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**Oral Update by the Chairperson of the Independent Commission of Inquiry on the 2014 Gaza Conflict**

23 March 2015

As chair of the Independent Commission of Inquiry on the 2014 Gaza Conflict, I am pleased to provide this oral update on the implementation of Human Rights Council resolution [S21/1](#) on behalf of the Commission of Inquiry.

The resolution tasked us to investigate all alleged "violations of international humanitarian law and international human rights law in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, particularly in the occupied Gaza Strip, in the context of the military operations conducted since 13 June 2014, whether before, during or after, to establish the facts and circumstances of such violations and of the crimes perpetrated and to identify those responsible, to make recommendations, in particular on accountability measures, all with a view to avoiding and ending impunity and ensuring that those responsible are held accountable, and on ways and means to protect civilians against any further assaults, and to report to the Council at its twenty-eighth session".

The Commission has interpreted its mandate as including investigation of the activities of Palestinian armed groups in Gaza, including attacks on Israel, as well as the Israeli military operation in the Gaza Strip and Israeli actions in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem. The Commission is looking at a broad range of alleged violations committed by all parties and is considering the full range of human rights including economic, social and cultural rights. Three Commissioners were appointed in August 2014 and the Secretariat was fully staffed by the end of November 2014. The chair of the Commission, Professor William Schabas, resigned last month and I was appointed chair in his place, serving alongside my esteemed colleague Dr. Doudou Diene.

The Commission made an initial call for submissions with the deadline of 10 January 2015. This deadline was extended until the end of January 2015 and then again until late-February, in order to give all stakeholders the opportunity to provide any information they wished to share with the Commission.

The Commission has done its utmost to obtain access to Israel and the Gaza Strip, as well as to the West Bank, including East Jerusalem. We would very much have liked to meet face to face with victims and the authorities in these places. In October and November 2014 the Commission wrote to the Government of Israel requesting access. We wrote again in January and February this year, but to date we have received no response to our letters. In November 2014 the Commission wrote to the Government of Egypt requesting access to Gaza via the Rafah crossing. Egypt indicated it was ready to facilitate our travel to Gaza as soon as the security situation permitted travel through its territory. Unfortunately that has not yet been possible, but we remain ready to go should circumstances change.

The Commission is grateful to the Government of Jordan for facilitating two missions – in November 2014 and January 2015 – to Amman where we met with witnesses and officials from the region.

The Commission of Inquiry has used technology to interview a wide spectrum of witnesses and victims in Israel and the occupied Palestinian territory. Many witnesses and NGO's have also travelled here to Geneva to testify before the Commission. In addition, we have received a large number of submissions from individuals, as well as from local and international human rights groups and UN agencies. We are extremely grateful for this cooperation.

On 9 March we asked the Council to extend our mandate until June this year. We need more time in order to assess the large amount of information we have accumulated – much of which has only been received in recent weeks after the extension of the deadline for submissions. In addition there are complex legal issues to consider. This process cannot be rushed.

Finally, the Commission would like to reassure the victims and witnesses who have testified before the Commission that we remain committed to this process and intend to do justice to their submissions. We look forward to submitting our report to the Council in June this year.

- See more at: <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=15741&LangID=E#sthash.IX19v3FB.dpuf>

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