

UN rights chief urges prompt probe into Israeli strike near Beirut hospital

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Search and rescue operation is underway after an Israeli airstrike around the Rafik Hariri State

Hospital in Beirut, Lebanon, October 22, 2024.

Geneva, October 23 (RHC)-- UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Turk has demanded a prompt and thorough investigation into an Israeli strike near a hospital in the southern part of the Lebanese capital.

In a statement released on Tuesday, the UN rights chief said “any incidents which affect hospitals must be subjected to a prompt and thorough investigation.” “Hospitals, ambulances and medical personnel are specifically protected under international humanitarian law because of their lifesaving function for the wounded and the sick.”

“When conducting military operations in the vicinity of hospitals, parties to the conflict must assess the expected impact on health care services in relation to the principles of proportionality and precautions.”

Turk said “in the conduct of military operations, all feasible precautions must be taken to avoid, and in any event to minimize, incidental loss of civilian life, injury to civilians and damage to civilian objects.”

Elsewhere in the statement, the UN rights chief said four children reportedly figured among the at least 18 people killed in Israeli strikes, while 60 people had been wounded. “I am appalled,” Turk said, noting that “the fundamental principles of international humanitarian law concerning the protection of civilians must be respected.”

Lebanon’s health ministry said Tuesday that at least 18 people had been killed in the Israeli strike near the Rafic Hariri Hospital, located a few kilometers from the city center, the day before.

Ola Fahed Eid, a local resident said she saw children who were playing in the courtyard “torn to pieces” as the missiles landed.

Rescuers were on Tuesday still searching for survivors, amid fears that the toll may rise further.

Lebanon’s health ministry says 18 people, including four children, have been killed in an Israeli strike near a south Beirut hospital the previous night.

The attack was among the 13 airstrikes that hit south Beirut on Monday evening. The Israeli military alleged it was attacking facilities linked to Hezbollah resistance movement.

Lebanese media also reported strikes near the southern city of Tyre after an Israeli forced displacement order. At least 63 people have died in Israeli attacks in the past day.

Meanwhile, the head of Hezbollah’s Media Relations Office, Mohammad Afif, said at a press briefing on Tuesday that the targeting of several branches of the Qard al-Hassan institution by Israeli forces has no justification and the strikes will have no financial impact on the Lebanese resistance movement.

The Hezbollah official said the United States is a partner in the aggression against Lebanon, and the arrival of its envoy will not change Lebanon’s opinion that Washington “is the mother of terrorism.”

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