



JANUARY 13, 2009

PALESTINE-ISRAEL

Foreign Minister addresses special UN Security Council session on Gaza

Foreign Minister Prince Saud Al-Faisal demanded an immediate end to Israeli attacks against Palestinians in the Gaza Strip during a January 6 special session of the UN Security Council convened to discuss the crisis.

Prince Saud expressed astonishment at the lack of action by the international community to stop the Israeli strikes, which have already killed hundreds of innocent people. He cited a resolution adopted by the Council of the Arab League Foreign Ministers as a framework to resolve the crisis. The December 31 resolution calls for an immediate halt to military action, and an end to the blockade of Gaza.

Urging the Council to act, Prince Saud warned, "What is happening now in Gaza can only be described as a horrendous human crime, which will produce only more violence and extremism and a departure from the objective of peace and security, which Israel uses as a justification for its aggressive acts."

Prince Saud urges Israel to accept Arab Peace Initiative

Foreign Minister Prince Saud Al-Faisal told reporters in New York January 8 that the Arab Peace Plan is still on the table and that its acceptance by Israel would bring peace to the Middle East.

Proposed by the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz in 2002, the plan calls for the withdrawal of Israel from the Occupied Territories and the establishment of a Palestinian state with East Jerusalem as its capital.

Prince Saud said that Arab countries are willing to participate in the peace process, but noted, "Before any negotiations can start, the fighting has to stop."

SAUDI-US RELATIONS

Prince Saud Al-Faisal calls for a shift in U.S. Mideast policy

Foreign Minister Prince Saud Al-Faisal reaffirmed the importance of Arabian Gulf-U.S. relations in a speech delivered January 6 at the Gulf Forum 2009 in Riyadh.

The Prince's address was delivered on his behalf by Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Dr. Nizar Obaid Madani.

In his speech, Prince Saud noted, "Gulf-American relations have been of so much strategic importance, established through decades of fruitful cooperation and common interests." However, he called for a shift in U.S. foreign policy, insisting that there must be an "immediate end to the double standard policy" giving Israel an "unconditional green light to do whatever it deems fit, even if it means undermining the peace process." Unless there is a change, he warned, America's favoritism towards Israel "will continue to badly affect our relations."

Prince Saud urged U.S. President-elect Barack Obama to give the highest priority to the Middle East peace process, insisting that all Arab countries are ready to participate.

FOREIGN AID

Kingdom launches three-pronged Palestinian relief campaign

Saudi Arabia continued its efforts to aid Palestinians in Gaza this week. The Kingdom's three-pronged relief campaign involves the airlifting of emergency medical supplies to Palestinians, the evacuation of the injured to Saudi hospitals and the launch of an overland convoy carrying food and other aid to Gaza.

Between December 30 and January 9, twelve Saudi relief planes have delivered 144 tons of emergency supplies to Al-Arish, Egypt, across the border from Gaza. During that same period, six Saudi medical evacuation transported dozens of injured Palestinians from Al-Arish to hospitals in the Kingdom. On January 12, the Kingdom launched its first overland convoy, consisting of 59 trucks laden with over 760 tons of food and aid as well as 30 new ambulances.

\$45.7 million donated to King Abdullah's campaign for Gaza relief

As of January 8, monetary donations to the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques Gaza relief campaign had reached SR 171,261,643 [\$45.7 million]. In addition to cash donations, large quantities of foodstuffs, medical supplies, clothes, tents, blankets and jewelry have also been contributed.

The Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques Campaign began providing supplies for more than 270,000 people in Gaza on January 7, in cooperation with the World Food Program. The Campaign has already opened two centers in the Jabaliya and Shatie refugee camps in Gaza to distribute relief aid.

