



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

January 19, 2008

Operation Cast Lead-Update No. 17



IDF soldiers leave the Gaza Strip after Israel announced it would hold its fire (Jerry Lampen for Reuters, January 18, 2009).



Musa Abu Marzuq announces Hamas's agreement to a ceasefire: "We, the factions of the Palestinian resistance, announce a ceasefire in the Gaza Strip..." (Al-Arabiya TV, 1400 hours, January 18, 2009).

The Situation on the Ground

Overview

- On January 18 at 0200 hours, a unilateral ceasefire went into effect as Israel held its fire. On January 19, IDF forces began exiting the Gaza Strip. Some of the forces remained in place in commanding positions, especially around the areas in the northern Gaza Strip from which rockets were launched.
- During the afternoon of January 18, Hamas and the other Palestinian terrorist organizations announced they were ceasing their fire in the Gaza Strip. In its announcement Hamas demanded a withdrawal of IDF forces from the Gaza Strip **within one week**, and a simultaneous opening of the crossings for the delivery of humanitarian aid to the Gazans. Even after the announcement, rocket fire continued on January 18. **As of 1700 hours, January 19, the arena has remained quiet**, for the first time since the beginning of Operation Cast Lead.

The situation on the ground since Israel has held its fire

- IDF forces have been redeployed since the shooting stopped and have not carried out any offensive action. Some of the forces began leaving the Gaza Strip on January 18. The Israeli Air Force does not carry out offensive attacks and has only struck points from which rockets were launched at Israel, including after the ceasefire. The main events of January 18 were the following:
 - The Israeli Air Force attacked a launching point from which a Grad rocket was fired at the city of Kiryat Gat. The strike was identified as successful.
 - The Israeli Air Force attacked a terrorist squad which launched a rocket at the city of Sderot. The strike was identified as successful.
 - During the morning terrorists opened fire on an IDF force in the northern Gaza Strip. The source of the fire was identified and armored vehicles and aircraft attacked the terrorists. No Israeli casualties were sustained.
- In a shooting incident which took place after the ceasefire, the Israeli Air Force identified a rocket launcher which had been used to fire at Israel. It was **positioned between two school buildings** in the Saja'iya neighborhood in the eastern part of Gaza City. The air force did not attack the launcher because of its proximity to the school buildings.

[Click for Video](#)



Launcher used to fire rockets at Israel, positioned between two school buildings in the Saja'iyah neighborhood of eastern Gaza City (IDF Spokesman, January 18, 2009).

Rocket and Mortar Shell Fire into Israeli Territory

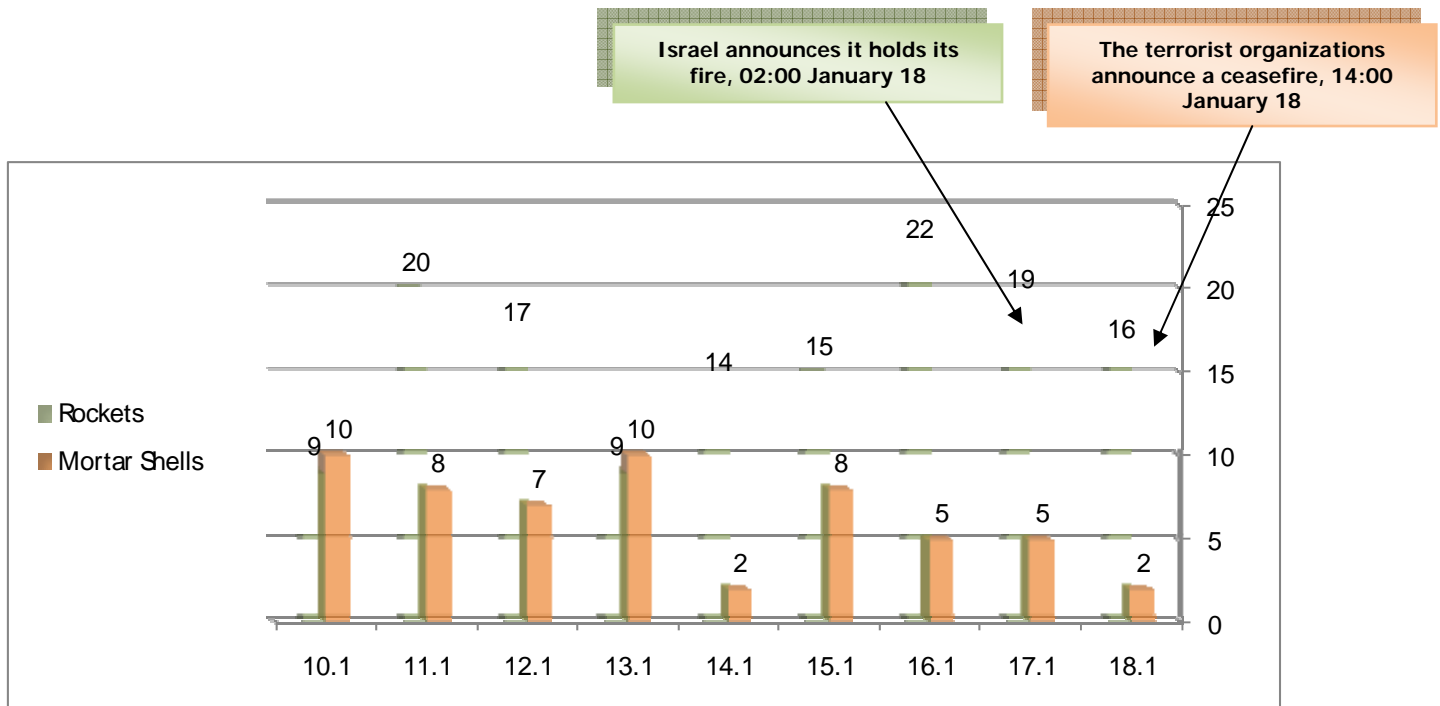
■ Although Israel announced it was holding its fire, on January 18 rocket and mortar shell fire continued into Israeli territory. **Sixteen rocket and two mortar shell** hits were identified. **Six rockets and one mortar shell** fell in the on January 18 after Hamas announced all the terrorist organizations had agreed to a ceasefire.

■ At approximately 0915 hours on the morning of January 18, a barrage of six rockets was fired at the city of **Sderot**. There were no casualties and no property damage was reported. At 1404 hours a long-range rocket hit a house in the city of **Ashdod**. Two civilians were seriously wounded, two sustained minor injuries and three were treated for shock. The house suffered extensive damage. **On January 19, as of 1700 hours, the arena has remained quiet, for the first time since the beginning of Operation Cast Lead.**



A rocket hit in Ashdod (Photo: Edi Israel, used courtesy of NRG, January 18, 2009).

Rockets and Mortar Shells Fired at Israel during Operation Cast Lead



Humanitarian Aid Delivered to the Gaza Strip

Israel

■ On January 18, humanitarian aid continued to be delivered from Israel into the Gaza Strip, in greater volume than on previous days. **Forty trucks** passed through the Karni crossing and **92** through the Kerem Shalom crossing. In addition, **60,000 liters of diesel fuel** were delivered for Gaza's power plant. Since the beginning of Operation Cast Lead **approximately 1,500 trucks** delivering humanitarian aid have entered the Gaza Strip. The Erez crossing was open for Palestinians with urgent humanitarian problems, and eight correspondents used it to enter the Gaza Strip.

Egypt and other countries

■ On January 18 wounded Palestinians continued crossing into Egypt through the Rafah crossing and doctors from various countries entered the Gaza Strip to help in hospitals. Since the beginning of Operation Cast Lead, several hundred sick and wounded Palestinians left the Gaza Strip through the Rafah crossing for Egypt. Some of them were transferred to other Arab and Western countries for medical treatment (Middle East News Agency, January 18, 2009).

■ Humanitarian aid continues being delivered into the Gaza Strip through Israel and Egypt via the Rafah crossing: on January 18, ten tons of medical equipment and 13 ambulances entered. Al-Jazeera TV reported that the Egyptian authorities refused to set up a field hospital for wounded Palestinians in Rafah or El-Arish, despite the fact that various countries had sent Egypt suitable equipment (Al-Jazeera TV, January 18, 2009).

■ Various countries continue contributing funds to aid and rehabilitate the Gaza Strip. The British minister for international development said that Britain would donate £20 million in addition to the aid it had already given. He added that the unilateral ceasefire made it possible to use the money for food, water and shelter for the Palestinians (Ma'an News Agency, January 18, 2009).

■ The Iranian ship with its cargo of humanitarian aid which was prevented by the Israeli Navy from reaching the Gaza shore is anchored in international waters near Egypt. Its captain expressed hope that negotiations between the Iranian consul in Egypt and senior Egyptians would make it possible to deliver the aid through one of Egyptian's ports or to Gaza (Press TV website, January 18).

The humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip

■ On January 18, as IDF forces began a gradual withdrawal from the Gaza Strip, Palestinian civilians began showing the **first signs** of returning to their routine lives. Some of those who had left their houses during the fighting began returning. Al-Arabiya TV described Gazans leaving their houses to see what had happened to Gaza City, and Palestinians went to hospitals to visit the wounded (Al-Arabiya TV, January 18, 2009). After three weeks, Gazan banks are expected to reopen on January 19 (Ramattan News Agency, January 18, 2009).

■ **Palestinian sources in the Gaza Strip reported 1,300 dead and more than 5,400 wounded.** They also reported the evacuation of dozens of bodies found after the ceasefire. The Palestinian media make **no mention of the hundreds of operatives belonging to Hamas and the other terrorist organizations who were killed**, part of Hamas's propaganda effort to paint the false picture that Israel killed only civilians during the operation.

The Egyptian Initiative

Conference at Sharm el-Sheikh

■ In his opening speech at the summit meeting at Sharm el-Sheikh, Egyptian president Hosni Mubarak said that Egypt's primary objectives were to guarantee the ceasefire, remove the IDF forces from the Gaza Strip, institute a new lull arrangement and open the Gaza Strip crossings. He appealed to the international community, asking for their cooperation and support of Egypt's efforts to ensure its objectives, and moreover, to put the peace process in motion (Al-Arabiya TV, January 18, 2009). He also reiterated that Egypt would not agree to the deployment of an international force on its territory.

■ The world leaders who participated in the conference (among them the German chancellor, the Czech prime minister, the UN secretary general, the king of Jordan, the British prime minister and the presidents of Egypt and France) expressed their support for implementing the ceasefire in the Gaza Strip. They also called for Hamas to stop firing rockets and mortar shells into Israeli territory and expressed their hope that the next phases of the arrangement would include the withdrawal of IDF forces and the opening of the crossings. French president Nicholas Sarkozy expressed his support for Israel, saying it had the right to defend itself. The British prime minister said that Britain, France and Germany would cooperate to prevent weapons from being smuggled into the Gaza Strip. The Italian prime minister proposed sending Italian forces to the Gaza Strip to oversee the border crossings.



Left: Press conference held after the conference in Sharm el-Sheikh (Al-Jazeera TV in English, January 18, 2009). Right: After the conference European leaders visited Jerusalem (Israeli Government Press Office, January 18, 2009).

Talks with Hamas representatives

- The Hamas delegation left Cairo for Damascus after two days of talks about the Egyptian initiative. The five-man delegation headed by Muhammad Nasr, a member of Hamas's political bureau, deliberated with senior Egyptian officials about developments following the Israel announcement that it would hold its fire. The talks also dealt with the implications of the Israeli attacks and the way Israel would withdraw from the Gaza Strip (Kuwaiti News Agency, January 18, 2009).
- A spokesman for the Egyptian foreign minister said that Egypt had invited Israel and the Palestinian organizations to Cairo for separate talks with Egypt. He said the objective of the talks was to discuss the steps necessary for bolstering the ceasefire in the Gaza Strip and to agree on a series of steps to implement the Egyptian initiative, including lifting the siege and opening the crossings (Middle East News Agency, January 18, 2009).

Economic summit meeting in Kuwait

- Hosni Mubarak, in his opening speech at the Arab economic summit meeting in Kuwait, again discussed the details of the Egyptian initiative for a ceasefire. He said that Egypt's most important goal was to put the peace process in motion immediately and in a serious way (Middle East News Agency, January 18, 2009).
- Summit meeting participants discussed a proposal to support the Egyptian initiative for an arrangement in the Gaza Strip. They said that they considered the initiative one of the ways to complement UN Security Council 1860. The proposal is supposed to stress the need to work to open the crossings according to the agreement of 2005. It also calls for an reexamination of the ties with Israel and the implementation of a decision to impose economic sanctions on Israel in a way that will serve the Palestinian people "as long as Israel continues its aggression in the Gaza Strip" (Middle East News Agency, January 18, 2009).

Hamas contests Mahmoud Abbas's legitimacy as president of the Palestinian Authority

- Immediately after announcing its ceasefire, Hamas rushed back to the mudslinging of the internal Palestinian arena, putting the legitimacy of Mahmoud Abbas as Palestinian Authority president back on the agenda. As far as Hamas is concerned, his term of office ended on January 9, 2009, but because of having to focus on the fighting in the Gaza Strip, Hamas preferred to not to deal with the issue. **Faraj al-Ghoul**, justice minister in the Hamas administration in the Gaza Strip, said that all actions taken by "**former president**

Mahmoud Abbas” and the commitments he made did not obligate the Palestinian people. Al-Ghoul demanded that Mahmoud Abbas be investigated and tried for his “crimes” (Al-Bayan Center website, January 18, 2009).

Bashar Assad delivers belligerent speech

■ Syrian president Bashar Assad delivered a belligerent, anti-Israeli speech with anti-Semitism motifs at the Arab summit meeting in Doha on January 16. His main points were the following (Al-Jazeera TV, January 16, 2009):

- Israel has based its existence on slaughter, robbery and destruction, and the premise of its future is genocide. Israel is an enemy which understands only the language of bloodshed. The Israeli aggression in the Gaza Strip is not only a response to rocket fire but a link in a chain of steps toward the establishment of a purely Jewish state from which anyone who is not Jewish will be expelled or destroyed.
- The Arab countries must stand at the side of the residents of Gaza and the “resistance” [i.e., the terrorist organizations]. The Israeli leaders should be tried so that history will record that they are “racists more dangerous than the Nazis in modern history.”
- Israel will never return the land and “rights” of the Arabs unless it is forced to. Therefore, “restoring territory and rights” is the essence of the “resistance” [i.e. terrorism] and it is the way to achieve peace.
- Israel has not learned the lessons of history, because “he who has no land has no history.” Thus there will be no compromise, no surrender and no withdrawal, and in the end peace will be achieved by force.
- **The Arab peace initiative is dead.** All the Arab countries must sever relations with Israel, close Israel’s embassies and impose a boycott on it.
- Israel’s “war crimes” will give birth to fiercer hatred for Israel in coming generations. For every Arab child killed in the Gaza Strip, dozens of “resistance” [activists] will be born who will hate Israel.