

*United Nations warns of tragic humanitarian catastrophe in Lebanon resulting from Israel's genocidal war of aggression*

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United Nations, October 15 (RHC)-- United Nations agencies have called for an urgent increase in funding to deal with the unfolding humanitarian crisis in Lebanon as the Israeli military continues its offensive against Hezbollah.

UNICEF and the World Food Program (WFP) warned in a joint statement on Tuesday that the fighting, which has displaced hundreds of thousands in Lebanon, has “triggered a catastrophe.”

“We are preparing for the reality that the needs are increasing,” the agencies said. “We need additional funding, without conditionalities.”

Lebanese officials have said 1.2 million people have been affected by the conflict, in which Israel has conducted air attacks on Beirut and many other parts of Lebanon, as well as sending ground troops into the south.

“Around 1.2 million people have been affected, with a significant impact on vulnerable communities,” the statement cautioned. “Nearly 190,000 displaced individuals are currently sheltered in over 1,000 facilities, while hundreds of thousands more are seeking safety among family and friends.” In addition, hundreds of thousands have crossed into Syria, the statement notes, further complicating the humanitarian response.

The UN agencies say they are working to deliver vital support. WFP is meeting the needs of approximately 200,000 people daily with ready-to-eat food and cash.

UNICEF said it is delivering essential support to children and families, including primary healthcare, water and hygiene kits, mattresses and blankets, and psychosocial support services, in cooperation with the Lebanese government.

The agency has warned of a “lost generation” in Lebanon, saying 400,000 children have been displaced in the three weeks since major hostilities broke out.

There is growing concern regarding the effects of Israeli attacks, which its military insists targets Hezbollah facilities, on civilians. The human rights office on Tuesday reported that the majority of 22 people killed in a strike on the northern village of Aito on Monday were women and children, and called for a “prompt, independent and thorough investigation.”

“What we are hearing is that amongst the 22 people killed were 12 women and two children,” a spokesperson said, adding that this raises “real concerns with respect to ... the laws of war and principles of distinction, proportion and proportionality.”

An official from the UN Refugee Agency said new Israeli evacuation orders to 20 villages in southern Lebanon meant that more than a quarter of the country was affected. “People are heeding these calls to evacuate, and they’re fleeing with almost nothing,” she said.

Meanwhile, the fighting shows little sign of abating. The Israeli army reported on Tuesday it launched 200 strikes across Lebanon in the past 24 hours as it expanded its attacks against Hezbollah. The Lebanese group also said it carried out a rocket attack targeting the suburbs of Tel Aviv overnight.

[ SOURCE: PRESS TV ]

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