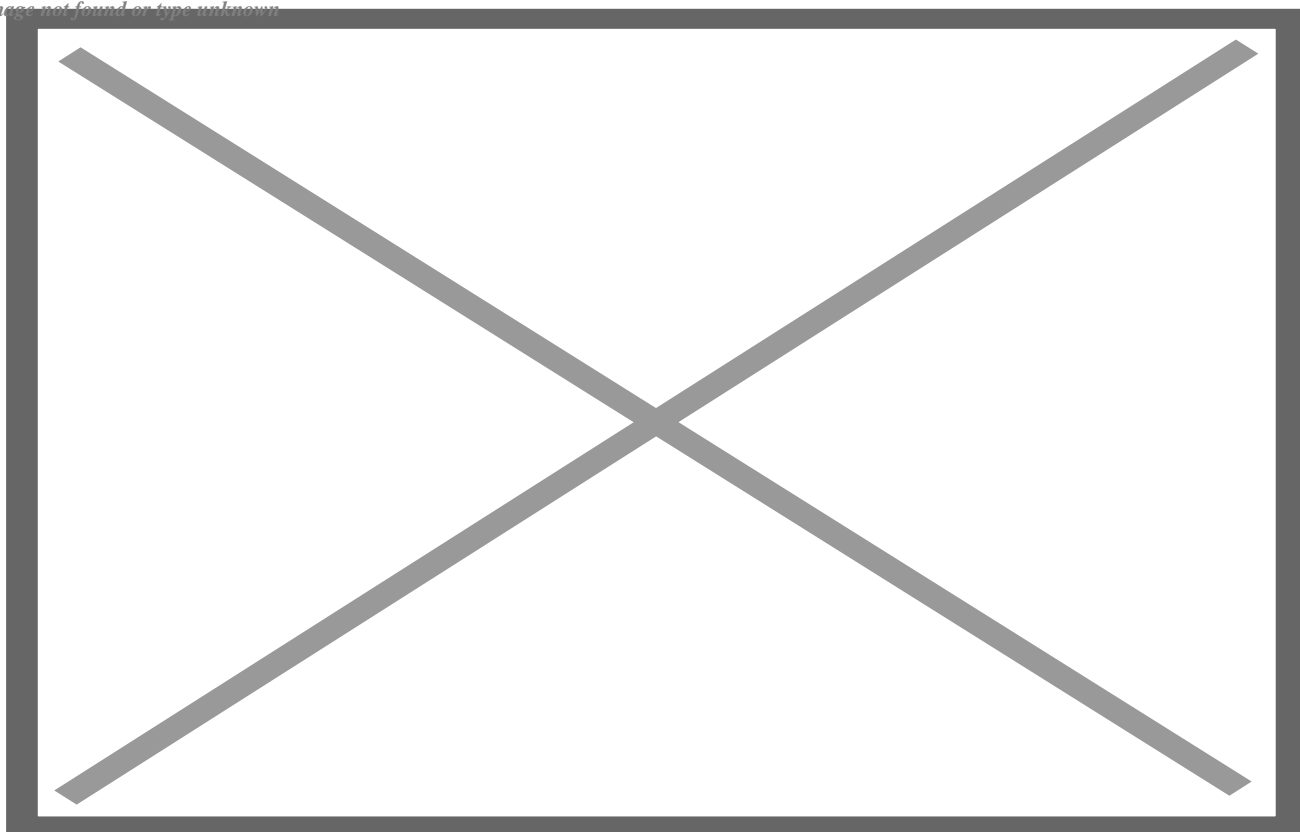


UNRWA says 182 staff members killed in Israeli hostilities in Gaza

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Philippe Lazzarini is the commissioner-general of UNRWA

Geneva, May 1 (RHC)-- The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, UNRWA, says at least 182 of its employees have been killed since the start of the Israeli military aggression in the besieged Gaza Strip.

Philippe Lazzarini, the commissioner-general of the UN agency, said in a post on social media that Israeli attacks in Gaza had also damaged 160 of the agency's facilities, killing a total of 400 people sheltering inside the buildings.

During a briefing in Geneva on Tuesday, Lazzarini also called for countries to back an independent investigation into killings and detentions of its staff and damage to its premises once the Israeli savagery

ends in the besieged Palestinian territory.

UNRWA has accused Israel of targeting its facilities during more than seven months of conflict in the Gaza Strip.

Elsewhere in his remarks, Lazzarini said the prospects of an Israeli invasion of Gaza's southern city of Rafah "will all depend on whether a ceasefire deal will be reached this week."

"There is an extraordinary deep anxiety in Gaza" right now, as people fear a possible invasion of Rafah, he said. "People have not yet been asked to evacuate from Rafah," he added. "But there is a sense that if there is not a ceasefire deal this week, it could happen at any time."

The Palestinian resistance movement Hamas is considering a new ceasefire proposal. A delegation of senior Hamas officials will rejoin the ceasefire talks in Egypt. The Palestinian delegation, led by Hamas deputy head Khalil al-Haya, is expected to submit the movement's response to the new Israeli proposal after consultations with other resistance leaders.

The movement insists on the withdrawal of Israeli forces from Gaza, the unrestricted return of displaced Palestinians and the flow of more humanitarian aid. Also, Hamas has repeatedly said it will not accept a deal that does not include a permanent ceasefire.

According to media reports, a high-ranking Israeli delegation will also join the Cairo talks.

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