

Israel orders evacuations as onslaught on Gaza widens



Gaza City, December 4 (RHC)-- Israel has ordered Palestinians to evacuate several more areas as it widens its bombardment of the Gaza Strip, killing hundreds.

The Israeli military declared on Monday via the social media site X that it was defining “safe areas” for Gaza civilians to minimise harm to them. However, hundreds more Palestinians have been killed since the onslaught resumed on Friday, and it is unclear where civilians might seek safety.

Al Jazeera journalists on the ground say it is difficult to heed the orders in real time, with nowhere safe remaining in the enclave.

Israel published a map on Friday, dividing Gaza into “evacuation zones” and asking people to follow their announcements for their safety. However, the maps, which include nearly 2,500 grids, have confused many, while unreliable internet and electricity make keeping updated a challenge.

On Monday, an update with three arrows pointing south was issued. The instruction came the day after the Israeli military said it had expanded its ground operation to all of Gaza, targeting “ Hamas centres in all” of the enclave.

The renewed bombardment follows the end on Friday of the seven-day pause in the fighting between Israeli forces and Hamas fighters, which had allowed an exchange of about 105 Israeli and foreign hostages held by Hamas for 240 Palestinian prisoners.

More than 15,500 people have been killed, according to Gaza’s Ministry of Health, in nearly two months of warfare that broke out after a Hamas cross-border raid on southern Israel on October 7 in which 1,200 Israelis were killed and about 240 taken hostage.

Intense air raids overnight killed more than 100 Palestinians, according to the Hamas authorities. That raises the death toll in Gaza since Saturday to more than 800.

Israel has also stepped up attacks on the city of Khan Younis in the south, which was previously designated as a safe area, leading thousands of displaced Palestinians to flee to the city. “This comes as hundreds of thousands of Palestinians have fled their homes and have been displaced,” said Al Jazeera’s Hamdah Salhut, reporting from occupied East Jerusalem.

“While the Israelis are chalking up battle plans for the southern part of the Gaza Strip, the reality is that there is no safe place in Gaza at the end of day 58 of this war.

“It is worth noting that the Israeli military has not shown huge military achievements or accomplishments, but rather what we have seen is a dire humanitarian catastrophe that has unfolded inside of the Gaza Strip.”

Israeli security forces also continued their raids in the occupied West Bank overnight and early on Monday morning. They targeted the cities and towns of Ramallah, Jenin, Silwad, Jaffna, Jalazoun, Qalqilya and Hebron, arresting dozens of people, according to the Palestinian Wafa news agency.

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