

Violence Continues in Israel

May 13, 2021

The onslaught of rockets from Gaza continued overnight, targeting cities throughout Israel. Seven Israelis have been killed, including a five-year old boy. In response, the IDF has stepped up its counter-strikes on terror targets in the Gaza Strip, and is now openly discussing the possibility of a ground offensive.

See [here](#) for a special update from Jewish Agency Director General, Amira Aharonovich, reporting on rocket damage to an Absorption Center in Ashkelon.

Join an exclusive briefing with the Executive Director of JDC Israel, Dr. Sigal Shelach, on JDC's crisis response today, Thursday, May 13th at 1:00pm ET. Click [here](#) to register.

Rocket Attacks

- More than 1,200 rockets have been fired into Israel from Gaza since attacks by Hamas and other terrorist groups began at 6:00pm on Monday night. See footage of the rockets [here](#). A further 250 rockets fired from Gaza fell short, landing in the Hamas-controlled enclave.
- In addition to massive rocket barrages on the country's south, rockets were once again launched at Tel Aviv, Modi'in and other cities in the country's center overnight.
- Seven Israelis have been killed by terror strikes since the current fighting began.
 - Yesterday afternoon a five-year-old boy was killed, and seven others injured when a rocket scored a direct hit on his family's apartment building in Sderot. This was the first time that a rocket succeeded in breaching the security of a designated safe room since building codes required their construction in the early 1990s. See a [photo](#) here and footage [here](#).
 - Earlier in the day, an IDF soldier, 21 year-old [St-Sgt Omer Tabib](#), was killed by an anti-tank missile fired at his jeep along the Gaza border. Three other soldiers were injured in the attack. See [here](#) for footage of the attack, filmed by the terror squad.
- Overnight several rockets made direct hits, including in Petah Tikva (see [here](#) for footage) and Rishon Lezion where a part of a rocket landed inside a home, but no one was injured.
- In Ashkelon, a rocket scored a direct hit on a home (see footage [here](#)), causing extensive damage to one of the bedrooms. A child had been sleeping in the room moments earlier and had been taken to safety when the sirens sounded, with just seconds to spare.

Israeli Response

- In response to the rocket fire, the Israeli military continued to strike in Gaza. Over 650 terror targets have been hit since Monday night. Palestinian media reports that at least 69 people have been killed in the IDF strikes, including 17 children, with more than 388 wounded.
- Significantly, the IDF announced that is finalizing a plan for a ground offensive that will be

presented to the country's political leadership as an option to consider. The plan is being prepared by the Gaza Division and the IDF Southern Command and will first be presented to the IDF General Staff later today. Meanwhile additional ground troops have already been redeployed to the Gaza area, including from the Paratroopers Brigade, Golani Infantry Brigade and the 7th Armored Brigade.

- Among the targets hit last night, a terror tunnel underneath a school and in close proximity to other civilian buildings, was destroyed. See [here](#) for a photo of the tunnel, and [here](#) for footage of the attack.
- In addition, a number of other strategic targets were struck, including several Hamas internal security buildings used for counterintelligence, (one of which housed the office of the Head of Hamas' internal security, see [here](#) for footage), as well as numerous branches of the Hamas central bank (see [here](#) for photos of the Hamas bank attack).
- The IDF also said that it successfully eliminated a number of terrorists belong to the Hamas naval forces, as well as two rocket launch sites (see [here](#) for video of IDF fighter jets and aircraft striking a rocket launch site). In total, 60 Hamas operatives have been killed in IDF attacks in recent days, including 10 senior commanders. (See graphic [here](#)).
- In [this](#) graphic, the IDF explains why it will strike high-rise buildings.
- The IDF continues its policy of warning civilians to leave an area before an air strike on terrorist infrastructure, including by calling all cell phones in the area. See video [here](#) of a local Gaza resident receiving a call from an Arabic-speaking IDF representative.
- IDF Spokesperson Brig.-Gen. Hidai Zilberman said, "(Hamas) is losing everything... Tonight we started destroying government targets in the Gaza Strip, such as central banks and internal security buildings. Hamas is beginning to discover cracks and there is pressure in the organization, even among the Gaza public who is losing its patience and sees these ruins on the eve of the holiday (of Eid al-Fitr)."
- Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said that Israel would continue to take action to strike at the military capabilities of Hamas and the other terrorist organizations operating in the Gaza Strip.

Defensive Precautions

- Rockets were fired in the area near Ben Gurion Airport overnight, causing inbound flights to be redirected to Ramon Airport in Eilat. In an attempt to widen the air corridor for flights, until further notice, arrivals will only land in Eilat, while departures continue from Ben Gurion.
- Strict measures have been enacted for those living south of Netanya and west of Modi'in (an area that covers many major cities, including Tel Aviv, and includes a large percentage of the Israeli population). In this area, schools are shut and only up to ten people are allowed to gather in open areas, and up to 100 indoors. Places of work are allowed to operate only at locations where there is an accessible rocket shelter.

Rioting in Israel

- Unprecedented disorder continues on the Arab-Israeli street, with large scale violence in many mixed Arab-Jewish towns. Some 375 people were arrested for rioting yesterday.
- Citizens across the country were shocked last night to learn that a Jewish mob had beaten a 33-year-old Arab man in Bat Yam. Politicians from across the political spectrum strongly condemned the attack. The condition of the hospitalized victim has since improved, and four of the attackers have been arrested.

- Sephardi Chief Rabbi Yitzhak Yosef also condemned the attackers saying "We must not be dragged into provocations and inflicting harm on people or property. The Torah of Israel grants no license for taking the law into one's hands and acting violently."
- Also last night, a Jewish man was in critical condition after having been beaten by Arab rioters in the city of Akko; and in Lod, an Arab man stabbed a Jewish passer-by.
- Last night, in a highly unusual move, a curfew was imposed from 8:00 pm in the mixed city of Lod which has seen some of the worst violence. Before the curfew began, clashes were reported between Jewish and Arab residents of the city, including Arab rioters throwing petrol bombs and stones at police and setting fire to dozens of cars. In addition, shop windows were smashed and trees uprooted. A security task force has been set up in the city that includes close to 500 para-military Border Police officers.
- At least 20 people were wounded in the Lod clashes yesterday.
- Early this morning Defense Minister Benny Gantz ordered the mobilization of ten additional reserve Border Police companies to help deal with the riots across the country.
- According to media reports, Jewish rioters threw stones at Arab cars in Ramle – another mixed city close to Lod – causing one vehicle to crash into a roundabout and then a sidewalk.
- Also last night, Arab rioters broke into the home of a Jewish family living in Ramat Eshkol in Jerusalem (who had been evacuated due to the violence), and vandalized the entire apartment, causing extensive damage.
- In [this](#) video, rioters in the Arab Israeli town of Umm El Fahm are seen attacking an ambulance.
- Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu commented on the violence, saying "Let us unite together to do the task we need as citizens of our country - to restore governance, eliminate this anarchy and preserve and restore the security and peace we all deserve."
- See [this](#) article from Ha'aretz, where a number of Arab Israelis speak about the reasons behind the current unrest, and [here](#) for a piece on how social media is influencing the events.

Reactions

- Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, discussing Hamas last night, said "This is just the beginning. We will strike them with blows they haven't dreamed of."
- Defense Minister Benny Gantz said that the IDF will continue striking Gaza until it can bring a "complete and long-term peace... Only when we achieve this goal can we talk about calm. There is currently no end date. We will not accept moral sermons from any organization or institution about our right and duty to protect Israeli citizens."
- The Prime Minister also informed the security cabinet that Israel officially rejected a Hamas proposal for a ceasefire, and IDF Chief of Staff Lt.-Gen. Aviv Kohavi held a call with General Mark Milley, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff to update him on the operation.
- Earlier, the Prime Minister spoke by telephone with US Secretary of State Antony Blinken and thanked him for American support of Israel's right to self-defense, which the Secretary reiterated during the call. Later, the Prime Minister also spoke with US President Joe Biden. He also thanked the President for America's backing of Israel's right to defend its citizens.

Israeli Politics

- Just before the attacks in Israel began on Monday evening, it seemed that a coalition, led by Yair Lapid and Naftali Bennett, was forming to create a new government without Prime Minister Netanyahu.
- However, one of the partners in that potential coalition was the Arab Israeli Ra'am party.

Ra'am's leader yesterday said that he cannot consider supporting a government in the current circumstances, and coalition talks are frozen.

- On Israel radio this morning, Abbas said that he stopped coalition talks, because they would be inappropriate at such a sensitive time. But he said they would be restarted immediately after the escalation ends. "I am not giving up on future cooperation. It could be that these incidents emphasize the need for true partnership with understanding."
- There are now just over two weeks for Lapid and Bennett to form a government. If they fail, the Knesset has the power to form a government, but that would be very unlikely to occur, resulting in probable new elections.

Jewish Federations and Partners

- The Jewish Federations of North America continues to closely monitor the situation and is in regular contact with the government, security forces, our partners, and individual Federation representatives in the areas under attack.
- See [here](#) for JFNA's statement following attacks on Tel Aviv.
- The [Jewish Agency for Israel](#) is continuing its work with its Fund for the Victims of Terror, and expects a number of victims to receive emergency payments in the immediate future.
- The [Israel Trauma Coalition's](#) (ITC, a federation partner) resilience centers continue to operate in emergency 24/7 mode.
- The [American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee](#) (JDC) is working closely with its clients in many programs who often have far greater needs during the current difficult times:
 - Many seniors in Israel's south who have become practically imprisoned in their homes and reinforced rooms. Often they cannot run to shelters in the few seconds afforded to them and therefore remain in their protected rooms the entire day and night. Large numbers have not moved in the past three days. JDC's program professionals and volunteers have been phoning senior clients one by one to check in on them and see what their physical and emotional needs are.
 - Similarly, thousands of JDC volunteers paired with homebound Holocaust survivors as part of the National Network of Volunteers are in close touch with their charges. A therapeutic/recreational program for homebound survivors is also in touch with some 800 homebound clients.
 - Integrated care nurse and social worker case management teams responsible for the most vulnerable older adults at extreme health and social risk are in close contact with their clients.
 - Guidance Centers that have been developed for the newly retired in Eshkol, Tel Aviv and Ashdod are also reaching out to each of their clients.
 - This Sunday, a network of JDC created Rehabilitation Centers will once again begin online group yoga and group spiritual guidance through a platform that was established this year due to the COVID lockdowns.

Further Information

- Last night, Jewish Federations held a webinar on the latest developments in the violence, with the IDF's International Media Spokesperson, Lieutenant Colonel Jonathan Conricus. The webinar can be viewed [here](#).
- See [here](#) for a briefing given to the European Press Association by Jerusalem Deputy Mayor Ms. Fleur Hassan-Nahoum, journalists Khaled Abu Toameh and Ron Ben-Yishai, and the IDF's Lt Col Jonathan Conricus.

For more information, please contact JFNA's [Dani Wassner](#), Director of Israeli Government Relations.

Sources: *Office of the Prime Minister, IDF Spokesperson, The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, The Government Press Office, N12 Israel News, The Times of Israel, Galei Tzahal Radio, The Jerusalem Post, Ynet, i24 News, Alma.*