

After Gaza Factions Declare Round of Hostilities Over, Rocket Fired at Southern Israeli City

Israel hits 150 Gaza targets ■ Three Gazans said killed, including pregnant woman and child ■ Woman severely wounded in Israel ■ Israeli official: Hamas was dealt a serious blow, IDF instructed to prepare for any scenario.



Site where rocket fired from Gaza hit southern Israeli town, Thursday morning, Aug. 9, 2018. Courtesy Eshkol security

- Israel may evacuate border towns as Gaza conflict escalates, senior officer says
- Foreign worker severely wounded in Israel by Gaza rocket
- Pregnant woman, toddler in Gaza reportedly killed in Israeli strikes

The Israeli military said Thursday that it struck 150 targets in Gaza in retaliation to a massive barrage of rockets that was fired at Israel since Wednesday evening. Some 180 rockets were fired at Israel, the military said, with over 30 rockets intercepted by the Iron Dome missile defense system. Most of the rockets exploded in open areas.

Palestinian factions in Gaza declared Thursday that they consider the latest round of violence between Israel and Gaza over, saying that maintaining the peace now depends on Israel. After the statement was released, however, a rocket was fired at the city of Be'er Sheva, located some 40 kilometers from the Strip. This was the first time rockets were fired at the city since the 2014 Gaza war.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu held a security meeting with Defense Minister Avigdor Lieberman and IDF Chief of Staff Lt. Gen. Gadi Eisenkot in Tel Aviv Thursday ahead of the security cabinet meeting on Gaza.

“Hamas was dealt a serious blow, Israel will keep acting will full force,” a source

said after the meeting. Netanyahu and Lieberman instructed the IDF to prepare for every possible scenario.

The military started striking in the Strip overnight Wednesday after six rockets were fired from Gaza, landing in the southern Israeli town of Sderot and wounding 11 people. Nine Sderot residents were evacuated to a hospital; a woman was in serious condition, and 13 others were treated for shock trauma.

Gaza's Health Ministry reported Thursday that three Palestinians were killed by the Israeli attacks, including a pregnant woman, 23, her 18-month-old toddler and a man, who was identified as 30-year-old Ali Alrandur. Alrandur was said to be in moderate to serious condition. He is the son of one of the commanders of Hamas' armed wing, Iz al-Din al-Qassam. Six other people were wounded by the strikes.

"We don't see the end of the escalation. We are nearing an operation in Gaza," a senior IDF official said Thursday, not ruling out the evacuation of Israeli civilians if the conflict continues.



A picture taken on August 8, 2018 shows a fireball exploding during Israeli air strikes in Gaza City. Credit: AFP

"The way things continue to play out is significant. Hamas will understand in the coming hours, as in the past months, that this is not the direction it wants to choose," the military said in a tweet.

The sites in Gaza targeted by the Israeli military included a military compound east of Rafah and attack tunnels belonging to Hamas, the army said.

Hamas spokesman Abed Lateef Kano warned Thursday morning that Israel's attacks will not be tolerated: "The resistance forces are doing what they have to do as part of protecting the Palestinian people from Israeli aggression," he said. "The brutal Israeli attack and the targeting of civilians will not be tolerated quietly, and the occupation will pay the price and will not be successful in dictating a new equation," he added.

The army said Thursday it struck a terrorist group that launched rockets from the southern part of the Strip. The Israeli army started backing up its aerial defense units, and began deploying more Iron Dome missile defense batteries in the south

to prepare for a scenario in which Gaza rockets could reach deeper into Israeli territory.

> Israel, Hamas to agree on cease-fire by end of August, report says | Hamas claims deadly border exchange with Israel was misunderstanding



A fireball exploding during Israeli air strikes in Gaza City, August 8, 2018
Credit: AFP

Defense Minister Avigdor Lieberman met with senior military and defense officials at the army's headquarters in Tel Aviv on Wednesday to discuss the escalation on the southern border Wednesday night.

U.S. special envoy to the Middle East Jason Greenblatt criticized Hamas actions overnight. Greenblatt tweeted: "Hamas regime again is launching rockets at Israeli communities. Another night of terror and families huddling in fear as Israel defends itself."



Aftermath of a rocket attack from Gaza, Sderot, August 8, 2018 Credit: Eliyahu Hershkovitz

Jason D. Greenblatt [@jdgreenblatt45](#)

Hamas regime again is launching rockets at Israeli communities. Another night of terror & families huddling in fear as Israel defends itself. This is the Hamas regime's choice. Hamas is subjecting people to the terrifying conditions of war again.

"This is the Hamas regime's choice. Hamas is subjecting people to the terrifying conditions of war again," he added.

The United Nations' Middle East envoy, Nikolay Mladenov, released a statement late Wednesday night concerning the escalation between Israel and Gaza. "I am deeply alarmed by the recent escalation, particularly by today's multiple rockets fired towards communities in southern Israel," he wrote.

"For months I have been warning that the humanitarian, security and political crisis in Gaza risks a devastating conflict that nobody wants. The UN has engaged

with Egypt and all concerned parties in an unprecedented effort to avoid such a development," Mladenov continued.

"Our collective efforts have prevented the situation from exploding until now. If the current escalation, however, is not contained immediately, the situation can rapidly deteriorate with devastating consequences for all people," he warned.

Sderot Mayor Alon Davidi said that rescue services had been sent to homes "to check whether there are more shock victims" as a result of the rocket fire. "I recommend that everyone remain near protected spaces," Davidi said. "We are in constant contact with the army and security forces."

Opposition blasts Netanyahu government



A fire started in the Eshkol Regional Council after a rocket fell there on August 9, 2018. Credit: Eshkol Regional Council Security

Opposition lawmakers blasted Netanyahu's government for failing to achieve a lasting truce in Egyptian-mediated ceasefire talks with Hamas.

"Netanyahu and Lieberman! You have failed!" Labor Party leader Avi Gabbay tweeted. "Is this the way to hold a negotiation? Our hearts are with the residents of the Gaza border region and we support the IDF in its mission of restoring security to residents of the area."

Opposition leader MK Tzipi Livni said that "this government has weakened the moderates and strengthened the radicals, four years of wasting time." She continued, saying: "This government prefers a Hamastan near the residents of the south. The 'let the IDF win' motto clearly doesn't work without complementary policy."

The developments came a day after the Israeli military fired at a Hamas facility in northern Gaza in response to fire from the Strip aimed at Israeli security forces. The tank fire killed two members of the Izzedine al-Qassam Brigades' al-Nukhba elite unit and wounded six others, reports in Gaza said. The al-Qassam Brigades is the military wing of Hamas.

According to the IDF, the incident occurred due to a misunderstanding: The military believes that the shots that prompted an Israeli response were not

deliberately aimed at IDF soldiers, but were part of a ceremony of the al-Qassam Brigades.



Israelis in Sderot after the rocket attack from Gaza, August 8, 2018
Credit: Eliyahu Hershkovitz

An IDF engineering corps force was operating in the area when the shots fired from Gaza were heard. The IDF thought it was an attempted sniper attack, and it was decided to fire a tank shell at the position in response.

An initial investigation has found, however, that the shooting took place two kilometers away from where the soldiers were operating. At this stage, it remains unclear whether the IDF knew of the ceremony, during which weapons were being fired. The assessment is that if any information had been received earlier about the event, senior IDF officers would not have approved the tank fire.

Nevertheless, the security establishment assesses that Hamas is still interested in reaching a cease-fire agreement with Israel, but that the organization faces a dilemma. While Hamas works toward signing a deal, the organization must keep responding to incidents in such a way as to show it has not shifted its policy toward Israel. At the same time, Hamas is trying to strengthen its links with other groups in Gaza - such as Islamic Jihad - to restore control and muster support behind any deal that may be reached.

A Hamas official told the Turkish state news agency Anadolu on Wednesday that the two parties are expected to sign an agreement by the end of August. The source, who spoke on the condition of anonymity, said the first stage of the deal would include a two-week trial. The deal would lift restrictions on the entry of goods into the Gaza Strip and at the Rafah border crossing between Egypt and the coastal enclave.



A firefighter examines a building hit by sharpnel after a rocket attack from Gaza, Sderot, August 8, 2018 Credit: Eliyahu Hershkovitz



Aftermath of a rocket attack from Gaza, Sderot, August 8, 2018 Credit: Eliyahu

Hershkovitz



Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, IDF Chief of Staff Gadi Eisenkot and Defense Minister Avigdor Lieberman at an emergency discussion on the Gaza-border escalation. Credit: Defense Ministry Spokesperson



Yaniv Kubovi

Source: <https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/gaza-escalation-11-israelis-wounded-3-palestinians-killed-as-over-150-gaza-rockets-launched-at-israel-1.6361801>

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