

# Situation in Gaza Strip Remains Tense with Little Chances of De-escalation Soon

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*Protests have been happening for more than two months by Palestinians along the Gaza Strips. Their demands: to be allowed to return home and to have their lands returned after the expulsion from 70 years ago.*

Since the beginning of the protests on March 30<sup>th</sup>, Israeli forces have wounded more than 15 000 people and have killed as many as 135 Palestinians, according to the health officials in Gaza.

The situation in recent months has gone from bad worse, mostly due to the US **President Donald Trump** recognizing Jerusalem as Israel's capital. Palestinians are left to look for international support to stop what it sees as a destruction of its last hopes to defend their interests and to achieve statehood.

What makes the situation worse is that recognition of Jerusalem as Israel's capital, as well as the move of the US, Guatemala and the soon-to-follow Uruguay embassies to the city show the complete abandonment of the Palestine Cause. The US, Israel, Saudi Arabia among others seek their own agendas in the region, they do not always contribute to the stability and long-lasting peace. The US and Israel provide no solution or real offer, just demands in the form close to an ultimatum that has no hope of being welcomed.

During the escalation, after the March 30<sup>th</sup> Israel carried strikes on Gaza on April 27<sup>th</sup>, May 4<sup>th</sup>, May 5<sup>th</sup>, May 11<sup>th</sup>, followed by one of the largest incidents after the recognition of Jerusalem as capital of Israel by the US. The most recent exchange happened on the July 14<sup>th</sup> when Israel sent an air raid and several rockets were targeted by Hamas at Israel.

On June 29<sup>th</sup>, **Yasser Abu al-Naja**, a 11-year-old boy who sustained a gunshot wound to the head was killed, announced by **Ashraf al-Qidra**, spokesperson for Gaza's health ministry. **Mohammad Fawzi Hamaydeh**, 24, was also killed by a shot to the abdomen and foot by Israeli Forces. There were 415 wounded, 11 of whom children, 3 cases of injuries were severe.

On the 15<sup>th</sup> consecutive Friday of Great March of Return a Palestinian man - 22-year-old **Mohammad Jamal Abu Halima** was killed and 396 were injured, among whom were 13 children, fifty seven people were injured by live ammunition. The Palestinians marched on

July 7<sup>th</sup>, Saturday to mourn the victim.

On July 9<sup>th</sup> Israel announced its decision to seal off trade border crossing. Hamas dubbed the decision a “crime” and a “death sentence” for Palestine traders. It is a crossing that was not only used as a trade route, but also as a way to deliver foreign aid to the Gaza Strip. The closing will, however, allow for humanitarian aid to move, stated Al Jazeera by confirmation from Gaza. The materials which will be refused entry will be clothing goods and construction materials. In the recent weeks Palestinians have protested against the land, naval and aerial block imposed by Israel and Egypt since 2006. This heavy strike on citizens of Gaza comes after **Mahmoud Abbas**, President of the Palestinian Authority’s decision to impose financial sanctions on Gaza in an attempt to isolate Hamas, who currently run the Strip.

On July 14<sup>th</sup>, Israel sent air raids over al-Kateeba, Gaza in retaliation to rockets fired by Hamas with the biggest daytime assault on Gaza since 2014, killing two teenagers – Amir al-Nimra, 15, and Luay Kaheel, 16, who were playing on a rooftop – and wounding at least 30 people.

Following the attacks, thanks to international and regional mediation efforts an all-out war was avoided, and a ceasefire was established. Reports by Al Jazeera dub the ceasefire an Egypt-brokered one.

The ceasefire, however, is threatened and Israel’s **Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu** states that it may be lifted if Palestinian Protesters’ attacks with flaming kites which burn Israeli land do not end. Thousands of hectares of land were burned, however there have been no deaths.

As of the morning of July 16<sup>th</sup> the ceasefire seems to be holding, however anger and frustration seem to be increasing as the 12-year-long Gaza Strip siege does not show any signs of ending soon and threatens a renewal of an all-out war.

The recent launching of war games by Israel over the occupied territories may also be the spark of war, they began on July 15<sup>th</sup>, Sunday and are expected to continue throughout the entire week. According to the Walla news website, the drill is supposed to simulate the capture of Gaza City. United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) media adviser Adnan Abu Hasna said that the threat of a new Israeli war is more real than ever before since at this point denizens of the Gaza Strip “have nothing to lose.”

After the beginning of the war games, Hanan Ashrawi, a member of the Palestine Liberation Organization’s executive committee came forward and said that Israel is “deliberately targeting and killing Palestinian children.” She also added that

“The targeting of public places and playgrounds constitutes a war crime and violates international law and international humanitarian law.”

However, as the world turns its back on Palestine, Israel will continue its campaign of brutality and terrorism against the innocent, according to Ashrawi.

Human rights groups have claimed that Israel troops use excessive force, to which Israel responded that all actions it takes are in self-defense or against people who, disguised as

demonstrators, aim to infiltrate their country.

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