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Dear Secretary of State Kerry,

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Amnesty International is extremely concerned about the rapidly deteriorating situation in Gaza and Israel. Amnesty International urges the U.S. government to immediately stop all U.S. military aid and U.S. arms transfers to Israel. We also urge the U.S. government to help ensure that a comprehensive UN Security Council arms embargo is imposed on Israel, Hamas and other Palestinian armed groups.

In previous conflicts in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories, Amnesty International has documented a pattern of repeated violations of international law, including war crimes, committed by all sides with impunity. It appears that this pattern is being repeated in the current military offensive, named Operation "Protective Edge" by Israel. Israeli forces have killed civilians with missiles that struck them when there had been no apparent activity by Palestinian armed groups in the area. Israeli forces have also deliberately attacked civilian homes without providing justification, as well as attacked medical facilities. Hamas and Palestinian armed groups have fired hundreds of indiscriminate rockets into Israel in violation of international law. They have also stored munitions in civilian buildings, disregarding international law and endangering civilians.

The armed conflict is once again exacting a terrible human toll. Since Operation "Protective Edge" began on Gaza on July 8, more than 1000 Palestinians have been killed, with many more injured. The UN estimates that at least 75 percent of those killed in Gaza have been civilians and that more than 20 percent of fatalities have been children. The homes of more than 3,500 families in Gaza have been completely destroyed or rendered uninhabitable by Israeli attacks, leaving tens of thousands of Gazan residents homeless.

Palestinian armed groups have launched volleys of indiscriminate rockets into Israel. Three civilians have been killed in Israel, with other civilians injured. Israeli homes and other civilian property have also been damaged. At least 43 Israeli soldiers have died in the fighting.

Amongst other recommendations, Amnesty International is calling on the UN Security Council to immediately impose a comprehensive arms embargo on Israel, Hamas and other Palestinian armed groups until effective mechanisms are in place to ensure that weapons, munitions and other military equipment and technology will not be used to commit serious violations of international human rights law or IHL.

Amnesty International is calling on states to also act immediately to unilaterally suspend all transfers of weapons, munitions and other military equipment and technology to Israel, Hamas and other Palestinian armed groups – including weapons which may be diverted. Suspension of transfers must be maintained until there is no longer a substantial risk that such equipment or technology will be used to commit or facilitate serious violations of international human rights law or IHL. Indicators that such risks have been addressed would include whether the parties have introduced effective mechanisms to ensure that arms transfers will not be used to commit or facilitate violations of international humanitarian and human rights law.



They must also put in place credible mechanisms for ensuring accountability for past violations. This must include independent, impartial and effective investigations of reported violations, bringing suspected perpetrators of crimes to justice in fair trials, and provision of full reparations to victims and their families.

As the major exporter of military, security and policing equipment to Israel, the U.S. has a particular obligation to stop any supply that contributes to gross human rights violations. In 2013, according to US Customs data, the U.S. exported US\$94 million in arms and ammunition and US\$120 million in tanks and armoured fighting vehicles. These figures included US\$114 million in "parts of armoured fighting vehicles"; nearly US\$26 million in the trade category "bombs, grenades, torpedoes, mines and similar munitions of war; other ammunition and projectiles".¹ Overall, the U.S. now provides some \$3 billion in military aid to Israel annually.

In the five years from 2009 to 2013, the U.S. has registered \$773,853,826 worth of exports of a wide variety of arms and ammunition to Israel on the UN Commodity Trade Statistics Database (Comtrade). The UN Register of Conventional arms has also documented U.S. exports to Israel of 596 armoured combat vehicles, 141 large-calibre missile systems, 192 combat aircraft, 128 attack helicopters and 3,805 missiles and missile launchers since the Register began collecting data in 1992.² Many of these weapons are still operational.

In addition, on August 16, 2007, the U.S. and Israel signed a 10-year Memorandum of Understanding to provide Israel with US\$30 billion.³ Under the agreement, Israel will receive over US\$3 billion annually in Foreign Military Financing (FMF) from the U.S. The grants provided under FMF are for the acquisition of US defence equipment, services and training.⁴ In addition to this financial support, the U.S. participates in military research and weapons development with Israel.⁵ Programs have included joint research and development "to improve combating terrorism capabilities through the application of state-of-the-art and emerging technology."⁶

¹ Data retrieved under categories HS2012 9306.90.0040; HS2012 9306.30.8000 from US Trade online, <https://usatrade.census.gov/>.

² <http://www.un-register.org/>

³ House Report 113-185 - State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs Appropriations Bill, 2014 (<http://thomas.loc.gov>)

⁴ U.S. Relations With Israel, Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs, Fact Sheet, March 10, 2014. (<http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/3581.htm>)

⁵ U.S. Relations With Israel, Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs, Fact Sheet, March 10, 2014. (<http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/3581.htm>)

⁶ Memorandum of Agreement between the Department of Defense of the United States of America and the Ministry of Defense of the State of Israel Concerning Combating Terrorism Research and Development, Signed at Washington and Tel Aviv, February 7 and March 24, 2005. (www.state.gov/documents/organization/178840.pdf)



Amnesty International therefore urges the U.S. government to:

- Immediately stop all U.S. military aid and arms transfers to Israel until there is no longer a substantial risk that such equipment or technology will be used to commit or facilitate serious violations of international human rights or humanitarian law. This includes ending the supply of all weapons, munitions, police equipment and devices, as well as training and techniques to Israel;
- Help ensure that a comprehensive UN Security Council arms embargo is imposed on Israel, Hamas and other Palestinian armed groups until effective mechanisms are in place to ensure that weapons, munitions, and other military equipment and technology will not be used to commit or facilitate serious violations international human rights or humanitarian law.

U.S. policy prohibits the provision of weapons where they will be used in grave human rights violations. The U.S. government must act in accordance with its own laws and policies concerning weapons transfers.

Sincerely,

On behalf of John Peder Egenæs, Director of AI Norway

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