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72 dead, 20 missing as deadly Israeli strikes pummel Gaza

HEZBOLLAH SPOKESPERSON KILLED DURING ISRAEL'S OFFENSIVE IN BEIRUT

DUBAI

BY STEPHEN N. R.

Senior Associate Editor

Israeli air strikes yesterday killed over 70 Palestinians in Gaza, with the deadliest attack targeting Beit Lahia in the north, where 50 people, including women and children, died. The strike also left at least 20 others buried under the rubble.

"We heard the Israeli strike, and the whole area was shaking," said Jaber Ghabayen, whose family lived in the razed building. "I was at a relatives' place, and we all thought that death was near," he told AFP.

Three other strikes killed 22 more people in Gaza and Rafah.

Media relations officer dead

Israeli forces struck a building in Beirut, that housed the Lebanese office of Syria's Baath Party, killing Hezbollah spokesperson Mohammed Afif.

Afif managed Hezbollah's Al Manar television station for many years before taking over as the top media relations officer for the armed group.

Several strikes also hit Hezbollah's south Beirut stronghold earlier, after the Israeli military warned people to evacuate.

Columns of smoke rose over the southern Beirut suburbs, where Lebanon's only international airport is located.



■ People check for survivors amid the rubble of a building hit in an overnight Israeli strike in Beit Lahia in the northern Gaza Strip yesterday.

UN peacekeeping force in Lebanon reported being shot at nearly 40 times on Saturday, though no injuries were sustained.

Meanwhile, Pope Francis for the first time tackled claims of Israel's ongoing "genocide" of Palestinians in Gaza in a forthcoming book, urging further in-

vestigation into whether Israel's actions meet the definition.

Titled *Hope Never Disappoints. Pilgrims Towards a Better World*, the book includes his latest and most forthright intervention into the more than year-long war sparked by Hamas's October 7 attack on Israel. **SEE ALSO P9**

43,846

people have so far been killed in Gaza due to Israeli strikes

University applicants in UAE to get a 2nd chance

ABU DHABI

BY ALI AL HAMMADI

Reporter

University applicants in the UAE who had not obtained the minimum score in a standardised exam — EmSAT — used for college admission can still apply for higher studies.

The clarification comes in the wake of the recent cancellation of EmSAT. The Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research stated on its website that the cancellation does not impact the applicant's prospects — they can go ahead and apply to the university of their choice regardless of their EmSAT score.

Universities have been given room to set their own admission requirements without affecting the evaluation and structure of their academic programmes, the Ministry said. Applicants simply have to meet those requirements, even if their EmSAT performance was inadequate when this exam was dropped.

The Ministry pointed out that EmSAT was not cancelled because of any issue with its efficiency, but rather to allow for the development of new evaluation criteria focused on institutional outcomes rather than relying on a single standardised test for admissions.

SEE ALSO P2



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