

Dead bodies everywhere' in Jabalia camp as Israel besieges northern Gaza

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Gazans in the north are trapped in their homes as Israel launches a new military operation, threatening hospitals and shooting at fleeing residents.

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Palestinians fleeing Jabalia camp arrive in Gaza City, October 6, 2024. (Omar El-Qataa)

The Israeli army has launched a major new offensive in northern Gaza, besieging the Strip's three northernmost cities and their surroundings. Early Sunday morning, the army [ordered](#) the approximately [400,000 residents](#) remaining in the north of the Strip to move to the [so-called "humanitarian area"](#) in the south ahead of a new military operation. Many refused to leave their homes, and residents of Jabalia, Beit Hanoun, and Beit Lahiya have been under intense bombardment since Sunday afternoon, cut off from Gaza City to the south as tanks and drones shoot at people who try to escape.

[Over 120](#) Palestinians have already been killed in the area since the latest operation began as a result of airstrikes, artillery fire, and shooting by Israeli soldiers and quadcopter drones. [No humanitarian aid](#) is entering the besieged areas, and Israel has bombed Jabalia's last functioning bakery.

The army has also ordered the evacuation of all medical staff and patients from the three principal medical facilities in the area : Kamal Adwan Hospital and the Indonesian Hospital in Beit Lahiya, and Al-Awda Hospital in Jabalia. Residents of [Jabalia refugee camp](#), the epicenter of the army's current ground invasion, report that bodies are strewn across the streets, with ambulances unable to retrieve them.

"Quadcopter drones are hovering low over the streets, firing at anything that moves," Mohammed Shehab, a 27-year-old resident, told +972 Magazine from inside the camp. "Snipers are positioned on rooftops, targeting anyone who steps outside. At the same time, soldiers and tanks have pushed into the camp, demolishing homes and bulldozing roads and fields."

The Israeli army, which has been [exchanging fire](#) with Hamas forces in the area and has suffered multiple casualties, declared that the new operation is [designed](#) to stamp out the group's attempts to rebuild its operational capabilities in the north of the Strip. But the offensive comes only weeks after [reports](#) that Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu was considering a proposal, known as the [Generals' Plan](#), to ethnically cleanse the entirety of northern Gaza through a [campaign of starvation and extermination](#). As such, there are widespread concerns — including among Gazans who spoke to

+972 — that Israel may now be putting that plan into action.

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“Heavy bombing began suddenly on Sunday afternoon,” Shehab recounted. He was home at the time with his friend Abdel Rahman Bahr, and Bahr’s brother, Mohammed. “Abdel Rahman went out to see what had happened — he thought they might have bombed a school or a shelter. He never came back.

“Hours later, Mohammed and I went out to search for him,” Shehab continued. “Suddenly, drones started firing at us. Mohammed was hit, and I managed to escape. I still don’t know what happened to Mohammed or Abdel Rahman.”

Israeli forces have also [targeted](#) Palestinian journalists reporting on the army’s incursion into Jabalia. On Wednesday, an airstrike killed Al-Aqsa TV journalist Mohammad Al-Tanani and wounded his colleague Tamer Lubbad. An Israeli sniper also shot Al Jazeera photojournalist Fadi Al-Wahidi in the neck ; his colleagues managed to evacuate him to a hospital, where he remains in [critical condition](#). This comes only days after another journalist, 19-year-old Hassan Hamad, was [killed by an airstrike](#) that targeted his home in Jabalia refugee camp, taking the total number of journalists killed in Gaza since October 7 to 168 according to the [Palestinian Journalists Syndicate](#).

“They want us to go south, but is there really any safety there ?” Shehab asked. “My brother was killed in [Israel’s attack on Al-Mawasi](#) [where displaced people from the north are being ordered to go]. The whole of Gaza is a battlefield.”

‘I don’t know if we’ll survive’

For the third time since Israel’s ground invasion of Gaza began in late October 2023, Israeli forces are advancing through Jabalia refugee camp. They are moving in from the east, with tanks also stationed at the Al-Tawam and Abu Sharkh roundabouts to the west, trapping residents inside their homes. A journalist inside the camp [said](#) residents are now describing Abu Sharkh as “the intersection of death,” with Israeli forces shooting at anyone seen in the area.

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“We are besieged in our apartment,” Madah Abu Warda, 55, told +972 on Tuesday. “There are bodies in the streets, and the sound of tanks is very close. We have refused to leave our home since the very beginning of the war. How can we leave now, after all the horrors we’ve seen ? I am here with seven members of my family, and I don’t know if we’ll survive.”

In a desperate bid for safety, some residents have attempted to escape the invading Israeli forces. Mohammed Shehada, a 29-year-old from Jabalia, tried to flee with his family to the Al-Rimal neighborhood of Gaza City, but they came under fire along the way. “Gunfire erupted around us,” he recounted. “My youngest sister, Aya, who is only 12 years old, was shot in the leg by a drone.

“The ambulances were far away because of the danger of being targeted, and I knew they wouldn’t be able to reach us, so I carried my sister to the nearest medical point,” Shehada continued. “The closer we got, the more fear overwhelmed me, but I couldn’t leave her behind. My heart raced with worry as I tried to save her life.” Shehada eventually managed to get Aya to Al-Ahli Hospital in Gaza City where she received treatment.

Another camp resident, 22-year-old Hamza Salha, watched his grandfather die from a shrapnel wound after Israel began “randomly bombing” the area around his home on Monday. “He died right

there in front of us,” Salha said. “His body lay on the ground all day because we were too frightened to move [in case Israeli soldiers spotted them and opened fire]. When the soldiers finally shifted their focus to another area, we were able to bury him at the house. It was a moment of indescribable pain and helplessness.”

After that, Salha took advantage of a brief moment of quiet to flee the camp, with the rest of his family planning to follow him — but they never came. “I escaped alone, and now I have no idea where my family are,” he said.

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Even in the face of these dangers, many residents are insisting on remaining in their homes. Ahmed Nasser, 43, has been trapped in the camp with his family since Sunday without access to food or water. “I will not leave,” he told +972. “I won’t abandon my home or the camp where I grew up, despite the devastation and what feels like famine around us.”

Describing the scene inside the camp, Nasser said there are “dead bodies everywhere, and the wounded lie in the streets with no one able to help them. Moving anywhere is difficult because the camp is filled with the rubble of destroyed houses and cars, and Israeli snipers are positioned on high buildings.”

Still, he said, “I refuse to leave death for more death. There’s no safe place, not in the north and not in the south. The occupation is trying to implement its plan to fully evacuate northern Gaza and turn it into a military zone. Our steadfastness will thwart them.”

Abir Madi, 51, lost her two sons when her house in the camp was shelled on May 14, and she, too, is refusing to evacuate. “Why should we leave our camp and go to the south as the occupation wants ? This is our land ; I will only leave to the sky,” she said. “It makes no sense to leave my home just to be killed in a tent in the south. The occupation doesn’t care about civilian lives ; it targets them everywhere.

“Do not repeat the mistake of those who fled earlier,” she called on her fellow residents. “Do not leave. Stay in northern Gaza and die there.”

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‘A death sentence for thousands of patients’

On Tuesday evening, Gaza’s Health Ministry reported that the Israeli army had ordered the evacuation of Kamal Adwan Hospital, the Indonesian Hospital, and Al-Awda Hospital. Another hospital in Jabalia, Al-Yemen Al-Saeed, was the [target of airstrikes](#) that killed at least 16 people sheltering in tents.

On Wednesday, staff at Kamal Adwan [began to evacuate](#) premature babies and other patients as Israeli tanks and soldiers closed in and threatened to destroy the hospital. Hussam Abu Safiya, the general director of the hospital, [posted](#) an update today warning of the catastrophic conditions in the facility due to a shortage of medical staff, supplies, and fuel.

D^r. Marwan Al-Sultan, the general director of the Indonesian Hospital in Beit Lahiya, told +972 on Wednesday that the army’s decision to forcibly evacuate hospitals in northern Gaza “is equivalent to a death sentence for thousands of patients and wounded people who are in need of continuous medical care.”

Al-Sultan emphasized that “the hospital is still serving patients and the wounded, and we have not evacuated it yet. There are 28 patients receiving treatment, including two in intensive care, accompanied by 17 medical staff. However, we do not know what the coming hours will bring, and we may be forced to evacuate at any moment.” He called for urgent pressure on Israel to reverse its evacuation order, to ensure the delivery of fuel and food supplies to the north, and to protect hospitals and medical personnel.

D^r. Mohamed Salha, director of Jabalia’s Al-Awda Hospital, also confirmed to +972 on Wednesday that “the hospital will continue its operations despite Israeli threats, and we will not evacuate it under any circumstances. The hospital is overcrowded with wounded people and women in need of childbirth and cesarean sections. Forty-eight injured patients are still receiving treatment in the hospital, and they require ongoing medical care. The injuries we receive exceed the hospital’s capacity.”

Obeida Al-Shawa, an official at the Health Ministry, voiced urgent concerns about the worsening situation at Kamal Adwan Hospital. “On Tuesday night, the Israeli army gave the hospital management a strict ultimatum of 24 hours to evacuate completely,” he explained. “This is a terrifying measure that threatens to collapse the entire health system in the north, which has already been pushed to the brink.

“Evacuating Kamal Adwan Hospital is impossible under the Israeli siege, as they target anything that moves,” Al-Shawa continued. “We received calls from colleagues saying that the army has so far refused to coordinate safe passage for ambulances to evacuate and transfer the wounded to another hospital.”

And for Al-Shawa, the desperate conditions faced by those trapped inside Jabalia only underscores the need for the hospitals to stay functioning. “We have received testimonies from survivors of the siege indicating that there are dozens of bodies lying on the ground [inside the camp]. Medical crews have been unable to reach these individuals because the area is completely surrounded and besieged.”

+972 approached the IDF Spokesperson for comment regarding the army’s order to evacuate hospitals, the targeting of journalists, and testimonies about bodies littering the streets and snipers and drones shooting at civilians who attempt to flee. Their response will be added as and when it is received.

Ibrahim Mohammad and Mahmoud Mushtaha

P.-S.

- +972. October 10, 2024 :
<https://www.972mag.com/jabalia-camp-northern-gaza-siege/>
- Ibrahim Mohammad is an independent Palestinian journalist from Gaza City who covers humanitarian and social issues. He holds a BA in journalism and media from Al-Aqsa University.
- Mahmoud Mushtaha is a Gaza-based freelance journalist and human rights activist.
- Our team [+972] has been devastated by the horrific events of this latest war - the atrocities

committed by Hamas in Israel and the massive retaliatory Israeli attacks on Gaza. Our hearts are with all the people and communities facing violence.

We are in an extraordinarily dangerous era in Israel-Palestine. The bloodshed unleashed by these events has reached extreme levels of brutality and threatens to engulf the entire region. Hamas' murderous assault in southern Israel has devastated and shocked the country to its core. Israel's retaliatory bombing of Gaza is wreaking destruction on the already besieged strip and killing a ballooning number of civilians. Emboldened settlers in the West Bank, backed by the army, are seizing the opportunity to escalate their attacks on Palestinians.

This escalation has a very clear context, one that +972 has spent the past 13 years covering : Israeli society's growing racism and militarism, the entrenched occupation, and an increasingly normalized siege on Gaza.

We are well positioned to cover this perilous moment - but we need your help to do it. This terrible period will challenge the humanity of all of those working for a better future in this land. Palestinians and Israelis are already organizing and strategizing to put up the fight of their lives.

Can we count on your [support](#) ? +972 Magazine is the leading media voice of this movement, a desperately needed platform where Palestinian and Israeli journalists and activists can report on and analyze what is happening, guided by humanism, equality, and justice. Join us.

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