



Written by [Raven Clabough](#) on November 18, 2012

Tensions in Gaza Heat Up

Conflict in the Mideast is intensifying between the Israeli government and Hamas, the Palestinian Islamist political/military party that governs the Gaza Strip. Hamas has declared ground warfare on Israel after Gaza Islamists began by firing missiles at Tel Aviv, while Israel has launched several airstrikes against key Gaza sites. Israel is in the process of preparing for ground war, amassing troops outside the Gaza Strip.



Over 200 missiles have been fired at Israel by Hamas, killing at least three people, [reports](#) the *Washington Times*. The missile strikes are said to be in retaliation for a Wednesday airstrike by Israel that killed Hamas' military commander Ahmed Jabari.

Gaza militants sent a rocket into Bat Yam, a city just south of Tel Aviv on the Mediterranean seacoast, but it was targeted to an open area and so caused no damage or casualties. Israeli aircraft have already attacked 320 Gaza Strip targets, including tunnels, weapons arsenals, and command posts.

The Israeli army reported the first Israeli fatalities in the conflict: three people in the city of Kiryat Malachi were killed by a Hamas rocket after Israel had bombarded Gaza from aircraft, tanks, and naval boats.

During a press conference earlier this week, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu declared,

Israel has made it clear that it will not tolerate rocket and missile attacks on its civilians. I hope that Hamas and the other terror organizations in Gaza got the message. If not, Israel is prepared to take whatever action is necessary to defend our people.

The increasing possibility of all-out war in the Middle East exacerbates an already tense region recently characterized by protests in the wake of the Arab Spring and civil war in Syria.

Daniel Byman, deputy director of the Saban Center for Middle East Policy of the Brookings Institution in Washington, D.C., asserts that escalation of the warfare depends on Hamas. "The question [of all-out warfare] comes down to whether Hamas will give in or not," he said. "IF it continues rocket attacks, it will be hard for Israel to cease its attacks, so this could escalate."

And Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin [Netanyahu](#) has stated that he is prepared to expand the offensive:

No government would tolerate a situation where nearly a fifth of its people live under a constant barrage of rockets and missile fire, and [Israel](#) will not tolerate this situation.

This is why my government has instructed the Israeli Defense Forces to conduct surgical strikes against the terrorist infrastructure in Gaza. And this is why [Israel](#) will continue to take whatever action is necessary to defend our people.

Netanyahu's cabinet has approved the mobilization of military reserves to forge ahead with its offensive, dubbed the "Pillar of Cloud" in Hebrew. Israeli officials have already called up reservists for potential action in Gaza, and Israeli tanks and armored vehicles have been moved toward the border. According to Israeli military officials, more than 30,000 soldiers could be drafted.



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Indications that Israel is prepared for a ground operation into Gaza prompted announcements that Hamas is now in open war with Israel.

Shortly after, Islamic Jihad responded, "Israel has declared war on Gaza and they will bear the responsibility for the consequences."

Likewise, Hamas Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh said that the Palestinians will remain steadfast and could hold out even longer than the 22 days they did in the last Israel-Gaza war in 2008 and 2009, when over 1,000 Palestinians were killed.

In the last two days, 16 Palestinians have been killed.

The *Washington Post* reports that life has come to a virtual "standstill" on both sides of the border. School has been closed and civilians are remaining indoors.

The United Nations Security Council called for a halt to the violence during an emergency meeting on Wednesday. Egypt's prime minister made a one-day trip to Gaza today to show support for the Palestinians.

Channel 4 News [reports](#), "Egypt, whose new Islamist-rooted government pledge to honour the 1979 peace treaty with Israel, condemned the new Israeli raids as a threat to regional security."

In addition to the conflict in Gaza, Israeli Defense Minister Ehud Barak told reporters that all the Syrian villages along the Israeli border are in the hands of the rebels. He also indicated that the Israeli Defense Force (IDF) was closely monitoring the "painful crumbling of the Assad regime."

Israel has fired into Syria twice since Monday, asserting that the strikes are in response to shells that struck territory in the occupied Golan Heights.

Barak said that the IDF is working to stop any Syrian fire from crossing the border into Israel, "while making more wide-scale preparations for all developments."

Barak contends,

It's very difficult to estimate what will be in Syria in the future, and we need to be alert and ready here, like in many other areas. We are determined to defend our land and our borders. We made that clear to the other side.

Meanwhile, BBC News [reports](#) that both Israel and Hamas have taken the conflict to Twitter, providing a play-by-play account of the military strikes and posting videos and comments regarding the warfare.

According to the BBC, the Israeli Defense Force began live-tweeting and blogging about its military efforts against Hamas on Wednesday.

The IDF uploaded a video on Twitter of the attack that killed Ahmed Said Khalil al-Jabari, head of Hamas' military wing, provoking a response from Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades, the armed wing of Hamas: "Our blessed hands will reach your leaders and soldiers wherever they are. (You Opened Hell Gates on Yourselfes)."

The Israeli Defense Force warned in response, "We recommend no Hamas operatives, whether low level or senior leaders, show their faces above ground in the days ahead."

Hamas has also taken to YouTube, where it posted a video on Thursday of the launch of a Fajr 5 missile toward Tel Aviv. The Israeli Defense Force in turn tweeted a video of an air force attack on a rocket warehouse in Gaza.



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As noted by BBC News, “The use of social media to announce and comment on military operations, almost in real time, is a significant departure for social networking platform.” It may also be in violation of the rules of the social networking sites.

Twitter’s rules, for example, state, “Violence and Threats: You may not publish or post direct, specific threats of violence against others.”

Benedict Evans, an analyst at media research company Enders Analysis, told the BBC,

This clearly puts Twitter in a difficult position. They want to preserve their position as a carrier service that doesn’t editorialise.

On the other hand, they have terms and conditions that must be adhered to.

This is not a decision a couple of hundred engineers in Northern California want to be making.

Photo of rocket fired toward Israel from Gaza Strip: AP Images



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