

Israel's airstrikes kill four in Gaza; Hamas warns Tel Aviv over fate of captives

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Gaza City, March 2 (RHC)-- At least four Palestinians have been killed in Gaza as Israel has resumed its aggression on the besieged territory hours after the first phase of the fragile ceasefire agreement came to

an end.

The Gaza ministry of health said on Sunday that Israel's airstrikes on "various parts of the territory" have killed four people and injured six people since this morning.

The regime's military said in a statement that its forces have carried out an air strike in northern Gaza targeting people it suspected of "planting an explosive device" near its soldiers.

Reports said earlier that a drone attack on the northern town of Beit Hanoon killed at least one person and injured another. The military said it will "continue to operate in order to eliminate any threat posed to the citizens of the state of Israel" and its forces.

Under the ceasefire deal that took effect on January 19, Israel had largely halted its airstrikes on Gaza. The deal had also facilitated the release of dozens of Israeli captives and hundreds of Palestinian prisoners and abductees.

Israel said it wanted an extension of the first stage for the exchange of Israeli captives, alive and deceased, in return for the continued release of Palestinian prisoners and abductees.

Hamas, however, ruled out that approach and instead called for the second phase as originally planned. "Extending the first phase in the manner proposed by the occupation is unacceptable to us," Hamas spokesperson Hazem Qassem told CNN.

He said Tel Aviv "aims to recover its captives while maintaining the possibility of resuming aggression against the Gaza Strip, which contradicts the terms of the agreement."

The second phase was to include a permanent end to Israel's military campaign, a full withdrawal of the regime's forces from Gaza and the release of around 60 remaining captives held by Hamas. There are thought to be 24 Israeli hostages still alive in Gaza.

Israel also stopped the entry of all goods and supplies into the coastal enclave on Sunday and warned of "additional consequences" if Hamas doesn't accept a proposal to extend the truce deal.

Hamas spokesman Qassema said in a separate statement that Israel "bears responsibility for the consequences of its decision on the population of the (Gaza) Strip and for the fate of" Israeli captives in Gaza.

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