**UN official: No overlap between 2 Israeli probes**

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GENEVA — The president of the U.N. Human Rights Council denied on Wednesday that the body's investigation of Israel's deadly raid on a Gaza-bound flotilla has been made redundant by the announcement of a higher-profile U.N. probe.

Sihasak Phuangketkeow defended the Geneva-based council's investigation into the May 31 incident, which was launched before U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon announced a high-level panel on Monday. Sihasak urged Israel to cooperate with both.

"There's a clear distinction between the two missions and the mandates given," Sihasak told reporters, dismissing suggestions that the 47-nation council's probe was now superfluous. "I feel very strongly that we have to proceed."

Ban's probe has a greater international profile, as it is led by former New Zealand Prime Minister Geoffrey Palmer and outgoing Colombian President Alvaro Uribe. It will also get more input from the parties through its inclusion of a Turkish and an Israeli representative, and reports submitted by the two countries.

Sihasak, of Thailand, said the rights council's mission will try to travel to the region to interview people in person, but the Jewish state has previously refused to take part in council investigations.

Both teams are expected to publish their findings in September.

Israeli commandos trying to prevent pro-Palestinian activists from breaking its blockade of Gaza killed eight Turks and one Turkish-American during the raid on one of the flotilla's six vessels. Israel has said the soldiers acted in self defense after being attacked as they boarded the Mavi Marmara, owned by an Islamic charity.

Israel said Monday it will work with Ban's panel but has yet to say if it will cooperate with the rights council's probe. Sihasak said it would be "in the interest of Israel to do so."

Calls to Israel's U.N. mission in Geneva weren't answered Wednesday. Israel considers the council biased because it focuses more of its attention on the Jewish state than on any other country.

The council's panel is composed of British lawyer Desmond de Silva — a former U.N. war crimes prosecutor — Trinidadian judge Karl T. Hudson-Phillips and Malaysian women's rights advocate Mary Shanthi Dairiam. Its mandate is primarily to investigate whether Israel breached international humanitarian or human rights law.

Both Turkey and Israel were consulted before the panel was announced and neither raised any major objections, Sihasak said.