**Gaza rocket hits Be'er Sheva home, IAF retaliates**

By: Ynet reporters

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A rocket fired from Gaza landed on a Be'er Sheva home while another landed in the sea off the shores of a city in central Israel early Wednesday morning, prompting an IAF retaliatory attack in the strip.

IDF Chief of Staff Gadi Eisenkot decided to cut short his trip to the United States following the rocket attack, while Defense Minister Avigdor Lieberman ordered the closure of the Kerem Shalom and Erez border crossings and the reduction of the strip's fishing zone to three nautical miles.

The Security Cabinet's meeting planned for Wednesday morning, to assess whether the Egyptian-mediated ceasefire talks with Hamas are bearing fruit, was postponed in light of the situation.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu will hold security consultations with Defense Minister Lieberman, Deputy IDF chief Maj. Gen. Aviv Kochavi, the head of the National Security Council, the director of the Shin Bet and other senior defense officials.

The rocket attack came a day before Kamel Abbas, the head of Egyptian intelligence, is due to arrive in Israel to discuss the ceasefire talks with Hamas.

After the early morning rockets, Hamas and Islamic Jihad released a joint statement in which they said they "oppose rocket fire that hurts the efforts to lift the siege."

The rocket alert siren went off at 3:39am in Be'er Sheva and surrounding communities in the Negev region, following which a rocket hit a house, breaking through two floors of concrete.

Seven people were treated for shock after the attack, including a 39-year-old mother and her three children aged 9, 10, and 12, who were in the house when it was hit. In addition, three people were taken to the Soroka Medical Center in the city suffering from light bruising sustained when falling as they were running for shelter.

"The mother and her children said they went into the safe room and immediately after they locked the door, they heard a big explosion and everything shook," said an MDA paramedic who treated the family.

Attorney Ora Tamano, said her sister Miri, whose Be'er Sheva house was hit by the rocket, is "a lioness. She was sleeping downstairs and the kids were in three rooms upstairs. She simply grabbed them and forcefully pulled them into the safe room. It saved their lives."

"She's still frightened and disoriented. I think she's not entirely realizing the magnitude of the disaster. Nothing is left of the house except for the safe room," Tamano added.

Police forces extracted the family from the safe room, while firefighters called to the scene started scanning the house and worked to disconnect power sources. The street was then closed, with police sappers arriving on the scene to neutralize the fallen rocket.

Due to the size of the rocket and the force of the impact, heavy damage was caused to the house that was hit and it is at risk of collapse. A house next door was hit by shrapnel from the rockets, and its balcony collapsed. Debris was scattered throughout the street, damaging parked cars and adjacent structures.

The rocket that hit the sea off the shores of one of the cities in central Israel had a bigger payload than normal.

School was cancelled in Be'er Sheva, Sderot and the Gaza border communities following the rocket fire, though Ben-Gurion University announced classes will be held as normal.

The Palestinians reported extensive Israeli airstrikes following the rocket fire, with IAF fighter jets attacking Hamas and Islamic Jihad posts east and south of Gaza City, on the beach near Beit Lahia (which may have belonged to Hamas's naval commando unit) and targets near the border fence.

At around 8:30am, the Code Red rocket alert was once again sounded in southern Israel, this time in two communities in the Hof Ashkelon Regional Council. There have been no reports of injuries or damage. An IAF aircraft attacked the terror cell that tried to launch rockets at Israel.

The last time a rocket was launched at Be'er Sheva was over 2 months ago, on August 8, which was the first rocket launched at the city since the 2014 Operation Protective Edge. Wednesday morning's rocket was the first to hit inside the city in four years.

Rocket fire from the Gaza Strip has dropped in recent months, while the launching of incendiary and explosive balloons and rioting on the border continued unabated.

Last weekend, some 20 terrorists blew up a hole in the border fence and infiltrated Israel. The IDF opened fire at them, killing three and forcing the others to retreat back to the strip.

Since then, Defense Minister Lieberman has been calling on a daily basis to deliver a "serious blow" to Hamas, arguing it was the only way to ensure an end to the violence.

The defense minister visited the Gaza Division on Tuesday and held a situation assessment with the deputy IDF chief, the GOC Southern Command and other senior commanders.

"We are not willing to accept the level of violence we see one week after another," the defense minister told reporters, adding "a serious blow to Hamas could bring us at least five more years of quiet."