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Secretary-General

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ACTIVITIES OF SECRETARY-GENERAL IN EGYPT, 14 JANUARY

In January 2009, United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon set off on a mission to the Middle East that was intended to send a simple and unmistakable message about the crisis in Gaza and southern Israel: that the fighting must stop, and that Security Council resolution 1860 must be fully respected and implemented. He visited and met with the leaders of Egypt, Jordan, Israel, the Occupied Palestinian Territory, Turkey, Lebanon, Syria and Kuwait.

His first stop was in Cairo, Egypt, where he arrived in the morning of Wednesday, 14 January.

His first meeting there was with Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak. Their discussions focused mainly on Gaza, on which the Secretary-General expressed his appreciation for Egypt's efforts to get the parties to reach a ceasefire. They also talked about Somalia and Darfur.

Speaking to reporters after a later meeting with Foreign Minister Ahmed Aboul Gheit, the Secretary-General said that he and the President shared their feelings of frustration and pain over the ongoing violence in Gaza.

They also discussed in depth how to attain an immediate ceasefire and to further secure humanitarian relief. He added in his comments to reporters that he is asking that all those who have influence with any party to the conflict use all means to end the violence and to find a durable solution.

The Secretary-General also met with Egyptian First Lady Suzanne Mubarak, who briefed him on the efforts by the Egyptian Government and the Red Crescent Society on humanitarian efforts. They discussed the possibility of sending a needs assessment mission to Gaza once the fighting stops there.

At the press conference, the Secretary-General was asked about the reported use of white phosphorous in Gaza, and he said that the United Nations has no confirmation of its use. He added that he appeals to all the parties very strongly to stop any kind of use of such weapons, because of the terrible effect it would have, especially on such an intensely populated area as Gaza.

He also met that day in Cairo with Miguel Angel Moratinos, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Spain.

The Secretary-General departed Cairo for Amman, Jordan, early on Wednesday afternoon.

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