Armed Conflict

10
JUN
7:30 UTC

Israel & Palestinian Territories Analysis: Security situation remains volatile following 11-day conflict between Israel, Gaza-based militant groups

Executive Summary:

- On May 21, Israel and Hamas agreed to an Egypt-mediated ceasefire following 11 days of hostilities. Over 4,360 rockets were fired towards Israel. 13 Israelis and at least 242 Palestinians are reported to have been killed. Since the ceasefire, no major hostilities have been recorded.
- Hamas emerges from the latest escalation with several strategic gains. It won the “hearts and mind” of the Palestinian street by portraying itself as “protector of Jerusalem”, overshadowing the Fatah-led Palestinian Authority (PA).
- However, following the conflict, the PA has gained increased international legitimacy, particularly from the US, as the legitimate political representatives of the Palestinian people. Over the coming months, international actors will seek to embolden the PA and sideline Hamas.
- Israel re-established its military deterrence vis-a-vis the Gaza-based militant groups in the short to medium term by landing a significant blow to their capabilities and thwarting all attempts at surprising Israel through the militants’ diversification of military tactics and maneuvers.
- Civil unrest within Israel has subsided since the ceasefire and the prior deployment of Border Police to mixed cities. However, the high-level unrest recorded between Jewish and Arab citizens magnified the existing gaps between segments of these populations and drew attention to the animosity between elements in both societies. Tensions will remain, particularly in Jerusalem and mixed Arab-Jewish cities, given that many of the underlying factors for this discord prevail.
- A long-term ceasefire between Israel and Hamas is unlikely to materialize over the near-term due to significant gaps in the parties’ demands. To exert pressure on Israel, Hamas may instigate or actively launch small-scale attacks into Israeli territory, such as incendiary or explosive-laden balloons. Israel is currently trying to refrain from provoking the Palestinians, as can be seen by its hesitancy to permit a controversial right-wing flag parade in Jerusalem’s Old City.
- Regardless, the current underlying conditions, coupled with the parties’ long-term disagreements over core issues, render it likely that another round of conflict between Israel and Gaza-based militants will be recorded in the medium to long term.
- **Remain abreast of developments in Israel and the Palestinian Territories due to the ongoing volatile security situation. MAX Security has strong on-ground capabilities in Israel, including contingency planning and consultation. Contact us at operations@max-security.com or +44 20-3540-0434.**

Outcome of the conflict

Hamas emerges from latest round of hostilities with Israel having achieved several strategic gains:

Protector of Jerusalem, al-Aqsa Mosque/Temple Mount Compound

1. Hamas attained the image of “protector of al-Quds [Jerusalem]”, at least temporarily, by following through on its threat of responding to Israeli “aggression” in East Jerusalem’s Sheikh Jarrah neighborhood, namely, the potential eviction of Palestinian residents from the area against the backdrop of a decades-long property dispute. Hamas military commander, Mohammed Deif, warned on May 4 that Hamas “will not stand idly by… and [Israel] will pay a heavy price”. This came amid rising tensions over Israeli security operations at the al-Aqsa Mosque/Temple Mount Compound and several weeks of tensions in Israel during the Muslim holy month of Ramadan, particularly in Jerusalem and at the Old City’s Damascus Gate. Subsequently, on May 10, Hamas fired seven rockets towards the Jerusalem area.
2. The firing of rockets on Jerusalem Day, an Israeli Jewish holiday commemorating the reunification of the city under Israeli control in 1967, was symbolic as it signified Hamas’ rejection of Israeli sovereignty in its declared capital amid the long-standing battle over ownership of the city. This enabled the militant group to project itself as the defender of both the Palestinian people and pan-Muslim interests in Jerusalem, particularly at one of Islam’s holiest sites, the al-Aqsa Mosque/Temple Mount Compound.

Winning ‘hearts and minds’ of Palestinians

1. Despite suffering significant personnel and infrastructure losses, by projecting a picture of victory vis-à-vis Israel as the “protector of al-Quds [Jerusalem]”, a unifying Palestinian issue, the armed conflict allowed Hamas to raise its profile among Arabs within Israel as well as the West Bank and East Jerusalem. In this way, it succeeded in overshadowing the Palestinian Authority (PA) within the “Palestinian street”. This is particularly significant given that PA President Mahmoud Abbas had announced the indefinite postponement of the Palestinian elections on April 29, which was perceived as an act of weakness by Hamas due to the divisions within Abbas’ Fatah party. Hamas therefore took advantage of the opportunity to engage in clashes with Israel in order to increase its level of support among Palestinians amid Abbas’ failure to unify the Fatah party or curtail rival factions from emerging.
2. Hamas has managed to strengthen its support base in the West Bank and East Jerusalem at the expense of the PA by projecting itself as the legitimate representative of the Palestinian people. However, the relatively large-scale destruction within the Gaza Strip likely diminished some of the group’s support base within this territory, especially among those who do not share the group’s Islamist ideology. **FORECAST:** Nevertheless, among Israeli Arab citizens and Palestinians in Jerusalem and the West Bank, Hamas will seek to cement its support over the coming months by portraying that its strategy of armed resistance against Israel is far more effective than the Fatah-led PA’s cooperation with Israeli security forces, which Hamas considers treacherous.

Inflamed ethnic tensions within Israel

1. An increase in localized civil unrest was recorded in Israel between Jewish and Arab citizens amid the hostilities between Israel and Hamas, which has since been contained. This manifested in attempted lynchings, vandalism, lootings, and assaults by both Jewish and Arab individuals against members of the other community. For example, on May 12, a group of far-right Jewish Israelis attempted to lynch an Arab citizen while he was driving his vehicle in Bat Yam, located just south of Tel Aviv. On the same day, far-right Jewish individuals vandalized an Arab-owned store in the city. There were also various instances of synagogues being torched by Arab citizens in central Israel’s Lod and mass vandalism by Arab protesters in northern Israel’s Akko during the week of May 10-14. The unrest was primarily recorded in mixed Jewish-Arab cities and towns and other areas with a large Arab population.
2. The eruption in violence on the Arab side was a result of the long-standing perceptions of discrimination held by segments of this population as well as renewed Palestinian nationalism among parts of the community, particularly surrounding the recent tensions at the al-Aqsa Mosque/Temple Mount Compound. It was also a consequence of the anger harbored over the perceived use of disproportionate and excessive violence against Israeli-Arab citizens and Palestinians by Israeli security forces. The armed conflict between Israel and Gaza-based militants further elevated this perception. Hamas utilized this anger to mobilize swathes of the Israeli-Arab population by leveraging the developments in Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip. Hamas has a profound interest in gaining inroads in the wider Palestinian population beyond the Gaza Strip, particularly among Arab citizens within Israel, and thus sought to fan the flames by calling for this population to rise up against Israel.

Perpetuating anti-Israel regional and global sentiment as well as hindering, at least temporarily, normalization trends between Israel, Arab states

1. In 2020, Israel signed normalization agreements with several Arab countries, namely, the UAE, Bahrain, Sudan, and Morocco. However, during the latest conflict, large-scale anti-Israel demonstrations were staged throughout the world, particularly in the Middle East and North Africa. For example, in Morocco, numerous demonstrations were held in Rabat and Casablanca to express support and solidarity with the Palestinian cause, and to condemn any form of normalization with Israel. **FORECAST:** The annulment of any of the normalization agreements remains highly unlikely

at present, as shown by recent cooperation between Israeli and Emirati authorities on taxation, for instance. However, the latest round of hostilities elevated the level of anti-Israeli sentiments in the region, thereby decreasing the probability of future normalization agreements in the coming months as this will be deemed highly unfavorable by large parts of the population in the Arab world.

2. Hamas also proved adept at arousing anti-Israel sentiments in neighboring countries, which translated into attacks on Israeli territory. For example, the IDF reported that three rockets were launched from Syria toward Israel's Golan Heights on May 14. Additionally, on three separate occasions, rockets were launched toward Israel from southern Lebanon, and multiple violent gatherings, including infiltration attempts, were reported along the Lebanese-Israeli border fence near northern Israel's Metula. These incidents highlighted Hamas' ability to garner support for its cause from Palestinian militant groups in neighboring countries, which in the Lebanon context, were likely conducted with the explicit approval of Hezbollah.

Israel dealt a blow to Hamas' military capabilities over the medium-term through the following ways:

Restoration of deterrence:

1. Israel has re-established military deterrence in the short to medium term vis-a-vis Hamas by inflicting a blow to the militant group's capabilities through the killing of high-ranking personnel and destruction of large segments of its rocket production facilities and underground infrastructure. Hamas gambled on its attack against Jerusalem and underestimated Israel's willingness to retaliate with force. This is illustrated by Hamas' desire to secure a ceasefire from the outset of the conflict, with the Islamist group immediately attempting to project victory. Ismail Haniyeh, the head of Hamas' Political Bureau, stated on May 11 that Hamas had "achieved victory in the battle for Jerusalem" following its firing of rockets toward the city, indicating that Hamas sought to consolidate its gains vis-a-vis Israel and project victory after only 24 hours of hostilities. This suggests that Hamas miscalculated Israel's response, which provided the latter with an opportunity to strike over 1,200 targets in the Gaza Strip, thereby diminishing the capabilities of Hamas, the Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ), and other Gaza-based militant factions.
2. Despite the significant damage inflicted upon both militant groups, they still possess a significant rocket arsenal, capable of striking territory in southern and central Israel. **FORECAST:** Taken together with Hamas' proven ability in the past to regroup and rearm following bouts of conflict with Israel, the resumption of hostilities is likely over the longer term. Moving forward, Israel has

stated that the equation with regard to dealing with Hamas has changed. Israel has vowed to forcefully respond to any attacks emanating from the enclave. The implementation of such a strategy would represent a shift from its policy in recent years, whereby it largely refrained from conducting meaningful strikes against Hamas following rocket attacks or the launching of incendiary balloons targeting Israel's peripheral southern communities. Within this context, the proposed policy change symbolizes Israel's desire to create long-term deterrence vis-a-vis the militant group.

Thwarting of Hamas' military 'surprises'

1. Since the conclusion of the last prolonged period of conflict with Israel in 2014, Hamas has invested a great deal of its resources in the diversification of its military arsenal, particularly through the development of relatively rudimentary naval and unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) weapons. This is illustrated by Hamas' development of submersible drones that the IDF reportedly believes are GPS-guided and are able to carry a warhead of at least 30 kg as well as the creation of its explosive-laden "Shebab" UAVs. Hamas periodically attempted to utilize its naval and aerial capabilities to launch attacks during the recent escalation, which highlighted the group's efforts to target Israel in an environment it perceived to be more vulnerable to attack.
2. The Israeli security apparatus successfully thwarted all of the militant group's naval and aerial attacks, which illustrates Israel's ability to identify and destroy potential threats to its territorial integrity, including at sea and by air. It also underscored the significant intelligence possessed by the IDF and other Israeli security agencies on the Palestinian militant groups' operations. This was also evidenced by Israel's ability to eliminate high-ranking Hamas and PIJ militants during the operation despite the latter's tendency to hide in bunkers during such rounds of conflict. The recent conflict thus underscored Hamas' failure to successfully diversify its military operations in the face of Israel's heightened vigilance and advanced intelligence on such maneuvers.

Implications of May 2021 escalation

PA's international legitimacy likely to be boosted by renewed focus on Israeli-Palestinian conflict, efforts to sideline Hamas

1. The PA emerges from the conflict having gained increased international legitimacy, particularly from the US, as the legitimate political representatives of the Palestinian people. This is highlighted by a statement by US Secretary of State, Antony Blinken, on May 25, wherein he reiterated that the US is committed to beginning the process of reopening its consulate to the PA in Jerusalem. The planned reopening of the US consulate, which has been closed since March 2019, will signify a positive shift in US-PA relations following several years of deteriorating ties during former US President, Donald Trump's tenure. Within this context, the slated consulate reopening represents a diplomatic gain for the PA, albeit one that requires Israeli approval and may therefore be stalled.
2. There have also been increasing calls from the international community for the funds pledged towards the rebuilding of the Gaza Strip to be distributed at least partially via the PA. This is aimed at mitigating the risk of this capital being siphoned off by Hamas and being used to rebuild its weapon stockpiles and military infrastructure. The desire for a greater role for the PA in Gaza's reconstruction underscores the fact that both regional and international actors view the entity as the most trusted and reliable partner in the Palestinian arena. This view has been somewhat echoed by leading figures in the Israeli security establishment. Defense Minister Benny Gantz stated on May 23 that "the most desirable change…is to strengthen the PA as much as possible, and not to let Hamas be the one that sets the agenda..in Gaza."
3. On a regional level, the conflict has elevated the importance of the PA in the eyes of neighboring countries, most notably Egypt. Egyptian delegations have held several discussions with the PA regarding ways to bolster the Israel-Hamas ceasefire agreement as well as stressing the importance of reviving the Israeli-Palestinian diplomatic process. Domestically, Israel has a vested interest in bolstering the Fatah-dominated PA's control, at Hamas' expense, both within PA-administered territory within the West Bank and in the Gaza Strip. The goal of strengthening the PA, which has shown itself willing and capable to cooperate with Israel in the security sphere, diminishes the influence of the militant factions in these areas, thereby decreasing the overall security threat to Israel.
4. **FORECAST:** US-PA relations are expected to strengthen in the coming months as the Biden administration seeks to stabilize the region and kickstart the Israel-Palestinian peace process. On a domestic level, Israel is likely to increase backchannel diplomatic and security engagement with the PA in the immediate future in an effort to bolster the latter's control in the West Bank in an effort to reduce the influence of Hamas in the Palestinian arena. However, such activity is highly unlikely to result in the resumption of the Israeli-Palestinian peace process given the significant differences that remain on both sides, most notably the relinquishment of Israeli control over parts of Jerusalem as well as disagreements over Palestinian refugees and borders.

Hamas to remain diplomatically isolated

On a domestic level, the militant group increased its support base in the Palestinian street during the conflict by projecting itself as the protectors of Jerusalem and the al-Aqsa Mosque/Temple Mount Compound. However, the damage inflicted upon the Gaza Strip during the 11-day conflict further tarnished Hamas' reputation on the international stage as it bolstered the perception that the militant group prioritizes armed conflict with Israel over improving the lives of the citizens living under its rule. Hamas is increasingly viewed by both the West and prominent regional Arab leaders as an impediment to regional stability and security. **FORECAST:** Hamas will therefore remain heavily reliant for diplomatic and financial support in the coming months on its primary state backers, Iran

and Qatar, and to a lesser extent, Turkey. Hamas will not forgo its violent resistance against Israel and thus will continue to be regarded by much of the West as a militant group. As a result, Hamas will continue to remain largely diplomatically isolated.

Reconstruction efforts

International community to seek supervision over Gaza's reconstruction

1. Hamas has long been accused by Israel and Western powers of misusing humanitarian aid to upgrade its weapons arsenal and tunnel infrastructure, rather than investing in much needed civil infrastructure. Within this context, both regional and international donors are wary of providing financial support directly to Hamas for the reconstruction of the enclave. For example, US President, Joe Biden, stated on May 24, that international coordination was needed to ensure that "immediate assistance reaches Gaza in a way that benefits the people there and not Hamas". Consequently, there have been increasing calls for such funds to be distributed via the PA as opposed to Hamas. However, given the absence of PA control or support in the Gaza Strip, the proposal is unlikely to come to fruition. Another obstacle to the reconstruction efforts is Israel's demand that such activities be dependent upon Hamas releasing two IDF troops' bodies and two other Israeli citizens held captive in the enclave. The militant group has stated it rejects linking the reconstruction of the enclave to any prisoner exchange deal.
2. **FORECAST:** Therefore, concessions will be required by both Israel and Hamas if significant reconstruction efforts are to begin in the immediate future. In the meantime, international organizations and foreign actors will aim to alleviate the humanitarian situation and start the reconstruction process in the Gaza Strip without strengthening Hamas financially. For instance, on June 4, various bulldozers, trucks, and cranes from Egypt arrived in Gaza to "prepare the ground for reconstruction". Egypt has dedicated 500 million USD in funds to reconstruction in the enclave, although it will seek to carry out this endeavor by funding its own personnel to directly work in the territory as in the June 4 event, rather than risking the funds ending up in Hamas' possession.
3. **FORECAST:** Despite the international community's desire to avoid providing financial aid directly to Hamas, the militant group will likely still be able to siphon off some funds towards restocking its rocket arsenal and rebuilding its tunnel infrastructure. This is largely due to the fact that Hamas is the uncontested ruler in the Gaza Strip and is therefore able to take advantage of its control over civil bodies to redirect funding towards its military wing. Israel is expected to maintain its position vis-a-vis the prisoner swap and therefore reconstruction efforts will likely remain limited until such an exchange occurs. Moreover, given the precedent of previous conflicts between Israel and Hamas, a large part of the funds that are pledged by international actors ultimately fails to reach the enclave.

West Bank

Greater coordination anticipated between Israel, PA

1. An uptick in Palestinian-perpetrated militant attacks targeting Israeli security personnel and Israeli civilians was recorded in the West Bank during "Operation Guardian of the Walls". At least 26 militant attacks were recorded in the West Bank during the 11-day conflict as compared to 19 such attacks during the whole month of April. The surge in militancy is indicative of Hamas' ability to inflame tensions and lead its supporters in the West Bank to conduct lone-wolf attacks. However, a drop in militancy has been recorded since the cessation in hostilities, with only nine such attacks being recorded. The reduction is a result of a concerted effort by the Israeli security apparatus to prevent Hamas from establishing infrastructure in the West Bank. This is evidenced by the IDF's arrest of several senior Hamas operatives in recent weeks, including Nayef Rajoub

and Sheikh Jamal Tawil, on May 20 and June 2 respectively. Overall, these arrests are indicative of both Israel and the PA's effective efforts to clamp down on the militant networks and particularly the PA's ability to consolidate its power.

2. Hamas capitalized on the tensions in Jerusalem to overshadow the PA and project itself as a legitimate alternative in the Palestinian arena. The militant group's actions in Jerusalem endeared itself to segments of the Palestinian population, who had become disillusioned by the PA's inability to stop Israel's perceived violations in the Old City and at the al-Aqsa Mosque/Temple Mount Compound during the month of Ramadan. Conversely, the PA understood that it had a vested interest in containing the violent unrest in the West Bank due to the knock-on effect that the destabilization of the security environment has on its own rule in the West Bank. Within this context, the Palestinian security apparatus is reported to have partially prevented several protests in the West Bank during the conflict. Such efforts were aimed at de-escalating tensions and mitigating Hamas' influence in the area. However, the PA's efforts to contain the unrest were inconsistent at times, as illustrated by Fatah, the dominant party in the PA, calling for a day of rage on May 18.
3. **FORECAST:** Greater security cooperation and coordination between Israel and the PA is anticipated in the coming months, given both parties' desire to combat Hamas' expansion in the West Bank. This is evidenced by Israeli Defense Minister, Benny Gantz, stating his desire to "strengthen the Palestinian Authority as much as possible, and not to let Hamas be the one that sets the agenda". Both the IDF and the Palestinian security apparatus will likely conduct periodic arrest operations targeting Hamas and PIJ operatives in an effort to weaken Hamas' influence in the area, thereby increasing the stability and security in the West Bank. Nonetheless, given tensions between Palestinians and Israeli security forces will remain high over the short term, sporadic low-sophistication acts of militancy will likely be recorded in the West Bank over the coming weeks. These include attacks such as vehicular-rammings, stabbings, and the hurling of Molotov cocktails and rocks.

Outlook

Downtick in civil unrest within Israel anticipated due to increased law enforcement, tensions to remain due to underlying factors

1. Civil unrest within Israel has subsided, particularly following the May 21 ceasefire and the prior increased deployment of Border Police and Israel Police officers to mixed cities within Israel as well as the involvement of the Israel Security Agency (Shin Bet). Nonetheless, the civil unrest magnified the existing gaps within Israeli society and illustrated the levels of animosity harbored by fringe elements of both Jewish and Arab societies towards the other. From an Israeli-Arab perspective, the outburst of violent unrest was not spontaneous but rather a result of years of neglect and the authorities' failure to address long-standing grievances held by large segments of Arab society, particularly perceived political and social exclusion. On the part of the far-right Jewish Israeli protesters, these elements engaged in unruly violent protests and vandalism against Arab-linked property to project their efforts to "restore Jewish honor and pride". Overall, the recent intercommunal violence between Israel's Arab and Jewish communities increased mutual distrust and suspicion among some segments of Israeli society.
2. **FORECAST**: The Israeli Police are likely to maintain a more significant presence in the country's mixed cities as it seeks to maintain law and order in these areas. Additionally, the involvement of the Shin Bet in detaining elements partaking in intercommunal violence will further bolster the investigative capacity of the Israeli Police over the coming weeks and months, which will result in further arrests of individuals within both Arab and Jewish sectors of society. Israeli authorities will also likely seek to prosecute those involved in inciting violence online, such as on social media platforms. Nonetheless, localized instances of violent unrest may be recorded in mixed and Arab-dominated cities across Israel over the coming months. This is evidenced by incidents in northern Israel's Binyamina and the mixed city of Lod on May 27. In Binyamina, an Arab driver was moderately wounded after reportedly being attacked by a group of Jewish-Israelis. Meanwhile, in Lod, Molotov cocktails were thrown into the home of a Jewish family. These incidents will likely remain isolated, although they will contribute to the tension within the country. This is because the underlying factors that contribute to these grievances have not been resolved.

Jerusalem to remain continued source of contention

1. The city will remain a contentious issue and a continued source of tensions between Israel and the Palestinians. This is due to both Jerusalem's religious significance in both Judaism and Islam as well as the fact that both Israelis and Palestinians claim the city as their capital as part of their current and potential states, respectively. Within this context, any perceived Israeli violations of the al-Aqsa Mosque/Temple Mount Compound are likely to exacerbate the already heightened tensions surrounding the city. Additionally, any court rulings pertaining to the slated eviction of Palestinian families in East Jerusalem's Sheikh Jarrah and Silwan neighborhoods are also liable to elevate tensions. The Israeli court system may consider further postponement of its adjudication over these matters in the short term in an effort to de-escalate tensions.
2. Another possible catalyst for violence is if right-wing Israeli activists conduct marches or protests in contested areas of Jerusalem's Old City, such as the Muslim Quarter, which will be considered to be provocative by Palestinian residents of Jerusalem. **FORECAST:** While the Israel security cabinet on June 8 announced that it will allow right-wing Israelis to march in the Old City on June 15, this remains subject to permission by the Israel Police, which will also decide the route of the march. If the event avoids Arab-populated areas of Jerusalem, the risk of unrest will be lesser. Regardless, some fringe far-right Israeli politicians and their supporters are intent on marching on June 10, the original requested date for the mark, which the police refused to approve. Overall, these events will increase tensions in the area. The Israeli security establishment's reluctance to permit the march, especially through contested parts of the Old City, indicates Israel's current hesitation to provoke the Palestinians. This also presents a dilemma for the government as it does not want to appear to be actively caving to Hamas' demands.

3. **FORECAST:** Sporadic low-sophistication “lone-wolf” attacks are likely to occur in the coming weeks and months as radicalized individuals seek to play their part in the “protection of al-Quds” (Jerusalem). This is evidenced by the May 24 stabbing attack on Jerusalem’s Shlomo Zalman Street, which resulted in the wounding of one civilian and an IDF soldier. Hamas will also utilize the discourse over Jerusalem to inspire future incidents in Jerusalem and as justification for launching attacks against Israel. This is bolstered by the fact that senior Hamas leaders, including Hamas leader in Gaza, Yahya Sinwar, have reiterated that it reserves the right to respond to any perceived Israeli aggression in the city, particularly in relation to the al-Aqsa Mosque/Temple Mount Compound.

Long-term ceasefire between Israel, Hamas unlikely to materialize over near-term due to significant gaps in demands

1. Israel has informed Egypt that any long-term ceasefire negotiations with Hamas must include the subject of a prisoner exchange. However, the militant group is unlikely to agree to such terms given its strategy of using Israeli hostages as bargaining tools to secure the release of militants held in Israeli jails. For example, in October 2011, Hamas secured the release of 1,027 militants, including its current leader in Gaza, Yahya Sinwar, as part of a prisoner exchange deal involving a captive IDF soldier. Therefore, Hamas will be determined to not relinquish control over the four Israelis it holds without extracting significant concessions from Israel.
2. The militant group has consistently said it rejects linking the reconstruction of the enclave to the prisoner exchange deal. Another impediment to the negotiations is Hamas’ demand for the removal of the blockade on the Gaza Strip. Israel has maintained tight restrictions on the Gaza Strip since 2006, a blockade it says is necessary to prevent the flow of weapons from reaching the enclave’s militant factions. Israel is highly unlikely to yield to such a demand as doing so would enable the militant factions, including Hamas, to upgrade their weapons capabilities, thereby posing an increased risk to Israel’s security. Israel is also highly unlikely to adhere to Hamas’ demands on Jerusalem, such as operations at the al-Aqsa Mosque/Temple Mount Compound or regarding property disputes in East Jerusalem. **FORECAST:** Thus, a long-term ceasefire agreement is unlikely at present, given both sides’ desire to extract major concessions from the other. Moreover, the current underlying conditions and prevailing causes of friction, together with the parties’ long-term disagreement over core issues in the conflict, rendering it likely that another round of conflict between Israel and Gaza-based militants will be recorded in the medium to long term.

Recommendations

Recommendations following escalation:

1. Remain abreast of developments in Israel and the Palestinian Territories due to the ongoing volatile security situation.
2. Due to their sensitivity, it is advised to refrain from engaging in conversations regarding politics and the IDF’s recent operation in Gaza with unfamiliar individuals, particularly as tensions remain relatively high within both Israeli and Palestinian societies.
3. Maintain heightened vigilance in mixed Jewish-Arab locales, such as Lod, Acre, Haifa, Jaffa, and Ramla, due to the continued volatility in these areas and underlying risk of unrest.
4. It is advised to avoid nonessential unaccompanied travel to Jerusalem’s Old City and Arab-populated areas of East Jerusalem due to the ongoing risk of militancy and civil unrest. Consult with MAX to arrange secure transportation and on-ground support.
5. Avoid nonessential travel to Palestinian-controlled areas of the West Bank at this time given the current underlying threat of civil unrest as well as ongoing travel restrictions.
6. **In general, MAX Security has strong on-ground capabilities in Israel, including contingency consultation and planning. Contact us at operations@max-security.com or**

+44 20-3540-0434.

General Recommendations

1. Travel to Israel may continue at this time while adhering to security precautions regarding militant attacks and civil unrest.
2. In major Israeli cities, remain vigilant in crowded commercial areas or public transport hubs, as these locations have been targeted by militant groups in the past. Alert authorities to suspicious, unattended packages in these areas.
3. Avoid the immediate vicinity of the borders with Lebanon and Syria given the persistent risk of cross-border violence.
4. Avoid the immediate vicinity of the border with the Gaza Strip given the persistent risk of cross-border violence.