**IDF kills three Gazans who blow hole in fence, cross border, run at troops**

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<https://www.timesofisrael.com/2-palestinians-reported-killed-in-violent-riots-on-gaza-border/>

Seven Palestinians were killed and at least 252 protesters were injured in intense clashes with Israeli security forces along the Gaza border on Friday afternoon and evening, the Hamas-run health ministry said.

In the most serious incident, in the south of the Strip, the IDF said several Gazans planted a bomb by the fence. After it exploded and blew a hole in the fence, some 20 Palestinians came through and ran toward Israeli soldiers stationed in a snipers’ position.

Most of the Gazans pulled back and returned through the fence into the Strip. However, three continued to move towards soldiers, who fired at them, killing them.

The bodies of the three were taken back into the Strip by the rioters, Hadashot TV said.

“This is a blatant terror attempt that was thwarted by IDF troops quickly and professionally which prevented a possible terror attack against civilians and IDF troops,” the IDF said noting that a knife was found at the scene.

The army said around 15,000 protesters hurled grenades, bombs, firebombs and rocks at Israeli forces at various locations along the border. Hadashot TV reported that for the first time soldiers were also being shot at with crossbows.

Troops responded with riot dispersal means and live fire as needed, the army said.

The Gaza health ministry identified six of the dead as Ahmed Ibrahim Zaki El Tawil, 27, Ahmad Abdullah Abu Naim, 17, Mohammed Abdulhafiz Yusuf Ismail, 29, Afifi Mahmoud Atta, 18, Abdullah Barham Sulaiman al-Daghmah, 25 and Tamer Iyad Mahmoud Abu Rummaneh, 22.

The seventh casualty was not immediate named. The ministry said 154 of the wounded were hit by live fire.

Heavy smoke from burning tires at the Kerem Shalom crossing in the northern Strip prompted authorities in Israel to order residents of the adjacent kibbutz to stay indoors. Ynet said firefighters were putting up large fans throughout the community to help clear the smoke.

Meanwhile, ten fires broke out in southern Israel that were sparked by incendiary balloons launched over the border.

In light of the bomb attack on the fence and the heavy rioting, Defense Minister Avigdor Liberman ordered a halt to the transfer of fuel into the Strip.

The riots have increased in recent weeks, going from a weekly event to near nightly protests since Hamas halted indirect talks with Israel aimed at a ceasefire. The humanitarian crisis in Gaza has also worsened and reconciliation talks with the Palestinian Authority have broken down.

Hamas, an Islamist terror group which rules the Gaza Strip and actively calls for Israel’s destruction, has increased the pace of rioting and demonstrations against Israel, and created new units tasked with sustaining tensions along the border fence including during nighttime and early morning hours.

Almost every evening, thousands of Gazans now gather for violent demonstrations at the Erez crossing and elsewhere, in what is regarded by some as part of Hamas’s attempts to signal to Israel that it wants an economic solution to the Gaza Strip.

At least 140 Palestinians have been killed during the protests since late March, according to AP figures. Hamas has acknowledged that dozens of the fatalities were its members.

In recent days, Qatari-bought fuel has begun entering the Strip to allow operation of its only power station, in a bid to alleviate conditions in the blockaded Palestinian enclave. Hundreds of liters of fuel have since passed into the territory.

Israel has facilitated the delivery over the objections of the Palestinian Authority, hoping it will help ease the months of protests and clashes.

A Qatari official told the Reuters news agency that the $60 million fuel donation came “at the request of donor states in the United Nations, to prevent an escalation of the existing humanitarian disaster.”

For months residents of the strip have been receiving only four hours of electricity a day on average. Jamie McGoldrick, the UN’s resident humanitarian coordinator, told the Reuters news agency the delivery will add a few more hours of electricity to Gaza’s 2 million residents.

Hamas seized control of Gaza from PA President Mahmoud Abbas’s Palestinian Authority in a 2007 near civil war and multiple reconciliation attempts aimed at restoring the PA to power in Gaza have failed.

Abbas says that making deals with Hamas amounts to recognizing their control over Gaza in place of the PA and has sought to block the fuel deliveries. In a statement Tuesday Azzam al-Ahmad, a senior official close to Abbas, threatened retaliatory measures if the fuel deliveries continued.

Abbas has reportedly threatened to cut off funds to Gaza in response to the fuel transfers.

Israel worries the halt of some $96 million that the PA sends monthly to the Gaza Strip could drive a desperate and cash-strapped Hamas toward conflict with Israel as a means of propping up its rule.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said Tuesday that Abbas was exacerbating Gaza woes and thereby fueling its residents’ aggression toward Israel. “Abbas is strangling them economically and they lash out at Israel,” he told a press conference in his Jerusalem office.

Both Israel and Egypt enforce a number of restrictions on the movement of people and goods into and out of Gaza. Israel says the blockade is necessary to keep Hamas and other terror groups in the Strip from arming or building military infrastructure.

On Thursday, the IDF revealed it had uncovered and demolished an attack tunnel that reached from Gaza some 200 meters into Israel.

The tunnel originated in the city of Khan Younis in southern Gaza. It was the 15th tunnel destroyed by Israeli forces since October 2017, according to the IDF.

Israel’s military liaison to the Palestinians, Maj. Gen. Kamil Abu Rokon, accused Hamas of diverting funds for needy Gaza citizens to its terrorist activities.

“Residents of Gaza, see the full picture: Despite your distress, the terrorist organization Hamas continues to invest massive funds in terror instead of taking care of you and developing the civilian infrastructure in the Strip. Instead of using cement, iron and gravel to build schools, playgrounds and hospitals, Hamas uses these materials to build death tunnels of terror,” Abu Rokon said in an Arabic-language Facebook video.