

**Statement by the United Nations Secretary-General
on Strike on UN Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) School in Gaza**

In the last day, three schools operated by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) have been hit by nearby Israeli military strikes. A substantial number of civilians have been killed, particularly in the third strike, and many more have been injured. I am awaiting full confirmation of the details of these incidents.

These, and over twenty other schools, are serving as temporary shelters to over 15,000 Palestinians whose homes have been destroyed or who are fleeing the violence. They are seeking sanctuary in UNRWA schools because they have no other place to go and are not able to flee the Gaza Strip.

In another incident, seven UN staff were injured, three seriously, together with three patients, when a strike on a neighbouring building caused substantial collateral damage to an UNRWA health centre.

The locations of all UN facilities have been communicated to the Israeli authorities and are known to the Israeli army. After earlier strikes, the Israeli government was warned that its operations were endangering UN compounds. I am deeply dismayed that despite these repeated efforts, today's tragedies have ensued. These attacks by Israeli military forces which endanger UN facilities acting as places of refuge are totally unacceptable and must not be repeated. Equally unacceptable are any actions by militants which endanger the Palestinian civilian population.

Today's events underscore the dangers inherent in the continuation and escalation of this conflict. I call once again for an immediate ceasefire.

New York, 6 January 2009