

‘ Hamas is Responsible for the Suffering and the Destruction ’

Gazan families who have lost loved ones in the current conflict with Israel reportedly confronted a Hamas official at Shifa hospital in Gaza and blamed Hamas for the deaths.

“Hamas is responsible for the suffering and the destruction caused to residents of the Gaza Strip,” a bereaved family member told Hamas spokesman Mushir Al-Masri, who was at the hospital visiting Gazans injured during what the Israel Defense Forces calls Operation Protective Edge.

In the aftermath of the campaign, many Gazans are saying the impact this time is much greater than it has been after past operations.

“The damage done in past rounds of fighting is nothing compared to the destruction this time,” a Beit Hanoun resident told an *Al-Arabiya* reporter. “Entire neighborhoods were turned to rubble, and we have nowhere to return to. Our homes have been turned into piles of rocks.”

The Palestinian Authority says it will take several months to repair the damage done in Gaza, which is estimated at \$6 billion to \$9 billion. According to the Palestinians, more than 1,000 buildings and homes have been destroyed and several hundred more are badly damaged. There have also been reports of significant damage to sewage, electricity and drinking-water infrastructure.

UNWRA reported that nearly half a million Gazans fled their homes, with about half of them seeking shelter in U.N. buildings.

COGAT commander Maj. Gen. Yoav Mordechai approved the entrance of 300 trucks filled with goods and medical supplies into Gaza to be transferred to aid organizations. Egypt also opened the Rafah crossing to allow goods and humanitarian supplies into Gaza.

According to the Palestinian Health Ministry, there are more than 1,800 dead in Gaza and nearly 10,000 injured a result of the fighting.

An Israeli official said the actual number of dead in Gaza is likely lower than 1,800, and the defense establishment already has identified about 30 percent of the dead as Hamas and Islamic Jihad operatives. He thinks that ultimately about half of the Gazans killed in the conflict will prove to have been terrorists.

In Ramallah, the Palestinian Authority is advancing efforts to have Israeli political and military officials put on trial for war crimes. Palestinian Foreign Minister Riyad al-Maliki arrived in the Hague on Tuesday to meet with U.N. officials and discuss the possibility of the Palestinians joining the Rome Statute, which would allow them to take Israel to the International Criminal Court.

The president of the International Committee of the Red Cross, Peter Maurer, was expected to tour Gaza and the West Bank on Wednesday to assess the damages first hand.

Meanwhile, Indian network NDTV aired a video showing the launch of a Hamas rocket from a densely populated civilian area, which was filmed from an adjacent hotel room window.

The video shows what appears to be three Hamas operatives preparing a rocket for launch in a tent they had set up. They then dismantled the tent and placed branches around the launch site, before the rocket was launched on Tuesday morning.

After the launch, an NDTV reporter left the hotel from where

the video was filmed and went to see the launch site but was warned away by locals wary of a retaliatory Israeli attack.

The hotel has since been evacuated, as this was not the first rocket launched in the area, and the hotel management was concerned for its guests' safety.

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