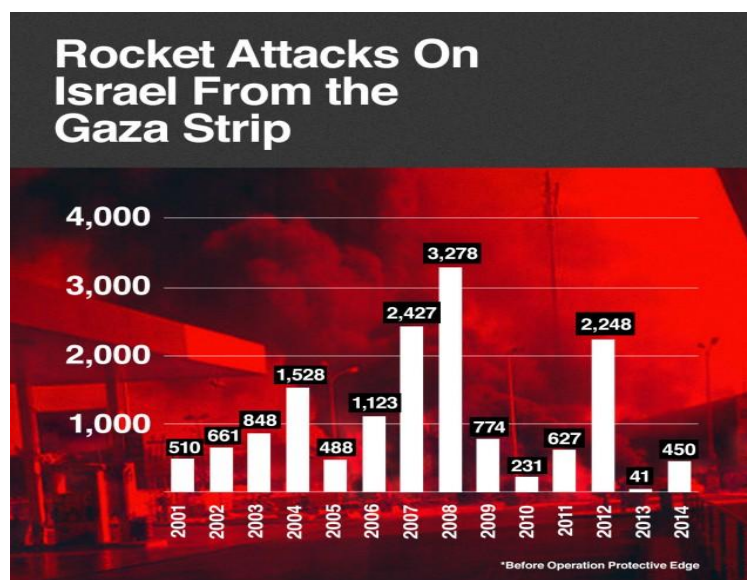


LFI Briefing 'Stop the War' campaign briefing

Background: a recurring spiral of violence

- Last summer's war caused a tremendous loss of life, fear and suffering in both Gaza and Israel. The causes of the war are clear: repeated and indiscriminate rocket attacks against Israeli civilians.
- Since 2001, and prior to last summer's war, more than 15,200 rockets and mortars, an average of over 3 rocket attacks every single day, have [targeted](#) Israel.



- In the space of just over five years, Israel and Hamas have now gone to war on three occasions. The pattern is clear: in every lull, Hamas invests enormous energies in preparing to enter the next round with even more potent threats to Israeli civilians.
- Hamas is once again preparing for a new war against Israel. Britain should lead the way in securing international support for a plan to stop them.

How Hamas is preparing for war

Rebuilding its terror tunnel network

- One of the key lessons Hamas took from last summer's war was the military utility and psychological impact its tunnel network had on Israelis. For its next war against Israel, Hamas aims to ensure large groups of terrorists can hit both the army and civilian targets from behind the frontline.
- Less than a month after last August's ceasefire, Hamas co-founder and former foreign minister Mahmoud al-Zahar [pledged](#) the group would "build new tunnels" into Israel to replace those destroyed by the IDF.
- In October 2014, the Hamas weekly Al-Risalah [reported](#) that the organisation had begun work on one of its attack tunnels. A reporter for the paper accompanied members of the Izz ad-Din al-Qassam Brigades, Hamas' military wing, who, it was claimed, work in shifts around the clock digging the tunnels.
- Hamas' boasts appear to be corroborated from reports inside Israel. In late December, Israeli media [reported](#) "sightings of what appear to be massive excavation operations along the Gaza Strip border fence".

Boosting rocket and mortar capability

- Hamas' rocket capability has grown considerably over the course of the last three conflicts: in 2009, its rockets had a range of 40km; by 2012, they were able to target Tel

Aviv; by 2014, they were able to regularly menace Tel Aviv, as well as Haifa in northern Israel.

- Hamas is engaged in an attempt to renew its depleted arsenal of rockets and mortars and to construct a new generation of home-produced rockets using 'dual-use' materials.
- Testing is now underway: in mid-December, to take one example, Hamas' military wing [fired rockets](#) at the Mediterranean for three consecutive days. Hamas' tests – particularly the firing of a large volley of rockets – suggest that they are experimenting with ways to cheat the Iron Dome's ability to fire interceptors in rapid succession.
- Egypt's attempts to destroy the tunnels between Sinai and Gaza has led Hamas to attempt to smuggle rocket-making materials by sea. On 11 February, Israel [disclosed](#) that in January it had successfully intercepted a boat carrying liquid fiberglass as it attempted to sail from Sinai to Gaza.

Building a 'popular army'

- In November, Hamas [announced](#) the formation of a new "popular army" at the Jabaliya refugee camp in northern Gaza. Hamas are recruiting young men aged between 15 and 21.
- New recruits are trained by the al-Qassam Brigades. It claims the 2,500 recruits would form "the first section of the popular army for the liberation of al-Aksa and of Palestine".
- Hamas' efforts to militarise the young Gazan population were further [evident](#) in the "vanguard of liberation camps" which ran during January's one-week midterm holiday. Some 17,000 Gazan teenagers and young men [graduated](#) from the camps, at which they were drilled in weapons training and exercises simulating kidnapping IDF soldiers and launching attacks on Israel via tunnels. The training was organised by, and took place at the facilities of, the al-Qassam Brigades.

Reconciliation with Iran

- Their opposing positions on the Syrian civil war led Iran to cut off support – both financial and military – to Hamas. A reconciliation now appears to have taken place: Iran is [believed](#) to have agreed to resume financial aid to Hamas and the head its political bureau, Khaled Mashaal is to visit Tehran next month.
- In November Ayatollah Khamenei pledged that the "West Bank should be armed like Gaza and be prepared for defence". The message was then [Tweeted](#) by Khamenei:



The way forward: Development for disarmament

- The prevention of terrorism emanating from the West Bank and Gaza formed one of the core principles of the 1993 Oslo Accords; the 1994 Gaza-Jericho Agreement; and Oslo II, the 1995 Interim Agreement on the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. The principle that any

future Palestinian state be 'demilitarised', or 'non-militarised' has rested at the heart of diplomatic initiatives and is [supported](#) by the Palestinian Authority.

- Without disarming armed groups in the Gaza Strip, efforts at reconstruction will continue to be hampered, while the 'blockade' of Gaza by Israel and Egypt restricts not only the movement of people and goods in and out of the territory, but with it any prospect of much-needed economic development, prosperity and the alleviation of poverty.
- Even in the absence of demilitarisation Israel has shown a willingness recently to increase freedom of movement between itself and Gaza according to the security situation. Prior to the kidnapping and murder of three of its teenagers and the increase of rocket attacks last June, Israel was issuing three times the number of exit permits at the Erez pedestrian crossing as it granted in 2010. Since the end of the fighting in the summer Israel has [allowed](#) some limited exports, and even work permits for Gazans to work in Israel.

How Britain can take a lead: what LFI is calling for

Reconstruction, lifting the 'blockade' of Gaza by Israel and Egypt and demilitarisation are intimately linked: the first two are dependent on the last.

We believe Britain should take the lead in assembling international support for a plan to stop Hamas' next war and thereby help ensure peace and prosperity for the peoples of Israel, Gaza and the West Bank.

1 The British government must pledge that the strong desire of the US and western powers to secure a nuclear deal with Iran does not reduce pressure on Iran over its other destabilising policies in the region.

2 The UN security council should pass a resolution imposing sanctions on any nation which attempts to transfer weapons to Hamas and other militant groups. And it should go further and provide for disarmament inspectors who would oversee the destruction of rockets, mortars and other heavy weaponry in Gaza. The British Government should make every effort to pass and support the implementation of this resolution and inspection regime.

3 Implementing the disarmament process will require Hamas' cooperation. So it should be presented with a clear choice by Israel, Egypt, the Quartet, the Arab League and PA: disarmament in return for development. The British Government should work with our international partners to support this offer.

A staged, two-year process would see Israel agreeing to the building of an airport and opening of a seaport in return for disarmament. The initial development work on raising international funding and tendering for the airport can start as soon as Hamas signs up, with the seaport and airport ready for full operation at the end of the process.

Support LFI's campaign: write to your MP and the foreign secretary today

If we're going to stop Hamas from starting another war in Gaza, we need to lobby our MPs and the foreign secretary to ensure Britain plays its full part in assembling an international coalition committed to peace and prosperity for the peoples of Israel, Gaza and the West Bank.

Here's a model letter you can send to your MP:

Dear XXX XXX MP,

I am deeply concerned by reports that Hamas are now rearming and preparing to launch their fourth war against Israel in a little over five years. This will have tragic consequences for the Israeli and Palestinian peoples.

In particular, I am disturbed to read that Hamas' co-founder has publicly pledged that it will "build new tunnels"; that pro-Hamas newspapers have published stories where reporters accompany those constructing them; and that there have been media reports in Israel of sightings of massive excavations near the Gaza border. It is also clear that Hamas is restocking its arsenal with a new generation of home-produced rockets, testing rockets over the Mediterranean, and attempt to smuggle materials such as liquid fiberglass into Gaza. Finally, Hamas has announced the formation of a new "popular army" and last month ran half-term camps in which 17,000 Gazan teenagers and young men were drilled by its military wing in exercises which included simulations of launching attacks through tunnels and kidnapping Israeli soldiers.

I believe that news of a rapprochement between Iran and Hamas and Ayatollah Khamenei's pledge that the "West Bank will be armed just like Gaza" adds to this very worrying picture.

The notion that a future Palestinian state will be 'non-militarised' rested at the heart of the Oslo Accords and every subsequent diplomatic initiative. It is supported by both the Palestinian Authority and the Israeli government. Moreover, without disarming armed groups in the Gaza Strip, efforts at reconstruction will continue to be hampered, while the 'blockade' of Gaza by Israel and Egypt restricts not only the movement of people and goods in and out of the territory, but with it any prospect of much-needed economic development, prosperity and the alleviation of poverty.

I urge you, therefore, to press the British government to take the lead in assembling international support for a plan to stop Hamas' next war and thereby help ensure peace and prosperity for the peoples of Israel, Gaza and the West Bank.

I would ask that you write to ministers registering your support for the following:

First, the British government must pledge that the strong desire of the US and western powers to secure a nuclear deal with Iran does not reduce pressure on Iran over its other destabilising policies in the region.

Second, the UN security council should pass a resolution imposing sanctions on any nation which attempts to transfer weapons to Hamas and other militant groups. And it should go further and provide for disarmament inspectors who would oversee the destruction of rockets, mortars and other heavy weaponry in Gaza. The British Government should make every effort to pass and support the implementation of this resolution and inspection regime.

Third, implementing that disarmament process will require Hamas' cooperation. So it should be presented with a clear choice by Israel, Egypt, the Quartet, the Arab League and PA: disarmament in return for development. As the Labor MK Omer Barlev has proposed, a two-year process would see Israel agreeing to the building of an airport and opening of a seaport in return for disarmament. The initial development work on raising international funding and tendering for the airport can start as soon as Hamas signs up, with the seaport and airport ready for full operation at the end of the process. The British Government should work with our international partners to support this offer.

Here is a model letter you can use to write to Rt Hon Philip Hammond MP, the foreign secretary:

Dear foreign secretary,

I am deeply concerned by reports that Hamas are now rearming and preparing to launch their fourth war against Israel in a little over five years. This will have tragic consequences for the Israeli and Palestinian peoples.

In particular, I am disturbed to read that Hamas' co-founder has publicly pledged that it will "build new tunnels"; that pro-Hamas newspapers have published stories where reporters accompany those constructing them; and that there have been media reports in Israel of sightings of massive excavations near the Gaza border. It is also clear that Hamas is restocking its arsenal with a new generation of home-produced rockets, testing rockets over the Mediterranean, and attempt to smuggle materials such as liquid fiberglass into Gaza. Finally, Hamas has announced the formation of a new "popular army" and last month ran half-term camps in which 17,000 Gazan teenagers and young men were drilled by its military wing in exercises which included simulations of launching attacks through tunnels and kidnapping Israeli soldiers.

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The notion that a future Palestinian state will be 'non-militarised' rested at the heart of the Oslo Accords and every subsequent diplomatic initiative. It is supported by both the Palestinian Authority and the Israeli government. Moreover, without disarming armed groups in the Gaza Strip, efforts at reconstruction will continue to be hampered, while the 'blockade' of Gaza by Israel and Egypt restricts not only the movement of people and goods in and out of the territory, but with it any prospect of much-needed economic development, prosperity and the alleviation of poverty.

I urge you, through our membership of the Quartet, European Union and our seat on the UN security council, to take the lead in assembling international support for a plan to stop Hamas' next war and thereby help ensure peace and prosperity for the peoples of Israel, Gaza and the West Bank.

I would ask that you support the following:

First, that the strong desire of the US and western powers to secure a nuclear deal with Iran does not reduce pressure on Iran over its other destabilising policies in the region.

Second, the UN security council should pass a resolution imposing sanctions on any nation which attempts to transfer weapons to Hamas and other militant groups. And it should go further and provide for disarmament inspectors who would oversee the destruction of rockets, mortars and other heavy weaponry in Gaza. The British Government should make every effort to pass and support the implementation of this resolution and inspection regime.

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Write to your MP: Full details of how to find and contact your MP are available here:
<http://www.parliament.uk/mps-lords-and-offices/mps/>

Write to the foreign secretary: Rt. Hon. Philip Hammond MP; King Charles Street London SW1A 2AH or email fcocorrespondence@fco.gov.uk

Please let LFI know of any responses you receive. Email them to mail@lfi.org.uk