

Press release

January 15 2009 Jerusalem

Save the Children

As tanks move further into Gaza City and the entire area endures escalating bombardment and fighting in the streets, Save the Children is calling for an immediate ceasefire and humanitarian access to all of Gaza to ensure the protection of the civilian population, especially its children.

Charlotte Petri Gornitzka, Secretary General of the International Save the Children Alliance, said: "This conflict is taking place in one of the most densely populated areas of the world, where every other person is a child. The escalation in fighting over the last several days — including attacks today on organisations like UNRWA and the International Red Crescent Hospital — prove that there is no safe place in Gaza. Tens of thousands of very vulnerable children and families are in mortal danger. What is most tragic is that there is no safe place to go."

Today the UNRWA compound was hit and is now burning. The agency reports that fire fighters cannot reach the site because of fighting in the streets. The ICRC hospital, which was already overwhelmed by the number of casualties, was also shelled.

"Children bear the brunt of any conflict and this one is certainly no different. The children of Gaza and their families are suffering injuries, fatalities, fear and upheaval," said Charlotte. "This must stop and we must be able to provide them immediate assistance."

Save the Children also reports that it's 11 staff members and their families are in extreme danger. The ongoing escalation of violence means the agency cannot deliver aid to the people who need it most.

Save the Children is calling for an immediate ceasefire and unfettered access across the border. It insists that all parties in the conflict must take appropriate measures to protect civilians and reduce civilian casualties.

Save the Children is pressing governments to prepare now for a large-scale and comprehensive humanitarian relief and recovery effort to begin as soon as possible through humanitarian organisations and the UN.