

Brief: Fighting Breaks Out in Israel and Palestinian Territories

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Background: Israel and the Palestinian territories engage in low-level skirmishes pretty regularly, but intifadas and outright kinetic war are comparatively rarer. There hasn't been a major event between the two since Israel and several Gulf Arab states took small steps toward reconciliation last year with the Abraham Accords. Until now.

What Happened: Fighting broke out on Monday between Israel and Hamas in Gaza. Hamas fired missiles into Israel, albeit imprecisely, and in response Israel conducted airstrikes in Gaza and moved armor to their shared border. The frequency of the volleys from Gaza has slowed in recent hours, but it's unclear if that's because the group is running low on munitions or if Israeli air defenses have finally been able to intercept them. Either way, casualties are relatively low thus far.

Bottom Line: Episodes like this are routine until they're not. So at this point we have more questions than answers. Can Hamas ever increase the accuracy of its missiles and thus impose more casualties? Can Israel intercept them? How did Israeli intelligence fail to anticipate the attack or locate the missiles before there was one? Were any of the missiles fired from Syria or Lebanon? Will the Arab members of the newly minted Abraham Accords care? Will Israel stop at the border? In other words, it's not just a matter of *if* things escalate, but *how* they escalate.

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