

Palestinian Human Rights Organizations Condemn Israel's Ban on Access of International Independent Commission of Inquiry to Gaza

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Quatre organisations palestiniennes des droits de l'homme s'inquiètent des obstacles que rencontre la Commission d'enquête internationale indépendante de l'ONU. Alors que cette commission est mandatée pour enquêter sur la récente offensive israélienne sur la bande de Gaza, Israël a interdit l'accès des enquêteurs internationaux à la bande de Gaza, une interdiction condamnée par ces organisations des droits de l'Homme.

12 November 2014

Human rights organizations are following up with utmost concern the developments related to the work of the International Independent Commission of Inquiry established by the UN Human Rights Council to investigate the latest offensive launched by Israeli occupation forces on the Gaza Strip. The organizations condemn the ban imposed by Israel, the occupying power, on the Mission's access to the occupied Palestinian territory (oPt), especially the Gaza Strip - the scene of the crime. They call upon the international community to take necessary action to exert pressure on Israel to prevent it from obstructing the Mission's work and to compel it to allow Mission's access to the oPt without any further delay.

Palestinian human rights organizations had welcomed the Resolution issued by the UN Human Rights Council on 23 July 2014, which called for dispatching « an international commission of inquiry... to investigate all violations of international humanitarian law and international human rights law in the oPt, including East Jerusalem, particularly in the occupied Gaza Strip, in the context of the military operations conducted since 13 June 2014... »[1] The organizations have expressed their willingness and readiness to cooperate with the Commission and provide it with all information they have concerning the investigations they have conducted into war crimes committed by Israeli forces against Palestinian civilians and their

property and any other crimes that fall under the Commission's mandate.

The organizations are aware of the unwearied and persistent efforts being made by the Commission to reach the oPt, especially the Gaza Strip, to assume its mandate in the major scene of the crime, but Israel has banned access of the Commission to the oPt.

The Commission is currently holding a series of meetings in Amman, the capital of Jordan, with civil society organizations, UN agencies, victims and eyewitnesses in the period 10-14 November 2014, pending its access to the Gaza Strip. Under the current situation, human rights organizations, victims and eyewitnesses in the Gaza Strip will not be able to participate in these meetings.

The signatories of this statement welcome the Commission and support its work and efforts, and :

1. Express reservations for the unjustified delay in the formation of the Commission, as the resolution to establish it was issued on 23 July, 16 weeks ago and 11, and 11 weeks have passed since the end of the Israeli offensive on the Gaza Strip ; this delay constitutes a major technical and professional mistake, especially in regards to the scene of the crime, evidence, weapons and victims.
2. Stress that it is not possible to conduct an objective, professional and independent investigation without the actual presence of the Commission in the main scene of the crime - the Gaza Strip - and without first-hand view of the crimes committed against Palestinian civilians and civilian objects.
3. Strongly condemn the ban imposed by Israel, the occupying power, on the Commission's access to the oPt, especially the occupied Gaza Strip.
4. Call upon the international community, especially the United Nations and Human Rights Council, to denunciate Israel's blatant interference and prevention of the Commission's access to the oPt, and hence obstructing its work.
5. Believe that inviting human rights organizations, victims and eyewitnesses in the Gaza Strip to travel to Amman to meet with the Commission is impractical and impossible because of the blockade imposed by Israeli forces on the Gaza Strip.
6. Reiterate their willingness and readiness to provide all the information and results of investigations they have when the Commission is allowed into the Gaza Strip.
7. Stress that failing to promptly contain these problems and the continuous denial of the Commission's access to the Gaza Strip will raise doubts concerning its work and undermine its credibility and that of the UN mechanisms.
8. Believe that the absence from the scene of the crime is a disappointment for victims in the Gaza Strip as it sends them a clear message that there is no accountability and the crimes committed against them will go unpunished.
9. Are fully confident that the Commission will make all possible efforts to overcome the difficulties it is facing because of being prevented by Israel from entering the oPt and the complications of the so-called « UN security procedures » in finding alternatives.
10. Believe that failing to allow the Commission to assume its duties will raise questions as regarding the feasibility and efficiency of the UN human rights mechanisms.
11. Call upon the UN Secretary-General and President of the Human Rights Council to declare Israel as the party that is obstructing the Commission's work, and suggest practical steps to compel Israel to facilitate the Commission's Work.
12. Appreciate Egypt's willingness to cooperate with the Commission.

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