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UN HUMANITARIAN CHIEF ENDS FOUR-DAY VISIT TO THE OCCUPIED PALESTINIAN TERRITORY

(Jerusalem/New York, 17 May 2011): United Nations Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator (ERC) Valerie Amos has just completed a four-day visit to the occupied Palestinian territory (oPt) today. During her visit she met with Palestinian and Israeli officials as well as affected Palestinians and humanitarian organizations. She visited communities in Area C of the West Bank, East Jerusalem and in Sderot in Israel.

Commenting at the end of her visit, Ms. Amos said that what had struck her was that everyone she spoke to, Palestinians and Israelis, wanted the same thing – to live normal lives in peace and security.

Ms. Amos visited a number of East Jerusalem communities, where residents have been evicted from their homes to make way for Israeli settler communities, and where many face demolition of their houses and schools. She also visited communities in Area C, which remains under Israeli military control and control over planning and zoning, and where many communities are isolated by the Barrier. She said, “This morning I heard about yet more communities at risk of displacement, the Bedouins of Wadi Abu Hindi and the residents of Al Walaja. I hope following my discussions with the Israeli authorities, that they will look carefully at the key humanitarian concerns of demolitions and displacement in the West Bank.”

During a visit to a protected play-centre in Sderot, Ms. Amos was told about the fear and uncertainty facing the local community as a result of rocket attacks from Gaza. She condemned the indiscriminate use of violence which she said had to stop.

On Gaza, Ms. Amos said that the Blockade has resulted in a stifling of economic activity and a serious decline in education, healthcare and water and sanitation services. Moreover, she noted that consequently 1.1 million Gazans are dependent on food aid due to the Blockade. Civilians have been hit hardest by the impact of the policy of restrictions and have had to endure unnecessary humanitarian suffering. Ms. Amos called for an end to the man-made and protracted humanitarian situation through a lifting of the Blockade on Gaza.