IDF: Four rockets fired from Gaza toward Israel as violence escalates on border

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<https://www.timesofisrael.com/idf-two-rockets-fired-from-gaza-at-ashkelon-as-violence-escalates-on-border/>

Palestinian terrorists fired two rockets from the Gaza Strip toward the city of Ashkelon and surrounding communities on Sunday night, the Israel Defense Forces said, following a day of constant airborne arson attacks from the enclave. Just before midnight, two more rockets were launched but landed inside the Strip.

The military said one of the first pair of rockets was intercepted by the Iron Dome missile defense system. The second apparently landed in an open, unpopulated area.

There were no immediate reports of injuries or damage.

Video footage from Ashkelon showed at least two interceptor missiles being fired from a nearby Iron Dome air defense battery and then detonating, apparently bringing down one of the rockets.

The second barrage set off sirens in open areas only, with the two missiles falling short of the security fence.

Early Monday, the IDF said its tanks had fired shells at a number of Hamas military posts in “a response to the rocket fire and arson balloons.”

The rocket attack came an hour after Israel announced it was closing the Gaza Strip’s fishing zone in response to the launching of dozens of balloon-borne incendiary devices throughout the day, which caused dozens of fires and burned large swaths of southern Israel, as well as a mortar attack in the predawn hours of Sunday morning.

The attacks came amid ongoing violence in Jerusalem, the West Bank and along the Gaza border, coming from both the general heightened tensions associated with the Muslim holy month of Ramadan, as well as the impending eviction of dozens of Palestinians from East Jerusalem’s Sheik Jarrah neighborhood in favor of Jewish tenants, a highly contentious case that is being reviewed by the courts and has prompted concern in Washington and denunciations of Israel from around the world, including by close allies.

Recent days saw over a dozen fires[sparked](https://www.timesofisrael.com/eight-fires-in-south-said-sparked-by-incendiary-balloons-launched-from-gaza/) on the Gaza border area as a result of incendiary balloons. Gaza’s so-called “independent balloon unit” warned on Thursday that “this is just the beginning.” Another smaller unit affiliated with the Gaza-based Mujahideen Brigades terror group announced on Saturday morning they had begun to mobilize their members to start launching balloons.

The practice of launching balloon-borne incendiary and explosive devices from the Gaza Strip toward Israel has waxed and waned over the past two years, though there have been relatively few launches until the past few days. The Israeli government and Gaza-ruling Hamas terror group have been engaged in indirect talks about a long-term ceasefire.

Earlier this month, terrorists in Gaza launched dozens of rockets at southern Israel. Most of the rockets landed in open fields, where they caused no injury or damage, but a few struck inside Israeli communities, with shrapnel hitting buildings and vehicles.

On Friday, three Palestinians [opened fire](https://www.timesofisrael.com/police-say-cell-opened-fire-toward-military-base-2-attackers-killed-1-hurt/) toward a Border Police base in Israeli territory near the northern West Bank, with two of the attackers killed and one wounded when officers on the scene returned fire.

Israeli yeshiva student Yehuda Guetta was shot in a Palestinian terror attack in the West Bank earlier this week. He died of his wounds on Wednesday night.