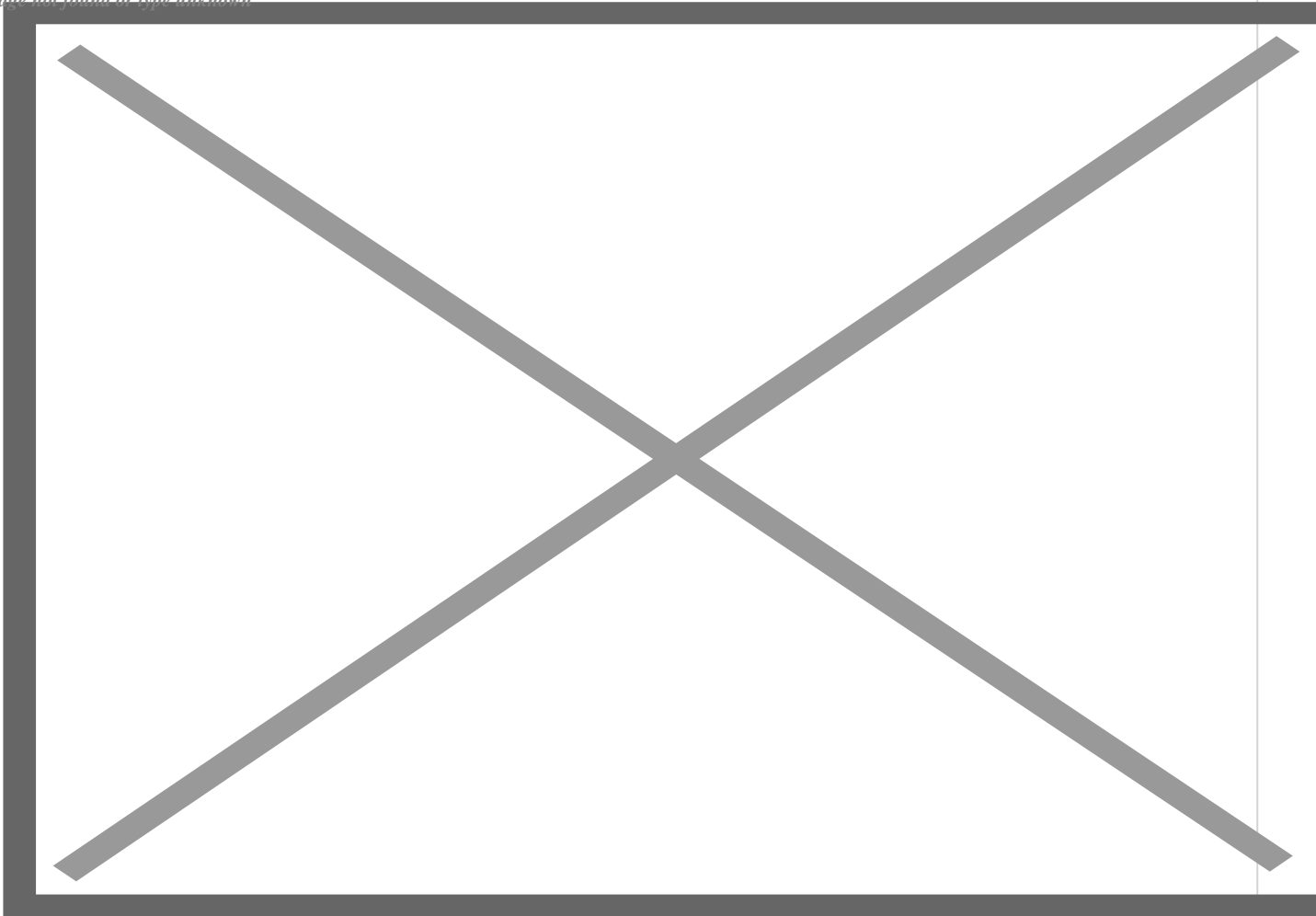


Israel maintains onslaught as Gaza death toll tops 22,000

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Gaza City, January 2 (RHC)-- Israeli attacks have continued across the Gaza Strip with little let-up, as the death toll in the enclave rose above the latest milestone of 22,000. The total number of Palestinians killed in Gaza since October 7 now stands at 22,185, while at least 57,000 have been injured, the Hamas-run Ministry of Health announced on Tuesday. Meanwhile, air and ground attacks continued across the Strip, including in the south, where hundreds of thousands of displaced people have been directed to seek safety.

Some two-thirds of those killed amid Israel's bombardment of Gaza are women and children, according to the ministry. Israel launched its campaign following Hamas's raid into southern Israel, which killed around 1,140 and saw around 240 taken hostage.

Overall, 207 Palestinians have been killed in 15 Israeli attacks over the past 24 hours, the health ministry said on Tuesday. It also reported that 338 people were wounded.

Al Jazeera's Hani Mahmoud, reporting from Khan Younis in the south, said there was "intense bombardment" in the central and southern regions last night and in the early hours of Tuesday morning. "There were reports of massive explosions in these two areas, in Khan Younis and refugee camps in the central part," he said. The intensity of the bombing and the fact that many roads and much infrastructure were destroyed prevented ambulances from going to the targeted sites and taking people to hospitals.

Israeli forces hit a home in the central Gaza city of Deir el-Balah, and the majority of the dead were women and children, local Palestinian outlet Wafa News Agency said. In the Nuseirat refugee camp, also in central Gaza, at least one girl was killed and several others injured after an Israeli drone opened fire on the market.

Meanwhile, in Khan Younis, in southern Gaza, four people were reported killed in an Israeli bombing.

More than one million Palestinians have been displaced from northern Gaza since October 13, when the Israeli military ordered people to evacuate to the south with 24 hours of notice.

In central Gaza's Bureij refugee camp, Hamas's armed wing, the Qassam Brigades, said it had clashed with Israeli forces in the eastern part of the camp, while also targeting an Israeli Merkava tank.

The al-Quds Brigades, the armed wing of the Islamic Jihad, says that its fighters fought an armed battle with Israeli soldiers in the Bureij refugee camp that resulted in injuries among the soldiers. The armed wing also announced that it targeted the Israeli military with mortar shells in the al-Mahatta area in Khan Younis.

Meanwhile, the Israeli military said it killed Hamas members who were planting mines along Gaza's coastline and in nearby buildings.

The Israeli army said it also killed three Hamas members in an air attack after seeing them enter a building south of Gaza City in the north.

With at least 22,000 Palestinians massacred in Gaza, Israel has lost its "carte blanche" from Western allies, said Adel Abdel Ghafar, a senior fellow at the Middle East Council on Global Affairs. "As scenes of carnage, displaced populations, dead children and starvation fill our screens, the tide is really shifting," he told Al Jazeera, adding that massive pro-Palestinian rallies across Europe and the United States have exerted pressure on politicians, with some European countries like Belgium changing their tone on Gaza and calling for a ceasefire, something Israel has firmly rejected.

"It's also very interesting to keep an eye on U.S. politics given that this is an election year and [U.S. President Joe] Biden's ratings are down," said Abdel Ghafar. "This will factor into his calculus in this New Year."



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