

## Israel's Gaza Strategy Forces Hamas to Weigh the Economic Cost of Lashing Out

Policy bypasses the militants to provide Gazans economic benefits, which analysts say helped keep Hamas out of recent fighting

By Dov Lieber, Aaron Boxerman and Anas Baba / Aug. 20, 2022 1:00 am ET

GAZA CITY—Tensions between Israel and Palestinian militants have twice erupted into violence in recent months, but Hamas, usually a central player in the long-running conflict, has sat out on both occasions.

Israeli officials and analysts in Gaza say the militant group, which seized control of Gaza in 2007 and now runs its government, is hamstrung by an Israeli policy that bypasses Hamas and provides direct economic benefits to residents of the Palestinian enclave.

[...]

Israeli work permits boosted Gazans' monthly income to about four times the average wage in the enclave, according to a recent study by **Haggay Etkes** of the Israeli **Institute for National Security Studies** and Wifag Adnan of NYU Abu Dhabi.

[...]

"The weaknesses of this [policy] path comes from the fact that the peace it offers will always be temporary and fragile," said **Meir Ben-Shabbat**, Israel's recently retired national security adviser.

"The challenge will be to prolong [this peace], and when there is a conflict—to fully take advantage of it in order to restore deterrence and weaken Hamas," he said.

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