

Gaza's Khan Younis latest focus of Israeli forced displacement and bombings



Palestinians flee with their belongings after the Israeli military issued displacement orders for eastern Khan Younis [Hatem Khaled/Reuters]

Israeli army warns of 'unprecedented' assault on the southern city as dozens killed in strikes

across blockaded enclave.

Khan Younis, May 19 (RHC)-- Israel's military has issued another forced displacement order to residents of Gaza's southern city of Khan Younis, threatening an "unprecedented" assault after launching a wave of deadly strikes on the area and pressing a punishing new ground offensive.

The displacement order, posted on X by the military's Arabic-language spokesman Avichay Adraee on Monday, also applies to the nearby areas of Bani Suhaila and Abasan. It calls on Palestinians to move west towards al-Mawasi. "From this moment, Khan Younis governorate will be considered a dangerous combat zone," the post read.

It comes a day after Israel's military issued a separate displacement order for areas of central Gaza, including the town of al-Qarara, as its expanded offensive continues.

The new order also comes as Israeli forces continue to pound the blockaded enclave, where a famine is looming. There have been at least 30 air strikes in the Khan Younis area Monday as Israel hammered the vastly destroyed territory from north to south, killing at least 60 people since dawn, according to Gaza's Ministry of Health.

Previous forced evacuation orders throughout Israel's 19-month war have displaced the majority of Gaza's population multiple times. Many Palestinians have been bombarded again after fleeing to Israeli-designated "safe zones", including al-Mawasi.

Al Jazeera's Tareq Abu Azzoum, reporting from Deir el-Balah in central Gaza, said Monday's displacement order "signals a potential full-scale attack" in Khan Younis. "Many families are in a state of chaos. They are trying to get whatever they can from their properties and move to al-Mawasi, where the Israeli military has instructed them to go to," Abu Azzoum said, adding that an attack targeting al-Mawasi earlier in the day had killed two people.

"The repeated issuance of evacuation orders has shattered any sense of safety for Palestinians," Abu Azzoum said. Israeli forces carried out a massive operation earlier in the war that left much of Khan Younis in ruins. Al-Mawasi, where tens of thousands of people have fled, has also been repeatedly targeted by deadly Israeli strikes.

Under the newly launched air and ground offensive, Israel said it plans to displace hundreds of thousands of Palestinians and secure limited aid distribution inside the territory – something that has been widely criticised by aid groups and the United Nations.

In a video message on Monday, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said the military is to "take control of the entire territory of the Gaza Strip".

He said a plan to let "minimal" aid into Gaza is aimed at alleviating pressure from allies, who, he said, cannot tolerate "images of ... mass hunger". It remains unclear when the aid will be allowed to enter the Palestinian territory, where two million Palestinians are "starving", UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres has warned.

Israel has kept Gaza under a total blockade since early March, pushing the population there into famine as the healthcare system remains under Israeli attack and is quickly crumbling as its access to medical equipment, supplies and fuel has been cut off.

Meanwhile, the al-Nasser Salah al-Din Brigades, the military wing of the Popular Resistance Committees, a Palestinian group in Gaza, has confirmed that one of its commanders, Ahmed Sarhan, was killed in Khan Younis.

Sarhan was killed in an undercover operation backed by Israeli drones and jets early on Monday. The group said Israeli special forces tried to capture the commander, but he was killed in a shootout after he fought back.

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