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Statement by Norway, 1 June 2010

Norway is shocked that Israeli naval forces have shot and killed civilians while boarding a convoy carrying humanitarian supplies to Gaza. We condemn this use of military force against civilians. Norway supports the Presidential Statement adopted last night by the Security Council. The statement demonstrates a strong and consensual condemnation of the incident.

So far there is little specific information about what actually happened. The Israeli authorities have imposed tight restrictions on the release of information. Israel has defended its actions by claiming that there were suspected terrorists and weapons on board the convoy.

What is permitted in situations like this one is clearly defined in international law. The rules of international law cannot be set aside for political or military purposes.

The circumstances surrounding this incident and the number of people killed underscore the need for an independent, international investigation. Yesterday the Norwegian Foreign Minister, Mr Jonas Gahr Støre, requested UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon to ensure that steps are taken as soon as possible to initiate an investigation to determine whether international law has been violated.

Norway supports this meeting as a swift reaction by the Human Rights Council to this incident. We view it as an important precedent and expect the Council to respond in an equally effective manner to other serious incidents relevant to its mandate to protect human rights.

It is imperative that the Human Rights Council acts in full coordination with the Secretary General of the UN and other relevant UN-bodies when responding to this incident. We strongly believe that a decision by the Council must add value to the overall response by the UN and be in full conformity with its mandate. It would in our view be a significant mistake if the Human Rights Council fails to maintain the consensual approach achieved by the Security Council last night.

The backdrop to this tragic incident is the blockade of Gaza. It is vital that the closure regime imposed on Gaza is lifted so that humanitarian aid and other necessary assistance can reach the Palestinian population.