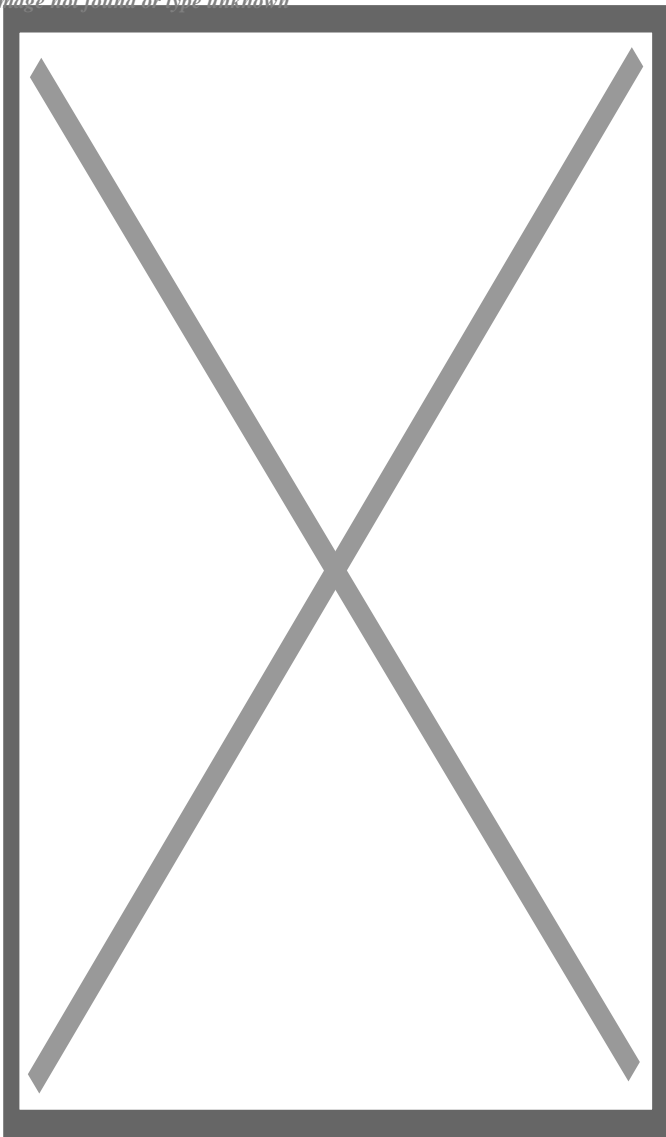


UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres deeply alarmed by escalation in Lebanon

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United Nations, September 24 (RHC)-- UN Secretary-General António Guterres has raised alarm over the escalation of tensions between Lebanon and Israel in a statement calling for protection of civilians and their infrastructure.

The highest official of the United Nations warned about the large number of civilian victims, including children and women in Lebanese territory, as well as thousands of displaced people, amid the most intense Israeli bombing campaign since last October.

Guterres expressed deep concern for the safety of civilians on both sides of the Blue Line, including UN personnel, as the UN Special Office for Lebanon and the Peace Force in that country work to reduce tensions.

The text reiterated the urgent need for immediate détente and called for all efforts to be concentrated on a diplomatic solution. He also reminded all actors of their responsibility to ensure the safety of all staff and assets of the agency.

The UN confirmed on Monday that its special coordinator for Lebanon, Jeannine Hennis-Plasschaert, had travelled to Israel to discuss the latest situation with representatives from Tel Aviv.

At the same time, the head of the Peace Mission, Aroldo Lázaro, maintains contact with the Lebanese and Israeli sides, stressing the urgent need to reduce the escalation.

“Efforts are being made to reduce tensions and stop the bombings,” Stéphane Dujarric, Guterres’ spokesman, told the press.

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