
Ban appeals for immediate release of detainees after raid on Gaza aid flotilla

1 June 2010 – Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon today appealed for the immediate release of those detained following yesterday's Israeli raid of an aid flotilla bound for the Gaza Strip, reiterating his call for a prompt probe into the deadly incident.

The return of the deceased and care for the wounded are also a top priority, United Nations spokesperson Marie Okabe told reporters in New York. At least 10 civilians died and dozens more were wounded when the Israeli military intercepted a six-ship convoy that was in international waters as it headed for Gaza.

"We reiterate our call to all concerned to act with a sense of care and responsibility and for a satisfactory resolution and the United Nations has raised its concerns about this with international partners and with Israeli authorities and all parties should act in accordance with international law and avoid provocations at this sensitive time," Ms. Okabe said.

The Secretary-General is en route to New York from the Ugandan capital, Kampala, where he spoke on the phone to several world leaders, including Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas, Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan, Israeli Defence Minister Ehud Barak, Israeli Foreign Minister Avigdor Lieberman and French President Nicolas Sarkozy.

Mr. Ban, who condemned the violence in a statement yesterday, also discussed the raid with UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Navi Pillay.

Upon returning to New York, he will hold further talks on a future course of action – including an investigation – with Arab, Turkish and Israeli officials, as well as with members of the Security Council and others.

Early this morning, the Council issued a presidential [statement](#) in which it condemned the acts that led to deaths aboard the aid ships, calling for a "prompt, impartial, credible and transparent investigation."

The 15-member body said that it "deeply regrets the loss of life and injuries resulting from the use of force during the Israeli military operation in international waters against the convoy sailing to Gaza."

Ms. Okabe said today that Robert Serry, the Secretary-General's Special Coordinator for the Middle East Process, has been in contact with other representatives of the diplomatic Middle East Quartet – which comprises the UN, the European Union, Russia and the United States – to ensure that the supplies carried by the convoy reach Gaza, as called for by the Council today.

The spokesperson added that, moving forward, Mr. Ban will consult closely with members of the Council regarding an investigation into the incident.

At an emergency Security Council session yesterday, Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs Oscar Fernandez-Taranco said that "bloodshed would have been avoided if repeated calls on Israel to end the counterproductive and unacceptable blockade of Gaza had been heeded."

He spotlighted "the scale of unmet needs of Gaza's civilian population," underlining that "the blockade is unacceptable and counterproductive and must end."

Mr. Fernandez-Taranco noted that yesterday's developments come as indirect talks between Israel and the Palestinians began last month.

The military operation took place "at a time when all efforts should be focused on the need to build trust and advance Israeli-Palestinian negotiations, and nurture regional cooperation in support of peace," he said. "It is vital that the proximity talks continue."