

**Al-Marsad calls for an international committee to investigate the rocket shell strike on a football field in Majdal Shams in the occupied Golan**

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**Al-Marsad - Arab Center for Human Rights in Golan**

On Saturday, July 27, 2024, at approximately 6:20 p.m., a rocket shell struck the football field in the town of Majdal Shams in the occupied Syrian Golan, killing and injuring dozens of people, most of whom were children playing football.

According to data collected by Al-Marsad from medical centres and doctors, the explosion led to the death of 12 children, including three girls and nine boys, aged 10-16 years, in addition to wounding 32 people. Most of them were children, fourteen of whom were seriously injured.

Videos reported by the media and social media indicate that 15 seconds elapsed between the sounding of warning sirens and the explosion. The Israeli occupation authorities and the Lebanese Hezbollah organization have accused each other of being responsible for this horrific incident. The spokesman for the Israeli occupation forces, Brigadier General Daniel Hagari, blamed Hezbollah for this incident, claiming that it was the result of a missile whose explosive payload weighed more than 50 kilograms. He claimed that the missile was a "Falaq 1", which is manufactured in Iran and is only available to Hezbollah. In turn, Hezbollah categorically denied Israel's accusations, claiming that it had no connection to the incident, and instead held the Israeli occupation forces responsible.

Al-Marsad condemns this crime in the strongest possible terms and urgently calls for an impartial international investigation to determine the party responsible, uncover the truth, and achieve justice for the victims and their families. Further, Israel must fulfil its obligations under international law to protect the Syrian population living under Israeli military occupation in the Golan from military operations.

The rules and provisions of customary and conventional international humanitarian law, including the 1949 Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War and Additional Protocol I to the 1977 Geneva Conventions, affirm that the civilian population enjoys general protection against dangers arising from military operations. The civilian population may not be the subject of attack, and indiscriminate attacks targeting populated areas and acts or threats of violence whose primary purpose is to spread terror among them are also prohibited. Parties to the conflict must distinguish between the civilian population and combatants and between civilian objects and military objectives. They should limit their operations to military objectives to ensure respect and protection of the civilian population and objects.

Protecting the civilian population, both from parties to the conflict and from the occupying power, requires avoiding the establishment of military objectives in or near densely populated areas, taking other necessary precautions to protect the civilian population and civilian objects under its control from the dangers resulting from military operations, and refrain from setting military targets inside or near residential areas.

Al-Marsad condemns this appalling crime and demands that:

- The Israeli occupation authorities fulfil their obligations stipulated in international humanitarian law regarding protecting civilians and take all necessary precautions to protect the Syrian population under Israeli control from the dangers resulting from military operations, as well as initiating a transparent and impartial investigation of this incident.
- The United Nations and the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Occupied Palestinian Territories, including East Jerusalem and Israel, to conduct an independent and impartial investigation which involves experts and specialists reviewing all available evidence and testimonies to uncover the circumstances of this crime and those responsible.
- The international community established an independent international investigation committee and enabled it to travel to Majdal Shams in the occupied Golan to conduct an in-depth and impartial investigation into the circumstances of this crime, reveal the truth to the victims and their families, and hold those responsible accountable.