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Human Rights Now

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Secretary General, Kazuko Ito

For Immediate release

Human Rights Now calls for the immediate cessation of attacks against civilians in the Gaza Strip

1. Human Rights Now (HRN), a Tokyo-based international human rights NGO, expresses utmost concern over the intensified armed conflict between Israel and Hamas.

In particular, HRN strongly condemns the Israeli Military's indiscriminate attack against innocent civilians in Gaza Strip. It is reported that a significant number of innocent civilians, including women and children, have been killed since the beginning of the Operation Protective Edge. It was reported that the Operation was aimed at striking Hamas and ending the barrage of Hamas rocket attacks, which have been aggravated recently since the killing of 3 Israeli teenagers and alleged revenge homicide of a Palestinian teenager¹. Yet the effect of the Israeli operation is disproportionate to the damage done by the rocket attacks fired by Hamas, which have caused no fatalities so far.

2. The Operation Protective Edge, the Israeli offensive launched on the 8th July 2014, is escalating its intensity of attacks on the Gaza Strip causing a number of civilian casualties.

According to Palestinian Center for Human Rights (PCHR), throughout Gaza Strip, there has been nearly 300 airstrikes² by Israeli warplanes, within just 24 hours from the noon of 9th to 10th of July, targeted homes, public streets, civilian facilities and other related sites associated with Hamas. The death toll mounts to over 69 Palestinians, among which are at least 60 civilians, including 22 women and 13 children whilst the United Nations reported that it would be even 89 in total³. Further, since Tuesday, the total number of the wounded amounts to 469 based on PCHR, half of whom are women and children. Yet the Embassy of Palestine said the wounded would be even over 600. It is our grave

¹<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/jul/08/operation-protective-edge-israel-bombs-gaza-in-retaliation-for-rockets>

²http://www.pchrgaza.org/portal/en/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=10466:israeli-offensive-on-gaza-continues-69-palestinians-killed-of-whom-60-are-civilians-including-22-children-and-13-women-and-469-others-wounded-mostly-civilians-including-166-children-and-85-women-driver-of-press-vehicle-killed-70-houses-destroyed&catid=145:in-focus

³<https://www.un.org/sg/statements/index.asp?nid=7852>

concern that Israel will further intensify its attacks against civilians and break into a ground war in the Gaza Strip.

The areas targeted by the Israeli military for bombardment include residential areas in the Gaza Strip, making it almost impossible to control and deliver attacks solely to military combatants. Under international humanitarian law, the civilian population must be protected and not be targeted in any circumstances. HRN warns that failure to comply by this norm constitutes a war crime as well as crimes under the international law.

3. The international community has a responsibility to protect innocent civilians in the Gaza Strip. There has been neither justice nor accountability for the grave violations of human rights and humanitarian law committed during Operation Cast Lead (2008 and 2009), despite the Goldstone recommendations. The international community has failed to ensure accountability for those who were responsible for the crimes committed during this operation. Impunity over the gross violation of human rights committed by the Israel has been allowed by the international community. This contributes a repetition of these crimes against Palestinian civilians by the Israeli Military. The international community must act to prevent further deterioration of the situation and further civilian casualties.

4. Thus, HRN urges all parties to immediately cease further military operation.

Particularly, HRN urges the Israeli government to cease immediately all violations of international human rights and humanitarian law, in particular, its attacks against civilians and civilian objectives. HRN also urges Israel to cease in any attempts to expand its current military operation, including a ground war in Gaza.

HRN further urges the UN Human Rights Council to hold a special session on this situation immediately and adopt a resolution calling for the immediate cessation of war crimes in the Gaza Strip.

HRN calls on the international community to establish a UN fact-finding mission to investigate suspected war crimes committed by the Israeli military against Palestinian civilians and to take steps to bring those who are responsible for these crimes to justice. The international community must act now to protect innocent civilians in the Gaza Strip and we must take all possible effective measures to stop any further escalation of the Israeli offensive.