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Secretary-General SG/SM/16018

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Secretary-General, Alarmed at Worsening Situation, Demands Israelis, Palestinians Take Steps to End Fighting, Prevent Greater Risks to Regional Security

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

The Secretary-General is alarmed that, despite the Security Council's clear demand for a ceasefire, the situation in and around the Gaza Strip appears to be worsening, with grave implications for the safety of both Israeli and Palestinian civilians. He strongly believes that it is in the interest of both sides that steps towards dangerous escalation be replaced with immediate measures to end the fighting, thus preventing further casualties and greater risks to regional peace and security. He demands both sides move in this direction now.

Hamas' indiscriminate firing of rockets against Israeli civilian targets is a violation of international law. The Secretary-General, abhorring the images of Israeli families hovering in shelters in fear for their children's safety, repeats his condemnation of Palestinian rockets fired from Gaza and demands an immediate cessation of these indecent attacks.

The Secretary-General is also deeply worried about the impact on Palestinian families of Israeli military action. Too many Palestinian civilians have been killed, and any Israeli ground offensive will undoubtedly increase the death toll and exacerbate civilian suffering in the Gaza Strip. The Secretary-General feels a sense of responsibility for the Palestinians who, especially in the Gaza Strip, have long been denied the sense of freedom and dignity that they deserve.

The Secretary-General does not believe that what is inherently a longstanding, serious political dispute between Israelis and Palestinians can be resolved via military means by either side. He remains engaged with both sides to urge de-escalation and an end to violence. It is time for Israeli and Palestinian families alike to feel a sense of peace and security, with trust in the other side, rather than fear, despair and hatred that characterize too much of the relationship in the current environment.

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