



PRESS RELEASE

For immediate release - 13 January 2009

Gaza: ARTICLE 19 Welcomes UN Human Rights Council Resolution Calling for Free Access of Media to Gaza and Condemns Israel's Targeting of Media Professionals

ARTICLE 19 welcomes the UN Human Rights Council resolution of 12 January which calls for "Free access of media to areas of conflict through media corridors" into Gaza and strongly condemns the IDF's (Israeli Defence Force) targeting of media professionals there. The nature of the conflict and dangerous security situation has placed very severe restrictions on the ability of both Palestinian and international journalists to report freely from Gaza.

Since the start of the Israeli offensive on 27 December five media professionals have been killed, including Basil Ibrahim Faraj. Basil, an Algerian assistant cameraman for the Palestinian Media and Communications Company, died when his crew came under fire on the first day of the military campaign.

On January 9, the clearly marked Al-Johara Tower in Gaza city, home to the offices of numerous international media organizations, was targeted by the IDF resulting in the injury of one journalist and the damage of satellite communication equipment. On January 5, the IDF bombed the offices of the Hamas-affiliated Al-Risala newsweekly agencies and on December 29 the headquarters of Al-Aqsa TV were shelled, destroying communication facilities and forcing the station to broadcast from mobile facilities.

The ban of foreign media entering the Gaza strip and the severe limitations placed on the movement of journalists within Gaza is evidence of the IDF's attempts to control and manage the news coming out of Gaza.

'It is imperative that foreign media professionals are allowed entry into Gaza and that those currently in the conflict zone are able to report freely and impartially on the situation there, including the humanitarian cost and disaster.' said Agnes Callamard Executive Director for ARTICLE 19.'

ARTICLE 19 therefore urgently calls on Israel to immediately adopt operative paragraph 6 of the Human Rights Council resolution issued on January 12 which **"Demands further the occupying Power, Israel, to lift the siege, open all borders to allow access, free movement of humanitarian aid to the occupied Gaza Strip, including the immediate establishment of humanitarian corridors,**

in compliance with its obligations under International Humanitarian Law and to ensure free access of media to areas of conflict through media corridors."

ARTICLE 19 also calls for Special Procedures mandate holders to be granted unrestricted access to Gaza and the West Bank to conduct investigation and fact findings.

"The news black out must be put to an end. The people of Gaza must be given their change to tell their story to the world and the world has a right to know what is occurring in Gaza. The presence of impartial human rights reporters and investigators is essential to break the censorship walls." adds Dr. Callamard

NOTES TO EDITORS:

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- The 47-member United National Human Rights Council adopted the resolution, with 33 voting in favour, 1 against and 13 abstentions, as it concluded its ninth special session which discussed "the grave violations of human rights in the Occupied Palestinian Territory including the recent aggression in the occupied Gaza Strip". The resolution called for an "immediate cessation of Israeli military attacks throughout the Palestinian Occupied Territory, in particularly in the Occupied Gaza Strip that have resulted, thus far, in the killing of more than 900 and the injury to more than 4000 Palestinians, including a large number of women and children. It also called for an "end to the launching of the crude rockets against Israeli civilians that resulted in the loss of 4 civilian lives and some injuries." <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/hrcouncil/specialsession/9/docs/S-9resolution12jan08.pdf>
- The Security Council resolution adopted on Thursday January 8th, by a vote of 14-0, with the U.S. abstaining, "stresses the urgency of and calls for an immediate, durable and fully respected cease-fire, leading to the full withdrawal of Israeli forces from Gaza."