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13 Morsi's dilemma

Are deteriorating ties with Israel in Egypt's interest?

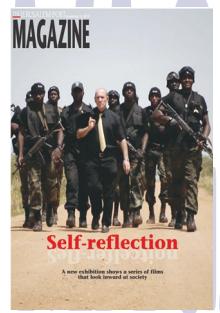
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Esther Pollard writes a letter to US President Barack Obama

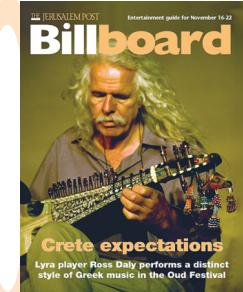
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Islamic Jihad targets Tel Aviv as IAF pounds Gaza

THIS 155 mm. mobile cannon was moved to just outside the northern Gaza Strip yesterday.
(Amir Cohen/Reuters)



Hamas trying to restore shattered morale, lost dignity

ANALYSIS

• By KHALED ABU TOAMEH
There were no signs whatsoever on Thursday that Hamas was interested in a cease-fire with Israel at this stage.

In past rounds of fighting, Hamas leaders used to appeal, both openly and discreetly, to the Egyptians to intervene in order to achieve another truce with

See HAMAS, Page 10

Has the bubble burst?

ANALYSIS

• By GIL HOFFMAN

During the last two wars, Tel Avivians were accused of acting like they were "in a bubble," far removed from the heightened state of alert a mere hour's drive away.

This time, they could not ignore the loud sirens that cautioned them to seek shelter.

Even though no rocket actually hit the city, there is no doubt that the siren and

See BUBBLE, Page 10

Grad kills three in Kiryat Malachi

- IAF hits 320 targets, destroys most long-range missiles
- 300 rockets fired at Israel since start of IDF operation

• BY YAAKOV LAPPIN

Air raid sirens rang out across greater Tel Aviv on Thursday for the first time since the 1991 Gulf War, after Islamic Jihad fired what it said were two long-range Fajr missiles at central Israel.

Soon afterward, the Israel Air Force replied by carrying out a massive wave of strikes in Gaza, targeting 70 underground medium-range rocket launchers.

The IDF shifted infantry brigades and tank columns to the Gaza border, and announced the call-up of 30,000 reservists, as it made preparations for a possible ground incursion into the Gaza Strip.

The developments came after a direct Grad rocket strike killed three people in Kiryat Malachi as they stood on a balcony of their apartment building. The deaths were the first Israeli fatalities from the wave of Palestinian rocket attacks.

Day two of Operation Pillar of Defense was marked by

30,000 reservists may be called up, Page 3

A war fought over Twitter, Page 5

Ratcheting up the pressure on Hamas, Page 10

nating long-range Fajr missiles hidden in underground sites and medium-range Grad rockets possessed by Hamas and Islamic Jihad.

"The aim of the attacks is to disrupt the ability of the terrorist organizations to fire rockets," the IDF said. "Terrorist cells involved in firing rockets have also been hit."

The targets were chosen after intelligence reports on their locations were gathered over recent months.

"The IDF is landing painful blows against Hamas and against terrorist infrastructure," Defense Minister Ehud Barak said. He said the rocket fire on greater Tel Aviv was "an escalation, and the other side will have to pay a price for this escalation."

"I said at the beginning of the operation that there would be difficult moments, and that this would not be an easy test. Today, we saw that price in Kiryat Malachi, and our hearts are with the families of the

See TEL AVIV, Page 10

Devastation and anger at site of fatal rocket attack

Pregnant wife of Chabad emissary to India among the dead

• By BEN HARTMAN

There were blood stains up and down the stairwell of the Kiryat Malachi building where a Gazan rocket killed three Israelis on Thursday morning.

In the apartments on the top two floors, the damage and the disarray made it look as if a tornado had crashed into the building and scattered everything asunder.

One of the two apartments on the top floor had a bedroom with three beds and a crib, and another room with a crib, all of them next to the southern window, facing Gaza. It was unclear why there weren't even more casualties in the attack that took the lives of Mirah Scharf, 25, Aharon Smadja, 49, and Itzik



A POLICE OFFICER walks across the wreckage of an apartment in Kiryat Malachi yesterday after a rocket ripped through the building, killing three people. (Marc Israel Sellem/The Jerusalem Post)

Amsalem, 27.

Scharf, whose husband, Shmuel, is an emissary to New Dehli, had been visiting Israel for the memorial service of

Gabi and Rivka Holtzberg, the Chabad emissaries who were killed in the terrorist massacre

See ANGER, Page 10



MIRAH SCHARF



AHARON SMADJA



ITZIK AMSALEM

Cairo to send high-level delegation to Gaza today

Move comes after Egyptian President Morsi slams strikes on Gaza as 'unacceptable' • Abbas cuts short European visit

• BY KHALED ABU TOAMEH, JOANNA PARASZCZUK

A high-level Egyptian delegation is expected to arrive in the Gaza Strip on Friday for talks with Hamas leaders on ways of ending the current round of fighting with Israel, a Hamas spokesman said on Thursday.

Egyptian Prime Minister Hesham Kandil will head the delegation, which will consist of a number of cabinet ministers, announced Taher a-Nunu, spokesman for the Hamas government.

This would be the first visit to the Gaza Strip by an Egyptian prime minister.

Nunu expressed appreciation for Cairo's decision to dispatch the delegation, saying that the planned visit "reflected Egypt's brave stance toward the conflict." Kandil's visit to Gaza is seen in the context of Egypt's efforts to achieve a cease-fire between Hamas and Israel.

The visit comes as some

Hamas officials in the Gaza Strip expressed disappointment over Egypt's "mild response to the Israeli aggression."

The officials said that they were expecting Egyptian President Mohamed Morsi to take a tougher stance toward the conflict.

"Recalling the ambassador is just a symbolic act," said

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Israel seeks backing for Pillar of Defense as Egypt, US work to end hostilities

Liberman: We won't settle for a two-week cease-fire

• By TOVAH LAZAROFF and HILARY LEILA KRIEGER in Washington

Israel rallied world leaders on Thursday to support more military strikes against Gaza, as Egypt, with US backing, continued to work toward a cease-fire.

US State Department spokesman Mark Toner said Washington had urged Cairo to take steps to calm the situation.

We ask Egypt to use its influence in the region to help de-escalate the situation," he said.

Both US President Barack Obama and Secretary of State Hillary Clinton spoke to their Egyptian counterparts by phone on Wednesday in an appeal for partnership in de-escalating the tension.

Obama told President Mohamed Morsi that Egypt had a "central role in preserving regional security."

Obama, according to a White House statement put out after the call, stressed to Morsi that Israel has the right to self-defense.

Prime Minister Netanyahu told the foreign press that "Israel will continue to take whatever action is necessary to defend our people."

Foreign Minister Avigdor Liberman said, "We are not going to settle for a cease-fire.

See HOSTILITIES, Page 10

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