

Gaza reaching 'humanity's darkest hour': WHO

International Desk

The situation in the Gaza Strip is getting worse all the time and approaching humanity's "darkest hour", the World Health Organization said Tuesday.

Richard Peeperkorn, the WHO's representative in the occupied Palestinian territories, told reporters in Geneva Tuesday, via video link from Rafah in the southern Gaza Strip, that the number of people on the move from central and southern Gaza was "vastly increasing".

Israeli forces launched attacks on southern Gaza on Tuesday, with attacks pushing civilians into a steadily shrinking area of the besieged Palestinian territory.

After initially focusing on northern Gaza, the Israeli Army has now sent ground forces into the south and urged Palestinians to evacuate.

"The situation is getting worse by the hour. There is intensified bombing going on all around, including here in the southern areas," said Peeperkorn.

"A lot of people are desperate and almost in a permanent state of shock".

"We are close by humanity's darkest hour," Peeperkorn said. "These bombings and the senseless loss of life must stop now, and we need a sustained ceasefire."

James Elder, spokesman for the UN children's agency UNICEF, said that with the population on the move, in two hours "there are 5,000 people where there was no-one previously. Critically in these places, there's no sanitation."



An Israeli military tank rolls near the Gaza Strip on December 5, 2023.
● MENAHEM KAHANA/AFP

Speaking from Cairo after returning from Gaza, he said that in one shelter in Gaza, where 30,000 people were seeking refuge, there was one toilet for roughly every 400 people, meaning queues of up to five hours.

Israel directing civilians towards safe zones it has designated as safe – but which have no toilets or clean water – is creating "the perfect storm for disease outbreak", said Elder.

"Israel is the occupying power: it's they who have to provide food, water, medicine," he added.

'Shameful' inaction

Qatar's ruler hit out at "shameful" international inaction over the Israel's onslaught on Gaza as he opened a Persian Gulf

Cooperation Council meeting in Doha on Tuesday.

"It is shameful for the international community to allow this heinous crime to continue for nearly two months, during which the systematic and deliberate killing of innocent civilians continues, including women and children," Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani said.

Qatar was a key mediator in negotiations that resulted in a seven-day truce, which saw scores of Israeli captives exchanged for Palestinian prisoners and humanitarian aid, until it ended on Friday.

Qatar's ruler said his country was "constantly working to renew" the truce, but added this was "not an alternative to a permanent cease-fire".

He called for "an international investigation into the massacres committed by Israel" and for the Security Council "to assume its legal responsibility and act to end this barbaric war, and compel Israel to return to credible negotiations to achieve a just solution to the Palestinian issue".

In a joint statement, the [P] GCC expressed "deep concern" with "blatant Israeli aggression" in Gaza.

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan attended the session and accused Israel of "war crimes" and "crimes against humanity in Gaza", which he said "should not be left unanswered".

Both Turkey and Qatar have been vocal supporters of the Palestinian cause and have

opened channels of communication with Hamas.

Storming southern Gaza

Israeli forces launched their storm of the main city in the southern Gaza Strip on Tuesday, where hospitals were overrun with scores of Palestinian wounded and dead.

In what appeared to be the biggest ground assault since the truce collapsed last week, residents said Israeli tanks had entered the eastern parts of Khan Younis for the first time. The Israelis, who seized the northern half of Gaza last month before pausing for the week-long truce, say they are now extending their ground campaign to the rest of the Palestinian territory.

"We're moving ahead with the second stage now. A second stage that is going to be difficult militarily," regime's spokesperson Eylon Levy told reporters in a briefing.

At Khan Younis' main Nasser hospital, the wounded arrived by ambulance, car, flatbed truck and donkey cart after what survivors described as a strike that hit a school being used as a shelter for the displaced.

"We are in the heart of Jabalia, in the heart of Shejaiya (in northern Gaza), and now also in the heart of Khan Yunis," Southern Command chief Major General Yaron Finkelman was quoted as saying in an army statement, describing "the most intense day since the beginning of the ground operation."

The Israeli army has so far lost 80 soldiers since the start of its ground offensive in the Gaza Strip on October 27.

Israel's resumption of war 'huge mistake': Iran MP

Renewed assaults might expand conflict in region



By Sadeq Dehqan
Staff writer

Israel made a "huge mistake" by resuming aggression against the Gaza Strip, an Iranian lawmaker said on Monday, warning about a spillover of war.

"The Zionists' move could lead to the expansion of war beyond Gaza and into the region and even other parts of the world," Fada-Hossein Maleki said in an exclusive interview with Iran Daily.

Maleki, who sits on the Parliament's National Security and Foreign Policy Committee, said Israel, backed by the US, was pressing ahead with its war on Gaza in a way that civilian targets, including people and hospitals, were mainly hit in "brutal attacks".

He emphasized that the Zionists' goal in the ruthless massacre in Gaza was an attempt to cover up their defeat from the dominant operations of Hamas in Operation Al-Aqsa. The result was the shattering of the prestige of the Zionist regime, and they sought to present an appearance of victory through widespread massacres of the people in Gaza. Operation Al-Aqsa was carried out by the resistance group Hamas forces on October 7 in response to the Israeli crimes against Palestinians and the desecration of the Al-Aqsa Mosque. The operation, branded as "Black Saturday" by Israel, led to the Israel-Hamas war.

The operation is considered an unprecedented failure for Israel. In the first 20 minutes, over 5,000 missiles were fired from Gaza toward Israel, causing significant damage. In response, Israel pounded various parts of Gaza indiscriminately, killing thousands of people, mostly civilians.

Under pressure from the Islamic world and some Western countries, Israel declared a cease-fire. Protesters, rallying across the world, including those from European and American countries, demanded an end to Israeli attacks on Gaza.

The cease-fire, mediated by Egypt and Qatar, commencing on November 24, lasted seven days. During this period, Hamas and Israel exchanged prisoners, and humanitarian aid was allowed into the war-torn Gaza Strip. However, Hamas declared that the conditions for releasing captives would be different, involving talks on ending hostilities, a complete halt, and lifting the blockade imposed by Israel on the coastal enclave.

Maleki emphasized that Hamas having conditions for the prisoner swap was "natural," especially considering "the Zionists' lack of commitment during the cease-fire."

He warned that Israel had begun a "dangerous game" by resuming the war.

"The second phase of the war would definitely drag in many countries and would inflict further damage and hardships on the world," the MP said.

Referring to the motivations behind restarting attacks on Gaza, Maleki stated that Israel aimed to deliberately involve some countries in the war, directly engaging the United States.

"Such decisions have been made in the think tanks run by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's cabinet."

Maleki noted that such a situation would usher in a new phase of the war, disrupting the region's security, with some countries not remaining silent, and others being drawn into the conflict.

This, he asserted, is not in the interest of the region and the world.

Israel's nuclear capabilities out in open



By Syed Ali Hassan
Iran Daily's correspondent in Pakistan

Israel's nuclear denial policy, often referred to as nuclear ambiguity or the Samson Option, was designed to deter potential adversaries by avoiding the complications and scrutiny that would arise from an open declaration of nuclear capabilities. However, Hamas's Operation Al-Aqsa Storm has provided Israel with the opportunity to admit to having a nuclear weapon.

One of the thousands of rockets fired by Hamas on October 7 fell on the Asdat Macha military base in central Israel, where nuclear missiles were stored. The rocket did not directly hit the missiles but sparked a fire that spread to missile storage facilities and other sensitive weapons.

The Israeli government has not yet released any information about the damage caused to the military base and the surrounding population by the radiation from the nuclear material, but the military base has been evacuated.

According to Hans Christensen, director of the Nuclear Information Project of the Federation of American Scientists, an Israeli military base hit by rockets fired by Hamas contained between 25 and 50 nuclear-capable Jericho missile launchers. The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), which considers it its primary responsibility to keep a close eye on the nuclear programs of Iran, North Korea, and Pakistan, has not yet started a formal inspection of the site despite clear reports. It is certain that the IAEA, under the United Nations, will not impose sanctions against Israel, nor will it bring this issue to the Security Council, as any resolution against Israel will be vetoed by the United States, Great Britain, and France.

In early November, the Israeli Minister of Cultural Heritage, Amihai Eliyahu, said during a radio interview that the nuclear option would be a way to deal with the Palestinians in Gaza. This clearly means that Israel not only has nuclear weapons but is also ready to use them. Israel has never officially stated its position on

the possession and number of its nuclear weapons. Nuclear weapons experts and international organizations say that Israel has more than 200 nuclear warheads. During the 1973 Arab-Israeli war, when Arab forces were bombing Israel from the Golan Heights and Israel's military was being destroyed, then Israeli prime minister Golda Meir informed the Arab rulers of her determination to drop nuclear bombs on the Arab capitals. After that, the tide of the war changed, and Israel very deftly and cunningly occupied the strategically important hillocks of the Golan Heights, which it holds to this day.

The IAEA has always ignored Israel's nuclear weapons program, and the justification is that Israel has not signed the NPT, so the agency cannot monitor Israel's nuclear program.

Here is revealed the hypocrisy of the world powers, especially the United States, which allows a usurper state to make nuclear weapons. Yet, the United States and European countries pressure Pakistan to sign the Non-Proliferation

of Nuclear Weapons Treaty (NPT) and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT).

The US does not pressure Israel and India to sign the CTBT and NPT, but it imposes sanctions on Pakistan and freezes the financial assets of an already poor country. This double standard has put the world in greater nuclear danger.

The Israeli government's ambivalent stance on nuclear weapons has persisted for decades. This ambivalence ended with Operation Al-Aqsa Storm. An Israeli minister even suggested the nuclear option against Palestinians. It proved that Israel not only has nuclear weapons but is also

ready to use them.

Israel's aggression against the Palestinians in Gaza is having a negative impact on American politics. President Biden's support for Israeli aggression has reduced his popularity among Democratic voters. The Biden administration is causing growing outrage among the American public, who claim that their country is essentially aiding and abetting war crimes on a massive scale.

Political experts say that if a US presidential election were held today, Biden would fail to defeat Trump because he has lost the support of key constituencies, including progressive voters and American Muslims.



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