



November 22, 2012

ATT:
Dr. Navi Pillay
The High Commissioner for Human Rights
UN – Geneva

via e.mail

Re: Press briefing notes on Gaza 20/11/12

Thank you for your prompt reply of 21.11.2012 in which we were pleased to see that you unequivocally condemn the firing of indiscriminate rockets from the Gaza Strip to Israel.

We regret that you did not take the same approach in your press statement of 20.11.2012. Indeed the Association was shocked and dismayed by your opinion of the conflict in Gaza, in view of the plain lack of balance and unfounded criticism of Israel. We believe that Israel, which is engaged in a conflict with an internationally recognized terrorist organization, is entitled to fair and equitable treatment by the High Commissioner.

I would like to call your attention to the fact that while southern Israel has suffered from rocket and mortar attacks for over a decade (a fact you failed to mention in your press notes), the current outbreak of violence has also seen attacks on central Israel and Jerusalem. As is the wont of terrorist organizations, these attacks aim directly at civilian targets. No attempt is made to focus on military targets in direct contravention of the international law that you emphasize in your notes.

When you speak of casualties, you fail to mention Israeli casualties. Apart from physical injuries and the death of Israelis you must be aware of the psychological damage caused by a decade of incessant air raid sirens and running to shelters. A recent survey has revealed that almost half of Sderot children show symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder. I assume that surveys in other affected areas would reveal similar results. These children are the future of Israel! How can you dismiss this fact as unworthy of mention?

As to the incident regarding the Al-Dalou family, while the loss of life of non-combatants is undoubtedly regrettable, you ignore the well documented fact that Palestinian terrorists habitually use civilian homes both to store weapons and as a base for launching attacks against Israel. This was the case in this instance where four terrorists were making use of the home. Unfortunately, Israeli forces had no information about the presence of civilians or the operation would undoubtedly have been aborted as in countless previous cases where Israel took extreme measures to avoid civilian casualties.



הארגון הבינלאומי של עורכי-דין ומשפטנים יהודים (ע"ר)
THE INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF JEWISH LAWYERS AND JURISTS (R.A.)

Regarding your reference to attacks on homes, schools and religious sites, may I assume that you included the Israeli statistics as well? Surely this is what would be expected of a high UN official.

Israel is well aware of its obligations under international law with regard to war crimes. Israel takes extreme measures to avoid harm to civilians. It carries out its operations using aircraft able to apply pin-point technology and meticulously complies with the concept of proportionality. You must be aware that leaflets were dropped advising civilians to leave areas where they might accidentally be injured.

One of the basic aims of our Association is the protection of human rights and this includes Palestinians' rights as well as those of Israelis. We would like to feel that you too regard both sides as having equal rights.

IRIT KOHN, PRESIDENT

Irit Kohn

CC: Members of IAJLJ