Overview

- The hostilities between Israel and the Palestinians in Jerusalem escalated to a new height on May 10, 2021, the day Israel celebrated Jerusalem Day. Hamas' military-terrorist wing issued an ultimatum to Israel, calling for the removal of Israel's security forces from the al-Aqsa mosque precinct and Sheikh Jarrah in east Jerusalem, and the release of all the Palestinian terrorists imprisoned in Israeli jails, by 18:00. When its conditions were not met, Hamas fired seven rockets at the Jerusalem region.

- Another barrage of rockets was then fired at Israel's southern coastal cities of Ashdod and Ashqelon. As of noon, May 11, 2021, more than 250 rockets had been fired from the Gaza Strip at Israel. Several buildings were damaged and 31 civilians were hospitalized. The IDF responded by attacking more than 130 Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) terrorist targets.

- Since the tension began in Jerusalem, Hamas has systematically escalated its attacks. When the riots in east Jerusalem began Hamas initiated an intensive propaganda campaign inciting the Palestinians to violence against Israel. Muhammad Deif, the commander of Hamas' military-terrorist wing, later issued a warning to Israel and an ultimatum, which led to massive rocket fire barrages.

- While in recent years Hamas has been careful not to escalate the situation along the border, and one way or another maintained the lull understandings, apparently this time the organization decided to disregard the understandings and fire massive barrages of rockets at Israel, despite the fact it was clear the Gaza Strip would pay a high price. Apparently what caused the change was Hamas' desire to represent itself as defending Jerusalem and al-Aqsa mosque to make political capital with the Palestinian public in Judea and Samaria. It might also have been caused by internal pressure on the Hamas leadership in the Gaza Strip from senior figures abroad to push for action against Israel, since they are less committed than the Gaza Strip leadership to the welfare of the Gazan population.
The Chain of Events

The escalation in hostilities between Israel and the Palestinians began on May 10, 2021, Jerusalem Day, when Israel celebrates the uniting of the city. During the morning thousands of Palestinians who had barricaded themselves inside al-Aqsa mosque rioted against Israeli police. About three hundred Palestinians were injured, seven of them seriously.

Rocket fire attacking Israel

The Palestinians' opening shot was a barrage of rocket fire at exactly 18:00, when the ultimatum issued by Hamas' military-terrorist wing ended. Seven rockets were fired in the general direction of Jerusalem and the surrounding area, one of which was intercepted by the Iron Dome aerial defense system. A number of close explosions were heard. A house in an Israeli community close to Jerusalem was damaged when a rocket fell nearby. The last time rockets were fired at the Jerusalem area was during Operation Protective Edge (July-August 2014). Hamas military-terrorist wing was quick to claim responsibility for the rocket fire. Usama Obeida, spokesman for the Izz al-Din Qassam Brigades, said the rocket fire targeted the "enemy of occupied Jerusalem," a response to its alleged "crimes and aggression" against the Old City, and to the attacks on the residents of Sheikh Jarrah and al-Aqsa mosque. He also said the promise made by Muhammad Deif, commander of Hamas' military-terrorist wing, would be kept.¹

Later the military-terrorist wing announced the rockets were a new type called A120, which had range of 120 kilometers (about 75 miles) and the attack on Jerusalem was the first time they had been used (al-Aqsa, May 11, 2021).

Given the tense situation in Jerusalem, as part of Hamas's attempts to increase the tension and incite the Palestinian public to acts of violence, Muhammed Deif, the commander of Hamas' military-terrorist wing, issued a (rare) formal announcement. He warned Israel that Hamas would not watch the events from the sidelines and Israel would pay a high price (website of Hamas' military-terrorist wing, May 4, 2021).
Rocket fire attacking the Israeli communities near the Gaza Strip border

Immediately after the rocket fire attacking Jerusalem barrages of rockets and mortar shells began attacking the Israeli communities near the Gaza Strip. The military-terrorist wings of Hamas, the Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ), the Popular Resistance Committees (PRC), Fatah in the Gaza Strip, and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) all claimed responsibility for the rocket fire (al-Aqsa, May 11, 2021). As of noon, May 11, 2021, more than 250 rockets had been fired, dozens of which were intercepted by the Iron Dome aerial defense system (IDF spokesman, May 11, 2021).

The joint operations room of the terrorist organizations in the Gaza Strip issued an announcement to the effect that after they had warned Israel, and the time had come for it "to pay for its aggression against the holy sites." The announcement promised the Palestinians that the "resistance" [i.e., terrorist organizations] would not disappoint them and would serve as their shield and sword. A PRC spokesman said they were calling the operation "Sword of Jerusalem" (Shehab Twitter account, May 11, 2021).

Rockets were fired continually at Ashqelon and the communities near the Gaza Strip, continuing into May 11, 2021, when the range was extended to Ashdod, to the north of Ashqelon:

- Ashqelon took several direct hits, and several buildings were damaged. Dozens of local residents were injured, four in one family. Later two local residents were killed by rocket fire.
Rocket fire damage in Ashqelon (Palinfo Twitter account, May 11, 2021).

Direct rocket hit on a house in Ashqelon (QudsN Facebook page, May 11, 2021).
- In Sderot a house next to a synagogue was hit, and a rocket caused a fire in a newly-built section of the city.
- A local municipality was also directly hit. No casualties were reported (spokesman for the municipality’s media unit, May 11, 2021).

Rocket fire damage in one of the Israeli communities near the Gaza Strip (QudsN Facebook page, May 10, 2021).

Anti-tank missile fired at Israeli civilian vehicle near the Gaza Strip

A short time after the rocket fire targeting Jerusalem, a Kornet anti-tank missile was fired at a civilian Israeli vehicle near the Gaza Strip border. A civilian was wounded and evacuated to
a hospital for medical care (IDF spokesman, May 10, 2021). The PIJ’s military-terrorist wing claimed responsibility for the missile fire, documenting and publishing it on its media outlets. PIJ spokesmen claimed the vehicle’s passengers were a military delegation headed by the head of intelligence for the IDF’s Gaza Division (PIJ military-terrorist wing Telegram account, May 11, 2021). The Filastin al-Yawm channel broadcast a video of the missile fire, claiming it came in response to the [alleged] “crimes at al-Aqsa mosque,” and that the vehicle belonged to “enemy commanders” (Filastin al-Yawm, May 10, 2021).

PIJ ultimatum for Israel

Around 21:00 on May 10, 2021, Abu Hamza, spokesman for the PIJ’s military-terrorist wing, announced that Tel Aviv and Ashqelon would be attacked at 21:00 (Abu Hamza’s Twitter account, May 10, 2021). In effect, at the designated time a large barrage of rockets attacked Ashqelon and the Israeli communities near the Gaza Strip.

Israeli casualties

As of 12 noon, May 11, 2021, 31 Israelis had been evacuated to Barzilai Hospital in Ashqelon. A man who had been critically wounded was transferred to the hospital in Beersheba. Another man was seriously wounded and 21 people were superficially wounded, with eight people treated for shock. Among those wounded were four members of the same family, and five children (Barzilai Hospital spokesman’s unit, May 11, 2021).

Israel's Response

In response to the rocket fire the IDF attacked Hamas terrorist targets. Around midnight the IDF announced the launching of Operation Guardian of the Walls against the terrorist organizations in the Gaza Strip. The IDF attacked about 130 targets in the Gaza Strip in several
waves (IDF spokesman, May 11, 2021). After an assessment of the situation the IDF’s recommendation to continue attacking was authorized (Israeli media, May 11, 2021).

With aircraft and tanks, the IDF attacked primarily Hamas and PIJ targets (IDF spokesman, May 10 and 11, 2021), including:

- Senior military-terrorist wing operatives and their houses.

![Hamas military-terrorist wing battalion commander's house (IDF spokesman, May 10, 2021).](image1)

- Rocket launchers, rocket launching squads and a missile-launching squad.

- Terrorist attack tunnels near the border security fence. Several terrorist operatives were inside one of the tunnels.

![Attack on a Hamas terrorist tunnel (IDF spokesman, May 10, 2021).](image2)

- A Hamas intelligence situation room in the southern Gaza Strip.

- Sites for the manufacture of rockets and other weapons, and weapons storehouses.

- Hamas and PIJ posts and training bases.


The ministry of health in Gaza claimed 24 Gazans were killed in the attacks, nine of them allegedly children, and 103 wounded (ministry of health in Gaza website, May 11, 2021).

Hamas' ministry of the interior in Gaza called on the public not to gather at the entrances of the hospitals and ERs in order to allow for the continuous and rapid passage of emergency staff. In addition, the ministry warned the public not to touch undetonated ordnance which could explode and cause damage to life or property (ministry of the interior in Gaza Facebook page, May 11, 2021).

In response to the rocket fire the Israeli Coordinator of Government Activities in the Territories (COGAT) announced the closing of the Kerem Shalom Crossing, which is used for the delivery of merchandise. That followed the recent closing of the fishing zone and of the
Erez Crossing, which is used for the passage of Gazans, with the individual exceptions of humanitarian and other special cases (COGAT spokesman’s unit website, May 9 and 10, 2021).

Hamas and the PIJ

► As soon as the rocket fire began the Hamas media announced that Hamas was **keeping its promise and that Muhammad Deif's warning was being put into action**. The headline of the Hamas newspaper al-Risalah read, "al-Qassam² keeps its promise." Izz al-Din Qassam Brigades spokesman **Abu Obeida** threatened that if Israel attacked civilian installations or houses in the Gaza Strip the response would be strong and painful, and beyond what Israeli expected.

► **Isma'il Haniyeh**, head of Hamas' political bureau, said Jerusalem had set a new balance of power which could be seen in the political and public arenas and on the ground. He also said the connection between Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip was firm, and when Jerusalem called the Gaza Strip answered. He announced they would continue the struggle as long as Israel continued its [alleged] "displays of aggression and terrorism in Jerusalem and al-Aqsa mosque" (Shehab Twitter account, May 11, 2021). **Abu Obeida** sent the east Jerusalemites the message that they could be calm because the "resistance" was vigilant, stood behind them and had its finger on the trigger.

Palestinian Reactions

► **Mahmoud Abbas** spoke with **Ahmed Hilles**, a member of Fatah’s Central Committee, and with **Salah Abu Warda**, governor of the Gaza Strip's northern district, and with other senior figures in the Gaza Strip, to discuss recent developments (Wafa, May 11, 2021). Mahmoud Abbas ordered **the flags lowered to half mast** in mourning for the Gazans who had been killed. He **cancelled Eid al-Fitr celebrations** with the exception of religious observance (Shehab, May 10, 2021).

► **PA Prime Minister Muhammad Shtayyeh** issued a demand to the UN Security Council for urgent intervention to stop "Israel's aggression against the Gaza Strip and the Muslims in al-Aqsa mosque." He called on the human rights organizations, especially those dealing with children, to condemn Israel, and ordered that all necessary equipment be provided to the hospitals in the Gaza Strip (Wafa, May 11, 2021).

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² The Izz al-Din Qassam Brigades, Hamas' military-terrorist wing.
Musheir al-Masri, spokesman for the Hamas faction in the Palestinian Legislative Council, who was interviewed while the rockets were being fired, said Israel had to pay a high price for its stupidity. He said al-Aqsa mosque would always be the fuse that lit the explosion, adding that the campaign was now only beginning, and all options were open (al-Aqsa, May 10, 2018).

Hamas spokesman Fawzi Barhoum said Hamas was fully ready for a campaign in every location, and prepared to change the equation it had with Israel. Appealing to Hamas terrorist operatives, he said the zero hour had arrived and that anyone who had a weapon should be prepared to fight, including those whose only weapon was a knife or a rock. “Attack the settlers, attack the posts, attack the roadblocks and checkpoints” (al-Aqsa, May 10, 2021).

PIJ leader Ziyad al-Nakhalah claimed Israel had begun the “aggression” in Jerusalem and if Israel did not stop its “aggression” there was no point in trying to use political efforts to stop the rockets (Telegram channel of the PIJ’s military-terrorist wing, May 11, 2021).

Senior PIJ figure Muhammad al-Hindi said all the [terrorist] organizations wanted the uprising to turn into an intifada. He said Israel and the United States wanted calm but they were fooling themselves, and the Palestinians would make them miss their opportunity. He said that during the coming days various mediators would intervene to end the round of escalation, but the campaign was still ongoing (al-Mayadeen, May 10, 2021).
The UN Security Council met to discuss the situation. Apparently they did not reach a decision.

American spokesmen said the United States and President Biden were following the events and were very worried by the violence. They condemned the rocket attacks on Israel. They said they recognized Israel's right to defend itself and that the Department of Defense would provide Israel with what it needed. They called on both sides to promote calm, noting that the United States’ position on Sheikh Jarrah had been made known to Israel (Politico, May 11, 2021).

Germany and Britain condemned the rocket fire attacking Israel, saying the violence in Jerusalem and Gaza had to stop and both sides had to prevent the situation from deteriorating, adding that rocket fire from the Gaza Strip against civilian targets had to stop (Twitter account of the British foreign minister, May 11, 2021).
Overview

► For the past 24 hours there has been continuous, massive rocket fire from the Gaza Strip targeting Israel. During the night longer-range rockets were fired, reaching the center of the country. As of noon, May 12, 2021, five Israelis had been killed and scores wounded. In the morning an anti-tank missile was fired (the second since the escalation began), killing one person and wounding two. Throughout the morning hours the terrorist organizations continued firing rockets, most of them targeting the Israeli communities near the Gaza Strip.

► Hamas regards the events that have unfolded so far as a "victory." Hamas gave Israel an ultimatum, carried out its threats, caused loss of life and property damage, and significantly disrupted the fabric of daily life in Israel. The rioting Israeli Arabs add to Hamas' claim of victory.

► Israel has signaled that its response will not be proportional or be limited in duration. Israeli aircraft has carried out massive attacks, destroying several high-rise buildings in the Gaza Strip where senior Hamas operatives lived, and killing senior operatives in the military-terrorist wings of both Hamas and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ).

Rocket Fire

► During the past 24 hours rocket fire attacking Israel increased significantly and spread from the south to the center of the country. As of noon, May 12, 2021, according to the IDF spokesman, more than 850 rockets had been fired at Israel, and 200 additional rockets were fired but landed inside the Gaza Strip. The Iron Dome aerial defense system successfully intercepted between 85% and 90% of the rockets (IDF spokesman, May 12, 2021).
Five Israelis were killed by the rocket fire: two women in Ashqelon, a father and daughter near Lod, and a woman in Rishon LeTzion. Several dozen people were treated at hospitals, most of them for superficial injuries and shock.

On the afternoon of May 11, 2021, an exceptionally large barrage of rockets was fired at the southern coastal cities of Ashdod and Ashqelon. One rocket hit a fuel tank near Ashqelon, setting it on fire. It burned for several hours until it could be extinguished. Hamas' military-terrorist wing claimed responsibility for the rocket hit on the fuel tank (Izz al-Din Qassam Brigades' Telegram channel, May 11, 2021).

The military-terrorist wing claimed it was using a new tactic by firing Sejil rockets at Ashqelon, which successfully evaded the Iron Dome aerial defense system and killed and wounded Israelis (Sawa, May 11, 2021).

At 19:00 on May 11, 2021, Hamas' military-terrorist wing threatened Israel, saying that if Israel continued attacking residential buildings in the Gaza Strip Tel Aviv would be hit hard (Izz al-Din Qassam Brigades' Telegram channel, May 11, 2021). After the IDF destroyed the Hanadi Tower, a 13-story building in Gaza City, the military-terrorist wings of both Hamas and the PIJ
threatened Tel Aviv would be attacked at 21:00. At 20:45 the terrorist organizations fired
dozens of rockets at the Tel Aviv and coastal plain region. Hamas rushed to announce that 130
rockets with heavy warheads had been fired in the largest attack ever carried out against Tel
Aviv. A similar barrage was fired at 03:00, May 12, 2021, at the Tel Aviv and coastal plain
regions, Beersheba, Dimona and other cities.

Hamas’ military-terrorist wing revealed that SH85 rockets had been fired in the attacks on
Tel Aviv and Ben-Gurion International Airport. The rockets are named for Muhammad Abu
Shamala, a senior Hamas terrorist operative who was killed in Operation Protective Edge.
Other types of rockets fired were J80, M75, A120 and J90. Hamas also said Beersheba had
been attacked with Sejil rockets (Izz al-Din Qassam Brigades’ Telegram channel, May 12, 2021).

A bus in the central Israeli city of Holon takes a direct rocket hit
(Twitter account of journalist Hassan Aslih, May 11, 2021).

Right: Direct hit on a house in Givatayim in the greater Tel Aviv area
(QudsN Facebook page, May 11, 2021). Left: Direct hit on a vehicle in Ashqelon
(Magen David Adom spokesman’s unit, May 11, 2021).

Hamas and the PIJ noted their satisfaction with firing rockets at the center of Israel:

- The joint operations room of the terrorist organizations in the Gaza Strip said in
  a statement that on the second day of “Operation Sword of Jerusalem” the Israeli

The letters refer to names and the numbers to range in kilometers.
leadership had not predicted the degree to which the "resistance" [i.e., the terrorist organizations in the Gaza Strip] had prepared itself. According to the statement they fired more than 300 rockets, the largest barrage of rockets in the history of the conflict, particularly at targets in and around Tel Aviv (Shehab, May 12, 2021).

- **Khaled Mashaal**, a senior Hamas figure living abroad, said the Palestinian people were proud of the "resistance's" ability to strike deep within the Israeli homeland and undermine its security (Shehab, May 12, 2021).

- Hamas spokesman **Hazem Qassem** said the "resistance" was designing its "struggle" to defend the Palestinian people and their holy sites. He said the strikes deep inside Israel stressed the Palestinians' total willingness to sacrifice themselves to defend the Palestinian people's principles (al-Aqsa, May 11, 2021).

- Hamas spokesman **Fawzi Barhoum** said Israel had failed and had not been able to deal with the rockets. He said the barrage targeting Tel Aviv was the largest and most significant in Israel's history. He claimed they had fired 150 rockets in a number of minutes and the Iron Dome aerial defense system was helpless against them (al-Aqsa, May 11, 2021).

- The **PIJ** praised Hamas for the attack on Tel Aviv, saying the Palestinian "resistance" had proved its capabilities and its strength was equal to Israel's (al-Mayadeen, May 11, 2021).

**Anti-tank missile fired from the northern Gaza Strip at an Israeli vehicle**

On the morning of May 12, 2021, an anti-tank missile (the second since the beginning of the attacks) was fired from the northern Gaza Strip at an Israeli vehicle near the border. At the same time mortar shells were fired at the site, making it difficult for rescue workers to evacuate the wounded. One man was killed and three were wounded. Hamas' military-terrorist wing claimed responsibility for the attack (the previous anti-tank missile attack was claimed by the PIJ). According to Hamas, a Kornet anti-tank missile was fired at an IDF jeep to the north of the Gaza Strip (QudsN Facebook page, May 12, 2021).
UAV from Gaza crosses the border and is intercepted

A UAV launched from the Gaza Strip was intercepted by IDF aerial defense forces after it crossed the border into Israeli territory. The forces monitored it from the time it was launched until it crossed the border.

Israel's Response

Throughout the day the IDF attacked terrorist targets in the Gaza Strip, primarily those belonging to Hamas and the PIJ. As of noon, May 12, 2021, the attacks continued. So far the IDF has attacked more than 500 terrorist targets, focusing during the past 24 hours on the following (IDF spokesman, May 12, 2021):

- **Houses of military-terrorist wing operatives** – Mainly buildings in Gaza City where Hamas' terrorist infrastructure structure is located. For example, on May 12, 2021 a multi-story building that housed Hamas' intelligence, media, West Bank and Gaza Brigade headquarters was attacked.

- **Underground targets** – Facilities used by Hamas terrorist operatives.

- **Senior military-terrorist operatives** – Cleared for publication was the information that in Gaza City and Khan Yunis the IDF and the Israeli Security Agency had killed a number of senior Hamas terrorist operatives who belonged to Hamas' so-called "general staff forum" and were close associates of Muhammed Deif, the commander of Hamas' military-terrorist wing (IDF spokesman, May 12, 2021). Before the Israeli announcement the PIJ reported the deaths of three of its commanders in an attack on the Rimal neighborhood of Gaza City. They were Sameh Fahim Hashem al-Mamluk, responsible for the organization's rocket firing unit in the northern Gaza Strip; Muhammad Yahya Abu al-Issa, a rocket unit commander and brother of the commander of the organization's northern military-terrorist wing, who was killed in a targeted attack on November 12, 2019; and Kamal Taysir Suleiman Qriqa, field commander of the rocket launching unit of the Gaza Brigade. Hamas' military-terrorist wing reported the deaths of two of its commanders in the IDF attack on Tel al-Hawa. They were Hassan al-Qahwaji and Wa'el Issa (Paldf, May 12, 2021).

- **Rocket launching pits** – On May 11 and 12, 2021, IDF aircraft attacked dozens of rocket launching pits in the Gaza Strip which had been used to fire rockets at Israel.
Houses of military-terrorist wing operatives – IDF aircraft attacked the houses of Hamas operatives who had gone underground so they would have nowhere to return to. For example, on May 12, 2021, the house of senior Hamas operative Salah Dahaman, which also served as a weapons storehouse, was attacked.

A Hamas squad preparing to launch a UAV into Israeli territory.
The announcement made by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of his intention to escalate Israel's response and increase the attacks was widely covered by the Palestinian, Arab and international media. Journalists in the Gaza Strip reported that the consequence of the announcement would be that the organizations would increase the range of their rockets to include Ashqelon and Ashdod.

**Palestinian casualties**

Ashraf al-Qidra, spokesman for the ministry of health in the Gaza Strip, claimed that as of 12:00 noon, May 12, 2021, 43 Gazans had been killed, 12 of them allegedly children, and 296 had been wounded. According to reports, at least two of the children were killed by improvised rockets that blew up inside the Gaza Strip (Twitter account of DCIPalestine, May 11, 2021).

**Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad Reactions**

Ismail Haniyeh, head of Hamas' political bureau, who resides in Qatar, said the Palestinians were currently beginning a new chapter in the confrontation with Israel and that they had been victorious. He claimed that today the Palestinian forces had a new balance of power which the "resistance" would use in every form in the al-Aqsa mosque compound and in the "resistance" of rocket fire. He claimed that Hamas' activity on three fronts, Jerusalem, Gaza and the internal front, which included Israeli Arabs and the Palestinians in the West Bank, who were the core of the internal front (al-Aqsa, May 11, 2021).

Usama Hamedan, in charge of Hamas' external relations, said in the past Israel had attacked the Gaza Strip without a Palestinian response, but now there was a new equation, and the resistance would respond to any aggression against the Palestinian people. He said the battle was only beginning and Israel had to decide if it wanted to end the battle and pay the price, or if it was prepared to take a step back and admit it had made a stupid mistake (Filastin al-Yawm, May 11, 2021).
Appeals to Israeli Arabs and Palestinians in Judea and Samaria

Hamas spokesmen, headed by Fawzi Barhoum, and al-Aqsa TV issued incitement to violence throughout the day and called on Israeli Arabs and the residents of Judea and Samaria to take to the streets, burn vehicles and "resist" Israelis for the sake of victory in east Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip. During the evening Israeli Arabs did in fact riot in mixed Jewish-Arab and Arab cities throughout the country.

Abu Obeida, spokesman for Hamas' military-terrorist wing, called on Israeli Arabs to continue the uprising (al-Aqsa, May 11, 2021). He also called on all the Palestinians, regardless of where they were, to stand firm and struggle against Israel. He praised the Palestinians in every arena, stressing that the Izz al-Din Qassam Brigades were at the beck and call of the Palestinians and would answer every call for help in the struggle (al-Aqsa, May 12, 2021).

Hamas spokesman Hazem Qassem praised the rioting of Israeli Arabs in Lod, saying the flame that had been lit in Lod was the same flame that had been lit in the West Bank, the Gaza Strip and Jerusalem (Hamas website, May 12, 2021).

The PIJ called on all the forces in Judea and Samaria to begin a new intifada, and called on the Palestinian Authority to end its security coordination with Israel. He said an intifada was necessary because of Israel's attacks on al-Aqsa mosque and escalation in the Gaza Strip (Filastin al-Yawm, May 12, 2021).
**Judea and Samaria**

Demonstrations were held in Jenin and Jericho to protest Israel's actions in the Gaza Strip and in support of al-Aqsa mosque. In Hebron and Bethlehem Palestinians rioted against the Israeli security forces (Wafa, May 11, 2021).

![Protest demonstrations in Jericho (left) and Jenin (right) (Wafa, May 11, 2021).](image)

**Mediation Attempts**

On the morning of May 11, 2021, the Hamas leadership told the Egyptians they would refuse to negotiate with Israel as long as it did not meet Hamas' demands for a withdrawal of Israeli forces from al-Aqsa mosque, the release of the Palestinians detained because of their participation in the riots on the Temple Mount and the reversal of the decisions related to Sheikh Jarrah (al-Araby al-Jadeed, May 11, 2021). At a meeting of the foreign ministers of the Arab League, **Sameh Shoukry**, the Egyptian foreign minister, said they had been in contact with Israel during the past few days to reach a lull and prevent the situation from deteriorating further, but Egypt had not received the response it wanted (Sky News, May 11, 2021).

In the evening sources reported to al-Arabiya that Egypt was working for a lull in the Gaza Strip and was in contact with the "organizations" to achieve a ceasefire. It was also reported that Egypt asked Israel to stop its attacks unconditionally. Sources reported that Egypt, Qatar and the UN were holding intensive contacts to achieve a lull. According to other reports, Hamas told the mediators that Israel had to stop its attacks before Hamas would talk about a lull (al-Jazeera, May 12, 2021).

**PIJ leader Ziyad al-Nakhalah** said mediation efforts were meaningless as long as Israel continued its "aggression" in Jerusalem (Filastin al-Yawm, May 11, 2018).
Overview

During the 24 hours between May 12 and 13, 2021, the last day of the Muslim religious month of Ramadan, Hamas continued attacking Israel with massive barrages of rocket fire, although fewer than previously. As of 05:00 on the morning of May 13, 2021, 1,100 rockets had been fired, most of them with a range of about 40 kilometers (about 25 miles). Rocket fire gas caused six Israeli deaths, an IDF soldier was killed by an anti-tank missiles, and scores of people have been injured. Ben-Gurion International Airport cancelled landings.

The IDF increased its response to the rocket fire from Gaza. During the 24 hours between May 12 and 13 massive counterattacks were carried out, including attacks on Hamas government institutions and bank branches. The IDF also hit four anti-tank missile-firing squads.

So far, all efforts to reach a ceasefire have failed. This time Israel is determined to reestablish its deterrence by carrying out massive counterattacks in response to the rocket fire. Hamas seems surprised by Israel's response and its refusal to reach an arrangement. The international community condemns Hamas but criticizes Israel, especially its actions in Jerusalem. Fatou Bensouda, the International Criminal Court (ICC) chief prosecutor, said she was deeply concerned by the escalation of the violence in Judea, Samaria, the Gaza Strip and east Jerusalem, adding that she was following developments and would investigate everything that came under ICC's jurisdiction (ICC Twitter account, May 12, 2021).

Rocket Fire

During the 24 hours between noon, May 12, 2021, and noon, May 13, 2021, Hamas continued attacking Israel with massive barrages of rocket fire. As of 05:00 on the morning of May 13, 2021, 1,100 rockets had been fired into Israeli territory, and about 200 additional rockets had fallen inside the Gaza Strip. About 90% of the rockets were intercepted by the Iron Dome aerial defense system. Six Israeli civilians have been killed so far, and an IDF soldier was
killed when his vehicle was hit by an anti-tank missile near the Gaza Strip. Scores of Israeli civilians have been injured.

On May 12, 2021, hundreds of rockets and mortar shells were fired from the Gaza Strip. Most of them had ranges of up to about 40 kilometers (about 25 miles). They targeted the Israeli communities near the Gaza Strip border the southern Israeli cities of Ashqelon, Ashdod, Netivot, Sderot and Beersheba. After midnight on May 13, 2021, Hamas fired a barrage of rockets at cities in the center of the country, including Rishon LeTzion, Tel Aviv and Petah Tikva. Responsibility for most of the rocket fire was claimed by the military-terrorist wings of Hamas and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ).

After firing two barrages of rockets at Tel Aviv and the surrounding area Hamas' military-terrorist wing said in a statement that the rockets had been fired in response to Israel's attacks on "civilian structures." The PIJ issued a similar statement (Shabakat Quds, Dunia al-Watan, May 12, 2021).

Saleh al-'Arouri, deputy head of Hamas' political bureau, boasted that so far they had been firing old rockets they wanted to get rid of and they had new rockets that had not yet been used (al-Aqsa, May 12, 2021). "Senior Hamas sources" also reported that the organization's military-terrorist wing, along with the wings of the other organizations, were planning a naval, land and aerial military operation against Israel (al-Araby al-Jadeed, May 12, 2021).

Some of the more prominent events were the following:

- In the evening a child was killed in Sderot when a rocket penetrated the fortified room in his home.
- Several rockets hit residential buildings in Ashqelon. No casualties were reported. The buildings were damaged.
- Three apartment houses in Petah Tikva were hit by rockets, superficially injuring five civilians. Fragments of a rocket intercepted by the Iron Dome aerial defense system fell and damaged a building in Rishon LeTzion.

Spokesmen for the Palestinian terrorist organizations reported that a barrage of 50 rockets was fired at Ashdod in retaliation for the killing of Bassam Issa, a senior Hamas military-terrorist wing commander.
Apartment house in the central Israeli city of Petah Tikva hit by a rocket fired from the Gaza Strip (QudsN Facebook page, May 13, 2021).

Right: Hamas rocket hits an apartment house, killing a five year-old boy (Magen David Adom Facebook page, May 12, 2021). Left: Results of the direct hit of rocket fired from the Gaza Strip at Ashqelon (Palinfo Twitter account, May 12, 2021).

The rocket fire was renewed on May 13, 2021, most of it targeting the Israeli communities near the Gaza Strip border. The rocket fire also caused the partial closing of Israel's airspace, with landings cancelled but takeoffs continuing. A number of foreign airlines cancelled their flights to Israel. In the afternoon another barrage of rockets targeted Tel Aviv and the surrounding area.

Israel's Response

Between May 12 and 13 the IDF intensified its activities and began attacking public institutions and Hamas administration buildings. By the morning of May 13, 2021, the IDF had attacked more than 600 terrorist targets in the Gaza Strip (IDF spokesman, May 13, 2021). They included:

- **Facilities belonging to Hamas' military-terrorist wing infrastructure**, among them, a terrorist tunnel situated under a school in civilian area, and Hamas posts, bases and rocket launching positions.
Attack on a Hamas terrorist tunnel hidden under a school inside a civilian area in Gaza City (IDF spokesman's Twitter account, May 13, 2021).

- Houses of senior commanders, including the house of Iyad Tayib, commander of the Camp Brigade in the central Gaza Strip.
- High-rise buildings including the Al-Shurouq Building. According to the IDF spokesman, it was a 14-story building which housed Hamas military intelligence offices and communications equipment for transmitting tactical military information to and from the terrorist organizations in the Gaza Strip (IDF spokesman, May 12, 2021); a high-rise building in Beit Lahia in the northern Gaza Strip (Shabakat Quds, May 12, 2021); and the Al-Johara Building (Filastin al-Yawm, May 12, 2021). The IDF also attacked the neighborhood of al-Maqusi (Shabakat Quds, May 12, 2021).

The Al-Shurouq Building in Gaza City before (Twitter account of journalist Hassan Aslih, May 13, 2021) and after the IDF attack (Twitter account of photojournalist Ashraf Abu Amra, May 1

- Terrorist operatives, including senior figures in Hamas' military-terrorist wing and naval force. According to reports, the IDF attacks killed many Hamas military-terrorist commanders, including Bassam Issa, commander for the Gaza Brigade. Also attacked were rocket- and anti-tank missile-firing squads, and so far four anti-tank missile-
firing squads have been eliminated, one while its operatives were planning to fire a
missile into Israeli territory.

- **Hamas administration buildings**, according to the Palestinian media (Paldf, May 12,
2021), including Hamas' Islamic National Bank in Khan Yunis, and the headquarters
of Hamas' ministry of the treasury, the headquarters of internal security in Gaza
City and Khan Yunis (Dunia al-Watan, Shehab and Palinfo, May 12, 2021), and the
headquarters of the national security forces (Dunia al-Watan, May 12, 2021).

Palestinian casualties

- At noon on May 13, 2021, the ministry of health in Gaza issued an infographic of Palestinian
casualties, according to which that 83 people had allegedly been killed (59 men, seven women
and 17 children) and 487 wounded, and most of them in Gaza City and the northern Gaza Strip
(ministry of health in Gaza Facebook page, May 13, 2021).
Hamas' military-terrorist wing announced the deaths of a number of senior operatives, among them **Bassam Issa, the commander of the Gaza City Brigade. Isma'il Haniyeh**, head of Hamas' political bureau, who delivered his eulogy, called him a "daring fighter" who had been killed during Ramadan "in the battle to defend Jerusalem." He said the conflict continued and the Palestinians were deployed and ready for every contingency. The PIJ's military-terrorist wing called Issa's death proof the "resistance's" commanders were at the forefront, directing the battle from the field (Shehab, May 12, 2021).

### Foreign aid for the Gaza Strip

Egypt said it would send humanitarian assistance to the Gaza Strip through the Rafah Crossing and would open the Crossing for the passage of the wounded from the Gaza Strip to Egypt (Dunia al-Watan, May 12, 2021)

### Hamas and PIJ Responses

**Saleh al-'Arouri**, deputy chairman of Hamas' political bureau, said in an interview that the deaths of senior figures did not weaken the "resistance" [i.e., the terrorist organizations]. He said **Hamas had done everything for the sake of Jerusalem** and had sent Israel the message that Jerusalem was its top priority. He added that all the "resistance's" preparations had been for the sake of Jerusalem and the current round of fighting was directly related to the defense of al-Aqsa mosque, and the residents of Jerusalem would never forget that the "resistance" had come to their aid. He also said that **Muhammad Deif had waited years** to fight in defense of Jerusalem and they were prepared to pay the price. He called on the Palestinians in Judea and Samaria to join the fight and that anyone who attacked settlers, soldiers or IDF patrols
was equal in stature to the operatives in Hamas’ military wing who fired rockets at Israel (al-Aqsa, May 12, 2021).

The Palestinian Authority (PA)

The Palestinian leadership held an emergency meeting where Mahmoud Abbas said Jerusalem was a red line for the Palestinians. He said he saluted the young Palestinians fighting for Jerusalem, claiming Israel's [alleged] "aggression" had gone too far, and violated international conventions. The Palestinians, he claimed, were "resisting" with "popular resistance" [i.e., popular terrorism] at the Damascus Gate, al-Aqsa mosque and the Sheikh Jarrah neighborhood in east Jerusalem. He condemned Israel's [alleged] "aggression" against the Gaza Strip, claiming the Palestinian people were exercising their right to self defense. He informed the United States and Israel that "enough was enough" and that peace and security would not be achieved by the force of arms (Palestinian TV, May 12, 2021). PA Prime Minister Muhammad Shtayyeh said the Palestinian government was doing everything in its power to defend the Palestinian people and put a stop to Israel's "aggression" against them.

Mahmoud Abbas opens an ad hoc session of the Palestinian leadership in Ramallah (Wafa, May 12, 2021).

Mahmoud Abbas spoke with Jordanian King Abdallah, and they agreed to continue coordinating to put a stop to the "aggression" against the Palestinian people. He held similar phone calls to discuss recent developments with Iraqi President Barham Salih, Qatar's Emir Tamim ibn Hamad, and Josep Borrell, the EU Minister for Foreign Affairs (Wafa, May 12, 2021). He also spoke with United States Secretary of State Antony Blinken (Dunia al-Watan, May 12, 2021).
**The Temple Mount**

On the morning of May 13, 2021 the Eid al-Fitr prayer was held on the Temple Mount, attended by about 100 thousand Palestinians. According to reports, the prayer also commemorated the Palestinians killed in the Gaza Strip. After the prayer Palestinians on the Temple Mount shouted encouragement for the Izz al-Din Qassam Brigades, Hamas' military-terrorist wing (QudsN website, May 13, 2021).

![Eid al-Fitr prayer on the Temple Mount (QudsN website, May 13, 2021).](image)

**Riots and solidarity demonstrations in Judea and Samaria**

Hamas holds a demonstration and riot in Dura in solidarity with the Gaza Strip (Palinfo Twitter account, May 12, 2021).
Palestinians riot against Israeli security forces at the northern entrance to Ramallah on May 12, 2021 (Wafa, May 13, 2021)

**Attempts to Mediate a Ceasefire**

▶ A Palestinian source reported that Egypt, Qatar and the UN were holding consultations to mediate a ceasefire (al-Akhbar, May 12, 2021). So far no progress has been made. Hamas spokesman Fawzi Barhoum said contacts were being made for a lull. According to reports, Hamas has conditions (Dunia al-Watan, May 12, 2021). Mahmoud Mardawi, a member of Hamas’ national relations committee, said they had told all the negotiators that Israel had to stop its "aggression" against the Gaza Strip before they would discuss a ceasefire (al-Araby al-Jadeed, May 12, 2021).

▶ "Egyptian sources" reported that an Egyptian delegation headed by Abd al-Khalq, who holds the Palestinian portfolio in Egyptian General Intelligence, would visit both the Gaza Strip and Israel in an effort to seek a speedy ceasefire. According to the sources, Egypt was collaborating with various international agencies (al-Araby al-Jadeed, May 12, 2021).

▶ The United States intensified its efforts to reach a ceasefire. Secretary of State Antony Blinken told Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu the United States was worried about harm coming to innocent non-combatants. However, he supported Israel's right to defend itself. The United States said it would send Hady Amr, deputy assistant secretary for Israeli and Palestinian affairs in the Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs, to the region to help stop the violence (Reuters, May 12, 2021).

▶ Musa Abu Marzouq, deputy "external" Hamas leader, said he had received a communiqué from the Europeans saying the Palestinians had to stop firing short-range rockets, otherwise regional and European countries would not help rebuild the Gaza Strip. He said his answer to the Europeans was that Hamas was not firing short-range rockets, but rather long-range rockets. He also claimed that if Israel stopped its "aggression" they would stop "struggling against it" (al-Aqsa, May 12, 2021).
Saleh al-'Arouri, deputy head of Hamas' political bureau, said Hamas had received appeals to calm the situation from Egypt, Qatar and the UN. He said the talks were continuing and that Hamas had posed conditions for a ceasefire, including the defense of al-Aqsa mosque, religious freedom and not evicting the residents of Sheikh Jarrah. He claimed Hamas was prepared to stop the rocket fire if its conditions were met (al-Aqsa, May 12, 2021).

International activity

The UN Security Council met for the second time since the escalation began to discuss the events without issuing a statement. According to reports the United States prevented the Council from issuing a joint statement calling for an end to the violence and respect for international law (Reuters, May 12, 2021).

Fatou Bensouda, chief prosecutor of the International Criminal Court (ICC), expressed concern over the escalation in Judea, Samaria, east Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip, and over possible war crimes included in the Rome Statue which come under the ICC's jurisdiction. She said investigators from her office would examine all the relevant facts and evidence, monitor events and investigate every event that came under ICC jurisdiction (ICC Twitter account, May 12, 2021).
Overview

► Operation Guardian of the Walls entered its seventh day. As of the evening of May 15, 2021, 2,652 rockets had been fired into Israeli territory, most of them with a range of 40 kilometers (about 25 miles), targeting the southern Israeli coastal cities of Ashdod and Ashqelon, as well as the Israeli communities near the Gaza Strip border. However, there were also several rounds of barrages which reached the Greater Tel Aviv area, the coastal plain and Beersheba. Nine Israelis have been killed by rocket fire; an IDF soldier was killed by an anti-tank missile.

► The IDF continued attacking in response to the rocket fire from the Gaza Strip, carrying out hundreds of aerial sorties. The IDF also hit several anti-tank missile-launching squads and intercepted armed UAVs sent across the border into Israel. In addition, the IDF attacked Hamas’ "metro," the system of tunnels it constructed under Gaza City to wage war on Israel.

► The events influenced other areas. In Judea and Samaria Palestinians rioted to show solidarity with the Gaza Strip and nine Palestinians were killed. Lebanon and Syria responded with rocket fire attacking Israel. Lebanese also rioted near the northern border security fence, where a Hezbollah terrorist operative was killed.

► Hamas keeps repeating the Gaza Strip is fighting for the sake of Jerusalem, which unites Gaza with the West Bank and east Jerusalem, and with Muslims around the globe. Isma'il Haniyeh gave a speech where he said their terms for a ceasefire included not only the Gaza Strip, but Jerusalem, the so-called "right of return" and "Palestine."

► Israel rejects Hamas’ terms and is determined to regain its deterrence against Hamas by continuing to respond to rocket fire with IDF attacks. The Palestinian social networks post pictures of the non-combatant casualties in the Gaza Strip, especially pictures of children who have been killed. Their motive is to be able to claim Israel [allegedly] carried out war crimes.
Rocket Fire

During the past few days Israel has been attacked by massive rocket and mortar shell fire from the Gaza Strip. As of the evening of May 15, 2021, 2,652 rockets had been launched at Israel, 1,072 intercepted by the Iron Dome aerial defense system, more than 800 falling in open areas and more than 80 hitting populated areas. So far nine Israelis have been killed by rocket fire; one soldier was killed when an anti-tank missile hit his jeep near the Gaza Strip. About 110 civilians have been injured, and there has been extensive damage to property around the country (IDF spokesman, May 15, 2021). Between 17:00 on May 15, 2021 and 07:00 on May 16, 2021, an additional 120 rocket launches were identified, 11 of which fell inside the Gaza Strip (IDF spokesman, May 16, 2021).

Most of the rocket fire from the Gaza Strip was within the 40-kilometer range and targeted the Israeli communities near the Gaza Strip, Ashqelon and Ashdod. A number of times, especially after massive IDF attacks, barrages were fired at Beersheba, the Greater Tel Aviv area and the coastal plain.

Particularly prominent events were the following:

- **At 00:12, May 16, 2021**, a barrage of rockets was fired at central Israel, after Abu Obeida, spokesman for Hamas’ military-terrorist wing, speaking for Muhammed Deif, the commander of Hamas’ military-terrorist wing, announced that at midnight Tel Aviv would be attacked. No casualties were reported. A slight amount of damage to property was reported.

- **On the afternoon of May 15, 2021**, a barrage of rockets was fired at central Israel. A building in the Tel Aviv suburb of Ramat Aviv took a direct hit which killed one man and damaged four nearly buildings. Forty-eight families had to evacuate their homes.

![Destruction caused by rocket hit in Ramat Gan (Tel Aviv suburb)](Palinfo Twitter account, May 16, 2021).
On May 15, 2021, a rocket fell near the Arab town of Taybeh, east of Tel Aviv. Near the site Israeli Arabs gathered to show their joy and planted a Palestinian flag in the crater formed by the rocket hit.

A rocket crater with Palestinian flag (Twitter account of Liam Baloum, May 15, 2021).

On May 15, 2021, the Israeli Coordinator of Government Activities in the Territories (COGAT) announced a rocket hit near hospital in the village of Azzun in the Palestinian Authority (PA) Qalqilya district. The Omar al-Qassam Hospital was one of the hospitals devoted to the treatment of coronavirus patients, with a specially trained staff and modern equipment.

On May 15, 2021, a mortar shell fired from the Gaza Strip fell near the Erez Crossing, through which pass humanitarian cases from the Gaza Strip, especially for medical treatment and hospitalization.

The Palestinian social networks posted calls reading, "On Sunday and Monday the Jews have a holiday, and just as they destroyed our holiday [Eid al-Fitr], we will destroy theirs [Shavuot], we will attack them and their houses and drive them away, so get ready."

Israel’s Response

The IDF continued attacking terrorist targets in the Gaza Strip. From the beginning of the Operation until May 15, 2021, Israel had attacked 650 targets. Abu Obeida, spokesman for the Izz al-Din Qassam Brigades, Hamas' military-terrorist wing, said "The enemy is carrying out attacks to cause destruction and keep the resistance from fighting. It will not influence the resistance's capabilities."

Israel’s targets have included:

- **Compounds and facilities belonging to the infrastructure of the Hamas and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) military-terrorist wings**: On May 15, 2021, IDF aircraft attacked a PIJ workshop for the manufacture of weapons and rockets in Jabalia, a warehouse for the storage of weapons inside the house of a senior Hamas figure, a stock of weapons in the house of an operative of Hamas' aerial unit and a number of other weapons storage and manufacturing sites.

- **Rocket-launching positions**: On May 15, 2021, the IDF spokesman reported an attack on rocket launching positions and underground launchers containing rockets aimed at the center of Israel, ready for launching. The multi-barreled rocket launcher which had been used to launch rockets at Jerusalem on the first day of the Operation was attacked, as were a number of terrorist squads en route to fire rockets at Israel. A Hamas military post housing an anti-tank missile launcher in a house in Jabalia was also attacked (IDF spokesman, May 15, 2021).

- **Underground facilities**: On the night of May 13, 2021, more than 160 Israeli Air Force aircraft attacked Hamas' "metro," the underground tunnel system beneath Gaza City from where senior Hamas military-terrorist figures were waging the war against Israel with no fear of reprisals. A Hamas tunnel shaft inside a hotel in the northern Gaza Strip was also attacked.

- **Apartments used as operational centers**: Apartments belonging to operatives in Hamas' naval force and apartments of commanders in the Sabra and Tel al-Hawa neighborhoods of Gaza City and an apartment in Beit Lahia were attacked, all of which were part of Hamas’ terrorist network. Some were used to direct the fighting in previous rounds of escalation (IDF spokesman, May 15, 2021).
• **Weapons storehouses:** Some of the terrorist organizations' largest and most important weapons storehouses were attacked, among them one containing paragliders for infiltrating into Israeli territory, and one containing weapons of Hamas' aerial unit (IDF spokesman, May 15, 2021).

• **Houses of senior terrorists:** Among those attacked was the house of Marwan Issa, deputy head of Hamas' military-terrorist wing, who was in charge of Hamas' tunnel project, dealt with Hamas' ties to Iran and built up Hamas' commando unit. He also liaised between Hamas' military-terrorist wing and the leadership. Also attacked was the house of Ayman Nofal, commander of the central Gaza Strip region, responsible for smuggling weapons into the Gaza Strip and for directing rocket fire at Israel's center. On May 15, 2021, the IDF attacked the house of Khalil al-Haya, deputy chairman of the Hamas political bureau, in Sajaiya. Also attacked was the house of Yahya al-Sinwar, head of the Hamas political bureau in the Gaza Strip.

• **High-rise buildings:** The IDF continued attacking multi-story buildings throughout the Gaza Strip. Several hours before each attack the occupants were warned and given time to leave the building. On May 15, 2021, IDF aircraft attacked the al-Jalaa Building, multi-story building belonging to Hamas' military intelligence. It was also the location of foreign communications networks (IDF spokesman, May 15, 2021). The attack led to a wave of international criticism. Following the attack on the buildings Abu Obeida, spokesman for Hamas' military-terrorist wing, and Abu Hamza, spokesman for the PIJ's military-terrorist wing, threatened that the "State of Israel will pay a high price." The al-Jalaa Building housed Hamas' military-terrorist intelligence as well as the offices of various media, the PIJ, and Hamas military-terrorist intelligence's research and development unit, whose operatives were specialists in operating technological equipment against Israel. The unit's capabilities were used against Israel on a number of occasions in attempts to sabotage and disrupt IDF and civilian activity near the Gaza Strip (IDF spokesman, May 15, 2021).

Abu Obeida threatens Israel after it toppled the building (Palinfo Twitter account, May 15, 2021).

The IDF attack on the Mushtaha Building in Gaza City (Palinfo Twitter account, May 15, 2021).

Targeted attack in Gaza City (Palinfo Twitter account, May 15, 2021).

- Hamas administration institutions and buildings: On May 14, 2021, the al-Intaj Bank, which is located across from al-Shifa Hospital in Gaza City was attacked.

IDF attack before dawn (QudsN Facebook page, May 16, 2021).


On May 14, 2021, Salama Maarouf, head of the Hamas administration's media unit in the Gaza Strip, revealed the initial assessment of the economic damage done to the Gaza Strip since the beginning of Operation Guardian of the Walls. He estimated the damage at $75 million. He said 500 dwelling units and 60 administration offices had been destroyed. One mosque was destroyed and dozens of mosques were been damaged, and he said he estimated the actual damage was greater (al-Quds, May 15, 2021).
Other activities

The joint operations room of the terrorist organizations in the Gaza Strip said in an announcement that they had prevented the "scam" the IDF had planned in order to delay the beginning of the ground activity with the objective of causing the deaths of hundreds of military operatives and damage the organizations' military capabilities. According to the joint operations room their capabilities were not affected and their operatives were not harmed (al-Jazeera, May 14, 2021).

Palestinian casualties

According to the ministry of health in Gaza, as of 10:30 on May 16, 2021, the number of Palestinians killed in the Gaza Strip stood at 174, with about 1,200 wounded and injured. Among those killed, the ministry of health alleged, were 29 women and 47 children (ministry of health in Gaza Facebook page, May 16, 2021).

Foreign aid for the Gaza Strip

Mai al-Kayla, PA minister of health, accused Israel of [allegedly] deliberately targeting innocent civilians, medical teams and medical facilities in violation of international law. She also said the ministry had sent a truck containing medical aid to the Gaza Strip, which would enter on May 16, 2021, if Israel allowed (ministry of health in Ramallah Facebook page, May 15, 2021).

Funeral held for Hamas terrorist operatives

The electric company in the Gaza Strip announced that the supply of electricity was about to run out, and called for pressure to be exerted on Israel to renew it. The electric company
in Khan Yunis said it could provide electricity for between three and four hours because the
electric lines and one of the generators were not functioning (al-Mamlaka TV, May 15, 2021).

Mohammed al-Emadi, chairman of Qatar’s National Committee for the Reconstruction of
Gaza, said that as of May 17, 2021, Qatar would begin distributing assistance to the families
of shaheeds and families whose houses had been destroyed (al-Quds, May 16, 2021).

Hamas and PIJ Reactions

Isma’il Haniyeh, head of Hamas’ political bureau, gave a speech at a solidarity rally in
Qatar, where he said Hamas was threatening Israel with an intifada following the events al
al-Aqsa mosque. He warned Israel "not to play with fire," and called al-Aqsa mosque a red
line. He said the intifada would be called "Jerusalem Jerusalem Jerusalem." He claimed the
military wings of Hamas and the other organizations could reach everywhere and that today
the conditions they demanded were related not only to the Gaza Strip but to Jerusalem, the
[so-called] "right of return" and "Palestine" (Ma’an, May 15, 2021).

Isma’il Haniyeh speaking in Qatar (Ma’an, May 15, 2021).

Isma’il Haniyeh spoke with Esmail Ghaani, the commander of the Iranian Revolutionary
Guards Corps’ Qods Force, who told him Iran stood side by side with the Palestinian people.
Ghaani praised the firm stance of the Palestinians and Hamas’ ability to defend the
Palestinian people. He said Iran would continue to support the Palestinian people and the
"resistance in Palestine" (al-Alam TV in Arabic, May 15, 2021).

Hamas’ internal security forces called on Gazans to be especially careful when posting
information, pictures and messages relating to Israeli activities and to completely avoid
discussing locations of rocket launchers, whether by photographing them, posting them to
the social networks, or talking about them on the phone (ministry of the interior in Gaza,
May 15, 2021).
Hamas’ military-terrorist wing launched a campaign on its website asking for digitally transferred donations of $500 (Izz al-Din Qassam Brigades website, May 14, 2021). In response the Saudi Arabian security agency issued an official announcement calling on Saudi Arabians not to respond to unidentified external requests for donations for charity outside the country.

The Palestinian Authority (PA)

Mahmoud Abbas condemned Israel’s "[allegedly] planned, ugly acts of murder" in the West Bank, Gaza Strip and Jerusalem. He said the Israeli government was responsible for the escalation and warned the government not to continue along the path it was taking. He said the PA had appealed to the United States to intervene and stop Israel's "aggression" to keep it from spinning out of control. Mahmoud Abbas demanded all Jews and soldiers leave Jerusalem [sic] (Wafa, May 14, 2021).

On May 15, 2021, Mahmoud Abbas held an emergency meeting of the heads of the PA’s security forces for updates on the situation in the Palestinian arena,

Mahmoud Abbas holds a situation assessment with the heads of the PA’s security forces (Mahmoud Abbas' Facebook page, May 15, 2021).

On May 15, 2021, Mahmoud Abbas received a phone call from United States President Joe Biden. Mahmoud Abbas updated him on Israel's actions in the Gaza Strip, on the Temple Mount and in east Jerusalem. He claimed there would be security and stability only after the Israeli "occupation" ended. He called on Biden to act immediately to stop Israel's actions in the Gaza Strip. Biden promised the United States would continue helping the PA and donating to UNRWA (Mahmoud Abbas' Facebook page, May 15, 2021).

The ministry of health in Ramallah opened a situation room to follow medical conditions in the field during the escalation. Mai al-Kayla, PA minister of health said the objective of the situation room was to provide a response for medical needs in Judea, Samaria, the Gaza
Strip and east Jerusalem, and to facilitate the transport of equipment between the various sites (ministry of health in Ramallah website, May 15, 2021)

**Terrorist attacks**

- Over the past few days there was an **increase in the number of terrorist attacks** and attempted attacks.
  - **On May 15, 2021**, there was an attempted vehicular ramming attack at a junction south of Hebron. No casualties were reported and the terrorist was neutralized by IDF forces (IDF spokesman, May 15, 2021).
  - **On May 14, 2021**, there was a drive-by shooting at the Te'enim Crossing northwest of Nablus. No casualties were reported. The vehicle drove away (Rescue Without Borders in Judea and Samaria, May 14, 2021).

**Riots and demonstrations in Judea and Samaria**

- Hamas' al-Aqsa TV issued a call to Arabs in Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria to confront IDF soldiers at the roadblocks in Jerusalem and other key cities. In Judea and Samaria protest demonstrations were held in many locations. Nine Palestinians were killed during riots. **Abu Obeida**, spokesman for Hamas' military-terrorist wing, used his Telegram channel to praise the residents of Jerusalem and their "revolution," and called on them to burn the ground under the feet of the "occupation" (Abu Obeida's Telegram channel, May 14, 2018).

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**Lebanon**

- **On May 14, 2021**, **PIJ leader Ziyad al-Nakhalah** met with **Na'im Qassem**, deputy Hezbollah secretary general, to discuss recent developments in the Palestinian arena, particularly the "Sword of Jerusalem" campaign. They discussed "the internal Palestinian arena and the firm stance of the 'resistance' in the Gaza Strip." Qassem said the objective of
the Hezbollah delegation was to stress that the organization stood alongside the Palestinian "resistance" in its "struggle" against Israel, adding that Hezbollah supported the jihad of the Palestinian people and the "liberation of Jerusalem."

► On **May 14, 2021**, IDF tanks fired shells to disperse a number of suspicious Lebanese rioters who had crossed into Israeli territory. The Lebanese vandalized the border security fence, lit fires and then retreated into Lebanese territory (IDF spokesman, May 14, 2021). Hezbollah issued a mourning notice for the "jihad fighter shaheed" Muhammad Qassem Tahan from the Lebanese village of Adloun who had participated in a rally of solidarity with Jerusalem and "Palestine" at the border. **Lebanese President Michel Aoun** condemned the gunfire targeting the "group of youths" who had held a demonstration and asked the Lebanese foreign minister to send a communiqué to the UN about the attack.

► On the night of **May 13, 2021**, IDF fighters deployed in ambushes near Metulla identified a number of suspicious figures from Lebanon who made their way to the border security fence and then vandalized it. The fighters carried out standard procedures for detaining suspects, including shooting at their legs. The suspicious figures fled back into Lebanon. An initial investigation of the incident and searches of the area revealed that the group had been organized, left behind suspicious objects which could be IEDs, and acted in a manner that indicated they had intended to enter Israeli territory and carry out a terrorist attack in the town of Metulla (IDF spokesman, May 15, 2021).
Lebanese throw stones at the border security fence in south Lebanon

Rocket fire from Lebanon

On the evening of May 13, 2021, three rockets were fired from Lebanon towards the sea off the Galilee coast (IDF spokesman, May 13, 2021). Hezbollah denied firing the rockets. "A security source" told MTV that the initial evidence indicated Palestinian organizations were responsible for firing the three rockets. The al-Nashra news website reported that the rockets were probably fired from the town of Qleileh in south Lebanon.

Rocket fire from Syria

On the evening of May 14, 2021, three rockets were fired into Israeli territory from Syria. Two fell in open areas in Israel and the third fell inside Syria (IDF spokesman, May 14, 2021).

Mediation Attempts

Egypt continues ongoing contacts for a ceasefire. A spokesman for the Egyptian foreign ministry reported that they were in contact with international actors, especially the United States (al-Jazeera, May 15, 2021). The Egypt revealed it had offered Israel a timeout of a year supervised and coordinated by Egypt. Egypt also asked Israel to stop sending its security forces to al-Aqsa mosque and to stop the targeted killings in the Gaza Strip, stressing it would commit Hamas and the other "factions" not to fire rockets at Israel and to put a complete stop to the rioting, incendiary balloon launching and night harassment unit activities along the Gaza Strip border. So far Israel has refused to accept Egyptian mediation for a ceasefire.

On May 13, 2021, Hamas said Tor Wennesland, the UN envoy to the Middle East, had contacted Isma'il Haniyeh. According to Hamas, they discussed the most recent developments in the Gaza Strip and Jerusalem.
Overview

Operation Guardian of the Walls entered its ninth day. As of May 18, 2021, about 3,350 rockets had been fired, most of them with a range of up to 40 kilometers (25 miles) targeting the southern Israeli coastal cities of Ashqelon and Ashdod, as well as at the Israeli communities near the Gaza Strip border. However, there were several barrages targeting Beersheba, Israel's largest southern city. Since May 15, 2021, no rockets have been fired at the Greater Tel Aviv area. So far 11 people have been killed by rocket fire; and an IDF soldier was killed by an anti-tank missile.

The IDF continues its response to rocket fire with attacks on Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) terrorist targets in the Gaza Strip. On May 17, 2021, a targeted IDF attack killed the commander of the PIJ's Northern Brigade. Buildings which housed senior terrorist operatives and the terrorists' underground infrastructure were also attacked. According to reports from the Gaza Strip, extensive damage has been done to the infrastructure, including buildings, roads, businesses. Also attacked were sites for the manufacture of weapons.

In Judea and Samaria there have been terrorist attacks as well as solidarity demonstrations and riots, especially in the cities. The Palestinians and Israeli Arabs declared May 18, 2021, a "day of rage" and called a general strike, including demonstrations. Another barrage of rockets was fired at Israel from Lebanon, probably by one of the Palestinian terrorist organizations. A UAV was intercepted in the eastern part of the country, apparently carrying explosives.

Israel continues to reject appeals for a ceasefire, and remains determined to continue its activity in the Gaza Strip. According to reports, many discussions were held by world leaders and the international community called for a ceasefire. Senior Hamas figures still condition a ceasefire on Israeli concessions in Jerusalem and Sheikh Jarrah. In view of the worsening humanitarian situation, figures in the Hamas administration, such as the mayor of Gaza City, expressed a desire to end the hostilities.
Rocket Fire

Rocket and mortar shell fire has continued unabated, although during the past two days the large barrages occur further apart. Between the beginning of Operation Guardian of the Walls and May 18, 2021, 3,350 rockets were launched at Israel, about 500 of the falling inside the Gaza Strip. About 90% of the rockets were intercepted by the Iron Dome aerial defense system. So far rocket fire from the Gaza Strip has killed 11 people; one IDF soldier was killed when an anti-tank missile hit his jeep. Hundreds of civilians have been injured, and there has been extensive damage to residential housing, public institutions and industrial buildings throughout Israel. Responsibility for most of the rocket fire was claimed by Hamas and the PIJ.

Most of the rocket fire from Gaza during the past two days has had a range of about 40 kilometers (25 miles) and for the most part targeted the Israeli communities near the Gaza Strip border, the coastal cities of Ashqelon and Ashdod, and the southern cities of Netivot and Ofakim. Several barrages targeted Beersheba. Since the afternoon of Saturday, May 15, 2021, rockets have not been fired at the Greater Tel Aviv area or the coastal plain. Abu Obeida, spokesman for Hamas’ military wing warned that Israel’s increased attacks on civilian structures in the Gaza Strip would lead to a renewal of rocket fire at Tel Aviv. The PIJ promised to avenge the death of the commander of its Northern Brigade.

Some of the more serious attacks were the following:

- **On May 17, 2021**, a rocket hit an apartment house in Ashdod. The building was severely damaged but the residents gathered in the stairwells and were not harmed.

![Apartment house in Ashdod takes a direct hit (QudsN Facebook page, May 17, 2020).](image)

- **On the evening of May 17, 2021**, a rocket hit an empty kindergarten in Sderot, damaging the building.
Hamas video of a rocket barrage targeting Israel commemorating Shaher Abu Khudija, the terrorist who carried out a vehicular ramming attack in Sheikh Jarrah, east Jerusalem (QudsN Facebook page, May 17, 2021).

- The Israeli media reported that Hamas attempted an attack on the Tamar gas platform off the Ashqelon coast, firing dozens of rockets and launching armed UAVs which were intercepted by the Israeli Air Force aircraft.
- **On May 18, 2021**, after a hiatus of several hours, a heavy barrage was fired at the Israeli communities near the Gaza Strip border. Three direct hits were recorded. Two civilians were killed and ten injured. A packing house and cow shed took direct hits and several homes were damaged (western Negev spokesman’s unit, May 18, 2021).
- **On May 18, 2021**, a mortar shell fell close to the Erez Crossing in the northern Gaza Strip and shots were fired at the Kerem Shalom Crossing, which is used for the passage of people and the delivery of merchandise. As a result the Crossing was closed to the passage of trucks carrying humanitarian assistance to the Gaza Strip, including drugs, food and fuel.

Damage done to the Erez Crossing by a previous Hamas attack. The Crossing is used by Gazans entering the Gaza Strip and exiting for humanitarian assistance (Israeli Coordinator of Government Activities in the Territories Facebook page, May 15, 2021).
Operation Guardian of the Walls – Rocket Fire into Israel

Other events

On May 17, 2021, the IDF prevented a naval commando attack with an unmanned underwater vehicle. The IDF simultaneously attacked both the vehicle and the car of the terrorists who delivered it. According to the IDF the vehicle was remote controlled and could reach Israel’s shores or Israeli navy boats (IDF spokesman, May 17, 2021).

Israel's Response

The IDF continues attacking terrorist targets in the Gaza Strip from the air, on land and from the sea. The damage to the infrastructure, including buildings, residential housing, roads, businesses and sources of energy has been extensive. According to reports from the Gaza Strip the humanitarian situation is deteriorating. IDF attacks included the following:

- **Targeted killings:** The IDF killed Husam Abu Rabid, commander of the PIJ’s Northern Brigade, in the Jabalia refugee camp.
Targeted killing in Gaza City (Wafa, May 17, 2021)

- **Compounds and facilities belonging to the military-terrorist wings of Hamas and the PIJ:** Hamas' military intelligence facility was attacked. The attack was made possible by the joint efforts of the IDF information-communications technology and cyber defense unit and Israeli Air Force intelligence (IDF spokesman, May 17, 2021).
- **A tunnel shaft:** A Hamas tunnel shaft in the southern Gaza Strip located near a kindergarten and mosque (IDF spokesman, May 17, 2021).
- **Rocket launching squads:** On the morning of May 18, 2021 the IDF attacked nine underground and aboveground rocket launching positions. A PIJ rocket launching squad in the central Gaza Strip was attacked while making preparations for a launch (IDF spokesman, May 18, 2021).
- **An anti-tank missile-launching squad:** The IDF identified a Hamas anti-tank missile-launching squad in Khan Yunis and prevented it from attacking Israel (IDF spokesman, May 18, 2021).
- **The underground terrorist infrastructure:** More than 160 Israeli Air Force aircraft attacked more than 150 underground terrorist targets in the northern Gaza Strip, inflicting severe damage on several kilometers of Hamas' strategically important underground infrastructure (IDF spokesman, May 16, 2021). The attack on the tunnel in the al-Wahda region of Gaza City caused its collapse and extensive damage to buildings above it. The IDF spokesman said the IDF's objective was the tunnel and not the buildings on top of it (IDF spokesman, May 16, 2021).
- **Operational apartments:** The IDF attacked a number of Hamas operatives who were in an apartment used for terrorist purposes in the al-Shati refugee camp in Gaza City. The attack allegedly killed ten members of a family. The IDF is investigating the incident (IDF spokesman, May 15, 2021).
- **Houses of terrorist operatives**: Twelve houses of senior Hamas operatives were attacked in various locations in the Gaza Strip. The buildings were part of Hamas' terrorist infrastructure, some of them serving as weapons storehouses. Among the houses attacked were those belonging to: the deputy commander of the Northern Brigade, the commander of the Khan Yunis Company, a military-terrorist commander in Beit Hanoun in the northern Gaza Strip, the Beit Hanoun Company commander, the commander of the Gaza City Company, the commander of the Shati Company in the Gaza City Brigade and a military intelligence operative in Sajaiya (IDF spokesman, May 18, 2021).

- **Multistory buildings**: The IDF continued attacking multistory buildings in Gaza City, among them the Anas Bin Malik Building, the al-Mashrak Building, the al-Muhand Building in western Gaza City and the Faisal al-Shawa Building (Shehab, May 17, 2021). Regarding the building leveled by the IDF which housed the foreign media outlets, the IDF spokesman said the building also housed Hamas military intelligence, which situated its transmitters in the building so they would be protected by the civilian transmitters (IDF spokesman, May 16, 2021).

- **Institutions and Hamas administration buildings**: The IDF attacked the offices of Hamas' internal security, where part of its military-terrorist infrastructure was also located (IDF spokesman, May 17, 2021). The Palestinian media reported that the ministry of Muslim endowments in the western part of Gaza City was completely leveled (Palinfo, May 17, 2021).
Salameh Maarouf, head of the Hamas administration media office in the Gaza Strip, said the damage done to the Gaza Strip totaled about $210 million. He said Israel had deliberately attacked Gaza's infrastructure, which provided vital services for local residents, and alleged the planes had attacked more than 300 facilities with the intention of destroying the Gaza Strip's economy. He also claimed about 1,000 buildings had been leveled and about 6,000 had been damaged and that Israel had attacked 132 residences and completely destroyed 33 communications offices and the offices of dozens of organizations, 68 government and public offices and 36 schools (al-Quds, May 17, 2021).

Hamas spokesman Abd al-Latif al-Qanua claimed Israel's attacks on civilian targets were "crimes against humanity" and reflected "Israeli barbarity." He claimed the strength of Israel's attacks on the infrastructure, roads and houses were no match for the attacks of the "resistance" [i.e., terrorist organizations]. He said Israel's refusal to meet [Hamas'] demands for a ceasefire were an effort to cover its failure (Dunia al-Watan, May 17, 2021).

Iyad al-Buzum, spokesman for the ministry of the interior in Gaza, claimed videos and pictures proved Israel was committing war crimes against the Gazans (Filastin al-Yawm, May 17, 2021).

Palestinian casualties

According to the ministry of health in Gaza, as of May 18, 2021, Israeli attacks had killed 213 people and wounded 1,442. Among the "civilian casualties" were allegedly 36 women, 16 senior citizens and 61 children (ministry of health in Gaza Facebook page, May 18, 2021).

As opposed to previous rounds of escalation, this time the Hamas administration has been careful not to reveal the organizational affiliation of the terrorist operatives killed in IDF attacks in an effort to represent Israel as attacking only civilians, not terrorist operatives. To that end, the bodies in the funeral held for Palestinians killed in IDF attacks on the Rimal...
neighborhood of Gaza City were wrapped in white shrouds (Palinfo Twitter account, May 17, 2021) and not the flags of the organizations they belonged to.

The overall situation in the Gaza Strip

Figures in the Hamas administration, for example Gaza City Mayor Yahya al-Sarraj, said they were under pressure and wanted to end the hostilities, calling for international intervention. Al-Sarraj accused Israel of deliberately destroying the Gaza Strip's infrastructure, adding that the attacks caused immense damage, including to water and sewage stations. He called for an end to "Israel's aggression," claiming the attacks on civilian services were "collective punishment" for the Gazans (Palinfo Twitter account, May 17, 2021).

A report by al-Ghad TV on May 17, 2021, dealt with the hardships in the Gaza Strip. According to the report, the damage to the infrastructure was about $200 million, and closing the Kerem Shalom Crossing, the only crossing for merchandise into the Gaza Strip, had resulted in a crisis. The report claimed so far there were no shortages but there definitely would be in the coming days. There was, however, a crisis in the supply of electricity, and fuel was necessary to operate the power station. In addition, more than 3,000 fishermen were out of work, and as
a result of the attacks about 40,000 people had evacuated their houses and moved into UNRWA schools. Therefore, on May 18, 2021, Israel transferred food and fuel to the Gaza Strip.  

Muhammad Thabet, spokesman for the Gaza electric company, said the company was facing many hardships because five of its main lines, which provided between 60 and 65 megawatts had been hit, causing extensive power outages. The company was currently providing 107 megawatts of the 400 megawatts needed by the Gaza Strip. There was also a shortage of fuel for the turbines. He claimed they did not have the necessary financial resources to repair the damage. He called on international organizations to help the Gaza Strip (al-Ghad, May 17, 2021). On another occasion the electric company reported that according to initial assessment, the company had lost about $8 million. It called for pressure to be exerted on Israel to open the Kerem Shalom Crossing for the delivery of fuel to the Gaza Strip (Filastin al-Yawm, May 17, 2021).

The ministry of public works and housing reported that about 10,000 residential units had incurred superficial to moderate damage and about 800 had been completely destroyed (Dunia al-Watan, May 17, 2021). The ministry of health in Gaza announced it was suspending coronavirus tests because Israel’s attacks had disabled the central laboratory (Dunia al-Watan, May 17, 2021).

Foreign aid for the Gaza Strip

On May 16, 2021, the Rafah Crossing was opened for evacuating the wounded to hospitals in Egypt. According to Egyptian sources 96 Gazans were transferred to Egypt (Sky News, May 16, 2021). Dozens of ambulances were sent from Egypt to take them (al-Jazeera, May 16, 2021).

UNRWA spokesman Adnan Abu Hasna said the agency had begun providing basic necessities to Gazans who had left their houses. He said UNRWA needed immediate help to be able to continue helping the Palestinians in the Gaza Strip (Filastin al-Yawm, May 17, 2021).
It was also reported that UNRWA centers could house 50,000 people but the number who needed someplace to sleep was far higher (Dunia al-Watan, May 15, 2021).

The ministry of health in Gaza asked for immediate, urgent medical equipment in light of the Israeli attacks on medical institutions, which had forced medical staffs to stop working (Amad, May 16, 2021).

The ministry of the interior in Gaza announced that since the beginning of the hostilities the security forces and police had detained 43 people suspected of spreading rumors (Shehab, May 17, 2021).

Hamas and PIJ Responses

PIJ secretary general Ziyad al-Nakhalah spoke with Ali Akbar Velayati, advisor to Iran’s supreme leader for international affairs, and with Esmail Ghaani, commander of the Iranian Revolutionary Guards Corps' Qods Force. Both supported the right of the Palestinian people to “defend themselves” against Israel's [so-called] aggression. Velayati also spoke with Isma'il Haniyeh and reiterated Iran's support for the Palestinians and their leadership.

Spokesmen for Hamas and the PIJ continue stressing their respective operational capability to deal with Israel, claiming Israel's mission had failed. They also noted that a ceasefire would be based on settling the issues of al-Aqsa mosque and Sheikh Jarrah.

**Isma'il Haniyeh**, head of Hamas' political bureau, said in an interview that the "resistance" was stronger and more determined than what Israeli believed, and that Hamas' achievements so far were a turning point in the overall battle. He claimed the battle they were fighting in the Gaza Strip did not relate to their demands but rather the issue was the battle for Jerusalem, and the intifada of the people living in Jerusalem, the uprising in the West Bank and the anger of the Arabs who live in Israel all indicated that the objective of the battle was Jerusalem (al-Akhbar, May 17, 2021).

**PIJ secretary general Ziyad al-Nakhalah** gave a speech at a demonstration held in the Dahia, the Shi’ite suburb south of Beirut, where he said that today the Palestinians were writing a new chapter in the hostilities with Israel. The battle, he said, was being waged in Gaza, the West Bank and within the 1948 lines to defend Jerusalem and al-Aqsa mosque. He claimed Israel was helpless and that the "resistance" had made Israel weaker than a spiderweb (a quote originally from Hassan Nasrallah). He claimed they
had caused Israel many losses and that Israel preferred attacking from the air to fighting on the ground.

- **Usama Hamedan**, Hamas representative in Lebanon, speaking at a demonstration, said that during the recent battle the [terrorist] organizations had proved their unity. He said the "resistance" had created a new equation and progressed to the stage of "resistance" for the sake of liberation. Israel, he claimed, would soon be decapitated (al-Manar, May 17, 2021).

- **Khallil al-Haya**, deputy chairman of the Hamas political bureau, said in a recorded message that Israel had met a "resistance" that could stand up to it. Israel, he claimed, had failed to achieve a "picture of victory," and the "resistance" had leveled Israel's cities [sic]. He appealed to the Gazans to be strong, and promised Hamas would stand by them, rebuild the ruins and build a Palestinian state. He said "We are victorious for the sake of Jerusalem, the sake of al-Aqsa mosque, the sake of the holy sites and Sheikh Jarrah" (al-Aqsa, May 17, 2021).

- **PIJ spokesman Da'ud Shehab** said the current confrontation had proved the strength of the Gaza Strip and surprised Israel. He claimed the events in the West Bank would develop into an "armed resistance." He said the organization's leader was conducting deliberations to end Israel's aggression, including the lifting of the occupation on Jerusalem (Filastin al-Yawm, May 17, 2018).

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**The Palestinian Authority (PA)**

- At the weekly government meeting, PA Prime Minister **Muhammad Shtayyeh** said the UN had to issue a condemnation of the illegal measures Israel was using. He claimed an ordinary condemnation was insufficient and that ambassadors had to be recalled, at the very least for consultations. He called on the Arab states not to allow Israelis to enter and to stop all commerce with Israel. He said Mahmoud Abbas had instructed all the ministries to supply the Gaza Strip with medical equipment and for the government to work with Egypt and humanitarian organizations to accelerate the transfer of the equipment. He called on the international community to intervene to stop the "aggression," noting that Israel obeyed no one (Wafa, May 17, 2021).

- Mahmoud Abbas met with **Hady Amr**, deputy assistant secretary for Israeli and Palestinian affairs in the bureau of Near Eastern Affairs in the American State Department. Also present
were Hussein al-Sheikh, chairman of the civilian affairs commission, Majed Faraj, head of Palestinian general intelligence, and Majdi al-Khaldi, Mahmoud Abbas' advisor for diplomatic affairs (Dunia Al-Watan, May 17, 2021). Mahmoud Abbas briefed Hady Amr on what he claimed were the hardships of Jerusalem and the attacks of the settlers, who called for Arabs to be killed, the attacks on the worshippers in al-Aqsa mosque and the escalation in the hostilities in the Gaza Strip. He stressed the importance of the intervention of the American administration in ending Israel's [so-called] "aggression" (Wafa, May 17, 2021). Muhammad Shtayyeh also met with Amr to discuss the need to stop Israel's "aggression" (Wafa, May 17, 2021).

Terrorist attacks

Given the events in the Gaza Strip there has been an increase in terrorist attacks and attempted attacks in Judea and Samaria:

- **On May 15, 2021** – Shots were fired at IDF forces near the security fence southeast of Nablus. A soldier was superficially wounded.
- **On May 16, 2021** – A vehicular ramming attack was carried out near Sheikh Jarrah in east Jerusalem. Six Border Police fighters were wounded. The terrorist was shot and killed. The attack was praised by a spokesman for the PIJ; Abu Obeida, spokesman for Hamas' military wing; and the Popular Resistance Committees. The Palestinian media reported that the terrorist was Shaher Abu Khadija, 40, married and father of five, from Kafr 'Aqab, north of Jerusalem (QudsN website, May 16, 2021).

- **On May 16, 2021** – Shots were fired and an IED was thrown at the Israeli security forces at the Qalandia roadblock.

- **On May 17, 2021** – Shots were fired from a moving vehicle at an Israeli vehicle west of Hebron. The vehicle was damaged. An IDF force at the site also reported being shot at.

- **On May 17, 2021** – Shots were fired from a moving vehicle at IDF fighters in the Hebron area. The soldiers returned fire. No casualties or damage were reported.

- **On May 17, 2021** – A vehicular ramming attack south of Nablus. A soldier was superficially injured. The driver was apprehended and detained (Rescue Without Borders in Judea and Samaria, May 17, 2021).

- **On May 18, 2021** – A Palestinian armed with an IED, a Carlo improvised machine gun and a knife tried to carry out a combined attack on IDF fighters near the Jewish settlement in Hebron. The fighters identified the terrorist approaching them, who tried to shoot at them and throw the IED. They shot and killed him. The Palestinian media reported the terrorist was Islam Ghu'ad Muhammad Zahada, 32, from Hebron. He was imprisoned in Israel between 2016 and 2017 (Ma'an, May 18, 2021). The PIJ issued a
mourning notice for him, claiming he was an operative in the organization (PIJ website, May 18, 2021).


Riots and solidarity demonstrations in Judea and Samaria

> In Judea, Samaria and east Jerusalem riots and confrontations with the Israeli security forces continued. A Palestinian tried to throw a Molotov cocktail at an IDF force at the entrance to the al-Aroub refugee camp, north of Hebron. He was shot and killed. the Palestinian media reported the terrorist was Obeida Jawabra, 18, from the al-Aroub refugee camp (QudsN Facebook page, May 17, 2021).

> Before dawn on May 18, 2021, a rally in support of Hamas and the Gaza Strip was held in Nablus. Demonstrators shouted their support for al-Aqsa mosque, Muhammad Deif [commander of Hamas' military wing], the Izz al-Din Qassam Brigades and the Jerusalem Brigades, and held pictures of military-terrorist operatives who had been killed (QudsN Facebook page, May 18, 2021). In Ramallah armed Fatah operatives fired their guns into the air, shouted condemnation of the PA and announced the renewal of the al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades activities. In Jenin residents showed solidarity with the Gazans by driving in a convoy (QudsN Facebook page, May 17, 2021).
Despite the turbulent demonstrations, the PA is apparently trying to ensure Hamas does not take control of events in Judea and Samaria. They allow Hamas flags at the demonstrations but the PA security forces supervise the events to keep them under control.

Fatah's Central Committee and all the Palestinian organizations declared a general strike and a "day of rage" in Judea, Samaria and east Jerusalem, and called on all Palestinians to confront the Israeli security forces at the friction points. The Palestinian government announced it would join the general strike (Sawa, May 17, 2021). The initiative included Israeli Arabs and was adopted by Fatah. The public health system in the PA announced it was on alert. **Hamas spokesman Fawzi Barhoum** called on the Palestinian leadership in Judea and Samaria to attack settlers and soldiers everywhere (al-Aqsa, May 17, 2021).
Full general strike in Judea and Samaria – Hebron (right) and Nablus (QudsN Facebook page, May 18, 2021).

Masked Palestinians set tires on fire at the entrance to Anata, north of Jerusalem (QudsN Facebook page, May 18, 2021).

Lebanon

Rocket fire from Lebanon

On the evening of May 17, 2021, a barrage of between five and seven rockets was fired at Israel from Lebanon. The rockets fell inside Lebanese territory. In response the IDF shot a number of shells at the source of the rocket fire. No organization claimed responsibility, but the rockets were probably fired by a Palestinian organization. It was third rocket fire attack from the north since the beginning of Operation Guardian of the Walls (on May 13, 2021, rockets were fired from Lebanon and Syria). On May 18, 2021, the day after the rocket fire, it was reported that the Lebanese army had located the rocket launchers. According to reports, the leaders of the Palestinian refugee camps in south Lebanon and Sidon told their operatives that they had been instructed by Hezbollah to make sure no group carried out an action from south Lebanon. Hezbollah made the leaders responsible for any hasty event that could cause an unwanted confrontation with Israel.
Solidarity demonstrations

Demonstrations in support of the Gaza Strip were held along the border security fence between Israel and Lebanon. Rioters tore out the security cameras and flew Hezbollah flags (al-Manar, May 16, 2021). The Lebanese army erected roadblocks to direct the movement of the demonstrators. UNIFIL advised that they were coordinating with all the sides to ensure stability.

Eastern Israel

It can be reported that before dawn on May 18, 2021, a UAV was intercepted near Beit Shean, in the eastern part of Israel. The source of the UAV was not reported and it is being examined for explosives. The security forces collected the pieces of the UAV. The country from which it came and the path it had taken were not revealed (IDF spokesman, May 18, 2021).

International Activity

Mediation attempts

Diplomatic efforts are being made to bring the hostilities in the Gaza Strip to a close. According to reports world leaders have held consultations and the international community has issued increasingly frequent calls for a ceasefire. A Palestinian source reported that the many efforts made to mediate between the two sides, led by Egypt, have so far not succeeded in ending the "aggression against the Gaza Strip." According to the source, the mediators want a ceasefire on both sides, the Palestinians, however want to force is to stop its "aggression against Jerusalem and the holy sites" before a lull or ceasefire agreement (Filastin al-Yawm, May 17, 2021).

Isma'il Haniyeh said in an interview that they were in contact with Egypt, Qatar, Russia and the UN. He claimed they all agreed [sic] what was currently happening was the result of Israel's intransigence and determination to Judaize Jerusalem, expel the residents of the Arab neighborhoods and to attack al-Aqsa mosque. He claimed that in view of the Palestinian victims and the heroic acts of the "resistance" it was clear they would not accept an "inappropriate solution" (al-Akhbar, May 17, 2021). Musa Abu Marzouq, deputy head of Hamas' political bureau, said the efforts to mediate had failed, and if they succeeded in the future they would be on Hamas' conditions. He said the United States was responsible, after Israel, for the blood shed by the Palestinians.
PA Prime Minister Muhammad Shtayyeh met with Tareq Tayel, the Egyptian representative in the PA. They discussed Egypt's efforts to "stop Israel's aggression" against the Palestinian people in the Gaza Strip, and opening the Rafah Crossing to ease the Gazans' suffering. Tayel briefed Shtayyeh on Egypt's efforts to stop "Israel’s aggression" (Wafa, May 16, 2021).
Operation Guardian of the Walls entered its tenth day. As of 07:00 in the morning on May 19, 2021, 3,750 rockets had been fired at Israel. About 550 of them fell inside the Gaza Strip and the Iron Dome aerial defense system intercepted about 90% of the launches. During the past two days there been a decline in the amount and range of the rocket fire, although the barrages are still massive. Most of the rockets were fired at targets within 40 kilometers (25 miles) of the Gaza Strip, including the southern coastal Israeli cities of Ashqelon and Ashdod, and the Israeli communities near the Gaza Strip border. Rockets were also fired at Beersheba and at the coast to the north of Ashdod. Since May 15, 2021, no rockets have been fired at the Greater Tel Aviv area. So far 11 people have been killed by rocket fire; an IDF soldier was killed by an anti-tank missile.

The IDF continues responding to the rocket fire with intensive attacks on Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) terrorist targets in the Gaza Strip. During the past 24 hours primarily Khan Yunis and Rafah in the southern Gaza Strip were attacked.

May 18, 2021 was declared a "day of rage" with a general strike of Palestinians in Judea and Samaria and Israeli Arabs certain locations to show solidarity with Hamas and the Gaza Strip. At one riot shots were fired at IDF soldiers, wounding two.

Palestinian foreign minister Riyad al-Maliki appealed to the International Criminal Court (ICC) to begin investigating Israel's actions. Israel still rejects requests for a ceasefire and is determined to continue attacking in response to rocket fire from Gaza. Hamas, aware of the extensive damage done to its military-terrorist infrastructure, represents itself as defending al-Aqsa mosque and Jerusalem, attempting to involve Palestinians in Judea, Samaria and Jerusalem, and even Israeli Arabs, in the hostilities. Senior Hamas figures, especially those who do not live in the Gaza Strip, claim the hostilities are not for Gaza but rather for Jerusalem, and condition a ceasefire on meeting their demands for Jerusalem, al-Aqsa mosque and the Sheikh Jarrah neighborhood in east Jerusalem.
Rocket and mortar fire attacking Israel continues. On the afternoon of May 18, 2021, after a few hours of relative quiet, massive rocket fire again pounded the Israeli communities near the Gaza Strip. The hiatus in the rocket fire may have been because of deliveries of basic necessities to the Gaza Strip through the Kerem Shalom Crossing following an UNRWA request made to Israel. On May 19, 2021, the rocket fire continued.

As of 07:00, May 19, 2021, about 3,750 rockets had been fired at Israel, about 550 of them falling inside the Gaza Strip. About 90% of the rockets which would have hit populated areas were intercepted by the Iron Dome aerial defense system. Rocket fire from the Gaza Strip has killed 11 people. An IDF soldier was killed when an anti-tank missile hit his jeep near the Gaza Strip. Several hundred civilians have been injured, and extensive damage has been done to private property, homes, public institutions, industry and agriculture. Responsibility for most of the attacks was claimed by Hamas and the PIJ.

Over the past few days there has been a decline in the quantity of rockets fired and an increase in the length of the lulls between them, but the attacks are still massive. Most of the rocket fire is within the 40-kilometer (25-mile) range, targeting mainly the Israeli communities near the Gaza Strip border and the cities of Ashqelon, Ashdod, Netivot, Sderot and Ofakim. Beersheba has also been attacked by rocket fire. Since the afternoon of May 15, 2021, no rockets have been fired at Israel’s center (the Greater Tel Aviv area and the coastal plain).

Some of the more serious events were the following:

- **On the afternoon of May 19, 2021**, a rocket was fired at one of the Israeli communities near the Gaza Strip, hitting the yard of a school empty at the time (western Negev spokesman’s unit, May 19, 2021).

- **On the morning of May 19, 2021**, after a four-hour hiatus, rocket fire at Israel was renewed. **Seven rocket hits were located near homes** in one of the communities near the Gaza Strip. No casualties were reported.

- **On May 18, 2021**, a mortar shell was fired at one of the communities in the western Negev. It landed near a packing house, **killing two people** and wounding several. Hamas military-terrorist wing said it was a Q20 rocket (Amad, May 18, 2021).

- **On May 18, 2021**, rockets were fired at Ashdod. One of them hit a 12-story apartment house still under construction.
Direct hit on an apartment house still under construction in Ashdod (Palinfo Twitter account, May 18, 2021)

- Hamas’ military-terrorist wing claimed responsibility for firing rockets at six Israeli Air Force bases, by name, in retaliation for Israel’s attacks in the southern Gaza Strip (Palinfo Twitter account, May 19, 2021).

**Operation Guardian of the Walls – Rocket Fire into Israel**

According to IDF spokesman
Israel's Response

The IDF continued attacking terrorist targets in the Gaza Strip from the air, on land and from the sea. On the night of May 18, 2021, Israeli Air Force aircraft attacked Khan Yunis and Rafah in the southern Gaza Strip. The attack lasted 25 minutes and focused on 40 Hamas military-terrorist targets, among them tunnels, command and control centers, posts, weapons storehouses situated in the headquarters of Hamas internal security forces in Khan Yunis, and the terrorist infrastructure situated in residential housing (IDF spokesman, May 19, 2021). Earlier in the day planes attacked Hamas control and command centers in the houses of Hamas commanders in Gaza City and Khan Yunis (IDF spokesman, May 19, 2018).

PIJ targets were attacked, including a situation room for coordinating rocket fire, rocket launchers positioned in an apartment and rocket launching site. Also attacked were squads preparing to launch rockets (IDF spokesman, May 18 and 19, 2021).

On May 19, 2021, the attacks continued, including a military-terrorist complex belonging to Hamas' technological department, an underground rocket launching compound, the house of a senior Hamas intelligence operative, and a PIJ site for the manufacture of weapons.

Regarding the attack on the al-Jalaa Building, which housed the transmitters of foreign news agencies and led to international criticism, Hamas issued an announcement denying it had offices in the building. According to Hamas, Israel's claims were meant to justify the attack on a civilian building (Shehab Twitter account, May 18, 2021). United States Secretary of State Antony Blinken said Israel had provided additional information about the attack, but he declined to comment further (Reuters, May 18, 2021). The Israel media reported that Israel had given the United States intelligence information about the use Hamas made of the building. About an hour before the attack al-Jazeera TV (whose transmitters were located in the building) broadcast a conversation between an IDF representative and the owner of the building warning him of the attack and instructing to evacuate its occupants (al-Jazeera, May 15, 2021).
IDF attacks during the past 24 hours

Attack on the al-Hasnat family house in Deir al-Balah (Twitter account of journalist Hassan Aslih, May 19, 2021).

Attack on the al-Andalas Building in Gaza City (QudsN Facebook page, May 19, 2021).

Right: Attack on the house of senior Hamas operative Atallah Abu al-Sabah. Left: The house after the attack (QudsN Facebook page, May 19, 2021).
Rebuilding roads and removing unexploded ordnance

- During the attacks civil defense crews in the Gaza Strip worked to quickly repair the roads that were damaged, most, they claim, to make it possible for emergency vehicles to drive through the city (Palinfo Twitter account, May 19, 2021).

Quick road repair (Palinfo Twitter account, May 19, 2021).

- The department of explosives engineering in the ministry of the interior in Gaza, whose employees are deployed throughout the Gaza Strip, reported that between the beginning of the Operation and May 18, 2021, it had neutralized and destroyed about 149 bombs and missiles (Filastin al-Yawm, May 18, 2021).
Palestinian casualties

The ministry of health in Gaza reported that as of May 19, 2021, 219 people had been killed in the attacks and 1,570 wounded. Among those killed, according to the ministry, were 36 women, 119 men and 64 children, most of them in Gaza City (112) and the northern Gaza Strip (64) (ministry of health in Gaza Facebook page, May 19, 2021). The ministry of health again announced that following the IDF attack on its main office in the Rimal neighborhood of Gaza City, the central laboratory was damaged, making it currently impossible to test for the coronavirus (ministry of health in Gaza Facebook page, May 19, 2021).

Foreign aid for the Gaza Strip

On May 18, 2021, Israel acceded to the UNRWA request to allow humanitarian assistance to enter the Gaza Strip. While the assistance was being delivered mortar shells were fired at the Kerem Shalom Crossing, the site of the delivery, and the Erez Crossing, usually meant to be
used for the passage of pedestrians. An IDF soldier was superficially injured by shrapnel. In the wake of the attacks both crossings were closed.

► Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi, while visiting Paris, said Egypt would transfer $500 million for the reconstruction of the Gaza Strip. He said the work would be done with the involvement of Egyptian companies, and added that during the past few days Egypt had supplied the Gazans with food and medical aid (al-Masry al-Youm, May 18, 2021). Isma'il Haniyeh, head of Hamas' political bureau, thanked el-Sisi, saying he appreciated the efforts Egypt was making to halt Israel's "aggression" and for opening the Rafah Crossing (Hamas website, May 18, 2021). Mahmoud Abbas also thanked the Egyptian president (Wafa, May 18, 2021).

► Stéphane Dujarric de la Rivière, the spokesperson for UN Secretary-General António Guterres, gave a briefing where he related to the situation in Israel and the Gaza Strip. He said the deputy UN coordinator for the peace process had requested that the UN be allowed to deliver fuel, food and medical assistance to the Gaza Strip, and that UN humanitarian activists be allowed to enter (UN website, May 17, 2021).

### Statements from the Hamas Leadership

► Senior Hamas figures, especially those who do not live in the Gaza Strip, represent the events as a victory for Hamas. Their conditions for a ceasefire include an arrangement for Jerusalem, al-Aqsa mosque and the Sheikh Jarrah neighborhood in east Jerusalem.

► Khaled Mashaal, a Hamas "external" leader, said the "resistance" [i.e., the terrorist organizations] in the Gaza Strip had defeated Israel for the sake of Jerusalem and al-Aqsa mosque. He said Israel had been surprised by the resistance and was now looking to claim victory by killing senior movement figures. According to Mashaal, Hamas was not defending itself but rather Jerusalem and Sheikh Jarrah. He said the "resistance" in the Gaza Strip had shattered the image of the "Zionist enemy" and showed it could be defeated. He also said that despite the settlements, the occupation and the security coordination [with the PA], the West Bank belonged to the Izz al-Din Qassam Brigades and Yahya Ayyash ("the engineer," a senior Hamas terrorist operative killed in a targeted attack). He said they wanted an intifada and all forms of "resistance," and that the intifada had to be ignited not only in Judea and Samaria but inside Israel. He added that anyone whose house had been damaged would receive

▲ Isma’il Haniyeh, head of Hamas’ political bureau, said the "resistance" could protect the Palestinian people and the holy sites from Israeli aggression. He said the "resistance" knew how to achieve the goals of the Palestinian people in the Gaza Strip, Jerusalem and everywhere (Shehab, May 18, 2021).

▲ Musa Abu Marzouq, deputy "external" Hamas leader, was interviewed by the RT channel in Arabic. He said there was nothing wrong with the proposal to send an international force to separate IDF forces and Hamas in the Gaza Strip, because in that case the Gaza Strip would not be occupied. Asked why they did not construct bomb shelters for the Gazan population, Musa Abu Marzouq evaded the question and said there were places the population could escape to, but refused to elaborate. As for the destruction in the Gaza Strip, he said that every time people said Hamas had been hit hard, Hamas rehabilitated itself (RT TV in Arabic, May 17, 2021). On another occasion he said that because of running to bomb shelters, the alerts and Hamas’ rockets, "the next Zionist generation" would not fight, it would hesitate and be confused and cowardly (Musa Abu Marzouq’s Twitter account, May 18, 2021).

Gazans housed in an UNRWA school (Palinfo Twitter account, May 19, 2021).

The Palestinian Authority (PA)

▲ Palestinian foreign minister Riyad al-Maliki sent a communiqué (through the permanent PA delegation to the ICC) to Fatou Bensouda, the chief prosecutor, demanding she accelerate the beginning of the investigation into the situation in "Palestine." He also demanded she issue a strong statement about Israel’s actions in the Gaza Strip and its attempts to use force to evict residents of the Sheikh Jarrah neighborhood in east Jerusalem. According to al-Maliki, practical steps taken by the chief prosecutor would warn the Israeli leadership that their
actions were being monitored. He said the Palestinian leadership and the Palestinian people would resist all Israel's action until they stopped and Israel was brought to trial (al-Quds, May 19, 2021).

In response to statements from Hamas "external" spokesman Husam Badran, who called on the PA to cancel is security coordination with Israel, Nabil Abu Rudeineh, spokesman for Mahmoud Abbas, said the security coordination with Israel was a foundation of Palestinian sovereignty and defense of the Palestinian people (QudsN, May 18, 2021).

The Palestinian "day of rage"

The call for a "day of rage" was answered by a substantial percentage of the population in Judea and Samaria. On May 18, 2021, there was a general strike in Judea, Samaria and east Jerusalem, and the educational institutions were closed as well. Demonstrations attended by several thousand people were held in Ramallah, Nablus, Tulkarm and Jerusalem. Senior Fatah figures participated in some of the demonstrations. For the first time in years, operatives of the al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades (Fatah's military-terrorist wing) marched through the streets of Ramallah firing their guns into the air. They said they had been absent [from view] for a long time, but had recently renewed their activities (al-Mayadeen, May 17, 2021). Palestinians confronted the Israeli security forces. Four Palestinians were killed rioting against IDF forces in al-Bireh, Bila'in and Ni'ilin, and about 200 were injured.

There was a serious incident north of al-Bireh during a mass demonstration where Palestinians shot at IDF soldiers, superficially wounding two of them. The soldiers returned fired. Hamas spokesman Fawzi Barhoum said the shots were fired at the soldiers to show solidarity with the operation in the Gaza Strip. He called on the Palestinian people in general and operatives in the PA security forces in the West Bank in particular to join the "resistance," especially the "armed resistance," and to bravely attack Israeli targets (Dunia al-Watan, May 18, 2021).

Isma'il Haniyeh congratulated the Palestinians in the Judea and Samaria who rose up against the "occupation" and showed their "blood ties with the Gaza Strip" and the Arabs in Israel. He also praised the Arabs in Israel for their strike (Filastin al-Yawm, May 18, 2021).
Palestinians riot at the northern entrance to al-Bireh (Palinfo Twitter account, May 18, 2021).

Palestinians vandalize the border security fence in the village of Ni'lin (QudsN Facebook page, May 18, 2021).


Cartoon in al-Hayat al-Jadeeda, the official PA newspaper, May 19, 2021. The Arabic reads, "The Israeli mutation and the Palestinian vaccine."

Hamas and Mediation Attempts

"External" Hamas spokesman Husam Badran said Egypt, Qatar and the UN had mediated for a ceasefire with Israel from the first day of the hostilities. He said he was in direct contact with Isma'il Haniyeh. He claimed Hamas did not want a war and Israel began it with its actions in Jerusalem, even if Hamas had fired the first rockets. He said Israel had to stop its aggression...
in Jerusalem adding that Hamas was in contact with Fatah, attempting to coordinate a number of issues (Dunia al-Watan, May 18, 2021).

► Taher al-Nunu, Isma’il Haniyeh’s media advisor, said that for several days there have been contacts with Israel for a ceasefire, but so far no final proposal had been formulated and no date had been agreed on (al-Araby, May 19, 2021). A Hamas source said Egypt had sent Israel a communiqué regarding a lull in the Gaza Strip but Israel had not yet replied to it. He said Hamas did not know what was in it, and so far no final proposal for a lull had been made (al-Akhbar, May 19, 2021).

Turkey

► Mevlüt Cavuşoğlu, the Turkish foreign minister, speaking before the Turkish parliament, said that Turkey, under Erdogan’s leadership, would not stop supporting the Palestinian cause. He said Turkey led the diplomatic efforts concerning the cause, adding that the international reaction to Israel’s attacks had been "weak" (al-Andalou News, May 18, 2021).
Overview

Operation Guardian of the Walls entered its eleventh day. With reports of an upcoming ceasefire rocket and mortar fire continues, although slightly smaller in number. During the 24 hours between 0700, May 19 and May 20, 2021, 270 rockets were fired at Israel from the Gaza Strip. So far, since the beginning of Operation Guardian of the Walls, 3,153 rockets have been fired at Israel. About 90% of those attacking populated areas were intercepted by the Iron Dome aerial defense system. Most of the rockets fired during the past 24 hours had ranges of about 40 kilometers (25 miles) and targeted the southern Israeli coastal cities of Ashqelon and Ashdod, and the Israeli communities near the Gaza Strip border. Longer range rockets were fired at Beersheba. Since May 15, 2021, no rockets were fired at the Greater Tel Aviv area. So far 11 Israelis have been killed by rocket fire; an IDF soldier was killed by an anti-tank missile.

The IDF continues to respond to the rocket fire from the Gaza Strip by attacking Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) terrorist targets. During the past 24 hours the attacks focused on squads firing rockets, rocket launchers, weapons storehouses concealed in the houses of terrorist operatives and Hamas' underground tunnel system ("the metro"). During the morning an anti-tank missile was fired at an IDF bus. It was empty at the time.

An female terrorist tried to shoot Israeli civilians and soldiers at a junction in Kiryat Arba, near Hebron. She was shot and killed. Judea and Samaria have become relatively calm since the violent events of the "day of rage."

Sources in Hamas (especially those living outside the Gaza Strip) continue linking the Gaza Strip with Jerusalem and al-Aqsa mosque, promoting a narrative of victory over Israel.

Mahmoud Abbas, speaking at an emergency meeting of the speakers of the Arab state parliaments, accused Israel of "organized political terrorism and war crimes" in the Gaza Strip as defined by international law, noting the Palestinian Authority (PA) would pursue the "criminals" until they had been tried in international courts.
On the afternoon of May 19, 2021, four rockets were fired at Israel from south Lebanon. Two fell in the sea. One was intercepted by the Iron Dome aerial defense system and the other fell in the region of the northern city Arab of Shfaram, east of Haifa. At the same time a barrages of rockets was fired at the Israeli communities near the Gaza Strip border. No organization claimed responsibility for the rocket fire. It was the third time rockets were fired at Israel from south Lebanon since the beginning of Operation Guardian of the Walls (May 10, 2021).

Rocket Fire

Rocket and mortar fire attacking Israel continues. After a relatively quiet night, on the morning of May 20, 2021, rocket launches at the Israeli communities near the Gaza Strip were renewed. Since the beginning of the operation and 0700, May 20, 2021, 3153 rocket hits were identified in Israeli territory and 550 fell inside the Gaza Strip. About 90% of the rockets that would have hit populated areas were intercepted by the Iron Dome aerial defense system. So far, 12 Israelis have been killed. Several hundred civilians have been injured. Substantial property damage has been caused to homes, public institutions, commerce, industry and agriculture. Hamas and the PIJ have claimed responsibility for most of the rocket fire.

During the past 24 hours the terrorist organizations concentrated most of their rocket fire on Israeli cities and towns within 40 kilometers (25 miles) of the Gaza Strip, including the southern coastal cities of Ashqelon and Ashdod, as well as Ofakim, Sderot and Netivot in the western Negev, and the Israeli communities near the Gaza Strip border. Several barrages of rockets targeted Beersheba, Israel's largest southern city. Hamas' military-terrorist wing has made several (unsuccessful) efforts to attack Israeli Air Force bases in the south and the center of the country.

Rocket fire from within populated areas of Gaza City (IDF spokesman, May 19, 2021).
On the night of May 19, 2021, barrages of rockets were fired at Beersheba and Kiryat Malakhi (southeast of Ashdod). On the afternoon of May 20, 2021, there were massive rocket and mortar shell attacks on the Israeli communities near the Gaza Strip border. The attacks continued for several hours. Local residents were instructed to remain in shelters.

Direct rocket hits in Sderot (Twitter account of journalist Hassan Aslih, May 19, 2021).

Rocket hit in Ashdod (QudsN Facebook page, May 19, 2021).

Anti-tank missile fire

While the IDF successfully prevented dozens of squads from firing anti-tank missiles, on May 20, 2021, a missile was fired at an IDF bus, which was empty at the time. A soldier standing next to the bus was injured by shrapnel (IDF spokesman, May 20, 2021).
The IDF continued attacking terrorist targets in the Gaza Strip from the air, on land and from the sea. Some of them were the following (IDF spokesman, May 20, 2021, unless otherwise noted):

- Houses of senior terrorist operatives.
- The infrastructure of the naval force.
- Launching positions for rockets, mortar shells and anti-tank missiles. On May 20, 2021, a number of rocket launching squads were attacked, as well as underground and aboveground launching positions. One was a position in Jabalia used for firing rockets at Tel Aviv. Another was on the roof of a house in the Shati refugee camp.
- Hamas **terrorist tunnels** in the northern Gaza Strip.
- **Weapons storehouses and military positions** in the houses of terrorist organizations, including storehouses in the houses of **Atallah Abu al-Sabah**, the former minister of justice in the Hamas administration; the house of the deputy commander of the aerial units for the refugee camps in the central Gaza Strip; and the house of an operative in Hamas' aerial unit in Khan Yunis.
- Operatives in **Hamas' cyber system** who were hiding in apartments housing the system's equipment.
- Ongoing attacks on **Hamas' tunnel system** (the "metro").

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**Attacks on Hamas' tunnel system (the "metro") in the northern, central and southern Gaza Strip (IDF spokesman, May 20, 2021).**

**IDF attack in the northern Gaza Strip (Twitter account of journalist Hassan Aslih, May 20, 2021).**
The overall situation in the Gaza Strip

► According to the ministry of health in Gaza, as of May 19, 2021, 230 Gazans had been killed and 1,710 wounded. The fatalities included 39 women, 17 old people and 65 children (ministry of health in Gaza Facebook page, May 20, 2021).

► The Hamas administration’s office of media affairs in Gaza reported that since the beginning of the hostilities Israel had carried out 1,810 aerial strikes which caused damage estimated at $322 million (Dunia al-Watan, May 19, 2021).

► A cellular and Internet company in the Gaza Strip called Jawal Media reported extensive damage to cables connecting the districts in the southern Gaza Strip, the refugee camps in central Gaza Strip and Gaza City. That reportedly led to slow Internet service in the southern Gaza Strip. The company later reported the network had been repaired (QudsN, May 19, 2021).
Foreign aid for the Gaza Strip

- UNRWA formally requested $38 million for urgent humanitarian assistance for Gaza Strip, Judea and Samaria. UNRWA described itself as "shocked" by the number of casualties and the extent of the damage to the Gaza Strip infrastructure. It was also "shocked" by Israel's "excessive use of force." UNRWA called for the Gaza Strip crossings to be opened so that assistance could be delivered (UN website, May 19, 2021). **Note:** During the past two days Hamas repeatedly shelled the Kerem Shalom Crossing when humanitarian assistance was being delivered, as well as the Erez Crossing. For that reason the crossings were closed.

### Statements from the Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) Leadership

- **Isma'il Haniyeh, head of Hamas' political bureau**, sent a communiqué to Iranian leader Ali Khamenei describing the situation in the Gaza Strip (al-Arabiya, May 19, 2021).

- **Musa Abu Marzouq, deputy "external" Hamas leader**, announced a Hamas "victory" even before the hostilities had ended, saying this time the Palestinian people participated, from those who fired rockets to those who confronted the Israeli security forces at the friction points. He claimed they could keep fighting for longer than in Operation Protective Edge [51 days], they could fight for months. He was also of the opinion that Israel's "bank of targets" was empty and was "begging" for a ceasefire. He also claimed Israel had failed in its attacks on Hamas' "metro," and its attacks on the political and military leadership had also failed, with the exception of a number of PIJ operatives. He said Hamas had no plan for a lull, stressing that the ceasefire had to be mutual and would be in the Gaza Strip, not at the friction points in the West Bank where the hostilities against Israel would be continued (al-Mayadeen, May 19, 2018).
PIJ leader Ziyad al-Nakhalah gave a speech where he said the Palestinians had led Israel into a historic crisis. He blamed Israel for killing civilians and using American weapons to destroy houses and kill civilians. He claimed the Palestinians had paid a high price but they understood it was the only way to defend Jerusalem and the Palestinian public. He called on the Palestinian people to increase their presence in every location, to block the settlers' roads and to attack roadblocks (al-Mayadeen, May 19, 2021).

The Palestinian Authority (PA)

Mahmoud Abbas gave a speech at an emergency meeting of the speakers of Arab state parliaments where he accused Israel of "carrying out organized political terrorism and war crimes violating international law." He promised the PA would continue pursuing the criminals until they were tried by international courts. He said the Palestinians were currently focusing on stopping Israel's "aggression" in Jerusalem, the West Bank and Gaza Strip, and they would turn to political activity that would lead to "the end of the occupation" (Palestinian TV, May 19, 2021).

Right: Emergency meeting in Cairo. Left: Mahmoud Abbas gives a speech
(Mahmoud Abbas' Facebook page, May 19, 2021).

Mahmoud Abbas and UN Secretary General António Guterres discussed recent developments and efforts to stop the hostilities. Mahmoud Abbas stressed the need to stop "Israel's aggression" against the Palestinians in the Gaza Strip and the aggression of the settlers against the Palestinians in the Sheikh Jarrah neighborhood of east Jerusalem (Amad, May 19, 2021).

PA Prime Minister Muhammad Shtayyeh and Sven Kühn von Burgsdorff, the EU representative in the PA, discussed the need to stop Israel's "aggression" in Jerusalem, the West Bank and Gaza Strip (Wafa, May 19, 2021).
Terrorist attack in Hebron

On May 19, 2021, a Palestinian woman from Hebron armed with an M-16 assault rifle arrived at an entrance to Kiryat Arba, near Hebron. She opened fire at the IDF fighters and civilians at the site. She was shot and killed. No casualties were reported (IDF spokesman, May 19, 2021). It was the second attempted terrorist attack at the same site in the past week. The Palestinian media reported the Palestinian woman was Wafaa’ Abd al-Rahman al-Baradai, 37, mother of five from Hebron (Ma’an, May 19, 2021).

Riots and demonstrations

After the riots and other violence on the Palestinian “day of rage” relative calm was restored to Judea and Samaria. In preparation for Friday the social networks used the hashtag #Palestine_resists to enlist Palestinians for “the great dawn,” during which Palestinians will be asked to intensify the riots at the friction points (QudsN Facebook page, May 19, 2021).

Call for attacks on Israel: #Palestine_resists (QudsN Facebook page, May 19, 2021).

A Hamas march in Hebron in support of Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip (QudsN Facebook page, May 19, 2021).
Lebanon

On the afternoon of May 19, 2021, four rockets were launched from the region of Sadiqin in south Lebanon. Two fell into the sea. One was intercepted by the Iron Dome aerial defense system and one fell in the area of the northern Arab city of Shfaram, east of Haifa. At the same time a barrage of rockets was fired from the Gaza Strip at the Israeli communities near the border. No organization claimed responsibility for the rocket fire. It was the third time rockets were fired at Israel from Lebanon since the beginning of Operation Guardian of the Walls (May 10, 2021).

Musa Abu Marzouq, asked during an interview with al-Mayadeen if Hamas was behind the rocket fire from Lebanon, said they were not ashamed that they confronted Israel ("the Zionist project") everywhere. Asked if Hamas coordinated with the "resistance" to the north and east, he said understandings were in place with the entire "resistance" (al-Mayadeen, May 19, 2021).

Mediation Efforts

After 11 days of hostilities there has been increasing discussion of a ceasefire between Israel and the terrorist organizations in the Gaza Strip. Senior Palestinian figures confirmed that efforts were in fact being made to mediate a ceasefire. Reportedly, a high-level Egyptian delegation met in Ramallah with the Palestinian leadership, and informed Muhammad Shtayyeh that Egypt was prepared to support the Palestinians in every way (Wafa, May 19, 2021).
Musa Abu Marzouq said the ceasefire would begin "within a day or two" (al-Mayadeen, May 19, 2021). Jibril Rajoub said the Egypt-led Arab effort for a ceasefire could be implemented within 24 hours (al-Shurouq, May 19, 2021). PIJ spokesman Da'ud Shehab said a ceasefire would be conditioned on the demands of the "resistance." He added that even if there were a ceasefire, if Israel acted "aggressively" towards Jerusalem and the Palestinians, rocket fire and riots would be renewed (al-Aqsa, May 19, 2021).

**Iran**

At a meeting held in Tehran in support of the Palestinians Hossein Salami, commander of the Iranian Revolutionary Guards Corps, said the Palestinians were attacking Tel Aviv with Qassam and Sejil rockets. Israel, he claimed, was at an impasse, because it could neither continue its military action nor stop it. He also said the "war" with Israel did not involve only the Palestinians, because the Iranians would always support them. He said "Palestine" had become a "global issue" and was not restricted only to the West Bank and Gaza Strip (al-Mayadeen, May 19, 2021).
Overview

- After 11 days of hostilities, Operation Guardian of the Walls ended with a ceasefire at 0200 on May 21, 2021. The terrorist organizations in the Gaza Strip continued firing rockets until shortly before the deadline, and since the ceasefire there has been a tense quiet in the Gaza Strip. Hamas spokesman Taher al-Nunu and Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) leader Ziyad al-Nakhalah said they would adhere to the ceasefire as long as Israel did.

- During the 11 days of Operation Guardian of the Walls more than 4,360 rockets were fired at Israel, of which 3,573 fell inside Israeli territory, the rest falling either inside the Gaza Strip or into the sea. The Iron Dome aerial defense system intercepted about 90% of the rockets. Eleven civilians were killed by rocket fire and an IDF soldier was killed by an anti-tank missile. Several hundred people were injured and there was property damage to homes, schools, industry, commerce and agriculture. The IDF attacked about 1,500 terrorist targets in the Gaza Strip.

- As soon as the ceasefire went into effect Gazans began celebrating in the streets. They also began to understand the extent of the destruction and the results of Israel's attacks. The Palestinians reported serious infrastructure damage, including to water and sewage pipes, roads and communications networks.

- Rebuilding the Gaza Strip began immediately after the ceasefire was announced. Unlike previous rounds of hostilities, Egypt has taken upon itself not only to send money, but to establish a mechanism for transferring the funds and for coordinating donations and the supplies entering the Gaza Strip. According to Egypt, the entire task will be handled mainly by companies belonging to the Egyptian army in order to limit the influence of companies that operated in the Gaza Strip in the past, especially Turkish companies.

- Despite the destruction, Hamas and PIJ spokesmen celebrate their "victory" and Israel's "defeat." According to the Hamas narrative, they attacked not for the Gaza Strip but rather for Jerusalem, al-Aqsa mosque and the Sheikh Jarrah neighborhood in east Jerusalem. Even though the enlistment of Judea, Samaria and east Jerusalem was only partial, the Hamas
leadership continues claiming that all the Palestinians participated in the Hamas-led hostilities.

**Rocket Fire**

- During the 11 days of the operation **more than 4,360 rockets and mortar shells** were fired at Israel, of which 3,573 penetrated Israeli airspace, about 680 fell inside the Gaza Strip and about 280 fell into the sea. The Iron Dome aerial defense system intercepted about 90% of the rocket fire. Two anti-tank missiles were fired at Israel and several launches were prevented. One killed an IDF soldier when it hit his jeep, the other superficially injured an IDF soldier.

- The joint operations room of the terrorist organizations in Gaza held a press conference where they claimed they had used “new technology” to fire rockets and that Israel had failed when it relied on “deception” to attack and destroy the “resistance” [i.e., terrorist] leaders and operatives. They also claimed they could have continued firing rockets in response to any Israeli "aggression" against the Palestinians (al-Aqsa, May 21, 2021).

**Daily distribution of rocket fire during Operation Guardian of the Walls**

(According to data from the IDF)
Direct hit on a house in the southern Israeli coastal city of Ashqelon on the last day of the hostilities (Twitter account of journalist Hassan Aslih, May 20, 2021).

Israel casualties

- Despite the massive barrages of rocket and mortar fire, relatively speaking Israeli casualties were few and there was relatively light property damage. Eleven Israeli civilians were directly killed by rocket and mortar fire. One soldier was killed when an anti-tank rocket hit his jeep. Two Israelis died when they ran for shelter. Several hundred people were injured, most of them superficially, and many had anxiety attacks. However, the rocket fire disrupted routine daily life for people living as far north as Netanya, and Jewish-Arab coexistence in the mixed cities was severely damaged by riots that were influenced by the events in the Gaza Strip.

Israel's Response

- During Operation Guardian of the Walls Israel destroyed more than 1,500 terrorist targets, severely damaging the strategic and tactical capabilities of Hamas and the PIJ Among the targets were the following (IDF spokesman, May 21, 2021):
  - **Hamas' tunnel system** (the "metro") in Gaza City, Rafah and Khan Yunis: The IDF destroyed more than 100 kilometers (60 miles) of tunnels used by the Hamas leadership and terrorist operatives as hideouts, and command and control centers. Several attack tunnels in the northern Gaza Strip were also hit.
  - **Terrorist operatives**: An estimated 50 senior Hamas and PIJ terrorist operatives were killed including brigade commanders, and about 20 lower-ranking commanders and about 200 terrorist operatives.
  - **Rocket launching capabilities**: The IDF carried out about 340 attacks on high-trajectory rocket launchers, 230 attacks on surface-to-surface rocket launchers, and about 35 on mortar shell launchers.
Weapons-manufacture capabilities: The weapons-manufacturing and military-buildup capabilities of the terrorist organizations were hit hard, research and development operatives were killed, and small facilities for the manufacture of weapons, development centers and weapons storehouses were hit.

Hamas administration structures: Dozens of administration offices, 11 buildings belonging the internal security forces, and five banks used to transfer funds for terrorist activities were attacked. A senior source in the Hamas police force said that between 15% and 25% of the police management offices and most of its headquarters were partially destroyed (al-Aqsa, May 22, 2021).

The terrorist infrastructure: The Israeli Air Force attacked dozens of bases, posts, command centers and nine multistory buildings where terrorist activity was coordinated.

Prevention of attacks: Terrorist invasions were prevented, as were attacks from anti-tank missile squads, seven aerial threats (armed UAVs) and two naval threats (including attacks by unmanned submarine vessels).

On May 21, 2021, the ministry of health in Gaza reported that 248 Gazans had been killed, including 66 children, 39 women and 17 old people, and that 1,948 had been injured (ministry of health in Gaza Facebook page, May 21, 2021).

Hamas exploited the days following the ceasefire to remove the bodies of terrorist operatives from the tunnels. On May 21, 2021, a mass funeral was held in Khan Yunis for Hamas operatives killed in the tunnels in the al-Fakhri and Soufa areas east of Khan Yunis. The bodies were wrapped in Hamas flags (Twitter account of journalist Hassan Aslih, May 21, 2021).

Mass funeral held in Khan Yunis for Hamas terrorist operatives (Twitter account of journalist Hassan Aslih, May 21, 2021).

The PIJ’s military-terrorist wing issued a mourning notice for 19 of its operatives killed during the operation, the most important of whom was Husam Abu al-Rabid, commander
of its northern brigade. During a press conference held by the police the names of police casualties were read (al-Mayadeen, May 22, 2021). It was not the first time serving policemen participated in hostilities as operatives in the military-terrorist wings.

► After the declaration of a ceasefire, Hamas’ internal security forces warned that Israeli security and intelligence forces were increasing their efforts to collect information to renew their bank of targets. Gazans were instructed to be more conscious of security and not transmit information about what had happened or the sites hit by Israeli attacks. They were also warned not to transmit information about operatives or their movements (Dunia al-Watan, May 22, 2021).

The overall situation in the Gaza Strip

► When the ceasefire went into effect Gazans poured into the streets to celebrate. They also began to understand the extent of the damage and destruction, reporting serious damage to the infrastructure, including water and sewage pipes, electric lines, roads and the communications networks. Iyad al-Buzum, spokesman for the ministry of the interior in Gaza, said that immediately after the ceasefire police and security forces were deployed to attack sites and to remove unexploded ordnance (Dunia al-Watan, May 21, 2021).

Gazans celebrate the end of the hostilities (Wafa, May 21, 2021)

Right: Hamas terrorist operatives celebrate their "victory" by handing out cake and candy. Left: Gazans thank Hamas operatives for fighting Israel (Palinfo Twitter account, May 21, 2021).
Naji Sirhan, deputy ministry for public works and housing in the Gaza Strip, said that at least 2,000 residences, four mosques and dozens of police stations had been destroyed. The UN reported that about 800 thousand Gazans had no access to clean water and that about half the water pipes had been destroyed, as were 53 schools, six hospitals and 11 public health centers (AP, May 22, 2021). Abd al-Hadi al-Agha, deputy ministry of Muslim endowments in the Gaza Strip, said about $5 million worth of damage had been done to mosques and cemeteries. He said three mosques had been completely destroyed and 40 others had been damaged. He claimed the IDF had attacked six cemeteries and the ministry of endowments building in the Ansar facility in Gaza City (al-Quds, May 23, 2021)

Gazans visit ruins and have their pictures taken (Wafa, May 21, 2021).

Gazans leave the UNRWA schools they stayed in during the fighting (Wafa, May 21, 2021).

Routine life returns to the Gaza Strip (Twitter account of journalist Hassan Aslih, May 21, 2021).
On May 23, 2021, the ministry of education in Gaza announced the end of the school year for the 1st through 11th grades because of the general situation, among them the difficulties in frontal and distance teaching. The education system in Gaza is now focusing on holding matriculation exams for 12th grade students (Twitter account of journalist Hassan Aslih, May 23, 2021).

Mai al-Kayla, PA minister of health, said "terrible" damage had been done to the Gaza Strip’s medical sector and "Israeli aggression" had prevented the delivery of medical equipment planned for the Gaza Strip which included coronavirus testing kits. She also claimed that for days Israel had delayed a delivery of drugs to the Gaza Strip (Wafa, May 21, 2021).

Rebuilding the Gaza Strip

Egypt has taken it upon itself to lead the rebuilding of the Gaza Strip. According to the Lebanese newspaper al-Akhbar, Egypt promised to transfer $500 million to rebuild the Gaza Strip and now fills a key position in its implementation. According to report, Egypt's efforts will not be limited to delivering materials for construction but it will also determine how the $500 million will be used and coordinate donations and supplies that enter the Gaza Strip. Generally speaking the reconstruction project will be carried out by companies belonging to the Egyptian army, limiting the influence of Turkish companies and strengthening cooperation with the Gulf States, which will also send aid in the coming days. According to "sources," Egypt wants to restore its relations with Hamas and the other "organizations" to the point where they will protect the interests of Egypt, which aspires to ensure the continuation of the lull (al-Akhbar, May 22, 2021). Hasan Abd al-Aziz, a member of the Egyptian contractors’ association, said that for Egyptian private and public companies the rebuilding of the Gaza Strip would be a national mission and not a profit-making operation.
He said the funds Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi promised would be translated into projects, raw materials and materials for construction, and not cash donations (Sputnik, May 22, 2021). It was also reported that Egypt is making contacts to hold a conference in Cairo for rebuilding the Gaza Strip through international cooperation (al-Arabiya, May 21, 2021).

Following instructions from the Egyptian president, a convoy of 130 trucks will arrive in the Gaza Strip bringing 2,500 tons of food, drugs, clothing, furniture and electrical appliances (Facebook page of the Egyptian president’s spokesman, May 22, 2021).

Gazan volunteers remove the rubble and clean the streets (Twitter account of journalist Hassan Aslih, May 23, 2021).

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<th>Statements from the Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) Leadership</th>
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On May 22, 2021, according to bodyguards, Yahya al-Sinwar, head of the Hamas political bureau in the Gaza Strip, made his first public appearance since Operation Guardian of the Walls began. He toured the Gaza Strip and offered his condolences to the family of Bassem Issa, commander of the Gaza City brigade of Hamas' military-terrorist wing, killed in an IDF attack. The visit was widely covered by the media, which stressed his public appearance despite Israel's threats (al-Jazeera, May 22, 2021).
Senior Hamas and PIJ leaders rushed to describe the operation as a stunning victory for the organizations in the Gaza Strip, saying that this time the hostilities were not for the Gaza Strip but for Jerusalem, al-Aqsa mosque and the Sheikh Jarrah neighborhood of east Jerusalem. Some statements were the following:

- **Isma'il Haniyeh**, head of Hamas' political bureau, said the Palestinian organizations in the joint operations room had stood together and hit Israel in a way that deeply affected its security. He said the Gaza Strip would continue to defend Jerusalem, and thanked Qatar and Egypt for their moral support of the Gaza Strip, and Iran, which supported them with arms and money.

- **Musa Abu Marzouq**, deputy "external" Hamas leader, said all possible options of the "equation" with Israel were open and that al-Aqsa mosque and east Jerusalem were a red line. He added that "the era of the division between the Gaza Strip, the West Bank and Jerusalem" had ended.

- **Abu Obeida**, spokesman for Hamas' military-terrorist wing, claimed the "resistance" had entered the hostilities to defend al-Aqsa mosque and had accumulated its forces and weapons for that specific purpose. He said they had humiliated Israel and its army and shown the world that Israeli attacked civilian residences and facilities (al-Aqsa, May 20, 2021).

- **Khalil al-Haya**, a member of Hamas' political bureau, praised the Palestinian people and the "resistance" for their firm stance, claiming that jihad fighters were now "striding proudly through the tunnels" (al-Aqsa, May 21, 2021).

- **Musheir al-Masri**, spokesman for the Hamas faction in the Palestinian Legislative Council, claimed the "resistance" had new tools to confront Israel and was no longer geographically limited to Gaza Strip but controlled all "Palestine," protecting Jerusalem.
and the Palestinian people. He claimed they had shown Israel that al-Aqsa mosque and evicting Palestinians from Sheikh Jarrah were red lines and that the "resistance" had controlled when the hostilities began and when they ended (al-Mayadeen, May 21, 2021). On another occasion he said that the rockets were launched until the last minute to show that the "resistance" had its finger on the trigger and that the decision to strike Israel was in the hands of the joint operations room and on the table. He claimed they had agreed to a ceasefire because they had successfully enforced a new equation in managing the conflict (al-Ghad, May 21, 2021).

◆ **PIJ leader Ziyad al-Nakhalah** claimed it was a "historic victory" and a giant step towards the ultimate victory over the "Zionist project," and that they were emphasizing more than ever that they would continue to pursue "resistance" and jihad. He claimed they had forced a "new equation" on Israel and created a new balance of terror (al-Mayadeen, May 21, 2021).

◆ Senior PIJ figure **Muhammad al-Hindi** said that Palestinian cause had been returned to the international agenda as the issue of an occupied people and not a people in need of humanitarian assistance. He claimed the conflict had returned to its starting point, "the Gaza Strip 'resists,' the West Bank rises up, the Arabs of 1948 rise up, and even the Palestinian dispersal helps." He claimed no mutual understandings or indirect negotiations with Israel existed, but rather Israel had been forced to agree to a ceasefire because it had no targets left. He also claimed that Israel’s boasts about destroying tunnels were baseless lies. He said he thought the ceasefire would remain in force but added that the uprising included "revolutionaries in the West Bank, the 1948 territories and Jerusalem" (Filastin al-Yawm, May 21, 2021).

◆ **Abu Hamza**, spokesman for the PIJ’s military-terrorist wing, said they would continue the path of jihad, adding that the most recent campaign proved they belonged to Jerusalem and its residents. He claimed the ["resistance"] fighters, using barrages of rockets, mortar shells and Kornet missiles, had made Israel’s cities and bases, including the communities near the Gaza Strip, uninhabitable. He also claimed that for days they had attacked Tel Aviv and other cities in Israel with hundreds of rockets (al-Mayadeen, May 21, 2021).
The Palestinian Authority (PA)

- The PA welcomed the ceasefire, noting that Jerusalem was the heart of the conflict and the way to peace, praising the efforts of Egypt, Qatar, Jordan and the American administration, the EU and the UN in achieving a ceasefire. The PA also said the time had come for the American administration and the international community to take serious practical steps to stop "Israel's crimes," which had led to hostilities which had caused hundreds of fatalities (Wafa, May 21, 2021).

- The Fatah movement welcomed the end of "Israel's aggression" against the Gaza Strip, and declared that the Palestinian people, wherever they were, would always unite to defend Jerusalem and the holy places. Fatah also said the unity the Palestinians had shown during the hostilities could be a catalyst for a discussion about national unity and the end of the internal Palestinian schism (Wafa, May 21, 2021). Jibril Rajoub, a member of Fatah's Central Committee, said they did not condemn the rocket fire, rather they saluted every form of "resistance." He claimed the rocket fire had shocked Israel and undermined the concept of its security.

Contacts for a ceasefire

- Mahmoud Abbas met with an Egyptian the newly-arrived delegation to discuss coordinating efforts to rebuild the Gaza Strip. He thanked the Egyptian president for his efforts to achieve a ceasefire, rebuild the Gaza Strip and return to a political path for ending the [so-called Israeli] "occupation" (Wafa, May 22, 2021). Hussein al-Sheikh, minister of civilian affairs and responsible for coordination with Israel, said the Egyptian delegation, headed by Ahmed Abd al-Khalq, who holds the Palestine portfolio in Egyptian General Intelligence, arrived in Ramallah on May 22, 2021, to discuss implementing the ceasefire. The delegation met with Mahmoud Abbas, Hussein al-Sheikh and Majdi Faraj, head of Palestinian general intelligence (Hussein al-Sheikh's Twitter account, May 22, 2021). According to reports, the Palestinians are preparing for long-term negotiations with Israel, led by the Egyptian security delegation (al-Ayam, May 22, 2021). A report quoted in Hamas' al-Risalah, the Egyptian delegation will work with three main issues: to ensure the commitment of all sides to implementing the ceasefire, to ensure agreement on the measures taken by the sides to maintain the ceasefire, and to invest efforts to rebuild the buildings in the Gaza Strip.
Terrorist attacks, demonstrations and riots

Throughout the hostilities rioting increased in Judea, Samaria and Jerusalem between the Palestinians and the Israeli security forces. Ten terrorist attacks were carried out, most of them shooting attacks:

- **May 14, 2021** – Shots were fired at a crossing in western Samaria from a passing car. No casualties were reported. The vehicle drove away (Rescue Without Borders in Judea and Samaria, May 14, 2021).
- **May 15, 2021** – An attempted vehicular ramming attack south of Hebron. No casualties were reported. The terrorist was neutralized by IDF forces (IDF spokesman, May 15, 2021).
- **May 15, 2021** – Shots were fired at IDF forces near the security fence southeast of Nablus. A soldier was superficially wounded.
- **May 16, 2021** – A vehicular ramming attack near Sheikh Jarrah in east Jerusalem. Six Border Police fighters were wounded. The terrorist was shot and killed.
- **May 16, 2021** – Palestinians fired shots and threw an IED at Israeli security forces at the Qalandia roadblock
- **May 17, 2021** – Shots were fired from a passing vehicle at an Israeli vehicle west of Hebron. The vehicle was damaged. An IDF force at the site also reported being shot at.
- **May 17, 2021** – Shots were fired from a passing vehicle at IDF fighters in the Hebron region. The fighters returned fire. No casualties or damage were reported.
- **May 17, 2021** – A vehicular ramming attack south of Nablus, superficially wounding an IDF soldier. The terrorist was apprehended and taken for interrogation (Rescue Without Borders in Judea and Samaria, May 17, 2021).
- **May 18, 2021** – A Palestinian armed with an IED, an improvised Carlo machine gun and a knife attempted a combined attack against IDF fighters in the Jewish settlement in Hebron.
- **May 19, 2021** – A Palestinian woman armed with an M-16 assault rifle went to one of the entrances to Kiryat Arba. She opened fire at IDF fighters and civilians. She was shot and killed.

When the ceasefire went into effect people poured into the streets of Judea, Samaria and east Jerusalem. They celebrated spontaneously, waving Hamas flags and shouting praises for Muhammad Deif and Hamas' military-terrorist wing. On Friday, May 21, 2021, Palestinians
rioted on the Temple Mount after the Friday prayer, forcing the Israeli police to enter the Temple Mount compound. Jordan and the PA issued a statement condemning the entrance of the Israeli police. Palestinian sources reported the forces used tear gas and stun grenades against Palestinians who threw rocks at them, and reportedly dozens were superficially wounded.


Fatah terrorist operatives riot at the northern entrance to al-Bireh (Wafa, May 21, 2021).

Palestinians riot in Hebron (May 21, 2021).
Lebanon and Syria

Lebanon

- There were several incidents along the Israel’s border with Lebanon during the operation:
  - **May 13, 2021** – Three rockets were launched from Lebanon. They fell into the sea.
  - **May 14, 2021** – A number of Lebanese infiltrated into Israeli territory after cutting the border security fence in the region of Metulla, Israel’s northernmost city. The IDF returned them to Lebanon. One of the Lebanese was killed.
  - **The night of May 14, 2021** – An attempted infiltration from Lebanon was prevented.
  - **May 17, 2021** – Six rockets were fired at Israeli territory. All six fell inside Lebanon.
  - **May 19, 2021** – Four rockets were fired at Israel from the region of Sadiqin in south Lebanon. The Iron Dome aerial defense system intercepted one, two fell into the sea, and one fell near the northern Israeli Arab city of Shfaram.

Syria

- On the night of May 14, 2021, three rockets were fired at Israel from Syria. Two fell in an open area in the Golan Heights. The third fell inside Syria. On May 18, 2021, the IDF intercepted an armed UAV near Beit Shean in the eastern part of the country, apparently launched from Syria.

Appeal to the International Criminal Court (ICC)

- According to reports, Jawad Mahdi, the owner of the al-Jalaa Building, which was toppled by the IDF and where foreign news companies had their transmitters, lodged a formal complaint against Israel with the ICC. According to Mahdi, there were no military targets in the building and the attack was a war crime. The complaint is being dealt with the AFD, an
organization operating in Belgium (al-Jazeera, May 22, 2021). According to another report, the first complaint for the ICC will be officially lodged on Tuesday, May 26, 2021, and will deal with the deaths of six members of the al-Tanani family, whose house in the Sheikh Zaid neighborhood in the northern Gaza Strip was attacked. The complainant is Isma’il al-Tanani, the grandfather, and the complaint will be presented by a Belgian lawyer named Georges Henri Beauthier (al-Mayadeen, May 22, 2021).

Regional Countries

Syria

- On May 20, 2021, Bashar al-Assad, the Syrian president, met with a delegation of representatives from the Palestinian terrorist organizations. He told them the Palestinian cause was Syria's main focus and Syria would continue to support the Palestinian people's struggle. The delegation praised Syria's steadfast support for the Palestinian people over the years (al-Mayadeen, May 20, 2021). A "source within the Hamas leadership" reported that in light of positive hints received from a number of leaders of Palestinian organizations in Syria, **Hamas was considering returning to Syria**. According to the source, Hamas will soon begin consulting with Hezbollah and Iran to see if the Syrians are interested in renewing relations, and expects Syria's response to be positive (al-Akhbar, May 21, 2021).

- Na'im Qassem, Hezbollah's deputy secretary general, said he believed Hamas would return to Syria in the near future because efforts had been invested for a long time and the results were positive (al-Nashra, May 22, 2021).

Iran and Lebanon (Hezbollah)

- The heads of the Iranian leadership praised the Palestinians on the "victory" and issued their support. Iranian President Rouhani gave a speech in which he claimed the Palestinian people had won a great victory over "the occupying entity" during the days of the confrontation, and that Palestinian people everywhere were united in support [of the Gaza Strip]. The Iranian media reported that Hossein Salami, commander of the Iranian Revolutionary Guards Corps, spoke with Isma’il Haniyeh and Ziyad al-Nakhalah, congratulating them on their "great victory" (Dunia al-Watan, May 21, 2021).

- PIJ leader Ziyad al-Nakhalah thanked Iran for its support, saying it had greatly influenced the victory. He also said he was thankful for the help previously given to the Palestinians by Qassem Soleimani, the late commander of the Qods Force (al-Manar, May 22, 2021). Abu
Hamza, spokesman for the PIJ's military-terrorist wing, expressed his appreciation for Iran's role and all the forces of the "resistance axis" that provided the Palestinians with weapons and technical information and strengthened their practical and professional capabilities, saying they were partners in the victory (al-Mayadeen, May 21, 2021).

Na'im Qassem, deputy Hezbollah secretary general, gave a speech praising the Gaza Strip's victory, calling it a "historic turning point." He said Hezbollah had been updated on the stages of the operation in real time and supported the Palestinians. He claimed he was one of the organizers of the demonstrations on the Israeli-Lebanese border. Regarding the death of a Lebanese "demonstrator," he said he was a youth from Hezbollah's educational mobilization. Regarding the rocket fire from south Lebanon during the hostilities, he said he did not want to discuss the identity of the people who had launched the rockets or whether launching them was the right thing to do, only that responsible people were dealing with the issue (al-Nashra, May 22, 2021).