

Palestinian killed in Gaza smuggling-tunnel collapse

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A Palestinian man was killed and two injured on Sunday when a smuggling tunnel under the Gaza Strip's border with Egypt collapsed, according to medics and witnesses

Ismail Abu Jaldan, 20, died of suffocation when a tunnel under the border at the divided town of Rafah collapsed on him, Moaweya Hassanein, chief of emergency services in the Hamas-run government of the Gaza Strip, told reporters. Two other men were injured in the accident, he said.

Residents on the Palestinian side of the town said rescue teams rushed to the scene after the tunnel collapsed and pulled out two survivors, both badly injured.

They speculated that the tunnel may have been weakened by Israeli airstrikes on the border region three days ago, which were apparently in retaliation for the launch of homemade rockets from the Gaza Strip at Israel.

A lucrative smuggling trade in basic commodities, drugs and weapons has taken root in the town since Israel and Egypt imposed a blockade on the Gaza Strip after Hamas security forces took control of the territory in June 2007.

Gaza-based human rights groups have said that more than 120 workers have been killed in tunnel collapses on the border in the past two years.

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