

Israeli attacks on three Gaza schools sheltering displaced Palestinians kill 33



A Palestinian boy wounded in an Israeli strike is carried to treatment at Nasser Hospital in Khan Younis in the southern Gaza Strip [Hatem Khaled/Reuters]
At least 18 children among those killed in Gaza City at three schools-turned-shelters for families.

Gaza City, April 4 (RHC)-- At least 33 Palestinians have been killed and more than 100 wounded in Israeli air attacks on three schools housing displaced people in the Tuffah neighbourhood of Gaza City, according to local officials.

Gaza's Government Media Office said in a statement that 29 people – including 18 children – were killed and more than 100 were injured when Israeli air raids hit the Dar al-Arqam School-turned-shelter on Thursday. The school was hit with at least four missiles, a Civil Defence spokesperson said.

Sources told Al Jazeera that at least four people also were killed in an Israeli attack on the Fahd School in the same area of Gaza City, which was also sheltering displaced families.

Israeli forces also reportedly hit Shaaban Alrayyes school in Tuffah, although no figures on casualties were immediately available.

The Israeli military said it struck a command centre in Gaza City that had been used by Hamas fighters to plan and execute attacks against Israeli civilians and soldiers. It was unclear whether it was the same attack that targeted a school.

Israeli forces have routinely targeted shelters in the Gaza Strip that house displaced families who have nowhere to flee and remain trapped in the besieged enclave, which is being heavily bombarded.

Al Jazeera's Hani Mahmoud, reporting from Gaza City, said the footage from the site of the bombing at Dar al-Arqam School was "horrific." "Some of the footage is too graphic to show – horrific and deeply disturbing. Many were killed on the spot while others succumbed to their injuries while being transported in ambulances or civilian vehicles to al-Ahli Hospital," Mahmoud said. "This tragedy underscores again that Israeli-described 'safe zones' are anything but," he added.

A spokesperson from Gaza's emergency rescue workers told Al Jazeera the international community must step in immediately to stop the Israeli army from killing Palestinians. "What is going on here is a wake-up call to the entire world. This war and these massacres against women and children must stop immediately. Children are being killed with cold blood here in Gaza," he said.

Medical sources told Al Jazeera that at least 112 people have been killed in Israeli attacks on the Gaza Strip since dawn on Thursday with 71 people killed in Gaza City and many others killed in attacks on the southern city of Khan Younis.

In Gaza City, 21 bodies were taken to al-Ahli Arab Hospital, including those of seven children. Officials in Khan Younis said the bodies of 14 people had been taken to Nasser Hospital – nine of them from the same family. Those killed included five children and four women.

The bodies of another 19 people, including five children aged one to seven years and a pregnant woman, were taken to the European Gaza Hospital near Khan Younis, hospital officials said.

The Government Media Office warned that Civil Defence crews are finding it increasingly difficult to remove people from under the rubble without adequate equipment and vehicles and while the healthcare sector is collapsing.

Israel has imposed a monthlong total siege on Gaza, sealing vital crossings and banning the entry of all humanitarian aid, including food, fuel and medical supplies – leaving Palestinians in Gaza with acute shortages and exacerbating an already dire humanitarian catastrophe.

Meanwhile, hundreds of thousands of fleeing families sought shelter in one of the biggest displacements of the war on Thursday as Israeli forces advanced into the ruins of Gaza's southernmost city of Rafah – part of a newly announced "security zone" they intend to seize.

The Israeli army's assault to capture Rafah is a major escalation in the war after Israel broke a ceasefire with Hamas on March 18 and resumed its attacks on Gaza. Israeli forces on Thursday pushed into the city, which had served as a last refuge for people fleeing other areas for much of the war.

Rafah "is gone. It is being wiped out," a father of seven told the Reuters news agency. He was among the hundreds of thousands of people who had fled from Rafah to neighbouring Khan Younis. "They are knocking down what is left standing of houses and property."

Separately, the Israeli military on Thursday issued new orders to residents in parts of central Gaza, telling them to move west towards Gaza City and saying it planned to "work with extreme force in your area."

Many Palestinians leaving the targeted area did so on foot with some carrying their belongings on their backs and others using donkey carts. "My wife and I have been walking for three hours, covering only 1km [0.6 miles]," Mohammad Ermana, 72, told The Associated Press news agency. The couple, clasping hands, each walked with a cane. "I'm searching for shelters every hour now, not every day," he said.

Also on Thursday, Israel's military said it was conducting an investigation into the deaths of 15 Palestinian aid workers found buried in a shallow grave in March near Red Crescent vehicles, an incident that caused global alarm.

Earlier on Thursday, the Ministry of Health in Hamas-run Gaza said 1,163 people had been killed in the Palestinian territory since fighting resumed on March 18 after a six-week ceasefire.

More than 50,500 Palestinians have been killed by Israeli forces in Gaza since the start of the war in October 2023 and at least 114,000 have been wounded.

[SOURCE: AL JAZEERA and NEWS AGENCIES]

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