At least 370 Palestinians dead and thousands more wounded as fighting rages
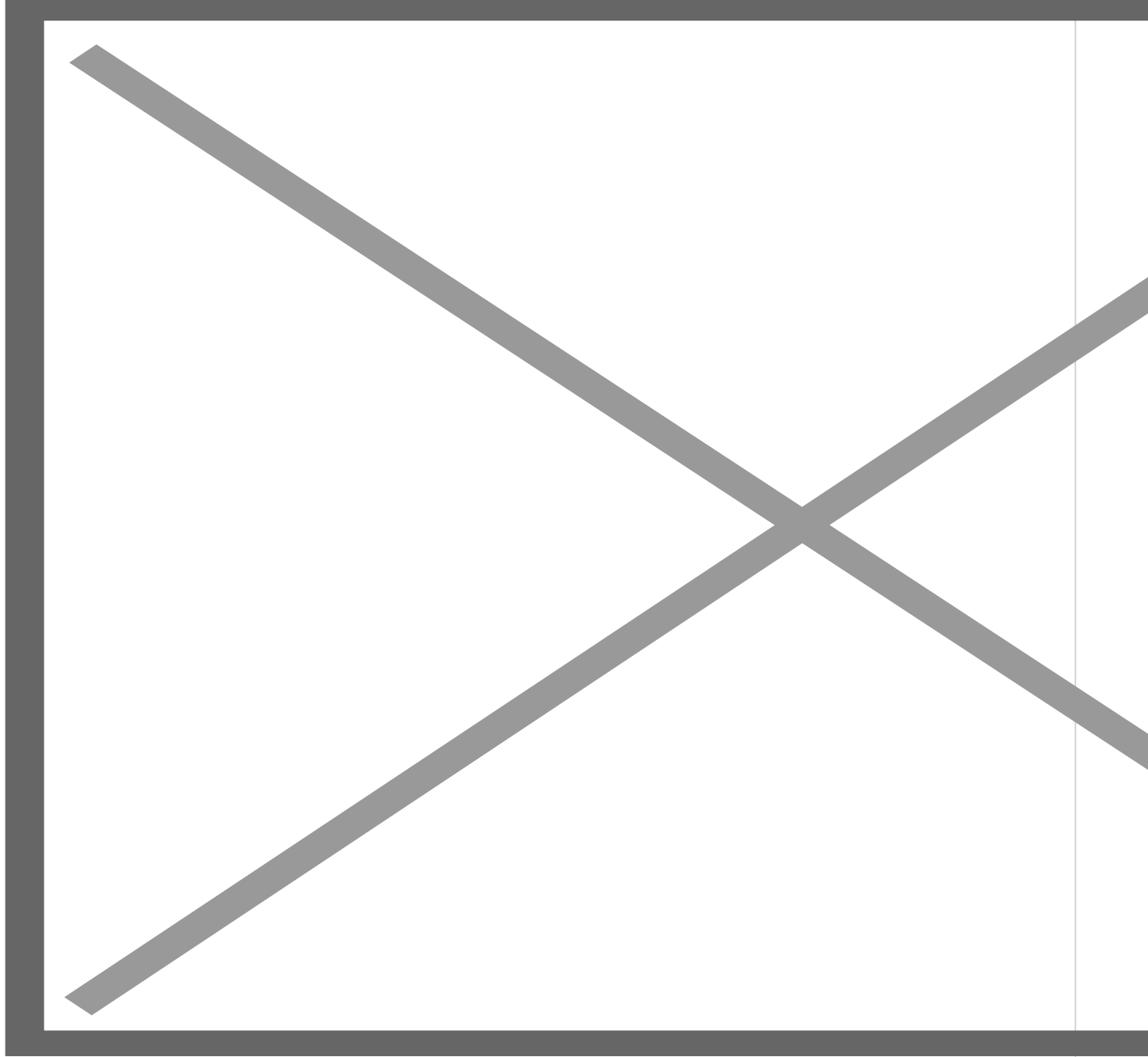
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The rubble of a building after it was struck by an Israeli air attack in Gaza City. [Hatem Moussa/AP Photo]

Gaza City, October 8 (RHC)-- Israel has declared a "state of war" as its army continues to face off against Palestinian fighters in several areas across southern Israel. This comes a day after a surprise attack by al-Qassam Brigades, the armed wing of Hamas, the Palestinian group that governs the Gaza Strip.

On Sunday, the Lebanese armed group Hezbollah said it launched mortar attacks into the occupied Shebaa Farms in solidarity with Hamas; Israel said it responded with artillery.

The escalation comes as expectations grow that Israel will launch a ground invasion of Gaza after Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu threatened to turn the besieged Palestinian enclave into a "deserted island".

The latest death toll stands at 370 Palestinians, according to health officials; and at least 600 Israelis, according to media reports. Hamas said it launched its large-scale operation in response to continued brutality by Israel and its occupation administration against Palestinians.

This includes standing by as Israeli settlers launch violent attacks on Palestinian villages and neighbourhoods; attacking worshippers at the Al-Aqsa Mosque and killing an alarming number of Palestinians this year.

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