



UNITED NATIONS

Press Release

UN EXPERT URGES ISRAEL TO STOP DESTRUCTION OF HOUSES AND INFRASTRUCTURES IN GAZA, CALLS FOR MILITARY SANCTIONS

10 November 2006

The following statement was issued today by the Special Rapporteur on adequate housing as a component of the right to an adequate standard of living, Miloon Kothari:

"As Special Rapporteur on adequate housing, I condemn in the strongest possible terms the artillery shelling of Palestinian homes by the Israeli defence force in Beit Hanoun that killed 19 innocent civilians and injured 60, including women and children. The explanation by Israeli authorities that this wantonly criminal act was a mistake is unacceptable. The shelling and subsequent killing of civilians indicates a premeditated military tactic constituting a form of collective punishment against the Palestinian people.

"Since 25 June 2006, the most recent Israeli incursion into the Gaza Strip, I continue to receive alarming reports about deliberate attacks by Israeli forces resulting in the destruction of homes, civilian property and infrastructures in the Gaza Strip. Such acts have a devastating impact on civilians particularly, women and children, and create insecurity and psychological trauma. Thus, these forced evictions and unjustifiable destruction constitute breaches of international laws of human rights, war and humanitarian norms. International law strictly prohibits the destruction of private or public property when not absolutely necessary by military operations. According to United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) the military operation in Beit Hanoun itself led, in a six-day military siege, to the destruction of dozens of houses.

"Israel's practice of confiscating Palestinian land, demolishing Palestinian homes, closure and the implantation of illegal settlements also continues throughout the West Bank and Jerusalem, including those in connection with the Separation Wall. I also have learned of the colonization activities in the Jordan Valley, in particular, including the active involvement of the World Zionist Organization and Jewish National Fund. Such dispossession and destruction across the Green Line, within the continuum of population transfer policies and practices, are factors that underlie the ongoing conflict. I urge the State of Israel to cease these practices and restitute confiscated lands in the interest of regional peace and security.

"These latest killings by Israel must act as a call for the international community to awaken from the inaction and hesitation that has marked its attention to the grave crisis in Gaza. In this context, I fully support the statement by Prof. John Dugard, the Special Rapporteur on the situation of

human rights in the Palestinian territories calling on the United Nations Security Council to urgently address the crisis in Gaza. I urgently call for an international independent investigation of the events and the deployment of international forces in the region. I also urge the international community, in view of their human rights and humanitarian law obligations, to reconsider the continuation of military cooperation with Israel in light of the overwhelming evidence of violations of a range of human rights, including the right to adequate housing".