

**Israel-Hamas war**

## Israeli air strikes kill 6 UN staff at Gaza school sheltering homeless

Latest attacks prompt condemnation from EU's top diplomat and Arab countries



UNRWA said the strike on Wednesday was the fifth time al-Jaouni school had been targeted since the start of the war © Eyad Baba/AFP/Getty Images

**James Shotter** in Jerusalem YESTERDAY

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Israeli air strikes on a school in Gaza sheltering displaced people killed six UN staff, the UN agency for Palestinian refugees said, prompting condemnation from the EU's top diplomat and Arab countries.

UNRWA said the strikes on Wednesday in Nuseirat in central Gaza were the deadliest incident for its staff since the war in the Palestinian enclave began last year.

It said the dead included "the manager of the UNRWA shelter and other team members providing assistance to displaced people".

The Israeli military said it had carried out a "precise strike on terrorists who were operating inside a command and control centre embedded within a compound that previously served as the al-Jaouni school".

[UNRWA](#) said the strike was the fifth time that the school, which is sheltering about 12,000 displaced people, mainly women and children, had been targeted since the start of the war.

In a report published earlier on Wednesday, UNRWA said 214 of its staff in Gaza had been killed during the [war](#), and that nearly 70 per cent of the schools that it

ran before the war had been hit, “some several times”.

The Hamas-run Palestinian Civil Defense agency in Gaza said that overall 18 people were killed in the air strikes, and at least 18 more were injured. The Financial Times was unable to independently verify the toll.

The incident was denounced by Arab countries, including Jordan, Saudi Arabia and Qatar. The EU’s top diplomat, Josep Borrell, said he was “outraged” by the killings of the UN staff.

“The disregard of the basic principles of [international humanitarian law], especially protection of civilians, cannot and should not be accepted by the international community,” he wrote on X.



Inside the heavily damaged al-Jaouni school © Ahmad Salem/Bloomberg

UN secretary-general António Guterres condemned the incident as “totally unacceptable”, and wrote on X: “These dramatic violations of international humanitarian law need to stop now.”

Israel’s ambassador to the UN, Danny Danon, hit back at Guterres, saying it was “unconscionable that the UN continues to condemn Israel in its just war against terrorists, while Hamas continues to use women and children as human shields”.

Israel launched its offensive in Gaza in response to Hamas’s October 7 attack on Israel, during which Palestinian militants killed 1,200 people and took another 250 hostage according to Israeli officials

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The Israeli offensive has taken a devastating toll on Gaza, killing more than 41,000 Palestinians, according to local officials, displacing hundreds of thousands of people, and fuelling a humanitarian crisis in the enclave.

In a report published on Thursday, Unctad, the UN's trade and development body, said that by the middle of this year, the economy in Gaza had shrunk to just one-sixth of its 2022 size.

“By early 2024, between 80 and 96 per cent of Gaza's agricultural assets — including irrigation systems, livestock farms, orchards, machinery and storage facilities — had been decimated, crippling the region's food production capacity and worsening already high levels of food insecurity,” the agency said.

As the devastation has mounted, Israel has come under increasing international pressure to agree to a ceasefire. But talks mediated by the US, Egypt and Qatar have failed to yield a breakthrough, with Israel and Hamas at loggerheads over key elements of a deal.

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