



Policy Analysis

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Flare-Up in Gaza (Part 2): Gently Undoing a Gordian Knot

[Ghaith al-Omari](#) and [Assaf Orion](#) / November 20, 2018

Israel and Hamas cannot advance their current strategic goals through intensified fighting, but the Cairo dialogue could enable important short-term gains in Gaza.

This PolicyWatch is the second in a two-part series on the latest hostilities between Israel and Hamas. [Part 1 discussed](#) the domestic political implications for Israel.

After seven months of ongoing clashes, and before the recent escalation in Gaza, Israel and Hamas were making significant progress in Egyptian-sponsored talks aimed at reaching limited ceasefire understandings. Resuming those discussions and implementing the understandings seems like their best available course of action today, despite the current volatility.

The talks turned fruitful when they finally disaggregated the myriad demands made by both sides, adopting a piecemeal approach instead of bundling. The main goal is to produce a limited but concrete set of arrangements whereby Hamas commits to end violence against Israel (including confrontations along the Gaza security barrier during weekly “Marches of Return,” as well as incendiary kite and balloon attacks), while Israel allows foreign assistance into Gaza to alleviate the territory’s pressing economic and humanitarian situation.

Before the latest escalation, both sides took steps to signal their seriousness and goodwill. Israel allowed the immediate transfer of \$15 million to pay the salaries of Hamas employees in Gaza as part of a \$90 million grant from Qatar. It also permitted the entry of fuel trucks. For its part, Hamas ensured that the November 2 and 9 border marches avoided friction with Israeli forces, producing two of the calmest Fridays since the practice began in March.

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