



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

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Operation Cast Lead—Update No. 3



Injured man being evacuated from a construction site in Ashkelon that suffered a direct rocket hit. One person was killed and several others were severely and moderately injured (Foreign Ministry, December 29, photo by Edi Israel)



On December 29, Israel allowed the crossing of more than 60 trucks and 10 ambulances to the Gaza Strip through the Kerem Shalom Crossing (IDF Spokesman, December 29)



**Israeli Air Force raid in Gaza City
(Palestine-info, December 29)**



Direct hit at a house in Sderot (Sderot Media Center, December 30, photo by Hamutal Ben Shitrit)

Overview

1. On December 29, the third day of Operation Cast Lead, Israeli Air Force raids continued on targets of Hamas and other terrorist organizations in the Gaza Strip. The targets of the attacks included military installations, Hamas's administration symbols, terrorist operatives, and arms and ammunition. The number of people killed in the attacks, in our assessment, exceeds 350, **the great majority of them terrorist operatives**.
2. On December 29, the extent of Hamas's rocket fire and mortar shelling became **greater**, the organization having clearly **recovered** from the initial shock of the Israeli air raid. A total of **57 rocket landings and 15 mortar shell hits** were identified on the third day of the fighting. Of particular note were 122-mm long range rocket landings in the city of **Ashdod** (for the first time) and in other distant population centers that have not been targeted before (**Ofakim** and the **Yavne** region, as well as such cities as Sderot, Ashkelon, and Netivot). On December 30, a rocket even landed in the heart of **Beersheba**, the capital of the Negev. Evidently, despite the damage it took, Hamas still has the **ability and willingness** to launch a constant stream of rockets and mortar shells on Israel, including improved 122-mm Grad rockets.
3. With that in mind, it appears that Operation Cast Lead may **continue** and even **expand** in order to achieve the target set forth by the Israeli leadership, namely, a significant, long-lasting improvement in the security situation of western Negev cities and towns.

Attacks on terrorist targets on December 29

Overview

4. On December 29, the third day of Operation Cast Lead, the Israeli Air Force attacked dozens of facilities belonging to Hamas and other terrorist organizations. The targets attacked included headquarters and military installations, training camps, rocket launch sites, and buildings used by the Hamas administration throughout the Gaza Strip. During the night, the Israeli Navy joined the activity by attacking several terrorist targets in the Gaza Strip, including outposts, training camps, and positions of the Hamas naval force. Since the beginning of the operation, the Air Force made **about 400 sorties**, hitting over **390 targets** of Hamas and the other terrorist organizations.
5. As at the morning of December 29, **more than 350 Palestinians were killed and over 1500 were injured** during Operation Cast Lead. The vast majority of the casualties are **terrorist operatives** who were staying in headquarters, bases, and installations used by

Hamas and the other terrorist organizations. Some of the casualties are civilians accidentally killed inside or in the vicinity of terrorist targets.¹

6 .According to the IDF Spokesman, the targets attacked included: some 30 rocket and mortar shell launch sites, a truck loaded with long-range Grad rockets, launch squads, a rocket launcher, five weapon production sites and weapon silos, about ten Hamas buildings and outposts, about five groups of terrorist operatives, and a terrorist center operating in a mosque in the northern Gaza Strip. Also hit were senior terrorist operatives, including a senior PIJ commander, **Ziad Abu Tir**, and one of the leaders of the Hamas rocket unit, **Ayman Siam**.

Attack on a truck loaded with Grad rockets

7. The Air Force attacked a **Hamas truck loaded with dozens of Grad rockets** in the Jabalia region (northern Gaza Strip). The truck was hit and the rockets exploded. It appears that Hamas wanted to transport the rockets from a building in which they were stored to a safe location, fearing that their present location would come under attack by the IDF, or in order to bring them closer to launch sites where they could be fired on Israeli population centers (IDF Spokesman website, December 29).



Attack on a truck loaded with Grad rockets (IDF Spokesman, December 29). To view a video of the attack, [click here](#).

Military and security infrastructure, Hamas's dministration facilities and institutions

¹Al-Arabiyya TV reported that according to UNRWA information (as at December 29), 51 civilians were killed since the beginning of the operation (meaning that the rest of the victims are not civilians but rather terrorist operatives). Hamas, which controls the media in the Gaza Strip, conceals or plays down the extensive damage caused to the military terrorist infrastructure and to terrorist operatives.

8. What follows is a summary of the information that appeared on Palestinian media about military, security, and administration targets of Hamas and the other terrorist organizations attacked during the third day of Operation Cast Lead:
- a. **A Hamas administration office compound in the neighborhood of Tel al-Hawa**, western Gaza City. Three seven-story buildings were bombed in the attack, killing 10 and injuring about 40.
 - b. **The Hamas Prisoners Office headquarters**. An Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades operative named Nasser Hamouda was killed in the attack.
 - c. **The seat of the Hamas Interior Ministry**, which formerly served as the preventive security headquarters.
 - d. **The Naval Police headquarters** in Nusseirat.
 - e. **Tunnels** in the Rafah region.
 - f. **The Information Office of the Salah al-Din Brigades**, the terrorist-operative wing of the Popular Resistance Committees, near the legislative council building in Gaza City.
 - g. **A lathe** used for weapons production in the central Gaza Strip.
 - h. **The air defense service headquarters** in the southern Gaza City.
 - i. **The air defense headquarters** in western Khan Younes.
 - j. **The house of a senior leader of the Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades**, Ra'ed Saad.
 - k. **The house of a senior leader of the Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades**, Umar Mushtaha, in the Gaza City neighborhood of Al-Shajaiyya.



A poster produced by the Jerusalem Battalions, the terrorist wing of the Palestinian Islamic Jihad, commemorating the death of the organization's operatives, the most senior of which (on the right) is Ziad Abu Tir (Jerusalem Battalions website, December 30).

- m. **The house of a senior operative of the Hamas military wing**, Maher Zaqout. Seven people were killed and 30 were injured in the attack.
- n. **The house of an operative of the Hamas military wing**, Nour Barake, in Bani Suheila, east of Khan Younes.
- o. **The house of a senior operative of the Hamas military wing**, Ayman Siam. Two people were killed and about 35 were injured in the attack.
- p. **The Al-Qarara police building** in Gaza City.
- q. **The Foreign Ministry building** of the Hamas administration in the Gaza government compound.
- r. **A Hamas security installation** in Jabalia.
- s. **The security compound headquarters** in the central Gaza Strip.
- t. **The Ummah University for Military Studies** in western Gaza City, which belongs to the Hamas administration's Interior Ministry.
- u. **An Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades training camp** in the central Gaza Strip.
- v. **An Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades outpost** in Al-Nusseirat.
- w. **Buildings belonging to the Islamic University.**
- x. **The naval police headquarters in Gaza City.**
- y. **The police station** in the central Gaza Strip.

Hamas's response: intensive rocket fire on Israel

After two days of initial shock, Hamas finally recovered. On December 29, the third day of the operation, **massive rocket and mortar shell attacks** were launched, including long-range rockets which hit **Ashkelon** and, for the first time, downtown **Ashdod**, the **Yavne** region, and the city of **Ofakim**. 9.

10 . **A total of 57 rockets and 15 mortar shells** landed during December 29. What follows is a summary of the major hits:

- a . A rocket hit a construction site in **Ashkelon** in the morning, killing **Hani al-Mahdi**, a construction worker from the Israeli Bedouin village of Aroer. The rocket also injured 11 civilians, one of them severely, two moderately, and the rest lightly. Other rockets which landed in the city of Ashkelon caused stress-related injuries.



The construction site in Ashkelon in which Hani al-Mahdi was killed (Foreign Ministry, December 29, photo by Edi Israel)

b. Around 21:00, a long-range rocket landed (for the first time) **in downtown Ashdod**, killing **Irit Shitrit**, who sought shelter at a bus station which was then hit by the rocket. Eight other civilians were injured, one of them severely (Irit Shitrit's sister), two lightly, and the rest suffered stress-related injuries.



Irit Shitrit

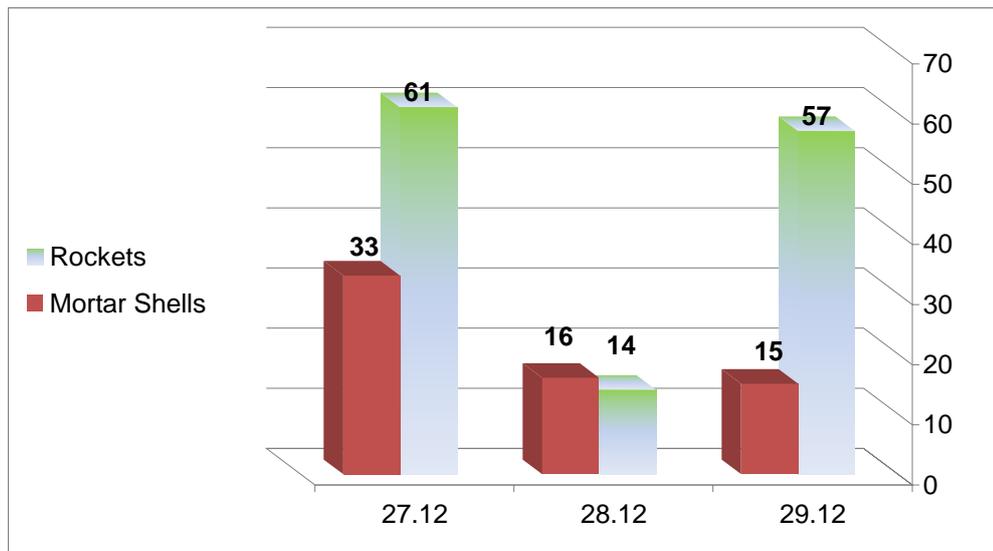
c. At 21:45, two mortar shells landed **in the brigade headquarters near Nachal Oz**, killing First Staff Sgt. **Lutfi Nasraldin**, 38, from the Israeli Druze village of Daliyat al-Karmel. Five soldiers were injured, one severely and four lightly.



First Staff Sgt. Lutfi Nasraldin

11. **On the backdrop of the massive fire, Ashraf Zaid**, the head of the Hamas public relations committee, said in an interview to Hamas's Sawt al-Quds radio (December 29) that Hamas **"digested the blow and contained it"**. He added that Hamas still had a lot of rockets to give to the Palestinian people. "... The rockets pierce the Arab silence... and strike at the heart of the entity [Israel] in Ashkelon, Ashdod, and the Negev. The enemy must expect a constant stream of Qassam surprises..."
12. Since the beginning of Operation Cast Lead, a total of **132 rockets** landed in Israeli territory and **64 mortar shells** were fired on Israel. As a result, **four civilians were killed and 31 were injured.**² Also, the fire caused dozens of stress-related injuries.

Rocket landings and mortar shell hits in Operation Cast Lead



² On December 30, more rockets were fired, including one which landed in a Beersheba kindergarten in the evening.

The crossings between the Gaza Strip, Israel, and Egypt

Transporting humanitarian aid from Israel

13. On December 29, Israel allowed the crossing of **more than 60 trucks** with humanitarian assistance for Gaza Strip residents. Additional trucks are scheduled to cross on December 30. Also, Palestinians with urgent humanitarian problems continue to cross through the Erez Crossing.



Trucks with humanitarian assistance cross into the Gaza Strip (IDF Spokesman, December 29)

Egyptian and Arab assistance starts to come in through the Rafah Crossing

14. After the Palestinians breached the Egyptian border, Egypt sent reinforcements to the border area to prevent similar incidents from happening again (Al-Arabiyya TV, December 29). Also, Egypt apprehended more than 150 Palestinians who came to Egypt illegally when the border fence was breached on December 28 (Al-Youm al-Sabe' news portal, December 29). The detainees were deported back to the Gaza Strip on December 29. On December 29, confrontations continued between Palestinians and Egyptian security forces along the Gaza Strip border. The Palestinians fired in all directions, threw Molotov cocktails, and set fires along the border fence. Five Egyptian police officers were injured in the confrontations (AFP, December 29).

15. On December 29 in the afternoon, the Rafah Crossing was opened and Egypt allowed the passage of several dozen trucks with aid for the Gaza Strip. The aid came from **Egypt, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and Libya**. Also, dozens of injured people started to be evacuated from the Gaza Strip to receive medical treatment in Egypt (Arab media, December 29).



Food shipment at the Rafah Crossing on December 29 (Al-Hayat al-Jadida, December 30)

16. On December 29, an aid plane of the **Iranian** Red Crescent landed in Egypt. It was reported that another plane was on its way (ISNA, December 29). The Iranian aid ship Iran-Shahed left the Bandar Abbas port on December 29 en route to Jordan's port of Aqaba (Mehr News Agency, December 29). Iran announced that two more ships would embark soon (ISNA, December 29).

17. On December 29, **Syria** said that an aid convoy with food and medical supplies was on its way to the Gaza Strip (Syrian News Agency, December 29). **Jordan** also said that a convoy with food and medical supplies was on its way. A senior Jordanian official stated that Jordan intended to send aid convoys on a weekly basis (Jordanian News Agency, December 29).

The ship Dignity prevented from arriving

18. On the night of December 29-30, the ship called **Dignity** left Cyprus once again on its way to the Gaza Strip. Approaching the Gaza Strip, it was asked to identify itself by Israeli Navy vessels. It did not respond and made a sharp turn, colliding into the Israeli ship and slightly damaging both. After the collision, the ship responded and started turning back towards Cyprus. Israeli Navy vessels escorted the ship on its way back to Cyprus, offering their assistance in case of malfunctions (IDF Spokesman, December 30).



The ship Dignity before leaving Cyprus on December 29
(Al-Jazeera, December 29)

Protests and violations of public order in Judea and Samaria

19. Anti-Israeli protests continue in Judea and Samaria. Several demonstrations were held in **Hebron**; the demonstrators confronted the Palestinian Authority security services as well as the Israeli security forces. Several demonstrators were lightly injured. **In the village of Husan**, near Bethlehem, demonstrators confronted IDF forces. Other demonstrations took place in Jericho and near the Damascus Gate in the Old City of Jerusalem. Salam Fayad's government announced that it would not prevent protest rallies, but that it would not let them near "clash sites" with IDF to prevent any more Palestinian casualties (Wafa News Agency, December 29).

Stabbing attacks against Israelis

Israel

20. **Kiryat Sefer**: a Palestinian doing construction work at a house in the village of Kiryat Sefer, near Modi'in, went on a stabbing spree on the morning of December 29. First he stabbed the contractor, who was severely injured; then he stabbed the couple who owned the house, following which he stabbed two passers-by on the street. The terrorist was shot dead by a medical volunteer who happened on the scene.

Judea and Samaria

21. **Kedumim**: a Palestinian who arrived in the Samaria village of Kedumim stabbed one of the residents in his neck, lightly injured him, and fled from the scene. The IDF began searching for the terrorist. Fatah's Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades claimed responsibility for the stabbing (Ma'an News Agency, December 29).

A selection of reactions

Hamas

22. Top Hamas's Gaza leaders, such as Mahmoud al-Zahar, Sa'id Siam, and Khalil al-Hayya, have been keeping "media silence" since the beginning of Operation Cast Lead, fearing that they might be hit by the IDF. Connection with the media is maintained mostly by Hamas spokesmen: Fawzi Barhoum, Mushir al-Masri, and Sami Abu Zuhri. Reactions to the operation from the Hamas leadership in Damascus, members of the Political Bureau, are also constantly heard.
23. Following are several messages by Hamas spokesmen in the past two days:
- a. **Hamas can protect itself against an Israeli ground assault.** Entering the Gaza Strip is going to be a "dangerous adventure" for the IDF, **and it will result in the deaths of many (Palestinian) civilians** (Mushir al-Masri, Monte Carlo Radio, December 29).

 - b. **Hamas's conditions for a renewed lull in the fighting:** Khaled Mash'al, the head of the Political Bureau, responded to an appeal by the President of Senegal, saying that Hamas never objected to the lull in the fighting but that it had clear demands and conditions. It demanded the cessation of Israel's "aggression" in the Gaza Strip and in the West Bank, the opening of the crossings between Israel and the Gaza Strip, and the opening of the Rafah Crossing (Muhammad Nazzal, member of the Hamas Political Bureau, in an interview to the Russian Arabic-language TV station RT, December 29). Hamas expressed its willingness to renew the lull in the fighting, but it will not do it for free but rather according to conditions which everybody is aware of (Muhammad Nazzal, Al-Arabiyya TV, December 29).

 - c. **Severe lashing out against Abu Mazen:** Abu Mazen, "the godfather of the Palestinian issue", "is dancing on the wounds of Gaza Strip residents". His invitation to a dialogue with Hamas is unacceptable, because "Abu Mazen is no longer Palestinian, he is not a patriot, and has nothing to do with the resistance anymore..." (Fawzi Barhoum, Al-Aqsa TV, December 29).

Syria: anti-Israeli and anti-Semitic rhetoric

24. The Syrian propaganda continued the attacks on Israel, intertwined with anti-Semitic expressions. Israel's attacks in the Gaza Strip were described as a holocaust, pogrom, massacre, and a war of mass destruction (Tishreen, December 29). Also, the Syrian propaganda attacked **Egypt and Saudi Arabia**, without mentioning them explicitly, accusing them of abetting the "Israeli crime" and promising that history and the peoples would not forgive their governments.

25. As in the past, the Syrian propaganda integrated **anti-Semitic expressions** in the anti-Israeli campaign. Thus, for example, an article in the newspaper Al-Thawra noted that "the despicable racism is drawn from the guidelines of the Talmud and the principles of the Zionist movement..." (Al-Thawra, article by Hassan Hassan, December 29). Israel is depicted as "a Zionist-Nazi gang", "the new Nazism", "a racist entity". The Jews are depicted as "the same Jews throughout history... warmongers and terrorism producers, they are the world's most bloodthirsty and racist people" (ibid).