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Hamas Wants to Restore Cease-Fire Truce with Israel

Israel responded positively, although the situation remains tense

What came out as quite an extraordinary offer, given the entity that was forwarding it, Hamas stated on Thursday that it is willing to return to the 16-month cease-fire, after it had initially broken it off following an alleged air strike conducted by the Israeli military on a beach in Gaza on Friday that killed eight Palestinian civilians, an incident which Israel insisted it was not to blame although it had been conducting military operations nearby. Israeli officials welcomed the Thursday offer, which many view as a sign that both sides want to come to terms with their struggles against each other, which threatened to escalate to a greater conflict. According to an official from Hamas, the militant movement is trying to reach to all its fighters in Gaza in order to order them to halt all rocket barrages targeting Israel in retaliation. Hamas militants had initially teamed up with Islamic Jihad ones and others, and responded with many rockets sent towards Israel, most of them falling in the town of Sderot., near the Gaza border, injuring an Israeli resident. Hamas' government spokesman, Ghazi Hamad, stated: "This is very clear for us. We are interested to keep the situation and quiet, especially in the Gaza Strip. We have contacts with the Palestinian factions. We are ready to do it, but (only) if the Israeli side has a strong intention to respond positively to the call . . . to stop their aggression". In reply, Mark Regev, a spokesman for Israeli's Foreign Ministry, declared: "If it is quiet, we will answer that with quiet". In spite of the verbal official willingness to end the fighting, Islamic Jihad militants continued to fire at least five rockets against Israel on Thursday, which determined Israel representatives to think about Hamas offering the return to the truce, as a short-term strategic maneuver, although the militant movement seemed quite serious about it.