

Secretary-General's statement on Beit Hanoun

Erbil, 24 July 2014

I am appalled by the news of an attack on an UNRWA school in Northern Gaza where hundreds of people had taken refuge.

Many have been killed – including women and children, as well as UN staff.

Circumstances are still unclear. I strongly condemn this act.

Throughout the day, our staff had been attempting to arrange a humanitarian pause in the hostilities so that civilians could be evacuated.

I express my profound condolences to the families of the victims and those of so many hundreds of innocent Gazans who have tragically been killed as a result of the massive Israeli assault.

When I briefed the Security Council from Ramallah just two days ago, I condemned Hamas rocket fire and called on Israel to exercise particular care to avoid any attack on United Nations premises where civilians have taken refuge. More than 100,000 Gazans – that's 5 percent of the total population – have sought refuge in UNRWA facilities.

I once again stress to all sides that they must abide by their obligations under international humanitarian law to respect the sanctity of civilian life, the inviolability of UN premises and to honour their obligations to humanitarian workers.

Today's attack underscores the imperative for the killing to stop – and to stop now.

From here I will continue to work with international and regional partners to help reach an agreement to end the fighting as soon as possible for the people of Gaza and Israel.

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