

IERUSALIM (AP) - aeronavele israelian au efectuat operatiuni de lansare de rachete catre militanții din Gaza vineri - devreme , si au masat trupele, tancuri și transportoare blindate în apropierea teritoriului palestinian, actiuni ce semnalizeaza o posibila invazie la sol în cel mai scurt timp.



Conflictul între cele două părți a escaladat puternic joi, cu un atac primul-vreodată militant pe zona din Tel Aviv, Israel .

Nu s-au raportat victime acolo, dar trei persoane au murit în țara când un proiectil a lovit-o clădire apartament.

Numărul morților în teritoriul palestinian dens populată a urcat la 19, inclusiv cinci copii, potrivit oficialilor palestinieni de sănătate, ca valuri de avioane de luptă israeliene și trântori trimis rachete hurtling în jos, pe la magazine de arme și rachete suspectate-lansare site-uri.

Early Friday, 85 missiles exploded within 45 minutes in Gaza City, sending black pillars of smoke towering above the coastal strip's largest city. The military said it was targeting underground rocket launching sites.

One missile hit the Interior Ministry, a symbol of Hamas power, and another hit an empty house belonging to a senior Hamas commander. Those strikes, together with an attack on a generator building near the home of Gaza's Hamas prime minister, Ismail Haniyeh, signaled that Israel was expanding its offensive beyond military targets.

The fighting has already widened the instability gripping a region in the throes of war and regime upheavals. It has straining already frayed relations with Egypt, which was sending its prime minister to Gaza later Friday in a show of solidarity with its militant Hamas rulers.

Israel and Hamas had largely observed an informal truce since Israel's devastating incursion into Gaza four years ago, but rocket fire and Israeli airstrikes on militant operations didn't halt entirely. The latest flare-up exploded into major violence Wednesday when Israel assassinated Hamas' military chief, following up with a punishing air assault meant to cripple the militants' ability to terrorize Israel with rockets.

The Israeli military reported early Friday that its aircraft had struck more than 350 targets since the beginning of its operation against Hamas' rocket operations.

After nightfall Thursday, several explosions shook Gaza City several minutes apart, a sign the strikes were not letting up. The military said the targets were about 70 underground

rocket-launching sites.

The Israeli offensive has not deterred the militants from striking back with more than 400 rockets aimed at southern Israel. For the first time, they also unleashed the most powerful weapons in their arsenal — Iranian-made Fajr-5 rockets capable of reaching Tel Aviv.

The two rockets that struck closest to Tel Aviv appear to have landed in the Mediterranean Sea, defense officials said, and another hit an open area on Tel Aviv's southern outskirts.

No injuries were reported, but the rocket fire — the first in the area from Gaza — sowed panic in Tel Aviv and made the prospect of a ground incursion more likely. The government later approved the mobilization of up to 30,000 reservists for a possible invasion.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said the army was hitting Hamas hard with what he called surgical strikes, and warned of a "significant widening" of the Gaza operation. Israel will "continue to take whatever action is necessary to defend our people," said Netanyahu, who is up for re-election in January.

At least 12 trucks were seen transporting tanks and armored personnel carriers toward Gaza late Thursday, and buses carrying soldiers headed toward the border area. Israeli TV stations said a Gaza operation was expected on Friday, though military officials said no decision had been made.

"We will continue the attacks and we will increase the attacks, and I believe we will obtain our objectives," said Lt. Gen. Benny Gantz, Israel's military chief.

An Israeli ground offensive could be costly to both sides. In the last Gaza war, Israel devastated large areas of the territory, setting back Hamas' fighting capabilities but also paying the price of increasing diplomatic isolation because of a civilian death toll numbering in the hundreds.

The current round of fighting is reminiscent of the first days of that three-week offensive against Hamas. Israel also caught Hamas off guard then with a barrage of missile strikes and threatened to follow up with a ground offensive.

Much has changed since then.

Israel has improved its missile defense systems, but it is facing a more heavily armed Hamas. Israel estimates the militants have 12,000 rockets, including more sophisticated weapons from Iran and from Libyan stockpiles plundered after the fall of Moammar Gadhafi's regime there last year.

Also, regional alignments have changed dramatically since the last Gaza war. Hamas has emerged from its political isolation as its parent movement, the region-wide Muslim Brotherhood, has risen to power in several countries in the wake of last year's Arab uprisings, particularly in Egypt.

Egypt recalled its ambassador to protest the Israeli offensive and ordered its prime minister to lead a senior delegation to Gaza on Friday in a show of support for Hamas.

At the same time, while relations with Israel have cooled since the toppling of longtime Egyptian leader Hosni Mubarak, Islamist President Mohammed Morsi has not brought a radical change in Egypt's policy toward Israel. He has promised to abide by Egypt's 1979 peace deal with Israel and his government has continued contacts with Israel through its non-Brotherhood members.

Laub reported from Gaza City, Gaza Strip.

** sursa :Associated Press