

GAZA: AN ISRAELI CALL FOR URGENT ACTION

We, the Israeli organizations signed below, deplore the decision by the Israeli government to cut off vital supplies of electricity and fuel (and therefore water, since the pumps cannot work), as well as essential foodstuffs, medicines and other humanitarian supplies to the civilian population of Gaza. Such an action constitutes a clear and unequivocal crime against humanity.

Prof. John Dugard, the UN Special Rapporteur for Human Rights in the Palestinian Territories, called the Israeli government's actions "serious war crimes" for which its political and military officials should be prosecuted and punished. The killing of more than 40 civilians this past week violates, he said, "the strict prohibition on collective punishment contained in the Fourth Geneva Convention. It also violates one of the basic principles of international humanitarian law that military action must distinguish between military targets and civilian targets." Indeed, the very legal framework invoked by the Israeli government to carry out this illegal and immoral act – declaring Gaza a "hostile entity" within a "conflict short of war" – has absolutely no standing in international law.

We call on the Secretary General of the UN, Mr. Ban Ki-Moon, to lead the Security Council to a decisive decision to end the siege on Gaza when it meets in emergency session on Wednesday.

We call on the governments of the world, and in particular the American government and the European Parliament, to censure Israel's actions and, in light of recent attempts to revive the diplomatic process, to end all attacks on civilians, including the continuing demolition of Palestinian homes at an alarming rate.

We call upon the Jews of the world in whose name the Israeli government purports to speak, and upon their rabbis and communal leaders in particular, to speak out unequivocally against this offense to the very moral core of Jewish values.

And we call upon the peoples of the world to let their officials and leaders know of their repudiation of this cruel, illegal and immoral act – an act that stands out in its cruelty even in an already oppressive Israeli Occupation.

We condemn attacks on all civilians, and we acknowledge the suffering of the residents of Sderot. Still, those attacks do not justify the massive disproportionality of Israeli sanctions over a million and half civilians of Gaza, in particular in light of Israel's oppressive 40 year occupation. Such violations of international law by a government are especially egregious and must be denounced and punished if the very system of human rights and international law is to be preserved.

The Israeli government's decision to punish Gaza's civilian population, with all the human suffering that entails, constitutes State Terrorism against innocent people. Only when Israeli policy-makers are held accountable for their actions and international law upheld will a just peace be possible in the Middle East.

The Alternative Information Center * Bat Tsafon * Gush Shalom * The Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions (ICAHD) * Physicians for Human Rights * The Women's Coalition for Peace