



media release

Australian Council for International Development

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Australian Government must act to end the blockade of Gaza

The Australian Government and the international community must act to have the Israeli Government lift its blockade of humanitarian assistance to the people of Gaza. The Israeli Government blockade is having dire humanitarian consequences for over 1.5 million people, according to the Australian Council for International Development (ACFID), the peak Council for Australian not-for-profit aid and development organisations.

Marc Purcell, Executive Director of ACFID said: "As a priority, the Australian Government must call for the immediate and full lifting of the Gaza blockade, and take action to ensure this outcome. Previous calls for 'easing' of the blockade have obviously failed and what is needed now are greater collective efforts to get a better humanitarian outcome for the people of Gaza."

"Over 1.5 million people in Gaza, most of whom are civilians, have been living under an Israeli Government blockade since 2007. Since the Israeli Government's military assault against Hamas in Gaza in December 2008 - January 2009, the economy of Gaza is on the verge of collapse. The UN estimates that sixty per cent of households do not have enough food. People in Gaza are in urgent need of sufficient food, medicines and building supplies," Mr Purcell said.

"The Israeli Government should immediately cease the Gaza blockade and allow international assistance and humanitarian workers access to the people of Gaza."

"ACFID strongly deplores the loss of life on the flotilla and calls for an immediate independent inquiry. We welcome the Australian Government's call for an immediate credible investigation subject to UN scrutiny. Such an inquiry should highlight the importance of international standards which ensure the civilian character of humanitarian aid provision."

"This tragic incident could have been prevented if the Israeli Government and the international community had worked more effectively to lift the blockade of the occupied territory. The Israeli state and peoples have a need for security but the Israeli Government's responses must be proportionate and not target civilians. The blockade of Gaza has widely been condemned as collective punishment, which is both inhumane and illegal under international law."

For further information:

Marc Purcell

Ph: 0450 961 561

Background on humanitarian situation in Gaza: [UNDP One Year After report](http://www.undp.ps/en/newsroom/publications/pdf/other/gazaoneyear.pdf)
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The Australian Council for International Development is an independent national association of Australian non-government organisations (NGOs) working in the field of international aid and development.

ph: 02 6285 1816
fax: 02 6285 1720
email: main@acfid.asn.au
website: www.acfid.asn.au

Mail: Private Bag 3
DEAKIN ACT 2600
Address: 14 Napier Close
DEAKIN ACT 2600