**UN urged to reject Israeli calls to retract Goldstone report**

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The Israeli government's call for the UN to retract the report of its Fact-Finding Mission on the Gaza Conflict is an attempt to avoid accountability for war crimes and to deny justice to the victims of the 2008-2009 conflict, Amnesty International said today.

Israel has claimed that its conduct during the 22-day conflict, in which some 1,400 Palestinians were killed, has been vindicated following the publication of a Washington Post opinion piece last week by Justice Richard Goldstone, who led the UN Fact-Finding Mission on the Gaza Conflict.

"These claims are a deliberate misinterpretation of Justice Goldstone's comments in the Washington Post," said Philip Luther, Deputy Director of Amnesty International's Middle East and North Africa Programme.

"The international community must firmly reject these attempts to escape accountability and act decisively for international justice, as it has done on Libya, Sudan and other situations where possible war crimes and crimes against humanity have been committed.

"The UN General Assembly should ensure that the Goldstone report is submitted to the Security Council at the earliest opportunity, so that it can consider whether the situation should be referred to the International Criminal Court."

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and other Israeli ministers called for the entire report to be retracted after Justice Goldstone's opinion piece questioned whether the Israeli military had intentionally targeted civilians in certain incidents examined by the Fact-Finding Mission.

Justice Goldstone said on Tuesday that he would not work for the report to be retracted, rejecting Israeli Interior Minister Eli Yishai's claims that he had promised to do so in a phone conversation on Monday.

At least two of the three other members of the Fact-Finding Mission have said they stand by the original report.

"Comments made in an opinion piece do not provide a sufficient legal basis for overturning a UN report that has been discussed and endorsed by both the Human Rights Council and the General Assembly," said Philip Luther.

"Neither do the self-serving calls of Israeli political leaders, some of whom were members of the Israeli war cabinet which made the policy decisions during the conflict in which some 1,400 Palestinians, including some 300 children, were killed by Israeli forces."

"Retracting the report would also deny any possibility of justice for the Israeli victims of the conflict, who suffered from hundreds of indiscriminate rockets and mortars launched into southern Israel by Hamas' military wing and other Palestinian armed groups in Gaza."

In its September 2009 report, the UN Fact-Finding Mission on the Gaza Conflict found that both sides had committed serious violations of international law, including war crimes and possible crimes against humanity.

The report called on the Israeli and Palestinian authorities to conduct credible, independent investigations into alleged war crimes within six months or face potential UN Security Council referral to the International Criminal Court.

More than two years after the conflict, the Hamas de facto administration has failed to investigate violations committed by Palestinian armed groups or hold perpetrators accountable.

Amnesty International has monitored Israel's military investigations and found them not to have been independent or to have met key international standards of promptness, effectiveness, and transparency.