

Exposure to rocket attacks in Israel increases adolescent violence, study says

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Chronic exposure to rocket attacks launched from the Gaza Strip into Israel is causing an increase in severe adolescent violence, according to a new study by Ben-Gurion University of the Negev (BGU) researchers.

Provided by American Associates, Ben-Gurion University of the Negev

The study, published in the *Journal of the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry (JAACAP)*, followed 362 Israeli adolescents from the southwestern Negev from 2008 to 2011, and conducted annual assessments of exposure to rocket attacks, [symptoms of depression](#) and anxiety, as well as acts of violence.

"This is the first study to prospectively examine adolescents' internal and external symptoms due to exposure to rocket attacks over the course of several years," says Prof. Golan Shahar of BGU's Department of Psychology.

Levels of severe violence, which were relatively low at the beginning of the study, have risen as a result of long-term exposure to rocket attacks, so much so that the rate of the increase in violent acts can now be predicted after each attack.

"The main finding of our study was that prolonged [exposure](#) to rocket attacks predicted a steep increase in violent incidents reported by the [adolescent](#) participants," says Prof. Shahar. "Some incidents resulted in physical fights that required medical treatment, as well as gang fights, and arrests for [violent crimes](#), carrying knives or other weapons."

The findings have potentially global public health implications for healthy youth development in politically unstable regions, particularly within the Israeli-Palestinian context.

"These findings should serve as a red flag for health care practitioners in civil areas afflicted by terrorism and political [violence](#)," Shahar says.

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