OCCUPATION VS. RESISTANCE

Contextualizing Israel’s 2014 Operation Against the Palestinian Population in Gaza

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Abstract: The indiscriminate killing of Palestinians in the occupied Gaza Strip by the Israeli war machine, during July–August 2014, marked yet another phase in the long-drawn-out Palestinian resistance against Israeli occupation. The large-scale death, destruction, and displacement on the Palestinian side underlined a particular pattern of Israeli State behavior vis-à-vis the Palestinians in Gaza. This article argues that the 2014 operation, code named “Operation Protective Edge,” was but a part of Israel’s long-term, well-thought-out, and consistently pursued policy of crushing Palestinian resistance and eliminating Palestinian identity and nationalism.

Keywords: Gaza Strip, Israeli War Machine, Palestinian Resistance, Palestinian Identity

“Operation Protective Edge” was the third such offensive, during which Israel used its massive military might against the innocent and captive Palestinian civilian population of Gaza, since 2008. As in the past, this was also launched in the name of fighting Hamas-sponsored “terrorism.” For 51 days, the Israeli Defence Forces (IDF) employed almost every sophisticated weapon in its armory, with of course the exception of nuclear weapons fortunately, to attack the Palestinians from air and land. Before contextualizing this “Operation” within the larger Israeli ideological vision vis-à-vis the Palestinians, it will be well in order to first provide a brief historical backdrop to the entire issue.

Palestinians in Gaza and the Israeli State

Historically, Gaza has been at the crossroads of many empires. Gaza City has been inhabited for “at least” 35,000 years.¹ The entire coastal strip constitutes a little more

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than 2 percent of Palestine. Its small size (141 sq. miles or 365 sq. kilometers) needs to be mentioned to underline the fact that it never had any separate existence from the larger territorial entity of Palestine in the past; it was always integrated “administratively and politically” with the rest of Palestine. Its location on the eastern coast of the Mediterranean made it vulnerable to outside invaders, from time to time, like the Greeks, the Mongols, the French, etc.

Therefore, resistance to outside invaders has been part of the history and culture of the Gazans. At the same time, Gaza’s position as Palestine’s most important gateway to the outside world, through land and sea, facilitated the growth of a “more flexible and cosmopolitan” lifestyle among its inhabitants. However, the cosmopolitan lifestyle, the resistance culture and the consequences of outside invasion changed radically with the full-scale Zionist colonization of Palestine subsequent to the so-called British mandate.

Because of its small size, Gaza was not the epicenter of conflict between the European Zionist settlers and the Palestinian Arabs. Nevertheless, the impact of what was happening in other parts of Palestine was felt in Gaza as early as 1929. This was the year when around 54 indigenous Jewish inhabitants left Gaza City after the outbreak of anti-Zionist riots in Jerusalem, Hebron, and other parts under the sway of the Arab resistance against Zionist penetration. By 1945, the Zionist settlers, constituting 2 percent of the population, owned 4 percent of the land in Gaza. The proclamation of the state of Israel on May 14, 1948, in violation of the UN Resolution in terms of territorial composition and time stipulation, and the subsequent war between Israel and the Arab states carried devastating demographic implications for Gaza and its inhabitants. The Egyptian control over Gaza made it a safe haven for Palestinians trying to escape the Zionist ethnic cleansing in different parts of the country. It was estimated that one in four Arabs from mandatory Palestine took refuge on 1 percent of Gaza’s land area. Put differently, 200,000 refugees were crammed into a territory inhabited by 80,000 Palestinians. Ever since, the refugee population of Gaza always outnumbered the number of non-refugees or original residents. In 2002, for instance, the refugees constituted 70.2 percent (886,244) of the total population of 1,261,909 in Gaza. The demographic balance continues to remain tilted in favor of the refugees even at present, the number of refugees stands approximately at 1.2 million (around 64 percent) in a total population of 1.9 million. Further, around 41.5 percent of the total population is under 14 years old. This overwhelming refugee character of the Gazan society has had serious political consequences.

Since its establishment, Israel faced a perennial dilemma as to how to deal with the Gaza Strip. During the first two decades (1948–1967), Israel confronted a different set of problems with regard to Gaza, which remained under Egyptian rule. Initially, in 1949, David Ben Gurion toyed with the idea of annexing Gaza by
proposing to rehabilitate the Gazans throughout Israel. This proposal was rejected both by the UN and the Arab World.\textsuperscript{13} With Gamal Abdel Nasser coming into power, one witnessed the early signs of Gaza emerging as the mainspring of Palestinian resistance against the new state of Israel. At a time when efforts were being made by King Abdullah to integrate the Palestinians in the West Bank with the Kingdom of Jordan, the Palestinians in Gaza raised the banner of stiff resistance against the state of Israel, of course with the help of the Egyptian authorities.

In fact, sporadic Palestinian \textit{fedayeen} attacks posed a major challenge to Israel during its period of consolidation. Eliminating these early signs of resistance was the main motive behind Israel’s decision to join Britain and France in invading Egypt in 1956 on a fabricated \textit{casus belli} for the invasion.\textsuperscript{14} Further, the Israeli policy of collective punishment for the civilian population, through the use of disproportionate force, for individual Palestinian armed attacks was evident during this period.\textsuperscript{15} Thus, three basic features of the Israeli policy toward the Palestinians in Gaza, and also in general, emerged very clearly from the early days itself. These were: creating a pretext to justify an attack against the Palestinians, inflicting heavy punishment on the entire population, and deliberate killing of civilians through the use of disproportionate military power. Over the years, these fundamental tenets remained constant, though the nature of the pretext, the methods of punishment and the sophistication of the military power employed to kill innocent and unarmed civilians kept changing.

The Six-Day Arab–Israeli War of June 1967 changed the very geopolitics of the Arab–Israeli–Palestinian conflict radically. In particular, it carried profound implications for the Palestinian struggle for independence and self-determination as the Gaza Strip and West Bank came under Israeli occupation. For a little more than two decades, the Israeli State and its political class were at their ruthless best in ruling over around 4 million Palestinians living in the occupied territories; it was a classic case of colonial occupation.\textsuperscript{16} The Israeli policy can be summed up in two broad categories: building and expanding settlements through a creeping annexation of Palestinian land and resources; and destroying the basic social, economic, political, and cultural rights of the Palestinians.\textsuperscript{17} As a result, one witnessed two parallel developments in the trajectory of Palestinian nationalist struggle against Israel during this phase. At one level, the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) got completely radicalized setting the objective of “complete liberation of Palestine,” which included the state of Israel, through an armed struggle. At another level, the Palestinians living in the West Bank and Gaza led a life of despair and dispossession under the weight of a vast array of draconian measures by the Israeli occupation authority. These measures included arbitrary arrests, administrative detention, demolition of houses, frequent curfews and closures, restriction of movements through innumerable checkpoints, indiscriminate
killings, destruction of property and crops, desecration of holy places, and so on and so forth. As a result, the socio-economic conditions remained quite depressing, humiliating, and explosive. The result was the Palestinian *intifada*, which erupted in the first week of December 1987, which shook up Israel as much as the region and the world at large. Interestingly enough, the spark for the uprising came from the Palestinians from the Jabaliya refugee camp in Gaza though very soon it engulfed the whole of the West Bank and Gaza.

The developments in Gaza during this phase would have a definite bearing on Israeli State policy toward the Palestinians and more importantly on the intra-Palestinian power dynamics in the post-*intifada* phase. Parallel to the radicalization of the PLO was the emergence and growth of Islamist forces, as part of the Muslim brotherhood activities in the occupied territories. Probably to undermine the growing influence of the secular PLO, Israel adopted a deliberate policy of allowing/tolerating the Islamist forces to take strong roots. This was particularly so with regard to individuals, institutions, and activities which provided the foundation for the Islamic Resistance Movement (*Harkat al-Muqawama al-Islamiyya*) better known as Hamas. The other two Islamist groups were the Islamic Jihad movement or the Islamic Jihad and the Islamic Liberation Party. The triangular relationship between the PLO, the Islamist forces and the occupation authority remained a very complex one. Suffice it to say that it was Israel’s tolerant policy, coupled with the pathetic living conditions of Gazans, particularly those in the refugee camps, which created a solid grassroots base that Hamas would use to its best advantage not only against the Israeli occupation but also vis-à-vis the mainstream PLO in the post-1987 *intifada* period, especially after Oslo.

Hamas propagated the establishment of an Islamic state of Palestine, through Jihad, whose territory would encompass the whole of British mandate Palestine. In other words, the new faction sought to delegitimize, rather than dismantle, the state of Israel. In that sense, it never accepted the Oslo process and, therefore, rejected all the institutions and arrangements toward self-governance that flowed from it. From the beginning, Hamas argued that the 1993 peace deal between the PLO and Israel was never meant to end occupation and allow Palestinian sovereignty over West Bank and Gaza finally leading to an independent state; it was a trap to deepen occupation, now with the help and acquiescence of the PA. This was where Hamas found itself in a doubly advantageous position. In the post-Oslo phase, Hamas sought to achieve two interrelated objectives. At one level, it aimed at popularizing a new narrative of the armed resistance against Israel as opposed to the narrative of negotiation and peaceful co-existence. At another level, it made sustained efforts to broaden its support base to project itself as an alternative to the secular, Arafat-led PLO and lead the Palestinian nationalist struggle. The second
intifada, which broke out in September 2000, symbolized the ascendancy of Hamas and its methods of resistance.

After Arafat’s death, the leadership of both the PLO and PA passed on to Mohammad Abbas in a smooth transition of power.\textsuperscript{21} This change gave a decisive edge to Hamas, considered a “terrorist organization” by the West, in Palestinian politics as well as in the struggle against Israeli occupation as Abbas did not enjoy the stature of Arafat. Abbas was perceived as being more soft toward Israel under pressure/persuasion from both the US and Egypt. He made it clear that the only way to end Israeli occupation was through negotiation. This in a way portrayed Hamas as an obstacle toward peace and statehood. It did not work. The majority of Palestinians and the Hamas leadership had a better understanding of the character of the Israeli State than Abbas and other Fatah leaders. In a game-changing verdict, Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza elected Hamas with a clear majority in the January 2006 elections to the PLC.\textsuperscript{22} The Hamas victory opened a new chapter in the Palestinian resistance against Israeli occupation, because two opposite forces would then vie for the control over the Palestinian nationalist struggle. Instead of a united front against the US–Israel machinations, Fatah and Hamas fought against each other in a bitter and bloody fratricidal war which culminated in political and geographical fragmentation of Palestine in June 2007. Consequently, the PA under Abbas remained confined to the West Bank and the Hamas government under Haniyeh operated from and remained limited to the Gaza Strip.\textsuperscript{23} The power struggle between Fatah and Hamas was the crowning achievement of Israel’s colonial policy of divide and rule. Since then, Israel has been ruling over Gaza and the West Bank through two different approaches.

Israel adopted a policy of denial and betrayal toward the West Bank whereby it would do everything unilaterally to make the negotiation process redundant but at the same time would not take any military measures to destabilize the PA. Such a policy served Israeli interests best. As regards to the Gaza Strip, Israel followed a provocative, militaristic, and hostile policy with the objective of destabilizing the Hamas government and keeping Gazans continually on the edge of a multi-level crisis. It would deliberately and methodically provoke Hamas before initiating any military offensive against the Gaza Strip that would not only justify the attack but also help the rightist forces to strengthen their constituencies in the Israeli political spectrum by using the bogey of Hamas threat to the security and survival of Israel. Thus, one can see the symbiotic link between various military invasions against Gaza and the securitization of Israeli political discourse in the aftermath of the so-called Gaza withdrawal. “Operation Protective Edge” was one in a long series that included major military offensives like “Operation Cast Lead” and “Operation Pillar of Defense.”\textsuperscript{24}
The 2014 Operation: Context and Objectives

The July–August 2014 invasion of Gaza, code named “Operation Protective Edge” (the invasion/operation hereafter), was a carefully planned military move by the Israeli political leadership in response to certain developments in the Palestinian, regional, and international context. At the Palestinian level, the formation of a national unity government by both the rival factions, Fatah and Hamas, in the first week of June 2014 came as the most significant breakthrough in post-2007 Palestinian politics. It was a necessity for both factions as much as it was dictated by the overall Palestinian national interest.\textsuperscript{25} The Palestinian unity was somewhat unnerving for the right-wing Israeli government which always thrived on Palestinian division. As part of the unity deal, President Muhamood Abbas assured the international community that the unity government would respect all the previous agreements with Israel which included recognition of the state of Israel and renunciation of violence.\textsuperscript{26} Instead of cooperating with the new government to facilitate the creation of a conducive atmosphere for negotiations to end occupation, the Netanyahu government adopted a hostile attitude toward it by initiating a series of punitive measures like withholding Palestinian tax money and freezing the already suspended negotiations. Indeed, the Israeli Prime Minister issued a scary ultimatum to the Palestinian President to choose between Hamas and Israel.\textsuperscript{27}

While Palestinian unity posed a challenge to Israel by way of exposing the Netanyahu government’s hypocrisy about not having a negotiating partner, the regional realignment of forces subsequent to the overthrow of the Mohammad Morsi government in Egypt provided an opportunity for Israel to carry out its game plan vis-à-vis Hamas and the Gaza Strip. The Egypt–Qatar–Hamas alliance, which Morsi sought to build during his short-lived tenure, had the potential to change the power equation at the Arab-Palestinian level with its own implications for the Israeli–Palestinian conflict. The visits of the exiled Hamas leader, Khaled Meshal, and the Qatari Amir to Gaza were the pointers toward that.\textsuperscript{28} Even though there is a debate over the real gains for Hamas during Morsi’s rule,\textsuperscript{29} the fact remained that life for Gazans remained much more relaxed with the opening of the Rafah border crossing between Egypt and Gaza.\textsuperscript{30} After the military, under Abdel Fattah al-Sisi’s leadership, seized power in Egypt, the whole process was reversed; Sisi was as hostile to Hamas as Morsi was friendly because of the Muslim Brotherhood dimension. Egypt’s anti-Hamas policy included the closure of the Rafah border crossing, tightening Gaza’s fragile economy by destroying most of the 1,200 tunnels which served as the main supply lines between Gaza and the outside world in view of the crippling Israeli blockade, accusing Hamas of supporting al Qaeda – affiliated terrorist groups that had carried out attacks against Egyptian security forces in the Sinai Peninsula, encouraging Tamarud – through

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demonstrations against Hamas in Gaza, accusing Hamas of hatching a conspiracy, along with the Muslim Brotherhood’s Morsi and Iran, against Egypt, and so forth.31 Further, one witnessed a systematic, rather “unprecedented,” media campaign that demonized Gazans.32 In other words, as one Hamas spokesperson in Gaza put it, the Sisi regime was “effectively trying to outmatch the Israelis in tormenting and starving” Gazans.33 Hence, Egypt and the hawkish political dispensation in Israel saw political and strategic gains in destabilizing Hamas in Gaza. The Sisi government’s position at the regional level was further strengthened by the open support, both political and financial, extended by Saudi Arabia and its other allies in the Gulf like the UAE and Kuwait.

At the international level, Israel was under pressure to deliver on the negotiation front, particularly from the Obama administration. Indeed, the issue had caused some strain in the personal equation between President Barack Obama and Prime Minister Netanyahu. The so-called peace process, which had remained stalled since 2010 on the issue of settlements, was revived by US Secretary of State John Kerry in July 2013. Kerry had invested heavily in terms of his prestige, time, and energy to push the parties toward a final agreement within a nine-month time frame, by April 2014. As in the past, the nine-month deadline meant nothing for Israel and by the close of 2013 it was evident that the Kerry mission was becoming another exercise in futility as far as the goal of achieving the final status agreement between Israel and Palestine was concerned. It was a diplomatic failure34 from which the Obama administration could never recover, further widening the differences between the US and Israel on the peace process. The Israeli Prime Minister came under criticism at home for annoying the most important strategic ally, the US. Therefore, Netanyahu desperately needed a distraction from the negotiation process, a distraction that should appear credible and justifiable for the Western audience at large and for US public opinion in particular. There could be no better context for a hawkish political leadership to somehow swing Western/US public opinion in favor of Israel than initiating a war with the Palestinians. Because then the whole debate could be reconstructed around the issue of “threats to the safety and security” of the state of Israel from “Palestinian terrorists,” and not peace negotiation with Palestinians. Thus began the invasion of Gaza in July 2014.

The stated, rather ostensible, twin objectives of the invasion were to stop the “rocket attacks” by Hamas and destroy its “capabilities to conduct operations against Israel”; and to degrade the “military infrastructure” of various “terror organizations” and “their network of cross-border assault tunnels.” The first objective was stated when Israel’s air campaign against the Gaza Strip began on July 7, 2014, while the ground operation, which started on July 17, 2014, was justified on the basis of the second goal.35 Thus, the overarching ostensible objective was Israel’s “security.”36 The real objective behind the Gaza invasion,
however, was two-fold. In the immediate context, it was aimed at destroying Palestinian unity and deflecting US pressure to negotiate with the Palestinians. Because the formation of a national unity government, which Abbas announced in the first week of June 2014, came as a “great threat to the refusenik policies of the Israeli right-wing government” as the pretext that Abbas “does not represent the Palestinians” or that “the government is half of the Palestinian nation” was “falling apart.” That was the reason why the Israeli military offensive began even before the unity government could “assume its full responsibilities” in Gaza thereby leaving everything to Hamas to decide. The assumption here is: had the unity government, which was purely transitional in nature, been allowed to fulfill its priority tasks, which included re-building of the Gaza Strip and facilitating the long-postponed Palestine elections in 2015, things would have been entirely different.

The long-term Israeli goal was to de-populate Gaza by emptying it of Palestinians. This was in keeping with the overall Israeli policy of de-Palestinianization which referred to a process of deliberate and methodical killing of Palestinians, destruction of their infrastructure, and confiscation of their land. In the occupied West Bank, this policy is being pursued by systematically building a racist, apartheid regime through a separation wall, fast-paced Jewish settlements, total control over water resources and the economy, depriving the Palestinians of their political, social, economic, and cultural rights. The strategy is to create a situation that would psychologically terrorize the Palestinians to leave Palestine or to live as a colonized people to serve the colonial power at the cost of their independent identity and legitimate rights as a nation. In Gaza, Israel has been pursuing the objective by carrying out periodic military invasions of the densely populated and impoverished region. Crushing of the armed resistance, represented by Hamas and Islamic Jihad (IJ), has been the most convenient tool. The Israeli objective has been to destabilize and delegitimize Hamas in the eyes of its supporters and demonize it before the international community. Without Hamas, the Israeli right wing thinks, the Gazans would be left with only two options: either leave the territory or submit to Israeli rule. Ironically, the Gazans appear to have decided neither to leave nor to accept Israeli subjugation; they have decided to stay in Gaza and resist Israeli rule even while living under subhuman conditions due to the decade-long blockade. However, by consistently focusing on Hamas as a mortal threat to the security of Israel and branding it as a terrorist organization before the international community, particularly the West, Israel has been able to scuttle, rather than sabotage, the peace process.

Another un-declared but related objective, which is common to all Israeli military operations in Gaza in the post-2007 phase, has been what can be called the strategic weakening or staggered crushing of the armed Palestinian resistance,
represented predominantly by Hamas and its importance in the Palestinian national movement. Israel, which has awesome military superiority and is fully backed by successive US administrations, can always crush Hamas in one go by completely eliminating its leadership and the entire infrastructure. It does not want to do this for two reasons: 1) it is somewhat worried about the American public opinion (not so much about International Law and International Humanitarian Law, much less world opinion) which is becoming increasingly critical of Israeli handling of occupied Palestinian territory since the 1987 Palestinian intifada; and 2) more importantly, the total crushing of Hamas would force the Israeli leadership to negotiate meaningfully with the Palestinian Authority. Because, then, the argument that Israel does not have a negotiating partner will not hold ground. Moreover, by crushing Hamas fully, Israel will lose its bogey of terrorism and security as the Abbas-led PA has completely renounced armed resistance in favor of negotiation. Further, keeping Hamas alive serves the Israeli game of keeping the Palestinians divided and fighting with each other. Therefore, the basic objective of all the Israeli military operations is not to punish/finish Hamas as much as to punish the ordinary Palestinians so that the Palestinians either leave Gaza or perish there in suffering and humiliation. There is also the issue of the Palestinian refugees’ right to return which Israel rejects outright. Trying to find a reason behind Israel’s periodic invasion of the Gaza Strip, an academic from the Al Aqsa University in Gaza observed the following in the midst of the invasion:

Those who have been killed had lived such short lives, all of it in the Gaza Strip – a life lived and lost as refugees under brutal Israeli occupation. It is our fate: to die in the 2006 war, or if not, in the 2008–2009 war. Or if you’ve survived, then another attempt in 2012, and if still living, then they would finish you off in 2014, or next time in 2015, 2016, 2017?

But is this enough for them? No! Gaza is a challenge to the Israeli regime because here two-thirds of the population were refugees who are entitled to the right of return under UN Resolution 194. Could this be the real reason Israel is committing genocide on Gaza repeatedly? Kill the “brute” and live happily ever after?

Gaza has become a permanent war zone; the biggest concentration camp on earth has become a burial site – a noisy graveyard. The Palestinian body has become the ultimate target of the Israeli bullet – the younger the better! The Palestinian body has, in other words, become the site of justice: eliminate the body, and it will leave a vacuum that can be occupied – a land without people for people without land.40
Israel’s officially stated strategic objectives behind the operation were: “to
defend its citizens and restore sustained calm and security to the Israeli civilian
population from unlawful attacks.” Prime Minister Netanyahu sought to provide
reasons for the operation on July 8, at the beginning itself:

In recent days, Hamas terrorists have fired hundreds of rockets at Israel’s civilians.
No other country lives under such a threat, and no country would accept such a
threat. Israel will not tolerate the firing of rockets on our cities and towns. We
have therefore significantly expanded our operations against Hamas and other
terrorist organizations in Gaza ... 

During the 51-day operation, Israel’s military machine focused on two central
goals:

1. degradation of Hamas’s and other terror organizations military infrastructure,
   particularly with respect to their rockets and mortar launching capabilities,
   and ...
2. neutralization of their network of cross-border assault tunnels.

Netanyahu’s self-righteous security narrative, embedded into the explanatory
note regarding the 2014 operation, and the stated objectives of the Israeli govern-
ment are flawed on two counts. First, with regard to the assertion that “no country
lives under such a threat,” the question that needs to be asked is: Does any other
country occupy the people and their land for so long, and so brutally, where the
inhabitants are deprived of their basic rights as human beings? Second, if the tar-
get was “Hamas’s and other terrorist organizations’ military infrastructure,” then
why the indiscriminate bombing of civilian homes and infrastructure and the kill-
ing of ordinary Palestinians, including the most vulnerable sections like children
and women?

Prelude, Course, and Consequences

The prelude to the invasion conformed to a familiar pattern of Israel’s militaristic
behavior in the occupied territories: finding an alibi to attack the Palestinians for
domestic and international consumption. The entire military operation was orches-
trated on the basis of the alleged involvement of Hamas in an incident that took
place in the West Bank. This referred to the kidnapping of three teenage Jewish
settlers in the occupied West Bank on June 12, 2014. Their bodies were found in
a valley outside Hebron on June 30, 2014. Israel responded, as expected, in two
ways. First, it accused Hamas of being involved in the abduction and killing of the
young settlers without producing any evidence. Second, the Israeli security forces launched a massive manhunt and arrested a large number of people “affiliated” with Hamas. These arrests included the re-arrest of a number of prisoners released as part of the 2011 Gilad Shalit deal. Israel did not stop at that; it launched air strikes on Hamas members in Gaza on the mere assumption of its involvement in the kidnapping. Hamas responded by firing dozens of rockets into Israel. Then began Israel’s massive military offensive in the Gaza Strip. The Israel army killed two Palestinians, suspected of being responsible for the kidnapping and killing of the Jewish settlers in the third week of September 2014 in the West Bank.

From the sequence of events narrated above few questions emerge that point toward Israel’s real intentions. Why did Israel carry out such a massive manhunt and arrest innocent Palestinians simply because of their affiliation with Hamas? Why did Israel not produce concrete evidence before the international community to prove the involvement of Hamas in the kidnapping and killing of the settlers? By all standards, the abduction and killing of the three teenage settlers was gruesome and despicable. If so, what about the revenge killing of a 16-year-old Palestinian Arab boy who was burned alive by Jewish extremists? Why did not the Israeli intelligence and security agencies quietly nab the suspected Palestinians and bring them to justice as per Israeli law? Why did not Israel wait till the culprits were brought to book? Why did Israel re-arrest the prisoners released under the Gilad Shalit deal? Most importantly, why did Israel first initiate air strikes against Hamas in Gaza? The only answer to these questions could be that Israel deliberately provoked Hamas to create a pretext to launch such a massive military offensive. It needs to be underlined that until the crisis began, Hamas was scrupulously adhering to the terms of the ceasefire agreed upon to end “Operation Pillar of Defense” in 2012. These included maintaining “relative peace” in Gaza, arresting Islamic Jihad members and other groups “who fired rockets” into southern Israel, etc. In fact, it was Israel that violated both the 2011 prisoners exchange deal and the 2012 ceasefire agreement.

The 2014 Israeli military offensive in Gaza was conducted through three distinct phases, interspersed with several truce/ceasefire attempts mediated by both Egypt and the US. In terms of duration, the offensive continued for 51 days, thus making it the largest of the three major Israeli military invasions into the Gaza Strip in the post-2007 period. The operation began on July 7, 2014, with the stated objective of “stopping the rocket attacks by Hamas and destroying its capabilities to conduct operations” against Israel. This initial phase, which was primarily limited to “precision” airstrikes, continued for ten days. The second phase, which was launched on July 17, was a ground operation. The entry of Israeli ground troops into “a limited area of the Gaza Strip” was aimed at identifying and dismantling the “cross-border tunnels” which, according to Israeli government
sources, “originated from the outskirts of the urban areas” of Gaza. During this phase, aerial strikes continued along with ground troops attacks. On August 5, Israeli troops withdrew after “locating and neutralizing 32 cross-border assault tunnels.” With this began the third and final phase of the operation which continued till August 26; this phase was marked by “alternating ceasefires and air-strikes.” The operation came to an end when both the Israeli government and the Palestinians “adhered to an unconditional ceasefire.”

An interesting feature of this operation was the ceasefire puzzle. An analysis of the various attempts toward a long-term ceasefire provides a clear indication of the larger objective sought to be achieved by both the conflicting parties as well as the so-called mediators. A survey of the operation reveals that during the conflict period, as many as four short-term ceasefire arrangements, ranging from five hours to five days, were agreed upon. During the negotiations, both the US and Egypt sought to convert the short-term humanitarian true and ceasefire arrangements into a long-term lasting ceasefire to end the fighting, especially after the land operation began and casualties mounted. The attempts failed as both Israel and Hamas rejected the proposal at different points in time. This was due to the fundamentally different conditionalities which both put to end the fighting early. Hamas put three conditions: lifting the eight-year blockade that Israel had imposed on Gaza, opening the Rafah border crossing with Egypt and freeing the Palestinian prisoners who had been released as part of the 2011 Gilad swap and re-arrested by Israel before the OPE. The most important of all these three demands was, of course, the lifting of the blockade. Israel’s condition was a fully demilitarized Gaza Strip that would necessarily involve disarming Hamas. For Israel, the objective was to crush Palestinian resistance while for Hamas and other Palestinians living in Gaza, it was a question of survival. As one senior Hamas leader, Osama Hamadan, put it “you cannot put Palestinians in a jail and tell them to live quietly.”

The consequences of the invasion for Gazans were devastating from every angle. These can be broadly categorized under human casualties in terms of death and injury; the psychological dimension of death, destruction and damage; the impact on Gaza’s socio-economic infrastructure; and the implications for the West Bank, including East Jerusalem. Even though the casualty figures cited by different sources vary, what is indisputable is the disproportionate number of civilians killed compared to the combatants. Further, of all the three major military operations that Israel carried out in the Gaza Strip since 2008, the 2014 operation caused the highest number of Palestinian death and injury. As the United Nations Human Rights Council Mandated Commission of Inquiry rightly observed: “… regardless of the exact proportion of civilians to combatants, the high incidence of loss of human life and injury in Gaza is heart-breaking; all the more so in the many cases in which several family members died together.” During the invasion, 2,251
Palestinians were killed out of which 1,462 were civilians which included the most vulnerable sections like women, 299, and children numbering 551. The number of injured stood at 11,231 including 3,540 women and 3,436 children. It needs to be pointed out that nearly 10 percent of the injured became permanently disabled. More than the numbers, the method of killing innocent, unarmed, and ordinary Palestinian civilians was more disturbing. The Israeli Defence Forces (IDF) carried out more than 6,000 airstrikes during the operation, which included “targeted attacks” on residential and other buildings in the Gaza Strip. In as many as 142 cases, Palestinian families suffered the loss of the lives of three or more members of the same family in the same incident due to the destruction of residential buildings. The UN Commission conducted a detailed investigation of 15 IDF strikes on residential buildings in the Gaza Strip. A total of 216 people were killed in these strikes which included 115 children and 50 women. The following table provides the name of the residential complex, its location, the date and timing of the Israeli strike, the number of killed and injured, etc.

The Israeli government disputed not only the figures but also the categorization of the killing. While mentioning the Palestinian fatality figure, the government document underlined that the “number and percentage of Palestinian civilian fatalities is actually much lower than” what was reported by various sources. According to the IDF analysis, 2,125 Palestinians were killed. Of these, at least 936 (44 percent of the total) were militants and 761 (36 percent of the total) were civilians. By May 2015, when the report was published, the Israeli government had not classified the rest 428 (20 percent of the total), which were all male Palestinians aged 16–50.

The psychological dimension related to the dehumanizing aspects of the invasion which are beyond description. A detailed account of the daily horror that ordinary Gazans had to undergo during the 51-day operation remains beyond the scope of this article. Nevertheless, a few points need to be highlighted to put the larger issue of the Israeli State’s approach toward the Palestinian people in perspective.

The indiscriminate killing of civilians, including the most vulnerable sections, and targeting of facilities meant for the wellbeing of these sections by the IDF was a matter of grave concern. Take, for instance, the killing of children playing on the beach and on the rooftop; the bombing of homes for the disabled, rehabilitation centers, hospitals, kindergartens, etc. Residential buildings were targeted at times killing an entire extended family. No place was safe. As a result, people were left with the option of choosing a somewhat less dangerous place to escape, if possible, Israeli bombing. In other words, everybody and every location was a “legitimate” target for the IDF. Israel always justified the killing of Palestinian civilians on two counts: first, it argued that the IDF tried to avoid civilian casualties, and
### Table 1  IDF Strikes on Residential Buildings in Gaza

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Warning</th>
<th>Possible Military Objective Identified</th>
<th>Weapon Likely Used</th>
<th>Killed</th>
<th>Women</th>
<th>Children</th>
<th>Injured</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kaware</td>
<td>Khan Younis</td>
<td>8 July 3 p.m.</td>
<td>Phone call; Roof-knock</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>JDAM equipped 500lb or 1000lb bomb</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>25–29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Al Hajj</td>
<td>Khan Younis</td>
<td>10 July 2 a.m.</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>JDAM equipped 500lb bomb</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>19, 7 Women and 4 children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Al Batsh</td>
<td>Tuffah, Gaza City</td>
<td>12 July 9.30 p.m.</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>JDAM equipped bombs (either 500lb or 1000lb)</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>16–45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shuhei bar</td>
<td>Gaza City Children</td>
<td>17 July 5.30 p.m.</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>JDAM equipped 500lb MPR bomb</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Al Qassas</td>
<td>Shuja’iya</td>
<td>20 July 4.30 p.m.</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>AGM 114 Hellfire Missiles</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>10 including 8 children and 1 woman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Al Hallaq and Al Ammar</td>
<td>Al-Remal, Gaza City</td>
<td>20 July 6.45 p.m.</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>AGM 114 Hellfire Missiles</td>
<td>7+4 from Ammar Family</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3+4</td>
<td>Ammar family: 5 children injured</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abu Jama</td>
<td>Abu Safar; East of Khan Younis</td>
<td>20 July 7.50 p.m.</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>JDAM equipped bomb, unknown size</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>3 including 1 child</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Al Sayam</td>
<td>Rafah</td>
<td>21 July 6.15 a.m.</td>
<td>No (house next door was hit)</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>AGM 114 Hellfire Missiles</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8 including 2 women and 5 children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Case</td>
<td>Location</td>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Warning</td>
<td>Possible Military Objective Identified</td>
<td>Weapon Likely Used</td>
<td>Killed</td>
<td>Women</td>
<td>Children</td>
<td>Injured</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kilani (Al Salam)</td>
<td>Gaza City</td>
<td>21 July 8 p.m.</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>JDAM equipped 500lb bomb</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Al Najjar</td>
<td>Khan Younis</td>
<td>26 July 3 a.m.</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>JDAM equipped 1000lb or 2000lb bomb</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abu Jabr</td>
<td>Al Buraij refugee camp</td>
<td>29 July 12.30 a.m.</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>JDAM equipped 2000lb bomb</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7 including 4 women and 3 children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dheir</td>
<td>Rafah</td>
<td>29 July 4.30 a.m.</td>
<td>Possible roof-knock</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>JDAM equipped 500lb bomb</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3 children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Al Dali Building</td>
<td>Khan Younis</td>
<td>29 July 7.30 a.m.</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>JDAM equipped 2000lb bomb</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>21 including 4 children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Balatah</td>
<td>Jabaliya refugee camp</td>
<td>29 July 4 p.m.</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>AGM 114 Hellfire Missiles</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>41 including 17 children and 5 women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Al Farra</td>
<td>Khan Younis</td>
<td>1 August 2.30 a.m.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>AGM 114 Hellfire Missiles</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2, 1 a baby</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>A total of 216 killed</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Of whom 115 children</td>
<td>And 50 women</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Source:** Report of the detailed findings of the independent commission of inquiry established pursuant to Human Rights Council resolution S-21/1, (A/HRC/29CRP.4), June 23, 2015, pp. 57–58.
second, the IDF always “warned civilians” to leave their homes “before any military action in their neighborhood.” But the question was: where would the Palestinians go? This assumed importance in view of the fact that since 2006 Gaza was under siege and all the exit points were closed. The predicament of the Palestinians could be gauged from the following statement by a Gazan: “This is not downtown Manhattan or London with trains, buses, planes to take us from here to anywhere we would like to go!”

The most important psychological dimension was the trauma and agony experienced by those who survived relentless shelling and bombing by Israeli forces. These survivors witnessed the killing of their near and dear ones in front of them and underwent the trauma of looking for dead bodies out of the rubble. These were the people who also witnessed their houses being completely destroyed and their belongings damaged or rendered useless. The challenges of overcoming the loss and building a new life were too daunting for these people.62 Mention must be made about the operation’s impact on the orphans of Gaza. It was reported that the 2014 Israeli offensive rendered more than 1,500 children orphans; this was in addition to the already existing tens of thousands in Gaza. Some “watched their families and mothers die in front of them”; others found their family dead after returning home from the market; and so on and so forth.

The psychological condition of these orphans is very traumatic. The observations of some of the functionaries of the al-Amal Institute for Orphans in Gaza encapsulate it. As a board member put it: “They don’t steep. They’re always scared. We spend as much time as possible with them so they can cope.” Most of them suffer from a deep sense of paranoia. So much so that some even wish to die so that they can join their parents who are already dead. Others get scared and cry whenever they hear ambulance sirens which are heard frequently during the war.63

Another dimension of the dehumanizing process unleashed by the IDF during the invasion was the condition of the dead bodies. It was a horrible scene to see human bodies thrown on the streets as if they were less dignified and valuable than even dead animals. During temporary ceasefires, people were seen dragging decomposed bodies from the pile of rubble caused by Israeli bombardment. What was worse was that continuous Israeli shelling prevented Palestinians from giving a decent burial to their loved ones; they faced a severe “shortage of space and supplies to bury loved ones.” So much so that people were forced to keep the dead bodies in commercial refrigerators as the morgues were overwhelmed by the corpses of dead Palestinians. As a Palestinian from Rafah pointed out: “the missiles are hitting everyone … there is nowhere for us to seek shelter.” As a result, in some cases, dead bodies lay outside in the streets for days, compelling one reporter to state that the “smell of death is thick” in Gaza air. What was more unbelievable was that the IDF, which prided itself on being the most “moral and
“responsible” military force in the world, did not even spare the cemetery in Beit Hanoun from bombardment. Palestinians living there “spoke of bones coming out of the ground of the destroyed cemetery due to the intensity of bombardment.” Thus, it would not be wrong to state that the IDF debased itself beyond any comprehension by bombing the dead.

The 2014 Israeli military operation also had a debilitating impact on Gaza’s socio-economic infrastructure, which was already in an extremely bad state due to long years of blockade. The damage to infrastructure was caused by the Israeli policy of indiscriminate shelling and bombing of civilian targets which violated international law. These included, for instance, educational institutions (the Islamic university in Gaza City), religious places (the Shifa Mosque in Gaza City), hospitals, health centers, primary health care facilities, factories, workshops, construction sites, food processing and pharmaceutical plants, water and electricity supply centers, multi-story buildings, commercial centers and office complexes, Gaza’s only power station, UNRWA schools, tunnels, even the Al-Bisan Zoo in Beit Lahiya in northern Gaza, etc. These actions resulted in large-scale internal displacement (around 440,000), huge job loss, lack of basic amenities, food shortage, paralysis of agricultural and fishing activities, skyrocketing price rise of essential food items (the price of eggs went up by 40 percent, potatoes by 42 percent, and tomatoes by 179 percent), etc. On the whole, as the UN Human Rights Council report underlined, the 2014 Israeli operation posed “significant challenges” to the enjoyment of basic rights of the Gazans such as an adequate standard of living, housing, food, water, sanitation, power supply, and, above all, health and education. The fundamental reason behind this massive destruction of socio-economic infrastructure in Gaza was that the IDF made no distinction between “civilian objects and military objectives.” There was hardly any red line for the IDF. The generic justification provided by Israel for targeting civilian infrastructure and institutions was that these were “terrorist homes and institutions,” military “command centers,” “centers of weapon development,” and storage, etc. Preliminary estimates put the cost of Gaza reconstruction at $6 billion.

The military operation in Gaza had its own impact on the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, not so much in terms of death and destruction but from the perspective of the overall Israeli approach toward Palestinian resistance against occupation. Israeli State behavior toward the residents of the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, during the entire operation period reinforces the fundamental argument in this paper throughout that the Jewish state is premised upon crushing Palestinian resistance, irrespective of the latter’s form, intensity, content, and style. It needs to be underlined that Israel conducted another somewhat little-known operation named “Operation Brother’s Keeper” in the West Bank which was launched between June 12 to June 30, 2014, in response to the kidnapping of
The stated objective was to “find the three youths and simultaneously weaken Hamas terror.” As per the IDF claim, these objectives were met on September 23, 2014. During this period, the Palestinians living in the West Bank suffered no less than their Gaza counterparts.

The punitive measures by the Israeli Security Forces (ISF) against the Palestinians can be analyzed at three levels: 1) during the search operation that followed the kidnapping and later murder, of the three Israeli teenagers; 2) during the clashes between Palestinians and the ISF subsequent to the revenge killing of 16-year-old Mohammad Abu Khdeir by Israelis; and 3) during the solidarity protests/demonstrations by Palestinians against the Gaza operation by the IDF. The measures included mass arrests; frequent and widespread raids on Palestinian homes, charitable associations, universities, and media outlets; administrative detentions; torture and ill-treatment of adults and children; a number of restrictions on the movement of Palestinians, particularly in the Hebron area; house demolitions; and, above all, restrictions on Palestinian access to the Al Aqsa Mosque. As in any conflict, women and children suffered the most. For instance, the raids on Palestinian homes were conducted mostly during the early hours of the morning when most family members were “sleeping with light garments.” In June, July, and August 2014, the number of children arrested and kept under military detention stood at 201, 191, and 200, respectively. During the mass arrest drive by the ISF, more than 2050 Palestinians were arrested which included 27 members of the Palestinian Legislative Council and over 60 members who had been freed in 2011 as part of the prisoner swap deal that had ensured the release of an Israeli soldier, Gilad Shalit. An important psychological dimension, having a bearing on inter-communal passion, related to the rise in “extreme anti-Palestinian rhetoric” by some Israelis, especially in the social media, “including revenge and hatred” against Palestinians after the kidnapping incident. What was alarming was that the anti-Palestinian rhetoric degenerated into “sexual and negative references” to the women folk of persons having links with “armed groups and individuals killed during the conflict.” Further, the Palestinians also suffered due to settler violence and settlement building during this period. There were incidents of physical assaults, stone-throwing, firing with live ammunition against the Palestinians and damage to Palestinian property by settlers.

The protests by Palestinians in the West Bank, against the Israeli invasion of Gaza, was a significant indicator of intra-Palestinian unity and solidarity against the occupation. Through these protests, which also led to the death of a few protesters, the West Bank Palestinians sought to send a message to the international community that they stood in solidarity with the Gazans in their resistance against Israeli occupation. The protests in East Jerusalem near Al Aqsa Mosque, after
Friday prayer, was certainly a reflection of the spirit of Palestinian resistance, despite the devious methods adopted by Israel since 2006 to fragment the Palestinian community and weaken its struggle for an independent state. As one Palestinian, praying on the street near the Al Aqsa Mosque, stated: “we are with the resistance [in Gaza], and this is our way of resisting. The same Israeli government that is carrying this aggression in Gaza is taking away our right to pray.” Further, in some cases, the PLO gave a call to Palestinians to protest against the Israeli invasion of Gaza terming it a “genocide.” The protests “appeared to be the largest” against Israeli occupation since the end of the second intifada.

Conclusion

The 2014 operation was a well-thought-out military strategy by the Netanyahu government to send a clear message to the Palestinians in general and those living in Gaza in particular: surrender to Israeli occupation or suffer the IDF brutality or leave Palestine. The corollary dimension of this continual and excessive focus on a militaristic approach toward Hamas in Gaza was to put the security narrative at the center stage of international, especially Western, debate over the Israeli–Palestinian conflict. Such a security narrative, spearheaded by the Israeli State, not only sought to justify the IDF’s brutal methods against innocent, unarmed, and highly vulnerable Palestinian civilians as “legitimate means of self-defense” but also to completely undermine and delegitimize the Palestinians’ right to resist Israeli occupation. Because the Palestinian nationalist aspirations challenge the very foundation on which the right-wing and ultra-right-wing forces have maintained their dominance over Israeli politics and state since the second intifada. By seeking the limelight on the “Hamas-sponsored terrorist threat” from Gaza, the Israeli State conveniently used it as a cover to carry out its colonial practices in the West Bank – creeping encroachment of Palestinian land, building new settlements and expanding the existing ones, inflicting daily suffering on the Palestinians through various restrictions and many forms of collective punishment, encouraging settler vigilantism, strengthening its stranglehold on East Jerusalem, etc.

Being the longest of all the three major military offensives launched by Israel against Gaza since 2008, the consequences of the 2014 invasion were devastating for the Palestinians in terms of loss of lives, the traumatic experience of those who survived and witnessed the indiscriminate killing of their near and dear ones, the infrastructural damage and destruction, the further impoverishment of the Gazans, and so on and so forth. The invasion also underlined Israel’s mastery over various forms of collective punishment against the Palestinians in total violation of international humanitarian law and the Geneva Convention. These aspects were largely neglected by the Western media which sought to overemphasize the Israeli
narrative and thereby granting a degree of legitimacy to the extreme right-wing agenda pursued by the Netanyahu government vis-à-vis the Palestinians. This naturally put Hamas at a great disadvantage in garnering support for its legitimate right to resist Israeli occupation and the crippling siege of Gaza for almost a decade. In fact, the branding of Hamas as a “terrorist organization” by the US and European countries emboldened Israel to continue with its militaristic policy against Gaza with impunity. The blanket US support, in particular, sustained and, in a way, justified brazen Israeli aggression against Gaza.

Targeting the Hamas has been largely a tactic of Israel’s broad strategy of crushing Palestinian resistance in any form. Therefore, the real issue is not Hamas per se but the message and the spirit it represents in the Palestinians’ long struggle against Israeli occupation. If Hamas gets crushed by Israel’s brute military force in due course, or moderates itself by bringing fundamental changes in its Charter, or gets marginalized in Palestinian politics, there could be another organization to take its place to carry out the resistance against Israel as years of peace negotiation has brought no concrete gains for the Palestinians. Therefore, the core issue is Israeli occupation vs. Palestinian resistance. To put it differently, as long as the Israeli occupation remains Palestinian resistance will be there. Israel’s military operations against Gaza, including the one in 2014, are but attempts to divert the attention of the international community from that core issue under the grab of “Hamas terrorism vs. Israeli security.” Prolonged reliance on such diversionary tactics, without resolving the core issue, may ultimately backfire and harm, rather than benefit the Israeli State and society.

* Some scholars use the term “Zionist Entity,” instead of Israel. The present author does not agree with those viewpoints and, therefore, has used Israel as per the UN and International Law.

Endnotes

3. Filiuaug.
5. This was probably a panic reaction to the overall inter-communal animosity that had gripped Palestine subsequent to the British “mandate,” because the native Jews had been well protected by their Arab neighbors. Filiuaug.
6. Ibid.
7. For a brilliant exposition on this see Ilan Pappe, The Ethnic cleansing of Palestine (One World: Oxford, 2006).
8. Filiuaug.
As regards the overall trend in 1998 around 83 percent of Palestinian refugees reside in historic Palestine (Gaza constituting the highest at 15.6 compared to the west, including East Jerusalem, at 11.6 percent) and bordering countries like Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, and Egypt, 10 percent in other Arab countries, and 7 percent in the rest of the world. See ibid, pp. 16–17, Table 2.1.

10. The exact figure at the end of 2018 was: 1,989,970, Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics.

11. Ibid.


22. For details, see ibid., pp. 308–319.


24. “Operation Cast Lead” began on December 27, 2008, and ended on January 18, 2009. Israel’s stated objective was “to stop indiscriminate Palestinian rocket fire into Israel and weapons

25. The formation of the unity government followed the April 23, 2014, reconciliation between PLO and Hamas. It was agreed after differences between the two sides over portfolios were sorted out. The ground realities compelled both to work towards reconciliation. Hamas was confronting mounting challenges in view of the continuing Israeli blockade and, more importantly, its strained relationship with Egypt resulting in the “crackdown on border tunnels.” Similarly, Abbas was facing a highly disaffected constituency due to economic hardship, stalled peace talks and increasing Israeli settlements. See Dalia Hatuqa, “Palestinians form consensus government,” Aljazeera, June 2, 2014.

26. In a pre-recorded message, aired on Palestinian TV, Abbas stated: “This government, like its predecessors, will abide by all previously signed agreements and the PLO’s political agenda,” ibid.

27. Prime Minister Netanyahu had warned Abbas in the last week of April 2014 itself when the reconciliation deal with Hamas was struck. In an interview with BBC’s Middle East Editor, Jeremy Bowen, Netanyahu had told that Abbas could “have peace with Israel or a pact with Hamas – he can’t have both.” He further added: “As long as I am Prime Minister of Israel, I will never negotiate with a Palestinian government that is backed by Hamas terrorists that are calling for our liquidation.” www.bbc.com>news>world –midd, April 24, 2014. Accessed on September 5, 2020.


30. See Jerusalem Post, January 14, 2014.

31. See ibid., A senior Egyptian security official reportedly stated: “Gaza is next … We cannot get liberated from the terrorism of the Brotherhood in Egypt without ending it in Gaza, which lies in our borders,” cited in ibid.
34. That the US initiative was a total failure became quite evident when in the last week of June 2014, Martin Indyk, the Chief US negotiator for Israeli–Palestinian talks, resigned amid mounting tension in the Palestinian territories. For details see *Aljazeera*, June 27, 2014.
37. These comments were made by Yaron Ezrahi, Professor Emeritus of Political Science at the Hebrew University, cited in *Aljazeera*, June 2, 2014.
38. UN Report, p. 18.
42. Ibid.
43. Ibid, p. 34.
44. They were: Eyal Yifrach (19), Gilad Shaer (16), and Naftali Fraenkel (16). All three were seminary students. See “Israel kills suspects in teen settler deaths,” *Al Jazeera*, September 23, 2014.
46. The suspects were: Marwan Qawasmeh (33), and Amer Abu Aisheh (29). “We opened fire, they returned fire and they were killed in the exchange,” said the Israeli Army spokesman, Lt. Colonel Peter Lerner. See “Israel kills suspects in teen settler deaths,” *Al Jazeera*, September 23, 2014.
47. On July 2, 2014, Mohammud Abu Khdeir, from Shufat neighbourhood of East Jerusalem was burnt alive to death in West Jerusalem. See, UN Report, p. 134.
50. As has already been mentioned, Operation Cast Lead lasted for 22 days (December 27, 2008, to January 18, 2009), while Operation Pillar of Defense began on November 14, 2012, and ended on November 21, 2012 (eight days). While the first was conducted during the premiership of Ehud Olmert, the second was carried out under the leadership of PM Netanyahu.
51. UN Report, p. 18.
52. Israeli Government Report, p. 32 and p. 34.
53. UN Report, p. 18.
54. For an analysis of the intricacies of the short-term humanitarian truce/ceasefire, their timing and duration, the actors involved in the process, etc. See *The New York Times*, July 17, 2014, and *Al Jazeera* July 17, July 24, July 26, August 7, August 9, August 15, August 20, and August 23, 2014.
56. See *Al Jazeera*, July 26, 2014.
58. UN Report, p. 154.
59. Ibid.
60. UN Report, p. 32 and Table on pp. 57–58.
64. Mohammed Omer, “Gaza: No place to bury the dead,” Al Jazeera, August 4, 2014; “‘Smell of death thick’ in Gaza air,” Al Jazeera, August 1, 2014.
66. For details see, “UN says illegal blockade must be lifted,” Al Jazeera, August 12, 2014; Mohammed Omer, “As prices soar, Gaza food crisis looms,” Al Jazeera, August 23, 2014; Mohammed Omer, “New life is born amid Gaza destruction,” Al Jazeera, August 14, 2014.
68. See ibid., p. 61; also see, “Israel strikes university in Gaza city,” Al Jazeera, August 2, 2014.
69. See “Billions needed to rebuild Gaza,” Al Jazeera, August 7, 2014.
70. UN Report, p. 134. The Israeli teenagers were, as has already been mentioned, kidnapped and brutally murdered. They were last seen near the Israeli settlement Gush Etzion. See ibid.
71. See UN Report, p. 134.
72. For details see UN Report, pp. 133–148.
73. Ibid., p. 136.
74. Ibid., pp. 135–136.
75. Ibid., p. 135.
76. For more details See ibid., p. 147.
78. Ibid.