



نقابة الصحفيين الفلسطينيين  
Palestinian Journalists' Syndicate



# Safety Advisory for journalists covering the war in Gaza

## Disclaimer

The advices given in this safety advisory are not an insurance against threats in the field. Rather it helps you to assess the situation and act accordingly depending on the circumstances. This advisory is in no case a substitute for local intelligence. The IFJ accepts no liability whatsoever arising from the use of this safety Advisory.

## Conflict Analysis

The main Dynamic of an invasion is a military offensive, usually in large numbers from land, air and/or sea. There are many different methods by which an invasion can take place, each method having arguments both in their favour and against depending on geographical location, weather conditions, and operational defensive tempo.

In previous invasions the assault method has generally been from land, using prolonged air and long-range artillery bombardment before ground troops deployed. This is a common tactic in any land invasion to destroy defences and morale of opposing troops.

An invasion overland is straightforward entry of armed forces into an area using border crossings. In a situation like Gaza, the movement will initially be slow and subject to disruption by asymmetric forces. An invasion by sea would be using landing craft or assault boats or even rigid inflatable boats usually subject to high casualty rates. There is also the potential for air invasion by using high altitude or static line parachuting and/or attack helicopters followed by air transportation helicopters to get troops quickly onto target areas.

The invasion forces may advance with a ground assault using a boxing or containment tactic. This may consist of splitting the territory up into sections or districts. Tactical movement will only progress, once a section has been cleared and secured. The forces will then move in a tactical formation to the next section of the territory not before securing a strategic defensive platform.

Another option is attacking from multiple locations along the surrounding border or by sea. As there has not been any ground troop incursions yet, it probably suggest significant planning has been made for flexibility and adaptability to attack multiple locations at consecutive times.

### **OBUA (OPERATIONS IN BUILT UP AREAS) OR FIBUA (FIGHTING IN BUILT UP AREAS)**

The IDF urban warfare "LASHAB" is usually associated with large scale utilization of heavy armoured personnel carriers, armoured bulldozers, drones for intelligence and close support infantry. In this area of operations, tall buildings, narrow alleys and roads, sewage tunnels and strategic tunnel locations will initially give defenders the upper hand using sniper tactics, ambushes by small groups of combatants. This will complicate invasion forces movement so there will be small scale engagements in many locations as well as large troop activity so no place will be safe for potential newsgatherings.

The probability is also that intelligence and reconnaissance will have a significant and pivotal role before any decision is made on the attack strategy. There are probably sleeper cells, operating now within the city. We must also hope that diplomacy and international intervention, may be able to, minimise the loss of innocent human life. What must also never be underestimated is the use of advanced military technology which in itself presents a challenge although when fighting in build-up areas highly populated and city locations, human skills will always be a dominating factor. Even after combat actions have seized, there will be many complexities, in post conflict stabilization, especially in the context of an asymmetric conflict. Combat actions on a smaller scale could last for months to years after an initial invasion.

Another Tactical approach which must be considered is long term siege of the city, by surrounding the city denying access in and out of food and supplies (including medical), causing starvation, then ongoing bombardment, causing death and casualties. This will cause disease and also antibiotic resistance infection in time. This tactic could be prolonged for weeks or even months before an invasion takes place, using the environment and conditions as a weapon itself, similar to, medieval castle sieges during the 12 centuries.

### **Signs of Potential ground invasion**

- An increase in air or artillery attacks at entry point to the Gaza strip be that by land, air or sea.
- Armoured vehicles forming in large numbers outside the territory perimeter.
- Movement of troops and strategic positioning.
- Loss of communication in Gaza - communication lines broken no mobile or radio signal
- Increase in Drone surveillance or any overhead air surveillance
- Bombardment from the sea from maritime vessels or long-range missile.
- Ordering local population to reallocate to a hibernation location.

## Points to consider when under attack from invasion

- Immediately move as far as you can from the main combat actions.
- Distancing from ballistic threat is always the best safety factor.
- Always identify escape routes if needed.
- Never move at night or during combat actions.
- If you are taking cover at home or in any building, look for a room or basement which may give you cover from airstrike, always select a room with strong internal structure like stair cases or corners of a room.
- Use a bed mattress to cover you during air or artillery bombardment.
- If you choose to use a basement or bunker, make sure it has the potential to escape in case of building collapse.
- Make sure you have supplies of water and nonperishable food (Canned food).
- Make sure you have digging tools with you as you might have to dig yourself out of a situation.
- Have a fire extinguisher at hand in case of fires.
- Always keep your medical equipment at hand
- Do not move from a good protective cover until you are sure a ballistic strike is over.

## Field newsgathering

- Always ensure you are prepared including analysis of the ongoing risks
- Plan extensively before any Newsgathering
- Never wear military clothing or safety equipment that could suggest you are a combatant
- Always wear clear press identification at all times.
- Personal protective equipment to be worn at all times.
- Do not risk exposing yourself for little or no editorial value
- No story or photograph is worth your life
- Do not expose yourself in large groups as you become a bigger target
- Newsgatherer in protective cover at all times
- Never elevate yourself or skyline yourself to observe combat actions
- Always have the ability to take cover or Ex fill out of a potential threat

## The (IA) Immediate action on a ballistic attack

### The 3 second rule: Small Arms Attack

- Drop to the ground
- Try to crawl into protective cover

### The 3 second rule: Grenade attack

- Drop to the ground
- Feet facing threat and legs closed
- Cover you head
- Keep elbows in to protect arm pits

- Open your mouth to absorb the over pressure
- Do not hold your breath

**The 3 second Rule** : Heavy weapons attack

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## Heavy Weapons

Mortars –Light, Medium & Heavy

A mortar is an indirect fire weapon, which can fire projectiles at short and long-range targets.

A mortar is relatively simple and easy to operate. A modern mortar consists of a tube into which an operator drops a shell into, which is usually referred to as a bomb or round. The tube is generally set at between 45 and 85 degrees angle to the ground, with the higher angle giving shorter firing distances.

The shell contains a quantity of propellant. When it reaches the base of the tube it hits a firing pin, which detonates the propellant and fires the shell. Some larger calibre mortars have a string-operated firing pin instead of a fixed one.

Types of Mortars

**Light mortars** move faster and are more responsive than medium or heavy mortars. Effective range **750 meters**.

**Medium and heavy mortars** ammunition is heavy, but they are more destructive. Effective range **5650 meters**

**Heavy mortars** usually need vehicles to move on the battlefield.

Effective range **6800 meters**.

## Artillery

**Types and Tactics**

An Artillery shell can be discharged from battle tanks and rocket launchers systems , or from smaller portable mortars or even battleship armaments . The most common mortars have a range of about 6km, whereas other types of artillery can have a range of up to 50 km. In terms of tactics basic distinctions can be made between ‘unpredicted or saturation fire’, ‘predicted fire’ and ‘forward observed controlled fire’.

**Unpredicted or salvo fire**

This is inaccurate fire and which ‘saturate’ an area with shells (or ‘cluster bombs’ which scatter hundreds of smaller ‘Or it can be the result of a deliberate tactic, such as an ‘artillery barrage’ or so-called ‘carpet bombing’.

### **Predicted' fire**

This means that the artillery crew is aiming on the basis of calculations from a map, with no capacity to adjust to a specific target.

### **'Observed' artillery fire/air attack**

'Observed' fire means that there are one or more observers who watch where shells/rockets/bombs land, and relay directions for more accurate targeting to the firing crew. There are two commonly used techniques to adjust artillery fire on to the target: 'walking towards you' and 'bracketing'.

In both cases the observer first directs the artillery crew to a 'firing line' – an imaginary line between the observer and the target – and then closes in on the target. In 'walking towards you' the shells get successively closer to the target. In 'bracketing', the shells are fired alternately before and beyond the target with the 'bracket' getting smaller and smaller.

If you are the target, or very close to it, and alert, you will realise it as the shells start coming closer to you. You may not be the target but in the firing line, in which case the shelling may shift its focus elsewhere. But while the crew is adjusting you may still be hit. With 'observed fire' there is a shorter or longer time interval in which you may be able to get yourself out of the firing line.

### **Risk Reduction**

- Do not to locate yourself near likely military targets such as, military barracks, fuel depots, official buildings, or strategic crossroads, , power stations, radio and TV buildings, etc.
- If you are in a sector of the city of strategic military value that is likely to come under fire move location.
- Do not locate yourself with opposition forces even if you think you have not been observed forward observers on the ground might have seen a began on the roof or detected the use of electronic equipment and the electric magnetic bloom coming from the building, from which they can triangulate your potion and fire munitions accurately onto your location.

### **Reaction to artillery and mortar fire**

- Take immediate cover: If in the open immediately drop to the ground and crawl into protective cover if in a building again drop the floor move away from windows and seek structural and good overhead protection in corners of a room or under staircases.
- Exposure to blast can damage your eardrums: remember to cover your ears with your hands and keep your mouth slightly open.
- Always wait until firing has stopped before moving out of protective cover.
- Always wear your protective gear it will possibly save your life!
- While driving: Either try accelerate and try to get out of the kill zone although this is a risky tactic as artillery and mortar rounds can cover wide areas. It is better to immediately abandon your vehicle and run or crawl into protective cover.
- Again make sure the attack is over until getting back into your vehicle, remember a forward observer might be watching your vehicle.

### **Sniper Countermeasures:**

- Alert yourself to the presence of snipers like hearing single shot engagements from over 300 meters

- Make sure where there is risk of snipers you always wear your protective equipment it can save your life snipers favoured tactic is to aim a central body mass which your body armour protects
- When moving in open ground keep moving
- Keep exposure down to a minimum
- Do not skyline yourself
- Always be looking for protective cover when moving
- Do not silhouette yourself on high ground
- Long range shooting requires the shooter to be able to judge the wind. Avoid areas with flags, ribbons or even plastic bags tied on trees or fences, which could aid a shooter to judge wind
- When moving in urban environments avoid possible kill zones long clear view unobstructed streets where snipers can easily static or moving targets, identify where snipers have already carried out distance measurements like isolated vehicles and prominent buildings which they use as aiming points where they have already recorded distance to get accurate shots on target

#### Reaction to effective sniper fire:

- React immediately to incoming fire get down and crawl into protective cover.
- If you are moving on foot move in short bursts in a zig zag movement especially over long distances or open ground and keep your spacing do not bunch together
- Never take or break cover as a group you present yourself as a bigger target
- Avoid taking cover where there has been a firer or a person is firing
- Never film directly behind a firer always in cover at an angle
- Remember Outgoing fire attracts incoming fire
- Never look over the top of cover to observe get low and look around cover.
- If taking cover never get up from the same position you went down crawl back then get up at a different angle a firer may be watching you position.
- Avoid crossing large gaps in urban and rural environments

#### Small arms and heavy weapons safety distances

Weapon	Effective Range	Min Safety Distance	Remarks
Pistol	100 meters	50 meters although an inexperienced firer will have trouble hitting a target at 20 m	Some handguns are more, high powered and have longer barrels <b>3 Second Rule!</b>
Assault Rifle	300 -600 meters	300 if a lone firer is targeting you or 600 if there are a group of fires the reason you double the range is there are more bullets going into the same direction	Modern assault riffles now have sight mounted assistance so can effectively hit targets at longer ranges <b>3 Second Rule!</b>
Sniper Rifle		The sniper may have sophisticated sighting systems for min 800-2000 m	Modern sniper rifle can effectively hit targets up to 2km <b>3 Second Rule!</b>

Light Machine gun	800- 1000 meters	800 Meters	Light machine gun are a area weapon so rounds can discriminate go everywhere <b>3 Second Rule!</b>
Heavy Machine gun	2000 meters		50 caliber and 12.7 rounds will penetrate amour make sure you take protective cover with depth. <b>3 Second Rule!</b>
Rocket propelled grenade (RPG)	300 – 1000 meters	300 Meters 360% OF THE WEAPON	An RPG is shoulder mounted so the firer can move and aim the weapon 360% <b>3 Second Rule!</b>
Mortar	Light Mortar – 2km Medium mortar -4km Heavy Mortar – 14km	Locate yourself as far as you can from mortars min 800 m	Be aware there might be multiple mortar firing on to one location  <b>3 Second Rule!</b>
Artillery	16km	Locate yourself away from potential targets and maximum distance is best	<b>Modern Artillery has very sophisticated long-range target acquisition so be aware you may not see them but they can see you</b> <b>3 Second Rule!</b>

## Aircraft and drone awareness

### Plane/Helicopter/Drone.

An air strike is an attack on a specific objective by military aircraft during an offensive mission. Air strikes are commonly delivered from aircraft such as fighters, bombers, ground attack aircraft, attack helicopters, and drones.

Weapons used in an airstrike can range from machine gun bullets, missiles, to various types of bombs. In close air support, trained observers for coordination usually control air strikes with friendly ground troops in a manner derived from artillery tactics. One of the methods used in airstrikes is the strategic bombing.

Strategic bombing is a military strategy used in a total war with the goal of defeating an enemy nation-state by destroying its economic ability and public will to wage war rather than destroying its land or naval forces. It is a systematically organized and executed attack from the air which can utilize strategic bombers, long- or medium-range missiles, or nuclear-armed fighter-bomber aircraft to attack targets deemed vital to an enemy's war-making capacity.

What are the indicators of possibility of an air attack?

- Look for strategic targets, located near your location (Military bases, socioeconomic targets)
- Military offensives or offensives against opposition forces.

### **What are the indicators of possibility of an air attack?**

- What are the possible targets of the air attack, look for strategic targets, located near your location (Military bases, opposition forces locations, socioeconomic targets)
- Military offensives or offensives against opposition forces.
- Clearing the way for troop movement.
- Movement of opposition forces (Foot and Vehicle)
- Observe and hear what is happening look for jet engine smoke it may mean the aircraft is entering into an attack
- Hearing anti-aircraft weaponry firing or anti-aircraft alarms.

### **Proactive countermeasures:**

- Where there is risk from air attack do not report in large open spaces where you can easily be detected by aircraft, only news gather in areas where you have cover from view from the air.
- Check weather reports for low cloud and bad weather as aircraft will not fly or may not detect you in inclement weather conditions.
- Always wear body armour and helmet in high-risk area even when in vehicles.
- Do not use satellite equipment or spend long periods of time on the phone as you can get triangulated and detected by military electronic systems, if triangulated you might receive imminent aircraft or drone fire.
- Do not travel in vehicle convoy for long periods of time with military or opposition forces this is definitively a potential target.
- If you are newsgathering in a town of strategic military value that is likely to come under attack, get in and out as fast as you can avoid main supply routes.
- Do not highlight or expose yourself in elevated positions like on top of buildings or balconies of buildings.
- Avoid using lighting for live transmission at nighttime it will draw attention to you for target acquisition
- Never locate yourself in large media buildings or makeshift media centres, as these locations may become targets for air attack.
- Try not to locate yourself buildings that are occupied by opposition forces.
- Never locate close to obvious or likely military targets, such as, barracks, fuel depots, official buildings or strategic points such as crossroads,, power stations and official radio and TV buildings.
- At your location gaffer tape all windows and use heavy curtains to help deflect broken glass.
- Always keep observing for potential air attack!

### **In the event of an air attack**

The correct action taken will depend on the type of attack and your location. The following procedures may be appropriate, depending on the circumstances:

#### **In the open:**

- Never run about in the open you will be subject to more risk.
- If you cannot reach a bomb shelter or protective cover, drop to the ground and crawl into immediate hard cover.

- Exposure to blast can damage eardrums: remember to cover your ears with your hands and keep your mouth slightly open.
- If it is possible to roll or crawl into a ditch, into a building or behind a wall without raising your profile, do so. This may give you some protection. Otherwise, remain still. Most blast and shrapnel fly upwards from the site of the explosion in a cone shape, so your best defence is to stay as low as possible..
- Do not move until you are confident that the attack has finished. Beware: Other attack waves might happen it is quite common for an aircraft to do a second sortie.

### **In a building**

- If you are in a building, drop to the ground and move away from windows immediately.
- Seek immediate cover under a staircase or supportive corners of room.
- Be aware of falling structures and roofs.

### **Driving**

- If driving, decide whether to accelerate out of the bombing zone, or abandon the vehicle and seek immediate cover.
- Keep observing the skies when driving for signs of aircraft.
- Do not travel in convoy in high-risk areas & always assume that your vehicle will be targeted.

