Arson balloons from Gaza spark two fires in southern Israel

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Incendiary balloons from Gaza sparked two fires in southern Israel on Sunday, firefighters said.

One blaze erupted near Kibbutz Or Haner while the second spread in the Be’eri forest.

Both fires were extinguished by the fire brigade.

In recent months, Israeli communities, agricultural land, and parks on the Gaza periphery have suffered from hundreds of fires as a result of incendiary kites and balloons flown over the border from Gaza on a near daily basis. Over 7,000 acres of land have been burned, causing millions of shekels in damages, according to Israeli officials.

On Saturday night, more than 200 Israelis from communities along the Gaza border converged on Tel Aviv’s Rabin Square, calling on the government to act to ensure their security after months marred by rocket fire that has seen them scrambling toward shelters on a regular basis.

Demonstrators held signs reading, “We are not cannon fodder,” “We are not human shields,” and “Wake up, government — the entire south is burning.”

They released balloons, to highlight the arson kite and balloon attacks from Gaza,  and lay down on the ground to mimic safety procedures when rocket attacks find them too far from shelters.

Saturday’s rally came amid reported intensifying negotiations for a long-term ceasefire between Israel and Hamas in Gaza. A day earlier, a senior Hamas official said that negotiations for a long-term ceasefire deal were in “the final stretch.”

While no rockets have been launched at Israel in over a week as talks have progressed, residents of the coastal enclave have continued to release incendiary balloons at bordering Israeli towns nearly every day.