

Nearly 200 bodies found in mass grave at hospital in Gaza's Khan Younis

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Palestinian health workers unearth a body buried by Israeli forces inside Nasser hospital compound in Khan Younis in the southern Gaza Strip on April 21, 2024. [AFP]

Khan Younis, April 21 (RHC)-- Palestinian civil defense crews have uncovered a mass grave inside the Nasser Medical Complex in Gaza's Khan Younis, with 180 bodies recovered so far, Al Jazeera has

learned, as Israel has continued bombardment of the devastated coastal enclave for more than six months.

The discovery on Saturday, and continuing into Sunday, comes after the Israeli military withdrew its troops from the southern city on April 7. Much of the Khan Younis is now in ruins after months of relentless Israeli bombardment and heavy fighting.

“In the hospital courtyard, civil defence members and paramedics have retrieved 180 bodies buried in this mass grave by the Israeli military. The bodies include elderly women, children and young men,” Al Jazeera’s Hani Mahmoud reporting from Khan Younis said on Sunday.

In a statement late on Saturday, Palestinian emergency services said: “Our teams continue their search and retrieval operations for the remaining martyrs in the coming days as there are still a significant number of them.”

Earlier this week, a mass grave was discovered at al-Shifa Hospital following a two-week siege. It was one of several mass graves found at al-Shifa – the largest medical facility in the coastal enclave.

Israel’s war on Gaza has killed more than 34,000 Palestinians, according to local health officials, devastated Gaza’s two largest cities and left a swath of destruction across the territory.

At least two-thirds of the casualties are children and women. It also says the real toll is likely higher as many bodies are stuck beneath the rubble left by air strikes or are in areas that are unreachable for medics.

Israel launched its genocidal war on Gaza after fighters from Hamas and other Palestinian groups carried out an attack inside Israel on October 7 killing about 1,139 people and taking more than 200 people captive.

Meanwhile, Israeli strikes in the coastal enclave are ongoing, including on the southern Gaza city of Rafah, where overnight raids killed 22 people, including 18 children, health officials said on Sunday.

The first strike on early on Sunday morning killed a man, his wife and their three-year-old child, according to the nearby Kuwaiti Hospital, which received the bodies. The woman was pregnant, and the doctors managed to save the baby, the hospital said.

Israel has carried out near daily air raids on Rafah, where more than half of Gaza’s population of 2.3 million has sought refuge from fighting elsewhere.

The second strike killed 17 children and two women, all from the same family, according to hospital records. An air strike in Rafah the night before killed nine people, including six children.

Al Jazeera’s Hani Mahmoud reporting from Rafah said the threats of a looming ground invasion in Rafah were “growing.” “Entire families are being directly targeted inside the residential homes they shelter in,” he said. “There is a shattered sense of safety and security for people already traumatised from fleeing from one place to another.”

Israel has also pledged to expand its ground offensive to the city on the border with Egypt despite international calls for restraint, including from the United States.

However, the U.S. continues to provide weapons packages to Israel while pushing for an end to hostilities in the six-month war. On Saturday, the U.S. House of Representatives with broad bipartisan support passed a \$95bn legislative package providing security assistance to Ukraine, Israel and Taiwan.

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