

24 October 2023

# Secretary-General's remarks to the Security Council - on the Middle East [as delivered]

At a crucial moment like this, it is vital to be clear on principles -- starting with the fundamental principle of respecting and protecting civilians.

I have condemned unequivocally the horrifying and unprecedented 7 October acts of terror by Hamas in Israel.

Nothing can justify the deliberate killing, injuring and kidnapping of civilians – or the launching of rockets against civilian targets.

All hostages must be treated humanely and released immediately and without conditions. I respectfully note the presence among us of members of their families.

Excellencies,

It is important to also recognize the attacks by Hamas did not happen in a vacuum.

The Palestinian people have been subjected to 56 years of suffocating occupation.

They have seen their land steadily devoured by settlements and plagued by violence; their economy stifled; their people displaced and their homes demolished. Their hopes for a political solution to their plight have been vanishing.

But the grievances of the Palestinian people cannot justify the appalling attacks by Hamas. And those appalling attacks cannot justify the collective punishment of the Palestinian people.

Excellencies,

Even war has rules.

We must demand that all parties uphold and respect their obligations under international humanitarian law; take constant care in the conduct of military operations to spare civilians; and respect and protect hospitals and respect the inviolability of UN facilities which today are sheltering more than 600,000 Palestinians.

The relentless bombardment of Gaza by Israeli forces, the level of civilian casualties, and the wholesale destruction of neighborhoods continue to mount and are deeply alarming.

I mourn and honour the dozens of UN colleagues working for UNRWA – sadly, at least 35 and counting – killed in the bombardment of Gaza over the last two weeks.

I owe to their families my condemnation of these and many other similar killings.

The protection of civilians is paramount in any armed conflict.

Protecting civilians can never mean using them as human shields.

Protecting civilians does not mean ordering more than one million people to evacuate to the south, where there is no shelter, no food, no water, no medicine and no fuel, and then continuing to bomb the south itself.

I am deeply concerned about the clear violations of international humanitarian law that we are witnessing in Gaza.

Let me be clear: No party to an armed conflict is above international humanitarian law.

Il manifesto

## **Nazioni Unite, in trincea contro la diplomazia**

[\*Mario Ricciardi, 26 ottobre 2023\*](#)

Ecco perché oggi la sinistra dovrebbe essere al fianco di Guterres e di chi difende le Nazioni unite da un attacco strumentale che può fare soltanto il gioco di chi vuole che le armi siano l'unica risposta a una crisi che richiederebbe invece un impegno per una soluzione stabile che altrimenti corre il rischio di aprire la strada a un'estensione del conflitto.