Humanitarian Coordinator expresses concern amidst escalation of violence in the West Bank

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Today, the Humanitarian Coordinator for the occupied Palestinian territory, Mr. Jamie McGoldrick, expressed concern over the deteriorating security situation in the West Bank. Since 9 December, three Israelis and five Palestinians have been killed across the West Bank in attacks, clashes and arrest operations. Over 400 Palestinians and at least 13 Israelis were injured, and more than 200 Palestinians have reportedly been arrested.

“I am deeply concerned by the escalation of violence in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, which is continuing yet again today,” said Mr. McGoldrick. “I condemn the attacks on Israeli and Palestinian civilians perpetrated over the last days, which have led to the tragic deaths of a newborn Israeli child and an 18-year-old Palestinian youth in Al Jalazun refugee camp, among others. Further violence and reckless action, which will only result in more tragedy and loss for families on both sides, must be stopped.”

The current upsurge in violence began on 9 December, when a Palestinian fired upon a group of Israelis at the entrance to Ofra settlement (Ramallah), injuring

seven of them, including a pregnant woman and four children; the unborn child was subsequently delivered prematurely and died three days later. Since then, several additional attacks by Palestinians were perpetrated against Israeli soldiers, also injuring at least one Israeli civilian; Israeli forces have conducted extensive search and arrest operations throughout the West Bank, triggering clashes with Palestinian residents; and multiple ad-hoc checkpoints have been deployed, tightening control over vehicular movement across the West Bank. Several incidents involving the delay of Palestinian ambulances trying to reach injured people, as well as one incident of opening fire at an ambulance, were reported. In addition, groups of Israeli settlers have held protests at multiple road junctions across the West Bank, with stone throwing at passing Palestinian vehicles reported at many of these protests; attacks on Palestinian homes and properties and at least one school in various parts of the West Bank have also been reported.

“I call on all actors – including armed groups, security forces and armed civilians – to refrain from attacks on civilians and other actions that would further escalate the violence,” Mr. McGoldrick concluded. “I also call on Israeli and Palestinian security forces to ensure law and order operations are conducted with restraint and that protection, including from attacks by armed civilians, is provided to ambulances, children, schools and civilians at large. Israeli and Palestinian leaders must take immediate action to restore calm on the ground.”

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