

UN Human Rights in Occupied Palestinian Territory

Ramallah

14 October 2024

UN Human Rights Office is appalled at the desperate situation in the North Gaza

The UN Human Rights Office is appalled by Israel's continued bombing and other attacks on parts of North Gaza, where its forces have trapped tens of thousands of Palestinians, including civilians, in their homes and shelters with no access to food or other life-sustaining necessities. In the shadow of the escalation of hostilities across the Middle East, the Israeli military appears to be cutting off North Gaza completely from the rest of the Gaza Strip and conducting hostilities with absolute disregard for the lives and security of Palestinian civilians.

For the eighth consecutive day, the Israeli military continued heavy strikes in North Gaza. While repeatedly ordering residents to move to the south of Gaza, on 9 October, Israeli troops reportedly erected sand mounds and blocks at the Abu Sharekh roundabout, the critical junction for those trying to move between North Gaza and Gaza City, in northern part of Gaza, effectively sealing off North Gaza and reportedly attacked those trying to flee. On 9 October, the Israeli military reportedly struck a group of people in the vicinity of Abu Sharakh roundabout, killing a photojournalist and injuring another. According to reports received by the office, on 10 October at around noon, the Israeli military again fired on people near the Abu Sharakh roundabout, killing several Palestinians and injuring others.

At the same time, attacks on schools serving as shelters for IDPs in Jabalya in North Gaza have continued, almost daily, demonstrating disregard for the lives of Palestinian civilians. The Gaza Civil Defense has, in many cases, been unable to reach Palestinians pleading for rescue, partially due to lack of fuel and equipment, exacerbated by the reported destruction of one of their two remaining stations in the entire North Gaza governorate.

The separation of North Gaza raises further concerns that Israel does not intend to allow civilians to return to their homes, and the repeated calls for all Palestinians to leave northern Gaza raise grave concerns of large-scale forced transfer of the civilian population. Shooting at civilians would amount to war crime, including when they are fleeing in response to an order to evacuate.

Israel, as the occupying power, has the obligation to ensure food, water, medical care and other basic necessities for civilians in Gaza, including by complying with its duty to ensure public order and civil life. The denial of entry of sufficient goods necessary for the survival of the civilian population into northern Gaza and the refusal or failure by Israel to provide these essentials, especially following more than a year of existing unlawful impediments to humanitarian assistance, will inevitably lead to further unnecessary suffering and deaths.

The UN Human Rights Office reminds Israel that the forcible transfer of the population of North Gaza would amount to a war crime and may amount to other atrocity crimes, as would shooting at civilians.

fleeing hostilities in response to their orders, and demands an immediate end to the siege of northern Gaza, the repeated bombing of IDP shelters and a public confirmation to its troops that civilians who are not directly participating in hostilities may never be targeted.

#ENDS

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