

# MEMMO

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## Key Points: Hamas' Assault on Israel

### **Israel Forced to Defend Citizens After Years of Attacks**

Since Israel's full withdrawal from Gaza in 2005, Hamas has indiscriminately fired more than 6,300 rockets and mortars at Israeli population centers. Last spring, Israel tested whether Hamas would move toward peace by accepting Egypt's proposal for a six-month lull in the fighting. Instead, Hamas significantly enhanced its arsenal, and ultimately resumed its rocket assaults.

- Israel demonstrated extreme restraint in the face of years of attacks on its citizens after it fully withdrew from Gaza.
- Instead of seizing this historic opportunity to build a better life for the people of Gaza, Hamas and other terrorist groups have turned the area into a launching pad for thousands of rocket attacks against Israel, killing more than a dozen Israelis and wounding and traumatizing countless others.
- Hamas used a six-month Egyptian-mediated lull in the fighting to significantly enhance its rocket arsenal that it is now using to terrorize Israeli civilians. It unilaterally ended the period of calm last month, firing hundreds of rockets and mortars into Israel.
- An estimated 900,000 Israelis are now within range of Hamas' rocket arsenal, including Ashdod—Israel's fifth largest city and home to 200,000 people and Israel's largest port—and Beersheba, Israel's major city in the south of the country.
- Israel's military operation is an act of self-defense, a right enshrined in Article 51 of the United Nations Charter. No country can tolerate ongoing provocations and attacks without responding. Israel is doing what every nation is entitled to do: act against those who willfully are attacking its citizens.
- Israel's main goals are to stop the rocket and mortar attacks on its citizens and to secure a durable and sustainable cease-fire that does not allow Hamas to continue building up its weapons arsenal and resume attacks on Israelis.

### **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 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.
- In carrying out its defensive operations in Gaza, Israel is using an appropriate application of force and is taking dramatic action to minimize civilian casualties while degrading Hamas' military capabilities.
- 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, purposely locating its command centers and weapons stockpiles in homes, apartment buildings and mosques. Hamas bears both the legal and moral burden for such civilian casualties.
- 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 10 days of Israel's operations, it has facilitated the delivery to Gaza of more than 450 trucks loaded with more than 10,000 tons of food and medicine.

### **Hamas' History of Terror**

Hamas is an Iranian-backed terrorist organization founded in 1988 with the stated aim of destroying Israel. Hamas has carried out attacks that have killed more than 500 innocent civilians, including two dozen Americans. In June 2007, the terrorist group violently seized control of Gaza from the Palestinian Authority and targeted Israelis with thousands of rockets and mortars. Funded and supported by Tehran in order to disrupt Israeli-Palestinian peace efforts, Hamas will be a legitimate partner for negotiations only when it is ready to live in peace with Israel.

- Hamas is an Iranian-backed terrorist organization dedicated to the destruction of Israel and represents a larger conflict in the region fomented by Tehran and directed not only at Israel, but the United States, Palestinian Authority and moderate Arab states.
- The Hamas charter, published in 1988, details the guiding principles of the group, is laced with anti-Semitism and racism, rejects peaceful efforts to end the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and calls for the destruction of the State of Israel through *jihad*, or holy war. Hamas considers all of Israel to be occupied territory.
- Iran has increased its lethal assistance to Hamas, providing advanced rocket technology and training to hundreds of Hamas terrorists in camps in Iran, Syria and Lebanon.
- Hamas must meet the international community's criteria to become a legitimate partner: renounce violence, recognize Israel's right to exist and accept previous Israeli-Palestinian agreements.
- President-elect Obama has said Hamas must be isolated until it changes its negative behavior. "We must isolate Hamas unless and until they renounce terrorism, recognize Israel's right to exist

and abide by past agreements," Obama said in June 2008." There is no room at the negotiating table for terrorist organizations."

- President Bush said Hamas is to blame for the hostilities. "This recent outburst of violence was instigated by Hamas—a Palestinian terrorist group supported by Iran and Syria that calls for Israel's destruction... America's objectives in the Middle East will remain clear: We seek security and peace for our allies, the free people of Israel."

### **Israel Remains Committed to Peace**

Israel's actions will ultimately improve the prospects for peace. Israel remains committed to peace and has held intensive negotiations with the Palestinian Authority during the past year amid continuing attacks by Hamas. Israel also has taken numerous steps to improve the lives of Palestinians in the West Bank.

- The best chance for a successful peace process is for Israel and others in the region to ensure that Hamas is not allowed to transform itself from a terrorist group into a paramilitary force using Gaza as a launching pad for rockets into Israel.
- This conflict has highlighted the divisions among the Palestinians and Arabs who want peace with Israel, and those who do not: Iran and its proxy Hamas.
- Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak and Palestinian Authority head Mahmoud Abbas both have blamed Hamas for the hostilities. Moderate Arab leaders understand the importance of neutralizing Iran, Hamas and other extremists who oppose a negotiated solution to the conflict.