

# Egypt, U.N. ask Israel to ease up on Hamas

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President of the Arab Republic of Egypt, Abdel Fattah El-Sisi arrives at the United Nations headquarters in New York, September 25, 2018. (photo credit: ANGELA WEISS/REUTERS)

Egypt and the United Nations have asked Israel to ease its blockade on the Gaza Strip in another effort to effort to restore calm and prevent a wide scale military confrontation, Defense Minister Avigdor Liberman told Army Radio on Thursday.

He spoke as Israel braced for another outbreak of Gaza border violence on Friday, and Egypt and the UN continued to work behind the scenes to restore the situation to what it was before March 30, when the weekly border riots began.

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An Egyptian delegation left Gaza on Wednesday and asked Israel to allow one more chance for calm to be restored to the situation, Liberman said.

UN Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process Nickolay Mladenov made the same request. The military establishment, including IDF Chief-of-Staff Gadi Eisenkot, also agreed.

“Prime Minister [Benjamin Netanyahu] is applying heavy pressure to ensure that the [diesel] fuel goes into Gaza,” Liberman said.

The Defense Minister had been very vocal about the need to set red lines, including the necessity of linking the normal workings of Gaza’s two border crossing with Israel, Erez and Kerem Shalom, with a cessation of violence.

Last week Liberman halted the transfer of fuel and gas into Gaza. After a rocket

destroyed a home in Beersheba on October 17 and another fell in the Mediterranean Sea near Bat Yam, he shut down the pedestrian crossing at Erez and the commercial crossing at Kerem Shalom.

But this week, although border violence continued and the Iron Dome system was activated after a Gaza rocket was launched at the Eshkol area, the borders were opened. As of Wednesday, fuel paid for by Qatar entered Gaza.

Liberman explained that he had held back from a military response, even though he believes that humanitarian gestures are futile.

"From my perspective, we have to overturn every stone before we resort to violence. I don't want anyone to say that Avigdor Liberman, because of his personal political agenda, has pushed Israel into a war with Hamas that could have been avoided," Liberman said.

"We can't prevent violence with Hamas," he added.

Liberman said he believes the Hamas statements that salaries and fuel will not calm down the situation. Hamas will not be satisfied until all the border restrictions have been lifted, including the military ones.

Hamas "wants the ability to bring in arms, ammunition, Iranians, Hezbollah members, and that is not possible," Liberman said.

He explained that when he spoke of military action, "I didn't say that there would be ground forces. I said we have to deliver the harshest blow possible."

With regard to the northern border with Syria, Liberman said that Israel maintains its ability to respond to any threats. "We won't accept any restrictions. Anything that needs to be done, we will do," he said.

Early Thursday morning an IDF air strike hit eight Hamas military targets in Gaza, in three separate compounds. The targets included a military compound in northern Gaza, and a training camp and a weapons production and storage site in southern Gaza, according to the IDF.

The attack was carried out in response to the rocket fired into Israeli territory overnight, which did not cause damage.

The IDF said “the Hamas terrorist organization is responsible for everything happening in and out of the Gaza Strip, and it will bear the consequences for the terrorist acts carried out against the citizens of Israel.

“The IDF is prepared for a variety of scenarios and is determined to continue its mission to protect the citizens of Israel.”

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Source: <https://www.jpost.com/Middle-East/Egypt-UN-asked-Israel-to-ease-up-on-Hamas-570360>

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