Heavy rocket fire on central, southern Israel; 300,000 reservists mobilized in 48 hours

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Five people were wounded on Monday, two of them seriously, as heavy barrages of rockets were fired by terrorists in the Gaza Strip at towns in southern and central Israel, including one that exploded near Ben Gurion International Airport.

The Magen David Adom ambulance service said it treated four people wounded in Ashkelon by rocket impacts, including a 75-year-old man in serious condition, two men aged 55 and 30 in moderate condition, and one person who was lightly hurt.

In Ashdod, MDA said its medics treated a woman in her 50s who was seriously wounded as a result of a rocket impact.

Sirens were heard in Jerusalem, Tel Aviv, Ra’anana and as far north as Baqa al-Gharbiyye.

It was the first time sirens were heard in many of the locations since Saturday.

There were multiple explosions, caused either by impacts or interceptions by the Iron Dome missile defense system.

One rocket fell in an open area near Ben Gurion Airport. However, the airport said it was operating normally.

The barrages came a day after Israel formally declared a state of war as the death toll from the massive Hamas attack rose above 800, according to Hebrew media reports, and was expected to rise further, with the fate of over a hundred people abducted and taken into the Gaza Strip still unclear.

Alongside the invasion, carried out by terrorists in convoys of pickup trucks and motorbikes as well as speedboats and motorized gliders, Gazan terrorists fired thousands of rockets at Israel, hitting homes in Tel Aviv and elsewhere.

The 800 dead included at least 73 soldiers, including top officers, and 37 police officers.

The number of wounded has also continued to tick upward. The Health Ministry said that as of Monday afternoon, 2,616 people have been treated at hospitals, including 25 people in critical condition and hundreds more also fighting for their lives.

Fears that terrorists could still be roaming free throughout the country remained rampant, keeping much of the country on edge.

The military’s top spokesman said Monday that Israeli troops have regained control of all towns on the Gaza border, but that terrorists may remain in Israeli territory. A short time later the Israel Defense Forces said troops killed a Palestinian terrorist in Kibbutz Kfar Aza, close to the border with the Gaza Strip.

“Exchanges of fire continue between our forces and the terrorists,” the IDF said in a short statement.

Gun battles between military forces and holed-up terrorists raged throughout Saturday and Sunday, with the army slowly recovering from its shock and killing and capturing numerous attackers, after long hours in which the gunmen ravaged towns.

Rear Adm. Daniel Hagari said incidents of clashes between troops and Palestinian terrorists on Monday morning have been “isolated.”

Hagari said that in the Shaar Hanegev Regional Council three terrorists were killed by troops; in Be’eri one was killed; in Holit and Sufa five were killed; and in Alumim four were killed.

“It is possible there are still terrorists in the area,” Hagari said, but said that there was no ongoing fighting in any of the towns.

Some of the terrorists have been in Israel since the preliminary attack on Saturday, while others crossed the border over the past two days.

Hagari says breaches of the Gaza border barrier will be physically secured by tanks supported by combat helicopters and drones.

He said the army has evacuated 15 out of 24 towns on the border, and will continue to evacuate the others over the course of Monday, but that the town of Sderot will not be evacuated at this stage.

Additionally, Hagari said some 4,400 rockets have been launched toward Israel since the fighting started on Saturday morning.

Regarding the draft of reservists, Hagari said the IDF “has never mobilized so many reservists so quickly — 300,000 reservists in 48 hours.”

This is the largest mobilization since the 1973 Yom Kippur War when Israel called up 400,000 reservists.

Meanwhile, the IDF continued to carry out airstrikes, with the military saying it was hitting targets belonging to the Hamas terror group.

A large wave of strikes was carried out overnight as part of its effort to “devastate the capabilities of the Hamas terror group,” two days after the terror group unleashed carnage on an unprecedented scale in Israel, killing at least 700 civilians and security personnel in the deadliest single day in the nation’s history.

However, the presence of over 100 Israeli hostages in Gaza may complicate Israeli plans for a wide-scale counterassault on Gaza.

The spokesperson for Hamas’s Izz ad-Din al-Qassam Brigades, who goes by the nom de guerre Abu Obeida, claimed on Monday that Israel’s bombing in the Gaza Strip killed four Israeli hostages.

“The occupation’s bombing tonight and today on the Gaza Strip led to the killing of four enemy prisoners and the martyrdom of their captors, the Qassam Mujahideen,” Abu Obeida said in a statement on his Telegram channel.

Among the 500 targets hit overnight were eight Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad war rooms; a building housing Hamas operatives; several high-rise towers housing Hamas assets; a command center used by a senior official in Hamas’s naval forces; an “operational asset used by Hamas” located within a mosque in Jabaliya; an asset used by the terror group for intelligence; and three tunnels in the Beit Hanoun area in northern Gaza.

The Hamas-run health ministry in the Gaza Strip said 493 Palestinians have been killed and 2,300 have been wounded in the enclave since Saturday. The Israel Defense Forces has said it has killed hundreds more Palestinian terrorists in Israeli territory.

As of late yesterday, Israeli airstrikes had destroyed 159 housing units across Gaza and severely damaged 1,210 others, the UN said. The UN agency for Palestinian refugees, UNRWA, said a school sheltering more than 225 people took a direct hit, but did not specify where the fire came from.

The United Nations said Monday that more than 123,000 people have been displaced in the Gaza Strip since the outbreak of the conflict between Palestinian terrorists and Israel.

In the shocking assault, Hamas gunmen rolled into as many as 22 locations in southern Israel on Saturday morning, including towns and smaller communities as far as 15 miles (24 kilometers) from the Gaza border. In some places, they roamed for hours, gunning down civilians and soldiers as Israel’s military, caught entirely off guard, scrambled to muster a response. At the same time, thousands of rockets were fired at towns in the south and center of the country.

ZAKA, a volunteer group that handles human remains after terror attacks and other disasters, announced Sunday night that among the dead were some 260 mostly young Israelis mowed down by Hamas gunmen who invaded an outdoor music festival in southern Israel.

Social media was filled with horrifying videos of men, women and children being carried into the Strip, many of them appearing to have been abused.

There were also videos published of dead Israelis taken, including soldiers, the bodies of some of whom were paraded in the streets.

The Government Press Office, a body that operates under the Prime Minister’s Office, said that the number of hostages in Gaza was over 100. Hamas and Islamic Jihad boasted Sunday night that they were holding some 130 Israeli hostages, claiming this included high-ranking army officials.

Hamas said Monday it wants to “liberate all Palestinian prisoners” from Israel and end Israeli “provocations” in the Bank and Jerusalem, particularly at Al-Aqsa Mosque.

Abdel-Latif al-Qanoua told The Associated Press over the phone that Hamas terrorists were still fighting Israeli forces and claimed they had captured more Israelis on Monday morning.

“We are in an open battle to defend our people and the Al-Aqsa Mosque,” he says. “This battle is linked to the liberation of all Palestinian prisoners and the cessation of this fascist government’s activities in Jerusalem.”

He said the group has captured “a large number of Israelis” in Gaza, without giving a specific figure, but added that Hamas’s military wing, al-Qassam Brigades, will announce the figures later.

Earlier Monday, Hagari, said Monday morning that fighting was ongoing in and near Kfar Aza, Be’eri, Nirim, Shaar Hanegev, Nir Oz, Alumim and Holit.

Hagari said that overnight, some 70 terrorists infiltrated Be’eri. Most of them were killed in battle with IDF troops, but others were still hiding in homes in the kibbutz.

In Kfar Aza, seven terrorists were identified in the town’s vicinity, and the mouth of a tunnel near the kibbutz was found as well, Hagari said.

While it was known that the terrorists infiltrated by land, sea, and air, this is the first tunnel found in the current conflict. Israel had invested millions of dollars in an advanced underground wall of sensors and obstacles that was supposed to make tunneling into the country impossible.

Six terrorists were identified near Kibbutz Nirim, and four in Alumim, Hagari added.

**Distraught families demand information**

The ongoing fighting and informational fog compounded tough questions about the various failures that had allowed Gazan terrorists to carry out the onslaught seemingly unimpeded. Relatives of those missing or thought kidnapped or killed said they felt abandoned by authorities, with many saying they had yet to be contacted by officials at all.

That sense of chaotic and lackluster management of the disaster was a widespread sentiment on Saturday, when numerous besieged residents in overrun communities made urgent whispered pleas for help in phone calls to loved ones and authorities, begging for a rescue that in many cases did not arrive for long hours, in some cases too late.

The scenes of chaos and suffering and the prolonged failure to gain control of the situation have shocked and outraged the nation, and sparked demands for answers on the many failures of intelligence, deployment, and policy that had allowed such a national catastrophe to occur.

**No public statement from PM since Saturday**

A day after announcing that Israel would carry out a broad retaliatory campaign in Gaza, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu was largely silent on Sunday and Monday.

His office has distributed photos of the premier, but he has not made a public statement since Saturday evening, when he gave a short televised speech.