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RICHARD J. GOLDSTONE APPOINTED TO LEAD HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL FACT-FINDING MISSION ON GAZA CONFLICT

Three Additional Members of Fact-Finding Mission Appointed

3 April 2009

The Human Rights Council today announced the appointment of Richard J. Goldstone, former Chief Prosecutor of the International Criminal Tribunals for the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda and current Spinoza Fellow at the Netherlands Institute for Advanced Study in the Humanity and Social Sciences, to lead an independent fact-finding mission to investigate international human rights and humanitarian law violations related to the recent conflict in the Gaza Strip.

The Council's President, Nigerian Ambassador Martin Ihoeoghian Uhomoibhi, today announced his decision to appoint Justice Goldstone to lead the mission, which will also include the following experts: Professor Christine Chinkin, Professor of International Law at the London School of Economics and Political Science, University of London; Ms. Hina Jilani, Advocate of the Supreme Court of Pakistan and former Special Representative of the Secretary General on Human Rights Defenders; and Colonel (retired from the Irish Armed Forces) Desmond Travers, member of the Board of Directors of the Institute for International Criminal Investigations (IICI). The team will be supported by staff of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights.

"I am confident that the mission will be in a position to assess in an independent and impartial manner all human rights and humanitarian law violations committed in the context of the conflict which took place between 27 December 2008 and 18 January 2009 and provide much needed clarity about the legality of the thousands of deaths and injuries and the widespread destruction that occurred", Ambassador Uhomoibhi stated.

Today's appointment comes following the adoption of a resolution by the Human Rights Council at the conclusion of its Special Session on 9 and 12 January convened to address "the grave violations of human rights in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, particularly due to the recent Israeli military attacks against the occupied Gaza Strip".

"It is in the interest of all Palestinians and Israelis that the allegations of war crimes and serious human rights violations related to the recent conflict on all sides be investigated. It is my hope that the findings of this mission will make a meaningful contribution to the peace process in the Middle East and to providing justice for the victims", Justice Goldstone stated upon his appointment.

Members of the fact-finding mission will hold a range of discussions in Geneva within the next few weeks before departing for the region.

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