



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

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Operation Cast Lead—Update No. 2



Ground forces deploy in the vicinity of the Gaza Strip (IDF Spokesman, December 28)



Twenty-three trucks with humanitarian assistance cross into the Gaza Strip through the Kerem Shalom Crossing (IDF Spokesman, December 28)



Direct hit at a construction site in Ashkelon, killing one person and severely and moderately wounding several others (Foreign Ministry, December 29, photo by Edi Israel)

Terrorist targets attacked on December 28

1. On December 28, Israeli Air Force attacked **more than 90 Hamas targets**, including military infrastructure, Hamas's administration facilities, and terrorist operatives. Also attacked was the office of Hamas's head of administration Ismail Haniyah. Of particular importance was the air raid on some 40 tunnels. **A total of more than 300 targets** have been attacked since the beginning of Operation Cast Lead.

Tunnels on the Gaza-Egypt border

2. In a four-minute air raid conducted in the southern Gaza Strip along the Philadelphi Road, Israeli Air Force fighters destroyed **about 40 Hamas tunnels** used for smuggling from Sinai to the Gaza Strip (IDF Spokesman, December 28). The tunnels were used to smuggle arms and ammunition for terrorist attacks against Israel. They were also used to smuggle terrorist operatives from Egypt into the Gaza Strip and vice versa.



Tunnels attacked on the Philadelphi Road (IDF Spokesman, December 28)

Military and security infrastructure, Hamas's administration facilities

3. During December 28, the IDF continued attacking headquarters, bases, outposts, and other military, security and administration targets of Hamas. Examples of attacked institutions follow:

- a. **The Al-Saraya compound**, in Gaza City, housing Hamas administration offices and headquarters of its security services, was totally destroyed. The main prison of the Gaza Strip, where prisoners belonging to Fatah were held as well,¹ was also located in that compound.

¹ The Palestinian media offered conflicting reports about the presence of Fatah prisoners during the Air Force raids. According to some, the prisoners were evacuated before the attack, others claim that criminal prisoners were released but that Fatah prisoners remained inside during the attack. The Fatah movement issued an announcement with the names of its 20 killed activists. According to Fatah, on December 27 Hamas released the criminal prisoners, refusing to release the Fatah operatives. **Fatah spokesman Fahmi al-Za'rir** accused Hamas of using Fatah

- b. **An Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades training outpost**, in the Al-Maqusi towers in the northern Gaza Strip, was destroyed. Ten people were wounded.
- c. **The Islamic University in Gaza**, the site of **Hamas's weapons research and development center**. The site was used to develop rockets with improved launching range (IDF Spokesman, December 29).



The Islamic University in Gaza following the Israeli Air Force raid (Al-Aqsa TV, December 28)

- d. **An installation of the Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades** in Khan Younes.
- e. **Lathes** (for manufacturing weapons) in the Gaza City neighborhood of Al-Zaitoun, in Khan Younes, and in the Al-Bureij refugee camp.
- f. **A terrorist squad** in Khan Younes. According to Palestinian media reports, **Ahmed As'ad Fayad**, the chief of the artillery unit in the Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades, was killed in the attack.
- g. **The house of a senior operative of the Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades**.
- h. **A security outpost** in the western part of Gaza City.
- i. **A Hamas police headquarters** in the former Israeli Kfar Darom region.
- j. **The Al-Shajaiyya police headquarters** in Gaza City, which was completely destroyed.
- k. **The sea police headquarters** in Gaza City and in Rafah.
- l. **A National Security outpost** in east Gaza City.
- m. **The National Defense headquarters** in Rafah.
- n. **A vehicle with an Izz al-Din al-Qassam operative** in Jabaliya. The operative was killed.

prisoners as "human shields". Hamas hunted down and fired on Fatah prisoners who attempted to escape following the attack (Palestinian media, December 28).

- o. **A Palestinian Islamic Jihad office** in Khan Younes.
- p. **The police station in the Al-Shati refugee camp**

Media belonging to Hamas

4. During December 28, Israeli Air Force bombed Hamas's Al-Aqsa TV building, which later resumed broadcasting from another site. According to reports on Palestinian media, various media institutions evacuated their offices from a building in Gaza City, including the Hamas Al-Quds channel, after receiving threats that it would be bombed.

Interim summary of Palestinian casualties

5. According to Palestinian reports, so far **more than 300 Palestinians were killed and over 1,000 were wounded, most of them terrorist operatives belonging to Hamas and other terrorist organizations.** The presence of the terrorist organizations' military infrastructure in the civilian areas of the Gaza Strip resulted in some civilian casualties in the attacks.

The reaction of Hamas and other terrorist organizations: ongoing rocket fire at Israeli population centers

6. On December 28, rocket fire at Israel continued, albeit on a **relatively smaller scale** compared to the first day of Operation Cast Lead. A total of **14 rocket hits and 16 mortar hits** were identified in December 28. For the first time, rockets landed in **Gan Yavne and Bnei Darom (near the city of Ashdod)**, confirming Hamas's threat to increase the range of fire (see details below). The hits caused minor injuries to five people and stress disorders to some others.

7. **The extent of rocket fire increased** on December 29, and many dozens of rockets were fired by noon. One of them hit a construction site in Ashkelon, **killing a worker** and causing severe and moderate injuries to several people. The rockets also directly hit a building in Sderot and a yard in another house in the city, causing light injuries and stress disorders to several people. Later that day, long-range rockets were fired at the cities of Ashdod and Ofakim, and the Yavne area.



Rocket hit at a house in Sderot on December 29 (Sderot Media Center, December 29, photo by Hamutal Ben Shitrit)

8. **A total of 75 rockets** were identified in Israeli territory, and **49 mortar shells** were fired on Israel since the beginning of Operation Cast Lead (not including December 29). As a result, two civilians were killed (one on December 29) and several dozens were injured, suffering mostly from stress disorders. Note: Summary of the rocket and mortar shell fire for December 29 will be included in the next update.

First ever launch of 122-mm artillery rockets on Gan Yavne and Bnei Darom

9. On December 28, two landings of artillery rockets were identified near the towns of Gan Yavne and Bnei Darom. The rockets were launched from the northern Gaza Strip **and attained ranges of some 33-34 km**. Examination showed that they were Chinese-made rockets with similar characteristics to standard **122-mm** rockets. The maximum range of those rockets is **up to 40 km**.

10. The use of such rockets **is a threat to additional hundreds of thousands of Israeli civilians and metropolitan areas, including Beersheba, Ashdod, and Kiryat Gat**. Also, the rockets make it possible for Hamas to launch them from densely populated areas **deep inside the Gaza Strip**.

Remains of a rocket identified by Israeli Police



The body of the rocket after the hit



Writing on the rocket fin: E28 0210



A segment of the rocket

The crossings between the Gaza Strip, Israel, and Egypt

Transporting Israeli assistance

11. In the midst of Operation Cast Lead, on December 28 Israel approved the crossing of 23 trucks loaded with food, medications, medical supplies, and gas into the Gaza Strip. The trucks crossed through the Kerem Shalom Crossing. The aid shipment was designed to prevent a humanitarian crisis in the Gaza Strip and signal that the civilian population is not the target of IDF operations.



Twenty-three trucks with humanitarian assistance cross into the Gaza Strip through the Kerem Shalom Crossing (IDF Spokesman, December 28)

Difficulties with the transportation of Egyptian assistance through the Rafah Crossing

12. The Arab media reported that Egypt was willing to receive the casualties from the Gaza Strip, first claiming that they could not reach the Rafah Crossing due to Israel's air strikes. However, the Egyptian Foreign Minister announced that **Hamas was not letting the casualties to arrive**. At a press conference held by Abu Mazen in Egypt with the Egyptian Foreign Minister, Abu Mazen was asked why the casualties were not leaving the Gaza Strip. The Egyptian Foreign Minister answered the question and said that Egypt was waiting for the wounded. He insinuated that Hamas was to blame, saying: "They are not letting them through... ask the one in charge..." (Al-Arabiyya TV, December 28).

To watch the response of the Egyptian Foreign Minister, click [here](#).

13. In the evening of December 28, after the Air Force attacked the tunnels, the Palestinians breached the border between the Gaza Strip and Egypt. Dozens of them started running towards Egypt. Hamas's Al-Aqsa TV reported that Egyptian security forces opened fire on them. Hamas started deploying its operatives in the Rafah region in order to prevent disorders and to keep militants from arriving on the scene. According to media reports, confrontations began between Hamas



A Palestinian crowd gathering at the breach in the Rafah border fence (Al-Arabiyya TV, December 28)

operatives and the Egyptian security forces, in which an Egyptian officer and a Palestinian were killed. This prevented the evacuation of casualties to the Egyptian side (Al-Arabiyya TV, December 28). Following the incident, the crossing was closed down.

14. The Arab media reported that Egypt allocated two planes for supplying medical assistance (that would arrive in Sinai and, once there, be transported to the Gaza Strip). Those planes are also meant to transport the injured to hospitals in Egypt. It was also reported that a Qatari aid plane arrived at the Al-Arish airport, as well as aid collected in various regions in Egypt and Britain. However, so far, the aid has not started coming into the Gaza Strip through the Rafah Crossing.

Protests and order violations in Judea and Samaria

15. A general strike was declared in Judea and Samaria in protest of the developments in the Gaza Strip. Stores and official Palestinian Authority institutions were closed down. Universities, colleges and schools announced a one day strike to express solidarity with the Gaza Strip (Pal-Media, December 28). Also, many protest rallies were held and local conflicts took place, which did not get out of hand, with the Israeli security forces in several places in Judea and Samaria.

16. Following are details of the incidents in Judea and Samaria and among East Jerusalem Arabs:

- a. **The Ramallah region:** a group referring to itself as the National Palestinian Initiative held on December 28 a demonstration on Al-Manara square in the city of Ramallah, attended by hundreds of Palestinians who raised Palestinian flags and signs condemning the international silence over the developments in the Gaza Strip (Maan News Agency, December 28). Violent confrontations took place between dozens of protestors and IDF forces near the roadblock of Qalandia. Also, confrontations took place between demonstrators and IDF forces in a number of villages in the Ramallah region in which a Palestinian was killed and several others were injured (Al-Quds TV, Al-Arabiyya TV, December 28).



Order violations in Ramallah (Al-Arabiyya, December 28)

- b. **Hebron:** many confrontations took place between Palestinians and the Israeli security forces. The demonstrators threw rocks and Molotov cocktails at IDF forces and blocked roads with burning tires (Wafa News Agency, December 28). A total of 20 Palestinians were injured as the demonstrations were dispersed.
- c. **Qalqilya:** confrontations took place between IDF forces and Palestinians (Al-Aqsa TV, December 28). Also, confrontations took place in the village of Azur, near Qalqilya (Al-Quds, December 28).
- d. **Bethlehem:** two Palestinians were injured in confrontations between IDF forces and Palestinians (Al-Aqsa TV, December 28). In the village of Husan, west of Bethlehem, on December 28 in the evening there occurred confrontations between IDF forces and demonstrators on the road leading to the Israeli village of Beitar Illit. An Israeli woman was injured and several cars were damaged (Nidaa al-Quds website, December 28).
- e. **Nablus:** a mass procession was held in Nablus on December 28. The participants raised signs of condemnation and the stores were closed down. The governor of the Nablus district, Jamal al-Muhaysen, called upon the participants to work towards national unity (Wafa News Agency, December 28).

17. **The Jerusalem region:** dozens of Israeli Arabs, residents of East Jerusalem, took part in solidarity rallies with Gaza organized by civil institutions in Jerusalem on the night of December 28 at the Damascus Gate (Wafa News Agency, December 28). Two civilians from the town of Biddu north west of Jerusalem were injured during confrontations between young people and IDF forces at the entrance of the town (Wafa Agency, December 28). At the Shoefat refugee camp, north of Jerusalem, residents threw rocks at Israeli security forces (Maan News Agency, December 28).

Reactions on the Palestinian scene

Hammas

18. Spokesmen for Hamas and Palestinian terrorist organizations continue to condemn the activity of Israel, accusing it of “massacre” and “holocaust” against the Palestinians and promising a “proper response”. They also criticize the silence of the world countries, particularly Arab countries. Thus, for example, **Fawzi Barhoum**, the Hamas spokesman, called a press conference in the Gaza Strip in which he said that it was Israel that chose to start the war. However, **Israel will not be the one to choose when the war will end**. Barhoum referred to the happenings in the Gaza Strip as a “massacre” and “holocaust”, and called upon the Arab and Muslim world to intervene (Al-Aqsa TV, December 28).

19. Against the backdrop of the developments in Gaza, Hamas is waging a **propaganda campaign** in order to turn Israeli and world public opinion to what is happening in Gaza. In that context, the Hamas Al-Aqsa television station broadcasts images from the attacks in Gaza coupled with songs of incitement. Also, the station broadcasts short clips with messages in broken Hebrew which address the Israeli public. In the two clips there is a picture of a skull with warlike music playing throughout. In one of the clips the speaker says that Israel is faced with two options, either peace that will return the “rights of the Palestinians” or war that will “crush you”.



Clips of the Al-Aqsa channel (December 28)

The Palestinian Authority

20. **Abu Mazen**, Chairman of the Palestinian Authority, pointed during a press conference held with the Egyptian Foreign Minister in Egypt the blame at Hamas, which, as he believes, is responsible for the escalation in the Gaza Strip. According to him, before the Israeli attack he tried to form direct and indirect contact with Hamas leaders in the Gaza Strip and asked them not to put an end to the lull in the fighting.

Reactions from the Arab and Muslim world

Egypt

21. Egyptian spokesmen continue to condemn the Israeli operation but at the same time to attack Hamas. In this context, the Egyptian Foreign Minister **Ahmed Aboul Gheit** implied that Hamas was the one that prevented the transportation of the Palestinian casualties in order to receive medical treatment in Egypt (Al-Arabiyya, December 28). Ahmed Aboul Gheit stressed again and again that Egypt's goal in the coming period was to exert international pressure on Israel to stop the activities against the Palestinian people. According to him, all the crossings between Israel and the Gaza Strip should be opened so that the Palestinian people can receive its needs (Middle Eastern News Agency, December 29).

22. The commentator of Radio Sawt al-Arab **Mahmoud al-Agami** strongly condemned both Israel and Hamas. He said that Israel was perpetrating a "war crime against the Palestinian civilians". At the same time, the commentator also claimed that the Hamas leadership bore the responsibility for the "acts of destruction and killing against the Palestinian people". According to him, Hamas made a mistake by not replying to Egypt's invitation to come to the internal Palestinian dialogue and did not heed Egypt's call to continue the lull in the fighting arrangement, and prevented supply convoys from arriving in the Gaza Strip (Sawt al-Arab, December 28).

Iran

23. During the last day, Iran broadened its propaganda and diplomatic activity against **Israel and Egypt** and at the same time began preparations for sending humanitarian assistance designed for Gaza Strip residents. In various cities in Iran demonstrations continued, in which the demonstrators carried slogans saying "death to Israel".

24. In this context:

- a. **Iran's President Ahmadinejad** noted that "...The Zionists built their own trap and no hand can actually save them. Those measures [of the Zionists] drop them faster into the trap and shorten their lives..." (ISNA, December 28). Ahmadinejad held a telephone conversation with Ramadan Abdallah Shalah, the leader of the Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ), and after it he declared that the attack in Gaza worsened the situation of the "Zionist regime" (IRNA, December 28).
- b. **Iranian Foreign Minister Mottaki** and other Iranian senior figures strongly condemned Israel's attacks, calling them a "new terrorist measure" and "the greatest

crime of the century". The Iranian Foreign Ministry condemned "the violation of basic human rights" perpetrated by Israel (ISNA, Al-Alam TV, December 28).

c. **The student organizations** which support the Palestinians held a press conference in the Hamas chamber in Tehran. **Hamid Hosseini**, a member of the central committee of an organization calling itself the Movement of Justice Seeking Students, addressed the Egyptian people and called upon them to take measures against their leaders, mainly "**to revolutionarily execute** the Pharaoh of Egypt, that is **Husni Mubarak**" (Fars News Agency, December 28).

25. On December 28, the Iranians started loading fuel, drugs, and food on a ship with assistance to the Palestinians that is docking at the port of Bandar Abbas. Also on board are 12 physicians and Iranian social workers. A spokesman for the Iranian Red Crescent announced that the ship would arrive at the port of Aqaba (AFP, December 28). In addition, a spokesman for the Iranian Red Crescent informed that two Iranian planes with food and drugs would be sent to the Egyptian Red Crescent (AFP, December 28).



The Iranian assistance ship docking in the port of Bandar Abbas (Al-Alam, December 25)

Lebanon and Hezbollah

26. In protest of the developments in the Gaza Strip, many demonstrations and protest rallies were held across Lebanon, initiated by the Palestinian terrorist organizations, local religious leadership, and Islamic officials. In front of the Egyptian embassy in Beirut there was held a demonstration initiated by Hamas and the PIJ. During the demonstration, the demonstrators tried to break into the embassy building and were stopped by the Lebanese security forces. The Lebanese Prime Minister met with representatives of the Palestinian organizations in order to discuss ways to help the Gaza Strip.



Solidarity rally in Saida (Al-Manar, December 28)

27. The Lebanese President met with the Defense Minister and discussed the increase of security measures in the country. The Lebanese army and the Lebanese security forces raised the alert level fearing that the developments in the Gaza Strip would cause tensions in Lebanon (Al-Hayat, December 28). UNIFIL forces increased their patrols in south Lebanon (Al-Nahar, December 28).

28. Hezbollah senior figures continued to condemn the IDF's activity in the Gaza Strip, calling upon the Arab world to act in order to open the crossings. Hezbollah leader **Hassan Nasrallah** gave a speech on December 28 in the southern suburb of Beirut, dedicated mostly to severe attacks on Arab countries, mainly **Egypt, calling upon the Egyptian people to rise against the government** (echoing the Iranian attack on the Egyptian government). The key points of the speech (Al-Manar, December 28):

- a. The Gaza Strip is the site of an Israel-American plan which strives to impose, through war and pressure, a humiliating agreement on the Palestinian people and then on Lebanon and Syria (following up on the peace treaties signed with Egypt and Jordan).
- b. There is an **"Arab partnership"** to that plot. The war of 2006 (the second Lebanon war) took place with Arab consent. Those Arab regimes which demanded the second Lebanon war be waged now strive to eliminate Hamas, the PIJ, and the other organizations. The peoples in the Arab and Islamic countries which share that plan must put pressure on their governments "even if they open fire at us". Nasrallah noted that those who die as a result of the fire opened on them will be considered a *shahid* (martyr) of Islam.
- c. **The Egyptian government** is responsible for what is taking place in the Gaza Strip nowadays. The Egyptian government is not required to fight Israel, but only to open the Rafah Crossing, so that food, drugs, water, and **weapons** can be transferred to members of the "resistance" (terrorist organizations operating in the Gaza Strip).

That was what Nasrallah claims **Syria** did in the second Lebanon war, even though its border crossings with Lebanon were constantly bombed.

- d. **Hassan Nasrallah called upon millions of Egyptians to take to the streets**, otherwise they will be partners to the crime of the Egyptian government. He asked: "Can the Egyptian police kill millions of Egyptians?" and replied: "No, it can't". He called upon the Egyptian people to open the Rafah Crossing by turning their chests (to the fire of the Egyptian security forces).

29. In response to Nasrallah's incitement against the Egyptian regime, the Egyptian Foreign Minister Aboul Gheit attacked Nasrallah, saying that his purpose was to create chaos in Egypt just like the chaos which prevails in Lebanon. According to him, the situation in the region is dangerous and Egypt condemns Israel's military operation. He also added that Egypt had a special responsibility on the Palestinian issue and towards the Gaza Strip (AFP, December 29).

Syria

30. Held in Damascus was a solidarity rally with the Gaza Strip attended by tens of thousands of people. The demonstrators raised flags of Syria, Palestine, Hamas, Hezbollah, and the pictures of Bashar Assad. The Syrian television widely covered "the aggression on the Gaza Strip" and Israel's "terrorist history", broadcasting the images of bodies of Palestinians and children with blood on their faces. A commentator for Radio Damascus (December 27) also condemned Arab leaders for their silence over the so-called Israeli siege of the Gaza Strip, which, according to him, green-lighted the Israeli operation.



Demonstration at the Shahid Youssef al-Azma square in Damascus (Al-Jazeera, December 28)

Jordan

31. On February 28, solidarity demonstrations with the Palestinians continued in Jordan's cities. The opposition parties issued a call to hold a demonstration in front of the Egyptian embassy in the afternoon of December 28. At a demonstration in the city of Ma'an, the demonstrators called to cancel the peace treaty with Israel, condemned the Egyptian president, and raised images of Saddam Hussein. The Jordanian media called to immediately expel the Israeli ambassador, claiming that Jordan's relations with Israel have always been a burden on Jordan.



Solidarity rally with the Gaza Strip in Amman (Al-Jazeera, December 28)