

Israeli air strikes kill 12 in Gaza on eve of Trump's first "Board of Peace" meeting

Kevin Reed**17 February 2026**

Israeli airstrikes on Gaza on Sunday night and Monday morning, which killed at least 12 Palestinians on the eve of the first meeting of Trump's so-called "Board of Peace," confirm once again that the US-backed "ceasefire" is a cover for the continuation and escalation of genocide against the Palestinian people.

According to Gaza's civil defense, Palestinians were killed by Israel in a series of attacks that hit a tent encampment of displaced families in the north, residential areas in Khan Younis in the south and other locations across the besieged enclave.

The Palestinian Red Crescent reported that a strike on a tent camp in northern Gaza killed at least six people, while a separate strike in the south killed five. Hospital staff later confirmed that another Palestinian was killed by Israeli fire in a separate incident, bringing the toll in the latest attacks to 12.

Civil defense officials also said the strike that hit a tent sheltering displaced people in Jabalia in northern Gaza, while those killed in the early-morning strike in Khan Younis were civilians in an area housing displaced Palestinians near homes and makeshift shelters. There were additional casualties from shelling in Gaza City and Beit Lahia.

Medical staff at Al-Shifa and Nasser hospitals said they received at least seven bodies from these attacks, with relatives gathering in hospital courtyards to pray over the dead who were wrapped in white shrouds. Eyewitnesses described families being hit while they slept in tents and makeshift shelters set up after months of forced displacement, with one relative asking bitterly, "Where is the truce, where is the ceasefire they talked about, when they bomb us in our sleep?"

Israel's military claimed that the strikes were aimed at militants and that one of the targets was a person identified as a commander of Islamic Jihad in the Tel al-Hawa area of Gaza City, while other strikes were described as responses to alleged ceasefire violations and rocket fire. However, as always, the main victims were civilians—women, children and the elderly—crowded into tents and ruined apartment blocks, as they have been throughout the more than two-year-long campaign of annihilation.

Palestinian authorities condemned the attacks as a flagrant breach of the US-brokered ceasefire that was supposedly in its second phase, pointing out that more than 500 Palestinians have been killed by Israeli fire since the truce came into effect.

Gaza's health ministry reports that around 71,700–71,800 Palestinians have been killed and more than 170,000 injured since the war began, meaning that more than 10 percent of the

population has been killed or wounded, a scale of destruction now acknowledged by Israeli officials. Roughly 480–520 have been killed in Israeli attacks since the ceasefire began, figures also accepted by Israeli military sources.

Hazem Qassem, a spokesman for Hamas, denounced the targeting of displaced people in tents and shelters as "a violation of the ceasefire agreement," stressing that Israel has never stopped its attacks and is using the so-called truce to continue the ethnic cleansing of Gaza under US protection.

The timing of the latest massacre—on the eve of the first meeting of Donald Trump's Board of Peace in Washington on February 19—exposes the real content of the imperialist initiative. The Board has been presented by the White House as a mechanism to oversee "post-conflict reconstruction" in Gaza and to manage the second phase of the ceasefire, including a UN-mandated stabilization force and a technocratic committee to govern the Strip under international supervision.

The criminal character of Trump's board is revealed by its composition, a tightly knit core of Trump-aligned US officials, financial oligarchs and long-time imperialist operators. Key US figures include Secretary of State Marco Rubio, Trump's Middle East envoy and real-estate billionaire Steve Witkoff, Trump's son-in-law Jared Kushner and senior White House adviser Aryeh Lightstone.

There are also members who are prominent international representatives of capital and imperialist policy. Among them are former British prime minister Tony Blair, a key architect of the criminal invasion of Iraq in 2003; World Bank president Ajay Banga; Apollo Global Management CEO Marc Rowan; and former UN Middle East envoy Nickolay Mladenov, who has been named "High Representative for Gaza" and the on-the-ground link between the Board and the new technocratic Gaza authority.

Around this inner circle sits a Gaza Executive Board composed of a cabal of regional and international power brokers: Turkish foreign minister Hakan Fidan; a senior Qatari diplomat Ali al-Thawadi; Egypt's intelligence chief Hassan Rashad; UAE minister Reem al-Hashimy; Israeli-Cypriot billionaire Yakir Gabay; and former UN and EU reconstruction officials like Sigrid Kaag, among others. Other fascists supporting the board include Argentina's Javier Milei, Hungary's Viktor Orbán and, of course, Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

European political figures speaking at the Munich Security Conference criticized Trump's Board for bypassing the United

Nations and warned that it has “played virtually no role” in stopping the war, noting that “hundreds of Gazans have been killed since the announcement” of the ceasefire framework and the board. However, European governments have, in practice, continued to back Israeli crimes in Gaza while posturing as defenders of international law.

The former UN envoy, Nickolay Mladenov, admitted that if the Board does not move “very fast” it will not implement “the second phase of the ceasefire but the second phase of the war,” while pointedly refusing to address the mounting charges of genocide.

The *World Socialist Web Site* has consistently condemned this entire structure—the so-called ceasefire, the “framework” for Gaza’s future and the Board of Peace—as a political fraud whose aim is to provide a pseudo-legal and “humanitarian” cover for a US-directed plan to depopulate Gaza, destroy all organized resistance and transform what remains of the enclave into a colonial protectorate dominated by Israeli and American imperialism.

The insistence on “technocratic” administration, “security guarantees,” the disarming of resistance organizations and the permanent presence of foreign and Israeli forces is a blueprint for the completion of the removal of Palestinians from all the Israeli-occupied territories.

The Sunday–Monday attacks are a continuation of the wave of Israeli strikes from two weeks earlier that killed at least 32 Palestinians across Gaza, including children, in what was described as one of the deadliest days since the October ceasefire was proclaimed. On that day, Israeli warplanes and artillery hit an apartment building in Gaza City, a police facility and a tent camp in Khan Younis, igniting fires that tore through flimsy shelters where displaced families had sought refuge.

While the missiles continue to strike Gaza, a video from Ofer Prison in the occupied West Bank has shed light on the systematic abuse and torture of Palestinian detainees that is an integral part of the same genocidal campaign.

The footage broadcast on Israeli and regional media on Friday showed around 20 heavily armed officers storming a hallway leading to Palestinian prisoners’ cells and forcing detainees to the ground with their hands tied behind their backs, before dragging them out and leaving them face down on the floor.

The Palestinian Prisoners Society, which sent lawyers to meet inmates afterwards, reported that far-right National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir personally “stepped on prisoners’ heads” and filmed their humiliation, boasting of the crackdown as cameras rolled.

Prisoners said they were ordered to keep their heads and faces pressed to the floor throughout the raid, were subjected to degrading insults and threats, and were treated in ways the group described as physical torture aimed at breaking their will and terrorizing their families.

The Society stated that since the start of Israel’s genocidal war on Gaza in 2023, the prison authorities have deliberately released more videos and images of abuse in a “race to achieve higher levels of brutality” and to showcase their cruelty for domestic political gain.

Rights organizations have documented a sharp deterioration in

conditions for Palestinian prisoners under Ben-Gvir’s tenure, including severe restrictions, routine beatings, food deprivation and widespread weight loss, which they say amount to cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment in violation of international law.

Ben-Gvir’s presence at Ofer on Friday was a calculated act of fascistic intimidation. Accompanied by senior police and prison officials and civilian Zionists, he toured the prison just days before Ramadan, while guards fired stun grenades near prisoners’ cells and stormed sections of the facility.

During the visit he declared that the harsh measures imposed on Palestinian detainees were “not enough,” demanded still more repressive legislation, including a death penalty law for Palestinian prisoners, and sneered that Ofer was “not a luxury hotel” but a “real prison” whose conditions he welcomed as a “fundamental change.”

Palestinian and international rights groups condemned the raid as an instance of “intimidation and abuse” and part of a “systemic, institutionalized policy of torture” sanctioned at the highest levels of the Israeli state. Hamas called the episode a “new war crime and a blatant challenge to international humanitarian law regarding prisoners,” stressing that the raid was not an aberration but an escalation of entrenched brutality.

The Israeli government has not announced any serious investigation or review of the incident. Instead, the *Times of Israel* and other outlets amplified Ben-Gvir’s own video of the raid, underlining the state’s endorsement of his actions. The imperialist governments have responded with silence, as they continue to arm Israel and coordinate policy with Netanyahu’s government, which includes fascists like Ben-Gvir.

The ongoing genocide in Gaza is a component of the drive by US and European imperialism to redivide the world in the lead-up to a new world war in which rival powers carry out colonial wars and proxy military conflicts. Trump’s Board of Peace, the sham ceasefire, the militarized “stabilization” of Gaza and the complete impunity granted to Israeli war criminals are elements of a global strategy by US imperialism to secure strategic chokepoints, energy routes and military bases across the Middle East.



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