



A bad year for journo

Journalists faced ever increasing danger in 2004, with 53 killed on the job worldwide, reports say.



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'Sharon is a butcher'

16/10/2004 14:48 - (SA)

Jabaliya - Palestinians on Saturday surveyed the widespread devastation inflicted by Israeli troops during an 18-day military operation in the northern Gaza Strip, after the troops redeployed overnight - comparing the scene to the aftermath of an earthquake.

At least 129 Palestinians were killed in the operation, the deadliest in Gaza since the beginning of the intifada or uprising four years ago, which the Israelis said was aimed at preventing militant rocket attacks on Israeli territory.

Around 100 houses were levelled in the refugee camp of Jabaliya and neighbouring Beit Lahya, scenes of the heaviest violence, said Palestinian security sources and a correspondent at the scene.

Fifty workshops and shops along the Gaza Strip's main road were destroyed by tanks and army bulldozers.

'Worse than Nazis'

Lamp posts and electricity cables lay uprooted along roads mangled by Israeli tanks around Jabaliya and Beit Lahya. Puddles of stagnant drain water permeated refugee camp streets with a fetid smell.

Whole districts were still without water and electricity on Saturday.

"This is worse than an earthquake. The Israelis threw out the Palestinians in 1948 and in 1967 and they're trying to do the same thing now," said Jamila Yehya, 54, a Jabaliya refugee whose home was destroyed on Friday.

Israeli Prime Minister Ariel "Sharon is worse than the Nazis," she continued, pointing to the ruin of her three-storey house in the Al-Sikka district, the most damaged in the camp.

Nearby, dozens of women sift through the ruins of their homes in the hope of recovering some valuables or personal effects.

Surrounded by four of her children and holding a fifth in her arms, 32-year-old

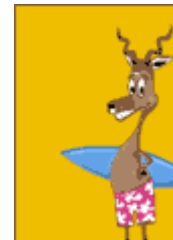
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An elderly Palestinian walks past a destroyed house in the Jabaliya refugee camp. (Kevin Frayer, AP)

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Manal Abu Nadi weeps over a pile of rubble.

Her house and nine others belonging to members of her family in Al-Sikka were demolished on Friday shortly before Israeli forces redeployed away from Palestinian residential areas.

"They destroyed our house without warning. We left without our shoes," she cries. "Sharon is a butcher."

Israeli armoured columns also damaged a 4th-century Byzantine archaeological site in eastern Jabaliya, destroying ancient columns and mosaics, an official from the Palestinian tourism ministry, Muin Sadeq, told journalists.

The site was recently restored with the help of the United Nations Development Fund, he said.

Archaeological site damaged

"Nothing has escaped the destruction, even this archaeological site which they knew about. Signs in different languages identify this as an archaeological site and Palestinian UNDP flags fly above it," he said.

Israeli forces redeployed on Friday after the army said that the offensive had achieved the objective of reducing militant rocket fire.

Israel has not yet announced the end of Operation Days of Penitence and the army remains in Palestinian territory.

Since the beginning of the intifada in September 2000 4 493 people have been killed, including 3 465 Palestinians and 954 Israelis.

Edited by Andrea Botha

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