

On Gaza's Edge

The loud wail of an air raid siren pierces the air. Residents of Sderot know what this means: a Qassam rocket fired by terrorists in the Gaza Strip will explode somewhere nearby in about 15 seconds. The scene plays out three times a day, on average, often with terrifying consequences.

In early September, a rocket scored a nearly direct hit on an Israeli tent where soldiers in basic training were sleeping. The attack on the Zikim training base wounded 69 people and left one soldier fighting for his life with severe head wounds. Another had his leg amputated as a result of the attack.

Also in September, a Qassam barely missed a Sderot kindergarten on the second day of school. Twelve children were treated for shock at the hospital. Had the rocket landed just a few meters away, the results could have been devastating.

For Israeli families in Sderot, Kibbutz Nahal Oz and other towns within firing range of the Gaza Strip, this scene plays out several times a day – and has been going on for more than two years. The situation causes severe and constant stress for the area's residents.

Terrorists from Hamas, Islamic Jihad and other groups are firing the rockets from the Hamas-controlled Gaza Strip. Following Israel's complete unilateral withdrawal from the Gaza Strip in the summer of 2005, Palestinian terrorists have fired more than 2,000 Qassams into Israel from the coastal territory. Since Hamas violently seized control of Gaza in June of this year, terrorists have launched more than 200 rockets into Israel.

No country would tolerate a constant barrage of rockets against its civilian population. With Israeli civilians being killed by terrorists operating in Hamas-controlled territory, Israel has a right and a responsibility to protect its citizens.

"Gaza is controlled by Hamas," said Israeli Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni. "This means something, and life cannot go on as normal there as well, even if we cannot completely prevent the firing of Qassams. I think there are things that a state is obligated to do."