

At least 28 Palestinians killed in Israeli air raids on Gaza



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Gaza City, May 11 (RHC)-- At least 28 Palestinians have been killed in Israeli air raids on the besieged Gaza Strip, according to the Palestinian health ministry, after Hamas launched rockets from the coastal territory towards Israel.

The Gaza health ministry told media sources on Monday that 20 people, including children, had been killed in the strikes. At least 65 others were wounded.

Earlier Hamas, the ruling entity in Gaza, fired dozens of rockets into Israel, including a barrage that set off air raid sirens as far away as Jerusalem, after hundreds of Palestinians were wounded by Israeli forces which stormed the Al-Aqsa Mosque compound in occupied East Jerusalem. Hamas had given Israel an ultimatum that it stand down forces from Al-Aqsa, the third holiest site in Islam which is also revered by Jews.

Tensions in Jerusalem have been fuelled by the planned forced expulsions of Palestinian families from the Sheikh Jarrah neighbourhood and by an Israeli forces raid on Al-Aqsa on one of the holiest nights of Ramadan.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu warned of an open-ended operation against Hamas. In a speech, Netanyahu accused the group of crossing a "red line" with the latest rocket fire and promised a tough response. "Whoever attacks us will pay a heavy price," he said.

The Israeli army said a civilian in the country's south suffered mild injuries when a vehicle was struck by an anti-tank missile from Gaza. Abu Obeida, spokesman for Hamas's military wing, said the attack on Jerusalem was a response to what he called Israeli "crimes and aggression" in the city. "This is a message the enemy has to understand well," he said.

He threatened more attacks if Israeli forces re-enter the Al-Aqsa Mosque compound or carry out forced expulsions of Palestinian families from an East Jerusalem neighbourhood.

Earlier in the day, Israeli police fired tear gas, stun grenades and rubber bullets at Palestinian worshippers at the Al-Aqsa mosque. More than a dozen tear gas canisters and stun grenades landed in the mosque as police attacked protesters inside the walled compound that surrounds it.

More than 300 Palestinians were injured by armed Israeli forces, including 228 who went to hospitals and clinics for treatment, according to the Palestinian Red Crescent. Israeli police said 21 officers were hurt, including three who were hospitalised. Israeli paramedics said seven Israeli civilians were also hurt.

As a result, and in an apparent attempt to avoid further confrontation, Israeli authorities changed the planned route of a march by right-wing, ultra-nationalist Israelis through the Muslim Quarter of the Old City to mark Jerusalem Day, which celebrates Israel's capture of East Jerusalem. East Jerusalem is not internationally recognised as Israeli territory.

Monday's confrontation was the latest after weeks of almost nightly attacks by Israeli troops in the Old City of Jerusalem against Palestinian protesters, during the Muslim holy month of Ramadan.

On Saturday, more than 250 people were wounded after Israeli forces entered Al-Aqsa during Laylat ul-Qadr, one of the holiest nights in Islam.



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