

Greek Foreign Ministry condemns attack on Israel



The Greek Foreign Ministry has strongly condemned the rocket attacks against Israel, saying it stands with the country.

“Greece strongly condemns today’s launch of heavy rocket attacks from Gaza against Israel. Greece stands with Israel and is deeply concerned by this unacceptable escalation of violence,” the ministry wrote on X, formerly known as Twitter.

In what is the biggest attack on Israel in years, the Palestinian Islamist movement Hamas launched on Saturday in a surprise assault that combined gunmen crossing the border with a heavy barrage of rockets fired from the Gaza Strip.

As warning sirens sounded across southern and central Israel, including in Jerusalem, Israel’s military said it was on a war footing as Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu called an emergency meeting of security officials.

Saturday's incident marked an unprecedented infiltration by Hamas gunmen into Israel from Gaza, and was the most serious escalation since Israel and Hamas fought a 10-day war in 2021.

Israeli media reported gunbattles between bands of Palestinian fighters and security forces in towns in southern Israel. In Gaza, people rushed to buy supplies in anticipation of days of conflict ahead.

Hamas military commander Mohammad Deif announced the start of the operation in a broadcast on Hamas media, calling on Palestinians everywhere to fight.

"This is the day of the greatest battle to end the last occupation on earth," he said, adding that 5,000 rockets had been launched.

One Israeli woman was killed, according to emergency services, as ambulance crews were deployed in areas around the Gaza Strip.

The Israeli military said its forces were operating inside Gaza but gave no details.

"A number of terrorists have infiltrated into Israeli territory from the Gaza Strip," the military said in a statement, adding that residents in the area surrounding the Gaza Strip had been told to stay in their homes.

Israeli media reported that gunmen had opened fire on passers-by in the town of Sderot, in southern Israel, and footage circulating on social media appeared to show clashes in city streets as well as gunmen in jeeps roaming the countryside.

"We were told there are terrorists inside the kibbutz, we can hear gunfire," a young woman named Dvir, from Beeri Kibbutz, told Israeli Army Radio from her bomb shelter.

Palestinian media also reported that a number of Israelis had been taken captive by fighters and Hamas media circulated video footage apparently showing a destroyed Israeli tank.

The Israeli military was aware of reports of captives, a security source said, but provided no further details.

Netanyahu's office said he would meet top security officials in the coming hours and Defence Minister Yoav Gallant authorised the call-up of reservists.

In Gaza the roar of rocket launches could be heard and residents reported armed clashes along the separation fence with Israel, near the southern town of Khan

Younis, and said they had seen significant movement of armed fighters.

Israel's ambulance service said teams had been dispatched to areas in southern Israel near Gaza and residents were warned to stay inside.

A group representing military reservists who had planned to refuse to attend training over their objections to the government's plans to overhaul the judiciary called on reservists to report for duty.

The Palestinian Islamic Jihad group said its fighters were joining Hamas in the attack.

"We are part of this battle, our fighters are side-by-side with their brothers in the Qassam Brigades until victory is achieved," said Islamic Jihad armed wing spokesman Abu Hamza on a post on Telegram.

Palestinians in Gaza expressed disbelief at the infiltration into Israel. "It is like a dream. I still can't believe it, fighters inside our occupied land?" said one Gaza shopkeeper.

The attack came a day after Israel marked the 50th anniversary of the 1973 war that brought the country to the verge of catastrophic defeat it a surprise attack by Syria and Egypt.

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