

בלמ"ס/מידי

אל: כל הנציגויות
דע: תפוצת הסברה
מאת: מח' מידע ואינטרנט – אגף תקשורת

הנדון: מסרים מחייבים לשלב הנוכחי – אופרת יצוקה - אנגלית

בהמשך למברקו של מנהל הסברה בנדון מהיום להלן נוסח אנגלית.
מועבר במקביל בדוא"ל לכתובות MFA בלבד.

The next stage of Operation Cast Lead

1. **The achievement: During the first week of Operation Cast Lead the Hamas terror organization suffered a heavy blow** – dozens of its commanders and hundreds of terrorists were killed, ammunition stores were destroyed and its arms production capabilities and tunnel smuggling infrastructure were damaged. Hamas's ability to govern was also impaired. Its senior leaders completely abandoned the population and are concerned only in saving their own skins. (Mohammed Bassiouni, Chairman of the Egyptian parliament's foreign relations committee asked, "Where is the Hamas leadership? They are all hiding in underground bunkers while Gaza is being attacked.")
2. The situation revealed by the IDF operation in Gaza is that mosques, public institutions and private homes were being used by Hamas as bases of operation and arms caches. The entire terror infrastructure is located in the heart of the Palestinian civilian population which serves as a human shield.
3. **The reason: Hamas still retains significant ability and desire to carry out terror attacks** and they continue to fire dozens of rockets daily at population centers in the south of Israel. Hamas has placed almost a million Israeli civilians within its range of fire (about 15% of the total Israeli population!). No country in the world would agree to daily fire at its civilians' homes.
4. The Hamas military arm, which is directly responsible for the terrorist activity, continues to fire rockets and is trying to broaden its terrorist activity. Many of its terror operatives are in the field and in the tunnels, some of the infrastructure remains, they still have weapons and rockets, and the terrorists have the will and the means to carry out terror attacks. Iran is helping Hamas and inciting to terror and violence.

5. **The goal: In order to achieve the goals set for the operation – dealing the Hamas terror infrastructure a forceful blow and changing the security situation of the Israeli population in the south in the long term – the Israeli Cabinet decided to approve the next stage of Operation Cast Lead**, which includes the entry of armored forces and infantry, and the calling up of reserves in order to expand and deepen the operation as needed. The forces are to take control of primary rocket launching areas and to combat the existing terror infrastructure.
6. **The continuation of the operation is necessary in order to achieve its goals.** Stopping midway will not only lead to a resumption of terrorism but will also serve as encouragement to Hamas and other extremist elements in the region.
7. Israel has no intention of reassuming control of the Gaza Strip. The entry of forces is intended to achieve the goals set.
8. The operation will not be brief, and there will be difficult days ahead. There may be casualties among our soldiers and civilians, and Hamas will continue to fire at Israeli cities. But the strength and determination of the people of the south will enable the Israeli government and the IDF to achieve the operation's goals. Their firm stand will sustain us.
9. The government of Israel expresses its deep appreciation to the IDF and security forces on their impressive achievements to date and is confident in their ability to attain the required successes on the battlefield. Their fighting spirit and faith in the justness of our course, together with the highest professional standard will ensure the successful completion of the task. Who hope and pray that they will return home safely.
10. Alongside the military effort, Israel is conducting a broad diplomatic effort abroad in order to achieve the goals set. Israel insists that any proposal put forward will lead to a change in the security situation over the long term.
11. Israel reiterates that it is not at war with the Palestinian people in Gaza, but with Hamas. Hamas is responsible for the suffering of the civilian populations on both sides of the fence. Israel will therefore continue to transfer to Gaza all humanitarian aid that is received (in the course of the past week 400 trucks and 10 ambulances entered the Gaza Strip from Israel). There is today no humanitarian crisis in the Gaza Strip. The IDF is striving to prevent any harm to uninvolved Palestinians, including warnings issued prior to attacks. The figures we have indicate that the percentage of casualties among uninvolved civilians stands at about 12% (50 out of 400 killed), much lower than any similar event, such as NATO's bombing

in Kosovo or in Afghanistan, under much more difficult conditions given the location of the terror infrastructure in the midst of the civilian population.

12. Israel embarked on this operation only after it exhausted every possibility to put an end to the terror from Gaza which has continued for years. Israel agreed to the calm arrangement, although Hamas took advantage of it to build its strength, rearm and continue to fire (during the six-month calm Hamas fired hundreds of rockets and mortars at Israel). Faced with ongoing terror, Israel acted with restraint and did everything to avoid a confrontation. But the time came when we no longer had a choice; the security situation of the people of southern Israel became unbearable and a significant change was needed.
13. The government of Israel will use all the means at its disposal to provide vital services to the people of the south. The Homefront Command, government ministries and local authorities, as well as the emergency services are prepared for immediate action and are working ceaselessly.
14. We call on all citizens of Israel to act with restraint. The police will not allow extremists to take the law into their hands, to use violence or to aggravate the situation or cause damage that could be irrevocable.
15. Israel will respond strongly to any attempt by other elements in the region to take advantage of the situation and carry out attacks against Israeli citizens.

עד כאן.

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3 ינואר 2009