



Anniversary of the 7 October 2023 attack on Israel

Statement by the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms while Countering Terrorism, Ben Saul

On the anniversary of the 7 October 2023 attack on Israel, I commemorate the many victims of war crimes and crimes against humanity committed by Hamas and other armed groups. Almost 1,200 people were killed, thousands were injured, and 251 people were taken hostage. The victims hailed from dozens of countries.

International crimes can never be justified. Those responsible for planning and perpetrating these crimes must be brought to justice, in accordance with international law.

I urge the immediate release of all hostages. Hostage taking negates the humanity of victims and is agonizing for their loved ones. No person should be treated as a means to a political end.

I pay tribute to the courage and resilience of victims during their recovery and rehabilitation. Victims should be assisted in accordance with the United Nations Model Legislative Provisions to Support the Needs and Protect the Rights of Victims of Terrorism.

Victims also have the right to know the truth about the attack, including through independent investigations, prosecutions of perpetrators, and accountability for any state failures to prevent foreseeable attacks.

Israel's response to the attack must fully respect international law. As I have often done over the past year, I will continue to condemn Israeli violations that arise in Palestine and Israel, as well as in related violence in Lebanon, Syria, Iran and Yemen.

I also condemn unlawful attacks on Israel by non-state armed groups in Lebanon and Yemen, and by Iran.

All victims of violations of international law, whether by non-state or state actors, deserve equal respect, dignity and justice. The pernicious dehumanization of "the other side" must end.

I call on all states with influence over any of the parties to the complex conflicts in the Middle East to encourage and command respect for international law by all possible means.

A century of violence has not guaranteed security for anyone in the region. I urge a ceasefire and a comprehensive political settlement based on full respect for international law.