

Hello, this is the Global News podcast from the BBC World Service with reports and analysis from across the world. The latest news seven days a week. BBC World Service podcasts are supported by advertising. This is a special edition of the Global News podcast from the BBC World Service on the conflict between Israel and Hamas. I'm Nick Miles and at 13 hours GMT on Saturday the 28th of October. These are our main stories. Israel's military operations in Gaza have expanded. Dozens of rocket attacks hit across the strip overnight and Israel says it's engaged Hamas fighters on the ground. Israel's war now is against Hamas, not against Palestinian people and not against the people of Gaza. That's why Israel is making efforts to minimize civilian casualties. Aid organizations say internet and phone communications were cut to Gaza. So we have one million children in Gaza to whom we need urgently to get supplies, water supplies, medicine without contact with our office and staff on the ground. It becomes that much more difficult. There has been a significant escalation in Israel's military actions in Gaza. It came just hours after the UN General Assembly overwhelmingly passed a resolution calling for a humanitarian truce there. Overnight from Friday into Saturday there were perhaps the most sustained

Israeli bombardments on Gaza since the Hamas attacks on October the 7th. The Israeli army says it's also expanded its ground operations in several parts of the strip. Daniel Hagaris is from the Israel Defense Forces. During the night our General Security Services and the IDF targeted killing various senior operatives of the Hamas, including a senior official who was responsible for the preparation of the massacre. And we have continued killing various brigade officers and others. They are literally the spearhead of the Hamas operatives.

And we see this as good progress for what we are aiming for against a much more weakened enemy. The forces are still in the field, in the arena and continue. We have no casualties after the activities that we carried out tonight. We're continuing to preserve the security of our forces. Alon Levy is a spokesman for the Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

He said the Israeli army was doing everything in its power to avoid civilian injuries and deaths. Israel's war now is against Hamas. Israel's war is against the terror organization that declared war on us on October 7th, not against the Palestinian people and not against the people of Gaza. That's why Israel is making efforts to minimize civilian casualties despite Hamas' best efforts to maximize them in the Gaza Strip. For example, two weeks ago, we gave Palestinians and the northern Gaza Strip 24 hours to move out of the northern Gaza Strip temporarily for their own safety to the south. Because in northern Gaza, that is where Hamas has embedded its terror infrastructure under their homes, under their schools, under their hospitals.

Internet and phone communications have been cut in Gaza, and that is worrying aid organizations, more on the humanitarian situation in Gaza in a moment. But first is our correspondent, we're at Davis with this update from Jerusalem. Anybody who saw and heard what happened last night

will have gathered quite quickly that this was by far the biggest night of Israeli action over Gaza, shelling and using aircraft to hit dozens, hundreds of targets in the Gaza Strip. For the specifics, the Israelis said they hit about 150 targets, mainly tunnels, which they of course say Hamas uses for commander control centers, for communication centers, and even for training. They also specifically said they eliminated several Hamas commanders, those one commander particularly responsible for aerial attacks using drones and microlights to cross into Israel on October the 7th. So specific targets, and this is the Israeli narrative that

this is a targeted operation, it's an increased operation, it's a more intensive operation, but these are targeted Hamas assets they are hitting. The problem of course is that such as the intensity of the targeting, such as the intensity of the bombing, that there is considerable collateral damage. We've now heard from our correspondent in Gaza that according to the Hamas run health ministry, there have now been almost 8,000 people killed in Gaza. Many of those are children, nearly all of them civilians, and the devastation on the ground can only be, we don't really know just yet because communication with Gaza is really problematic, but given the intensity of the bombing last night, it was a severe military operation that would have led to many, many casualties. And where it wasn't just increased bombing activity, there were land incursions as well. Yeah, this is a very important point as well. Of course, we'd seen limited land incursions about three times this week, once from the sea and twice over the land border, but those were quite limited. Small numbers of tanks, bulldozers, perhaps preparing the way for what happened last night, but last night there were a lot of tanks, a lot of soldiers went into Gaza. There was reportedly hand to hand fighting, perhaps even casualties on both sides. And one thing the Israelis did say in that briefing this morning that the, I quote, troops are still in the field and continue the war. Now, does that mean that Israeli troops have stayed within Gaza, perhaps in advanced positions, either to mop up after what happened overnight, or preparing these advanced positions when the tanks again will go in, perhaps into the built up areas of Gaza, because Israel's aim, unlike previous wars, isn't just to weaken Hamas, isn't just to give Hamas a bloody nose. After what happened on October the 7th, Israel's stated aim is to completely wipe out and annihilate Hamas as a fighting force. And that means the troops will have to go in, tanks will have to go in, in a much greater number than we've seen previously. And perhaps last night was the start of that, especially troops, Israeli troops have stayed within Gaza. Was this the start of an invasion? Was this a limited invasion in its own right? Now these semantics don't matter, because the intensity of the bombing from the air is having a dramatic effect, of course, on the people of Gaza. We're at Davis. Well, at the time of recording this podcast, most internet and phone communications are still cut to Gaza, making it very difficult for aid agencies to contact their staff there. Jeremy Hopkins is the UNICEF representative in Cairo, Egypt. There are several dozen colleagues of ours in Gaza working day and night to bring assistance to vulnerable children. It was around dusk last night that UNICEF lost touch, and we're desperately trying to reconnect with them to find out if they're safe and to continue to support them to do their work for children. We have one million children in Gaza to whom we need urgently to get supplies, water supplies, medicine, health supplies, and food and nutrition supplies, and without contact with our office and staff on the ground, it becomes that much more difficult and that much more terrifying. I mean, our hearts go out to them. They're doing, you know, amazing work under these difficult circumstances, and now they have one more major impediment, which means they can't communicate with us and amongst each other. The quickest way to provide safe humanitarian support to vulnerable children is for an immediate ceasefire. Well, for more on what's happening in Gaza, our correspondent Rushdie Abu Alouf spoke to my colleague Anna Foster via a satellite track in Karnunis. It's about 13, 14 hours, Gaza's without communication, without internet and without a mobile signal. The Palestinian Health Minister just issued a statement saying that about 400 people were killed overnight in

the Israeli air strikes in the north. Israel said that they have expanded their operation, especially in Gaza City and the north here in Karnunis. Also, there was many air strikes overnight with about 20 people killed, about 15 targets around this area and around the middle camps. People are really worried since the Israel is cutting all the communication. People can't communicate with their relatives, with their friends in Gaza City and the north, and people were really in panic. I saw people in the streets today less people in the streets than yesterday. People are afraid of the next stage of the operation. They believe that cutting the communication, this is the first time ever since Hamas took over Gaza and four wars before. We haven't seen Israel completely cutting the communication with Gaza. The humanitarian situation is also getting worse and worse with Israel not allowing food and medicine. I have seen people struggling to find water here in the hospital. People are struggling to find fuel to run the generator and work in the hospital. The medical crews are struggling. The ambulance services are almost shut down since the morning. They say we don't know where to go and how to communicate with the people. After an air strike, they wait for any news from the people on the ground and then they move quickly to the scene and back with casualties here in the hospital. So it's a real catastrophic situation. I'm hoping that you can still hear me. I know that you're using a satellite phone there to hear the questions. How are you managing to find out what else is going on in the strip? Because obviously we're at the northern end on the Israeli side and we can hear continuing bombardment going on throughout the morning. What are you hearing about the intensification and the impact it's having there in Gaza? Communication is extremely difficult and getting information is extremely difficult. A lot of rumors, a lot of conflicting reporting about what happened but we are sure from different sources in the area there is still some people who have like Israeli mobile numbers who still could communicate. I managed to get some information from people in the northeast and west where the the fourth area that Israel is expanding the operation. They said they are not aware of any tanks near the like resident or the highly populated area. So most likely the tanks are still operating within the border area one or one and a half kilometer from the border area. But what the people are noticing is that non-stop Israeli air strike in the area. They said this is the for the first time ever they have seen this scale of explosion a huge black huge fire on the on the sky. Someone told local radio station here I was listening to a local radio station. Someone said it's like a hill what's happened last night in the north and in in Gaza. That was Rushdie Aboulouf in Gaza. In Turkey President Erdogan's political party is hosting what it's calling the great Palestine rally in Istanbul. Mr Erdogan himself is due to make a speech on stage where he's expected to condemn what he's already described as the murder and madness of Israel's response to the October the 7th attacks. He's also called Hamas not a terror organization but a group fighting for liberation. Our reporter Victoria Craig is at the rally. There are several hundred people that have started to assemble. We're at an old disused airport that the president frequently uses for sort of his set piece events the last event that he held here was just ahead of the May election his final rally here in Istanbul and this area was packed it was tens of hundreds of thousands of people gathered to hear him speak and the AKP his party is expecting they say a million people to attend today's rally. There's free public transport today here in Istanbul and tomorrow worth noting that tomorrow is the centenary of the Turkish Republic so that's also designed to get people sort of out and about to various things across the city but certainly here to the rally is you know people are taking public buses and trains to get here. There's a steady stream of people I can see coming

in just to my left here. They're carrying huge Turkish flags lots of Palestinian flags as well but so far the mood here is fairly calm at this hour. And yesterday we were hearing President Erdogan was saying look Hamas is not a terror organization many Western countries including the UK and the EU think that it is. They Mr. Erdogan saying that it's a group fighting for liberation. What is the assessment of a lot of people in Turkey that you speak to about the situation that are going on in Gaza? Well we've seen a lot of protests around Turkey not just here in Istanbul but in the capital Ankara where I'm usually based and all across the country. Shortly after the October 7th attack we saw the U.S. operations in Adana briefly closed because of protests there. Certainly lots of protesters have gathered outside the Israeli and the U.S. embassies those two countries really seen as sort of a united front I guess you could say in this conflict. And so people have taken to the streets and haven't been hesitant really to express their frustration with the situation and the crisis there. For his part the president has said that this rally is designed to draw attention to Israeli brutality as he's called it and support the cause of free Palestine so that's certainly the message that we're expecting to hear from him today. With Victoria Craig well the current conflict has rekindled awareness and passions about the Israel-Palestinian question across the Arab and Muslim world. On Friday Arab diplomats and those from many other nations supported a UN resolution calling for a ceasefire. Well Mike Thompson is our Arab Affairs editor. Where is the public mood at the moment across the Arab world? I would say that very much anti-Israel in many many countries in the region over the last

24 hours we've seen widespread protests in the West Bank the occupied West Bank for instance in Amman in Jordan something like 200,000 people on Friday joined a rally there. Also in the Yemeni capital Sana'a in Lebanon and in Iraq and also in Iraq we've had the religious leader Muktada al-Sadr calling for the country to close the US embassy there because of its support for Israel. By the way Iraq of course does not recognize Israel so it's even more pointed. And then the situation we heard there Mr Erdogan making a distinction over Hamas and what it is and what it isn't. How is Hamas perceived? Does Hamas have sympathy amongst the public in across the Arab world or is it specifically the Palestinians? No I think there is a lot of sympathy for Hamas now anyway after what's been going on in Gaza. There's really little little gray anymore a little more differentiation between the sort of things you were mentioning in the description of Hamas and this is particularly so in countries with large Palestinian minorities of course like like Lebanon but also in Yemen and Iraq where people talk about this open air prison in Gaza. They talk about all the continued settlements in the occupied West Bank attacks by settlers and also the many deaths of Palestinians at the hands of the Israeli military particularly over the last year. And if and when we see a wider incursion by Israeli ground troops into Gaza one has to assume that the death rate will go up amongst Palestinians in flaming feelings yet further. Absolutely this feeling about Hamas that we were talking about and the general anti-Israel feeling has really grown since what happened three weeks ago the Israeli response to that and it's growing more and more intense. That was Mike Thompson. You are listening to a special edition of the Global News podcast as we mentioned Israel's military operations in Gaza have expanded or dozens of rocket attacks hit across the strip overnight and Israel says it's engaged Hamas fighters on the ground. Jeremy Bowen is our international editor and has this analysis. Well what appears to be happening is that they're concentrating on the northern part of the Gaza Strip. There's a place called Beit Hanun and pushing

down a little bit further south from there. I've been trying to get more information out of the Israeli army this morning and they're not adding anything to what they were saying last night which is effectively that they are upping the tempo of their operations and people have seen and people from just outside Gaza have filmed it this very very large bombardment. I mean you can hear it for miles and miles around the extent of the explosions but I think right now as I understand it the army the Israeli army is still in there that they will be trying to clear out these tunnels. They'll probably have special forces there spotting targets for the air force.

Question mark about tanks they're more vulnerable in daylight so maybe they might pull some of those

back but I don't think we should get too hung up on definitions of all of this because I think the assumption was when there was that enormous military buildup fully mobilized army 300,000 plus reservists called up that there would be some kind of all-fronts invasion. I think what they seem to be doing is to be doing it slice by slice. I think you can probably call this I don't know if it's a very extended raid or whether it is the ground offensive but it seems very like a very large military operation to me so without getting as I say too worked up about about what title we give it it seems very much like a ground offensive yeah. That was Jeremy Bowen. Let us get more on the situation on the ground in Gaza now. These paramedics are working in the southern Gaza city of Hanunis. They describe the challenges carrying out their duties. While searching for survivors and casualties I discovered my brother among the martyrs. This has become a part of our work as paramedics in these circumstances. The possibility of finding my brother, my father or my wife martyred.

46 ambulances have been damaged in the Gaza Strip. 24 of those are completely out of service and the

other 22 were partially hit and have been repaired and are functional. We no longer have any body bags in the ambulances and we're facing difficulties in transporting decomposing corpses. We're a Davis is our correspondent in Jerusalem. I ask them to bring us up to date with the latest.

Well Israel is completely unapologetic about its operations. Of course Israel wants the world to remember and want to remind the world that this is all about retaliating and defeating Hamas after what happened on October the 7th when Hamas gunmen thousands of them crossed the Israeli border and

murdered killed 1400 people. Israel says that this isn't a normal operation against Hamas. The likes of which we've seen five times over the last 15 years. This is a war in which Israel's aim is to completely defeat Hamas and what happened overnight fits in with that narrative. Of course they've been ridiculously heavy bombing. I say ridiculously I mean it's the highest level of bombing we've seen every night and every day. These huge levels of explosions and bombs in Gaza prepare the way Israel says for some form of ground offensive. Now what happened overnight that was different to previous nights is that large numbers of Israeli troops and tanks went in on the ground into Gaza much more than we've seen before. Not an invasion because most of them withdrew although we have

learned this afternoon that Israel did apparently leave some troops on the ground either in military terms mopping up after the military operation or perhaps creating advanced bases so this full scale invasion that we're expecting in the coming days might well happen. But Israel on that point is very clear. It says it has specific military objectives. This isn't blanket bombing it says this isn't just bombing Gaza for the sake of it. Israel says it has military objectives to destroy

Hamas tunnels, the command centers underneath Gaza city and the rest of the strip and also to specifically target individual Hamas leaders and it said overnight it succeeded in eliminating in Israeli terms several senior Hamas figures. So that is the the nub of the Israeli military operation. Where you mentioned one of the main aims is to destroy those tunnels which are widespread across particularly northern parts of Gaza. The geography is incredibly difficult though isn't it because Israel is saying that some of those tunnels are underneath a very large hospital where hundreds if not thousands of gardens are sheltering. Yeah that's a difficult one. Israel has maintained for a long time that the chief for hospital which is the main hospital in Gaza well as you say we're not only on most casualties treated there but several people have been seeking refuge there. Israel has alleged for a long time that Hamas uses tunnels and rooms underneath the hospital as a command center. We've seen no proof of that there was an Israeli military briefing earlier this week which purported to show images and proof of that but these were computer generated images

they weren't actual real images of what Israel says is present under the hospital nonetheless Israel maintains that Hamas fighters and commanders use the civilians as in effect as shields to protect them they live amongst the civilians which is why Israel says that sometimes civilian areas are getting hit. Aid agencies say the net effect of all this is that thousands of people are dying there are at least 600 if not 700 000 internally displaced people in Gaza people who the Israelis ordered to leave northern Gaza have gone to the south and in those areas there's still being shelved there's still being bombed there's still being killed in Khan units for example the big town in southern Gaza in theory should be safe but it's clearly not. That was Wira Davis. Relatives of more than 200 Israelis being held hostage in Gaza have expressed alarm at the intensification of the fighting. A statement from the hostages and missing families forum demanded an immediate meeting with the prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu and his defense minister

to discuss their safety. Nirm Sagi's mother Ada Sagi was abducted on the 7th of October after Hamas gunmen stormed the near Oz Kubuts near the border with Gaza. Nirm grew up in the Kubuts but

now lives in London. He spoke to Michel Hussain about his reaction to the events overnight. Exactly three weeks ago to now we're sitting sick worried with lots of messages coming from what started to appear that happened in Israel and I think for the last three weeks 21 days exactly we are worried since that nothing you know not knowing is a psychological torture not hearing it's just one big void of of so many emotions. And as you watch these scenes and it and it's clear that Israel wants to get the hostages back the question is how when you hear calls for a ceasefire what do you think? I'm not a politician and I'm not a military guy and I think that the only way to stop this the quickest way to stop this is to get the 229 hostages plus 100 missing back now. But when you when you hear an Israeli official advisor to the prime minister say the way to do that is to beef up the military operations do you support that? You know I don't know if I can be more worried from the last three weeks and in the way that we are you know there's no sleep and it's constantly trying to do everything in our power to bring them back home so we are worried to I thought to the max I'm more I'm more worried now. That was Noam Sagi. Well let's take a

broader look now at the impact of the conflict. In London the city's police have revealed a startling increase in anti-Semitic hate crimes since Hamas' attacks on October the 7th and Israel's response

to it out from 28 this time last year to 408 reported incidents. There was also a sharp rise in Islamophobic hate crime out from 65 to 174 incidents for the period between the first and the 18th of October. Well for London's Jews it has been an especially unsettling time. Johnny Diamond has been to one of Britain's biggest Jewish communities to hear how life has changed since the October the 7th attacks and a warning his report does include a smattering of language that some listeners may find upsetting. In Stamford Hill North London Grodzinski's bakery is bustling filled not just but mostly with Orthodox Jews here on the shelves are bagels and rugalach, chalabread and biscuits. Once there were more than 20 Grodzinski's across London now there are two this one run by Voldy Cooperstein. There is definitely an increase in anti-Semitism what I see so we've had incidents where the door is open and people were just saying like abuse you old Jews go back a friend of mine just told me that his child walked with him on the street and then suddenly he got a slap on his face literally like that just somebody went past and getting a slap. And Volvy as far as you are concerned this is new because there's been anti-Semitism in London as long as there have been Jews in London but you think there has been a significant shift since the terrible events of a few weeks ago. There's definitely be an increase I must say as well that we have Muslim stuff and we're very happy we never had don't have no issue with them and we have a lot of Muslim customers here and we never had an issue with them. Customers too have tales to tell of a sharp change in me. I was going on the underground and somebody came up to me and he said you bastard and I was scared of him because I'm a small person

otherwise I would have answered him that I have no connection to the whole thing there just like he hasn't got connection to the other side I haven't got the connection to this side. I did see like red pink on trees in my area it makes me a bit not safe like I feel like you know sometimes I'm just a bit scared like you know anything can happen. You walk round Stamford Hill and I mean apart from the fact it's a lovely peaceful neighborhood what you really notice is this is a Jewish neighborhood in particular the number of Orthodox Jews the long dark coats and the conservative clothing this is a place where Haradi Jews in particular are comfortable but also very conspicuous. They've come into the playground central playground sprayed this marquee which the children use they sprayed all these windows this this front door and all these four windows you can see of that building. Joel Friedman is from the Pinter Trust which speaks for Orthodox Jews we're at Lubavitch Senior Girls School in Stamford Hill. There's no specific threats we're told by the police and security services and that is encouraging and we're happy to see life continue as usual but we are very visible and people are very conscious of that. Everyone can feel the stress and the anxiety just bubbling under the surface. Jewish community has lived in Britain pretty happily and pretty successfully for decades now. Are there times when you when you hear about abuse when you hear about attacks when you see the paint sprayed on

a school here where you think is this still a comfortable place for us to live? There's all these things happen the community is anxious and stressed we feel very British and proud to be British and we don't give up easily that hate and imbalance and you know that has to stop. I'm just going to pop inside the school now to meet Rabbi Sterner who's a director and trustee of the Vishnitz School and on the handle here there's still the remnants of the red paint that was splashed on the doors. The girls came in the morning to saw red paint wet paint and they knew with something bringing them not not good so basically they a lot of girls they didn't came

back to school bringing them a lot of anxieties and the teachers as well. In the Jewish community we we have a lot of connections with the Muslim community in the area we are very close we don't feel that because of something happened in the world between Israel and Gaza or any other issue we don't need to suffer from it and we feel that the government need to protect us as well.

That was Rabbi Sterner a director and trustee of the Vishnitz School in Sanford Hill ending that report by Johnny Diamond. Let's go back to what's happening on the ground in Gaza. Israel says its troops and tanks remain in the strip after launching a major incursion to fight Hamas. It also says the Air Force struck 150 underground targets overnight into Saturday. The scenes in Gaza have been described as panic and chaos. Jonathan Marcus is an independent defence analyst. It's a much bigger version of what we've seen in recent days and as far as we know for the moment one of the big differences is that the Israeli forces haven't withdrawn on the ground they seem to still be there and now whether this is a precursor to a sort of gradually building up of a ground operation step by step we just don't know but as I say it's a very very significant increase in the in the military pressure and the military operations by the Israeli Defence Force compared with what we've seen up to now. And Jonathan remind us what Israel is trying

to achieve with this strategy and the broader picture? Well it's in a general rhetorical sense it's trying to destroy Hamas's ability to threaten Israel in the future and we believe to try and destroy Hamas's ability to govern the Gaza Strip. The problem is that's the rhetoric, the reality on the ground raises more questions than are answered. How competent will the Israelis be in dismantling Hamas militarily? How long might that take if they were to be successful you know setting aside for a moment the the terrible human catastrophe in Gaza itself who is going to run Gaza afterwards and it's interesting you know because the Americans sent a very senior military team including a US Marine Corps general who's had a lot of experience of urban fighting in Iraq and elsewhere Lieutenant General James Glynn. He went out to Israel and all of the indications we're getting from the Americans is that they weren't hugely impressed with Israel's military plans. They thought that they left too many of these questions unanswered. So look we're left in a position now with three big sets of questions, four questions. How much damage is going to be done to the civilian population in Gaza? What's the US response going to be if this battle on the ground continues to escalate? What's going to happen of course to the Israeli hostages and finally that fundamental concern of the Americans the fear of this war widening with Hezbollah being drawn in on Israel's northern border and potentially in a sense Iran too and I think that as this operation continues you know nervous eyes will be looking to the north all the time to see what might happen there. That was independent defence analyst Jonathan Marcus. And that's all from us for now but there will be a new edition of the Global News podcast later on. If you want a comment on this podcast or the topics covered in it you can send us an email. The address is globalpodcast.bbc.co.uk. You can also find us on X formerly known as Twitter at Global News Pod. The editor of the Global News podcast is Karen Martin. I'm Nick Miles and until next time goodbye.