



Gaza: Nobody needed to die

Israel is currently engaged in its third military offensive against Gaza since 2008, ostensibly to bring a halt to rocket and mortar fire out of Gaza into Israel.

There was no need for this offensive – or for the previous two offensives – for Israel to achieve that objective. Nobody, neither Israeli nor Palestinian, needed to die in order to bring a halt to rocket and mortar fire out of Gaza. All Israel needed to do was to stick to agreements it made with Hamas. But it didn't.

Since September 2005, when Israel withdrew its settlers and ground troops from Gaza, Hamas has been willing to abstain from rocket and mortar fire out of Gaza, and to exert pressure on other Palestinian groups to do likewise, providing Israel

- (a) ceased its repeated military incursions into Gaza to kill Palestinians, and
- (b) ended its economic blockade of Gaza.

There is no doubt that, if it wished to do so, Israel could have achieved a peaceful modus vivendi with Hamas on this basis at any time since September 2005.

Egypt has brokered agreements between Israel and Hamas on two occasions in recent years. But neither of them led to a peaceful modus vivendi, because, while Hamas honoured its obligations under them, Israel did not.

(1) 2008 ceasefire agreement

In June 2008, Egypt brokered a deal which provided for an immediate cessation of hostilities on both sides and steps by Israel towards ending its blockade.

Hamas fulfilled its obligations under this agreement to the letter and, as a result, southern Israel was almost entirely free from firing out of Gaza for four and a half months. But Israel did not ease its economic blockade, let alone lift it, 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 in June, and killed 7 members of Hamas. That was the end of the deal.

(2) November 2012 agreement

Israel's military offensive against Gaza in November 2012 (Operation Pillar of Cloud) ended with an Egyptian-brokered agreement in which Israel promised to cease military incursions into Gaza and to end its blockade of Gaza. It did neither. By contrast, Hamas maintained a ceasefire for over 18 months until 1 July 2014.

These examples prove that Israel cannot be trusted to implement any agreement with Hamas. If life is to improve for the people of Gaza, a future agreement must be enforced by the international community.

(For more information, see Sadaka Briefing: [Gaza: Nobody needed to die](#))