
COUNCIL CONCLUDES SPECIAL SESSION AFTER ADOPTING A RESOLUTION CALLING FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE RECOMMENDATIONS IN THE GOLDSTONE REPORT

16 October 2009

The Human Rights Council concluded its twelfth Special Session today after adopting a resolution that focused on continuing violations of human rights by Israel in the Occupied Palestinian territories, in particular in East Jerusalem, and endorsed the recommendations set out in the reports of the Fact-Finding Mission to Gaza led by Justice Goldstone and by the High Commissioner for Human Rights, and called for their implementation.

In its resolution, which was adopted by a vote of 25 in favour, six against, and 11 abstentions, the Council strongly condemned all policies and measures taken by Israel, the occupying Power, including those limiting access of Palestinians to their properties and holy sites particularly in Occupied East Jerusalem, on the basis of national origin, religion, sex, age or any other discriminatory ground, which were in grave violation of the Palestinian People's civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights. It also condemned the recent Israeli violations of human rights in Occupied East Jerusalem, particularly the confiscation of lands and properties, the demolishing of houses, the construction and expansion of settlements, the continuous construction of the separation Wall, the restrictions on the freedom of movement of the Palestinian citizens of East Jerusalem, as well as the continuous digging and excavation works in and around Al-Aqsa mosque and its vicinity. The Council demanded that Israel allow Palestinian citizens and worshippers unhindered access to their properties and religious sites in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and that it immediately cease all digging and excavation works and activities beneath and around Al Aqsa Mosque.

The Council also condemned the non-cooperation by Israel with the Independent International Fact-Finding Mission established by its resolution S-9/L.1. The Council endorsed the recommendations contained in the Mission's report and called upon all concerned parties to ensure their implementation. It also recommended to the General Assembly that it consider the report of the Fact-Finding Mission during the main part of its sixty-fourth session. Similarly, the Council endorsed the recommendations contained in the first periodic report of the High Commissioner for Human Rights in this area, and called upon all concerned parties, including United Nations bodies, to ensure their implementation.

The United Nations Fact Finding Mission on the Gaza Conflict, led by Justice Richard Goldstone, was tasked by the Council "to investigate all violations of international human rights law and international humanitarian law that might have been committed at any time in the context of the military operations that were conducted in Gaza during the period from 27 December 2008 and 18 January 2009, whether before, during or after". The report of the Mission, presented to the Council's twelfth session, concluded that, while the Israeli Government sought to portray its operations as a response to rocket attacks in the exercise of its right to self defence, the Israeli plan had been directed, at least in part, at the people of Gaza as a whole. The report highlighted the treatment of many civilians detained or even killed while trying to surrender as one manifestation of the way in which the effective rules of engagement, standard operating procedures and instructions to the troops on the ground appeared to have been framed in order to create an environment in which due regard for civilian lives and basic human dignity was replaced with the disregard for basic international humanitarian law and human rights norms. The destruction of food supply installations, water sanitation systems, concrete factories and residential houses had been the result of a deliberate and systematic policy by the Israeli armed forces and not because those objects had presented a military threat. The report also found that Palestinian armed groups had succeeded in causing terror within Israel's civilian population through the launch of thousands of rockets and mortars into Israel since April 2001. The text of the full report runs to 575 pages.

General Assembly Resolution 60/251 which created the Human Rights Council states in its operative paragraph 10 that the Council "shall be able to hold Special Sessions when needed at the request of a member of the Council with the support of one-third of the membership of the Council".

This was the twelfth Special Session of the Human Rights Council. The Council's previous Special Sessions related to grave human rights violations in the Gaza Strip; the Occupied Palestinian Territories; Lebanon; Darfur; Myanmar; the Global Food Crisis; the Democratic Republic of the Congo; the Global Financial and Economic Crises and Sri Lanka.

The thirteenth regular session of the Human Rights Council will be held from 1 to 29 March 2010.

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HRC09131E