



19 November 2012

LPHR public statement on current military offensive on Gaza

As lawyers committed to the protection and promotion of Palestinian human rights, we call upon the international community to reassert the rule of law in connection with the use of force against Palestinian civilians.

LPHR deplores the military action pursued by Israel since Wednesday, 14 November 2012. There is no legal justification for the use of indiscriminate force against civilians or civilian targets by any armed group, Israeli or Palestinian.

The consequences of the current military action is already hugely destructive. According to a press release, dated 18 November 2012, from the United Nations Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs: "at least 29 Palestinian civilians, including 11 children, have been killed, and over 520 Palestinians, mostly civilians, including at least 140 children, were injured, since the beginning of hostilities. Three Israeli civilians have been killed and another 80, including many children, were injured, in the last five days".

The lingering brutal shadow of the three week military offensive launched by Israel in December 2008, which resulted in the deaths of over 1,400 Palestinians (mostly civilians) and saw the use in densely populated urban areas of heavy metal weapons, flechettes (an inherently indiscriminate maiming weapon) and white phosphorous (a weapon with a highly incendiary effect), amplifies the urgent need for the international community to act decisively to immediately halt the latest resort to sustained military action, and its concurrent substantial risk of violations of international humanitarian law, international human rights law and international criminal law.

In light of acutely grave fears that the safety and welfare of the entire civilian population of Gaza will again be severely impacted upon during the current hostilities, we endorse and reiterate the calls made by Palestinian Civil Society Organizations – see these links:

http://www.pchrgaza.org/portal/en/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=9003:palestinian-civil-society-organizations-call-on-the-international-community-to-stop-the-offensive-on-gaza-&catid=145:in-focus

<http://www.alhaq.org/advocacy/topics/gaza/641-indiscriminate-attacks-continue-to-escalate-against-the-gaza-strip>

Please call out for a cessation of military hostilities & the application of the rule of law

LPHR suggest that you alert Parliamentarians and the UK government – at a minimum by writing to your local MP (<http://findyourmp.parliament.uk>), and/or the Foreign Secretary ([http://www.fco.gov.uk/en/contact-us#contact us](http://www.fco.gov.uk/en/contact-us#contact-us)) – in both cases highlighting the urgent need for the UK government to initiate with other EU governments to seek:

- the urgent cessation of the use of force and for all parties to fulfil their binding legal obligations under international humanitarian law and international human rights law.
- the urgent convening of a Special Session of the Human Rights Council.
- the High Contracting Parties to the Fourth Geneva Convention to convene and act to protect civilians in light of the seriousness of the ongoing escalation.