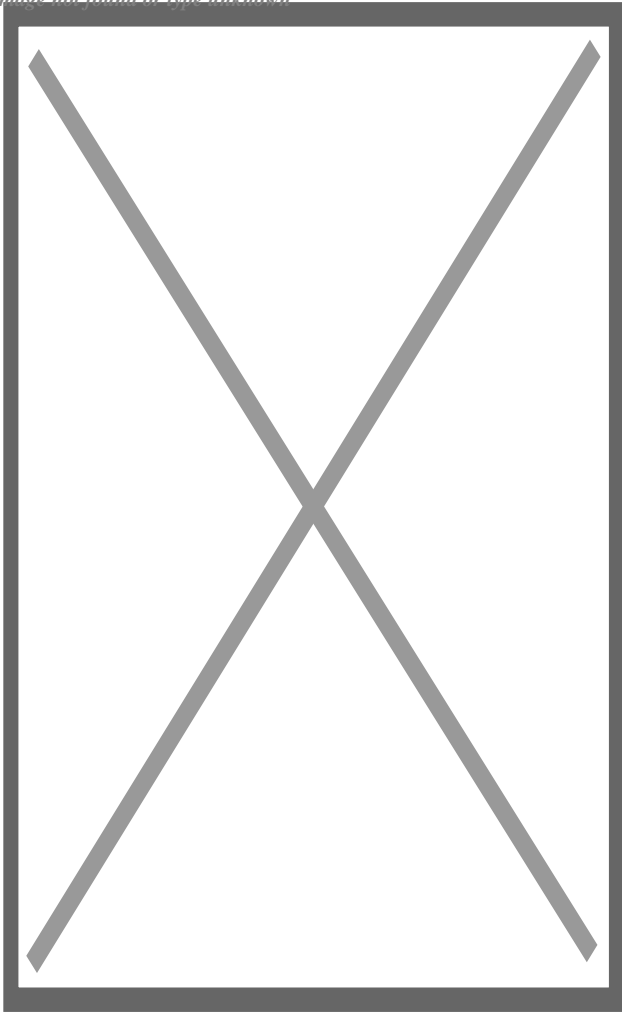


*Israel's genocidal war machine  
bombs Gaza school housing  
displaced Palestinians  
massacring at least 40, including  
women and children*

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Deir el-Balah, June 6 (RHC)-- Israeli forces have bombed a United Nations-linked school in central Gaza where forcibly displaced Palestinians are sheltering, killing at least 40 and wounding more than 70.

Officials from Gaza's government media office and the Health Ministry confirmed the death toll, which included 14 children and 9 women, following Thursday's predawn strikes which hit al-Sardi school and homes in Nuseirat camp.

Hamas, which governs the Gaza Strip, condemned the attack on Thursday as a "horrible massacre" and said many women and children were among those killed and wounded.

The Palestinian Wafa news agency said that thousands of displaced Palestinians were sheltering at al-Sardi school, which is linked to the UN agency for Palestinian refugees (UNRWA), when it came under attack.

Ismail al-Thawabta, a spokesman for Gaza's government media office, said "huge numbers of dead and wounded" were arriving at the Al-Aqsa Hospital in central Gaza, which had reached three times its clinical capacity. "This horrible massacre committed by the Israeli occupation is clear evidence of genocide, ethnic cleansing against civilians, including women and children and displaced people in the Gaza Strip," he told reporters.

The dead and wounded were overwhelming the hospital, "which is filled with wounded patients three times beyond its clinical capacity", he added. "This portends a real disaster that will lead to an even greater increase in the number of martyrs."

Israel's military confirmed the bombing, saying its fighter jets struck a " Hamas compound embedded inside an UNRWA school in the area of Nuseirat". It claimed the bombing "eliminated terrorists who were planning to carry out attacks" against its forces.

Hamas rejected the Israeli statement. "The occupation uses lying to the public opinion through false, fabricated stories to justify the brutal crime it conducted against dozens of displaced people," al-Thawabta told the Reuters news agency.

The attack on al-Sardi came as Israeli forces stepped up their bombardment of Gaza even as the United States and mediators continued to press ahead with an effort to secure a ceasefire deal.

Al Jazeera's Hani Mahmoud, reporting from Deir el-Balah in central Gaza, said prior to the latest attack on Nuseirat, Israeli forces had killed at least 102 people in 24 hours. These included attacks on the Bureij and Maghazi refugee camps, also located in central Gaza.

Doctors Without Borders, in a statement earlier on Wednesday, described the situation in Gaza as "apocalyptic". The group, which is known by its French acronym MSF, said the Al-Aqsa Hospital had received 70 dead people and more than 300 injured since Tuesday, and that the majority of the casualties were women and children.

"The odour of blood in the hospital's emergency room this morning was unbearable. There are people lying everywhere, on the floor, outside ... bodies were being brought in plastic bags. The situation is overwhelming," said Karin Huster, an MSF official.

The "insane escalation of violence" across the Gaza Strip and the closure of the Rafah border crossing – which has halted most humanitarian deliveries into the Palestinian enclave – has stretched the health system to the "point of collapse", she said. "This man-made catastrophe needs to stop now," she added.

At least 36,586 Palestinians have been killed and 83,074 have been wounded in Israel's eight-month war on Gaza. The brutal assault, which some countries and UN experts say amounts to genocide, began after Hamas fighters launched attacks inside Israel on October 7 of last year, killing at least 1,139 people and taking dozens of others captive.

Efforts to end the war have so far made little headway, however. William Burns, the director of the CIA, was in Qatar's capital, Doha, on Wednesday to discuss a three-phase truce proposal touted last week by US President Joe Biden. The first phase calls for a six-week ceasefire, during which Hamas would free some of the captives and Israeli forces would withdraw from Gaza's population centres and negotiations would continue for a permanent truce.

Regional and international powers have backed the proposal, but sticking points remain. Hamas has insisted on a permanent ceasefire and full withdrawal of Israeli troops.

Israel, however, has rejected those demands, saying it is prepared to discuss only temporary pauses until Hamas is defeated.

Ismail Haniyeh, the leader of Hamas, on Wednesday reiterated the group's stance. "The movement and factions of the resistance will deal seriously and positively with any agreement that is based on a comprehensive ending of the aggression and the complete withdrawal and prisoners swap," he said.

Meanwhile, Israel's Defense Minister Yoav Gallant said there would be no halt to the fighting. "Any negotiations with Hamas would be conducted only under fire," Gallant was quoted as saying as he flew on board a plane to inspect the Israeli offensive in Gaza.

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