



United Nations Fact Finding Mission on the Gaza Conflict

PUBLIC ADVANCE NOTICE

This note seeks to inform the public concerning the United Nations Fact Finding Mission on the Gaza Conflict. It describes the Mission's composition, mandate and methods of work and provides practical information on how to contact the Mission. It announces its first field visit.

ESTABLISHMENT, MANDATE AND FOCUS

On 3 April 2009, following resolution S-9/1 of the United Nations Human Rights Council (HRC), adopted on 12 January 2009 at the conclusion of the 9th Special Session of the Council, the President of the Human Rights Council established an International Independent Fact Finding Mission with a mandate to “investigate all violations of International Human Rights Law and International Humanitarian Law that might have been committed at any time in the context of the military operations that were conducted in Gaza during the period from 27 December 2008 and 18 January 2009, whether before, during or after.”

In accordance with its mandate, the Mission will focus on relevant violations by all parties in the entire occupied Palestinian territory, including Gaza and the West Bank, and Israel.

The Mission officially started its work on 4 May 2009 and is required to submit its report within three months.

COMPOSITION

The Mission is headed by Justice Richard Goldstone, former member of the South African Constitutional Court and former Chief Prosecutor of the International Criminal Tribunals for the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda. The three other mission members are Professor Christine Chinkin, Professor of International Law at the London School of Economics and Political Science, who was a member of the High Level Fact Finding Mission to Beit Hanoun (2008); Ms. Hina Jilani, Advocate of the Supreme Court of Pakistan and former Special Representative of the Secretary General on Human Rights Defenders, who was a member of the International Commission of Inquiry on Darfur (2004); and Colonel Desmond Travers, a former officer in the Irish Armed Forces and member of the Board of Directors of the Institute for International Criminal Investigations (IICI). As requested by the Human Rights Council, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) has appointed a Secretariat to support and facilitate the work and proceedings of the Fact-Finding Mission.

FIELD VISITS

The Mission intends to visit affected areas of the occupied Palestinian territory, including Gaza and the West Bank, and Southern Israel, and has requested the cooperation of the Government of Israel in this regard. **The Mission will conduct its first visit to Gaza between 1 and 5 June 2009.** Pending reply from the Government of Israel, the Mission is relying on the cooperation of the Government of Egypt to facilitate entrance to Gaza through Rafah. Subsequent field visits will be announced in due time.

METHODS OF WORK

The Mission's investigation will be based on an independent and impartial analysis of compliance of the parties with their obligations under international human rights and humanitarian law in the context of the recent conflict in Gaza, and on international investigative standards developed by the United Nations.

The Mission intends to consult with a wide range of interlocutors who will include victims and witnesses, Palestinian, Israeli and international NGOs, United Nations and other international organizations, community organizations, human rights defenders, medical and other professionals, legal and military experts, and other sources of reliable information relevant to its mandate, within and outside Israel and the occupied Palestinian territory. The Mission will also seek consultations with relevant authorities.

In the course of its work, the Mission will review reports produced by various organizations and institutions, and will be requesting submissions on matters of fact and law relevant to its inquiry. A separate notice will be issued to call for submissions. The Mission is also planning to hold public hearings on particular issues of concern related to its mandate.

CONTACTING THE MISSION

Anyone wishing to make contact with the Mission on any matter relevant to its mandate should do so through the Secretariat, either by email to factfindinggaza@ohchr.org or by regular mail at the following address in Geneva:

Secretariat

United Nations Fact Finding Mission on the Gaza Conflict
c/o UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
Avenue G. Motta 48
UNOG-OHCHR, CH-1211 Geneva 10, Switzerland

Anyone wishing to make contact with the Mission during its visit to Gaza may contact the Mission by telephone at:

(+970) 0597 444 158
(+970) 0597 444 159

PROTECTION OF INFORMATION

Measures are being taken to ensure the careful and safe handling, communication and preservation of the Mission's records and files. The information collected by the Mission is, and will remain, the property of the United Nations. Wherever necessary, the Mission will take precautionary measures necessary to ensure the safety or protection of victims, witnesses, sources and any other persons cooperating with the Mission.
