

Israel steps up genocidal attacks on Gaza while claiming push for ceasefire



Gaza City, January 12 (RHC)-- At least eight people have been killed in an Israeli attack on a school sheltering displaced Palestinians in northern Gaza, as Israel sent several senior officials for talks on a potential ceasefire.

An Israeli attack on Saturday hit the Zainab al-Wazir school in northern Gaza's Jabalia al-Balad area, killing eight civilians, including two women and two children, according to the Palestinian civil emergency service.

"The Israelis have targeted us without any prior warning," a mother told Al Jazeera, as she searched through the debris. "They attacked us with a missile. I don't know where our children are. I don't know

anything about them, whether they're wounded or killed."

Al Jazeera's Moath al-Kahlout described the scenes at al-Ahli Hospital in Gaza City, where dozens of the wounded were taken, as "bloody" and "dire", noting the dearth of medical supplies under Israel's ongoing siege of northern Gaza, which has been in place for more than 80 days.

Later on Saturday, the official Palestinian news agency Wafa reported strikes on various locations across Gaza, including an attack on a house in the Daraj neighbourhood in Gaza City, which killed four Palestinians and wounded several others.

Israeli fighter jets also bombed a tent sheltering displaced families in Deir el-Balah, located in the centre of the enclave, killing three people, Wafa reported.

Additional strikes reportedly killed one person near the Bureij refugee camp, also in central Gaza, and another in the southern town of Khan Younis.

The intensified attacks came as Egypt, Qatar and the United States made renewed efforts to reach a deal to halt fighting in Gaza and free remaining Israeli captives in exchange for Palestinian prisoners held in Israeli jails.

On Saturday, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu met President-elect Donald Trump's incoming special envoy to the Middle East, Steve Witkoff, who had travelled to Qatar earlier in the week.

Witkoff had reassured Egyptian and Qatari mediators that the U.S. would continue to work towards a "fair deal" to end the war soon, said Egyptian security sources cited by news agency Reuters.

After the meeting, Netanyahu dispatched a high-level delegation, including the head of the Israeli Mossad intelligence agency, to Qatar in order to "advance" talks, according to a statement from Netanyahu's office.

"There are a lot of moving parts here," said Al Jazeera's Hamdah Salhut, reporting from the Jordanian capital, Amman. "Donald Trump said that he would be quite aggressive in trying to get a ceasefire if it didn't happen before he took office ... But you have to remember that there are tough sticking points on each side," she said.

"The Israelis say that they're not going to end the war, and Hamas says that they want to see a comprehensive ceasefire that sees an end to the war and a withdrawal of Israeli troops.

"And you also have the Israeli public, which is constantly demonstrating against Benjamin Netanyahu, against the Israeli government, saying that he's neither capable nor willing to make a deal fifteen months into this war," she said.

Families of Israeli captives welcomed Netanyahu's decision to dispatch the officials, with the Hostages and Missing Families Forum Headquarters describing it as an "historic opportunity."

As mediators prepare for more ceasefire talks, Al Jazeera's Hind Khoudary said that Palestinians under attack in Gaza were also contending with severe food shortages, with Israel continuing to ignore United Nations demands on lifting its restrictions on supplies entering the Strip.

"We're seeing children with empty pots every single day searching for community kitchens, talking with families saying they are barely able to feed their children one meal per day," said Khoudary, reporting from Deir el-Balah. "It's not only the continuous air strikes, but also malnutrition is killing Palestinians in the Gaza Strip," she said.

Vibe Klarup, head of Amnesty Denmark, said that Israel was clearly committing genocide. “When we say Israel is committing genocide, it is not an opinion, it’s a conclusion on the basis of a legal, thorough analysis,” she told The European Palestinian Network conference in Copenhagen.

“It is increasingly impossible to stay alive in the Gaza Strip ... Our role as people is to stop the genocide,” she added.

At least 46,537 people have been killed in Israel’s war on Gaza since October 7, 2023, according to Palestinian health authorities.

[SOURCE: AL JAZEERA and NEWS AGENCIES]

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