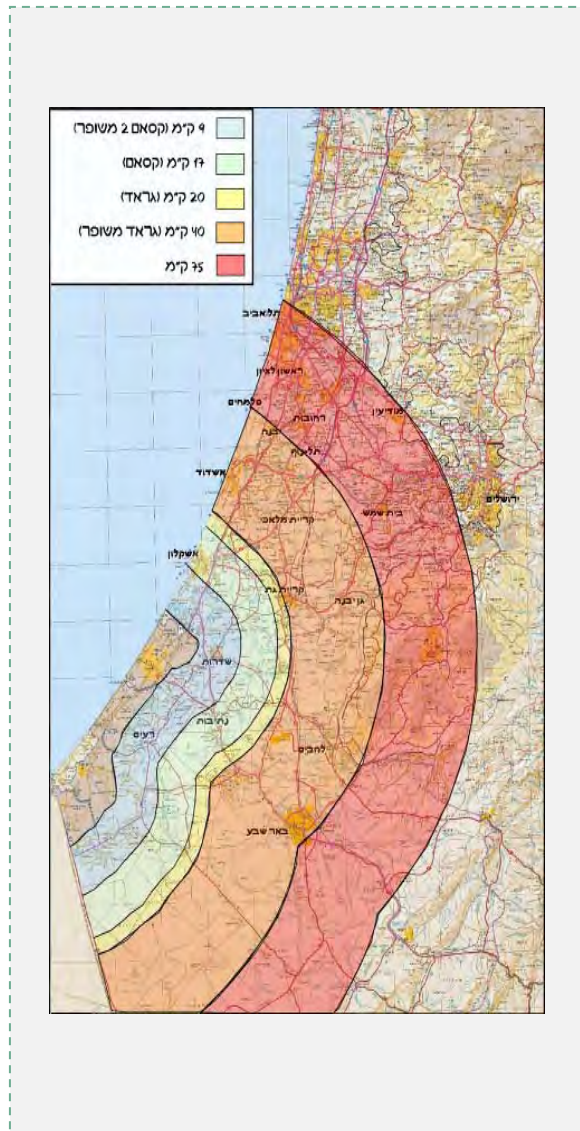




## Hamas' restraint policy in the Gaza Strip: the results of the tension between Hamas' jihadist ideology and pragmatic considerations, which include governmental obligations and Israel's deterrent capabilities.



The rocket threat to Israel from the Gaza Strip

## Constraints and Considerations Influencing Hamas' Terrorist Attack Policy

1. In the three and a half years which have passed since Operation Cast Lead, **the Hamas movement in the Gaza Strip has maintained a policy of restraint regarding terrorist attacks**, different from its policy before the operation. Hamas' policy maneuvers between the movement's Islamist jihad identity and the constraints and considerations which direct it toward pragmatism.

2. The main factors influencing its current policy are, in our assessment, the following:

1) **Ideology**: In essence, Hamas is a radical Islamist movement, the Palestinian branch of the Muslim Brotherhood, for which jihad and "resistance" [i.e., terrorism and violence] are components central to its identity (as made clear in Hamas' 1988 charter, by frequent statements from the movement's senior members and years of terrorist attacks against the State of Israel). Hamas regards the path of "resistance"/jihad as **its primary, but not only, method for advancing its strategic goals**. Secondary methods include **political activity** and the so-called "**popular resistance**" (the method currently favored by the Palestinian Authority). Hamas' central strategic objective is the "liberation of Palestine" from the Jordan river to the Mediterranean sea, that is, the annihilation of the State of Israel, the return of the Palestinian refugees to Israeli territory and the establishment of an Islamic Palestinian state.

2) **Governmental constraints**: Since Hamas took over the Gaza Strip in June 2007, **the demands of governing have grown**, especially those relating to preserving and reinforcing its control and sovereignty over the Gaza Strip, one step on its way to taking over the entire Palestinian arena. **That consideration, which edges Hamas toward pragmatism**, forces it to consider the needs of the million and a half Gazans for whom it is responsible and providing practical responses and solutions for routine difficulties (a good example is the recent energy crisis).

3) **Other considerations**: Hamas has to cope with **Israel's post-Operation Cast Lead deterrent power**, which has made it less willing to enter into a military confrontation with Israel at a time and under circumstances Hamas considers inconvenient. Another consideration is Hamas' desire to **buy time to build up its military might without interruption**, and especially to **improve its capabilities to hit the Israeli heartland with long-range rockets**.

## Overview of Hamas' Restraint Policy

3. As an outcome of the tension between radical jihadist ideology and retraining factors after Operation Cast Lead, **Hamas adopted a policy of restraint which it tries, with various degrees of determination, to impose on the other terrorist organizations in the Gaza Strip.** The main aspects of the policy are the following:

1) **Restraining rocket fire attacks into Israeli territory while turning a blind eye to the sporadic rocket fire of the other terrorist organizations.** Hamas does not participate in sporadic rocket fire but also does not decisively stop the other organizations from launching rockets and in effect has allowed them to continue. Most of the sporadic rocket fire is carried out by the **Palestinian Islamic Jihad** (which inherited the role of main rocket launcher from Hamas), the **Popular Resistance Committees, Fatah networks and Salafist jihadist networks** affiliated with Al-Qaeda.

2) The various terrorist organizations also keep to a routine of "**ordinary terrorist attacks along the border fence** (placing IEDs, sniping at IDF forces, firing mortar shells and anti-tank weapons) without trying to carry out mass-casualty showcase attacks.

3) **In the recent past Hamas has not participated in the rounds of escalation** which occur every several months as the result of continuing attacks from the Gaza Strip (the most recent was in March 2012, when more than 170 rockets hits were identified in Israeli territory.) During the last round Hamas **left the reins in the hands of the PIJ**, for which it was criticized both in the Gaza Strip and externally. **The PIJ's jihadist considerations and its great dependence on Iran** dictate a less-restrained rocket policy than that of Hamas. However, the organization is willing to come to terms with Hamas in order to prevent the situation with Israel from deteriorating. That is one of its understandings with Hamas to preserve the PIJ's "right" to respond to Israeli attacks against PIJ operatives in the Gaza Strip.

4. The existing level of rocket fire and terrorist attacks along the border fence, which provoke pinpointed Israeli responses, is, in our assessment, preserved by Hamas as enabling the existence of a **fragile but continuing lull** without its being drawn into an overall military confrontation.

5. **While Hamas makes an effort to impose its policy of restraint on the rogue organizations, it does not always do so with determination or the inflexibility it usually demonstrates** when it feels its vital interests are being challenged. In addition, **Hamas carries out low-signature terrorist attacks of its own. It also enables other terrorist organizations to carry out sporadic attacks with low signatures without formally taking responsibility.** That policy is manifested by terrorist attacks on Israeli through the Sinai Peninsula (rocket fire, attacking Israeli targets near the border and infiltrating deep into Israeli territory). Hamas and the other terrorist organizations are **careful to hide such activities** and sometimes deny their very existence **to keep Israel from responding and to prevent complicating their relations with Egypt.**

6. Since Operation Cast Lead the restraint policy has given Hamas and the other terrorist organizations **breathing space to rebuild the Gaza Strip and accelerate their military buildup.** One of the results is that since Operation Cast Lead Hamas and the other terrorist organizations have **doubled the number of rockets in their arsenals** (most of them provided by Iran) and acquired higher-quality rockets. Currently Hamas and the other terrorist organizations in the Gaza Strip have **several thousand rockets, both standard and of local manufacture, of varying ranges.** **Among them are Fajr-5 rockets provided by Iran** (not yet used). **They have a range of 75 kilometers, or 46.6 miles, and can reach Tel Aviv and the densely-populated areas in the center of Israel.**

## How Hamas' Internal Security Apparatuses Enforce the Restraint Policy

7. Hamas has a ramified system of **internal security apparatuses** which are responsible for enforcing its terrorist attack policy. Since 2009 they have been headed by **Fathi Hamad**, who was recently (April 2012) elected to Hamas' political bureau in the Gaza Strip.

8. **Fathi Hamad's activities combine enforcing the policy of restraint with promoting terrorism, as well as integrating political-governmental activities with military activities:**

- 1) Internal security, of which he is in charge, imposes Hamas' restraint policy on the other terrorist organizations, although not always decisively enough. To that end, a number of months ago a new internal security force was established. It is called "the control force on the ground" and is subordinate to Fathi Hamad. It has

about 300 operatives who act to stop squads launching rockets and confiscate their launchers.<sup>1</sup>

2) At the same time, **behind the scenes Fathi Hamad is covertly involved in military-terrorist activity.** He heads a **terrorist organization established by Hamas called the Defenders of Al-Aqsa which initiates low-signature showcase attacks against Israel.** It was, among other things, behind the attempt to place an IED on the Israeli-Egyptian border a few months ago.<sup>2</sup>

9. Not only does Fathi Hamad have multiple identities as a minister of the interior, a handler of terrorists and an enforcer of Hamas' policy of restraint, but **in effect throughout the years there has been close collaboration between Hamas' police and its other internal security forces on the one hand, and Hamas' military-terrorist wing** (the Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades) **on the other.** That collaboration, in evidence on the eve of Operation Cast Lead as well, was manifested in joint deployment, joint military training, logistical collaboration, intelligence collection, ambushes and reconnaissance, and the integration of the internal security forces into Hamas' military force during fighting against the IDF in emergency situations.<sup>3</sup>

10. **A more recent example of the double identity of security force operatives was revealed by the Israeli Air Force attack on a coastguard post in northern Gaza City** on November 14, 2011. After the attack the Palestinian media reported that an attack targeting a coastguard post had killed coastguards policeman **Muhammad Zaher al-Kilani.** After the same attack, the Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades, Hamas' military-terrorist wing, issued an official announcement of the death of one of its military operatives (Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades website, November 14, 2011). Both Fathi

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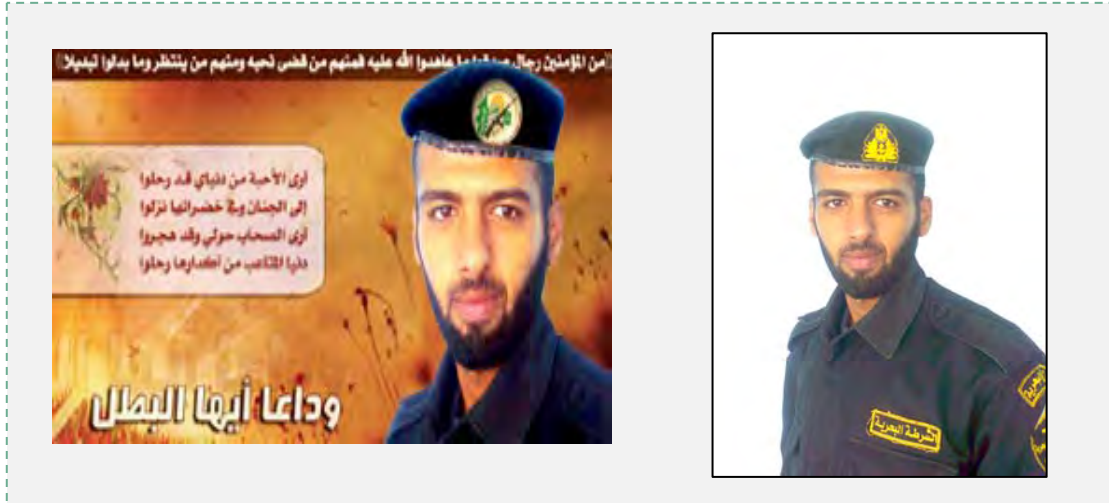
<sup>1</sup>The information about the establishment of the force appeared in the May 10, 2012 issue of the Israeli newspaper Haaretz and was quoted by Hamas' PALDF forum. In our assessment the exposure of the force and its mission embarrassed Hamas, which does not want to appear as preventing terrorist activities. **Ihab al-Ghassun**, spokesman for Hamas' ministry of the interior, called the item in Haaretz Israeli "propaganda and rumors." he said that the Palestinian government in the Gaza Strip was a "resistance government" and its objective was to preserve the "resistance" [i.e., the terrorist organizations]. In the past Fathi Hamad boasted that his ministry tried to protect the various terrorist organizations "and to facilitate their jihadist missions." To that end, he said, he and his ministry's employees met regularly with the organizations to remove obstacles from the path of their military actions (Wafa News Agency, October 28, 2009). **Enforcing Hamas' policy of restraint and aiding and abetting terrorist activities are in fact two sides of the same coin.**

<sup>2</sup>On the night of February 20, 2012, during a joint IDF-Israel Police activity to prevent smuggling along the Israeli-Egyptian border, a man was seen throwing away a suspicious bag and fleeing. **A later search of the area revealed the bag, which contained a powerful IED which was apparently meant to be used in an attack against IDF soldiers or Israeli civilians.** The device was detonated by the IDF (IDF Spokesman, February 21, 2012). It was found in the area between Kerem Shalom and Nitzana, and contained ball bearings, and nearby a cell phone was discovered which was to be used to detonate the device by remote control (Haaretz, February 21, 2012).

<sup>3</sup>For further information see the date bulletin **"Hamas and the Terrorist Threat from the Gaza Strip. The Main Findings of the Goldstone Report Versus the Factual Findings"** at [http://www.terrorism-info.org.il/data/pdf/PDF\\_19298\\_2.pdf](http://www.terrorism-info.org.il/data/pdf/PDF_19298_2.pdf)

Hamad, minister of the interior, and Ismail Haniya, head of the Hamas government, attended his funeral.<sup>4</sup>

### The Double Identity of Muhammad al-Kilani



**The terrorist identity:** The picture of Muhammad al-Kilani as it appeared on the website of the Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades, Hamas' military-terrorist wing. The inscription at the bottom reads, "Go in peace, hero" (Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades website, November 14, 2011). His beret bears the insignia of Hamas, not the Palestinian Authority security forces or the coastguard.

**The coastguardsman's security identity:** Muhammad al-Kilani in coastguard uniform.

<sup>4</sup>For further information see the November 11, 2011 bulletin "The recent Israeli Air Force strike on a Hamas police coastguard post illustrated the dual nature of the Palestinian security force operatives, many of whom also serve in Hamas' military-terrorist wing" at <http://www.terrorism-info.org.il/en/article/17821>.

## Senior Hamas Officials at the Funeral



**Fathi Hamad, minister of the interior in the Hamas administration (left), and Ismail Haniya, head of the administration, at the funeral of Muhammad al-Kilani (PALDF forum website)**

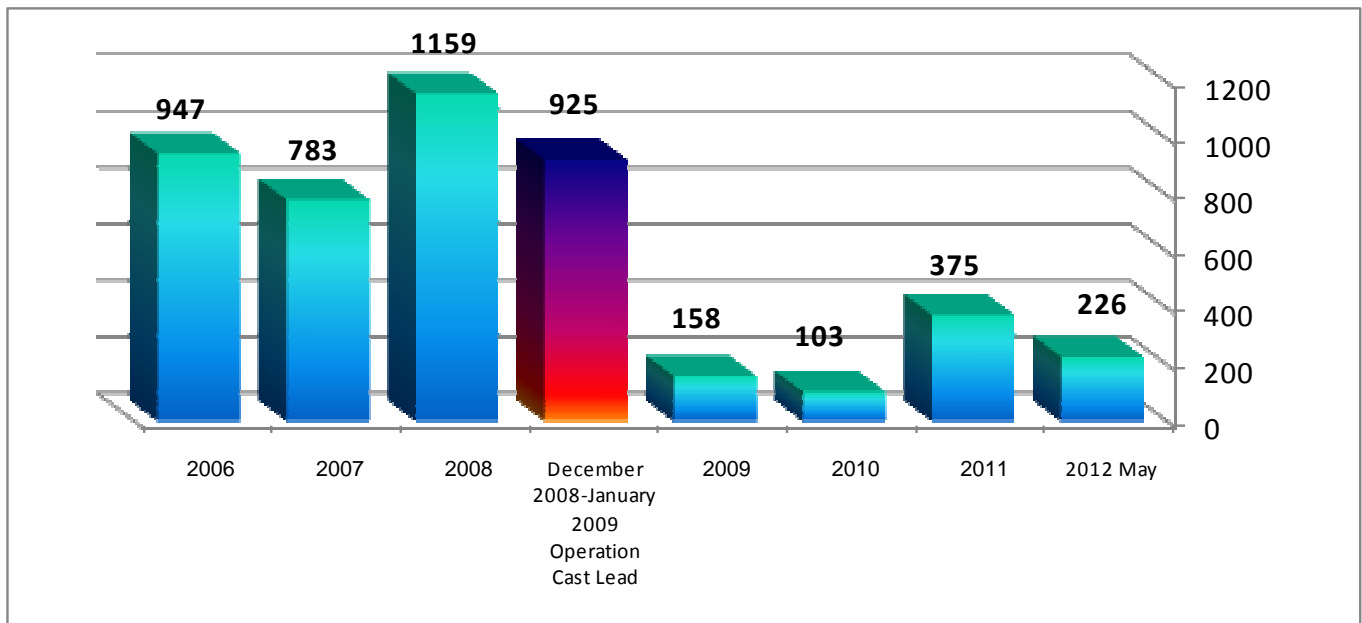
## Appendix

### Terrorist Attacks from the Gaza Strip since Operation Cast Lead

11. Overview of rocket attacks from the Gaza Strip since Operation Cast Lead:

1) **There has been a significant drop in the amount of rocket fire:** In the three and a half years since Operation Cast Lead rocket fire has **decreased by about 75%** in comparison with the three years leading up to the operation. The annual average for 2006-2008 was approximately 960 identified rocket hits, compared with an annual average of about 240 identified hits between 2009 and 2011. Assuming that the current trend of rocket fire continues throughout 2012, the graph shows a gradual increase in rocket fire beginning in 2010.

### Identified Rocket Hits in Israel's South

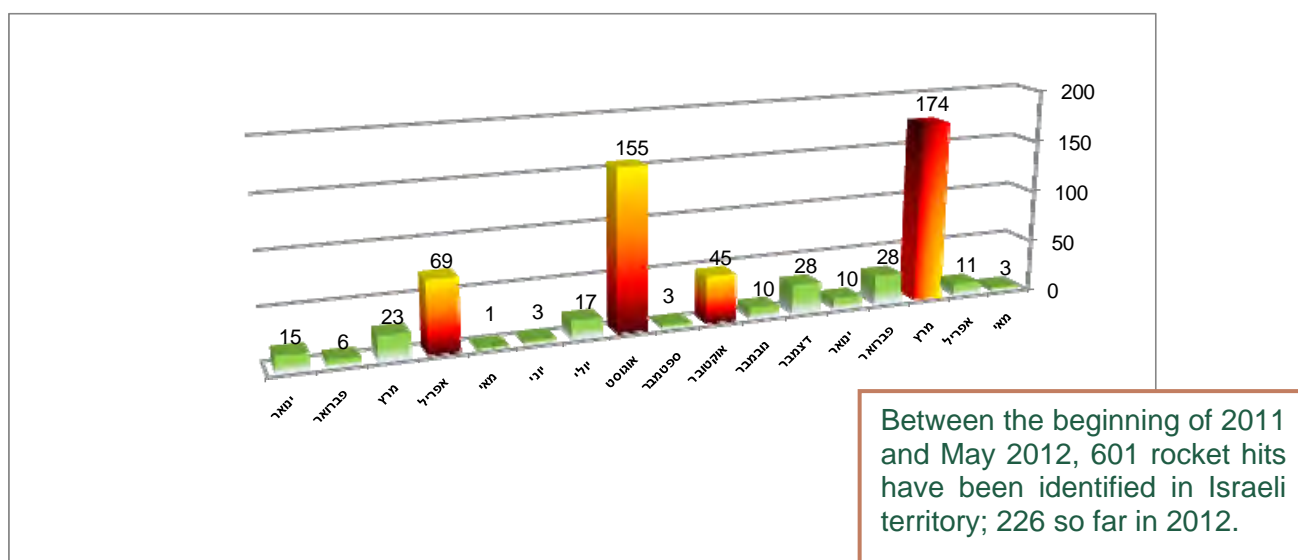


2) **There is a small but continual amount of sporadic rocket fire targeting Israel's south (occasional rocket fire throughout the week) whose objective is to upset ordinary civilian life without leading to escalation.** In our assessment Hamas assumes that sporadic fire creates a routine that Israel can live with. However, Hamas also takes into consideration that Israel may respond with pinpointed attacks on terrorist targets in the Gaza Strip, but assumes that they will not lead to a large-scale military confrontation.



3) Every few months, following a terrorist attack and/or Israeli preemptive activity, **the sporadic rocket fire develops into a round of escalation lasting several days**. Since the beginning of 2011 there have been **four rounds of escalation**, the latest in March 2012, during which more than 170 rocket hits were identified in Israeli territory. The rounds of escalation affected the daily lives of the residents of major cities such as Beersheba and Ashdod, who had not been threatened by terrorist rocket fire before Operation Cast Lead. The latest round of escalation disrupted the daily lives of **almost a million civilians living in Israel's south**, compared with 200,000 before the operation. However, so far the **terrorist organization have not used long-range rockets capable of reaching Tel Aviv and the rest of densely-populated areas in central Israel**.

### Rounds of Escalation since the Beginning of 2011<sup>5</sup>



12. As "compensation" for the need to restrain rocket fire from the Gaza Strip and not carry out showcase terrorist attacks, Hamas and the other terrorist organizations are developing alternative venues for promoting terrorist attacks against Israel. One conspicuous venue is the Sinai Peninsula, where the terrorist organizations use the weakness of the Egyptian administration to implement their jihadist ideologies. They launch rockets into Israeli territory, carry out attacks along the Israeli-Egyptian border and infiltrate terrorist operatives into the State of Israel and Judea and Samaria. The various organizations make an effort to hide their activities in the Sinai Peninsula and sometimes even deny their existence.

<sup>5</sup>As of May 15, 2012. The data include rocket hits identified in Israeli territory and not rockets launched from the Gaza Strip, whose number is greater (because of technical difficulties some of the rockets fall inside the Gaza Strip).

13. The following were prominent terrorist attacks which originated from the Gaza Strip:

1) **In 2010 two 122mm standard Grad rockets were fired from the Sinai Peninsula at the Eilat, Israel's southernmost city (April 22 and August 2). Operatives from the Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades, Hamas' military-terrorist wing, were behind both attacks.** Hamas did not admit its responsibility for the rocket fire. In addition, **Hamas and the other terrorist organizations operating in the Gaza Strip dispatched terrorist cells from the Gaza Strip to Israeli territory through the Sinai Peninsula to carry out various types of terrorist attacks, among them mass-casualty attacks in crowded public places, and abducting and murdering an IDF soldier whose body was to be used as a bargaining chip.**

2) **On August 18, 2011, the Popular Resistance Committees carried out a combined terrorist attack** against a number of targets **north of Eilat**, which included several Israeli civilian vehicles. The terrorist operatives came from the Gaza Strip. **Eight civilians were killed and 30 wounded.** No terrorist organization formally claimed responsibility for the attack.

3) **On the night of April 4, 2012, three standard 122mm Grad rockets were fired from the Sinai Peninsula at Eilat.** The remains of two were found near a residential dwelling. No terrorist organization claimed responsibility for the rocket fire. In addition, **other terrorist attacks in or from the Sinai Peninsula were prevented.**