**UN Envoy Mladenov Receives Israeli and Palestinian Bereaved Families
for International Day of Peace**

Jerusalem, 21 September 2015

On the occasion of International Day of Peace, the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, Mr. Nickolay Mladenov, received today 32 Palestinian and Israeli bereaved members of the Parents Circle – Families Forum (PCFF) in his office in Jerusalem.

PCFF members briefed Special Coordinator Mladenov on the organization's goals and work, and shared personal stories about their losses and how they were able to turn their grief into a positive force for peace through dialogue and exchange.

Iris Segev, an Israeli member of PCFF who lost her beloved son to the conflict, said: "I'm not seeking revenge but reconciliation. It has to be said today, on Peace Day: Life is too short. The lives of our children are too dear. We must make a change now; the conflict must end."

Mazen Faraj, a Palestinian member of PCFF, who lost his beloved father in the conflict, said: "If we who have paid the highest price can find a way to meet on this important day of peace, then surely that can be an example to others."

Special Coordinator Mladenov stressed that "these powerful testimonies reinforce my resolve to work towards ending this conflict. The current status quo between Israelis and Palestinians is untenable and will only fuel more hatred and violence. This conflict is not set in stone -- it is a result of the choices that people make. Leaders on both sides must choose to break this cycle. On International Peace Day, I am inspired by people who have made the choice to turn tragedy into hope, rather than fear."

PCFF is a joint Palestinian Israeli organization of over 600 families, all of whom have lost a close family member as a result of the prolonged conflict. Joint activities of the organization have shown that the reconciliation between individuals and nations is possible and it is this insight that they are trying to pass on to both sides of the conflict. Moreover, the organization has concluded that the process of reconciliation between nations is a prerequisite to achieving sustainable peace.

The International Day of Peace was established in 1981 by the United Nations General Assembly to coincide with its opening session, which was held annually on the third Tuesday of September. The first Peace Day was observed in September 1982.In 2001, the General Assembly by unanimous vote established 21 September as an annual day of non-violence and cease-fire.

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