



# PRESS RELEASE

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**AUSTRALIA'S NATIONAL  
ISLAMIC ORGANISATION  
REPRESENTING  
MUSLIM COMMUNITIES**

**45 Years of Community  
Services**

18 November 2008

## **HUNGER - WEAPON OF WAR**

The President of the Australian Federation of Islamic Councils, Mr Ikebal Patel expressed grave concern at the looming food crisis in Palestine and the Gaza strip in particular.

Israel's blockade of the Gaza strip preventing flow of humanitarian food supplies required on a daily basis is bound to escalate the situation further to the detriment of all peaceful efforts, said Mr Patel.

In a strongly worded statement Mr Patel said: "We call on our government and world leaders to apply pressure on Israel to accept responsibility for the circumstances of the Palestinian people and to call for an immediate reversal of Israeli policies generating the food crisis within the Occupied Palestinian Territories." Mr Patel added: "This matter is of great urgency, and we call on Prime Minister Rudd to stop hesitating and to adopt clear and practical position with the international community to alleviate the suffering and dependency of the Palestinian people.

Mr Patel referred to reports of the National Coalition for the Global Call to Action against Poverty, which gave the monthly income of 58.3% of all Palestinian households as being below the national poverty line with 46.5% in the West Bank, and 79.3% in the Gaza Strip.

Mr Patel also referred to UNICEF reports on worldwide child mortality rates which ranked Palestine 108<sup>th</sup>. Chronic malnutrition for children under five years of age hit 10% this year, which is an increase of 36% from 1996. One half of the total number of children below two years of age suffers from anaemia, while 70% suffer from lack of vitamin A. The situation worsens in the Gaza Strip, where 50,000 children suffer from malnutrition.

The report further states the average cost of food products in the occupied Palestinian territories has risen over the standard world price. Food production and consumption levels in the Gaza Strip have been compromised by Israeli control over the fishing industry, the export and import of food goods, and the import of vital raw materials.

Mr Patel stated that over the last two years the situation has further deteriorated putting individual Palestinians under unprecedented economic restraint and hardship. Gazans now face circumstances so dire that words fail to adequately describe their plight. Yet at this very moment, having re-imposed an overall blockade on Gaza, the Israeli government threatens yet more military action, compounding an already horrific humanitarian crisis.

For Further information, please contact:

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