



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

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Implementing the arrangement for a lull in the fighting¹ (Updated to June 22, 4 p.m.)

Halcyon Days



Left: IDF soldiers near the Sufa crossing playing backgammon (Yannis Behrakis for Reuters, June 19).
Right: Hamas prime minister Ismail Haniya playing soccer (Palestine-info Website, June 22).

¹ Follow up for our June 18 Bulletin entitled “The arrangement for a lull in the fighting
(Updated to 6 p.m., June 18)” at [http://www.terrorism-
info.org.il/malam_multimedia/English/eng_n/html/lull_180608e.htm](http://www.terrorism-info.org.il/malam_multimedia/English/eng_n/html/lull_180608e.htm).

Overview

1. On June 19 at 6 a.m. the lull in the fighting in the Gaza Strip went into effect.

During the first four days the terrorist organizations have not fired shots or launched rockets or mortar shells from the Gaza Strip into Israeli territory. The IDF also stopped its counterterrorist activities in the Strip and orders for opening fire were refreshed. On Sunday morning, June 22, a "red alert" was heard in Sderot but turned out to be a false alarm. On June 20 in Samaria, **which is not included in the lull arrangement**, two terrorist operatives opened fire from their vehicle at a number of Israelis on a hike along a trail near the settlement on Halamish (in southwest Samaria). Three Israelis were wounded, one of them critically.

2. After a number of days of calm, according to the arrangement, Israel is supposed to open the Karni and Sufa crossings and allow the passage of large quantities of food, fuel, various types of merchandise and building and other material necessary for the renewal of economic activity in the Gaza Strip. At 4 p.m. today, June 22, about 90 trucks passed through the Sufa crossing, compared with an average of about 60 trucks a day since the Kerem Shalom crossing was attacked on April 19, 2008.

3. During the next week contacts are expected to resume between Israel and Egypt regarding other issues related to the lull. Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert is expected to visit Egypt on June 24 and meet with Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak at Sharm el-Sheikh. Ofer Dekel, the prime minister's envoy in matters concerning abducted Israelis, is also expected to leave for Cairo to renew contacts regarding the release of Gilad Shalit. The Shalit family, for its part, has filed a petition with the Israeli Supreme Court against the government of Israel, demanding that the crossings remain closed and that the economic closure of the Gaza Strip remain in force unless their son Gilad is released or guarantees of his impending release are provided.

The release of Gilad Shalit

4. The Shalit family has petitioned the Supreme Court to oblige the government of the State of Israel to make the opening of the Gaza Strip crossings conditional on the release of their son Gilad. Otherwise, they claim, Israel will lose important leverage to pressure Hamas.

5. They have requested the Court to issue a conditional order instructing the Israeli government to explain "why it should not be prevented from implementing any arrangement

to open the four crossings which connect the State of Israel to the Gaza Strip and the Rafah crossing which connects the Strip to the sovereign territory of Egypt, and [why it should not be prevented from implementing] the lifting of the economic closure of the Gaza Strip without the immediate release of Gilad Shalit from his captors or the provision of guarantees for his release" (from the petition lodged with the Israeli Supreme Court on June 21, translated from the Hebrew). To the petition was appended the last letter the family received from their abducted son, delivered at the beginning of June through the auspices of former American President Jimmy Carter, in which he wrote, among other things, that his health was deteriorating.

6. Sources within Hamas continue to maintain that the issue of Gilad Shalit is not part of the lull arrangement, reiterating that he will be released only in exchange for the release of Palestinian terrorists imprisoned in Israel. According to **Ismail Haniya**, Hamas's commitment to maintain the lull is different from its commitment to release Gilad Shalit. He said that Hamas had given Egypt a list of 450 prisoners whose release it demanded in return for Shalit. "The Israelis have to agree to the list to resolve the problem..." he said (Palestine-info website, June 20). **Dr. Osama al-Muzeini**, a senior Hamas figure, said that the negotiations regarding Shalit "were not a stage in the lull," noting that Shalit would only be released in return for the release of Palestinian prisoners. He said that in the near future the Egyptians would invite the Palestinians and Israelis to deliberate the issue (Filastin al-'An website, June 21).

The Gaza Strip crossings – overview

7. On June 22, following four days of quiet, the number of trucks delivering merchandise via the **Sufa crossing** was **increased** and a total of 90 trucks passed through, compared with 60 since Kerem Shalom crossing was attacked on April 19, 2008. **The conveyor belt at the Karni crossing and the fuel terminal at the Nahal Oz crossing** started working at their usual capacity today. Civilians with compelling humanitarian problems entered and left the Gaza Strip through the **Erez crossing**. The **Kerem Shalom crossing** has been out of commission since it was destroyed in a terrorist attack.



Trucks waiting at the Sufa crossing to enter the Gaza Strip (Amir Cohen for Reuters, June 19).

The Rafah crossing

8. Egypt, under whose aegis the lull was achieved, made it clear that the Rafah crossing would open in accordance with the crossings agreement of November 2005, in which Israel was involved. Egypt said that it would include representatives from the Palestinian Authority in the negotiations, since they were a side in the original agreement (Al-Hayat, June 19). On the other hand, Ismail Haniya said that it had been agreed that Egypt, Hamas, the European Union and the Palestinian Authority would meet to discuss the mechanism for opening the crossing, implying that Israel would have no involvement in its operation (Palestine-info website, June 20).

9. In the meantime, the interior ministry of the Hamas administration confirmed that 259 Palestinian civilians delayed on the Egyptian side of the Rafah crossing had entered the Gaza Strip on the morning of June 18. Egypt was reported to have facilitated the crossing. Hamas's interior ministry is also reported to have prepared a comprehensive plan for dealing with traffic through the Rafah crossing to ease the passage of civilians when it is opened (Filastin al-'An website, June 19).

10. "Egyptian sources" reported that within ten days (by the end of July) they expected that pedestrian traffic would pass to Egypt through the Kerem Shalom crossing. They said it would not replace the Rafah crossing but would be a temporary solution to ease the burden of the residents of the Gaza Strip (Al-Hayat, June 20). "A highly-placed Hamas source" told an Al-Hayat reporter that Hamas had no objection to the Kerem Shalom crossing's operation, but

that it did oppose its replacing the Rafah crossing (*ibid*). On the other hand, Hamas spokesman **Sami Abu Zuhri** said that it was “completely unacceptable” and that the matter had not arising in the talks with Egyptian (Palestine-info website, June 20).

Reactions to the lull arrangement

Egypt

11. In a television interview **Hossam Zaki**, spokesman for the Egyptian foreign ministry, said that the arrangement was **an oral agreement**, because the sides involved [Israel and Hamas] did not recognize one another, and therefore signing a written agreement was a problem. He added that both sides had an interest in the lull, Israel because of the rocket fire targeting its population centers and the internal pressures on the government, and the Palestinians because they wanted to put an end to the IDF’s constant activities and the blockade of the Gaza Strip (Al-Arabiya TV, June 19).

12. Egyptian sources reiterated that first of all, the lull had to be firmly established, while adding that it did not include the Rafah crossing, about which Egypt was ready to deliberate with Hamas and the Palestinian Authority. They said that Egypt would host a meeting for negotiations relating to Gilad Shalit and would take the “appropriate steps” to promote an internal Palestinian reconciliation (Al-Hayat, June 19).

The Hamas Movement

13. Hamas continues to represent the lull arrangement at a victory for the movement, which succeeded in “imposing” its conditions on Israel by virtue of the activities of the “resistance” (Palestinian terrorism) and popular Palestinian protest:

i) In the Friday sermon at the Filastin mosque in the Gaza Strip Hamas prime minister **Ismail Haniya** said that the success of the lull depended on Israel’s willingness to abide by it. He also said that Hamas did not impose the lull on the other organizations but that **they had committed themselves to abide** by it despite their reservations. He said that **Hamas was not obligated to take any action to prevent smuggling into the Gaza Strip** because it was not within its power as a government to do so (Palestine-info website, Reuters, June 20).

ii) The **Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades** announced that after having taken a successful “firm stance,” they regarded themselves committed to the lull in the fighting with Israel, calling it a “tactical necessity” aimed at easing the suffering of the

Palestinian people. However, they threatened to react assertively to every Israeli violation of the arrangement (Izzedine al-Qassam Brigades website, June 19).

iii) **Dr. Muhammad Abu Hashish**, head of Ismail Haniya's information bureau, wrote an article stating that the lull was a victory for Hamas, and compelling proof of the movement's ability to deal with crises and to be politically creative (Felesteen, June 19). **Izzat al-Rishq**, a member of Hamas's political bureau, said that the lull did not mean the end of the "resistance" (i.e., terrorism), but a temporary period of rest for the fighters, limited in time and place (Al-Alam TV, June 19).

The Gazan street

14. Gazans who were interviewed by the Arab media (Al-Sharq Al-Awsat, Al-Jazeera TV, June 19) expressed satisfaction with the lull. They said they hoped it would improve daily life in the Gaza Strip, rehabilitate its economy and help all the sectors harmed by the fighting. Surfers on Hamas's Internet forum also expressed their satisfaction and some of them said they hoped and were even sure that the other organizations would not try to sabotage the lull (PALDF Forum, June 19).



Gazans swimming in the sea (Palestine-info Website, June 22).

The Palestinian Authority

15. In a newspaper announcement Abu Mazen praised the lull arrangement, calling it "a national interest." He expressed hope that it would ease the Gazans' suffering, accelerate the peace process and lead to an internal Palestinian dialogue between the rival parties (Wafa News Agency, June 18).

16. Arriving in Jordan as part of a trip there and to Yemen, Abu Mazen said that the Palestinian Authority was interested in the success of the lull. He called upon the Palestinian

organizations to restrain themselves and not to involve external agendas (possibly a reference to Iran) which were liable to damage the lull (Wafa News Agency, June 20).

The other Palestinian terrorist organizations

17. **The Popular Resistance Committees** announced their commitment to the internal Palestinian consensus at the heart of the lull and the opening of the crossings. The PRC threatened to react to every Israeli attack on the Palestinian people and its jihad fighters “wherever it occurred” (i.e., also in Judea and Samaria) (Popular Resistance Committees Website, June 19).

18. **Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades** (i.e., Fatah networks which do not accept Abu Mazen and the Fatah leadership’s authority) announced their reservations regarding the lull arrangement, stating that it “did not include all of the homeland, especially the West Bank” (Qudsnet website, June 19).

The United States and the European Union

19. The United States and the European Union praised the arrangement and expressed hope that the lull would be maintained and that the arrangement would open the door to continued talks. Some of the remarks made were the following:

i) **The Deputy US State Department spokesman** congratulated Egypt on its efforts to mediate between the two sides. He also said that as long as Hamas threatened Israel, American policy toward Hamas would not change (US Department of State Website, June 18).

ii) **The American National Security Council spokesman** expressed cautious enthusiasm and the hope that Hamas would honor the arrangement, and it would abandon its terrorist tactics and become a legitimate political party. He also expressed hope that the arrangement would lead to a situation in which Israel civilians would not be subjected to rocket fire and there would be a good atmosphere for talks (Agence France Presse, June 18).

iii) **Javier Solana**, in charge of foreign relations for the European Union, said that the EU’s policy toward Hamas had not changed but expressed hope that the lull arrangement would create dynamics leading to a dialogue between the two sides (Kuwait News Agency, June 19).

iv) **The British Prime Minister** praised Egypt for its efforts to mediate. He called upon Hamas to cease firing rockets and upon Israel to stop enlarging the settlements. He said that many world countries were willing to give financial support to a peace accord based on a security agreement between the two sides (Sky News, June 18).