



UNITED NATIONS HIGH COMMISSIONER
FOR HUMAN RIGHTS



**UN human rights experts deeply regret
obstruction by the Government of Israel
of a planned mission**

Ms. Asma Jahangir, Chairperson of a coordinating body for independent UN human rights experts (also known as "Special Procedures"), issued the following statement today:

"The Coordination Committee of Special Procedures is deeply alarmed that the Special Rapporteur on the human rights situation of the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967, Professor Richard Falk, was prevented by the Israeli authorities from undertaking a mission, in accordance with the mandate entrusted to him by the Human Rights Council.

Upon invitation from the Palestinian Authority, the Special Rapporteur intended to carry out an official visit to the occupied Palestinian territory from 14 to 20 December 2008. However, the Israeli authorities denied him transit through Israel in order to access the occupied Palestinian territory, held him overnight at Ben Gurion international airport, and subsequently sent him back to the United States of America on 15 December 2008.

We deeply regret that the Government of Israel obstructed the planned mission of Professor Falk, detained him for several hours, and separated him from accompanying United Nations staff. Such actions risk undermining the effectiveness of the system of Special Procedures. Fact-finding missions are an essential means for mandate holders to investigate human rights violations, promote fundamental freedoms, and engage in a constructive dialogue with Governments. It is therefore vital for States to cooperate with and assist the Special Procedures in the performance of their tasks.

We would like to note that several other mandate holders have recently visited Israel and the occupied Palestinian territory and enjoyed the cooperation of the relevant authorities. At the same time, we urge the Israeli authorities to extend full cooperation to the Special Rapporteur on the human rights situation of the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967. We hope that Professor Falk will have access to the occupied Palestinian territory so that he can fulfill his mandate."

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