

Israel launches Operation Gideon's Chariots offensive to seize Gaza territory

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Tel Aviv, May 17 (RHC)-- The Israeli army announced late Friday night that it has launched the first stage of a major offensive in Gaza, dubbed "Gideon's Chariots," to seize the Palestinian territory.

The plan was approved by the Security Cabinet of Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu on May 5th -- "to conquer Gaza" for Israel and hold the territory under its control.

On Friday, the Israeli army announced that it had begun the "first moves" of Operation Gideon's Chariots over the past 24 hours. The army said it has "launched extensive attacks and mobilized forces to seize strategic areas in the Gaza Strip, as part of the opening moves of Operation Gideon's Chariots and the expansion of the campaign in Gaza."

The statement claimed that the new campaign would "achieve all the goals of the war in Gaza, including the release of the hostages and the defeat of Hamas." It added that Israeli troops in the Southern Command will continue "to operate to protect Israeli citizens and realize the goals of the war."

According to Israeli officials, the "Gideon's Chariots" offensive would see the occupation forces "conquering" Gaza and retaining the territory and moving the Palestinian civilian population toward the south of the Gaza Strip.

During the last three days, Israel has killed more than 370 Palestinians, according to Gaza's Health Ministry. The recent flurry of killings coincided with US President Donald Trump's visit to the region that began Tuesday.

Israel continued its carnage in Gaza on Friday after the deadliest day yet for Palestinians in the besieged territory since Israel resumed its war on the strip in March.

According to medical sources, 74 Palestinians were killed on Friday, mostly in attacks on the northern Gaza Strip.

The Indonesian Hospital in the northern city of Beit Lahia alone had received 30 dead and dozens of injured, mostly children and women, according to a doctor at the hospital.

The massacres in northern Gaza came after a series of powerful Israeli strikes in the vicinity of the European Hospital in south Gaza's Khan Yunis late Tuesday.

Israeli daily Yedioth Ahronoth reported that at least 40 bunker buster bombs were used in the strike to allegedly destroy an underground complex belonging to the Palestinian resistance.

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