
Israel must end Gaza blockade, evictions, alleged abuse of Palestinian children – Ban

16 November 2009 – Israel should end the blockade of Gaza, cease evictions and demolitions of Palestinian homes, and ensure that the rights of children are respected and that all allegations of torture and ill-treatment are promptly investigated and perpetrators prosecuted, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said in an annual [report](#) released today.

"In particular, the Government of Israel should allow unimpeded access to Gaza for humanitarian aid and the non-humanitarian goods needed for the reconstruction of properties and infrastructure," he writes in the report to the General Assembly on the human rights of the Palestinian people in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem.

"Israel should also address effectively and immediately the water, sanitation and environmental crisis in Gaza," he stressed, citing the devastating damage stemming from Israel's military action against Hamas last winter and its blockade of many materials other than foodstuffs, medical supplies, stationery and some industrial or electrical appliances.

"Those heavy import restrictions, coupled with a near total prohibition on exports, have had a devastating effect on the Gaza economy. The blockade has also severely impaired the realization of a wide range of economic, social and cultural rights, as well as civil and political rights."

Mr. Ban says the reported ill-treatment of children includes beatings, being forced to stand or sit for long periods in extremely painful and harmful positions, in most cases with hands tied together and eyes blindfolded, threats of sexual abuse and hooding the head and face in a sack.

He cites one case documented by the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), in which a 14-year-old-boy from the village of Qatanna was arrested in March by soldiers after other children had thrown stones at an army vehicle. While being transferred to an Israeli military camp, soldiers slapped him several times, handcuffed and blindfolded him.

The boy stated that the handcuffs were too tight and caused him great pain and that the blindfold may have been coated in tear gas since his eyes were burning the entire time. After repeated appeals at the police station, a soldier noted the boy's hands were turning blue and took off his handcuffs and blindfold. He was then subjected to interrogation for four hours, during which an interrogator beat his face and ears with the back of his hand, approximately 40 times.

"All parties to the conflict should abide scrupulously by their obligations under international human rights law and international humanitarian law," Mr. Ban writes in an overall recommendation, calling for all allegations to be investigated by credible, independent and transparent accountability mechanisms.

"Equally crucial is upholding the right of victims to reparation."

On the West Bank, he reiterates that the wall which Israel says it is building to keep out Palestinian suicide bombers and other attacks, should be dismantled where it is in occupied territory, in accordance with an advisory opinion by the International Court of Justice.

Israel should also issue viable zoning plans and a less cumbersome process for issuing building permits in a non-discriminatory manner for all in East Jerusalem and other places in the West Bank. "Until such time, the evictions and demolitions of Palestinian homes should cease," Mr. Ban stresses.

"Victims of forced evictions should also be afforded the possibility of effective redress. Punitive demolitions should cease immediately."

In East Jerusalem alone from January to July 2009 at least 194 persons were forcibly displaced as a result of home demolitions. The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) in August cited "conservative estimates" of more than 1,500 pending demolition orders in East Jerusalem. Some neighbourhoods face the prospects of mass demolitions. In the Silwan neighbourhood of East Jerusalem, some 90 houses are threatened, potentially displacing about 1,000 people. In Sheik Jarrah, an area in central East Jerusalem, 475 residents could face potential eviction as the ownership of their homes is contested by Israeli settlers.