

**United Nations Human Rights Council  
9th Special Session  
Geneva, 9 January 2009**

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**'The Grave Violations of Human Rights in the Occupied Palestinian  
Territory including the recent aggression on the occupied Gaza  
Strip'**

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**Statement by  
H.E. Ambassador Tomáš Husák  
Permanent Representative of the Czech Republic  
on behalf of the European Union**

Mr. President,

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union.

The European Union expresses, as on many occasions before, its deep concern at the human rights and humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip where the suffering and anguish of the civilian population has escalated dramatically over the past days.

The European Union is very concerned over the ongoing fighting and deeply deplores all the civilian casualties caused by the Israeli military incursion and by the firing of rockets by Palestinian militant groups. We are profoundly disturbed by the loss of civilian life at schools in Gaza Strip, including the UN school in Jabaliya, and the tragic death of the two UN staff that resulted from Israeli military action and we want to express our sincere and heartfelt condolences to the families of the victims.

The EU welcomes the UN Security Council resolution that was adopted last night as positively contributing to durable ceasefire in the Gaza Strip and southern Israel. It urges all parties to fully respect provisions set out in the resolution and provide humanitarian assistance to the civil population in the Gaza Strip.

The European Union calls for an immediate and permanent ceasefire. We also call on all parties to fully respect the international humanitarian law. There must be an unconditional halt to rocket attacks by Palestinian militant groups on Israel and an end to Israeli military action. The EU recalls that no military solution can prevail in Gaza and calls for the establishment of a lasting truce. The cessation of fighting should allow for the lasting and normal opening of all border crossings, as provided for in the 2005 Agreement on Movement and Access. Further, basic human rights and humanitarian needs of the Palestinians have to be met. The European Union is determined to make every effort to help to stop the current violence. We welcome the initiative of Presidents Mubarak and Sarkozy and we follow with hope the latest development in this direction.

The European Union is deeply concerned over the serious human rights situation in Gaza and we follow with particular concern the deteriorating humanitarian situation on the ground. Immediate humanitarian action is required and the European Union as a whole and its Member States in their individual capacity continue providing emergency and humanitarian assistance to the population. An urgent field mission was dispatched to provide the immediate response as quickly as possible in cooperation with the United Nations and NGOs. The European Commission is coordinating humanitarian aid provided by the EU Member States and international donors.

It has to be noted that the restrictions on movement in Gaza and at border crossings only aggravate the already grim humanitarian situation. Immediate action must be taken to allow food, urgent medical aid and fuel to reach its addressees. Evacuation of the injured and unhindered access of humanitarian workers has to be made possible. We call on all parties to respect the humanitarian corridor. But whilst a humanitarian corridor is a step in the right direction to resolve the problem it is far from sufficient. What is needed is safe and consistent access for humanitarian agencies to all parts of Gaza and sufficient periods of complete calm to enable people

to collect aid from distribution centers in safety. Normalization of economic and social life in the Palestinian Territories is an important factor in the peace process.

Mr. President,

The above mentioned concerns are also reflected in the statements recently made by the UN Security Council and by the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights. We also wish to draw the attention to the UN Secretary General's particular stress on the disastrous effects of the current crisis on children in Gaza.

The European Union is committed to supporting the efforts of both Palestinians and Israelis to achieve a just, comprehensive and lasting settlement to the Middle East conflict, with the objective of two States, living side by side in peace and security in accordance with the relevant Security Council resolutions and as laid out in the Road Map drawn by the Quartet. We are convinced that there is only a political solution to the current crisis. We call for stepping up the peace process, as requested by the Security Council resolution 1850. Work must be carried out, notably on the basis of the process set out in Annapolis and the Arab peace initiative, to deal with the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in a comprehensive and operational manner.

We are more determined than ever to assist alongside the other members of the Quartet and the region's states in ending violence and returning to peace negotiations. And we are just as determined to do our utmost best to alleviate the deplorable humanitarian situation and put an end to the suffering of the civilians.

Thank you.