NEWS RELEASE

UNITED NATIONS HUMAN RIGHTS OFFICE OF THE HIGH COMMISSIONER
Occupied Palestinian Territory

UN Human Rights in Occupied Palestinian Territory

Ramallah

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Strikes on internally displaced persons shelters - Gaza

The UN Human Rights Office calls on the Israeli military to immediately end the pattern of strikes in Gaza on buildings acting as shelters for Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs). Such attacks have become an almost daily event. In the last 72 hours alone, at least 6 schools serving as IDP shelters were struck resulting in tens of fatalities, including children and women. In addition, in the early hours of 2 October, the Israeli military reportedly struck Al Amal Institute for Orphans, which was also serving as an IDP shelter in west Gaza City, killing at least 6 Palestinians. In September alone, our office recorded at least 14 schools struck in Gaza by the Israeli military, and in August one school attack every other day.

Irrespective of whether Palestinian armed groups were present in these facilities, the resulting high rate of civilian casualties makes it difficult to conceive that such strikes are proportionate according to the principles of international humanitarian law. These attacks have long-term impacts on the civilian population, destroying the only viable shelters remaining for the more than one million Palestinians who have been forcibly displaced into an unsafe, unilaterally declared "humanitarian zone" where there is little or no access to life-saving essential humanitarian assistance. With winter fast approaching, the majority of Palestinians in Gaza are now forced to live in tents and other makeshift shelters where they are at risk of exposure to the elements. Israel, as the occupying power, must comply with its obligations under international humanitarian and human rights law to ensure the provision of food, medical supplies and shelter for the population of Gaza, as ordered by the International Court of Justice in its Order on provisional measures under the case on the Application of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide in the Gaza Strip.

The UN Human Rights Office reminds Palestinian armed group members that using the presence of civilians to shield themselves from attack constitutes a violation of IHL; Palestinian armed groups must cease and refrain from any such use and take all feasible precautions to protect civilians under their control from the effects of hostilities. In any event, any such use would not affect the requirement for the Israeli military to strictly comply with the fundamental IHL principles of proportionality, distinction and precautions in attack.

#ENDS

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