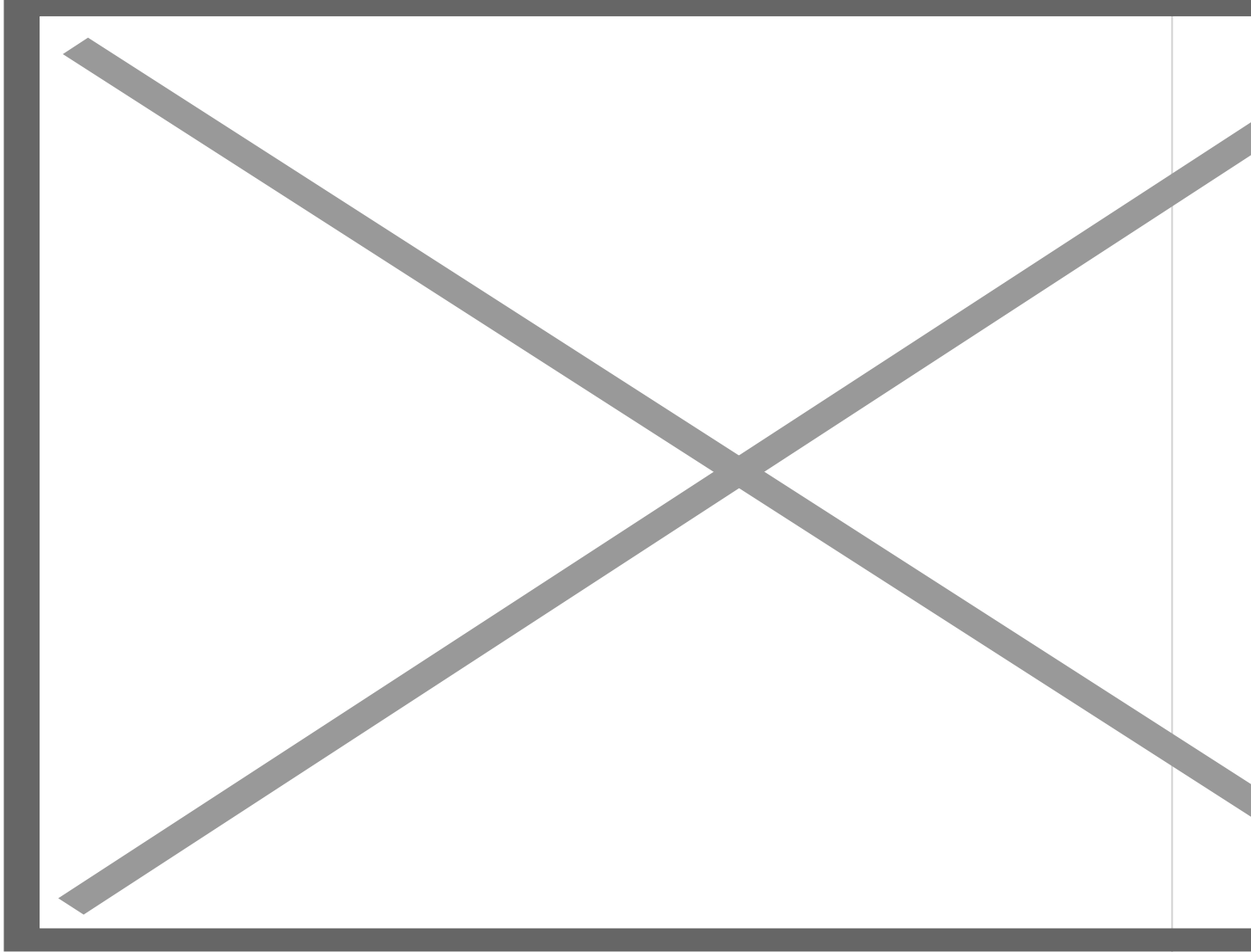


UN calls on Israel to provide Palestinians with coronavirus vaccines

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United Nations, January 28 (RHC)-- The United Nations has called on the Israeli regime to help ensure Palestinians will receive COVID-19 vaccinations amid the coronavirus pandemic.

"The UN continues to encourage Israel to help address the priority needs of Palestinians... and to support Covid-19 vaccine availability more generally," UN's new peace coordinator for the Middle East, Tor Wennesland, said during a video call with Security Council ministers. "It is important that the same level of engagement and cooperation be sustained with regard to the delivery of vaccines," Wennesland added.

Stressing that the pandemic has taken a heavy toll on the occupied Palestinian territories, the UN official said the cost of lives and livelihoods there remain high, particularly in the Gaza Strip.

Israel has injected more than 2.5 million people in the occupied territories with Pfizer and Moderna vaccines, but Palestinian Authority's Foreign Minister Riyad al-Maliki said Tel Aviv had declined to provide any vaccines to the Palestinians.

So far, over 156,000 Palestinians have been infected with the coronavirus and more than 1,800 have lost their lives. Moreover, Palestinian officials have on several occasions expressed serious concern over the deteriorating health conditions of prisoners infected with COVID-19 in Israeli prisons.

The Palestinian Information Center cited the Prisoners' Press Office as saying in a statement earlier this week that the Israeli Prison Service (IPS) prevents the provision of vitamins and medical supplies necessary for infected prisoners, adding that it deprives them of protection methods such as sterilizers, cleaning materials and masks.

The rights group further appealed to international institutions to immediately intervene to ensure the infected prisoners' access to appropriate medical treatment, adding they are isolated in tragic conditions in departments that lack the minimum health services.

A large number of Palestinian prisoners have over the past months been infected with the coronavirus due to the negligence of the Israeli authorities, with reports saying the number of cases has reached more than 230 people.

The United Nations has already called for the protection of Palestinian prisoners being held in Israeli jails and detention facilities amid the novel coronavirus pandemic. Over 7,000 Palestinian prisoners are currently held in some 17 Israeli jails, with dozens of them serving multiple life sentences.

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