

Israel's Tension With Hamas Intensifies as IDF Responds to Lebanon Rocket

The Israel Defense Forces announced on Monday that it had fired into Lebanon in response to a rocket fired earlier from Lebanon into the Jewish state. The IDF reportedly fired dozens of artillery shells toward the location of the rocket fire in southern Lebanon.

"IDF artillery is now attacking targets in Lebanon and firing at the launch area in retaliation for the rocket fired into Israeli territory," read the statement from the Israeli army.

The Iranian-backed terrorist organization Hezbollah is widely considered the most powerful player in Lebanon. While no group has officially claimed responsibility for the rocket fire at Israel, Israeli officials believe that radical PLO-affiliated Arab residents in Lebanon, not Hezbollah, are responsible for the unprovoked attack.

Israeli authorities believe the rocket from Lebanon is linked to the recent tensions between Muslim radical rioters and Israeli security forces during Ramadan prayers on the Temple Mount in Jerusalem.

"It is estimated that these are Palestinian factions and that this is related to the Ramadan period and the events of the Temple Mount," IDF spokesperson Ran Kochav told the Kan public radio.

The fired rocket from Lebanon landed in an open area close to Kibbutz Matzuva without causing any human injuries or material damages. The kibbutz, founded by German Jewish immigrants in 1940, is located in the western Galilee adjacent to the Israeli-Lebanese border.

"We reacted in a quick, deadly and effective way," declared Captain Yotam Zeituni, the Israeli commander of the artillery battery that responded to the Lebanese rocket.

UNIFIL, the United Nations peacekeeping force along the Lebanese-Israeli border, urged restraint on both sides of the border in a tweet.

"A rocket was launched from Lebanon toward Israel early this morning. Israel Defense Forces are returning fire with dozens of shells. UNIFIL Head of Mission and Force Commander @aroldo_lazaro urges calm and restraint in this volatile and ongoing situation," read the tweet.

Meanwhile, the tensions on the Temple Mount in Jerusalem have also activated the tense border between the Hamas-ruled Gaza Strip and Israel. The Israeli army recently intercepted a rocket fired from Gaza into the Jewish state. Other Gaza rockets landed in open areas or failed to reach Israeli territory. While it is not clear whether the rocket was fired by Hamas or the Islamic Jihad terrorist group, the Israeli government's policy is to hold the Hamas regime responsible for all rocket attacks emanating from the Gaza Strip.

Israeli Defense Minister Benny Gantz warned Hamas that the Gaza-ruling terrorist organization could face a potentially harsher Israeli response to the ongoing rocket attacks.

"Terror organizations and perpetrators of incitement must remember: It is those whose economic, civilian, and military situation is unstable who will be severely harmed by any unrest," said Gantz in an official statement released by the IDF in Tel Aviv.

In an effort to improve the living conditions in Gaza and to stabilize the border area, Israel reportedly decided in March to increase the number of Gazan work permits from 12,000 to 20,000. The impoverished Gaza Strip, with a population of over two million people, struggles with an unemployment rate

exceeding 50%. While Israel and the international community seek to improve the situation for regular Gazans, the ruling Hamas regime has largely neglected civilian infrastructure in Gaza, instead focusing on developing and strengthening its terrorist capabilities against Israel.

The Israeli defense minister indicated that the Jewish state's humanitarian efforts concerning Gaza are dependent upon preserving a quiet border between Gaza and Israel.

"We will continue to show civil and economic generosity only if security stability is maintained," Gantz said. {eo}

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