

Israel escalates attack on Gaza

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The Israeli military continued to escalate its assault on the Palestinian Gaza Strip over the weekend, carrying out hundreds more air strikes and its first ground incursion into the territory. It claims it has conducted over 1,300 air strikes in Gaza over the past week.

Israel is openly targeting the private homes of officials and leading members of the Islamist Hamas organisation, which governs the densely-populated strip of land, regardless of who is residing in them. The assassination attempts have killed at least 167 people so far, the vast majority of whom were civilians, according to United Nations representatives. At least 19 women and 29 children under the age of 16 are among the dead.

Hospitals have been overwhelmed by more than 1,000 wounded. Audrey Landmann of Médecins Sans Frontières told the British *Independent* that people were being brought in to the Al Shifa Hospital with “mainly brain injuries or everything related to bones—fractures, displaced fracture, open fractures.”

Even before the weekend, patients were being treated on the floor, with medical supplies depleted and fuel to power generators running low. “With the increase in patients in the hospitals, the situation can very quickly become catastrophic,” Landmann said.

The Gaza population is threatened with a general health disaster due to the inability of aid agencies to continue to chlorinate the strip’s water supplies. The director of Oxfam, Nishant Pandey, told the *Independent* that 90 percent of water was now unsafe to drink. He warned that “water pumps and sewage plants could stop functioning within days because of severe shortages of fuel.”

On Saturday, amid international condemnation of the carnage in Gaza, the Obama administration allowed the United Nations Security Council to pass a worthless, non-binding resolution that called on both sides to “de-

escalate the situation” and agree to a ceasefire.

The resolution was ignored by the Israeli government of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. On Saturday night, the house of Gaza’s chief of police, Tayseer al-Batsh, was demolished by two missiles. At least 18 people, including several children, were killed, and more than 45 others injured. Saturday’s attacks also hit a home for the disabled, killing two patients and one nurse. A mosque and buildings from which Hamas representatives distribute food assistance were damaged.

On Sunday, thousands of Palestinian civilians fled from Beit Lahia and Attara, in northern Gaza, ahead of an Israeli deadline, delivered via leaflets dropped from the air, giving them until midday to evacuate the area or be caught up in a massive bombardment. The leaflet declared: “Those who fail to comply with the instructions will endanger their lives and the lives of their families.” As many as 100,000 people live in the towns. The majority, according to observers, remained in their homes in defiance of the Israeli edict.

Palestinian youth in the West Bank and in Israel protesting against the attack on Gaza clashed with police and Israeli troops in a number of cities and towns over the weekend. In East Jerusalem, a number of youth were injured yesterday when security forces fired rubber bullets to drive them out of the al-Aqsa mosque. In a provocation that led to further unrest, all entrances to the site were blocked off so a group of right-wing Zionist settlers could tour the area.

At least three brigades of Israeli troops, with tanks and armoured bulldozers, are massed along the border with Gaza, ready for a ground offensive that would involve the demolition of thousands of houses. On Sunday morning, a detachment of Israeli Special Forces commandos entered northern Gaza to attack an alleged Hamas rocket-launching site and fought a brief battle with Palestinian fighters before withdrawing.

Over the past week, as Israeli jets have been pounding Gaza, Hamas militants have fired some 800 rockets into Israel in response. Several Israeli civilians have been wounded, but none killed. Most of the rockets have landed harmlessly in unpopulated areas or been shot down.

In an interview on the Fox News Sunday interview program, Netanyahu sought to use the Hamas rocket attacks to justify Israel's indiscriminate slaughter of civilians, as well as the preparations for an invasion of Gaza and even greater carnage.

"It must be understood," he declared, "that our enemy hides in mosques, puts weapons stores under hospitals and situates command posts next to kindergartens. The enemy uses the residents of Gaza as a human shield and inflicts disaster on them."

Heaping lie upon lie, Netanyahu asserted: "The difference between Israel and Hamas is that we use missiles to defend the citizens of Israel while they use the civilian population to defend the stores of their missiles."

Such statements go unchallenged by the American media. The reality, however, is that Hamas in Gaza resumed firing crude and inaccurate rockets into Israel in retaliation for the brutal crackdown on its members in the West Bank last month.

Without any evidence, Netanyahu's government accused Hamas of responsibility for the disappearance of three Israeli teenagers on June 12. On the pretext of searching for the youth, Israeli troops rampaged through the West Bank, raiding thousands of homes and detaining up to 600 alleged Hamas members and supporters. At least six people were killed and 120 wounded.

When the bodies of the missing teenagers were discovered on June 30, Israeli authorities admitted they had suppressed evidence that the youth were murdered within hours of being abducted by unknown persons.

The Israeli government's motive in attacking Hamas is to sabotage its moves toward forming a unity government with Fatah, the Palestinian faction of President Mahmoud Abbas, which controls the West Bank, and seeking to gain international support for the recognition of the impoverished Palestinian territories as a nation-state.

Instead, the Israelis state is once again subjecting the people of Gaza and the West Bank to terror, death and

destruction. In doing so, it is only confirming in the eyes of millions, including within Israel, the reactionary dead end of Zionism.

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