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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The UN Human Rights Office condemns the Israeli military's targeting of shelters with internally displaced Palestinians in Gaza and the militarized operations in the occupied West Bank

The UN Human Rights Office condemns the Israeli military's targeting of shelters hosting displaced Palestinians in Gaza with disregard for the lives of Palestinian civilians. The reported killing of 6 humanitarian workers in the latest strike on a school overnight emphasizes the Israeli military's systematic failure to comply with international humanitarian law.

In the late afternoon of 11 September, the Israeli air force struck the Al Jaouni school in An Nuseirat, Middle Gaza, which serves as a shelter for 12,000 IDPs. According to initial information, at least 18 Palestinians, including women, children and 6 UNRWA staff, were killed in the strikes. A few hours earlier, the Israeli military also struck Al Farouq Mosque and the youth club in front of the Hamisa school in Al Bureij, Middle Gaza, killing 2 women and a man. In August alone, the UN Human Rights Office recorded 16 incidents involving attacks or shootings in schools – a rate of one school attack every other day.

Any intentional co-location by armed groups of military objectives with civilians or the use of the presence of civilians to shield a military objective from attack violates international humanitarian law, and the latter would amount to a war crime. Nevertheless, any such violation does not negate the Israeli forces' obligations under international law to comply with the principles of distinction, proportionality and precautions in attack. The pattern of attacks on shelters leading to verifiably high civilian fatalities, especially in an area that the Israeli military has unilaterally declared safe, suggests a complete disregard for the lives of Palestinian civilians and raises grave concerns about the systematic commission of disproportionate attacks or attacks directed at civilians, which are war crimes. Under international humanitarian law, parties to a conflict must also respect and protect civilians involved in humanitarian relief, and any attacks directed at them would amount to a war crime unless they were directly participating in hostilities at the time of the attack.

Meanwhile, Israeli forces continue to plan and implement militarized operations in the occupied West Bank, in violation of their obligations to plan and implement all law enforcement operations in a manner to minimize the use of potentially lethal force, as required under the applicable international human rights norms and standards. In these operations, Israeli security forces systematically apply combat-like methods and means to a situation of law enforcement. As a

result, between 10 and 12 September, Israeli forces killed 11 Palestinians in the West Bank, including a woman and a boy, and injured several others during ongoing militarised operations in Tulkarm and Tubas and their refugee camps. Information gathered by the UN Human Rights Office indicates intense shooting by Israeli forces in densely populated areas resulting in apparently unlawful killings, including of unarmed bystanders, reportedly including a staff member of UNRWA shot in the chest as he stood on the rooftop of his home. Israeli forces used bulldozers and explosive devices to destroy roads, houses and other civilian infrastructure, impacting and interrupting access to basic services such as water, sewage and electricity. Israeli forces besieged municipal hospitals, stopped and searched Palestinian ambulances and detained medical personnel.

The use of military, combat-like means and methods in the occupied West Bank is unlawful and can only lead to a cycle of further instability and violence.

ENDS

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