
UNITED NATIONS HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS CALLS FOR AN IMMEDIATE END TO THE ISRAELI BLOCKADE OF GAZA

18 November 2008

United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights Navi Pillay called today for an immediate end to the Israeli blockade of Gaza. “By function of this blockade, 1.5 million Palestinian men, women and children have been forcibly deprived of their most basic human rights for months. This is in direct contravention of international human rights and humanitarian law. It must end now,” she said.

The High Commissioner further called for the Israeli authorities to facilitate the urgent passage of essential humanitarian goods, including food, medical supplies, and fuel, to immediately allow the restoration of electricity, water and other essential services, and to lift movement restrictions preventing the passage of civilians for medical, educational and religious purposes. “Decisive steps must be taken to preserve the dignity and basic welfare of the civilian population, more than half of which are children,” she added.

While welcoming the decision by Israel to allow a limited number of trucks to enter Gaza on 17 November, the High Commissioner recalled the Occupying Power’s obligation to fully cease all measures that are inconsistent with its obligations under international law. “Only a full lifting of the blockade followed by a strong humanitarian response will be adequate to relieve the massive humanitarian suffering evident in Gaza today.”

Calling on all sides to respect international law and the security of civilian populations, the High Commissioner also appealed for a complete cessation of Israeli air strikes and incursions, and of rocket fire by Palestinian groups.

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