A Brief History of Israel-Hamas Ceasefire Agreements

Since Hamas seized control of Gaza in 2007, Hamas and Israel have engaged in several armed confrontations. All of these rounds of intensified violence gave way to stretches of calm that began with ceasefires, typically brokered by third parties such as Egypt, Qatar, and the U.S.

But these ceasefires did not alter the status quo or address the underlying conditions that led to these regular escalations: Hamas’ long-term aspiration of destroying Israel, Israel’s unwillingness to tolerate provocations and threats from Hamas, and dire humanitarian conditions in Gaza caused by Israel’s blockade and Hamas’ repressive rule.
Examples of the cycle:

**DECEMBER 2008 | OPERATION CAST LEAD**

Israel carries out a 22-day ground and aerial military operation in Gaza in response to Hamas rockets targeting Israeli civilian communities. The operation ends with a unilateral Israeli ceasefire following U.S. assurances that it would help Israel curb the flow of arms to Hamas.

**NOVEMBER 2012 | OPERATION PILLAR OF DEFENSE**

In response to a barrage of rockets launched from Gaza, Israel kills Hamas military leader Ahmad Jabari in an airstrike. Hamas launches rockets at Israel and Israeli airstrikes target Hamas capabilities in Gaza. The conflict ends after eight days in a ceasefire brokered by Egypt and the U.S.

**JULY 2014 | OPERATION PROTECTIVE EDGE**

The capture and murder of three Israeli teenagers by Hamas and a reprisal murder of a 16-year-old Palestinian by Israeli extremists prompts an Israeli crackdown on Hamas in the West Bank and a wave of Hamas rockets launched at Israel from Gaza. The ensuing seven-week war sees an Israeli ground invasion into Gaza and ends in an Egyptian-brokered ceasefire. In the aftermath of Protective Edge, Prime Minister Netanyahu’s government allows Qatar to deliver millions of dollars in cash to Hamas in Gaza. Israel maintains this unconventional policy vis-à-vis Hamas for the next five years as an economic carrot in exchange for quiet.

**MAY 2021 | OPERATION GUARDIAN OF THE WALLS**

In response to protests against the pending eviction of Palestinian families in East Jerusalem’s Sheikh Jarrah and clashes between Israeli police and Palestinians on the Temple Mount, Hamas and PIJ launch rockets at Israeli cities. Israel responds with airstrikes on Gaza. In parallel, Arabs and Jews clash in Israel’s mixed cities, instigated by extremists on both sides. After over two weeks of hostilities, Hamas and Israel agree to a ceasefire brokered by Egypt, Qatar, and the U.N. Months later, Israel begins issuing thousands of entry permits to allow Gazans to work in Israel. This system provides Israel with a new economic lever to encourage quiet from Hamas.

**OCTOBER 2023 | A SURPRISE ATTACK ON SIMCHAT TORAH**

Thousands of Hamas militants break through the Gaza-Israel barrier and invade Israeli communities in an unprecedented terror attack. They kill more than 1,200 Israelis and take over 200 captive to Gaza. Israel invades Gaza, with the goal of dismantling Hamas’ regime. Months later, this conflict is ongoing. Unlike previous escalations, Israel has rejected the possibility of ending the war until all of Hamas’ forces in Gaza are defeated. While Hamas has called for a full withdrawal of Israeli forces from Gaza, it has also vowed to continue carrying out October 7-style attacks against Israeli civilians.

*Note: this does not include conflicts between Israel and Palestinian Islamic Jihad in which Hamas did not participate in hostilities.*

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