

United Nations affirms Israeli offensive on occupied West Bank forcibly displaced 40,000

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United Nations, February 13 (RHC)-- The Israeli army issued a forced evacuation threat for Nur Shams refugee camp as it continues its deadly operation across the occupied West Bank.

Israeli forces “stormed” the camp’s al-Ayada neighbourhood on Wednesday, using loudspeakers at a mosque to tell residents to immediately leave the camp, which has been under Israeli siege since earlier this week, the Palestinian Wafa news agency reported.

The report added that Israeli forces deployed at the entrances to the camp fired “live bullets and sound bombs” to sow panic among residents, with soldiers “assaulting young men” and “expelling the elderly without allowing them to take their basic needs.”

The forced evacuation threat was the latest in a series of orders issued over the past four days since Israel launched operations in the camp.

Three weeks ago, Israel launched its “Iron Wall” military operation across the West Bank, killing dozens of Palestinians and forcing at least 40,000 to flee their homes, according to the United Nations agency for Palestinian refugees (UNRWA).

Launched just days after a ceasefire between Israel and Hamas was agreed in Gaza, the operation has seen Israeli forces raiding several refugee camps, including Jenin, Tulkarem, Far’a and Arroub, in a bid to clear them of residents.

“It’s comprehensive and open war against the whole existence of the Palestinian people in the West Bank,” Hamza Zubiedat, a land rights researcher based in Bethlehem, told Al Jazeera.

UNRWA has described the nearly three-week military operation as “the single longest in the West Bank” since the second Intifada. In addition to the large-scale military operations in refugee camps and cities in the northern occupied West Bank, Israeli soldiers have also launched a series of smaller attacks.

Wafa reported on Wednesday that Israeli soldiers assaulted three students in the town of Huwara, south of Nablus. The army also deployed tear gas and sound bombs against a number of students in al-Khader, south of Bethlehem, causing them to suffer suffocation-related injuries.

Israeli forces stormed Aqqaba town, north of Tubas, arresting two men. They also destroyed agricultural land with bulldozers in Funduq village, east of Qalqilya, and raided homes close to occupied East Jerusalem.

Land-rights analyst Zubiedat stressed that Israel’s assault goes beyond the camps, with Israel building “new walls” around Palestinian villages in the Jordan Valley, “isolating whole Palestinian communities” from the West Bank cities.

“We are not only talking about the daily scenes in the refugee camps of Jenin, Nur Shams and Tulkarem, but there is also the other hidden war,” he said. “The real goal of this operation is going beyond even the military goals.”

UNICEF, the UN agency for children, issued a statement on Wednesday, said 13 children have been killed in the West Bank over the past month, adding that “there has been a 200 per cent increase in the number of Palestinian children killed in the territory over the past 16 months as compared to the 16 months prior.”

“UNICEF condemns all acts of violence against children and calls for the immediate cessation of armed activity across the occupied West Bank. All civilians, including every child without exception, must be protected,” it said in the statement.

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