

UN Human Rights in Occupied Palestinian Territory

Ramallah

4 October 2024

UN Human Rights Office Condemns Unlawful Airstrike on Tulkarem Camp, Calls for Accountability and Protection of Civilians

The UN Human Rights Office strongly condemns the airstrike carried out by Israeli security forces (ISF) on a residential building in Tulkarem camp on the evening of 3 October that killed at least 18 Palestinians.

At around 2220 hours on 3 October, the Israeli air force bombed a three-story residential building, with a café on the ground floor, in a heavily populated area in Tulkarem camp. No clashes or confrontations were occurring at the site. The airstrike completely destroyed the targeted building and also damaged nearby houses. More fatalities may be trapped under the rubble, but recovery and identification are proving difficult in light of the massive impact of the blast. The IDF stated that they had killed a local Hamas leader, who was allegedly planning to carry out attacks on Israeli settlements, including in the “immediate timeframe”, as well as other “significant terrorists”. According to information gathered by OHCHR, most of those killed were not armed or wanted by the ISF and were killed in their homes or while passing in the street. Among those killed were an entire family of five, including two children, who lived in the targeted building. In total, at least three children and two women were among those killed.

The strike is part of a highly concerning pattern of unlawful use of force by ISF during military-like operations in the West Bank that have caused widespread harm to Palestinians and significant damage to buildings and infrastructure. Since 7 October 2023, ISF has killed 697 Palestinians in the West Bank, including 161 children and 12 women, 186 of them in airstrikes. In Tulkarem alone, ISF has killed 174 Palestinians, including 88 by airstrikes. Such incidents cannot become normalized as an acceptable method of law enforcement.

This incident is another clear example of ISF’s systematic resort to lethal force in the West Bank that is frequently unnecessary, disproportionate, and therefore unlawful. The levelling of an entire building filled with people via aerial bombing shows flagrant disregard for Israel’s obligations. Israel must carry out a thorough, prompt, independent, and transparent investigation into this incident and hold perpetrators of violations to account, as required by international human rights law.

The International Court of Justice recently held that Israel’s presence in the Occupied Palestinian Territory is unlawful and called for it to end this unlawful presence as rapidly as possible. In the

meantime, Israel is bound by the laws of occupation, which require it to take steps to ensure the security of the Palestinian population in the OPT while complying with the international human rights standards applicable to law enforcement. ISF's repeated use of unnecessary and excessive force against Palestinians in the West Bank is not only inconsistent with these obligations but is contributing to an escalation of violence that risks further jeopardizing the security of Palestinians and Israelis alike.

#ENDS

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