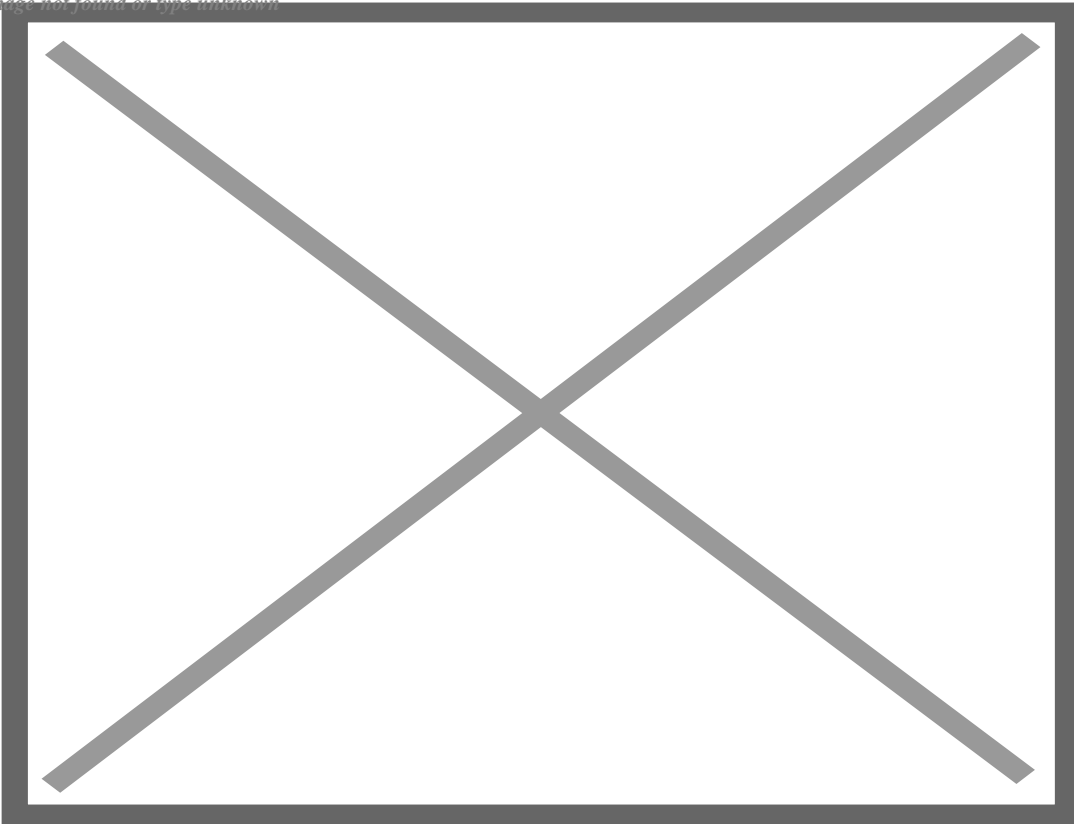


Israeli forces move further into Gaza as Netanyahu declares time for war

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Gaza City, October 30 (RHC)-- Israeli military forces have advanced further into the besieged Gaza Strip and battled with Palestinian fighters near Gaza City, as the United Nations and medical staff expressed fears over air strikes hitting closer to hospitals.

Israeli soldiers and tanks carried out attacks from two sides of Gaza City in the northern section of the strip on Monday, with Palestinian armed groups saying that they repelled Israeli tanks to the east of the city.

“Our duty today is [to] fight and fight,” the Palestinian Islamic Jihad armed group said in a statement, adding that it was not the right time to discuss a potential ceasefire.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu also dismissed growing calls for a ceasefire, saying that such action would constitute “surrender to terrorism”.

Israeli forces said that they “killed dozens of terrorists who barricaded themselves in buildings and tunnels and attempted to attack the troops” and that three Israeli troops have been killed in Gaza.

Israel also announced that it had freed a female Israeli soldier being held captive by the Palestinian armed group Hamas during its ground raids, which have expanded in recent days alongside its continuing aerial assault.

More than 8,300 people, including more than 3,400 children, have been killed in the bombardment, according to Gaza officials, and UN officials and aid organisations have warned of a humanitarian catastrophe as Israel continues to impose a “complete siege” on the territory.

Numerous strikes lit up the north sky in northern Gaza on Monday. Colin Clarke, director of research at the Soufan Group, an intelligence and security consultancy, told Al Jazeera that the latest strikes could include large bombs meant to destroy a network of underground tunnels utilised by Hamas.

“This could be the use of bunker busters, where the Israelis are dropping bombs meant to penetrate what we call hard and deeply buried targets,” said Clarke, adding that it was impossible to be certain.

A small amount of aid has started to trickle into the beleaguered strip, with the Palestinian Red Crescent reporting that 26 trucks carrying aid entered through the Rafah crossing with Egypt on Monday.

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