

Israeli Bombs Have Destroyed Over 52,000 Homes, Leaving 1 Million Homeless

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Beit Hanoun is vanishing, air strike after air strike, house after house. All or most of the residents of the town in the northeastern Gaza Strip have fled in recent days, after the Israeli army peremptorily ordered them to leave their homes and head south. And it might take years until they are able to return – or they might never do so, if Israel establishes a “buffer zone” in the north of the Strip.

The air strikes that began after Hamas attacked southern Israel on October 7 have already destroyed or severely damaged 52,000 homes, according to the Euro-Med Monitor. According to the Geneva-based human rights center, before the air strikes the number of housing units in the northern districts of Gaza was about 260,000. More than a quarter of them have been affected by air strikes, and 20 percent of the houses are no longer habitable. Beit Hanoun has been the hardest hit, with about 60% of its buildings destroyed or damaged. These numbers will only grow in the coming years, together with the expected destruction that will come to the south of the Strip as well.

An estimated one million Palestinians are currently homeless. The spokesperson of the Israeli military, Daniel Hagari, admitted that air raids on Gaza are taking place at a level “not seen in decades.”

On Thursday, six U.N. special rapporteurs accused Israel of committing crimes against humanity in Gaza:

“There are no justifications for these crimes, and we are horrified by the lack of action by the international community,” they wrote in a statement.

The Netanyahu government and the military leadership are saying that they will change the face of Gaza forever and that they will fight Hamas until it is wiped out in order to release the 203 Israeli and foreign hostages taken on October 7 by the Islamic movement. On

Friday, through the mediation of Qatar, the armed wing of Hamas released two women, Judith and Natalie Raanan, a mother and daughter with dual U.S. and Israeli citizenship, on humanitarian grounds. The two women were handed over to the International Red Cross. After arriving in Egypt, they were expected to be back in Israel the next day.

This development will not have the slightest effect on the Israeli military offensives on the horizon. On the ground around Gaza, everything suggests that the invasion will come in a matter of days. This is also indirectly confirmed by the decision of Israel and the United States not to take part in the “peace summit” in Egypt. The Netanyahu government, riding on the strong support at all levels that Joe Biden assured them of on Wednesday, has no intention of agreeing to a ceasefire, as Egypt’s Abdel Fattah el-Sisi and Jordan’s King Abdullah would like, both of whom are concerned about the possibility that the war will end with the expulsion of hundreds of thousands of Palestinians to their countries, not only from Gaza but also from the West Bank. There are many future scenarios to consider.

Israeli Defense Minister Yoav Gallant said on Thursday that achieving Israel’s goals will be neither quick nor easy:

“We will overthrow the Hamas organization. We will destroy its military and governmental infrastructure. It is a phase that will not be easy. It will have a cost,” he told members of a parliamentary committee.

In support of the Gaza war, Joe Biden is expected to send an emergency request to Congress to approve new funding to support Israel and Ukraine. The Jewish state will get \$14 billion in U.S. arms and aid. During his address to the nation, the U.S. president addressed “other hostile actors in the region,” who, he said, needed to know that Israel was “stronger than ever” and thus “prevent this conflict from spreading.”

But his unconditional support for Israel is beginning to generate discontent in the Arab capitals allied with the U.S. and those that have normalized relations with Tel Aviv. In the days after October 7, the Emirates and Bahrain had both condemned Hamas. But then, according to Arab analysts, Biden’s words categorically ruling out any Israeli responsibility in the explosion that devastated Gaza City’s Al-Ahli hospital on Tuesday – which left 471 Palestinians dead, according to the Health Ministry – were poorly received in Abu Dhabi and Manama. From that point on, the two countries called for a ceasefire and condemned Israeli policies toward Palestinians. Their positions were also influenced by the wave of outrage across the region and protests in the occupied Palestinian West Bank and other countries.

The “concern” for Palestinian civilians expressed by Biden and Secretary of State Antony Blinken is failing to reassure Arab leaders allied with Washington in the face of images from Gaza that show two million Palestinians subjected to continuous bombardment by the Israeli air force, which has left 4,137 dead and some 13,000 wounded according to Health Ministry figures.

The stories of despair and terror that Gaza civilians are managing to convey to the outside world are giving rise to fear and frustration among other Palestinians and Arabs, and among those in the rest of the world who are following the fate of so many innocent people. The humanitarian emergency is more and more serious: finding clean water and food is difficult, and some hospitals have stopped functioning. In others – as Al Jazeera reported on Friday – they are disinfecting surgical instruments with vinegar. Everything is lacking, starting with

the diesel fuel needed to keep autonomous electricity generators running.

The smell of death wafts across the streets everywhere, unbearable – the stench of the corpses left under the rubble of houses and buildings, at least 1,400 according to health authorities. The Palestinian Red Crescent denounced on Friday that it had received a threat from Israel that it would bomb the Al-Quds hospital in Gaza City, which houses more than 400 patients and some 12,000 displaced people. By Friday night, there had been no denial from the Jewish state.

Israel did admit to causing severe damage to the buildings of the St. Porphyry Orthodox Church in Gaza city, resulting in the death and injury of several people. Nonetheless, the IDF military spokesperson denied that the church had been the target of the airstrike, which he said had targeted a “ Hamas command center ” in the vicinity. The Orthodox Church reported 18 dead Palestinians, both Christians and Muslims who believed they had found safe haven at St. Porphyry.

Meanwhile, the much-needed humanitarian and hospital aid remained stuck at Gaza’s gates on the Egyptian side of the Rafah crossing. Joe Biden himself promised on Friday that they would enter on Friday or Saturday. Finally, on Saturday evening, it was confirmed that the first 20 trucks had been allowed to enter the strip.

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