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STATEMENT BY

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ON BEHALF OF THE ORGANIZATION OF ISLAMIC
CONFERENCE (OIC)
AT THE TENTH EMMEGENCY SPECIAL SESSION OF THE
GENERAL ASSEMBLY

ON THE ILLEGAL ISRAELI ACTIONS IN OCCUPIED EAST
JERUSALEM AND THE REST OF THE OCCUPIED
PALESTINIAN TERRITORY

New York, 15 January 2009

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Mr President

I have the honour of speaking on behalf of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) Group in New York.

Mr President

The OIC welcomes and supports the convening of this 10th Emergency Special Session of the General Assembly on the "Illegal Israeli actions in Occupied East Jerusalem and the rest of the Occupied Palestinian Territory" today to discuss Israel's aggression on Gaza.

An Emergency OIC Ministerial Executive Committee Meeting held in Jeddah on the 3rd of January 2009 called for the convening of a meeting of the General Assembly under "Uniting for Peace". This meeting today of the General Assembly therefore, is a clear reflection of the seriousness with which the international community takes the tragic situation in Gaza and the need to find an immediate and sustainable solution.

Mr President

The grave and worsening humanitarian crisis in Gaza as a result of the Israeli actions is unacceptable. Civilians have borne the brunt of the attacks, causing hundreds of casualties, leaving thousands injured, and wreaking massive destruction on property and civic facilities.

The violence in Gaza, has claimed over 1,000 Palestinian lives and is now in its 20th day. Today, the UN compound in Gaza was shelled again. Yesterday we heard from the UN Under Secretary General for Humanitarian Affairs that "United Nations schools sheltering displaced persons had been hit, humanitarian workers had been killed and ambulances hit, sick and wounded had been left trapped and unassisted, and up to 100,000 people had been displaced from their homes" He said "the civilian population of Gaza is terrified and its psychological impact felt particularly by children and their parents who feel helpless and unable to protect them."

We condemn Israel actions in Gaza, which are excessive. They must stop. The effect of the current hostilities is the further destabilization of the situation in the occupied territories and the wider Middle East. The violence is also a serious threat to the Middle East Peace process.

Israel must end its military operation immediately and open all the border crossings to ensure unfettered access of humanitarian supplies into Gaza. It is necessary to have immediate humanitarian access into Gaza to provide relief and evacuation of the wounded. But this access cannot be guaranteed as long as Israeli military operations are ongoing.

Mr President

Last week, the OIC welcomed the adoption of the resolution by the UN Security Council on the Israeli aggression against the Gaza Strip. Although the resolution came late, and it did not address some of the fundamental issues related to the Israeli – Palestinian Question, the resolution represented a step in the right direction.

There is need for immediate and full implementation of the resolution to ensure that all concerned parties abide by it and that Israel demonstrates commitment to stopping its aggression, withdrawing from the Gaza Strip, lifting the siege imposed on Gaza, opening the crossings, and allowing humanitarian assistance to cross into Gaza.

The Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) has undertaken an emergency humanitarian assistance campaign launched by the OIC Secretary General with the objective of catering to the minimum basic humanitarian needs of the population in the Gaza Strip. On Wednesday, 14th January, 2009, a convoy of relief aid was delivered to the Palestinian people in the Gaza Strip through the Rafah crossing. The OIC aid convoy included 300 tons of medicine, medical equipment, and food supplies.

We thank the United Nations, UN Member States, and civil society institutions that have provided the people of Gaza with support in these difficult times. We call on them all to give further support as the humanitarian needs in Gaza are acute.

We also pay tribute to all the humanitarian workers in Gaza who are continuing to carry out their work amid the terrible violence.

Finally, I wish to reiterate that the time has come for the violence to stop and an immediate resumption of the peace process to deal with the Question of Palestine in a comprehensive way in order to ensure a lasting and just peace in the Middle East, encompassing a two-state solution as called for in relevant Security Council resolutions.

I thank You