

**HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL**  
**Ninth special session (12 January 2009)**

**Oral statement delivered by The World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT), a non-governmental organisation in general consultative status**

Mr. President,

The International Secretariat of the World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT) expresses its **deep concern** with regard to the military operations started on 27 December 2008 by Israel Defense Forces (IDF) into densely populated areas of the Gaza Strip, which have reportedly caused so far **the death of at least 842 Palestinians, including 175 children and 58 women** and more than 3000 injured according to the latest reports, among others, by SOS-Torture Network organization Al-Mezan Center for Human Rights. OMCT supports the statement by DCI and the legal brief issued by Al Haq, two members of the Network.

Reports have denounced the targeting of civilians and civilian objects during IDF military operations, including of medical teams and civilian houses. OMCT strongly condemns the **disproportionate use of force** by IDF, causing unprecedented loss of civilian life, and other grave violations of both human rights and humanitarian laws.

The Gaza Strip has remained under **blockade since 2007**, having only a limited access to humanitarian supplies. While the humanitarian conditions in the Gaza Strip had already reached a dire situation before IDF military operations, OMCT fears that the death toll will sharply increase with the lack of medical supplies, food and basic commodities such as fuel and electric power.

OMCT calls on IDF to ensure the **unhindered movement of medical personnel** and ambulances to carry out their duties. OMCT expresses its deep concern about the **extensive damage sustained** by the Gaza Community Mental Health Programme (GCMHP), a member of the International Rehabilitation Centre for Torture Victims (IRCT), (also part of SOS-Torture Network), as a result of aerial bombing of a nearby police site, leading to the suspension of the centre's operations.

Along with the Public Committee Against Torture in Israel (PCATI), another member of SOS-Torture Network, OMCT is also preoccupied by reports that some of the Palestinians detained by Israeli forces during its attacks on Gaza have been **transferred to Israel for interrogation**. OMCT strongly urges Israel to ensure that all detainees are held in strict accord with the relevant provisions of international humanitarian law and international human rights law, recalling the absolute prohibition of torture and other forms of ill-treatment.

OMCT **also calls on Hamas** and other Palestinian armed groups to stop firing rockets from densely populated areas; placing civilians at risk of serious harm and cease indiscriminate rocket attacks against Israeli towns and villages, even if these actions can in no way be compared in magnitude and impact with IDF actions.

Mr Chairperson, the OMCT urges the Israeli authorities to immediately cease the military operations and calls for the establishment of an **UN-led investigation mission** whose mandate should be:

1. To establish the facts;
2. To draw up a list of violations of both human rights and humanitarian law;
3. To identify the responsible of these violations and to launch legal action against them;
4. To identify the victims and the damages incurred and ensure full reparation.

Thank you