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OHCHR – UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (Author)

Israel must rescind evacuation order for northern Gaza and comply with international law: UN expert

GENEVA (13 October 2023) – A UN expert today demanded that Israel immediately rescind its order for 1.1 million Palestinians to leave northern Gaza within 24 hours, condemning the evacuation order as a crime against humanity and a blatant violation of international humanitarian law.

“Forcible population transfers constitute a crime against humanity, and collective punishment is prohibited under international humanitarian law,” said Paula Gaviria Betancur, Special Rapporteur on the human rights of internally displaced persons.

“We are horrified at the prospect of an additional 1 million Palestinians joining the over 423,000 people already forcibly driven from their homes by the violence over the past week,” she said.

“It is inconceivable that more than half of Gaza’s population could traverse an active war zone, without devastating humanitarian consequences, particularly while deprived of essential supplies and basic services,” said Gaviria Betancur.

Shortly before midnight, the Israeli military informed the United Nations that the entire population of Gaza, north of Wadi Gaza, should relocate to southern Gaza within 24 hours, including UN staff and those sheltered in UN facilities.

"The humanitarian system in Gaza is already at breaking point. Gaza's infrastructure has been devastated by indiscriminate bombardments from air, land and sea, and those currently displaced have nowhere to go," the expert said.

"Tripling the displaced population overnight will decimate and permanently alter the civilian population of Gaza," she warned.

The Special Rapporteur said that humanitarian actors in Gaza were facing an overwhelming rise in needs against a backdrop of attacks on healthcare facilities and health workers, threats against humanitarian workers, and a draconian siege that has cut off access to water, fuel, medicine, electricity, communications, and essential humanitarian supplies.

"More than two-thirds of internally displaced persons are sheltering in UNRWA schools which are not fit for this purpose, and have themselves been bombarded. Over 1,400 Palestinians have been killed and more than 6,000 have been injured since 7 October, leaving hospitals overwhelmed," she said.

"Because there is no conceivable way for hospitals to evacuate the most serious cases, the WHO has called the evacuation order an effective 'death sentence' for the sick," added Gaviria Betancur added.

Recalling the earlier [statement](#) from a group of UN experts, she urged Israel to adhere to international law.

"I would like to remind Israel that observance of international law is compulsory, not optional, during any conflict," the expert said.

"To that end, I call for the strict respect of international humanitarian law and its provisions, including unrestricted humanitarian access to those in need, the cessation of indiscriminate attacks against civilians, and an end to forced displacement of populations and blockade," she said.

Ms. Paula Gaviria Betancur is the [Special Rapporteur on the human rights of internally displaced persons](#)

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