

**Israel-Hamas war**

## Palestinians ordered to leave Khan Younis as Israel renews offensive

Hundreds of thousands flee south Gaza city where Israeli military previously conducted a five-month operation



Displaced Palestinians carry their belongings as they leave Khan Younis in south Gaza on Monday following Israeli military orders to evacuate parts of the city © Bloomberg

**Neri Zilber** in Tel Aviv YESTERDAY

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Hundreds of thousands of Palestinians have fled the southern Gaza city of Khan Younis as Israel launched a renewed offensive in the area three months after its forces withdrew.

The Israeli military early on Monday ordered the evacuation of residents from the city's eastern edges in an area that had formed part of an expanded Israeli-designated humanitarian "safe zone".

An Israeli military spokesperson said the "humanitarian area" was now being "adjusted" because of  [Hamas](#) rocket fire and other militant activity ahead of a planned "forceful" operation.

Israeli air and artillery strikes were reported later in the day, with witness accounts indicating that Israeli tanks and armoured personnel carriers were already visible in the city's eastern suburbs.

More than three dozen people have been killed, according to health authorities in the Hamas-controlled enclave, with an estimated 400,000 heeding the evacuation orders and heading west to the Al-Mawasi coastal "safe zone" or north to the city of Deir al-Balah. The Israeli military said that hospitals in the area would not need to be evacuated.

The renewed offensive, which comes after Israel in April concluded a five-month operation in [Khan Younis](#), forms part of what Israeli officials have termed the “low intensity” phase of their Gaza campaign, with intermittent raids targeting Hamas forces across the territory. The Israeli military said on Monday that it was still conducting operations around the southern city of Rafah as well as in the enclave’s central region.

The Israeli military also confirmed that two hostages seized by Hamas during the group’s October 7 attack on the Jewish state were killed while in captivity. The two men, Yagev Buchshtab and Alex Dancyg, are believed to have died in the Khan Younis area several months ago. Israeli authorities said they were still investigating the circumstances of their deaths and emphasised that Hamas was still in possession of the bodies.

About 120 Israelis and foreign nationals are still being held hostage in Gaza, with more than a third now confirmed by Israeli intelligence to no longer be alive.

An Israeli delegation is set to travel to Doha on Thursday for renewed talks over a hostage-for-ceasefire deal being brokered by US, Egyptian and Qatari mediators. Talks have stalled for months over fundamental gaps between Israel and Hamas, including Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's refusal to permanently end the war.

The Israeli premier flew to the US on Monday, but his planned meeting with President Joe Biden will now not take place on Tuesday, as originally scheduled, according to people familiar with the matter. The US president is recovering from a bout of Covid, and it is unclear when the meeting between the two will happen.

Netanyahu's visit, which includes a joint address to Congress, is going ahead despite Biden dropping out of the presidential race on Sunday, and endorsing his vice-president Kamala Harris.

The Israeli prime minister told reporters on Monday that he would use the opportunity to "thank [Biden] for the things he did for Israel in the [Gaza] war and during his long and distinguished career in public service".

"Regardless who the American people choose as their next president, Israel remains America's indispensable and strong ally in the Middle East," Netanyahu added. "It's important that Israel's enemies know that America and Israel stand together today, tomorrow and always."

*Additional reporting by Felicia Schwartz*

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