
Media centre**Zeid urges calm and restraint in West Bank amid deadly escalation**

GENEVA (8 October 2015) - UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein said Thursday he was extremely concerned about increased tensions and violence in Occupied Palestinian Territory, and stressed that calm can only be restored on the basis of respect for human rights.

"The security situation has deteriorated dramatically over the past week in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem. Four Israelis and five Palestinians have already lost their lives, while hundreds of others have been injured. More bloodshed will only lead to more hatred on both sides, and offer no solution in the long run," Zeid warned.

"The violence is spreading rapidly across the entire West Bank. In the past week, violent clashes between Palestinians and Israeli security forces have been reported in more than 50 different locations, including in East Jerusalem, Ramallah, Hebron, Bethlehem, Jenin, Tulkarm and Nablus," he said.

On October 1, an Israeli family was reportedly attacked by Palestinians in a drive-by shooting in the northern West Bank, causing the deaths of both parents. Two days later, a Palestinian youth allegedly attacked an Israeli family in the Old City in East Jerusalem, killing two men and injuring a woman and a toddler, following which he was shot and killed by Israeli security forces. On October 4 and 5, two Palestinians, including a 13-year-old boy from Aida Refugee camp, were reportedly killed during clashes with Israeli security forces. On October 4, a young Palestinian was reported killed by Israeli policemen near the Old City, in circumstances that remain unclear. Yesterday, a Palestinian was reportedly shot by police in Kiryat Gat, in Israel, after attempting an attack.

"The escalating tensions indicate a general sense of growing frustration and despair resulting from the situation of prolonged occupation, exacerbated by recent restrictions imposed by the Israeli authorities on Palestinian worshippers wishing to access the Al-Aqsa compound, the ongoing settlement expansion and settler violence, and a general lack of accountability in cases such as the Duma arson attack," Zeid said.

At least 134 Palestinians have reportedly been injured by live ammunition in the context of clashes with Israeli security forces since September 28, and hundreds more have been injured by tear-gas inhalation and rubber bullets.

"The high number of casualties, in particular those resulting from the use of live ammunition by Israeli security forces, raise concerns of excessive use of force, and violations of the right to life and security of the person," said the High Commissioner.

"The use of .22 calibre rifles against protestors is of particular concern, given the fact that this weapon, despite being depicted as less lethal, has caused many Palestinian deaths in the past," he added. Zeid stressed that the use of any firearms by law enforcement should be the exception, and only where less extreme means are insufficient to put a stop to an imminent threat of death or serious injury.

Israeli security forces have reportedly arrested more than 150 Palestinians in the context of clashes, and in search and arrest operations carried out over the past week. In addition, punitive home demolitions are being stepped up in East Jerusalem as part of the response of Israeli authorities to the situation.

"Collective punishments such as house demolitions are both illegal and counterproductive. Any response to the current situation must be strictly in accordance with norms and standards contained in international law," said the High Commissioner.

"I am also deeply concerned at the increasing number of reported attacks, including stone throwing, by both Israeli settlers and Palestinians," Zeid said. Allegations of the use of fire arms by settlers have also been received.

The High Commissioner said he fully supported the Secretary-General's call for urgent action by both sides to stop any further escalation, and further stressed the imperative need to ensure that security forces comply with international standards on use of force*.

ENDS

* including the UN Code of Conduct for Law Enforcement Officials and the UN Basic Principles on the Use of Force and Firearms by Law Enforcement Officials

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