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Statement attributable to the Spokesperson for the Secretary-General on Gaza

Stéphane Dujarric, Spokesman for the Secretary-General

The Secretary-General strongly condemns today's Israeli air strikes in a densely populated Israeli-designated zone in Khan Younis and the killing of civilians, including women and children.

The use of heavy weapons in densely populated areas is unconscionable.

Displaced Palestinians had moved to this area in Khan Younis in search for shelter and safety after being repeatedly instructed to do so by the Israeli authorities - but there is no safe place in Gaza.

Today's attack comes as humanitarian workers yesterday faced one of the most horrific assaults on their ability to deliver life-saving vaccines. Twelve UN staff members, whose movement was fully coordinated with Israeli forces and whose details were shared in advance, were stopped at a checkpoint on their way to northern Gaza to support the polio vaccination campaign. Israeli forces fired live shots and the UN convoy was compacted by a military tank and a bulldozer with our staff inside. The convoy was held at this checkpoint for seven and a half hours and ultimately unable to fulfill its humanitarian mission. The Secretary-General strongly condemns this incident.

The Secretary-General once again recalls that international humanitarian law, including the principles of distinction, proportionality, and precautions in attack, must be complied with at all times by all parties to the conflict. He also calls for the protection of civilians, including aid workers, as well as the facilitation of humanitarian access.

The Secretary-General reiterates once again his calls to reach an immediate deal on a ceasefire and the immediate and unconditional release of all hostages.

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