

# *Israel Launches Ground Offensive Against Gaza Strip*

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Gaza City, July 18 (RHC)-- Israel has launched a ground invasion in the besieged Gaza Strip as the Palestinian death toll from Israeli airstrikes and shelling reaches 247.

On Thursday, Israeli forces began a ground offensive against the blockaded enclave after Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu instructed the army to push the aggression against Gaza into a new stage. Netanyahu reportedly made the decision after a security cabinet meeting in Tel Aviv.

Israeli warplanes, warships and artillery have launched an intensive bombardment of different locations of the coastal enclave. Israel has killed at least 243 people and injured 1,800 others since it began its latest onslaught against Palestinians in the Gaza Strip on July 8th. About a third of the Palestinian fatalities are women and children.

For the past 10 days, the Israeli military has attacked more than 1,800 targets across Gaza, which is home to around 1.8 million Palestinians living under blockade.

## **Israeli Tank Shelling Kills Five More Palestinians in Gaza**

At least five more Palestinians, including a five-month-old baby, have been killed in Israeli tank shelling in the besieged Gaza Strip. According to Gaza Health Ministry spokesman, Ashraf al-Qudra, the

Palestinians lost their lives in the Israeli attacks early on Friday. He added that a five-month-old baby and two Palestinians were killed in separate shelling by Israeli tanks in southern Rafah.

The Gaza health ministry spokesman said that two more Palestinian men lost their lives in tank shelling in northern Beit Hanoun. He said the deaths came after the Israeli regime launched a ground invasion into the blockaded enclave late on Thursday.

Israeli media said that thousands of soldiers, backed by tanks and bulldozers, entered the Palestinian territory and Israeli tanks have shelled different parts of Gaza. Israeli tanks reportedly shelled al-Wafa hospital in eastern Gaza City on Thursday, injuring several people there. The Israeli military has also called up thousands of reservists for the military operation.

Meanwhile, the Palestinian resistance movement Hamas said Israel would pay a "high price" for the invasion. "The start of the Israeli ground attack on Gaza is a dangerous step, the consequences of which have not been calculated," said Hamas spokesman, Fawzi Barhoum, in a statement issued on Thursday.

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