

UN report says more than 250 Gazans killed by Israeli fire since March 2018



United Nations, January 22 (RHC)-- The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) says more than 250 Palestinians have been killed and over 23,000 injured by Israeli forces since the Great March of Return rallies began along the border between the besieged Gaza Strip and the Israeli-occupied territories on March 30, 2018.

The UN body said in a report that at least 254 Palestinians had been killed in the besieged Palestinian coastal enclave between March 30 and December 31. Among those killed were 44 children and four women.

“Since March 30, 2018, the Gaza Strip has witnessed a significant increase in Palestinian casualties in the context of mass demonstrations and other activities along Israel’s perimeter fence with Gaza, taking place as part of the Great Return March, as well as during hostilities and access related incidents,” the report said.

In addition, 23,603 Palestinians were injured in the same period, including 5183 boys, 464 girls and 1437 women, almost all of them during the March of Return protests.

The report raised concerns about Israel's "excessive use of force" against peaceful Palestinian protesters participating in the anti-occupation rallies. "The large number of casualties among unarmed Palestinian demonstrators, including a high percentage of demonstrators hit by live ammunition, has raised concerns about excessive use of force by Israeli troops."

"Exposure of children to violence and lack of protection for medical teams are also of concern. Despite significant assistance provided, addressing the resulting multi-sectoral needs of the mass influx of casualties remains challenging due to the lack of funds, years of blockade, the internal divide and a chronic energy crisis," the report added.

According to the report, the largest number of fatalities and injuries occurred during mass protests against the relocation of the United States embassy from Tel Aviv to occupied Jerusalem in May 2018.

Palestinians have held weekly protests on the Gaza border, over the siege on the enclave and the right for refugees to return to their homes they fled during the 1948 creation of Israel.

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