

PRESS RELEASE

MALAYSIAN CHILDREN TO LEND SUPPORT TO CHILDREN IN GAZA



KUALA LUMPUR, 21 January 2009 – Malaysian children are invited to lend their support to children in Gaza through a project called ‘To My Friend in Gaza’ that was launched today.

‘To My Friend in Gaza’ invites Malaysian children to write letters, cards, postcards or drawings to show Palestinian children that they are thinking of them, wishing them well and praying for their safety.

Since the war began on December 27, over 800,000 children have been exposed to extraordinary levels of violence and insecurity, some 1,600 have been injured and more than 300 children have died. Gazan children who have survived are experiencing unimaginable trauma every day, cowering from fear and suffering from stress-related health problems such as asthma.

“No child should suffer like this,” said Datin Paduka Marina Mahathir, initiator of the To My Friend in Gaza project. “This project aims to make them know they have friends in Malaysia and to feel less alone. Hopefully knowing this will give them the strength to go through their ordeal.”

Partners in the project are +wondermilk who designed the logo and various volunteers who will translate the letters to Arabic. The United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) will help deliver the letters to children in Gaza through its office in the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

“UNICEF is concerned about the mental well-being of children in Gaza and the high level of stress they have endured during three weeks of violence. They have lost homes, schools and families. For them, the psychological and social healing is going to take time and dedication”, said Mr. Youssouf Oomar, UNICEF Representative to Malaysia and UNICEF Special Representative to Brunei. “Our top priority is to help them get their daily lives back to normal”.

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and the 4th Geneva Convention call on parties to a conflict to take all possible measures to ensure the protection and care of civilians, especially children and women. Children have rights and needs that must be protected irrespective of the political context.



Article 38 of the CRC provides for the protection of children in armed conflict, by holding governments responsible to protect and care for children affected by war. To further strengthen the implementation of rights recognised in the CRC, the UN General Assembly has adopted the Optional Protocol on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict, which, among other points:

- Recognises the harmful and widespread impact of armed conflict on children and the long-term consequences it has for durable peace, security and development;
- Reaffirms that the rights of children require special protection, and calls for continuous improvement of the situation of children without distinction, as well as for their development and education in conditions of peace and security;

Letters, cards, postcards and drawings should be sent to **To My Friend in Gaza, c/o 48, Jalan Terasek Dua, 59100 Kuala Lumpur** by February 20. They will be then translated and sent to UNICEF to be forwarded to the children in Gaza.

“This is a very simple project with very simple aims, to provide comfort to children who are living in a very stressful and frightening environment because of the war in Gaza. I am heartened at the support of so many members of the public and of schools who have pledged to send their letters,” added Marina.

For additional information, please contact Marina Mahathir at 03-2284-8775, Indra Nadchatram at (+6.03) 2095 9157 • (+6) 012 292 6872 or Tee Shiao Eek, (+6.03) 2095 9154 • (+6) 012 207 0138