

SOME KEY FACTS ABOUT THE 2021 HOSTILITIES.

The escalation of hostilities in Israel has taken many by surprise. However, it has been the anti- Israel sentiments and the blaming of Israel that, although not uncommon needs to be addressed.

The escalation is not equivalent, and the media too often sensationalises the news. To give the situation a global context. Imagine that New York City and New Jersey were two countries. And the people of New Jersey began to fire rockets towards the New York. Rockets with the capability of destroying a bus, causing extensive damage to houses and buildings. Imagine that we had no way to defend ourselves, we would be demanding from the government, a military response to protect our lives and our lifestyle.

In May 2021 over 12 days, 4000 such rockets were launched into Israel by Hamas in Gaza.

Fortunately, Israel has developed a missile defence system called -The Iron Dome, which shielded Israeli cities from incoming rockets. The Dome is over 90% effective. However, it is not perfect.

WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE WEST BANK AND GAZA?

The West Bank and Gaza Strip are two areas, which between 1948 and 1967 were controlled by Jordan and Egypt. The West Bank by Jordan and Gaza by Egypt. After the 6 Day War of 1967, these areas came under Israeli control. After the signing of the 1993 Oslo Accords, the majority of Palestinians were under control of the Palestinian Authority and not Israel. In 2005, Israel vacated Gaza by removing 14000 Jewish settlers and vacating the settlement blocs.

After the 2007 elections, the Gaza Strip has been controlled by Hamas. The West Bank is divided into three areas. Area A under Palestinian control- which includes all the major Arab cities in the West Bank. Area B which is jointly managed by the Palestinian Authority and Israel, and Area C under Israeli control. After the events of 2007, the Palestinians have been ruled by Fatah in the West Bank and Hamas in Gaza. As a general rule, things are generally more peaceful in the West Bank.

Throughout the West Bank there are Israeli towns and there is interaction between Israelis and Palestinians. However, entrance into the Palestinian towns are illegal for Israelis. In contrast, the Gaza Strip is completely devoid of Jews after Israel left the Strip and tore down the settlements.




ARE THERE ARABS LIVING PEACEFULLY IN ISRAEL?

Yes 20% of Israel's population are Arab. There has been Supreme Court Justices, Political parties, Arabs in the army and in the Diplomatic Corps. They have full citizenship rights and enjoy all the benefits and opportunities of the State.

WHAT IS THE IDF AND HOW DOES IT RESPOND TO TERRORIST?

The IDF stands for the Israel Defence Force and as per its name its mandate is to defend and protect the citizens of Israel. Every Israeli is expected to serve in the army. The Israeli Army, is known for its technical prowess and this is acknowledged by military experts. See video by Colonel Richard Kemp of The British Army.

<https://youtu.be/tN1MkAGuVyY>



WHO ARE HAMAS?

Hamas is a recognised terror organisation by the International Community has ruled Gaza since 2007. Its Charter calls for the destruction of Israel and has fought 3 wars with Israel. Hamas have used the current situation in Israel to launch thousands of rockets.

See video for more information about Hamas

<https://youtu.be/oqRNxTT6Nf0>

WHAT WAS THE REASON FOR THIS ESCALATION?

1. Cancellation of the Palestinian elections.

Elections were to be held on the 22nd of May 2021. However Prime Minister Mahmoud Abbas postponed the elections last week, indefinitely. Abbas is in the 17th year of his 4-year term. The problem is that he is not popular, and polling suggested that Hamas would win the elections if they were held. Considering what has happened in Gaza, this would not be a good outcome for the West Bank. Abbas has used the excuse of the Israeli government to refuse to allow the Arabs of East Jerusalem to vote, as the reason to postpone the elections. Blaming Israel is always popular.

2. Sheikh Jarrah

Sheikh Jarrah is a neighbourhood in Jerusalem which until 1948 was a Jewish. After the war, the area was controlled by Jordan, who expelled all the Jews of East Jerusalem and the Old City. They allowed Arabs to live in the confiscated houses. After the 6 -day War a legal argument about who owns the houses began. This was settled in court, which ruled that either the Arabs pay rent to original owners and their descendants or must face eviction.

This was used as a pretext by Hamas that Israel was forcing Arabs out of their homes. This is a purely legal issue that does not involve the Israeli government.

3. Ramadan

The holy month of Ramadan is always an emotional time. At Friday prayers on the Temple mount, Palestinians had stockpiled rocks, fireworks and other weapons to use to fight the Israeli police and throw rocks onto the Jewish worshippers at the Kotel. These skirmishes were used by Hamas to prove that Israel wanted to conquer and destroy the Al Aksa Mosque. The firecrackers set fire to a large tree on the Temple mount and was used as propaganda to prove the case.

4. Israeli elections

Israel has recently completed its fourth election in 2 years. Prime Minister Netanyahu was unable to form a ruling coalition and now it is the turn of the opposition. They have been working with the Arab Israeli party RAAM to potentially form a government. This is viewed as an anathema by Hamas and could be another reason for the violent reaction. An Arab party part of the Israeli government would prove the integration of the Arab community (which comprises of 20% of the population) into Israel.

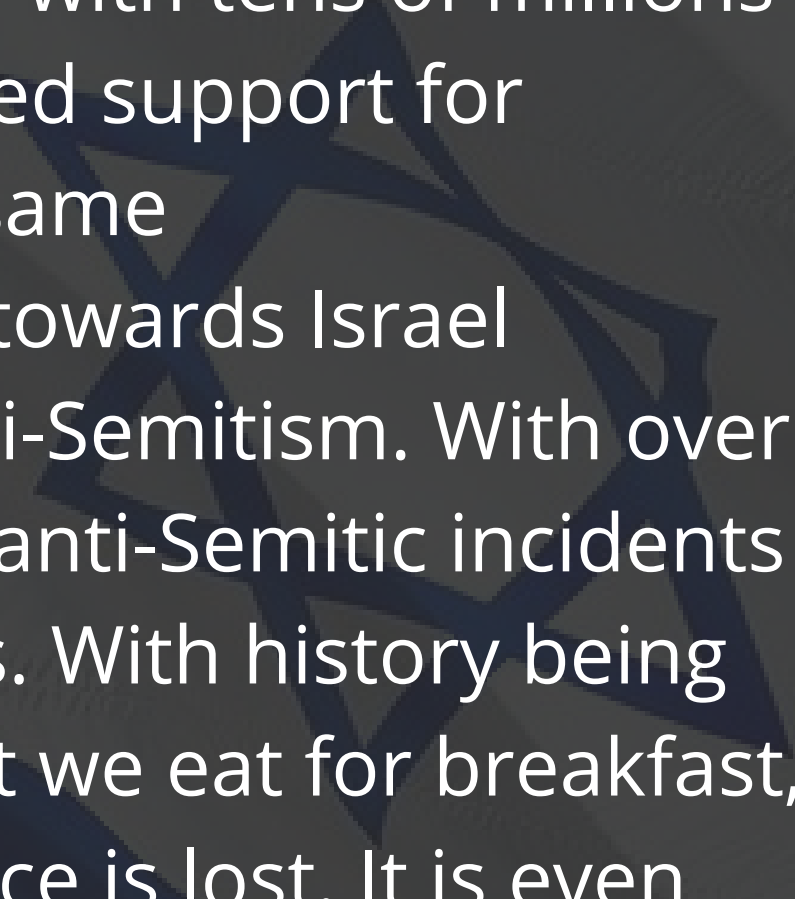
Together, all these reasons, provided the fuel for Hamas to launch over 4000 rockets against Israel. Millions of Israelis were sent to hide in bunkers and protected shelters. Schools were closed and the Israeli Airforce has responded with precision bombings in Gaza.

At present a ceasefire is in effect.



What was different this time?

This was the first time that we have seen social media play a role in framing the conflict. Social media influencers, those with tens of millions of followers, posted support for Palestine. At the same time the feelings towards Israel morphed into anti-Semitism. With over 500% increase in anti-Semitic incidents in some countries. With history being described as what we eat for breakfast, context and nuance is lost. It is even more important than ever to educate ourselves about the issues.





Some more articles for context.

<https://www.timesofisrael.com/tv-palestinians-stocked-rocks-for-temple-mount-riots-police-caught-unawares/>

<https://www.timesofisrael.com/>

Update of what is happening in Israel

<https://youtu.be/cpzWLRAuCBM>

What is the Iron Dome

https://youtu.be/b4a_ie0J0hU

The Begin and Sadat Centre for middle east studies <https://besacenter.org/>

Honest reporting analyses and provides context for news reports <https://honestreporting.com/>

Stand with us advocates for the State of Israel.

<https://www.standwithus.com/>

