Man killed, 2 women hurt in direct Gaza rocket hit in Ashkelon

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<https://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-5399726,00.html>

A 48-year-old Palestinian from Hebron was killed and two women were wounded late Monday night when a rocket fired from the Gaza Strip landed on a four-story residential building in Ashkelon.

Hundreds of rockets have been fired from the Gaza Strip at Israel [since Monday](https://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-5398776,00.html), with the Iron Dome missile defense system intercepting about 100 of them.

One rocket hit the back part of a building in the Shimshon (formerly Atikot) neighborhood in Ashkelon at around 11:49pm on Monday, with the fourth flood suffering the brunt of the hit.

Rescue forces extracted an elderly woman, around 60 years old, from the building and evacuated her in critical condition to the Barzilai Medical Center in Ashkelon. After her condition stabilized, she was transferred to the Sheba Medical Center in Tel Hashomer in serious condition. The Police, Fire Department and Magen David Adom paramedics believed there were no more casualties and left the scene, allowing the other residents to return to their homes.

But later, at 1:39am Tuesday, rescue forces were called to the building again by residents who said one of the fourth-floor apartments was not searched. The forces that broke into the apartment found a Palestinian man, Mohammed Abdel Hamid Abu Isbah, and a woman, both in their 40s, embraced in bed in the midst of complete destruction. Their apartment was destroyed, with walls collapsed on top of them. The woman was extracted first and taken in moderate condition to the Barzilai Medical Center. Over an hour later, the body of the man was extracted as well.

The Fire Department said that "because this is a difficult scene with a lot of destruction, firefighting and rescue forces acted to extract several people who were trapped, while at the same time firefighting forces were putting out and cooling gas tanks that were on fire. In such a complex scene, searches are also done on nearby structures until the entire scene is declared clear of casualties.

"During the firefighting and rescue operations, there was another direct hit of a structure far from this scene, and most of the forces were diverted there following information of great destruction and a large number of people trapped and wounded. All firefighting and rescue forces returned immediately upon finishing work on the second direct hit and worked until the last of the trapped people was extracted."

The next morning, residents of the neighborhood complained to Ashkelon Mayor Tomer Glam, who arrived on the scene to survey the damages, that the building had no shelter, while the nearby public shelter was locked and couldn't be accessed.

"We found ourselves helpless and didn't know whether we should go back into the building or just get away," said one of the building's residents. "I feel we've been abandoned. We had nowhere to run, and right now we have nowhere to go, because we're not allowed back into the building for fear its walls would collapse."

The mayor told the residents that while he agrees their building was too old and should be renovated and fitted with a shelter, the city has yet to secure the budget to that end.

"The number of rocket launches is far bigger than last year. Iron Dome intercepted 80-90 percent of the rockets, but despite that there were still five rockets that fell inside the city," Glam told Ynet.

The Yifrach family home in Netivot also suffered a direct hit by a rocket that killed the family dog Chip, tore a hole through the wall, and destroyed the family car.

"People see the damage to the property, but they don't see the mental damage to the family," said Lee Ben-Hemo, a family friend. "They loved the dog very much, it's such a shame he died like this."

"Most homes here don't have safe rooms, so we don't really have anywhere to run to," Ben-Hemo added.

Since Monday afternoon, 10 people were rushed to the Soroka Medical Center in Be'er Sheva: six lightly wounded, most of whom were treated and discharged, and three suffering from shock.

The Barzilai Medical Center received 90 wounded: the two seriously wounded women (with one later being transferred to Sheba), one moderately hurt, 65 lightly wounded and 22 suffering from shock.

In addition, the 19-year-old soldier who was seriously wounded on Monday by a [Cornet anti-tank missile fired at a bus](https://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-5398776,00.html) near the Gaza border underwent surgery at the Soroka Medical Center during the night.

Rocket barrages from the Gaza Strip targeting Ashkelon, Sderot and the Gaza border communities continued on Tuesday morning. Two houses suffered a direct hit in the Eshkol Regional Council, but no one was hurt.

The IDF retaliated by [attacking some 150 Hamas and Islamic Jihad targets in the Gaza Strip](https://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-5399809,00.html). The army also noted that while it is prepared to evacuate residents from the Gaza border area, such a decision has yet to be made.

Hamas's military wing threatened to target Israeli cities Ashdod and Be'er Sheva if the IDF continues attacking civilian targets in Gaza. Islamic Jihad threatened to fire rockets even further away from Ashdod and Be'er Sheva.

"What has been happening since last night and until this morning was part of the traditional response that Israel expects. In the coming hours, something the enemy doesn't expect will come," warned a spokesman for Islamic Jihad. "The continuation of aggression in this manner—the targeting of homes, public places and civilian population centers—will lead the resistance to make the decision to expand the range of response. The resistance has decided that the settlers beyond the cities of Be'er Sheva and Ashdod should remain near shelter."

The Home Front Command instructed residents in communities near the Gaza border, in the southern Negev, some communities in the Lakhish region and in the cities of Netivot, Ofakim, Be'er Sheva and Ashdod to remain near shelters. Public gatherings are forbidden in open spaces in these areas.

School was cancelled in all Gaza border communities, as well as in Be'er Sheva, Omer, Ashkelon, Ashdod, Kiryat Gat, Kiryat Malachi and Gedera.

The municipal elections in the Hof Ashkelon Regional Council, which were supposed to take place on Tuesday, were postponed due to the escalation of hostilities.

Eilat Mayor Meir Yitzhak Halevi instructed the municipality Tuesday to prepare to host of 300 families from the Gaza border communities during the upcoming weekend. The families will be received in hotels and in the homes of Eilat's residents.

The fighting cast doubt over recent understandings brokered by Egypt and UN officials to reduce tensions.

The office of the UN's Mideast envoy, Nickolay Mladenov, said Monday that efforts were underway help "to ensure that Gaza steps back from the brink."

"The escalation in the past 24 hours is EXTREMELY dangerous and reckless," tweeted Mladenov. "Rockets must STOP, restraint must be shown by all!"

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, meanwhile, urged Israel and the Palestinians "to exercise maximum restraint," according to a statement.

The rocket fire was triggered by a [botched IDF raid](https://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-5397926,00.html) in Gaza on Sunday. Undercover troops, apparently on a reconnaissance mission, were discovered inside Gaza on Sunday, setting off a battle that left seven terrorists, including a Hamas commander, and an IDF officer dead.