

Oral Statement by the Internal Displacement Monitoring Center, IDMC  
to the 21<sup>st</sup> Special Session of the Human Rights Council, 23th July 2014: Situation in Gaza

**Mr. President, Distinguished Members of the Council,**

Today marks the 17<sup>th</sup> day of Israel's military operation in the Gaza Strip. More than 600 people have been killed, almost three quarters of them being civilians, according to the UN. In addition, over 130,000 people have fled their homes to avoid indiscriminate bombings. With 44% of the Strip declared a no go zone by Israel, with no possibility to flee to Egypt, Israel, or even the West Bank, the fundamental right to freedom of movement has been drastically reduced in the open air prison that is the Gaza Strip. The people of Gaza are being denied their most basic human rights that relate to displaced people, which recalls that "*every internally displaced person has the right to liberty of movement and [...] to seek safety in another part of the country [...] or to leave their country*".<sup>1</sup> However, in Gaza, internally displaced cannot answer the agonizing question: where can I find safety?

Most of the IDPs in Gaza are in dire need for medical and food assistance. UN agencies and NGOs are stretched to the limit of their capacity and the ability to deliver assistance is limited to extremely short ceasefires, which occur between continuous air strikes and the number of people moving attempting to find any safety continues to grow with no end in sight.

The Israeli military operation has come after years of deteriorating living conditions in Gaza. Today, with the high number of civilian victims of the bombardments and the massive displacement, the residents of the Strip are experiencing a paroxysm of humanitarian needs. It is a crisis within a pre-existing crisis. Simply returning to the *status quo ante* is not enough.

Since 2007, Israel's harsh blockade of Gaza has sealed off more than 1.8 million Palestinians in an increasingly unliveable space, with serious humanitarian and development consequences. This is the third time since 2009 that Palestinians have been displaced by Israeli military operations. This operation is reminiscent of Israel's December 2008 'Operation Cast Lead' when 150,000 were displaced. Today, there are still 12,500 people in Gaza who remain displaced following the destruction of their homes during this operation.

How many Palestinians who have fled from their homes today will remain displaced in the coming years?

It is time for the international community to fulfil its international legal obligations. It must call for an end of the blockade and the demands for unconditional respect for international humanitarian and human rights law, in order to ensure the protection of civilians on both sides.

Thank you.

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<sup>1</sup> Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, principles 14, 15 a,b.