Press Releases

Palestinian human rights organizations demand an end to Israel's deliberate attacks on internally displaced persons

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The Palestinian Center for Human Rights (PCHR), Al Mezan, and Al-Haq, vehemently condemn and demand an end to the repeated Israeli attacks against internally displaced persons forced to seek shelter in tent camps and in areas designated as 'safe' by the Israeli military. The labelling of any areas as 'safe' is a claim consistently refuted by our organisations, which maintain that nowhere in Gaza is safe.

According to the preliminary information collected by our teams, at around 12:30 a.m. on Thursday, 4 January 2024, the Israeli occupying forces (IOF) launched several missiles at the shelters and tents of displaced people in the Al-Mawasi area, west of Khan Younis. Thousands of civilians sought refuge there after it was designated as a safe zone by the Israeli military. The attack killed 17 Palestinians, including two women and ten children. Among the victims were Mohammed Abu Hatab, 40, and his wife Jawaher Al-Qedra, 39, along with their seven children: Maram, 13, Rewaa, 12, Mohammed, 9, Yazan and Lama, 8, and Ahmad and Layan, 5. Additionally, three siblings were also among the victims: Hamza Hammad Salah, 14, Jamal, 11, and Maram, 9.

On the same day, the IOF targeted the fifth floor of the Palestinian Red Crescent Society's headquarters in Al-Amal neighbourhood west of Khan Younis, housing around 14,000 displaced people. The attack killed one Palestinian and injured others. Two days earlier, on 2 January 2024, the eighth floor of the building, which also includes Al-Amal Hospital, had been targeted by Israeli warplanes, killing five Palestinians, including a five-day-old infant, and injuring three others, including a first responder volunteer.

At around 5:10 p.m. on Wednesday, 3 January 2024, the IOF targeted Al-Nahhal family's house in Kharbet Al-Adas neighbourhood in Rafah, with its occupants inside and without warning. The attack killed three Palestinians, including a child and a woman, who had evacuated from east Rafah. Several Palestinians were also injured.

At approximately 1:49 p.m. on the same day, an Israeli drone fired two missiles at a group of civilians in front of the City Mall in Kharbet Al-Adas neighbourhood in Rafah. The airstrike killed three Palestinians, including two displaced individuals from Gaza and Beit Lahiya, and injured others.

Over the past three months, the IOF have targeted the gatherings of displaced people, including UN-flagged shelters and houses sheltering displaced people, with aerial and artillery bombs and shells, in a complete disregard of Palestinians' lives.

The recent attacks once again expose the falsehood of Israel's claims about 'safe zones',proving and affirming that Israel deliberately and knowingly perpetrates its crimes.

According to UNRWA's Commissioner-General, at least 300 Palestinians were killed and another 1,000 were injured in Gaza while seeking protection under UN-flagged shelters. He stated, "[i]n the past three months, international humanitarian law has been violated multiple times. Civilian facilities, including UN buildings, are not a target".

According to the latest update from the Palestinian Ministry of Health in Gaza, issued on 3 January 2024, Israeli attacks on Gaza have killed 22,313 Palestinians and injured 57,296 others since 7 October 2023. 70% of the victims are children and women. The majority of the victims, including men, are civilians, and among them are thousands of elderly people. Our teams assert that the true number of Palestinians killed in Gaza since 7 October far exceeds the officially announced figure by the Palestinian Ministry of Health. Thousands of Palestinians are still trapped under the rubble, strewn across the streets, or buried in the closest available areas, due to the formidable challenge of transporting them to hospitals. Within this tragic cohort, many killed Palestinians have decomposed, demonstrating Israel's blatant disregard and disrespect for the dignity of Palestinian deceased, and intensifying the peril of disease outbreaks and health epidemics.

The plight of 1.9 million displaced Palestinians, with hundreds of thousands subjected to repeated evacuations amid continuous Israeli bombing, has reached an intolerable level, leaving an indelible mark of shame on the world. Many in Gaza have been compelled to move multiple times, in harsh cold weather, leaving behind all their belongings. They are crammed into limited geographical areas without healthcare and at a time when communicable diseases and epidemics are spreading. People endure starvation and thirst, while Israeli relentless attacks persist.

We assert that it is decades-long impunity granted to Israel that emboldens Israel to commit even further international crimes. It

is past time for the international community to act responsibly to stop the genocide against the Palestinian population in Gaza and to urgently pressure Israel to end its policy of targeting civilians and civilian objects as a means of retaliation, punishment, and political pressure. Effective measures must be taken to ensure accountability for war crimes, crimes against humanity, and the crime of genocide committed by the IOF against Palestinians.

We reiterate our call on the international community to promptly take meaningful and effective actions and measures, ensuring an immediate ceasefire, the delivery of unconditional humanitarian aid to all residents of the Gaza Strip, and the lifting of the 16-year-long illegal closure and blockade of Gaza. We further call on Third States to ensure the end of the Israeli occupation, and the dismantling of Israel's settler-colonial and apartheid regime. We call for the repeal of all discriminatory and inhumane laws, policies, and practices against the Palestinian people as a whole, and to enable them to exercise their inalienable right to self-determination without restriction, including their right to return.

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