

War In Gaza: Why Now? Election Politics?

By [Washington's Blog](#)

Global Research, November 16, 2012

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

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It was widely [reported](#) that Israel agreed to delay any war against Iran until after U.S. elections.

A little over a week after the election, Israel launched a “targeted assassination” against the leader of Hamas. That is what started the current round of fighting.

Professor Michel Chossudovsky [notes](#):

On November 14, Hamas military commander Ahmed Jabari was murdered in a Israeli missile attack. In a bitter irony, barely a few hours before the attack, Hamas received [the draft proposal of a permanent truce](#) agreement with Israel.

“Hours before Hamas strongman Ahmed Jabari was assassinated, he received the draft of a permanent truce agreement with Israel, which included mechanisms for maintaining the cease-fire in the case of a flare-up between Israel and the factions in the Gaza Strip.”([Haaretz, November 15, 2012](#))

The targeted assassination of Ahmed Jabari was followed by an extensive bombing campaign under Operation Pillar of Cloud. The latter consists of a carefully planned military endeavor.

F-16 fighter planes, Apache helicopters and unmanned drones were deployed. Israeli naval forces deployed along the Gaza shoreline were involved in extensive shelling of civilian targets.

Israel’s defense minister Ehud Barack has confirmed a scenario of military escalation, blaming Palestine for having committed acts of aggression: .

“[t]he provocations we have suffered and the firing of rockets to the southern settlements within Israel have forced us to take this action. I want to make clear that Israeli citizens will not suffer such actions. The targets are to hit the rockets and to harm the organization of Hamas.”

The Israeli attacks were followed by the firing of dozens of rockets by Hamas against Israel.

Palestine’s response was known to Israeli war planners. The resulting Israeli civilian casualties are now being used to justify military escalation on humanitarian grounds.

What we are dealing with is a carefully planned operation, a clear act of provocation. The deaths of Israeli civilians (envisaged and foreseen by IDF military planners) are being used to muster the support of the Israeli public.

Meanwhile, the Israeli attack is casually portrayed by the Western media as part of a legitimate counter-terrorism agenda.

(Glenn Greenwald notes that America's targeted assassination policy is [identical](#) to that of Israel. This could escalate quickly. Not only are Israel and Hamas exchanging rocket fire – with casualties of children on both sides – but Israel is calling up [30,000 reserve soldiers](#) ahead of a possible ground invasion of Gaza.)

Israel is holding its own elections in January. Many commentators [say](#) that the attacks on Gaza are a cynical ploy by the Israeli Prime Minister to win re-election:

Netanyahu was accused by left-wing opposition Hadash party MP Mohammed Baraka [the leader of the Israeli [Hadash](#) opposition party] of “making another round in a circle of blood for cynical political interests” and “speculating in the blood of the Palestinian people.”

Labour MP Jeremy Corbyn denounced the regime, saying that “once again Israel has wantonly attacked the people of Gaza, bombing and killing.

“This is effectively a first world state attacking a poor and largely defenceless population. It looks like a rerun of Operation Cast Lead,” he said.

“The timing is interesting and it looks like Netanyahu is creating a crisis to ensure his re-election”, the MP added.

Leading German newspaper Spiegel [reports](#):

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is hoping the offensive in the Gaza Strip wins his Likud party more votes in January's election.

“When the cannons roar, we see only Netanyahu and Barak on the screen, and all the other politicians have to applaud them,” wrote the daily Haaretz in a commentary published Thursday. “The assassination of (Hamas' top military commander Ahmed) Jabari will go down in history as another showy military action initiated by an outgoing government on the eve of an election.”

Indeed, one can conclude that the most recent offensive against militants in the Hamas-ruled Gaza Strip– which started Wednesday with the killing of Jabari — has been conceived as more of a show fight for the Israeli public than the beginning of a decisive battle.

Precursor to War with Iran?

The top British Rabbi – when asked by the BBC on his thoughts on what's really going on in Gaza right now – replied:

I think it has got to do with Iran, actually.

Why Iran?

Anti War [lays out](#) one theory:

This escalation occurs just days after widespread reports about newly reelected Obama mulling a grand bargain with Iran over its disputed nuclear program. Barbara Slavin and Laura Rozen at Al-Monitor [reported](#) on Monday that US officials told them Washington was considering offering a “more for more” deal with Iran, based on the fuel swap deal from Obama’s first term.

So what does Israel’s impending war on defenseless Gaza have to do with Iran diplomacy? Here’s [a tweet](#) from the Tehran bureau chief for the New York Times, Thomas Erdbrink:

Forget ANY [#Iran](#)-US talks if conflict in Gaza escalates

— Thomas Erdbrink (@ThomasErdbrink) [November 14, 2012](#)

And [here](#):

[#Iran](#) leaders can never be seen as talking to US, while its “eternal” ally Israel assassinates Iran’s ideological allies

— Thomas Erdbrink (@ThomasErdbrink) [November 14, 2012](#)

I suspect this point was not lost on the Israeli leadership, either. So, is Netanyahu knowingly escalating military tensions in order to avoid a successful diplomatic overture? I’m speculating, but it isn’t far fetched. We know from extensive reporting, mainly in Israeli media, that in 2010 – just as President Obama requested a freeze on Jewish settlements in the West Bank with the aim of resuming peace talks – Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu [tried to provoke Iran into a war with Israel](#) that would eventually drag in the United States.

It reminds me of what former CIA Middle East analyst Paul Pillar [referred to this week as](#) “Netanyahu’s tension-stoking brinksmanship: to divert attention from continued Israeli occupation of Palestinian territory and inaction on the festering Israeli-Palestinian conflict.” “[T]he Iran issue,” Pillar has [previously written](#), provides a “distraction” from international “attention to the Palestinians’ lack of popular sovereignty.” Now the situation seems reversed: Israel is escalating war with Gaza to maintain deadlock with their favorite scapegoat, Iran.

Israel, lest we forget, [instigated](#) this resumption of missile exchanges last week when two Palestinian civilians were shot and killed and Israeli tanks intruded into Gaza, prompting Gaza militants to respond by targeting Israeli soldiers, which then gave Israel an excuse to unleash successive airstrikes. And Israel had numerous chances to pacify the situation, considering Hamas publicly [offered to establish a total ceasefire](#) and Egypt [appeared about to broker a truce](#) between the two. Israel has intentionally inched towards escalation from the beginning. Are we to believe this isn’t strategic?

A second theory is that this is a prelude to an Israeli attack on Iran. Specifically, some theorize that Israeli is trying to assassinate top Hamas militants before hitting Iran ... so that

Iran's proxy Hamas cannot retaliate.

A third theory is that Israel is [trying to drag Iran into a war](#). Given that Israeli treatment of Palestinians is perhaps the key source of hostility towards the current Israeli administration in the Arab world, starting a war in Gaza may be an attempt by Israeli to drag Iran into war.

After all, Iran backs Hamas, and Israel just assassinated a top Hamas leader after making an overture of peace to him. So some believe that Israel is attempting to poke the hornet's nest in an attempt to drag the hornets out in the open so that war can be openly declared.

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