



## Will Israel implement this agreement with Hamas?

A ceasefire agreement between Israel and Hamas, brokered by Egypt, was reached on 26 August 2014 (see [\[1\]](#), for an account of the agreement by Reuters).

This is the third such agreement that Hamas has negotiated with Israel in the past seven years. The previous two (in June 2008 and November 2012) came to nothing because, unlike Hamas, Israel failed to fulfil its obligations under them – and the international community turned a blind eye to its failure.

Had Israel kept its side of the bargain in either agreement, rocket and mortar out of Gaza would most likely have ceased permanently.

### Provisions broadly the same

The provisions of these three agreements are broadly the same. In all three, Israel promised to cease military incursions into Gaza and to take steps towards lifting its economic blockade of Gaza. And Hamas and other Palestinian groups promised to cease military action against Israel from Gaza, including the firing of rockets and mortars.

In fulfilment of the first agreement, brokered by Egypt in June 2008, Hamas ceased firing out of Gaza for four and a half months. But Israel did not ease its blockade and, on the evening of 4 November 2008 (when the world was watching the election of Barack Obama), it made a military incursion into Gaza, for the first time since the ceasefire began, and killed 7 members of Hamas. That was the end of that agreement. A few weeks later, Israel launched Operation Cast Lead, its first major military offensive against Gaza.

Israel's second military offensive against Gaza in November 2012 (Operation Pillar of Cloud) ended with an agreement, brokered by Egypt, in which Israel promised to cease military incursions into Gaza and end its blockade of Gaza. It did neither – it continued military incursions into Gaza and failed to take any steps to end its blockade. It simply ignored its obligations under the agreement. By contrast, Hamas maintained a ceasefire for almost 20 months.

Had Israel fulfilled its obligations under either of these agreements, it is virtually certain that Hamas would have maintained its ceasefire indefinitely.

The basic question now is: will Israel fulfil its obligations under this third agreement, or will it simply ignore them? History suggests that, without international pressure to force Israel to implement the agreement fully, it won't do so. History also suggests that the US and the EU, the entities with the power to apply effective pressure will not do so.

### US backing?

It is true that US Secretary of State, John Kerry, welcomed the agreement, saying

“We strongly support today’s cease-fire agreement, and call on all parties to fully and completely comply with its terms. We hope very much that this cease-fire will prove to be durable and sustainable, that it will put an end to rocket and mortar attacks, and that it will help to bring about an enduring end to the conflict in Gaza.” [\[2\]](#)

But then his predecessor, Hillary Clinton, welcomed the last agreement in November 2012 when she stood beside Egyptian Foreign Minister, Mohammed Amr, as he launched the agreement:

“The United States welcomes the agreement today for a ceasefire in Gaza. For it to hold, the rocket attacks must end, a broader calm return. ... In the days ahead, the United States will work with partners across the region to consolidate this progress, improve conditions for the people of Gaza, and provide security for the people of Israel.” [\[3\]](#)

A “broader calm” did return: in 2013, fewer rockets were fired from Gaza than in any year since 2003 [\[4\]](#). But, when Israel failed to cease its military incursions into Gaza and lift its blockade, as required by the agreement, far from working to “consolidate this progress”, the US turned a blind eye to Israel’s failure.

As for the EU, in European Council conclusions in December 2012, the EU stated that “it is vital that all parts of the ceasefire agreement are implemented” [\[5\]](#). But it didn’t lift a finger to force Israel to implement its obligations under the agreement.

### Israeli cabinet split

According to the Jerusalem Post, there is widespread disquiet in Israeli political circles about the conduct of the Gaza offensive and about the ceasefire agreement in particular, with half of the cabinet being opposed to it [\[6\]](#). Danny Danon, the Chairman of the Central Committee of Likud, Prime Minister Netanyahu’s own party, said: “The Protective Edge war that began with huge support ended with Israel shamed and confused” [\[7\]](#). He continued:

“Despite the heavy price Hamas paid, we did not defeat Hamas. ... Fifty days of fighting, 64 soldiers killed, five civilians killed, 82,000 reservists called up, and in the end we’re back to the agreement from Operation Pillar of Defense [in November 2012].” [\[6\]](#)

Popular dissatisfaction with the war rose sharply over the past month as Israeli casualties, both military and civilian, have increased. This has manifested itself in a dramatic fall in Netanyahu’s approval ratings, from 82% on 23 July to 32% on 27 August [\[7\]](#). According to a poll broadcast on Channel 2 in Israel, only 37% support the ceasefire agreement, whereas 54% are opposed. The same poll found that “only 29% believe Israel defeated Hamas and 59% think it did not”.

### Popular dissatisfaction

This dissatisfaction is understandable, since 64 Israeli soldiers and six civilians were killed – and the capacity of Hamas to fire rockets and mortars into Israel hasn’t been eliminated.

Israel's three major military offensives were sold to Israelis, and to the world, as self-defence against rocket and mortar fire out of Gaza, but in reality they increased dramatically the number of people killed in Israel by this means – and as well 63 Israeli ground troops have been killed inside Gaza during them.

Thus, of the 37 people (15 military and 22 civilian) killed in Israel since September 2005 by this means, 26 were killed during the three major military offensives and only 11 at other times, the last one as long ago as October 2011. Since then, all of the fatalities in Israel – 22 in all – have occurred during Israel's last two offensives, Operation Pillar of Cloud and Operation Protective Edge (see *How many people have died from Gaza rockets into Israel?* by Phan Nguyen, Mondoweiss.net [8]).

These offensives have led to the deaths of more than 3,500 Palestinians, about which most Israelis care little, but they have also caused the deaths of almost a hundred Israelis – and they have failed to eliminate the capability of Hamas to fire rockets and mortars into Israel. That spells trouble for Prime Minister Netanyahu.

There is an alternative, in which nobody, neither Israeli nor Palestinian, needs to die, namely, the full implementation of an agreement with Hamas. It remains to be seen if he will take this third opportunity for Israel to go down that route.

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### References:

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- [8] [mondoweiss.net/2014/07/rocket-deaths-israel.html](http://mondoweiss.net/2014/07/rocket-deaths-israel.html)

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