

**Statement attributable to the Spokesman for the Secretary-General
on escalation in Gaza**

New York, 17 July 2014

The Secretary-General is alarmed at the serious escalation in Gaza today, including resumed rocket fire into Israel and the subsequent launch of an Israeli ground operation into Gaza, despite his repeated urgings to the contrary. He is disappointed that notwithstanding United Nations efforts the parties could not build on today's promising humanitarian pause to achieve a lasting ceasefire.

This escalation will inevitably increase the already appalling suffering of the affected civilian populations. The Secretary-General calls for an immediate end to the indiscriminate firing of rockets by Hamas into Israel and Israeli retaliatory action. He asks the parties to do their utmost to ensure the protection of civilians and United Nations premises and staff, and that humanitarian assistance continues to reach all those in need. All parties must respect international humanitarian and human rights law, and there must be accountability for any breaches of those obligations.

Even prior to the beginning of today's ground offensive in Gaza, there had been a regrettable number of incidents involving the deaths of civilians, including the terrible killing of four Palestinian boys on a beach in Gaza City. He calls on Israel to do far more to stop civilian casualties.

These developments complicate the efforts of Egypt and others to put an end to the violence. The Secretary-General reiterates his call for an immediate cessation of hostilities, and urges regional and international partners to exert all possible influence to bring about an immediate end to the suffering and bloodshed. He will continue his efforts to that end.

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