

## **Secretary-General's message for the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People**

**New York, 29 November 2014**

We have passed through another somber, sad and sorry year for Palestinians, Israelis and all who seek peace. Over the course of 50 brutal days this summer, the world witnessed a ruthless war in Gaza -- the third such conflict in six years.

I travelled to the region twice in recent months. First, to help end the fighting -- and second to see the aftermath and support the massive reconstruction efforts.

I repeat what I said in Gaza: I condemn the Hamas rocket attacks that indiscriminately targeted Israeli civilians. They have brought nothing but suffering to all

I repeat what I said in Israel: The scale of the destruction by the Israeli military has left deep questions about respect for the principles of distinction and proportionality, and generated wide calls for accountability. Much more must be done to protect civilians and abide by international human rights and humanitarian law.

Long-term stability depends on addressing the underlying causes of the conflict. That means lifting the closure on Gaza, ending the half century occupation of Palestinian land and addressing Israel's legitimate security concerns.

On this day of solidarity, our hearts turn to the many Palestine refugees in Gaza and beyond. UNRWA is a lifeline for millions of Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank as well as in Jordan, Lebanon and Syria. I urge all donors to continue their strong support to UNRWA and for the reconstruction of Gaza.

I am deeply troubled by the situation in Jerusalem and the West Bank. Extremists on both sides are dictating the agenda. I call on all parties to stand up to those forces, exercise restraint and respect the status quo governing these holy sites. I also have repeatedly denounced Israeli settlement activity in the West Bank, including occupied East Jerusalem.

An end of the conflict will only come through a negotiated and just political solution, based on the relevant United Nations resolutions.

The Israeli and Palestinian people face a shared fate on shared land. There is no erasing the other. Yet I fear deeply that with each passing day the people of the region are losing any sense of connection -- any sense of empathy -- any sense of mutual understanding of our common humanity and common future.

On this International Day of Solidarity, I call on the parties to step back from the brink. The mindless cycle of destruction must end. The virtuous circle of peace must begin.