

## Israel Avoiding Scenario of 'War with Syria,' Limiting it to Hizbullah, Hamas

Contributed by Naharnet  
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Israel has taken steps in recent weeks to lower tensions with Syria and prevent a misunderstanding that could spark an escalation along the northern border, Haaretz reported.

It said a General Staff exercise code-named Firestones-12 last week did not include the scenario of a war with Syria -- only a clash with Hizbullah in Lebanon and Hamas in the Gaza Strip.

Although originally considered, the report said, the Israeli army opted not to include an element in the exercise that required the rushing of large numbers of conscript soldiers to the north, so that the Syrians would not mistake this as an offensive.

Haaretz said Israel also relayed messages to Syria, assuring them that no nasty action was being considered.

It quoted military sources as saying that the desire to avoid escalating tensions was one of the considerations that led to the cancelation of part of the exercise.

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<http://www.naharnet.com/domino/tn/NewsDesk.nsf/Lebanon/B6F4A718E8171C73C22576DD0028561B?OpenDocument>