

Israel launches onslaught against Gaza City

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The Israeli military has begun its onslaught on Gaza City, currently the only portion of Gaza that remains outside of full-scale occupation by troops of the Israel Defense Forces (IDF), in a new and even deadlier phase of the US-Israeli genocide in Gaza.

The aim of the operation is the total military subjection of the most densely populated section of the Gaza Strip, in preparation for the forced displacement of the population to concentration camps in the south of the enclave, from which the Netanyahu government plans to expel the Palestinians to other countries, including South Sudan.

“We have begun the preliminary operations and the first stages of the attack on Gaza City,” said Brigadier General Effie Defrin, Israel’s military spokesperson, on Wednesday. The IDF announced that it is mobilizing another 60,000 reservists to complete the conquest of the city. Israel already occupies 90 percent of Gaza, according to United Nations estimates.

Israeli officials told the *New York Times* that the IDF would first surround Gaza City and forcibly expel the population to the south before fully occupying the city. Residents told the *Times* that Israeli forces were systematically demolishing buildings in the outskirts of the city using remote-controlled explosives, moving ever closer to the city center.

Volker Türk, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, said earlier this month that “A complete military takeover of the occupied Gaza Strip ... will result in more massive forced displacement, more killing, more unbearable suffering, senseless destruction and atrocity crimes.”

Conscious of the fact that the ongoing starvation of Gaza and total military occupation of the enclave is a death sentence for the remaining Israeli hostages, Israeli government minister Orit Strock condemned those who put “the value of returning the hostages above the national interest.”

At least 81 Palestinians were killed in Israeli attacks throughout Gaza on Wednesday, *Al Jazeera* reported. Over 62,000 Palestinians have been killed since the start of the Israeli onslaught on Gaza in October 2023.

Also Wednesday, the Netanyahu government announced the expansion of Israeli settlements in the West Bank, aiming for the complete control and subjugation of the entire Palestinian territory.

The government approved a West Bank settlement construction project, known as E1, which has been planned for over two decades. The plan comes on top of the construction of 20,000 new settler housing units in the West Bank so far this year. The new settlement project would effectively split the West Bank in two.

Israeli Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich boasted that the settlement plan means the idea of a Palestinian state “is being erased from the table.” He added, “Every town, every neighborhood, every housing unit is another nail in the coffin of this dangerous idea.”

Mustafa Barghouti, secretary-general of the Palestinian National Initiative, told *Al Jazeera*, “This plan will completely separate the West Bank in two pieces. ... It will also isolate Jerusalem completely from the rest of the occupied Palestinian West Bank.”

Responding to the announcement of the settlement plan, Stephane Dujarric, a spokesperson for UN chief Antonio Guterres, said, “We stand against all settlement activity in the occupied territories which we view as illegal under international law.”

The start of Israel’s assault on Gaza City takes place as mass starvation in Gaza is only deepening. In a statement on Wednesday, the UN agency for Palestinian refugees said nearly one in every three Palestinian children in Gaza City was now afflicted by malnutrition.

The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA) said, “This is not a natural disaster. It is a man-made, preventable

starvation.”

In a statement published on Wednesday, Israeli rights group Gisha declared categorically that “the population is being starved” in Gaza. It said, “Israel has used its control over aid entry as a weapon of war since day one, including as a tool of pressure and displacement.”

The report by Gisha noted that 269 people had died since the beginning of the war on Gaza from the effects of malnutrition, including over 112 children. In July, the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) issued an alert stating that the “worst-case scenario of famine is unfolding in the Strip.”

On Wednesday, the United States announced a series of sanctions against officials of the International Criminal Court, which has brought war crimes charges against Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, reemphasizing the Trump administration’s support for the Gaza genocide.

In a statement on Wednesday, US Secretary of State Marco Rubio said that two ICC judges and two prosecutors were being added to the list of ICC members sanctioned by the Trump administration.

In a statement on X, Israeli Defense Minister Israel Katz thanked the Trump administration for its sanctions against the ICC, declaring, “This historic step reflects the unbreakable alliance between Israel and the United States.”

Last year, the ICC said it had “reasonable grounds” to believe Netanyahu “intentionally and knowingly deprived the civilian population in Gaza of objects indispensable to their survival, including food, water, and medicine and medical supplies, as well as fuel and electricity.”



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