

Day 11: Operation Guardians of the Walls Continues

May 20, 2021

With strong indications of an imminent ceasefire, and President Biden’s calls for quiet, the number of rocket attacks dropped significantly overnight.

Here are the main updates for today:

Rocket Fire/ Ceasefire

- More than 4,070 rockets have been fired into Israel from Gaza since attacks began last week. Of these, 610 (some 15%) fell short and landed inside the Hamas-controlled Strip.
- Both Israeli and Palestinian sources are suggesting that a ceasefire agreement is close, with some media reporting that hostilities will cease at 12 noon on Friday (Israel time).
- In a phone conversation yesterday, U.S. President Joe Biden told Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu that he “expected a significant de-escalation on the path to a ceasefire.” Netanyahu told Biden in reply that the operation to destroy terrorist infrastructure would continue until Israeli citizens are secure. Since the conversation between the two leaders, the intensity of fighting seems to be abating.
- In the longest period of quiet since hostilities began, no rockets were fired at Israel from 1:00am until 9:00am this morning. Since that time, a number of barrages have been fired. Prior to 1:00am, some 80 rockets were fired at Israel during the evening.
- In one attack on Thursday morning, Hamas attacked a bus used for transporting soldiers with anti-tank missiles. One soldier was lightly injured. See [here](#) for photos of the damaged bus.
- Several rockets also directly struck a number of houses in Sderot late yesterday, causing damage and leaving a 72-year-old man with moderate injuries.

Israeli Response

- Israel continued to strike Hamas targets in Gaza overnight in response to the rocket attacks. In military operations the IDF destroyed a multi-launch rocket system in the city of Khan Younis, as well as two weapons caches. See footage of the strike on the rocket launcher [here](#).
- Several Hamas officials and activists were arrested by Israeli security forces in the West Bank on Wednesday night as part of the ongoing campaign against the terrorist organization.
- Overnight the IDF also continued its attacks on Hamas’ “metro,” – the underground system of terror tunnels built across the Gaza Strip. In recent days, the IDF has destroyed some 70 miles of

Hamas tunnels. See [here](#) for an article on the tunnel system.

- According to IDF sources, the military has twice attempted to eliminate Muhammad Deif, the commander of Hamas's military wing, during the recent fighting, but on both occasions, Deif managed to escape.
- The IDF continues to send warning to civilians before striking targets in Gaza. In [this](#) disturbing recording of a warning phone call, the Palestinian recipient tells the IDF officer that he will not evacuate, and wants people to die so that "we can reveal your cruelty."

Diplomacy

- German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas arrived in Israel on what Israel's Foreign Minister Gabi Ashkenazi described as a "solidarity visit." The foreign ministers of the Czech Republic and Slovakia are also expected in Israel today as part of a delegation of envoys.
- US Secretary of State Antony Blinken tweeted last night that "I spoke with Gabi Ashkenazi about efforts to end the violence in Israel and the West Bank and Gaza, which has claimed the lives of Israeli and Palestinian civilians including children. The US expects to see de-escalation on the path to a ceasefire."

Jewish Federations and Partners

World ORT

- When hostilities began, World ORT's Kfar Silver Youth Village's day school, which is close to the Gaza border, closed and hundreds of day students remained at home with their families. However, around 150 boarding students and essential staff remained on site, spending their nights in the village's bomb shelters.
- In the village there are currently 122 students and 30 staff members.
- Some days have seen nearly constant sirens and almost non-stop rocket fire. There are two Iron Dome batteries located near the village, so students are keenly aware of the many exchanges of fire underway.
- Israel musicians including Aviv Geffen and David Broza have visited and performed in the village this week.

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.