

UN Human Rights in Occupied Palestinian Territory

Ramallah

05 August 2024

UN Human Rights Office in Palestine horrified by pattern of Israeli strikes on schools in Gaza and use of lethal force in the West Bank

The UN Human Rights Office is horrified by the unfolding pattern of the Israeli Defense Force (IDF) strikes on schools in Gaza killing internally displaced Palestinians seeking shelter there. Strikes on at least 17 schools just in the last month reportedly killed at least 163 Palestinians, including children and women - suggesting a failure to comply with the principles of distinction, proportionality, and precautions in carrying out these attacks.

Such attacks are escalating. In the span of the last eight days, at least seven schools were targeted. On 27 July, Khadija School and the adjacent Ahmad Al Kurd School in Deir al Balah were struck, killing at least 30 Palestinians, reportedly including 15 children and 8 women. On 1 August, Dalal Moghrabi public school in Ash Shujaiyeh neighborhood in eastern Gaza City was struck killing 15 Palestinians, including children, followed on 3 August, by an attack on Hamama School and the adjacent Huda School in Shake Radwan in Gaza City, with initial reports indicating at least 16 Palestinians were killed, including children and women. On 4 August, Hassan Salame and Nasser Schools in An Nassr area in western Gaza City were attacked almost simultaneously, with initial reports suggesting at least 25 Palestinians, including children and women, were killed. All seven schools were reportedly serving as shelters for Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) while Khadija school was also serving as a field hospital. The Israeli military claims that Khadija, Dala Moghrabi, Hamama, Hassan Salame and Nasser schools were being used by “ Hamas operatives”. Meanwhile, in the last four weeks, the UN Human Rights Office has recorded another 10 strikes on schools across Gaza.

While the collocation by armed groups of military objectives with civilians or the use of the presence of civilians with the objective of shielding a military objective from attack constitute violations of International Humanitarian Law (IHL) it does not negate Israel’s obligation to comply strictly with International Humanitarian Law, including the principles of proportionality, distinction and precaution when carrying out military operations. Israel, as the occupying power, is also obliged to provide the evacuated population s with basic humanitarian needs, including safe shelter.

The UN Human Rights Office calls once more for an immediate cease-fire.

The Office is also extremely concerned by Israeli security forces’ (ISF) use of lethal force in the West Bank as it reportedly killed nine Palestinians on 3 August, five of which appeared to have been planned extra-judicial executions. According to information gathered by the UN Human Rights Office, including statements by Israeli authorities, ISF raided western areas of Tulkarem in the early morning of 3 August 2024, withdrawing after about two hours. At around 06:20 am,

ISF targeted a Palestinian vehicle on a road in Tulkarem with two consecutive airstrikes and killed five Palestinian men inside the vehicle, claiming that they were on the way to carry out a “terrorist attack”. At around 12:30 pm, after a raid by the ISF in south-western Tulkarem, ISF and four Palestinian armed men on a side road in Tulkarem engaged in an exchange of fire. The ISF then launched an airstrike against the four men, killed them.

The planned killing of individuals who do not represent an imminent threat to life as well as the regular recourse to military tactics and weapons of war in law enforcement operations in the occupied West Bank raises concerns of unnecessary or disproportionate, and unlawful, use of force.

On 4 August, in another disturbing incident, a Palestinian man from Salfit, occupied West Bank, reportedly stabbed and killed two Israelis and injured two others in Holon, Tel Aviv, after irregularly crossing into Israel. ISF reportedly shot and killed the assailant on the spot.

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