

Ynet News

comment

2 killed as Gaza rockets slam into southern Israel

Ashkelon hospital also sustains direct hit; IDF deploys Armored Corps brigade 'preparing for escalation'; IAF striking homes of mid-level Hamas, Jihad commanders; IDF denies killing woman and baby, says deaths caused by Gaza rocket; **some 450 rockets** fired at Israeli communities since Saturday morning

05.05.19 , 15:17

Two people were killed Sunday when rockets fired from Gaza **hit a factory in Ashkelon** and a car near Sderot in quick succession, as a massive barrage against southern and central Israel continued for a second day. The deaths came hours after a man was killed in rocket fire near his home in Ashkelon.

Two other people were badly wounded when a rocket slammed into the Ashkelon factory, killing a 22-year-old man. Near Sderot, a 60-year-old driver was discovered at the side of the road in his burning car, and rushed to hospital in critical condition, but was pronounced dead a short time later.

An earlier rocket strike on Ashkelon claimed the life of 58-year-old father of four Moshe Agadi.

Barzilai hospital in Ashkelon also sustained a direct hit to its oncology unit, but there were no injuries.

Bracing for further escalation with Gaza, the Israel Defense Forces ordered the deployment of a brigade from the Armored Corps along the border on Sunday morning, after a **weekend of violence in which 450 rockets were launched at Israel**. The IDF retaliated with a wave of air strikes against terror targets that was still continuing Sunday.

"We are preparing for several days like this," said IDF Spokesman Brig. Gen. Ronen Manelis, several hours after 58-year-old Moshe Agadi was killed by a rocket in Ashkelon – **the first Israeli fatality in rocket fire since the 2014 Gaza war**.

"The enemy has fired about 450 rockets at Israel, mainly by Hamas and the Islamic Jihad in a coordinated manner," said Manelis. "We have **intercepted more than 150 rockets** in several built-up areas. Civilians are required to act when the sirens sound as part of the layers of defense provided by the IDF. It has proven itself to save lives. More than 70% of the rocket fire (has hit) open areas. "

"We gave an order to deploy a brigade that will mobilize in the coming hours," Manelis said, adding that the brigade will join the Gaza Division "as an available offensive force and not to reinforce defenses."

Manelis said that the army has so far **attacked more than 220 terrorist targets** since the round of violence began.

"We are attacking launch squads, and three terrorists have been killed in these attacks. We struck two such squads at night and another squad this morning. The IDF does not recognize and is not dealing with any ceasefire - the deployment is for several days and under these circumstances."

The general also denied Gazan claims that IDF fire had killed a mother and her baby, saying that they had been caught up in a failed rocket launch by Palestinians militants.

"The mother and daughter who were killed yesterday in Gaza were killed by the use of weapons in Gaza and not by our attack," he said. "They were apparently killed by the failed launch of a rocket that exploded close by in the eastern part of the city, near the border."

Manelis said that the army was also targeting installations in Gaza, which he called "real estate targets with terrorist infrastructure, including high-rise buildings."

He said that the IDF had also struck "an underground site for the manufacture of weapons, as well as stores of small and specialist anti-tank and naval weaponry."

The general said that no civilians were harmed when the IDF took out weapon caches hidden in their homes.

Since the early hours of Sunday, the Israel Air Force has been striking the private homes of the mid-level Hamas and Islamic Jihad commanders. According to the IDF, more than 30 houses were being targeted across the Strip, including in areas such as Khan Yunis and Rafah in the south and Shati in the north. Some of the houses contained weaponry, the army said.

**The IDF said that it is taking the approach that those who command rocket fire against Israeli homes will not find a home of their own to return to.**

Following Manelis' comments, Hamas hardened its own position, declaring itself "ready to fight until the last moment."

The Islamic Jihad also struck a defiant note, vowing that "the Palestinian resistance will not give up its right to respond to Israel's crimes and to protect our people - children, babies, women and old people - whose blood is spilled by terrorist murderers... We will resist forcefully until the aggression stops."

### Kushner hopes Israel will look at peace plan before any West Bank moves

Ahead of elections, PM Netanyahu vowed to annex settlements; Arab officials believe the plan is likely to be decidedly pro-Israel since the Trump administration has taken a tough line toward Palestinians, cutting off aid and shuttering the PLO's office in Washington

Reuters |Published: 05.04.19 , 00:34

White House senior adviser Jared Kushner said on Thursday he hopes Israel will take a hard look at President Donald Trump's upcoming Middle East peace proposal before proceeding with any plan to annex West Bank settlements.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu had vowed in the waning days of a re-election campaign he won on April 9 to annex Israeli settlements in the West Bank, in a move that would be bound to trigger condemnation from the Palestinians and the Arab world and complicate the U.S. peace effort.

Kushner, speaking at a dinner of the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, said the Middle East peace proposal he has been putting together was close to release and that Israel and the Palestinians should wait to see it before making any unilateral moves.

He said the issue would be discussed with the Israeli government when Netanyahu forms a governing coalition.

"I hope both sides will take a real look at it, the Israeli side and the Palestinian side, before any unilateral steps are made," Kushner said, adding he had not discussed the issue of settlement annexation with Netanyahu.

### Greenblatt and Kushner with Israeli Ambassador Danny Dannon

Kushner and Middle East envoy Jason Greenblatt have spent the past two years developing the peace proposal in the hopes it will provide a framework for a renewed dialogue between the Israelis and Palestinians.

The Palestinians have refused to talk to the U.S. side since Trump decided to move the U.S. Embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem and declare Jerusalem the capital of Israel.

The Palestinians want to establish a state in the West Bank, east Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip, all territory Israel captured in 1967.

Kushner, who is married to Trump's daughter Ivanka, is expected to unveil his proposals in June after the Muslim fasting month of Ramadan.

"What we will be able to put together is a solution that we believe is a good starting point for the political issues and then an outline for what can be done to help these people start living a better life," Kushner said.

"I was given the assignment of trying to find a solution between the two sides and I think what we'll put forward is a framework that I think is realistic ... it's executable and it's something that I do think will lead to both sides being much better off," Kushner said.

Political, economic components

Kushner has begun to take a more public role in the Trump administration since he emerged unscathed from U.S. Special Counsel Robert Mueller's probe into whether the Trump presidential campaign in 2016 colluded with Russia.

Trump has relied heavily on the 38-year-old Kushner, who helped develop prison reform legislation and a new U.S.-Mexico-Canada trade deal and is also working on a U.S. immigration proposal.

The Middle East proposal, which has been delayed for a variety of reasons over the past 18 months, has two major components. It has a political piece that addresses core issues such as the status of Jerusalem, and an economic part that aims to help the Palestinians strengthen their economy.

Kushner has said the proposal is not an effort to impose U.S. will on the region. He has not said whether it calls for a two-state solution, a goal of past peace efforts.

On Thursday night, he called on critics to hold their fire until they are able to see the plan in its entirety.

Palestinians have voiced skepticism about the effort led by Trump's son-in-law, who was a real estate developer before joining his father-in-law as a senior White House adviser.

Arab officials and analysts believe the plan is likely to be decidedly pro-Israel since the Trump administration has taken a tough line toward Palestinians, cutting off aid and ordering the PLO's office in Washington shut.

Greenblatt has said U.S. negotiators expect Israelis and Palestinians will both be critical of some parts of the plan.

MIDDLE EAST

Netanyahu Orders Continued Pounding In Gaza As 600 Rockets Fired Into Israel  
May 5, 2019 1:45 PM ET

VANESSA ROMO

Black smoke caused by an Israeli airstrike billows over Gaza City, Sunday as Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu ordered the military to continue pounding the coastal city. Palestinian militants in the Gaza Strip also intensified a wave of rocket fire into southern Israel.

Khalil Hamra/AP

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu ordered "massive strikes" against militant groups in Gaza on Sunday in response to a barrage of rocket fire, stretching hostilities into a third day and leading to mounting casualties on both sides.

At a cabinet meeting on Sunday Netanyahu said he also instructed military leaders to boost tank artillery and infantry forces around the Gaza Strip.

" Hamas bears responsibility not only for its own attacks and actions but also those by Islamic Jihad, for which it pays a very high price," he said.

Gaza militant groups have launched at least 600 rockets and mortars at Israel since the latest conflict began, while the military has struck what it says are hundreds of Hamas and Islamic Jihad targets in the coastal enclave, Israel Defense Forces said on Twitter.

At least three Israeli men and nine Palestinians have been killed since the violence erupted, and more than 100 people have been wounded on each side of the Israel-Gaza border since tensions flared. Among them, a pregnant Palestinian woman and a 14-month-old infant. Gazan health officials blamed Israeli strikes for their deaths, but the IDF disputes that, claiming it was a rocket shot from inside Gaza killed them.

A Palestinian man checks the damage of a multi-story building following Israeli airstrikes in Gaza City, Sunday. Palestinian militants have fired more than 600 rockets and mortars into Israel, drawing dozens of retaliatory airstrikes on targets across the Gaza Strip in a round of intense fighting that broke a month-long lull between the bitter enemies.

Khalil Hamra/AP

A 58-year-old man killed by a rocket that hit his home was the first Israeli fatality in the weekend skirmish. The Barzilai University Medical Center in Ashkelon confirmed two Israeli civilians died from rocket fire from Gaza.

Meanwhile, the Palestinian Islamic Jihad announced that two of its members had been killed in East Gaza City in Israeli airstrikes. And at least four gunman were killed in separate strikes, Reuters reported.

The IDF said it targeted and killed Hamid Ahmed Abdul Khudri, whom it accused of helping fund the rocket fire attacks by transferring money from Iran to militant groups inside of Gaza.

"Transferring Iranian money to Hamas & the [Palestinian Islamic Jihad doesn't make you a businessman. It makes you a terrorist," IDF wrote in a tweet that included a photo of a charred Toyota engulfed in flames.

Israel Defense Forces

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@IDF

We just targeted Hamed Ahmed Khudari, a Gazan terrorist responsible for transferring Iranian funds to Hamas & PIJ in Gaza, helping fund their rocket fire at Israelis.

Transferring Iranian money to Hamas & the PIJ doesn't make you a businessman. It makes you a terrorist.

8:11 AM - May 5, 2019

Other Israeli targets include a tunnel, rocket launcher sites, mosques and other military compounds it alleges are used by Hamas and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad.

An Army spokesman told NPR's Naomi Zeveloff that at least 150 of the Palestinian-launched projectiles were intercepted by Israel's Iron Dome missile defense system. He added that the Army is preparing to deploy an armored brigade for an offensive mission if needed.

The latest conflict was sparked on Friday after militants shot and injured two Israeli soldiers. The attack prompted swift military retaliation, which resulted in the deaths of two militants. That, in turn, led to an onslaught of mortar and rocket fire from within Gaza, unraveling the tenuous calm

Ariel Schalit/AP

It is one of the most serious conflicts in the region since the 2014 war, which lasted seven weeks and killed dozens of Israeli soldiers and several civilians and on the Palestinian side, left more than 2,000 people dead, including hundreds of civilians and militants.

The fighting broke out as Egyptian mediators had been trying to negotiate a long term cease fire, in exchange for Israel loosening restrictions on Gaza.

Nickolay E. MLADENOV

@nmladenov

I condemn the continuing launching of rockets from #Gaza. Enough #Palestinian and #Israeli lives have been lost, people injured, houses damaged and destroyed! It is time to de-escalate and return to the understandings of the past few months before it is too late.

8:35 AM - May 5, 2019

U.N. Special Coordinator for the Middle East Nickolay Mladenov decried the violence from within Gaza. "I condemn the continuing launching of rockets from Gaza. Enough Palestinian and Israeli lives have been lost, people injured, houses damaged and destroyed!" he said in a tweet, urging both sides to "return to the understandings of the past few months before it is too late."