

UNRWA says 108 staff members killed in Israeli bombardment of Gaza



United Nations, November 22 (RHC)-- The United Nations Palestinian Refugee Agency (UNRWA) says at least 108 employees have been killed since the Israeli regime launched its relentless war on the Gaza Strip last month.

The UN agency's commissioner-general Philippe Lazzarini said in a statement on Tuesday that nearly 67 UNRWA installations had been hit, 17 of them directly. "Most of them were in the middle areas and in the south, where people were promised safety," the UN official noted. "We cannot even protect people under the United Nations flag," he added.

Elsewhere in the statement, Lazzarini also said that 176 displaced people sheltering in UNRWA installations were reported killed and at least 778 injured. This includes the most recent attacks on two

UNRWA schools.

The remarks come as the people of Gaza are not safe anywhere: not at home, not under the UN flag, not in a hospital, not in the North, and not in the South.

Figures show at least 1.7 million people – almost 80 percent of the population – are displaced from their homes and moved into half of the Gaza Strip.

More than 900,000 people are sheltering in UNRWA installations, including in the north.

More United Nations aid workers have been killed in Gaza than in any other single conflict in the organization's 78-year history. Observers say this was a stark reminder that humanitarian staff from global agencies have not been spared from Israel's relentless bombardment of the besieged strip.

UN offices around the world recently lowered their flags to half-mast and UN staff held a moment of silence to mourn and honor their colleagues killed in Gaza.

"They will never be forgotten," said UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, who led the minute of silence from UN headquarters in New York last week.

Meanwhile, the World Health Organization has sounded the alarm about the humanitarian situation in Gaza. It warns about the risk of disease outbreak as Israel continues its relentless bombing in the Palestinian territory.

A WHO spokesperson has said that three hospitals in Israeli-besieged Gaza had requested help with evacuating patients and that planning had started.

Hospitals have come under bombardment in Israel's war on Gaza and all hospitals in the northern part of the enclave have effectively ceased functioning normally. WHO spokesperson Christian Lindmeier said evacuations were a last resort. "It's robbing the entire population of the north of the means to seek health (care)," he told a Geneva press briefing.

The Palestinian Health Ministry has announced that all hospitals in northern Gaza went out of service, and coordination is underway to evacuate the besieged Indonesia Hospital.

Separately the ministry stated that 259 injured people, several civilians and medical personnel are still inside Al Shifa Hospital and there is no date yet for their evacuation.

Despite international calls for the protection of hospitals, Israel keeps targeting medical facilities in the Gaza Strip.

The Gaza death toll has surpassed 14,000, most of them women and children.

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