

UN chief urges all parties to exercise maximum restraint in Gaza



United Nations, April 6 (RHC) -- United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres on Thursday called upon all parties to exercise maximum restraint in Gaza under the current situation.

In a statement on the situation in Gaza, Stephane Dujarric, spokesman for Guterres, said that the secretary-general called upon all parties on the ground "to avoid confrontation and exercise maximum restraint," adding that the UN chief particularly urged Israel "to exercise extreme caution" with the use of force in order to avoid casualties.

The secretary-general noted that civilians must be able to exercise their right to demonstrate peacefully, the spokesman said.

In light of the "tragic events" of the "Great Return March" last Friday, the secretary-general reiterated his call on all concerned to refrain from any act that could lead to further violence or place civilians in harm's way, especially children.

The UN chief stressed the urgency to accelerate efforts to return to meaningful negotiations that would eventually allow Palestinians and Israelis "to live in two democratic states side by side in peace and within secure and recognized borders," said the spokesman, adding that the UN chief also reaffirmed UN's readiness to support these efforts.

At least 18 Palestinians have been killed and over 1,200 others injured since last Friday, when a massive Palestinian protest was launched to mark the Palestinian Land Day along the border between Gaza and Israel.

The Friday rally was the start of a six-week long protest expected to reach its peak on May 15, the day Israel celebrates its establishment. But the Palestinians mark it as "Day of Catastrophe" because a large number of them have been forced to leave their homes.

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