

The Sabra Report

Raising Awareness and Encouraging Discussion About Israel

Israel Deploys Ground Forces Near Gaza as Conflict Escalates

Jorge Fitz-Gibbon, New York Post, May 13th 2021

Recap:

Israel deployed ground forces near Gaza and ramped up air strikes as the conflict with Hamas reached a new level. The fighting is the most intense since a 50-day war in 2014 that left more than 2,000 dead and included an Israeli ground assault.

The Context:

- ✧ The current round of fighting between Israel and Hamas was triggered by days of escalating tension between Palestinians and Israeli police at the Temple Mount in Jerusalem. Hamas demanded Israel remove police from the site as well as the town of Sheikh Jarrah, where Palestinian families are facing eviction by Israeli courts. When the demands went unheeded, Hamas proceeded to launch an attack on Israeli population centers [1].
- ✧ 1,050 rockets were fired from the Gaza Strip – the majority of which were shot down by Israel's Iron Dome missile defense system [2]. Hamas said, "the decision to bomb Tel Aviv, Dimona and Jerusalem is easier for us than drinking water." Israeli officials confirmed three rockets were also fired from Lebanon. It is believed that Iran has a hand in the unrest and that Hamas has missiles capable of reaching any point in Israel.
- ✧ The Israeli military retaliated by hitting over 700 Hamas targets in Gaza with a focus on eliminating Hamas' military leadership, missile arsenal and underground tunnel system [3].
- ✧ US President Joe Biden reaffirmed his commitment to Israel, saying it had not overreacted to Hamas' aerial assaults, however the sentiment was not shared by many in his Democratic party. Congresswoman Ayanna Pressley urged the US not to "remain silent when our government sends \$3.8bn of military aid to Israel that is used to demolish Palestinian homes, imprison Palestinian children, and displace Palestinian families [4]."
- ✧ Israel and Hamas have fought three wars since the militant group seized control of the Gaza Strip in 2007. The two sides have seen several escalations since 2018 [5].

Conversation Points:

- ✧ What would Israel's loss of life look like without the Iron Dome?
- ✧ Does not agreeing with Israel's policies justify an apologetic stance towards a terrorist organization?
- ✧ What is the difference between Hamas' attacks on Israel and Israel's attacks on Hamas?
- ✧ What is the long-term solution to the Israeli-Gaza conflict?

Gaza Rockets Spark Civil Unrest Among Israel's Jews, Arabs

Jeremy Sharon, Jerusalem Post, May 14th 2021

Recap:

Arab rioters laid waste to the mixed Jewish-Arab city of Lod and conducted violent rampages in Haifa and Acre. In retaliation, Jewish mobs attacked Arab civilians. "There is no greater threat now than these riots," said Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu [6].

The Context:

- ✧ Lod and its 77,000 residents, a quarter of whom are Arab, has been at the forefront of the internal clashes. The violence started on Monday following the tensions on the Temple Mount.
- ✧ Elivera Kolihman, a member of the Lod Municipality, acknowledged the Arab community's complaints but pointed to the large amounts of money spent on communal infrastructure in the Arab sector, including community centers, schools, kindergartens, and roads.
- ✧ Relations between Israel's Jewish majority and its Arab citizens, who make up 20% of the population, were never great. Though they are citizens, Israeli Arabs are oftentimes relegated to secondhand status. In 2018 the Knesset passed a law stating that the right of national self-determination is "unique to the Jewish people [7]" and demoted Arabic from being an official language. In 2015, Netanyahu angered Israeli Arabs by trying to galvanize his right-wing base saying Arabs were flocking "in droves" to cast ballots.

Conversation Points:

- ✧ How can Israel better the lot for its Arab citizens?
- ✧ Why might internal Arab Israeli strife pose a bigger threat to Israel than the Israeli-Palestinian conflict?
- ✧ Can cities like Lod restore coexistence?

Bennett Rules Out 'Change Gov't' Amid National Unrest, Renews Talks with Likud

Tal Schneider And Raoul Wootliff, Times of Israel, May 13th 2021

Recap:

Naftali Bennett ruled out the option of forming a government with Yesh Atid chief Yair Lapid that would replace Netanyahu, citing the rioting and chaos unfolding throughout Israel as well as the clashes with Hamas.

The Context:

- ✧ Following Israel's 4th election, Netanyahu failed to form a government leaving him close to losing power after 12 consecutive years in office. Lapid received the mandate last week from President Reuven Rivlin to form a government however, with Bennett's departure and Arab Israeli party Ra'am announcing a halt in negotiations [8], Lapid will be hard-pressed to succeed.
- ✧ Bennett, head of the right wing Yamina party, said the current outbreak of fighting with Palestinian militants in the Gaza Strip made it difficult to join a prospective coalition with left-wing and Arab parties [9].
- ✧ As part of a reported deal with Netanyahu, Bennett would get reserved spots on the electoral slate of Netanyahu's Likud party and be made defense minister [10].

Conversation Points:

- ✧ Is now the time for a shift in leadership?
 - ✧ Will the events unfolding in Israeli cities work to Netanyahu's advantage or detriment?
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Notes:

1. [Israel Declares Emergency in Lod as Unrest Spreads](#), BBC, May 12th 2021
 2. [Palestinians In Gaza Recount 'Ruthless' Horrors of Israeli Raids](#), Al Jazeera, May 14th 2021
 3. Ibid.
 4. [Congress Members Slam Us Support for Israel](#), Al Jazeera, May 14th 2021
 5. [Death Toll Rises as Israel-Hamas Fighting Intensifies](#) By Felicia Schwartz and Dov Lieber Updated May 12, 2021
 6. [Israel Bombards Gaza as It Confronts Mob Violence at Home](#), The Economist, May 14th 2021
 7. Ibid.
 8. [Israel Coalition Talks Suffer Blow as Arab Party Pulls Out of Negotiations After Attack on Jerusalem](#), Middle East Monitor, May 11th 2021
 9. [Anti-Netanyahu Bloc Dealt Blow as Bennett Drops Coalition Talks](#), Yaacov Benmeleh, Bloomberg, May 13th 2021
 10. [Israel Coalition Talks Suffer Blow as Arab Party Pulls Out of Negotiations After Attack on Jerusalem](#), Middle East Monitor, May 11th 2021
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The Sabra Report is a newsletter intended to stimulate conversation about Israel by recapping major events & providing context. Our conversation points are meant to encourage discussion amongst friends and family.

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