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**Baby Among 15 Dead as Israeli Shell Hits UN School in Gaza**

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Emergency services spokesman Ashraf al-Qudra said at least another 200 people were injured, with more bodies and wounded expected to arrive at nearby hospitals.

It was the latest in a number of Israeli strikes on schools and hospitals in the embattled Palestinian territory, as the death toll from a 17-day operation to halt rocket fire by Gaza militants topped 770.

A spokesman for the UN's Palestinian refugee agency UNRWA separately confirmed "multiple dead" at the school in Beit Hanun, in northern Gaza Strip, where hundreds of Palestinians had sought refuge.

But he could not immediately give an exact toll.

"Precise coordinates of the UNRWA shelter in Beit Hanun had been formally given to the Israeli army", Chris Gunness said on his Twitter account.

An AFP correspondent saw nine bodies, including those of a one-year-old child and his mother at a morgue in nearby Beit Lahiya.

The shell appeared to have struck in the middle of the school courtyard, which was covered with blood stains, he said.

All around the sides of the yard, blankets and clothes had been hung up by people who had

turned it into a makeshift home after fleeing their own houses.

A second UN official told AFP that at around 2:50 pm (1150 GMT) a shell had landed "in or near" the school, adding that UNRWA had tried to ask people to leave shortly beforehand, fearing it might be a target.

Gunness said there had earlier been "firing around the compound", and asked the army for time to evacuate civilians.

"We've spent much of the day trying to negotiate or to coordinate a window so that civilians, including our staff, could leave.

"That was never granted and the consequences of that appear to be tragic", Gunness told AFP.

### **'My father's dead'**

At a nearby hospital to which the wounded had been evacuated, a young girl screamed "My father's dead!"

A Palestinian man said that after initial Israeli fire in the area, the school's residents were waiting to be evacuated when the shell hit.

Israel's army said it had acted "against a terrorist target located in a populated area."

"We use various technology, like radio or messaging to ask the population to leave", Gaza Division Commander General Micky Edelstein told journalists, adding, "We need to investigate what happened here."

On Tuesday, an UNRWA school sheltering the displaced came under Israeli fire as a team was inspecting damage from a day earlier.

Israel's military has also hit hospitals in Gaza, blaming resulting civilian deaths on Hamas, saying the Islamist movement uses innocents as "human shields".

UNRWA last week slammed unknown militants for storing around 20 rockets in one of its schools.

A UN official told AFP that four schools had been hit in Israel's latest operation to stamp out rocket fire from Gaza, the bloodiest campaign since 2009.

32 Israeli soldiers have been killed in the army's ground operation, and three civilians have died in Israel from rocket fire.

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