

Israeli siege of north Gaza leaves 5,000 dead, missing after 100 days

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A girl watches as Mohammad Eid mourns his cousin Dima, along with her uncle and grandfather, who were killed in an Israeli air attack on Saturday, during their funeral in Deir el-Balah, central Gaza Strip, January 12, 2025 [Abdel Kareem Hana/AP]

Gaza City, January 13 (RHC)-- The Israeli military siege on the northern Gaza Strip has left about 5,000 Palestinians dead or missing after 100 days of brutal attacks that have only intensified amid talks of a potential mediated agreement between Israel and Hamas.

Another 9,500 Palestinians were injured as a result of the Israeli military operation in the north that was launched in early October, a medical source told Al Jazeera on Sunday.

Gaza's Government Media Office on Sunday described the Israeli siege as "the most horrific form of ethnic cleansing, displacement and destruction" that has affected hundreds of thousands in the war-ravaged area.

Reporting from Deir el-Balah in central Gaza, Al Jazeera's Hind Khoudary said north Gaza is now a "ghost area" of vast destruction and rubble, but some people have managed to stay alive there, refusing to leave. "We are seeing Palestinians being systematically targeted in every single place across the Gaza Strip. It doesn't matter where you are – if you're in a school, a shelter, a makeshift camp or even a hospital," she said.

Kamal Adwan Hospital, the most prominent healthcare facility in the north, was torched and destroyed by Israeli forces in late December as part of the siege, and the fate of its arrested director Hussam Abu Safia remains unknown.

As Israeli politicians and settler groups openly discuss prospects of building settlements in north Gaza, the siege shows no signs of stopping.

Israeli forces killed two Palestinians in the Mukhabarat area in northern Gaza City, witnesses said on Sunday afternoon. Israeli drone fire later killed a young man in the Shati refugee camp.

Overnight, there were heavy Israeli attacks on the northwestern areas of Gaza City. At least eight Palestinians were killed on Saturday when the Israeli military directly hit yet another school-turned-shelter in north Gaza's Jabalia, calling it a Hamas "command and control centre."

Unrelenting attacks are also targeting other areas across the enclave many times each day, with some of the latest hitting the Bureij refugee camp in central Gaza.

The Israeli military on Sunday issued another forced evacuation order, targeting people living in residential blocks in the northern part of Nuseirat refugee camp in central Gaza. Residents were told they would risk being killed if they did not abandon the area.

The Gaza Civil Defence announced on Sunday that the Israeli army has killed at least 70 children across the enclave in the past five days alone.

The ramp-up of Israeli attacks comes as Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu authorised the heads of spy and security agencies Mossad and Shin Bet to travel to Qatar along with other top representatives to advance negotiations on the release of captives held in Gaza and Palestinian prisoners.

But Israeli leaders have emphasised that the war will not end even if an agreement is reached, and that they will maintain military control of the enclave, even as they continue to occupy the West Bank, large parts of Syria, and areas in southern Lebanon.

Despite another large-scale demonstration against the Israeli government and in favour of a deal in Tel Aviv on Saturday night, far-right ministers in the administration remain opposed.

Netanyahu was scrambling on Sunday to ensure Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich and National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir do not threaten the stability of his ruling coalition by abandoning it in case of a deal.

The humanitarian situation in Gaza remains dire, meanwhile, as the Israeli military continues to block most aid from entering while creating an unsafe situation that has enabled the armed looting of aid convoys.

Thousands of families are forced to brave the open or hunker in dilapidated tents amid famine-like conditions across Gaza as Israeli forces keep attacking hospitals and ordering them to evacuate.

According to the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), nearly all of Gaza's 1.1 million children need mental health and psychosocial support amid the ongoing Israeli bombardment, repeated displacement, and catastrophic living conditions in the winter cold.

The UN estimates that at least 19,000 Palestinian children have been orphaned since the start of the war on Gaza that is now in its 16th month. At least 203 journalists have been killed by the Israeli military since the start of the war, including several in the new year.

Israel has killed at least 46,565 Palestinians and injured 109,660 so far, with 28 killed in the past day, the Gaza Health Ministry said on Sunday.

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