

**For Immediate Release**

## **EU: Demand Justice for Victims of Gaza War**

### ***Endorse Goldstone Report in its Entirety***

(Brussels, September 25, 2009) – The European Union and its member states should fully endorse the report of the United Nations fact-finding mission on the Gaza conflict led by South African judge Richard Goldstone and demand justice for the victims of serious violations of international humanitarian law, Human Rights Watch said today.

In a [letter](#) to EU foreign ministers made public today, Human Rights Watch called on the European Union and its 27 member states to “promote an international order where no state is above the law.”

“EU member states should accept that both Israel and Hamas committed serious violations during the Gaza conflict,” said Lotte Leicht, EU director at Human Rights Watch. “The step-by-step approach proposed by the Goldstone report could finally help secure justice for the civilian victims of the war.”

In its letter, Human Rights Watch called upon the EU and member states to support a resolution at the UN Human Rights Council endorsing the fact-finding mission’s report in its totality and its submission to the relevant UN bodies for follow-up. The Human Rights Council in Geneva will debate the Gaza report next week.

Human Rights Watch expressed concern that EU member states may challenge the Goldstone report with procedural arguments about whether the mission had a mandate to make recommendations beyond the Human Rights Council rather than initiate a process that advances justice for possible war crimes in the conflict.

“The Goldstone report offers a unique opportunity to break the cycle of impunity that has for too long undermined prospects for peace in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict,” said Leicht. “The EU should not let this opportunity go to waste.”

The UN fact-finding mission on the Gaza Conflict released its 575-page report on September 15. The report documents serious violations of international humanitarian law by both Israel and Hamas. Some Israeli violations amounted to war crimes and possible crimes against humanity, including willful killings, deliberate attacks on civilian objects, wanton destruction of civilian property, indiscriminate attacks, the use of human shields, and collective punishment against Gaza’s civilian population in the form of a continuing blockade.

The Goldstone report concluded that rocket fire from Gaza by Hamas and other Palestinian armed groups was deliberate and calculated to cause loss of civilian life and to terrorize Israeli civilians. As such, the report said, they amounted to serious war crimes and perhaps crimes against humanity.

The report recommends that Israel and the Hamas authorities be given six months to show that they will finally conduct credible investigations into violations by their forces, and that the UN Security Council asks a group of independent experts to monitor and report on whether the parties undertake genuine efforts in this regard.

**For more Human Rights Watch reporting on Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories, please visit:**

<http://www.hrw.org/en/middle-eastn-africa/israel-and-occupied-territories>

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