



**Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center  
at the Israel Intelligence Heritage  
& Commemoration Center (IICC)**

June 18, 2008

## **The arrangement for a lull in the fighting** (Updated to 6 p.m., June 18)

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Senior Hamas figures Khalil al-Hayeh and Mahmoud al-Zahar announce the expected beginning of the lull in the fighting (Al-Jazeera TV, June 17).

### **Overview**

1. On June 17, 2008, at the end of several months of contacts between Egypt and Israeli and Hamas representatives, Egypt and Hamas separately announced that a lull in the fighting (*tahdiya*)<sup>1</sup> between Israel and the Palestinians in the Gaza Strip had been agreed on. According to the

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<sup>1</sup> For further information see our May 6, 2008 Bulletin entitled "The Egyptian initiative for a lull in the fighting (updated to May 5, 2008 )" at [http://www.terrorism-info.org.il/malam\\_multimedia/English/eng\\_n/html/hudna\\_050508e.htm](http://www.terrorism-info.org.il/malam_multimedia/English/eng_n/html/hudna_050508e.htm).

announcements, **it was expected to go into effect on the morning of Thursday, June 19, at 06:00 Israeli time.**

2. The lull, which was formulated by Egypt, will be in effect in the Gaza Strip for **a period of six months**, at the end of which it is likely to be extended to Judea and Samaria. The core of the lull is the cessation of the fighting in the Gaza Strip, which Hamas is obligated to enforce on the other Palestinian terrorist organizations which have stated that they have no objection to the arrangement (although some of them have reservations). The cessation in the fighting will pave the way for the reopening of the crossings between Israel and the Gaza Strip, put into motion the renewal of talks for the release of abducted Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit, and eventually lead to talks about reopening the Rafah Crossing between Egypt and the Gaza Strip.

3. At this time the Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center does not have a full, detailed, formal version of the arrangement. From what can be gleaned from Palestinian, Egyptian and Israeli media reports, the lull will be implemented in three stages:

i) **Stage One:** Three days after the lull goes into effect, Israel will open the Karni and Sufa crossings and allow the passage of basic commodities from Israel into the Gaza Strip.

ii) **Stage Two:** One week later Israel will permit the passage of most commodities into the Gaza Strip with the exception of those used in the manufacture of weapons.

iii) **Stage Three:** One week after that talks will be held about opening the Rafah crossing. Participants in the talks will include Hamas, Fatah, Palestinian Authority and European Union representatives. (Israel's status in such talks is unclear to the ITIC. Israel is also a party to the November 2005 agreement which regulated movement through the Rafah crossing).

4. One day before the lull went into effect, intensive rocket and mortar shell fire targeting western Negev population centers continued from the Gaza Strip. On June 18, 30 rockets and six mortar shells were fired and Israeli civilians carrying out engineering works near the security fence were attacked with small arms fire. In most instances responsibility was claimed by the Palestinian Islamic Jihad, which suffered a blow when a number of its operatives were killed in an Israeli Air Force attack on June 17.

# Issues discussed during the Egyptian-sponsored contacts

## The release of Gilad Shalit

5. The lull arrangement is expected to jumpstart a renewal of negotiations for the release of Gilad Shalit, the IDF soldier abducted by Hamas two years ago. In Israeli perception, his release is an integral part of the arrangement (although it is unclear which stage it belongs to). **Hossam Zaki**, Egyptian foreign ministry spokesman, said that the issue of the Israeli soldier would be examined at the next stage, when the lull had been established (BBC Radio, June 17). According to Al-Jazeera TV (June 17), Egypt has promised to renew intensive negotiations for Shalit's release.

6. Senior Hamas figures, including Khaled Mashal, Ismail Haniya and Mahmoud al-Zahar, reiterated their position that the lull arrangement was separate from Shalit's release. They have stated that he will be released only after Israel frees the Palestinian prisoners according to the list of demands presented by Hamas.



Ismail Haniya: the issue of Gilad Shalit is separate from the lull in the fighting (Al-Jazeera TV, June 15, 2008).

## Retaining Israel's freedom to act in Judea and Samaria

7. The lull arrangement relates exclusively to the Gaza Strip, which means that the Israeli security forces will retain full operational freedom to act against the terrorist networks in Judea and Samaria, as made clear by Chief of Staff General Gabi Ashkenazi (Ynet, June 17).

8. Hamas was forced to back down on the issue after having tried, during the initial negotiating stages, to extend the lull to Judea and Samaria. However, **Muhammad Nizal**, a member of Hamas's

political bureau, said that by agreeing not to include Judea and Samaria in the arrangement Hamas was not capitulating to Israel. He said that "the West Bank is part of the land of Palestine but the most important thing is to lift the blockade of the Gaza Strip." PIJ spokesmen said that as far as they were concerned, there was no separation between the Gaza Strip and the West Bank (See below).

## **Reopening the Rafah crossing**

9. During the contacts with Egypt, Hamas demanded that the Rafah crossing be opened as soon as the lull went into effect, and even told the media that opening the Rafah crossing was one of the lull's main objectives. Hamas also refused to enable Israel to have a status in regulating traffic through the crossing even though Israeli participation is stipulated by the November 2005 crossings agreement, and even made specific suggestions regarding the management of the crossing without Israel.

10. The lull is supposed to initiate talks between Egypt, Hamas, the PA and the European Union for a reopening of the Rafah crossing. At this point it is unclear to the ITIC whether Israel will be involved in the talks and what its status will be.

## **Smuggling weapons into the Gaza Strip**

11. It is Israel's view that the lull commits Hamas and the other terrorist organizations operating in the Gaza Strip to end their weapons smuggling and stop their military buildup. During talks the Egyptians made it clear that they intended to improve the way they dealt with arms smuggling into the Gaza Strip (Interview with Amos Gilad, Israel's TV Channel 2, June 18). According to an article by Amos Harel and Avi Issacharoff in the June 18 issue of Haaretz, Israel Security Agency head Yuval Diskin is expected to monitor the degree to which Egypt carries out its obligations during the lull.

## **Responses and positions of various parties**

### **Israel**

12. An official in the Israeli prime minister's office said that at a meeting of the Political-Security Cabinet on June 11, it was decided to give a chance to the Egyptian-sponsored lull. The decision was made because Israel desired to exhaust all possible avenues before deciding on a military operation, and following Israel's approval of its conditions, primarily:

- i) Cessation of terrorist activity by all terrorist organizations in the Gaza Strip.
- ii) Cessation of the military buildup undertaken by Hamas and the other terrorist organizations in the Gaza Strip.

iii) The issue of Gilad Shalit would remain an integral part of the process, with calm contributing to progress. It was resolved that efforts to secure his release would be accelerated.

13. The same official added that if there was quiet in the south, Israel would soon allow more goods and products to be imported into the Gaza Strip. He said that results on the ground would determine if the lull were being implemented. Israel, he said, would closely monitor the way obligations were being met. At the same time the IDF would continue preparing for a military action in the Gaza Strip, in the event the lull collapsed, and would continue thwarting terrorism and to defend the citizens of Israel at all times.

14. Sources in the defense minister's office said that the lull would give Israel the opportunity to exhaust political means to stop the rocket fire. Defense Minister Ehud Barak said it was difficult to estimate how long the lull would continue. He said the test would be how it was carried out, and that it was very important to give it a chance. Chief of Staff General Gabi Ashkenazi said that the IDF would give the lull credit but at the same time would prepare for an action (Ynet, June 18).

## Egypt

15. Egyptian sources expressed satisfaction with the arrangement. **Hossam Zaki**, Egyptian foreign ministry spokesman, said that the lull set to go into effect on June 19 was the direct result of an arrangement between the two sides which had been achieved through the efforts of Egypt (Al-Jazeera TV in English, June 17). He again stated the importance of putting an end to military actions and said that after calm was established it would be possible to progress to the other stages of the lull, including a gradual lifting of the blockade, reopening the Rafah crossing and completing negotiations for the release of Gilad Shalit (BBC Radio, the Kuwaiti News Agency, June 17).

## Hamas

16. Senior Hamas figures expressed satisfaction with the lull and were quick to hold a press conference in Gaza City, where they announced that it would go into effect on the morning of June 19:

i) **Khaled Mashal**, head of Hamas's political bureau in Damascus, said that the lull was necessary and that it would benefit the million and a half residents of the Gaza Strip, who had been harmed by the Israeli blockade. He said that the various organizations had achieved the lull from a position of strength. However, he also said that Hamas would respond to any violation by Israel (Reuters, June 18).



**Khaled Mashal, head of Hamas's political bureau in Damascus (Al-Jazeera TV, June 18).**

ii) **Mahmoud al-Zahar** held a press conference where he said that the lull was a victory “for the resistance organization, which carried their weapons and that it meant that the blockade of the Gaza Strip, had failed.” He added that it was not a question of completely abandoning the use of weapons because he did not believe that Israel was capable of honoring the arrangement ( Hamas Website, June 17).

iii) Hamas spokesman **Fawzi Barhoum** said that Hamas appreciated the part Egypt had played in formulating the arrangement and in trying to ensure the peace and security of the region (CNN, June 17).

## **The other terrorist organizations**

17. The **PIJ** and other terrorist organizations operating in the Gaza Strip made it clear that they would not interfere with implementing the lull, although they rejected some of its articles:

i) Senior PIJ figure **Daoud Shihab** said that his organization would uphold the lull insofar as Israel did, and had not been an obstacle to the lull. However, he also said that the PIJ reserved the right to respond to every Israel act of aggression in the Gaza Strip and West Bank (CNN, June 17). **Nafez Azzam** said that despite the PIJ's objections to a number of articles in the arrangement, for example the separation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip, the organization agreed to respect the position of the other organizations (Al-Alam TV, June 17). Jerusalem Battalions spokesman **Abu Hamze** said that every Israeli violation of the arrangement in the Gaza Strip or West Bank would give the organization the right to respond in any way it saw fit (Qudsway Website, June 18).

ii) **Rabakh Mihna**, a member of the **PFLP** political bureau, said that the entire issue of the lull was a political mistake and expressed his disappointment with it. He said that it had been achieved under conditions worse than those Hamas had proposed in the past. However, he said that the PFLP had no reason to object to it. He said Hamas should exploit the lull to close Palestinian ranks and reinforce its hold, politically and socially (Pal-today Website, June 17).

iii) **Saleh Zaydan**, a member of the **DFLP** political bureau, said that if there was a will to continue the lull, the blockade had to be lifted and the lull had to include the West Bank (Radio Sawt al-Quds, June 17).

18. Hamas made it clear that from its point of view, **the arrangement obligated the other organizations**. At a press conference **Fawzi Barhoum** noted that the lull was the fruit of the Palestinian organizations' firm, united stance which had been achieved over a period of months. He said that all the Palestinian factions in the Gaza Strip were completely committed to implementing the lull to protect the Palestinian people and its land, and to lift the blockade of the Gaza Strip (Palestine-info Website, June 17).