



**UN Association of the UK
3 Whitehall Court
London SW1A 2EL**

Mark Thompson
BBC Director-General
BBC Television Centre
Wood Lane
London
W12 7RJ

24 January 2009

Dear Director-General,

I am writing to you in my capacity as Chair of the Board of the United Nations Association of the UK to protest most vigorously at the BBC's decision to refuse a request by the Disasters Emergency Committee (DEC) to broadcast a humanitarian appeal for Gaza, and to urge you to reverse that decision at the earliest possible moment.

I am afraid we find the reasons given by the BBC for taking this decision both incomprehensible and unsustainable. It was said on behalf of the BBC that you needed to be sure that the proceeds of any appeal would reach the intended recipients. That is a laudable objective. But what capacity does the BBC itself have to apply it? And are not all the charities represented on the DEC bound by their own statutes to achieve that same objective for any monies they raise; and are they not considerably better placed than the BBC to achieve it? At the time when you, quite rightly in our view, broadcast the DEC appeal for Burma last spring, following the cyclone there, what certainty did you have that none of the funds would end up in the hands of the regime?

It is also asserted that the BBC has to be impartial – that is also a laudable objective which, in my personal view, you have admirably achieved in your coverage of the recent hostilities in and around Gaza. But you are surely not demonstrating impartiality by preventing charities from maximising their fundraising effort for what is unquestionably a humanitarian disaster.

The UN's own relief agencies, most particularly UNRWA, have been doing heroic work throughout the crisis and are calling for massive assistance to help the civilian population of Gaza. Your decision to decline to broadcast the DEC appeal will undermine their efforts and cut across everything they are trying to achieve.

We do hope therefore that, on further consideration, you will decide to air an appeal from the DEC.

Lord Hannay of Chiswick
Chair, UNA-UK