

Mathurin Hybrid Initiative

**Global Advisory
Report**

**Hamas's "Operation
Al Aqsa Flood" 50
years after the Yom
Kippur War**

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Summary of events between 7th and 9th of October 2023:

On October 7, 2023, 50 years after the start of the Yom Kippur War. Hamas carried out Operation "Al Aqsa Flood" from the Gaza Strip into Israel. Within hours of the operation's start, Hamas had launched over 5,000 missiles into Israel, effectively paralysing the IDF's reaction to the surprise assault. Hamas captured many towns and villages surrounding the Gaza Strip and within Southern Israel during the initial assault. Prompting international responses of support for Israel and calls for de-escalation. According to Israeli media, around 250 people had been killed and Prime Minister Netanyahu declared war on Hamas. Further reporting stated IDF personnel, men, women and children had been kidnapped by Hamas. Furthermore, Israel has implemented a total blockade and cut off electricity, internet access and water in the Gaza Strip.

On the 8th of October 2023, the death toll from the war inside Israel has now risen to 700 with more than 2000 casualties with several hundred in critical condition. The Security Cabinet of Israel enacted Article 40A officially putting the country in a state of war. In addition, it has been reported that Hezbollah launched rocket and artillery strikes into Northern Israel with the IDF retaliating in return against Hezbollah. Generating more questions as to whether the conflict is expanding beyond the Gaza Strip. Also, Shayetet 13 Israeli Naval Special Forces units today captured the Hamas deputy commander of Naval Forces in the Gaza Strip.

Several countries particularly Germany and Turkey are currently seeking mediation talks in a bid to prevent the conflict from expanding into the wider region. Also, the United States has boosted military support to the State of Israel in their operations against Hamas and has placed a Carrier Task Group in the Eastern Mediterranean near Israel considering non-combatant evacuation operations for US citizens. The United States is transferring additional military aircraft to the Middle East region. They have confirmed that 4 American citizens were killed by Hamas during the conflict.

On the 9th of October 2023, the death toll inside Israel rose to 1000 with 2616 casualties and nearly 1300 targets being destroyed by the IDF. Reports of deaths from Gaza and the West Bank between the 7th and 9th of October are estimated to have more than 700 people killed and 3800 people sustaining casualties. Defence Minister Galant has ordered a total siege of Gaza to limit Hamas operations. IDF Home Command has told Israeli citizens to prepare to supply food and drinking water for the next 72 hours. Additionally, Hamas has also started to threaten the execution of hostages live on video in Southern Israel in an attempt to stop Israeli airstrikes in the Gaza Strip. President Herzog of Israel had addressed the nation calling for further support and condemnation of Hamas' operations and atrocities against civilians. Furthermore, the United States had also stated that they were months away from achieving the normalisation of relations between Israel and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Moreover, the European Union announced it has suspended aid payments to Palestine and conducted a review of EU funding of Palestinian Aid.

The new war between Hamas and Israel has yet to be decided militarily with operations still ongoing. The surprise operation by Hamas has been described as a major failure of the Israeli Intelligence Community, which will potentially send a political tsunami through the domestic Israeli political system and raise additional doubts about regional geopolitical trends. This report will focus on the potential domestic political fallout from the war coinciding with the judicial reform protests added further by the potential geopolitical ramifications of the new war.

Domestic Considerations:

The domestic considerations from the new war are yet to be revealed. However, the fallout from the war nonetheless would place heavy pressure on the Government to form an independent inquiry into the failures and paralysis of its strategic leadership from Hamas's "Operation Al Aqsa Flood". This cannot be understated as from the fallout of the 1973 Yom Kippur War, the Agranat Commission which examined the Military, Intelligence and Political leadership's decision-making skills in the lead-up to the war, found severe failings made by the strategic leadership which subsequently ended the careers of Prime Minister Golda Meir, Chief of the General Staff David Elazar and Chief of Military Intelligence Eliyahu Zeria.

It is very likely that when the war comes to an end, the political career of Netanyahu and the leadership of the Military and Intelligence community along with the coalition cabinet, will be placed under further scrutiny by the political opposition and broader society at large. This is the most likely outcome which would occur from the war when it ends. It can be expected that the political opposition after the end of the war will continue to mobilise and demonstrate against the coalition government over the Judicial Reforms being enacted. It could be likely that there will be reforms and more scrutiny placed on the Israeli intelligence community regarding the handling of information and intelligence on the intentions of Hamas in the Gaza Strip in the lead-up to the 7th of October 2023. However, the outcome of that independent inquiry over the handling of information, intelligence and decision-making in the lead-up to the new war inside military and intelligence communities would be a long-term investigation lasting for several years.

Another point in terms of short and long-term domestic political considerations is if and not when there would be another Palestinian group other than Hamas conducting military operations inside the Palestinian Territories on the West Bank. This short and long-term domestic consideration could potentially occur within the next few years given the initial success and paralysis it created on Israeli strategic leadership. However, the effectiveness of other Palestinian terrorist groups in potentially conducting the level and sophistication of the operations made by Hamas could be smaller in scale which poses a challenge in the longer term. This linking with the previous point would present a longer-term domestic political consideration. The military and intelligence community, their previous assessments on Hamas and the Gaza Strip had been effectively incorrect will lead to a possible change of approach in the longer term dealing with any potential Hamas-motivated style military operations from other Palestinian Groups in Gaza and the West Bank.

Geopolitical Considerations:

The geopolitical considerations in the short and long term after the war ends or when continuing will persist. Three potential short and long-term geopolitical considerations could arise from the war; firstly, the reemergence of Palestinian rights, aspirations and ambitions, secondly, the Iranian dilemma for regional and global powers thirdly, American priorities being shifted to the Middle East

The first geopolitical consideration in the short and long term would be the re-emergence of Palestinian rights and aspirations being presented in full force. The issue of Palestinian rights, ambitions and aspirations will persist as a long-term geopolitical consideration for regional powers such as the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Jordan. This is a consideration those countries have used when dealing with the State of Israel. Notably with the Israeli-Saudi normalisation talks under the United States-backed Abraham Accords, it is likely these talks would be stalled because of the ongoing war between Hamas and Israel. This being interpreted by Saudi Arabia's leadership would give them more leverage in ongoing or future normalisation talks in making any future Israeli Government give concessions over the rights, aspirations and ambitions of the Palestinians.

At the same time, this is an objectively difficult consideration for the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to potentially use as leverage against Israel because there is no single sole entity that can effectively represent the rights, ambitions, and aspirations of Palestinians due to the Palestinian Authority's fractured leadership and Hamas's political stronghold inside the Gaza Strip. This

fractured political authority of Palestine split between Hamas and the Palestinian Authority plays into Israel's favour with the normalisation talks potentially ongoing or in the future. This is based on the fractured political leadership and other groups in the West Bank and Gaza Strip attempting to take the mantle of seeking the aspirations, rights and ambitions of the Palestinian people. However, the fractured and competitive state of the Palestinian political framework could potentially play into Israel's advantage. Although, that point can be disproven since it would be extremely likely that Saudi Arabia's leadership would focus more on the aforementioned point regarding the Palestinian people and not the politically fractured system within Palestine itself.

The second geopolitical consideration is the Iranian dilemma for regional and global powers in the Middle East. This particular dilemma for regional and global powers in the Middle East with the new war and Hamas is an Iranian-supported organisation representing the struggle of the Palestinian people. It has placed regional states in the Middle East notably Egypt, Saudi Arabia and Turkey calling for de-escalation, meditation and peace talks. This is in contrast with Iran fervently supporting Hamas' military operations against Israel in boosting further its geopolitical objectives in boosting their position in supporting the Palestinian cause, undermining three geopolitical rivals and harming any attempts at normalisation talks between Arab states and Israel. Additionally, Hezbollah's recently conducted rocket and artillery strikes into Northern Israel have indicated that Iran has already made moves to bolster Hezbollah and Hamas placing further pressure on Israeli military logistics and decision-making. This increased pressure from Hezbollah on the Northern border with Israel would nonetheless in the eyes of regional powers not under Iranian influence tread carefully. This created another short-term geopolitical consideration where Hamas' surprise offensive on Israel added to Hezbollah's shelling of Northern Israel supported by Iran has stalled any further or potential progress on the Abraham Accords. This would potentially translate into the longer term placing more pressure on Israel to acknowledge Palestinian aspirations along with potentially ceasing the building of settlements in the West Bank or Gaza Strip.

The third geopolitical consideration is the United States' priorities shifting to the Middle East. This current shifting of priorities by the United States on the 8th of October with a Carrier Strike Group deployed in the Eastern Mediterranean, redeployment of military aircraft to the region and logistical support to Israel. The shifting of priorities back to the Middle East has made the United States change its short-term considerations into assisting Israel in its fight against Hamas. The quick changing focus made by the United States to the region has been pretty effective in providing a show of force and support in Israel's time of need.

However, the war between Hamas and the State of Israel rather leaves the United States in a bind. This bind as stated previously, the United States was months away from the normalisation of diplomatic relations between Saudi Arabia and Israel. The recent war and Saudi Arabia's statements on the war and reiteration of support for the Palestinian people presents a short and long-term challenge. This as a geopolitical consideration has already halted any progress of the Abraham Accords achieving further countries in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) participating in the Accords because it would be interpreted as undermining the cause of Palestine and the Palestinian people. This interpretation of trade-offs for any future regional participants joining the Accords presents a long-term issue for the United States when presenting the Abraham Accords to potential states in the MENA region. This nonetheless will remain persistent for any future US Presidential Administration after the 2024 elections.



