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Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs

STATEMENT ON GAZA BY JOHN HOLMES, UN HUMANITARIAN CHIEF

(New York, 4 February 2009): The United Nations Emergency Relief Coordinator John Holmes today condemned as unacceptable the confiscation of aid supplies from the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) in Gaza yesterday by Hamas personnel, and demanded the aid be returned immediately.

Mr. Holmes made clear that while the United Nations and its partners are doing their utmost to provide for the basic humanitarian needs of 1.4 million civilians affected by the recent 23-day Israeli military operation, such actions could jeopardize the provision of aid. "The United Nations cannot accept under any circumstances the diversion of aid by a party to a conflict," said Mr. Holmes. He added: "To ensure the access of civilians in Gaza to life-saving assistance and the sustained delivery of aid and essential reconstruction supplies, I call on all parties to respect the neutrality and independence of aid workers, supplies and facilities."

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