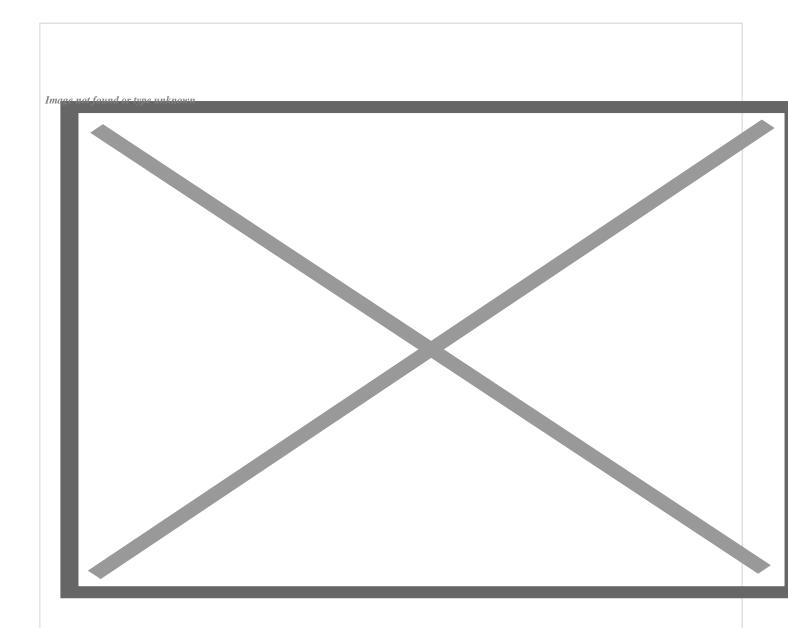# *Israeli snipers kill 21 civilians outside Gaza's besieged Nasser Hospital*

Palestinians dig graves to bury their relatives who were killed in the Israeli bombardment of the Gaza Strip, at the Nasser hospital in Khan Younis, Southern Gaza Strip, Monday, Jan. 22, 2024. (AP Photo/Mohammed Dahman)

Khan Younis, February 9 (RHC)-- Israeli snipers have killed at least 21 Palestinians after they opened fire on displaced civilians trying to reach Nasser Hospital in southern Gaza's Khan Younis.

Al Jazeera's Hani Mahmoud, reporting from Rafah, said on Friday that snipers had surrounded the hospital and were "shooting at every moving object" as people were trying to reach it from two densely populated residential neighbourhoods near the facility.

"The area around the hospital is very dangerous, and it has turned into a combat zone," he said, noting that the hospital is the only place right now in Khan Younis that has some water left. Rights groups said the Israeli military's repeated attacks on medical facilities, doctors, nurses, medics and ambulances must be investigated for war crimes.

"Hospitals and other medical facilities are civilian objects that have special protections under international humanitarian law or the laws of war," Human Rights Watch noted.

Mahmoud said this represents a "new trend of targeted killings" by Israeli snipers, who shoot Palestinians in the streets. People inside the medical facility would also become easy targets by trying to retrieve the bodies.

"Attack drones also targeted a group of young people who gathered on the roof of the hospital. Because of the communications blackout, they were trying to get signals for the internet on their mobile phones so they could communicate with family members," Mahmoud reported.

Along with al-Amal Hospital, Nasser Hospital is the largest in Khan Younis. Both medical facilities have been under siege for weeks as the Israeli army said it "encircled" the area and ramped up its offensive from air, land and sea.

Many Palestinians, who had been forcibly displaced by previous Israeli attacks in other areas, are now left with few options inside Nasser Hospital, along with limited medical staff and patients, all of whom have little to eat or drink.

The Palestine Red Crescent Society said on Friday that al-Quds Hospital in northern Gaza City also suffered significant damage as a result of being fired on by Israeli tanks. "The Israeli army deliberately targeted the society's headquarters and vehicles to put them out of service," Red Crescent spokesperson Raed al-Nims said.

This is while hundreds of thousands of Palestinians have been in the past few weeks forced to flee Khan Younis to Rafah further south, which lies at the border with Egypt.

More than half of Gaza's population of 2.3 million is now in Rafah, the last place previously designated a "safe zone" by the Israeli army. Israel has said it plans to launch a ground assault on Rafah soon, ignoring warnings of a "catastrophe" by the United States and the United Nations.

"I think that we should push to avoid the tragedy instead of pushing for things to facilitate the tragedy," said UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres on Friday after being asked if he would urge for the border with Egypt to be opened to displace Palestinians out of the Gaza Strip.

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