

At least 50 killed in Israeli attacks as Gaza City fighting rages

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Gaza City, July 9 (RHC)-- Israeli forces ramped up attacks on areas across the northern Gaza Strip despite new ceasefire discussions taking place. At least 50 people were killed in the latest 24-hour reporting period and dozens wounded in strikes throughout the besieged coastal enclave, Gaza's Ministry of Health said on Tuesday.

Israeli tanks deepened their incursions into some Gaza City districts such as Shujayea, Sabra and Tal al-Hawa, where residents reported some of the fiercest fighting since the start of the war.

The armed wings of Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad said they fought against Israeli soldiers in Tal al-Hawa with antitank rockets and mortar fire and inflicted casualties. Gaza City residents reported “explosions and numerous gun battles” as well as helicopter strikes through the night in southwestern neighborhoods.

The Israeli army has focused its attention on Gaza City after announcing it had intelligence showing Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad fighters were operating there.

Gaza City residents have now been told to move to the central district of Deir el-Balah, which the United Nations said “is already seriously overcrowded with Palestinians displaced from other areas of the Gaza Strip”.

In the first weeks of the war, Israel had called on civilians in the north of the enclave to move south, declaring the area a “safe zone” but later expanding its attacks there.

Maha Mahfouz fled her home with her two children and many other Palestinians from Gaza City’s Zeitoun neighbourhood. She said their area was not included in the latest evacuation orders, but “we are panicked because the bombing and gunfire are very close to us.”

Seven people were killed in a blast at a house in the Nuseirat refugee camp in central Gaza. Six people died in an attack on a house on al-Jalaa Street in northern Gaza City, and three others were killed in a bombing in Lababida nearby.

Marwan al-Sultan, director of the Indonesian Hospital, said it received 80 patients and wounded people from al-Ahli Hospital. They had to be packed into “every corner”, he said as Gaza’s medical facilities have been overwhelmed with the wounded while struggling to remain in operation due to Israeli attacks and a lack of supplies.

“Many cases require urgent surgeries. Many cases suffer from direct shots in the head and require intensive care. Fuel and medical supplies are dwindling,” he said. He said the hospital also received 16 bodies, half of them women and children.

Mahmoud Bassal, a Civil Defence spokesman, said the military shelled houses in Gaza City’s Jaffa area and first responders “saw people lying on the ground and were not able to retrieve them”.

In a situational update on Tuesday, Israeli’s army said its forces “eliminated dozens of terrorists and located numerous weapons” during its operations in Gaza City. Its soldiers are continuing raids “above and below” ground in the Shujayea neighbourhood, it added.

The Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights said it was “appalled” at the latest mass evacuation orders as “civilians continue to be killed and injured”.

At least 38,243 people have been killed in Gaza and 88,033 people wounded in Israel’s war since October 7, according to Gaza’s Health Ministry. The war began that day after Hamas attacked southern Gaza, killing at least 1,139 people and taking dozens of people captive.

Hassan Barari, international affairs professor at Qatar University, said the level of attacks on the civilian population is nothing new. “These atrocities have been the hallmark of the Israeli operation in Gaza from the very beginning,” he told Al Jazeera.

As Israel increases its bombardment of northern Gaza, Hamas and Israeli officials have been discussing a potential ceasefire with mediators.

But on Monday, Hamas warned the intensifying attacks will bring the talks back to “zero”. Its political chief, Ismail Haniyeh, said he made “urgent contact” with mediators warning of the “catastrophic consequences” of the deadly incursions.

Egypt’s President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi discussed efforts to reach a ceasefire in Gaza on Tuesday in Cairo with US Central Intelligence Agency Director William Burns, the Egyptian presidency said in a statement.

Burns and Israel’s Mossad chief, David Barnea, will reportedly travel to Doha on Wednesday and meet Qatar’s prime minister, Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim Al Thani, a key mediator.

Barari said the first phase of the ceasefire proposal – six weeks without any fighting – is crucial for the people of Gaza to get some sense of security after nine months of relentless attacks and to receive desperately needed humanitarian aid.

“The continuation of the war is not good for the Palestinians, but it’s also not good for the Israelis. If the Israeli government succeeds in securing the liberation of the hostages, the momentum for the continuation of the war would be less and less,” Barari said. “I think this would be a wake-up call to Israeli society that the time has come to put an end to the war.”

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