

Islamists in Sinai Claim Attack on Israel

Islamist militants in the Sinai Peninsula claimed responsibility for a rocket attack on the Israeli Red Sea resort of Eilat on Wednesday, and Egyptian security sources said the rockets had probably been fired from the Egyptian territory.

In a statement posted on its website, the hardline militant group Magles Shoura al-Mujahddin said it had targeted Eilat with two Grad missiles on Wednesday morning, and then withdrew safely.

It said the attack was in retaliation for what it described as the Israeli army's attack on protesters demonstrating over the death of a Palestinian prisoner.

The Israeli military earlier said two rockets fired from Sinai had struck Eilat, causing no casualties or damage.

Residents of the coastal city said that the rockets first exploded, and only afterward was a siren heard. Army Radio said the IDF was checking why the siren system failed to identify the incoming rockets, even though they landed in an urban area, a new housing construction site in the city, and why the Iron Dome system, deployed to Eilat only two weeks ago after intelligence warnings of possible rocket attacks, did not intercept the rockets. Israel Radio reported that the IDF was looking into why the vaunted system did not spring into operation and launch interceptors at the rockets.

An IDF Spokeswoman told Reuters that Iron Dome didn't intercept the rockets "for operational reasons," without elaborating.

The sirens were heard shortly after 9 a.m. Security forces

canvassed the area and were able to locate the remnants of two rockets.

The rockets that struck Eilat were part of a volley fired from Egypt's Sinai Peninsula, the army said. Two other rockets reportedly hit Jordan. A Jordanian official told Israel Hayom that one of the rockets exploded in the city of Aqaba's industrial zone.

Following the rocket fire, the airport in Eilat was temporarily closed to takeoffs and landings. Students at schools in Eilat took cover in protected spaces. By noon, the city returned to normal.

In Sinai, Egyptian security forces began a search of the border area to investigate the Israeli claims.

"There is not yet any evidence indicating that these rockets were fired from Egypt," an Egyptian security source told Reuters.

"Contact has been made with all the security points along the border and they confirmed that they did not monitor any unusual activity in the area and did not hear the sound of any rocket launches from Sinai."

But despite the claim made to Reuters, an Egyptian source told Israel Hayom on Wednesday that the assessment in Egypt is that Salafist extremists or Palestinian terror groups based in the Sinai are responsible for the firing of the rockets at Eilat.