

# Zionist Attacks Destroy 79% of Gaza Mosques, 3 Churches

WEST BANK (Dispatches) – The Zionist regime has destroyed 79% of the mosques in the Gaza Strip and completely demolished three churches, according to the spokesperson for the enclave’s Ministry of Endowments, as reported by Anadolu Agency.

Ikrami al-Mudallal said Zionist troops have also killed 255 clerics and imams affiliated with the ministry and detained 26 others.

“The targeting of mosques and places of worship by the occupation forces is a clear violation of all sanctities, international law, and human rights law,” he said.

The Israeli army has also targeted 32 of Gaza’s 60 cemeteries, completely destroying 14 and partially damaging 18, al-Mudallal added.

For centuries, Gaza has been a gateway between Asia and Africa, home to a diverse history of civilizations, cultures, and religions.

Since the Zionist regime launched its assault on Oct. 7, 2023, many of the enclave’s historic mosques,



Along with 814 mosques flattened, another 148 damaged, 3 churches were also destroyed, and 19 of 60 cemeteries deliberately targeted, says the ministry of religious affairs in Gaza.

temples, and churches have been reduced to rubble.

Among them is the Great Omari Mosque, the largest and oldest mosque in Gaza. The 1,400-year-old mosque’s minaret was destroyed, and parts of the structure were severely damaged.

Other mosques damaged in the

attacks include Sayed al-Hashim Mosque and Katib al-Wilaya Mosque.

Churches have also been targeted. Saint Porphyrius Church, the oldest church in Gaza and the third-oldest in the world, suffered damage, as did Holy Family Church.

The Ahli Baptist Church, located within the al-Ahli Baptist Hospital, was also hit. An Israeli strike on the hospital and church on Oct. 17 killed about 500 people.

In another development, illegal Zionist settlers burnt a mosque northwest of Ariha city in the occupied West Bank on Sunday, according to a local activist.

Hasan Mleihat of the non-governmental al-Baidar Organization for the Defense of Bedouin Rights, said settlers also tried to torch a tractor in the Mleihat Bedouin community in the area.

“The mosque was completely burned down, but residents managed to stop the fire on the tractor,” he added.

Illegal settlers carried out over 2,970 attacks against Palestinians and their property in the occupied West Bank in 2024, according to Palestinian figures. At least 10 Palestinians were killed and over 14,000 olive trees damaged in these attacks.

## Dahiyeh’s Restaurant Scene Bounces Back After Zionist Aggression on Lebanon

DAHIYEH (Dispatches) – Ahmad Wehbe didn’t expect his restaurant, Fries Lab, to survive the Zionist regime’s war on Lebanon.

The restaurant in Haret Hreik, Dahiyeh – a neighborhood heavily targeted during the war – was hit by an Israeli strike in late November.

“I woke up to a call from a friend in Qatar,” Wehbe, 28, told Al Jazeera.

“He said my restaurant was on a map of targeted buildings published by the Israeli army. I rushed to check.”

When he arrived, all that was left of his tiny, open-kitchen burger joint was a pile of rubble.

“I was sad but not devastated,” he said. “As long as my family and loved ones were safe, I knew I had to move on. I couldn’t dwell on something I

expected to happen.”

Haret Hreik’s main street still sports bright, colorful signs and exteriors of popular restaurants like Falafel Khalifeh and Al Agha.

As daylight fades, the restaurants’ vibrant neon lights take over, masking the scenes of destruction all around.

Not all of them survived – Wehbe is among many restaurant owners who lost businesses as the Zionist regime destroyed whole swaths of Dahiyeh, although he was a bit more fortunate.

As soon as a ceasefire deal was announced on November 27, people returned to their Dahiyeh homes, salvaged what they could, and those who could afford repairs reopened their businesses.

Wehbe’s restaurant was a complete

loss, but his delivery-only kitchen remained intact, allowing him to keep the business running.

Food is a passion for Wehbe, who has been blogging about his love of food on Instagram for a few years, but he still works at a media analysis company.

“I didn’t study at culinary school, but I have a passion for food. I love street food and understand the analogies and combinations of flavors,” he said.

Fries Lab’s delivery branch is on a corner near the destroyed location, sitting, intact, next to a badly damaged building bearing the scars of Israeli strikes.

Seven delivery drivers wait outside, taking orders in rapid succession as

staff work inside at full speed, preparing multiple orders of fries and burgers layered with colorful sauces.

Their signature chicken wraps overflow with mozzarella, fried chicken, and homemade condiments, all in generous portions.

Despite the kitchen rush, everyone had their role – grill station, fry station, assembly, quality control – the space’s quiet only disrupted by delivery drivers asking when their orders would be ready.

Outside, one batch of delivery drivers departs as another arrives.

“We’re busier now than before the war,” Wehbe said. “I opened a temporary kitchen in Hamra during the war, but the orders there didn’t compare to the orders to Dahiyeh.”

## Cash-Keen Taliban Betting on Afghanistan’s Mines

GOSHTA (AFP) – A miner in the mountains of eastern Afghanistan poured water over a block of jade, exposing the green stone that is part of the Taliban authorities’ push to capitalize on the country’s rich mineral resources.

Touting the return of security, the Taliban government is rushing to court local and foreign investors to exploit the country’s underground wealth and secure a crucial revenue stream -- though experts warn of the risks of cutting corners.

Emeralds, rubies, marble, gold and lithium: the resources buried across Afghanistan’s rocky landscape are estimated to be worth a trillion dollars, according to U.S. and UN assessments from 2010 and 2013.

Though decades of war spared these

reserves from large-scale exploitation, roughly 200 contracts -- the majority with local companies -- worth billions of dollars in total have been signed since the Taliban’s 2021 return to power, official figures show.

“We want Afghanistan to be self-sufficient but there are obstacles,” Humayoun Afghan, the spokesman for the Ministry of Mines, told AFP.

“We have no experts, no infrastructure, no knowledge.”

The Taliban authorities will “welcome anyone who wants to invest, especially those with mining experience”, he added.

Many of these contracts focus on mining exploration, a process that can take years and yield little results, while loosely regulated extraction can leave behind environmental scars, experts

caution.

The US Geological Survey (USGS) has noted the production of coal, talc and chromite, “sharply increased” in 2021 and 2022.

The authorities are prioritizing resources that could lose value before tackling others, such as lithium, the prices of which may still rise on global markets.

The mines ministry regularly publishes tenders for exploration and extraction projects, sending their embassies lists of available mining projects to invite foreign companies to apply, according to documents reviewed by AFP.

The World Bank says the results are already visible: a 6.9 percent expansion of mining and quarrying drove an industrial sector increase of 2.6 percent

in 2023-2024.

But while the government “has auctioned several small mining contracts to meet its cash requirements, many of these contracts have yet to commence operations”, it said in a December report.

For mining sector expert Javed Noorani, authorities are tendering “maybe 10 times more than its own capacity to do things”.

The Taliban fought a two decade insurgency against the U.S. and NATO-backed Afghan government in Kabul, seizing power in a rapid military campaign in 2021 after foreign forces withdrew.

Foreign investors had largely abandoned the country, but security has drastically improved and the country’s road network has opened up.

## Criminal Probe Launched Into Zionist PM’s Wife

AL-QUDS (Dispatches) – Israeli police are conducting a criminal investigation into Sara Netanyahu, the wife of Zionist prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu, the office of the state attorney said in a letter made public on Sunday.

“A criminal investigation was opened” into suspected criminal offenses, the office said in a letter to an Israeli opposition lawmaker who had accused Sara Netanyahu of tampering in her husband’s corruption trial after the broadcast in December of a television news investigation.

Naama Lazimi, Knesset member for the Democrats, shared the letter on X on Sunday confirming the criminal investigation was launched on December 26, adding

that her office had contacted the state attorney following the investigation by Israeli Channel 12’s Uvda news program.

The show alleged that Sara Netanyahu had tried to intimidate a key witness in her husband’s ongoing corruption trial.

She also organized demonstrations to harass the Attorney General, his deputy and other individuals deemed hostile to her husband, according to the program.

The state attorney’s office added the investigation was being “conducted by the Israel Police accompanied by the cyber department of the state attorney’s office.”

In December, Benjamin Netanyahu testified in the corruption trial in which he

faces charges of bribery, fraud and breach of public trust in three separate cases, calling the charges against him “ridiculous.”

The trial, which had been delayed many times since it first began in May 2020, is scheduled to last for months, with an appeals process that could further prolong matters.

In the first case, Netanyahu and his wife are accused of accepting more than \$260,000 worth of luxury goods such as cigars, jewelry and champagne from billionaires in exchange for political favors.

He is the first sitting premier to face criminal trial in the country.

## Leader ... (Continued From Page One)

prerequisite for reliance on Him, saying “one must have absolute certainty without any doubt that by God’s permission, even the impossible will become possible”.

Ayatollah Khamenei noted that the victory of the people of Gaza over the Zionist and American regimes is an example of the realization of the impossible.

“If it had been said that the people of the small region of Gaza would fight against a great power like the U.S. and emerge victorious, no one would have believed it. But this seemingly impossible event was realized by God’s permission.”

The Leader of the Islamic Revolution said the second condition for the fulfillment “Whoever puts his trust in God, He will suffice him” is the accomplishment of responsibilities which Allah has assigned on humans.

“If, in addition to mental certainty in God’s promises, these duties are also fulfilled, without a doubt, any task even seeming impossible will be executed.”

Ayatollah Khamenei touched on Iran’s confrontation with the global arrogance since the 1979 Islamic Revolution, saying the Islamic Republic is not the only country on a collision course with the U.S.

“The difference between the Iranian nation and others is that it has the courage to state the truth that the U.S. is an aggressor, a liar, a deceiver, and a colonialist that adheres to no human principles whatsoever,” he said.

“Therefore, it says ‘Death to America,’ but others do not have the courage to express these truths and stand against America and fulfill their share in the fight against arrogance.”

## Etemad... (Continued From Page One)

of its military equipment from then-ally the United States, has been forced to develop its own weaponry since Washington cut off ties and imposed sanctions in the wake of the 1979 Islamic Revolution.

Having been under an arms embargo during a devastating war with Iraq between 1980 and 1988, Iran now has a substantial arsenal of domestically-developed weapons, including missiles, air defense systems and drones.

On Sunday, Iran unveiled three new satellites including new versions of Pars-1 and Pars-2 as well as Navak during a ceremony held to mark National Space Technology Day.

The upgraded Pars-1 satellite is an improved version of its predecessor, while Pars-2 offers higher imaging accuracy with an 8-meter resolution in color and 4 meters in black and white.

The Navak communications satellite has been designed to improve telecommunications at high altitudes.

Iran plans to launch two more satellites before the end of the current Iranian calendar year that ends on March 20. In addition to the 25 satellites currently in development, eight are fully built and ready for launch.

Addressing the ceremony, Pezeshkian said Iran is using science and technology in various fields including defense, not for aggression but for deterrence, dignity, and pride of its people “to ensure that no country dares to invade Iranian territory”.

He said the so-called human rights advocates use their military knowledge to kill oppressed and defenseless women, men, and children. “Today we are witnessing the catastrophes the criminal Israel has created in Gaza and Lebanon.”

Pezeshkian said despite attempts by the enemies to prevent Iran from standing on its own feet, the country, relying on its youth and experts, proudly produces and even exports military equipment and makes scientific progress.

Defense Minister Aziz Nasirzadeh said Iranian experts are working on the Sarir satellite launch vehicle, which will be able to put super-heavy cargoes into orbits, potentially paving the way for a satellite constellation.

Iran, he added, has become “completely self-reliant” in developing satellites, their carriers, as well as necessary ground infrastructure, control, and navigation systems.

On its 46th anniversary, Iran marked a successful year, achieving significant milestones, including the launch

of four satellites and the successful deployment of a 300-gram payload into low Earth orbit.

Hassan Salarieh, head of the Iranian Space Agency, highlighted the accomplishments on Sunday, citing the successful launch of the Pars-1 in March - a remote-sensing satellite capable of capturing images with a resolution of 15 meters.

Iran also launched the Chamran, a research satellite aimed at testing orbital control and correction systems. Flown aboard the Qaem 100 solid-fuel satellite carrier, it marked the third consecutive successful launch of the carrier, solidifying its reliability.

In November, the private sector achieved a historic milestone by independently constructing and launching the Hodhod and Kowsar satellites.

Iran also deployed a 300-gram payload into low Earth orbit using the Simorgh satellite carrier, which also tested an orbital transfer block, a critical step toward reaching higher orbits.

Salarieh further noted progress in infrastructure, including the Chabahar National Space Center, which is 80% complete and expected to serve as a gateway for international launches.

Other advancements include the development of satellite image reception stations and enhanced laboratory capacities, he said.

## Resistance... (Continued From Page One)

Chaos has continued over in Syria since the collapse of the former government.

New reports said the body of a Syrian scientist and doctor had been found in the countryside of the capital Damascus, adding to the number of the scholars that have been fatally targeted.

The lifeless body of Hassan al-Ibrahim was found in the village of Ma’araba in the capital’s Rif Damascus suburb, Lebanon’s Al-Mayadeen television network reported.

The victim, apparently hailing from he country’s Alawite community, used to teach at the country’s Higher Institute of Scientific Research.

The sources said Ibrahim had been kidnapped from his workplace five days before, adding that he was assassinated at gunpoint. Other sources said he was killed with a headshot.

In December, gunmen assassinated Dr. Hamdi Ismail Nadi, a prominent Syrian scientist in Damascus.

On Friday, militants shot and killed nearly a dozen civilians at a Shia-populated village in Syria’s central province of Hama, amid ongoing raids and summary executions by gunmen affiliated with the HTS administration.

Local sources in the Hama governorate said masked assailants stormed the village of Arza, abducting several residents before executing 15 of them near the Orontes River.

The so-called Syrian Observatory for Human Rights reported that “armed men committed a massacre” on Friday and killed “10 citizens in Arza village in the northern Hama countryside.”

The Britain-based observatory said the gunmen then quickly fled the area, leaving the bodies behind.

The monitor said at least 105 such incidents have taken place across Syria since the beginning of the current year, claiming the lives of 228 people, including five women and one child.

## Envoy... (Continued From Page 2)

Charter, particularly those safeguarding state sovereignty and civilian protection,” he said.

“Considering the above, the Islamic Republic of Iran condemns in the strongest possible terms terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, recognizing it as one of the gravest threats to international peace and security,” he added.

Iran remains resolute in its commitment, under international law, to combating terrorism and promoting regional peace and stability, Iravani stressed.

“However, the international community must acknowledge the profound suffering endured by the Iranian people over decades of hostility and terrorism. It is imperative that the voices of the victims are heard and respected, free from the shadow of double standards or baseless accusations.”