Israeli attacks kill at least 20 Palestinians across Gaza on New Year's Day

Khan Younis, January 2 (RHC)-- Israeli attacks have killed at least 20 Palestinians, including children, in Gaza on New Year's Day, as makeshift shelters for displaced people across the Strip flooded after days of heavy rain.

The attacks were reported on Wednesday in Jabalia in northern Gaza, Bureij refugee camp in central Gaza and the southern city of Khan Younis.

Gaza's Health Ministry said four children and one woman were among the dead. At least 10 other Palestinians were missing and believed to be under the rubble. "Fifteen people were martyred and more than 20 were injured in a massacre after midnight in a house where displaced people were living in the town of Jabalia," Gaza civil defence agency's spokesperson Mahmoud Basal said.

A relative of some of the victims said the first responders were still searching for survivors. "The house has turned into a pile of debris," said Jibri Abu Warda. "It was a massacre with body parts of children and women scattered everywhere. They were sleeping when the house was bombed," Abu Warda said. "No one knows why they targeted the house. They were all civilians."

An attack overnight in Bureij refugee camp killed a woman and a child, according to the Al-Aqsa Martyrs Hospital, which received the bodies. A third strike in Khan Younis killed three people, according to the Nasser Hospital and the European Hospital, which received the bodies.

The civil defence agency said it has been finding it hard to respond to distress calls from families because of intense Israeli bombardment over the past few days. "Those besieged in the areas of incursion suffer from a complete lack of livelihood. The suspension of our services has completely affected the lives of citizens who are exposed to Israeli bombardment," a civil defence member told Al Jazeera.

"The New Year arrives in Gaza, not with joy or hope, but with the boom of fighter jets, drones, and eardrum-shattering explosion sounds," said Al Jazeera's Tareq Abu Azzoum, reporting from Deir el-Balah in central Gaza.

Israel's war on Gaza has killed at least 45,553 Palestinians and wounded 108,379 since October 7, 2023, Gaza's Health Ministry said on Wednesday.

"It's not just Israeli bombs and the forced displacement that are overwhelming Palestinians, but also the severe cold weather. Many of them are in tents, lacking warm winter clothing, and they are trying to cope with it all by resorting to primitive means of heating," Abu Azzoum said.

Days of heavy rain have flooded hundreds of makeshift shelters across the enclave, piling more misery on forcibly displaced Palestinians as Israel continues to restrict entry of humanitarian aid. At least six infants have died from the cold in recent days.

"For three days, we haven't slept out of fear that our children would fall sick because of the winter, as well as fear of missiles falling on us," said Samah Darabieh, a woman displaced from central Gaza's Deir el-Balah and now living in Beit Lahiya.
Throughout their 15-month assault on Gaza, Israeli forces have routinely besieged and attacked medical facilities housing both patients and displaced families.

"Two days ago, they bombed Al-Wafaa hospital, which is behind us, and the shrapnel dropped here," Darabieh said.

Last week, Israeli forces raided north Gaza's Kamal Adwan Hospital, forcibly evacuating medical staff and patients from the facility and arresting the hospital's director, Dr Hussam Abu Safia, whose whereabouts remain unknown.

Kamal Adwan Hospital is "suffering from a stifling siege, as the operating and surgery departments, laboratory, maintenance, ambulance units and warehouses have been completely burned", the Gaza Health Ministry said.

The United Nations has said Israel's attacks on Gaza's hospitals have pushed its healthcare system to "the brink of total collapse", and Israeli justifications that Palestinian armed groups use health facilities are "vague, broad" and "contradicted by publicly available information".

Israel's continuing assault on Gaza has drawn growing international condemnation, with officials and rights groups labelling the attacks and blocking of aid deliveries as acts of genocide.

In November, the International Criminal Court (ICC) issued arrest warrants for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and former Defence Minister Yoav Gallant for alleged war crimes and crimes against humanity in Gaza.

Israel also faces a genocide case at the International Court of Justice for its deadly war on Gaza.

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