

## *Annan, UN rights chief voice dismay at latest violence in Gaza*

14 May 2004 – United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan and the UN's top human rights official today both voiced their dismay at the violence and destruction in Gaza during the latest cycle of fighting that erupted earlier this week.

"The Secretary-General strongly condemns Israel's ongoing and widespread destruction of Palestinian homes in Rafah in the southern Gaza Strip," said a [statement](#) issued by a spokesman for Mr. Annan.

Reports cite the demolition of scores of buildings over the last two days, in addition to 130 residential buildings already destroyed this month. "The Secretary-General has repeatedly called on the Government of Israel to address its security needs within the boundaries of international law," spokesman Fred Eckhard said.

"He urges Israel to uphold its obligations as an occupying power by immediately halting such actions, which are tantamount to collective punishment and a clear violation of international law," he added.

The Acting UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Bertrand Ramcharan, [said](#) he was alarmed over the violence and death toll following Israeli incursions that left more than 25 Palestinians dead and dozens of others injured. Meanwhile, at least 11 Israeli soldiers have also died, with the remains of some of them being paraded by members of Palestinian armed groups in a shocking display, he noted in a statement issued in Geneva.

The Acting High Commissioner said he was concerned about the scale of the use of force by the Israeli army in its latest operations, and urged all parties to respect the right to life, fundamental to all other human rights.

Mr. Ramcharan urged all concerned to stop the violence in Gaza and to resume negotiations, in line with the calls of the Quartet, aimed at securing a lasting settlement and respect for all human rights.

The High Commissioner also emphasized the duty to protect human rights even in armed conflict and appealed to all concerned to live up to this obligation.

Earlier Friday the UN said it has asked Israeli authorities for evidence to support allegations that UN ambulances were involved in the transfer of body parts of some of the dead Israeli soldiers.

Mr. Eckhard [said](#) the Secretary-General was aware of the allegations made through the media by Israeli Defence Minister Shaul Mofaz. "Both he and the Commissioner-General of [the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees ([UNRWA](#))] take such accusations very seriously," he said.

Yesterday UNRWA issued a statement calling on the parties in the occupied Palestinian territory to respect its ambulance services after an incident Tuesday in which armed Palestinian militants threatened the lives of an Agency ambulance team and forced them to transport an injured gunman and two of his armed colleagues to a hospital in Gaza City.

Link: <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=10748&Cr=palestin>