

Israel Shells Syria and Gaza

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In-depth Report: [PALESTINE](#), [SYRIA](#)

A previous article said beware of false flags. For months throughout the Syrian conflict, possible full-scale Western intervention loomed. It still does. Post-US elections, it's more likely, not certain, but reports suggest expect it.

Several stray mortar shells from Syria struck occupied Golan. No injuries were reported. Israel holds Damascus responsible. On November 9, Israel warned Assad.

Vice Prime Minister [Moshe Ya'alon](#) said, "We see the regime in Syria as responsible for what is happening along the border."

"If we see that it is spreading in our direction, we will know how to defend the citizens of the State of Israel and the State of Israel's sovereignty."

Defense Minister [Ehud Barak](#) added, "We have made clear via UNDOF (Golan's United Nations Disengagement Observer Force) that we intend for there not to be shells falling on us."

Without elaborating, he added: "I hope this will not continue, and that the rebels will win in Syria, that Assad will fall and that, at long last, a new stage in the life of Syria will begin.

It's hard imagining what he means or wants. Israel already has post-Mubarak Egypt to deal with. Mohamed Morsi is more outspoken on issues where both countries disagree.

Similar or more extremist Syrian governance would substitute a peaceful opponent for one more adversarial. The adage about being careful for what you wish applies.

On November 11, another stray mortar shell struck Golan. In response, Israel fired cross-border warning shots. On November 12, [Haaretz](#) headlined "IDF strikes Syria mortar bomb battery, after errant shell lands in Israel," saying:

Doing so was the second time in two days. It was the sixth time in over a week. Warning shots were fired earlier. Israel had a target in mind this time. It claimed a direct hit.

Israeli tanks "fired artillery at two Syrian mortar shell batteries." The IDF "fired a Tamuz anti-tank missile with a range of 25 kilometers in the direction of a Syrian army mortar crew that had launched a shell which overshot the Golan disengagement fence. There were no casualties on either side."

Israel has had Tamuz missiles since the 1980s. It wasn't made public until last year. They were used in the 2006 Lebanon war and Cast Lead. Last week, Israel warned Assad about conflict spilling over into Golan.

In early November, three Syrian tanks entered Golan's demilitarized zone. They remained in Syrian-controlled Be'er Ajam village. After several hours they left.

Nonetheless, Israel elevated its Golan alert level. It also lodged a UN complaint for a ceasefire violation. At the same time, it knows Syria didn't act provocatively. Assad wants no conflict on his southern neighbor.

It's uncertain what Tel Aviv wants. Ahead perhaps we'll know one way or the other. Israel's Northern Command remains on alert. In mid-September, live-fire Golan drills were conducted.

IDF head General Benny Gantz said it was to test preparatory readiness in case of emergency. A similar exercise was held on Yom Kippur eve last year. Two IDF divisions were involved. The occasion was "more than a coincidence," according to a military spokesman.

In early September 2012, Israel began reinforcing its Golan border with Syria. New information-gathering sensors were installed. Parts of a fence separating the two nations were electrified. Mines were also laid.

Tel Aviv will have to explain what it plans or fears. Israel and Syria haven't been at war since 1973. Damascus, of course, won't initiate conflict. Israel may have other ideas in mind.

In October, it evacuated Mount Hermon tourists. Allegedly it was over armed Syrians or opposition fighters approaching its border. They never advanced closer than 500 meters. No incident followed.

General Gantz warned about greater numbers of Al Qaeda and other extremist elements. They're heavily armed and could use them against Israel.

At the same time, Israel bombed and shelled Gaza for three days. Over the weekend, Hamas complained to the UN. Hamas spokesman Taher al-Nunu called on Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon to intervene.

He's a pro-Western/pro-Israeli imperial tool. Expect little more than hollow rhetoric at best. Since Saturday, at least five Palestinians died. Some reports say seven. Three were children. Over 50 were injured. Ten or more serious cases were reported.

Four deaths and 38 injuries resulted from attacking a football playground in al-Shoja'ila neighborhood east of Gaza City. Israel willfully struck a non-military target. Civilians alone were harmed.

On November 8, Israel killed a young Palestinian child. He was playing football with friends when he was shot in the abdomen and died. Southern Gaza's Abassan village was targeted. Indiscriminate live fire followed.

Israeli ground and air attacks continued into Monday. Targets included a water tank, electricity distribution facility, brick and metalworking workshops, a concrete factory, and agricultural store. All were civilian sites. Crimes of war and against humanity were committed. It's standard Israeli policy.

Fourth Geneva obligates High Contracting Parties to protect civilians in time of war and hold

those responsible accountable. Throughout its history, Israel's gotten away with murder. It wages aggressive war on Palestine with impunity.

When Hamas and other resistance groups respond, it's called terrorism. Conflicting reports disagree on what Israel plans. The International Middle East Media Center ([IMEMC](#)) cited a Haaretz report. It said Netanyahu is preparing public opinion perhaps for Cast Lead 2.0.

He'll also launch an international propaganda offensive. He plans "to conduct a large ground offensive against the coastal region." He needs Israeli and international community support.

On November 12, [Israel National News](#) headlined "PM: Israel Ready to Fight for Defense of the South," saying:

"Indications are that Israel would begin a military campaign against Gaza Arab terrorists sooner rather than later, analysts said."

Official propaganda manipulates public opinion by claiming terrorists threaten Israelis. Netanyahu said "the whole world understands that this is not acceptable."

People paying attention, of course, know Israel bears full responsibility. Claiming Israel can "take whatever action" it wishes doesn't wash. Netanyahu and other Israeli officials try to package naked aggression as self-defense.

The argument wore thin long ago. Nonetheless, he'll likely convince enough people to believe war with Gaza is good. Most Israelis are as much out of the loop as Americans. International leaders say nothing. Most offer support.

On November 12, [Haaretz](#) headlined "Israel will avoid Gaza war but may mull Hamas assassinations," saying:

Gaza is Netanyahu's "main problem." He plans confronting it with harsher measures. Targeted killings are most likely. Ahead of January elections, he wants to look tough.

His options are "limited." Diplomatic reality today is different than pre-Cast Lead. Syria is embroiled in conflict. Morsi replaced Mubarak in Egypt. Perhaps Western nations may tire of Israel's belligerence. No sign of it showed up so far.

Assassinations are simpler than war. Israel has lots of experience with both. Egypt's been trying to broker a ceasefire. Hamas and other Gazan resistance groups will respond defensively to Israeli aggression.

Assassinations assure escalated responses. Perhaps Israel wants them as justification for larger-scale aggression. Haaretz said when Israel attacks Gaza, "civilian communities" are targeted.

Hamas plans meeting with other resistance groups Monday evening. Responding to Israeli aggression will be discussed.

Israel's Home Front Defense Minister Avi Dichter said Israeli deterrence will have to be reshaped to "leave no doubt." He barely stopped short of declaring war.

Netanyahu, those around him, and IDF commanders alone know for sure what's planned or

considered. Given longstanding Israeli belligerence, expect conflict, not diplomatic resolution.

A Final Comment

On November 6 in Istanbul, four ex-IDF commanders stood trial in absentia for murder and related crimes.

Numerous observers attended. They included human rights groups, journalists, and lawyers from different countries.

At issue was attacking and killing nine Mavi Marmara humanitarian activists in international waters, as well as injuring and abusing dozens more.

Charges include voluntary manslaughter, attempted voluntary manslaughter, intentional injury, incitement to assault with a deadly weapon, robbery, abduction or confiscation of maritime vessels, property damage, false arrest, and mistreatment of prisoners.

Istanbul's Public Prosecutor listed 490 "complainant-victims" from 36 countries. They include passengers as well as family members of victims.

Hearings so far heard testimonies from 74 Turkish and foreign eyewitnesses and complainants. Clear evidence was presented.

On November 9, the trial's first session concluded. Further hearings were scheduled to begin on February 21.

The court also decided to check the validity of notices sent defendants, assure others scheduled to testify are heard during the next session, and get updated medical information on Ugur Suleyman Soylemez.

He was assaulted aboard the Mavi Marmara. He's been in a coma for almost two and half years.

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