



Fédération internationale des ligues des droits de l'Homme

ORGANISATION INTERNATIONALE NON GOUVERNEMENTALE AYANT STATUT CONSULTATIF AUPRES DES NATIONS UNIES, DE L'UNESCO,
DU CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE ET D'OBSERVATEUR AUPRES DE LA COMMISSION AFRICAINE DES DROITS DE L'HOMME ET DES PEUPLES

International Federation
for Human Rights

Federación Internacional
de los Derechos Humanos

الفدرالية الدولية لحقوق الإنسان

HEM Jean-Maurice Ripert,
Ambassador, Permanent representative to the UN
President of the UN Security Council
HEMM Ambassadors, Members of the UN Security
Council
HEM Ban Ki-moon, United Nations Secretary General

Paris, January 6th 2009

Re: Israel / OPT – Operation « Cast Lead » - Call for an International Interposition Force

Excellencies,

The International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH) conveys to you its horror about the extensive destruction and terrible loss of human lives resulting from the « Cast Lead » operation led by the Israeli Defense Forces in the Gaza Strip. It calls upon you to intervene at the Security Council without delay to put an end to the grave breaches of the international humanitarian law and large scale human rights violations in the Occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT).

FIDH condemns the rocket firing of Palestinian armed groups against Israeli civilian population. Yet and unfortunately, the reaction by the Government of Israel results in a flagrant and serious violation of international humanitarian law. The operations of the Israeli Army constitute at the least war crimes, if not crimes against humanity, according to international criminal law. As acknowledged by the Israeli and Palestinian human rights organizations, members of FIDH, as well as by the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights¹ and the group of UN Human Rights Special Procedures, these interventions are totally disproportionate.

Furthermore, the ground incursion into Gaza by the Israeli forces could greatly increase civilian casualties. As of yesterday, UNRWA had announced 500 deaths, including at least 25% of civilians. Today, 40 would have been killed in the bombing of a UN school.

The artillery operation is definitely increasing the need for the civilian population to have access to food, water,

1 Declaration on Decembre 28th 2008,

<http://www.unhcr.ch/hurricane/hurricane.nsf/view01/F5307C1E012294F6C125752D005CD71F?opendocument>

and urgent medical assistance. FIDH recalls that international humanitarian and human rights workers as well as international observers and journalists have not been allowed into Gaza for weeks. Water supplies are about to run out, and ambulances are prevented from moving into Gaza, which constitutes a violation of international humanitarian law. Individuals are dying as a result of this, as documented by the International Committee of the Red Cross.²

This situation will aggravate the unprecedented humanitarian crisis that has been taking place in the Gaza Strip for the past 18 months, due to the hermetical closure imposed by Israel of this part of the Palestinian territory.

In regard to this situation, FIDH believes the United Nations Security Council has the obligation to intervene to prevent the further escalation of civilian casualties, under Chapter 7 of the UN Charter, and following the “Responsibility to Protect” doctrine, as well as in virtue of Resolution 1674 (2006) on the Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflicts.

FIDH therefore calls upon the French Presidency of the UN Security Council to facilitate the urgent adoption by the Security Council of a resolution, that, inter alia,

- Urges the government of Israel, the occupying power, to respect international humanitarian law and human rights; and consequently to immediately put an end to “Operation Cast lead”;
- Urges all parties to declare an immediate cease-fire;
- Requests the deployment of an international interposition force mandated to put an end to the worsening of the humanitarian crisis by ensuring the supplying of food, water, medicine, fuel, and electricity to the Palestinian population, and to ensure the effective protection of the civilian population in Gaza and in the South of Israel;
- Requests the UN Secretary General to deploy an international high-level commission of investigation, set up under Article 34 of the UN charter, in order to investigate the gross violations of human rights and international humanitarian law that are currently being perpetrated and which are likely to endanger the maintenance of international peace and security ;

Thanking your for your attention and prompt reaction,

Sincerely yours,



Souhayr Belhassen,
President

FIDH

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² <http://www.icrc.org/web/eng/siteeng0.nsf/htmlall/palestine-update-050109?opendocument>