

Crimes against history

Over 200 archeological sites in Gaza destroyed by Israeli army

The Israeli army has destroyed more than 200 archeological and ancient sites out of 325 that were registered across the Gaza Strip in the course of its devastating onslaught since Oct. 7, authorities in the enclave said, Anadolu Agency reports. The Government Media Office in Gaza reported that Israeli

Occupation Forces (IOF) have destroyed over 200 heritage sites out of the 325 in Gaza. Gaza is an ancient and historic city that came under the rule of several empires and civilizations, including the Pharaohs, the Greeks, the Romans, the Byzantines then the Islamic age, among others.

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Gaza is an ancient and historic city that came under the rule of several empires and civilizations, including the Pharaohs, the Greeks, the Romans, the Byzantines then the Islamic age, among others. According to a statement, this includes historic mosques, churches, schools, museums, ancient houses, and various heritage locations.

In the statement, it highlighted that the IOF destroyed heritage sites date back to the Phoenician and Roman eras, some 800 years before Christ, 1400 years, and 400 years. It added that the IOF destruction of heritage sites in Gaza constitutes a clear

international crime under international laws, especially humanitarian law and the 1954 Hague Convention on the Protection of Cultural Property in Armed Conflict. The 1999 Protocol explicitly prohibits intentional targeting under all circumstances of cultural and religious sites.

It added "We call on all relevant international organizations and bodies to condemn this organized crime committed by the Israeli Occupation Forces in Gaza. We urge immediate intervention to stop this crime and work towards rehabilitating and restoring these destroyed heritage and cultural sites."

Key religious sites struck by airstrikes since Israel's war began include the Great Omari Mosque, one of the oldest and most important mosques in historical Palestine, that was destroyed - with only its ancient minaret standing.

The mosque, in the heart of Gaza City's old

town, has been a Christian or Muslim holy site since at least the fifth century.

Many churches suffered damage. Built in 406 CE, the Greek Orthodox Church of Saint Porphyrius, the oldest church in Gaza originally founded in 425 CE, was bombed on October 19. The church's nave sustained major damage, while the administration building was totally demolished. Over 20 Christian families who sought sanctuary within the church were murdered, according to Watani Newspaper.

In Jabalia, indirect bombardment partially destroyed the 444 CE Byzantine Church and the Holy Family Catholic Church, which was established by Fr. Jean Morétan in Gaza in 1869.

The Baptist Church, which was established by the Church Missionary Society of the Church of England in 1882, is housed at the National Baptist Hospital. On October 26, Israel bombed the hospital, severely dam-



Al Qarara Cultural Museum, in southern Gaza, suffered serious damage, losing much of its pottery collection from the Byzantine period.

● MOHAMMAD ABULEHIA
/AL QARARA CULTURAL
MUSEUM

