify acts of terror. Acts of terror do not justify revenge. Revenge does not justify destruction, plunder and desolation. Even in the face of the rage and frustration, the violence and the pain, things can be done differently. Things must be done differently." President Shimon Peres and President-elect Reuven Rivlin, in a response to Palestinian and Israeli terror attacks. (Monday, 7/7)
- "Like others in the region, I remain saddened, too, as to why there has never been an Israeli government response to the API [Arab Peace Initiative], despite the Arab world's continuing to endorse it at every Arab League summit over the last 12 years, and at every summit organized by the Organization of Islamic Cooperation and by the Gulf Cooperation Council. An Arab delegation went to Israel to deliver it directly to the Israeli people. Many times, there were those among the Arabs who said that it has not worked and should be discarded and abandoned. But we have stuck by it and continue to stick by it; and it is still very firmly on the table." Saudi Arabian HRH Prince Turki Al Faisal, in an op-ed for the Israel Conference on Peace. (Monday, 7/7)
- "[T]rust has been eroded on both sides. Until it is restored, neither side will likely be ready to take risks for peace -- even as they live with the dire consequences that result from its absence." Phillip Gordon, Special Assistant to the President and White House Coordinator for the Middle East, North Africa, and the Gulf Region, in a speech at the Israel Conference on Peace. (Tuesday, 7/8)

### 5b) [The State of Two States - Week of July 13](#)

Operation Protective edge entered its second week. On Wednesday, the Egyptian government attempted to broker a ceasefire between Israel and Hamas, but only Israel accepted the terms. On Thursday night, after Hamas violated a five hour humanitarian ceasefire and failed in an attempt to infiltrate Israel, the Israeli military began a land incursion into the north of Gaza. IPF hopes for an end to hostilities which provides both Israeli and Palestinian civilians the long-term calm and security they both deserve. **[See link above for full listing.]**

- "Let us be clear about one thing; Hamas might deny it all it wants, but the fact of the matter is that 1) Hamas had been involved in destabilising security in Sinai in support of the Muslim Brotherhood, who were ousted by the will of the Egyptian people, and 2) Hamas leaders have declined to heed our advice to avert the onset of hostilities a few weeks ago and decided to take the risk at the expense of unshielded Palestinian civilians in Gaza." An unnamed Egyptian official, in a statement to Al Ahram. (Tuesday 7/16)
- "The Jewish democratic state is something that is difficult to explain... Arab Israelis must take into consideration that we [Jews] have returned home, but one [who is not Jewish] who was born to this land should also consider this land his home... I cannot understand those who talk of banishing Arab citizens from Israel." President Elect Reuven Rivlin, in an address to a visiting delegation of the Conference of Presidents of Major Jewish Organizations. (Wednesday 7/16)
- "We don't need to control Gaza, we don't need to build settlements. We just need to make sure all of the Hamas terrorists either run away, are arrested, or killed. We cannot accept a situation in which terrorists can, at any given moment, disrupt the daily routine of 6 million people running for cover." Foreign Minister Avigdor Lieberman, in support of IDF ground invasion. (Wednesday 7/16)
- "From their rationale, they [Hamas] are holding strong, as if they have nothing to lose... If they feel they have nothing to lose, they can continue this for a long time." Former Israeli army intelligence official Miri Eisen, in an article in the Washington Post. (Thursday 7/17)



## **6) How politics and lies triggered an unintended war in Gaza**

### ***Kidnap, crackdown, mutual missteps and a hail of rockets***

**J.J. Goldberg, The Forward, July 18, 2014**

In the flood of angry words that poured out of Israel and Gaza during a week of spiraling violence, few statements were more blunt, or more telling, than this throwaway line by the chief spokesman of the Israeli military, Brigadier General Moti Almoz, speaking July 8 on Army Radio's morning show: "We have been instructed by the political echelon to hit Hamas hard."

That's unusual language for a military mouthpiece. Typically they spout lines like "We will take all necessary actions" or "The state of Israel will defend its citizens." You don't expect to hear: "This is the politicians' idea. They're making us do it."

Admittedly, demurrals on government policy by Israel's top defense brass, once virtually unthinkable, have become almost routine in the Netanyahu era. Usually, though, there's some measure of subtlety or discretion. This particular interview was different. Where most disagreements involve policies that might eventually lead to some future unnecessary war, this one was about an unnecessary war they were now stumbling into.

Spokesmen don't speak for themselves. Almoz was expressing a frustration that was building in the army command for nearly a month, since the June 12 kidnapping of three Israeli yeshiva boys. The crime set off a chain of events in which Israel gradually lost control of the situation, finally ending up on the brink of a war that nobody wanted — not the army, not the government, not even the enemy, Hamas.

The frustration had numerous causes. Once the boys' disappearance was known, troops began a massive, 18-day search-and-rescue operation, entering thousands of homes, arresting and interrogating hundreds of individuals, racing against the clock. Only on July 1, after the boys' bodies were found, did the truth come out: The government had known almost from the beginning that the boys were dead. It maintained the fiction that it hoped to find them alive as a pretext to dismantle Hamas' West Bank operations.

The initial evidence was the recording of victim Gil-ad Shaer's desperate cellphone call to Moked 100, Israel's 911. When the tape reached the security services the next morning — neglected for hours by Moked 100 staff — the teen was heard whispering "They've kidnapped me" ("hatfu oti") followed by shouts of "Heads down," then gunfire, two groans, more shots, then singing in Arabic. That evening searchers found the kidnappers' abandoned, torched Hyundai, with eight bullet holes and the boys' DNA. There was no doubt.

Prime Minister Netanyahu immediately placed a gag order on the deaths. Journalists who heard rumors were told the Shin Bet wanted the gag order to aid the search. For public consumption, the official word was that Israel was "acting on the assumption that they're alive." It was, simply put, a lie.

Moti Almoz, as army spokesman, was in charge of repeating the lie. True, others backed him up, including Defense Minister Moshe Yaalon. But when the truth came out on July 1, Almoz bore the brunt of public derision. Critics said his credibility was shot. He'd only been spokesman since October, after a long career as a blunt-talking field commander with no media experience. Others felt professional frustration. His was personal.

Nor was that the only fib. It was clear from the beginning that the kidnappers weren't acting on orders from Hamas leadership in Gaza or Damascus. Hamas' Hebron branch — more a crime family than a clandestine organization — had a history of acting without the leaders' knowledge, sometimes against their interests. Yet Netanyahu repeatedly insisted Hamas was responsible for the crime and would pay for it. ...

**[Read the entire piece here.](#)**

## **7) Netanyahu government knew teens were dead as it whipped up racist frenzy**

**Max Blumenthal, The Electronic Intifada, July 8, 2014 (excerpts)**

From the moment three Israeli teens were reported missing last month, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and the country's military-intelligence apparatus suppressed the flow of information to the general public. Through a toxic blend of propaganda, subterfuge and incitement, they inflamed a precarious situation, manipulating Israelis into supporting their agenda until they made an utterly avoidable nightmare inevitable. Israeli police, intelligence officials and Netanyahu knew within hours of the kidnapping and murder of the three teens that they had been killed. And they knew who the prime suspects were less than a day after the kidnapping was reported.

Rather than reveal these details to the public, Israel's Shin Bet intelligence agency imposed a gag order on the national media, barring news outlets from reporting that the teens had almost certainly been killed, and forbidding them from revealing the identities of their suspected killers. The Shin Bet even lied to the parents of the kidnapped teens, deceiving them into believing their sons were alive. Instead of mounting a limited action to capture the suspected perpetrators and retrieve the teens' bodies, Netanyahu staged an aggressive international public relations campaign, demanding sympathy and outrage from world leaders, who were also given the impression that the missing teens were still alive.

Meanwhile, Israel's armed forces rampaged throughout the occupied West Bank and bombarded the Gaza Strip in a campaign of collective punishment deceptively marketed to Israelis and the world as a rescue mission.

Critical details that were known all along by Netanyahu and the military-intelligence apparatus were relayed to the Israeli public only after the abduction of more than 560 Palestinians, including at least 200 still held without charges; after the raiding of Palestinian universities and ransacking of countless homes; after six Palestinian civilians were killed by Israeli forces; after American-trained Palestinian Authority police assisted Israeli soldiers attacking Palestinian youths in the center of Ramallah; after the alleged theft by Israeli troops of \$3 million in U.S. dollars; and after Israel's international public relations extravaganza had run its course.

The assault on the West Bank arrived on the heels of the collapse of the US-led framework negotiations, for which the U.S. blamed Netanyahu, and immediately after Hamas' ratification of a unity deal with the Fatah-controlled Palestinian Authority. Netanyahu was still smarting from the U.S. recognition of the unity government when news of the kidnapping reached him. Never one to miss an opportunity to undermine the Palestinians, he and his inner circle resolved to milk the kidnapping for maximum propaganda value.

Weeks after the incident, it is now clear that the Israeli government, intelligence services and army engaged in a cover-up to provide themselves with the political space they required for a military campaign that had little to do with rescuing any kidnapped teens. The disinformation campaign they waged sent a heavily indoctrinated, comprehensively militarized population into a tribalistic frenzy, provoking a wave of high-level incitement, the shocking revenge killing of an innocent Palestinian teen and rioting across East Jerusalem. Where the chaos will end and how far it will spread is unknown. But its origins are increasingly clear.



## 8) The real “us” versus “them”

Guy Spigelman, Ha'aretz, July 10, 2014

It doesn't matter where you live or what you do, whether you are watching the World Cup, running for shelter, going to the beach or avoiding burning tires, the current cycle of violence that has killed innocent children is wreaking havoc on all our lives.

For days I have been angry with our leadership, and wanted to write about how our leaders should do this and that to calm the situation down, rather than fanning the flames as many do. But then I visited the Rabin museum in Tel Aviv and realized that our current leaders are leaders by virtue of their position only, not because of any great personal quality or moral compass. So to hope for real statesmanship would actually be naïve.

The question is: What can we the people do? One of the first things we can do is change our concept of “us” and “them.”

Traditionally, “us” referred to those of the same ethnic clan or nationality, and “them” referred to the other, or opposing ethnic clan or nationality. In this paradigm, we take pride in all the achievements that any of “us” achieve, even if on a personal level we had nothing to do with it. On the other hand we find ways to defend or ignore the less desirable actions carried out by “us.” Sometimes we will highlight a positive achievement by “us,” in order to divert attention away from an immoral action committed by “us” on “them.” After an Israeli soldier beats up a child we get a Jewish PR/hasbara response of “But we have so many Nobel Prize winners.”

Other times we will focus on the other side's bad, to cover up our own bad. Like when after a Palestinian murders a Jewish civilian, we will get a Palestinian response focused on how “they” build settlements. There are infinite possibilities of manipulating the “us” versus “them” paradigm, some of which are extremely dangerous, as the Jewish people know from history.

So here is what I propose. A new definition of who “us” and “them” are – not based on “Jew” or “Arab” – but rather based on core values, meaning Jews and Arabs can both be in the “us” or “them” category. This is a first attempt, and I would welcome contributions to improve it. Here is what I suggest:

**Us:** Those that believe all people have basic human rights, including the freedom to live without fear, violence and also freedom of speech, religion, to vote and all the rights that we should take for granted but sadly can't; Those that accept that there are two nations in this land that are both staying here and not going anywhere; Those that accept that there will be different narratives of the past and don't require one narrative to be absolutist; Those who believe in nonviolent action to bring about change.

**Them:** Those that believe that the people in their own nation have more rights than those of the opposing nation; Those who think their own nation should dominate and the other nation should either go away or become submissive; Those that think that the other nation have to accept their own nation's narrative of the past and surrender their version of history; Those who believe it is permissible for their own nation to commit violence in order to keep the other nation living in fear.

It is not a matter of left and right. I truly believe there are basic values that transcend the left/right divide. Perhaps if we conduct ourselves according to this new paradigm, or at least start a dialogue on what can constitute the new “us” and “them,” we can start to expect our leadership to behave better – or, looking further, to develop a new generation of leadership to guide us through difficult times such as those we face now and will also face in the future.

*Guy Spigelman is CEO of PresenTense Israel, a Jerusalem based organization that promotes social, technology and small business entrepreneurship amongst all of Israel's diverse population.*

## **9) The occupation will last forever, Netanyahu clarifies**

**Michael Omer-Man +972, July 11, 2014**

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Friday put to rest any lingering speculation or hopes that the long-comatose two-state solution might ever be revived. All of a sudden, the prime minister's refusal to discuss borders or maps in negotiations with the Palestinians makes sense. After all, why negotiate over a map you have no intention of ever compromising on?

"I think the Israeli people understand now what I always say: that there cannot be a situation, under any agreement, in which we relinquish security control of the territory west of the River Jordan," Netanyahu said in a televised statement about the current Gaza military operation, the Times of Israel reported.

Yes. You read that right. Benjamin Netanyahu, Israel's prime minister for the coming years (unless he is unseated by a political opponent who outflanks him from the right) said that there is no way he would ever pull the Israeli army out of the West Bank. It's official. Not that this should really surprise anyone, as long as Netanyahu is the Israeli prime minister the occupation is forever and there will be no sovereign Palestine.

So when PLO Chairman Mahmoud Abbas takes his next international diplomatic step aimed at advancing Palestinian statehood and claiming a seat among the community of nations, remember why he is doing so. (Abbas is reportedly discussing joining the International Criminal Court.) It is not because negotiations broke down over some minor details, a clash of personalities or just bad timing.

No. It's because at the negotiations table, Abbas was the only one even talking about a two-state solution. It's now clear why U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry was unable to draft an acceptable — to Israel — "framework" document in his efforts to budge negotiations along just a few feet further. Netanyahu outright rejects the most fundamental piece of the puzzle: the land on which it lays. Denouncing the current violent escalation between Israel and Hamas Friday night, Mahmoud Abbas said: "The only solution to the current crisis is a diplomatic one, but I don't have a partner for a two-state solution," Ha'aretz reported.

And remember, if there is no two-state solution, and assuming a one-state solution isn't around the corner either, then the occupation is forever — and that seems to be okay with most Israelis.

## 10) Palestinians struggle to compete with Israeli PR machine

Daoud Kuttab, Al Monitor, July 14, 2014

Alongside every war waged by the military is an equally important war of words. The current Israeli war against Gaza is no different. The Palestinians concede they are miles behind Israel in public relations as international media largely repeat Israel's account of the war. The Palestinian and Israeli narratives are so divergent one would think people are talking about two different conflicts. The Israeli narrative revolves around a self-defense argument, specifically that Israel is defending itself from Hamas rockets that have turned the lives of innocent Israelis into a psychological hell because they have to go bomb shelters every time warning sirens blare.

Palestinians, on the other hand, claim they are the victims because the Israelis started this unprovoked war. They insist that Israel, without substantiation, began by blaming Hamas for the abduction and killing of three Israeli settlers. This unproven accusation was then followed up with massive arrests and other punishments, including house demolitions, travel restrictions on Palestinians in the West Bank and bombings in Gaza. When Palestinians in Gaza responded by launching rockets toward Israel, Palestinians argue, the Israelis launched the current disproportionate war whose victims are largely civilians.

One sacred Israeli narrative is that the Palestinians celebrate rocket attacks against Israel, while Israel regrets every missile that misses its alleged military target. A July 9 image that went viral on social media demolished this argument. The photo shows Israelis in the south sitting on beach chairs while watching the bombing of Gaza with glee.

Of course, the actual results of the attacks belie Israeli assertions. By Saturday, more than 150 Palestinians, most of them non-combatants, with many children among them, had been killed by Israeli fire, and more than 1,000 had been injured. No Israeli has been killed as a result of the unsophisticated home-grown Palestinian rockets. George Galloway, the maverick British member of Parliament, was so offended by the BBC's coverage of the current crisis that he tweeted his decision not to pay the license fees to the British public broadcaster.

Maher Awwadeh, director of external media at the Palestinian Ministry of Information, said the ministry works well with local Arabic-speaking media, but is not faring as well with international media. "We make it possible to set up interviews for local media, and we encourage them to hold joint broadcasts," he told Al-Monitor from his Ramallah office by phone. Awwadeh said, however, that it is an uphill battle to compete with Israeli public relations when it comes to international media.

"When you watch how the Israeli PR machine works, you can easily see that the international media is biased in their favor. The Palestinian ministry monitors the international and Israeli media, and we correct them when we see major mistakes," said Awwadeh. He also asserted that Palestinians often fall into a trap because "we feel that we need to publicize bloody pictures, yet we never talk about fear among our people while the other side excels in this area."

Nedaa Younis, head of social media for the Palestinian Ministry of Information, told Al-Monitor that it has been difficult to produce tweets and hashtags in English because the Palestinians lack English-speaking spokespeople and social media activists. She said the Palestinian Government Media Center has been advertising on social media for volunteers who speak different languages.

Younis stated, "I often feel alone and isolated in the face of the many who are propagating the Israeli narrative." While the hashtag #GazaUnderAttack has been trending, most social media efforts are in Arabic. [She] noted that most senior media officials have no social media accounts, stating, "They only use email and don't even know what a hashtag is." ...

[Read the entire piece here.](#)

## 11) Delusional living in Israel

Michal Yudelman O'Dwyer, Ha'aretz, July 15, 2014

When the sirens wailed in Tel Aviv last Tuesday, it seemed the famous bubble had finally burst, and we Tel Avivians were part of the country again. No more would we be called stuck-up and aloof – especially when Hamas gave advance notice that it was going to bombard the city at 9 P.M. the following Saturday night. But the bigger barrage that struck Tel Aviv was of text messages, phone calls and Facebook pleas from abroad, telling us to get out of this crazy place.

We tried to play by the rules – even went to the stairwell, cappuccino in hand, with the rest of the neighbors as the siren went off – just so we could feel at one with the rest of the nation, well used to the siren routine. But as a solidarity mechanism, it didn't really work.

The previous day, Friday, sirens and rockets notwithstanding, the line at midday in the supermarket on Ibn Gabirol was as long as usual, and the streets were just as busy. Early on Saturday morning the old-timers and diehards were marching briskly along the Mediterranean promenade as they always had done, literally taking the situation in their stride.

The prime minister and other ministers kept repeating on news stations, that continued broadcasting nonstop nothingness, that we are all united and the world supported us.

In a gesture of feeling one-with-the-nation, I switched on the television and zapped through the news channels. Channel 2 showed five images of the intimidating Arab affairs analyst Ehud Ya'ari, as though one wasn't enough, while Channel 1, in a burst of creativity, went all "24" on us and featured a quartered screen showing four different locations simultaneously. Hey, if I wanted to watch four places with nothing happening in any of them, I have the "real" Jack Bauer on Channel 14.

So, a quick flick to see what the foreign channels were doing. Were they still scarcely paying us any attention, as I heard a radio news broadcaster complain before the offensive began? That was when Israel was still turning the West Bank upside down looking for the three abducted teens whom the authorities already knew were dead.

A BBC TV crew was standing in the rubble of a home for disabled persons in Gaza, where locals were trying to dig out the bodies of those who couldn't make it out on their wheelchairs in the less than 60 seconds warning they had been given before the Israeli bombardment. It's hard to imagine how anyone in this building could have been a threat to anyone, the reporter said. Sky News showed more rubble.

Homes destroyed by air strikes and toddlers in diapers with no shelter to hide in, even if they did hear the warning in time. I didn't have to switch to Al Jazeera to know what they'd be showing. Does the world really support us? Unless the cabinet ministers have their own exclusive news channel, what planet are they living on?

This is a battle Israel has already lost, and if it hasn't yet, it's about to. You can't win against pictures of bombed streets and civilian casualties, no matter how right you are.

So who's really cut off from reality and who's living in a bubble? Is it really Tel Avivians and the many Israeli media columnists who see things in a wider context? More likely, the bubble boys are the ministers and generals who still think we're winning, endlessly yakking away on TV. ...

[Read the entire piece here.](#)

## **12) Jews Against Genocide hold memorial for Palestinian children at Yad Vashem July 12, 2014**

[On July 12], Jews Against Genocide (JAG) held a memorial service for Palestinian children killed by Israel in its current attack on Gaza. JAG set aflame to a pile of dolls covered in red paint at Yad Vashem, Israel's holocaust memorial museum. JAG is a movement of Jews from all over the world, including Israelis, who are protesting against Israel's intent to commit genocide against the non-Jewish indigenous people of Palestine.

The Yad Vashem security guard attempted to disrupt the memorial, confiscated JAG's fire extinguisher, and called the Israeli police to arrest the participants.

*We, Jews Against Genocide, came to Yad Vashem, Israel's memorial of the genocide committed against Jews, to honor the Palestinian children who are dying in a genocide committed by Jews. We brought dolls to symbolise the children of Gaza, and tried to bring a glimpse of the horror that Gazan's face, to Israel's doorstep. We hope to show Israel, and the world, the absurd reality of using the memory of one genocide to justify another.*

*We invite compassionate people from across the globe to join the outcry by staging similar protests in front of Israeli embassies and consulates around the world on [July 15-16].*

*Just as we honor the people who were murdered seven decades ago in Europe because they were Jews, we are here to honor the people who are being murdered at this very moment because they are the indigenous people of this land who are not Jews.*

*The UN Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide defines Genocide as, "any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such: (a) Killing members of the group; (b) Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group; (c) Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part; [...]"*

*The children of Gaza, who are being systematically murdered as we write this article, constitute 52 percent of the population under siege in the strip. The vast majority of these children are descendants of refugees from historical Palestine.*

*In the current round of atrocities committed by the Israel occupation army, so far dozens of children have been murdered in their homes, with Israel's war-making leadership vowing "much higher costs" on the Palestinian side as the bombing and shelling continues.*

*The war crimes and crimes against humanity committed in Gaza today are the latest stage of an ongoing campaign of ethnic cleansing and genocide against the indigenous people of this land.*

*The Jewish State was founded on the Zionist principle of "maximum Jews on maximum land, and minimum Arabs on minimum land," which was made reality through 66 years of continued assault against Palestinians, denying them the right to live freely and peacefully in their historical homeland. The Israeli regime has turned the beautiful Gaza strip into a densely populated ghetto, with unsafe water, untreated sewage, and insufficient resources and electricity. This ghetto has become a concentration camp, through repeated Israeli massacres in what the Goldstone Report described as an effort to, "humiliate and terrorize a civilian population, radically diminish[ing] its local economic capacity." ...*

**Read more on the Jews Against Genocide Facebook page [here](#).**

### **13) [Hamas, Islamic Jihad submit 10 conditions for truce](#)**

**Chris Carlson, International Middle East Media Center Editorial Group, July 16, 2014**

Spokesperson for Hamas Sami abu-Zuhri said yesterday that Palestinian resistance forces had not yet received an official ceasefire proposal, according to Al Ray, confirming that forces are determined to continue with armed resistance against Israeli criminal assaults on the Palestinian people. Forces are refusing to accept any ceasefire proposal until Israel agrees to meet their just demands, Zuhri affirmed.

Israeli daily Maariv reported today that both Hamas and Islamic Jihad have submitted a list of 10 demands to Egypt in establishing a 10-year truce with Israel:

- 1) The withdrawal of Israeli military tanks from the border fence area, to a distance which enables Gaza farmers to access their fields and tend them freely.
- 2) Israel must free all Palestinian prisoners detained after the abduction and killing of three Israeli teenagers in the southern West Bank, including those who were freed as part of Gilad Shalit prisoner swap. (This precondition also includes softening procedures against all prisoners in Israeli custody, according to Ma'an News Agency.)
- 3) Israel must end the crippling siege on Gaza, meaning all border crossings must be opened and the entry of construction materials and all requirements needed to run the Gaza Strip's power station must be allowed.
- 4) An international seaport and airport must be opened in the Strip -- one which is to be run and monitored by the United Nations.
- 5) Israel increases the Gaza fishing zone to 10 nautical miles and allows Gaza fishermen to use large fishing ships.
- 6) The Rafah crossing between Egypt and the Gaza Strip should be monitored by international crews from friendly and Arab countries.
- 7) Israel must commit to a 10-year ceasefire which includes closing Gaza airspace to Israeli aircraft.
- 8) Israel must give Gaza residents permission to visit Jerusalem and pray at al-Aqsa Mosque.
- 9) Israel abstains from any intervention in Palestinian internal affairs, including political arrangements, the reconciliation agreement and all its consequences.
- 10) Gaza's industrial zone must be re-established.

The Egyptian Foreign Ministry announced, yesterday, that it did in fact offer a proposal which included at least three definitive stipulations of a cease-fire agreement, which were supposed to go into effect at 6 a.m. Tuesday: 1) Israel will stop all hostilities in the Gaza Strip land, sea and air -- with guarantees that there would be no ground invasions or further targeting of the Palestinian civilians; 2) Palestinian forces in Gaza will stop all (hostilities) towards Israel land, sea and air -- with guarantees that there would be no targeting of the Israeli civilians; 3) Border crossings will be opened to facilitate the entrance of goods and people, amid the stability of the security situation on the ground.

Other issues, including the security, would be discussed with the two parties.

Ma'an further reports that the military wing of the Islamic Jihad, al-Quds Brigades, said today that the fighting in Gaza will continue until the demands of the Palestinian resistance are met. The group said in a statement that the all Israeli cities and towns would remain under fire... "as the resistance has prepared for a long battle which the enemy could not have expected."

Although Palestinian resistance groups, including Islamic Jihad and Hamas, have fired more than 1,200 rockets into Israeli airspace since the fighting began, these rockets have caused only minor damage, killing one Israeli civilian reportedly feeding soldiers near the border, and injuring a soldier during a separate incident.

However, for the first time, Ma'an reports, resistance rockets have now struck as far north as Tel Aviv and Haifa, as well as Jewish settlements in the occupied West Bank, causing panic among Israeli citizens.



#### **14) Hundreds of British leftists protest BBC's "pro-Israel" war coverage**

**Ha'aretz, July 16, 2014**

The BBC is widely believed in Israel to be biased in favor of the Palestinians. Yet in Britain, which can fairly be called the nerve center of Western pro-Palestinian sentiment, hundreds of left-wingers have protested in recent days over what they call the state broadcaster's pro-Israel bias in its coverage of the fighting with Gaza.

The Independent reported Wednesday that protesters have rallied outside Broadcasting House, the BBC's London headquarters, as well as in Manchester, Liverpool and Newcastle.

On Tuesday the protesters presented a letter to the BBC from the Palestine Solidarity Campaign, Stop the War Coalition, Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND) and other groups.

The letter charged that the broadcaster's coverage of the fighting was "devoid of context or background" about Israeli military control over of Gaza.

"We would like to remind you that Gaza has no army, air force, or navy, while Israel possess one of the strongest militaries in the world," the letter continued. "When you portray the occupier as the victim, and the occupied as the aggressor, we would like to remind you that resistance to occupation is a right under international law."

A week ago Owen Jones, a left-wing columnist for The Guardian, wrote: "'Israel under renewed Hamas attack': this was last night's BBC headline on the escalating bloodshed in Gaza. It is as perverse as Mike Tyson punching a toddler, followed by a headline claiming that the child spat at him." In the nine days of Israel's Operation Protective Edge, over 200 Palestinians have been killed, along with one Israeli.

A spokesman for BBC News did not address the specifics of the protesters' criticism, saying only that this was an "ongoing and complex conflict," and that the BBC is "committed to continuing to report and analyze sometimes fast moving events in an accurate, fair and balanced way."

Numerous protests have been held in British cities against the BBC's coverage and Israel's attacks, and the Stop the War Coalition says additional ones will be held in London, Glasgow, Birmingham and Worcester in the days ahead.

#### **15) NBC sends reporter back to Gaza after sudden exit**

**Associated Press, Israel News, July 19, 2014**

NEW YORK - NBC said Friday it was sending Middle East correspondent Ayman Mohyeldin back to the Gaza Strip this weekend after he left the region for unexplained reasons following his eyewitness report on the killing of four Palestinian boys on a beach this week. The network praised Mohyeldin for his "extraordinary reporting" throughout the conflict in Gaza. NBC said that as with any news team in combat zones, deployments are constantly reassessed.

Mohyeldin's firsthand reports on the deaths of the four boys Wednesday were aired on the "Today" show and MSNBC, and he tweeted that he had played soccer with some of the victims shortly before the attack. But then his social media account went quiet, and when NBC's "Nightly News" reported on the deaths Wednesday, correspondent Richard Engel did the story ...

His absence was immediately noticed in the news world. When NBC refused to discuss the situation, there was much online speculation that the network had problems with his reporting. Mohyeldin, who has worked extensively in the Middle East and reported for Al Jazeera English before joining NBC in 2011, has received some criticism of his reporting from pro-Israeli groups.

In announcing his return to Gaza on Friday, NBC still would not discuss Mohyeldin's temporary absence. But the network made a point to compliment him. "Ayman Mohyeldin has done extraordinary reporting throughout the escalation of the conflict in Gaza, filing 25+ reports over the past 17 days, including his invaluable and well-documented contribution to the story on the deaths of the four Palestinian children on Wednesday," the network said in a statement. News organizations are usually reluctant to talk about security of its personnel in danger zones, or if some of their employees had been threatened. ..

Tensions in the region affected another reporter, CNN's Diana Magnay, as she reported live Thursday on Israel's launch of a ground attack in Gaza. Magnay tweeted that she was surrounded by Israelis watching the action who cheered the explosions and threatened to "destroy our car if I say a word wrong."

## 16) Is Netanyahu fighting just Hamas or the two-state solution as well?

Peter Beinart, Ha'aretz, July 16, 2014

Most Jews think the answer is clear: Israel is fighting to keep its people safe from rockets. Most Palestinians think the answer is clear too: Israel is fighting to maintain its occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip. (According to the United States government, Israel still occupies Gaza despite withdrawing its settlers because it controls access to Gaza from air, sea, and—along with Egypt—land. If the United States controlled whether boats could dock, and planes could land, in Canada, we'd be occupying it even if no Americans lived there.)

A tremendous amount rides on how one views Israeli intentions. If Israel is only seeking to protect its people, then Hamas' rocket fire really is - as Israeli spokespeople insist - the equivalent of Canada shelling the United States. Even if you acknowledge that the Canada-U.S. analogy is flawed because Israel occupies the West Bank and Gaza while America doesn't occupy Quebec, it's still possible to justify Israel's behavior if you believe Israel wants that occupation to end. If, on the other hand, you believe that Israel desires permanent dominion over territories whose non-Jewish residents lack basic rights, then Israel's behavior doesn't look all that defensive. That doesn't justify launching rockets into Israel. Hamas' attempted murder of civilians is wrong, period, irrespective of Israel's intentions. It is even more egregious because Hamas rejected a cease-fire, which Israel embraced. But as appalling as Hamas' behavior has been, it's hard to endorse Israel's response if it is aimed not just at safeguarding its own people but at controlling another people as well.

Which is why Benjamin Netanyahu's comments last Friday were so important. "There cannot be a situation, under any agreement," he declared, "in which we relinquish security control of the territory west of the River Jordan." With those words, explained Times of Israel editor David Horovitz, a Netanyahu sympathizer, the Prime Minister was "insisting upon ongoing Israeli security oversight inside and at the borders of the West Bank. That sentence, quite simply, spells the end to the notion of Netanyahu consenting to the establishment of a Palestinian state."

Publicly, at least, this is an earthquake. Until last Friday, Netanyahu was on record as supporting a Palestinian state. For five years, in fact, American Jewish leaders have insisted that he sincerely desires one. So what has changed on the ground to make Netanyahu change his mind? Nothing. Netanyahu now says he cannot relinquish control of the West Bank because Hamas could use it as a base from which to shell Israel, as it is now doing from Gaza. But that danger didn't arise last week. Hamas has been shelling Israel, and refusing to recognize its right to exist, for a long time. The argument for the two state solution—which most top former Israeli security officials endorse - has always been that once Palestinians gained the rights and dignity that came with a state, their government would have a strong incentive to keep Hamas and other militants from imperiling that state by using it as a launching pad for attacks on Israel, as the governments of Egypt and Jordan have done in the decades since they signed peace deals. One can dispute this logic. But it is no less persuasive this week than it was last week. And last week, Netanyahu publicly supported a Palestinian state.

In reality, what has changed are not Netanyahu's views but his willingness to publicly acknowledge them. Bibi is a man, after all, who in *A Durable Peace*, his major book on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, reissued in 2000, repeatedly compares a Palestinian state to the Nazi takeover of the Sudetenland. When elected prime minister in early 2009, he still publicly opposed a Palestinian state. And even when he supposedly embraced Palestinian statehood that June in a speech at Bar Ilan University, his own father told Israel television it was a ruse: "He doesn't support [a Palestinian state]. He would support it under terms they [the Palestinians] would never accept." ...

[Read the entire piece here.](#)

## 17) Why the West Bank isn't erupting against Israel

Amira Hass, Ha'aretz, July 18, 2014

Palestine Radio reported at midnight between Thursday and Friday that "the occupation this afternoon suppressed a protest demonstration near the Ofer checkpoint," west of Ramallah. The announcer did not report that an hour before, a battery of about 30 Palestinian police from the riot suppression unit blocked about 200 protesters who were marching in central Ramallah toward the settlement of Beit El as an expression of mourning over the victims in Gaza and anger over Israel's military offensive. "If we were 6,000 protesters, the police would not be standing here," someone said. Indeed, the story here is not the blocking of the protesters but why they are so few.

Over the past 10 days there have been a number of demonstrations in various cities as an expression of mourning and concern over Gaza. Almost every day young people take to the streets throughout the West Bank after the night time prayer and clash with soldiers. If tens of thousands more had wanted to demonstrate solidarity with Gaza by facing off against the army, they would have already found the ways to do so. It is not only "security coordination" that stops them.

The clashes, the injured and two people killed this week have been swallowed up by the scenes and reports from Gaza. The daily reports of Israel Defense Forces raids have also been swallowed up, along with the continued mass arrests in the West Bank, between 10 and 30 every day, 24 of whom are members of the Palestinian parliament from Hamas' Change and Reform party. The number of those arrested since the kidnapping and murder of the Israeli teens has already exceeded 1,000. The Palestinians are convinced that most of those detained have nothing to do with the kidnapping and that these are mainly political arrests for purposes of intimidation and revenge.

In contrast to the hopes or expectations of quite a few people, the fire that broke out in East Jerusalem after the murder of the teen Mohammed Abu Khdeir by Jews, did not spread to the West Bank. There is a solid basis for the assumption that even if there had been a military escalation, the protests would not have crossed the separation wall.

In the heritage of the Palestinian people, as a people fighting for its independence for decades, protests are a lightning rod for the political and social mood. Through them, political discourse bursts out from closed rooms and computer screens to the public sphere. Protests are the natural democratic means to challenge the unnatural situation of life under foreign rule. Protests are a kind of public opinion survey, a means of raising consciousness and direct and unimpeded communication with the leaderships.

"Lack of faith" is the common explanation for why the demonstrations do not spread. A leftist activist who went to the demonstration Wednesday suggested that her daughter join her. The daughter – "much more extreme than I am," according to her mother – refused. She said: "I don't believe that the demonstrations will achieve anything and that the price we'll pay for clashing with the soldiers – injured, dead – is worth it." The Palestinian Authority and its agencies have a schizophrenic, confusing discourse: on the one hand speeches and denunciations of the occupation and on the other hand, habituation to its dictates. The PA's official radio station is playing these days of military conflict militant music about martyrs and liberation, while the security agencies continue to oppress Hamas activists. On Wednesday night, members of the Preventive Security force stopped the Palestine Today TV channel from broadcasting live shots of Palestinian police forcibly breaking up a demonstration of young people in Jenin who were trying to reach the military checkpoint.

Such leadership does not inspire the faith that can lead an uprising if one breaks out. ... [There] is no faith that the current leadership of the PLO, headed by Mahmoud Abbas, wants or is able to lay out such a strategy not now, and not without far-reaching changes that will take a long time. ...

[Read the entire piece here.](#)

## **18) The delusion of Hamas' military wing** **Shlomi Eldar, Al Monitor, July 17, 2014**

Nine years ago, in the course of my journalistic work in the northern Gaza Strip, my photographer, a Gaza resident, Majdi Arbid, was injured by Israel Defense Forces (IDF) fire. Arbid was transferred by ambulance in very grave condition to Soroka Hospital in Beersheba, where his life was saved. After several weeks, when his condition improved, I got authorization from the Israeli Civil Administration to give him a tour of Tel Aviv before he returned to his home in the Sheikh Radwan neighborhood.

On the Ayalon Highway, the highway leading to the big city, he first laid eyes upon the tall buildings, Tel Aviv's towers, the branching road system, the bridges, the lights, the life. It was all so different from Gaza, which seemed light years away to him. On the way, we passed the sites Hamas terrorists struck some years before: the Dizengoff commercial center, the Dolphinarium night club, Mike's Place bar and others. When the astonishment faded from his face, he summarized it thus: "Hamas militants are living in a delusion; they are convinced that with a group of suicide bombers (shahids, meaning martyrs) they could overpower Israel."

After that he had an idea, somewhat comical, somewhat practical: "If we get all of Hamas' leaders on one bus, both the political wing and the military wing, and give them a guided tour from the Erez crossing to Tel Aviv, they will get wiser, return to Gaza and will stop threatening and dreaming that they could defeat Israel."

I recalled this story this week, when the spokesmen of Hamas' military wing once again threatened that, through its rockets, it would shake the earth of Israel. Again, the military wing, which managed to force down the political wing and drag it along its path, proved not only the extent of its detachment from reality, but also the fact that the suffering of Gaza's 1.6 million residents is nothing to be measured, nor is it a consideration to be taken into account.

At the same time, the film unit of Izz ad-Din al-Qassam Brigades labored over "propaganda products" to scare the Israeli home front. The production house of the Qassam Brigades even uploaded a "song" in Hebrew to YouTube, which has become a joke for many Israelis. It became a joke not only because of how garbled it was and the pathos with which the Hamas men sing an embarrassing song in Hebrew, but mostly because of the distorted worldview of these armed men, who convinced themselves that they were heading a military power with technological and military superiority over Israel. And so they sang: "Thus you will carry out attacks, burn military bases and soldiers ... strive for contact with the Zionists, shake the security of Israel, kill all the Zionists. A country of weakness and delusions, they do not have a standing in war, they are like a spiderweb."

The Hamas militants borrowed the term "spider web" from the speech of Hezbollah Secretary-General Hassan Nasrallah, who, in the course of the celebration of Israel's withdrawal from Lebanon in 2000, said, "It [Israel] has nuclear weapons and the most powerful air force in the region, but in reality, it's weaker than a spiderweb."

This is merely a "song" that Hamas produced, which is accompanied by dramatic music and photos of the production and launching of rockets. But it illustrates the huge gap between the grasp of reality of the Hamas military wing, which has once again led the Gaza Strip on a tragic adventure, and the end result of this adventure — enormous ruin, destruction and great suffering for residents of the Gaza Strip.

As a journalist covering the Gaza Strip for Israeli television networks, I met Hamas leaders many times, from both the political and military wings, as well as armed militants from the Qassam Brigades, masked men who even then made overblown threats. ...

[Read the entire piece here.](#)

## 19) Israel Defense Forces: the moral army?

Michael Mitchell, Ha'aretz, July 18, 2014

*Despite real efforts to protect lives, the Israeli military's actions in Gaza seem to violate secular and Jewish ethical principles.*

You probably know Israel's army as the Israel Defense Forces, but the IDF has a more controversial name for itself: the "moral army." For those unused to this rhetoric, hearing it at a time when Israel is engaged in cross-border fighting can spark everything from confusion to outrage – especially in the midst of horrifying reports of civilian casualties in Gaza from Operation Protective Edge.

There are a number of reasons to be wary of the title of "moral army" (it normalizes violence and discourages accountability, for example), but the most important issue is whether the IDF's conduct upholds its commitments. The IDF claims that it aspires to respect secular and Jewish ethics in its operations, but especially when evaluated under the principle of "pikuakh nefesh" - the Biblical insistence that we prioritize the preservation of human life above all else - the IDF doesn't seem to be meeting the Jewish ethical standard for a "moral army."

**Civilian casualties:** In Gaza today, the ethical question the "moral army" must answer is this: When the IDF has good reason to believe there are civilians in a targeted area – or can even see them – should it strike anyway? In the scope of this month's fighting, the crux of how we evaluate the IDF's claim to be a "moral army" lies in what its behavior reveals about its approach to this dilemma. From the information that's publicly available, the verdict seems less horrifying than Israel's staunchest opponents would have it, but far more damning than Israel's rhetoric – or its ostensible moral aspirations – admits.

On one hand, there's little evidence that the IDF is knowingly and deliberately killing civilians in Gaza, and some evidence that Israel is taking significant measures to minimize civilian deaths.

Media reports confirm that the IDF is – in at least some cases – taking actions to prevent civilian casualties: warning the residents and neighbors of targeted buildings and giving civilians time to evacuate. It is also clear that at least some in Hamas are calling for innocent people to act as human shields, and there is evidence that suggests some are heeding those calls – complicating the IDF's efforts to avoid harming noncombatants.

On the other hand, Palestinian civilians make up the majority of those killed or wounded in the recent conflict: more than 200 Palestinians have been killed and more than 1,100 wounded, along with one Israeli fatality, several dozen wounded and many more treated for shock (up to the date of this article). According to a UN report, nearly 80 percent of the Palestinians killed by the IDF in this operation were civilians. Others estimate it to be about half, depending on how they define terrorists. Some of these civilian casualties may be the results of tragic accidents in which the IDF could not reasonably have foreseen the presence of noncombatants and could not see any when it initiated a strike. But it's quite possible that innocent people have been killed by IDF decisions to strike a target when it knew that doing so could put civilians at risk.

If the IDF aspires to be a "moral army," especially one that affirms both the universal dignity of each human life and the respect for the human embodiment of the divine image particular to the Jewish ethical tradition, it is in these instances that its conduct falls from regrettable to wrong.

**To save a life:** Unless you're a staunch consequentialist – someone who believes that whether an action is right or wrong should be judged entirely by its consequences – it's fairly easy to see why deliberately killing civilians is wrong, even when doing so is necessary to hitting a legitimate target. ...

[Read the entire piece here.](#)

## 20) "Gaza: this shameful injustice will only end if the cost of it rises"

Seumas Milne, Guardian, July 19, 2014

*The idea that Israel is defending itself from unprovoked attacks is absurd. Occupied people have the right to resist.*

For the third time in five years, the world's fourth largest military power has launched a full-scale armed onslaught on one of its most deprived and overcrowded territories. Since Israel's bombardment of the Gaza Strip began, just over a week ago, more than 200 Palestinians have been killed. Nearly 80 percent of the dead are civilians, over 20 percent of them children.

Around 1,400 have been wounded and 1,255 Palestinian homes destroyed. So far, Palestinian fire has killed one Israeli on the other side of the barrier that makes blockaded Gaza the world's largest open-air prison. But instead of demanding a halt to Israel's campaign of collective punishment against what is still illegally occupied territory, the western powers have blamed the victims for fighting back. If it weren't for Hamas's rockets fired out of Gaza's giant holding pen, they insist, all of this bloodletting would end.

"No country on earth would tolerate missiles raining down on its citizens from outside its borders," Barack Obama declared, echoed by a mostly pliant media. Perhaps it's scarcely surprising that states which have themselves invaded and occupied a string of Arab and Muslim countries in the past decade should take the side of another occupier they fund and arm to the hilt.

But the idea that Israel is responding to a hail of rockets out of a clear blue sky takes "narrative framing" beyond the realm of fantasy. In fact, after the deal that ended Israel's last assault on Gaza in 2012, rocketing from Gaza fell to its lowest level for 12 years.

The latest violence is supposed to have been triggered by the kidnapping and killing of three Israeli teenagers in the occupied West Bank in June, for which Hamas denied responsibility. But its origin clearly lies in the collapse of U.S.-sponsored negotiations for a final settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in the spring.

That was followed by the formation of a "national reconciliation" government by the Fatah and Hamas movements, whose division has been a mainstay of Israeli and U.S. policy. Israeli incursions and killings were then stepped up, including attacks on Palestinian civilians by armed West Bank settlers. In May, two Palestinian teenagers were shot dead by the Israeli army with barely a flicker of interest outside the country.

It's now clear the Israeli government knew from the start that its own kidnapped teenagers had been killed within hours. But the news was suppressed while a #BringBackOurBoys campaign was drummed up and a sweeping crackdown launched against Hamas throughout the West Bank.

Over 500 activists were arrested and more than half a dozen killed – along with a Palestinian teenager burned to death by settlers. Binyamin Netanyahu's aim was evidently to signal that whatever deal Hamas had signed with Mahmoud Abbas would never be accepted by Israel.

Gaza had nothing to do with the kidnapping, but Israeli attacks were also launched on the strip and Hamas activists killed. It was those killings and the West Bank campaign that led to Hamas resuming its rocket attacks – and in turn to Israel's devastating bombardment.

Hamas is now blamed for refusing to accept a ceasefire plan cooked up by Netanyahu and his ally, the Egyptian President Sisi, who overthrew Hamas's sister organisation the Muslim Brotherhood last year and has since tightened the eight-year siege of Gaza. ...

[Read the entire piece here.](#)



## **21) At least 60 killed In Shuja'eyya neighborhood of Gaza City, hundreds injured Saed Bannoura, IMEMC and agencies July 20, 2014**

In what Gazans have already begun to term “the Shuja'eyya massacre,” Israeli strikes in the crowded Gaza City neighborhood, Sunday morning, have caused the deaths of at least 60 Palestinian civilians, 17 of them children and babies, according to medical sources, and led to a mass exodus of people walking, running and driving out of Shuja'eyya toward hospitals, schools or anywhere they thought they could be safe from the constant bombing.

The Israeli army is continuing to surround the Shuja'eyya neighborhood of Gaza city, firing hundreds of shells into homes, streets, hospitals and medical facilities, and targeting Palestinian ambulances killing medics, and at least two journalists. Missiles have directly hit five ambulances, while several ambulances were fired at, and were rendered useless. Eyewitnesses said the bodies are everywhere, injured people, homes turned into rubble, and that every person seen leaving the Shuja'eyya, is directly targeted by the army.

While most of the Israeli strikes Sunday morning are focused on Shuja'eyya neighborhood, Israeli troops have not let up on their bombardment of other parts of Gaza as well. Casualties have been reported Sunday in Khan Younis and Rafah, in southern Gaza, Beit Hanoun and Beit Lahia, in the northern part of the Gaza Strip. A woman and a young man have been killed after the army bombarded a home in Khan Younis, and twelve children were injured. The army deliberately fired missiles into homes, causing a large number of casualties, and even fired shells at dozens of families fleeing their homes.

Head of the Shifa Hospital in Gaza said the hospital cannot deal with this very large number of casualties, as they do not have enough supplies and equipment, and were forced to move dozens of patients to other hospitals. Medics are unable to perform their duty as the army is firing missiles at them, rendering them unable to provide essential aid to the wounded, and retrieve the remains of slain Palestinians.

Around 25,000 Palestinians have been displaced, and are seeking shelter in hospitals and medical centers, amidst ongoing Israeli bombardment. Calls have been made to the Red Cross to send ambulances, but it was unable to do so, while the army threatened any person or vehicle that moved in the Shuja'eyya as a direct target for the army. In an initial report, the Ministry of Health said that at least 40 Palestinians, including children, have been killed in Shuja'eyya in the early morning hours, and more than 400 wounded, and that the number of casualties is gradually escalating.

Talking al Al-Jazeera, spokesperson of the al-Quds Brigades of Hamas Abu Ahmad, said the large number of remains indicates that the number of killed Palestinians could be higher than 100. In a statement, the Palestinian Ministry of Health said that as Israel escalates its aggression against the civilians in their communities, in different parts of the Gaza Strip, it seems Saturday night and Sunday, at dawn, have been the most violent of the 12-day long assaults on Gaza.

[Read the entire piece here.](#)

*IMEMC is a media center developed in collaboration between Palestinian and International journalists to provide independent media coverage of Israel-Palestine.*

## **22) Egypt's cease-fire proposal gains Arabs' backing** **Barak Ravid and Jack Khoury, Ha'aretz, July 20, 2014**

International diplomatic efforts to reach a cease-fire in Gaza have not yet achieved a breakthrough, but over the weekend there were signs of some progress. Israeli, Palestinians and American officials noted that a critical mass of international and Arab support was forming around considering the Egyptian initiative the only viable one.

Over the weekend, marathon phone discussions continued between the U.S., Egypt, the Palestinians and Israel, as well as with the UN Secretary General, Russia and the larger European Union members. U.S. President Obama spoke with Prime Minister Netanyahu on Friday, shortly after the cabinet discussed the expansion of ground operations.

During their conversation and at a later press conference, Obama stressed that the U.S. supports Israel's right to defend itself. He related that in the middle of the conversation sirens could be heard in Tel Aviv due to rocket fire from Gaza. However, he noted that the U.S. is worried about further escalation and about casualties among non-combatants.

Obama told Netanyahu he is interested in assisting the attainment of a cease-fire agreement and could send Secretary of State John Kerry to the region if that would help achieve quiet. Kerry spoke with Netanyahu yesterday, discussing diplomatic moves needed to achieve a cease-fire. Kerry may arrive in Cairo tomorrow to further push the Egyptian initiative. Later in the week he may come to Israel as well. UN Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon will also arrive in Cairo tomorrow in support of Egyptian efforts. He will come to Israel on Tuesday. On Friday, French Foreign Minister Laurent Fabius arrived in Cairo to discuss the cease-fire. He came to Israel on Saturday, meeting Netanyahu and Foreign Minister Lieberman.

Two parallel tracks characterize the diplomatic maneuvering. The first, led by Egypt, calls for an immediate cease-fire, after which details will be worked out. These would include border crossings, salary payments and the easing of fishing limitations on Gaza fishermen. A keystone of Egyptian efforts is the return of the Palestinian Authority to Gaza, for the first time since the 2007 takeover by Hamas. A senior Palestinian official said that Egypt told Hamas that any opening of the Rafah crossing would entail the return of Abu Mazen's presidential guard there, with no Hamas men present.

Israel and the Authority accepted this proposal, but Hamas rejected it.

The second track is a Qatari initiative, supported by Turkey. It includes the acceptance of multiple demands made by Hamas, such as a lifting of the naval blockade of Gaza, the construction of a harbor and an airport. A key part of this proposal was that Hamas retain control of Gaza and official recognition of its sovereignty over the Strip. Senior Hamas officials, especially political bureau chief Khaled Meshal, adopted this proposal with open arms, refusing to negotiate the terms of the Egyptian proposal. Israel, Egypt and the Palestinian Authority asked the U.S. last week to convey to Qatar and Turkey that they must stop proceeding along a second track. "We told the Americans that we have to stay focused and let Egypt lead," said a senior Israeli source. "We wanted to prevent Hamas getting rewarded for a war it initiated."

The Americans agreed and Kerry clarified that if Turkey and Qatar wished to be involved they would have to fall in line with Egypt. "We have no quarrel with Israel – we told Qatar that we expect them to support Egypt," said an American official. ...

[Read the entire piece here.](#)

### **23) [Despite war, Israel must act with magnanimity](#)**

**Ha'aretz editorial, July 19, 2014**

Israel's ground operation in the Gaza Strip, which is the second phase of Operation Protective Edge, has chalked up some achievements, but at a cost: casualties among its troops and a sharp increase in the number of Palestinians killed. The delusion, held by some, that a ground operation would be quick, easy and cheap was replaced within hours by a more bitter reality.

We can understand the efforts to find tunnels Hamas has dug under the border fence and uses to assault Israel's sovereign territory and launch terror attacks on civilian communities and troops. The exposure and destruction of a dozen or more such tunnels will dull Hamas' spearhead. This action is essential, but it carries the risk of more escalation, which can already be seen as the Israel Defense Forces makes its way into densely populated urban areas.

Meanwhile, the IDF continues to advance through Gaza's densely packed cities to get to the rockets that can reach central Israel. But to avoid harming the civilian population living in these areas, the IDF is urging these people to uproot themselves from their homes and move south, which is exacerbating the humanitarian problem.

So far, more than 300 Palestinians have been killed during Operation Protective Edge, 60 since the IDF launched the ground phase. Thousands of others have left their homes and fled northward. The fact that the international community is still not exerting significant pressure does not mean that the wholesale killing of civilians has been sanctioned. Even the Egyptian wink and the American nod are not *carte blanche* to occupy Gaza for an unlimited time. From the moment Israel entered Gaza, it is also directly responsible for humanitarian aspects.

After World War II and the surrender of Britain's enemies, Winston Churchill, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's hero, advocated "in victory – magnanimity." Despite the growing frustration as the war continues, Israel must strive for a cease-fire, granting Hamas an achievement in terms of the population's welfare, livelihood and freedom of movement. A good, sound agreement must reflect a convergence of the interests of both sides. Such an agreement must take into consideration the deep distress of 1.8 million people over many years, which enabled Hamas to grow in strength. A magnanimous solution for the daily distress of Gazans would allay frustration toward Israel, would allow them to live honorably and could stop another violent round in the near future.

This is the time for level-headed, moderate, magnanimous and responsible leadership, which understands that there is no contradiction between the welfare of Israelis and of Gazans.

## 24) Reaping what we have sown in Gaza

Amira Hass, Ha'aretz, July 21, 2014

I've already raised the white flag. I've stopped searching the dictionary for the word to describe half of a boy's missing head while his father screams "Wake up, wake up, I bought you a toy!" How did Angela Merkel, the chancellor of Greater Germany, put it? Israel's right to defend itself.

I'm still struggling with the need to share details of the endless number of talks I've had with friends in Gaza, in order to document what it's like to wait for your turn in the slaughterhouse. For example, the talk I had on Saturday morning with J. from al-Bureij refugee camp, while he was on his way to Dir al-Balah with his wife. They're about 60-years-old. That morning, his aging mother got a phone call, and heard the recording instructing the residents of their refugee camp to leave for Dir al-Balah.

A book on Israeli military psychology should have an entire chapter devoted to this sadism, sanctimoniously disguising itself as mercy: A recorded message demanding hundreds of thousands of people leave their already targeted homes, for another place, equally dangerous, 10 kilometers away. What, I asked J., you're leaving? "What, why?" He said, "We have a hut near the beach, with some land and cats. We're going to feed the cats and come back. We're going together. If the car gets blown up, we'll die together."

If I were wearing an analyst's hat, I would write: In contrast to the common Israeli hasbara, Hamas isn't forcing Gazans to remain in their homes, or to leave. It's their decision. Where would they go? "If we're going to die, it's more dignified to die at home, instead of while running away," says the downright secular J. I'm still convinced that one sentence like this is worth a thousand analyses. But when it comes to Palestinians, most readers prefer the summaries.

I'm fed up with lying to myself – as if I could remotely, by phone, gather the information necessary to report on what the journalists located there are reporting on. Regardless, it's information that is important to a small group of the Hebrew-speaking population.

They're looking for it on foreign news channels or websites. They do not depend on what is written here in order to hear, for example, about the short lives of Jihad (11) and Wasim (8) Shuhaibar, or their cousin Afnan (8) from the Sabra neighborhood in Gaza. Like me, they could read the reporting of Canadian journalist Jesse Rosenfeld on The Daily Beast.

"Issam Shuhaibar, the father of Jihad and Wasim, leaned on a grave next to where his children were buried, his eyes hollow, staring nowhere. His arm bore a hospital bandage applied after he gave blood to try to help save his family. His children's blood still covered his shirt," writes Rosenfeld. "They were just feeding chickens when the shell hit," he said. "I heard a big noise on the roof and I went to find them. They were just meat," he gasped, before breaking down in tears," continued Rosenfeld's article. We murdered them about two and a half hours after the humanitarian cease-fire ended last Thursday. Two other brothers, Oudeh (16) and Bassel (8) were wounded, Bassel seriously.

The father told Rosenfeld that there was a warning missile. Before the attack, they heard the humming of the UAVs, the kind that "knock on the roof." So I asked Rosenfeld, "If the missile was one of our merciful ones, those that come along as a warning, was the house bombed afterward?" By chance, I found my answer in a CNN report. The network's camera managed to catch the explosion that came after the warning: knock, fire, smoke and dust. But it was a different house that was bombed, not the Shuhaibar house. I rechecked with Rosenfeld and others. What killed the three children was not a Palestinian rocket that went astray. It was an Israeli warning missile. And Issam Shuhaibar himself is a Palestinian policeman on the payroll of the Ramallah-based Palestinian Authority. ...

[Read the entire piece here.](#)

## **25) As casualties mount, the Gaza operation threatens to become a war**

**Amos Harel, Ha'aretz, July 21, 2014**

Operation Protective Edge began as a military operation in the Gaza Strip, defined by the IDF as a limited one. By Sunday, Chief-of-Staff Benny Gantz was already talking of a "campaign." With the current intensity of the fighting and the high number of casualties, the media may soon define this, with some exaggeration, as a war.

The Israeli public, followed by politicians, considers an event as a war only according to one criterion: the number of casualties. This number climbed to 18 yesterday. The question to be addressed in the coming days is whether it is still possible to stop now and halt the slide into a full-blown war.

During yesterday's fighting in Shujaiyeh, the eastern neighborhood of Gaza, thirteen soldiers from the Golani Brigade were killed, as well as sixty Palestinians, apparently half of whom were civilians. This battle is almost on the scale of the Lebanon War. Hamas is currently busy trying to portray this battle as an epic event of legendary proportions. It is trying to depict it as the perfect combination that serves its purposes: its courageous fighters stopped the most powerful army in the Middle East, sustaining casualties. On the other hand the Israeli army massacred innocent people. Thus, according to directives issued by Hamas's Interior Ministry, every effort is being made to disseminate horrific pictures of women and children who were inadvertently killed by the IDF.

During the first two days of the ground operation, the army focused on locating tunnels and their exit shafts, operating within a narrow, sparsely populated strip on the Palestinian side of the border. On Saturday night a decision was taken to expand the scope of operations. A large force from the Golani Brigade was added to the Nahal, Paratrooper and Givati brigades that were already operating in the area, alongside armored battalions. This force was sent to the most densely populated area the IDF had reached in the current operation, the Shujaiyeh neighborhood of Gaza. The eastern outskirts of this area are a mere two kilometers from the border, but its western parts reach the center of Gaza city. According to army intelligence, Hamas had built a tunnel from this neighborhood towards Israeli territory.

Apparently the maneuver had another objective. Hamas, like Hezbollah in Lebanon, has constructed its defenses in arcs facing Israel. In Shujaiyeh it posted one of its strongest battalions, in one of the innermost arcs. IDF planners assumed that in the course of locating this tunnel, contact between Hamas fighters and Golani would ensue, resulting in numerous Hamas casualties. Hamas, which fled a similar confrontation in Operation Cast Lead in 2009, held its ground this time and fought back. Dozens of its fighters opened fire at advancing Golani units, firing anti-tank missiles and detonating explosive charges. Golani took casualties in several incidents – seven fighters were killed by an anti-tank missile that hit a personnel carrier; three officers were killed in a house by rocket fire and three others were killed in other firefights. Brigade commander Rassan Aliyan was also injured.

Characteristically, as in all its battles, Golani soldiers fought bravely and with determination. Under difficult circumstances they struggled to extricate their fallen and wounded comrades. The Hamas talks of a massacre but, as in Jenin in 2002, this does not appear to be the case. According to preliminary information from the battlefield the intensity of fire increased only after the force had sustained many casualties. It is possible that the decision to use limited artillery and aerial strikes in the days preceding the attack enabled Hamas to hold on to its positions.

Furthermore, part of the operation was postponed for 24 hours, since too many residents had ignored the IDF's requests to evacuate. ...

[Read the entire piece here.](#)