

Israeli air strikes kill UN official and 70 of his extended family members in Gaza



Palestinian employees of United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) take part in a protest in Gaza City [File:Ibraheem Abu Mustafa/Reuters]

Gaza City, December 26 (RHC)-- A United Nations official has been killed along with more than 70 members of his extended family in an Israeli airstrike near Gaza City, as the world body condemned a series of mass massacres and successive crimes committed by the Israeli crimes in the besieged territory.

Issam Al Mughrabi, 56, who worked for the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) for three decades was killed along with his wife and children in an Israeli airstrike on Friday.

UNDP administrator Achim Steiner on Sunday criticized the Israeli regime for targeting civilians and UN staff in the besieged strip. "For almost 30 years, Issam has worked with UNDP through our Programme of Assistance to the Palestinian People," Steiner said in a statement on Sunday.

"The loss of Issam and his family has deeply affected us all. The UN and civilians in Gaza are not a target."

Offering his condolences to Issam's family and colleagues, the World Health Organization's chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus also stressed in a post on X that "humanitarians should never be victims" and called for a ceasefire.

Since Israel's war on Gaza began on October 7, 136 staff members of the UN have been killed.

The death of the veteran UN staff member and his family members comes as hundreds of people have been killed in intensified Israeli bombardment since Friday.

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres recently said that throughout the world body's history, they had never witnessed the death of their staff in such large numbers. "Most of our staff have been forced from their homes," he added in a post on X, paying tribute to UN members working in Gaza.

UNRWA director Thomas White shared similar concerns and highlighted that conditions on the ground for aid workers should be secure, for aid deliveries to be carried out. "We need a ceasefire that will stop the killing of civilians and destruction of civilian infrastructure in Gaza," he said.

Israel keeps pounding the besieged Gaza Strip, where every new airstrike and shelling further worsens the humanitarian situation.

The Palestinian health ministry says dozens of Palestinians were killed this week and some were publicly executed during an Israeli military offensive.

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