

## Israel's Operation Pillar of Cloud

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Region: [Middle East & North Africa](#)

In-depth Report: [PALESTINE](#)

On November 14, Israel murdered Hamas military commander Ahmed Jabari in cold blood. A missile struck his car. Another passenger was killed. Unconfirmed reports said it was his son.

An IDF Twitter message said, "We recommend that no Hamas operatives, whether low level or senior leaders, show their faces above ground in the days ahead."

[Press TV](#) said Shin Bet claimed responsibility. An official statement said:

"During a joint operation of the General Security Service (Shin Bet) and the IDF today, Ahmed al-Jabari, the senior commander of the military wing of Hamas in the Gaza Strip, was targeted."

Attacks continue. Israel's Operation Pillar of Cloud (aka Cloud Column) killed at least nine Palestinians. Over 20 others were injured. Authorities expect death and injury tolls to rise.

Bombing and shelling continued overnight. At least three more Palestinians were killed. More were injured.

Israel said over 20 sites were targeted. Hamas' military wing, Izzeddin Qassam Brigades, said Israel "opened the gates of hell." A robust response was promised.

Jabari is the most senior Hamas official killed since Cast Lead. He was involved in capturing Gilad Shalit. During his five years in captivity, he led negotiations that freed him.

Netanyahu said Israel chose this time to "exact the heaviest price." Initially he added that a significant military action wouldn't be undertaken. In fact, it was initiated and remains ongoing. Perhaps something greater is planned.

Kadima opposition leader [Shaul Mofaz](#) called killing Jabari and attacking Gaza a "deterrence against Hamas in the long term. It isn't the time to loosen our grip and relax. We must search (out Hamas leaders) everywhere."

Former Kadima chairwoman [Tzipi Livni](#) called the killing an "appropriate assassination of the head of a terror organization that is responsible for spilling the blood of Israeli citizens."

Labor leader [Shelly Yacimovich](#) said Jabari had the "blood of many Israelis on his hands. (He) was the arch terrorist of the extremist Hamas organization." Killing him was "justified."

Knesset State Comptroller's Committee chairman, MK [Uri Ariel](#) said:

"Let the IDF win. This pinpoint attack cannot be our final act. Israel needs to continue and hit the terrorist organizations in the Gaza Strip with all its might."

“The Israeli government must keep up the pressure until it topples the evil regime that is keeping thousands of Israeli residents from leading normal and peaceful lives.”

Other Israeli officials made similar comments. Meretz MK [Nitzan Horowitz](#) was nonbelligerent, saying:

“Stop the escalation in Gaza. It is a petty bloody circle. War will not solve anything.”

Senior Hamas official Izzat al-Rishq said killing Jabari won’t “break the will of our people nor weaken our resistance.” He accused Netanyahu of committing a war crime to boost his reelection chances. Doing so, he warned, may “cost him his political future.”

Hamas spokesman Fawzi Barhoum called killing Jabari a “declaration of war.” Revenge was promised. “The occupation has committed a grave crime and crossed all red lines.”

“The enemy will pay a heavy price for its crime and will regret the moment it thought of perpetrating it.”

Israel launched war but doesn’t know how to end it. Islamic Jihad spokesman Abu Ahmed said attacks would follow in hours. He also called killing Jabari a “declaration of war.”

Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh called on Arab states to help stop Israel’s “barbaric” assault.

An Izzeddin Qassam Brigades statement said, “From this night, the Israeli occupation will be living in hell.”

What may be is planned is worrisome. Defense Secretary Ehud Barak called up Israeli reserves. All options are on the table, he stressed. A ground operation may or may not follow.

[Haaretz](#) headlined “Israel launches military operation in Gaza.” A timeline followed, saying:

On November 14 at 7:37PM, the Palestinian death toll rose to seven. Another 20 others were wounded.

At 7:42 PM, Shimon Peres spoke to Obama by phone. He said Jabari was responsible for “terrorist” attacks. He lied, but both sides accept this explanation.

At 7:45 PM, Abbas called for an urgent Arab League meeting.

At 7:50PM, Barak called for “special situation” status on the home front at a distance of 40 km from Gaza. Government approval is needed.

At 7:59PM, Be’er Sheva alarms told residents to seek shelter from rocket attacks.

At 8:03PM, eight Palestinian deaths were reported. Another 30 were wounded.

At 8:09PM, Palestinians reported an explosion at the home of former Fatah security head, Rashid Abu Shabak in Gaza.

At 8:11PM, rocket fire struck a parked vehicle in Be’er Sheva.

At 8:12PM, Be'er Sheva alarms again sounded. Rocket fire was reported.

At 8:17, 8:19, and 8:20PM, more rockets were fired.

At 8:37PM, Netanyahu accused Hamas and Islamic Jihad of harming Israelis.

At 8:40PM, Israel's US embassy said surgical strikes showed restraint in responding to Hamas rockets.

At 8:50PM, rockets were fired toward Dimona for the first time.

At 9:21PM, Israeli gunboats shelled Gaza.

At 9:18PM, Jimmy Carter condemned attacks on both sides.

Press TV said Israeli warships fired missiles on Gaza.

Egypt recalled its Israeli ambassador. [Reuters](#) said Egypt condemned Israeli attacks on Gaza. Foreign Minister Kamel Amr demanded they stop immediately.

Failure "could have negative repercussions on the security and stability of the region." Israel's escalation is "very dangerous."

Egypt's [Muslim Brotherhood](#) Freedom and Justice Party political wing said:

FJP "stresses its full condemnation to the Israeli assignation operation against Al-Qassam leader Ahmed Al-Jabari."

"Israel's return to the policy of assignation of leaders from the Palestinian struggle groups shows that the Israeli occupation wants to drag the region towards instability."

"But the occupying state has to understand that the changes the Arab region, and especially Egypt, have witnessed will not permit that the Palestinian people be put under the hold of the Israeli offense in the same way as the past."

"The wanton aggression against Gaza proves that Israel has yet to realize that Egypt has changed and that the Egyptian people who revolted against oppression/ injustice will not accept assaulting Gaza."

On November 14, [Haaretz](#) headlined "Hit on Hamas military chief is only the beginning," saying:

"This is not just 'another' assassination, but rather a hit on one of the top people in the movement and the person in the leadership most identified with the terror struggle against Israel."

Israel's action is the beginning of more to come. Retaliatory attacks will follow. Expect Israel to use them as justification for further strikes. Perhaps Cast Lead 2 is planned. The fullness of time will tell.

Haaretz said Hamas has Fajr rockets. Their range is 75km. They can strike Tel Aviv and other urban areas. Whether this "Judgment Day" weapon will be used remains to be seen.

Israel attacked 20 underground sites believed to store them. Reports didn't claim success. It bears repeating what previous articles stressed. On January 22, Netanyahu faces reelection. Perhaps he thinks killing Gazans increases his prospects.

Once attacks begin and escalate, who knows how they'll end. Death and destruction begets more of it. The more Israel attacks Gaza, the more Arab street anger will grow. So will anti-Israeli sentiment elsewhere.

Israelis perhaps approve. Jabari may be viewed as Netanyahu's bin Laden. Expect his reelection strategy to stress it. Israel removed its main terrorist threat, he'll say.

Gullible Israelis may believe it. Opposition candidates won't refute him. If greater escalation follows, all bets are off.

War benefits often have short shelf life benefits. Netanyahu needs boosting until January 22.

If reelected, he'll worry less about approval afterwards. Blood on his hands will remain.

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