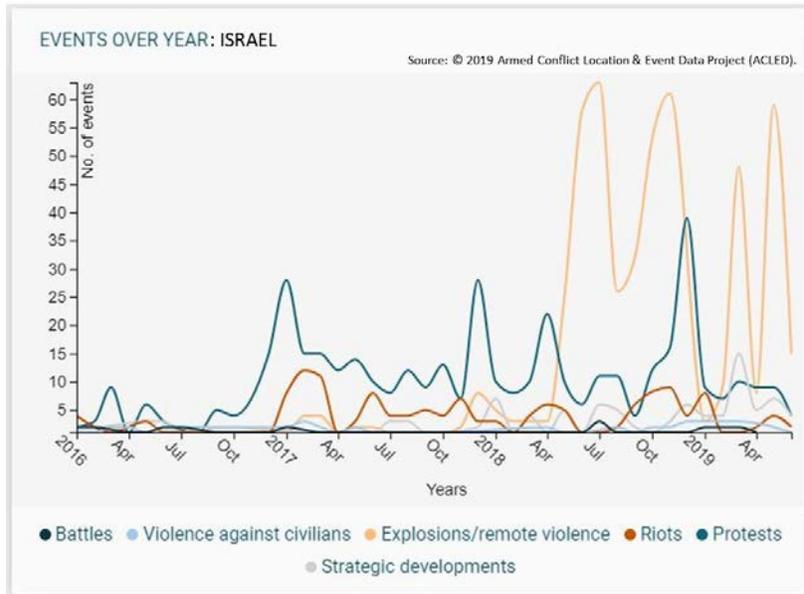# Air Raid Sirens in Israel

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Indirect fire, rockets, and mortars from surrounding actors have enough range to reach most major cities in Israel, with those in bordering areas at the highest risk. Israel employs an air raid siren system that activates in the event of rocket fire, but sirens don't always signal incoming fire – they are also used to commemorate important holidays. This report will help distinguish sirens for travelers unfamiliar with the area, as well as give important tips on what to do when you hear a siren, and how you may be able to gain valuable seconds to get your personnel to safety in case of danger.

ISRAEL'S AIR RAID SIRENS

In June 2019, Israel upgraded its air raid alert system to be city-specific rather than regional, in an effort to minimize unnecessary panic and forestall message fatigue. The army announced that this upgrade now divides the country into 1,700 smaller alarm zones, up from the 255 regional alarm zones used previously.

Over the past year, Israel experienced an increase in threat of explosions and remote violence due to terrorism compared to 2016 and 2017. Indirect fire, rockets, and mortars launched from Gaza and the West Bank have enough range to reach most major cities in Israel, with those in border areas at the highest risk. (There is also the possibility of rocket fire from Lebanon, primarily by Hizb'allah, but there have only been a small number of such incidents in the last dozen years.)

In the year following March 2018 when the weekly "March of the Return" protests began in Gaza, Israel has seen over 2,000 violent incidents along the border. These include 1,233 rocket and mortar launches, 18 incidents of gunfire, 94 IED incidents, 600 Molotov cocktails, and 152 arson/airborne object incidents in areas near Israel's fence with Gaza as reported by Israel's Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The current State Department Travel Advisory for Israel, including Jerusalem, is Level 2, indicating travelers should exercise increased caution due to terrorism. There is a higher advisory level in the West Bank, where the Level 3 indicates travelers should reconsider their necessity to travel due to terrorism and the potential for violent civil unrest and armed conflict. The State Department urges travelers not to travel to Gaza, which it places at Level 4 due to terrorism, civil unrest, and armed conflict.
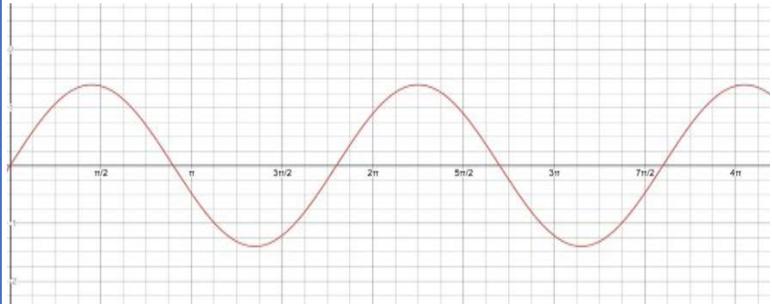
TYPES OF SIRENS

A typical air raid siren tower in Israel.

There are two types of sirens you may hear in Israel. In an effort to decipher them for travelers unfamiliar with the area, OSAC encourages security managers to share these differences with staff members on the ground.
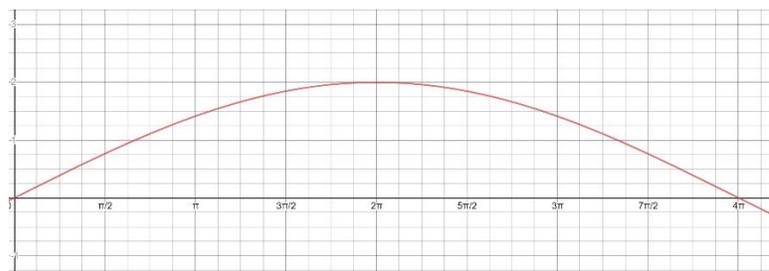
- *Air Raid Sirens ("Az'aka")*

These sirens usually indicate a missile attack or air raid, and consist of a **continuous ascending and descending tone.** These alerts are also called "Red Alert" sirens. ([audio clip](#))

- *All Clear Signal ("Tzfirat Harga'ah")*

This is a **continuous single-pitch sound** that gives the "all-clear" signal. It **also sounds <u>once</u> on Holocaust Remembrance Day (Yom Hashoah) and <u>twice</u> on the National Memorial Day (Yom Hazikaron).** ([audio clip](#))

SAFETY PROCEDURES IN EVENT OF SIREN:

Time between hearing siren and rocket landing (when launched from Gaza)

Source: AIPAC

See below for official guidance from the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) Home Front Command website. (Some networks may block this website.)

- *If you are in a building:*
Head immediately to a secure room or a shelter. If there aren't any in the building find a staircase or an inner room with the least external walls. Close all doors and windows.

- *If you are outside:*
Head immediately to a shelter or building nearby. If you are in an open area, lie on the ground and cover your head with your hands.

- *If you are driving:*
Pull over to the side of the road, exit the vehicle and enter a nearby building or shelter. If you cannot reach a building or shelter, leave the vehicle, lie on the ground and cover your head with your hands.

- *If you are on a bus:*
On intercity roads, the driver will pull over to the side of the road and open the doors. Get out of the bus, bend down below the line of windows and cover your head with hands.

On city streets, the driver will stop at the side of the road and open the doors. Passengers should leave if there is a nearby building.

- *If you are on a train:*
The train driver must slow down the train to 30 mph for 10 minutes, bend your head under the line of the windows and cover your head with your hands.

Additional Procedures:

- In all cases, stay in the protected area for ten minutes after the last siren and/or red alert on Home Front Command application for your area.
- If you see a rocket or parts of it on the ground, stay far away and prevent others from approaching. Notify the Home Front Command immediately by calling: **104**.
- Do not linger in the area, as there is a danger of additional rockets landing in the same location.

APPS FOR MONITORING SIRENS

The IDF deploys a multi-touchpoint siren system that broadcasts simultaneously over radio, TV, and the IDF Home Front Command website and app. Several apps exist that provide real-time alerts and updates on air raids to your smart phone. The apps will clarify the nature and location of any sirens. Here are some popular apps for monitoring air raids in Israel and a summary of their features:

- **Home Front Command** – The only official IDF app, this has the capability to track users using their GPS location and only notify them of alerts happening in their area. A recent update allows users to add multiple areas to receive alerts. Previously, the notification coverage area was limited to three zones. This app includes written and visual safety resources on what you should do in the event of an air raid. The app is available in six languages: English, Arabic, French, German, Hebrew, and Russian. It is available on Apple and Android devices.

The following are popularly-used private third-party apps. The IDF announced it will no longer allow third-party apps to access the government's rocket and missile data for alert usage for fear of misinformation. While the apps remain functional at this time, they often do not provide real time information due to loss of support from the IDF. As such, they may be useful for situational awareness of rocket attacks, but may not activate in time to allow users to respond to an attack.

- **RedAlert** – Available on Google Play and the App Store, it is available in multiple languages, including English. Users can click on an alert to see a map of the location.
- **Red Alert: Israel** – This app is also available in English and includes a radio function so users can listen in to radio coverage about the attacks.
- **Rocket Alert!** – This app is only available for Android devices, and includes push notifications and details about whether the sirens are alerting the presence of rockets or if the signal is "all clear." This app is available in Hebrew and English, though the English version features only rough translations.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Israeli Emergency numbers and email contact information:

- Police – 100; listen@police.gov.il
- Ambulance – 101
- Israel Fire and Rescue Services – 102; mashlat@mops.gov.il
- West Bank and Gaza Fire and Rescue Services – 103
- Home Front Command – 104
- Ministry of Social Affairs and Social Services – 118; minag@molsa.gov.il

For more information, contact OSAC's Middle East & North Africa Team and consult with the following resources:

- OSAC Crime and Safety Report for Israel
- OSAC Israel Country Page
- U.S. Department of State Travel Advisory for Israel
- U.S. Department of State Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP)
- Israel Country Specific Information Page – Bureau of Consular Affairs
- IDF's Home Front Command website.