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Oral statement submitted by Badil Resource Center for Palestinian Residency and Refugee Rights, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status.

Lack of Accountability for Israeli Onslaught Starkly Harms Palestinian Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons in Gaza

1. Well before the start of Israel's onslaught of Gaza in late December 2008, Israeli policies had caused the impoverishment and de-development of the Gaza Strip. In particular, its illegal and unilateral blockade imposed in June 2007, reduced 80 percent of the Palestinian population in Gaza to food aid dependence, made 80 percent of water unfit for drinking, and caused a rise in unemployment from 30 percent in 2007 to 40 percent in 2008.¹
2. Israel's 22-day Winter aerial and ground offensive exacerbated these dismal figures and heightened the insecurity of Gaza's Palestinian population, 67.4% of whom are refugees.²
3. According to UNRWA, at the start of 2011, the unemployment rate had reached 45 percent.³ Today, UNRWA estimates that 325,000 refugees are living in abject poverty and another 350,000 are below the official poverty line.
4. Israel's onslaught, for which there has been no accountability to date, also significantly increased the number of internally displaced, and secondary displaced refugees, in the Gaza Strip. Forced displacement in the Occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT) is both a consequence and cause of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict and has become a fixture of Palestinian dispossession. Between 1967 and 2008, it is estimated that 129,000 Palestinians have been internally displaced in the OPT.⁴
5. At the height of Israel's offensive, approximately 51,000 individuals, including 28,560 children were displaced and sought refuge in 44 UNRWA schools in Gaza.⁵ Over 4,000 homes were demolished, 3,000 were seriously damaged, and 53,000 suffered minor injuries.⁶
6. According to OCHA by November 2009, more than 20,000 people were still displaced in Gaza. By December 2010, nearly 93.3 percent of those families whose homes were destroyed had still not been able to re-construct their original homes.⁷ UNRWA attributes its inability to repair or reconstruct damaged and destroyed homes on Israel's debilitating blockade, which has prohibited the entry of necessary construction materials.

7. Failure to achieve accountability for Israel's brutal attack by implementing the recommendations enumerated by the UN Fact-Finding Mission on the Gaza Conflict, otherwise known as the Goldstone Report, has sustained and perpetuated these violations against the Palestinian refugee and internally displaced persons in the Gaza Strip.

We urge the Human Rights Council to:

- 1- Urge all signatories to the Geneva Convention to fulfill their obligations pursuant to Common Article 1 of the Convention to take meaningful action to recognize and affirm the illegality of the Gaza blockade pursuant to the Fourth Geneva Convention's prohibition on collective punishment, and to end the blockade swiftly and unequivocally.
2. Commission a report outlining the parameters of a resolution to the internally displaced crisis based on humanitarian and human rights law, the advisory opinion of the ICJ, the Security Council, as well as the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement;
3. Transmit the findings of the Committee of Independent Experts, established by the Human Rights Council through Resolution 13/9, to the United National General Assembly and to the Secretary-General for immediate action, namely referral to the UN Security Council to be submitted to the International Criminal Court.

¹ http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/7545636.stm

² <http://www.pcbs.gov.ps/DesktopModules/books/booksView.aspx?tabID=0&lang=en&ItemID=2&mid=11239>

³ Gaza unemployment reaches 45 percent, says UNRWA (10 February 2011).

⁴ Badil (30 September 2009).

⁵ Association of International Development Agencies. The Gaza Blockade: Children and Education Fact Sheet.

⁶ Internal Displacement Monitoring Center, *Gaza offensive adds to scale of displacement* (30 December 2009).

⁷ <http://www.mezan.org/upload/11208.pdf>