

Statement by H.E. Mr. Mohammad Khazae

Permanent Representative

of the Islamic Republic of Iran to the United Nations

Before the UN Security Council, on

The protection of civilians in armed conflict

New York, 14 January 2008

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In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful

Mr. President,

At the outset, I wish to thank you for having convened this open debate at this critical juncture. The issue under discussion is of paramount importance and this meeting is all the more important because it is held at a time when the Palestinian people in the Gaza Strip are subjected to one of the most heinous brutalities ever committed against civilians in mankind's history.

Mr. President,

Rather than referring to generalities about this important topic, I , like many other speakers, prefer to address one of the most serious examples in this regard that is the current untold losses and sufferings that the Zionist regime has inflicted on the defenseless civilian population in Gaza. We also hope that the current tragedy

in Gaza will be duly reflected in the outcome of today's meeting of the Council.

In the past 19 days, the Palestinian civilians have been deliberately targeted and brutally mass murdered by the ruthless Israeli war machine which callously shatters the lives and livelihoods in the Gaza Strip. The abhorrent Israeli carnage and its war crimes in the Gaza Strip is continuing unabated. The 1.5 million people of Gaza have been under a crippling siege and a brutal blockade for more than 18 months now, and continue to be deprived of the most needed medical supplies and as most basic supplies as even bread and drinking water, and are at the same time massacred in the most horrendous and brutal ways while having nowhere to run, nowhere to hide and nothing to eat. Whole families are eliminated in cold-blood by the Zionist forces and women and children along with other civilians are wittingly targeted and massacred. The humanitarian aids sent to the people of Gaza are turned away by the Israeli regime and prevented from reaching their destination as

it was the case with an Iranian relief ship carrying 2000 tones of basic medical and food supplies destined for Gaza that was intercepted and prevented from continuing its way to Gaza by the Israeli regime yesterday. We condemn this unjustifiable move and hope that the Security Council will put this regime under pressure to cease and desist from such unlawful actions.

Even UN workers as well as the United Nations premises in which innocent civilians take shelter are not immune from Israeli attacks as we witnessed in the recent attack on UNRWA schools that claimed the lives of more than 40 people and wounded many more civilians, most of them children. Savageries like forcing women, small children and other civilians out of their homes and then massing them all into a small place and machine gunning or shelling them are some examples of the rampant atrocities repeatedly committed by the Israeli forces in Gaza; and those revealed so far are really just the tip of the iceberg, and many more such atrocities are simply never reported because the international

media is facing an Israeli ban and can not cover the heartbreaking tragedies in Gaza.

The international community has no doubt that the Zionist regime is violating the basic principles of international law, international humanitarian law and human rights law, and defies the most fundamental values for which the civilized world stands. Israeli forces blow away women and children in Gaza without a moment of remorse. As a result of these atrocities, many innocent civilians, including little children, have died horrible deaths and the bodies of many others have not been recovered from the rubbles because Israeli military is shooting at anyone who attempts a rescue.

This carnage must be stopped immediately and the Israeli war criminals should be brought to justice for the crimes they have perpetrated and continue to perpetrate, and for the outrageous and brutal pain and torment they have inflicted, and continue to inflict, on the innocent people in Gaza.

Despite its commitment to the full and effective implementation of its resolutions on the protection of civilians in such circumstances, no effective action has been thus far taken by the Security Council to stop this genocide against Palestinians. The Security Council was first prevented, by some permanent members, from taking any action. And when it took action belatedly, the resolution it adopted, i.e. Res. 1860, has not addressed the expectations of the international community in, *inter alia*, forcing the Israeli regime to stop its atrocities against the Palestinians and withdraw from Gaza, or even in strongly condemning the Israeli regime's crimes against humanity and devising a mechanism for holding the Israeli officials accountable for the war crimes and genocide they have committed and continue to perpetrate against the Palestinian people in general and in the Gaza Strip in particular. Even this resolution, as imperfect and belated as it has been, is totally ignored by the Israeli regime like many other previous UN resolutions to which its response has been contempt and defiance.

We strongly condemn all these Israeli violations of international law, and urge the Security Council to force the Israeli regime to put an end to such practices and to its aggression. The international community should act swiftly to end impunity and to bring the Israelis responsible for war crimes, genocide, crimes against humanity and numerous other serious violations of international humanitarian and human rights law to justice. This Council has a vital and urgent responsibility to discharge in this regard, in order to end these Israeli atrocities and crimes against humanity immediately.

Thank you Mr. President.