



Secretary-General SG/SM/16051

Department of Public Information • News and Media Division • New York

SECRETARY-GENERAL URGES PARTIES IN GAZA TO PROLONG SUSPENSION OF FIGHTING, 'STEP BACK' FROM INFLICTING MORE TRAGIC VIOLENCE ON CIVILIANS

The following statement was issued today by the Spokesman for UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon:

The Secretary-General calls on the parties to renew a humanitarian pause in Gaza and reiterates his demand for a durable ceasefire that could set the ground for the start of comprehensive negotiations. In this connection, he welcomes the Security Council's strong support in its presidential statement earlier today for his call for a humanitarian ceasefire.

Following a largely observed 12-hour humanitarian pause on 26 July, the Secretary-General called on all parties to prolong the suspension of the fighting for an additional extendable period of 24 hours to allow vital humanitarian efforts to continue, including relief operations. The parties have expressed serious interest in this request but have not yet agreed on the timing of its implementation. As people around the world mark Eid al-Fitr, the end of the holy month of Ramadan and a time for overcoming differences, the Secretary-General calls on parties to build on the current calm.

With hundreds of Palestinians already killed in Gaza and horrifying levels of physical destruction, he urges those responsible to step back from provoking or inflicting yet more tragic violence on civilians there.

The Secretary-General stresses that Israelis and Palestinians have a responsibility beyond ceasing the ongoing hostilities to start a serious dialogue to address the root causes of the conflict. This is the only way finally to break the seemingly endless cycle of violence and suffering. That means an end to the blockade of Gaza and ultimately to the nearly half century of occupation. It equally means security for Israel. He urges the parties to heed his call and that of the international community for the sake of present and future generations of Palestinians and Israelis.

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