

Gaza Death Toll Reaches 40 in Day Two of Israeli Assault, Mostly Women and Children

By [al-Akhbar](#)

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Israeli war jets bombed 160 targets in the Gaza Strip overnight, the military said Wednesday, including a hospital and homes, as the casualty toll in the ongoing assault climbed to 41 deaths and over 370 injuries.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu meanwhile threatened to escalate attacks on the besieged strip, as Hamas political chief Khaled Meshal vowed to fight back.

"We have decided to further intensify the attacks on Hamas and the terror organizations in Gaza," his office quoted him as saying after consulting defense chiefs.

Israeli warplanes have so far hit 550 targets in Gaza, and Hamas fighters have hit back with 165 rockets, some of which struck Jerusalem and Tel Aviv and as far away as Hadera, 116 kilometers (72 miles) to the north of the coastal enclave.

Gaza health ministry spokesperson Ashraf al-Qudra wrote on Twitter that the death toll had reached 41, including six members of the Hamad family who were killed when Israel bombed their home in the northern Gaza town of Beit Hanoun.

The latest victims included Amal Youssef Abdel Ghafour and a child, Raneem Jaoude Abdel Ghafour. Before that, four year-old Mohammed Khalaf al-Nawasra, his mother Samoud, and two other family members were announced dead.

Other recent victims were Suhur Hamdan Masri and her son Ibrahim in the northern town of Beit Hanoun, Qudra wrote.

Amir Arif, 13, was killed in a bombing in the Sha'af neighborhood of Gaza City.

One and a half year-old Mohammed Melkiye, and his 27-year-old mother Amniye, were killed in another strike in an unspecified location.

Another victim, Hatem Abu Salem was also killed Wednesday.

In Mughraqa in central Gaza, medics retrieved the body of 80-year-old Naifeh Farajallah from the rubble of her house damaged in an earlier air strike.

In the same area, an Israel missile killed two men in a field near Nusseirat refugee camp.

Medics named them as Abdel Nasser Abu Kweik, 60, and his son Khaled, 31.

Meanwhile a 30-year-old man was critically wounded Wednesday when Israeli aircraft launched a missile at him as he rode a motorbike in northern Gaza.

The casualties are “mostly children, women and the elderly,” he wrote.

“The targeting of the European Gaza Hospital resulted in dozens of injuries ... and serious material damage,” Qudra added. “Patients are living in a state of panic.”

Speaking in a televised address from exile in Doha, Hamas political chief Khaled Meshal said the movement would continue to fight Israel until it ends its bombing campaign.

“Our Palestinian people will not surrender, and it is because of [our people’s] anger — a blessed anger — that we will not stop,” he said.

“To those [countries] who ask for restraint, we tell them to retreat. We demand from them to pressure Netanyahu to retreat his army from our lands,” Meshal added.

Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas meanwhile accused Israel of committing “genocide” in Gaza.

“It’s genocide — the killing of entire families is genocide by Israel against our Palestinian people,” he told a crisis meeting of the Palestinian leadership in the West Bank city of Ramallah.

Israel claims its assault — the most deadly against Gaza since the November 2012 aggression killed 177 Palestinians — is aimed at stopping rockets being fired from the besieged strip towards Israeli occupied territories.

“Last night, Hamas started to unveil its surprises,” Almoz said referring to an attempted attack by sea and the barrage of long-range rockets fired at cities as far away as occupied Jerusalem, Tel Aviv and the northern coastal city of Hadera, which is more than 100 kilometers (60 miles) from Gaza.

Israeli occupation forces say they killed four Hamas fighters who staged a beachfront assault on an army base just north of the besieged strip. Those casualties are separate from the 41 killed in Gaza.

The occupation forces, which released a video allegedly showing the attack, said Hamas members used Kalashnikov rifles and hand grenades after storming the beach, injuring one soldier.

Soldiers on the base near kibbutz Zikim, just north of the Gaza Strip, shot dead two of the fighters, aircraft killed a third and the navy killed the fourth, a spokesperson for the occupation forces said.

Hamas’s military wing the Ezzedine Al-Qassam Brigades said its men carried out an attack at Zikim but did not report losses, saying instead there were heavy casualties on the Israeli side.

Video released by Israel’s army allegedly shows the Brigades ambushing the base:

The brigades added that its fighters fired 10 Katyusha rockets at the Israeli base.

The rocket fire from Gaza continued early Wednesday, with the Brigades claim saying it had launched four M75 rockets at Tel Aviv.

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