



Press release

31 December 2008

Save the Children Sweden: Situation of Children in Gaza is Catastrophic

Save the Children Sweden is calling for an immediate end to the Israeli military attacks on the Gaza Strip following reports of at least 39 children among those killed and at least 82 children injured.

The situation is catastrophic. Children make up 56% of the population of Gaza and as always are paying the hardest price. There is no escape for them or for their families. The start of the Israeli military operation occurred when just as children were leaving school, exposing them to horrific scenes of violence and causing death and injury to a number of them.

After the bombardment began on 27 December 2008, the situation for children is becoming immeasurably worse with Gaza already paralyzed with the high potential of the complete destruction of essential infrastructure for sewage treatment, water provision, electricity for hospitals and homes. Health providers warn that the health system is near a state of complete collapse with shortages in medical supplies. Due to the big number of killed and injured, hospitals are unable to provide proper urgent medical care to the injured. Hundreds of homes have been destroyed or damaged, with an increasing number of IDPs.

The Israeli military attacks must stop. The situation in Gaza was already dire and this recent escalation in violence is creating a humanitarian emergency and must stop. The international community must continue to pressure all those involved to cease the violence, and to ensure that Israel meets its humanitarian obligations under international humanitarian law.

Attacking or bombing civilians is prohibited under international humanitarian law whether it is in Gaza or Israel. The unlawful attacks on the civilian population in Israel do not provide legal or moral justification to the indiscriminate damage inflicted on Palestinian civilians. Save the Children calls on ending the Israeli military operation in the Gaza Strip and unconditionally open border crossings in order to allow all needed medical supplies and food inside Gaza and to allow humanitarian agencies to respond to the immediate emergency needs of the population inside Gaza.

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