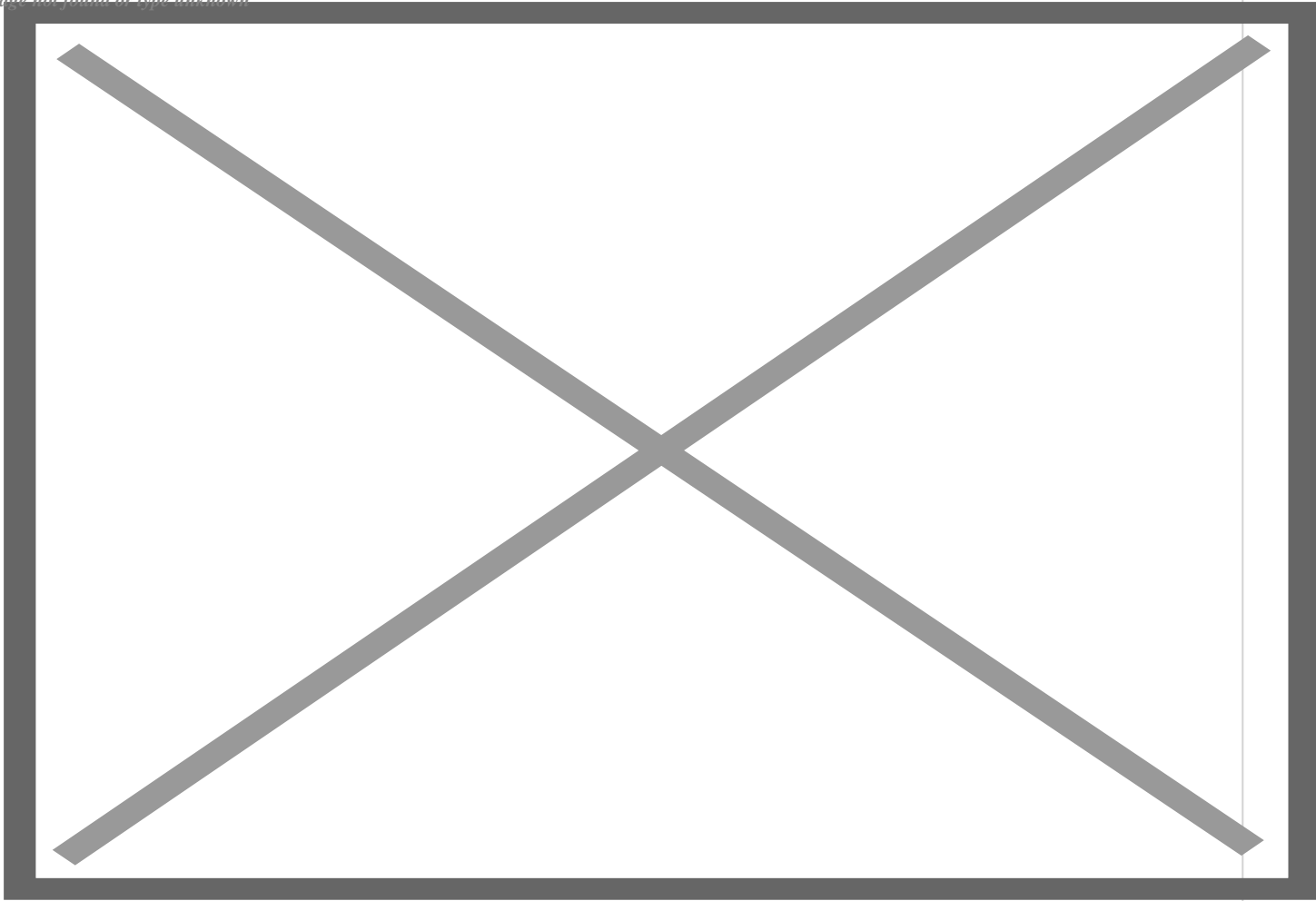


Hamas says two captives killed in Israeli strikes on Gaza

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Families and supporters of Israeli captives held by Hamas fighters demonstrate outside Israel's Ministry of Defence in Tel Aviv, calling for an immediate deal or the captives' release in exchange for that of Palestinian prisoners [File: Ahmad Gharabli/ AFP]

Gaza City, February 12 (RHC)-- The military wing of the Palestinian resistance movement Hamas says Israeli strikes on the Gaza Strip over the past 96 hours have killed two Israeli captives and seriously injured eight others.

The al-Qassam Brigades announced the development in a brief statement on the group's Telegram channel on Sunday. "Their conditions are becoming more dangerous in light of the inability to provide them with appropriate treatment. (Israel) bears full responsibility for the lives of those injured in light of their continued bombing," the statement read.

Israel's chief military spokesperson Rear Admiral Daniel Hagari recently said that 31 of the remaining captives held by Hamas in Gaza were dead. "We have informed 31 families that their captured loved ones are no longer among the living and that we have pronounced them dead." Israel has said more than 130 captives are still being held in the besieged Gaza.

Meanwhile, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said in an interview aired on Sunday that "enough" of the 132 remaining Israeli captives held in Gaza were alive to justify Israel's ongoing war in the region.

"We're going to try to do our best to get all those who are alive back and, frankly, also the bodies of the dead," he said in the interview with ABC's "This Week" program. The Palestinian Prisoners Club, which documents and cares for all Palestinian detainees, stated on Sunday that the number of Palestinians who have been arrested since Oct. 7 had reached 6,950 people.

After Hamas launched Operation Al-Aqsa Storm into the occupied territories on October 7, it captured more than 240 Israeli soldiers and settlers as captives. In late November, a short-lived 7-day truce saw more than 100 Israeli captives freed in exchange for about 240 Palestinian prisoners held illegally in Israeli jails.

However, since the truce collapsed and the fighting resumed on December 1, Hamas has repeatedly said the only way for the resistance movement to release the rest of the Israeli captives was for the regime to stop its aggression on Gaza and free Palestinian prisoners held in Israeli jails.

Health authorities in Gaza estimate about 28,000 Palestinians, mostly civilians, have been killed in the region since the Israeli aggression began in October.

Palestinian health authorities say around 70% of those killed are women or children under 18. The World Health Organization has described the Palestinian Health Ministry system for reporting casualties as "very good" and UN agencies regularly cite its death toll figures.

The latest Israeli strikes on the Gaza Strip killed more than 100 Palestinians, raising the death toll from the onslaught since early October to nearly 28 200. The attacks are focusing on Rafah. The city lies on the border with Egypt and hosts some 1.4 million displaced Palestinians who have been forced to leave their homes due to heavy Israeli bombardments in other parts of the strip.

Hamas has warned that Israel's planned ground offensive in Rafah could cause tens of thousands of casualties.

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