

Israel pushes back into northern Gaza, ups military pressure on Rafah

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AFAH:

Israel sent tanks into eastern Jabalia in the northern Gaza Strip early on Sunday, after a night of heavy aerial and ground bombardments, killing 19 people and wounding dozens of others, health officials said. Jabalia is the biggest of Gaza's eight historic refugee camps and is home to more than 100,000 people, most of whom were descendants of Palestinians who were driven from towns and villages in what is now Israel during the 1948 Arab-Israeli war that led to the creation the state of Israel. Late on Saturday, the Israeli military said forces operating in Jabalia are preventing Hamas, which controls Gaza, from re-establishing its military capabilities there. "We identified in the past weeks attempts by Hamas to rehabilitate its military capabilities in Jabalia. We are operating there to eliminate those attempts," said Rear Admiral Daniel Hagari, Israel's military

spokesperson, during a briefing to reporters. Hagari also said that Israeli forces operating in Gaza City's Zeitoun district killed about 30 Palestinian militants. "Bombardment from the air and ground hasn't stopped since yesterday, they were bombing everywhere, including near schools that are housing people who lost their houses," said Saed, 45, a resident of Jabalia. "War is restarting, this is how it looks in Jabalia," he told Reuters via a chat app. "The new incursion forces many families to evacuate. The army sent tanks back into Al-Zeitoun, an eastern suburb of Gaza City, as well as Al-Sabra, where residents also reported heavy bombardments that destroyed several houses, including high-rise residential buildings. The army had claimed to have gained control of most of these areas months ago. Tanks did not invade eastern Deir Al-Balah city, residents and Hamas media said, but some Israeli tanks and bulldozers penetrated the fence on the outskirts of the city prompting a gunfight with Hamas fighters. In an air strike late on Saturday in Deir Al-Balah two doctors, a father and his son, were killed, health officials said. The armed wing of Hamas and the Islamic Jihad said their fighters attacked Israeli forces in several areas inside Gaza with anti-tank rockets and mortar bombs, including in Rafah, previously the Palestinians' last refuge where more than a million people were sheltering. The war was triggered by a Hamas-led attack on southern Israel on Oct. 7 in which some 1,200 people were killed and more than 250 people taken hostage, according to Israeli tallies. Israel's military operation in Gaza

has killed close to 35,000 Palestinians, according to Gaza's health ministry. The bombardment has laid waste to the coastal enclave and caused a deep humanitarian crisis. On Sunday, more families, estimated in the thousands, were leaving Rafah as the Israeli military pressure intensified. Tank shells landed across the city as the army gave new evacuation orders covering some neighbourhoods in the centre of the city, which borders Egypt. "As I moved out of Rafah, I passed through Khan Younis, I cried, I didn't know if was I crying for what I was passing through, the humiliation and the feeling of loss I felt or for what I have seen," said Tamer Al-Burai, a resident from Gaza, who had been sheltering in Rafah. "I saw a ghost city, all buildings on the two sides of the road, complete districts were wiped out. People are fleeing for safety, knowing there was no place safe, and there are no tents and no people to care for them," he told Reuters. Burai, a Palestinian businessman, said the Palestinians were abandoned by the world and left to face their destiny as the war entered its eighth month, with world powers failing to end hostilities and international mediation efforts to reach a ceasefire collapsing over Hamas and Israel disputes. "No ceasefire, no UN decision, no hope," he said.