



Joint Statement of United Nations organisations on the situation in Gaza

For Immediate Release

Jerusalem, 13 June 2007- United Nations organisations working in the occupied Palestinian territory, are gravely concerned about the spiralling violence in the Gaza Strip, which has claimed 59 lives and caused 273 injuries since 9 June. This includes two UNRWA staff members who were killed today, one while on duty. UN organisations are particularly troubled by reports of attacks on hospitals, ambulances and extra-judicial killings, which raise concerns of serious violations of international humanitarian and human rights law.

The UN is also concerned about the humanitarian consequences arising from the heavy street fighting which is preventing the civilian population from reaching essential health services and food outlets. The fighting is also hampering the UN's ability to deliver emergency services, mainly food and health assistance. Militants have also engaged in gun battles inside two UNRWA facilities.

"There is a need for immediate efforts to restore calm, protect the lives of innocent Palestinians and ensure the safe and secure distribution of emergency aid," said Kevin Kennedy, the UN Humanitarian Coordinator for the oPt. "The UN remains committed to continuing its humanitarian operations in the Gaza Strip so that Palestinians in need can continue to receive assistance. The ongoing violence is putting our operations at risk," he added.

United Nations organisations call upon all parties engaged in the current hostilities to exercise their responsibilities under international humanitarian and human rights law and refrain from attacks on civilians, humanitarian institutions and carrying out extra-judicial killings.

At the same time, UN organisations call upon the Government of Israel and Palestinians to facilitate access to and from the Gaza Strip for humanitarian staff and relief supplies and ensure the continued operation of commercial and passenger crossing points.

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