

06 July 2023, New York

## **Excerpts from Secretary-General's press encounter on visits to Haiti and Trinidad and Tobago, and on the situation in the Middle East**

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... While I was in Haiti and Trinidad, I was deeply disturbed by the news from Jenin in the occupied West Bank.

I strongly condemn all acts of violence against civilians, including acts of terror.

Israel's airstrikes and ground operations in a crowded refugee camp were the worst violence in the West Bank in many years, with a significant impact on civilians, including more than one hundred injured and thousands forced to flee.

Schools and hospitals were damaged. Water and electricity networks were disrupted. And people in need were prevented from accessing essential care and relief.

All those injured must have access to medical care, and humanitarian workers must be able to reach everyone in need.

I once again call on Israel to abide by its obligations under international law, including the duty to exercise restraint and use only proportional force, and the duty to minimize damage and injury and respect and preserve human life.

The use of airstrikes is inconsistent with the conduct of law enforcement operations.

I also remind Israel, as the Occupying Power, that it has a responsibility to ensure that the civilian population is protected against all acts of violence.

I understand Israel's legitimate concerns with its security. But escalation is not the answer. It simply bolsters radicalization and leads to a deepening cycle of violence and bloodshed.

Restoring the hope of the Palestinian people in a meaningful political process, leading to a two-State solution and the end of the occupation, is an essential contribution by Israel to its own security.

Thank you. I will answer three questions. There is another stakeout to take place.

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Questions and Answers

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Question: Secretary-General, can you clarify if your condemnation specifically applies to Israel in your statement?

Secretary-General: Sorry. I didn't get you.

Question: Can you clarify if your condemnation in your statement specifically applies to Israel?

Secretary-General: No. It applies to all use of excessive force and obviously, in this situation, there was an excessive force used by Israeli forces.

Question: Secretary-General, three special rapporteurs today have accused Israel of possible war crimes in Jenin for actions that amount to egregious violations of international law and standards of use of force. Does that square with what you have described today in terms of the attacks on hospitals, on infrastructure, civilian infrastructure? Do those attacks amount to war crimes? And yesterday, Palestine's ambassador again talked about the need for an international protection force. Is this something you can endorse? Do Palestinians need an international force to protect them from Israel?

Secretary-General: I don't think it's realistic to think that we can have a military force sent to Israel. I don't think the Israeli Government would consent on that possibility. But I think we need to find mechanisms to allow for the protection of civilians in these dramatic circumstances. Thank you very much.

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<https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/press-encounter/2023-07-06/secretary-generals-press-encounter-visits-haiti-and-trinidad-and-tobago-and-the-situation-the-middle-east>