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**New York, 5 February 2008 - Secretary-General's press encounter following his briefing to the Security Council on his recent visit to Africa [unofficial transcript]**

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**Q:** The situation in Gaza is getting very dire, and the population is under collective punishment. Also, we hear more and more threats that fuel has been stopped there. It has been a year almost that Gaza is under siege. What is your plan, or what initiatives would you follow in order to alleviate the situation there?

**SG:** On this issue, I share your concern. You have seen how much I have been working hard to address this issue. I have met with President Shimon Peres in the Davos Forum, and I have spoken to Prime Minister [Ehud] Olmert on this issue. And the Quartet members had a telephone conference a few days ago to address all these issues. We are still working on that. My message is quite clear that, while I appreciate and understand the security concerns of the Israelis, therefore the rocket firing should be stopped, and at the same time, the Israeli Government should also take the necessary measures to ease these humanitarian difficulties brought by these crossings and crossing this [inaudible] - they should not take this as collective punishment.

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**Q:** ... And also, on the Gaza situation, the Israeli Supreme Court just declared Gaza under the control of, not Israel actually, it's a hostile entity. My question is, can Gaza be still defined as an occupied territory, as it is all across the United Nations?

**SG:** ... On this Gaza situation, I again would like to urge the parties concerned first of all to refrain [to] the maximum [extent] from these violent actions, and the Israeli Government should also take necessary measures to look at these humanitarian situations.

**Q:** That doesn't answer my question: Is it occupied territory?

**SG:** I am not in a position to say on these legal matters.

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