

lawyers for palestinian  
human rights



Right Hon William Hague MP  
Foreign Secretary  
Foreign and Commonwealth Office  
King Charles Street  
City of Westminster  
SW1A 2AH

Email: [private.office@fco.gov.uk](mailto:private.office@fco.gov.uk)

For the attention of: Right Hon William Hague MP

20 November 2012

Dear Mr. Hague,

**Re: Current Military Offensive on Gaza**

As lawyers committed to the protection and promotion of Palestinian human rights, we urge the UK government to take all necessary diplomatic measures to achieve the urgent cessation of the use of force against civilians, and to ensure all parties adhere to their binding legal obligations under international humanitarian law and international human rights law.

We deplore 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 actions pursued by Israel since Wednesday, 14 November 2012 have already caused huge destruction. According to a press release, dated 19 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 740 Palestinians, mostly civilians, including at least 252 children, were injured, since the beginning of hostilities. Three Israeli civilians have been killed and another 127 are reported injured, the vast majority civilians, in the last six days". The severity of the ongoing escalation suggests that without a ceasefire the civilian casualties will continue to significantly rise daily.

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 and white phosphorous, amplifies the urgent need for the UK government 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.

It is only through the proper assertion of the rule of law that peace and security for Palestinians and Israelis will be achieved. We therefore urge the UK government to ensure that all parties immediately fulfil their binding legal obligations for the protection of civilians, taking positive steps (unilaterally and together with other EU governments) to convene a special session of the Human Rights Council and an urgent meeting of the signatories to the Fourth Geneva Convention, at which states can make clear that all alleged grave breaches (war crimes) will be subject to full international investigations and that universal jurisdiction will be exercised wherever appropriate.

Yours sincerely,

Tareq Shourouh  
**Chair, Lawyers for Palestinian Human Rights**