

Israel forms emergency government against Hamas as deaths and damage in Gaza mount

JERUSALEM/GAZA/WASHINGTON, Oct 11 (Reuters) - Israel formed an emergency unity government on Wednesday as its jets pounded Gaza and tanks massed around the densely populated Palestinian enclave while Hamas militants said they were still fighting on Israeli territory following their shock weekend incursion.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu agreed to form a war cabinet with former defence minister and centrist opposition party leader Benny Gantz and focus entirely on the conflict, a joint statement from Gantz's National Unity party said.

Israel's death toll rose to 1,200 with over 2,700 wounded, its military said, from Hamas militants' hours-long rampage after breaching the fence enclosing Gaza on Saturday.

U.S. President Joe Biden has issued a warning seemingly aimed at Hamas' Iranian supporters not to exploit the Gaza conflagration to start a wider Middle East war.

Israeli reprisal strikes on blockaded Gaza have killed 1,100 people and wounded 5,339, Gaza's Health Ministry said. Some 535 residential buildings had been destroyed leaving around 250,000 homeless, Hamas officials said. Most of the displaced were in U.N.-designated shelters, others huddling in shattered streets.

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