

The Israeli army continues to escalate its attacks on the Gaza Strip during the polio vaccination campaign



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Israel-Palestinian Territory

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Palestinian Territory - Israel has continued its military attacks on the Gaza Strip during its polio vaccination campaign, ignoring all calls to implement a humanitarian truce or a temporary halt to attacks during the vaccination hours.

Israeli aircraft and tanks continue to bomb the central Gaza Strip, the area where the polio vaccination campaign has begun. The campaign is a joint effort between the Palestinian

Ministry of Health and the United Nations, including UNICEF, and non-governmental organisations, aiming to vaccinate about 640,000 Palestinian children under the age of 10. The campaign was launched in response to the confirmation of the first case of polio in Gaza in 25 years, contracted by a 10-month-old infant in Deir al-Balah, in the central part of the Strip. The virus was found in water samples taken in Khan Yunis and Deir al-Balah in late June.

Despite the World Health Organisation's announcement last Thursday that Israel had consented to a series of "humanitarian truces" lasting three days each in the central, southern, and northern sections of the Strip in order to carry out a polio vaccination campaign that would benefit 640,000 children, Israel has continued its attacks.

Palestinian Rami Rashad Nofal has been killed, and several other Palestinians injured, during an Israeli air strike on Al-Bureij camp in the central Gaza Strip, which was also the target of artillery shelling and at least three raids. The injured survivors were transferred to the Shuhada Al-Aqsa Hospital in Deir al-Balah.

Together with shooting from Israeli vehicles that broke through the northwest of Nuseirat and from quadcopter aircraft, Israeli artillery also shelled the west of the new camp in Nuseirat, in the central Gaza Strip.

Along with the ongoing shelling in various parts of the Strip, these Israeli military attacks have coincided with the peak of families' movement with their children towards the designated vaccination centres. Some of these attacks have even targeted locations near the vaccination centres, endangering the progress of the vaccination process that is required to stop the poliovirus from spreading among Palestinian children in the besieged enclave.

Following its initial attacks, Israel is still targeting Palestinian clinics and hospitals where Palestinians are supposed to go for children's vaccinations. The most recent incident took place at the Baptist Hospital in Gaza City on Saturday 31 August, leaving three Palestinians killed and numerous others injured.

Deliberately initiating heavy military assaults during the vaccination campaign will undoubtedly make it more difficult for Palestinian families to get to health facilities and raise their anxiety, which might lead them to refrain entirely from going to these centres. This indicates that Israel has a clear and deliberate intention to thwart efforts to combat the virus and undermine the

vaccination campaign. Additionally, these attacks are part of a larger plan aimed at exacerbating the man-made humanitarian crisis currently plaguing the Gaza Strip, preventing the alleviation of Palestinian suffering there, increasing the risk to the lives of Palestinian children and society at large, and intensifying the comprehensive crime of genocide that Israel is committing there.

The international community must pressure Israel to immediately cease its military assaults in order to guarantee that the polio vaccination campaign is carried out as quickly and thoroughly as possible. Israel bears full responsibility for protecting the lives and safety of Palestinian children from the virus, as this crisis is primarily the result of the crime of genocide it has been committing against Palestinians in the Gaza Strip since 7 October 2023, which includes the destruction of basic infrastructure and the health sector, repeated forced displacement, and deprivation of all elements of human life, in addition to the ongoing arbitrary and comprehensive blockade