

Israel strikes southern Gaza following new evacuation order

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Rafah, July 3 (RHC)-- Israel has carried out renewed strikes in southern Gaza after ordering sections, including much of the city of Khan Younis, to be evacuated. The attacks on Tuesday forced hundreds of Palestinians to flee densely populated neighborhoods. Witnesses reported multiple strikes in and around the city.

Eight people were killed and more than 30 were wounded, according to the Palestinian Red Crescent Society.

The bombardment came in response to a rare rocket barrage aimed at Israel on Monday. That attack was claimed by the Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) group, which has fought alongside Hamas in the war that has raged since October 7th. It came in retaliation for Israeli "crimes ... against our Palestinian people," said the al-Quds Brigades, the armed wing of the PIJ.

The Israeli military said about "20 projectiles were identified crossing from the area of Khan Younis", most of which were intercepted. It reported no casualties. The military said that its artillery was "striking the sources of the fire".

The order to evacuate al-Qarara, Bani Suheila and other parts of Khan Younis followed soon afterwards, striking fear into local populations. There is concern that the order suggests that Israeli troops could soon reinvade the city. They pulled out of Khan Younis earlier this year after a ground offensive left much of the city in ruins, claiming to have destroyed Hamas battalions there.

"Fear and extreme anxiety have gripped people after the evacuation order," said Bani Suheila resident Ahmad Najjar. "There is a large displacement of residents."

Most of Gaza's population of 2.3 million have fled their homes, with many displaced multiple times. Israeli restrictions, fighting and the breakdown of public order have hindered the delivery of humanitarian aid, causing widespread hunger and fears of famine.

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