**Behind the Headlines: Israel accepts ceasefire, Hamas rejects**

July 15, 2014

Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs

http://mfa.gov.il/MFA/ForeignPolicy/Issues/Pages/Behind-the-headlines-Israel-accepts-ceasefire-15-Jul-2014.aspx

This morning, Israel accepted the Egyptian proposal for a ceasefire starting today,15 July 2014, 09:00 Israel time. Israel accepted the ceasefire in order to allow for sustained quiet to be achieved diplomatically.

Nevertheless, Israel reserves its right of self-defense.

Hamas bluntly rejected the ceasefire, both in word and deed. Hamas continued to launch sustained rocket barrages at Israel. Between 09:00-15:00, it fired approximately 50 rockets at Israeli towns and cities, from the north to the south of the country. Only then - after six hours of continuous and indiscriminate fire at Israel - did the government instruct the IDF to respond.

Hamas bears responsibility for the consequences of its rejection of the ceasefire and its continued aggression. No country can sit idly by while its civilian population is subjected to terrorist rocket fire.

Israel had hoped that the ceasefire would have allowed civilians on both sides to return to normal life. Israel continues to do its utmost to prevent harm to uninvolved civilians in Gaza. Responsibility for casualties lies squarely on Hamas which used its own population as human shields.

Hamas' use of Palestinian civilians as human shields and its targeting of Israeli civilians is a double war crime. At the same time that Hamas deliberately placed the residents of Gaza in the path of danger, it has targeted Israeli civilians with over 1,000 rockets in the past week.

The people of Israel showed great resilience in the face of constant bombardment. Their discipline in following civil defense instructions and the effectiveness of the Iron Dome missile defense system meant that there were few Israeli casualties.

Israel appreciates the international support for its right of self-defense. Israel also shares an interest with other moderate forces in the Middle East in promoting stability in the region.