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New York

Statement by the Secretary-General on the situation in the Middle East

I am horrified by the reported attack in Gaza on an ambulance convoy outside Al Shifa hospital. The images of bodies strewn on the street outside the hospital are harrowing.

I do not forget the terror attacks committed in Israel by Hamas and the killing, maiming and abductions, including of women and children. All hostages held in Gaza must be released immediately and unconditionally.

Now, for nearly one month, civilians in Gaza, including children and women, have been besieged, denied aid, killed, and bombed out of their homes.

This must stop.

The humanitarian situation in Gaza is horrific. Not nearly enough food, water and medicine are coming in to meet people's needs. Fuel to power hospitals and water plants is running out. UNRWA shelters are at nearly four times their full capacity and are being hit in bombardments. Morgues are overflowing. Shops are empty. The sanitation situation is abysmal. We are seeing an increase in diseases and respiratory illnesses, especially among children. An entire population is traumatized. Nowhere is safe.

I renew my earlier appeals for a humanitarian ceasefire.

International humanitarian law must be respected. Civilians and civilian infrastructure, including humanitarian and medical workers and assets must be protected. Civilians must also not be used as human shields.

Essential supplies and services and unimpeded humanitarian access must be safely allowed into and across Gaza at a scale commensurate with this dramatic situation.

All those with influence must exert it to ensure respect for the rules of war, end the suffering and avoid a spillover of the conflict that could engulf the whole region.

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