



MEDICAL ASSOCIATION FOR PREVENTION OF WAR (AUSTRALIA)

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

# **Doctors call for end to Israel's Gaza blockade**

4 December 2008

The Medical Association for Prevention of War has called on the Australian Government to help secure an end to the Israeli Government's crippling blockade of Gaza.

MAPW President Dr Sue Wareham OAM says that the blockade is a clear violation of the Geneva Conventions, with recent reports indicating that life for Gaza residents is becoming intolerable.

In a letter to Foreign Minister Stephen Smith, Dr Wareham quotes UN reports that the Gaza Strip is facing a humanitarian catastrophe as Israel continues its siege, and prevents essential food and aid from reaching residents.

"The International Committee of The Red Cross has been forced to abandon some relief efforts, and reports a desperate need for medical supplies", Dr Wareham reports. "Flour mills have run out of wheat to mill. European Union-funded fuel supplies have been cut off, and fuel shortages have led to widespread power cuts and problems with pumping clean water and sewage treatment. Such a situation is a public health disaster in the making."

"For the children of Gaza, the situation is particularly tragic. Infant mortality rates are already high (at least several times greater than in Israel, for example) and will be exacerbated with undermining of the territory's health care infrastructure. With children living in a situation of economic despair, disruption of education and health care, and growing resentment, the outlook for future peaceful relations with those whom they see as military oppressors is bleak."

Dr Wareham also questions the Israeli Government's banning of access for journalists to the Gaza strip.

"While the Israeli government claims the need to protect its citizens from rocket fire from Hamas, this need does not grant the right to inflict collective punishment on those who simply wish to conduct their lives peacefully. In any event, Israeli air strikes and military incursions into Gaza also jeopardise the lives of innocent people, and are equally unacceptable. Violence on each side is to be condemned." says Dr Wareham.

For further comment:

**Dr Sue Wareham**, President, MAPW

02 6259 6062 (home, including Thursday)

0407 924 152 (mobile)

02 6241 6161 (work)