



Press Release

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Canberra, Australia

Israeli Assaults on Jerusalem and Gaza

The situation on the ground in Palestine is rapidly destabilizing as a result of escalating violations by Israeli occupation forces and settlers against Palestinian civilians. The forced evictions and displacement of Palestinians in East Jerusalem and increasingly violent attacks against worshippers and raids of Al Haram al-Sharif and Al Aqsa Mosque are deliberate efforts by Israel to consolidate control of the City and to change the demographic composition, character and legal status of East Jerusalem.

Thousands of Palestinians are being forcibly evicted and replaced with Israeli settlers. There are currently over 200,000 settlers living in illegal settlements in occupied East Jerusalem, and an estimated 9,000 Palestinians are in immediate threat of forced eviction and home demolitions to make way for the construction of another 200 illegal settlement units. Palestinian families in the East Jerusalem neighborhood Sheikh Jarrah are experiencing the largest forced mass displacement since 1967.

The violence against Palestinian worshippers continues to escalate. Since the beginning of the Holy Month of Ramadan, occupation forces have banned gatherings at Damascus Gate and heavily restricted Palestinians' access to Al Aqsa Compound for observance of the Holy Month. The violent incursions against Al Aqsa Compound by settlers continue under the protection of Israeli occupation forces, who themselves continue to attack worshippers using gas grenades and rubber bullets, illegally detaining hundreds of Palestinians, including women, children, and the elderly. Israeli forces have prevented Red Crescent medical teams and ambulances from entering the compound to assist the hundreds injured. Over 700 Palestinians have been injured by Israeli suppression in recent days. Three Palestinians have lost their eyes.

The Palestinian public have responded to Israeli violations by holding vigils, peaceful protests and demonstrations which have been violently suppressed by Israeli occupation forces who have arrested and assaulted protesters using skunk water, tear gas, stun grenades, and rubber bullets.

Hamas responded to Israeli violence against Palestinians in Jerusalem by launching rockets towards Israel, without any casualties. Israel's disproportionate retaliation in the form of air raids on Gaza have levelled a 12-storey residential building and killed at least 28 Palestinians, including 10 children. The Secretary General of the Arab League has condemned Israeli air strikes as "indiscriminate and irresponsible" and argued that Israel's violations in Jerusalem and tolerance of escalating settler violence against Palestinians is what led to the ignition of the situation in this dangerous way.

The UN Human Rights office has warned that Israeli violations could amount to "war crimes", and the Secretary-General has urged Israel to cease in line with its obligations under international humanitarian and human rights law. The Envoys of the Middle East Quartet (the EU, USA, UN, and Russia) in a joint press statement expressed "deep concern" along with a long list of others including Australia, New Zealand, the UK, Germany, France, OIC Countries, China, and Mexico.

At this point, expressing concern is not a sufficient response. The international community and media continue to approach the situation in Jerusalem with false equivalence, despite there being no parity between Israel, the occupier and oppressor, and Palestinians, the occupied and oppressed. The international community must reevaluate and reconsider its approach to Israel with this in mind, and focus on international law and human rights tools such as the ICC. Additionally, full recognition of the State of Palestine is vital to empower Palestine enough for genuine peace negotiations to be made possible. Finally, the international community must act immediately to protect the Palestinian people against Israeli violations in the interest of upholding international law and saving human lives.

