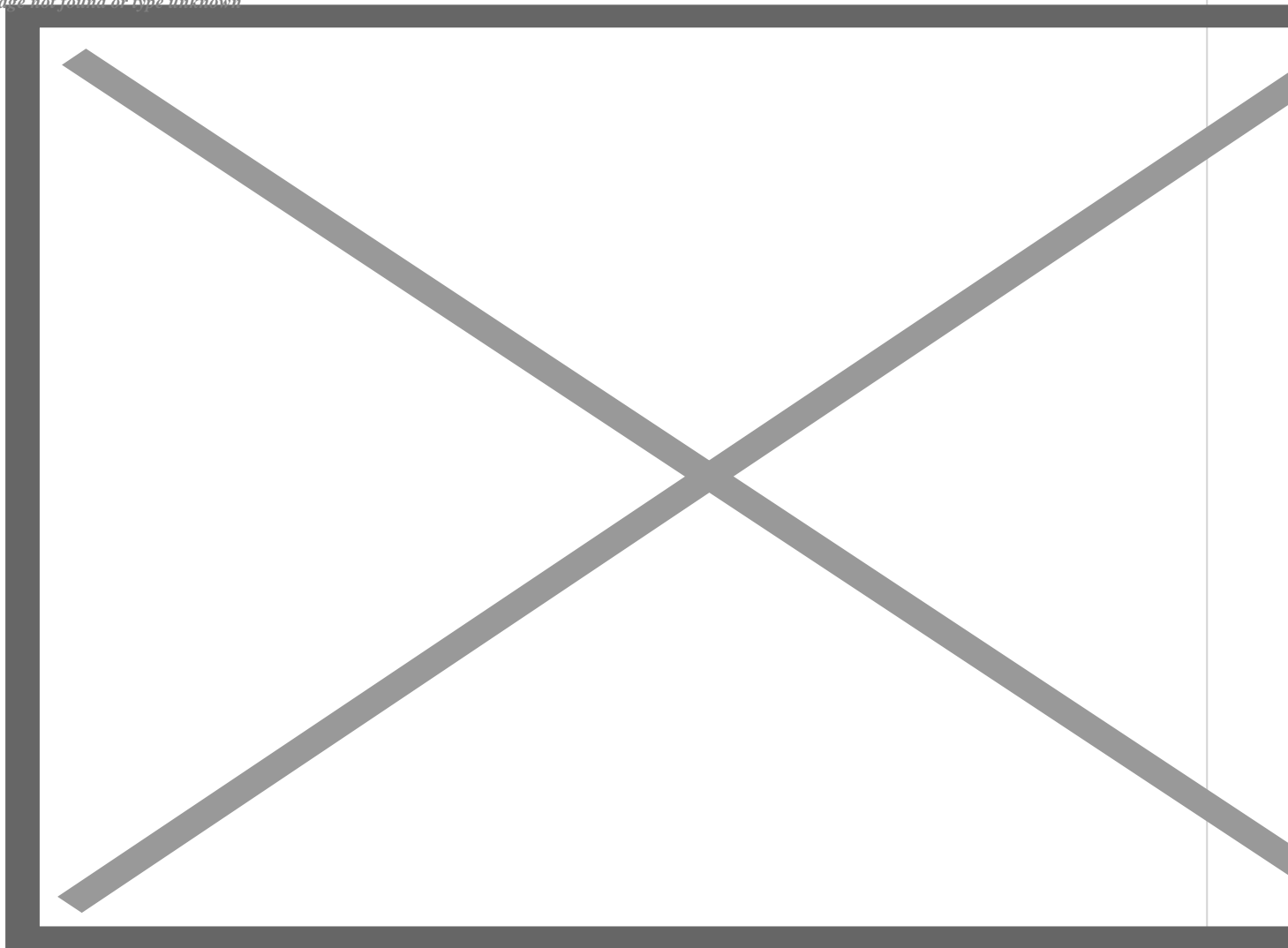


Israeli ground forces raid central Gaza as massacre enters 21st day

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An Israeli army M109 155mm self-propelled howitzer is deployed at a position along the border with the Gaza Strip near Sderot in southern Israel on October 27, 2023 amid ongoing battles between Israel and the Palestinian Hamas movement. (Photo by Jack Guez / Agence France-Presse AFP)

Gaza City, October 27 (RHC)-- Israeli infantry backed by warplanes mounted an incursion deeper into Gaza, the army said Friday, as it readies for a ground offensive against Hamas for the deadliest attack in the country's history.

As Tel Aviv's massacre against Palestinians raged into its 21st day, there was no letup in Israel's relentless strikes on the Gaza Strip, with European leaders calling for "humanitarian pauses" to allow in critically needed aid.

Israel has been bombarding the Palestinian territory since Hamas gunmen stormed across the border on October 7, killing 1,400 people, mostly civilians, and kidnapping more than 220 others, according to Israeli officials.

So far, Gaza's Hamas-run health ministry says the strikes have killed more than 7,000 people, mostly civilians and many of them children, raising growing calls for protection of innocent people caught in the conflict.

With tens of thousands of Israeli troops massed alongside the Gaza border ahead of a widely expected ground offensive, the army said its forces had staged a brief ground incursion into central Gaza.

"During the last day, IDF ground forces, accompanied by IDF fighter jets and UAVs, conducted an additional targeted raid in the central Gaza Strip," it said in the second such operation in as many days.

Black-and-white footage released by the military showed a column of armoured vehicles as a thick cloud of dust billowed into the sky after the strikes.

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