

# **IDF: Islamic Jihad Carried Out Gaza Mortar Fire in Retaliation for Tunnel Strike**

Up to 12 mortar shells fired at Israeli forces near Gaza border ■ In response, Israeli military strikes six times in Gaza

The Israeli military said Islamic Jihad fired 10 to 12 mortar shells at Israeli forces near the northern Gaza Strip on Thursday in retaliation for an Israeli strike in October on an attack tunnel reaching from Gaza into Israeli territory.

None of the Israeli forces, who were working near the border at the time of the strike, were wounded.

In response to the mortar fire, the Israeli military struck two Hamas positions and two Islamic Jihad positions, with tanks and aircrafts, in northern Gaza. Two Palestinians were lightly wounded in the strikes, according to the Palestinian Health Ministry. Later, the Israeli air force struck a further two military compounds in central Gaza, IDF Spokesman Brig. Gen. Ronen Manelis said.

“We know exactly who carried out this attack,” the army spokesman said. “Today marks exactly one month since the explosion of the tunnel next to Kibbutz Kisufim, and Islamic Jihad decided to avenge the tunnel today. Our estimate is that it is the attack we were anticipating. We know exactly who personally stands behind this attack. When Islamic Jihad doesn’t shoot from the hip it is usually on order from Damascus. What happened here today is an attack that came a month after the tunnel assault. It does not look like a gut reaction.

A Gaza citizen who spoke to Haaretz said that “in recent hours there was an evacuation of [militant] training areas. The Strip is celebrating today, as is the rest of the Islamic world, the holiday of Mawlid marking the birth of Prophet Muhammed.”

Earlier in the day, rocket alarm sirens sounded in Israeli communities near the Gaza border. The Israeli military later said the sirens were a false alarm.

Train lines running between the southern Israeli cities of Ashkelon and Sderot

were temporarily closed following the attack. Defense Minister Avigdor Lieberman and other senior Israeli defense officials have warned since last month's strike on an Islamic Jihad attack tunnel that any attempts at retaliation would be met with a harsh response.

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