

# Israel resumes its genocidal assault on Gaza, targeting the southern strip

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Israel resumed its genocidal assault on Gaza Friday morning within minutes of the seven-day “operational pause” expiring. By the end of the day, at least 178 more Palestinians had been reported killed, and 589 injured. A woman and her son were killed in Lebanon by Israeli artillery fire, after shooting restarted across the border.

The Netanyahu government blamed Hamas for ending the truce—the latest in a long list of lies. Rocket fire into Israel, still unattributed, came only after Israel claimed that Hamas had failed to honour commitments to free all the women and children it was holding when it released eight hostages yesterday.

Hamas responded that there were no more such hostages to return. They had offered to hand over the bodies of a mother, Shiri Bibas, her 10-month-old son, Kfir, and his four-year-old brother, Ariel, who were killed by an Israeli bomb. “Hamas also offered to transfer the Bibas family’s bodies and release their father [Yarden] for their burial, along with two Zionist detainees,” it said in a statement, but Israeli authorities “remained unresponsive.”

The Israel Defense Forces (IDF) had already determined to resume military action, come what may, after repeated complaints that it was “losing momentum”. Citing Hamas’s supposed failure to uphold its side of the bargain was a transparent justification for doing so.

Only a day before, Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich had raved that Israel would “chase and destroy” its enemies “everywhere with the help of God.” The pretext for this outburst was an attack in Jerusalem in which two alleged Hamas members killed four people at a bus stop before they were fired on by an armed civilian and then killed by the IDF.

National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir boasted

that this proved he was correct to arm civilians with assault rifles. The “hero gunman” died Friday from multiple gunshot wounds inflicted by the IDF, who mistook him for an enemy combatant.

Netanyahu’s response made clear that what is planned in the name of eliminating Hamas is the ethnic cleansing not only of Gaza, but of the West Bank and Israel itself. “All Hamas terrorists will die—in Jerusalem, in Gaza, in the West Bank, and everywhere,” he thundered.

No secret is made of the brutal, criminal character of the second phase of the IDF’s assault now underway. Government spokesperson Eylon Levy told reporters thuggishly, “Having chosen to hold onto our women, Hamas will now take the mother of all thumpings.”

Reviewing the day’s slaughter, Defence Minister Yoav Gallant said, “The results are impressive. Hamas only understands force and therefore we will continue to act until we achieve the goals of the war.”

The destruction wrought in the north of the Gaza strip is now planned for the south, focussing on the city of Khan Yunis, where Israel claims Hamas is headquartered. Leaflets have been dropped on the city, which has already come under repeated and deadly attack, telling residents to evacuate and describing the area as a “dangerous battle zone”.

Given that the vast bulk of northern Gaza’s population is already crowded into the south—with 1.8 million of a 2.3 million total population displaced—there is nowhere to go. The IDF has told civilians to move towards the border with Egypt at Rafah, confirming fears that Israel is seeking to drive the Palestinians out of the strip entirely and into the Sinai desert.

*Al Jazeera* journalist Zoran Kusovac commented, “the south is now so overcrowded that there is a danger that an all-out ground assault from Israel might leave

the people of Gaza with no option but to try to force their way across the border fence into Egypt.

“From the beginning of the conflict, Egypt has been warning that it would not accept any refugees, fearful of political destabilisation and security risks. If it is confronted with that reality, it might find itself in the worst-case scenario of having to use force.”

The humanitarian situation in Gaza was described by the World Health Organization as a “horror movie”. During the truce, roughly 150 trucks of aid entered the strip each day, less than a third of the 500 a day on average before October 7, and less even than the 200 a day believed necessary to meet the most basic needs of the population. Supplies have ground to a halt again with the resumption of the bombing.

International agencies have issued dire warnings. Speaking from the strip’s largest still-functioning hospital, shortly after an airstrike landed barely 50 metres away, UNICEF chief of communications James Elder asked, “Has humanity given up on the children of Gaza?”

“I cannot overstate how the capacity has been reduced in hospitals over the last seven weeks. We cannot see more children with the wounds of war, with the burns, the shrapnel littering their body, with their broken bones. Inaction from those with influence is allowing the killing of children. This is a war on children.”

At al-Nasr hospital, International Red Cross surgeon Paul Ley warned, “We are already overwhelmed. There are something like 2,000 patients in a hospital built for 300, and over half need surgery. But we don’t have enough drugs, and insufficient anaesthetics. There is very little pain control and we have to use techniques that have been abandoned for many years because they are seen as dangerous.”

Head of the UN relief agency for Palestinian refugee UNRWA Philippe Lazzarini referred to a “staggering human tragedy” and a “race against time... already disease is becoming as much a threat as the bombardment.”

He described the south of Gaza as “completely overloaded... It simply cannot cater to so many people. Remember people from Gaza City and the north have been asked to go to the south because they were told the south would be safer. Yet a large proportion have been killed in the south.”

Condemning the “siege on an entire population” as “collective punishment”, he referred to the “one million people in UN installations, including 100,000 in the north... Their locations are known, and despite that, nearly 100 installations have been hit directly or indirectly.”

A joint investigation by Israeli outlets 972+ Mag and Local Call, published Thursday, confirmed the deliberate process used to carry out strikes on civilians in unprecedented numbers.

A source told the journalists, “The numbers increased from dozens of civilian deaths [permitted] as collateral damage as part of an attack on a senior official in previous operations, to hundreds of civilian deaths as collateral damage.”

An artificial intelligence programme called “The Gospel” has been used to select targets, powering what one source called a “mass assassination factory,” with the “emphasis... on quantity and not on quality.” Reporting the story, the *Guardian* explained that the programme “was created to address a chronic problem for the IDF: in earlier operations in Gaza, the air force repeatedly ran out of targets to strike.”

At the start of the war, the head of the Israeli air force made a point of emphasising that in carrying out “around the clock airstrikes... We are not being surgical.”

The massacre in Gaza resumes with the continuing support of US and world imperialism. Speaking in Dubai, Secretary of State Anthony Blinken backed Israel’s lie that the pause “came to an end because of Hamas, Hamas reneged on the commitments it made.” He reiterated Washington’s “strong solidarity with Israel defending itself” while cynically insisting that it was doing “everything possible to protect civilians.”



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