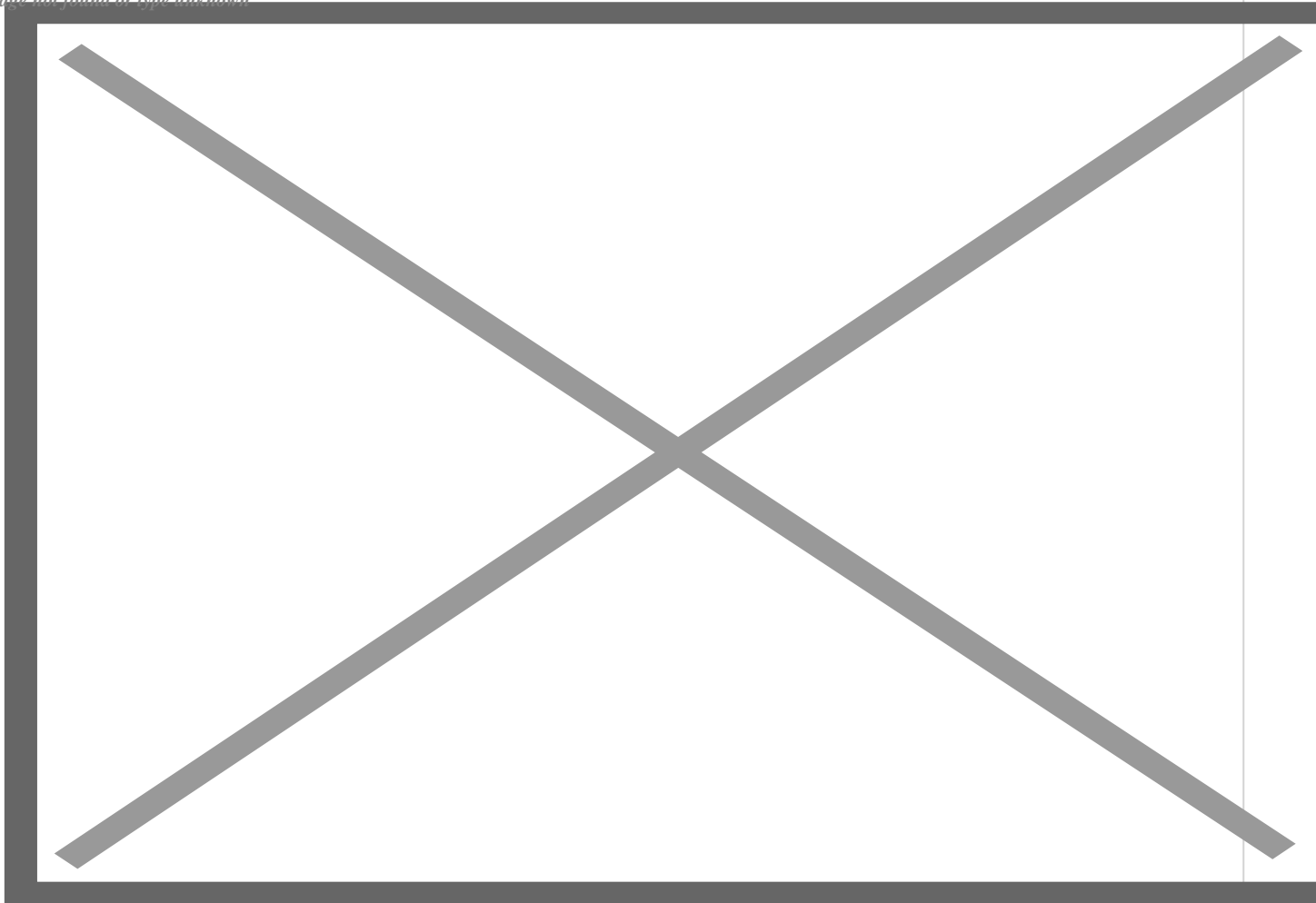


Israel still destroying homes in Gaza despite ceasefire

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Analysis of satellite images shows Israel has destroyed dozens of homes in possible breach of the ceasefire terms.

Gaza City, February 16 (RHC)-- Israel has destroyed dozens of homes in Rafah, southern Gaza, despite the ceasefire between Israel and Hamas, satellite imagery analysis conducted by Al Jazeera's fact-checking agency, Sanad, has revealed.

The crossing between Egypt and Gaza at Rafah, which has served as a critical lifeline into the enclave for decades, was closed by Israel in May 2024.

Since seizing control of the border area, in breach of its 1979 peace agreement with Egypt, Israel has been digging in in the Philadelphi Corridor, a 14-km (8.7-mile) strip of land along the boundary between Egypt and Gaza.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has emphasised the importance of remaining in the corridor, despite the illegality.

According to Sanad, the images, taken between January 19 and 21, show the Israeli army to have built sand fortifications across the Rafah crossing. Additionally, the agency said, a new military outpost has been established just to the north of the crossing.

The army has also constructed a 1.7 km (1.1-mile) road surrounding the crossing, running parallel to the sand fortifications. Israeli forces have also kept thousands of Rafah residents from their homes, Israeli military vehicles shooting at dozens of people trying to go home, injuring and killing them.

Israel, in essence, is constructing “a buffer zone that allows you to push any kind of fighters or, in technical terms, any hostile within an otherwise friendly environment away from you”, Palestinian defense analyst Hamze Attar said.

As part of the ceasefire, which began on January 19th, Israel agreed to reduce its forces in the area before completely withdrawing its troops by the 50th day of the agreement.

However, analysis carried out on satellite images taken between January 19 and February 1 shows the Israeli army has continued construction in the area, demolishing and bulldozing 64 buildings within the city of Rafah, specifically in the as-Salam, Idari, and Tel Zaarab neighbourhoods.

The demolitions occurred only 700 metres (766 yards) from the Egyptian border. At the same time, Sanad also identified at least six homes razed in Tal as-Sultan, west of Rafah, a little more than 750 metres (820 yards) from the Egyptian border.

“This is a war crime because they are destroying residential houses,” Attar said, referring to the fourth Geneva Convention, which prohibits the destruction of private property.

Meanwhile, Munir al-Bursh, director-general of the Ministry of Health in Gaza, said on Tuesday that Israeli attacks, unexploded ordnance, or fatal injuries sustained earlier have killed 118 people since the ceasefire agreement took effect.

In addition to military breaches of the ceasefire, Israel has not allowed in sufficient amounts of essential humanitarian aid, such as food, fuel, tents, and emergency shelters.

Rafah Mayor Ahmed al-Sufi said most of the city’s residents remain displaced, with an estimated 200,000 people sheltering in the al-Mawasi Khan Younis area and other locations across Gaza, unable to come home.

Initial estimates indicate that 90 percent of Rafah’s homes have been damaged, with approximately 52,000 units suffering various degrees of destruction.



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