

UN Human Rights in Occupied Palestinian Territory

Ramallah

5 December 2024

In Gaza: Seven attacks on tent encampments in the past two weeks kill 34 Palestinians including 10 children

Israel must immediately stop the forcible transfer of Palestinians in Gaza, allow people to return home, and, in the meantime, ensure the safety of civilians, including in shelters.

Yesterday, 4 December, an Israeli airstrike hit a makeshift tent encampment sheltering 21 families in Al Mawasi, Khan Younis, which had been unilaterally declared a “safe humanitarian zone” by the Israeli military. The strike, together with secondary explosions, destroyed all 21 tents and killed at least 23 Palestinians, including at least 4 children and 2 women – one of them pregnant - while seriously injuring others. The Israeli military claims to have targeted “senior Hamas commanders” and alleges that secondary explosions were likely caused by weapons present in the area. However, according to the information available to UN Human Rights Office, it was the gas cylinders for domestic use that appear to have caused these secondary explosions.

This is the seventh attack on an IDP tent encampment in the past two weeks, altogether killing at least 34 Palestinians, including 10 children and 3 women. Four of these attacks occurred in the Israeli-declared “humanitarian zone” in Al Mawasi, killing at least 11 Palestinians including a woman who died with her 2 daughters, and 4 additional children.

Almost everyone in Gaza has been displaced more than once due to ceaseless Israeli displacement orders and bombardment. In this context, the pattern of attacks on shelters including schools and tent camps raise concerns about Israel's failure to comply with its obligations under International Humanitarian Law including the principles of distinction, proportionality, and precautions in attack. Depending on the circumstances, such strikes may amount to the deliberate targeting of civilians- a war crime and could also amount to crimes against humanity when conducted as part of a widespread or systematic attack against a civilian population.

The UN Human Rights Office urges the Israeli military to prioritize the protection of civilians in Gaza. We call for independent, impartial and effective investigations for all such attacks on tents sheltering displaced families that have led to the deaths of civilians, including women and children, since the beginning of the war on 7 October 2023 and for accountability for those found responsible. We also urge the Palestinian armed groups to refrain from any activities that may expose civilians to the risk of attacks.

ENDS

For more information and media requests, please contact:

Mayy El Sheikh – mayy.elsheikh@un.org

Tag and share

Twitter [@OHCHR_Palestine](https://twitter.com/OHCHR_Palestine)

Facebook [UN Human Rights Palestine](https://www.facebook.com/UNHumanRightsPalestine)