

Palestinians say there is nowhere safe as Israel resumes barbaric Gaza bombing

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Gaza City, December 2 (RHC)-- Fierce fighting has resumed in Gaza after a weeklong pause in hostilities between Israel and Hamas, with Palestinians left with nowhere safe to shelter from the widening offensive and sirens blaring across southern Israel.

Minutes after the truce expired on Friday, the Israeli military started pounding Gaza, accusing Hamas of violating the pause first by launching rockets.

Al Jazeera's journalists in the enclave reported heavy gunfire and Israeli shelling in the north, central and southern parts of Gaza. "The Gaza Strip is under heavy artillery and even aerial bombardment by the [Israeli] occupation forces," said Al Jazeera's Tareq Abu Azzoum, reporting from Khan Younis in southern Gaza. "In the coming hours, we might witness a surging increase in the number of Israeli strikes across the territory."

Israel has been dropping leaflets into parts of southern Gaza, warning civilians to evacuate southwards towards Rafah, on the border with Egypt. The leaflets dropped in Khan Younis said the city is now a "dangerous battle zone."

Until the truce that started on November 24, Israel's response to the Hamas attack on October 7 was largely concentrated on northern Gaza. Thousands of residents fled to the south, taking shelter in areas including Khan Younis. But with an estimated 1.7 million people displaced, Palestinians face an untenable situation with no route to return north and attacks across the enclave.

"Right now, sounds of Israeli explosions can be heard in the south, an area that the Israeli authorities had recommended as safe for civilians to flee," Abu Azzoum said. "This [resumption of fighting] brings Palestinians only one option – that they will live again under the Israeli bombardment that will destroy all means of life inside the Gaza Strip," he added.

Khan Younis resident Mansour Shouman said he has been "surrounded by tens of thousands" of people who have come to the Nasser hospital to seek refuge. Shouman, who told Al Jazeera that he was sheltering in a tent beside the maternity ward, said that more than "10 people have been killed [and] brought in ambulances close by me".

"There is a general feeling of anxiety between the civilians here, people do not know what's going to happen next. The belief is that negotiations are still going. People are hopeful that a ceasefire will hold in the next few hours," Shouman said.

He added that people are staying put wherever they are as it's too dangerous to travel anywhere.

"Despite all challenges, Palestinians are steadfast on their land here, they don't want any repeat of 1948 and 1967. We are not leaving our land to go anywhere, we will try to strive against what the occupation here is doing," Shouman said.

"People are asking 'Where should we go?' Gaza is unprepared for all of this," said journalist Hind Khoudary, reporting from Khan Younis.

As it prepares for the next stage of the war, the Israeli army also published a map dividing Gaza into hundreds of small zones, saying that these individual areas will be used to notify Palestinian civilians of active fighting.

According to an announcement published on the army's website, Palestinians are asked to follow security updates within the new zones. Anyone living in or near one of the numbered zones must follow instructions for that area issued by the army, the announcement said.

UNICEF spokesperson James Elder, who is in Khan Younis, told Al Jazeera that Palestinians in Gaza are once again full of fear after the resumption of Israel's military offensive. Speaking from outside the Nasser hospital, he said ambulances had already started transporting people to the largest active remaining complex in the enclave. "Hospital staff obviously have already been working 24/7," he said.

“This hospital, despite the immense efforts of its brave health staff, cannot take another assault. People cannot take another assault.” Elder also said that thousands of people sleep in the Nasser hospital – beyond the fact it is working at 200 percent capacity for patients who need medical care.

Gaza’s Ministry of Health said Israeli air strikes have killed at least 54 people across the strip on Friday. More than 15,000 Palestinians, including more than 6,150 children, have been killed in Gaza since October 7th.

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