Gaza rocket fired toward Israel, falls short of the border

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Terrorists in the Gaza Strip fired a rocket toward Israel on Sunday night, which fell short of the border and landed inside the Palestinian enclave, the Israel Defense Forces said.

The military said the launch triggered alerts in open fields near the security fence.

The attack came less than a week after Israel and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad fought a two-day battle in and around the Strip, in which over 100 rockets and mortar shells were fired at southern Israel and the IDF retaliated with airstrikes against the organization’s facilities in Gaza and — in a highly irregular move — in Syria.

The launch also came less than 12 hours before polls opened in Israel for the country’s 23rd Knesset elections.

Palestinian media reported that the rocket was fired from the Khan Younis area in the southern Gaza Strip.

Last Wednesday, Israel announced it would reopen its border crossings with the Gaza Strip, as well as the coastal enclave’s fishing zone, marking a clear end to the fighting, as a ceasefire with Palestinian terror groups held after the violent exchange.

The fighting was touched off last Sunday morning when Israel killed a member of Islamic Jihad, who the IDF said was planting a bomb along the border, and then sent a tractor into the Strip to retrieve the corpse, in an operation caught on film that angered many in Gaza and around the world.

The retrieval of the corpse was apparently part of Defense Minister Naftali Bennett’s announced plan to “hoard” the corpses of Palestinian terrorists in order to use them as “bargaining chips” in negotiations for the release of two Israeli men, and the remains of two fallen Israeli soldiers, being held by Hamas in the Gaza Strip.

In response, Islamic Jihad and other Gaza terror groups fired approximately 100 rockets and mortar shells into southern Israel. Some 90 percent of the projectiles heading toward populated areas were intercepted by the Iron Dome anti-missile system, according to the IDF, though one managed to slam into a playground in Sderot, and falling shrapnel caused damage elsewhere. There were no serious injuries on the Israeli side.

Israel responded with several rounds of airstrikes in Gaza and Syria, killing at least two more members of the group.

The flareup came amid reports of ongoing efforts by Israel to seal a long-term ceasefire agreement with Gaza terror groups, following weeks of intermittent rocket fire and the regular launching of balloon-borne explosive and incendiary devices into Israel.

The agreement reportedly includes significant measures by Israel to ease its blockade of the Strip, which Jerusalem says is in place to keep terror groups in the Gaza from arming or building up defense infrastructure.

As with an earlier flareup in November following the assassination of a high-level Islamic Jihad commander, Hamas appeared to remain on the sidelines during the latest round of fighting, a likely sign of its desire to reach a long-term truce with Israel that would include measures to end the blockade.

Israel and Hamas have fought three wars and numerous skirmishes since the group seized control of Gaza from the internationally recognized Palestinian Authority in 2007.