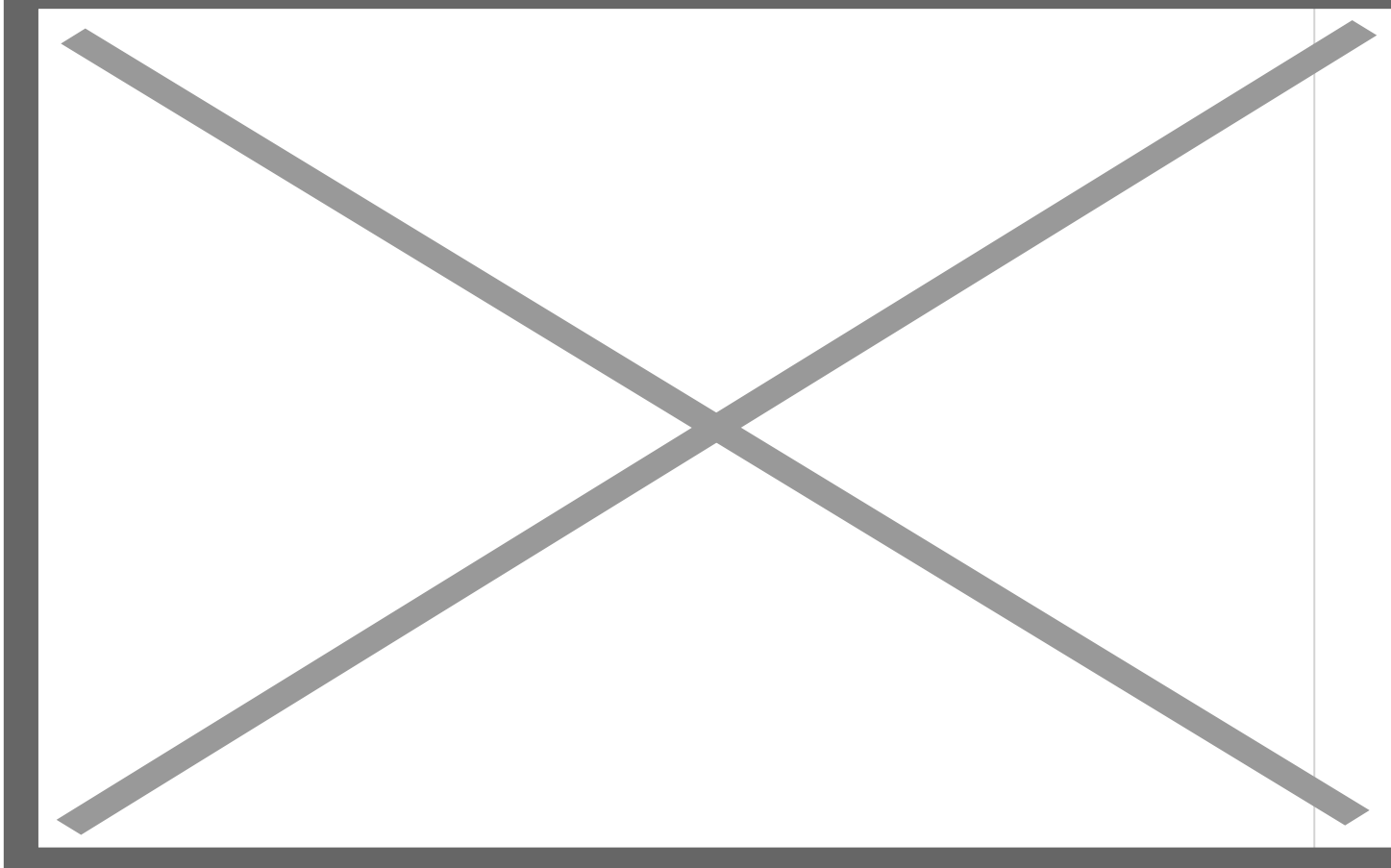


Children among 21 killed in Israel's attacks on Gaza amid aid blockade

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A man is carried away after being injured in an Israeli army drone strike on a sidewalk in downtown Gaza City [Jehad Alshrafi/AP Photo]

Gaza City, May 10 (RHC)-- At least 21 people, including several children, have been killed in Israeli attacks on the Gaza Strip since dawn amid a months-long Israeli blockade that has deepened the humanitarian crisis in the war-torn coastal enclave.

Four Palestinians were killed and others were wounded Saturday evening after an Israeli airstrike targeted a tent sheltering displaced families in Deir al-Balah, in the central Gaza Strip.

Earlier, Palestinian news agency Wafa said Israeli warplanes bombed a tent in the Sabra neighbourhood of Gaza City on Saturday morning, killing five members of the Tlaib family. "Three children, their mother and her husband were sleeping inside a tent and were bombed by an [Israeli] occupation aircraft," family member Omar Abu al-Kass told the AFP news agency.

The strikes came "without warning and without having done anything wrong", added Abu al-Kass, who said he was the children's maternal grandfather. In parallel, a drone attack on Gaza City's Tuffah neighbourhood left six people dead and one more in the Sheikh Radwan area of the city where Israel bombed an apartment belonging to the Zaqout family.

Further south, Wafa said Israeli gunboats opened "heavy fire" on the shores of Rafah, killing a man identified as Mohammed Saeed al-Bardawil. Two more civilians were injured in an attack on the al-Mawasi humanitarian zone, west of Rafah.

In the past 24 hours, at least 23 Palestinians have been killed and 124 others injured in Israeli attacks across the Gaza Strip, according to the enclave's Health Ministry.

Israeli blockade

The attacks came amid Israel's continuing refusal to allow vital supplies into Gaza since March 2, leaving the enclave's 2.3 million residents dependent on a dwindling number of charity kitchens, which have been shutting down in recent days as food runs out.

Reporting from Deir el-Balah in central Gaza, Al Jazeera's Hind Khoudary said: "There's barely food ... We're talking about bakeries not operating, we're talking about zero distribution points and we're talking about only a few hot meal kitchens still operating."

Khoudary said people queueing for hours would often leave empty-handed, with remaining kitchens stretching out food that would previously have fed 100 to serve up to 2,000 people.

"We're seeing more people dying, we're seeing more children dying due to malnutrition and the lack of food. But it's not only the lack of food, it's also the lack of medical supplies, it's the lack of fuel, cooking gas and it's the lack of everything," she said.

Among the charities shuttering operations, the United States-based World Central Kitchen said on Wednesday that it had been forced to close down because it no longer had supplies to bake bread or cook meals.

The United Nations' Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs appealed for the blockade to be lifted. "Children are starving, and dying. Community kitchens are shutting down. Clean water is running out," it said on Friday in a post on X.

'Failure of humanity'

The blockade is also having a devastating effect on people with chronic illnesses, depriving Palestinians who suffer from diabetes, cancer and rare conditions, of life-saving medication.

Reporting from Gaza City, Al Jazeera's Hani Mahmoud said: "Doctors here say the tragedy is not in what's happening, but in what is preventable." "These diseases have a treatment, but people of Gaza no longer have access to them, and they say that this is not just a failure of logistics, but of humanity," he added.

Mahmoud spoke to the father of a 10-year-old boy suffering from diabetes, who said insulin was not available across northern Gaza. “I spend entire days searching pharmacies, hoping to find it. Sometimes we hear that individuals might have it, so I go to their homes to barter,” he said.

Said al-Soudy, head of emergency in the oncology department of Gaza City’s Al Helou International Hospital, told Al Jazeera: “A large part of patients are struggling to find their essential medications. Without them, their health conditions deteriorate and may become life-threatening.”

Pharmacist Rana Alsamak told Al Jazeera that Palestinians were unable to obtain medication for “multiple sclerosis, rheumatoid arthritis, hepatitis, chronic illnesses and ... immune-related diseases.” “These conditions now go largely untreated,” she said.

On Friday, the United States said it was establishing the Gaza Humanitarian Foundation to coordinate aid deliveries into Gaza, with Israel providing military security for operations. The United Nations rejected the move, saying it would weaponise aid, violate principles of neutrality and cause mass displacement.

[SOURCE: ASSOCIATED PRESS and NEW AGENCIES]

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