

Palestinians flee as Israeli forces re-enter Jabalia in northern Gaza

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Gaza City, May 14 (RHC)-- Israeli forces have resumed ground and air attacks on northern Gaza's densely populated Jabalia refugee camp, while in the southern part of the besieged enclave, tanks and troops pushed across a highway into Rafah, where some 1.5 million displaced Palestinians are sheltering.

Israel previously said it had pulled its troops out of the mostly devastated north, where famine has taken hold of the area, after claiming it had defeated Hamas months ago.

But on Monday, its forces and tanks re-entered northern Gaza and resumed shelling in Jabalia, where Hamas said its fighters were engaged in battles. Israel described its latest return to the north as part of a so-called "mop-up" stage of the war, but Palestinians say the need to return is proof Israel's military objectives are unattainable.

Hamas's armed wing, the Qassam Brigades, said its fighters were engaged in gun battles with Israeli forces in the east of Jabalia, and east of Rafah in southern Gaza.

In a series of statements on its Telegram channel, the Qassam Brigades said one of its snipers shot an Israeli soldier in Jabalia. The group said its fighters "targeted" an Israeli army bulldozer with an Al-Yassin 105 shell, east of Jabalia.

Earlier on Monday, the group said its fighters attacked a crowd of Israeli soldiers with mortar shells inside the Jabalia camp, the biggest refugee camp in northern Gaza.

In Rafah, fighters with the brigades also attacked an "infiltration" of Israeli soldiers inside the vital border crossing with Egypt, it said. The armed wing of the Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) said that its fighters fired mortars at Israeli forces massing on the Palestinian side of the crossing.

Israeli forces seized the Palestinian side of the crossing last week, and have blocked the entry of essential humanitarian aid and supplies to desperate Palestinians in the enclave.

With some of the most intense fighting for weeks taking place on both the northern and southern edges of Gaza, hundreds of thousands of Palestinians have again taken flight, and aid groups warn that an already dire humanitarian crisis could sharply worsen.

The attacks come as health officials in Gaza warn that the few remaining healthcare facilities are on the brink of total collapse. Residents fled their houses along rubble-strewn streets in Jabalia, carrying bags of belongings. Tank shells were landing in the centre of the camp and air raids had destroyed clusters of houses, they said.

"We don't know where to go. We have been displaced from one place to the next ... We are running in the streets. I saw it with my own eyes. I saw the tank and the bulldozer. It is on that street," said one woman, who did not give her name.

More than 35,000 people, mostly women and children, have been killed in the Israeli war on Gaza since October, according to Palestinian health officials. The assault has laid waste to the coastal enclave and caused a deep humanitarian crisis, with the Gaza Health Ministry warning in a statement on Monday that the medical system is on the verge of collapse due to a shortage of fuel to power generators and ambulances.



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