

# UN moves to charge Israel with war crimes

By [Global Research](#)

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Ethical and moral questions linger even among Israeli peace activists over the destruction and civilian deaths wrought by the immense Tel Aviv firepower employed in Gaza. The United Nations moves to set up a commission to look into Israeli war crimes and respond to its human rights violations in Gaza.

After the United Nations Works and Relief Agency (UNRWA) compound became the target of GPS-guided Israeli mortars on January 15, the UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon condemned “in the strongest terms this outrageous attack” and called for an inquiry into suspected Israeli war crimes. “I strongly demand a thorough investigation and punishment for those responsible,” he told reporters in Beirut after the attack. Japanese Ambassador Yukio Takasu, who currently holds the presidency of the Security Council, said late on Monday that Ban had told a closed-door briefing in the council that the UN had set up a commission as a preliminary step to look into Israeli damage to UN premises.

Several diplomats have reported that the commission would be led by the former British secretary-general of human rights group Amnesty International, Ian Martin. Takasu said the commission would later report back to the Security Council, which would then decide how to respond. Diplomats have expressed skepticism as to whether a Security Council inquiry would take place, saying they thought it unlikely that Israel’s ally the United States, which has a veto in the council, would allow the 15-nation body to adopt the report as its own.

The January 15 incident, which has prompted the UN inquiry, was the third shelling of UN shelters by Israeli fire in its war on the Palestinian territory. UN spokesman Adnan Abu Hasna said the shelling of the school happened while Israel had been given the coordinates of the building and the compound was also clearly marked with UN flags and logos. “The UN compound in Gaza had only that morning become a makeshift shelter for hundreds of Gaza City residents seeking sanctuary from relentless Israeli shelling,” said an unnamed UN official in Gaza.

The UN move to launch a probe into suspected Israeli war crimes comes after the International Criminal Court (ICC) prosecutor in The Hague announced earlier last week that a “preliminary analysis” was launched to review the military conduct of Israeli forces participating in the offensive against the Gaza Strip. The ICC prosecutor’s office said it had received 210 communications from individuals and non-governmental organizations regarding the recent events in Gaza. The criminal case is expected to focus on the Israeli atrocities, including charges of using disproportionate force, white phosphorous bombs and depleted uranium in the densely-populated area.

Israel’s three-week offensive against Gaza — aimed at toppling the democratically-elected

government of Hamas in the Palestinian territory — left nearly 1,300 Palestinians dead, more than half of them civilians, according to medical sources. The Israeli assault led to the destruction of schools, mosques, houses, UN compounds and government buildings, which Israel has a responsibility to protect under the Fourth Geneva Convention.

Earlier during the war, members of a Norwegian triage medical team in Gaza which worked at the Shifa Hospital in the war-torn Palestinian territory said Israel had turned Gaza into a research laboratory to test out its new “extremely nasty” weapons on Palestinians. “There’s a very strong suspicion I think that Gaza is now being used as a test laboratory for new weapons,” Dr. Mads Gilbert told reporters at Oslo’s Gardermoen airport upon his return home after the war. “We are not soft-skinned when it comes to war injuries, but these amputations are really extremely nasty and for many of the patients not survivable,” Gilbert’s colleague Erik Fosse added.

While Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, as well as Israel’s most prominent human rights organization, B’Tselem have raised questions about the ethical and moral guidelines of Israel’s warfare, the Israeli lobby is working hard to counter efforts to protect the civil rights of Gazans. A Monday report by Press TV revealed that Egypt had refused to allow members of an investigation committee set up by the ICC into the Gaza Strip, arguing that at present only displaced Palestinians could enter the territory through the Rafah crossing. The committee — comprised of four French and Norwegian lawyers — intended to collect evidence and testimonials on Operation Cast Lead to present to the International Court.

Amid reports of profound human sufferings, Israel continues to reject the fact that it has imposed a humanitarian crisis among the battle-hardened 1.5 million population of Gaza and denies committing war crimes in the embattled Strip.

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