

Largest Attack in 7 Months: PIJ in Gaza Launches 20 Rockets at Southern Israel

Islamist terrorists in Gaza launched around 20 rockets at Israeli communities bordering the Gaza Strip on Monday, Israel Defense Forces reported. The Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) terror group claimed responsibility for the attack, the largest barrage launched from Gaza in approximately seven months.

The Iron Dome air defense system intercepted some rockets, while others fell in open areas. The IDF responded with artillery fire at the source of the launches.

The IDF said the rockets were launched from Khan Younis, the neighborhood in southern Gaza where several Hamas leaders, and the location where IDF soldiers operated before its incursion into Rafah.

Senior security officials recently stated they believe that Hamas terrorists and leaders in Gaza, such as Yahya Sinwar and Mohammed Deif, fled from Rafah to Khan Younis at the beginning of the IDF incursion in early June.

Over the past few weeks, IDF troops have been conducting targeted operations with the assistance of military intelligence to locate and destroy terrorist infrastructure, including tunnels and building facilities.

Israeli Defense Minister Yoav Gallant visited troops in Rafah on Sunday evening, where he said the IDF was “shutting off Hamas’ air.”

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"The fighting here in Rafah signifies a very important thing. We are actually shutting off Hamas's air-Rafah crossing, the tunnels," Gallant told the forces. "The result is that they have no way of arming themselves, they have no way to equip themselves, they have no way to bring in reinforcements, they have no way to take care of their casualties, and we see this very well."

Gallant said Hamas is being weakened by continuous IDF operations.

"We are destroying the tunnels, we are destroying the weapons, and reaching places it never dreamed we would reach, at great depths below ground," he said, apparently referring to the underground facilities where Israeli security officials believe Sinwar and other leaders are hiding.

"We will persist and intensify until we reach a situation where we are choking their lifeline and preventing them from rebuilding their strength," Gallant told the soldiers.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, Gallant and IDF Chief-of-Staff Herzi Halevi reportedly discussed the campaign in Rafah on Sunday night, as the IDF is expected to wind down operations within a matter of days.

Israeli news media reported that Egypt has recently intensified efforts to achieve a hostage exchange ceasefire deal between Israel and Hamas. An Israeli news channel cited a senior Egyptian source, who claimed: "Cairo has increased its contacts in the last few hours with Israel and the Palestinian factions to try to overcome the obstacles to a cease-fire agreement."

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Egypt was firmly opposed to any IDF incursion into Rafah and

has protested IDF taking control over the Rafah border crossing. As a peace treaty partner with Israel, Egypt has repeatedly claimed ignorance regarding any tunnels entering its territory from the Gaza side.

However, the IDF claimed it discovered at least 25 tunnels that cross into Egypt, which were allegedly used for smuggling weapons, equipment—and possibly people—between Gaza and Egypt.

The Egyptian source also appeared to refute recent reports about Egypt's possible participation in an Arab peacekeeping force in Gaza when the war ends.

The source said that Cairo refuses "any entry of Egyptian forces into the Gaza Strip" and claimed that "regulating the situation inside the Gaza Strip after the war is an internal Palestinian matter."

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