

Israel escalates bombing of Gaza, Lebanon as NATO covers up war plans against Iran

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Israeli forces struck targets in northern Gaza and Lebanon this weekend, after US, German, British and French officials met in Berlin on Friday to discuss Israeli plans for a massive bombing of Iran.

Israel killed at least 87 people in a bombing of Beit Lahiya yesterday, according to the Gaza Health Ministry, and wounded at least 40, many of them critically. Israeli officials claimed they were aiming for a “terrorist target” and boasted they had “eliminated dozens of terrorists.” Before the strike, Gaza authorities said the current Israeli offensive in northern Gaza launched on October 6 had already claimed over 400 lives.

Kamal Adwan, a 36-year-old Palestinian living in northern Gaza, told AFP: “We are trapped, without food, water or medicine, threatened with famine and surrounded by ruins.”

Officials at the Indonesian Hospital in Beit Lahiya said they had come under “heavy gunfire” from Israeli forces, who confirmed they were operating near the hospital. The Gaza health ministry added that 40 people were inside the hospital when it was hit by a power outage that, compounded by the lack of medical supplies, led to the deaths of two patients.

Also in northern Gaza, an Israeli strike on the Jabaliya refugee camp on Saturday killed at least 33 people, including 21 women. A further 85 people were wounded. Hundreds of thousands of people have been trapped in the refugee camp, besieged by the Israeli army, for at least two weeks.

The director of northern Gaza’s al-Awda hospital reported the influx of patients had left hospital wards “completely full,” with the wounded “receiving treatment on the floor.” Health officials also stressed that shipments of food, water and medical supplies were not reaching Jabaliya.

Israeli Minister for Diaspora Affairs Amichai Chikli defended the bombings, claiming Israel has “blockaded” parts of northern Gaza but denying that civilians are being targeted. He said, “We allowed the civilian population to escape into the safe zone, and we prevented supplies from entering the blockade region.”

Chikli’s remarks again confirm how the Israeli government is waging a genocidal war against the entire population of Gaza. Hundreds of thousands of people are living in as what it calls blockade areas, where its forces can treat anyone they meet as non-civilian, that is military targets that can be attacked and killed at will.

There are also mounting reports that Israeli soldiers are carrying out mass arrests and separating families in northern Gaza. “The Israeli tanks besieged the area and forced all of us out of the sheltering school,” a Palestinian woman with a baby on her shoulders told *Al Jazeera*. “They detained all men and warned all women to leave in groups. We left everything behind, even baby milk. ... The Israelis started shelling us with artillery, their drone and warplanes fired missiles, too. Then, they stormed the area with their tanks and opened fire randomly.”

On X/Twitter, the Palestinian Centre for Human Rights said Israeli starvation and mass arrests of civilians in northern Gaza amounted to “live-streamed ethnic cleansing.” Israeli soldiers are burning refugee camps in northern Gaza after forcibly displacing the civilians who had found refuge there.

On Sunday, Israeli forces also launched at least nine strikes targeting the Lebanese capital, Beirut, including several strikes on civilian buildings in Haret Hreik. There were also dozens of Israeli strikes on southern Lebanon, including on Tyre, Bint Jbeil and Nabatieh, including a deadly strike that hit an ambulance in Tyre.

Yesterday, the Lebanese Health Ministry announced that the toll from Israeli bombings since October 8 had reached 2,448 killed and 11,500 injured.

Israeli forces also demolished an observation tower of the UN Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) at Marwahin in the latest of several attacks on UNIFIL forces. The UN released a statement noting that attacking a UNIFIL position is “a flagrant violation of international law and Security Council resolution 1701.”

While Israeli officials ruthlessly escalate the conflict, there are growing signs that further Israeli escalation could lead to devastating losses for Israel itself. Yesterday, a drone strike hit the residence of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in the luxury seaside resort of Caesarea. Netanyahu was reportedly not home at the time of the attack.

While Hezbollah launched a salvo of missiles from southern Lebanon against targets in northern Israel, Israeli officials announced the death of Colonel Ahsan Daksa, the commander of Israel’s armored 401st Brigade, after his tank and another tank hit mines in Jabaliya.

Above all, there is the growing danger that an Israeli strike on Iran could lead to a devastating counterstrike by Iran and a generalized Middle East war drawing in all the major world powers, including the United States, the European powers, Russia and China.

Yesterday, Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi warned that Iran has reviewed and selected targets that it will strike in retaliation for Israeli bombings of Iran. “Any attack against Iran means crossing its red line. We will not leave it unanswered. A necessary response will be given to any attack on Iran’s nuclear facilities or a similar raid,” Araghchi said, adding: “Now, we have identified all our targets there [in Israel] and a similar attack will be carried out on them.”

While stressing that Iran does not seek a war with the United States, Araghchi warned of the danger of Washington launching a war with Iran. “If the Americans had real political will, they would be able to halt the attacks and stop Israel,” he said. “If a large-scale war breaks out in the region, the United States will be drawn into it, something we do not want at all.”

Nonetheless, the Biden administration, with the support of its European NATO allies, is continuing to arm and support Israel, even though it is aware that

Israel could trigger a regionwide war. On Friday, the @Middle_East_Spectator Telegram channel published a Top Secret October 16 intelligence report on Israeli preparations to bomb Iran. US officials later confirmed the report’s authenticity to CNN.

The document is titled “Israel Defense Forces Continue Key Munitions and Covert UAV [drone] Activity Almost Certainly for a Strike on Iran.” Reviewing US satellite images of Israeli bases, it reports that at least 16 Golden Horizon and 40 ISO2 Rocks ballistic missiles had been loaded onto warplanes at Hatserim Airbase. It warned, “a strike can occur with no further GEOINT [geospatial intelligence] warning.”

It stated Israeli forces are dispersing away from bases that could be hit by Iranian retaliatory strikes, and that US images showed forces leaving Israel’s Haifa naval base and Ovda airbase, and the dispersion of Israel’s Jericho II missiles, which carry a 1-megaton nuclear warhead. It claimed US intelligence has “not observed indications that Israel intends to use a nuclear weapon.”

Like all leaked intelligence reports, it cannot be taken at face value. It may faithfully reflect what US spy satellites over Israel show, or it may be disinformation released to deceive the Iranian military as to what US-Israeli attack plans actually are. In either case, US officials have confirmed the authenticity of documents purporting to show their foreknowledge of Israeli plans to bomb Iran.

This directly implicates Washington and its major European allies. On Friday, Biden met with German Chancellor Olaf Scholz, UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer and French President Emmanuel Macron. Biden subsequently confirmed that he and the other leaders had agreed on how to deal with Iran and that he knew but would refuse to reveal what Israeli war plans are. This amounts to a conspiracy by Washington, Berlin, London and Paris to hide the preparation from the world public of a catastrophic, potentially nuclear regional war in the Middle East.



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