

UN chief urges Hamas and Israel to 'step back from the brink of another devastating conflict' in Gaza

Voicing deep concern over the latest flare-up of violence around Gaza, the United Nations chief on Saturday urged all sides to “step back from the brink of another devastating conflict”.

“I am gravely concerned over the dangerous escalation of violence in Gaza and southern Israel,” said [Secretary-General António Guterres](#) in a statement.

“I deeply regret the loss of life. It is imperative that all sides urgently step back from the brink of another devastating conflict”, he added.

On 30 March this year, Palestinians in Gaza – controlled by Hamas, a militant Palestinian faction – started a mass protest against a blockade of the enclave imposed by Israel since the early 1990’s. The confrontation between the sides has since escalated.

On Friday, Palestinian gunmen killed an Israeli soldier and the Israeli military launched dozens of strikes that killed three Hamas fighters, according to media reports. A fourth Palestinian was killed by Israeli gunfire during a protest near the border.

In the statement, Mr. Guterres called on Hamas and other Palestinian militants in Gaza to cease the launching of rockets and incendiary kites and provocations along the enclave’s border fence. He also said Israel must exercise restraint to avoid further inflaming the situation.

“Any further escalation will endanger the lives of Palestinians and Israelis alike, deepen the humanitarian catastrophe in Gaza and undermine current efforts to improve livelihoods and support the return of the Palestinian Authority to Gaza,” he said.

The Secretary-General also encouraged all to engage with the UN, and particularly his Special Coordinator, Nickolay Mladenov, and work to find “a way out of this dangerous situation”.