MEDIA STATEMENT

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

UN Human Rights in Occupied Palestinian Territory
Ramallah
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Escalation of attacks in Gaza with a pattern of strikes on Internally Displaced People's (IDP) tents and residential buildings, as well as on crowded hospitals

The Israeli military's escalation of attacks in Gaza over the weekend raises further concerns that Israel is inflicting conditions of life on Palestinians increasingly incompatible with their continued existence in Gaza as a group. These latest attacks, which are forcing people to move while they are being bombed, the methodical destruction of entire neighborhoods, and the denial of humanitarian assistance underline an apparent push for a permanent demographic shift in Gaza that is in defiance of international law and tantamount to ethnic cleansing. Palestinian civilians are dying under the bombs or from hunger. This is intolerable, and a ceasefire must be immediately agreed and implemented.

On 19 May the Israeli Defense Forces announced that they had struck '160 terror targets" across Gaza over the period of one day, which in the context of the existing destruction of infrastructure in Gaza, raises grave concerns that not all strikes were targeted at military objectives. Furthermore, the pattern of strikes on Internally Displaced People's (IDP) tents and residential buildings, as well as on crowded hospitals, indicates that little, if any, care is being taken to protect the lives of civilians in Gaza, while reports of the use of weapons with wide area effects suggest deliberate, indiscriminate attacks.

Meanwhile, the humanitarian situation is beyond description. For the third consecutive month, Israel continues to prevent the entry and distribution of any items essential for life. Mass displacement continues as a result of bombings and strikes, the humanitarian catastrophe, and displacement orders, some of which no longer even identify areas where civilians should move. Around 150,000 people reportedly have been displaced in the last 24 hours alone. Displaced Palestinians are being forced onto the streets, with no shelter, and in most cases with no food, water or medical care. On 19 May, Israel issued more displacement orders impacting large areas of Khan Younis and Deir El Balah, which will result in further massive displacement, death, destruction, and push people into smaller areas.

Those who have been forced from their homes or other shelters remain under attack. In the last 48 hours, the Israeli military has intensified strikes, especially in North Gaza and Khan Younis and adjacent Deir al Balah in Middle Gaza, killing at least 96 Palestinians during the night and early morning of 17-18 May alone. In the last few days, the majority of Palestinians killed were in IDP tents, especially in the overcrowded Al Mawasi area in western Khan Yunis, where the Israeli military had previously unilaterally designated a "humanitarian zone." During the late

night of 17 May, Israeli military strikes on IDP tents in Al Mawasi killed at least 36 Palestinians, including 4 cases in which parents and their children were killed together. In the morning of 18 May, an attack on another IDP tent near Alkhear Hospital in Al Mawasi, killed 4 Palestinians, a man and his 3 boys.

In less than 24 hours, 5 Palestinian journalists were reportedly killed, including a female journalist. This wave of killings of journalists came a few days after 3 other journalists were killed on 13 and 14 May. OHCHR has verified the killing of 214 Palestinian journalists in Gaza since 7 October 2023, including 185 men and 29 women. The apparent targeting of Palestinian journalists in Gaza, combined with the denial by Israel of access of foreign journalist to Gaza for over 18 months, except a few visits controlled by IDF, appear to indicate a deliberate attempt by Israel to limit the flow of information to and from Gaza and prevent reporting on the impact of its attacks and denial of humanitarian assistance.

ENDS

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