

Israel Pounds Gaza Despite Truce as Death Toll Nears 69,000

GAZA STRIP (Dispatches) -- Israeli forces launched a new round of attacks on the Gaza Strip on Sunday, carrying out home demolitions and airstrikes despite the ongoing ceasefire agreement with Hamas.

According to the official Palestinian news agency WAFA, heavy gunfire was reported east of Gaza City, where troops simultaneously demolished several residential buildings in the neighborhoods of Zaytoun and Shuja'iyya, sending thick plumes of smoke into the sky. In Khan Younis, in southern Gaza, Israeli artillery shelling and gunfire were also reported, accompanied by the destruction of multiple homes.

Further south, Israeli warplanes carried out three airstrikes on Rafah, though there were no immediate reports of casualties or the extent of the damage.

On Saturday, Israeli jets, tanks, and artillery had already targeted areas near Khan Younis and destroyed homes east of the Jabalia



Israeli airstrikes and home demolitions continue in Gaza despite ceasefire.

refugee camp in northern Gaza.

The Palestinian Health Ministry announced that the death toll in Gaza since Israel began its campaign in October 2023 has reached 68,865, with 170,670 injured—the vast majority women and children.

Over the past 24 hours, seven more bodies were brought to hospitals, including three recently killed Palestinians, three recovered from under the rubble, and one who succumbed to wounds.

Since the ceasefire took effect on October 11, Israeli attacks have killed 236 Palestinians and injured at least 600 more.

Despite promises made under the U.S.-brokered ceasefire, Israel has allowed only a fraction of the agreed-upon humanitarian aid into Gaza—an average of 145 trucks per day, far below the pledged 600.

Palestinians continue to suffer from severe shortages of food, water, and medical supplies. The

United Nations confirmed that aid operations have been further hindered by rerouting restrictions imposed by Israeli authorities.

Meanwhile, Israeli forces continued their raids across the occupied West Bank. In Nablus, troops stormed the city from the Beit Furik checkpoint in what local reports described as the second assault within an hour.

In Kafr Ein, northwest of Ramallah, soldiers broke into a home, assaulted a family, and arrested 14-year-old Abdullah Malik Dar al-Eis.

Since October 2023, Israeli military and settler violence has killed more than 1,000 Palestinians and wounded over 10,000, according to the Health Ministry.

The UN High Commissioner for Refugees documented over 2,400 attacks on Palestinian property in the past two years, displacing more than 3,000 people.

In July 2024, the International Court of Justice (ICJ) ruled that

Iraq on Target as Israel Plots Regional Escalation

BAGHDAD (Dispatches) -- Israel is reportedly escalating its regional aggression, extending its military reach into Iraq and raising serious concerns about sovereignty and stability in the country.

According to reports from Israeli media, the Israeli military and Mossad are actively preparing for what they baselessly regard threats originating from Iraq, including missile and drone strikes, and even potential ground operations across Syria toward occupied Palestinian borders.

The pretext and preparation thereof underscores an alarming expansion of Israeli military ambitions beyond its traditional theaters of aggression.

The developments come alongside a highly controversial U.S. move, appointing Mark Savaya as special envoy to Iraq. Savaya, a businessman with limited diplomatic experience and connections to the Trump administration, has

been tasked with restoring Iraqi sovereignty while countering "external interference," signaling Washington's intent to back Israeli strategic interests under the guise of governance and reform.

Critics argue that the assignment of a marijuana dispenser, rather than a career diplomat, reflects the U.S. government's transactional and superficial approach to Iraq, treating the country as a chessboard for its regional designs rather than a sovereign state.

Reports indicate that Israel's military is mapping out multiple contingencies from Iraqi territory, including long-range strikes targeting civilian areas. While framed as defensive measures, these actions mark a dangerous escalation of Israel's longstanding policy of regional aggression, threatening to turn Iraq into a staging ground for attacks that could destabilize the entire

region.

The Israeli military has reportedly conducted military exercises in the Jordan Valley in preparation for contingencies originating in Iraq, signaling that Israel's ambitions extend far beyond the Palestinian borders.

The expansion of Israeli aggression into Iraq coincides with Washington's aggressive posture, which critics argue is facilitating rather than curbing these incursions.

The U.S. strategy, as demonstrated through Savaya's appointment, appears to prioritize alignment with Israeli strategic objectives over the autonomy and security of Iraq.

Observers note that positioning an inexperienced business figure as envoy diminishes the credibility of U.S. engagement and risks further undermining Iraq's sovereignty.

The convergence of Israeli mili-

tary operations and U.S. diplomatic maneuvering has set Iraq on edge. By treating the country as a launchpad for military aggression and political leverage, Israel and Washington are exacerbating existing instability, raising the specter of a wider conflict. The situation reflects a troubling pattern of aggression that prioritizes strategic expansion over regional peace, with Iraq caught squarely in the crossfire.

As the Israeli military intensifies its operational planning and U.S. policy continues to back these ambitions, the risk of direct confrontation within Iraq increases.

The combination of foreign military intrusion and politically motivated diplomatic appointments signals a disregard for Iraqi sovereignty and underscores the dangerous implications of Israel's expanding reach, facilitated by Washington's selective engagement.

Four Martyred in Israeli Airstrike as U.S. Pressures Lebanon

BEIRUT (Dispatches) -- At least four people were martyred and three others wounded in southern Lebanon after an Israeli airstrike targeted a car in the Nabatieh district, according to Lebanon's Ministry of Public Health.

The strike, carried out with a guided missile, came amid ongoing Israeli incursions into Lebanese territory, exposing the fragility of the nearly year-old ceasefire between Israel and Hezbollah.

The attack, which coincided with President Joseph Aoun's call for renewed negotiations with Israel, underscores the persistent threat posed by Israeli military operations in Lebanon.

Despite the ceasefire brokered by the United States in November 2024, Israel has maintained troops in multiple southern districts and continues near-daily air raids, killing civilians, journalists, and first responders. United Nations figures indicate that at least 111 Lebanese civilians have died since the truce went into effect.

Lebanon's leadership finds itself squeezed between Israeli aggression and U.S.-backed pressure to dismantle Hezbollah, the only effective force capable of resisting Israel's repeated violations.

U.S. envoy Tom Barrack, speaking at the Manama Dialogue in Bahrain, openly urged Lebanon to disarm Hezbollah, offering Persian Gulf-state investment of up to \$10 billion to develop southern Lebanon if the movement surrendered its arms.

Barrack framed this as an incentive rather than a mandate, but the message was clear: the U.S. and Israel are

seeking to neuter Lebanon's primary defense against ongoing occupation.

The stakes are stark. Hezbollah, with 40,000 fighters and tens of thousands of rockets, operates in a country where the Lebanese Armed Forces are poorly funded and under-resourced.

For most Lebanese, Hezbollah is a deeply embedded resistance movement, providing protection and essential services in the face of Israeli occupation.

Attempts to forcibly disarm Hezbollah risk catastrophic instability. Lebanon is already struggling under political paralysis and economic collapse, and the idea of stripping a widely supported resistance group of its weapons would almost certainly ignite internal conflict.

Hezbollah remains the only credible bulwark against Israeli expansionism and aggression, and popular support for the movement among Lebanese civilians underscores its legitimacy as a defender of the nation.

As Israel threatens to intensify its attacks and U.S. diplomats push Lebanon to comply with disarmament demands, the region faces a stark reality: the survival of Lebanon's sovereignty depends on Hezbollah's ability to resist, even as international powers attempt to curtail it.

The civilian casualties mounting in southern Lebanon are a stark reminder that Israeli aggression continues, enabled by American political and financial backing, while the world watches a nation's right to self-defense under siege.

Saudi Arabia Courts China While Preparing High-Stakes Talks in U.S.

RIYADH/WASHINGTON (Dispatches) -- Saudi Arabia is intensifying its engagement with China even as Crown Prince Muhammad bin Salman prepares for a high-stakes visit to Washington, underscoring the kingdom's complex balancing act between Beijing and Washington.

Last week, Chinese Vice President Han Zheng concluded a five-day visit to Riyadh, meeting with the crown prince and outlining plans to elevate the China-Saudi comprehensive strategic partnership.

Discussions focused on trade, investment, technology, renewable energy, and multilateral cooperation, reflecting Riyadh's push to diversify its economic and diplomatic relationships.

Han's visit highlighted China's appeal as a long-term partner for economic growth and regional projects. Chinese officials emphasized innovation-driven development, green energy, and cooperation in emerging industries, framing Beijing as a reliable partner capable of supporting Saudi Arabia's modernization agenda.

Both sides also underscored closer coordination on global governance initiatives, cultural exchange, and people-to-people ties, signaling that China is increasingly central to Riyadh's strategic calculations.

Yet Saudi Arabia's ability to assert independence from the United States remains limited by the massive spending it has already made in Washington.

The crown prince's upcoming visit to the United States is expected to focus on high-value deals, including potential agreements on F-35 stealth fighters, civilian nuclear technology, and broader military cooperation.

These commitments are the product of years of hefty U.S. arms purchases, training programs, and investment flows, creating a tether that Riyadh cannot easily sever.

While the kingdom has sought to expand ties with China, analysts note that it cannot afford to disengage from the United States entirely. The existing contracts, military acquisitions, and financial commitments effectively anchor Riyadh to Washington, even as it pursues a more diversified foreign policy.

The dual-track approach reflects a pragmatic, if convoluted, strategy: leveraging China for economic growth and technological collaboration, while maintaining a measure of security and procurement ties with the United States.

Saudi Arabia's maneuvering underscores the limits of its strategic autonomy. The crown prince must navigate public and international expectations, manage past investments, and continue pursuing modernization at home, all while balancing two major powers with competing interests.

The upcoming Washington trip will be closely watched as a test of Riyadh's ability to maintain this balance — deepening engagement with Beijing while remaining bound to the practical realities of its U.S. commitments.

Thousands Cross Into Afghanistan After Pakistani Border Reopens

ISLAMABAD/KABUL (Dispatches) -- Pakistan has reopened its two main border crossings with Afghanistan, allowing thousands of Afghan refugees to return home after nearly three weeks of closure caused by deadly clashes, though trade remains suspended amid ongoing security concerns and diplomatic talks.

The Torkham crossing in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province and the Chaman border in Balochistan, linking Afghanistan's Nangarhar and Kandahar provinces respectively, had been closed since Oct. 12 following intense fighting that left dozens dead on both sides. Pakistani officials reported 23 security personnel killed, while Afghan authorities claimed 58 Pakistani troops had died in retaliatory strikes.

The closure left thousands of Afghans stranded and hundreds of trucks carrying goods stuck

at the frontier, triggering shortages and price spikes for perishable items in Pakistani markets. Humanitarian pressure mounted as families were moved to temporary camps near the border or waited along roadsides.

Under the newly reopened crossings, pedestrian movement is allowed for Afghan families and individuals seeking repatriation. Nearly 10,700 people crossed at Chaman on the first day, with thousands more returning via Torkham, according to Pakistani officials. Temporary shelters, food supplies, and medical facilities were established to assist returning families.

The reopening follows a ceasefire agreement mediated by Turkey and Qatar, with initial talks in Doha followed by negotiations in Istanbul. Both countries have committed to reconvening

in Istanbul on Nov. 6 to strengthen the truce and address measures to prevent future clashes.

Officials cautioned that commercial trade will remain suspended until the security situation stabilizes, although authorities at Torkham indicated it could resume as early as Monday if conditions allow.

"The border crossing reopened today for families traveling to Afghanistan, but it will remain closed for trade," said a Pakistani official.

The border tensions come amid a surge in militant activity in Pakistan, with 355 insurgents and 72 security personnel killed in terrorist attacks in October, most claimed by the Pakistani Taliban. Diplomatic strains also surfaced, including public criticism from Afghanistan's ambassador to Pakistan, which Islamabad said breached diplomatic norms.