



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

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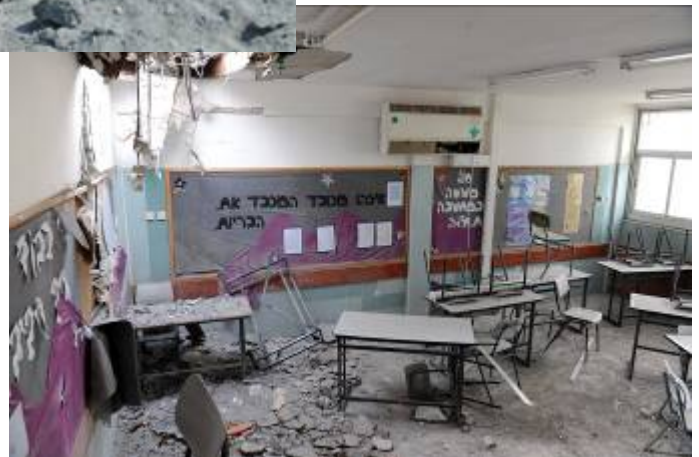
## Operation Cast Lead – Update No. 5



Direct hit on a kindergarten in Beersheba, December 30  
(Photo by Herzl Yosef, Ynet, December 30)



Bearings scattered from a Grad rocket that hit a Beersheba school (Yaron Brenner, Ynet, December 31)



Direct hit on a Beersheba school (Foreign Ministry, December 31)

## Overview

1. On December 31, the fifth day of Operation Cast Lead, the air force attacked more than 50 targets in the Gaza Strip. The targets attacked included rocket launcher squads, armed operatives, and a mosque that served for weapons storage and from the vicinity of which rockets were fired at Israel (secondary explosions in the mosque were evidence of the large amount of ammunition stored there). Since the start of the military operation, the air force has attacked **over 500 targets** belonging to Hamas and the other terrorist organizations.
2. At the same time, on December 31, rocket and mortar shell fire continued at a similar scale to that of the previous day. The rockets landed in Beersheba, Ashdod, Ashkelon, Netivot, Sderot and other communities. **In Beersheba**, at the outer range of the rockets, five rockets landed. One of them was a direct hit on a school (where classes were not being held at the time). A total of **312** rockets and mortars have landed during the operation (as of December 31).
3. Israel, in cooperation with international aid organizations, is continuing to make every effort to enable humanitarian aid into the Gaza Strip. Over the last day, 93 trucks carrying food and medicine passed into the Gaza Strip from Israel through the Keren Shalom Crossing. A large amount of humanitarian aid also reaches the Gaza Strip from the Arab and Muslim world via the Rafah Crossing. According to reports coming from the Gaza Strip itself, there is a sufficient stock of food and drugs there, and there is no humanitarian crisis.
4. Five days after the start of the operation, it appears that it is still far from over. The IDF is prepared to **expand and intensify** its activity in the Gaza Strip, including a ground operation against Hamas, when the order is given to do so by the political echelon. To date Israel has not accepted the ideas and proposals that have been raised for a unilateral ceasefire, as they hold no assurance that Hamas will cease the rocket fire and that Operation Cast Lead will achieve its goal of substantially changing the security situation in southern Israel.

## Assaults on Terrorist Targets, December 31

### Overview

5. On December 31, **the air force attacked over 50 targets in the Gaza Strip**. The targets of the attacks, according to IDF Spokesman announcements, included arms production sites, Hamas outposts, rocket launchers, launch squads, armed operatives, and launch sites. Also attacked were government buildings and symbols of Hamas' administration. Among other targets was a **mosque** that served for arms storage. **In this case, as in other cases, the many secondary explosions testified** to a large quantity of ammunition stored in the site attacked. **In all**, since the beginning of Operation Cast Lead, the Air Force has carried out **over 500 sorties**, in which **over 500 targets** of Hamas and the other terrorist organizations have been attacked.

### **Attacks on Military and Security Infrastructure, Administration Facilities and Symbols of Hamas and Other Terrorist Organizations**

6. Following is a summary of the outcome of the assaults on December 31, based on announcements by the IDF Spokesman and information that appeared in the Palestinian media:

- a. **Mosque that served as a storehouse for armaments:** the Air Force attacked a mosque that served as an arms storage place and from which terrorist activity was launched, in the Tel El-Hawa neighborhood of Gaza City. The strike caused a **long series of secondary explosions** from armaments and ammunition that were stored in the mosque (including rockets, some of which were long-range Grad rockets). The raid took place following intelligence received over the past days indicating that many fighting operations were being launched **out of and in the vicinity of the mosque**. These operations included storing weapons, **firing rockets into Israeli territory** (including fire on the morning of December 31), and a hiding place for terror operatives (IDF Spokesman, December 31).
- b. **Administration facilities and symbols of authority:** The Air Force attacked legislative council buildings and the justice ministry in Gaza City, on the night of December 31.
- c. **Tunnels:** The IDF continued attacking the tunnel infrastructure. Five tunnels used by Hamas for smuggling, among other things, were targeted.
- d. **Production site and armaments storage in the center of the Gaza Strip:** A tunnel had been dug under the site.

- e. **A Hamas outpost in Rafah and a coastal security outpost near Gaza City.**



Right: Islamic University in Gaza, which was a center for developing weapons (Photo: Online forum of the Izz al-din al-Qassam Brigades, December 31, 2008). Left: Below the Hamas administration offices in Gaza (Paltoday, website of the Palestine Islamic Jihad (PIJ), January 1, 2009).

7. According to the Palestinian press, many other sites were hit as well, including:
- f. **The ASIDAA communications complex** in Khan Yunis.
  - g. **The house of an Izz al-din al-Qassam Brigades operative**, Anas Abu Shabana, in the Al Shabura neighborhood of Rafah.
  - h. **The house of a Hamas operative**, Fawzi Abu El-Naja, in the Al-Bala'wi refugee camp.
  - i. **The house of a senior Izz al-din al-Qassam Brigades operative**, Zahar Al-Farah, in the Bena'a refugee camp in Rafah.
  - j. **The house of a senior Izz al-din al-Qassam Brigades operative**, Abu Jibril Al-Shamali, in the Al Brazeil neighborhood of Gaza.
  - k. **The house of a senior Izz al-din al-Qassam Brigades operative**, Rafa Salama, in Gaza.
  - l. **The house of a senior Popular Resistance Committees operative**, Hassan Nasman.
  - m. **The Al-Katiba center** in Khan Yunis, which serves as a national security outpost.
  - n. **A money-exchange office in Gaza.**
  - o. **A lathe shop** where armaments were manufactured in Khan Yunis.

## Hamas official Abd al-Qader Nizar Ghayan was killed

8. On December 31, the Air Force attacked the house of Abd al-Qader Nizar Ghayan in the Jabaliya refugee camp in the northern Gaza Strip. After the strike, many secondary explosions were identified. Hamas' Palestine-info website reported that Nizar Ghayan was killed along with his family. His home served as an **arms storehouse**; and underneath it was a tunnel for extricating terror operatives belonging to Hamas' military wing (IDF Spokesman, January 1).

9. Nizar Ghayan was a high official in the Hamas leadership and one of its extremists. He was involved in the military set-up of the Izz al-din al-Qassam Brigades. He was 49 years old and had four wives. Nizar Ghayan sent one of his sons to carry out a suicide attack on the Eli Sinai settlement (October 2001) in which two Israelis were murdered.



Nizar Ghayan with Izz al-din al-Qassam  
Brigades operatives  
(Al-Jazeera forums website, June 24, 2008)



Nizar Ghayan (PALDF, December 4, 2008)

## Palestinian casualties

10. According to Palestinian reports, so far **some 400 Palestinians have been killed and 1,900 wounded**. Most of the casualties in the IDF attacks were **terrorist operatives**. Some of the casualties in the attacks were civilians, who were in or near buildings or facilities belonging to the terrorist organizations.

## Israeli measures to prevent harm to the civilian population

11. In the course of Operation Cast Lead, Israel has taken a number of measures aimed at preventing, insofar as possible, harm to the civilian population in the Gaza Strip and at focusing the Air Force strikes on terror facilities and operatives. In this context, messages with the following gist were conveyed to the residents of Gaza:

- a. The IDF is acting only against the terrorist organizations.
- b. The IDF will target any person or building where arms or ammunition are located.
- c. Anyone whose house is concealing armaments must evacuate the house.

12. These messages were conveyed in a number of manners, including dropping notices, temporarily overriding the local radio station frequencies serving the Palestinian terror organizations, and sending messages to residents by telephone. Regarding the latter method, the IDF has made approximately 100,000 phone calls so far (IDF Spokesman, December 31).



Example of a notice directed at Rafah residents (Published on a Fatah Internet forum)

## Intensive rocket and mortar shell firing continues

13. On the fifth day of the operation, the firing of rockets and mortars at Israel continued at a rate similar to the previous day. During December 31, **43** rocket landings were identified and **25** mortars were fired. The rockets were aimed at **Beersheba, Ashdod, Ashkelon, Netivot, Sderot**, and other communities near the Gaza Strip. Most of the firing was done by **Hamas**. Following are the main incidents:

- a. **Beersheba: Five rockets** fell during the day in the city of **Beersheba**, at the outer range of the rockets. One of them landed in a school in a city neighborhood, ripping a hole in the ceiling of one of the classrooms. The building suffered extensive damage. Eight people were stricken with severe anxiety and sent to the hospital.



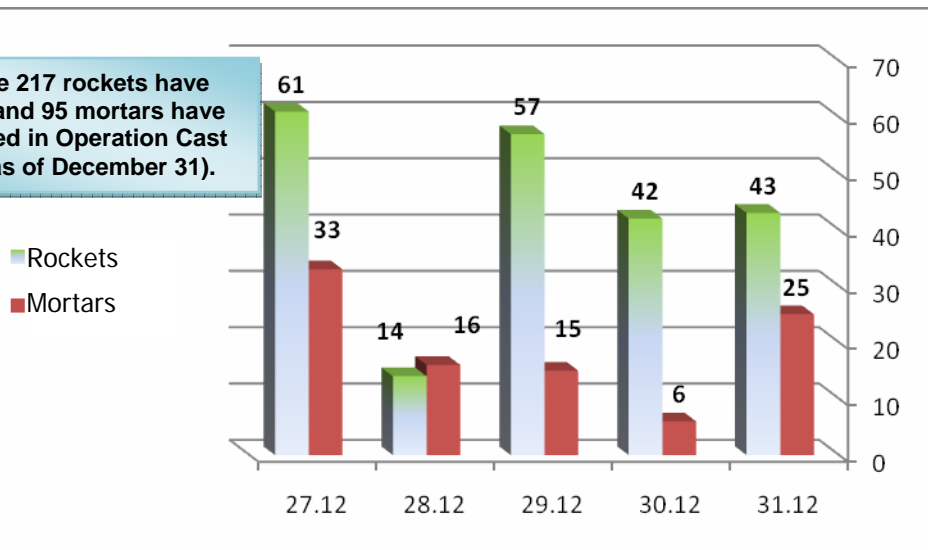
The school classroom that was hit in Beersheba  
(Foreign Ministry, December 31)

- b. Ashkelon: Three rockets landed in Ashkelon; a few civilians were stricken with severe anxiety.
- c. **Sderot** and other communities in the western Negev also took rocket landings.

14. On Thursday, January 1, the firing continued. In the afternoon, a rocket scored a direct hit on the top floor of an apartment building in **Ashdod**, and fire broke out in the building. The rocket damaged an electric power line and there was a power outage in the area. Some 30 people suffered severe anxiety and were treated on site. Two more rockets landed in open areas in Ashkelon; there were no casualties and no damages.

### Rocket landings and mortar fire during Operation Cast Lead

To date 217 rockets have landed and 95 mortars have been fired in Operation Cast Lead (as of December 31).



### Beersheba as a target of long-range rocket fire

15. Starting December 30, the fourth day of Operation Cast Lead, the city of Beersheba was also brought into the circle of rocket fire for the first time. The rockets fired at the city were of the standard 122-mm Grad type, whose range is **approximately 40 km**. To date **seven rockets** have landed in Beersheba and its environs. Due to the firing at Beersheba the Home Front Command decided to expand the area in which a "special situation" has been declared.

16. On December 30, close to 9:00 p.m., a rocket landed in a **kindergarten** in one of the Beersheba city neighborhoods, causing damage. No children were on site due to the late hour. A civilian close to the location was slightly injured and a few other people suffered shock.



The damage inflicted on the Beersheba kindergarten (Photo by Herzl Yosef, Ynet, December 30).

17. On December 31, at 8:45 a.m., a rocket landed on a school in one of the city neighborhoods. As a result, a hole with a diameter of about one and half meters was ripped in the ceiling of one of the classrooms. The building suffered severe damage. Studies were not taking place in the school due to an earlier decision by the Home Front Command and Beersheba's mayor. A few more rockets landed throughout the city and its outskirts; there were no casualties and no damage.



**The hole ripped in the roof of a school classroom (Photo by Herzl Yosef, Ynet, December 30).**

18. Prime Minister Ehud Olmert (January 1) and Defense Minister Ehud Barak (December 31) visited the school that was damaged. During their visit, Ehud Barak said that Israel will continue to intensify the operation until it achieves the goals for whose sake it was started (Ynet, December 31).



**Defense Minister Ehud Barak examining the damage to the school (Photo by Herzl Yosef, Ynet, December 30).**

## **The transfer of humanitarian aid to the residents of the Gaza Strip**

### **Overview**

19. Throughout Operation Cast Lead, Israel has seen to the **continuous transfer** of humanitarian aid to the residents of the Gaza Strip. This aid includes food, drugs and medical equipment. Israel allows an average of **90 trucks per day** to cross. In addition, Egypt allows the transfer of humanitarian aid and the evacuation of wounded for treatment in Egypt, through the Rafah Crossing.

20. On January 1, 2009, **UNWRA** is expected to begin distributing food for some **750,000 Palestinians** who will arrive at aid centers in the Gaza Strip. The agencies reported that according to their information, the Rafah Crossing is expected to remain open to meet the Palestinians' needs (Al Arabiya TV, December 31). The **Red Cross** reported on the organization's website (December 31) that the situation in Shifa Hospital in Gaza has stabilized, and that it has most of the required medicines and equipment in stock. The **United Nations Food Program (UFP)** also reported that its organization does not intend to bring additional food into Gaza, since its warehouses are full. **England** also transferred a total of \$10 billion in urgent aid – consisting of food and gasoline (Reuters, December 31).

### **Continued humanitarian aid arriving from Israel**

21. On December 31, Israel allowed the transfer of **93 trucks** carrying humanitarian aid into the Gaza Strip through the Kerem Shalom Crossing. Civilians posing humanitarian cases also continue to be allowed into Israel, through the Erez Crossing. On December 31, 12 wounded people from the Gaza Strip, including two children, were moved through the Erez crossing to receive medical attention in Israel.

22. Since the beginning of the operation, Israel has transferred over **6,500 tons** of food and humanitarian aid into the Gaza Strip. Israel allows the transfer of all required aid by the aid organizations and donor countries.

### **The transfer of Arab aid and wounded through the Rafah crossing**

23. The Arab and Muslim countries are continuing to collect and transfer humanitarian aid to the Gaza Strip. Following is a summary of the humanitarian aid that was sent to Gaza on December 31, and is expected arrive within the next few days:

- a. **Saudi Arabia:** 25 tons of medicine were transferred by Saudi Arabia to the Gaza Strip. The Saudi Health Ministry announced that there is a technical problem in transferring units of blood from Saudi Arabia to the Gaza Strip, and that the medical services in Gaza informed them that there is no problem finding donors. As per the request of the Palestinians in Gaza, Saudi Arabia will send empty bags for units of blood. On December 31, Saudi Arabia also dispatched two planes carrying 20 tons of drugs and medical equipment. These planes are expected to return bringing wounded Palestinians to receive medical treatment in Saudi Arabia (Al-Shark Al-Awsat, December 31).
- b. **Iran:** The Iranian Health Minister met with a Hamas representative in Iran, Abu Asamah Almaty, and told him that hundreds of doctors and nurses in Iran have expressed their willingness to leave for the Gaza Strip. According to him, Iran's medical delegations have failed in their attempts to enter the Gaza Strip, due to Egypt's closure of the border. He also said that Iran is willing to accept wounded from the Gaza Strip, and that a special center has been set up to collect food and medical equipment for the Gaza Strip (IRNA, December 31).
- c. **Egypt:** Four tons of medicine from the Red Cross in Egypt has been transferred into the Gaza Strip. Over the past 24 hours, about 25 wounded have been moved into Egypt through the Rafah Crossing. The head of the crossings in the Palestinian Embassy in Egypt said that few patients have been transferred because there are not enough ambulances to transport the wounded from the Gaza Strip into Egypt (Pal-Press, December 31).
- d. **Jordan:** Jordan sent another aid convoy on December 31. Jordan also announced that it is willing to accept Palestinian wounded (Jordanian News Agency, December 31). Jordan's aid convoys pass through Israel to reach the Gaza Strip.
- e. **Libya:** Libya transferred ten ambulances and 25 tons of medicine.

## **Confrontations continue between Palestinians and Egyptian security forces**

24. Confrontations between Palestinians and the Egyptian security forces continued along the border between Egypt and the Gaza Strip. On December 31, an Egyptian police officer was wounded in Rafah from shooting that came from the Palestinian side. A mortar shell and a hand grenade were also found in the area during searches carried out by the Egyptian forces (Middle Eastern News Agencies, December 31).

25. Egypt detained some 50 Hamas operatives who infiltrated into Egypt, and they are now being interrogated. This is in relation to the death of an Egyptian officer on December 28 (Al Masri Al Yom, December 31). In the past few days, the Egyptian security forces have been hunting for Hamas operatives who infiltrated into Egypt. The Egyptian security forces have called upon local residents not to provide assistance to the infiltrators or shelter them in their homes (Al-Ahram, December 31).

## **Protest actions and disturbances have dwindled in Judah and Samaria**

26. In Judah and Samaria, there has been a decline in the extent of the disturbances and confrontations between Palestinians and the Israel security forces that started at the beginning of Operation Cast Lead. At the beginning of the operation, a general strike was declared in all the Judah and Samaria cities, but in the past couple of days a trend of returning to normal life has commenced. On December 31, there were a few protest rallies in West Bank cities, but no special confrontations or clashes with the Israeli security forces were noted. On December 31, no attempts were made to carry out terrorist attacks in Judah and Samaria.

## Selection of Reactions

### Hamas and the other terrorist organizations

27. **Ismail Haniyeh**, head of the Hamas administration, who during these past days has refrained from appearing in public, gave a recorded speech he read out from a written page (Al Aqsa channel, December 31). The gist of his speech: Israel is waging a “war of destruction” against the Palestinian people and harming civilians, particularly children (Hamas denies that most of those killed are terrorist operatives<sup>1</sup>); Gaza is not isolated, as evidenced by the demonstrations being carried out on its behalf throughout the Arab world and the humanitarian aid that the Arab states are trying to transfer; the “bloodshed” in Gaza illustrates the need for national internal-Palestinian reconciliation and dialogue, based on releasing “political prisoners” from the jails of the Palestinian Authority. Haniyeh said that the Israeli attacks must be **stopped immediately without prior conditions and the crossings must be opened**. According to him, only after that will it be possible to hold discussions on all the topics on the agenda.

28. Following are some subjects raised in announcements made by the Hamas spokesman and the spokesmen of other terrorist organizations in the past two days:

- a. **Messages of deterring the IDF from entering the Gaza Strip:** The Izz al-din al-Qassam Brigades have a large number of **female suicide bombers** ready to sacrifice themselves in the event that the IDF decides to enter the Gaza Strip in a ground operation (Al Aqsa channel, December 30). **Thousands of well-trained fighters**, armed with weapons and supplies, including antitank weapons and a large quantity of explosive devices, are entrenching themselves in the northern and eastern Gaza Strip in high preparedness for the Israel ground action. The organizations are working out of a joint war room, according to an orderly work plan, which includes a division of responsibility by regions and streets (Abu Abir, Spokesman of the Popular Resistance Committees, Quds Press Agencies, December 31). **Abdullah Shami**, an official of the PIJ, warned that the various organizations have armaments, capability, forces and high morale, and are ready for any ground assault (Algerian daily Al-Shuruq, December 31).
- b. **Hamas is demanding a unilateral cessation of the Israeli assault and the opening of the crossings as a precondition for a lull in the fighting:** Hamas announced that any Arab or international intervention must be based on the “cessation of aggression, lifting the siege, and opening all the crossings” (Palestine

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<sup>1</sup> Hamas intelligence sources are even employing psychological warfare, saying that the Izz al-din al-Qassam Brigades have succeeded, supposedly, in deceiving Israel by “supplying false targets,” the bombing of which has not impaired the ability of the “resistance” (Al-Majd, the website of Hamas’ interior security mechanism, December 31).

info, December 31). Hamas official **Iman Taha** said that if any kind of a proposal for a ceasefire is presented to Hamas, they will consider it: “We support any initiative for immediately ceasing the aggression and fully lifting the blockade” (Reuters, December 31). Hamas refuses a lull in the fighting with Israel that does not include opening the crossings to the Gaza Strip (Al Hayat, December 31). Russian Foreign Minister Serge Lavrov said that in a telephone conversation with the head of the Hamas political bureau, **Khaled Mashal**, the latter told him that Hamas is willing to stop its attacks on condition that the siege on Gaza is ended (French News Agencies, December 31).

- c. **Conveying a (false) message of “business as usual”**: A Hamas police spokesman, Islam Shahwan, gave an interview to Al Aqsa radio staff (December 31), in which he said that the police are continuing to function as usual and that its people are continually at their place of work, as per instructions from police headquarters. Shahwan specified that police activity is ongoing in the criminal realm, including arresting drug dealers and thieves. However, he added, the police’s job is also to “maintain and defend the internal front, **in order to protect our brothers the resistance fighters** [terrorist operatives] and keep them from despairing...”

### Photos bolstering Hamas’ propaganda machine

(From the Izz al-din al-Qassam Brigades website, December 31)



Weapons aimed at Israel aircraft  
(Izz al-din al-Qassam Brigades website  
forums, December 31, 2008)



Poster from the Izz al-din al-Qassam  
Brigades forum on December 27: The title  
reads: “At your command, Al Qsa.”  
Underneath is written “We will build a  
bridge [to Al Qsa] built from the skulls of  
the sons of Zion.”

## Egypt

### Call for the Security Council to convene

29. The Egyptian Minister of Defense, **Ahmed Abu Algehit**, said that it was decided at a meeting of the Arab foreign ministers to ask the **Security Council** to convene immediately. The goal is get a resolution passed for the cessation of the Israeli actions, opening of the crossings, and “lifting of the blockade” (Al Jazeera, December 31). The Egyptian ambassador to the UN announced that he had submitted a draft proposal for the resolution to the Security Council on behalf of the Arab states, including an immediate ceasefire, opening the transit points, transferring humanitarian and economic aid, restoring the lull in the fighting and continuing the peace process (Egyptian satellite television, January 1). A UN spokesperson said that the Security Council would meet on the night of January 1 to discuss the situation in the Gaza Strip behind closed doors (French News Agency, December 31).

### Pulling the Al Manar TV channel off the Egyptian satellite?

30. The Iranian television channel **Alalam** quoted Egyptian “media sources” as saying that Israel had directed an official request to Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak to ban broadcasts by the Al Manar channel on the Egyptian communications satellite. This comes in wake of Hassan Nasrallah’s last speech, in which he called for a popular uprising against the Egyptian regime (El Nashra website, Lebanon, December 30).

31. Broadcasts by the Hezbollah television station, including harsh words of incitement against the Egyptian government, were indeed aired to the Arab/Muslim world and many other countries by the **Nilesat** satellites (under Egyptian control) and **Arabsat** (an Arab satellite in which Saudi Arabia plays a dominant part). The meaning of being aided by these satellites is that Egypt and Saudi Arabia are helping disseminate Hezbollah’s incitement broadcasts that draw inspiration from Iran and are directed against not only Israel but also their own governments and those in other pro-Western Arab states. Al Manar transmissions are also being distributed by an Indonesian communications satellite<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> See our information bulletin: “[Communications and terrorism: Hezbollah’s Al-Manar TV channel has started broadcasting via an Indonesian satellite, after being taken off a Thai satellite. The Indonesian satellite covers East Asia, China, and Australia. Indonesia is a Muslim country, making it more difficult for the international community to fight the incitement aired by Hezbollah \[backed by Iran\]](#)” (September 4, 2008).