Israeli air strike destroys main COVID-19 testing lab in Gaza
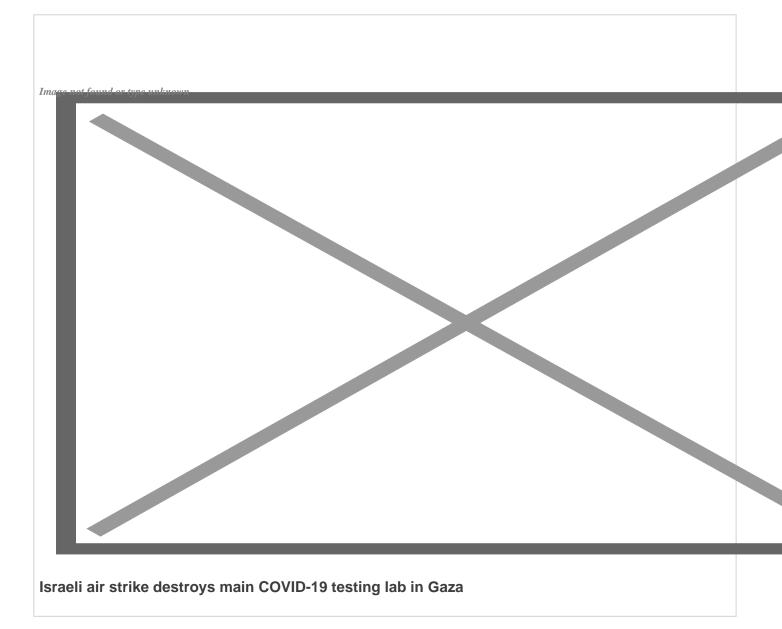

Image not found or type unknown

Israeli air strike destroys main COVID-19 testing lab in Gaza

Gaza City, May 18 (RHC)-- Gaza's primary COVID-19 testing and vaccination site was destroyed overnight after it was struck in an Israeli air raid, according to Palestinian health officials -- warning that Tel Aviv's bombing campaign will drive a surge in the coronavirus pandemic.

The strikes triggered a "complete halt" to immunizations, virus screenings and telemedicine services at Gaza's al-Rimal clinic, he Health Ministry said, noting that its own offices were also damaged in the bombing.

"The Israeli occupation's targeting of the Ministry of Health and al-Rimal Clinic caused a complete halt to the work of the only central laboratory examining coronavirus tests in [Gaza]," Health Ministry Undersecretary Youssef Abu al-Rish said in a statement, condemning the airstrikes as "a heinous crime aimed at dissuading the ministry from continuing its humanitarian work."

In a separate statement, the health ministry said that Israeli forces were targeting "densely populated residential areas," sending some 40,000 families to crowded shelters, which have become "a dangerous environment for the rapid spread of COVID-19." It urged the international community to provide "critically needed personal protection equipment" for the shelters.

The official announcement followed similar reports from both the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), as well as the territory's UN mission, which relayed a warning from UN chief Antonio Guterres that the fighting could "unleash an uncontainable security and humanitarian crisis" in Gaza.

The UN's Gaza relief agency, the UNRWA, has also voiced fears that the eruption of violence could fuel a surge in the pandemic, with agency official Matthias Schmale observing that Israeli airstrikes were sending large numbers of unvaccinated Palestinians into cramped shelters, saying they "could turn into mass spreaders."

The fighting entered its ninth day on Tuesday, bringing the death toll in Gaza up to 212 people, including 61 children, as well as more than 1,400 wounded. At least 10 Israelis have also perished in rocket fire, among them two children and one soldier.

---

https://www.radiohc.cu/en/noticias/internacionales/257649-israeli-air-strike-destroys-main-covid-19-testing-lab-in-gaza

Radio Habana Cuba