

HOLY LAND

Gaza: Unrwa school massacre in Nuseirat increases hatred between Israelis and Palestinians

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Yet another massacre of women and children in Gaza. Two missiles fired by the Israeli

Air Force hit the top floor of a school run by UNRWA, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East. The building, in Nuseirat Camp, in a central area of the Strip, housed numerous displaced people. The toll is dramatic: forty dead and over seventy wounded including fourteen children and nine women all refugees who had found refuge inside the school, after wandering for days in search of shelter from the continuous and heavy Israeli air and artillery raids.

The Israeli army confirmed the incident, claiming that its fighter planes hit a Hamas cell inside the Unrwa school in the Nuseirat area and that the terrorists belonged to the Nukhba Forces and had participated in the massacre of 7 October. The bombings reportedly eliminated the attackers who were planning further attacks against Israeli forces. 'The occupation (of Israel, ed) uses lies telling the public false and fabricated stories to justify the brutal crime committed against dozens of displaced people,' Ismail al-Thawabta, spokesman for the Gaza government's press office, said in a note on X.

This is not the first time UN-run facilities have been attacked and destroyed by the Israelis. Last week, buildings in the vicinity of a UN agency facility in the southern city of Rafah were targeted. The ensuing explosion devastated nearby tents housing displaced people, killing at least 45 people. 'This man-made catastrophe must end now,' said Karin Huster, an official with Doctors Without Borders. After this latest massacre, 'an independent investigation' is needed into the attack on the Unrwa school in Gaza. EU High Representative Josep Borrell wrote on X.

In the meantime, hatred between Israelis and Palestinians is spreading exponentially. A hostility fomented by men, by those politicians who should, instead, find a way out of this war. The hatred also exploded on Jerusalem Day, a holiday commemorating the conquest of the eastern part of the city, inhabited mainly by Palestinians, during the 1967 Six-Day War.

'Death to the Arabs'. 'Let us take back Gaza, but first let us raze it to the ground' . 'Let your houses burn'. 'Muhammad is dead', slogans echoed along the Via Dolorosa, shouted by the followers of Itamar Ben-Gvir and Bezalel Smotrich, the two far-right ministers. All were hoisting flags with the Star of David and Jewish Power. Many were also wearing yellow T-shirts with the face of Rabbi Meir Kahane, theorist of the deportation of all Palestinians from Israel. The demonstrators were headed towards the Wailing Wall. In front of the Damascus Gate, a gathering place for Palestinians in East Jerusalem, they yelled anti-Arab and anti-Islamic slogans. "The Damascus Gate is ours. The Temple Mount is ours. And God willing, complete victory is ours," Ben-Gvir said, referring to the Al-Aqsa mosque complex, the third holiest site in Islam. 'The violence of

the settlers, during the March of Flags, confirms that Jerusalem is the heart of the conflict, and that our people will not have peace until the occupation ends and an independent Palestinian state is created with Jerusalem as its capital,' Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh said in a note.

The followers of Ben-Gvir and Smotrich are not the majority in the country, but they do have the power to influence the life of Benjamin Netanyahu's government. Above all, it is in this climate of tension that the negotiators are trying to reach an agreement to end the war.

Netanyahu speaks of a 'timed truce', just long enough for the release of the hostages still held in Gaza, finding support from Defence Minister Yoav Gallant: 'All negotiations with Hamas will only take place under fire'. Meanwhile, the government has increased from three hundred thousand to three hundred and fifty thousand the number of reservists that the Armed Forces can call up by 1 August in case of need. Probably in view of the final attack on Rafah and the opening of the new front with Hezbollah.

In recent days, US President Joe Biden has made public a plan for a ceasefire, with the aim of putting pressure not only on Hamas, but also on Israel. Many analysts claim that Biden is furious with the Israeli ally, whose goal is to prolong the conflict as a matter of political survival. 'I don't want to comment,' the US president said, 'but there is every basis for drawing that conclusion. The G7 leaders also endorsed the US plan. 'We call on Hamas to accept this agreement and we call on the nations that have influence over Gaza to ensure the implementation of the understanding.'

Hamas for its part, as revealed by an Egyptian source, contrary to what sources in Saudi Arabia are leaking, is positively assessing the proposal made by President Biden, even though it has strong misgivings about Israel's intentions. Netanyahu, for his part, continues to reject a final ceasefire after the release of all hostages. "The Israeli documents speak of indefinite negotiations without a deadline, and they speak of a phase during which Israel would take back its hostages and immediately afterwards start a new war.

It is Israel that must totally accept the Biden plan,' said Sami Abu Zuhri, a senior Hamas official.