Israeli envoy calls on UN to condemn Hamas over Gaza rocket fire

August 9, 2018

The Times of Israel

<https://www.timesofisrael.com/israeli-envoy-calls-on-un-to-condemn-hamas-over-gaza-rocket-fire/>

Israel’s envoy to the United Nations urged Secretary-General Antonio Guterres and the UN Security Council to denounce Hamas following the firing of over 180 projectiles toward Israeli territory from the Gaza Strip.

In a letter to Guterres and the members of the Security Council, Danny Danon said Hamas, the terror group that rules Gaza, bears sole responsibility for the injuries and damage caused by the rocket and mortar launches.

“Alarms have once again shattered the hope of the children of southern Israel for a quiet summer vacation – no country would tolerate such a situation. The international community must condemn Hamas and place the responsibility for this unacceptable onslaught on the terrorist organization,” wrote Dannon.

“Israel will continue to take all necessary measures to prevent harm to civilians and to protect its sovereignty,” he added.

Earlier Thursday, the UN’s Middle East peace envoy said he was “deeply alarmed” by the flare-up in violence on the Gaza border, singling out rocket fire on southern Israeli communities as a particular concern.

“For months I have been warning that the humanitarian, security and political crisis in Gaza risks a devastating conflict that nobody wants,” Nickolay Mladenov said in a statement, adding the UN has worked with Egypt and others to prevent such an outcome.

“Our collective efforts have prevented the situation from exploding until now,” continued Mladenov. “If the current escalation however is not contained immediately, the situation can rapidly deteriorate with devastating consequences for all people.”

Throughout Wednesday night and Thursday morning, Gaza terror groups fired over 180 rockets and mortar shells at southern Israel, injuring at least seven people and causing damage to homes, businesses, and infrastructure throughout the region, according to the Israel Defense Forces.

In response, the Israeli Air Force struck over 150 Hamas “terror sites” in the Strip, the army said. Palestinian officials said a pregnant woman and her infant daughter were killed in the Israeli strikes, along with one Hamas fighter, who was reportedly in a car used by a rocket-launching Hamas cell that was targeted by an IDF aircraft.

The Hamas-run health ministry named the woman as Aynas Abu Khamash, 23, and her daughter, 18-months-old, as Bayan. According to Ashraf al-Qidra, a spokesman for the ministry, they were killed in an Israeli strike on the central Gaza Strip early Thursday morning. Mohammed Abu Khamash, Aynas’s husband, was seriously injured in the strike, he said.

Lt. Col. Jonathan Conricus, a spokesman for the IDF, said he could not comment on the specific case of the Abu Khamash family, but stressed that the army targeted “only military sites” in its raids.

On Tuesday, Hamas had vowed to avenge the deaths of two of its members killed by IDF tank fire after the army mistakenly thought a Hamas military exercise had been a cross-border attack. On Wednesday afternoon, the military warned that it was anticipating a revenge attack by Hamas.

Though the frequency of rocket attacks declined by Thursday afternoon, a projectile launched from Gaza landed north of the southern city of Beersheba, some 40 kilometers (25 miles) from the Strip. This was the first attack directed against Beersheba since the 2014 war, known in Israel as Operation Protective Edge.

Hours later, Israeli jets flattened a building in Gaza City that the army said served as headquarters for the Hamas internal security service. Eighteen Palestinians were wounded in the Israeli strike, according to the Hamas-run Gaza health ministry. The degree of their injuries was not immediately known.