

UN rights chief calls for end to Israeli killing of Gaza's people at schools and shelters



Geneva, November 20 (RHC)-- The United Nations human rights chief has called for an end to the Israeli regime's killing of defenseless people of the Gaza Strip who have taken refuge at schools that are now being used as shelters.

In a statement issued on Sunday, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Türk also expressed disbelief following a "horrendous" bout of violence against Palestinian people in Gaza by Israel, which has brought the territory under an all-out genocidal war for more than a month now.

"The killing of so many people at schools-turned-shelters, [while] hundreds fleeing for their lives from al-Shifa Hospital amid continuing displacement of hundreds of thousands in southern Gaza are actions, which fly in the face of the basic protections civilians must be afforded under international law," the UN rights chief said.

His remarks came a day after more than 200 Palestinians were killed and injured in an Israeli bombing of al-Fakhoora School, which is affiliated with the UN agency for Palestinian refugees, in Jabalia refugee camp in the northern Gaza Strip. Shortly afterwards, the regime targeted Tal al-Zaatar, another school, in the town of Beit Lahia, which is also located in northern Gaza, with another bombing.

"Images purportedly taken in the aftermath of the reported Israeli strike on al-Fakhoora School are horrifying, clearly showing large numbers of women, children, and men severely wounded or killed. At least, three other schools hosting displaced Palestinians have also been attacked in the past 48 hours," the UN official said.

"Israeli military operations have been continuing inside and around al-Shifa Hospital. UN colleagues visited the site yesterday and witnessed first-hand what they described as a 'death zone'," Türk added.

"Medical personnel, patients and civilians have fled the hospital, ordered to do so by the Israeli military. Hundreds were seen making their way south on foot at great risk to their lives, health, and safety. And to where? Nowhere is safe in Gaza," he added.

Al-Shifa, Gaza's largest hospital, has taken the brunt of the regime's attacks on healthcare targets across the coastal sliver. The regime claims that the hospital houses a "command center" belonging to the resistance movement Hamas. It began targeting the facility shortly into the war and recently ordered forcible evacuation of citizens, the sick, the wounded, and medical staff in order to turn the hospital into closed military barracks.

The Israeli regime started the war on Gaza on October 7 after the territory's Palestinian resistance groups carried out the surprise Operation al-Aqsa Storm against the occupied territories in response to the regime's intensified crimes against the Palestinian people.

According to Gaza's Health Ministry, at least 13,000 Palestinians, including more than 5,000 children, have so far been killed, while about 30,000 people have been injured.

Addressing the Israeli war's hugely indiscriminate nature, Türk said, "Rules of international humanitarian law, including the principles of distinction, proportionality, and precautions in carrying out the attacks, must be strictly adhered to," adding, "Failure to adhere to these rules may constitute war crimes."

Noting that "the pain, dread, and fear etched on the faces of children, women, and men is too much to bear," the UN official said, "Irrespective of warnings, Israel is obliged to protect civilians wherever they are."

"How much more violence, bloodshed, and misery will it take before people come to their senses? How many more civilians will be killed?" the UN official asked, asserting: "This must stop. Humanity must come first. A ceasefire - on humanitarian and human rights grounds - is desperately needed. NOW!"

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