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### Human Rights Council holds urgent debate

The Human Rights Council at its meeting in Geneva has adopted a resolution deciding to “dispatch an independent international fact finding mission to investigate violations of international law, including international humanitarian and human rights law resulting from the Israeli attacks on the flotilla of ships carrying humanitarian assistance”. The President of the Council will appoint the members of the mission who will be required to report back at the September meeting of the Council.

The resolution called on Israel “to immediately lift the siege on occupied Gaza and other occupied Territories” and condemned “in the strongest terms possible the outrageous attack by the Israeli forces against the humanitarian flotilla of ships”. The Council adopted the resolution following an urgent debate on the military operation during its 14th session.

Speaking on behalf of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, the Deputy High Commissioner, Kyung-wha Kang noted at the outset of the debate that while details of the incident are still emerging, the operation against the flotilla had taken place in international waters. “In light of the tragic outcome, it seems apparent that the Israeli military was highly excessive in its use of force, and we must question why force should have been used at all in such a situation.”

Recalling that the Secretary-General and the High Commissioner had stressed the need for a full investigation into the incident, Kang emphasized, “any investigation must meet relevant international standards. It must be prompt, impartial, credible and independent.”

“The 1.5 million persons of Gaza – more than half of whom are children, continue to suffer under a blockade that is an affront to human dignity,” Kang said and she reiterated the High Commissioner’s call for an immediate end to the blockade.

In conclusion Kang, on behalf of the High Commissioner expressed “the hope that the Israeli Government will take the necessary decisive actions to demonstrate to the international community a clear commitment to abide by international law.”