14 Gaza rockets in less than an hour; playground, yard hit

February 24, 2020

YNet News

<https://www.ynetnews.com/article/EJNU9KZJG#autoplay>

At least 14 projectiles were fired at southern Israel from Gaza in a half-hour period on Monday afternoon, as an escalation in violence with the Iranian-backed Islamic Jihad continued for a second day.

Six rockets were fired in the first wave that began at around noon. The Iron Dome air defense system intercepted five rockets over Sderot and Kibbutz Nir Am.

Less than half an hour later, sirens sounded in Netiv Ha'Asara and Hof Ashkelon regional council, and a second wave of eight rockets was fired from Gaza. Two of the rockets hit a children's playground and the yard of a home in Sderot.

There were no injuries reported, but at least one person was treated for shock in Sderot.

The IDF struck Islamic Jihad targets in Gaza in response.

The Prime Minister's Office said that Benjamin Netanyahu was conducting a security consultation by phone with defense officials following the rocket attacks. It said that Netanyahu also spoke with the mayors of Sderot and Ashkelon to update them on the situation.

Netanyahu also threatened Gaza's Hamas rulers with a "war" on Monday afternoon if the new round of rocket fire continued, ramping up his rhetoric amid the final stretch of his campaign ahead of the March 2 elections.

Speaking to Army Radio, Netanyahu said he'd conveyed a message to Hamas that if it did not stop Gaza militants behind the attacks, Israel would target Hamas directly.

"If you don't shoot them, we will shoot you. I'm talking about a war," he said. "I only go to war as a last option but we have prepared something you can't even imagine."

Netanyahu's interview was interrupted with news of fresh air raid sirens warning of incoming rockets, as Palestinian militant fire resumed midday after a morning lull.

Defense Minister Naftali Bennett warned earlier Monday that Israel was on the cusp of action "to fundamentally change the situation in the Gaza Strip," the Times of Israel reported.

“We are preparing a plan to fundamentally change the situation in the Gaza Strip,” Bennett told a conference in Jerusalem.

“I really understand the situation of the people of the south," Bennett said. "They deserve peace and security.”

Meanwhile, Netanyahu said that the proximity of next week's elections would not deter him from taking action to protect Israeli citizens.

Netanyahu told Radio Jerusalem that he would "not compromise Israel’s security for political reasons."

According to Netanyahu, “War is a last resort, but there may be no escape from it.

“If Israel is in the position of entering a large-scale military operation, we will have to deal a bigger blow than [the three Gaza wars of the past 12 years]. It could very well be that we may have to carry out — I don’t really want to say it, but — ‘the mother of all operations.'”

The Monday rocket barrage came just hours after Israeli warplanes on Sunday night [struck Islamic Jihad targets](https://www.ynetnews.com/article/1QC1TDUD6#autoplay) in Gaza and Syria, reportedly killing six people. Islamic Jihad threatened retaliation.