



Escalation in the Gaza Strip Summary of Operation Breaking Dawn August 5-7, 2022

August 8, 2022

Operation Breaking Dawn

- ▶ After three days of rocket and mortar fire from the Gaza Strip and IDF attacks, the Egyptian negotiator, Israel and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) declared a ceasefire, which went into effect on August 7, 2022, at 23:30.
- ▶ **Rocket and mortar fire:** During the three days of the operation 1,175 rockets were launched at Israel, 97% were intercepted by the Iron Dome aerial defense system. Approximately two hundred rockets fell inside the Gaza Strip or into the sea. Most of the rocket barrages targeted the Israeli communities near the Gaza Strip, but some were launched at the cities in Israel's south, along the coast, the greater Tel Aviv area and the Jerusalem area. Most of the rockets were launched by operatives of the Jerusalem Brigades, the PIJ's military-terrorist wing, and a small number by the military-terrorist wings of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine and the Popular Resistance Committees. The Izz al-Din Qassam Brigades, Hamas' military-terrorist wing, did not participate in the rocket fire.
- ▶ **Israeli casualties:** Seventy Israelis were wounded by shrapnel or injured while running to protected areas. Most of the injuries were superficial. Damage to homes was reported in the southern Israeli city of Sderot and in some of the communities near the Gaza Strip, and factories in Sderot and the coastal city of Ashqelon were also damaged. Rocket hits caused about 13 fires.
- ▶ **The IDF response:** During the operation the IDF carried out 170 attacks on PIJ terrorist targets. Among the targets were senior Jerusalem Brigades commanders, other senior figures, an offense tunnel, rocket and mortar shell launchers, squads on their way to launch rockets, weapons storehouses, facilities for the manufacture of weapons and a military installation of the organization's naval force.



Right: Attack in Rafah in the southern Gaza Strip (Facebook page of journalist Hani al-Sha'er, August 7, 2022). Left: Attack on a Jerusalem Brigades post in Rafah (Filastin al-A'an Twitter account, August 7, 2022).

► **Palestinian casualties:** The ministry of health in Ramallah reported 44 Palestinians killed, 15 of them women and three of them children; 360 were wounded, 151 of them children (ministry of health in Gaza Facebook page, August 8, 2022). Some of those who were killed, especially the women and children, died during explosions resulting from rocket misfires or rockets that fell inside the Gaza Strip.¹ The Hamas administration reported that 1,764 buildings had been damaged, 18 of them demolished completely (Facebook page of the ministry of public works and housing in the Gaza Strip, August 8, 2022).

Hamas: Hamas did not participate in the rocket fire, which was primarily carried out by the PIJ. Senior Hamas figures issued a number of vague statements of support for the PIJ and encouraged the Palestinians in the West Bank and Israeli Arabs to take part in the operation. However, it was not the first time Hamas did not participate in an escalation. During the two past rounds initiated by the PIJ, in November 2019 and December 2020, Hamas was not involved. Hamas' military and security capabilities are superior to those of the PIJ, but Hamas did not use them, in order to keep the escalation from increasing.

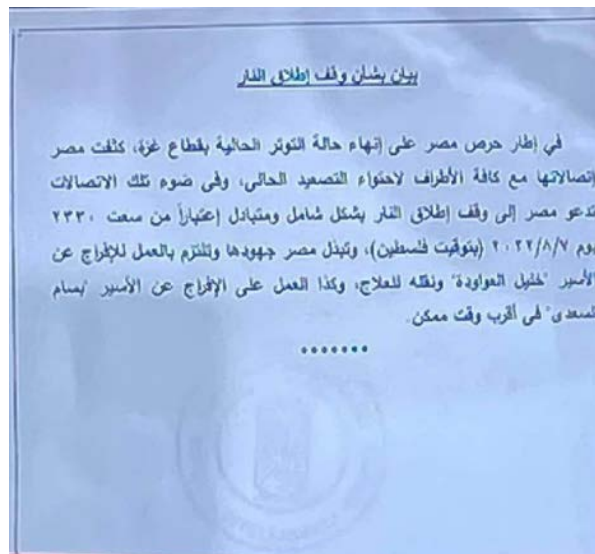
► **Judea and Samaria:** The attempts of the PIJ, Hamas and the other organizations to engage the Palestinians in Judea and Samaria and Israeli Arabs were unsuccessful, and the areas were relatively quiet. During the operation the Israeli security forces continued their

¹ The distribution of those killed will be issued by the ITIC in the near future.

counterterrorism activities in a number of locations in Judea and Samaria, detaining about 40 operatives suspected of involvement in terrorist activities and demolishing the houses of terrorists who carried out the shooting attack in Ariel.

Ceasefire

► After three days of escalation in the Gaza Strip, the Egyptian mediator, Israel and the PIJ declared a ceasefire, which went into effect on August 7, 2022, at 23:30. A short announcement was issued stating that as part of Egypt's efforts to end the tension in the Gaza Strip, Egypt had increased its contacts with both sides to halt the escalation, and called for a comprehensive mutual ceasefire, which would go into effect at 23:30. Egypt promised to invest efforts to secure the release of Khalil al-Awawdeh, a hunger-striking prisoner, and Bassem al-Sa'adi, whose detention in Jenin began the escalation, as soon as possible. Following the Egyptian announcement, the PIJ announced that on August 7, 2022 at 23:30, it would stop firing rockets, and reserved the right to respond to every act of "Zionist aggression" (PIJ website, August 8, 2022).



The full version of the ceasefire published by the Palestinian media.

► The ceasefire declaration was preceded by efforts at mediation led by Egypt, which began almost as soon as did the escalation. A delegation from Egyptian General Intelligence (EGI) headed by Hazem Imam arrived in the Gaza Strip, and after a day of intensive mediation, an agreement for a ceasefire was reached. Apparently Hamas also wanted a ceasefire, and Isma'il Haniyeh, head of Hamas' political bureau, said they were monitoring the efforts.

► The ceasefire was planned for 20:00 but arrived two and half hours later. **Muhammad al-Hindi, a senior figure in the PIJ's external leadership**, was interviewed in Istanbul, and claimed the delay was caused by Israeli procrastination and stubbornness. He said they wanted guarantees that both their detainees [Bassem al-Sa'adi and Khalil al-Awawdeh] would be released later. During an interview held about an hour afterwards, he said they had received a general statement from Egypt regarding its obligation to work for their release (al-Jazeera, August 7, 2022).

► **PIJ leader Ziyad al-Nakhlah** held a press conference in Tehran a few minutes before the ceasefire went into effect. He claimed Israel had tried to reject the demand for the release of Bassem al-Sa'adi but surrendered to the PIJ's demands, and that they had received explicit guarantees from Egypt that he would be released in the near future. He said Khalil al-Awawdeh would be released to a hospital on August 8, 2022, and from there he would go home. He added they had issued an ultimatum of a week, but Egypt requested the date be left open, and they agreed. He said that if Israel ("the enemy") did not release them, they would consider the ceasefire agreement as null and void and renew their attacks (al-Mayadeen, August 7, 2022).



Ziyad al-Nakhlah's press conference in Tehran (al-Mayadeen TV, August 7, 2022).

► **Khaled al-Batash, a member of the PIJ's political bureau**, praised the efforts of "all the sides" to reach a ceasefire. He gave special thanks to Egypt, EGI Director Abbas Kamel and those responsible for its Palestinian portfolio. He also thanked Qatar and UN envoy Tor Wennesland. He said he was certain both sides would be completely responsible and meet their commitments to the ceasefire, especially the release of Bassem al-Sa'adi and saving the life of Khalil al-Awawdeh (PIJ website, August 8, 2022).

► **Jerusalem Brigades spokesman Abu Hamza** said that jihad and combat would continue at all times and in all places where their presence was needed, that the Jerusalem Brigades

would not withdraw from the united front they had shown during the operation, and that it was only the beginning (Jerusalem Brigades website, August 8, 2022).

► **Hamas spokesman Fawzi Barhoum** said in an announcement that the most recent round of fighting was another station in the ongoing, heated "struggle" with Israel ("the occupation"), which would only end when Israel had been expelled from "Palestine." He added that the fighting had proved the "equation" that there was no "aggression or occupation without cost" (Hamas website, August 7, 2022).

► **Mahmoud Abbas** praised the Egyptian efforts that led to the end of the "aggression" against the Palestinians in the Gaza Strip. He expressed his admiration for the consistent position of Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi in support of the Palestinians, adding that Egypt's efforts contributed to calm and to relieving the suffering of the Palestinians, whether in Jerusalem, the Gaza Strip or all the Palestinian territories (Wafa, August 7, 2022).

Measures to restore calm

► Following the ceasefire and in accordance with an security assessment, the decision was made to gradually remove the restrictions which had been imposed on the Israeli public. The roads near the Gaza Strip which had been closed were reopened, railroad service was restored and civilians no longer had to remain close to protected spaces (IDF spokesman, August 7, 2022).

► On the morning of August 8, 2022, the Palestinian media reported that trucks had entered the Gaza Strip through the Kerem Shalom Crossing bringing fuel for the power plant that supplied electricity. The Israeli Coordinator of Government Activities in the Territories (COGAT) reported that 30 trucks had entered the crossing but not the Gaza Strip. The Erez Crossing, which was damaged by mortar fire, also reopened for foreigners as well as for patients wanting to leave the Gaza Strip for medical treatment in Israel (COGAT, August 8, 2022).



Right: Trucks bringing diesel fuel en route to the Gaza Strip (Facebook page of journalist Hani al-Sha'er, August 8, 2022). Left: The trucks arrive at the power plant (Twitter account of photojournalist Hassan Aslih, August 8, 2022).

Rocket and Mortar Shell Fire

► Throughout Sunday, August 7, 2022, and until the ceasefire went into effect, rockets and mortar shells were fired at Israel. The last launch was a few minutes before 22:30. During the day about 600 rockets and mortar shells were fired at Israel. Most of the barrages targeted the communities near the Gaza Strip, but rockets were also fired at Israel's southern cities, the coastal cities, the greater Tel Aviv area and the Jerusalem area. The PIJ's military-terrorist wing also reported it had shot at Israeli Air Force aircraft (Jerusalem Brigades website, August 7, 2022).



Pictures from a Jerusalem Brigades video of an air defense operative following the flight of an Israeli aircraft in the skies over the southern Gaza Strip and firing an RPG at it (Jerusalem Brigades website, August 8, 2022).

- The more prominent events were the following:
 - ◆ During the morning rockets were fired at the **Jerusalem area** communities of Shores, Neveh Ilan and Abu Gosh. Three rockets were intercepted. They were fired following the entrance of thousands of Jews into the Temple Mount compound for Tisha B'Av.

- ◆ At around noon, during the funeral held for Khaled Mansour² there were intensive barrages of rocket fire.
- ◆ Several barrages were fired at the southern coastal cities of Ashqelon and Ashdod. A factory in Ashqelon was hit, and a Palestinian from Hebron was wounded. The building was damaged (Israel Police Force spokesman's unit, August 7, 2022).



Right: An Israeli police demolitions expert removes the rocket from the factory in Ashqelon. Left: Israeli security forces at the site (Israel Police Force spokesman's unit, August 7, 2022).

- ◆ Three mortar shells hit the Erez Crossing, the crossing through which Gazans enter Israel. No casualties were reported. The crossing's facilities were damaged.
 - ◆ In the afternoon a barrage was launched at the central Israeli cities of Rishon LeZion and Ness Ziona. Another barrage was launched at the greater Tel Aviv area at 20:00, when the ceasefire was supposed to go into effect. The Iron Dome aerial defense system intercepted three rockets.
 - ◆ A short time before the ceasefire was announced, a barrage of rockets was launched at the southern city of Beersheba, the second barrage launched at the city. The rockets fell in an open area.
- ▶ PIJ spokesmen said the heavy barrages deep into Israeli territory as well as those targeting the communities near the Gaza Strip proved the organization still had a large rocket arsenal.

Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria

- ▶ The efforts of the PIJ, Hamas and other terrorist organizations to engage the Palestinians in Judea and Samaria and Israeli Arabs in the operation were unsuccessful, and relative calm was preserved. The entrance of about two thousand Jews into the Temple Mount compound for Tisha B'Av did not cause any particular events on the ground.

² The commander of the Jerusalem Brigades in the southern Gaza Strip, who died in a targeted killing the previous day.

► In the meantime, the Israeli security forces continued their counterterrorism activities in Judea and Samaria. Several dozen Palestinians suspected of involvement in terrorist activities were detained. Palestinians continued throwing rocks and Molotov cocktails at Israeli vehicles driving on the roads.



Right: An IDF activity. Left: Confiscated weapon (IDF spokesman's Twitter account, August 8, 2022).

► On the night of August 7 Israeli security forces operating in the village of Rummanah, northwest of Jenin, demolished the houses of the terrorists who carried out the stabbing attack at Elad on May 5, 2022, killing three Israelis and wounding several others (IDF spokesman's Twitter account, August 8, 2022). Hamas condemned the demolitions.



Demolition of the houses (IDF spokesman's Twitter account, August 8, 2022).

The Palestinian Islamic Jihad

► The PIJ regards the most recent round of escalation as an achievement and is constructing a picture of its "victory." On August 8, 2022, its Filastin al-Yawm TV network began its broadcast with a special survey of "the victory of the organization and its military wing," which included praise for the organization's "achievements." One of them was the delivery of fuel to the Gaza Strip a few hours after the ceasefire went into effect (Filastin al-Yawm, al-Jazeera, August 8, 2022).

- **Khaled al-Batash** said the "aggression" against the Gaza Strip was intended to settle accounts with the PIJ, but Israel failed to dislodge the organization from its popular base. He added their fighting had shown the unity of the arenas [sic], stressing their right to "resist" [carry out terrorist attacks] as long as the Palestinians lived under an "occupation" (al-Mayadeen TV website, August 8, 2022).
- "Exclusive Palestinian sources" revealed to al-Mayadeen TV that the PIJ had a "tie-breaking" weapon. According to the "sources," it could have seriously changed the nature of the operation, but the "resistance" [terrorist organizations] could not decide whether to use the weapon or postpone its use to a future, "more decisive" military engagement (al-Mayadeen TV website, August 7, 2022).
- **Jerusalem Brigades spokesman Abu Hamza** said the PIJ's rocket capabilities demonstrated in the fighting were only a small part of what the military wing had prepared. He called on the Palestinians in the West Bank and on Israeli Arabs to "wake up" and join "Operation unity of the arenas" (Jerusalem Brigades' Telegram channel, August 8, 2022).
- Regarding losses, the Jerusalem Brigades said in an announcement that 12 of its operatives, including two senior commanders, had been killed (Jerusalem Brigades' Telegram channel, August 8, 2022).



The notice issued by the Jerusalem Brigades with the names of the operatives who were killed (Jerusalem Brigades' Telegram channel, August 8, 2022).

Hamis' position

- Hamas did not actively participate in the escalation. However, it also did not use its military and security capabilities to prevent the activities of the PIJ and other terrorist organizations. **PIJ leader Ziyad al-Nakhlah** held a press conference where he tried to explain why Hamas had not taken an active role. He claimed "our brothers in Hamas" and the other organizations were connected through an alliance. While it was true that Hamas had not intervened, he

said, that did not mean that the "resistance" [terrorist organizations] had to be in the field militarily. The base of the "resistance" was the Palestinian people, and Hamas was its backbone. Therefore, holding a rifle and offering support for the "resistance" were "the same thing" (al-Mayadeen TV website, August 7, 2022; CNN in Arabic, August 7, 2022).

► During the operation, and especially towards the ceasefire, commentators in the Gaza Strip dealt with the question of why Hamas had not actively participated in the fighting. For example, **Hamas-affiliated commentator Sayid Basharat** said that some of Hamas' considerations were political, but many were related to what was happening on the ground. In addition, as opposed to Operation Guardian of the Walls, the IDF had begun the operation, which had been carefully planned. He said that if Hamas had intervened it would have expanded the operation and extended it to include attacks on the houses of local residents as well as vital institutions, and would have caused a larger number of deaths, including women and children. He said that this time Israel had initiated the operation and had designated it as a limited operation against a specific organization (al-Araby, August 7, 2022).

► After the ceasefire went into effect Isma'il Haniyeh, head of Hamas' political bureau, spoke with the head of Egyptian General Intelligence, thanking Egypt and President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi, who had given the instructions for the negotiations which ended the "aggression" against the Palestinians (Safa, August 8, 2022).

► Haniyeh also spoke with senior PIJ figures and the families of the Palestinians who had been killed. He offered his condolences to **senior PIJ figure Ahmed al-Mudallal** on the death of his son Ziyad, who was killed along with Khaled Mansour. He told al-Mudallal that "[Israel's] policy of targeted killing was a failure." He also spoke with the families of Tayseer al-Jaabari and Khaled Mansour, the two Jerusalem Brigades commanders who had been killed. Speaking with senior PIJ figure Jamil Alian, Haniyeh stressed the unity of blood, fate and the path of jihad against Israel until it had been expelled from "Palestinian lands" (Safa, August 8, 2022).

► The Izz al-Din Qassam Brigades, Hamas' military-terrorist wing, announced that Ahmed Muhammad Afana, one of its operatives in the Jabalia refugee camp, had been killed during an attack on the Gaza Strip (Izz al-Din Qassam Brigades Telegram channel, August 7, 2022). Afana was killed when a wall fell on him as he was trying to extract wounded Palestinians from a house in the refugee camp. It had been damaged when a rocket had misfired and

exploded. Mahmoud Daoud, a Hamas traffic policeman, was also killed in an IDF attack on the center of Gaza City.