

13 October 2023, New York

## **Secretary-General's remarks to the press on the situation in the Middle East**

Dear representatives of the media. I want to share with you some of the key messages I will share with the Security Council.

The situation in Gaza has reached a dangerous new low.

The horrific terror attacks by Hamas on Israel that killed more than 1200 people and injured thousands more last Saturday were followed by intense bombardment of Gaza that has already killed 1800 people, and injured thousands more.

After days of airstrikes, the Israeli Defense Forces have ordered the Palestinians in Gaza City and its surroundings to move to the south of the territory.

Moving more than one million people across a densely populated warzone to a place with no food, water, or accommodation, when the entire territory is under siege, is extremely dangerous –and in some cases, simply not possible.

Hospitals in the south of Gaza are already at capacity and will not be able to accept thousands of new patients from the north.

The health system is on the brink of collapse. Morgues are overflowing; eleven healthcare staff have been killed while on duty; and there have been 34 attacks on health facilities in the past few days.

The entire territory faces a water crisis as infrastructure has been damaged and there is no electricity to power pumps and desalination plants.

Our United Nations staff and our partners are working around the clock to support the people of Gaza.

We mourn for our colleagues who have been killed –a number that is increasing by the day.

I have been in constant contact with the leaders across the region, focusing on ways to reduce suffering and prevent further dangerous escalation in the West Bank or elsewhere in the region, especially in southern Lebanon.

The exchanges of fire across the Blue Line is very worrying. It must stop.

We need immediate humanitarian access throughout Gaza, so that we can get fuel, food and water to everyone in need.

Even wars have rules.

International humanitarian law and human rights law must be respected and upheld; civilians must be protected and also never used as shields.

And all hostages in Gaza must be released immediately.

It is imperative that all parties – and those with influence over them – do everything possible to achieve these steps.

Finally, I want to say something about the hatred that is being stoked by this terrible conflict – across the Middle East and around the world.

Dehumanizing language that incites violence is never accepted.

I call on all leaders to speak out against Antisemitism, anti-Muslim bigotry and hate speech of all kinds.

This is a time for the international community to come together around protecting civilians and finding a lasting solution to this unending cycle of death and destruction.

Thank you.

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