

UN Human Rights Council Tenth Regular Session
Item 7 Interactive Dialogue on the Report of the Special Rapporteur on
the Situation of Human Rights in the Palestinian Territories

Statement by the Delegation of the United States of America
March 23, 2009

The United States takes note of the report of the Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in the Palestinian Territories, and we regret that the mandate of Special Rapporteur Falk extends only to reporting on Israel's responsibilities under the Fourth Geneva Convention. The United States has, on many occasions, urged this Council to maintain a balanced, objective, and constructive focus on the situation in Israel and in the Palestinian Territories. While we fully understand the mandate that Special Rapporteur Falk inherited, we remain concerned about the one-sided focus of the report and caution against premature legal conclusions.

The report draws attention to alleged violations of international law committed by Israeli forces, yet largely fails to acknowledge Israel's right to self-defense and to protecting its citizenry and territory. No government can be expected to tolerate violence against its citizens and territory, and the United States again condemns the use of Gaza as a base from which to attack Israeli civilians. We encourage the Special Rapporteur to take note in future reports of the salient need to recognize Israel's right to self-defense and the security situation it confronts.

Moreover, the United States urges caution when using terms such as "crimes against humanity" when describing Israeli actions taken in its own defense. The characterization of Israel's actions as crimes against humanity is biased and inappropriate. The Government of Israel is investigating specific allegations of misconduct during the operations in Gaza, and we look forward to seeing the conclusions of those investigations.

The United States remains committed to independent, viable, democratic, and peaceful Palestinian and Israeli states where all citizens can live in security and dignity. We look to the Human Rights Council to ensure that the world community addresses the salient human rights issues in this region with objectivity and balance. We look forward to working with the international community to build a better future for the people of Palestine, Israel, and the greater Middle East.