

MEMMO

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Israel Seeks to Minimize Civilian Casualties, Facilitate Humanitarian Assistance

Israel is carrying out its defensive operations in Gaza using an appropriate application of force and is taking dramatic action to minimize civilian casualties. Israel puts the lives of its own soldiers at risk by providing advance warning to civilians that it intends to carry out operations in specific locations. In contrast, Hamas [deliberately attacks Israeli civilians](#) and cynically uses its own people as human shields. Despite the risks to Israel posed by Hamas rocket attacks and threats against the Israel-Gaza border crossings, Israel has facilitated the transfer of more than 450 trucks of food, medicine and energy supplies into Gaza during the past 10 days.

Israel's response to the ongoing terrorism from Gaza is proportionate and in complete compliance with international law.

- Israel's military operation is an act of self-defense, a right enshrined in Article 51 of the United Nations Charter. Its aim is to put an end to the more than [6,300 rocket and mortar attacks](#) on Israeli citizens since Israel fully withdrew from Gaza in 2005.
- Israel's actions to stop Hamas rocket attacks are proportional to the risk Israeli civilians—900,000 of whom are within rocket range—have faced, including the real prospect of mass casualties. Israel need not wait for a rocket to slam into a school full of children before it acts.
- Under international law, any state must attempt to minimize the number of casualties of its opponent as it seeks to achieve its military objective. Accordingly, Israel uses pinpoint targeting to achieve its goals.
- Israel drops leaflets and makes phone calls to targeted areas to warn citizens they are in danger, even if this means losing the element of surprise and putting the lives of its soldiers at risk.
- While Israel makes every effort to minimize civilian casualties, international law precludes Hamas from using civilians to protect legitimate military targets, as Hamas regularly does. Article 28 of the Fourth Geneva Convention clearly states, "The presence of a protected person may not be used to render certain points or areas immune from military operations."
- The responsibility for civilian casualties when the civilians are used as human shields lies with the party that deliberately places them at risk, namely Hamas.



More than 10,000 tons of food and medicine have been transferred into Gaza during the past 10 days.

Hamas places civilians at risk by launching rockets from civilian areas and [storing weapons in homes](#), schools and places of worship.

- Hamas deliberately and cynically fires rockets from civilian areas to make it more difficult for Israel to target the terrorists and to increase the likelihood of civilian casualties when Israel takes action. Hamas has ignored a plea by U.N. Secretary General Ban Ki-moon on April 28 that “civilian areas within Gaza should not be used as a base from which to launch its actions [against Israel].”
- On Jan. 6, residents of a Gaza neighborhood told the Associated Press that Hamas terrorists opened fire at Israeli forces from the cover of a U.N. school where hundreds of Palestinians had congregated. Two known Hamas terrorist were later uncovered inside the building. In a similar 2007 incident, terrorists were [filmed firing mortars](#) from a school in the northern Gaza Strip.
- Dozens of mosques in Gaza have been turned into weapons storage facilities and Hamas command centers. An air strike on a mosque in the Tel El Hawwa neighborhood of Gaza City last Wednesday set off numerous secondary explosions caused by the arms stockpiled in the mosque.
- Rockets fired from Gaza often kill Palestinian civilians as well as Israelis. Two Palestinian girls aged five and 13 were killed on Dec. 26 when a rocket landed short of its Israeli target.
- Many of Hamas’ senior members have taken to hiding in mosques and hospitals to avoid detection. Some terrorists are even disguising themselves as doctors and male nurses to avoid targeting by Israel, according to Israeli Shin Bet head Yuval Diskin.
- Hamas openly admits it uses women and children as human shields. Hamas MP Fathi Hammad told Al-Aqsa TV on February 29, 2008, “For the Palestinian people, death has become an industry. ... This is why they have formed human shields of the women, the children, the elderly, and the mujahedeen, in order to challenge the Zionist bombing machine.”

Israel continues to facilitate the delivery of humanitarian assistance to Gaza despite continuing rocket attacks against its civilians.

- Israel is working closely with humanitarian organizations and is setting up a special situation task force to deal with aid requests. During the first week of Israel’s operations, it has facilitated the delivery to Gaza of more than 500 trucks loaded with more than 10,000 tons of food and medicine.
- In order to ensure that food and supplies can be distributed once transferred into Gaza, Israel declared a three-hour humanitarian truce on Jan. 7. Prime Minister Olmert has indicated Israel will continue to offer limited truces as needed to allow aid to be distributed.
- Ten ambulances and 2,000 blood units have also been transferred to Gaza during the past week. More than 80 Palestinians have entered Egypt for treatment in addition to a dozen who have entered Israel.
- During the six-month calm, Israel facilitated the transfer into Gaza of more than 14,000 trucks, 185,000 tons of foods, more than 7,000 tons of heating gas, more than 10 million gallons of fuel, and other supplies.
- On Jan. 5, more than 93,000 gallons of industrial diesel fuel and gasoline for vehicles was transferred into Gaza from the Nahal Oz fuel depot in Israel, which comes under regular attack from terrorists in Gaza. The industrial fuel transferred to the Gaza power station will allow it to operate for the next 10 days.