



## Israel Carries Out Airstrikes Against Civilian Targets in Gaza After an Escalation in Tensions Due to Israeli Police Violence

This week, Israel has carried out deadly airstrikes against civilian targets in the besieged Gaza Strip following an escalation in tensions due to Israeli police violence toward human rights activists supporting Palestinian families under threat of forced displacement from their homes and worshippers at the Al-Aqsa Mosque. The latest troubling developments come in the aftermath of several nights in which Israeli security forces raided the mosque compound, engaging in brutal violence against Palestinians congregating there during the month of Ramadan – which left hundreds injured and hospitalized. Additionally, hostilities have also been heightened in preceding weeks over Israeli authorities’ plans to forcibly expel Palestinian families from their homes in the east Jerusalem neighborhood of Sheikh Jarrah, and activists peacefully protesting the move have been met with heavy-handed and repressive police tactics. The situation has deteriorated in recent days, and the subsequent barrage of Israeli airstrikes on Gaza have been condemned for striking residential areas, with children among those killed during the attacks. Independent human rights experts have expressed serious concern with the disturbing level of civilian casualties, and are urging for de-escalation. Ultimately, impartial observers have criticized Israel for its string of aforementioned aggressive and provocative behavior that has led to the crisis.

One of the major factors that has spurred the escalation in tensions and the current set of circumstances is Israeli authorities’ plans to forcibly displace Palestinian families from their homes in Sheikh Jarrah. International rights groups such as Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch have denounced the proposed move, stating that it is part of a sustained Israeli effort to expand illegal settlements in Palestinian territory and that the behavior is a flagrant violation of international law. In addition to the mere action itself being unjust and unlawful, Israeli police have exacerbated the situation by responding to peaceful sit-ins and protests in opposition to the expulsions with deadly violence. They targeted demonstrators with rubber bullets, tear gas, and sound bombs, and reports emerged of blatantly abusive force being used to try and suppress the protests. Verified eyewitness accounts, videos, and photographs taken by rights groups advocates showed that Israeli authorities repeatedly deployed disproportionate force and carried out unprovoked attacks on peaceful protesters in Sheikh Jarrah.

Outrage has also grown in recent weeks over similar Israeli police tactics toward Palestinian worshippers at the Al-Aqsa Mosque during the month of Ramadan. Authorities stormed the mosque compound, targeting thousands who had gathered there, of which hundreds were injured or hospitalized. Some relief and aid workers were also prevented from entering the facility to try and treat the wounded. Israel’s destructive actions, both at the Al-Aqsa complex and in Sheikh Jarrah, were the main catalysts behind the increased tensions in recent days, which has resulted in an uptick in airstrikes and other violence.

After Israel’s aggressive actions against Palestinians in Al-Aqsa and Sheikh Jarrah, Israel and Hamas ramped up their military engagement. The Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) have stepped up their bombing campaign of civilian areas in Gaza. Israel’s behavior has been entirely disproportionate, with Palestinian schools, hospitals, and apartment complexes being destroyed by Israeli bombardment. Israel claims that they are targeting “terrorists” despite striking civilian and residential areas. Due to the escalation, mob violence has also increased in recent days, as extremist Israeli mobs have attacked Palestinian businesses, homes, and people in the streets that they believe to be Arabs. Most disturbing of all is the fact that these assaults have been carried out in an extremely combative manner, with evidence of mobs even trying to forcibly break into homes. In the end, analysts fear that the violence will continue unless the necessary steps are taken to alleviate the overall crisis.