

Israeli-Hamas clash divides Palestinians

by UPI

JERUSALEM - The recent, stepped-up Hamas violence has divided the Palestinian community, and some say Israel's response strengthens Hamas because of civilian deaths. Israel conducted an incursion that killed 126 Palestinians and two Israeli soldiers. Israeli officials said the operation was to show Hamas what can happen if it continues to fire Qassam rockets at Israeli targets near the Gaza border. Officials said the operation also was to try to generate dissatisfaction with Hamas, which controls Gaza, The New York Times reported Thursday.

Palestinian officials said at least half the dead were civilians while Israel said civilians accounted for less than half those killed. "We all support resistance to the Israelis," said Hitam Abed Rabo, a Hamas supporter. "They talk about responding to rockets, but nothing justifies what the Israelis did here." Her cousin, Ayash Abed Rabo, counters, "These rockets are a joke. We want to live. We want peace. I don't want Israel here, and I don't want resistance." Nabil Katari, a local organizer for the Fatah youth, said Israel strengthened rival Hamas by aiming at civilians. "People always sympathize with the fighters and the victims. Israel is turning Hamas into a victim," he said.

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