

ANKARA (Anadolu) – Two pilots were killed in a helicopter crash in Turkey's southeastern Gaziantep province, the country's interior minister said Sunday.

The helicopter registered in the inventory of the General Directorate of Security Aviation Department had an accident in Kartal Village in Nurdagi district, Ali Yerlikaya wrote on X.

Yerlikaya said the two pilots on the helicopter, which was last contacted at 10.49 p.m. local time, were killed and one technician was injured.

Whoever makes arrangement for his salvation, Allah will arrange his worldly affairs; whoever is a preacher for himself, Allah will also protect him.

Amir al-Momeneen Ali (AS)

# Hezbollah Says 'Ready' to Confront Israeli Aggression

BEIRUT (Dispatches) – A senior official of Lebanon's Hezbollah has brushed off the Zionist regime's threats of a widespread attack against the country, warning that the resistance movement is "ready" to respond appropriately to any aggression by the occupying regime.

Sheikh Naim Qassem, Hezbollah's deputy secretary-general, made the remarks at a Saturday commemoration ceremony in the capital Beirut.

The Lebanese resistance movement has since early October been conducting retaliatory strikes against the Israeli-occupied territories in solidarity with Palestinians in Gaza.

The occupying regime has recently ramped up its aggression on several localities in southern Lebanon, bragging about attempts to expand the brutal war in the besieged Palestinian territory to other fronts in the region, including



Lebanon's Hezbollah has brushed off the Zionist regime's threats of a widespread attack against the country.

on Lebanese soil.

"Hezbollah supported Gaza, the people of Gaza and the people of Palestine during the confrontation taking place in southern Lebanon, and at the same time protected Lebanon, deterred Israel and put an end to the ideas that arise in the mind of the Israeli regime about the desire in the attack on Lebanon or the widespread attack on Lebanon," Sheikh Qassem was quoted as saying

by Lebanon's al-Ahed news website.

"They know that Hezbollah is always ready," he added, stressing that the resistance movement reserves its capabilities for the "due time."

The deputy secretary general of Hezbollah further said, "The due time is when the Israeli expands its aggression so that we can confront this expansion with something greater than it and more in-

strumental."

Praising Hezbollah fighters' courage and combat readiness, Sheikh Qassem said, "No one bets that threats or aggression can discourage us. Rather, we are stricter in confrontation and resistance, and we prove that we are superior. If Israel's aggression continues, we will respond appropriately."

The senior Hezbollah official added, "We hear some Israeli authorities saying that they will not stop the war even if it stops in Gaza! Slow down, who says we are waiting for you to stop or continue?! We are in the field, if you attack, we will respond to you, and if you stand aside, we will deal with you with an appropriate method."

The Israeli regime launched its hostilities in the Gaza Strip on October 7, 2023, after the territory's Hamas-led Palestinian resistance groups launched surprise Operation Al-Aqsa Storm against the occupiers.

## Thousands Stage Pro-Palestinian Protests in Europe



Thousands of pro-Palestinian protesters attended the eighth national march for Palestine in London on Feb. 3, 2024.

LONDON (Dispatches) – Thousands of pro-Palestinian demonstrators marched through the streets of London to "condemn UK government actions" in the war on Gaza and call for an immediate ceasefire, organizers said.

"This is the eighth such march and comes in the wake of the interim ruling against Israel by the International Court of Justice on Jan. 26," the UK-based Palestinian Solidarity Campaign told Arab News.

"Not only did the ICJ find South Africa's case — that 'Israel ... is engaging in ... genocidal acts against the Palestinian people in Gaza' — to be plausible, it also found evidence of the risk of further acts of genocide to be sufficient for the court to order interim measures to prevent such acts," PSC added.

"Israel has destroyed most health care services and education facilities. Far from obeying the ICJ orders, Israel continues its attacks in what constitutes an attempt at ethnic cleansing of Palestinians from Gaza," PSC also said.

On Dec. 29, South Africa filed an application instituting proceedings against Israel concerning alleged violations in the Gaza Strip, calling on the occupying regime to "immediately suspend its military operations" in the besieged Palestinian territory.

Also on Saturday, thousands of people gathered in France and Switzerland to call for an immediate cease-fire in the Gaza Strip.

In Paris, hundreds of protesters, carrying Palestinian and South African flags, denounced the ongoing Israeli attacks on Gaza, according to an Anadolu correspondent.

Criticizing French President Emmanuel Macron for "complicity" in Israel's attacks on Palestinians, the protesters urged the government to work toward peace in West Asia.

The rally that started in the afternoon merged with another demonstration held at the same time against the much-contested immigration law.

The immigration law, which was accused of being influenced by the far-right, was adopted by the parliament in December, and partially approved by the Constitutional Council last week.

In Geneva, thousands of protesters marched through the city center in support of the people of Gaza.

They also expressed solidarity with the UN agency for Palestinian refugees (UNRWA).

The multilingual march ended at the UN Geneva Office.

In Berlin, 2,000 Palestinian supporters rallied at Potsdamer Platz against Israel's Gaza attacks.

Demonstrators, including many Germans, carried Palestinian flags and banners that had slogans that read: "Stop the genocide in Gaza" and "Germany finances, Israel bombs."

## Hamas: Ceasefire Must Entail Full Zionist Pullout, End of Siege

GAZA (Dispatches) – A senior official of the Palestinian resistance movement Hamas says any ceasefire deal in the Gaza Strip must entail complete withdrawal of Israeli forces and lifting of the regime's blockade of the territory.

Osama Hamdan, the movement's representative in Lebanon, made the remarks at a press conference in Beirut.

"Since the beginning of the aggression, the movement has stated that it is open to discussing any initiatives or ideas that can stop the barbaric aggression on our people and restrain this criminal enemy that has murdered civilians, including children, women, and the elderly, and destroyed civilian infrastructure and human life in the

Gaza Strip," he said.

Hamdan added that the movement has received the general framework proposal discussed at the Paris Quartet meeting, adding, "The [Hamas] leadership's discussions and consultations on are based on the premise that negotiations would lead to a total end of the terrorist aggression against our people and a complete withdrawal of the occupation army from Gaza."

He noted that Hamas also seeks lifting of the siege "that has been imposed on Gaza for 17 years, reconstruction of what the occupation has destroyed, a serious prisoner exchange deal, and practical international recognition of our people's right to self-determination and the establishment of their fully in-

dependent state with al-Quds as its capital."

"For 120 days, this Nazi occupation [regime] has not stopped committing the most heinous crimes and massacres against unarmed civilians, mostly children, women, the elderly, and displaced people who lack the most basic human necessities, in addition to the brutal destruction of [their] homes, properties, and infrastructure," Hamdan said.

"This Nazi war will remain a testament to the brutality of the occupation and a stain on the forehead of all those involved in it, and those who falter in criminalizing and stopping it," the Hamas official added.

He also slammed the global inaction in the face of Israel's crimes in Gaza, saying, "The

crimes of genocide and ethnic cleansing are being committed in plain sight of the whole world, which stands by watching, [and] procrastinating, and [is] unable to stop the Zionist crimes that are supported by the US administration."

Hamdan reiterated that the United States "is complicit in [Israel's crimes in Gaza] and responsible for the continued aggression against more than two million Palestinians there."

The Hamas representative also warned about false news and reports circulated "by hostile entities about the course of the ceasefire negotiations," which he said were aimed at undermining and weakening "unity, steadfastness, and resilience" of the people of Gaza.

## Experts: Israel Destroying Gaza Homes to Create 'Buffer Zone'

WEST BANK (Dispatches) – Zionist troops in Gaza have systematically destroyed buildings in an attempt to create a buffer zone inside the Palestinian territory, experts and rights groups told AFP, raising fears over the civilian cost.

The plan, not publicly confirmed by the occupying regime, appears to entail taking a significant chunk of territory out of the already tiny Gaza Strip, something experts as well as the regime's foreign allies have warned against.

Since October 7, Zionist troops have targeted structures in Gaza within a kilometer (0.6 miles) of the occupied territories, said Adi Ben Nun, a professor at Hebrew University of Al-Quds who has carried out an analysis of satellite imagery.

More than 30 percent of all buildings in that area have been damaged or destroyed during the war, he said.

Last month, the Israeli army's deadliest day since the ground invasion began in late October offered a glimpse of the tactics being used to clear the area.

The regime's army chief Herzi Halevi said at the time that 21 reservists were killed "during a defensive operation in the area separating the Israeli communities from Gaza" to allow for residents' "safe return".

The troops had laid out explosives to blow up buildings when they were fired upon by militants, the army said.

Displacement of Gazans including from the border area could breach the laws of war, experts said.

"We are seeing mounting evidence that Israel appears to be rendering large parts of Gaza uninhabitable," said Nadia Hardman, a refugee rights

expert at Human Rights Watch.

"One very clear example of that may be the buffer zone -- this may amount to a war crime."

When contacted by AFP, the military declined to comment on the buffer zone.

Cecilie Hellestveit, of the Norwegian Academy of International Law, warned of "the prospect of ethnic cleansing, transfer, or lack of rebuilding, so that the Palestinians will eventually be forced out of the area entirely".

Scrutiny of Israel's actions in Gaza is likely to be heightened by last month's International Court of Justice ruling asking Israel to prevent any acts of genocide.

The United States, Israel's top ally and provider of military aid, has repeatedly said Gaza's territory should not change and that a buffer zone would breach that principle.

## Israeli Protesters Demand Early Elections, Release of Captives

WEST BANK (Dispatches) – Hundreds of Israeli demonstrators took to the streets of Haifa, Rehovot and Tel Aviv against Zionist prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu, demanding early elections and the release of hostages held in the Gaza Strip.

The protesters, gathered at Horev junction in the city of Haifa, were carrying banners with slogans such as "Elections Now" and "Save the Captives".

In the city of Rehovot, dozens of people protested in front of the Weizmann Institute of Science, chanting slogans against Netanyahu, according to the newspaper.

In the coastal town of Caesarea, protesters rallied in the rain before marching toward one of the private residences of Netanyahu. Some were seen calling for the prime minister's removal, chanting, "Guilty, guilty, guilty!"

And in Tel Aviv, demonstrators gathered at Habima Square to call for immediate elections.

"Israel declares in its actions that it is not competent and that the good of the state and its citizens are not at the top of its mind," the protesters said in a statement.

"We will go out to demonstrate that our future depends only on us – we the people will determine our destiny!," they added.

Israelis have been protesting almost daily, demanding early elections and the release of hostages in Gaza, but major demonstrations are held on Saturdays.

Zionist regime officials estimate that there are around 136 captives still held in Gaza since Oct. 7, 2023.

Palestinian resistance factions, led by Hamas, captured around 250 people in towns and cities near Gaza and last November exchanged dozens of them with Israel during a seven-day humanitarian pause.

In return, Palestinian prisoner institutions reported that Israel released 240 Palestinian prisoners from its jails during the pause, including 71 women prisoners and 169 children.

Israel launched a deadly offensive on the Gaza Strip on Oct. 7 that killed at least 27,200 Palestinians and injured 66,500 following a surprise attack by Hamas. Nearly 1,200 Israelis are believed to have been killed in the Hamas attack.

The Israeli offensive has left 85% of Gaza's population internally displaced amid acute shortages of food, clean water and medicine, while 60% of the enclave's infrastructure has been damaged or destroyed, according to the UN.