

In besieged Beit Lahiya, rubble and decomposing corpses line the streets

Saturday 30 November 2024, by [MOHAMMAD Ibrahim](#) (Date first published: 28 November 2024).

Thousands of Palestinians in the city are facing relentless bombardment and famine as the Israeli army ramps up efforts to cleanse northern Gaza.

Palestinian flee the city of Beit Lahiya in the northern Gaza Strip amid Israeli bombardment, November 5, 2024. (Islam Ahmad)

“Wherever you go, you find corpses on the ground. Some are almost decomposed, while others have been run over by Israeli armored vehicles. We’re surrounded from all directions, and people don’t know where to go.”

This is the current scene in Beit Lahiya, a city at the northern tip of the Gaza Strip that has been under sustained Israeli siege and bombardment since early October, as described by 43-year-old resident Ali Hamouda.

“The city has been subjected to massive destruction of buildings and infrastructure, in an attempt to force the remaining residents to leave,” Hamouda continued. “There is no food or water, and we currently face a real famine. It’s a genocide against the residents and the displaced people who are sheltering here.”

The Israeli army launched an [intense aerial and ground assault](#) on the northernmost areas of the Gaza Strip in the early hours of Oct. 6, in an effort to [empty the region of Palestinians](#). Much of the force of the operation was initially targeted at [Jabalia refugee camp](#), but after forcibly displacing residents and [destroying most of the camp](#), the military has increasingly focused its attention on Beit Lahiya.

Several hundred Palestinians have been killed as a result of Israel’s recent attacks on the city — including [at least 50](#) in an airstrike on a multi-storey residential building on Nov. 17, and [93](#) in another strike on an apartment block on Oct. 29. Roughly one-third of the victims of both strikes were children.

Gaza’s [civil defense](#) rescue workers, who are barely able to operate in the north’s besieged zone, have [declared](#) Beit Lahiya a “disaster area.” The city’s two hospitals, Kamal Adwan and the Indonesian Hospital, have [repeatedly come under attack](#). And due to the high number of casualties, residents have converted part of what was once the bustling market area [into a cemetery](#).

A post shared by “رِيمَا عَلِيَّيْنِ” (@reema_elhalabi)

The UN [estimates](#) that between 65,000 and 75,000 Gazans remain in the besieged cities of Beit Lahiya, Beit Hanoun, and Jabalia. Mahmoud Basal, a civil defense spokesperson, put that number slightly higher: closer to 80,000.

"The situation in northern Gaza, specifically in Beit Lahiya, is extremely catastrophic," Basal stressed, adding that Israel is dropping large missiles on residential buildings "without prior warning and with residents still inside." He and his staff, he said, "are working in extremely difficult conditions due to the Israeli targeting of our teams. We have no equipment. We search for those trapped and pull victims from under the rubble using primitive methods."

Many of the city's buildings which have not been totally flattened by airstrikes, shelling, [drone strikes](#), and bulldozers have sustained extensive shrapnel damage, making them virtually uninhabitable. Hamouda's house was completely destroyed by an Israeli attack, forcing him and his family to take shelter in a nearby building which, he said, is "on the verge of collapsing."

And after severing Gaza's northern cities from the rest of the Strip, the military is [preventing any food](#) or medical supplies from entering. "My family and I are now drinking unclean water, and eating the last remaining cans of legumes," Hamouda told +972.

Yet despite the dire conditions and the constant Israeli warnings ordering residents to evacuate southward in the direction of Gaza City, Hamouda and his family are determined not to leave. "There is no safe place anywhere in Gaza," he said. "All residents are at risk of being bombed and killed at any moment."

'I saw men and women drowning in their own blood'

Shukri Al-Bodi, a 51-year-old from the neighborhood of Al-Shaima'a in Beit Lahiya, described the situation in the city as a "Nakba in the 21st century."

"The landmarks have disappeared — it has become a pile of rubble," he told +972. "My family and I move from place to place, fleeing from the intense shelling."

According to Al-Bodi, the Israeli army's relentless attacks on Beit Lahiya have left many residents without any shelter at all. "We are suffering from severe overcrowding," he explained. "People have spread out onto the sidewalks and the streets, with no basic means of survival in the cold weather."

Palestinian flee the city of Beit Lahiya in the northern Gaza Strip amid Israeli bombardment, November 5, 2024. (Islam Ahmad)

"The occupation is demolishing entire residential areas, and people are trapped inside their homes with nothing to eat, terrified of shells falling on them at any moment," Al-Bodi continued.

"Surveillance drones are routinely flying over us at low altitudes, and [quadcopter drones](#) are opening fire at groups of civilians to force them to leave the city."

Nermine Labeled, 31, fled Beit Lahiya on foot with her four children on Nov. 17, walking for three hours until reaching the Sheikh Radwan neighborhood in Gaza City. "We made the journey while shells flew over our heads because there is nothing to eat or drink [in Beit Lahiya], and the situation is getting more dangerous by the day," she told +972.

"While leaving the town, I saw many bodies lying on the ground, and dogs were devouring some of them," she recounted. "I also saw men and women who were wounded, still alive but drowning in their own blood, with no one to help them. This is not life; we are dying slowly. How much longer will this killing and destruction continue?"

Khaled Al-Omari, 27, arrived in Beit Lahiya on Oct. 14 after fleeing Jabalia refugee camp. He told +972 that the Israeli army's siege of the city, including "snipers positioned at all of the entrances," has severely restricted residents' freedom of movement and left them exceedingly vulnerable. "We

are terrified and always wondering when it will be our turn — it seems Israel wants to exterminate us all,” he said.

“The hardest moments I experienced were when I heard the cries of people who were alive under the rubble of their destroyed homes, which were targeted by the occupation,” Al-Omari continued. “They were calling for help, but no one could do anything for them due to the absence of civil defense teams.”

Nevertheless, Al-Omari said, he and many other refugees sheltering in the Beit Lahia Project complex decided to “resist until our last breath, despite the lack of food and water and the repeated Israeli warnings for residents to evacuate the area.”

In a statement to +972, a spokesperson for the Israeli army said that its operations in northern Gaza comply with international law, and that any claims of indiscriminate targeting are “completely baseless.” It further claimed that it was “facilitating and easing the entry of humanitarian aid” into northern Gaza, and allowing for “safer evacuations” by arranging “temporary ceasefires.” The spokesperson accused Hamas of exploiting hospitals for military purposes, which “required the IDF to take action inside hospitals against the militants.” It also claimed that “over 666 aid trucks containing food, water, and more have entered the northern Gaza Strip” since the beginning of October.

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P.S.

- +972 Magazine. November 28, 2024:
<https://www.972mag.com/beit-lahiya-gaza-rubble-corpses/>

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Our team has been devastated by the horrific events of this latest war - the atrocities committed by Hamas in Israel and the massive retaliatory Israeli attacks on Gaza. Our hearts are with all the people and communities facing violence.

We are in an extraordinarily dangerous era in Israel-Palestine. The bloodshed unleashed by these events has reached extreme levels of brutality and threatens to engulf the entire region. Hamas’ murderous assault in southern Israel has devastated and shocked the country to its core. Israel’s retaliatory bombing of Gaza is wreaking destruction on the already besieged strip and killing a ballooning number of civilians. Emboldened settlers in the West Bank, backed by the army, are seizing the opportunity to escalate their attacks on Palestinians.

This escalation has a very clear context, one that +972 has spent the past 13 years covering: Israeli society’s growing racism and militarism, the entrenched occupation, and an increasingly normalized siege on Gaza.

We are well positioned to cover this perilous moment - but we need your help to do it. This terrible period will challenge the humanity of all of those working for a better future in this land. Palestinians and Israelis are already organizing and strategizing to put up the fight of their lives.

Can we count on your [support](#)? +972 Magazine is the leading media voice of this movement, a desperately needed platform where Palestinian and Israeli journalists and activists can report on and analyze what is happening, guided by humanism, equality, and justice. Join us.

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