

# Israeli air strikes pound Gaza as truce with Hamas ends

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Heavy fighting has broken out across the Gaza Strip, as the Israeli military resumed combat operations against Hamas after efforts to extend the truce failed. The resumption of hostilities came at about 7am local time (05:00 GMT) on Friday, as the deadline for the end of the week-long pause passed. Israeli air strikes have been reported across the enclave, including the south, which was previously said to be safe for fleeing civilians. Gaza's health ministry said that dozens of Palestinians were killed and injured during the initial resumption of Israeli strikes. Reports of rockets and gunfire had emerged in the hour before the temporary truce expired. Israel said that Hamas had violated the agreement. Efforts to extend the pause had been ongoing. There was no comment from mediator Qatar, but there are reports that talks between Qatari and Egyptian mediators are continuing.

"Hamas violated the operational pause, and in addition, fired toward Israeli territory," the Israeli army said in a post on X on Friday. "The IDF has resumed combat against the Hamas terrorist organization in Gaza." Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu claimed that Hamas did not agree to release further hostages, infringing the terms of the truce. Hamas has yet to respond. "With the resumption of fighting we emphasise: The Israeli government is committed to achieving the goals of the war – to free our hostages, to eliminate Hamas, and to ensure that Gaza will never pose a threat to the residents of Israel," Netanyahu's office said. "What Israel did not achieve during the fifty days before the truce, it will not achieve by continuing its aggression after the truce," said a Hamas statement.

## Heavy bombardment

There are now reports of heavy gunfire and Israeli shelling in the north, central and southern parts of Gaza, Al Jazeera's journalists in the enclave reported, saying aircraft and drones could be heard overhead. "The Gaza Strip is under heavy artillery and even aerial bombardment by the [Israeli] occupation forces," said Al Jazeera's Tareq Abu Azzoum, reporting from Khan Younis in southern Gaza. "In the coming hours, we might witness a surging increase in the number of Israeli strikes across the territory." Our correspondent said that in the north, a residential building was destroyed in the Jabalia refugee camp; in central Gaza, tanks were shelling near Nuseirat and Bureij refugee camps; and in the south, a house in Rafah was completely destroyed.

According to Gaza's health ministry, at least 21 people were killed as Israel resumed its attacks, including two in the north, seven in central Gaza and 12 in the south. "Right now, sounds of Israeli explosions can be heard in the south, an area that the Israeli authorities had recommended as safe for civilians to flee," Abu Azzoum said. "This [resumption of fighting] brings Palestinians only one option – that they will live again under the Israeli bombardment that will destroy all means of life inside the Gaza Strip," he added. Israeli forces have been dropping leaflets in Khan Younis warning civilians to evacuate southwards towards Rafah, on the border with Egypt. The city was also targeted by Israeli air raids on Friday.

"People are asking 'Where should we go?' Gaza is unprepared for all of this," said journalist Hind Khoudary, reporting from Khan Younis. The evacuation warnings suggest Israel is now planning to further target areas in the south of the Strip after concentrating most of its bombardment on the north of the enclave in the weeks before the truce. The seven-day pause in fighting, which began on November 24 and was extended twice, had allowed for the exchange of dozens of hostages held in Gaza for hundreds of Palestinian prisoners and facilitated the entry of humanitarian aid into the shattered coastal Strip.

During the truce, Hamas freed 110 captives, including 80 Israelis. In exchange, Israel released 240 Palestinians, including women and children, many of whom have been held in administrative detention for months without charge. However, during the same period, Israel has arrested nearly as many Palestinians in the occupied West Bank and East Jerusalem as it has released. The pause also allowed desperately needed aid into the enclave, although supplies of food, water, medicine and fuel remain insufficient for Gaza's 2.3 million people.