

Israel murders 6 journalists, as Netanyahu says annexation of Gaza will proceed “swiftly”

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10 August 2025

On Sunday, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu declared that Israel would move to “evacuate” and seize Gaza City “fairly quickly” and “complete the job.” These statements coincided with an Israeli airstrike that deliberately killed six journalists in Gaza City aimed at silencing coverage of war crimes being carried out against the Palestinian population.

Speaking after a meeting of Israel’s security cabinet, Netanyahu defended the approved plan that envisions the forced removal of all Palestinians from Gaza City and surrounding refugee camps in the central part of the Strip.

According to reports in the *Washington Post*, the prime minister presented the scheme as a matter of national security, insisting that Israel will ultimately “assume paramount security responsibility for Gaza” while transferring day-to-day governance to what he described as “an unspecified third party that will neither be Hamas nor the Palestinian Authority.”

He framed the operation as an urgent military necessity, declaring that “Israel will act swiftly” to carry it out. In characteristic Orwellian language, Netanyahu said the plan was not a permanent annexation and claimed, “We don’t want to govern it ... we want a security administration. The goal is not to occupy Gaza.”

These formulations are belied by the measures being discussed. As Reuters reported, military officials have already outlined a campaign for complete military dominance over the remaining 25 percent of Gaza not yet under direct Israeli control.

The *Washington Post* quoted Israeli sources acknowledging that, in practice, the plan means the mass removal of hundreds of thousands of Palestinians—driven into what are effectively concentration camps near the Egyptian border—coupled with a long-term Israeli security presence.

New York Times, citing members of Netanyahu’s cabinet, said the objective is to displace some 800,000 civilians within the next two months, stripping Gaza City and central refugee camps of their remaining population. The security cabinet’s schedule says full-scale operations begin imminently and conclude with the evacuation by early October, with military policing of the emptied areas to follow.

As the details of this deportation plan were being finalized, Israeli warplanes unleashed an intentional strike on a tent camp used by Al Jazeera journalists in Gaza City. Al Jazeera’s newsroom confirmed the killing of five of its employees: senior correspondent Anas al-Sharif, 32; correspondent Mohammed Qreiqeh, 28; camera operator Ibrahim Zaher, 27; camera operator Mohammed Noufal, 29; and technician and fixer Youssef Abu Odeh, 22.

Two other individuals were also killed in the Israeli air strike, at least one of whom was also a journalist, but their identities have not been published.

According to eyewitnesses and colleagues, they had been working and sleeping in a clearly marked tent near an area with no ongoing firefights at the time of the attack. Multiple journalists on the ground stated that there was no doubt the strike was deliberate, as the tent was isolated and had been in the same spot for weeks.

The government media office in Gaza condemned the attack as “a massacre of the press corps,” noting that the bombing brought the total number of journalists killed by Israel in Gaza since October 2023 to 237. Al Jazeera’s statement accused Israel of targeting its reporters because they were documenting the reality of the war, including the mass displacement and starvation of civilians.

In its own statement, the Israeli military sought to justify the killings by alleging that al-Sharif “posed as a journalist” and was, in their words, “a Hamas cell leader

involved in facilitating rocket attacks against Israeli civilians and troops.” Similar unsubstantiated claims were directed at other slain members of the press corps.

These accusations were denounced as baseless smears by Al Jazeera, press freedom bodies and human rights lawyers, who stressed that the systematic targeting of journalists in Gaza had already been described by the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) as unprecedented in the history of modern warfare.

Jodie Ginsberg, CPJ’s chief executive, issued a statement calling the killings “unacceptable” and demanded accountability:

Israel must end its attacks on journalists and allow them to work safely. Accountability is essential, as almost 100 journalists have been killed in Gaza since October 2023.

The security cabinet’s forced displacement plan, discussed and finalized in parallel with the attacks on the press, states that the population of Gaza City and the central refugee camps, including al-Bureij, al-Maghazi and Nuseirat, will be driven into a series of closed “humanitarian zones” on the edge of the Egyptian border zone in Rafah.

In reality, these zones will function as prison camps under constant surveillance and military guard. The displaced population will be dependent on sporadic aid deliveries that have already proven inadequate, leading to widespread hunger and deaths from starvation.

The *Jerusalem Post* and the *New York Times* reported that Netanyahu, on Sunday, held a phone call with US President Donald Trump to brief him on the plan and to discuss the final stages of the war in Gaza. While neither side released a full transcript, officials confirmed that Netanyahu described the coming military operation as a decisive phase that would secure the release of remaining hostages and “end Hamas rule in Gaza once and for all.”

According to the *Times*, Trump expressed no opposition to the displacement plan, with US officials indicating that he prefers to allow the Israeli government to proceed without interference.

Miroslav Jenca, UN Assistant Secretary-General, told reporters that if implemented, the plan “could lead to the displacement of all civilians in Gaza City by October 7, impacting approximately 800,000 individuals—a new disaster in Gaza … adding to deaths, devastation, and

intolerable suffering.”

Meanwhile, the human toll of Israel’s campaign continued its relentless rise in the 24 hours leading up to Netanyahu’s speech. Health authorities in Gaza recorded at least 91 Palestinians killed at aid distribution points alone. Among the dead was 15-year-old Amer al-Masri, who was crushed beneath the weight of a humanitarian aid pallet that had been parachuted into a crowd of desperate people.

Witnesses said the drop was uncontrolled and struck several individuals. Al Jazeera reported that al-Masri’s family and other civilians tried frantically to lift the heavy load off his body, but they lacked the necessary tools; he succumbed to his injuries about an hour later, as medics were unable to reach the site in time.

News media also reported the death of Suleiman al-Obeid, 41, a former star of the Palestinian national football team known locally as the “Palestinian Pele.” He was killed by Israeli gunfire while waiting for humanitarian aid in southern Gaza on Wednesday. Al-Obeid had represented Palestine in 24 international matches and played for the Gaza City club Al-Shati’a Services.

Tributes poured in from the Palestinian Football Association and even from UEFA officials, who called him a symbol of resilience and pride for a people under blockade. Friends described him as an inspiring figure who had mentored countless young players. He leaves behind a wife and five children.

Israel continued to impose a near-total blockade on food, fuel and medical supplies into Gaza. The UN and Gaza Ministry of Health confirmed that more than 217 people, including 100 children, have already died from starvation since October. In the past 48 hours alone, 11 new deaths from malnutrition were recorded. Hospitals in northern Gaza report that 159 of these deaths occurred there, with children making up the majority.

Nevertheless, Netanyahu dismissed these reports on Sunday, repeating earlier statements he has made that the widely circulated images of emaciated children are “fake.” He claimed the deaths resulted from “underlying conditions” unrelated to Israel’s military policies.



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