

Khan Younis besieged as Netanyahu calls for the “eradication of the new Nazis”

Thomas Scripps
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Israel focussed its genocidal assault in Gaza on the southern city of Khan Younis Wednesday, as leading Israeli officials promised no let-up in the slaughter.

The Israel Defense Forces encircled the city on Tuesday and demanded the evacuation of a swathe of its crowded downtown area, including the main Nasser and two smaller hospitals and housing 88,000 residents plus 425,000 already displaced people.

This criminal order, requiring more than half a million people to leave in a matter of hours with nowhere to go, was intended to justify the mass killings of civilians. United Nations (UN) humanitarian relief chief Martin Griffiths commented that the IDF was “Ordering trapped people to evacuate and bombing them before they can even do so”.

Al Jazeera journalist Hani Mahmoud explained the situation on the ground: “No one can get out of that area. Anyone who tries to leave risks losing their life as there is constant shelling and attacks by land and by air.”

Many of those who did try to flee were fired upon by IDF forces, including by tanks and attack drones. Reporting from Rafah and interviewing those who had managed to escape, Tareq Abu Azzoum said they described “Israeli military tanks surrounding them, opening fire against residents.”

Inside Khan Younis, the IDF continued its filthy war crimes. In one incident, Israeli artillery struck a UN training centre sheltering 800 people, causing a large fire, killing at least nine people and injuring at least 75. There was no prior warning of the attack.

A UN official told *Al Jazeera*, “People are screaming, crying, asking for help.” He explained that he and his team had not been able to reach the compound for two days previously due to the fighting and because a “safe route” agreed with the IDF had been blocked by an earth bank.

Head of the UN agency for Palestinian refugees

Philippe Lazzarini said the death toll was “likely higher” and accused Israel of “a blatant disregard of basic rules of war,” noting that “The compound is a clearly marked UN facility and its coordinates were shared with Israeli Authorities.”

An earlier attack on a school, also serving as a shelter, reportedly killed eight people, with *Al Jazeera* writing, “The intensity of the bombing prevented the ambulance and paramedics from getting to the school.”

Israeli forces are once again laying siege to hospitals, which are also serving as refugee camps. Gaza health ministry spokesperson Ashraf al-Qidra explained, “The occupation is isolating hospitals in Khan Younis and carrying out massacres in the western area of the city... Hundreds of injuries, patients, and childbirth cases face serious complications due to the lack of access to Nasser medical complex.”

Doctors Without Borders, with staff inside Nasser hospital, said they and 850 patients, plus thousands of displaced people, were trapped by the fighting. Its Twitter/X account posted, “Since yesterday evening, there has been heavy ongoing bombing mainly in the southern and northern parts of Khan Younis. MSF staff in Nasser hospital report they can feel the ground shaking and that there is a sense of panic among staff, patients and people sheltering inside.”

The organisation warned that Nasser “is one of two remaining hospitals in southern Gaza still able to treat critically injured patients.”

At the Amal hospital, run by the Palestinian Red Cross Society, staff described the IDF blockading the building and imposing a curfew on the area, preventing them from responding to emergencies.

Speaking at a press conference on the healthcare system in Gaza, World Health Organization (WHO) regional director for the eastern Mediterranean Ahmed Al-Mandhari described repeated Israeli attacks—660 recorded

on healthcare institutions—and the cutting off of medical supplies and food. He added that the number of health workers was now just five percent of the pre-war total.

In the north of the enclave, the Palestinian NGO Network warned that starvation threatens roughly half a million people barely able to eke out an existence in “catastrophic and inhumane conditions,” the result of a “starvation policy against defenceless civilians and an attempt to force citizens to leave their homes.”

The horrifying scale of the destruction throughout Gaza was described in a joint statement released by 16 human rights, aid and refugee organisations, calling on UN member states to “stop fuelling the crisis in Gaza and avert further humanitarian catastrophe and loss of civilian life.”

They explained, “Israel’s bombardment and siege are depriving the civilian population of the basics to survive and rendering Gaza uninhabitable. Today, the civilian population in Gaza faces a humanitarian crisis of unprecedented severity and scale...

“Gaza’s remaining lifeline—an internationally-funded humanitarian aid response—has been paralysed by the intensity of the hostilities, which have included the shooting of aid convoys, recurrent communications blackouts, damaged roads, restrictions on essential supplies, an almost complete ban on commercial supplies, and a bureaucratic process to send aid into Gaza.”

Two-thirds of Gaza’s population, 1.5 million people, have now been corralled, as planned, into a massive tent city centred on Rafah, on the border with Egypt—ready to be pushed into the Sinai desert or ravaged by hunger and disease.

Yousef Hammash of the Norwegian Refugee Council explained, “On a daily basis we have a new wave of displacement. Today, we had it from Khan Younis and before it was from the middle area.” Rafah is now so crowded that “there is not even enough empty space for people to establish their makeshift shelters or tents.”

Speaking to celebrate the 75th anniversary of the Israeli parliament, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu bluntly stated the genocidal agenda behind the offensive: “The war must end with the eradication of the new Nazis, there will be no compromise”. He posted to social media earlier in the day, “The only option is complete victory.”

His comments were part of a total disavowal by Israeli officials of any pause in the fighting.

Recent days had seen speculation about a two-month ceasefire while hostages held by Hamas were released being in the final stages of negotiation under Qatari

mediation. But this proved to be a pantomime played along with by the Israeli war cabinet to assuage the domestic protest movement demanding the return of the hostages and provide the Arab regimes and United States with the fig leaf of “diplomatic progress”.

Government spokesperson Ilana Stein told Reuters, “Israel will not give up on the destruction of Hamas, the return of all the hostages, and there will be no security threat from Gaza towards Israel. There will be no ceasefire. In the past there were pauses for humanitarian purposes. That agreement was breached by Hamas.”

Every Hebrew-language news outlet was delivered the same message by government sources, describing reports of a breakthrough in talks as “fake”.

As far as there is any opposition among Israeli politicians to this policy, it is purely on the basis of advocating a shift in timing, prioritising the release of hostages before continuing with the destruction of Gaza. Leader of the Opposition Yair Lapid, speaking in parliament during the 75th anniversary commemoration, summed up this standpoint as, “In the first stage, we will return the hostages... In the second stage Hamas will be destroyed.”

The same argument is made by many of the leaders of the protests in Israel demanding more be done to recover the hostages. On Wednesday, demonstrators sought to prevent trucks carrying humanitarian aid from entering Gaza, with one declaring it “unacceptable that Israel should continue to provide aid to Hamas, which enables it to survive and thus endanger IDF soldiers fighting in Gaza. All aid to Hamas should be conditional on the return of the abductees and the disarmament of Hamas.”

The fascistic war camp dominating Israeli politics operates with the imperialist powers’ full support, Washington’s above all. Its latest seal of approval was bestowed by national security spokesperson John Kirby, who grotesquely praised the IDF for “pursuing, on the ground, more targeted operations, particularly against the [Hamas] leadership. They are relying less on airstrikes.”



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