**Operation Protective Edge – Q&A**

July 14, 2014

Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs

http://mfa.gov.il/MFA/ForeignPolicy/FAQ/Pages/Operation-Protective-Edge-QA.aspx

The main objective of Operation Protective Edge is to re-establish stability and quiet for the citizens of Israel once and for all. Israel cannot accept a reality in which millions of its citizens are subject to the whims of radical Islamic terrorist organizations.

**How did it all start?**

Between 12 June and 7 July, Hamas and other terrorist organizations in the Gaza Strip fired 300 rockets at Israeli civilians. Although Israel showed great restraint and called for the cessation of the rocket attacks, Hamas kept firing them indiscriminately into Israeli towns and cities around the country. No country in the world would accept such a reality, and Israel is no exception.

However, after three weeks of restraint, and the continuation of incessant rocket attacks, Israel was left with no other alternative but to respond in order to restore the safety of its civilian population.

**What is Israel's goal?**

The main objective of Operation Protective Edge is to re-establish stability and quiet for the citizens of Israel once and for all. Israel cannot accept a reality in which millions of its citizens are subject to the whims of radical Islamic terrorist organizations, under immediate threat with as little as 15 seconds to find shelter from incoming missiles.

**How does Israel plan to achieve this goal?**

The only way to restore quiet to the citizens of Israel is by going after the Hamas aggressors who are entrenched in Gaza. Operation Protective Edge is aimed at significantly degrading Hamas' missile capabilities and destroying the terrorist infrastructures directed at Israeli civilians. Israel is not looking for a short-term understanding but wants a long-standing solution for the sake of the safety of its citizens.

**What are the targets of the Israeli airstrikes?**

As part of the operation, the IDF is selectively targeting mobile and concealed rocket launchers, Hamas leadership facilities, attack and smuggling tunnels, terrorist compounds, training sites, communications facilities, air defense elements and additional sites used for terror activities targeting Israel, including command and control centers.

**What are the long-term objectives of Hamas?**

Hamas is similar to other radical jihadi movements like al-Qaeda, ISIS and Boko Haram in its complete intolerance of the presence of non-Muslims in the Middle East. Therefore, it is no surprise that Hamas maintains close operational ties with jihadi terrorists in Sinai, including for weapons smuggling, and is getting weapons and support from Iran.

According to [Hamas' ideology](http://mfa.gov.il/MFA/ForeignPolicy/Terrorism/Palestinian/Pages/Hamas_Covenant-Excerpts.aspx), Israel has no place in the world and Hamas' declared goal is the destruction of the Jewish state. This is exemplified in the organization's covenant: "Hamas strives to raise the banner of Allah over every inch of Palestine" [meaning all of Israel, the West Bank and Gaza]. In addition, the organization promotes an antisemitic ideology that glorifies jihad and the killing of Jews.

**Why is Hamas shooting rockets at Israeli towns?**

Hamas' tactic of firing rockets at Israeli civilian communities did not end when [Israel left Gaza completely in 2005](http://mfa.gov.il/MFA/AboutIsrael/History/Pages/Disengagement%20-%20August%202005.aspx), but rather [intensified](http://mfa.gov.il/MFA/ForeignPolicy/Terrorism/Palestinian/Pages/Behind%20the%20headlines%20--%20The%20Threat%20to%20Israeli%20Civilians%20from%20the%20Gaza%20Strip%2021-Nov-2006.aspx). Because of its commitment to the annihilation of Israel, Hamas views every Israeli man, woman and child as a legitimate target of its terrorist attacks by missiles, suicide bombings, murder and abductions.

Hamas leaders have repeatedly stated that "all of the Israelis are legitimate targets" (Hamas spokesman Sami Abu-Zuhri, 8 July).

In recent years, the Hamas terrorist organization invested heavily in offensive weapons, bringing the number of missiles aimed at Israeli towns to around 12,000.

By firing rockets at densely populated areas in Israel, Hamas terrorists are attempting to cause as many civilian deaths as possible. Hamas' indiscriminate rocket fire is consistent with its ideology, which sees Israeli civilian casualties as military successes.

**Why have there been relatively few Israeli casualties so far in this confrontation?**

Due to the growing missile threat, Israel invested huge resources in establishing a two-fold defense system for its citizens:

1. Israel developed the Iron Dome missile defense system, which throughout this confrontation has provided outstanding protection to Israeli civilians, saving the lives of hundreds or more Israeli civilians.

2. Israel constructed a vast infrastructure of shelters and set up an early warning system enabling its civilians to find quick cover when terrorists launch their missiles.

Were it not for the effective deployment of Iron Dome and the shelters, the number of Israeli civilian casualties in this conflict would be very high.

**Why have civilians in Gaza been hurt?**

The civilian casualties in Gaza are a direct result of Hamas' tactic of [using the Palestinian civilian population as human shields for its terrorist activities](http://mfa.gov.il/MFA/ForeignPolicy/Terrorism/Pages/Hamas-again-uses-Gazan-civilians-as-human-shields-July-2014.aspx). Hamas is committing a [double war crime](http://mfa.gov.il/MFA/ForeignPolicy/Issues/Pages/Behind-the-Headlines-Hamas-war-crimes-13-Jul-2014.aspx) by deliberately targeting Israeli civilians while at the same time embedding its weapons, leaders, operatives and infrastructures in the midst of uninvolved Palestinian civilians. Hamas bears full responsibility for the civilian casualties in the Gaza Strip.

Moreover, Hamas is also investing all of its resources in acquiring and producing weapons and rockets for attacking Israel, instead of caring for the welfare of the population of Gaza.

In a show of utter disregard for the safety of its own civilian population, [Hamas' Ministry of the Interior in Gaza has instructed residents not to heed Israel's warnings about impending attacks](http://mfa.gov.il/MFA/ForeignPolicy/Terrorism/Pages/Hamas-attacks-from-civilian-population-areas-13-Jul-2014.aspx). Hamas also urges residents to actively form human shields, thus deliberately exposing them to grave danger.

**What measures is Israel taking to minimize civilian casualties in Gaza?**

Israel is doing the utmost to reduce to a minimum the harm caused to uninvolved civilians. It does so by employing stringent target selection procedures, by [warning residents about impending strikes](http://mfa.gov.il/MFA/ForeignPolicy/Terrorism/Pages/Hamas-attacks-from-civilian-population-areas-13-Jul-2014.aspx) using phone calls, text messages and leaflets and by firing warning shots.

Israel does all this despite significant tactical costs, foregoing operational opportunities and refraining from attacking known terrorist hideouts and weapons caches located in dangerous proximity to civilians.

**Why is it so difficult to de-escalate the situation?**

The main reason it is so difficult to bring an end to the violence is Hamas' lack of motivation to do so.

Hamas' experience so far has shown it that it is not considered by the international community as accountable for its violations of basic morality and of international law.

**Are the current events part of a cycle of violence?**

One can be tempted to view this confrontation as the latest round in an imagined "cycle of violence". However, nothing could be farther from the truth since there is no symmetry between Israel and Hamas.

Israel left the Gaza Strip completely in 2005 and has no claims on the territory besides the wish to see it develop as a peaceful and prosperous neighbor. If Hamas and the other terrorist organizations disarmed and stopped their attacks, Israel would have no reason to respond.

Yet instead of developing the Gaza Strip, Hamas violently seized control of the territory, turned it into a terror base and established a terrorist dictatorship whose declared goal is the destruction of Israel.