

21st Special Session of the Human Rights Council on the Human Rights Situation in the Occupied
Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem
23 July 2014



www.eaford.org

Joint Statement by:

General Arab Women Federation
International Organization for the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (EAFORD)
Geneva International Center for Justice (GICJ)

This is a joint statement by the General Arab Women Federation with EAFORD and GICJ.

Mr. President, over the years the right to self-defense has repeatedly been abused by Israel in order to justify its systematic reprisals against Palestinians. Two long-standing international principles however expose this argument as a fallacy: those of necessity and proportionality.

Contrary to the official pretext, it was the Israeli PM's public calls for revenge along with his openly declared goal to destroy the newly formed Palestinian unity government that set the recent avalanche of violence. Operation Protective Edge therefore must be seen as a pure act of aggression, in direct violation of the United Nations Charter and this is only the last in a series of similar offenses.

“Operation Protective Edge” further lacks all sense of proper proportionality. Despite international law provisions, thousands of civilian homes have become military targets, with or without relation to military activity. Such acts remain war crimes, even if bombings are carried out with previous warnings. The gravity of such violation is compounded when innocent civilians are injured.

As of today the Palestinian fatalities have risen to over 600, among them hundreds of civilians. Entire families have been extinguished; children on the beach killed, hospitals and fisher boats come under shelling, hence turning alleged self-defense into cold-blood murder. The indiscriminate brutality has become especially visible since the beginning of Israel's ground operation.

In the Shejaiya over 100 civilians were murdered in only one day. Ambulances that tried to rescue the injured came under attack and even a humanitarian ceasefire requested by the ICRC was rejected by Israel, the very same country that this morning blamed the Palestinians for not accepting a truce offering.

Mr. President, Israel's policy against the Palestinians in Gaza violates the fundamental rules of international law and contravenes the basic customary moral standards. Such atrocities must be prosecuted as crimes against humanity. We call on this Council to strongly condemn the indiscriminate attacks against Palestinian civilians, demand an immediate cease fire without any delay, establish an urgent and independent commission of inquiry and ensure that all responsible will be brought to the International Criminal Court.