What is happening in Israel and Gaza, and what is Hamas?

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- **Israel-Gaza war**

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Hamas gunmen launched an unprecedented assault on Israel from the Gaza Strip on 7 October, killing about 1,200 people and taking more than 200 hostages.
Israel has responded with air strikes on Gaza and has launched a ground offensive. More than 10,800 people have been killed in Gaza, according to the Hamas-run health ministry.

What is the goal of Israel's mission in Gaza?

Israel Defense Forces (IDF) warplanes are bombarding Gaza from the air while its troops and tanks are advancing on the ground. Israel has drafted 300,000 reservists to boost its standing force of 160,000.
Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu says Israel has a "clear goal of destroying Hamas's military and governing capabilities", as well as freeing the hostages.
Israel believes Hamas has about 30,000 members in its military wing. The group operates from underground tunnels, which it has previously said stretch for 500km (310 miles).
Mr Netanyahu has refused calls for a ceasefire unless the hostages are released.

Israel has also said it wants Gaza to remain demilitarised after the current conflict, but that it does not plan to reoccupy or govern the territory.

- **Could an Israeli ground invasion of Gaza meet its aims?**

What military operations are taking place in Gaza?

Much of the IDF's focus so far has been on northern Gaza, particularly densely-populated Gaza City. Israel's defence minister said its forces were "in the heart" of the city.

The IDF first warned the 1.1 million people living in the north to leave their homes and head south on 13 October. It has repeated those calls several times, but **has also continued to carry out air strikes in the south**.

Thousands of people **have been moving south** after Israel opened evacuation routes from northern Gaza. Local authorities said at the start of this week that 600,000 people were still living in Gaza City.

Media caption,

Watch: Civilians leave northern Gaza on foot

The situation in Gaza is changing rapidly:

- The US says that Israel will begin to implement daily **four-hour pauses in military operations** in northern Gaza, to allow civilians to flee. However, no specific times have yet been given
- Israel's military **is fighting Hamas in the centre of Gaza City**, close to two major hospitals - Al Shifa and Al Quds and **are reported to have surrounded Al Shifa**
- On Thursday the IDF said it had **raided a Hamas military base in Gaza City** and had killed or captured about 50 Hamas fighters
- The UN's human rights commissioner Volker Türk **has accused both Israel and Hamas of carrying out "war crimes"**