



The Permanent Mission of Iceland to the United Nations

**Statement by
H.E. Ambassador Gunnar Pálsson
Permanent Representative**

**The situation in the Middle East,
including the Palestinian question**

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Mr. President,

The situation in the occupied Palestinian territory remains of grave concern and continues to threaten stability far beyond the region.

Although *Operation Cast Lead* has ended, Gazans remain besieged through limited freedom of movement, import restrictions on even the most basic necessities, near total prohibition of export and reversal of economic development. For the ordinary civilians of Gaza, the situation remains unacceptable by international standards.

Meanwhile, the closure regime is still operated in the West Bank. Iceland remains deeply concerned at the continued house demolitions, evictions and settlement activities in the occupied Palestinian territory, including in East Jerusalem. There must be an immediate end to settlements and impunity. The prolonged situation of impunity has created a crisis of justice in the occupied Palestinian territory that needs to be addressed.

Iceland fully recognizes Israel's legitimate security concerns, including weapons smuggling and the unacceptable firing of rockets from Gaza, destroying and endangering lives of innocent civilians. At the same time, such violations do not justify the disproportionate use of force and breaching of international humanitarian and human rights law.

Mr. President,

The comprehensive report of the UN Fact-Finding Mission has concluded that there is evidence indicating serious violations of international human rights and

humanitarian law committed both by Israel during *Operation Cast Lead* and in the West Bank, as well as by Palestinian armed groups in their repeated launching of rockets into Southern Israel. The report deserves serious consideration and follow-up. The conclusions drawn require concrete action and the establishment of a credible system of investigation into the alleged violations. Every Member State must commit itself to full cooperation with the United Nations.

Mr. President,

Iceland regards as imperative that every effort be made to bring the human tragedy in the occupied Palestinian territory to an end, through negotiations and mediation. The international community must step up pressure on both sides and revitalise the Peace Process. More needs to be done, especially by the UN Security Council, through a concerted effort to actively further the goal of ending the occupation and achieving a two state solution - a prerequisite for durable peace. The political momentum that has been created must not be allowed to fade .

Thank you, Mr. President.