Difficulty locating towers targeted in IDF evacuation notices –the case of the "Italian Tower," Gaza City, September 26, 2025: spatial data and background

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Summary: IDF prides itself on giving prior warnings in advance of attacks on buildings. Yet these warnings are often needlessly opaque and confusing. Described here (with data layers attached) is a recent case: the bombing of the Italian Tower on September 26, 2025 following an evacuation warning for an area and neighborhood that did not include the tower destroyed. The vague image and street name of the building in question combined with its location outside of the mentioned evacuated area made geolocation difficult even for well equipped analysts. Identification would present an even greater great barrier to the civilians whose protection is the ostensible goal of such warnings, especially given that alerts sometimes are given less than an hour before the attack itself.

Background

The "Italian Tower" was a mixed 16/17 floor residential/commercial tower constructed in the 1990s by an Italian businessman, and destroyed a bit more than a decade ago, in a wave of high rise building bombings, during the final days before the ceasefire of the 2014 conflict.[1] After an advance warning to evacuate, it was hit by seven consecutive missiles on August 25, 2014, and collapsed[2]. The complex was among the residential towers allocated a grant for reconstruction from the Italian government in 2017[3], work that was completed with an opening ceremony in the summer of 2023[4], just two months before the onset of the current war. It was severely damaged in three of its upper stories on January 17, 2024[5], and housed refugees and residents.

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1 https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/aug/26/israel-bombs-two-gaza-city-tower-blocks; https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-30393540

2 https://www.alhaq.org/monitoring-documentation/6609.html

3 https://english.palinfo.com/o_post/Italian-grant-for-reconstruction-of-towers-in-Gaza/

4 https://gerusalemme.aics.gov.it/news/gaza-the-opening-ceremony-of-the-italian-tower/?lang=en

5 https://gigaza.org/en/war-damage/italian-complex-gaza/

At 11:36 on the morning of September 26, 2025, the following warning was issued (Figure 1).[6] No map of these evacuation blocks was given, only the block numbers, while the image of the targeted tower gave no intrinsic orienting information on which tower was intended, other than the name of the street.

"Urgent!! Urgent warning to all those who have not yet evacuated the Gaza Port area and Al-Rimal neighborhood in blocks 724, 725, 777, 835, 704, 702, 709 near the building marked in red and the adjacent tents on Amin Al-Husseini Street

- **The Defense Army will attack the building in the near future due to the presence of terrorist infrastructure belonging to Hamas inside it or adjacent to it.**
- **For your safety, you are compelled to evacuate the building immediately southward toward the humanitarian zone in Mawasi."**

Figure 1: IDF warning at 11:36 AM on Spet. 26, 2025

The street mentioned did not appear readily in searches on Google Maps or other online sources, and a careful search for the building configuration within the 7 evacuation blocks yielded no match. Fortunately, a NGO staff person familiar with Gaza remembered the location of the street sign of this street, the Gaza-based representative on an international news agency reported local groups saying the target was the "Italian Towers," and this was confirmed by an expert geolocation effort on social media as (31.5309123, 34.456843).[7]

The tower's location clarified why the search for the building in the evacuation zone was not successful: the building lies outside of the area designated in the evacuation alert. It is four streets north of the northmost evacuation blocks and of the northern boundary of the Remal neighbourhood mentioned in the alert (Figure 2). Even had the street mentioned (Amin Al-Husseini Street) been in the

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6 https://x.com/AvichayAdraee/status/1971493974515847263

7 https://x.com/Stinky915846091/status/1971500576103166091

designated neighbourhood or evacuation blocks, scanning of its 2.5 km length would be needlessly prolonged given the absence of a familiar name or a cross-street, sometimes provided in such warnings.

Figure 2: targeted building lying outside the announced evacuation blocks and neighborhood. Key features of the map are deposited as KML files in the repository.

Soon thereafter, the building was reported as being destroyed (Al Jazeera reported this at 13:23, less than two hours after the warning). Imagery showed the towers toppled (Figure 4).[8] A follow-up tweet by the IDF army spokesman some hours later (Figure 3) reported on the raid against the tower, acompanied by the claim that it had housed a Hamas observation point, and that civilian casualties had been reduced as as much as possible through various measures, including advance warning to the residents.

Despite their declared effort to provide advance warning that might reduce civilian casualties, there seems to be some carelessness or even reticence by the IDF to make the location of the targets of these advance warning notifications explicit. Even professionals with good internet connectivity and quality spatial tools were unable to decipher these locations in a reasonable time, and in other cases similar warnings preceded the bombing of towers by

8 https://www.instagram.com/p/DPFWfLREgAe/?utm_source=ig_web_button_share_sheet

only 20 minutes. If you want people to know where you are warning about, a simple coordinate (31.5309123, 34.456843) would eliminate ambiguity. These coordinates are available to the IDF, so the repeated and consistent degrading of the informational quality of advance warnings suggests they may be performed for a primary purpose and audience other than the civilians whose protection is claimed to be their function.

Figure 3: Follow-up tweet by IDF on destruction of tower

Figure 4: the Italian Tower toppled