

# Israel Kills Eight Palestinians in Gaza Despite Ceasefire

CAIRO (Dispatches) – Israeli forces continued their relentless assault on Gaza on Thursday, killing at least five Palestinians, according to the territory's health authorities.

The Israeli military claimed it targeted a fighter in southern Gaza who allegedly posed a threat to its troops, though medics reported widespread civilian casualties across the enclave.

In Gaza City's Tuffah neighborhood, an Israeli airstrike struck a group of Palestinians, killing two and wounding several others.

Later, Israeli drones attacked two police checkpoints in Khan Younis and the Abu Hujair area northwest of Bureij refugee camp, killing three more and leaving others critically injured.

The strikes underscore the ongoing pattern of Israeli atrocities against civilian areas despite



*Mourners react during the funeral of two Palestinians killed by an Israeli strike on Thursday, according to medics, at Shifa hospital in Gaza City, February 26, 2026.*

ceasefire agreements.

The Israeli military described its killing of a fighter in southern Gaza as a response to a so-called "violation" of the U.S.-brokered

ceasefire that began last October, attempting to frame the ongoing slaughter as defensive operations.

Meanwhile, Gaza's health ministry reports that more than 72,000

Palestinians, mostly women and children, have been massacred by Israeli fire since the war erupted in October 2023.

At least 600 Palestinians have been killed since the ceasefire took effect, highlighting Israel's repeated violations and indiscriminate targeting of civilians.

Israel claims four of its soldiers have died since the ceasefire, a stark contrast to the massive toll inflicted on Palestinians.

Gaza remains in ruins, with homes, schools, hospitals, and public infrastructure destroyed by continuous Israeli airstrikes, drone attacks, and artillery bombardments.

The humanitarian crisis is compounded as residents face starvation, lack of medical care, and constant threats of further attacks.

frequently warned against repeating what he views as past foreign policy failures. He has said he was "lied to" about the reasons for the 2003 invasion of Iraq, a conflict that became a long and costly engagement for the United States.

Against this tense backdrop, lawmakers in Washington are moving to reassert congressional authority over decisions of war and peace.

Congressional Democrats announced they will force a vote next week on a bipartisan war powers resolution aimed at preventing any unilateral military action against Iran without explicit congressional approval.

The measure emphasizes that the U.S. Constitution grants Congress—not the president—the sole authority to declare war, and increasingly many lawmakers argue has been increasingly eroded over the past two decades.

In a joint statement, Democratic leaders warned that "undertaking a war of choice in the Middle East, without a full understanding of all the attendant risks to our servicemembers and to escalation, is reckless."

## China ...

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"China supports the Iranian government and people in upholding their nation's stability and legitimate rights and interests," Mao said.

She also called for restraint from all parties involved, advocating for a peaceful resolution of disputes through dialogue.

Beijing warned that any U.S. military escalation against Iran would lead the region into an "abyss of unpredictability." China expressed its readiness to play a "responsible major country" role in promoting de-escalation and negotiations.

Russia's Foreign Ministry spokesperson Maria Zakharova also voiced strong support for Iran, condemning Western policies toward the country.

She referred to declassified documents from 1946, which highlighted attempts by American and British companies to exploit Iran's oil fields, noting the striking similarities to current Western actions.

Zakharova criticized the U.S. for continuously pressuring Iran, as well as other countries like Cuba and Venezuela, in a manner that echoes colonial and neo-colonial tactics.

"Western powers are unwilling to relinquish the advantages they gained through colonial practices and are increasingly relying on these benefits to maintain dominance," she stated.

"Meanwhile, the majority of countries in the world are asserting their rights and strengthening national sovereignty."

Moscow also reaffirmed its commitment to its strategic partnership with Tehran, with Zakharova noting that Russia and Iran continue to bolster mutually beneficial cooperation in the face of U.S. aggression.

The statements from China and Russia were echoed by Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko, who condemned Western interference in the sovereignty of Iran, Venezuela, and Cuba.

Speaking at the Supreme State Council of the Union State in Moscow, Lukashenko criticized the economic pressure and military threats levied by Western powers, accusing them of damaging global trade with heavy tariffs and energy blockades.

Lukashenko pointed to the growing cooperation between China, Iran, and Belarus, suggesting that Iran is interested in a similar cooperation model to the one between Moscow and Minsk.

## Mahdieh ...

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Esfandiari, a linguist and French language graduate, had been a professor at Lumière University and worked as a translator and interpreter.

A prominent pro-Palestinian activist, she had maintained a significant online presence advocating for Palestinian rights. Her arrest comes amid a wider crackdown on activists and scholars in the West who oppose Israeli policies.

## Top...

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Javani also cited historical grievances and foreign interventions in Iran dating back to the mid-Safavid period through the Pahlavi era.

Brigadier General Reza Talayi-Nik Defense Ministry spokesperson, said Thursday that the U.S. is using psychological and cognitive tactics targeting Iranian society and national identity. He said national events with large participation demonstrate the resilience of the Iranian people.

Shekarchi and other Iranian officials' statements come after the U.S. ordered additional military deployments to West Asia, including an aircraft carrier, thousands of troops, warplanes, and guided-missile destroyers, according to U.S. officials.

## Dutch...

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He had left behind a suitcase at Imam Khomeini International Airport after refusing to submit it for security screening, citing diplomatic immunity.

Airport security informed the diplomat that diplomatic luggage was subject to a separate legal procedure, but he declined to comply. Iranian customs authorities then initiated formal procedures to inspect and seal the suspicious cargo.

The diplomat hurriedly departed Iran without following up on the status of the suitcase, invoking political immunity.

Days later, a second diplomat returned to pursue the matter, prompting an official inspection in the presence of customs and Foreign Ministry officials.

The search reportedly uncovered three Starlink modems and seven satellite phones concealed inside the luggage. The equipment was confiscated, and the second diplomat was denied entry.

The report surfaced amid the United States increasing its threats against Iran after a wave of foreign-backed riots in Iran in early January, which left thousands dead, including civilians and security personnel.

During the riots, Iranian authorities said they seized dozens of Starlink devices from individuals leading anti-government activities.

At the time, multiple reports indicated that Iran deployed military-grade GPS jamming systems to disable Starlink connectivity, which had been introduced into the country as part of a U.S.-supported effort to assist rioters during an internet shutdown.

## Naval...

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At a ceremony welcoming the flotilla, Iranian Navy Commander Rear Admiral Shahram Irani said its participation in the South African exercise carried "an important message to the world." He added that the behavior of other countries at sea reflected the power of the 103rd flotilla.

The BRICS Plus joint naval exercise "Will for Peace 2026" was held off South Africa's coast last month. Participants included naval forces from Iran, China, Russia, South Africa, Ethiopia, Indonesia, Brazil, Egypt, and the United Arab Emirates.

The drills involved more than 20 naval and aerial units and included live-fire exercises with semi-heavy weapons, aimed at testing operational readiness and coordination among the participating forces.

South African authorities described the exercise as part of the BRICS Plus framework, designed to enhance maritime security and ensure the free flow of international trade.

# Trump Call Sparks Bitter Feud Between Saudi Arabia and UAE

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) -- A routine diplomatic phone call from President Donald Trump set off a sharp public rift this week between two key U.S. allies in West Asia, exposing deep unease over American influence in the region and complicating Washington's efforts to manage conflicts from Sudan to Yemen and beyond, the New York Times reported Friday.

The call, which took place earlier this month between Trump and Sheikh Muhammad bin Zayed, the president of the United Arab Emirates, was intended to coordinate U.S. poli-

cy toward the ongoing civil war in Sudan.

Instead, Saudi Crown Prince Muhammad bin Salman — whose government has backed the Sudanese national army — used the exchange to push for U.S. sanctions against the Rapid Support Forces, a powerful militia aligned with Emirates interests.

According to people familiar with the call, the conversation quickly exposed simmering tensions between Riyadh and Abu Dhabi over how to navigate the brutal conflict that has engulfed Sudan since late 2023.

The Saudis argue that pressure on the RSF is needed to secure a negotiated end to the fighting and prevent the collapse of neighboring states. The UAE, which has denied backing the RSF, has resisted moves that could constrain its regional reach or jeopardize its alliances.

The exchange inflamed a long-running power struggle between the two Persian Gulf powers, who have previously cooperated closely as pillars of U.S. strategy in the Persian Gulf but have diverged sharply over policy toward Yemen, Libya and now Sudan.

The fallout has already spilled over into competing military actions in Yemen and tense diplomatic interactions in regional capitals.

The episode highlights the fraught balancing act facing the United States as it seeks to leverage its relationships with both Riyadh and Abu Dhabi.

Officials in Washington have said privately that the discord complicates efforts to unify Arab support for U.S. initiatives in Africa and the wider West Asia, including counterterrorism efforts and stability operations.

## U.S. ...

(Continued From Page One)

In the meantime, both sides need to take certain steps, prepare documents, and consult with their capitals. After that, the next session will convene," he said.

Araghchi said it was the first time that the two sides had almost six to seven hours of talks. "We were able to define the main elements of a possible deal and we discussed those elements," he said.

The third round of indirect negotiations between Iran and the United States began earlier on Thursday at a building belonging to the Omani embassy in Geneva.

Omani Foreign Minister Al Busaidi said they "finished the day after significant progress in the negotiation".

Iran's Foreign Ministry spokesman Eamaeil Baghaei said Tehran was prepared to continue negotiations for as long as necessary.

"We are ready to continue the talks for as long as possible," he said, adding that Iran had entered the process "with full seriousness to secure our national interests."

He said the negotiations were focused on the nuclear issue and that Iran's positions had been clearly conveyed to the Omani mediators on both the removal of sanctions and Iran's nuclear rights and interests.

Iran's delegation was led by as Araghchi, who arrived in Geneva on Wednesday. The US side was led by Special Envoy Steve Witkoff.

Oman's foreign ministry said Iran's proposal had been reviewed alongside U.S. questions on Tehran's nuclear program and the guarantees required for an agreement.

It said technical and monitoring is-

issues were examined in detail and described the discussions as serious and constructive, with unprecedented openness to new ideas.

Ali Shamkhani, secretary of Iran's Supreme Defense Council, described the talks as an opportunity for a swift deal if the focus remains limited.

"If the central issue is Iran not developing nuclear weapons, this aligns with #Leader\_Fatwa and #Iran\_Defensive\_Doctrine, and an immediate agreement is within reach," he said.

He was referring to a ruling issued by Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei, banning the development and use of weapons of mass destruction, including atomic bombs.

Shamkhani added that Araghchi had sufficient support and authority to reach such a deal.

Ebrahim Azizi, chairman of the Iranian parliament's Committee on National Security and Foreign Policy, said all red lines and overarching nuclear strategies had been fully considered in Iran's proposal and that uranium enrichment "will under no circumstances be halted."

Azizi said Iran had offered constructive proposals across all areas to remove pretexts and force clarity, describing the package presented in Geneva as a "serious opportunity for the other side to engage without repeating past excuses."

He said the proposal addressed sanctions relief, investment opportunities, economic cooperation and the use of Iran's economic capacities to ensure tangible benefits for the Iranian people.

"If the other side acts rationally and on the basis of national interests," he said, the package could lead to a "comprehensive agreement."

Azizi warned, however, that if the

talks were used as a tool of pressure or destabilization, Iran would continue its path with full vigilance.

He said all defensive capabilities remained on full alert and that any action against Iran's national security or territorial integrity would be met with a decisive response.

## Devastating...

(Continued From Page One)

U.S. supplies of missile interceptors are already low after shielding the occupying regime of Israel during its war against Iran in June and following years of transfers to Ukraine, its war against Russia.

A third round of indirect negotiations between Iran and the U.S., held in Geneva on Thursday, concluded after several hours of talks described as "positive" by Omani mediators.

However, reports said Washington stuck to its "tough" demands and is only offering "minimal" sanctions relief.

Iran's Foreign Ministry spokesman Esmail Baghaei referred to U.S. demands as "contradictory," adding that "U.S. leaders should focus on negotiations rather than sending mixed messages."

Meanwhile, Trump's claim that Iran will soon have a missile that can hit the United States is not backed by U.S. intelligence reports, and appears to be exaggerated, Reuters reported, casting doubt on part of his case for a possible attack on the Islamic Republic.

In his State of the Union address to Congress on Tuesday, Trump began making his case to the American public for why the U.S. could launch strikes against Iran, claiming Tehran was "working on missiles that will soon reach" the United States.

But there have been no changes to