



June 24, 2012

Escalation in Rocket Fire in the South (Update No. 3) (1300 hours, June 24, 2012)



Remains of the rocket which fell near the southern city of Sderot (Photo by Edi Israel for NRG, June 23, 2012)

Overview

1. Despite Hamas' announcement of a ceasefire beginning as of 2300 hours on the night of June 20, **on Friday, June 23 rocket fire attacking Israeli territory was resumed.** On June 23-24, **30 rocket hits were identified.** The Iron Dome aerial defense system successfully intercepted and destroyed several rockets, chiefly those targeting the cities of Sderot, Netivot and Ashqelon (IDF Spokesman, June 23, 2012). **Since the last round of rocket fire escalation began 162 hits were identified in Israeli territory.**

2. In the early morning hours of June 23 a massive rocket barrage was initiated, targeting the areas flanking the Gaza Strip. **A school building in Sderot suffered a direct hit** and was slightly damaged. A rocket hit a nearby factory, seriously injuring a worker, who had to be evacuated to a hospital (IDF Spokesman, June 23, 2012). In

light of the renewal of rocket fire, the IDF Chief of Staff held a meeting to assess the situation, attended by members of the IDF General Staff, including the head of military intelligence and commander of the Israeli Air Force. Afterwards the Chief of Staff toured the area and met with regional commanders and the heads of the local civilian councils (IDF Spokesman, June 23, 2012).

3. On June 22 and 23, as opposed to the first days of the escalation, **some of the smaller terrorist organizations joined Hamas in firing rockets**. So far the Palestinian Islamic Jihad has not joined in firing rockets.

4. On the evening of June 23, Hamas spokesman **Ayman Taha** said that Egypt had brokered a new ceasefire according to which "Israel will stop its aggression" (Safa News Agency, June 23, 2012). **As of the early afternoon of June 24, the region has been relatively quiet.**

Rocket Fire

5. During the current round of escalation **162 rockets fell** in Israeli territory. Between June 21 and 23, **44 rocket hits were identified**. Most of the rockets targeted the civilian population centers flanking the Gaza Strip and the city of Sderot. The Iron Dome aerial defense system intercepted and destroyed eight rockets.

6. The **daily distribution** of rocket fire was as follows:

1) **June 21**: 14 rocket hits identified in Israeli territory

2) **June 22**: two rocket hits

3) **June 23**: 28 rocket hits. A school in Sderot was hit (but not seriously damaged because it was reinforced). A rocket which landed in a nearby factory injured one of the workers.

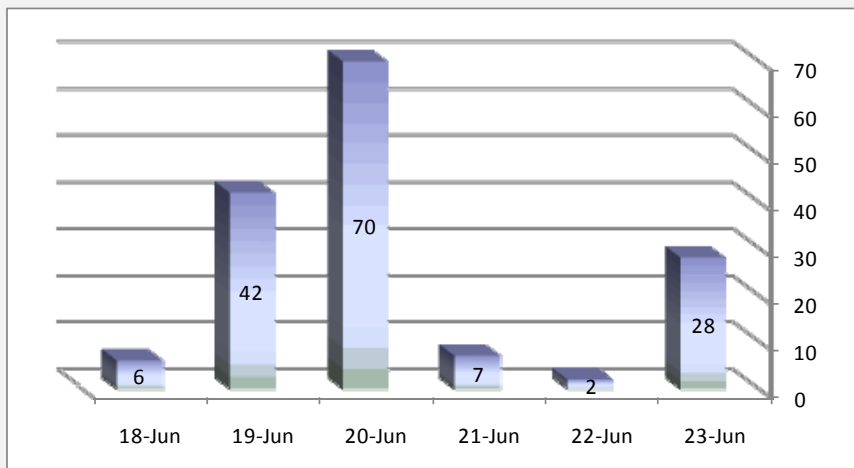


A team of first aid paramedics (Magen David Adom) evacuates the wounded man from the factory in Sderot (Photo by Edi Israel for NRG, June 23, 2012)

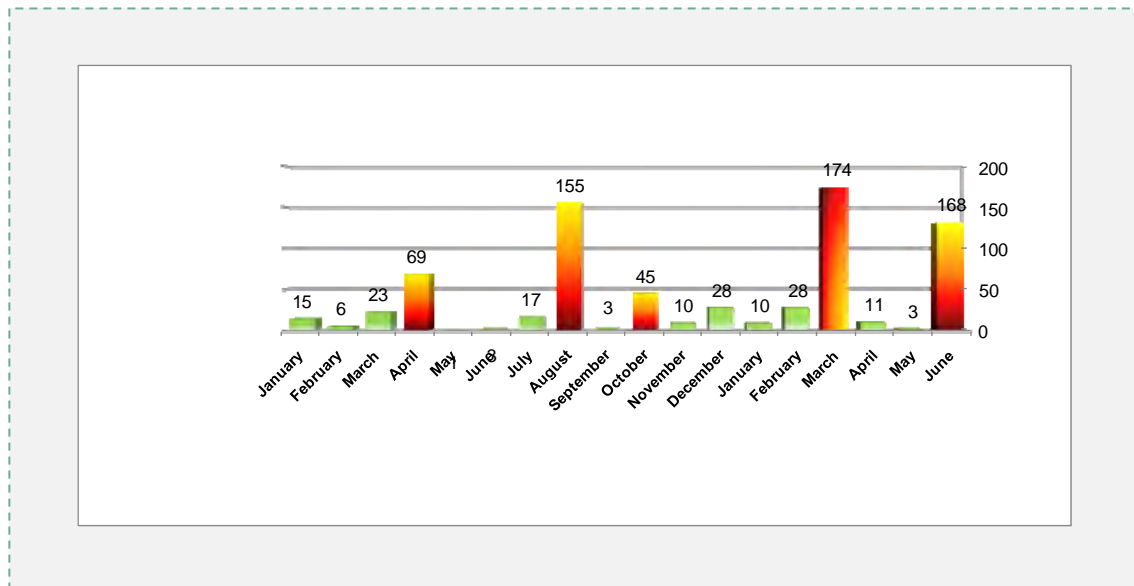


Damage done to the factory near Sderot (Photo by Edi Israel for NRG, June 23, 2012)

Daily Distribution of Rocket Fire during the Current Round of Escalation



Rounds of Escalation since the Beginning of 2011



IDF Response

7. Israeli Air Force aircraft struck terrorist operatives firing rockets and terrorist targets in the Gaza Strip (IDF Spokesman, June 24, 2012):

- 1) On **June 23** in the early afternoon IAF aircraft struck a **terrorist operative in the northern Gaza Strip who was preparing to fire a rocket into Israeli territory**. The Palestinian media reported the death of an operative of the **Popular Resistance Committees'** military-terrorist wing (The PIJ's Paltoday website, Safa News Agency, June 23, 2012).
- 2) On the night of **June 23** IAF aircraft struck **two terrorist bases in the northern Gaza Strip and one in the southern Gaza Strip**. The Palestinian media reported that a child had been killed and that several dozen Palestinians in the Khan Yunis region had been wounded. They also reported that civilians had been wounded in Beit Lahia in the northern Gaza Strip (The PIJ's Paltoday website, June 23, 2012). In addition, it was reported that members of the general security apparatus had been wounded at a training field in its Saraya security compound (Al-Aqsa TV, June 23, 2012).



The aftermath of the IAF strike

3) On **June 22** IAF aircraft struck a **terrorist squad** in the central Gaza Strip which was **preparing to fire rockets into Israeli territory**. Another squad of terrorist operatives was struck after they launched a rocket at Ashqelon from the northern Gaza Strip. The Palestinian media reported one terrorist operative killed and two civilians wounded in the region of Al-Bureij (The PIJ's Paltoday website, June 22, 2012).

Claiming Responsibility and Reactions to the Escalation

8. In the past two days smaller organizations and networks joined the firing of rockets into Israeli territory, among them the **Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine** (Website of the PLFP's terrorist operative wing, June 24, 2012), the **Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine** (Website of the DFLP's terrorist operative wing, June 23, 2012), and other small networks. This time as well, the Palestinian Islamic Jihad did not join in firing rockets.

9. Hamas' media **threaten Israel even as they claim readiness to return to the lull in the fighting**:

1) The **Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades** said in a statement that if the previous round of escalation was insufficient to send the message, Hamas was willing to "crush the enemy's arrogance." According to the statement, Hamas could not ignore Israel's aggression, but its response would be appropriate (Al-Aqsa TV, June 23, 2012).

2) Hamas spokesman **Fawzi Barhoum** said that Israel had become "genuinely hysterical" and was therefore attacking the Gaza Strip with all its weapons. He

added that the Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades had the right to respond to Israeli aggression (Al-Aqsa TV, June 23, 2012).

3) Hamas spokesman **Ayman Taha** said that there was no such thing as a lull in the fighting but merely "restraint on the ground," and that there would be a response to every Israeli violation. He said that Hamas followed the principle of "**bomb in return for bomb and quiet in return for quiet**," and that every action would have an appropriate reaction. He said **Hamas had told the Egyptians that it had no problem returning to the status quo ante of the lull, as long as Israeli honored it** (Al-Hayat, June 22, 2012).

4) A short time before the cease fire went into effect (the evening of June 23) Hamas' military-terrorist wing issued a video in Hebrew threatening to escalate the fighting (Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades website, June 23, 2012).