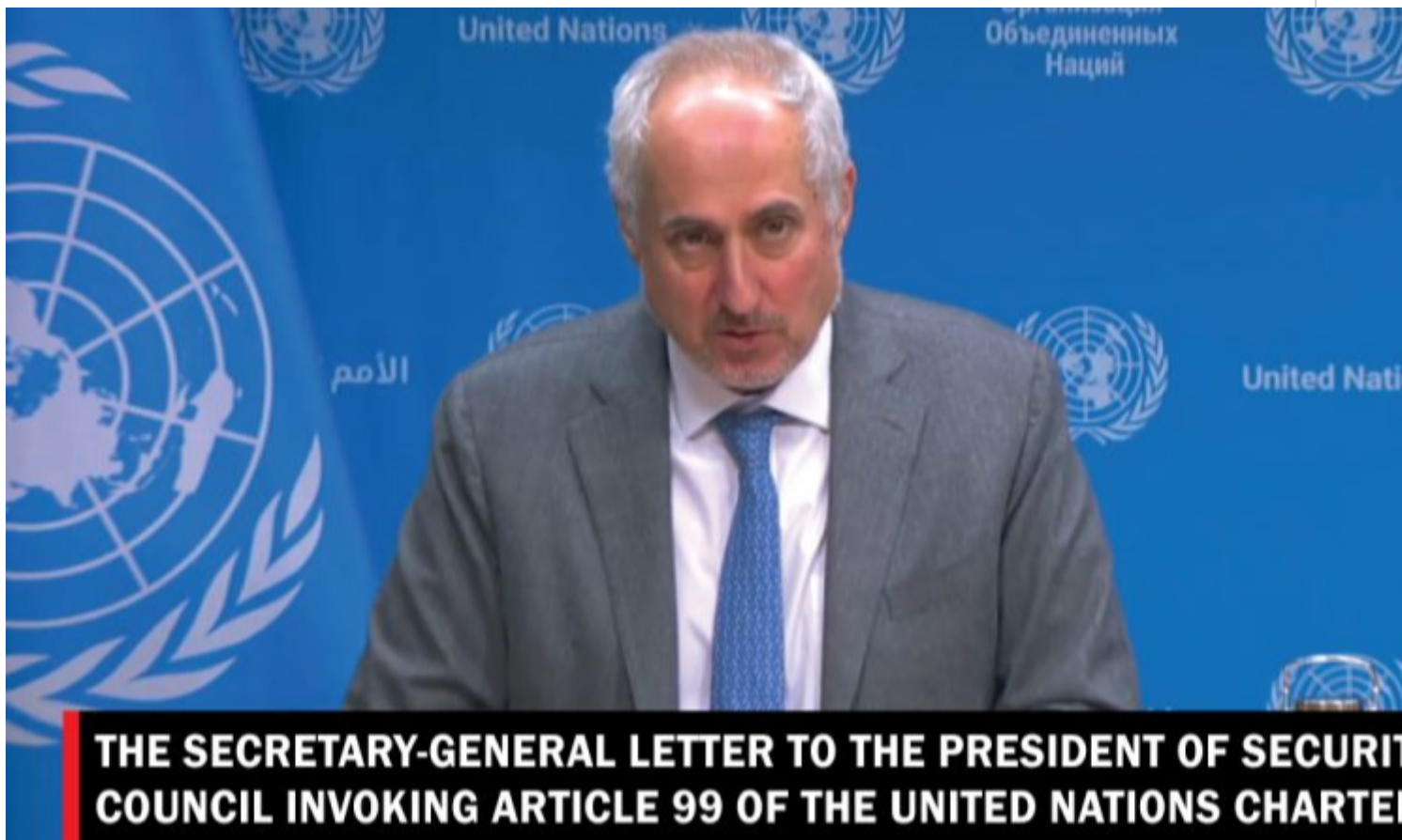


UN chief refers situation in Gaza to UN Security Council, invoking Article 99



President of the Security Council, José De La Gasca

United Nation, December 6 (RHC)-- United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres has formally referred the situation in Gaza to the UN Security Council, urging its members to "avert a humanitarian catastrophe" in the besieged enclave.

Guterres delivered a letter to the president of the Security Council, José De La Gasca, on Wednesday, invoking Article 99 of the UN Charter, his spokesperson Stephane Dujarric said in a statement. "This is

the first time that António Guterres has done this since he became Secretary-General in 2017," Dujarric said in the statement.

Article 99 gives the secretary general the remit to "bring to the attention of the Security Council any matter which in his opinion may threaten the maintenance of international peace and security."

In his letter, Guterres said the conflict has created "appalling human suffering, physical destruction and collective trauma across Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory."

The UN chief highlighted the plight of Gazan civilians, who he said are facing "grave danger" on a daily basis. "There is no effective protection of civilians. ... Nowhere is safe in Gaza," Guterres said. "Amid constant bombardment by the Israel Defence Forces, and without shelter or the essentials to survive, I expect public order to break down soon due to the desperate situation, rendering even limited humanitarian assistance impossible," he said, warning the situation could worsen if the spread of disease reaches epidemic proportions and mass displacement creates "pressure" on neighboring countries.

In the closing paragraph of his letter, Guterres urged Security Council members to "press to avert a humanitarian catastrophe" and support his call for a humanitarian ceasefire in Gaza.

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