

*UN warns of apocalypse in Gaza
amid Israel's unrelenting
bombardment*

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Geneva, December 7 (RHC)-- The UN human rights chief says Palestinians in the Gaza Strip are living in "utter, deepening horror" as he pleaded for an immediate ceasefire and an end to the ongoing Israeli aggression on the besieged Palestinian territory.

Volker Turk told a press conference Wednesday that some 1.9 million displaced Palestinians are being forced into smaller and smaller pockets of southern Gaza. The conditions are "overcrowded" and "unsanitary," he said.

The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights further said there was a high risk of atrocity crimes being committed in such "catastrophic" humanitarian circumstances." "Civilians in Gaza continue

to be relentlessly bombarded by Israel and collectively punished -- suffering death, siege, destruction and deprivation of the most essential human needs such as food, water, lifesaving medical supplies and other essentials on a massive scale."

He further stated Palestinians in Gaza are facing "utter, deepening horror" as disease spreads, food is scarce and humanitarian aid is all but cut off. "My humanitarian colleagues have described the situation as apocalyptic," Turk added, saying the catastrophe "was entirely foreseeable and preventable".

"As an immediate step, I call for an urgent cessation of hostilities and the release of all hostages," he said, adding: "You need to come back to your senses."

Elsewhere in his remarks, Turk said he was gravely concerned by "dehumanizing and inciteful statements" made by current and former Israeli authorities.

"History has shown us where this kind of language can lead," he said. "This is not just unacceptable, but a competent court may view such statements, in the circumstances in which they were made, as incitement to atrocity crimes."

Turk said the human rights crisis in the occupied West Bank was also "extremely alarming", calling for Israeli authorities to take immediate steps to end "widespread impunity" for violations. "The only way to end the accumulative sufferings is ending the occupation and achieving the two-state solution," he said.

Meanwhile, European Commissioner for Crisis Management Janez Lenarcic warned that the current catastrophic situation in Gaza threatens to decline further.

Speaking in Brussels, Lenarcic stressed the need for a ceasefire in the ongoing conflict in Gaza for humanitarian aid to enter the territory as it faces Israeli bombardment, blockade, and ground attacks. "Otherwise, the catastrophe in Gaza may turn into apocalypse," he said.

Israel has carried out airstrikes on several residential blocks in the Jabalia refugee camp in the northern Gaza Strip, killing at least 150 Palestinians. Israeli warplanes have also pounded Khan Yunis in southern Gaza while the regime's ground forces have surrounded the city.

As the Israeli bombardment of the Gaza Strip continues, Palestinian resistance fighters also keep up their retaliatory operations, dealing a severe blow to invading regime troops. Hamas has released a video showing that the al-Qassam Brigades, the movement's military wing, killed some 60 Israeli soldiers inside their tents in the Juhur al-Dik area of central Gaza.

The top Hamas official says Israel is "sinking deeper and deeper into the swamp of Gaza", stressing that the occupying regime failed to achieve a single victory after 60 days of war in the besieged enclave. Hamas fighters closed in on Israeli positions stealthily, planted bombs around their tents and detonated the explosives simultaneously.

Resistance forces then withdrew to their positions safely. Meanwhile, the Israeli military announced it has lost at least nine of its troops in the fighting in northern and southern Gaza. Israel has confirmed the killing of 90 troops since it launched a ground operation in Gaza about five weeks ago.

Fatalities among Israeli soldiers are believed to be much higher but the regime doesn't disclose the exact figure.

The onslaught has killed over 16,200 Palestinians since it began two months ago. Around 70 percent of those killed are women and children.

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