

Hamas surprise attack out of Gaza Strip stuns Israel

'Greatest battle to end the last occupation on Earth'

The Palestinian resistance group Hamas launched the largest attack on Israel in years, named "Operation Al-Aqsa Storm," infiltrating areas occupied by Israel, following a barrage of rockets fired from the Gaza Strip.

More than 270 people have been killed in the fighting between Palestinian fighters and the Israeli Army.

"This storm, which started from Gaza, will spread to the West Bank and outside the country and all the places where our people and nation are present," Hamas politburo chief, Ismail Haniyeh said. Haniyeh called the operation historic and epic, saying the main reason for its start was "the criminal aggression of the Zionists in Al-Aqsa Mosque, which had reached its peak in recent days."

"We've decided to say enough is enough," said Mohammed Deif, a senior Hamas military commander, as he urged all Palestinians to confront Israel. "This is the day of the greatest battle to end the last occupation on Earth," he said in an audio message.

Airstrikes on Gaza

In response to the attacks, Israeli warplanes pounded locations in Gaza – in what the Israeli military called "Operation Iron Swords" – and Israeli soldiers were engaged in ground fighting in several locations around the besieged Palestinian region.

The Health Ministry in Gaza said that at least 198 people were killed and more than 1,600 others were wounded on Saturday.

The Israeli Emergency Services estimated about 70 people were killed in Israel, with hundreds seriously injured.

Israel's Defense Minister Yoav Gallant warned Hamas that it had made a "grave mistake" in launching the attack, which began at 6:30 a.m. local time on Saturday and involved barrages of rockets fired from multiple locations in Gaza as well as fighters crossing the fence separating Gaza from the occupied territories by land, sea and air. "Citizens of Israel, we are at war," Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said in a video message from military headquarters in Tel Aviv.

Several Israelis arrested

Hamas released a video showing its fighters had captured three Israelis.

A spokesperson for the Israeli military confirmed that "soldiers and civilians" have been arrested by Palestinian fighters.

Videos posted on social media also appeared to show a heavy presence of Palestinian fighters in Sderot, which lies just 1km (0.6 miles) from Gaza.

The outbreak of major fighting between Israeli forces and Palestinian fighters comes after weeks of growing tensions along the fence separating Gaza from the occupied territories, and months of deadly clashes in the Israeli-occupied West Bank.

At least 247 Palestinians have been killed by Israeli forces so far this year, while 32 Israelis and two foreign nationals have been killed in previous Palestinian attacks.



Burnt out vehicles in Ashkelon are pictured following a rocket attack from the Gaza Strip into Israel on October 7, 2023.

AHMAD GHARABLI/AFP

Reactions to attacks

The fighting has drawn conflicting reactions from many countries.

Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Nasser Kanaani hailed the Palestinian operation as "a turning point and a new chapter" in the continuing resistance against the Zionists.

Kanaani said that Operation Al-Aqsa Storm "shows the Palestinian resistance is confidently capable of conducting hybrid and multilateral operations against the occupiers."

Yahya Rahim Safavi, an adviser to the Leader of the Islamic Revolution Seyyed Ali Khamenei, also congratulated Palestinian fighters for launching the biggest attack on Israel in years, saying, "We will stand by the Palestinian fighters until the liberation of Palestine and Al-Quds."

Israel blamed for violence

Saudi Arabia's Foreign Ministry said in a statement, "The Kingdom recalls its repeated warnings of the dangers of the explosion of the situation as a result of the continued occupation, and deprivation of the Palestinian people of their legitimate rights, and the repetition of systematic provocations against its sanctities".

The Qatari Foreign Ministry also reacted to the developments, blaming Israel for the violence.

"The Ministry of Foreign Affairs holds Israel alone responsible for the current escalation due to the ongoing violations of the rights of the Palestinian people, the latest of which is the repeated raids on the blessed Al-Aqsa Mosque, under the protection of Israeli police," the ministry said in a statement.

Lebanon's Hezbollah also praised

Hamas for its "heroic operation".

"Hezbollah congratulates the resisting Palestinian people," the Lebanese movement said in a statement, hailing Hamas and its armed wing, the Ezzedine al-Qasam Brigades, for the "large-scale, heroic operation".

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, who strongly supports the Palestinian cause, urged Israel and Palestinians "to act reasonably" and avoid a further escalation.

Egypt, a key mediator in conflicts between the two sides, urged the Palestinians and Israel to "exercise restraint" and warned of the "dire danger of ongoing escalation".

Egypt also called on the international community to "urge Israel to stop the attacks and provocative actions against the Palestinian people and to adhere to the princi-

ples of international humanitarian law with regard to the responsibilities of an occupying state".

US condemns Hamas

The US National Security Council spokeswoman Adrienne Watson said in a statement that Washington "unequivocally" condemns attacks by Palestinian fighters and promised to ensure that the key US ally has the means to defend itself. Russia's Foreign Ministry called for Israeli and Palestinian forces to stop armed hostilities.

Many European countries also condemned the attacks on the occupied territories.

Tor Wennesland, United Nations special coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, condemned "the multi-front assault against" Israeli towns and cities near Gaza.

Top general: Iraq's anti-terror actions near Iran border 'insufficient'

National Desk

Iranian top general considered Iraq's actions to tackle the terrorist groups on the Iran-Iraq border as an important step, but not sufficient.

Chief of Staff of the Iranian Armed Forces Major General Mohammad Baqeri said on Saturday that the efforts of the Iraqi government and armed forces in clearing terrorist groups near Iran's western border as a significant step, yet "insufficient", ISNA reported.

September 19 was the deadline,

set by Iran, for the Iraqi-Kurdish authorities to implement a security agreement to take action against secessionist anti-Iran groups stationed in northern Iraq along the common border. The agreement was made in late March for the disarmament and expulsion of terrorists from the Kurdistan Region in northern Iraq.

As part of the security agreement, the armed Kurdish groups in northern Iraq started pulling out from areas near the Iran border on September 19, as Baghdad faced the deadline.

Baqeri said that the issue of Iran's borders with its neighbors and the insecurity the country faces at its borders are highly significant.

General Baqeri criticized the presence of separatist groups opposed to Iran along the borders of Sistan and Baluchestan, as well as in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. These groups have been carrying out acts of terrorism inside Iran, which has required a strong border presence to respond effectively.

Iraqi officials also confirm that this issue must be definitively

resolved, the commander said.

In the agreement between the secretaries of the Supreme National Security Councils of Iran and Iraq, it was agreed that these groups would disarm completely within six months, he said.

"In recent weeks, these groups have been somewhat relocated from positions and strongholds near our border. However, the main agreement was not just a tactical relocation of separatist groups, or moving them further away from the border; our main focus has been their complete disarmament," Baqeri concluded.



Mohammad Ali Rajabi
Cartoonist



Economic security in region will offset normalization push

By Syed Ali Hassan
Iran Daily's correspondent in Pakistan

During a meeting with the UAE's President Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan in Abu Dhabi on Thursday, Iranian Parliament Speaker Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf said that the countries can form a major economic hub in the near future due to their unique geographical positions. To achieve this goal, he added, Iran and the UAE need to cooperate closely. As such, the two sides also discussed the need to speed up their joint cooperation in various fields.

As the follow-up to another significant recent development in the region, after a Saudi football club withdrew from

facing the Iranian football club Sepahan in Isfahan, Iran, the foreign ministers of the two countries held a phone conversation to address the issue before the withdrawal caused too much bitterness on both sides.

Around the same time, it was also revealed that a recent survey conducted by the Economist has found that only two percent of young Saudi Arabians are in favor of normalizing ties with the Israeli regime. The finding came as a blow to Tel Aviv's ambitions.

The establishment of relations with the largest Arab kingdom in the world may bring Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who is facing a corruption investigation, a relief from domestic opposition.

Iran is unhappy with the possible establishment of diplomatic relations

between Saudi Arabia and Israel, but it has not been long since its relations with Saudis have turned bitter. Iran is currently just mostly observing how the push for the normalization of relations between Israel and Saudi Arabia will unfold from the sidelines. Of course, through diplomatic efforts, Iran is trying to convince the Saudi monarchy that Riyadh should not recognize Israel until the liberation of occupied Palestine.

The thread that makes sense of these seemingly disparate events is the policy of the incumbent Iranian government, which is to create an atmosphere of security for Muslim governments, especially the Arab states of the Persian Gulf as strong economic hubs, so that Arab governments do not have to establish relations with Israel.