



29 August 2024

Statement:

Condemning Israel's Escalation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory

At dawn on Wednesday, 28 August 2024, the Israeli occupation authorities launched a wide-scale military offensive in the northern occupied West Bank. Israeli occupation forces (IOF) have killed at least 10 Palestinians, including children, in overnight military raids and airstrikes targeting the Palestinian cities and refugee camps of Jenin, Tulkarm, and Tubas. Since entering the occupied West Bank, IOF have besieged hospitals and emergency centres, imposed blockades to hinder ambulance movements, and systematically destroyed vital infrastructure and private property. This escalation is part of Israel's comprehensive campaign against the Palestinian people, with the ultimate goal being the permanent illegal annexation of the occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT) and denial of the rights of the Palestinian people, especially their inalienable rights to self-determination and to return.

Given Israeli authorities' ongoing attempts to justify this military assault as 'preventative', it is crucial to highlight the landmark advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice (ICJ), which found that **Israel's occupation of the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, is unlawful**. The ICJ also reaffirmed the illegality of Israel's associated settlement regime, annexation efforts, and apartheid, and further mandated, *inter alia*, that Israel end its illegal occupation and presence in the OPT as rapidly as possible. Since the advisory opinion was released on 19 July, UN experts have reported that Israel's attacks against Palestinian civilians and resources have only intensified. In the occupied West Bank, Israeli occupation forces and terrorist settlers have killed more than 650 Palestinians since October 2023. According to UN figures, 128 Palestinians, including 26 children, were killed by airstrikes in the occupied West Bank in the first three weeks of August alone.

The extremist far-right Israeli government's intentions to illegally annex the occupied West Bank and carry out the war crime of forced displacement – already being perpetrated against millions of Palestinians in Gaza – are evident in the increasing severity of crimes being committed against Palestinian civilians by the IOF and terrorist settlers, as well as in public statements and incitements made by Israeli officials. These include a recent motion passed by the Israeli Knesset, which outright rejected the establishment of a Palestinian state, and Israeli Foreign Minister Katz's call to "deal with" the West Bank in the same manner as Gaza, including through the "evacuation" of Palestinian residents. It is important to note that Article 49 (1) of the Fourth Geneva Convention explicitly prohibits forcible transfers and deportations of protected (occupied) persons from occupied territory, **regardless of their motive**. Without assurances of safety or fundamental protections mandated by international humanitarian law – such as essential services and a guarantee of return after hostilities end – Israeli-issued relocation orders do not qualify as 'evacuations' and must be understood as constituting the war crime of forcible transfer, for which Israel must be held accountable.

The General Delegation of Palestine urges the international community, including Australia, Aotearoa New Zealand, and Pacific nations, to intervene immediately and effectively to compel this extremist Israeli government to cease its relentless violations against the Palestinian people. As HE Dr Riyad Mansour, Minister and Permanent Observer of the State of Palestine to the United Nations, has stated: **"Waiting for Israel to do the right thing, when it has proven time and again that it will not do it, is incomprehensible and unconscionable."** Direct and concrete action is urgently needed to prevent further escalation, end Israel's illegal occupation, and stop the massacre, displacement, starvation, and destruction of the Palestinian people.

For more information, please contact the General Delegation of Palestine to Australia, Aotearoa New Zealand and the Pacific.