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Al-Quds NEWS

Together we safeguard Al-Quds

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PRESS STATEMENT: ISRAELI INTERNAL SECURITY MINISTER INVADES AL –AQSA MOSQUE –23 June 2009

The Al-Quds Foundation SA is extremely shocked and disgusted by the actions of the Israeli Internal Security Minister who invaded the Holy Al-Aqsa mosque during prayers in the early morning of June 23rd.

The minister, under the protection of the Israeli occupation forces (IOF), then proceeded to seal off the mosque and prevented anyone else from entering.

This violation of religious sanctity and total disregard and disrespect of the Holy place of worship is indeed one more in a series of con-

traventions of human rights against the Palestinians and Muslims worldwide. This heartless act was done solely to provoke and anger Muslims all over as Al-Aqsa is one of the holiest and most important mosques in the religion of Islam.

Al-Quds is also extremely stunned that at a time when the world is encouraging democracy and religious freedom and tolerance, a ruthless occupier is still able to get away with human rights abuses and violations.

Al-Quds further calls on the international regulatory bod-

ies in charge of the preservation of all religious places of worship to hold those responsible accountable for their actions and ensure that it does not happen again.

Issued by:

Al-Quds Foundation SA



Israeli Navy Attacks, Boards and Commandeers 'Free Gaza' boat

On the 30th June 2009, Israeli Occupation Forces attacked and boarded the Free Gaza Movement boat, the SPIRIT OF HUMANITY, abducting 21 human rights workers from 11 countries, including Noble laureate Mairead Maguire and former U.S. Congresswoman Cynthia McKinney (see below for a complete list of passengers).

The passengers and crew are being forcibly dragged toward Israel. "This is an outrageous violation of international law against us. Our boat was not in Israeli waters, and we were on a human rights mission to the Gaza Strip," said Cynthia McKinney, a former U.S. Congresswoman and presidential candidate. "President Obama just told Israel to let in humanitarian and recon-

struction supplies, and that's exactly what we tried to do. We're asking the international community to demand our release so we can resume our journey."

According to an International Committee of the Red Cross report released yesterday, the Palestinians living in Gaza are "trapped in despair." Thousands of Gazans whose homes were destroyed earlier during Israel's December/January massacre are still without shelter despite pledges of almost \$4.5 billion in aid, because Israel refuses to allow cement and other building material into the Gaza Strip. The report also notes that hospitals are struggling to meet the needs of their patients due to Israel's disruption of medical supplies.

"The aid we were carrying is a symbol of hope for the people of Gaza, hope that the sea route would open for them, and they would be able to transport their own materials to begin to reconstruct the schools, hospitals and thousands of homes destroyed during the onslaught of "Cast Lead".

Our mission is a gesture to the people of Gaza that we stand by them and that they are not alone" said fellow passenger Mairead Maguire, winner of a Noble Peace Prize for her work in Northern Ireland. Just before being kidnapped by Israel, Huwaida Arraf, Free Gaza Movement chairperson and delegation co-coordinator on this voyage, stated that: "No one could possibly believe that our small boat constitutes any sort of threat to

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Israel. We carry medical and reconstruction supplies, and children's toys. Our passengers include a Nobel peace prize laureate and a former U.S. congressperson. Our boat was searched and received a security clearance by Cypriot Port Authorities before we departed, and at no time did we ever approach Israeli waters."

Arraf continued, "Israel's deliberate and premeditated attack on our unarmed boat is a clear violation of international law and we demand our immediate and unconditional release."

www.freegaza.org

Central Labor Council of the Canadian province of Quebec to adopt a boycott of Israel

Bethlehem / PNN - The Labor Council from the Canadian province of Quebec has answered the call of more than 170 institutions and organizations, some within occupied Palestine and others outside.

They have all called for a comprehensive boycott of Israel. This boycott includes divestment and sanctions against the State of Israel, along with the adoption of a province-wide boycott of Israeli products.

The Bar Council represents about 180,000 workers, the third largest workers trade union in Canada. It stated this week that the decision came at the invitation of institutions and NGOs involved

in the Palestinian campaign to pressure an end to the rouge behavior of the Israelis through a boycott. The Council decided to circulate the resolution to all its branches in the province. It also wants to remind its members of the need for an extensive public information campaign about Israeli practices against the Palestinians. The Council also calls for Israel to comply with the resolutions of international law.

It is noteworthy that the decision in support of the struggle of the Palestinian people and their legitimate national rights is coming from the Canadian trade unions, along with the British and South African initiatives.

www.pnn.ps

Amnesty International says it was Israeli soldiers that used Palestinians as human shields, not Hamas

www.pnn.ps

Gaza / PNN - "Operation Cast Lead", the major attack on Gaza at the start of this year, has already become synonymous with mass civilian deaths and indifference to international law.

The Amnesty International report that has the Israelis issuing denunciations and the Hamas party refuting the notion that it was an aggressor, has accused both the of war crimes and confirmed gross abuses of rights.

It has also refuted Israeli claims that civilians were deliberately used as human shields by Hamas. The 117-page report is one of the first in-depth examinations of the late December - January attacks to be published and is based on field research by Amnesty activists and military experts over two months.

The report cites the use by the Israelis of white phosphorus in densely populated areas of Gaza, the killing of civilians with precision weapons, and attacks on unarmed paramedics and ambulances helping the wounded. It also describes Palestinian women and children being shot by Israelis at close range while fleeing the fighting, and attacks on houses with children playing on their roofs. The Israelis are also accused of "frequently obstructing access to medical care" for the injured. It also condemns the launching of projectiles from the Gaza Strip which all armed resistance groups engaged in, including Fateh's Al Aqsa Brigades. However Amnesty International has conflated the entirety of the Palestinian armed resistance and placed the onus on the wing

affiliated with Hamas: Al Qassam Brigades. The report raised concern over the effects of the Hamas-related projectile launches on southern Israeli civilians, which killed three people and injured several from cases of shock. "Though less lethal, these attacks, using unguided rockets which cannot be directed at specific targets, violated international humanitarian law and cannot be justified under any circumstance," said Donatella Rovera, an Amnesty researcher who contributed to the report.

According to Amnesty International figures, of the 1,400 Palestinians killed in the attack: 940 were civilians, nearly a third of who were children. A difficulty from the beginning in ascertaining the number of civilian deaths was that all men have been put in the category of non-civilian. Israel has claimed that only 295 of those killed were civilians. Alongside this, 3,000 Palestinian homes were destroyed, leaving thousands homeless. Amnesty has described this destruction as "wanton and deliberate" and without military justification. "The deaths of so many children and other civilians cannot be dismissed simply as 'collateral damage', as argued by Israel," said Rovera. "Many questions remain to be answered about these attacks and about the fact that the strikes continued unabated despite the rising civilian death toll."

One of Israel's main excuses for the high number of civilian deaths was Hamas's use of non-combatants as human shields. However, Amnesty researchers found no

evidence for these claims. Hamas had fired projectiles from densely populated areas, and the report cites one case where weapons were launched from a school yard, but no civilians were deliberately placed in military zones as the Israelis have claimed.

There were, however, several cases in which Palestinian civilians were used as human shields by Israel troops, including incidents when children were forced to search houses for booby-traps before troops entered. According to the report Israeli soldiers were "endangering [civilians'] lives by forcing them to remain in or near houses which they took over and used as military positions". Following the report Amnesty has added its voice to calls for the Israeli and Hamas to cooperate with a United Nations war crimes inquiry. The Israelis have continued to refuse as the research is being wrapped up. The Hamas government said it welcomed the UN. Amnesty International's Rovera expressed her concerns at the attitude which both have taken following the end of the attacks claiming that five months on neither has shown any inclination to change practices and abide by international humanitarian law, raising the prospect that civilians will again bear the brunt if major Israeli attacks resume or the armed resistance launches projectiles.

"Those responsible for war crimes and other serious violations must not be allowed to escape accountability and justice."

Impunity for war crimes in Gaza and southern Israel a recipe for further civilian suffering - A I Report

Israeli forces killed hundreds of unarmed Palestinian civilians and destroyed thousands of homes in Gaza in attacks which breached the laws of war, Amnesty International concluded in a new report published on Thursday. *Operation 'Cast Lead': 22 days of death and destruction*, is the first comprehensive report to be published on the conflict, which took place earlier this year.

"Israel's failure to properly investigate its forces' conduct in Gaza, including war crimes, and its continuing refusal to cooperate with the UN international independent fact-finding mission headed by Richard Goldstone, is evidence of its intention to avoid public scrutiny and accountability," said Donatella Rovera, who headed a field research mission to Gaza and southern Israel during and after the conflict.

"The international community, led by the UN Security Council, must use all its leverage to ensure that Israel cooperates fully with the Goldstone inquiry, which now offers the best means to establish the truth."

The Amnesty International report documents Israel's use of battlefield weapons against a civilian population trapped in Gaza, with no means of escape and is based on evidence gathered by Amnesty International delegates, including a military expert, during field research in January and February.

The report shows that Hamas and other Palestinian armed groups fired hundreds of rockets into southern Israel, killing three Israeli civilians, injuring scores and driving thousands from their homes. "Such unlawful attacks constitute war crimes and are unacceptable," added Donatella Rovera.

The scale and intensity of the attacks on Gaza were unprecedented. Some 300 children and hundreds of other unarmed civilians who took no part in the conflict were among the 1,400 Palestinians killed by Israeli forces.

Most were killed with high-precision weapons, relying on surveillance drones which have exceptionally good optics,

allowing those observing to see their targets in detail. Others were killed with imprecise weapons, including artillery shells carrying white phosphorus – not previously used in Gaza - which should never be used in densely populated areas.

Amnesty International found that the victims of the attacks it investigated were not caught in the crossfire during battles between Palestinian militants and Israeli forces, nor were they shielding militants or other military objects. Many were killed when their homes were bombed while they slept. Others were sitting in their yard or hanging the laundry on the roof. Children were struck while playing in their bedrooms or on the roof, or near their homes. Paramedics and ambulances were repeatedly attacked while attempting to rescue the wounded or recover the dead.

"The deaths of so many children and other civilians cannot be dismissed simply as 'collateral damage', as argued by Israel," said Donatella Rovera. "Many questions remain to be answered about these attacks and about the fact that the strikes continued unabated despite the rising civilian death toll."

More than 3,000 homes were destroyed and some 20,000 damaged in Israeli attacks which reduced entire neighbourhoods of Gaza to rubble and left an already dire economic situation in ruins. Much of the destruction was wanton and could not be justified on grounds of "military necessity".

The Israeli army has not responded to Amnesty International's repeated requests over the past five months for information on specific cases detailed in the report and for meetings to discuss the organization's findings.

"For its part, Hamas has continued to justify the rocket attacks launched daily by its fighters and by other Palestinian armed groups into towns and villages in southern Israel during the 22-day conflict. Though less lethal, these attacks, using unguided rockets which cannot be directed at specific targets, violated international humanitarian law

and cannot be justified under any circumstance," said Donatella Rovera.

In addition to locally made Qassam rockets, Palestinian militants often fired longer-range Grad-type rockets smuggled into Gaza via the tunnels on the Egyptian border, which reached deeper into Israel and placed many more Israeli civilians at risk.

"Five months on, neither side has shown any inclination to change its practices and abide by international humanitarian law, raising the prospect that civilians will again bear the brunt if fighting resumes," said Donatella Rovera.

Under international law, states have a responsibility to exercise universal jurisdiction and start criminal investigations in national courts, wherever there is sufficient evidence of war crimes or other crimes under international law, to arrest and bring to justice alleged perpetrators.

"Those responsible for war crimes and other serious violations must not be allowed to escape accountability and justice," said Donatella Rovera.

Among other recommendations, the report calls on states to suspend all transfers of military equipment, assistance and munitions to Israel, Hamas and other Palestinian armed groups until there is no longer a substantial risk that such equipment will be used to commit serious violations of international law.

It calls on Israel to commit not to carry out direct, indiscriminate or disproportionate attacks on civilians; or use artillery, mortars and white phosphorus weapons in densely populated areas; and to end its blockade on the Gaza Strip, which is collectively punishing the entire population.

The report urges Hamas to renounce its policy of unlawful rocket attacks against civilian population centres in Israel and to prevent other armed groups from carrying out such attacks.

Amnesty International Report

www.amnesty.org

From the Al-Quds Desk.....

As we gradually go through the month of Rajab and the time nears to once again celebrate Lailatul Mie'raaj, we should take some time to remember the glorious night journey of our beloved Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) to the Holy Al-Aqsa masjid.

We should take time to remember the importance of this Holy masjid bestowed in it by none other than our Lord and Creator, Allah SWT. Masjidul Aqsa is an integral part of every Muslim's life, an important part of his faith. It was the first qiblah of the Muslims and remains to this day the third holiest haram. The land of Al-Aqsa is blessed with the sweat and footsteps of many prophets of the prophets of Allah SWT.

So when we raise our voices with the words 'Birruh biddam nafdeeka ya aqsa

- with our souls, with our blood we will liberate you o Aqsa', it should not just be mere words uttered with emotion when the need arises. It should be an intention implanted in our hearts and in our souls to fight for one of our most holiest places. It is the responsibility of each and every Muslim to do his bit for the liberation of Al-Aqsa. Whatever it takes, whether it be R1 or R1000 or one word uttered in defense of the Holy mosque, we must be ready to give our all.

The liberation of Al-Aqsa does not fall on the shoulders of the Palestinians alone as it does not belong only to the Palestinians but to Muslims the world over. So say it with me and say it loud and proud: 'Birruh biddam nafdeeka ya Aqsa'. One day you shall be liberated O Aqsa.....

Al-Quds Foundation SA will be having an awareness programme on the:

18 July 2009

Masjid ur Rawbie

After Esha

Watch this space for more details

If you have any content to contribute to our newsletter, please feel free to pass it on to our media department @

media.cpt@alquds.za.net

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'Al-Quds reserves the right to edit all content if necessary'

Palestinian olive oil wins special commendation in international competition, bodes well for export

Nablus / PNN - The Palestinian Union of Agricultural Work Committees has produced an award winning olive oil. With the "Shami Monocultivar" Palestinian farmers won a special commendation for light fruity olive oils at the 11th International Competition of Extra Virgin Olive Oils "L'Orciolo d'Oro" in Italy.

Producers who won the award a week ago today were involved in the European Union's Olive Oil Programme in the occupied Palestinian territory and created the winning oil from a single variety of tree.

Palestinian tradition and international

expertise came together in this oil as part of the EU / UAWC program whose intention to measure Palestinian production against international was justified. Competing on the basis of quality the "Shami Monocultivar" oil beat other olive oils from countries considered the best producers of extra virgin olive oil. These results are all the more extraordinary given the many problems faced by Palestinian farmers. In the context of the ongoing Israeli occupation, movement of goods and people within the Palestinian territory is severely restricted.

With help from the Italian non-governmental organization GVC-

Gruppo di Volontariato Civile and the Palestinian UAWC, and in partnership with the Abu Nasser olive mill of Burin, Nablus, the smallholder olive farmers from the winning cooperative successfully met international standards for the production of good quality olive oil and achieved excellent outcomes. This is promising for the development of Palestinian olive oil exports.

Good agricultural practices, proper harvesting, oil extraction and storage methods, wrote the UAWC, were meticulously applied, as well as other specialized techniques to increase the value of the oil.

www.pnn.ps

Al Quds Foundation Thursday Evening Programme:

*Join us in our weekly day of fasting towards liberation of Masjidul Aqsa and come and break your fast with us
This week's programme will be taking place at :*

*Masjidul Thaanie
Rocklands, Mitchells Plain*

For more info contact Yunus Allie on 082 967 1656

May Allah SWT reward all those who regularly assist us in our efforts towards safeguarding Al-Quds