

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL PUBLIC STATEMENT

AI Index: MDE 15/030/2009
24 November 2009

Israel/Occupied Palestinian Territories: UN Secretary-General needs to ensure Gaza conflict investigations are credible

Amnesty International has urged UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon to assess the credibility of Israeli and Palestinian investigations into allegations of war crimes and other violations of international law concerning the conflict in Gaza and southern Israel.

On 5 November the UN General Assembly passed a resolution urging the Israeli government and the Palestinian side to conduct investigations into allegations of such crimes detailed in the report of the UN International Fact Finding Mission in the Gaza conflict (also known as the "Goldstone report"). The Assembly specified that any such investigations must be independent, credible and meet international standards and asked the Secretary-General to report on the resolution's implementation within a period of three months.

A UN assessment of whether any investigations conducted by the parties meet these standards is crucial for the international community to know whether Israel and the Palestinian side are serious about ending impunity for crimes amounting to war crimes and, possibly, crimes against humanity, as alleged by Justice Goldstone and national as well as international human rights organizations.

In a letter to the UN Secretary-General of 20 November, Amnesty International recommended that he calls on UN experts in international human rights and humanitarian law, as well as those with specific knowledge of the situation in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories, to assist him in making these assessments. The organization also suggested that Ban Ki-moon could consider appointing, as soon as possible, other independent experts in international humanitarian and human rights law to help with this task.

Amnesty International welcomed, in the letter, the UN Secretary-General's strong statement calling on the Israeli government to lift the military blockade of Gaza, to allow freedom of movement for Palestinians in the West Bank, to end evictions and home demolitions of Palestinian families, and ensure that all allegations of torture and other ill-treatment are promptly investigated and the perpetrators prosecuted.

In his report released on 16 November on Israeli practices affecting the human rights of the Palestinian people, the Secretary-General also emphasized that "All allegations of violations of international humanitarian law and human rights violations [in the Occupied Palestinian Territories]... must be investigated by credible, independent and transparent accountability mechanisms".

A robust report from the Secretary-General to the General Assembly in February would include a substantive assessment of the steps taken by the parties concerned and their compatibility with the standards set out in the General Assembly resolution. This would be a major contribution towards helping the parties end impunity and to providing justice and reparation to the many hundreds of victims of grave abuses committed during the conflict in Gaza and southern Israel. It will also be an important step towards the establishment of long-term peace and security in the Middle East.
