

Israel deploys snipers, tanks, missiles to counter Gaza protests



Tel Aviv, October 8 (RHC)-- The Israeli military says it is reinforcing forces around the Gaza Strip in order to quell weekly protests along a fence separating occupied territories from the besieged Palestinian enclave.

A military statement said that "wide-scale" reinforcements in the southern command had started in order to "prevent infiltration into Israel from the Gaza Strip." Under the plan, more snipers, infantry and armored forces are being deployed along the Gaza fence in anticipation of new demonstrations and Israeli concerns over their escalation. Additional "Iron Dome" missile batteries were being sent to the south in preparation for possible rocket and mortar fire from Gaza, the military said.

The decision was taken following a situation assessment by senior Israeli military officials. The statement said the new deployment will span over the next few days. An Israeli army spokesperson said the military is "prepared for a wide range of scenarios."

In August, Israel tightened its years-long siege of the coastal strip by closing a pedestrian crossing into the Palestinian territory. Tel Aviv said then it had taken the measure at the Erez crossing, the only Israeli pedestrian crossing into the Gaza Strip, in response to weekly Palestinian protests.

The crossing, situated along the northern part of the besieged Gaza Strip, is used for the movement of

humanitarian aid into the territory.

The Gaza Strip has been under an inhumane Israeli siege since 2007 and witnessed three wars since 2008. Israel carries out regular attacks on Palestinians in Gaza under the pretext of hitting Hamas targets.

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