

# Palestinian resistance forces claim Israeli security wall around Gaza will not block them

Author:

Thu, 2021-12-09 23:24

GAZA CITY: Israel has announced the completion of an enhanced security barrier around the Gaza Strip designed to prevent militants from sneaking into the country.

However, Palestinian factions have rejected Israeli claims that the wall would stop them digging tunnels.

The 65-kilometer barrier includes radar systems, maritime sensors, and a network of underground sensors to detect militant tunnels. Existing fencing has been replaced with a 6-meter-high "smart fence" with detection devices and cameras.

Israel recently celebrated completion of the project, which it announced in 2016, to prevent a repetition of the 2014 war experience in which Palestinian factions used tunnels to carry out offensive operations and confront Israeli ground forces.

Israeli Defense Minister Benny Gantz, said: "The wall, an innovative and technologically advanced project, deprives Hamas of one of the capabilities it tried to develop."

Israel used 1,200 workers, 1.2 million cubic meters of concrete, and 140,000 tons of iron and steel to build the wall, at a cost of 3.5 billion shekels (\$1.13 billion).

The Israeli army said the amount of concrete used was sufficient to "build a road from Israel to Bulgaria, while the amount of iron and steel is equivalent to the length of a steel section from Israel to Australia."

In a report, Israeli newspaper Yedioth Ahronoth, said: "It is expected that the new wall will prevent incursions on the ground, and in fact imprison Palestinians who try to infiltrate into Israel within a 200- to 100-meter strip between the old and new fences until the army forces arrive and neutralize the threat."

It quoted a senior Israeli army official as saying that "the new wall cut the tunnels that were on their way to Israel, even during the years of work."

Israel has waged four wars on the Gaza Strip since Hamas took control of the small coastal enclave in mid-2007 and has made it clear that its goal is to stop the building of all tunnels.

However, Palestinian factions said the wall was doomed to failure similar to

other Israeli fortifications in the past.

Abu Musab, a field commander in Al-Qassam Brigades, the military wing of Hamas, said the group was constantly developing its capabilities, and drew inspiration from the experience of previous wars and clashes.

“The factions in Gaza, despite their simple capabilities compared to the Israeli arsenal, are able to surprise the enemy with qualitative operations and from where they are not calculated. This wall will not stand in the way of the resistance to respond to Israel’s aggressions and crimes.

“The Iron Dome (mobile all-weather air defense system) did not succeed in preventing the Palestinian rockets that reached the farthest range inside the occupying country. This wall will not prevent Hamas from repelling any aggression and defending its people,” he added.

And spokesman for the Popular Resistance Committees, Muhammad Al-Buraim, said: “Such walls will not affect the capabilities of the factions in Gaza, which are constantly working on developments in their capabilities, and will not fail to achieve their goals.

“This is not the first time that the occupation has tried to isolate Gaza with walls and many restrictions in an attempt to protect its soldiers and settlers, and the resistance each time had new tactics that surprised the occupation and achieved successes,” he added.

Retired Maj. Gen. Rafiq Abu Hani, a specialist in military affairs, described the Israeli wall as “highly fortified,” but expected that Palestinian factions would find ways to overcome it in any future confrontation.

He said: “The apartheid wall in the West Bank did not prevent Palestinian attacks, and the Iron Dome system did not prevent the launching of rockets from Gaza.”

He pointed out that the building of the wall showed that Israel recognized its inability to “militarily resolve its conflict with Gaza,” adding that it also suggested an Israeli ground invasion of Gaza now looked unlikely.



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## [Judge Bitar resumes Beirut blast probe; unwilling to budge](#)

Author:

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BEIRUT: The lawyers of the Beirut port explosion victims and the 17 arrested defendants fear the lawyers of the politicians accused of being involved in the crime would resort to the Court of Cassation after they exhausted their cases before the Court of Appeal.

Tarek Bitar, the judge leading the probe, had resumed his meetings on Wednesday in his office at the Justice Palace after the judiciary defied the

pressures to remove him from the case.

Every setback in the investigations delays the indictment and the trials even further.

The horrific blast occurred on Aug. 4, 2020, after 1,750 tons of ammonium nitrate stored at the Beirut port along with seized explosives exploded, killing 220 victims, injuring over 6,500 people, and destroying the Beirut waterfront and its back neighborhoods.

Bitar and his predecessor, Judge Fadi Sawan, accused former PM Hassan Diab and four former ministers, Ali Hassan Khalil, Ghazi Zeaiter, Nohad Machnouk and Youssef Finianos of being involved in the crime and charged them with “a felony of probable intent to murder and a misdemeanor of negligence because they were aware of the presence of the ammonium nitrate, and did not take measures to spare the country such a disaster.”

Director-General of State Security Maj. Gen. Tony Saliba, his counterpart at the General Security Maj. Gen. Abbas Ibrahim and several judges have also been accused of being involved.

Bitar has not yet received the results of the simulation he conducted of the explosion in August. A security source told Arab News that security experts are still reviewing the simulation before drawing up their report and presenting it to the judge.

Bitar is yet to receive the satellite images [from the day of the explosion] that the Russian administration handed over to the Lebanese Foreign Minister Abdallah Bou Habib over a week ago. “The satellite images have been given to experts from the security forces for reviewing,” the source noted.

He downplayed the possibility of these images revealing significant details. “These satellites are always rotating, so they might not have taken any images right before or during the explosion. If these satellites were above the Beirut port following the blast, then these images are worthless to the investigation because what matters is what led to the explosion.”

The security source noted that the Special Tribunal for Lebanon (STL) asked many countries for satellite images when it was investigating the assassination of former PM Rafik Hariri, but none of the satellites had taken images right before or during the crime.

On Thursday, former minister and lawyer Rachid Derbas, representing Diab, submitted formal pleas before Bitar, regarding the jurisdiction of the Judicial Council and the Supreme Council for the Trial of Presidents and Ministers.

A judicial source told Arab News that all the arrests and charges made by Bitar “were based on acts that led to the explosion, and anyone who says otherwise is lying. The investigation does not focus only on the explosion. It is rather manifold; how the ship loaded with ammonium nitrate arrived in Lebanon and all the events that led to the day of the explosion. This investigation is carried out by a single judge, while such crimes usually

have an integrated team to expedite things.”

He questioned why Hezbollah is suspicious of the investigation’s path and is accusing Bitar of politicizing the case.

The judicial source recalled a speech Hezbollah’s Secretary-General Hassan Nasrallah gave in the wake of the blast, in which he said he will not provide a cover for anyone involved, no matter their sect, especially if they were Shiites, then, later on, started accusing Bitar of politicizing the investigation and targeting specific sects. “Bitar’s investigation is still ongoing and he is summoning everyone he believes the facts point to as being involved. He still has a lot of suspects he needs to question.”

Whenever Bitar takes a step forward, he stumbles over new obstacles. The source wondered: “How come the STL’s verdict did not provoke any offensive stances such as the ones Bitar is facing today?”

The judicial source believed Bitar would not step down, “otherwise, he would be admitting to all the accusations made against him.

“Bitar’s conscience is clear and he is simply doing his duty,” he said, adding: “The judiciary has to shelter Bitar, just as the military court did and imprisoned the journalist who dared to utter offensive words against the military institution.”

The ruling class is trying to evade Bitar by insisting that politicians should be tried before the Supreme Council for the Trial of Presidents and Ministers.

Legal expert and former MP Salah Hanin had previously told Arab News: “The PM and ministers do not have immunity when they commit a criminal offense such as the port explosion crime. It subjects them to ordinary laws and to the same judiciary that exercises its authority over all citizens.”

Hanin cited Article 70 of the Constitution, which stipulates that the parliament has the right to impeach the PM and ministers for high treason or breach of their duties. “This article does not include criminal offenses; they thus must appear before the judiciary.”



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Beirut port blast victim dies after 14 months

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## [UN Security Council condemns deadly Daesh terror attacks in Iraq](#)

Author:

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The UN Security Council on Wednesday strongly condemned recent terrorist attacks in Iraq that killed or injured dozens of people. Daesh has claimed responsibility.

At least four people were killed and 20 injured in an explosion in Basra on Dec. 7, and at least 13 died in an attack in the north of the country on Dec. 3.

The members of the Security Council offered their condolences to the families

of the dead and wished the injured a speedy recovery. They also reiterated their support for the “independence, sovereignty, unity, territorial integrity, democratic process and prosperity of Iraq.” They urged all states to “actively” cooperate with Iraqi authorities to bring to justice the “perpetrators, organizers, financiers and sponsors of these reprehensible acts of terrorism.” Such cooperation, they stressed, is in line with obligations under international law and Security Council resolutions. Council members “reiterated that any acts of terrorism are criminal and unjustifiable, regardless of their motivation, wherever, whenever and by whomsoever committed.” Pledging its continued support to Iraq in its fight against terrorism, and particularly Daesh, the council “reaffirmed the need for all states to combat by all means – in accordance with the charter of the United Nations and other obligations under international law, including international human rights law, international refugee law and international humanitarian law – threats to international peace and security caused by terrorist acts.”



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[Half of Iran's civil jets grounded for](#)

# Lack of spare parts

Author:

Thu, 2021-12-09 00:44

TEHRAN: More than half of Iran's fleet of civilian aircraft is grounded due to a lack of spare parts, the deputy head of the country's airlines association has said.

"The number of inactive planes in Iran has risen to more than 170 ... as a result of missing spare parts, particularly motors," Alireza Barkhor said in an interview with state news agency IRNA.

The shortage represented more than half of the civilian aircraft in the sanctions-hit country, he said in an interview this week.

"If this trend continues, we will see even more planes grounded in the near future," Barkhor was quoted as saying.

"We hope that one of the priorities of the government will be helping to finance airlines so that they are able to provide the spare parts to refurbish the grounded planes," he added.

According to the Iranian economic daily Financial Tribune, national carrier IranAir currently operates a fleet of 39 planes, the majority of them Airbus jets.

Iran's economy has struggled under sanctions that were lifted after a landmark nuclear deal in 2015 but reimposed again after the US withdrew from the pact in 2018.

In 2016, following the lifting of sanctions, Iran concluded deals to purchase 100 Airbus jets, 80 Boeing planes and 40 ATR aircraft.

But the Islamic republic received only 11 planes as deliveries were interrupted following the reimposition of sanctions, according to the daily.

Meanwhile, Iran has voiced criticism over new US sanctions imposed on a dozen Iranian entities and officials accused of "serious" human rights abuses.

Washington announced the sanctions late on Tuesday, adding to already stringent measures against the Islamic republic.

They came just before talks on reviving a nuclear deal between Tehran and world powers are to resume on Thursday in Vienna, according to Iran's main negotiator.

"Even amid #ViennaTalks, US cannot stop imposing sanctions against Iran," Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Saeed Khatibzadeh tweeted.

"Washington fails to understand that 'maximum failure' and a diplomatic breakthrough are mutually exclusive," he added.



“Doubling down on sanctions won’t create leverage – and is anything but seriousness and goodwill.”

The new US measures target government officials and organizations involved in the repression of protesters and political activists, and prisons where activists have been held in brutal conditions.

After a pause of several months the nuclear talks resumed in Vienna last week but paused on Friday.



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US envoy to return to Vienna for Iran talks as UK warns it’s the ‘last chance’

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## [Music therapy helping lift spirits of war-weary Gazans](#)

Author:

Wed, 2021-12-08 23:45

GAZA CITY: Specialists in the besieged Gaza Strip are mixing psychiatry and

music in therapy sessions designed to improve positivity among the Palestinian enclave's war-weary population.

And 12-year-old Reem, whose family home was bombed in May during the latest clashes in the ongoing Israeli Palestinian conflict, has been one of those to benefit.

The youngster was left traumatized after an explosion at her house in Gaza's Tel Al-Hawa neighborhood, an experience that has since regularly reduced her to tears and caused her to feel isolated and depressed.

But after getting involved in a music therapy scheme run by the Sununu Association for Culture and Arts and funded by the German GIZ organization, her stresses and fears have been significantly eased.

Reem listens to music without words during her weekly psychological support sessions organized as part of the Enjoy Your Life with Music initiative.

Program coordinator, Rania Al-Shurihi, said Reem's mental health had improved dramatically as a result of her treatment, adding that the association also held group sessions for Gazans suffering from the psychological effects of years of war and economic hardship.

Music therapy gained official recognition after World War II in successfully dealing with the effects of post-traumatic stress disorder and it is now used to treat a range of conditions including chronic pain, anxiety, depression, heart irregularities, and blood pressure issues.

Al-Shurihi pointed out that sometimes exposing people to sad music helped them shed negative energy through crying but added that happy and relaxing music incorporating the sound of rain and waves could have similar positive outcomes.

She noted that psychological pressure often generated the need to listen to music or readings from the Holy Qur'an for relaxation.

Mental health specialists also use therapeutic methods such as writing, cooking, sailing, and breathing exercises to relieve tensions.

"Despite society's inherited and negative view of mental health center visitors, the success of the music therapy experience has greatly contributed to changing these concepts," Al-Shurihi said.

Experts believe that many children living in Gaza suffer from psychological damage related to the conflict including depression, anxiety, behavioral disorders, urinary incontinence, and nervous mood swings.

According to UNICEF figures, 1 million children live in Gaza which has witnessed four wars with Israel since 2008. The aid organization said the deadly conflict in May had a devastating impact on many youngsters after schools, health facilities, homes, and offices were damaged or flattened in missile attacks.

Al-Shurihi said it was important that music therapy continued to be offered in Gaza not just to tackle the effects of war but also the daily pressures of life faced by Palestinians.

“We all need psychological intervention to varying degrees. And through music, we seek to help the neediest people to overcome difficult circumstances and not drown in a sea of psychological crises,” she added.



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‘She screams when someone comes near’: Gaza children in trauma  
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