

Israel, Hamas agree to restore calm in Gaza Strip: Hamas

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An explosion is seen following an Israeli air strike in the southern Gaza Strip Friday. (reuters photo)

Gaza: Israel and Hamas have agreed to restore calm in the Gaza Strip, a spokesman for Hamas, the Islamist group that controls the Gaza Strip, said on Saturday.

“With Egyptian and United Nations efforts it has been agreed to return to the era of calm between (Israel) and Palestinian factions,” Hamas spokesman Fawzi Barhoum told Reuters.

Israeli officials did not immediately comment on the announcement but an army spokeswoman said that in the early hours of Saturday, there was no known military activity in the Gaza Strip. Palestinian residents said the area was calm.

On Friday, Palestinian gunmen killed an Israeli soldier along the Gaza border and the Israeli military launched dozens of strikes into the Strip that killed four Palestinians, including three Hamas fighters. At least 120 Gazans were wounded.

The soldier was the first to be killed on the Gaza front in active duty since a 2014 war between Israel and Hamas, an Israeli army spokesman said.

During the flare-up which lasted several hours, the Israeli military said its tanks had hit 68 Hamas targets and had “eliminated about 60 buildings and infrastructures and revoked significant military and command and control capabilities.”

Egyptian security officials and a diplomat from another unnamed state held contacts with Hamas and Israel in an effort to restore calm and prevent further deterioration, a Palestinian official told Reuters.

- Reuters