IDF releases photos showing terror groups put rocket launchers next to Gaza schools

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<https://www.timesofisrael.com/idf-releases-photos-showing-terror-groups-put-rocket-launchers-next-to-gaza-schools/>

The Israel Defense Forces on Wednesday released photos showing what it said were rocket launch sites that Palestinian terror groups have positioned next to several schools in the Hamas-ruled Gaza Strip.

The IDF released statements in English and Arabic that included satellite photos of three schools in Gaza City, outside which it said rocket launchers have been set up.

“Over 1,000 innocent students attend these schools that Hamas uses for terrorist activities. Hamas purposefully puts civilians and pupils in danger by using them as human shields,” the IDF said.

The military identified two of the launch sites as belonging to Hamas — including one outside a school used as a shelter by the UN agency for Palestinian refugees during emergencies. It attributed a third site to unspecified terrorists.

According to the IDF, the principal of the school used as a shelter by UNRWA was in contact with a Hamas rocket operative ahead of the war in Gaza last May.

“The cynical exploitation of schools proves once again that the terrorist organization consciously chooses to endanger Gazan civilians and use them as ‘human shields’ to benefit their terrorist agenda,” the IDF said in reference to Hamas.

The military did not specify when the satellite photos were taken.

The release of the photos came weeks after UNRWA revealed that it had found a “[man-made cavity](https://www.timesofisrael.com/unrwa-condemns-subterranean-opening-found-beneath-gaza-school/)” underneath a school in Gaza, calling it a violation of international law and a threat to children and staff.

UNRWA did not respond to a request for further information at the time and it wasn’t clear whether the excavation was a tunnel linked to other underground passages or if there were weapons stored inside.

Hamas has dug an extensive network of tunnels under Gaza, which are used to move the Islamist terror group’s forces or store weapons, including rockets and launchers.

Israel has long charged Hamas with hiding weapons and infrastructure in tunnels around schools, hospitals and residential buildings, and tunnels and weapons have been found at UNRWA schools in the past.

In July, the IDF [accused](https://www.timesofisrael.com/idf-exposes-hamas-sites-in-gaza-civilian-areas-in-bid-to-explain-future-strikes/) Hamas of building up military infrastructure in civilian areas and adjacent to schools, mosques and businesses, in an apparent bid to pre-emptively justify collateral damage from any future strikes in the densely populated enclave.