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Human rights situation in Palestine and other occupied Arab territories

Letter dated 9 December 2010 from the Permanent Representative of Israel addressed to the President of the Human Rights Council

I write to bring your attention to an interview published in *Al Hayat*, the London-based Arabic daily newspaper, with Hamas Interior Minister, Fathi Hamad, on 1 November 2010, as reported by Agence France Presse.

On 28 December 2008, the State of Israel, in self-defence, commenced operation Cast Lead in response to more than 12,000 indiscriminately fired Qassam rocket, Grad-type missiles and mortar attacks launched from the Gaza Strip against Israeli civilians in southern Israel. During that time, as illustrated in the various reports distributed by the State of Israel, every effort was made to ensure that the conduct of hostilities adhered to the laws of armed conflict. The operation ended on 18 January 2009.

Following the cessation of hostilities, the State of Israel issued public statements and reports to the effect that, of the estimated 1,166 fatalities, 609 persons were classified as combatants belonging to the militant wing of Hamas, while 100 other persons were classified as combatants belonging to other militant organizations. The State of Israel has openly and continuously expressed its regret at any loss of civilian life.

The Israeli estimate came under heavy attack by, inter alia, several media outlets, some States Members of the United Nations and the Goldstone report (A/HRC/12/48). On the basis of unsubstantiated reports and figures from the Hamas terrorist organization, other militant groups and Palestinian non-governmental organizations, the State of Israel was falsely accused of deliberately targeting innocent civilian life and objects.

Now, for the first time since the end of operation Cast Lead, a Hamas leader has publicly announced the true number of estimated fatalities of militants from Hamas and other terrorist organizations. In his interview with *Al Hayat*, Mr. Hamad stated:

They say the people suffered from this war, but is Hamas not part of the people? On the first day of the war, Israel targeted police stations and 250 martyrs were killed, from Hamas and other factions.

In addition to them, between 200 and 300 fighters from the Al-Qassam Brigades (Hamas' armed wing) and another 150 security forces were martyred.

I believe, Mr. President, that the above statement speaks for itself. Israel stands by its original estimates of casualties incurred during operation Cast Lead and reiterates its deep regret at any loss of civilian life.

I should be grateful, Mr. President, if you would have the present letter circulated as a document of the sixteenth session of the Human Rights Council.

(*signed*) Aharon Leshno Yaar
Ambassador
Permanent Representative
