



UNITED NATIONS

Press Release

SPECIAL RAPPORTEUR ON HUMAN RIGHTS IN OCCUPIED PALESTINIAN TERRITORIES ON SITUATION IN GAZA AND NEIGHBOURING ISRAEL

3 March 2008

John Dugard, Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967, issued the following statement today:

"The present situation in Gaza and neighbouring Israel cannot be allowed to continue. Palestinian rockets fired into Israel violate the rules of international humanitarian law and terrorize Israelis. Israel's excessive and disproportionate response has likewise been unlawful in terms of international humanitarian law. The failure to distinguish between civilian and military targets violates one of the most fundamental rules of humanitarian law. Collective punishment and the terrorization of an occupied people are also unlawful.

It is imperative that every effort be made to bring the violence to an end. This can be done only by negotiation and mediation. The United Nations is the obvious body to initiate such talks between Hamas in Gaza, the Israeli Government and the Palestinian Authority in Ramallah. At present the United Nations is restrained by the United States, the European Union and Israel from speaking to Hamas and this has left it powerless to fulfil its principal duty of maintaining international peace. The Secretary-General of the United Nations must find the courage to overcome this obstacle and initiate meaningful talks between all parties. Without this the cycle of violence is doomed to continue."

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