

Statement by the President of the General Assembly, Miguel D'Escoto on the Crisis in Gaza

Saturday 27 December

The behavior by Israel in bombarding Gaza is simply the commission of wanton aggression by a very powerful state against a territory that illegally occupies. Time has come to take firm action if the United Nations does not want to be rightly accused of complicity by omission.

The Israeli airstrikes on the Gaza Strip represent severe and massive violations of international humanitarian law as defined in the Geneva Conventions, both in regard to the obligations of an Occupying Power and in the requirements of the laws of war.

Those violations include:

Collective punishment – the entire 1.5 million people who live in the crowded Gaza Strip are being punished for the actions of a few militants.

Targeting civilians – the airstrikes were aimed at civilian areas in one of the most crowded stretches of land in the world, certainly the most densely populated area of the Middle East.

Disproportionate military response – the airstrikes have not only destroyed every police and security office of Gaza's elected government, but have killed and injured hundreds of civilians; at least one strike reportedly hit groups of students attempting to find transportation home from the university.

I remind all member states of the United Nations that the UN continues to be bound to an independent obligation to protect any civilian population facing massive violations of international humanitarian law – regardless of what country may be responsible for those violations. I call on all Member States, as well as officials and every relevant organ of the United Nations system, to move expeditiously not only to condemn Israel's serious violations, but to develop new approaches to providing real protection for the Palestinian people.