

UN agencies express outrage over killing of Palestinian volunteer medic in Gaza

United Nations officials have expressed their outrage over Friday's killing by Israeli security forces of a 21-year-old Palestinian volunteer medic who was helping the injured along the Gaza border.

"Healthcare workers must be allowed to perform their duties without fear of death or injury," said the UN Humanitarian Coordinator, Jamie McGoldrick.

He added that it is difficult to see how the killing "squares with Israel's obligation as occupying power to ensure the welfare of the population of Gaza" – the Palestinian enclave occupied by Israel.

According to media reports, Razan An Najjar, a member of the Palestinian Medical Relief Society (PMRS), was hit by live ammunition fired by Israeli forces while trying, with other first responders, to reach those injured during Friday's demonstrations against Israeli policies in Gaza, dubbed the 'the Great March of Return'.

Ms. An Najjar was taken to the European Gaza Hospital after being reportedly shot in the chest, but died shortly afterwards. Three others in her team were also injured.

The protests, still ongoing, were initially organized to take place from 30 March to 15 May to mark "al-Nakba" or "the Catastrophe," by which Palestinians remember their mass displacement during the 1948-1949 war.

Hundreds of thousands of Palestinians have marched along the border of the Gaza Strip – the Palestinian enclave occupied by Israel.

Fuelled by United States recognition of Jerusalem as Israel's capital and the official opening of its embassy there on 14 May, the demonstrations peaked that day and clashes at the border fence resulted in the killing of at least 60 Palestinians by Israel security forces.

The latest incident comes on top of "an already-staggering number of attacks on healthcare personnel" reported since the end of March, said a statement released by UN agencies on Saturday; 245 health workers and 40 ambulance crews have been caught up in the attacks, according to data provided by the Palestinian Ministry of Health, the Palestinian Red Crescent Society, PMRS and the Union of Health Work Committees.

Attacks on medical teams in Gaza not only risk the life and health of staff and patients, but also undermine the overall capacity of Gaza's chronically underfunded health system.

“Such attacks on health care must not happen, and we need to enhance our efforts to ensure the protection of our frontline health workers. There are clear obligations to safeguard healthcare under international law and these must be respected,” said Gerald Rockenschaub, Head of the [World Health Organization](#) (WHO) office in the occupied Palestinian territory, or oPt.

Under international human rights law, lethal force may only be used as a last resort when there is an imminent threat of death or serious injury.

“It is very difficult to see how Razan posed such a threat to heavily-armed, well-protected Israeli forces in defensive positions on the other side of the fence,” James Heenan, Head of Office, [Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights](#) in the occupied Palestinian territory (oPt).

“Reports indicate that Razan was assisting injured demonstrators and wearing her first responder clothing, clearly distinguishing her as a healthcare worker, even from a distance,” he added.