Israel pounds Hamas after 19 injured in rocket barrage, one critical

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<https://www.jpost.com/Arab-Israeli-Conflict/Two-injured-as-Gazan-rockets-land-in-Sderot-564411>

The Israel Air Force retaliated by striking targets in the Gaza Strip on Wednesday evening after 19 people were treated for injuries resulting form rocket attacks from Gaza against southern Israel.

A rocket hit Eshkol Regional Council at 06:00 am Thursday, critically injuring a 30 year old woman and lightly wounding another man from shrapnel.

Following the barrages throughout the night, the IAF struck over 100 terror targets including a plant used to manufacture components intended for the construction of tunnels as well as a tunnel for maritime terrorism along Israel’s coast.

A number of terror targets in several military sites, including weapons and rockets, as well as a military compound that serves as a central logistic warehouse were also hit by IAF jets.

Red Alert sirens continued to sound in the South throughout the night, with the latest salvo fired at 05:45 am Thursday morning.

Hamas issued a statement saying:  “We are delivering on our promise. The resistance accepted the responsibility to even the playing field with the enemy and it is succeeding in doing so.”

According to the IDF, over 150 projectiles were launched  from the Hamas-run enclave as of early Thursday morning; 25 were intercepted by the Iron Dome missile defense system.

Prime Minister Binjamin Netanyahu with Defense Minister Avigdor Liberman held a security assessment with senior military and defense officials at the IDF Kirya Headquarters in Tel Aviv following the initial rocket barrage.

According to Barzilai Medical Center, six people were treated for body injuries and nine people were treated for shock.

Four of the projectiles fell in Sderot. A 34 year old was in light-to-moderate condition with wounds from glass shards and a 20 year old was in light condition with injuries to his limbs from Iron Dome shrapnel.

Civilians were treated at the scene after suffering from stress, including two pregnant women who started having contractions.

Two homes in Sderot were also reportedly hit by the shrapnel, as well as a home in Hof Ashkelon. Several cars were also damaged, as was a factory in Sderot.

The rocket fire from Gaza came shortly after an IDF tank struck Hamas posts in Gaza after shots were fired across the border towards civilian engineering vehicles working on the IDF’s underground barrier with the coastal enclave.

At least one Gazan citizen was reported injured.

“Terrorists shot at civilian vehicles that were being used in an effort to construct the barrier around the security fence in the northern Gaza Strip. One vehicle was hit,” the IDF said.

Earlier on Wednesday, the IDF closed several roads near the Gaza border after warning that it was concerned about a retaliatory attack by Hamas after two of its elite members were killed in an IDF strike on Tuesday.

According to the IDF, Route 25 and several other smaller roads were closed after Hamas was identified as having cleared several military positions along the border and threats made by the group.

The rocket fire also comes as a senior Hamas official said that UN and Egyptian-mediated cease-fire talks between the terror group and Israel have reached “advanced stages,” with a deal expected to be signed soon.

“We can say that actions led by the United Nations and Egypt are in advanced stages and we hope it could yield some good from them,” Khalil Al-Hayya, deputy Hamas chief in Gaza, told Al Jazeera television.

“What is required is for calm to be restored along the border between us and the Zionist enemy (Israel).”

On Sunday, Israel’s Security Cabinet met to discuss the proposed cease-fire agreement. The Prime Minister’s Office released a statement afterward saying that the IDF was ready for any eventuality.

Despite the cease-fire talks, dozens of fires have ignited following the continued launching of aerial incendiary devices into southern Israel. In response, IDF aircraft have continued to strike the cells launching the devices.

Hundreds of such devices have been launched towards Israel since late March when Gazans began weekly protests along the border with Israel.

The protests have been called the greatest threat to Israeli security in the region since Operation Protective Edge in 2014, due to the combination of terror tunnels, riots, attempted infiltration and the use of incendiary items.

According to the Palestinian Ministry of Health, 158 Gazans have been killed since the start of the weekly “March of Return.”