

UN Human Rights Office in Occupied Palestinian Territory
Ramallah
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Khan Younis – Evacuation order and fatalities

UN Human Rights Office condemns the repeated displacement pursuant to an evacuation order by the Israeli military to civilians in northeast Khan Younis. The evacuation order was issued in the context of ongoing attacks by the Israeli military and gave no time for civilians to know from which areas they were required to leave or where they should go. Despite the evacuation order, Israeli military operations continued in and around the area unabated. The evacuation order also covered parts of Salah al-Deen Road, which has been one of two main routes vital for the transport and distribution of aid, raising concerns that delivery and provision of desperately needed humanitarian assistance will be further reduced or prevented.

Since 21 July, Israeli airstrikes have reportedly intensified in Khan Younis. On 22 July, multiple airstrikes were reported, including in Bani Suhaila, Al Qarara and Abasan Al Kabira, along with the intensification of shelling in eastern Khan Younis. Around the same time, the Israeli military issued an evacuation order for areas in eastern Khan Younis, including parts of the area that they had unilaterally designated a “humanitarian zone”, claiming that armed Palestinians were firing projectiles from these areas towards Israel. According to Gaza Ministry of Health, by 1920 hours on 22 July, Israeli airstrikes and shelling of Khan Younis had resulted in the killing of at least 70 Palestinians, including women and children, while injuring at least 200 others, some in a critical condition.

Many of those displaced as a result of the latest evacuation order have been displaced countless times. Many have been forced to head in the direction of Al Mawasi area of Khan Younis, which has little or no infrastructure to support the masses of civilians who have been already displaced there and where there is little access to shelter or to basic, life-saving humanitarian assistance. Furthermore, despite Al Mawasi, Khan Younis being declared a “humanitarian zone” by the Israeli military, it continues to conduct airstrikes and shelling into the area. As the UN Human Rights Office has stated previously, there is no safe place in Gaza.

Confusing mass evacuation orders issued by a party that is concurrently increasing the intensity of its attacks on the areas from which evacuation is ordered and through which people must move place civilians in more danger and may increase the harm to civilians. This raises serious concerns regarding Israel's compliance with its obligation to take all

feasible precautions to avoid, and in any event to minimize, incidental loss of civilian life and injury to civilians.

UN Human Rights Office reminds Israel that in the conduct of its military operations, constant care must be taken to spare the civilian population, civilians and civilian objects. In this regard, where evacuations are required to ensure the security of the affected civilians or for imperative military reasons, it must take reasonable steps to allow people to move safely.

UN Human Rights Office also reminds Palestinian armed groups that the indiscriminate firing of projectiles into Israel or using the presence of civilians in an attempt to shield themselves from attack also constitutes violations of International Humanitarian Law.

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