**Gaza is ‘running out of time’ UN experts warn, demanding a ceasefire to prevent genocide**

GENEVA (2 November 2023) – Time is running out to prevent genocide and humanitarian catastrophe in Gaza, UN experts warned today, expressing deep frustration with Israel’s refusal to halt plans to decimate the besieged Gaza strip.

“We remain convinced that the Palestinian people are at grave risk of genocide,” the experts said. “The time for action is now. Israel’s allies also bear responsibility and must act now to prevent its disastrous course of action,” they said.

The experts expressed “deepening horror” about Israeli airstrikes against the Jabalia refugee camp in northern Gaza since Tuesday (31 October) night, which have reportedly killed and injured hundreds of Palestinians, calling it a brazen breach of international law.

“The Israeli airstrike on a residential complex in the Jabalia refugee camp is a brazen violation of international law – and a war crime. Attacking a camp sheltering civilians including women and children is a complete breach of the rules of proportionality and distinction between combatants and civilians,” the experts said.

The experts welcomed the General Assembly resolution on protecting civilians and upholding legal and humanitarian obligations, approved by an overwhelming majority of member states on 27 October.

“We received the resolution with hope, but the need for action is now,” they said.

“All signs are that we have reached a breaking point,” the experts warned, pointing to images of people desperately grabbing flour and other essentials from a UN warehouse on Sunday (29 October), alarming news of children being forced to drink sea water in the absence of clean water, distressing reports of patients including children undergoing surgery without anaesthetics, and persons with disabilities and older persons displaced and living in tents because houses have been turned to rubble.

“The situation in Gaza has reached a catastrophic tipping point,” they said warning of the dire need for food, water, medicine, fuel and essential supplies and the risk of looming health hazards.

The absence of fuel and disruption of water infrastructure due to constant shelling over three weeks had destroyed access to safe drinking water for the population in Gaza, the experts said.

“Water is essential to human life and today, 2 million Gazans are struggling to find drinking water,” they said.

The experts strongly supported the UN Secretary General's efforts to provide access to humanitarian aid to the Gaza Strip.

They also called for the immediate release of all civilians being held captive since Hamas militants attacked Israeli settlements on 7 October.

"All parties must comply with their obligations under international humanitarian and human rights law. We demand a humanitarian ceasefire to ensure that aid reaches those who need it the most. A ceasefire also means channels of communication can be opened to ensure the release of hostages,” the experts said.

They expressed grave concern about the safety of UN and humanitarian workers and hospitals and schools that are providing refuge and life-saving medical services to the people of Gaza. They also raised the alarm at the safety of journalists, media workers and their family members while noting that internet and communications have been shutdown, disrupting essential communications and reporting on the situation in Gaza.

“We want to remind all parties that humanitarian and medical personnel and facilities are protected under international law. States have an obligation to ensure their safety and protection during times of war,” the experts said. “As the Secretary General has repeatedly reiterated, Israel and Palestinian armed groups must bear in mind that even wars have rules.”

An estimated 1.4 million people in Gaza are internally displaced, with approximately 629,000 seeking refuge in 150 UN Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) emergency shelters. The UNRWA reports that 70 UN workers have died as a result of Israeli bombardment in Gaza.

“The Palestinian people in Gaza, particularly women, children, persons with disabilities, youth, and older persons, have endured decades of hardship and deprivation,” the UN experts said. “We call on Israel and its allies to agree to an immediate ceasefire. We are running out of time.”

ENDS

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