

Israel bombs Gaza cafe, school and aid hubs, killing over 100 Palestinians



Gaza City, July 1 (RHC)-- Israeli forces have bombed a cafe, a school and food distribution sites in Gaza, killing more than 100 Palestinians, and attacked a hospital, wounding several more people. At least 62 of the victims of Monday's attacks were in Gaza City and the north of the territory.

The figure includes 39 people who were killed in an Israeli strike on a seaside cafe, Al-Baqa cafeteria, in northern Gaza City. Dozens more were wounded. Among the dead was journalist Ismail Abu Hatab, as well as women and children who had gathered at the cafe.

One witness said that Israeli fighter jets carried out the strike. “We found people torn apart,” said Yahya Sharif. “This place wasn’t affiliated with anyone – no politics and no military association whatsoever. It was packed with people including children for a birthday party.”

The bombing flattened the cafe and left a huge crater in the ground.

Al Jazeera’s Hani Mahmoud, reporting from Gaza City, said the attack on the cafe occurred “without any warning.” “This area serves as a refuge for many traumatised and displaced people, offering some relief from the oppressive heat of the tents. The bloodstains are still everywhere given the intensity of the explosion. Some of the bodies and pieces of flesh were collected from the flood of this place,” he added.

Also on Monday, Israeli forces bombed the Yafa school in Gaza City, which was sheltering hundreds of displaced Palestinians. Hamada Abu Jaradeh, who fled before the attack, said that displaced Palestinians received a five-minute threat to evacuate.

“We don’t know what to do and where to go. We have been let down by the entire world for more than 630 days. Death is with us and around us every day,” Abu Jaradeh said.

In central Gaza, Israeli forces also attacked the courtyard of Al-Aqsa Hospital in Deir el-Balah, where thousands of families had sought shelter.

Videos circulating online and verified by Al Jazeera showed chaos at the hospital, with people fleeing for safety as tents sheltering displaced families appeared damaged by the attack.

Al Jazeera’s Tareq Abu Azzoum, reporting from the scene of the hospital attack, said the army did not issue “any warnings” before the “huge explosion”.

“The site of the attack is about 10 metres [33 ft] from our broadcast point. This is not the first time the hospital’s courtyard has been attacked. At least 10 times, this facility has been squarely targeted by Israeli forces,” Abu Azzoum said. “It’s a staggering concentration of attacks on medical facilities, adding further burden on barely functioning hospitals.”

In a statement, Gaza’s Government Media Office decried the attack by Israel, calling it a “systematic crime” against the Palestinian enclave’s health system.

“Its warplanes bombed a tent for the displaced inside the walls of Al-Aqsa Martyrs Hospital, resulting in injuries at the site of the bombing, material damage and directly threatening the lives of dozens of patients,” it said.

Israel has repeatedly targeted dozens of hospitals during its 22-month war on Gaza. Human rights groups and United Nations-backed experts have accused Israel of systematically destroying the enclave’s healthcare system.

‘It felt like earthquakes’

In southern Gaza, an Israel air attack killed at least 15 Palestinians waiting for food at aid distribution hubs run by the controversial United States- and Israeli-backed Gaza Humanitarian Foundation (GHF) in Khan Younis, according to sources at Nasser Medical Complex.

Fifty people were also wounded in the attack. They are the latest victims in a wave of daily carnage at these sites, which have killed nearly 600 Palestinians since GHF took over limited aid deliveries in Gaza in late May amid a crippling Israeli blockade.

The Israeli military acknowledged on Monday that Palestinian civilians were “harmed” at the aid distribution centres, saying that instructions had been issued to forces following “lessons learned,” and

that firing incidents were under review.

This follows the Israeli news outlet Haaretz report that soldiers operating near the aid sites in Gaza have been deliberately firing on Palestinians. According to the Haaretz report, which quoted unnamed Israeli soldiers, troops were told to fire at the crowds of Palestinians and use unnecessary lethal force against people who appeared to pose no threat.

Israeli forces are also carrying out home demolitions in Khan Younis, raising fears of a new ground invasion.

The Israeli military, meanwhile, has issued more forced evacuation threats to Palestinians in large districts in northern Gaza, where Israeli forces had operated before and left behind wide-scale destruction, forcing a new wave of displacement.

“Explosions never stopped; they bombed schools and homes. It felt like earthquakes,” said Salah, 60, a father of five children, from Gaza City. “In the news, we hear a ceasefire is near. On the ground, we see death and we hear explosions.”

Israeli tanks pushed into the eastern areas of the Zeitoun suburb in Gaza City and shelled several areas in the north, while aircraft bombed at least four schools after ordering hundreds of families sheltering inside to leave, residents said.

Gaza’s health authorities said that at least 10 people were killed in attacks on Zeitoun and at least 13 were killed southwest of Gaza City.

More than 80 percent of Gaza is now an Israeli-militarised zone or under forced displacement threats, according to the United Nations.

The attacks come as Israeli officials, including Israel’s strategic affairs minister, Ron Dermer, were due in Washington, DC for a new ceasefire push by the administration of US President Donald Trump.

Key mediator Qatar has confirmed that there are serious U.S. intentions to push for a return to negotiations, but there are complications, according to a Qatari Ministry of Foreign Affairs spokesman. The spokesman said that it has become difficult to accept the continued human losses in Gaza, and warned that the continued link between the humanitarian and military aspects in Gaza cannot be accepted. The talks in the White House are also expected to cover Iran and possible wider regional diplomatic deals.

In Israel, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu’s Security Cabinet was expected to convene to discuss the next steps in Gaza.

On Friday, Israel’s military chief said that the present ground operation was close to having achieved its goals, and on Sunday, Netanyahu claimed new opportunities had opened up for recovering the captives taken by Hamas and other Palestinian armed groups from Israel, 20 of whom are believed to still be alive.

Palestinian and Egyptian sources with knowledge of the latest ceasefire efforts also said that mediators Qatar and Egypt have stepped up their contacts with the two sides, but that no date has been set yet for a new round of truce talks.

Meanwhile, senior Hamas official Osama Hamdan said in a statement on Monday that there has been no news from Israel regarding a ceasefire for four weeks.

“We are determined to seek a ceasefire that will save our people, and we are working with mediators to open the crossings,” Hamdan said.

Qatar said that the ceasefire between Iran and Israel has opened a window for renewed talks on Gaza.

“The main obstacle over here is that both parties aren’t coming back to the table. But as I have said, there’s a momentum that’s been created by the ceasefire between Iran and Israel,” Majed Al Ansari, Qatar’s Foreign Ministry spokesman, told reporters in the Qatari capital Doha.

“We won’t hold our breath for this to happen today or tomorrow. But we believe that the elements are in place to push forward towards restarting the talks.”

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