



Talking Points:

TALKING POINTS ON OPERATION PROTECTIVE EDGE (Template as of JULY 25, 2014, with numbers to be updated daily **highlighted in yellow**)

Operation Protective Edge:

- Our families and friends in Israel now live under a threat none of us would tolerate. A rocket could land on their houses at any time. A siren could force them to run to a shelter with only 15 seconds of notice. The elderly and infirm are unable to sleep knowing their mobility issues may spell personal disaster. Israelis have been forced to make unimaginable decisions, including sending their sons and daughters into combat to defend innocent civilians from harm by Iran-backed Hamas terrorists.
- Since Monday, July 7, Hamas has indiscriminately fired more than **2,300** rockets and mortars from Gaza into Israeli territory, targeting cities as far south as Eilat and Tel Aviv, and as far north as Haifa, and Jerusalem.
- Today, **75% of Israelis--six million** Jews, Christians, Muslims, and others--are forced to seek refuge in bomb shelters. [This is the equivalent of roughly **250 Million** North Americans.] The danger is disrupting daily life, causing camps, celebrations, and other activities to be cancelled.
- Israelis face a grave threat. An extensive network of tunnels, dug by Hamas over several years, reach from Gaza well into Israeli territory. These tunnels were constructed to smuggle weapons into Gaza and to send commandos into Israeli communities to kidnap and kill Israeli citizens. These tunnels and other terrorist infrastructure must be dismantled. Carefully targeted air strikes can destroy some weapons caches or launching sites, but as the tunnel infiltration proves, there are valid threats that cannot be ignored and a ground operation is now necessary to protect lives
- Since the ground operation commenced on July 17, **31** terror tunnels and **66** entry points have been uncovered in Gaza by the IDF. Hamas dedicates millions of dollars and uses hundreds of tons of cement to build this extensive tunnel network.
- Israel launched "Operation Protective Edge" to defend the security of its citizens by preventing Hamas from continuing to attack Israeli population centers, while working to minimize casualties on both sides. Israel's actions are understandable and justifiable. Americans would expect nothing less from our government if missiles were falling on U.S. population centers.
- On Tuesday, July 15, Israel agreed to a ceasefire brokered by the Egyptian government, which was backed by the United States, Quartet, Palestinian Authority, and Arab League. Unfortunately, rather than lay down arms, Hamas rejected this proposal and instead chose to



intensify attacks on Israeli civilians, launching about 50 rockets during the time that Israel abided to the truce. Hamas' rejection of an agreement supported by the Arab world has left the organization more isolated than ever before. As a result of Hamas' actions, Israel resumed its defensive actions against Hamas military targets. Since then, Hamas has violated two humanitarian cease-fires requested by the UN and the Red Cross.

- On Thursday, July 17, after Hamas rockets punctuated a brief humanitarian break in hostilities, the Israeli military discovered and thwarted a large-scale [Hamas attack on the Israeli Kibbutz Sufa](#). Thirteen heavily armed Hamas commandos were caught infiltrating Israel via a hidden tunnel originating in Gaza. Additional cross-border infiltration attempts by Hamas have followed.

Hamas Rejects Peace:

- Over the course of the last nine years, ever since Israel withdrew completely from the Gaza Strip in 2005, more than 13,000 rockets and mortars have been indiscriminately fired at Israel's towns and cities. The increased sophistication of these rockets is due to [continued attempts by the Iranian regime to smuggle weapons to Hamas](#).
- In addition to countering rocket and mortar-fire from Gaza, Israel is threatened by cross-border incursions from Iran-backed Hamas, including from [armed groups that recently sought to infiltrate Israel from the sea](#) and through tunnels.
- A ground operation could have been averted had Hamas agreed to the Egyptian-brokered ceasefire. By not heeding the ceasefire call, and continuing to launch hourly rocket attacks on Israeli civilians, Hamas rejected peace. Israel accepted the ceasefire and wants this conflict to end.
- Alongside the EU, the United States [has designated](#) Hamas a terrorist organization that is fueled by an extremist ideology and openly seeks the destruction of Israel. Moreover, against fundamental principles of international law, Hamas engages in war crimes by using Palestinian civilians in Gaza as human shields and utilizes underground shelters to store weapons instead of safeguarding their citizens.
- We mourn the loss of life suffered on both sides, but death toll numbers rise in Gaza because Hamas perpetuates them. Hamas deliberately places schools, mosques and hospitals at risk by storing missiles in those facilities, turning them into legitimate military targets. This is part of their campaign to increase the number of casualties that can in turn be leveraged in a propaganda war against Israel.
- Even the Palestinian delegate to the United Nations Human Rights Council, Ibrahim Khreisheh, told a Palestinian Authority TV outlet that Hamas "rockets aimed at Israeli civilians are crimes against humanity - every rocket, individually, whether or not it hits anybody." He further elaborated that because Palestinians in Gaza receive warnings from Israel before an airstrike (a



courtesy not extended by Hamas to Israelis), any resulting fatalities are accidental and not criminal.

- The United Nations Relief Works Agency (UNRWA) for Palestinian refugees released two statements condemning Hamas' actions after discovering rockets hidden in schools in the Gaza Strip. Their statement read, "UNRWA strongly and unequivocally condemns the group or groups responsible for this flagrant violation of the inviolability of its premises under international law."
- While Hamas places its own citizens in danger, Israel is doing everything possible to minimize civilian casualties in Gaza, including notifying civilians by leaflet, phone calls, and text messages to vacate targeted areas, and detonating unexploded shells on roof tops (the knock at the door). Hamas meanwhile instructs its citizens to ignore these calls, or sometimes prevents them from leaving.
- Where Israel shows restraint, often calling off airstrikes if Palestinian civilians are at risk, Hamas' ambition is to indiscriminately kill as many Israelis as possible.
- Israel's objective was and remains to restore quiet and security for the people of Israel by eliminating rockets, shutting down terror tunnels and demilitarizing Gaza. As you read this message, attacks on Israel continue. Israel was forced into this operation by Hamas in order to defend its people and its cities.

Desire for Peace amongst Israelis and Palestinians:

- As reported by the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, a poll conducted last month throughout Gaza by a highly respected Palestinian pollster found that 70 percent of respondents were heavily in favor of a ceasefire, and largely oppose Hamas policies and leaders alike. This signifies that Hamas' decision to reject a ceasefire not only continues to place both Israeli and Palestinian lives at risk, but also ignores the wishes of its very own people.
- Despite the rockets and risk, Israel continues to coordinate hundreds of trucks carrying thousands of tons of medical supplies, humanitarian aid, fuel, food and other goods via the Kerem Shalom and Erez crossings to Gaza, which remains open despite hostilities. The IDF also opened a field hospital near Erez crossing to treat wounded Gazans and are working with the Red Cross to treat wounded Palestinians from the Gaza Strip.
- At this difficult time, it is important to remember that the only long-term solution to this conflict is a negotiated, two-state solution that will allow Israel to live side-by-side in peace and security alongside an independent nation state of Palestine. Both peoples deserve peace and normalcy, but neither of these will be possible until Hamas halts its attacks.

American and International Support for Israel:

- The view that Israel has the right to defend itself is widely shared. On July 16, [President Obama](#) stated, "Israel has a right to defend itself from rocket attacks that terrorize the Israeli people."



There's no country on Earth that can be expected to live under a daily barrage of rockets." White House Spokesman Josh Earnest [echoed these concerns](#), as did U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry, who stated, "I cannot condemn strongly enough the actions of [Hamas in so brazenly firing rockets in the face of a goodwill effort to offer a ceasefire](#)...We urge all parties to support this ceasefire. Israel has the right to defend itself." Similarly, United Nations Secretary General Ban Ki-moon [condemned](#) "the recent rocket attacks on Israel from Gaza." He went on to say, "These indiscriminate attacks on civilian areas must stop."

- [House Resolution 657](#) and [Senate Resolution 498](#) passed unanimously, reaffirming U.S. bipartisan support for Israel's right to defend itself and calling on Hamas to cease its rocket attacks on Israeli civilians.
- Of the more than **330** rockets that have been fired at Israel over the past several days, approximately **62** were intercepted by the Iron Dome, Israel's missile defense system that intercepts incoming rockets mid-air. This system was developed with assistance from the United States, and while it has a 90 percent success rate, it is only deployed for 27 percent of missile attacks and cannot prevent every rocket from hitting its intended target.
- The Senate Appropriations defense subcommittee approved a bill that will [double the U.S. assistance](#) to fund the Iron Dome system, showing tangible U.S. support for Israel's right to defend its civilians.
- The Jewish Federations of North America and its partner agencies are on the ground responding to this crisis. Approximately ten million dollars have been allocated by JFNA to provide various services including sending Israeli children living in close proximity to Gaza out of the line of fire to summer camps, providing food, medicine, and caseworkers to elderly and vulnerable populations, providing trauma support and psychological services for 12,000 Israelis, and other flexible direct response services.