



## **The Gaza War Ended, the Hamas Problem Remains**

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**BESA Center Perspectives Paper No. 2,042, May 21, 2021**

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: Israel's relations with Hamas in the coming months will be tested first and foremost by the strengthening of its sovereignty in Jerusalem. This makes the risk of a renewed conflagration extremely high.**

As the fourth war between Israel and Hamas in a decade draws to a close after ten days of fighting, there is little doubt that the terror organization's military infrastructure was massively degraded. Yet through unwavering commitment to its Islamist precepts and vision, Hamas managed to divert attention from these losses to its supposed success in defending Islam's holy shrines in Jerusalem, thus casting itself in the eyes of Muslims throughout the world as the unquestionable winner of the war.

From Israel's vantage point, on the other hand, the war's success will be determined not only by the length of the tranquility established along the Gaza Strip, but also by the Jewish State's ability to realize its national interests in Jerusalem. Hence Israel's relations with Hamas in the coming months will be tested first and foremost by the strengthening of Israeli sovereignty in Jerusalem. In these circumstances, the potential for renewed conflagration is extremely high.

There is more than one way to reach a ceasefire. Some ceasefires are grounded in agreements or memoranda of understanding, others are marked by the simple cessation of hostilities in keen anticipation of looming developments, as seems to be the case here. In these circumstances, the question of "What to do with Gaza?" will continue to preoccupy Israel's political and military leaderships for a long time.

Though taken by surprise by the outbreak of hostilities, the IDF had meticulously prepared for such eventuality, having enhanced its capabilities over the past two years under the able leadership of chief-of-staff Aviv Kochavi, especially through the adoption of groundbreaking technologies.

With the end of the war, and given the likelihood of renewed hostilities, the IDF will surely strive to incorporate the lessons of the war into its updated operational concepts, including a possible deep ground incursion into Gaza. More broadly, Israel will need to reexamine the extent of its continued ability to live under Hamas' Damocles sword.

The IDF should be congratulated on its operational achievements in the current round of fighting, as should be Israeli society on its resilience and cohesion that transcended its endemic tensions and divisions. This impressive display of national resilience is bound to play an important role in the government's handling of the Gaza problem in the coming months and years.

*This is an edited version of an article published in Israel Hayom on 21 May.*

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