



War broke out in the Middle East in October. The violence was centred in and around the Gaza Strip. That's a thin ribbon of Palestinian territory 41 kilometres long and 10 kilometres wide.

Gaza is bordered by the Mediterranean Sea to the west, Egypt to the south, and Israel to the north and east. It is home to 2.2 million people. That makes it one of the most densely populated regions in the world.

A SURPRISE ATTACK

The Gaza Strip is controlled by Hamas, a political and military group. Hamas is considered a terrorist group by Canada, the United States, the European Union and many other nations because it has pledged to destroy Israel.

On October 7, Hamas launched thousands of deadly rockets

into Israel. Israel was caught off guard by the attack. Next, Hamas gunmen breached a fence surrounding Gaza, then rolled into southern Israeli towns and **kibbutzes**. There, they slaughtered 1400 civilians and soldiers, including 260 young people attending a music festival. At least five Canadians died in the surprise assault. The militants also took over 200 people **hostage**. Children and the elderly were among them.

THE WORLD REACTS

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau strongly condemned Hamas's actions. Germany, Japan, Ukraine and other nations also denounced Hamas and supported Israel's right to defend itself. U.S. President Joe Biden said the raid was "sheer evil."

ISRAEL RESPONDS

Israel immediately declared war on Hamas. The Israeli

Defense Forces (IDF) called up 360,000 **reservists**. Then Israel bombarded Gaza with airstrikes. The objective was to destroy Hamas military targets. However, hundreds of residential buildings were also damaged or destroyed. Photos show whole swaths of Gaza reduced to rubble and ash.

On October 17, the violence escalated. A bomb landed near a hospital in Gaza. It killed at least 100 civilians. Hamas blamed Israel for the incident. U.S. and Israeli officials said that evidence showed a rocket launched against Israel had malfunctioned. However, that hasn't been confirmed by impartial sources.

By October 22, over 5000 Palestinians had been killed. Another 13,561 had been injured. Many were women and children. Israeli casualties were mostly

DEFINITIONS

HOSTAGE: a person captured and held prisoner who may be harmed if people do not do what the captor demands

KIBBUTZ: a type of farm or factory in Israel where people live together and share all the work, decisions, and income

RESERVIST: part-time soldier who returns to active duty on command



INTERNATIONAL

WAR BREAKS OUT IN THE MIDDLE EAST

– HAMAS LAUNCHES SURPRISE ATTACK ON ISRAEL

limited to those killed in the initial raid. Another 4600 were wounded during the attack.

NO WAY OUT!

Soon after the bombing campaign began, the IDF signalled it intended to mount a **ground offensive** in Gaza.

Israeli troops and military equipment began massing at the Gaza border in mid-October.

Israeli officials warned one million Palestinians in northern Gaza to evacuate.

But the Gazans had nowhere to go. Israel has **blockaded** the Palestinian territory since 2007. The reason? It says Hamas poses a constant threat. For the same reason, Egypt maintains a blockade along the border it shares with Gaza, too. Some people call the Gaza Strip the world's largest open-air prison, since every exit is closed.

GAZA'S GROWING CRISIS

After declaring war, Israel took the blockade a step further, and cut off Gaza's access to food, fuel, water, and aid. It said that it didn't want supplies diverted to Hamas, and warned it wouldn't restore access until all the hostages were freed.

These new restrictions added to the desperation that many Gazans were already facing. Even before the war broke out, over 80 percent of people in Gaza were living in poverty. Some 95 percent didn't have access to clean water. Half the population consists of **refugees** living in overcrowded camps. Their families were displaced when Israel was created in 1948.

A GLIMMER OF HELP

Now the humanitarian crisis is worsening. Gaza hospitals were running dangerously low on the fuel needed to keep lifesaving machines going. Crucial drugs like insulin and heart pills were running out.

Then, on October 21, trucks filled with critical supplies began to trickle across Egypt's Rafah border into Gaza after U.S. diplomats struck an agreement with Israel. However, much more aid was needed. The United Nations (UN) warned that a public health catastrophe was taking place.

WILL THE WAR SPREAD?

On October 27, IDF soldiers entered northern Gaza. They fought Hamas gunmen inside the tunnel network the militants

had built to counter the blockade and move weapons. Outside, bombing continued from the air.

Meanwhile, concern grew that the war could spill over into other nations. The reason? **Hezbollah** has been shelling towns on Israel's northern border from Lebanon, and Israel has been firing back.

PLEADING FOR CALM

In response, the U.S. – Israel's top trading partner and ally – stationed military resources nearby. The move was meant to deter the war from spreading. The U.S. also wanted to emphasize its commitment to providing security assistance for Israel.

At the same time, the U.S. and other nations called for a break in the fighting so more aid could reach Gaza.

"Without...humanitarian relief, the conflict is much more likely to spread, suffering will grow, and Hamas and its sponsors will benefit by fashioning themselves as the saviours of the very desperation they created," stated U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken. ★

DEFINITIONS

BLOCKADE: the action of surrounding or closing a place in order to stop people or goods from coming in or out

GROUND OFFENSIVE: military action on land, using troops

HEZBOLLAH: a political and militant group based in Lebanon, considered to be a terrorist group by many western nations

REFUGEE: a person forced to leave their country or home because of war or for political, religious, or social reasons