



Israeli Bombardment of the Gaza Strip Targets Hospitals and Civilian Areas as Hundreds of Palestinians are Wounded and Dozens Killed Including Children

This past weekend, numerous days of Israeli bombardment on the besieged Gaza Strip left hundreds of Palestinians wounded and dozens killed, including children. The aerial assaults were carried out against hospitals, residential neighborhoods, schools, health facilities, and other civilian infrastructure. An estimated 1,675 housing units were damaged, with 88 of these rendered uninhabitable because of the attacks. Human rights groups denounced the targeting of densely-populated areas and reiterated that it is a flagrant violation of international law. Impartial observers noted Israel's history of committing these types of human rights abuses and war crimes in the Gaza Strip and elsewhere. In addition to lamenting the deplorable killing of children and civilians, social justice activists also decry how destructive actions like this exacerbate the already dire humanitarian conditions in Gaza and only serve to fuel animosity.

As a result of the devastating Israeli barrage of aerial assaults on the Gaza Strip during the preceding week, reports began to emerge that hospitals there were becoming overwhelmed. Throughout the course of the multi-day crisis before the eventual cessation of bombardment, health officials had issued warnings regarding a potential imminent halt in the provision of medical services due to a lack of fuel needed to operate the electricity generators in hospitals and health facilities across the Gaza Strip. They outlined how shortcomings in the Gazan health sector were an unquestionable result of the blockade imposed on the territory with a clear scarcity of essential medicines and medical equipment and that now, the electricity woes brought about by the bombardment were worsening the already insufficient circumstances, paralyzing health departments like the intensive care unit, oxygen-generating stations, and nurseries. As one hospital director expressed, "there are injuries which need surgeries, wounded in intensive care departments in critical conditions...with the numbers indicating the excessive use of force in the Israeli bombing." Similarly to hospitals and medical facilities, civil defense workers in Gaza face significant difficulties as well because of a shortage of needed supplies and rescue equipment.

Israel's disproportionate and unprovoked air strikes on the Gaza Strip triggered rebuke from the international community. The United Nations Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967 commented that "I condemn Israel's air strikes in Gaza to allegedly 'deter' Islamic Jihad's possible retaliation for its leader's arrest. As International Law only permits the use of force in self-defense, Operation Breaking Dawn is a flagrant act of aggression." She labeled the bombing campaign as "illegal, immoral, and irresponsible." Heads of rights groups and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) also bemoaned the fact that children and families in the Gaza Strip too often unfairly bear the brunt of Israel's repeated military offensives in the Palestinian territory. Another particularly troubling element of this is how vulnerable civilians in overcrowded Gazan refugee camps are subjected to the aerial assaults. Multiple accounts of residents in these facilities being killed or trapped before later being rescued emerged in the wake of the Israeli bombardment.

All told, at least 45 people, including 16 children, were killed during the three days of violence that began last Friday when Israeli air strikes were launched on the Gaza Strip. According to officials, upwards of 360 others were wounded, nearly half of these being children and teenagers.