

ARMED CONFLICTS

Gaza: Israel continues its crime of ethnic cleansing by destroying last neighbourhoods, UN shelter centres in Jabalia camp



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Israel-Palestinian Territory

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Palestinian Territory - Throughout its three-week military operation against the Jabalia refugee camp in the northern Gaza Strip, the Israeli army has deliberately continued its crime of forcibly uprooting Palestinian civilians. Israeli forces have completely destroyed all of the camp's remaining necessities of life, housing, and survival—including entire residential blocks—as well as destroyed, either partially or fully, the United Nations shelter centres there.

Israel's army has been conducting a large-scale military operation in the Jabalia camp since 11 May, which it began only a few hours after suddenly issuing forced displacement orders against thousands of local residents. The Israeli army has struck residential neighbourhoods and other civilian objects in the vicinity with fire belts, and has been continuously bombarding civilian targets with intensive and indiscriminate artillery attacks. This is in flagrant violation of international humanitarian law regulations pertaining to proportionality, military necessity, and taking all necessary precautions.

In addition to the crimes of premeditated killings, arbitrary arrests, and targeting of civilians, the Israeli military operation in Jabalia has resulted in massive destruction. The attacks have destroyed entire residential blocks and impacted hundreds of homes and buildings in the camp, including shelter centres, UNRWA-affiliated medical and food centres, and UNRWA-funded water wells.

A field inspection of the conditions in the Jabalia camp after the Israeli withdrawal revealed that not a single residential building was spared from bombing, bulldozing, or burning operations. The complete destruction of the area's infrastructure was evident, as was the burning of the main market and shops in the streets surrounding it, to the point where walking on the roads of most of the camp's "blocks" has become impossible due to the rubble and massive destruction.

Simultaneously, the Euro-Med Monitor field team observed the Israeli army demolishing all UNRWA headquarters and facilities in the Jabalia camp, including six schools in Block 4 (Abu Zeitoun Schools). The attacks were carried out by intensive artillery shelling and partial or total burning of the schools.

The greatest destruction was observed in the UNRWA schools opposite the Birkat Abu Rashid area in the central area of the Jabalia camp, and on Al-Faluga road; these places were subjected to burning operations and complete destruction. The UNRWA headquarters in northern Gaza, which is adjacent to the Jabalia camp police station, was also burned, resulting in the total destruction of personnel files including documents pertaining to refugee aid. The UNRWA Jabalia Maintenance Office (Cleanliness and Maintenance Department) was not also spared from shells and destruction.

Next to UNRWA's main headquarters, its aid distribution store was set on fire—at a time when it was packed with aid supplies that had entered the camp just two days before its residents were forcibly evacuated. Notably, the Israeli army blocked aid trucks' access to the Gaza City and North Gaza governorates in May.

The targeted schools and UNRWA headquarters served as shelter centres for thousands of Palestinian civilians who were previously expelled from their homes after Israeli attacks destroyed them, or who were trying to find safe havens.

In order to consolidate its various crimes of forced displacement of Palestinians across the Gaza Strip, Israel has been systematically destroying all forms of life and housing in the Jabalia refugee camp. This destruction is part of a larger pattern of deliberate acts of genocide that Israel has been committing against the Palestinian people since 7 October 2023.

Israel's army is deliberately and systematically militarising civilian objects in the Gaza Strip. Israeli forces have turned buildings such as schools, educational facilities, and hospitals into military bases, in flagrant violation of international law and the rules of war, and have deliberately destroyed 80% of the Strip's schools, either completely or partially—an action described by UN experts in a joint statement issued on 18 April as "scholasticide", as it is depriving another generation of Palestinians of their future.

Even the UNRWA-run schools, which have been converted into shelter centres for hundreds of thousands of forcibly displaced Palestinian civilians, have been and are still being subjected to intense Israeli attacks—some of them frequently and abruptly—including in areas that the Israeli army had designated as "safe zones".

The international community must intervene swiftly and decisively to stop all Israeli direct, systematic, and large-scale military attacks on civilians and civilian objects in the Gaza Strip, and activate real pressure tools to force Israel to halt its eight-month-long genocide. Israel's genocide of Palestinians in the Strip has involved the forcible displacement and killing of civilians, obstruction of humanitarian aid access, targeting of medical and relief personnel, and the bombing and destruction of UN-run facilities. These acts constitute multiple forms of fully-fledged international crimes, and Israel has failed to abide by international law and the International Court of Justice rulings to prevent genocide and protect Palestinian civilians in the Gaza Strip.

In accordance with international law, Israel must cease its crime of forcibly displacing Palestinian civilians in the Gaza Strip, permit their immediate return to their homes and places of residence, and compensate them for all losses and damages they have endured.



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