

## **Erev Shavuot Holiday Update on the Ongoing Violence in Israel**

May 16, 2021

**Rocket fire from Gaza continued overnight, again targeting Tel Aviv and other cities in the country's center. Ongoing IDF retaliation against terror targets, including the home of Hamas leader Yahya Sinwar.**

Here are the main updates from the last day:

### **Rocket Fire**

- More than 2,900 rockets have been fired into Israel from Gaza since attacks by Hamas and other terrorist groups began at 6:00pm on Monday night.
- Overnight, rockets were fired at tens of targets in Israel's south and the center. Once again, millions of Israelis ran to shelters as sirens sounded for the seventh straight day. See [here](#) for video of rocket launches from Gaza.
- Ten people were injured while racing to their shelters.
- How many rockets get through?
  - Around 15% of the terror rockets fall short of the border and land in Gaza itself, often causing damage, injury and deaths among Palestinians.
  - A further 45% of the rockets hit unpopulated areas in Israel, usually causing only minor damage.
  - About 37% of rockets, are intercepted by Israel's Iron Dome system (which has a 90% success rate).
  - The remaining 3% of rockets strike Israel's population centers, often causing death, injury and damage.

### **Israeli Response**

- Israel continues to relentlessly strike at terror targets inside Gaza, hitting some 90 sites overnight, including weapons factories, rocket storage facilities and additional underground tunnels (additional details [here](#)).
- In one attack, the home of Hamas' leader in Gaza, Yahya Sinwar was hit. Like most Hamas leaders, Sinwar himself is currently hiding out in underground facilities and was not harmed (see footage [here](#)).
- In a separate attack, the IDF hit the Al Jawa Tower which housed offices of Hamas' Military Intelligence. The building was also home to the offices of Al Jazeera and the Associated Press. The IDF warned residents of the building of the impending strike in order to enable them to exit safely.
- When asked why the Air Force struck media outlets, the IDF's spokesperson, Brig.-Gen. Hidai Zilberman answered, "I want to see what would happen if one rocket was fired on Washington. They are firing salvos towards civilian populations. We are in the middle of an operation. If Hamas

and PIJ think they can hide behind the media, their buildings are not something they can hide behind.”

- The Israel Air Force also carried out strikes against the homes of several other Gaza terror figures including Samah Sarag, Head of Planning and Development of the Hamas Political Bureau, the residence of Youssef Abel-Wahab, commander of the Hamas Zeitoun Battalion in Gaza City, and the residence of Ahmad Abd El Aal, a senior Hamas Military Intelligence official.
- See [here](#) for photos and details of IDF strikes against Hamas targets.
- The IDF says that it continues to go to great lengths in order to avoid civilian casualties, including warning Gazans of impending attacks (see a Palestinian TV reporter describing the warnings [here](#) and footage of a warning being given [here](#)). In [this video](#) an attack is called off due to the suspected presence of children in the area.
- IDF spokesperson Zilberman noted that every mile of [tunnel in Gaza](#) costs more than \$1 million to construct, and pointed out how these funds could have been used on humanitarian projects to improve the lot of the enclave’s citizens, rather than on terror projects such as the tunnels.
- Following a meeting with senior IDF officials, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said, “(Hamas’) senior officials think that they can flee from our strikes -- they cannot flee. We will reach them everywhere, all of these people, and we will continue to do so... They attacked us on our holiday. They attacked our capital. They launched missiles at our cities. They are paying, and will pay, a very heavy price for this. This is not yet over. We will do everything to restore security to our cities and our people.”

### Protests in Israel

- Israeli Arabs commemorated “Nakba (Catastrophe) Day,” yesterday. Traditionally, May 15 is a day of protests marking the anniversary of the creation of the State of Israel.
- Despite days of unrest, and the extreme security situation, most protests did not turn violent, and few significant incidents were recorded.
- In a sign of unity, a mixed group of Jewish and Arab citizens of Akko joined together to clean up after rioting. See [here](#).
- Several hundred people gathered in Tel Aviv to call for calm in the aftermath of the unrest. The rally was organized by the Jewish-Arab solidarity organization Standing Together. Demonstrators carried signs calling for “peace and equality.”
- President Rivlin brought together Muslim, Christian and Jewish religious leaders and educators in Akko for an emergency meeting to call for calm and stopping violence on the streets. The President stated, “This is home to us all, and we protect our home. Not with clubs and knives, not with stones and firearms that sow destruction and ruin, but first and foremost by maintaining law and order which are the most basic guarantors of personal safety, for life. All of us, public leaders at all levels, and particularly spiritual leaders, are responsible for what happens in our community. Responsible for returning order, for ensuring that the law is obeyed. We must stop the cycle of violence. That is what is needed right now.”

### Global Reactions

- Prime Minister Netanyahu spoke again with US President Joe Biden and thanked him for the US's unequivocal support of Israel's right to defend itself. The Prime Minister emphasized that Israel is doing everything to avoid harming persons who are uninvolved in the conflict; telling the President that the proof of this is that the buildings in which terrorist targets are being hit by the

IDF are evacuated of uninvolved persons.

- The Prime Minister commented, "I would like to say a word of appreciation to my friend President Biden and to other friends – the President of France, the British Prime Minister, the Chancellor of Austria, the Chancellor of Germany and others. They have upheld our natural and self-evident right to defend ourselves, to act in self-defense against these terrorists who both attack civilians and hide behind civilians. This will not help them and we will continue to take action."
- According to the Pentagon, US Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin "reaffirmed Israel's right to defend itself" and "strongly condemned the continued onslaught of attacks by Hamas and other terrorist groups targeting Israeli civilians," he urged an end to the fighting and the restoration of calm.
- Israel's Defense Minister Benny Gantz met with US Deputy Assistant Secretary for Israel and Palestinian Affairs Hady Amr for talks on de-escalating the conflict earlier today.

**As always, Jewish Federations, through JFNA's Israel Office, is keeping a constant watch on developments on the ground and is in close touch with authorities, and our partners on the ground.**

*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.*