

Israeli snipers shoot to kill on sight, firing on fleeing civilians in Gaza

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Gaza City, July 11 (RHC)-- Several civilians in Gaza City say people were shot dead by snipers after the Israeli military issued a new evacuation order and told Palestinians to head south as it steps up its offensive across the enclave.

The attacks reportedly took place as civilians evacuated a number of neighbourhoods in Gaza City, having been ordered to leave on Wednesday, even as mediators from Qatar, the United States and Egypt

were meeting with Israeli officials in Doha for talks seeking a ceasefire.

One man told Al Jazeera he was sitting near Yarmouk stadium when he saw an Israeli sniper shoot a man on a bicycle carrying canned food. "The sniper shot him directly," he said. "We were unable to move his body. Even the paramedics were unable to access the street. They couldn't retrieve or evacuate the body of this person."

Ambulance staff forced to turn back reportedly told the man that they had not received instructions to retrieve bodies. They had been warned that anyone approaching the deceased would be shot.

A woman told Al Jazeera she wanted to pass through Yarmouk stadium but was told there were bodies of Palestinians in the streets who were shot by Israeli snipers. "We came to ask for help from the paramedics and firefighters to at least take the dead bodies so they wouldn't remain in the street," she said. "They need to be buried." Multiple people said they saw a man walking in the street being shot in the head by a sniper taking aim from a tower. Several people later managed to retrieve his body.

"This person was walking peacefully, and then a bullet was shot into his head. We went down and brought him here," one man said.

Reporting from the neighbourhood of Shujayea, where the Israeli military had intensified its attacks over the past two weeks, Al Jazeera's Ibrahim Al Khalili said Israeli forces left a trail of destruction after withdrawing from parts of the area.

"Many residents are in shock, struggling to comprehend the scale of the devastation," he said, adding that there are numerous civilian casualties. "Hospitals and clinics are overwhelmed with the injured, many of whom require urgent medical attention," he reported, and thousands of residents have been displaced.

The buildings still standing are structurally compromised with "significant damage to roofs, walls and foundations," he said. Essential services such as water, electricity and sanitation have been "severely disturbed."

Israel's army has repeatedly ordered hundreds of thousands of Palestinians to leave areas that it had previously declared were safe to return to – in both northern and southern Gaza.

On Wednesday, it dropped leaflets addressed to "everyone in Gaza City" warning people to leave the "dangerous combat zone," days after ordering evacuations of the city's Daraj, Tuffah and Old City neighborhoods.

B'Tselem, the Israeli Information Center for Human Rights in the Occupied Territories, has called Israel's orders for Gaza City's entire population to evacuate "absolute madness." In a post on social media on Wednesday, it said the international community must now intervene and "demand that Israel immediately stop the war."

The talks on a ceasefire and an exchange of captives held in Gaza for Palestinians held in Israeli prisons were ongoing in Qatar's capital on Thursday.

Tamer Qarmout, an assistant professor of public policy at the Doha Institute of Graduate Studies, said he remained "quite pessimistic" about them after "previous rounds of negotiations have failed miserably".

He told Al Jazeera that these talks would be the last push by the administration of US President Joe Biden, after which the "Americans would be busy with their elections and the Gaza war will be a secondary or third priority for them."



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