

Israeli claim of killing Hamas members at Gaza City school is proven to be totally false

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By Maryam Qarehgozlou

Gaza City, August 13 (RHC)-- After the Israeli regime claimed to have killed 19 members of Hamas in its latest attack on a Gaza City school to justify the massacre, investigations reveal the victims were all ordinary Palestinian civilians, and most of them had already been killed in previous strikes.

Early on Saturday morning, when hundreds of Palestinians were performing the dawn prayer, three Israeli missile strikes pounded the Tabaeen School, where about 6,000 internally displaced people were sheltering, killing more than 100 people, including women and children.

Reports indicate that the Israeli bombing specifically targeted the prayer hall where displaced people were performing prayers, as well as the upper prayer hall housing women and children.

According to the Palestinian Civil Defense in Gaza, the US-made bombs, some of which weighed about two thousand pounds, had immense destructive power, reducing the victims' bodies to "shredded pieces" and "burned parts", causing numerous serious injuries among the survivors.

Louay Nasser, a 30-year-old Palestinian who is living with his family in a classroom at Tabaeen School, said when he arrived at the scene of the explosion, he froze in shock at the horror that had unfolded.

"There were pieces of men, women and children lying in front of me ... heads separated from bodies, hands and legs all over," Nasser was quoted as saying.

"It was very difficult, but the worst was the man who was on fire, running and screaming. We ran over to him and put out the fire. He had burns all over his body to a massive degree."

The attack is one of the deadliest against Palestinians in the Gaza Strip during more than 10 months of Israeli genocidal war which has killed nearly 40,000 people so far. To evade international scrutiny and deflect the blame on the Palestinian resistance, the Israeli military claimed that the school was being used as a command center by Hamas and the Islamic Jihad.

In a statement, it said the death toll reported by the Gaza health authorities was "inflated" and claimed that the strike had killed at least 19 resistance fighters, including senior Hamas commanders.

Israeli claim debunked

However, debunking the claim, the Geneva-based Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Monitor said in its report on Sunday that the investigations show no proof or indication of any military operations or combatants at the Tabaeen School in Gaza City's Al-Daraj neighborhood.

According to the rights group, based on the statements and testimonies provided by witnesses and survivors and field surveys of the location following the attack, there were no military gatherings or centers at the school, and it was never used for any military objectives.

"The narrow layout of the school and the lack of launch pads and shelters would make it impossible for the site to be used for military operations," the report stated.

Mohammed Al-Kahlout, a displaced Palestinian who was at the school at the time of the attack, told the rights group that he did not see any combatants or military presence in the school while he was there.

"After several weeks at the school, I had not witnessed any armed man or manifestations. I always pray in the prayer hall, and everyone there is a civilian," he said.

The Euro-Med team's preliminary investigation also found that three of the 19 names listed by the Israeli army as "terrorists who were eliminated" in the school bombing had already been killed in previous Israeli bombings.

"These three include Ahmed Ihab al-Jaabari, who was killed on 5 December 2023, Youssef al-Wadiyya, who was targeted by the Israeli military two days prior to the massacre, and Montaser Daher, who was killed on Friday in a residential flat with his sister, one day prior to the massacre," it said.

The report added that three elderly civilians who had no connection to the resistance groups were also among the victims, including Muhammad al-Tayef, a former school principal, Abdul Aziz Misbah Al-Kafarna, deputy mayor of Beit Hanoun, and an academic and an Arabic language teacher, Yousef Kahlout, who were never engaged in any political or military activity.

The rights group said it was checking the identity of the rest of the Palestinians mentioned on the list.

‘Regime lives on lies’

Ramy Abdu, Chairman of Euro-Med Monitor, said four of the victims singled out by the Israeli military as Hamas members were from the Jaabari family, whom he knew personally. “They never engaged in any political or military activities,” Abdu wrote in a post on X, formerly Twitter.

“Another one was my neighbor from the Habib family who had a serious dispute with Hamas,” he noted. “Another civilian, Abdu said, was Abdul Karim Hamad, a devout man who sympathized with Hamas but never joined its ranks.” The human rights campaigner said the Israeli regime “lives on lies.”

The Islamic Jihad in a statement on Sunday said it “categorically” rejects Israel’s claims of the presence of armed personnel from the ranks or fighters of its Saraya Al-Quds in the Tabaeen School.

“The lies being spread by the enemy aim to create confusion and evade accountability while continuing its war of genocide against our people with the goal of killing as many as possible,” it stated.

Hamas also in a statement on Saturday said Israel’s narrative regarding the massacre at the Tabaeen School is “misleading” and “false” and is an attempt to justify its “heinous crime amid widespread international criticism.”

“We affirm that among those who were martyred in today’s massacre, there was not a single armed individual; all of them were civilians targeted while performing the Fajr prayer,” it said in a statement.

“The list includes children, civilian employees, university professors, and religious figures, most of whom have no connection to any political or military activities.”

Izzat Al-Rishq, a member of the Hamas Political Bureau was also quoted as saying on Saturday that there were no armed individuals at Al-Tabaeen School when it was bombed. “The terrorist enemy army is lying again, fabricating excuses and absurd pretexts to target civilians, schools, hospitals, and displacement camps. All of these are flimsy excuses and exposed lies to justify its crimes,” he said.

Resistance fighters avoid civilian areas

Al-Rishq elaborated that all resistance fighters from all factions have been instructed to avoid being among civilians in civilian areas to prevent them from being targeted by Zionist forces.

According to Rishq, the Israeli military’s claims of using “smart weapons” to reduce civilian casualties “is an insult to the world’s intelligence.”

“If these so-called ‘American smart weapons’ are killing such a large number of civilians, it shows the extent of the stupidity of this army and its leaders, proving that these weapons are blind, not smart.”

Gaza Government Media Office in a statement on Sunday confirmed that there were no resistance fighters inside the school and that children, women, and elderly made up 32 percent of the casualties.

“We affirm that the occupation’s claim regarding the presence of fighters at Al-Tabaeen School is entirely false and baseless. The people present inside the school were civilians, children, and women. The occupation army has utterly failed to prove the validity of its false and fabricated story,” it said.

According to the media office, the number of people killed in the attack could exceed 108 as some bodies are yet to be found. “It appears that the remains of these families were completely incinerated due to the intense explosion of the large, internationally banned bombs dropped by the occupation army on the displaced persons in the school, which may cause the number of martyrs to exceed 108,” it added.

Euro-Med Monitor said the attack on the Tabaeen School was just one of the military attacks that Israel has carried out against civilians “directly” and “indiscriminately”, which is an essential component of the crime of genocide that Israel has committed in the Gaza Strip since October 7.

“Israel continues to murder, burn, and injure hundreds of civilians every day and then claim that the targeted areas contained military installations or leaders, without offering concrete proof or permitting independent international entities to confirm the veracity of these claims.”

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