

**Press Release**  
**14 January 2009**

**STAFF UNION COMMITTEE ON SECURITY CALLS FOR STRONGER PROTECTION  
OF UN STAFF AND INNOCENT CIVILIANS IN GAZA  
DEMANDS FULL INVESTIGATION OF ATTACK ON HUMANITARIAN STAFF**

The United Nations Staff Union and its Standing Committee on the Security and Independence of the International Civil Service, in solidarity with our colleagues working in the humanitarian operations in Gaza, call for stronger action from the United Nations to protect innocent civilians as well as United Nations staff carrying out their vital mission.

On 6 January, over 40 Palestinians were killed and over 50 injured following shelling of a school of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) in Jebalya Camp. On 8 January, Israeli tank fire killed a UNRWA driver and wounded another in a clearly marked convoy less than a kilometre from the Erez crossing. A second convoy dispatched to recover the body of a United Nations staffer came under small-arms fire in Gaza City.

The Committee calls on the Secretary-General, on behalf of all members of the United Nations family, to respond to such incidents in the strongest possible terms, and to call upon all parties to fulfill their obligations under international law and respect and protect all United Nations and other aid workers operating in the area. The Committee stresses the need for the necessary protection and security of UNRWA staff to allow them to carry out their work.

The Committee protests the escalating harassment and violence directed against both international and Palestinian humanitarian staff working to help innocent civilians affected by the fighting. It demands an immediate and full investigation of these incidents.

The Committee stresses the responsibility of the United Nations at the most senior level to do everything within its capacity to advocate for the protection of civilians and to encourage a solution to end hostilities. The Secretary-General and the top United Nations management should strongly and clearly state that the killing of hundreds of innocent civilians and the injuring of thousands is totally unacceptable.

On behalf of all its members, the Staff Union extends its heartfelt sympathy to the families and colleagues of the victims.