

PRESS RELEASE

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AIPAC Condemns Hamas Decision to Terminate Period of Calm

Hamas steps up its attacks against Israeli civilians

AIPAC condemns the terrorist group Hamas for refusing to extend the six-month Egyptian-mediated *tahdiyeh*, or period of calm, which officially expired on December 19.

Hamas violated the calm long before it officially expired and is now stepping up rocket and terror attacks. Since the lull went into effect last June, Hamas has fired more than 300 rockets and mortars into Israel. And in the two days before December 19, Hamas fired more than 40 Qassam rockets and mortars, including one that exploded near a shopping center in Sderot, wounding three Israelis.

Despite the increase in attacks, Israel continues to facilitate the transfer of aid into Gaza and allow those in need of medical care to cross into Israel. More than 300 truckloads of aid entered Gaza during the second week of December along with 142 medical patients and companions. Israel also continues to provide 70 percent of Gaza's electricity, which Hamas routinely diverts for its own purposes.

In addition to terminating the *tahdiyeh*, Hamas is also persisting in its refusal to adhere to the Quartet's three conditions for international recognition. Hamas must recognize Israel's right to exist, renounce terrorism and accept previous Israeli-Palestinian agreements. (The Quartet consists of the United States, European Union, United Nations and Russia.)

Israel seeks peace with all of its neighbors and has demonstrated extreme restraint in the face of ongoing rocket attacks. But like every sovereign nation, Israel has the right and duty to defend its citizens from violence. Israel faces extreme difficulty in fighting an enemy that not only targets Israeli civilians, but also uses Palestinian civilian areas to launch attacks.

Egypt must take steps to control the border with Gaza and the Palestinian government, under the leadership of President Mahmoud Abbas, must take immediate action to fight Hamas terrorism in word and deed.

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