

## [Transcript] The Intelligence from The Economist / 6000 bombs in six days: life in Gaza

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Hello and welcome to The Intelligence from The Economist. I'm Jason Palmer.

And I'm Aura Ogumbi. Every weekday we provide a fresh perspective on the events shaping your world.

The Peninsula of Crimea was annexed by Russia back in 2014 and remains both strategically and psychologically important to both sides in Ukraine's war.

We ask how Ukraine is managing to put more and more pressure on Russian forces there.

And a sudden drop in the number of vultures in India has had surprising and lethal effects.

We ask why taking them out of the food web may have killed hundreds of thousands of people.

But first,

last night more than a million Palestinians were sent a message from the Israel Defense Forces.

The IDF calls for the evacuation of all civilians from Gaza City, from their homes southwards for their own safety and protection, and to move to the area south of the river Gaza.

The Hamas terrorist organization waged a war against the state of Israel, and Gaza City is an area where military operations are taking place.

This evacuation is for your own safety.

You will be able to return to Gaza City only when another announcement permitting it is made.

The evacuation order comes ahead of an expected ground offensive,

a response to Saturday's attack where Hamas terrorists murdered 1,300 people in Israel.

Since then, Gaza has been pounded with airstrikes.

Gaza authorities say over 1,500 people have been killed in the bombardment so far.

In the evacuation order, which was first shared with the UN, the IDF said

Hamas terrorists were hiding behind human shields in North Gaza, but insisted it was taking extensive effort to avoid harming civilians.

But avoiding such harm seems impossible given Gaza's incredibly dense population.

It's more crowded than cities like London or Tokyo.

Our reporter in East Jerusalem, Gareth Brown, has been speaking with one woman who's currently in Gaza.

There is no safety at all, not anywhere, not even in hotels.

There is intense random shelling, bombs, rounds, F-16 missiles, naval vessels launching shells, as well as tanks, aircraft and wide-scale clashes on the borders.

This is Javara. She's a 31-year-old woman. She's a media activist in Gaza.

I met her the last time I visited about six weeks ago.

Now I'm in East Jerusalem and she's still there.

Since Saturday, I've been communicating with her via voice notes, sent on whatever internet she can get.

The situation is very difficult. There's not been electricity since Saturday.

For four days, only four hours have come. As for the internet, I'm on mobile internet.

In general, there's no internet in the Gaza Strip.

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For water, it's difficult to get cars to carry the water because there just isn't any. Javara's finding it difficult to even charge her phone, food's running out, and what they do have is spoiling in the fridges, which of course have no power. But this evacuation order brings things to a whole new level. Where can more than a million people go?

The UN says it considers it impossible for such a movement to take place without devastating humanitarian consequences, and the places in the south where these people might flee to are also being bombed. Egypt is adamant it has no intention of allowing Palestinians in. Hamas, for its part, are telling people to ignore Israel's warnings.

Gaza's hospitals are already full of the dead, the injured, and those displaced.

All the while, the bombs continue.

I mean, since Sunday, the planes have not stopped flying over. I mean, from time to time, there are war planes, naval boats, guns. This war is unlike anything Javara has experienced before.

Israel has dropped 6,000 bombs on Gaza in six days. This is one of the most intense aerial attacks in modern warfare. In all wars and escalations, I would usually go out to report, but in this war, I can't go out because there is no protection for journalists.

Everything Javara knows no longer feels safe. Buildings have gone, institutions disappeared, she hasn't been able to contact friends and family members. She reels off a list of journalists, her colleagues, former colleagues who she knows have been killed since Saturday.

They are the journalist Ibrahim Lafi, the journalist Mohamed Jargon, the journalist Mohamed Al-Sulhi, the journalist Ashad Shamlala, like many in Gaza, Javara has found solace among her friends and family. They feel safer together, even if it won't actually protect them from the bombs. But it's a very crowded house. I'm at home, thank God me and my family and friends are close.

There are 19 adults here and seven children. Our building has seven floors, almost every floor has around 30 people. This is pretty standard for Gaza, it's one of the most densely populated places in the world and every few hours she can hear the sounds of bombs dropping in Israeli aircraft overhead. She sent me some of these recordings from her apartment.

Javara refers to Israel as the occupation. Israel did unilaterally withdraw from Gaza in 2005, pulling out its troops and dismantling settlements. But according to the UN and the Red Cross, it's still considered legally under occupation. The occupation randomly sends recorded audio messages to the phones of citizens in Gaza, asking them to leave their homes immediately.

Israel has said it warns civilians ahead of attacks and that they should get out of anywhere occupied by Hamas. But really that's not so easy in Gaza. Javara has experienced many of these warnings. We do not know the validity of these audio messages. It's very difficult to know what's going on in Gaza even at the best of times. But now we have the fog of war and it's hard to know what's real, what's fake. But even if Javara believes they're authentic, there's not much she could do to act on them. I won't be able to get out of the house even if the house is bombed over our heads. The IDF has been pretty adamant that it's targeting Hamas and Hamas' infrastructure. But Javara is keeping a list of buildings that have been hit.

There are targets in the League of Arab State Street, the house of the Shami family, the ferris station, the building of Almorjan. She mentions two universities, some pharmacies, and a number of buildings on the League of Arab State Street. Several mosques have also been targeted, she says. There are attacks and airstrikes that target mosques in the Gaza Strip. Seven

mosques were targeted and completely destroyed. The army claims that some of these mosques have been used by Hamas to hide weapons and fighters. Despite all the airstrikes and all this devastation we've heard about, it feels like this is just the beginning, it feels like things are ramping up. Going off what Israeli officials have said, there's no doubt that a ground offensive into Gaza is in the works. Javara doesn't know very much about it, but she's paying attention to the news, especially Israeli news websites, and she's clear that everybody in Gaza is talking about this ground offensive which feels imminent. I think Javara is scared, she doesn't show it. Honestly, she sounds exhausted, she's a different person from the woman I met a few weeks ago in Gaza. She's strong, she's confident, she's not afraid of anyone. You know, I've heard her speaking out against Hamas, against the Israelis, but this war has been difficult for her and it's only just beginning.

Things are tough, believe me, it is very, very, very difficult.

So I've been speaking to her nearly every day, but yesterday she disappeared for about half of the day. She wasn't receiving messages, she wasn't responding, and of course then your imagination jumps to all the worst things. It was quite a worrying situation, but I'm going to stay in contact with her for as long as possible, as long as the internet holds up in Gaza, we'll be in touch. Guys, I have an announcement. We have a new subscription launching on October 24th called Economist Podcasts Plus. My many announcements have apparently convinced thousands of you to sign up

already, which is amazing, so thank you very much. But if some of you are still on the fence, here's the deal. Not only will this new service be the home for all our weekly feature shows like Money Talks and Bavage, we're also bringing you a bunch of new ones, including a brilliant long-form weekend edition of The Intelligence. Our half-price offer runs until October 17th, so run. You don't have long. You can search Economist Podcast Plus online to find out more, or simply follow the link in the show notes.

In 2014, Russia annexed the Ukrainian peninsula of Crimea. It was like an early warning sign of the full-scale invasion that was to come in 2022. Pro-Russian forces today seizing Ukrainian ships in the Crimean port of Sebastopol. Shots fired, but no injuries as the Russians raised their flag. Little fighting hit the peninsula at the time, but the story is different now. A year ago, a Ukrainian bomb destroyed part of the Kerch bridge. Moscow says three people were killed in today's massive explosion of the only bridge connecting Russia with the annexed territory of Crimea. This summer, another attack on the bridge, this time with an unmanned sea surface drone.

And it's not just the bridge. On September 20th, a Crimean command post was hit, and Russian authorities tried to cover it up. Then two days later, missiles smashed into the headquarters of the Russian Black Sea Fleet in Sebastopol. That one was harder to hide. Ukraine has lots of new kit and new methods to hit Russia where it hurts.

Vladimir Putin's war has arrived in Crimea, and Ukraine has been massively stepping up its strikes on the peninsula.

Oliver Carroll reports for the economist from Kyiv in Ukraine.

They're using a mix of homemade drones and missiles with the ones which have been supplied by the West, and they're doing it pretty spectacularly, hitting bridges, military bases, and Russia's command and control centers.

So why this focus on Crimea now then?

Well, the Crimean operations are not necessarily ends in themselves. This is what Ukrainian military sources tell me. So the focus isn't so much taking control of the peninsula, which Russia annexed in 2014. It's more about supporting operations elsewhere in the ongoing land offensive, the counter offensive to the northeast of Crimea in Zaporozhye region. Crimea, of course, is the staging post and the logistical hub for the Russian defense there. But there's a really important second focus, and that's a naval contest in the Black Sea. And here, Ukraine is trying to deny Russia a monopoly of the sea, and to regain control of vital shipping routes. So it's destroying Russian warships wherever it can, and pushing the rest out to a distance that makes striking its ports and cities as difficult as possible. And you're making it sound like those strikes that shift in tactics is being pretty successful? Here's the thing. Remarkably, for a country without a single operational warship, it's registering some success. Since sinking the flagship Moscow in April last year, Ukraine has sunk or damaged at least 19 warships. And in this latest round of attacks on September the 13th, for example, they took out an amphibious landing ship and a submarine in Sevastopol. And together, this mix of these deep strike drones and Ukrainian cruise missiles and foreign cruise missiles, they've been able to take out cutting edge defense systems, for example, like the S-400. And that's got an export price tag of over a billion dollars.

And so is all of this acting as any kind of deterrence?

The attacks have changed the way the Russian fleet operates. So at the start of the war, Russian warships were positioned quite menacingly close to Odessa. You could literally see them on the horizon. Today, they rarely enter the Northwest and Black Sea. They're hiding away at the southern

and eastern shores of Crimea. And slowly, methodically, Ukraine is chipping away at Russia's Crimean firepower, a major part of its army. And it's getting closer to denying it the control of the sea. But as you say, Ukraine doesn't really even have a navy to speak of. How is it that they're having these successes? I was speaking to a top intelligent official recently, and he talked about the ongoing land offensive, the counter-offensives, this sort of First World War, almost a stalemate. And you could really see his eyes light up here. There was one key difference, he said, deep strike drones. And this is where Ukraine has made huge progress. In the air, they're competing with Russia, which had a multiple year head start. And in some deep strike capabilities, it's actually a head. In the sea, Ukraine is way ahead, at least for now. Zelensky talked about the world's first fleet of naval drones and not without reason.

Some of them were in development before the war started, like the Sea Baby, that was used for strikes on the Kerch Bridge, which links Russia to Crimea. But others have been publicized recently like the Marichka, which is a sort of torpedo style underwater drone. And that has a 450 kilogram explosive punch. And we also know that Ukraine has new missiles at its disposal. They've been steady flows of the storm shadow and scalp cruise missiles from Britain and France. And they have a new surface to surface version of the Neptune missile, the one that sank the Moskva. Speaking to a former British defense attaché in Moscow and Kiev, John Foreman, he put it well, he talks about the Ukrainians adapting to become a mosquito fleet.

So put this in context for us aside from the naval strategy here, how important is all of this for Ukraine in its fight against Russia? Well, deep sea shipping is actually crucial to Ukraine, as it is to Russia. Before the war, 60% of Ukrainian exports left from its deep sea ports.

Without it, Ukraine simply doesn't have an economy. And without an economy, Ukraine doesn't have a war effort. Now, in July, Russia called off the grain deal because of this. This is where it allowed some boats to leave in exchange for sanctions relief. And Ukraine made the bold move of opening its own sea corridor in and out of Odessa. And it's already facilitated 10 ships in and out. It's cleared the route of mines, but its safety largely depends on a bet that Russia will not target civilian ships sailing under third country flags, or failing that will be persuaded by a viable threat of retaliation. And so what he means by that is not completely controlling the seas, but making sure no one else can control it. And so how has Russia been reacting to this growth of naval power, essentially? Russia is certainly not happy. And it's been registering this with repeated attacks on Ukraine's port infrastructure in Odessa and in the Danube, most especially on grain storage silos. That is making the whole process of grain export much more expensive. But Russia's also had to adjust its posture in response to the new threat. The vulnerabilities in Sevastopol mean that it has to move its ships away from its main naval base. And as I said, some are now hugging the southern coastline of Crimea. Others are in the eastern Crimea port of Fidozia. And the Fairchunk are now slowly being transferred over to Novorossiysk across the Black Sea. Now the Ukrainians, they say they're confident they could hit anything that's left behind, given time. But of course, the psychological importance of Crimea to Mr Putin's rule means that he's likely to cling on as much as he can. And as you say, Crimea is hugely psychologically important. In fact, for both sides, would you see any of these moves as a kind of thin end of the wedge of Ukraine trying to regain actual dominance in Crimea itself? It's important to say that Russia still has the upper hand of the Black Sea. It is still largely able to dictate terms. And it's not a good idea to exaggerate the picture. But things could change rapidly, especially if the situation escalates, as would certainly happen if the civilian vessel was hit in this new shipping corridor. Russia, like Ukraine, relies on the Black Sea for its export economy. Now Ukraine is said, and they say pretty clearly, that they weren't targeted in shipping. But in some such circumstances, they could well look to try and make that trade enviable in different ways. And turning the eastern parts of the Black Sea into more of a war zone would not have a positive impact on that trade, on insurance costs and so on. That would be a big deal, not only for Russia and Ukraine, but also for Turkey and other littoral states. So the stakes should be pretty clear for everyone concerned, most especially Vladimir Putin. Thanks very much for your time, Oliver. Thank you for having me.

If you look at most wildlife conservation campaigns, there's not a lot of diversity when it comes to the creatures that are cast. Tigers, pandas, fennec foxes, all the majestic ones and frankly all the cute ones. But what people often overlook is just how valuable the really ugly ones, the gross ones, can turn out to be. Wolches were everywhere in India at one point of time. We don't have accurate numbers, but at the peak of their population is estimated that there may have been nearly 50 million birds across the country. But since then, the numbers have plummeted dramatically. Now there are just a few thousand vultures and four of the nine species of vultures found in India are critically endangered. Vishnu Padmanaban is a data journalist and a news editor at The Economist. Obviously, losing vultures is a big ecological loss, but there's a significant human cost as well. A new study by Eyal Frank of the University of Chicago, an unanswered version of Warwick University, suggests that the collapse in vulture populations in

India may have caused the deaths of hundreds of thousands of Indians. Hundreds of thousands of Indians. What's the connection there between the vultures' deaths and the human deaths?

Well, vultures play a very important role in ecosystems. So they effectively act as nature's sanitation service because their diet consists almost entirely of carcasses of dead animals.

So in India, they played an especially important role because they helped farmers dispose of the dead livestock. Farmers would leave their dead animals out in the fields and a group of vultures would come, settle around that dead carcass and polish it off. So a group of vultures would

polish off an entire cow's carcass in 40 minutes. It worked out to be a very effective disposal service for farmers. But when the population of vultures collapse and without

vultures around to do this, provide the service, then two problems happen. One is that these carcasses attracted feral dogs and rats. These are animals that carry rabies and other diseases that are dangerous to human health. And these animals are also aren't as efficient as disposing and eating dead animals. So the rotting remains of the carcasses that left behind were full of pathogens that were spread to drinking water. And so that would also affect public health.

And because of this, the researchers find that in places where vultures existed and subsequently collapsed during the 1990s, there was an increase in human mortality. Taken together, the researchers

estimated that between 2000 and 2005, the collapse in vulture populations cost half a million additional human deaths. The researchers also showed that this was a permanent effect on mortality rates in those places. And these places had higher mortality rates many years, even after the populations of vultures had collapsed.

So just winding back a bit, why is it that vulture populations collapsed so dramatically in the first place? Well, the reason for that was farmers in India in 1994 began using this drug, anti-inflammatory drug called glycolfiniac, to treat the cattle. This is an anti-inflammatory drug that had been used in humans until that point. And then in 1994, it was expanded for animal use in India. And these drugs are harmless to animals and humans, but prove fatal to vultures because when they ate cattle treated with glycolfiniac, the vultures' kidneys would fail and they would die within weeks. And that explains why the populations collapsed so quickly. And it took years for scientists to identify the cause. But by the time they realized it was the drug, the damage had been done. The damage may have been done, but what was done after that about this drug? So the Indian government banned the use of the drug in 2006. And thanks to that ban, the vulture population has stabilized, but it's still at a very dangerously low level.

And the other thing that has helped has been efforts by conservationists to revive the population of vultures. But that's a huge challenge for two reasons. One is vultures take really long time to breed. They only lay an egg a year. So just increasing the population just takes time. And second, while glycolfiniac may be banned, other drugs with similar effects are still prevalent. So that has prevented conservationists from releasing vultures in the wild. So that has added to the challenge. And the bigger point is that even if these efforts are successful in reviving the vultures' populations, there is no way we can go back to the levels they were of the 1980s. So it's unlikely that the vultures will ever return to India to provide the sanitation service that they once did. It sounds as if, as you say, the damage has been done and indeed that the damage will continue to be done. But what lessons to take from this then? The big lesson which is what the researchers also highlight is that they should serve as a warning for humans to take keystone species more seriously. So keystone species are species, birds or animals like the

vultures that hold ecosystems together. So in a world where we have limited resources, conserving these animals should be a priority. Vultures may not be cute or cuddly, but they're really, really important. Vishnu, thanks very much for your time. Thanks, Jason. That's all for this episode of The Intelligence. The show's editors are Chris Impey and Jack Gill. Our deputy editor is John Jo Devlin and our sound engineer is Will Rowe. Our senior producers are Rory Galloway and Sarah Larnott. Our senior creative producer is William Warren. Our producers are Maggie Kedifa and Kevin Canes and our assistant producer is Henrietta McFarlane. We had extra production help this week from Benji Guy. We'll all see you back here on Monday.