

Children, victims of Israel's 'savagery'

Over 700 Palestinian children killed in Israel's strikes

Nine days of Israel's nonstop bombings on the Gaza Strip have claimed the lives of more than 700 innocent Palestinian children. The casualties amount to one-third of the total number of Palestinians killed as a result of the recent onslaught on the region by a regime that believes there are no innocent civilians in Gaza.

The high number of children killed in the attacks has shown the regime's indifference toward human life and the fate of civilians, especially children, during a war.

Israeli President Isaac Herzog said on Friday that there are no innocent civilians in Gaza. He said that all citizens of Gaza are responsible for the attack Hamas launched in the occupied territories that left over 1,200 people dead.

He said that it is an entire nation out there that is responsible for the war, adding, "It is not true this rhetoric about civilians not being aware, not involved."

According to the health ministry in the Gaza Strip, Israeli strikes have killed at least 2,215 individuals, including 724 children. Some 458 women were among the deaths, the ministry said on Saturday.

It added that 8,714 people have also been wounded after an earlier statement said at least 324 people were killed in the past 24 hours alone.

Complete blockade

The regime has also imposed a complete blockade on the Palestinian territory, cutting off water, fuel, and electricity and preventing aid deliveries at crossings into Gaza. The sole power plant in Gaza ran out of fuel on October 11, forcing hospitals to run on backup generators.

The regime's siege is also contributing to a rise in civilian casualties, especially children who suffer more in such situations.

No food to eat

"My four children are eating one meal a day. There is no water, no electricity, no internet, no fuel in all of Gaza," said Mohammad Abu Rukbeh, senior Gaza field researcher at Defense for Children International - Palestine (DCIP). "I am carrying my children on foot because they are too paralyzed in fear to walk as we search for somewhere safe. There is no safe place in Gaza as Israeli forces rain down bombs in every direc-

tion, every hour of the day. We are isolated people facing the fiercest war machines."

The United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) in a statement on Friday denounced the killing of children in Gaza. "Hundreds and hundreds of children have been killed and injured. Every hour in Gaza, the number of children killed rises. The killing of children must stop," UNICEF said.

Call for cease-fire

"UNICEF is calling for an immediate cease-fire as 1.1 million people — nearly half of them children — have been warned to move out of the way ahead of what is expected to be a ground assault on one

of the most densely populated places on the planet but with nowhere safe for civilians to go," the statement said. "Children and families in Gaza have practically run out of food, water, electricity, medicine,

and safe access to hospitals, following days of air strikes and cuts to all supply routes."

"In every war, the ones who suffer the most are children. This is tragically true today."



Saudis put Israel deal on hold amid war, engage with Iran

International Desk

Saudi Arabia is putting US-backed plans to normalize ties with Israel on ice, two sources familiar with Riyadh's thinking said, signaling a rapid rethinking of its foreign policy priorities as war escalates between Israel and Palestinian resistance

group Hamas.

The conflict has also pushed the kingdom to engage with Iran. Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman — known as MBS — took his first phone call from Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi as Riyadh tries to prevent a broader surge in violence across the region, Reuters reported.

The two sources told Reuters there would be a delay in the US-backed talks on normalization with Israel that was a key step for the kingdom to secure what Riyadh considers the real prize of a US defense pact in exchange.

A source familiar with the discussions also told AFP that "Saudi Arabia has

decided to pause discussion on possible normalization and has informed US officials."

US national security adviser Jake Sullivan told a White House briefing this week that the normalization effort was "not on hold," but said the focus was on other immediate challenges.

US demand rejected

The first source familiar with Saudi thinking said Washington had pressed Riyadh this week to condemn the Hamas attack but said Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan pushed back. A US source familiar with the issue confirmed this.

Until Hamas sparked a war on Oct. 7 by launching a devastating attack on Israel, both Israeli and Saudi leaders had been saying they were moving steadily towards a normalization deal.

The first source familiar with Riyadh's thinking told Reuters that talks could not be continued for now and the issue of Israeli concessions for the Palestinians would need to be a bigger priority when discussions resumed — a comment that indicates Riyadh has not abandoned the idea. Hamas launched the large-scale attack on Israel on October 7 that killed 1,300 people, sparking a retaliatory bombing campaign, which Gaza authorities say have killed more than 2,200, a quarter of them children, and wounded nearly 10,000.



Israeli military deploys Merkava battle tanks close to the Gaza Strip in southern occupied territories on October 13, 2023.
● JACK GUEZ/AFP