

HAMAS ATTACKS ON SDEROT AND THE WESTERN NEGEV

Sderot, less than a mile from Gaza, bore the brunt of Palestinian rocket attacks since the beginning of the second intifada in September 2000. Rockets target vulnerable southern Israeli cities landing in or near private homes, schools, colleges, and daycare and recreation centers. In March 2008, Hamas increased the number and effectiveness of these attacks, using more powerful and longer range Grad (Katyusha-like) missiles to hit the city of Ashkelon. In June, 2008, Hamas and Israel negotiated a six month ceasefire. Hamas used this time to acquire Grad rockets (range of 24.8 miles) with the ability to reach into Beersheba. On Dec. 19, Hamas refused to extend the ceasefire and greatly increased the attacks. Israel launched “Operation Cast Lead” in order to stop the rocket attacks and protect its citizens. Israeli military officials have noted that some of these missiles have components that likely were manufactured in Iran.



Israeli communities within range of rocket fire from Gaza

From the end of Operation Cast Lead in January 2009 through the month of March, there were 154 mortars and rockets fired from Gaza into Israel.

Life in Southern Israel

The psychological trauma of the frequent rocket attacks cannot be minimized. When the alarm is sounded, no matter where they are or what they are doing - - taking a shower, shopping for food, going to work - - residents have 15 seconds to reach shelter or risk being killed or injured. In Sderot, mental health professionals have documented the trauma experienced by children and adults alike, many of whom endure nightmares, panic attacks, and are afraid of going about their daily lives for fear of being caught unprotected during a missile strike. For the children in Sderot, the trauma is most intense. More than 3,000 of Sderot’s 24,000 residents have left the city due to the ongoing rocket and mortar fire.

