

Statement of

**John Holmes, United Nations Under-Secretary-General for
Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator,
on the 'Free Gaza' Flotilla Crisis**

(New York, 31 May 2010): As Emergency Relief Coordinator, I condemn this dreadful waste of life over a humanitarian issue. Whatever the truth about what happened, which the full investigation called for by the Secretary-General should establish quickly, such an incident should never have happened or needed to happen.

The blockade of Gaza by Israel has been unacceptable, unnecessary and counterproductive from its beginning in 2007. It has worsened conditions of life for one and a half million Palestinians, deepened poverty and food insecurity, prevented reconstruction, and increased aid dependence by destroying livelihoods and economic activity. It has helped only the extremists.

I call for this disaster to be the occasion for this collective punishment of the people of Gaza to be lifted once and for all.

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