

## ARMED CONFLICTS

## Israeli army's destruction of more schools, health centres in Gaza is additional manifestation of genocide



16 May 2024

Israel-Palestinian Territory

Share On f t v @

AR

**Palestinian Territory** - As part of its genocide against Palestinians in the Gaza Strip, the Israeli army has intentionally destroyed schools and medical facilities during its ground invasion of Gaza City's southern Al-Zaytoun neighbourhood and Jabalia in Strip's north.

Seven days after the start of its latest ground incursion in the area, Israeli forces withdrew from Gaza City's Al-Zaytoun neighbourhood. The Wednesday 15 May withdrawal revealed the destruction of three schools—Ain Jalut, Atta Al-Shawa, and Hassan Al-Nakhlah—as well as the Zaytoun Medical Clinic, which had provided healthcare to the neighbourhood's roughly 80,000 residents.

The Israeli army launched, last Thursday, its third military operation in the Zaytoun neighbourhood since the start of its aggression on the Gaza Strip. The most recent operation included heavy air and artillery raids, a ground incursion with military vehicles, and the destruction of more residential buildings, turning the neighbourhood into a pile of rubble and forcing hundreds of families to evacuate.

Israeli warplanes struck the four-storey Al-Sabra Clinic building at 4:30 am on Wednesday. The clinic, run by UNRWA, is located in the southern Gaza City neighbourhood of Al-Sabra and was housing approximately 50 displaced people, including women, children, and people with injuries. The explosion caused additional deaths and injuries, with survivors being pulled out from under the debris.

Prior to the deadly attack, Israeli forces initially broke through the clinic's outer wall, but then left without asking the individuals inside to leave—giving those sheltering inside a false sense of security. Two days later, Israeli forces betrayed them by bombing the clinic with military aircraft, giving no prior notice.

Forty-three-year-old Safiya Rushdi Arhaim told the Euro-Med Monitor team that she and her family had been displaced from the neighbourhood of Al-Zaytoun to Al-Sabra Clinic. They were surprised when, at dawn on Wednesday, F-16 warplanes flew overhead several times before ultimately launching four missiles at the building's four floors, destroying all of them and killing, harming, or traumatising everyone inside.

Arhaim said that both her son Suleiman, 24, and her husband Tayseer Suleiman Arhaim, 47, were injured during the attack, marking the family's second set of injuries in a short period of time. She stated that she and the rest of the displaced felt relatively safe in the clinic, especially after the Israeli forces broke into the area and destroyed its outer wall with bulldozers but did not ask those inside to leave. Instead, Israeli forces delivered messages to them over the phone as they approached the Zaytoun neighbourhood, but these messages did not warn them of imminent violence, so they stayed until the planes arrived and destroyed the clinic above their heads. While several families were killed and severely injured, she and her own family members survived the attack.

Over the past few days, Israeli forces have bombed and opened fire on six UNRWA schools in Jabalia, in the northern Gaza Strip, which houses thousands of displaced families. The Israeli military forced these displaced people to evacuate anew, arresting and killing a number of them in the process. Currently, it is unknown if the area's schools are entirely destroyed or if the bombing caused only partial destruction.

These schools join the hundreds that Israeli forces have already destroyed, either fully or partially, since 7 October 2023. The schools have been destroyed by bombings, artillery shells, demolition, or bulldozing.

In its genocidal war, ongoing since 7 October, Israel has completely or partially destroyed 80% of the Gaza Strip's schools. In a joint statement released on 18 April 2024, UN experts described this as "scholasticide" and the deprivation of another generation of Palestinians of their academic future.

A study published in The New York Times supports the aforementioned figures. According to the report, over 200 schools in the Gaza Strip have been directly targeted by Israeli artillery, bombs, or missiles.

Even the UNRWA-run schools, which have become shelters for hundreds of thousands of civilians who are forcibly displaced, have been and continue to be the target of intense Israeli attacks, some of which occur frequently and others which occur irregularly, even in areas that Israel has declared to be "safe".

As part of its military assault on the Gaza Strip, ongoing for nearly eight months, the Israeli army has worked methodically to militarise civilian objects, turning places like hospitals, schools, and other educational institutions into military bases, in clear violation of international law and the conventions on war.

The Israeli army has turned many schools into military bases and detention facilities during its field invasion of most of the Gaza Strip. One such facility is the Salah al-Din Preparatory School in Gaza City, which was turned into a detention and investigation centre for hundreds of people last February.

As it did several months ago with Al-Israa University, in the south of Gaza City, the Israeli army has continued to frequently demolish and blow up civilian buildings after first turning them into military headquarters. All of this is done without respect for the principles of international humanitarian law, such as discrimination, proportionality, and military necessity.

Up until mid-April 2024, the Israeli military attack on the Gaza Strip is thought to have killed over 6,500 students, 756 teachers, and to have injured thousands more members of both groups. The death toll is expected to rise daily, and over 625,000 students are still believed to have been denied their right to an education over the course of an entire academic year.

The head of the UN Human Rights Office in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, Ajith Sunghay, previously declared that the educational system in Gaza "no longer exists at this stage", citing the destruction of schools by Israeli bombing operations as well as their use by displaced Palestinians as shelters. "Children can no longer find a place to learn," he said.

In a report published on 13 December 2023, Euro-Med Monitor revealed that the Israeli army has turned schools sheltering 10s of thousands of displaced people into military centres and field execution sites as part of its genocide against Palestinians. Euro-Med Monitor received testimonies at the time about Israeli army forces carrying out unjustified field executions and killings of Palestinian civilians after detaining them for days inside the same schools where they had sought refuge from Israeli violence.

Roughly one hundred leading European academics condemned Israel's genocide against Palestinian civilians in the Gaza Strip in an open letter in March, citing its physical and cultural liquidation of the Palestinian people and systematic destruction of the Strip's educational system.

It is crucial to shield schools in the Gaza Strip from Israel's military assaults. The international community must put pressure on Israel to cease its military operations against and inside the Strip's schools, in order to guarantee Palestinian children's right to education and ensure that they return to their classrooms as soon as possible, especially given that these schools will require extensive repairs and reconstruction.

Converting educational buildings into military bases is a practice that continues Israel's colonial legacy of dominance and tearing apart the fundamental components of the Palestinian people, particularly their cultural and educational heritage.

The humanitarian community needs to be made aware of the horrific conditions that children in the Gaza Strip are living in. Children are among the most vulnerable populations during times of armed conflict anywhere, and Israel's ongoing military assault on the Strip is worsening their suffering with every passing day. They are not being protected in any way by international law, and the Israeli army has turned them into direct and intentional targets of killings, executions, and deliberate and indiscriminate attacks. They are also being subjected to crimes such as starvation, siege, denial of health care and basic necessities for survival, and prolonged denial of education, which will negatively impact their ability to exercise their other rights and leave them vulnerable to poverty, unemployment, and exploitation. Finally, there is a risk that future generations will not have the knowledge necessary to rebuild Palestinian society in the Gaza Strip once Israel's genocidal war ends.

It is important to allow investigative committees and specialised technical committees to visit the Gaza Strip to look into the horrifying crimes Israel has committed and hold it responsible for its repeated violations of the International Convention to Prevent and Punish the Crime of Genocide. These violations include the systematic persecution of Gaza Strip residents due to their Palestinian heritage, which includes killing and abusing them physically and psychologically, undermining their ability to survive, and forcing them to flee their homes by crushing and militarising civilian property.



**EURO-MEDITERRANEAN  
HUMAN RIGHTS MONITOR**

Defending freedom Throughout  
the MENA Region and Europe

Euro-Med Human Rights Monitor is a Geneva-based independent organization with regional offices across the MENA region and Europe

#### FOCUS AREAS



#### CONNECT WITH US



#### NEWSLETTER

Get News & Action Alerts in Your Email.

**Subscribe**

[Privacy Policy](#)