

New York, 9 April 2003

Statement attributable to the Spokesman for the Secretary-General on the situation in the Middle East, including the question of Palestine

The Secretary-General is deeply concerned by Israel's air attack last night in the Zeitoun neighbourhood of Gaza City that resulted in the deaths of seven Palestinians and the wounding of dozens more. He deplores the use of excessive force in a densely populated area and reiterates his opposition to extra-judicial killings. While he recognizes Israel's right of self-defence, the Secretary-General again calls on Israel to conduct itself in a manner fully consistent with its obligations under international humanitarian law.

The Secretary-General reiterates his strongly held conviction that the only way out of the cycle of violence and retaliation is an immediate cessation of violence by all parties and a return to the negotiating table. He believes that the best path to a just and comprehensive peace is through the full implementation of the Quartet's Road Map, which will soon be presented to the parties.

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