



US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice
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Washington, DC 20520
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Washington, DC, January 16, 2008

Dear Madam Secretary,

Amnesty International (AI) is deeply concerned about the continued attacks on civilians in Gaza and in Israel and we hope that you make human rights a priority in your meeting with Israel's Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni.

Since the conflict began on December 27, 2008, 1,105 Palestinians have been killed, with 5,100 wounded. According to Palestinians medics, half of the dead are women and a third are believed to be children. In addition, 13 Israelis have been killed, three of them civilians.

AI asks you to raise the following concerns with Foreign Minister Livni:

- Israel should cease its disproportionate attacks on civilians. While AI recognizes Israel's right to defend itself and has also called on Hamas and other Palestinian groups to immediately cease all unlawful attacks, Israel does not have a right to use disproportionate force, target civilians or civilian buildings. In the recent conflict, there is growing evidence that Israel has failed to adhere to the principles of distinction and proportionality in its military action.
- AI is calling on the international community to impose immediately a comprehensive arms embargo on Israel, Hamas and Palestinian armed groups until effective mechanisms are in place to ensure that weapons or munitions and other military equipment will not be used to commit serious violations of international humanitarian law. AI is also concerned about the alleged use of white phosphorous in civilian areas. White phosphorous is known for its potential to cause severe burns and is an indiscriminate weapon when used as an airburst in densely-populated civilian areas as now alleged in Gaza. AI has learned that the Pentagon approved on December 31 tenders for arms shipments containing 325

containers of US munitions, including white phosphorous. While we understand these tenders have now been cancelled, AI is concerned that other means of delivery of these munitions to a US stockpile in Israel is now under consideration. US munitions stockpiled in Israel can be transferred to the Israel Defense Force in “an emergency” according to a US-Israel agreement.

- Israel must allow for more humanitarian access. In a report titled "Gaza: A Humanitarian Implosion," AI said the conditions in Gaza were at a 40 year low even before the bombing started on December 27, 2008. According to John Ging, a senior UN official, 750,000 people in Gaza lack access to water and over one million do not have electricity. While Israel has allowed for some supplies to enter, it is simply not enough to address the massive humanitarian crisis.
- Israel and Palestinian armed groups must not use Palestinian civilians as human shields. AI reports that Israeli soldiers have forcibly entered Palestinian homes and forced Palestinians to remain in their homes while they use their homes as a sniper station. This tactic puts entire families at risks and amounts to a clear violation of humanitarian law. In other cases, Palestinian gunmen have refused residents' requests to vacate areas near their homes and only left after firing. In still other cases, residents say they were too scared to ask the gunmen to leave.

Finally, AI has also asked for states and relevant international bodies to investigate—thoroughly, independently, and impartially—abuses of international human rights and humanitarian law. Evidence of war crimes and crimes against humanity is mounting daily and there must be fully accountability for such crimes.

We thank you for your consideration for the above concerns.

Sincerely,

Curt Goering
Deputy Executive Director
Amnesty International USA