

UN special rapporteur says Israeli strikes on Gaza are illegal

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United Nations, August 8 (RHC)-- The United Nations special rapporteur on the occupied Palestinian territories says Israel's air raids on the besieged Gaza Strip "not only are illegal but irresponsible," calling for a diplomatic solution to the latest bout of violence, which began on Friday when Israel launched air attacks on Gaza City.

“The situation in Gaza is on the verge of a humanitarian crisis,” Francesca Albanez told Al Jazeera. “The only way to secure the wellness of Palestinians wherever they are is to lift the siege and allow aid to enter.”

Israel has characterised the assault as a “preemptive” act of self-defence against the Palestinian Islamic Jihad group and said its operation could last a week.

Albanez blasted the United States for saying that it believed Israel had the right to defend itself. “Israel cannot claim that it’s defending itself in this conflict,” Albanez said.

The U.S. ambassador to Israel, Tom Nides, wrote on Twitter on Friday: “The United States firmly believes that Israel has a right to protect itself. We are engaging with different parties and urge all sides for calm.”

His remarks were echoed by British Foreign Secretary Liz Truss, who said the United Kingdom “stands by Israel and its right to defend itself”, and condemned the “terrorist groups firing at civilians and violence which has resulted in casualties on both sides.”

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