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***Israel, Hamas and Gaza 14-21 November 2012:
Operation Pillar of Defense;
Operation Stones of Shale;
Operation Blue Sky.***

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Introduction

This Special Edition of the *London Security Policy Study* provides an overview with impressions of Israel's Operation Pillar of Defense (Hebrew: עִמּוּד עָנָן) and the corresponding Operation Stones of Shale (Arabic: حجارة سجيل) by the Izz ad-Din al-Qassam Brigades of Hamas and Operation Blue Sky (Arabic: السماء الزرقاء) by members of the Palestinian Islamic Jihad. Although these are separate entities in theory including self identification of its members their goals and actions were identical and in unison during this period. Hamas (Arabic: حماس) which is an acronym in Arabic for "The Islamic Resistance Movement" was the majority player in the Gaza; hence when this report refers to Hamas it refers to both. To be sure these operations took place between 14-21 November 2012 on the physical geographic territory of Gaza and Israel and world-wide on the internet, through social media and the domestic and international press, through diplomacy and through legal arguments. At the end of the eighth day of battle both sides and all parties claimed victory. However there was no change in the size of the territory of either side, no side gaining any natural resources over the other. Neither side denies that although the respective operations are over, the war between them continues. So what happened? What were the victories and loses for both sides? Who stood by each side in the international system? What are the next steps?

The purpose of this publication is to provide an immediate eagle eye analysis, account, and impression rather than engage in details and detailed analysis on a worms eye view. Examples are given of the events to highlight the impressions and feelings at the time that they occurred. A detailed day by day accounts of events would be redundant as these can be found on the Israel Defence Force (IDF), Hamas and international press web sites. It is too soon to undertake a detailed analysis of the events as the impact and consequences will only emerge over time when the dust of the battle has settled. The locations and the distances between the places mentioned in this report can be viewed for example on maps.google.com or www.bing.com/maps

The Operations

Operation Pillar of Defense (Hebrew: עִמּוּד עָנָן, "Pillar of Cloud")¹ was an Israel Defense Forces (IDF) operation in the Gaza Strip from 14 to 21 November 2012. Although the official English name of the operation is *Pillar of Defense*, the Hebrew name translates as *Pillar of Cloud*. The IDF gave the origin of the naming as the Pillar of Cloud in the Bible that guided the Exodus from Egypt to the Promised Land (Exodus 13:21-22).² A Midrash elaborates that the Pillar of Cloud shielded the Israelites from the Egyptians' arrows and catapults. The name is thus an analogy to the Israel Defense Forces shielding Israeli citizens from rocket attacks.³

The Operation commenced with the assassination of Ahmed Jabari, a leading figure in Hamas's Gaza military operations.⁴ The stated objectives of the military operation were to halt the rocket attacks originating from the Gaza Strip against Israeli civilians and to disrupt the capabilities of militant organizations in the Gaza.⁵ The Israeli government said the operation began in response to the firing by Gaza militant of rockets, and attacks against Israeli soldiers on the Israel-Gaza border.⁶ Hamas denying it was the aggressor, asserting a right to defend Gaza inhabitants against the blockade of the Gaza Strip and the occupation of West Bank and East Jerusalem.⁷

Coincidentally the exchange of fire came during a joint Israel-US military exercise (Austere Challenge 12) to test anti-missile and anti-rocket defences where Israeli units had just practised what they were about to enact; the operation commencing 25 October and terminating 12 November.⁸ The exercise had originally been intended for the spring but deferred until to start 17 October to 17 November with at least 1000 US air personnel participating in addition to Patriot missile batteries and US Navy ships.⁹ Defense Minister Ehud Barak also spoke of the Iron Dome's success, saying, "We are fighting with our newest system, the Iron Dome, protecting against short-range missiles coming out of Gaza on a daily basis. We hope that [this escalation] will be over quickly without a need to broaden it or intensify it."¹⁰

To dispel any conspiracy theories between Israel and the US there is no doubt that the recent visit of the Emir of Qatar to Gaza was a catalyst provoking Gazan militant provocation.¹¹ So there was a combination of political and military events; leading to culmination of an escalation in military activity where both sides having perceptions of being able to gain an advantage over the other. This in turn led to a further escalation of tensions; there being an exchange of fire which further escalated into an eight day intense battle of rockets versus air power. Land forces were not utilised despite being mobilised by Israel and threatened by the militants should the Israeli Army having entered Gaza. It was not known the extent to which Hamas and the militants possessed anti-tank missiles but the casualties would probably have been high. There are roughly 35,000 Palestinian fighters in Gaza.¹² Israel has a conscript army of 175,000 and had the authority to mobilise an additional 75,000 reservists.¹³ It would have been a bloody battle with many casualties should the sides have met in hand-to-hand-combat in the narrow alley-ways of an urban environment.

Soon after the conclusion of the Operation Israeli Minister Ehud Barak informed on 26 November 2012 that he was leaving political life and would step down as Minister of Defence after the elections on 21 January 2013 once a new government had been formed.¹⁴ The Likud Primaries of the following week showed that even should Netanyahu and the Likud win the Israel

elections on 21 January 2013, the government would be far different. Senior Cabinet Ministers such as Benny Begin and Dan Meridor the Minister for Intelligence would not be in the government. In context of the assassination of Jabari and other Senior Hamas figures, it would appear that the Israel-Hamas conflict would be waged between different individuals come February 2013.

Only time will tell if these different individuals will be able to reach an agreement of non-aggression. Similarly only time will tell if the new leaders of Hamas will be able to reach an agreement of concord with the Fatah – who control the Palestinian Authority on the West Bank. The one issue that prevails that prevents an end to the Israel-Palestine issue preventing the creation of a Palestinian State is the willing of leaders on all sides to take the risk and the chance of compromise to get something which is better than nothing. No doubt Hamas as an organisation that sees terror of rockets as a means to an end and an end in its own right needs to conform to political rather than violent means.

Looking at the relations between the sides and the issues involved sees the "Future is everything that has already happened". In the short term to prevent rockets; a failure of arms control, disarmament and negotiations with Egypt to prevent the passage of these into Gaza. In the medium term the objective is to reach an agreement with Hamas to entertain a political rather than militant process; a failure of socialisation of the elites. In the long term to solve the issue of a 1.5 million and growing population living on a piece of land (Gaza) that is 300 km² and unable to sustain it; a ticking demographic bomb.

First things first rather than solve the cause of the problem and the major demographic issue, Israel and Hamas decided to address the symptoms of the failure. During the eight day exchange of fire between 14-21 November 2012 the IDF targeted more than 1,500 military sites in Gaza Strip, including rocket launching pads, smuggling tunnels, command centers, weapons manufacturing, and storage buildings.¹⁵ According to Palestinians sources civilian houses were hit¹⁶ and Gaza Health officials state that 167 Palestinians had been killed in the conflict.¹⁷ Although Israel agrees with the rough number there is disagreement on the division of how many were military and how many were civilian. To be sure in a world where no-one wears uniforms or carries military ID there is hardly an ability to discern between the two. Nevertheless there was agreement on the figure that eight Palestinians had been executed by the Hamas military wing, Izz ad-Din al-Qassam Brigades for alleged collaboration with Israel.¹⁸ The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs estimated that, as of 21 November, 252 Israelis and 1,202 Palestinians had been physically wounded.¹⁹ There is no accurate figure on how many on both sides including children suffered short and long term psychological effects.

Turning back to the escalation in the scheme of events shows that in response to Jabari's assassination the Gazans shouted from the roof tops that it had "opened the gates of hell".²⁰ The al-Qassam Brigades and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) intensified their rocket attacks on Israeli cities and towns, in an operation code named Operation Stones of Shale (Arabic: حجارة سجيل) by the al-Qassam Brigades and Operation Blue Sky (Arabic: السماء الزرقاء) by members of the PIJ.²¹

During the eight days in total over 1,456²² Iranian Fajr-5, Russian Grad rockets, Qassams and mortars were fired into Rishon LeZion, Beersheba, Ashdod, Ashkelon and other smaller population centers; the outskirts of the Tel Aviv Gush Dan region was hit for the first time since the 1991 Gulf War, and rockets were aimed at Jerusalem falling short in the Gush Etzion area.²³ There is no accurate figure to which organization in Gaza was responsible in the division of rocket launches. Nevertheless the rocket attacks killed five Israeli civilians – three of them in a direct hit on a home in Kiryat Malachi and two Israeli soldiers. The civilian deaths could have been prevented had the family come into protected shelters, which saved thousands of others all over the South of Israel. However they were in the living room of their apartment which received a direct hit. Sadly, it was to the day four years previously of the fatal attack in India on the Chabad Jewish Center. The young woman who was killed in Kiryat Malachi was the replacement of those killed in India, and had come to Israel for a memorial service for them.²⁴ Furthermore a number of Palestinian civilians were killed when the Hamas rockets fell short and on Gaza instead of Israel; some 42 rockets had fallen on Gaza itself.²⁵ By the termination of hostilities over 252 Israelis had been physically injured in rocket attacks.²⁶ The hero of the day was Israel's Iron Dome missile defense system which had intercepted about 409 rockets, the inaccuracy of the rockets where 875 rockets fell in open areas, though 58 rockets hit urban areas in Israel which was the cause of the deaths and physical injuries.²⁷ In addition a bomb attack against a Tel Aviv bus on Route 142 on King Saul Boulevard near the Kirya Military Headquarters wounded 21 civilians; receiving the "blessing" of Hamas" on its Al Aqusa Television Station though it was later shown to be the work of an Arab citizen of Israel.²⁸

While the physical conflict waged, both sides sought international recognition for their justifications. Both sides waged intense information operations and legal battles. In these Israel found its traditional allies siding with her. The United States, United Kingdom, Canada, Germany and other Western countries expressed support for Israel's right to defend itself, and/or condemned the Palestinian rocket attacks on Israel.²⁹ Similarly the usual allies took the side of the Gazans. These were Iran, Egypt, Turkey and several other Arab and Muslim countries who condemned the Israeli operation.³⁰ An empass between the both sides' audience and supporters came in the United

Nations Security Council when it held an emergency session on the situation but did not reach a decision.³¹

While the world waited, while journalists sought their scoops and while bloggers gave the individual insight in words, images and videos, an intense diplomatic effort was entertained by the UN in the form of the Secretary General, by the US in the form of the Secretary of State and by Egypt's new President. No sooner had the exchange started; did it cease. On 21 November a ceasefire was announced after days of negotiations between Hamas and Israel mediated by Egypt.³² Both sides of the exchange of fire claimed victory when they ceased to fire on each other. Yet no land had been won by either, no resources gained by other, a small and comforting loss of lives except for the families who had died; substantial physical damage, even more psychological and no deal whatsoever to resolve the cause of the conflict or the demographic issue. In claiming victory Israel said that it had achieved its aim of crippling Hamas's rocket-launching ability,³³ while Hamas stated that "The option of invading Gaza after this victory is gone and will never return" and thanked Iran and Egypt for their help.³⁴

So was this a victory? Hamas can easily re-arm with more rockets. The Iron Dome missile defense system is excellent but at \$80,000 per missile it is costly against a \$500 donated rocket. Will Israel need to wage a similar operation every two or three years? Will Hamas find other ways to wage terror now that the rockets have been shown to have little effect? Similarly Israel clearly did not to invade Gaza and was happy to be rid of having responsibility for 1.5 million Arabs on a 300 km² piece of desert unable to sustain such a number of people when it withdrew her civilians, dismantled all settlements and withdraw all military personnel in 2005 from Gaza. Despite Israel withdrawal from Gaza it can be seen why Hamas made their claim. The United States, United Nations and Arab League still consider Israel to be an occupying power.³⁵ An issue of perceptions and explanations by both sides to their respective populations in order to justify a cease-fire that was welcome by all – a political face saving exercise if you wish.

The Origins of the Hamas Issue

Hamas as an organization has its origins dating back to the 1980s in a Sunni Muslim world with the Muslim Brotherhood being a formative patron in its establishment in the West Bank.³⁶ It developed an external organisation headquartered in Damascus Syria and more recently relocated to Qatar because of the domestic war in Syria.³⁷ Despite its Sunni origins and orientation it receives moral support and alledged funding and weapons supplies from the Shia Iran.³⁸ The conflict in its current incarnation in the Gaza strip is ongoing since Hamas won the January 2006 legislative election in Gaza following Israel civilian and military withdrawal and dismantlement

of all Israel settlements.³⁹ However rockets were launched earlier than this with the first fatality in 2004 and a total of 26 fatalities including those from the current battle.⁴⁰

Not content to have legislative authority, in June 2007 internal disputes broke out in the Palestine camp between Hamas in Gaza and Fatah (PLO) who won elections in the West Bank. Hamas in Gaza fully consolidated its power with a coup denouncing the election system both in Gaza and the West bank and since refusing to participate in the later elections, territory, local and even student calling it rigged by Israel.⁴¹ In response to the Hamas Coup in Gaza, Israel and Egypt closed Gaza's land borders in June 2007.⁴² Ostensibly neither country wanted to have a mass influx of immigrants who were not willing to live in the austere shadows of Hamas, an organisation that would face eventually engage in armed conflict with Israel. Such an armed conflict was inevitable as Hamas since 1998 and ever more so since 2007 has called for the destruction of Israel.⁴³

While the Red Cross⁴⁴ and one UN report,⁴⁵ consider Israel's blockade as illegal under international humanitarian law another UN legal inquiry considers that the blockade is both legal and appropriate.⁴⁶ On one hand Hamas, is designated by the United States,⁴⁷ the European Union, Canada and Japan⁴⁸ as a Palestinian Islamist armed group terrorist organization. On the other hand Russia, Turkey and Norway do not designate Hamas as a terrorist organization.⁴⁹ Perhaps this difference of opinion and classification is why there was an impasse in the United Nations Security Council when it held an emergency session on the situation between Israel and Hamas 14-21 November 2012 but did not reach a decision.⁵⁰ The notable issue from the blockade has been attempts to breach it by sea. Ships manned by many nationalities have attempted including one, the *Mamara* which sailed from Turkey. That case resulted in the deterioration of the once excellent bi-lateral relations between Israel and Turkey after IDF forces boarded it, were injured and correspondingly resulted in deaths amongst the crew.⁵¹

Operation Pillar of Defence was not the first attempt by Israel to destroy the rocket threat from Gaza. This was in addition to occasional infiltrations across the border by Hamas forces aimed at both civilian and military targets, attacks against patrolling IDF forces, and the attempted breaching of the sea blockade. Sourced to Israeli human rights group, B'Tselem, the IDF and other security forces have killed 271 Palestinians in the Gaza strip between the end of Operation Cast Lead and 30 October 2012.⁵² These highlight the persistent tensions between Israel and the Hamas-governed Gaza Strip since 2007. In late 2008 and early 2009 a three-week armed conflict ensued in an attempt to destroy the rocket arsenal and the launch sites. It was code named Operation Cast Lead.⁵³ Prior to that operation the catalyst was the launch of 2378⁵⁴ rockets and mortars from Gaza into Israel over an eleven month period.

Similar to now then both sides also claimed victory. Unlike now then the IDF also engaged in a land forces operation. Israel measured the success of the operation by the aftermath when rocket attacks in 2009 fell to 190⁵⁵. A limitation to engaging in a more vigorous operation was the holding by Hamas of Gilad Shalit who had been captured and held by Jabari, the Hamas leader who IDF forces assassinated as an onset of Operation Pillar of Defence.⁵⁶ The effect of Operation Cast Lead was short lived. Tensions between Israel and the Hamas-governed Gaza Strip continued and escalated as Hamas re-armed.

Rocket fire on southern Israel steadily increased with 680 rocket attacks in 2011 and 797 attacks in 2012 up to 12 November 2012 when Operation Pillar of Defense commenced. The psychological terror was immense forcing many of the estimated one million civilians in southern Israel to repeatedly head into protected shelters and close schools.⁵⁷ Hamas demanded that Israel end the naval blockade of Gaza's coastline as a condition to end rocket fire.⁵⁸

There are numerous allegations to the sources of this rearmament. Many from Israel stated that Hamas has been aided by Iran and Sudan in the manufacture and in the smuggling in to Gaza of the rockets as well as the Iranian-made Fajr-5 rockets. The later having the range and lethality to strike the Gush Dan Tel Aviv region and Jerusalem as was demonstrated during Operation Pillar of Defense.⁵⁹ No doubt Egypt was also responsible for not preventing the smuggling routes through the Sinai Peninsula. In response to these claims the commander of the Iranian Revolutionary Guards, Major General Mohammad Ali Jafari has stated "We haven't sent any weapons to Gaza because it is under blockade, but we are honoured to announce that we gave them the technology of how to make Fajr-5 missiles."⁶⁰ He also added that Iran was "honored" to help Gaza's Hamas with "material and military aspects".⁶¹

Pre-Exchange of Fire events

The immediate escalation of events leading to Operation Pillar of Defense came with 92 separate attacks in October 2012, with a total of 171 rockets and mortar shells fired by Hamas into Southern Israel.⁶² Hamas alleged this was not an offensive but rather a defensive deterrent in response to Israel offensive actions. The immediate escalation started on 24 October, reports in the international media claimed that an arms factory setup and operated by Iran was blown up in the Yormouk district of South of the capital city Khartoum, Sudan. It was reported that the Sudanese claimed that eight Israeli F-15i aircraft were responsible for the attack, having blocked all electronic communication including radar for up to two hours before hand. International media wrote that the weapons were allegedly intended to be smuggled to Hamas in Gaza.⁶³ These have not been substantiated and Israeli authorities have even refused to comment on the allegations. Fingers have been pointed against Israel however because it was during the same week that dozens of

rockets struck Israel where Israel also conducted preemptive strikes against militant targets in Gaza.⁶⁴ On the same day as the blast in the Sudanese capital, 24 October 2012, 80 rockets and mortars were fired from the Gaza Strip over a 24-hour period, probably as a response to the blast. Thirty-two missiles struck the Lachish region and 28 the western Negev. A rocket strike on the agricultural area of the Eshkol region severely wounded two Thai workers. The same day three members of a Palestinian rocket-launching squad were killed by Israeli airstrikes while tanks returned fire at launching sites in Gaza. Hamas promised to "continue carrying the rifle...until the liberation of Palestine and the defeat of the occupation."⁶⁵

On 25 October, reports flowed of a ceasefire between Hamas and Israel as negotiated by Egypt. Despite this both by Israeli and Palestinian officials denied that any such truce existed.⁶⁶ Low level aggression continued in the following days with rocket fire from Gaza intermingled with Israeli air and tank strikes.⁶⁷ Casualties were abated until 2 November when a 22-year-old Palestinian who, according to IDF was suspected of attempting to place an explosive device on the Gaza border, was seriously wounded by Israeli tank fire.⁶⁸ On 5 November, Israeli soldiers shot and killed a 20-year-old man reportedly ignoring warning shots and instructions to leave the area decided to approach a fence near Gaza's side of the border with Israel. Hamas claimed that he was unarmed, suffered from mental issues and was on medication.⁶⁹ On the same day a road side bomb exploded and Israeli soldiers were injured.

On 8 November 2012 just four days prior to the start of Operation Pillar of Defense residents of the town of Khan Younis in the southern Gaza Strip said an Israeli tank wounded four children and damaged a mosque minaret and a water tower.⁷⁰ In response Hamas planted bombs alongside the border and attacked Israeli farmers with rockets – a tit-for-tat type operation.⁷¹ On 8 November, the IDF made a land based incursion into Gaza after finding more bombs along the border. This culminated in a gunfight with the Popular Resistance Committees,⁷² during which a 13-year-old Palestinian boy was killed. Later that same day, Hamas detonated an explosives-packed tunnel they had dug on the border, wounding four Israeli soldiers.⁷³ Hamas' military wing claimed responsibility for the blast, stating that it was in response to the killing of the boy.⁷⁴ In addition two Qassam rockets were fired into Israel on 9 November, exploding in open ground.⁷⁵

On 10 November, Gaza based militants fired an anti-tank missile at an IDF Jeep on patrol near Israel's side of the border, wounding four soldiers, one of whom a Captain lost an arm with the other arm in a critical condition.⁷⁶ In immediate response the IDF shelled the source of the fire and pre-chosen targets in the Sa'ajiya area of Gaza. Hamas spokesman Ashraf al-Qidra said that in that shelling four teenagers were killed.⁷⁷ Not willing to call the game even the exchange of fire continued where Hamas responded with 30 rockets

and several mortar shells into southern Israel. These not being accurate led to the Israeli Home Front calling a "Color Red siren" in a wide-spread area including Ashdod, Ashkelon, Gan Yavne and surrounding areas. The idea of a "Color Red" warning has evolved over decades of Home Defence. It was once only a rising-falling siren. However to reduce psychological effects and in some cases broaden the warning as the sirens are not always heard a warning is also given over loud speakers, radio and television and even sent by SMS. This is in the words "Color Red". Previous and subsequent operations have and may use other phrases. Indeed the warning migrated from Shachar Red (Red Dawn) because a mother complained that her son's name was Shachar and he was experiencing trauma at hearing his name frequently in the context of a rocket warning.⁷⁸ Israel ground and air radar pick up the rocket launch and issue the warning where he gaged range of such rockets is between 7 and 40 km from the Gaza border. Every time a rocket fire of this nature is detected Israelis in this area have been 15 seconds and 2 minutes to enter secure rooms, protected areas and bomb shelters sometimes remaining in them the whole night. If they are outside they lie flat on the ground as the rocket head contains shrapnel and ball-bearings. A person lying down can live from a rocket landing 10m away but standing up will be injured from a rocket landing 120m away.⁷⁹ As a consequence of such rocket firings prudence and safety take over from daily routine life, where for example the Gan Yavne regional council canceled school.⁸⁰

This "Color Red" situation with residents in protected shelters with schools closed persisted for several days given the firing of more than 100 rockets, some striking homes and one landing near a school. The severity of the disruption on children's lives was explained by the mayor of Beersheba, the South's largest city, Ruvik Danilovich "we have experienced hits on our education institutions in the past ... 40,000 children will remain at home today because of the attack that hit us out of the blue."⁸¹ Several Israelis were wounded by shrapnel in an onslaught designed to coincide with the morning commute to work and evening commute home from work. Two people were injured when the car they were sustaining sustained a direct hit.⁸² This could have been prevented had they adhered to Home Front instructions which were to stop and lie flat on the road side away from the vehicle. In an attempt to end the attack by destroying the launch sites and their operators, the IDF carried out airstrikes in Gaza where six Palestinian militants were killed, including one belonging to the Palestinian Islamic Jihad.⁸³

Public opinion was voiced in anger at the inability to carry out regular pacific life mainly at the Israeli government rather than Hamas. In response to this growing anger and on the background of a general election called for on 21 January 2013, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Defense Minister Ehud Barak said that "Israel's reaction will come at the appropriate time."⁸⁴ Empty words having little meaning for those suffering but ardently analysed

by Hamas. With this in mind and in intention and after a cabinet meeting in the morning before the assassination of Jabari commencing Operation Pillar of Defense; Cabinet Minister Benny Begin said that "the current exchange of hostilities seems to be over."⁸⁵ Another deceptive step was used when Israeli peace activist, Gershon Baskin, a mediator between Israel and Hamas in the negotiations that resulted in the release of Gilad Shalit, was sent a draft of a permanent truce agreement between Israel and Hamas hours before the strike that killed Ahmed Jabari.⁸⁶ Such mixed messages, the expected diplomatic repercussions from Egypt and the risks of a war on the eve of the Israeli elections were designed to foster a relaxed atmosphere for Hamas leaders lulling them into a fall sense of security; and leading to Jabari taking a journey in his car which was struck from the air assassinating him.⁸⁷

Non-plussed after the assassination and not willing to be responsible for an escalation both Hamas and PIJ officials verbalised a desire to discuss a ceasefire. A PIJ spokesman said, "The ball is in Israel's court. The resistance factions will observe Israel's behavior on the ground and will act accordingly." Words and actions didn't match and 12 rockets were fired at Israel throughout the day resulting in a "Code Red".⁸⁸ The results of the rocket fire was the hitting of a factory and a house while three civilians were wounded.⁸⁹ Also not willing to be blamed for an escalation the Israel' Ambassador to the United Nations Ron Prosner asked the UN Security Council to condemn the rocket attacks which coincided with a radio and television broadcast by the Minister of Defense Ehud Barak gearing up the Israeli population for a major military operation informing that the government "would not accept the harm to daily life of our civilians."⁹⁰

The Time Line of Operation Pillar of Defence

It is the purpose of this section to provide a brief summary of the exchange of fire between the two sides and not to enter into specific and numerous details which are readily available on the IDF and international press websites. The brief summary highlights the intensity of the daily events but also the briefness of the conflict of only eight days. The goal is to emphasize that the conflict was air-borne: rockets from Hamas and mainly airstrikes from IDF aircraft and drones; neither side experiencing the horror of protracted hand-to-hand conflict in confined urban environments. The outcome was terror for civilians who were the main victims where both sides claimed victory when a cease-fire was reached.

Day One - 14 November

Before the onset of hostilities Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu invited all foreign Ambassadors in Israel for a briefing on the deteriorating situation due to the launch of rockets against Israeli civilian targets. The star of

the show was a teenage girl who appeared via a video link and succinctly questioned why all over the world the ringing of a bell signified the end of class but in her town, her school and for her signified a rocket attack.⁹¹

The Israeli military operation began about 16:00 (Israel time) with an airstrike targeting Ahmed Jabari.⁹² A Hamas representative in Lebanon, Osama Hamdan, claimed that the airstrike also killed Jabari's son though this was shown to be false⁹³ when the IDF released a video of the airstrike.⁹⁴ Simultaneously the IDF struck 20 Hamas targets in Gaza, including underground rocket launchers and an ammunition warehouse stocking the longer-range Fajr-5 missiles.⁹⁵ The operation was well planned with intelligence aimed at avoiding civilian fatalities or casualties⁹⁶ as many of the targeted weapon stashes were in residential areas and evidenced according to the IDF "the pattern of Hamas to use the population in Gaza as human shields."⁹⁷ Nevertheless 10 people including 3 children were killed⁹⁸; including 11-month-old Omar Misharawi, son of Jihad Misharawi, a BBC Arabic video editor residing in Gaza.⁹⁹ In the strike Israel claimed to have destroyed most of the long-range capability which was estimated at seven Fajr-5 missiles,¹⁰⁰ though in the subsequent days Hamas longer range missile launches on Gush Dan (Tel-Aviv) and Gush Etzion (Jerusalem) proved this evaluation to be inaccurate. The IDF spokesman informed Israel and the world that the goal of that day's operation is to "bring back quiet to southern Israel, and... to strike at terror organizations."^[146]

This Israeli goal did not see immediate success as Gazan militants continued to fire rockets towards the large Israeli cities of Beersheba, Ashdod, Ofakim and the Shaar Hanegev and Eshkol Regional Council which contain smaller towns and agricultural settlements. Similarly the Hamas goal did not achieve any success as the IDF's Iron Dome missile defense system made 130 interceptions.¹⁰¹ The system consists of radar and a set of missiles. The radar range covers a wide area and the missiles are accurate in shooting down incoming short range rockets. Israel has five such systems deployed around the major urban areas and only shoots down rockets that are coming at an urban area. Four were in service in the months prior to the start of Operation Pillar of Defense moving around to different effected areas as and when required and the fifth was entered into service earlier than expected to defend the Gush Dan (Tel Aviv) area when rockets starting falling on it. The system operates by differential selection of prioritisation where rockets expected to fall in open areas/ vacant grounds are left to reach their targets. In addition Israel also has the Magic Wand for medium range missiles and the US designed Patriot and joint US-Israel developed Arrow system for long range and regional missile defences.¹⁰²

It was clear to both sides that a major battle was about to ensue when approximately 55 rockets were launched on the evening of 14 November,

including a Grad rocket fired in the direction of the Dimona based Negev Nuclear Research Center.¹⁰³ Three rockets were also fired from Egyptian Sinai by Jihadist militants.¹⁰⁴ Israel responded with numerous airstrikes against the missile launching sites and smuggling tunnels. For the most part civilian casualties were avoided except the fatality of Marwan Abu El Qumsan, a teacher for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency¹⁰⁵ travelling in his car near the scene of an airstrike while his brother, was severely injured.¹⁰⁶

It was on that evening that Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu called together his Israeli cabinet obtaining authorization and hence informing the population and the world at large that a partial call-up of reservists had been authorized and was commencing in case they were needed for a large ground-based operation.¹⁰⁷ The action in part was a deterrent to Hamas to further prevent escalation; in part in case they were needed; in part a response to a critical report of a previous military Operation when reservists were not called up in time; and in part to deter any Gazan civilian migration into Israel as a consequence of the hostilities.¹⁰⁸

Day Two - 15 November

In the night between 14 and 15 November the Israeli Air Force with fixed wing aircraft and drones carried out over 100 strikes on targets in Gaza including the killing of seven militants.¹⁰⁹ The casualties were not one-sided and during that morning 13 Israelis were treated for injuries while three Israelis, two men and a woman, were killed when a rocket struck a four-story apartment building in the town of Kiryat Malakhi.¹¹⁰ In addition Israeli Magen David Adom (Jewish Red Star equivalent of the Red Cross) paramedics treated five more wounded people at the same scene, including a 11-month-old child who was critically injured. While the treatment ensued and rescue operations continued on the trapped in in the debris another five missiles fell. The rockets are crude in fashion and therefore cannot be aimed at a specific target. Falling indiscriminately after being fired in a general direction the barrage also fell on a residence in Ashdod and a school in Ofakim; these being 20-30 km away from Kiryat Malakhi.¹¹¹ Indeed the Grad type rocket manufactured and operated in over 40 countries world-wide is based on a Soviet type system of the 1960's where the Grad name comes the Russian word "Hail". It is designed as a battle-field weapon based of a battery of up to 40 rockets in a single launch from a truck mounted system that can move within 2 minutes to a different location. Depending on the warhead size up to 20 kg it can be fired up to 40 km. The purpose is to rain down on advancing enemy soldiers a barrage of rockets killing them with direct explosion and shrapnel. Hamas uses them as a single launch sometimes hand-held against civilian targets not knowing where they will land or who they would kill or wound. Notably there are Arab Israeli citizens in the regions they aimed the rockets at.¹¹²

In response and escalating to day-time missions the Israeli air force flew sorties both to identify and to destroy targets. The sooner Hama's arsenal was destroyed the sooner Israel could live in relative peace. Airstrikes included the Souther Gaza site of Khan Younis that resulted in the injury of four Palestinians including a woman and two children.¹¹³ Throughout Operation Pillar of Defence the Israeli air force attempted to reduce this type of casualty by distributing leaflets over Gaza telling residents to keep a distance from away from Hamas facilities and their forces.¹¹⁴ However the damage had been done and it was clear that there would be a response and even an escalation. Consequently all Israeli communities with less than 15 seconds of warning from mortar/rocket attack were placed in lockdown and all schools schools in less than 60-second warning radius were closed.¹¹⁵

This type of response is known as multi-layered defense. There is an offensive air operation to destroy the missile launchers, arsenals and personnel; an active missile defence system in the form of the iron Dome which succeeding also generates a deterrence and dissuasion factor against Hamas; there is a deterrent land force in place with additional deterrent of increasing air operations; and a passive defense system based upon the population being in secure and protected shelters. All in all Hamas would rationally be expected to analyse that any objective could not be gained by rocket attacks. There is the limitation that a succesful multi-layered defense system of such kind would lead to Hamas seeking alternatives methods and technologies to achieve its objectives. To be sure the normal Grad and Quassam rocket barrage was supplemented by the firing of two longer range Fajr missiles which landed in the Southern suburbs of Gush Dan (Tel Aviv) being the first time that this area has been targeted by missiles since the Persian Gulf War of 1991, when Saddam Hussein launched Scud missiles most landing in the North-East neighborhood of Gush Dan (Ramat Gan) populated ironically by Jewish Iraqi immigrants.¹¹⁶ Not having expected this, previously having evaluated that all such missiles had already been destroyed that night the Israeli Air Force launched a series of 70 bombing runs to destroy assumed underground medium-range rocket launchers.¹¹⁷ The result being the death of 15 including five militants and two children which led into the third day of Operation Pillar of Defense with no expected de-escalation, nor a victory in sight for either side nor even a cease-fire.¹¹⁸

Day Three - 16 November

Dawn broke on the third day of Operation Pillar of Defense with mixed feelings and hopes when the new Prime Minister of Egypt installed subsequent to the Arab Spring events in that country, Hisham Qandil, visited the Gaza Strip. The stated purpose of the visit was to "show solidarity with the Palestinian people" and was accomodated by the IDF with a 3-hour ceasefire to ensure he would be alive to leave, when ready to do so.¹¹⁹ However about

50 rockets were fired from Gaza during his visits. The IDF claimed it didn't respond¹²⁰ but Hamas argued that the IDF bombed a Hamas commander's house during the ceasefire.¹²¹

This was not the only round of accusations between the two sides hotting up the Second Front: The Information War. The Egyptian prime minister took the opportunity to lift the body of Mohammed Sadallah, a four-year-old boy from Annazla in Gaza killed in a bomb explosion, saying "the boy, the martyr...is something that we cannot keep silent about," before promising to defend the Palestinian people. Israel denied having attacked the area at the time.¹²² Experts from the Palestinian Centre for Human Rights in examining the site found the explosion to have been caused by a Palestinian rocket which was carried by the *New York Times*, stating "the damage was nowhere near severe enough to have come from an Israeli F-16, raising the possibility that an errant missile fired by Palestinian militants was responsible."¹²³ The *Associated Press* taking neutrality reported "no one appeared to have witnessed the strike" and that "local security officials quickly took what remained of the projectile, making it impossible to verify who fired it;"¹²⁴ while the uncertainty of responsibility was later accepted by the boy's mother,¹²⁵

The statistics of the day sounded like the end of a weekend football league. Through the evening of 16 November, around 500 rockets were fired from Gaza; Iron Dome intercepted 184 of these; Israel to this point had bombed about 500 targets in Gaza;¹²⁶ the Israeli cabinet approved expanding the cap on reservist call-ups from 30,000 to 75,000;¹²⁷ and Israeli Foreign Minister Avigdor Lieberman said that the government was not considering an overthrow of the Hamas-led government in Gaza.¹²⁸ Shortly after the announcement of the statistics the ante would be raised when a rocket was aimed at Gush Etzion setting off air raid sirens in Jerusalem to the north-East of Gaza¹²⁹ while a rocket struck a home closer to Gaza in the southern port city of Ashdod wounding five Israeli civilians.¹³⁰

Day Four – The Sabbath - 17 November

By the fourth day the CNN media network reported that "the Israeli government was moving tanks and soldiers in preparation for what could be a ground invasion of Gaza;"¹³¹ however it was already clear that they could not and would not be used in an operational role. The main tactical use of ground forces would have been to reach, disrupt and destroy rocket launches in the early stages of such a conflict between Hamas could organise. By the fourth day Hamas had organized and had began to hide its launchers in the close urban enclaves leaving the IDF ground forces solely in a strategic deterrent and dissuasion role, to their ire.

Even though it was the Sabbath IDF planners broadened the targeting of the air operations, in order to turn the tide of the battle and/or in order to force a cease-fire. Perhaps because it was the Sabbath Hamas was not expecting the targeting of Hamas government sites,¹³² with an Israeli air strike destroying the office building of the Hamas Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh in Gaza albeit not totally leaving 30 people to be rescued from building's debris.¹³³ Such targeting of Hamas decision makers was out of necessity as two Fajr-5 missiles were aimed at Tel Aviv albeit intercepted by the Iron Dome; a residence in Ashdod was directly hit, wounding five Israeli civilians; two rockets were fired at Rishon Lezion and residences were damaged in Eshkol and Be'er Tuvia.¹³⁴ Two rockets also landed near Jerusalem¹³⁵ though in targeting that region with inaccurate projectiles it was of no surprise that one rocket fell near a Palestinian village in the West Bank causing property damage.¹³⁶ This did not deter sympathy demonstrations in the West Bank.¹³⁷

Despite the military conflict Israel's Defense Ministry opened the Kerem Shalom border crossing allowing civilian supplies to enter Gaza while continuing to provide the area with essential utility services.¹³⁸ Seeking neutral observers to gain recognition of the objectives and plight Hamas quoted the World Health Organization who reported that "Gaza hospitals are overwhelmed with casualties from Israel's bombings and face critical shortages of drugs and medical supplies" which was quickly supplemented by Gazan Health Ministry officials that "382 people have been injured - 245 adults and 137 children."¹³⁹ This was not a one-sided information campaign and not a one-side civilian casualty list. The Israeli side also used its Health officials in the form of Magen David Adom to report that in the over 70 rockets launches of that day sixteen Israelis were injured and twenty Israelis were treated for shock.¹⁴⁰

Day Five - 18 November

With no end in sight on Day Five clearly believing the expressions "the future is all that has already happened" and "more of the same is needed where more is better than less." The Israel Air Force operating with fixed wing aircraft and unarmed drones continued to bombard targets in Gaza but were supplemented by the Israeli Navy whose ships fired shells from off shore. The IDF targeted to kill the head of Hamas' rocket program, Yahya Byya, who according to IDF sources, had been responsible for most of the rocket attacks, though he was only injured.¹⁴¹

Perhaps running out of targets and with similar architecture to surrounding buildings but with no injuries came the destruction of two buildings housing foreign journalists including Sky News.¹⁴² The event was perhaps reminiscent of NATO strikes on the Chinese embassy during the Kosovo campaign or American strikes on the French embassy in Libya during the F-111 raid in the

mid-1980s. Perhaps the error was the occupants because shortly afterwards another media tower was hit, with reports of 7 injured Palestinian journalists.¹⁴³ Taking out potential information warfare sites attacking Israel might have been the real objective because the tower, known as the Al-Sharouk compound, contained the offices of Al-Quds TV, Iranian Press TV,¹⁴⁴ ARD, Kuwait TV, RAI, and Rusiya Al-Yaum.¹⁴⁵

In responding to these allegations the IDF said that the target was not the occupants but Hamas communications devices on the roofs¹⁴⁶ located there because Hamas had been using journalists as human shields.¹⁴⁷ Lieutenant Colonel Avital Leibovich added urging all journalists especially foreign to avoid areas with any Hamas presence whatsoever, while other officials informed that the offices of both Al Quds and Al Aqsa were legitimate military targets.¹⁴⁸

The worst was yet to come that day when an IDF missile intended to target Yehiya Rabiah, a senior commander of Hamas rocket operations, instead killed an adjacent house of a policeman,¹⁴⁹ killing the entire Dalu family consisting of 12 people;¹⁵⁰ leading to a bomb on a Tel-Aviv Bus four days later as a reprisal. Other casualties during the day including 14 more people¹⁵¹ including a 13 year-old girl and her uncle by the Israeli naval shelling while sitting on the beach near Gaza city.¹⁵²

Actions were matched by words and Prime Minister Netanyahu informed his cabinet, and that was later released to the press, that the IDF “is prepared for a significant expansion of the operation”¹⁵³ Taking the cue British Foreign Secretary William Hague expressed opinion that “a ground offensive would lose Israel much international support, but Hamas is to blame for instigating the conflict and that it should cease the rocket fire.”¹⁵⁴

Hamas was also not having a good day by wounding Israeli civilians or maybe it was depending on where you stand. The Iron Dome system intercepted two rockets fired at Ashkelon but a third one struck a building injuring two people.¹⁵⁵ Not heading either the Israeli or British words rockets launched by the Qassam Brigades strove for Tel-Aviv but were both intercepted by the Iron Dome system.¹⁵⁶ Three rockets struck Beersheba and a home in Sderot.¹⁵⁷ Two rockets hit Ashdod after coming under fire from a large rocket salvo.¹⁵⁸ In Ofakim, a rocket struck a car wounding five people including a two-year-old daughter.¹⁵⁹ An elderly woman was injured by shrapnel from a rocket that also struck a building in Ofakim.¹⁶⁰ Three rockets fell in the Eshkol area.¹⁶¹ A young rescue service worker from the Sha'ar Hanegev was also seriously wounded by a rocket.¹⁶²

With sunset approaching Israel sought to regain a modicum of respect with the international press and highlight that the civilian deaths and wounded were

more accidental than intentional. The IDF permitted the passage of eighty trucks loaded with medical supplies and food into Gaza through the Kerem Shalom crossing. Showing Hamas to be the bad guys the Israeli Foreign Ministry provided evidence that Hamas was refusing to permit 22 foreign nationals to leave the Gaza Strip including nine Italian citizens, one Canadian, one South Korean, a French national, six journalists from Japan, and two Turkish Red Crescent members.¹⁶³

Day Six - 19 November

Through the night into Day Six thousands of mobilised reservists grumbled that had this been the 1967 Six Day War they would already be on their way home.¹⁶⁴ Hearing the call for a quicker conclusion of the Operation at 2 am, a building housing the second largest police facility in Gaza was hit by an Israeli airstrike;¹⁶⁵ aired live on CNN and Al Jazeera English.¹⁶⁶ Later four Islamic Jihad militants hiding in the Al-Sharouk media compound were killed in air strike¹⁶⁷ while the PIJ reported by SMS that one of their senior militant operatives, Ramez Harb, was also killed.¹⁶⁸

There are two sides to any coin and on the flip side the IDF airstrikes also killed four civilians, including a 4-year old child and two women, in the az-Zeitoun neighborhood of Gaza City; Rana ash-Shandi, 18months old, in as-Saraya;¹⁶⁹ and two children in the Jabalia Refugee Camp.¹⁷⁰

On the other side of the border the daily statistics were read out including: since the beginning of Operation Pillar of Defense, over 540 rockets were fired from Gaza with 290 intercepted in-flight over populated areas in Israel;¹⁷¹ while on Day Six alone over 135 rockets were fired from Gaza.¹⁷²

Towards sunset to disrupt workers returning home and when they were most vulnerable in the open multiple rockets were fired into Ashkelon; most were intercepted but two rockets struck a house and a yard and a third a school. The Mayor of Ashkelon said that the rocket, after destroying the roof, "tore apart an entire classroom. Hundreds of shards of metal were scattered in the school's yard. Had the schools here been open we would have seen disasters."¹⁷³ At the same time another seven rockets were intercepted on their way to Ashkelon and Ashdod, and an eighth towards Beersheba while a 63-year-old man was wounded by shrapnel in the Bnei Shimon Region. This was light fire compared to the heavy barrage at the Sderot and Eshkol regions where a woman was injured from a mortar.¹⁷⁴ Rockets also exploded near Ofakim¹⁷⁵ and struck Sha'ar Hanegev and Gan Yavne.¹⁷⁶

Day Seven - 20 November

By Day Seven there was nothing that could not be said that had not already taken place in the exchange of fire. Hamas was firing rockets at Israel and Israel was striking rocket launch sites in Gaza. But there were some dramatic differences. The first difference to become apparent was apprehension and anxiety on both sides that neither were achieving an overwhelming victory over the other. The Israel population was wondering why the IDF had not yet managed to destroy all the rockets and rocket launches in Gaza. Surely they speculated Israel knew where all the sites were and should have struck them in the first few days. Why spread the operation over so many days when the rockets were constantly causing damage and injuries? The IDF in response noted the cautious need not to strike civilians in Gaza and the tactics of observing with drones to only strike a launch site at launch time, with legal advisors determining legitimate targets and proportional ordnance to be used.¹⁷⁷

Notwithstanding these considerations and with constantly improving intelligence IDF aircraft and artillery destroyed thirty rocket launchers and eleven militant cells.¹⁷⁸ During these three Hamas fighters were killed, two of whom were involved in rocket attacks. In a more strategic ploy 50 weapons smuggling tunnels between Gaza and Sinai were also destroyed¹⁷⁹ while drones targeted two cars in Sabra, killing six Hamas leaders.¹⁸⁰ Three IDF missiles also struck a Hamas intelligence operations center on the 7th floor of the building housing Agence France-Presse's office with no injuries.¹⁸¹ Israel also acknowledged killing three Palestinian journalists in their cars; one was an employee for Al Quds Educational Radio and two were cameramen for Al-Aqsa; because they had ties to militants and were Hamas operatives.¹⁸²

Similarly Hamas did not have a limitless arsenal of rockets. Hearing the Israeli tactics of observing for launch sites Hamas gunmen executed six Palestinians accusing them of collaborating with Israel while dragging the body of one executed through the streets, chained to a motorbike.¹⁸³ Hamas' Aqsa Radio, boasted that the men were "caught red-handed" with cameras and hi-tech equipment.¹⁸⁴ Fury was vented against this barbaric act by Hamas in the public opinion of Jordan, Saudi Arabia and other Gulf States.¹⁸⁵

With limited rocket fire remaining Hamas also attempted to spread the conflict by invoking a popular uprising or Intifada in the West Bank. Palestinians protested at multiple locations throwing stones and Molotov cocktails at IDF troops and Israel Border Police, pelted Israeli civilian vehicles, and attempted to block a road.¹⁸⁶ One Palestinian man lost his life after attacking a soldier.¹⁸⁷

However the main battle remained in Gza where the days statistics included more than 80 rockets into Southern Israel¹⁸⁸ of which 18 were at Beersheba 9 of which were intercepted by the Iron Dome, though 3 landed – one near a bus, which suffered shrapnel damage, another damaged a vehicle, and the third in a

soccer field. There was also rocket fire at Ofakim.¹⁸⁹ The rockets fired at Ashkelon; caused the city's Barzilai Medical Center to relocate its emergency room to its fortified basement after rocket shrapnel struck near the hospital's maternity ward.¹⁹⁰

Such rocket strikes were absorbed by Israel's multi-layered defence though the IDF was well aware that the more rockets that fell the more probability of casualties. The inevitable would happen in such a massive barrage as the days progressed and it did. Whendozens of rockets struck Kiryat Malakhi, Sderot and Ashdod¹⁹¹ and the Eshkol Regional Council, an Israeli soldier deployed in the vicinity of Gaza was killed.¹⁹² One of the rockets aimed at Eshkol wounded five people¹⁹³ while another struck a six-story building in Rishon LeZion injuring four people.¹⁹⁴ Being indiscriminate in terror and without technological accuracy it was also of no surprise when a Bedouin civilian was killed in rocket fire that struck the Bedouin village of Rejwan in the Negev.¹⁹⁵

Hamas frustrated at their inability to influence or impact even when they were attacking Gush Dan (Tel Aviv), they decided for the second time too aim for Jerusalem firing two rockets¹⁹⁶ both landing in an open area of the West Bank between two Palestinian villages.¹⁹⁷

Another major difference emerging during Day Seven and definitely a new feature on the board of the operations game was the attempt to reach a cease-fire or truce. Israel having believed that most of the tactical objectives having been achieved and Hamas knowing that they would soon run out of rockets. Indeed some in Israel believed that the IDF should have continued until Hamas had indeed run out of rockets which would have resulted in a de facto cease-fire. They saw no need to reach an agreement which would necessitate some form of concessions. Others were of the opinion that a cease-fire agreement would be a first stage of a broader agreement.¹⁹⁸

There was no direct contact between the sides leaving the role of mediator potentially to the United Nations and Egypt. The United Nations Secretary General visiting Israel and Egypt. United States Secretary of State Hillary Clinton left Cambodia where she was visiting¹⁹⁹ to engage in discussions with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu though not meeting with Hamas as it is designating as a Foreign Terrorist Organization.²⁰⁰ Egypt's President Mohammed Morsi declared that there would be a deal that day²⁰¹ supported by a Hamas spokesman that a deal was close.²⁰² However the negotiations bore no fruit and the rockets and airstrikes continued.²⁰³

Day Eight - 21 November

Eight Days a week sang the Beatles in the 1960s and indeed the week seemed to be eight days long since the eighth day was the last day in the week long

exchange of fire. Daily life on both sides had been disrupted including the winter soccer league. Hamas had launched rockets from the Gaza soccer stadium and therefore the IDF struck it, terminating the Gazan league venue. Similarly in Israel the 2012–13 UEFA Europa League game with visiting Athletic Bilbao was postponed by UEFA due to the security situation.²⁰⁴

Knowing the end was in sight with intense negotiations aimed at a cease-fire both sides also intensified their military activities for a final surge to gain a tactical and strategic advantage. So talking peace and waging war Hamas fired 116 rockets which was more than the previous day²⁰⁵ wounding seven people in the Eshkol region,²⁰⁶ one in Netivot,²⁰⁷ and a woman in the Beer Tuvia Region where two rockets fell.²⁰⁸ The intense barrage mainly fell on Sdot Negev,²⁰⁹ Hof Ashkelon, Sha'ar Hanegev,²¹⁰ Beer Sheva,²¹¹ Bnei Shimon,²¹² and Ashdod.²¹³

IDF strikes were now also preemptive attacking cells preparing to fire rockets from the Jabalia neighborhood and from Khan Younis²¹⁴ as well as three tunnels and two underground rocket launchers.²¹⁵ It was maybe with relief that a cease-fire was agreed on as brokered by Egypt and announced for 21:00 that evening²¹⁶ as the IDF strikes were taking their toll on civilians in Gaza, which was bad for publicity. In the Nusseirat refugee camp a four year old girl was killed, six people were killed in Gaza City and a teenage girl and her 80-year old grandfather were killed Khan Yunis.²¹⁷ The bad publicity would come from Al Jazeera whose news bureau in Gaza City was damaged during a strike on the adjacent Abu Khadra government building as was the office of the Associated Press,²¹⁸ while the building housing Agence France-Presse's office twice fell to airstrikes.²¹⁹

Tel Aviv bus bombing

On the last day of the eight day conflict while negotiations for a ceasefire were underway there was an explosion on a Tel Aviv Bus on Route 142 on King Saul Boulevard near the Kirya Military Headquarters wounded 21 civilians including three seriously.²²⁰ Mixed and confusing messages came from Hamas, for example Khaled Mashal, categorically rejected any connection of the bombing to Hamas²²¹ while Fawzi Barhoum, praised the attack, referring to it as the "natural response to the occupation crimes and ongoing massacres against civilians in the Gaza Strip"²²² The bus bombing was lauded from numerous Gaza mosque's loudspeakers²²³ while Hamas' television broadcast people in the streets of Gaza praising the attack.²²⁴

It was the first bomb blast in Tel Aviv since 2006 showing up the terrorist nature of the conflict²²⁵ and complicating negotiation efforts for a cease-fire.²²⁶ The area of the blast contained heavy pedestrian traffic and many office buildings with civilians²²⁷ bringing the United Nations, US, UK, France

and Russia to condemn the attack.²²⁸ In deploring the attack UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said "there are no circumstances that justify the targeting of civilians"²²⁹ with a stronger response from The White House that "today's terrorist attack" and attacks against innocent Israeli civilians were "outrageous." The Russian foreign ministry termed the attack a "criminal terrorist act" while the British Foreign Secretary noted "we are clear that terrorists must not be allowed to set the agenda."²³⁰ The French Foreign Minister linked their condemnation with the efforts to obtain a ceasefire.²³¹

A Ceasefire is reached

Israel classifies Hamas as a terrorist organisation and Hamas refuses Israel's right to exist negating direct negotiations leaving the role to intermediaries with the principal actors officials from the U.S. facilitated by Egypt.²³² These were apt given Egyptian President Mohamed Morsi, who came to power with the Muslim Brotherhood after that countries Arab Spring transformation, has close ties with Hamas who are a Muslim Brotherhood offshoot. Similarly the United States is Israel's principal ally. Both Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and UN Secretary General Ban Ki Moon met with Netanyahu. Not to be left out the Turkish Foreign Minister and Arab League officials also arrived in Gaza however unlike the US, UN and Egypt they do not have working relations with Israel and their role was negligible.²³³

In a display of grand diplomacy both sides demanded more than they knew they would obtain. Israel's 6 demands were:²³⁴ no violence for a period of more than 15 years; no smuggling or transfer of arms to Gaza; the end of all rocket fire and attacks on Israeli soldiers; reserving the right to attack terrorists in case of an attack or of a potential attack; the closure of the Israeli-Gaza crossings although Gaza-Egypt crossings may remain open; and Egypt's politicians must guarantee the demands. Hamas demands in exchange for a ceasefire were: the lifting of the naval blockade of Gaza including international guarantees;²³⁵ the cessation of attacks and international community guarantees for the cessation of targeted killings; and an end to IDF cross-border raids.²³⁶

It was the facilitator Mohamed Kamel Amr, the Egyptian Foreign Minister, and US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton who announced a ceasefire that would take effect on 21:00 21 November 2012.²³⁷ The agreement released by the Egyptian presidency states:²³⁸

1. Israel shall stop all hostilities in the Gaza Strip: land, sea and air including incursions and targeting of individuals.
2. All Palestinian factions shall stop all hostilities from the Gaza Strip against Israel including rocket attacks, and all attacks along the border.

3. Opening the crossings and facilitating the movements of people and transfer of goods, and refraining from restricting residents' free movements, and targeting residents in border areas and procedures of implementation shall be dealt with after 24 hours from the start of the ceasefire.
4. Other matters as may be requested shall be addressed.

The Implementation Mechanism agreed was:

1. Setting up the zero hour for the Ceasefire Understanding to enter into effect.
2. Egypt shall receive assurances from each party that the party commits to what was agreed upon.
3. Each party shall commit itself not to perform any acts that would breach this understanding. In case of any observations, Egypt - as the sponsor of this understanding - shall be informed to follow up.

The Head of Israel's intelligence service the Mossad was the main negotiator in Cairo²³⁹ returning home to hear Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu declare that Operation Pillar of Defense had been successful and thank US President Obama for his "unwavering support for Israel's right to defend itself."²⁴⁰ At the same time Khaled Meshal, Hamas leader in exile in Qatar thanked Egypt for mediating the ceasefire and claimed that Israel had been defeated while praising Iran for providing financing and arms.²⁴¹

Post-ceasefire incidents

Despite the agreed time and date of 21:00 21 November 2012 Hamas fired twelve rockets from Gaza all landing in open areas,²⁴² but causing "Code Red" warnings in Eshkol, Sderot, Hof Ashkelon, Ashdod, Kiryat Malachi and Sha'ar Hanegev. The terror persisted with one rocket being intercepted by the Iron Dome system over Ashdod.²⁴³ Similarly there was an explosion in Gaza with no casualties.²⁴⁴ Both sides wanting to show that despite a cease-fire they were still willing and capable of fighting and had not been defeated; cease-fires are not a sign of weakness. Accidents occurred as well when three Palestinians were wounded and another killed as Hamas fired in the air to celebrate the ceasefire.²⁴⁵ Another nine were wounded and one killed by the IDF when they entered into the buffer zone inside Gaza's border thinking in error that the borders were now open.²⁴⁶

The Street has its Voice – Protests Spillover into Other Areas

The conflict was not contained to Gaza and Israel. Both sides have supporters world-wide with rallies and protests supporting Gazan residents took place in countries including Malaysia, Indonesia, India^l, Pakistan, Turkey, Egypt, Yemen, Italy, United States, United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, New

Zealand, Poland, South Africa, Germany, Belgium, Israel, Argentine, Chile, Venezuela, South Korea, Hong Kong, and Japan.²⁴⁷ Countries in which rallies and protests in support of Israel were held included: the United States, the United Kingdom, South Africa, Australia, France, Netherlands, Germany, Israel, Poland, and Canada. For the main part these passed peacefully with no casualties and no report of confrontations between opposing supporters.²⁴⁸

More virilant protests took place in the West Bank²⁴⁹ starting on the first day, 14 November, where fierce protests and the injury of two Israelis by stoning of their car, caused the main road between Gush Etzion and Jerusalem to be closed.²⁵⁰

The protests on the West bank remained low key until the fifth day, 18 November, when a 31-year-old Palestinian man demonstrating in an illegal and violent protest in Nabi Saleh was killed by Israeli fire.²⁵¹ The next day thousands marched in response to this,²⁵² firebombing an Israeli civilian vehicle in the West Bank on Highway 60; although the passengers were able to flee to safety.²⁵³ Israeli vehicles were also stoned on Route 443 linking Tel Aviv and Jerusalem via Modiin. During the protests over 50 Palestinians were reported injured in Ramallah, East Jerusalem, Beit Ummar, Bethlehem, and Qalandia.²⁵⁴ One was shot dead when attempting to attack an Israeli soldier.²⁵⁵ As part of the East Jerusalem protests in Atarot, five firebombs were hurled at an Israeli Border Police base whilst in Hebron the same type of action saw a 22-year old Palestinian being shot and wounded. Assailants shot at Israeli soldiers near Jenin at a military base whilst others attempted unsuccessfully to break into the Nahliel Israel town by cutting through the security fence.²⁵⁶

The significance of the protests in the West Bank was not lost on the Israeli government or that of the Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas. Although Hamas has control of Gaza, Fatah has control through elections of the West Bank. Support for Hamas starting with the international recognition accorded by the visit of the Emir of Qatar and the world-wide support for Hamas in Gaza could only lead to a weakening of Fatah. Fatah has supported talks with Israel where the Palestinian demonstrations throughout the West Bank called for a new Intifada and the cessation of any form of diplomacy with Israel.²⁵⁷

Should support be overwhelming for Hamas as the growing apprehension when hundreds of protesters in Nablus waved Hamas flags²⁵⁸ then Israel would be disadvantaged in attempts for a two-state solution to the Israel-Palestine conflict. Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas reiterated his intent to turn to the United Nations General Assembly to change Palestinian status to “non-member state” as a step to reinforce his precarious domestic position and gain international status as the legitimate representative of Palestinian people. Israel opposed this as it was in breach of the 1993 Oslo accords which

called for a negotiated creation of the Palestine state and not a unilateral declaration of independence.²⁵⁹

The date Abbas chose would symbolically be the 29 November, the anniversary of the United Nations decision in 1947 to partition the British Mandate of Palestine granting Israel independence and creating a Muslim State of Palestine with Jerusalem being an international city. Despite ardent support of Israel in its right of self-defence against Hamas in Gaza France stated that it would support Abbas against Israel's wishes. Britain also an ardent support of Israel in its right of self-defence against Hamas in Gaza expressed vacillation but offering to vote for the resolution on condition that Fatah return to the negotiation table. The implications of two of the five permanent members (P5) of the United Nations Security Council turning opinion against Israel from their ardent support against Hamas in Gaza was not lost in her considerations for action against the impending Iranian nuclear capability. Two other of the five permanent members (P5) of the United Nations Security Council, Russia and China are also not standing with Israel against Iran. China is nonchalant and Russia is Iran's supplier. Only the United States has displayed a singular support of Israel but not a blank check for political and military actions on all three issues: Hamas in Gaza, the Iran nuclear issue and the West Bank / UN recognition.

While these issues were in the political forum unrest continued in the streets where an Israeli soldier was wounded near Gush Etzion, and an Israeli civilian woman near Husan was injured in a stoning attack on her car.²⁶⁰ The protests and clashes continued for the last two days of Operation Pillar of Defence (21-22 November). The most attended and most violent was at the funerals of those killed in previous days. For example the funeral procession of a Palestinian man, Tamimi, who had been killed in Hebron passed through Ramallah and Birzeit University before ending in his home town of Nabi Salih throwing stones at Israeli troops who responded with rubber bullets and tear gas.²⁶¹ This was also the case in the funeral procession in village of al-Jalama where protests became so violent it had to be classified and declared as a "a closed military zone."²⁶²

Casualties on both sides

Although both sides declared victory for their political and military goals, aims and objectives both sides lost from their casualties. So in a pseudo medieval manner of war between monarchical city-states with castles on the hills it was the Israeli Prime Minister, his military Chief of Staff and the terrorists leaders won but it was the civilians who lost. Different statistics were given by both sides on the other sides losses.

The day after the cease-fire (22 November) the Palestinian Centre for Human Rights announced that 158 Palestinians had been killed detailed as 102 civilians, 55 militants and one policeman with over 1000.²⁶³ Amongst the civilian fatalities 13 were women and 30 children.²⁶⁴ This figure is disputed by the IDF who calculate a total of 177 Palestinians killed, of which 120 were militants.²⁶⁵

The worst single episode was on 19 November 2012 when eight members of the Dalu family including two children, and having no known connections to militants,²⁶⁶ were killed as well as two neighbors.²⁶⁷ Conflicting reports suggest a militant was inside responsible for launching 200—300 rockets;²⁶⁸ the wrong house was targeted;²⁶⁹ and the event was an accident.²⁷⁰

Rage was expressed by public opinion in Jordan, Saudi Arabia and other Gulf States at the barbaric action of Hamas when eight Palestinians were publicly executed for alleged collaboration with Israel.²⁷¹ Hamas deputy leader Moussa Abu Marzouk fearful of losing the Arab world support condemned the killings suggesting that any punishments must follow the legal process and those responsible would be punished.²⁷²

The standard method was shooting for example Ashraf Ouaida on 16 November in the Sheikh Radwan neighborhood of Gaza City by two masked men underneath a Hamas billboard and then hanging a poster citing his alleged crimes.²⁷³ The second shooting execution was of six in the street on 20 November after being pulled out of a van;²⁷⁴ thereafter five being were left in a pile for a mob stomping and spitting while the sixth body was dragged through the main²⁷⁵

IDF air strikes have not responsible for all the casualties.²⁷⁶ For example BBC Arabic photojournalist Jihad Masharawi lost his baby son and sister-in-law even though, according to him, his neighborhood in the Sabra district saw no strike; maybe a rocket mis-launch.²⁷⁷

The rockets fired by Hamas were not of the highest technological calibre and accuracy nor were they stored in optimal conditions. A substantial number of rockets never launched or exploded at launch while at least more than 100 rockets fell short of its target in Gaza causing multiple injuries;²⁷⁸ and at least two Palestinian civilian deaths.²⁷⁹ For example the Palestinian Centre for Human Rights examined the site where four year old Mohammed Sadallah, was killed in an explosion in Annazla, and considered that it was caused by a Hamas rocket. Reports in the *New York Times*, concurred²⁸⁰ strengthening IDF denials that it had operated at that time in that area.²⁸¹

Rockets are terror. The psychological impact cannot be measured but over one million Israelis suffered trauma. During the eight day operation four Israeli

civilians and one soldier were killed from rocket attacks.²⁸² Three of the civilians died in a direct hit on the Kiryat Malachi apartment building while the fourth was an Israeli-Arab in the Eshkol Region²⁸³ in addition to the Bedouin civilian killed in rocket fire in Negev village of Rejwan.²⁸⁴ Almost 250 suffered physical injury,²⁸⁵ of which at least 10 were soldiers.²⁸⁶ The Tel Aviv bus bombing accounts for another 21 injured.

The relative low Israeli casualty rate can be attributed to a number of factors, including the IDF's defensive and offensive tactics and strategy that comprised of terminating militants whilst at launch phase; preemptive targeting of rocket arsenals and launching pads; the use of secure shelters in most Israeli homes; the success of the Iron Dome missile interception system; the implementation of the "Color Red" system; and the public adhering to Home Front Command instructions.²⁸⁷

Alleged war crimes

U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights Navi Pillay and U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon expressed condemnation at the targeting of civilians in Israel by indiscriminate Hamas rockets.²⁸⁸ The violations were also against their own civilians²⁸⁹ by firing the rockets from launch sites amongst its own civilians expecting casualties from Israeli counter-strikes in order to blame them as a means to gain Western public opinion sympathy.²⁹⁰ In effect using its own civilians as human shields. This was justified by Hamas leader Fathi Hamed, who said "for the Palestinian people, death has become an industry, at which women excel... the elderly excel at this... and so do the children. This is why they have formed human shields of the women, the children."²⁹¹ Some of the launch sites rocket were next to schools, hospitals, playgrounds and mosques²⁹² substantiated by IDF footage.²⁹³ Hamas also knew that about 10% of the rockets would land in Gaza and would thus kill or injure their own civilians.²⁹⁴

The death of the eight family members of the Dalu family received attention from the international press as a war crime and a massacre;²⁹⁵ responded to by the IDF as accident.²⁹⁶ The Arab League Foreign Ministers collectively accused Israel of crimes against humanity and perpetrating war crimes.²⁹⁷ Iran and Turkey refused to accept Israel's stance of self-defense blaming it for the escalation in Gaza where Turkish Prime Minister went so far to call Israel a terrorist state engaged in the "ethnic cleansing" of Palestinians.²⁹⁸

The Second Front: Social media and Internet

In the physical combat zone between the two sides the modus operandi of the IDF was to explain how it took every available measure to avoid harming civilians, by issuing preemptive warnings to Palestinian residents and in

utilizing precision strikes.²⁹⁹ One method to warn was to drop from the air leaflets instructing civilians to avoid areas used by Hamas for firing rockets, while another was to phone residents. A military tactic was to miss targets on the first strike permitting non-combatants to leave the area while yet another was to abort missions because civilians had been spotted in the vicinity.³⁰⁰ On the Home Front in Israel an app was developed based on the idea of a 13-year-old sending out information of the location and timing of the "Color Red" alerts warnings of imminent missile attacks.³⁰¹

In the information operations on the civilian front both Hamas and the IDF used Twitter and liveblogs³⁰² where the later used them to give an up-to-date accounts of its operations³⁰³ and the former to publicise rocket and mortar attacks and Israeli casualties.³⁰⁴ On Day One of Operation Pillar of Defense the IDF's Twitter account gained more than 50,000 new followers.³⁰⁵ Such texts were supplemented by images and videos from both sides where a popular one was a Hamas psychological warfare video with broken Hebrew and technical problems threatening the lives of Israeli citizens.³⁰⁶

When it was clear that the IDF web sites were having a greater successful impact than the Hamas web sites; Hamas brought down 700 Israeli sites replacing the home pages with messages condemning the Israeli campaign and expressing support for the citizens of Gaza;³⁰⁷ but the IDF was also able to deflect another 44 million attacks.³⁰⁸

Undermining their own cause due to reader uncertainty and scepticism³⁰⁹ Hamas issued Facebook postings and sent fake emails including such texts as "terrorists in Gaza can track you and direct their Katyushas to your location!" and "the military censorship of military intelligence is concealing information about attacks on soldiers". YouTube videos were attached showing a missile striking an IDF jeep though this was shown to be a Reuters news agency vehicle.³¹⁰

Hamas as a terrorist organization aims not only to inflict physical violence but also psychological trauma.³¹¹ A substantial amount of Hamas TV and internet based images and videos were recycled from the Syria conflict presenting them as Palestinian dead;³¹² including well known scenes from Syrian massacre photos of 19 October;³¹³ whilst others were digitally altered;³¹⁴ and yet others were staged deaths and scenes of injury.³¹⁵ Israeli casualties were also rebroadcast as Hamas casualties.³¹⁶ Even the BBC was to blame for inaccurate information when Gaza correspondent Jon Donnison retweeted a photograph of a dead child titled "Pain in Gaza" later proven to be from Syria.³¹⁷ All in all giving the effect of a very serious but inaccurate Israeli massacre against Gazan residents.

Both sides provided inaccurate figures. Israel has had 26 fatalities from Hamas Gaza rockets since the first fatality in 2004 yet made internet posters inferring more. Hamas adduced the civilian casualties extracting the figures from all previous conflicts since the 1982 Lebanon War.³¹⁸

Calling for recognition

Recognition of the legitimacy of each sides rights was from the onset a major objective of the Operations. Israel demanding the right to defend itself and its population and Hamas claiming Israel's aggression. The reactions around the world from statements in the mass media aimed at gathering support, including domestic, had a reciprocal impact on the military operations, whether there was an escalation, what were the targets and how quickly a sustainable cease-fire entered force.

According to the CNN/ORC International Poll, conducted between Day Three and Day Five (16-18 November), almost 60% of American public sympathize with Israel, while 13% sympathize with the Palestinians and 57% of American public think " Israel is justified in taking military action in Gaza."³¹⁹

On Day One of Operation Pillar of Defense, Israeli President Shimon Peres called American President Barack Obama to inform him "Israel does not want an escalation but for the last five days we were under nonstop bombardment, mothers and children cannot sleep in peace at night. There is a limit to what Israel can withstand. Ahmed Jabari was behind many terror activities."³²⁰ The Israeli Prime Minister said "Today we sent a clear message to Hamas and other terrorist organizations, and if it becomes necessary we are prepared to expand the operation."³²¹

There was almost 100% solidarity amongst Israeli political leaders, who were preparing for the general elections, where prominent part leaders including Shelly Yachimovich, Tzipi Livni, Naftali Bennett and Shaul Mofaz, applauded the operation.³²² Some were quick to offer advise led by Gilad Sharon, son of former Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, when he called for Gaza to be flattened in the same way that the US did Hiroshima and Nagasaki.³²³ This call was echoed by Interior Minister Eli Yishai informing: "The goal of the operation is to send Gaza back to the Middle Ages. Only then will Israel be calm for 40 years".³²⁴

At the same time on Day One, 14 November 2012, after the assassination of Ahmed Jabari, Fawzi Barhoum, a Hamas spokesman, called it an act of war;³²⁵ and Abu Ahmed, a Islamic Jihad spokesman called it "declaration of war" pledging a response within hours.³²⁶ The Izz ad-Din al-Qassam Brigades stated "The occupation has opened the gates of hell on itself" and vowed that its militants would "continue the path of resistance".³²⁷

Not involved in the military action which came as a surprise, President Mahmoud Abbas of Fatah returned to the West Bank from a tour of Europe³²⁸ calling for an emergency meeting of the Arab League³²⁹ and for the U.N. Security Council to pass a resolution to halt Operation Pillar of Defense in Gaza.³³⁰

The Stance of Supranational bodies

The United Nations was created in the last days of World War II and shortly after its aftermath as a forum for immediate discussion to resolve disputes before they become conflicts, and did just that. However the horse had already bolted and both sides were exchanging fire. The next step in United Nations standard procedures is to bring the sides together to prevent escalation and enforce a cease-fire. How this is done is always the operative question. So on the evening of Day One the United Nations Security Council entered into an emergency session but came to no decision other than to issue the statement: "the message that must resonate from this meeting is 'the violence has to stop'" which was followed by the Secretary-General is "deeply saddened" by the deaths of civilians and "alarmed by the continuing firing of rockets against Israeli towns."³³¹

With escalation and little possibility of the sides ending the conflict themselves UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon visited Cairo on 19 November with a view to discuss with the Egyptian President available options and a way forward. Getting an impression from all sides to the conflict he also met the Israeli Prime Minister and the Palestinian president. By being an impartial third-party, by respecting each parties requirements and demands and by not insisting on an externally imposed solution he was instrument in this shuttle diplomacy in exchanging the stances and views of all parties with each other which led to an early implementation of the cease-fire.³³²

As one of the four members of the international quartet working to solve the Israel-Palestinean issue, the European Union (EU) foreign policy chief Catherine Ashton called on both sides "The rocket attacks by Hamas and other factions in Gaza, which began this current crisis are totally unacceptable for any government and must stop. Israel has the right to protect its population from these kind of attacks. I urge Israel to ensure that its response is proportionate," but the EU did not enter into any form of diplomatic activity.³³³ Similarly NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen called on both sides saying "Of course Israel has the right to self-defense, and attacks against Israel must end. But the international community would also expect Israel to show restraint," and also showed no intent to enter into any form of diplomatic or military activity³³⁴

The Arab League has no links or communications with Israel and therefore could not act in the same capacity as the United Nations not achieve the same results. Instead it sided with Hamas describing Israel's actions as "crimes against humanity" and "war crimes;" and calling for the prosecution of "Zionist war criminals."³³⁵ It was well into the exchange of fire on the penultimate day that Nabil Elaraby led an Arab League delegation to Gaza to express solidarity³³⁶ which was criticized by the Palestinian Authority and Fatah as being too little too late and demanded an urgent summit.³³⁷

Taking sides - Which Countries Supported Which Side

There could only be three options by other countries: 1) support Israel; or 2) support Hamas; or 3) support neither but offer advice to both. The usual suspects were present in all three groups where there were no surprises of any country changing its already well known stance, support, or opinion.

Israel had on its side had on its side most of the Western democratic world led alphabetically by Australia "The government condemns the repeated rocket and mortar attacks on Israel from the Gaza Strip and calls on Hamas to cease these immediately. Australia supports Israel's right to defend itself against these indiscriminate attacks."³³⁸ Belgium stressed "Israel's legitimate right to defend its population against these attacks".³³⁹ Britain said "the rocket attacks from Gaza into southern Israel by Hamas and other armed groups were completely unacceptable and that the increasing frequency of rocket attacks in recent days was the immediate cause of the situation"³⁴⁰ Canada issued a statement "We fundamentally believe that Israel has the right to defend itself and its citizens from terrorist threats. Far too often, the Jewish people find themselves on the front lines in the struggle against terrorism. Canada condemns the terrorist group Hamas and stands with Israel as it deals with regional threats to peace and security."³⁴¹ The Czech Republic said "We fully recognize Israel's right to self defense against rocket barrage carried out by the militant organizations in the Gaza Strip."³⁴² France acknowledged Israel's right to defend itself³⁴³ but adding it won't achieve it through violence".³⁴⁴ Christophe Bigot the French ambassador to Israel visited Kiryat Malachi, where three Israeli civilians were killed, and expressed his solidarity with Israeli victims of rocket attacks.³⁴⁵ Germany said: "It is obvious that Israel has a legitimate right to defend itself and protect its own citizens against rocket attacks from the Gaza Strip,"³⁴⁶ adding "Hamas in Gaza is responsible for the outbreak of violence. There is no justification for the shooting of rockets at Israel, which has led to massive suffering of the civilian population."³⁴⁷ Italy said that "Hamas missile attacks pose serious risks for the population of Israel justifying Israel's response."³⁴⁸ Holland was adamant "Hamas has attacked Israel by firing rockets over and over again. Doing this makes Hamas the main actor that is guilty for the Israeli reaction" and "Let it be clear that the unbelievable sorrow of the people in the Gaza strip is in first place the result of Hamas' actions."³⁴⁹

Norway said the rocket attacks on Israel are "clearly unacceptable" and that "Israel has a right to defend itself."³⁵⁰ Romania issued a press release stating: "we hope that Hamas will stop its military aggression"³⁵¹ The United States stressed "The precipitating event here that's causing the current crisis was an ever-escalating number of missiles; they were landing not just in Israeli territory, but in areas that are populated. So we are fully supportive of Israel's right to defend itself from missiles landing on people's homes and workplaces and potentially killing civilians. And we will continue to support Israel's right to defend itself."³⁵²

Hamas had on its side the Arab and Muslim bloc led alphabetically by Afghanistan condemning Israel's airstrikes on Gaza and called for an "immediate stop" to violence against civilians.³⁵³ Algeria strongly condemned, "Israeli aggression against Gaza strip" and urged the United Nations Security Council and the international community to assume their responsibilities and "put an end to this dangerous escalation"³⁵⁴ Bahrain reiterated its strong condemnation of the "brutal Israeli aggression on the Gaza Strip."³⁵⁵ The Egyptian ambassador was recalled to Cairo and Israel's ambassador received an official protest while Egyptian President Mohamed Morsi stated that "The Israelis must realise that this aggression is unacceptable and would only lead to instability in the region"³⁵⁶ offering to receive wounded Palestinians.³⁵⁷ Iraq's envoy to the Arab League called on the Arab countries to "use the weapon of oil, with the aim of asserting real pressure on the United States and whoever stands with Israel".³⁵⁸ Jordan said: "Israel's aggressive policy placed the area again in a cycle of violence and instability. This additional hostility closes all doors on negotiations and the achievement of political arrangements. Israel deprives the Palestinian people of their political and national right to create an independent state Israel's aggression needs to be stopped and the Palestinian people need to be protected."³⁵⁹ Kazakhstan condemned Israel's operation "that claimed lives of civilians and damaged infrastructure. As the history shows, the policy of repressions will not bring peace and security to Israel."³⁶⁰ Kuwait expressed "sorrow for the bloody developments in Gaza which was in violation of all international laws and agreements".³⁶¹ Libya condemned Israeli attacks on Gaza, referring to them as "these criminal attacks which resulted in the killing and wounding of dozens of the Palestinian people are a challenge to the international community and to resolutions of international legitimacy".³⁶² Mauritania denounced and condemned the "wicked Israeli attack on the Gaza strip urging the UN Security Council to take up their responsibilities and take the needed measures to protect the Palestinian people against such attacks which jeopardizes security and stability in the region".³⁶³ Morocco expressed its deep concern and strong condemnation regarding Israel's ongoing large-scale military operation in the Gaza Strip, urging for "an immediate halt to these raids".³⁶⁴ Pakistan said that it "strongly condemns Israeli air attacks in Gaza that have targeted not only the Hamas leadership but also innocent civilians considering Israeli action as a

grave violation of international law and all humanitarian norms".³⁶⁵ Qatar stressed "This filthy crime of Israel must not pass without a punishment."³⁶⁶ Saudi Arabia expressed its condemnation of the "Israeli assaults on the Gaza Strip calling for a stronger and more united Arab stance in the face of the Israeli occupation practices" adding "It is no longer reasonable or acceptable to pass this new aggression unpunished, The Kingdom sees that it is time for the Palestinians to enjoy, like other peoples of the world, peace and security and to have a homeland free of violence, killing and destruction".³⁶⁷ Syria alled Israel's actions "barbaric, reprehensible crimes" and called on the international community to pressure Israel into halting its strikes.³⁶⁸ Tunisian foreign minister Rafik Abdessalem visited Gaza on 17 November, calling on the world to stop Israel's "blatant aggression" in Gaza, saying it was "no longer acceptable or legal by any standards".³⁶⁹ The United Arab Emirates urged the international community to "shoulder its responsibility towards the Palestinian people and to put an end to Israel's messing up with regional and international peace and stability".³⁷⁰ Venezuela called the Israeli airstrikes "Another savage aggression against the Gaza Strip had begun. Once again, Israel is bombing the Gaza Strip."³⁷¹ Yemen announced "its strong condemnation and denunciation of the brutal Zionist aggression on the Gaza Strip, and standing of the Yemeni people with their brothers in Palestine at all times".³⁷² On 19 November, hundreds marched in Sana'a Yemen to "affirm their solidarity with those under siege in the Gaza strip" beginning at Change Square, and ending in the Haseba district at the local Hamas office.³⁷³

Those countries that supported neither but offer advised to both started alphabetically with the Argentine expressing "solidarity with all victims" and pledging to "work with regional leaders in urging warring parties to cease violence" while Armenia said of the war in Gaza: "The use of force and militaristic threats should be stopped. We strongly believe that there is no alternative to the peaceful resolution of the conflict through peace talks."³⁷⁴ The Brazilian government called on Israel and Palestinians for an immediate ceasefire expressing the "strongest condemnation of the violence unleashed between Israel and Palestine"³⁷⁵ Bulgaria expressed condolences to the families of victims among the civilian population on both sides.³⁷⁶ Chile supported "Palestines right to a free, independent and autonomous state" and at the same time also supported Israels right to "have safety and peace at its frontiers".³⁷⁷ China expressed "concern" to the clashes and urge all sides, to display "restraint" and avoid civilian casualties.³⁷⁸ Hungaria issued a statement saying that it was "following developments in the Middle East with deep concern, in particular the rocket attacks from the Gaza Strip against Israel and the ensuing military response in protection of the population. We regard it as a necessity that the sides exercise self-restraint and desist from the use of violence. We support all efforts which facilitate the termination of fighting."³⁷⁹ India sought peace and cessation of all hostilities by Israel and Hamas and urged direct talks between the Palestine Authority in West Bank and Israel.³⁸⁰

Ireland said that "This latest round of violence, could lead to the further death and suffering of innocent Israeli and Palestinian civilians. The risks from an escalation of violence on either side are all too apparent. I urge both sides to immediately cease these attacks and remove the threat they pose to the lives and safety of innocent people."³⁸¹ Russia said "We urge all sides to end the military confrontation immediately and to prevent a new round of bloodshed in the Gaza Strip."³⁸² President Putin calling "on the parties to exercise restraint and avoid the path of escalating violence, whose victims include civilians, and to do everything to return the situation to its normal course".³⁸³

Non-governmental organizations

Similar to those countries which didn't take sides but which offered advice to both sides were the non-governmental organisations (NGO). Leading these was Amnesty International calling for "Palestinian armed groups in Gaza must not fire indiscriminate rockets into Israel" and "The Israeli military must not carry out further indiscriminate attacks, or attacks in densely populated residential areas that will inevitably harm civilians" while calling for "The international community must put pressure on both sides to fully respect the laws of war and protect civilian lives and property."³⁸⁴

Following in the footsteps of advice and impartiality was Human Rights Watch issuing the statement "Israeli and Palestinian forces alike need to make all feasible efforts to avoid harming civilians," and "there is no justification for Palestinian armed groups unlawfully launching rockets at Israeli population centers."³⁸⁵

Domestic Israeli human rights organization B'Tselem called on both sides to avoid deaths highlighting that the "Protection of civilians stands at the heart of international humanitarian law. They must never be targeted; all measures must be taken to protect them."³⁸⁶ The American based J Street organization said in a similar vein that it stands with Israel and its right to defend itself from all threats to its people and territory but urged Israel to avoid civilian casualties and hoped for President Obama to mobilize international partners to broker a ceasefire quickly."³⁸⁷

Conclusion

This Special Edition of the *London Security Policy Study* provided an overview with impressions of Israel's Operation Pillar of Defense (Hebrew: עַמּוּד עֲנָן) and the corresponding Operation Stones of Shale (Arabic: حجارة سجيل) by the Izz ad-Din al-Qassam Brigades of Hamas and Operation Blue Sky (Arabic: السماء الزرقاء) by members of the Palestinian Islamic Jihad. These operations took place between 14-21 November 2012 on the physical geographic territory of Gaza and Israel and world-wide on the internet,

through social media and the domestic and international press, through diplomacy and through legal arguments. At the end of the eighth day of battle both sides and all parties claimed victory. However there was no change in the size of the territory of either side, no side gaining any natural resources over the other. Neither side denies that although the respective operations are over, the war between them continues. The real loses on both sides were the civilian population.

Only time will tell the consequences. In the short term the supply of rockets in Gaza has dwindled but Israel cannot prevent re-armament. A failure of arms control and disarmament. Hamas has used rockets for over a decade to wage terror. Israel's Iron Dome system has raised the ante. Hamas will need to acquire better rockets or maybe it will wage terror using other means. Israel has already experienced suicide bombers on its civilian busses. In the short term there is the issue of government and governance in Gaza as well as the West Bank. Israel accepts that a Palestinian state will be created. The problem is when and how and who will govern it. Operations Pillar of Defence, Stones of Shale and Blue Sky made no steps towards creating an independent Palestinian State. A failure in the socialisation of elites and population. In the long term there is a ticking demographic bomb. Gaza an urban territory of 45 km² within 300 km² of unconstructable desert can barely sustain the current 1.5 million population. In one or more generations population will need to leave. Where to and how? Operations of then type of Pillar of Defence, Stones of Shale and Blue Sky cannot resolve these.

One of the immediate first afterthoughts on the events relate to Iran's nuclear ambitions. One possible scenario of an attack on Iran's nuclear capabilities was the expectation of a rocket and missile response from both Hamas in Gaza and Hezbollah in Lebanon. It was assumed that they would be coordinated and linked to their Iranian sponsors. Indeed American, British and French support for Israel on the first day of Operation Pillar of Defense may well be assumed to be a calculation on their part that this was the first stage of a strike against Iran. Namely a preemptive strike on Hamas and then Hezbollah.

However Hezbollah barely voiced an opinion on Operation Pillar of Defense and almost didn't take any military action in support of Hamas in Gaza. It was only on 20 November that a Lebanese army patrol about 2 miles from the Israeli border discovered two ready-to-launch 107mm Grad rockets between the villages of Halta and Mari; defusing them. Brig. Gen. Yoav Mordechai analysed that this was not Hezbollah but rather Palestinian factions in Lebanon.³⁸⁸ The next day two rockets were fired from Lebanon at Israel but landed within Lebanon.³⁸⁹ On the day after the cease-fire, 22 November, the Lebanese army disarmed an additional rocket aimed at Israel, in Marjayoun, about 10 kilometers from the border.³⁹⁰

It was the purpose of this publication to provide an immediate eagle eye analysis, account, and impression rather than engage in details and detailed analysis on a worms eye view. Examples are given of the events to highlight the impressions and feelings at the time that they occurred. A detailed day by day accounts of events would be redundant as these can be found on the Israel Defence Force (IDF) and international press web sites. It is too soon to undertake a detailed analysis of the events as the impact and consequences will only emerge over time when the dust of the battle has settled. The locations and the distances between the places mentioned in this report can be viewed for example on maps.google.com or www.bing.com/maps

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