

GANSO

BI-WEEKLY SAFETY REPORT VOL. 5.4

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- ABOUT GANSO -

GANSO is a project of CARE International, funded by ECHO with the aim of providing the information and analysis the NGO community needs in order to implement humanitarian projects safely.



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GAZA STRIP SUMMARY

This reporting period witnessed 7 IAF air strikes and 24 HMRS; in contrast, the previous reporting period witnessed 10 IAF air strikes and 39 Grad and homemade-style rockets. This represents close to a 30% decrease in the volume of cross-border violence when compared to the last reporting period (1-15 Dec.). Cross-border activity continued to be seen in all governorates, although a slightly higher level of activity was recorded in the upper governorates of the Gaza Strip (MA, GC, and NG) in comparison to the lower half (KY and RA).

There was a significant decrease in the number of IF incursions reported when compared to the previous reporting period, dropping from 10 to just 3. These affected the following areas: Khan Yunis (E of Khuza'a); North Gaza (E of Jabalia); and Rafah (Al Shouka area).

Border areas throughout the Gaza Strip were subject to multiple cases of IF border fire (including tank shells). Incidents were recorded up to 800metres from the border. Humanitarian workers are reminded that these areas remain very high risk.

Internal accidents continue to claim civilian casualties with 4 injuries due to the collapse of an under-construction mosque in Rafah and the injuring of 6 civilians due to the explosion of 2 unknown devices in Rafah and Khan Yunis.

In total, this reporting period saw 25 civilian injuries and 2 civilian fatalities.

ABBREVIATIONS KEY

- 'c', for example 'c200m'.....circa, shorthand for approximate
- BF.....Border Fire
- ERW.....Explosive Remnants of War
- HMG.....Heavy Machine Gun
- HMR.....Home Made Rocket
- IED, ED.....Improvised Explosive Device, Explosive Device
- IF, IAF, INF.....Israeli Forces, Israeli Air Force, Israeli Naval Force
- Pal. ops.....Palestinian Operatives
- RPG.....Rocket Propelled Grenade
- UXO.....Unexploded Ordnance
- E, W, S, N.....Compass points—East, West, South, North

OF SPECIAL CONCERN

Internal Palestinian Politics:

The formation of a unity government remains elusive; nonetheless, it is worth positively noting that multiple factions were invited to—and attended—reconciliation talks in Cairo. These talks continue without blatant animosity, but also without a concrete timetable for steps to be taken toward a unity government.

Hamas' PM Haniyeh left the Gaza Strip for the first time since 2007 in a two week tour of welcoming states. He plans to travel to Turkey, Egypt, Tunisia, and Sudan. In Egypt, he met with Mohammed Badie, the leader of the Muslim Brotherhood. Unsurprisingly, Badie publically reaffirmed the Brotherhood's commitment to 'issues of liberation, foremost the Palestinian issue;' however, what practical form this will take remains to be seen.

The second phase of the prisoner swap—a deal in which Israel exchanged 1,027 Palestinian prisoners for IF soldier Gilad Shalit—was concluded on the evening of the 18th of December. The event passed with little fanfare in the Gaza Strip as, of a total 550 prisoners released in this phase, only 41 prisoners returned to Gaza.

Regional Politics:

Continued reports of serious instability in Syria have kept rumours circling in the media that Hamas is attempting to relocate its headquarters out of Damascus. While Hamas continues to deny the possibility of an upcoming move, it is unclear how much longer its political leadership can remain silent in the face of sustained popular support for the Syrian revolution.

In Egypt, the Muslim Brotherhood and its new-found parliamentary presence remained generally supportive of Hamas in Gaza; however, it has become increasingly clear that Egyptian stability and internal issues will be the greatest concern for any incoming government.

Army of Islam:

The reporting period saw multiple IAF targeted killings of Salafi-Jihadi group Army of Islam. The missile strikes resulted in at least 2 Army of Islam fatalities and 5 operative injuries, but also wounded at least 11 Palestinian civilians. The largest strike took place on Jala' street in Gaza City when the IAF targeted a vehicle, wounding 4 operatives and 1 civilian.

In 2011, Army of Islam was designated a Foreign Terrorist Organisation by the US State Department, with its purported leader, Mumtaz Dughmush, labeled a Specially Designated Global Terrorist. They claimed rocket fire towards Israel in 2011 and were responsible for the kidnappings of BBC reporter Alan Johnston (2007) and 2 Fox News reporters (2006).

A Quiet Anniversary:

The 27th of December marked three years since the beginning of the Israel/Gaza conflict, 'Cast Lead' (27 Dec. 2008-18 Jan. 2009). The anniversary was marked by a series of small, localised events throughout the Gaza Strip, but passed without major incident.

Unexploded Ordnance:

On two separate occasions during the reporting period, a total of 6 Palestinian civilians were injured after finding and handling explosive devices—reported locally to have been unexploded IF remnants.

These incidents are a stark reminder of the potential hazards faced by people in the Gaza Strip. The Gaza NGO Safety Office continues to provide free UXO & Mine Risk Education training, in conjunction with UNMAT for NGO staff operating in Gaza. For further information, or to book a place on the training, please contact the GANSO Team. Contact details can be found on p. 5.

REGIONAL SUMMARIES

RAFAH

For the second consecutive reporting period Rafah was relatively quiet with only a handful of incidents to report.

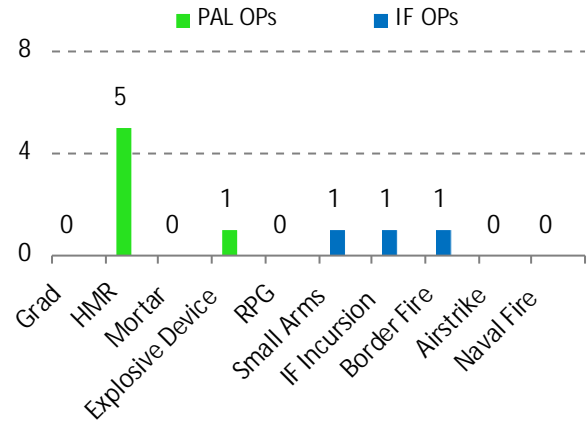
In the most serious incident, 3 Palestinian children were moderately injured when what is locally reported to have been an IF remnant—recorded as an explosive device—detonated near where they were playing in the As-Sawafi area, W of Tal Al Sultan.

In another multi-casualty incident, 4 civilians were injured when the roof of an under-construction mosque collapsed in Al Salam area.

On 18 Dec., 1 Palestinian civilian was injured by celebratory gunfire marking the 2nd and final phase of the prisoner release deal.

On 29 Dec., unidentified Palestinian operatives fired 5 HMRs from the Al Shouka area, E of Rafah towards Israeli territory.

IF activity was limited to 1 case of border fire, including tank shells, on 27 Dec. E of Rafah, followed by an IF incursion on 29 Dec. in the same area. There were no injuries or damage reported in either case.



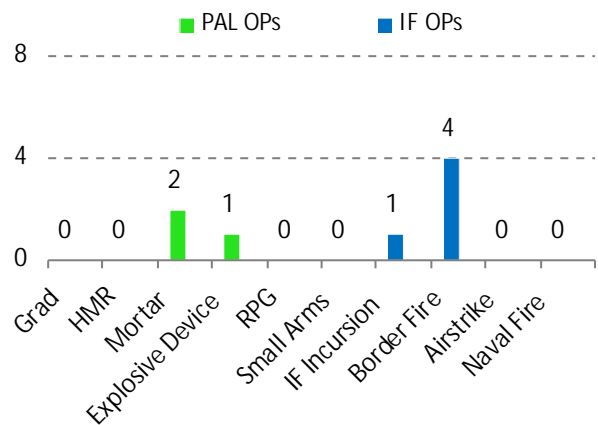
KHAN YUNIS

In the second incident of its type during the reporting period, 3 Palestinian civilians were moderately injured when what was locally reported as an IF remnant—recorded here as an explosive device—detonated in a scrap metal store in Khuza'a area.

While no HMRs were fired from Khan Yunis during the reporting period, 2 mortars were fired by unidentified Palestinian operatives from Al Fukhkhari area. One dropped short in Palestinian territory.

There were 4 separate incidents of IF border fire in Al Faraheen, Al Qarara, and E of Khan Yunis. In one case, the border fire was accompanied by an IF incursion which penetrated c300metres into Palestinian territory. 3 IF tanks and 4 bulldozers, assisted by an IAF helicopter, conducted a levelling operation before returning to the Israeli side of the border.

On 19 Dec., it was reported that IF positioned on the border E of Al Qarara detained 3 Palestinians as they attempted to enter Israel.



REGIONAL SUMMARIES

MIDDLE AREA

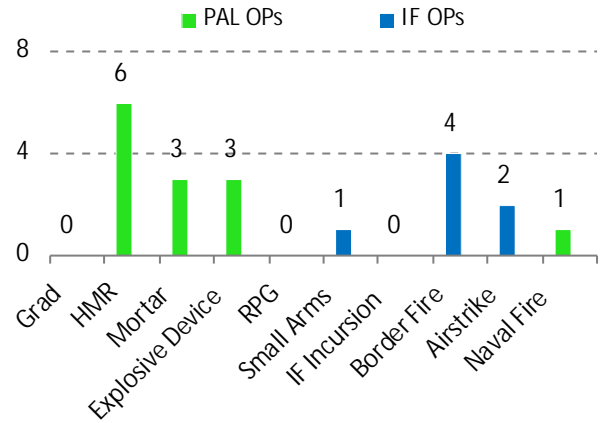
Of concern, there were 3 separate incidents reported in which unidentified assailants threw hand grenades: in the first, a house in Deir Al Balah was targeted; in the second, an UNRWA sanitation office was seemingly targeted; and in the third, an open area N of Al Bureij. In all cases, the motive remains unclear, with de facto police opening investigations.

Palestinian operatives fired 5 towards Israeli territory from the Abu Al Ajeen, Al Bureij, and Al Mugraha areas. Of these, 1 HMR exploded prematurely. PRC operatives claimed responsibility for at least 2 of the rockets. A further 2 mortars were reportedly fired towards Israeli territory.

At 0700hrs on 30 Dec., IAF conducted a targeted killing, striking a group of Army of Islam operatives in the Juhor Ad Dik area. Conflicting reports suggest that the air strike killed 1 operative and injured 2 others, while 3 Palestinian civilian bystanders were also wounded.

A family dispute turned violent when competing families turned knives and guns upon each other, injuring 1 in Al Bureij.

Four cases of IF border fire were reported. In the most serious, 1 Palestinian civilian was directly injured by gunfire, while another was killed after falling off his motorcycle while reportedly fleeing the scene of IF border fire.



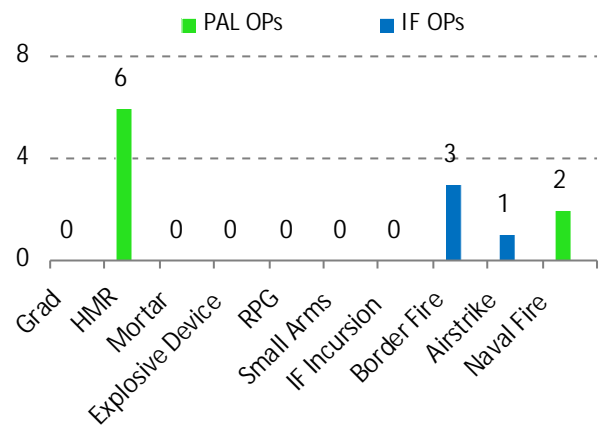
GAZA

Palestinian operatives fired 6 HMRs towards Israel from Zaitoun and Shujaiyeh areas. Of these, 2 dropped short within Gazan territory.

At 2145hrs on 27 Dec., the IAF conducted a targeted killing on Jala' street in Gaza City, striking a vehicle and injuring 4 Army of Islam operatives and wounding civilian bystanders.

There were 3 cases of IF border fire reported, 2 of which were in close proximity to the Karni crossing. An additional 2 cases of IF Naval fire, in the second case, the IF detained 4 Palestinian fisherman, releasing 3 back to Gaza after several hours and the fourth to hospital (due to renal failure).

A Palestinian was killed in the Sheikh Radwan area of Gaza City, the motive of which was purportedly a family dispute. The de facto police have opened an investigation.



REGIONAL SUMMARIES

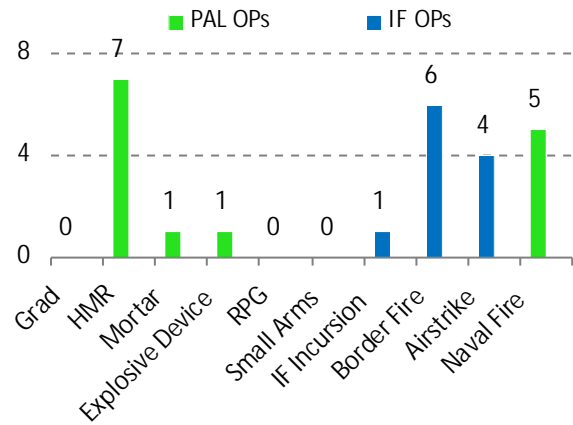
NORTH GAZA

North Gaza saw a reduction in the amount of rocket fire compared to the previous reporting period, a decrease from 22 to 7. However, for the second consecutive reporting period 1 HMR dropped short, landing in a house in the Beit Lahiya area injuring 1 Palestinian civilian. A further 2 HMRS exploded prematurely. One mortar was also fired in the direction of Erez.

The IAF conducted a targeted killing, striking a motorbike in the Jabalia area, killing 1 Palestinian operative and wounding 4 civilian bystanders. The IAF also conducted 3 air strikes on an open area, N-W of Beit Lahiya.

A Hamas operative was killed after reportedly handling an explosive device in his home in the Jabalia area.

There were 6 cases of IF border and 5 of Naval fire, 2 Palestinian civilian and 1 fisherman were injured. The IF also conducted 1 incursion near Abu Safiya area, c400metres from the border.



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