

Israel's Strike that Killed Nine Members of al-Sawarka Family. Mistakenly "Categorized as a Military Compound"

Israeli army says the home of the Palestinian family was not a military compound as it was previously categorised

By [Middle East Eye](#)

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Israel has said that an attack on the Gaza Strip which killed nine Palestinians from the same family happened after the premises were mistakenly categorised as a "military compound" used by Islamic Jihad.

In November, Israel conducted a series of air strikes on the Gaza Strip after it assassinated a senior Islamic Jihad commander and his wife.

The Palestinian armed group retaliated to the assassination by launching a barrage of rockets into Israel, before the two parties agreed on a ceasefire following joint Egyptian and UN mediation.

During the two days of air strikes, at least [34 Palestinians were reported killed](#) and more than 100 wounded.

No Israelis were killed during the same time period.

The deadliest of these attacks [was carried out on the home of the al-Sawarka family](#), killing eight members of the family, including children.

A week after the strike, [a ninth member of the family](#), Mohammed al-Sawarka, died from injuries sustained in the bombing.

"I was sleeping when the house was bombarded," 11-year-old Diyaa Rasmi al-Sawarka, one of the survivors, told Middle East Eye at the time.

"I tried to run away but my foot was stuck under the rubble. I started screaming but no one heard me, all my family members were under the rubble."

When Diyaa, who sustained minor injuries to his leg and head, was transferred to hospital, he found out that he had lost his father and a number of his cousins in the raid.

'No justification'

At the time, the United Nations special coordinator for the Middle East peace process said

“there is no justification to attacking civilians in Gaza”.

Israeli military spokesman Jonathan Conricus [said a day after the strike](#) that the army’s intelligence had indicated “no civilians were expected to be harmed”.

But on Tuesday, the Israeli army said that while the intelligence it obtained showed that the family home was part of an Islamic Jihad “compound”, the premises should have been marked as a civilian complex “with some military activity.”

According to a previous report by MEE, the victims’ family had rejected the Israeli army’s claims.

The al-Sawarka family home consisted of two shacks covered with corrugated metal sheets in an impoverished area of the Deir al-Balah refugee camp in the southern Gaza Strip.

Israel has imposed a crippling blockade of the Gaza Strip since 2007, after Hamas won contested Palestinian legislative elections a year earlier.

It holds Hamas, the de facto ruling party in Gaza, responsible for all fire coming from the small Palestinian territory, even though other armed factions also operate in the area.

Since 2008, it has carried out three wars with Gaza killing thousands of Palestinians and creating major infrastructural damage.

The United Nations warned in 2012 that Gaza would become unliveable by 2020.*

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Featured image: Israel said a day after the strike that “no civilians were expected to be harmed” (MEE/Mohammed al-Hajjar)

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