

Annan laments ongoing violence in Gaza as another girl is hit by Israeli gunfire

12 October 2004 - As another Palestinian girl in the Gaza Strip was hit by Israeli gunfire while attending a United Nations-run school, Secretary-General Kofi Annan said today that he was deeply troubled by the continuing military action and violence in the area, especially its effect on local children.

Ghadeer Jaber Mokheimer, aged 11, was hit in the stomach during classes at the school in the refugee camp at Khan Younis, the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) said in a statement issued in Jerusalem. The grade five student underwent emergency surgery in hospital, where her condition was later described as stable.

UNRWA said two shots were heard at about 10.45 a.m. from the direction of an Israeli army position on the border of the Gush Katif settlement and overlooking Khan Younis.

Noting that it is the fourth incident of its kind in two years, and that the Agency has repeatedly asked Israeli authorities to stop firing at schools, UNRWA Commissioner-General Peter Hansen called again for an immediate end to such shootings.

Most recently, 10-year-old Raghda Adnan Al-Assar was struck in the head on 7 September while sitting at her desk in a classroom of another UNRWA-run school in Khan Younis. She never regained consciousness and died on 22 September.

In a statement issued by his spokesman, Mr. Annan said he deplored the “high toll of death and injuries among the civilian population” and grieved “for the many children who have been killed or wounded” during the Israeli military operations in the north of the Gaza Strip.

The Secretary-General said he was disturbed by the destruction of civilian property, infrastructure and agricultural land during the operations and called on the Israeli Government to do its utmost to avoid harming Palestinian civilians.

Reminding both sides of their obligations under international humanitarian law to protect civilians, he urged them to cease all forms of violence and search for a peaceful settlement.

Source: UN News Service