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Israeli Cabinet Mulls Further Escalation: At Least 718 Gazans Killed

By Jason Ditz

July 23, 2014



The death toll in Israel's war on the Gaza Strip continues to rise, with at least 718 Gazans now reported slain, overwhelmingly civilians, and thousands wounded. The death toll on the Israeli side stands at 34, 32 of them soldiers, and one civilian from the Philippines.

Among the soaring number of Palestinian civilians, an estimated 24% are children under the age of 18, reflecting the growing tendency of attacks on civilian neighborhoods killing entire families.

There continues to be some international effort to ceasefire, though the indications are that neither Israel nor Hamas have been brought directly on board for the talks.

Israel's cabinet met today, and while international efforts to broker a ceasefire were discussed, the primary focus was said to be on the possibility of further escalation of the invasion.

Finance Minister Yair Lapid, talking ahead of the meeting, said the consensus is that the war must continue until the tiny strip is "cleansed" of all tunnels and all rockets.

Despite Israeli officials making the war officially about tunnels, today's reports again included intensive bombings of civilian areas, and a focus on the beach, where tunnels couldn't even theoretically be.

The seemingly random nature of a lot of Israel's attack has made them the subject of growing criticism, and UN human rights chief Navi Pillay is calling for an emergency session of the UN Human Rights Council to look into Israeli war crimes against Palestinian civilians.

Of course, the US government will likely block any efforts to hold Israel's leadership responsible for war crimes, and the State Department defended Israel's decision to attack hospitals full of wounded civilians, claiming secret evidence the hospitals were storing rockets, despite there being no sign of any in the wreckage.