
"Extremely volatile situation across the Occupied Palestinian Territory" – UN expert expresses grave concern

GENEVA (16 October 2015) – The United Nations Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, Makarim Wibisono, expressed grave concern and deep sadness at this month's intensification of violence across the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and in Gaza.

"Too many Palestinian and Israeli lives have been lost in the context of violent attacks and clashes," Mr. Wibisono said, noting also the hundreds of injured. "In the face of growing violence, I urge Israel to exercise restraint and to recognise that all, including Palestinians, have equal right to respect for their human rights and their dignity."

The number of reported Palestinian deaths, including children, is steadily rising. There are concerns of excessive use of force against Palestinians by Israeli security forces in the context of clashes, and cases of suspected Palestinian assailants shot and killed rather than arrested following attacks on Israelis, have been reported.

"In order to calm the situation and avoid further casualties, it is critical that authorities deal with protests and any crime, in accordance with international law," the human rights expert underscored.

"In particular, Israeli security forces must abide by international standards on use of force. Everyone's life deserves to be protected and nobody's security is enhanced by failing to respect Palestinians' right to life and security of the person," he said, adding that, "excessive measures which violate Palestinian human rights will only aggravate the situation."

Extensive Israeli search operations and arrests of Palestinians have been reported. In East Jerusalem, measures include authorisation to 'lock-down' areas, punitive home demolitions and a ban on reconstructing those homes.

"Regardless of the situation, Israeli authorities must not use any measure amounting to collective punishment or which otherwise contravenes international law. The violence was ignited in the context of ongoing violations of human rights of Palestinians living under occupation and such measures only stoke further violence," warned the Special Rapporteur.

Against the backdrop of settlements in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, the blockade of Gaza, and a general lack of accountability, Mr. Wibisono noted that tensions rose further following Israeli imposed restrictions on Palestinian access to the Al-Aqsa compound in East Jerusalem.

"I appeal to Israel to recognise the destabilising effect of the current human rights situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory," he said. "I remain ready to work with the Government of Israel to move forward towards improving the situation."

On his own role as Special Rapporteur he further commented: "The situation is extremely volatile across the Occupied Palestinian Territory. As a former diplomat, I say this is not the time to politicise my mandate, but to recognise that respect for human rights and international humanitarian law, is the first crucial step out of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict."

"I have again written to Israel and formally requested access by the end of 2015," noted the independent expert whose previous requests for Israeli cooperation and access to the Occupied Palestinian Territory have gone without formal response. The Government of the State of Palestine fully cooperates with the mandate.

The Special Rapporteur will present his next report to the 70th session of the United Nations General Assembly on 29th October 2015.

In 2014, the UN Human Rights Council designated Makarim Wibisono (Indonesia) as the sixth Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967. The mandate was originally established in 1993 by the UN Commission on Human Rights. Learn more, log on to: <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/SP/CountriesMandates/PS/Pages/SRPalestine.aspx>

Check the Special Rapporteur's last report to the UN Human Rights Council:

<http://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/RegularSessions/Session25/Pages/ListReports.aspx>

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