

Israel pounds Gaza as UN urges opening of land crossings for aid deliveries

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Gaza City, May 17 (RHC)-- Israeli forces have continued to bombard the Jabalia refugee camp in northern Gaza, where Israel's military offensive is deepening a humanitarian crisis in the already ravaged part of the Palestinian enclave.

Hamas said on Friday that its fighters were battling invading Israeli troops in the narrow alleyways of Jabalia – the Gaza Strip's largest refugee camp – in some of the fiercest confrontations since soldiers returned to the area a week ago.

Israeli forces have stepped up their attacks on northern Gaza in recent days, displacing more than 100,000 people, according to United Nations figures. Residents said Israeli tanks and armoured vehicles had moved deep into the heart of Jabalia while bulldozers were demolishing homes and shops.

Reporting from Deir el-Balah in central Gaza, Al Jazeera's Hani Mahmoud said the Palestinian Civil Defence said at least 93 bodies were recovered within 24 hours from the "streets and the alleyways" of Jabalia. "They are saying there are still more bodies in areas that they are unable to reach," Mahmoud said.

Meanwhile, fighting between Palestinian armed groups and the Israeli military was also reported in other parts of the coastal territory.

Hamas's armed wing, the Qassam Brigades, and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad's armed wing, the al-Quds Brigades, said on Friday that their fighters shelled an Israeli "command post" in the south part of Gaza City.

The spokesman for the Qassam Brigades, Abu Obaida, also said in a rare statement that Hamas fighters had targeted 100 Israeli army vehicles across all "fighting fronts" over the past 10 days and had inflicted casualties.

Israel's intensifying bombardment of Gaza comes as the United Nations and human rights advocates continue to call for a lasting ceasefire to end the war, which has killed more than 35,000 Palestinians since early October. The war began after Hamas carried out attacks in southern Israel on October 7, killing 1,139 people.

Gaza faces dire shortages of food, water, medicine and other critical supplies because Israel has impeded aid deliveries.

This month, the Israeli army seized and shut down the Palestinian side of the Rafah border crossing between the Gaza Strip and Egypt – a vital entry point for aid in southern Gaza. Hundreds of thousands of people have been forced to flee the city of Rafah as Israeli forces have launched intense air and ground attacks in recent days.

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