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[As Gaza truce talks falter, Israel closes border crossing](#)

Despite efforts to strike a long-term agreement to ensure calm along the Israel-Gaza border, violent protests erupt Friday, prompting Israel to close only land crossing for movement of Gazans into Israel, West Bank • Two Palestinians killed in border clash.

Israel Hayom Staff

A Palestinian demonstrator uses a sling to hurl rocks at Israeli troops at a protest near the Gaza border, Friday | Photo: Reuters

The Erez border crossing, the only land crossing for the movement of people between the Gaza Strip and Israel or the West Bank, will not be opened on Sunday, Israeli authorities announced amid stalled efforts to establish calm along the Israel-Gaza border.

The impetus for the decision, officials explained, was the violent Palestinian demonstration at the border on Friday, in which some 20,000 people hurled rocks and firebombs at Israeli troops under the cover of thick smoke from burning tires, witnesses said.

Video: Reuters

Israeli forces responded with tear gas and sporadic live fire. Medics said Israeli gunfire killed two men and wounded at least 270 other Palestinians.

The violence erupted Friday despite ongoing efforts by Egyptian mediators to clinch a truce deal that would calm the impoverished enclave.

Last week, after a more than four-month surge in violence along the Gaza Strip border, Israel eased its clampdown on the enclave's commercial traffic and fishing. The clashes included sporadic rocket and mortar fire into Israel, unrelenting arson attacks on Israeli communities and retaliatory air strikes on Hamas terror targets in the Strip.

Cairo said it was finalizing details of a long-term accommodation between Israel and the ruling Islamist group Hamas.

Following Friday's clashes, the IDF Spokesperson's Unit issued a statement asserting that "thousands of Palestinians and rioters gathered in the Gaza Strip, many of them deep within the territory. Several firebombs and homemade explosives were hurled across the border fence. No one was hurt and there was no damage. Several suspects were seen crossing the border into Israel and immediately turning back. IDF troops responded with riot dispersal measures and live fire in adherence with the rules of engagement."

Hamas military leader Yahya Sinwar attends a border protest in Gaza, Friday
 Hamas leaders Ismail Haniyeh and Yahya Sinwar attended a number of riot flashpoints along the border on Friday. Another top Hamas official, Khalil al-Hayya, said in an interview with Lebanon-based pan-Arab satellite media outlet Al Mayadeen that "We are in the final stretch of the efforts to achieve calm. The conversation is currently focused on the truce outlined at the end of the 2014 war. We strongly support a truce so that the people of Gaza can live in dignity and continue with the struggle."

However, another Hamas official involved in the Egyptian-mediated negotiations in Cairo noted that "we have completed a round of consultations with the various Palestinian factions regarding a truce and reconciliation. We insist that all the steps will be taken within a national capacity. We presented our position in regard to the truce and we listened to ideas and important comments from the faction heads. The efforts will resume after the [Eid al-Adha] holiday."

The Muslim Eid al-Adha holiday ends Saturday.

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| PA leader admits efforts to torpedo Israel-Hamas truce talks

"Either we take responsibility for the West Bank and Gaza under one state or Hamas will," Mahmoud Abbas states • If excluded from cease-fire negotiations, Ramallah will spare no effort to impede any deal reached between Hamas and Israel, he warns.

Lilach Shoval, Nikki Guttman, Yehuda Shlezinger, Erez Linn, News Agencies and Israel Hayom Staff

Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas | Photo: AFP

Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas warned Saturday that he will not allow for two separate entities to rule Palestinian lands, effectively admitting that Ramallah was actively trying to torpedo the Egyptian-brokered cease-fire talks between Israel and Hamas.

Over the past few weeks, Egypt has been heading the indirect negotiations between Israel and the terrorist group ruling the Gaza Strip, in an attempt to prevent recent flare-ups on the Gaza border from escalating into war.

Hamas ousted Abbas' Western-backed government from the Gaza Strip in a military coup in 2007. Since then, the various efforts to reconcile the rival Palestinian factions – the latest brokered by Egypt in late 2017 – have failed.

The Palestinian Authority will not abide by any deal inked between Israel and Hamas and Ramallah will actively try to torpedo it, Abbas exclaimed.

"Either we take responsibility for the West Bank and Gaza under one state, one regime, one law, and one weapon, or [Hamas] will take responsibility for it," he told the closing session of the Palestinian Central Council, the Palestine Liberation Organization's second-highest decision-making body.

But according to Abbas, "Reconciliation [with Hamas] does not mean a truce, cease-fire, or humanitarian assistance. Reconciliation means that unity should be reinstated. There is no state in Gaza and an autonomy in the West Bank, and we will not accept this. We will never accept the separation of Gaza [from the West Bank]."

He reiterated that any humanitarian aid or financial support for the coastal enclave must go through his own government, saying, "Who rehabilitated Gaza after [the Israeli military campaign in] 2014? The money was transferred to me and we rebuilt [Gaza]. We rebuilt some 90% of the houses – they [Hamas] did not rebuild even one house!"

Abbas further lambasted Israel for "violating all the agreements including Oslo, which I signed [in 1993]. We benefitted, but they started to destroy it. And they did destroy it. Therefore, Oslo will not remain if the situation remains as it is."

He reiterated that the Palestinian Authority would not maintain ties with the U.S. unless it rescinds its recognition of Jerusalem, announced in December 2017.

U.S. President Donald Trump's move and the subsequent relocation of the American Embassy in Israel from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem prompted Abbas to declare that Ramallah no longer sees the U.S. as a trustworthy partner in the Israeli-Palestinian peace process, given Washington's bias toward the Jewish state.

Palestinian Authority officials have not met with senior White House adviser Jared Kushner or U.S. Special Representative for International Negotiations Jason Greenblatt since January. Both Kushner and Greenblatt have said they would prefer to engage with Abbas on the long-awaited White House peace plan but stressed that if he persists with his rejectionism, the White House will work to implement the plan without him.

"Hope must remain with us that the state of Palestinian will inevitably come and that the Palestinian flag will be raised above Jerusalem," he said, Abbas said.

He also endorsed "popular resistance," saying that "we must not underestimate popular resistance and the land should remain aflame with popular resistance.

Abbas informed the Central Committee that his government plans to call on the U.N. General Assembly to condemn Israel's "racist and fascist" nation-state law when it reconvenes in September.

Responding to Abbas's threat, Israeli Ambassador to the U.N. Danny Danon said that "every year, ahead of the General Assembly, the Palestinians prepare some propagandist action. This is a ridiculous move."