Gaza terrorists fire rockets at Tel Aviv, south; IAF hits Islamic Jihad launch sites

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<https://www.timesofisrael.com/one-said-killed-in-fresh-israeli-strikes-on-islamic-jihad-rocket-sites-in-gaza/>

Palestinian terrorists in the Gaza Strip launched several volleys of rockets at southern and central Israel on Wednesday afternoon, as the military said it was targeting Islamic Jihad rocket launching sites across the coastal enclave.

At least three rockets were launched at Tel Aviv and the surrounding area at around 2:20 p.m., causing no injuries or damage.

The Israel Defense Forces said in a statement earlier Wednesday that it carried out a drone strike against Islamic Jihad members in a vehicle who were heading to a rocket launch site near Khan Younis in the southern Gaza Strip.

In additional strikes shortly after, the military said, the Israeli Air Force hit Islamic Jihad “rocket launching infrastructure” across the Gaza Strip.

Military spokesman Rear Admiral Daniel Hagari told reporters that before the strikes, the IDF had identified Islamic Jihad members preparing rockets to be launched.

“Now that we have started airstrikes against underground launchers… we should expect rocket fire in the next few hours,” he said.

Less than an hour later, several barrages of rockets were fired at the southern cities of Sderot and Ashkelon, nearby towns, as well as further north, including the coastal city of Ashdod and Tel Aviv.

Local authorities said many rockets were downed by the Iron Dome air defense system across southern and central Israel. There were no immediate reports of injuries.

The IDF said it was continuing to strike Islamic Jihad rocket launching positions amid the rocket fire.

Hagari said the IDF would hold an assessment later on Wednesday to decide whether restrictions on movement and gathering for residents living up to 40 kilometers (25 miles) from Gaza would remain in place.

“We are acting in a responsible manner, so are the residents, and we expect that we will continue this way and prevent the enemy from making any gains,” he said.

Hagari stressed that the military’s operation, dubbed Shield and Arrow, was solely focused on Islamic Jihad, “which undermines the security situation in Gaza and [the West Bank].”

“We are still in the middle of the campaign, it is not over and has not been concluded,” he added.

According to the Hamas-run health ministry, one person was killed, and media reports said another was seriously hurt in the first strike on Wednesday near Khan Younis.

The IDF published footage of the first strike, which appeared to show two men walking near the vehicle that was struck.

Another strike in northern Gaza left one dead and several others hurt, and a strike in the southern part of the Strip left two dead and one wounded, according to the ministry.

The strikes on Wednesday brought the Palestinian death toll of Israel’s operation, which began early Tuesday morning, to 19.

Earlier, the IDF’s Home Front Command instructed residents of all towns near the border with Gaza to remain in bomb shelters amid fears of rocket fire.

Tensions continued to build on Wednesday, a day after Israel launched an offensive against Islamic Jihad in Gaza, assassinating three senior members in simultaneous airstrikes.

Islamic Jihad, as well as the so-called Joint Operations Room of various Palestinian terror factions in the Gaza Strip — which includes both Hamas and Islamic Jihad — vowed a response to the deadly airstrikes early Tuesday that killed three of the group’s senior leaders in Gaza, as well as several others, including women and children.

The IDF said it [assassinated](https://www.timesofisrael.com/israeli-forces-bomb-islamic-jihad-terror-group-in-gaza/) Khalil Bahtini, who commands Islamic Jihad in northern Gaza; Jihad Ghanem, a top official in the group’s military council; and [Tareq Izz ed-Din](https://www.timesofisrael.com/shin-bet-chief-says-troops-thwarted-west-bank-cell-making-rockets-to-fire-at-israel/), who it said directed Islamic Jihad terror activities in the West Bank from a base in Gaza.

In a subsequent strike on Tuesday afternoon, members of an Islamic Jihad cell allegedly en route to carrying out an [anti-tank guided missile attack](https://www.timesofisrael.com/2-killed-in-fresh-israeli-airstrike-as-islamic-jihad-vows-to-avenge-slain-leaders/) on the Gaza border were struck and killed.

The army dubbed the campaign Operation Shield and Arrow.

Previous strikes on Islamic Jihad leaders have been answered with barrages of rockets on Israeli civilians and intense battles with Israeli troops, some lasting several days.

Also early Wednesday, two members of a local wing of the Palestinian Islamic Jihad in the West Bank were [killed](https://www.timesofisrael.com/2-palestinian-gunmen-killed-by-idf-in-west-bank-as-tense-quiet-remains-on-gaza-front/) in a shootout with IDF forces.