



Statement by the United Nations Agencies in the occupied Palestinian territory

On the United Nations International Day of Peace

Jerusalem 21 September 2006. We the United Nations agencies in the occupied Palestinian territory¹ unreservedly endorse the Secretary General's call for peace and his frank assessment that for far too many people in the world today, the gift of peace is only an elusive dream. That statement holds particular resonance for the people of the occupied Palestinian territory (the oPt), whose dreams of living in dignity and security remain all too tragically elusive. Over two hundred people have died in the oPt since the Israeli ground offensive began in Gaza at the end of June. Many of those killed were innocent women and children. These needless deaths we condemn in the strongest possible terms, just as the United Nations condemns the killing of all innocent civilians.

Israelis too deserve to live in peace and security, free from the scourge of war. They too must have their right to achieve their elusive dreams, living at peace along side their neighbors in the Middle East.

But peace means more than the preservation of life. Life has to be sustained in dignity and freedom. The Israeli policy of closures also makes this goal an elusive dream for millions of Palestinians. In the last year, the number of manned and unmanned physical obstacles across the West Bank has increased by over forty per cent. Restrictions in Gaza continue to humiliate an entire population and render their natural economic aspirations an elusive dream. We call for an immediate lifting of these restrictions and an end to the violence that many give as their justification.

Finally, we endorse the Secretary General's call for universal education, health care and protection for children. The climate of insecurity and fear, together with financial restrictions, closures and the general strike in the oPt, make this natural right an elusive dream for millions of Palestinian children. On this Day of Peace, we call upon politicians in both Israel and the oPt and we call upon the international community to recognize the humanitarian plight of ordinary Palestinians and to take immediate steps transform their elusive dreams into a living reality.

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¹ United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA), World Food Programme (WFP), United Nations Special Coordinator's Office (UNSCO), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), International Labour Organization (ILO), United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), World Health Organization (WHO), United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), and United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)