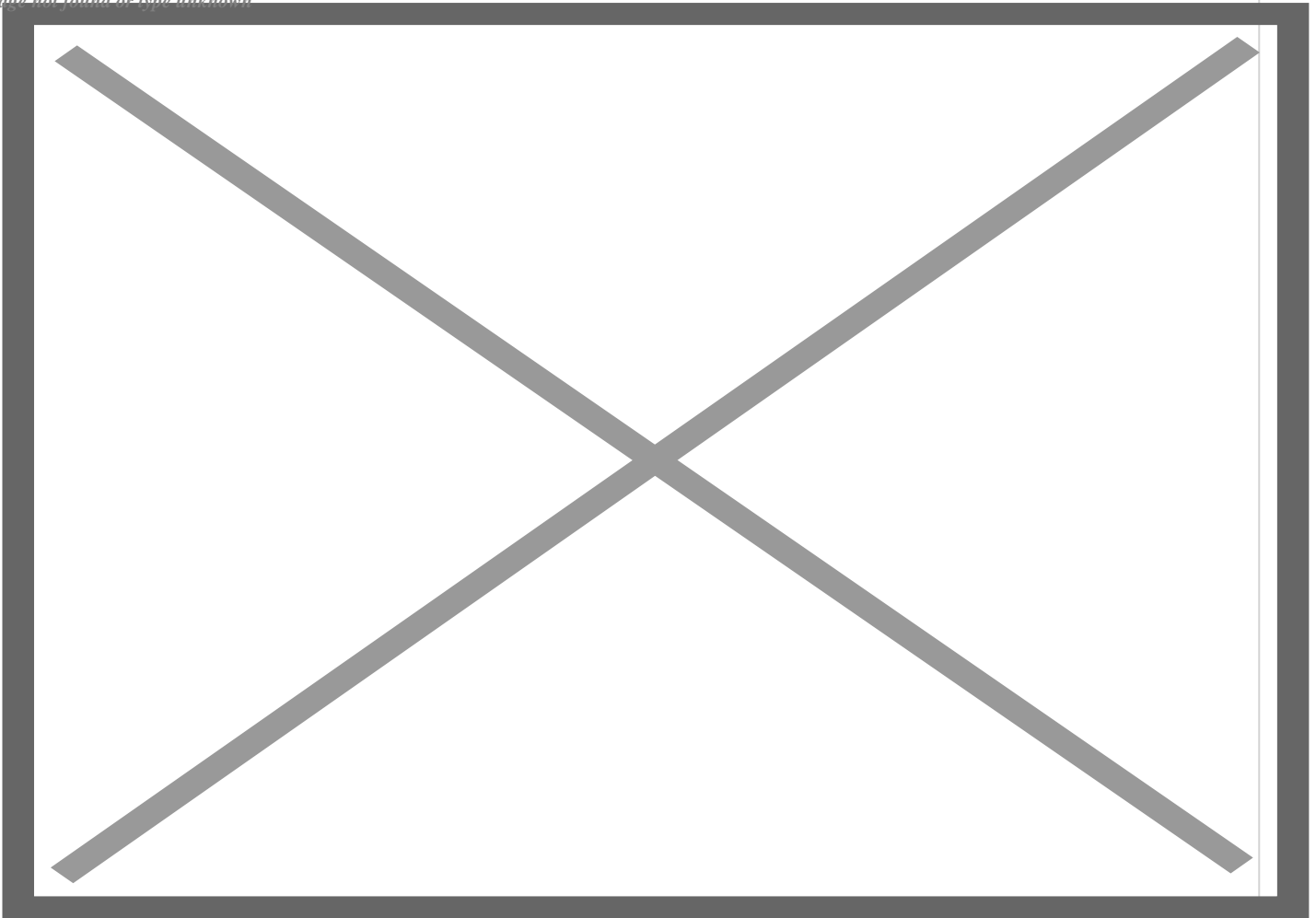


Israel's military claims it has cut Gaza in half, surrounded Gaza City

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Israeli soldiers take positions amid the ongoing ground operation of the Israeli army against Hamas, November 4, 2023 [IDF/Reuters]

Gaza City, November 6 (RHC)-- Israel's military has claimed it has encircled Gaza City and divided the besieged coastal strip into two, as Gaza came under its third total communications outage since the start of the war.

"Today, there is north Gaza and south Gaza," Israeli army spokesman Daniel Hagari told reporters on Sunday, calling it a "significant stage" in Israel's war against Hamas.

Israeli media reported that troops are expected to enter Gaza City within 48 hours. Strong explosions were seen in northern Gaza after nightfall.

But the "collapse in connectivity" across Gaza reported by internet access advocacy group NetBlocks.org and confirmed by the Palestinian telecom company Paltel made it even more complicated to convey details of the new stage of the military offensive.

"We have lost communication with the vast majority of the UNRWA team members," UN Palestinian refugee agency spokesperson Juliette Touma told the Associated Press. The first Gaza outage lasted 36 hours and the second for a few hours.

Earlier on Sunday, Israeli warplanes struck two central Gaza refugee camps, killing at least 53 people and wounding dozens, health officials said. Israel said it would press on with its offensive against Hamas, despite US appeals for even brief pauses to get aid to desperate civilians.

The Palestinian health ministry said more than 9,700 Palestinians have been killed in the territory in nearly a month of war, more than 4,000 of them children. That toll likely will rise as Israeli troops advance into dense, urban neighbourhoods.

Air strikes hit the Maghazi refugee camp overnight, killing at least 40 people and wounding 34 others, the health ministry said. The camp is in the zone where Israel's military had urged Palestinian civilians to seek refuge.

Another air strike hit a house near a school at the Bureji refugee camp in central Gaza. Staff at Al-Aqsa Hospital said at least 13 people were killed. The camp was struck on Thursday as well.

Despite appeals and overseas demonstrations, Israel has continued its bombardment across Gaza. Critics say Israel's strikes are often disproportionate, considering the large number of civilians killed.

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