

Israeli attacks kill 200 Palestinians in 24 hours

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Gaza City, December 14 (RHC)-- The Palestinian Ministry of Health reports Israeli attacks on Gaza have killed 200 Palestinians in the past 24 hours. Among the dead are at least 20 people killed in overnight air raids on Rafah near the southern border with Egypt, where nearly half of Gaza's population of 2.3 million is sheltering from Israel's unrelenting bombardment.

Their misery was compounded Wednesday as the area was hit with heavy rains and cold winds. These are Palestinians forced to live in a tent city in al-Mawasi in southern Gaza, which Israel has designated as a so-called safe zone.

One refugee, Jassir Barbach, told reporters: “Children sleep in the tent, while some adults have no choice but to sleep on the streets. There is no food, no water. The children lack milk and diapers. The situation is dire, with no sanitary conditions or toilets.”

Another refugee, Mahmoud Ashour: “I have four children with gastrointestinal diseases and flu. My youngest son has a cold, but we don’t have any medicine. I have never felt as helpless and miserable in my life as I do now.”

The United Nations warns Gaza faces a “public health disaster.” Lynn Hastings is the United Nations humanitarian coordinator for the Occupied Palestinian Territory. She said: “We’ve got a textbook formula for epidemics and a public health disaster. This is in part, of course, because the shelters have long ago exceeded their full capacity, with people lining up for hours just to get to a toilet, one toilet available for hundreds of people. You can imagine what the sanitation conditions are like as a result.”

The World Health Organization says there have been 360,000 cases of infectious diseases recorded in Gaza’s shelters. That includes meningitis, jaundice, chickenpox, lice, scabies, upper respiratory tract infections, and diarrhea, which is a leading cause of death for young children.

The World Food Program, the WFP, says 83% of households in southern Gaza are going hungry; in the north, that figure is 97%.

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