

Israel kills over 100 in Gaza as Palestinians mark another anniversary of 1948 Nakba



Beit Lahiya, May 15 (RHC)-- At least 115 Palestinians, mostly women and children, have been killed in a wave of Israeli attacks across the Gaza Strip, as indirect ceasefire talks between Israel and Hamas continue.

Over 60 people were killed overnight and early on Thursday in a barrage of attacks on the southern Gaza city of Khan Younis, according to local health officials. In Jabalia in northern Gaza, an Israeli strike on Al-Tawba medical clinic killed at least 15 people and wounded several others, the health ministry said.

This comes as Palestinians mark the 77th anniversary of the Nakba, or catastrophe, when more than 750,000 Palestinians were forcibly expelled by Zionist paramilitary groups during the creation of Israel in 1948.

Al Jazeera's Tareq Abu Azzoum, reporting from Deir el-Balah, described "another bloody day" in Gaza, as Israel intensified its air attacks on residential areas. "Israeli warplanes directly targeted nine houses without any warning in the city of Khan Younis," he said, adding that entire families were "completely wiped out".

He described the situation as chaotic, with civilians fleeing repeated forced evacuation orders. "The Israeli military targeted civilians while they were asleep," launching 13 air raids on the Jabalia refugee camp and nearby areas. Civil defence teams, he added, are overwhelmed and struggling to rescue those trapped under the rubble, due to a lack of equipment.

Abu Azzoum said the strikes reflect a "pattern of attacks not aimed at military targets, but at systematically destroying Gaza's social fabric".

The latest killings have triggered new waves of displacement. Thousands fled Gaza City on Thursday after the Israeli military issued sudden forced evacuation orders the day before.

Al Jazeera's Hani Mahmoud reported scenes of panic and fear as residents packed their belongings and tried to escape the expected onslaught. "We're seeing families carrying their belongings and taking to the streets," Mahmoud said. "The children and elderly are carrying whatever they're able to carry ... They don't know where to go. There is no safe place for these people – the so-called shelters have already been destroyed by Israeli bombs."

Speaking to Al Jazeera, displaced Palestinian Hasan Moqbel described the continuing assault as a war on civilians. "They have been bombing Gaza for 19 months. What's left in Gaza? Innocent children are dying. There is no armed activity here. Most of them are elderly people who are dying," he said.

On the wider mood in Gaza on Nakba Day, Abu Azzoum said people are "deeply worried" about a potential expansion of Israeli ground operations. "They believe the Israeli army may force them to flee again – to new areas where conditions are even worse." Despite international diplomacy, "there is no sign of a slowdown on the ground," he warned.

Elsewhere in the region, President Donald Trump concluded a visit to Qatar on Thursday, where Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani urged the leader of the United States to use his influence to help secure a ceasefire in Gaza.

"Our teams are engaged in intensive diplomacy to secure a ceasefire in Gaza to protect all civilians, especially innocent women and children, and ensure the release of all hostages," Al Thani said during a state dinner on Wednesday.

"This conflict is the key to wider stability in the region. From the West Bank to Yemen to Lebanon, and time is short," the Qatari leader said.

"Mr President, your involvement could catalyse a breakthrough where others have stalled. But only if done in concert with serious partners ... The United States brings power, leverage, and global weight. If we act together, we have a real shot at ending the bloodshed and restoring regional confidence," he added.

Trump on Thursday reiterated his radical vision for the future of Gaza, suggesting Washington should take control of the besieged territory. “I have concepts for Gaza that I think are very good, make it a freedom zone, let the United States get involved and make it just a freedom zone,” he said. “I’d be proud to have the United States have it, take it, make it a freedom zone.”

Trump’s comments come as Israel’s war on Gaza continues to escalate, with the enclave suffering unprecedented levels of destruction and civilian casualties.

The U.S. special envoy to the Middle East, Steve Witkoff, spoke to Al Jazeera’s diplomatic editor James Bays this week and “painted a positive picture on a deal on Gaza”, with a potential agreement being reached “pretty soon.”

When asked whether Witkoff was referring only to aid access – given that aid is currently completely blocked for the people of Gaza, with no food or medicine getting in – or to a ceasefire, he replied, “all of it, I’m positive about all that.”

‘We have to flatten the West Bank’

Meanwhile, the Israeli government appears to be laying the groundwork for a parallel escalation in the occupied West Bank. Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich, a key figure in Israel’s far-right coalition, has openly called for military forces to destroy Palestinian towns and villages in the West Bank, echoing the destruction witnessed in Gaza.

“Just as we are flattening Rafah, Khan Younis and Gaza, we have to flatten the terror hubs,” Smotrich said, referring specifically to the Palestinian village of Bruqin, where an Israeli settler was killed on Wednesday evening.

Israeli forces launched new raids across the occupied West Bank at dawn on Thursday, storming cities and refugee camps including Tubas, Nablus, Bethlehem and Dura. Residents in Qalandiya, Ya’bad, Fawwar and Askar camps also reported house raids, arrests and what rights groups describe as systematic abuse.

With both Gaza and the West Bank under assault on Nakba Day, Palestinians are increasingly questioning whether any part of their homeland will be left intact.

[SOURCE: AFP and NEWS AGENCIES]

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