

Note to Correspondents: on Gaza

Stéphane Dujarric, Spokesman for the Secretary-General

In the past week, Israel carried out devastating strikes on Gaza, claiming the lives of hundreds of civilians, including United Nations personnel, with no humanitarian aid being allowed to enter the Strip since early March.

As a result, the Secretary-General has taken the difficult decision to reduce the Organization's footprint in Gaza, even as humanitarian needs soar and our concern over the protection of civilians intensifies.

The UN is not leaving Gaza. The Organization remains committed to continuing to provide aid that civilians depend on for their survival and protection.

More than three weeks ago, the Israeli Government cut off the entry of humanitarian aid into Gaza – the longest such suspension since 7 October 2023.

Israeli officials have indicated that they intend to continue their military activities in Gaza.

Based on the information currently available, the strikes hitting a UN compound in Deir Al Balah on 19 March were caused by an Israeli tank. The strikes claimed the life of a UN colleague from Bulgaria and left six others – from France, Moldova, North Macedonia, Palestine and the United Kingdom – with severe injuries, some of them life-altering.

The location of this UN compound was well known to the parties to the conflict. I reiterate that all parties to the conflict are bound by international law to protect the absolute inviolability of UN premises. Without this, our colleagues face intolerable risks as they work to save the lives of civilians.

The Secretary-General strongly condemns these strikes and demands a full, thorough and independent investigation on this incident.

All parties must comply fully with international law at all times. Civilians must be respected and protected. The denial of lifesaving aid must end. The hostages must be released immediately and unconditionally.

All States must use all their leverage to stop the conflict and ensure respect for international law – by applying diplomatic and economic pressure and combating impunity.

The Secretary-General renews his urgent call for the restoration of the ceasefire to bring an end to the anguish.

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