



## **LFI Background Briefing: Rockets fired from Gaza – 7 January 2009**

### **Key figures**

**8,500+** rockets and mortars in total fired from Gaza into Israel since 2001

**5,700+** rockets and mortars fired from Gaza since Israel withdrew from Gaza in 2005

**3,200+** rockets and mortars fired from Gaza in 2008

**543** rockets and mortars fired from Gaza into Israeli territory during the ceasefire period from 19 June to 19 December 2008

**700+** rockets and mortars fired from Gaza into Israeli territory since Hamas unilaterally renounced the ceasefire on 19 December 2008

**28** deaths caused by rockets and mortars fired from Gaza into Israel since 2001. The dead include Israelis, Palestinians and foreign workers. Since the ceasefire ended, rockets and mortars fired from Gaza killed an Israeli-Arab construction worker; a mother of four who was seeking shelter in a bus station as a rocket warning siren sounded; a 38 year old Warrant Officer; and Beber Vaknin, a 58 year old resident of Netivot.

### **Rocket and mortar attacks**

- Rocket and mortar attacks against Sderot and the Western Negev began in 2001. An official Hamas announcement was made on 1 November 2001 of the firing of a Qassam rocket. It had been launched at Israel a few days earlier.
- Since 2001 over 8,500 rockets and mortars have been fired killing 28 (including 9 residents from Sderot) injuring 620 people and affecting thousands of Israelis in southern Israel who suffer from post-traumatic stress syndrome as a direct consequence of the past 7 years of attacks.
- Since Hamas' violent takeover of Gaza in June 2007, the frequency of rocket attacks rose by 150 percent to more than 250 rockets and mortars a month. On average, one rocket has been fired at Israel every three hours.

### **Rocket and mortar range**

- Most of the rockets fired at Israel are locally manufactured in Gaza and have a maximum range of approximately 12.5km.
- Palestinian militants have recently used Iranian-produced Grad-Katyusha rockets, which are smuggled into Gaza from Egypt via the tunnels, and have a maximum range of 40km (24 miles from the Gaza Strip).
- The Katyusha rockets place the Israeli towns and cities of Ashdod (population of 200,000), Be'er Sheva (population of 185,000), Ashkelon (population of 110,000), Yavne (population of 32,000), Netivot (population of 27,000), Ofakim (population of 24,000), Sderot (population of 24,000) and Kiryat Malachi (population of 20,000) within range of rocket fire from Gaza - meaning that nearly 900,000 Israeli civilians – around 12.5 percent of the Israeli

population, are at risk of attack.

### **Daily tally of rockets, mortars and missiles fired from Gaza since Hamas unilaterally renounced ceasefire (19 December) and Israel started its operation in Gaza (27 December)**

- January 7- 14 rockets (as of 1400 GMT)
- January 6 - 30 rockets
- January 5 - 40 rockets
- January 4 - 45 rockets
- January 3 - 40 rockets
- January 2 - 38 rockets
- January 1 - 53 rockets, mortars and longer range Grads
- December 31 - 43 rockets and 25 mortar shells
- December 30 - 70 rockets
- December 29 - 80 rockets (approximate figure)
- December 28 - 40 rockets and mortar rounds, including two long-range Grad missiles.
- December 27 - 110 rockets and mortar rounds, including one Grad-Katyusha missile.
- December 26 - 25 mortar rounds
- December 25 - 7 Qassam rockets, one Grad missile and 9 mortar rounds.
- December 23 & 24 - 33 rockets (Grad-Katyushas and Qassams), 37 mortar shells
- December 22 - 2 Qassams, 1 mortar
- December 21 - 19 Qassams, 3 mortars
- December 19 & 20 - 10 Qassams, 24 mortars

*Please note: the number of rocket and mortar shell fire data used for this tally is based on the Operational Division of the IDF General Staff. Rocket or mortar shell fire is defined as an event, during which a launch is tracked and the hit is clearly identified as falling in Israeli territory. It is also defined as an event during which a launch from the Gaza Strip is tracked and an explosion is heard, even if the location of the hit is not clearly identified. It should be taken into account that the actual number of rockets and mortar shells launched may be at least 20% greater than the number of hits identified.*

### **Sderot**

- The southern city of Sderot is a primary target, drawing around 35 percent of the total rocket attacks from Gaza – with 90 percent of Sderot residents experiencing a Qassam rocket falling on their street or the one adjacent.
- The continued attacks have an accumulated psychological impact on the population who live under the threat of daily rocket and mortar shell attacks. 28 percent of adults and 30 percent of children in Sderot suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Around 70 percent of Sderot residents suffer from signs of post-traumatic stress (PTS). In children, that figure rises to 94 percent, where symptoms often include sleeping difficulties, nightmares, sweating, development regressions, bed wetting and fear of the outside.
- The education system in Sderot has been severely affected by the rocket attacks. About 60 percent of the schools in Sderot do not have complete protection or buffers for their classrooms. In the past year, 1,100 children have moved to study in schools outside of Sderot because of fear of attack. Due to the massive Qassam rocket fire from Gaza, approximately 100 officers and soldiers have been accompanying children to schools and kindergartens on a regular basis.
- The increasing casualties, psychological trauma and constant fear of attack has forced over 4,000 of the 24,000 residents of Sderot to leave the city. The number of residents who left

peaked in the summer of 2007, when there was a significant increase in the extent of the rocket fire. According to the Sderot municipality, some 3,000 residents abandoned the city during those months. Many of the residents who remain cannot leave even if they wanted to as they cannot afford to move and because their properties are worthless.

- The Israeli government has installed a radar system or “red alert alarm” in an attempt to warn Israelis of possible attacks, though it does not sound on cold or rainy days when the radar cannot detect the rocket launches. In addition, the siren system cannot detect the launching of mortar shells. Once the rocket is launched from Gaza and the siren sounds, Sderot residents have 15 seconds to take cover in a bomb shelter.