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H.E. the Permanent Representative

Open letter to the Security Council

Dear Ambassador,

Following the Security Council's near unanimous adoption of resolution 1860 calling for an end to the violence in Gaza, the unimpeded provision of humanitarian assistance and the re-opening of crossing points, Amnesty International calls on the Security Council to insist that Israel, Hamas and other Palestinian armed groups immediately cease all attacks on civilians and other serious violations of international human rights and humanitarian law.

Unfortunately such violations are not addressed in the resolution although they continue to be a most conspicuous feature of the conflict. Evidence of war crimes in particular is mounting daily. Israeli forces continue to carry out attacks directed at civilians or civilian buildings in the Gaza Strip, or which are disproportionate, and Palestinian armed groups continue to carry out rocket attacks directed at Israeli population centres.

There must be full accountability for such crimes. Amnesty International therefore calls on the Security Council to ensure that a full, independent and impartial enquiry will be held promptly into all alleged abuses of international human rights and humanitarian law by the parties to the conflict. Where appropriate, states must be ready to initiate criminal investigations and carry out prosecutions before their own courts if the evidence warrants it.

The adoption of resolution 1860 provides an opportunity to intensify efforts to achieve the comprehensive peace highlighted in the resolution. The international community, and the Security Council in particular, can play a crucial role in encouraging the parties to achieve that goal. However, the establishment of an international monitoring presence on the ground will be crucial to ensure implementation of aspects of the resolution and, most importantly, to report on Israeli and Palestinian observance of their obligations under international humanitarian and human rights law that are core to establishing peace and security. Amnesty International strongly encourages the Council to create a monitoring presence with such a mandate, and to ensure that international human rights monitors are dispatched to Gaza and southern Israel without delay.

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