

# U.S. Media: Hamas Re-Establishing Itself as Israel War Objectives Proved 'Elusive'

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) – The Palestinian resistance movement Hamas is regrouping across the Gaza Strip, an American daily says, pointing out that Israeli forces are again fighting in the areas where they claimed to have defeated Hamas fighters.

"Now, [Zionist regime] troops are back fighting in the places they vacated," The Wall Street Journal wrote in an article published.

The article cited the recent resumption of the Israeli regime's airstrikes against Jabalia in the northern Gaza Strip, which was followed by ground raids against the northern city and the nearby city of Beit Lahia.

Hamas's fighters "are re-establishing themselves" in northern Gaza, the article noted, saying the group had recently killed at least five Israeli forces in those areas.



Palestinian resistance movement Hamas' fighters

"You leave and two minutes later, Hamas is back," Michael Milshtein, a former head of Palestinian affairs for the Israeli military intelligence, told the daily.

"It's impossible to build an alternative and create a new situation in Gaza, and at the same time,

get out of any area you took," he added.

The regime has been waging a genocidal war against the Gaza Strip since October 7 in response to Al-Aqsa Storm, a retaliatory operation by the Palestinian territory's resistance groups.

More than 35,000 Palestinians, mostly women and children, have died as a result of the brutal military onslaught so far.

The Journal pointed to an under-way operation by the Israeli military against the southern Gaza city of Rafah, which Tel Aviv has alleged, is aimed at dealing a final blow to Hamas.

Israeli analysts speaking to the daily said that the operation would not "deal a decisive blow to Hamas," noting that the group "can pop up anywhere."

"It wouldn't be an end to the war. An end to the war can be achieved only through a political decision by the two sides to agree on a ceasefire," said Shlomo Brom, a retired Israeli brig. gen.

"In this type of war, which is a war against a guerrilla force, I don't think there are decisive moments," he added.

## Palestinian Public Sector Salaries Squeezed as Israel Withholds Tax Revenue

RAMALLAH (Dispatches) – The Palestinian Authority says the Israeli finance ministry was continuing to withhold tax revenues and as a result only a part of public sector salaries would be paid this week, keeping up a squeeze on payrolls that has lasted for months.

The Authority said it would pay Palestinian public sec-

tor employees 50% of their March salaries on Tuesday, after Israel withheld a transfer due for the month of April.

It said the arrears would be paid once the financial situation allowed.

The Israeli finance ministry confirmed it had been decided not to transfer tax revenues this month but declined to provide details.

The squeeze on public sector salaries, and the fact that tens of thousands of Palestinians have been prevented from working in Israel since the start of the war in Gaza in October, have added to growing economic hardship in the occupied West Bank.

Israel collects tax on goods that pass through Israel into the West Bank on behalf of

the Palestinian Authority and transfers the revenue to Ramallah under a longstanding arrangement between the two sides.

But since the aggression on the Gaza Strip since October 7 last year, the Zionist regime's finance minister Bezalel Smotrich has withheld sums earmarked for administration expenses in Gaza.

## Survivors Hunt for Missing Days After Afghanistan Floods

FULOOL (AFP) – Survivors of flash floods in Afghanistan's northern Baghlan province were still searching for the missing on Monday, days after torrents of water ripped through villages, killing hundreds.

Heavy rains sparked flash flooding in multiple Afghan provinces on Friday, killing more than 300 people in Baghlan alone, UN agencies and Taliban officials said.

Rescue workers and aid have been struggling to reach some of the worst affected areas with the World Health Organization echoing Taliban government and non-profit warnings that the death toll

could rise significantly.

Samiullah Omari had found the bodies of seven of his relatives, but his uncle and uncle's grandson were still missing.

"We have been searching but we haven't found them," the 24-year-old day laborer told AFP in his village of Fulool.

For kilometers around, mud covers everything, debris and limbs of livestock jutting out from the thick brown sludge where homes once stood.

Neither Omari nor his 70-year-old father have ever seen "such havoc-wreaking floods", he said.

The WHO has already warned of rising cases of water-borne dis-

eases in flood-affected regions.

In a country with a health system already on its knees, some health facilities were rendered non-operational by the flooding, which damaged or destroyed thousands of homes and swamped agricultural land.

"The full extent of the damage is not yet known, and the country lacks the necessary resources to manage a disaster of this magnitude," it said in a situation report Sunday.

Omari and some 70 other villagers took refuge in a house on higher ground.

"God protected us along with 60-70 people and we survived it,"

he said, but his house and all his belongings were washed away.

All that was left were the clothes on his back.

Scant aid had arrived with Taliban government agencies and a few humanitarians, who braved washed-out roads for hours to reach the isolated village with food and water.

Tents had been set up near the village to provide health aid, as government officials surveyed the damage.

"We hope shelter will be provided for us," Omari said, adding that women and children had been "scattered" to other areas to stay with relatives.

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

according to Palestinian officials. The closure of the two crossings has raised alarm among aid workers over the potential catastrophic consequences for Gaza's 2.2 million population, who face imminent famine.

Aid operations could shut within days due to dwindling food and fuel stocks, United Nations aid agencies warned last week.

On Monday, the Palestinian health ministry said the health system was set to collapse "within hours" due to the lack of fuel.

"Restricted humanitarian access is a matter of life or death for people in the Gaza Strip, who are already suffering amid relentless bombardments and food insecurity," Unrwa, the UN agency for Palestinian refugees, said on Monday on X.

"We immediately and urgently need safe passage for humanitarian aid and workers."

Some of the heaviest air strikes have targeted the Jabalia refugee camp, a densely populated area north of Gaza City.

Jabalia camp is the largest of eight refugee camps in the besieged Gaza Strip, housing over 116,000 people officially registered with Unrwa. The actual number of people in the camp is likely to be much higher.

It was established in 1948 following the Nakba - "catastrophe" in English - when 750,000 Palestinians were forcibly displaced from their homes to make way for the creation of Israel.

The Jabalia camp is also the birthplace of the first Palestinian Intifada in 1987 and has long been a stronghold of Palestinian resistance.

"My childhood memories are tainted by the presence of the Israeli occupation. When they invaded Jabalia in 2004, I was just a child, but I was terrified," Maliha, 29, told MEE.

"As an adult, understanding the gravity of a ground invasion and the potential loss of family, friends, or loved ones to Israeli shells or bullets makes it even more distressing."

Earlier in the war, the camp came under relentless Israeli ground and aerial attacks.

One Israeli air raid on October 31 killed at least 100 Palestinians and wounded hundreds more, in one of the war's deadliest attacks.

However, the heart of the Jabalia refugee camp remained one of the few areas not penetrated by Israeli tanks during the invasion of northern Gaza in November and December.

This was mainly due to fierce resistance from Hamas and other Palestinian groups present there.

Over the weekend, Hamas said it was engaging Zionist troops in heavy clashes there, drawing troops into deadly ambushes, firing mortar shells and hitting at least 10 tanks and armored vehicles daily.

Similar heavy fighting, which continued into Monday, was also reported in the Zeitoun neighborhood and eastern Rafah.

Hamas has also fired rockets at occupied cities including Sderot, Ashkelon, Beersheba and areas near Gaza at the highest rate in months.

The attack on Rafah started early last week shortly after Hamas said it agreed to a U.S.-mediated ceasefire proposal leading to a permanent ceasefire, withdrawing Israeli troops from Gaza and releasing Israeli captives in exchange for Palestinian prisoners.

Israeli officials dismissed the proposal saying that Hamas' position was "far from meeting Israel's core demands".

Subsequent indirect talks in Cairo appeared to hit a standstill late last week.

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

The United States under former president Donald Trump reinstated crippling sanctions on Iran after unilaterally walking out of the 2015 nuclear deal in May 2018, despite Iran's full compliance with the terms of the agreement, officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).

In defiance of the illegal sanctions, Iran has made great strides in different areas and has become self-reliant in many sectors.

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

In a statement issued late on Friday, the Palestinian resistance movement Hamas said the CNN report was only the tip of the iceberg and reflects only a small portion of the atrocities committed against Palestinian detainees in the occupying regime's "human slaughterhouses."

More than 35,000 Palestinians, mostly children and women, have been martyred in the war that Israel began on October 7, 2023, following a retaliatory operation by the Palestinian territory's resistance movements.

The brutal military onslaught enjoys unreserved military and political support on the part of the Zionist regime's Western allies, including the United States and France.

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

Kabul's de-facto government. The United States invaded Afghanistan in 2001 under the banner of "war on terror."

The invasion that toppled the Taliban was followed by the deaths of hundreds of thousands of Afghan civilians and the displacement of millions of others.

The Taliban stormed back to power in August 2021 after making sweeping advances across the country, which was triggered by the messy withdrawal of U.S.-led foreign forces as well as the rapid collapse of the country's security forces.

## Saudi Arabia Offers to Buy Egyptian Premium Red Sea Area Using Deposits

RIYADH (Middle East Eye) – Saudi Arabia has presented Egypt with an offer to purchase Ras Ghamila, a prime Red Sea tourist destination, including pulling its deposits from the Central Bank of Egypt, and the acquisition of several government companies, according to an Egyptian government source.

The source, who works in the Ministry of Public Business Sector, the entity tasked with negotiating the deal, told Middle East Eye that Saudi officials offered to use the kingdom's deposits with the central bank (CBE), which amount to \$10.3bn, an option favored by the Egyptian side which will allow immediate access to foreign currency.

During the negotiations, the source said that the Egyptian government cited the \$35bn Emirati Ras el-Hekma deal which

included \$11bn in existing deposits.

Ras Ghamila, a popular diving destination, is located around 11.5km from Sharm el-Sheikh international airport in South Sinai governorate.

It is also opposite Tiran Island, one of two Red Sea Islands that Egypt ceded to Saudi Arabia in 2016 after a deal that drew significant popular backlash.

News about the Ras Ghamila deal was reported by Saudi media in February and confirmed by MEE, amid little official information from the Egyptian or Saudi governments.

Saudi investors are keen to secure this deal due to Ras Ghamila's proximity to Tiran and Sanafir Islands, and its potential to boost tourism between Sharm el-Sheikh and Neom in Saudi Arabia.

Mahmoud Esmat, Egypt's minister of public business sector, announced plans earlier in February to offer the area for investments.

He said the area is around 860,000 sqm and has a high strategic value.

Since 2018, as part of the government's efforts to alleviate the economic crisis, Egypt has been selling off assets to Persian Gulf states.

The Egyptian government is heavily indebted mainly due to a spending spree on megaprojects and weapons deals by the government of President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi since he became president in 2014.

Data released by the Central Bank on Thursday show that foreign debt has more than quadrupled over the past decade, reaching \$168bn at the end of 2023.