

Hamas Acknowledges Iran's Support

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Emerging after eight days of conflict with Israel, Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh thanked Egypt and Iran on Thursday for their support in helping make "Israel scream with pain."

Haniyeh, who heads Hamas in Gaza, hailed the previous night's ceasefire as a victory, despite what Israel called heavy losses for the terror group during Operation Pillar of Defense.

Though it had been threatening a ground operation, Jerusalem said Wednesday night it would give an Egypt-brokered truce a chance to work, ending a week of heavy rocket fire on the south of Israel.

It was "the resistance and strength of the Palestinian people that stopped Israel from sending troops into Gaza," Haniyeh said at a celebration in Gaza Thursday, which was declared a holiday for Palestinians.

"The idea of attacking Gaza is gone and, with the help of God, will never return," Haniyeh said.

During Operation Pillar of Defense, Israel struck some 1,500 targets and killed some 170 Palestinians, according to the Israel Defense Forces. Over 1,500 rockets were launched from Gaza to Israel's southern city, and six people were killed.

The strength of the Palestinians was the basis for the latest victory, and now "it's a sign of pride to the whole world," Hamas's leader said. We "did not raise a white flag. Israel screamed with pain from what the resistance did to it. I thank everyone who provided us with arms and money, especially Iran."

Haniyeh also thanked Egypt for aiding the Palestinians. The Egypt of Mohammed Morsi today was not like that of Hosni Mubarak yesterday and "Israel was mute in face of Egypt's position" during the fighting, he said.

"Israel entered this war with the intent of preparing the ground for a regional war" which would help its leaders during the upcoming elections, Haniyeh said, but added that Jerusalem was ill-prepared to face down Gazan fighters. "Israel was surprised at the response of the resistance movements, their accuracy and the ability to strike in the center of the country with such force."

"The enemy was hit and shocked because it thought [killing Ahmed Jabari] and attacking from the air would be a surprise — but the surprise was that of the resistance, the depth and determination in the field up until the last minutes," Haniyeh told the crowd.

“The resistance changed the rules of the game, and the idea of invading Gaza is gone forever,” Hamas’s leader said. “The resistance can stand even stronger. Our enemy doesn’t know our character. Today a new stage has started in the victory of this people and nation,” he said.

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