

# *Israeli airstrike kills 17 in central Gaza, 15 of them members of same family*

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Palestinians inspect the site of an Israeli strike in al-Zawayda in the central Gaza Strip on August

17, 2024. (AFP photo)

Gaza City, August 18 (RHC)-- An Israeli airstrike in central Gaza has killed at least 17 Palestinians — most of them members of a family, including nine children and three women, according to health officials.

"The toll from the Israeli strike on the Ajlah family home and their warehouse in Al-Zawaida is 15 dead," Gaza civil defense spokesman Mahmud Bassal told AFP. The airstrike hit the Gaza town of Zawayda shortly after midnight, according to a witness who spoke to the French news agency.

"Three rockets hit the house directly," he said as rescuers pulled bodies from the rubble of the flattened house. "There were a lot of children and women inside... What have they done to deserve this?"

Abu Ahmed Hassan, a neighbor who also witnessed the attack told the news agency, "They were asleep in their beds, kids and babies, then three missiles targeted their place."

"There are no military activities here at all," he added.

The Gaza Health Ministry said the latest toll brought the number of those killed in the territory since October to at least 40,074 Palestinians.

On Friday Israel's military issued instructions on X in Arabic for Palestinians in parts of central Gaza to evacuate to a designated "humanitarian zone." The military spokesman who posted the message claimed that "militants were firing rockets from those locations and that the military was preparing to act against them."

The new forced displacement order comes as residents in the area said that Israeli tanks pushed further into the eastern area of Deir Al-Balah, where hundreds of thousands of displaced Palestinians are sheltering.

The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) said Friday's orders, had affected around 170,000 displaced people.

The Euro-Med Human Rights Monitor has previously said that the regime's mass forced displacement campaign "has so far affected about 2,000,000 people in the Gaza Strip, most of them forcibly displaced multiple times."

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