



DEFENSA DE NIÑAS Y NIÑOS INTERNACIONAL DNI
DEFENSE DES ENFANTS INTERNATIONALE DEI
DEFENCE FOR CHILDREN INTERNATIONAL DCI

Defence For Children International urges for an independent and civil investigation into the killing of five children in the Gaza Strip by Israeli security forces on 9 June 2006

Open Letter to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child and the UN Commission on Human Rights' Special Rapporteur on the Occupied Palestinian Territories:

Prof. John Dugard
Prof. Jacob Egbert Doek
Dr. Norberto Liwski
Ms. Ghalia Mohd. Bin Hamad Al-Thani
Ms. Joyce Aluoch
Ms. Mary Alison Anderson
Mr. Kamel Filali
Ms. Moushira Khattab
Mr. Hatem Kotrane
Mr. Lothar Friedrich Krappmann
Ms. Yanghee Lee
Ms. Rosa María Ortiz
Ms. Awa N'Deye Ouedraogo
Mr. David Brent Parfitt
Mr. Awich Pollar
Mr. Kamal Siddiqui
Ms. Lucy Smith
Ms. Nevena Vuckovic-sahovic
Mr. Jean Zermatten

Geneva, 13 June 2006

Dear Committee Members and Prof. Dugard,

The International Executive Council of Defence for Children International (DCI) expresses its grave concern and utmost dismay at the killing of five children on a Gaza beach by Israeli security forces on 9 June. According to the statement issued by DCI/Palestine Section and international and local news agencies, five children, all belonging to the same family, were killed by Israeli artillery shells in broad daylight, along with their mother and father, as they were enjoying a day on the beach in northern Gaza.

The five children killed have been identified as:

Haytham Ghalia (5 months old)
Hanadi Ghalia (1 and a half years old)
Sabreen Ghalia (5 years old)
Ilham Ghalia (15 years old)
Aliya Ghalia (17 years old)

Eyewitnesses described how a barrage of shells, fired from the direction of an Israeli military gunship stationed just offshore, rained down on the beach-goers, killing members of the Ghalia family outright and wounding at least forty other people, including 12 children.

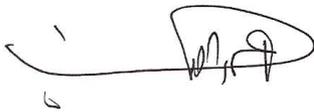
Israeli government sources however claimed that the shells which hit the beach east of Beit Lahiya did not come from the gunship, but were more likely to have been fired by Israeli ground forces. The Israeli military said it “regretted the harm done to innocent civilians”.

While the Israeli colonisation of the Gaza Strip ended with the withdrawal of illegal Jewish settlers and Israeli military personnel on 12 September 2005, Israeli military forces maintain effective control over the Gaza Strip and thus under international law the area remains occupied. Subsequent to these events, Israeli forces have killed dozens of Palestinians civilians in Gaza, including several children and injured hundreds more through systematic shelling campaigns and targeted assassinations. In addition, thousands of Gazan children have been left traumatized by the sonic booms caused by Israeli military aircraft deliberately breaking the sound barrier while flying at low altitude over the Gaza Strip.

These ongoing, unjustified tragedies, especially in light of the added consequences of the deepening humanitarian crisis in Gaza, demand an urgent response from international and supranational bodies, capable of holding Israel accountable to its obligations as a State Party to the Fourth Geneva Convention and international human rights law, especially the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

We the International Executive Council of Defence for Children International therefore appeal to the distinguished members of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child and the UN Commission on Human Rights’ Special Rapporteur on the Occupied Palestinian Territories to conduct an urgent investigation into the circumstances of the deaths of the five Ghalia children and to use its mandate to ensure that due concern is given to the safety of children who are supposed to be protected by international law. An Israeli Defence Forces inquiry is not enough; this issue demands and deserves an independent civil investigation.

Yours sincerely,



Rifat Odeh Kassis

President

International Executive Council

Defence for Children International