

URGENT ACTION

CIVILIANS IN DANGER IN GAZA STRIP AND ISRAEL

Thousands of Palestinian civilians in the Gaza Strip are under threat from indiscriminate, disproportionate, or other forms of sea, air and ground attacks by Israeli forces. Israeli civilians are at risk from rockets fired indiscriminately by Palestinian armed groups.

Since Israel launched Operation "Protective Edge" on 8 July, civilians in the Gaza Strip, 41 km long and no more than 11 km wide, have nowhere to escape military operations by Israeli forces. These include indiscriminate attacks on urban areas using artillery and bombs. Flagrantly disproportionate attacks reportedly aimed at militants have killed hundreds of civilians; buildings housing four or more families have been deliberately razed with no appropriate precautions taken to protect civilians from harm. At least 33 members of four families, including 14 children, were killed when the al-Dali building was totally destroyed in Khan Younis on 27 July; and 26 members of the Abu Jame' family, including 15 children under 14, were killed when a missile struck outside, demolishing their three-storey home. In breach of Israel's obligations under international humanitarian law, ambulances and medical personnel on their way to collect the wounded appear to have been deliberately targeted on several occasions and hospitals have been destroyed by shelling from tanks and missiles.

Civilians in Israel are facing barrages of rocket and mortar attack by Hamas' military wing and other Palestinian armed groups in Gaza: these attacks are inherently indiscriminate. Thousands of rockets have been fired on Israel since 8 July. In Israel, the Bedouin population in the Negev/Naqab desert are particularly vulnerable since they do not enjoy the same protection afforded to many other Israeli citizens, such as bomb shelters. Ouda Lafi al-Waj, aged 32, was killed on 19 July and three members of his family were injured, by a rocket attack on the unnamed area of tin houses near Dimona where he lived. No sirens warned of the attack: Israel's "Iron Dome" system, which intercepts rockets from Gaza, does not operate in "open areas" in unrecognized villages in the Negev/Naqab.

According to UN estimates, over 2,000 Gazans have died in the latest hostilities: most are civilians, including nearly 500 children. Hundreds of thousands have been displaced. Three civilians have been killed in Israel and dozens injured by rockets or shrapnel; 64 Israeli soldiers have also been killed. Since the collapse of the ceasefire on 19 August over 200 rockets have been reportedly fired at Israel while Israeli strikes on Gaza have reportedly killed more than 50 people, most of them civilians.

Please write immediately in Hebrew or your own language:

- Calling on the Israeli authorities to immediately cease indiscriminate and other unlawful attacks affecting the civilian population and to do everything necessary to ensure they uphold their obligations under international humanitarian and human rights law;
- Calling on Hamas and other Palestinian armed groups to stop carrying out rocket attacks against civilians in Israel or commit other violations of international humanitarian law.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 3 OCTOBER 2014 TO:

Minister of Defence

Moshe Ya'alon, Ministry of Defence
37 Kaplan Street, Hakiryia, Tel Aviv
61909, Israel

Email: minister@mod.gov.il

pniot@mod.gov.il

Salutation: Dear Minister

Izz ad-Din al-Qassam Brigades Hamas

(Islamic Resistance Movement), Gaza

Email: english@alqassam.ps

english@palestine-info.co.uk

Salutation: Dear al-Qassam Brigades

(Letters cannot be sent to Gaza due to the blockade)

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. Please insert local diplomatic addresses below:

Name Address 1 Address 2 Address 3 Fax Fax number Email Email address Salutation Salutation

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Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) in Gaza estimate that 435,000 people, a quarter of the population, have been displaced and are staying in emergency shelters or with host families, while thousands of homes and buildings have been damaged, destroyed and rendered uninhabitable. Gaza's public health system is desperately over-stretched and close to collapse. The situation worsened after an Israeli ground operation began on 17 July, and evidence of war crimes mounted as hospitals and clinics reported damage and schools were hit. Hospitals have been subjected to direct attacks and damaged by shelling from tanks and missiles: al-Aqsa Hospital in Deir Al-Balah and Najjar Hospital in Rafah city, among others, have been severely damaged in direct attacks and by tank shelling and missile fire. The entire population of Gaza is surviving on severely limited water supplies of unsafe water; in some areas, water has been cut off for days or weeks because of the attacks. Since the 29 July attack by Israel on the only power plant in Gaza, which is likely to constitute a war crime, Gaza has been without its primary source of electricity and the UN and World Health Organization (WHO) have warned that the entire Strip is facing a public health disaster.

The crippling blockade on Gaza for more than seven years, restricting the movement of people and goods in and out of Gaza has decimated the economy and basic infrastructure. Though Israel is the occupying power in the Gaza Strip since it has effective control over the territory and its population, it has not abided by the obligations of the Fourth Geneva Convention to provide for the welfare of protected persons living under occupation; rather, it has hindered Palestinians' fulfilment of their right to an adequate standard of living, including their access to water, sanitation and healthcare and other essential utilities, all of which are in dire condition. Amnesty International has condemned the Israeli blockade as collective punishment of the entire Gaza population. Lifting the blockade is Israel's obligation and should not be conditional on a ceasefire; it is an essential element of preventing any recurrence of the conflict.

Palestinian armed groups have fired thousands of indiscriminate rockets from residential areas, in violation of international humanitarian law (IHL). There have been reports, unconfirmed as yet by Amnesty International, that Palestinian armed groups have fired indiscriminate rockets from near hospitals or health facilities, or otherwise used these facilities or areas for military purposes. Israeli civilian property has also been damaged by indiscriminate rockets fired by Palestinian armed groups.

Israel's Supreme Court rejected a petition by the Association for Civil Rights in Israel in July, calling for Bedouin communities in the Negev/Naqab to be protected from rocket attacks from Gaza. The court said, "There [is] no excuse for our intervention in the operational decisions of the respondents [the state] that were received in the midst of fighting." The judges added that, "In the absence of data we decided not to refer to the ways of use of the Iron Dome. We believe that the protection of this system is based on practical considerations, without giving any weight to the appearance or non-appearance of settlements on maps".

Operation "Protective Edge" is the third major Israeli offensive against the Gaza Strip in less than six years. Victims of past violations of international human rights and humanitarian law, including war crimes, have not obtained justice, truth and reparation, as required by international law. This impunity fails the victims, and sets the stage for more violations, and the latest hostilities provide evidence of this. Amnesty International is calling for the UN Security Council to refer the situation to the International Criminal Court (ICC); and for the Palestinian President Abbas and the Israeli authorities to respectively accede to and ratify the Statute of the ICC.

Name: Population of Gaza Strip

Gender m/f: both

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