20 fires break out in south due to incendiary balloons

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Around 20 fires broke out on Thursday in various areas in south Israel along the Gaza border due to incendiary balloons being flown from the strip, with the largest conflagration erupting in Kibbutz Be'eri and Kibbutz Alumim.

Fires also broke out throughout the course of the day in the Regional Councils of Eshkol, Sedot Negev and Sha'ar HaNegev, as well as in several nature reserves, costing the lives of many animals.

Reptile carcasses were found in the areas that had been incinerated by the flame.

Firefighters, along with local security coordinators and volunteers, were still battling to extinguish the flames by the late evening.

Residents of the Gaza border communities are demanding that the IDF and the defense establishment put a stop to the phenomenon of incendiary kites and balloons, which has been wreaking havoc in the area for the last three months and which has burned more than 30,000 acres of land.

One Kibbutz Be’eri resident explained how the community reacts each time fires are spotted in the area.

“We have an observation post on one of the roofs and we do shifts to guard the area. Once we notice a fire, we deploy our forces there. We work in cooperation with the Nature and Parks Authority and Keren Kayemet," he said.

“Our forces are mainly us, the residents ... if we won’t do it then no one will. The communities’ security coordinators are working overtime. We’re using all of our agricultural tools in order to stop fires from spreading. It has turned into an actual war,” vented the resident.

Racheli, a Kibbutz Alumim local described the events saying “Heavy smoke has covered the Kibbutz. It’s suffocating. It has become a part of our daily life and it’s unbearable.”