**UN expert urges pressure on Israel to end blockade of Gaza, and the implementation of the Goldstone Report**

**Media Statement**

Statement by the Special Rapporteur for the Occupied Palestinian Territories, Richard Falk,
on the first anniversary of the Gaza war, 27 December 2009

<https://unispal.un.org/DPA/DPR/unispal.nsf/0/4A2E6CA774FC3A57852576950054D7EE>

GENEVA – “People of conscience everywhere, as well as governments worldwide and the United Nations, should take note of the dire situation in Gaza,” says the Special Rapporteur for the Occupied Palestinian Territories, Richard Falk, one year after the start of the Israeli military campaign against the Gaza Strip.

“The ordeal of the 1.5 million residents of Gaza affected by the Israeli blockade, over half of whom are children, has been allowed to continue without any formal objection by governments and at the UN,” stresses Falk.

For the independent expert, “so far, there is no evidence of meaningful international pressure being brought to bear to end the blockade or to ensure that Israeli and Hamas officials are held accountable for alleged war crimes perpetrated during the Gaza attacks.” In his view, “this represents both a tragic failure of responsibility by the powerful governments of the world and of the UN.”

“The unlawful blockade imposed by Israel continues, and is in its third year,” says the UN expert, noting that insufficient food and medicine is reaching Gazans, producing a further deterioration of the mental and physical health of the entire civilian population since Israel launched Operation Cast Lead against the territory on 27 December 2008, and maintained its military attack for 22 days.

Israel has not allowed building materials to enter the Gaza Strip to repair the billions of dollars of damage resulting from the heavy bombardment and artillery assaults on the civilian infrastructure of the whole area. The blockade continues to cause major breakdowns of the electricity and sanitation systems due to the Israeli refusal to let spare parts needed for repair get through the crossings.

For the Special Rapporteur Richard Falk, two urgent types of action should be encouraged on this dismal anniversary:

 that Israel’s European and North American allies insist that Israel immediately ends its illegal blockade of the Gaza Strip, backed up by a credible threat of economic sanctions.

 that the Goldstone Report’s recommendations\*, having confirmed the commission of war crimes possibly amounting to crimes against humanity, by Israel and Hamas, be fully and swiftly implemented.

On the first anniversary of the Gaza war, Falk also describes the initiatives of civil society such as the Free Gaza March and the global Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) campaign as “the only meaningful current challenge to Israel’s violations of its obligations as the Occupying Power of the Gaza Strip under the Geneva Conventions and the United Nations Charter.”

**(\*)** The Goldstone Report: <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/hrcouncil/docs/12session/A-HRC-12-48.pdf>