

Jan Kohout  
Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic,  
Presidency of the European Union

Brussels, 10 June 2009  
Ref: B877

Dear Mr Kohout,

**Subject: EU-Israel Association Council  
and General Affairs and External Relations Council, 15 June 2009**

Amnesty International urges the EU to use the opportunity of the forthcoming EU-Israel Association Council and the General Affairs and External Relations Council (GAERC) to confirm its unreserved support for the universality of human rights and respect for international humanitarian law (IHL). Currently, the EU is failing to implement its own Guidelines on Promoting Compliance with IHL and is failing to give vital and urgent support to the United Nations system.

Our concerns have been outlined in previous correspondence with the EU institutions, most recently in a joint letter from a number of humanitarian and human rights organizations on 8 May, as well as in letters from Amnesty International on 7 and 21 January, 11 February and 15 April. Similar concerns were also expressed in a letter from a number of Israeli human rights organizations on 10 May.

Despite the EU's longstanding support for all UN mechanisms and procedures, we remain deeply concerned that there has still not been a clear statement of support from the EU for the UN-mandated inquiry under the chairmanship of Justice Goldstone. This inquiry is currently investigating violations of international law committed by all parties to the recent conflict in Gaza and southern Israel. The establishment of a full investigation was a clear recommendation of the limited investigation already completed by the UN Board of Inquiry, which submitted its report to the UN Secretary General and Security Council. Following concerns surrounding the initial Human Rights Council resolution, the mandate of the new Goldstone inquiry has clearly been defined to cover violations committed by all parties to the conflict and the UN Secretary General has personally called on the Israeli government to cooperate.

To date, Israel has refused to cooperate with the inquiry and has not granted Justice Goldstone and his team access to the country. Amnesty International therefore expects the EU to use this opportunity to send a clear message of support to the UN and to, as a priority, call on the Israeli authorities to cooperate with the inquiry. Without full cooperation and access granted by the Israeli government by the end of June, the inquiry will not be able to carry out its mandate to investigate first-hand Palestinian rocket attacks launched from Gaza against southern Israel, and will not be able to interview either civilians affected by these attacks or members of the Israeli authorities.

In addition, Amnesty International calls on the EU to use the occasion of the Association Council, along with the associated GAERC conclusions, to convey its expectations of Israel with regards to respect for international law, and to clearly link these expectations not only to progress in the peace process but also to further deepening of EU-Israel bilateral relations. Given the urgency of the situation on the ground, the EU should use the meeting to achieve firm commitments, in particular concerning the following issues:

- the continuing blockade on Gaza, which is exacerbating the humanitarian crisis, constitutes collective punishment under international law and is preventing the desperately needed rehabilitation and reconstruction for which the EU has pledged funds and support;
- continued settlement construction/ expansion and house demolitions within the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT), in breach of the Fourth Geneva Convention, which is creating additional facts on the ground that further undermine prospects for a peace agreement;
- stringent restrictions imposed on freedom of movement for Palestinians in the OPT;

- the use of administrative detention to hold Palestinians without charge or trial for prolonged periods and the denial of family visits to detainees, often as a form of collective punishment (900 Palestinians detainees in Israeli jails have been denied all family visits since June 2007); and,
- the imprisonment of Israeli conscientious objectors who refuse to be drafted into military service for reasons of conscience.

Further information on these concerns can be found in our letter sent to the EU institutions on 25 November 2008 and in the Amnesty International Annual Report published on 28 May 2009.

We look forward to hearing from you further on this matter.

Yours sincerely,



**Nicolas Beger**  
Director  
Amnesty International EU Office



**Dasa van der Horst**  
Director  
Amnesty International Czech Republic

cc: Benita Ferrero Waldner, Commissioner for External Relations  
Javier Solana, High Representative for EU Common Foreign and Security Policy  
Ambassadors of EU Member States to the Political and Security Committee