



# MALDIVES

*Check against delivery*

**Statement by H.E. Mr. Ahmed Khaleel, Permanent Representative of the Maldives to the United Nations, at the Tenth Emergency Special Session of the General Assembly on the Illegal Israeli actions in Occupied East Jerusalem and the rest of the Occupied Palestinian Territory, 15 January 2009**

Mr President,

At the outset, let me congratulate you for resuming the Tenth Emergency Special Session of the General Assembly to consider the urgent and dangerous situation unfolding in the Gaza Strip. We believe that it is timely and appropriate, as the escalating violence and bloodshed in Gaza not only has the potential for disastrous consequences for the region, but also for the maintenance of international peace and security.

Mr. President,

The Maldives have been following the recent developments in Gaza and the Occupied Territories with grave concern. We are particularly alarmed and angered by the inhuman and shameful acts being committed by Israel against the defenseless Palestinian civilians, especially women and children.

The Maldives strongly and forcefully condemns the disproportionate and excessive military force being unleashed by Israel against the civilian population in Gaza causing death and destruction of hundreds of innocent Palestinian lives and property and injuring thousands more over the past 20 days of violence.

The grave humanitarian crisis that had been created by the closure of Gaza and the escalation of violence and hostilities is unacceptable. The Israeli attack on the UNRWA school killing nearly 40 civilians including several innocent children and its attack on an aid-convoy of UNRWA and the killing of UN humanitarian workers signifies the blatant disregard by Israel for human lives and international humanitarian law.

The Maldives calls upon Israel to honour its international obligations as an occupying power and refrain from violating the human rights of the Palestinian people.

The Maldives also calls upon the international community to take urgent measures to put an end to the continuing aggression and immediately address the worsening humanitarian situation in Gaza. In this regard the Maldives is happy to see, for the first time in many years, the adoption of Security Council resolution 1860 on 8 January 2009 calling for an immediate ceasefire and setting in place a set of elements to address the humanitarian crisis. We also welcome the resolution adopted by the 9<sup>th</sup> special session of the Human Rights Council on 12 January 2009 calling for an independent investigation of all violations of international humanitarian law by the occupying power against the Palestinian people throughout the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

Mr. President,

The Palestinian cause has always remained close to the hearts of the Maldivian people. Our support has been unwavering and steadfast. The Maldives sincerely believes that the two-state solution, a sovereign state of Israel and a sovereign state of Palestine, co-existing side by side harmoniously within fully recognized borders, remains the only viable option to ensure long-term peace, security and stability in the region. We once again take this opportunity to reiterate our solidarity with the Palestinian people's right for self-determination and establish an independent and sovereign homeland on their national soil, with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital.

Mr. President,

There is no alternative to dialogue. A just and comprehensive resolution of the conflict cannot be achieved by war and aggression, but through dialogue and negotiations based on the relevant United Nations Security Council resolutions. We therefore, call upon the two parties to immediately honour and implement Security Council resolution 1860 of 8 January 2009, cease hostilities and return to the negotiating table.

Before I conclude, Mr. President, let me take this opportunity to record our sincere appreciation to Your Excellency and to the Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, for the exemplary leaderships that Your Excellency and the Secretary-General continue to demonstrate in your efforts to find a lasting solution to the conflict. Let me also on behalf of my country thank Egypt and all other States in the region for the most constructive and important role that they are playing to achieve a lasting ceasefire.

The Maldives assures this august Assembly of its readiness to do whatever it can to find a just and comprehensive settlement with the realization of two states living side by side in peace and within secure and recognized borders.

I thank you, Mr. President.