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U.S. Statement
Report of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
November 29, 2006
Ambassador Warren W. Tichenor

Thank you, Mr. President. Thank you, Madame High Commissioner:

My delegation thanks the High Commissioner on the activities of her office, including the report on her recent visit to Israel and the Occupied Territories.

The suffering of the victims of the ongoing violence in Israel, the West Bank, and Gaza attests to the urgent need to press forward and reinvigorate peace efforts in the Middle East. This remains a key goal of the U.S. government, one that is being promoted this week through senior-level travel to the region. The Roadmap with its principles remains the only agreed international basis upon which to move forward towards the goal of two states: Israel and Palestine, living side by side, in peace and security.

We commend Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas and Israeli Prime Minister Olmert for having secured a ceasefire in Gaza. It is crucial that the Palestinians implement this ceasefire fully, and that they be supported in their efforts to do so, lest we return to indiscriminate attacks on civilians in Israel by Hamas, Palestinian Islamic Jihad, and other terrorist organizations. We urge the Palestinian Authority government to renounce terror, accept the Quartet principles, and become a legitimate partner for peace.

Israel has the right to defend its citizens from attacks but when defending itself, Israel, like any other state must comply with its obligations under the law of war including the obligation to only target military objectives and to avoid hurting civilians or their property where possible.

We commend the Government of Israel for inviting the High Commissioner to visit and supporting her efforts to meet with a wide range of government officials, civil society, and private citizens in both Israel and the Occupied Territories.

We also welcome the High Commissioner's report bringing attention to the tragic and grave circumstances for the people of Darfur. The United States deeply regrets that this Council has failed to effectively address the increasing suffering of the people of Darfur.

We urge the Government of Sudan to shoulder its primary obligation to protect all individuals against violations -- the use of rape as a weapon against the women of Darfur and the unlawful recruitment of child soldiers. Years of waiting for enhanced accountability and an end to impunity must come to an end.

My government fully supports the efforts of the United Nations, in conjunction with the African Union, to engage a joint peacekeeping force to stabilize this war-torn region, and bring hope to a region long-ravaged by mindless violence and terror.

This Council must not let the cries for help from the millions of victims of Darfur's violence go unanswered. The United States urges the Human Rights Council to support efforts of the Office of the High Commissioner to address the grave situation in Darfur. And we take special note of UN Secretary General Annan's call for a special session.

Thank you.