

Ms. Mona Sabella

23 July 2014

Al-Haq Oral Statement - Human Rights Council 21st special session of the Council on the situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem.

Mr. President, Distinguished Members of the Council,

Nine-year-old Shaima' al-Masri has been waking up every morning asking, in a trembling tone, why her mother hasn't come to visit her in hospital yet. Shaima's mother was killed before her eyes while attempting to flee Israel's indiscriminate air strikes in Beit Hanoun.

What we are witnessing today in the Gaza Strip, Mr. President, is a manifestation of Israel's prolonged and belligerent occupation of Palestine.

It is a result of the seven-year long siege of the Gaza Strip that amounts to collective punishment. It is yet another attack during which Israeli forces directly and intentionally target the civilian population.

It is an embodiment of the international community's failure to hold Israel accountable for war crimes and other unlawful activity in the occupied territory.

Every year Al-Haq reads statements in this Council and every time we call for accountability in order to dissuade future violations of international law committed by Israel. Why has the international community failed to hold Israel to account?

The answer can be observed in this very Council where we often find political agendas undermining the mandate of the Council and overpowering justice and human rights. We have consistently seen Member States choose partisan politics over their obligations under international law.

Distinguished Members of the Council, the recent escalation in violence proves that the status quo is not sustainable. And so we urge you to choose justice and human rights today and vote in favor of the proposed resolution, calling for an independent commission of inquiry to carry out fact-finding and help seek accountability for the hundreds of civilians that have lost their lives.

Finally, we urge the State of Palestine to sign the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court and urge the US to end its pressure on the Palestinian Authority not to do so.

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