

World Health Organization warns of danger of polio epidemic in Gaza



Geneva, July 24 (RHC)-- The World Health Organization (WHO) expressed on Tuesday its extreme concern about a possible massive outbreak of polio in Gaza, after detecting poliovirus of type 2 vaccine origin (VDPV2) in six environmental samples taken in Gaza.

During a UN press conference via video call, the leader of the WHO's emergency health team, Ayadil Saparbekov, said: "I am extremely worried about an outbreak that could be happening in Gaza."

Saparbekov said that action must be taken immediately, as there is a high risk of the outbreak spreading within Gaza and internationally. He also expressed his concern about the various outbreaks of communicable diseases that could occur in that city.

The head of WHO's emergency services in the occupied Palestinian territories, Ayadil Saberkov, also stressed "We believe there is a high risk of spreading the circulating poliovirus not only because of its detection, but also because of the serious water sanitation situation in the Strip."

Saberkov said that the WHO is conducting an epidemiological investigation and then, based on the result, will determine a plan of action. In this regard, he acknowledged that the constant attacks by the Israeli army in Gaza will make it extremely difficult to implement measures.

The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) said “As of July 22, almost 83% of the Gaza Strip has been placed under evacuation orders or designated as a ‘no-go zone’ by the IDF”.

OCHA reported that on Monday the Zionist entity ordered the evacuation of Palestinians living in the east and center of Khan Younis, south of Gaza, which means “the area of the humanitarian zone designated by the Israeli army decreased by 14.8 per cent, from 58.9 square kilometres to 50.2 square kilometres”.

The organization warns that repeated orders for evacuation, coupled with constant attacks, are making the situation increasingly difficult for Palestinian families.

OCHA warns that repeated evacuation orders and Israeli attacks continue “further undermining the health system in Gaza, making it increasingly difficult for the repeatedly displaced, particularly those with chronic diseases, access to basic services”.

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