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HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION IN PALESTINE AND OTHER OCCUPIED ARAB TERRITORIES

**Written statement* submitted by the Organization for Defending Victims of Violence
(ODVV), a non-governmental organization in special consultative status**

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[12 February 2009]

* This written statement is issued, unedited, in the language(s) received from the submitting non-governmental organization(s).

The right to self determination in occupied territories, particularly Palestine

The recent horrendous crimes of the Israeli regime in the attack on Gaza on the pretext of Hamas resuming rocket launches following the end of the ceasefire which resulted in the deaths of 1400 people including women and children, as well as the ongoing blockade of the enclave, once again showed the political, economic and arms support of the big powers for Israel. But the 23-day unjustified aggression that totally disregarded all fundamental human rights and international norms once again showed how all the plans for the reaching of lasting peace between the Palestinians and Israelis becomes a tool for the political developments of the region, particularly within Israel in the political struggles and elections campaigns.

The existence of unity in the administration of Palestine by its leaders and also the opportunity for the exploitation of others by creating or increasing the gaps between the Palestinian political leaders, not only provokes Israel to take advantage against the plight of the defenseless Palestinian people, but also strengthens the internal splits among the dominant political parties in Israel in the handling of the Palestinian situation and the peace process, and has made this process look impractical so far.

The disproportionate military attack against the Palestinian people in the recent Gaza conflict, has in no way left the international community, organizations and independent international human rights institutions with the impression that Israel supports peace. Looking at the position of different countries – Islamic countries in particular – over the Gaza crisis shows a split being opened among Islamic countries in the Palestinian solution. The thing that has been forgotten in all of this is the right to normal life of the oppressed Palestinian people, the slaughter of innocent Palestinian children and the homelessness of defenseless women and children. This is a story that has been continuing since 1948 and Israel's ratification of the Fourth Geneva Convention in 1949 has not been able to stop the regime to continue spilling blood.

Since the beginning of the killing of women and children from Al-Sheikh in 1947 at the hands of the Balmach Zionists which resulted in the deaths of 60 Palestinians to the massacres of Deir Yassin, Haifa, Kafr Qasem, Sabra and Shatila, Qana, and most recently Gaza, all show the average killings of 600 Palestinians per year in comparison to one or two Israelis. These figures do not include the thousands of Palestinian detainees and torture victims during these years.

Human rights and humanitarian law violations against the Palestinians have been so gross over the last 20 years – since the start of the Intifada in particular - as well as the condemnations of international human rights organizations, the UN General Assembly and Security Council have issued several resolutions against Israel. The extensive and systematic destruction of Palestinian homes (particularly in the recent Gaza conflict where approximately 22,000 homes have been destroyed) have stirred anger in the director of UNRWA.

The existence of 2.5 million Palestinians living below the poverty line, malnutrition of women and children in Palestinian refugee camps, lack of basic medical and health services, and the existence of the security barrier have inflicted serious damages to the economic and social

conditions of the Palestinians. Also the terrorist actions of the Israeli regime in occupied Palestinian territories and even UNWRA run camps such as Khan Yunnis in 2004, caused extensive anger and protests of people around the world and human rights organizations.

For several years now we have been witnessing the condemnation of these Israeli acts by the United Nations and its bodies such as the Commission on Human Rights and the Human Rights Council, but still on the tiniest of pretexts the Israeli regime disproportionately responds with military onslaught, killing Palestinians. And while demonstrating little or no restraint Israel continues to pile up problems for the Palestinians and peace in the Middle East.

The need to respect the global public opinion and the observation of Security Council resolutions (1860 in particular) on one hand and putting pressure on big powers – the United States in particular – on the other hand in reconsideration of their financial and arms support of Israel (10 million dollars a day), are two important factors that can be effective in bringing Israel's militarism and aggression under control.

As an international nongovernmental human rights organization, the Organization for Defending Victims of Violence (ODVV) stresses on the Palestinians rights to self-determination in their territories, Gaza Strip in particular, and declares its full support for the defenseless people of Palestine, and declares its readiness to help the Palestinians in the form of a group or committee made up of human rights advocating organizations set up by the Human Rights Council and other UN agencies.

The ODVV also believes that not only the continuation of Israel's aggression in Palestinian territories will not help in providing its citizens with security, but the creation of a split within its political parties and solidarity among countries and the region towards condemnation of its acts, will be a big obstacle in the way of the peace process in the region for future generations to come.

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