

December 8, 2023

Yesterday, we mark two months since the escalation of hostilities in the Gaza Strip and Israel, highlighting an urgent and devastating humanitarian crisis.

Since October 7 and the escalation of violence between Israel and Hamas, more than 16,000 people were killed and more than 46,000 were injured in Gaza by continuous bombing by Israeli forces. Israel's retaliatory response came after a massive attack launched by Hamas on October 7, killing 1,200 Israelis and taking hostage 240 Israelis and foreign nationals.

Civilians in Gaza and Israel have faced heart-wrenching loss of life, collective trauma. Throughout this period, civilians in Gaza have suffered relentless displacements, desperately seeking refuge, especially amidst cold and rainy nights.

The denial of basic human services, including clean water, food, electricity, telecommunication, and fuel, has been inflicted upon the people of Gaza for this extended duration. The ongoing situation not only hampers meaningful humanitarian operations but also intensifies the severity of the humanitarian crisis in the region. The indiscriminate use of explosive weapons has laid waste to thousands of buildings, with over 12,000 bombs unleashed upon Gaza, a densely populated region measuring approximately 40 kilometers in length, home to around 2.2 million people, including approximately 1 million children. These bombs, possessing significant destructive capabilities, range in size from 150 kg to 1000 kg.

Civilians in Gaza currently live under imminent threat, with a staggering 16,248 Palestinians reported killed since October 7th, with approximately 70% comprising women and children. The destruction of over half of all homes and the forced displacement of 80% of the 2.2 million population into increasingly confined areas have resulted in dire conditions. More than 1.1 million people have sought refuge in UNRWA facilities, leading to overcrowded, undignified, and unhygienic conditions. Others find themselves without shelter on the streets, as explosive remnants of war might render various areas uninhabitable.

This ongoing crisis disproportionately impacts persons with disabilities and injuries, as they are often denied the right to flee violence due to inaccessible information, warnings, destroyed roads and evacuation routes. The lack of early rehabilitation services compounds mental and physical health challenges, especially when injuries result from the ongoing violence or could have been prevented with proper medical treatment. The absence of effective civilian protection measures further compounds this crisis.

The resumption of hostilities on December 1st has brought about escalated destruction and a surge in casualties, impacting hundreds of thousands of civilians. In strict adherence to international humanitarian law, it is necessary that parties engaged in conflict undertake every conceivable measure to prevent and, at the very least, minimize harm to civilians.

We urgently and emphatically call for an immediate, and comprehensive ceasefire in Gaza.

We recognize the pressing need to alleviate the unimaginable suffering of civilians, ensure the provision of essential services, and foster an environment conducive to meaningful humanitarian assistance. This appeal is made with an acute sense of urgency, emphasizing the imperative to protect lives and promote the well-being of all those tragically affected by this devastating conflict.