



# *media release*

*Australian Council for International Development*

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## **A stronger Australian voice needed on Gaza**

The fragile ceasefire in Gaza and the proposed withdrawal of Israeli troops mark potentially significant steps towards resolving a tragic humanitarian crisis. However, only if UN Security Council Resolution 1860 of 8 January 2009 is fully implemented will there be a durable ceasefire.

Australia's aid and development sector expects the Australian Government to speak up strongly to the government of Israel about providing unrestricted access by international humanitarian aid agencies to assist the people of Gaza.

"Medical and other humanitarian supplies are needed urgently in Gaza in order to avoid an outbreak of water-borne diseases and to treat the thousands of people wounded in the conflict," said ACFID Policy Manager Linda Rademakers. "Immediate unimpeded access for humanitarian workers and goods is vital to address the urgent needs of Gaza's wounded and homeless."

"More than one thousand innocent people were killed in the conflict over recent weeks. This disproportionate impact on civilians constitutes a breach of international humanitarian law. In the event that the truce does not hold, the Australian Government needs to use every diplomatic effort to convince Israel that it must protect civilians, as well as allowing the unrestricted flow of humanitarian aid," Ms Rademakers said.

In light of the scale of destruction and responses of other donor countries, Australia should also be ready to provide additional assistance as part of a multi-donor reconstruction program.

Given the fragility of the current ceasefire, ACFID also calls on the Australian Government to reinforce its recent representations to the parties about abiding by UN Security Council Resolution 1860.

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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.

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