



Women carry children as others check the damage in the aftermath of Israeli bombing in Rafah in the southern Gaza Strip on October 29, 2023.
● MOHAMMED ABED/AFP

waste to entire neighborhoods in preparation for a broader invasion, the anguished families of prisoners are growing increasingly worried those aims will collide with devastating consequences.

Israel strikes near hospital

Early Sunday, Israeli warplanes carried out airstrikes near Gaza's largest hospital, which is packed with patients and tens of thousands of Palestinians seeking shelter. Israel has claimed Hamas fighters have a command post under the hospital, without providing much evidence. The Palestinian Red Crescent also said on Sunday it had received warnings from Israeli authorities to immediately evacuate Al-Quds hospital in the Gaza Strip, adding that raids conducted on Sunday had taken place just 50 meters from the facility. Head of the World Health Organization (WHO), Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, said on social media platform X that the Palestinian Red Crescent report was "deeply concerning", adding it was impossible to safely evacuate hospitals full of patients. Residents said the latest airstrikes destroyed most of the roads leading to Shifa Hospital in Gaza in the northern half of the besieged territory, which Israel has told people to evacuate. Israel says most residents have fled to the south, but hundreds of thousands remain in the north, in part because Israel has also bombarded targets in so-called safe zones. Tens of thousands are sheltering in Shifa, which is also packed with patients wounded in strikes. "Reaching the hospital has become increasingly difficult," Mahmoud al-Sawah, who is sheltering in the hospital, said over the phone. "It seems they want to cut off the area." Another Gaza City resident, Abdallah Sayed, said the Israeli bombing over the past two days was "the most violent and intense" since the war started.

Residents said the latest airstrikes destroyed most of the roads leading to Shifa Hospital in Gaza in the northern half of the besieged territory, which Israel has told people to evacuate. Israel says most residents have fled to the south, but hundreds of thousands remain in the north, in part because Israel has also bombarded targets in so-called safe zones. Tens of thousands are sheltering in Shifa, which is also packed with patients wounded in strikes.

"Reaching the hospital has become increasingly difficult," Mahmoud al-Sawah, who is sheltering in the hospital, said over the phone. "It seems they want to cut off the area." Another Gaza City resident, Abdallah Sayed, said the Israeli bombing over the past two days was "the most violent and intense" since the war started.

Central Israel under rocket fire

As Israel is expanding the ground activity and the scope of forces in the Gaza Strip, central Israel also came under heavy rocket fire on Sunday, with sirens sounding in several major cities. Al-Qassam Brigades, the armed wing of Hamas, said on its Telegram account that it was "bombing Tel

Aviv in response to the Zionist massacres against civilians".

Calls for cease-fire

Western countries have generally backed what they say is Israel's right to self-defense. But there has been a mounting international outcry over the toll from the bombing and growing calls for a "humanitarian pause" to allow aid to reach Gaza civilians and ease the humanitarian crisis. Pope Francis on Sunday called for a cease-fire in the Gaza war and renewed his call for the release of all prisoners. The European Union appealed to all parties to allow unhindered humanitarian access to Gaza. "People in Gaza depend on humanitarian aid only to survive the day. The depth of their desperation is beyond words," the EU's aid chief Janez Lenarcic said. Meanwhile, in a phone call on Sunday, British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak and French President Emmanuel Macron expressed their concern about getting aid into Gaza, according to a readout by Downing Street. "The leaders stressed the importance of getting urgent humanitarian support into Gaza. They agreed to work together on efforts both to get crucial food, fuel, water, and medicine to those who need it and to get foreign nationals out," a spokesperson for Sunak said. "They expressed their shared concern at the risk of escalation in the wider region, in particular in the West Bank."

Worldwide demonstrations

The conflict has prompted large demonstrations worldwide in support of the Palestinians. Hundreds of thousands of demonstrators rallied in cities in Europe, the Middle East and Asia on Saturday and Sunday to show support for the Palestinians. On Sunday people staged a rally in the Lebanese capital Beirut to show solidarity with Gaza. More than 5,000 people protested in Athens on Sunday, police said, calling for an end to the "massacre" of Palestinians. About 3,000 protesters gathered in Belfast city center for a rally organized by the Ireland Palestine Solidarity Campaign on Saturday. Rallies also took place in other parts of the UK, including London, Manchester and Glasgow.

AFP, AP, Reuters, BBC, and euronews contributed to this report.



A man stands amid the rubble of a building in the aftermath of Israeli bombing in Rafah in the southern Gaza Strip on October 29, 2023.
● MOHAMMED ABED/AFP

more desperate by the hour. I regret that instead of a sorely needed humanitarian pause, supported by the international community, Israel has intensified its military operations," Guterres said during a visit to Nepal, after a four-day trip to Qatar. He described as "totally unacceptable" the number of civilians killed and injured in the war.

Deaths top 8,000

According to the Palestinian Health Ministry in Gaza, the unrelenting bombardment has killed 8,005 people, mainly civilians and half of them children. The strikes over the weekend - described by Gaza residents as the most intense of the war - knocked out most communications in the territory late Friday, largely cutting off the besieged enclave's people from the world. Communications were restored to much of Gaza early Sunday. Hamas authorities reported Sunday that a "large number" of people were killed overnight in raids on two refugee camps in northern Gaza.

'Second stage' of war

Tanks and infantry pushed into Gaza over the weekend as Netanyahu announced a "second stage" in the war. The widening ground offensive came as Israel also pounded the territory from air, land and sea. The Israeli military raised the number of troops fighting inside the Gaza Strip, army spokesman Daniel Hagari said Sunday. The military has sought to assure the public it can achieve the two goals of its war on Hamas simultaneously - toppling the strip's resistance group and rescuing some 230 Israeli captives. But as the army ramps up airstrikes and ground incursions on the besieged enclave, laying



Protesters lift flags during a protest in Beirut, on October 29, 2023, in solidarity with the Palestinians in Gaza, amid the ongoing conflict between Israel and Hamas.
● AHMAD AL-RUBAYE/AFP



Netanyahu's plights and the West plots



By Mohsen Pakaeen
International affairs expert

OPINION EXCLUSIVE

After Benjamin Netanyahu secured his second term as Israel's prime minister, it was expected that his radical policies would result in a

new war against the innocent people of Palestine. And it wasn't long before this prediction came true.

Netanyahu's insistence on the violation of international regulations and the United Nations' resolutions by the expansion of illegal settlements and the desecration of the Al-Aqsa Mosque caused the 193-member United Nations General Assembly to ask the International Court of Justice in December 2022 to give an advisory opinion on the legal consequences of Israel's occupation of the Palestinian territories.

The desecration of the Al-Aqsa Mosque by the Israeli National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir, which coincided with the 2022 World Cup in Qatar, aroused anti-Israel and pro-Palestine sentiments during the event.

Israel's brutal attacks on the Jenin refugee camp in the West Bank in recent months and repeated deadly strikes on the besieged Gaza Strip led to the manifestation of the pent-up anger of Palestinians and the consequent crushing response of the resistance groups, including Hamas, to the regime's crimes.

Now, international experts are asking whether the US and the European countries have made a miscalculation by openly supporting the Israeli regime or they have deliberately encouraged Bibi to continue the conflict to eliminate him from Israel's political scene to secure their interests in the Middle East.

Some Israeli experts and even some members of the Knesset believe that Netanyahu's decision to enter into war with Hamas and exert more pressure on the Palestinians is aimed at distracting public attention from his domestic issues, particularly his corruption case.

He has also refused to commit to setting up a commission of inquiry to investigate the failings that enabled the Hamas attacks.

Public opinion and many Israeli politicians believe that Netanyahu is responsible for all the consequences of the army defeat against Hamas. "After the war, everyone will have to give answers, myself included," Netanyahu said on Saturday. He also acknowledged that "there was an awful debacle."

Netanyahu's remarks have once again provoked public anger and different political parties believe that he is not still aware of the extent of the incident and the damage to the public's trust. The lack of trust in society against Netanyahu has also increased after the release of pictures of his son on the beaches of Miami and the stay of the prime minister and his wife at the house of an American billionaire to escape the Hamas attacks. Israelis and even some members of the Likud party believe that the prime minister is now only focused on the ground invasion of Gaza. By continuing attacks on civilians, he aims to disclaim responsibility for the intelligence failure, his cabinet's failure to normalize ties with the Arab countries, the regime's isolation in the international organizations as well as increasing inflation.

According to Israeli media forecasts, should the conflict conclude and a ceasefire be established, it is anticipated that Netanyahu's political career will come to an end, leading to the dissolution of his cabinet.