

Interpal responds to *Mail Online* article

28th April 2016

Today an article was published on the Daily Mail Online website which makes serious allegations against Interpal. The charity wholly rejects these accusations. Interpal staff cooperated fully and willingly with the journalist concerned to provide him with information about the charity's work in the besieged Gaza Strip. Interpal believes that this has been misrepresented deliberately and maliciously in the resultant article.

Interpal has supported Palestinian families and children in desperate need since its establishment in 1994. The main focus of the charity's work, and a huge part of its motivation, is being able to ease the hardship faced by Palestinians under Israeli occupation and put smiles on the faces of their children. Interpal's ethos has always been, and remains, to encourage children to try to forget about the politics, violence and poverty, and focus on being children and having hope in the future.

In Gaza, the Festival of Childhood and Education has been held annually for more than a decade. Major charities and institutions are among its other sponsors. It was under this umbrella that Interpal's Gaza Field Office held its own activities in Gaza City for children and teachers. These activities included outdoor sports, a picnic, providing gifts and also celebrating the great work of dedicated teachers who have gone that extra mile for their pupils.

With regards to the video featured in the *Mail Online* article — with which Interpal had no connection whatsoever — we wish to reiterate that what took place on the stage is unacceptable and, without admitting or accepting any responsibility, we believe that an apology is owed for the distress that it has caused.

For the record, we at Interpal strongly assert that the charity has done nothing wrong, illegal or immoral, and feel that this article is misleading its readers intentionally by inventing a scenario, despite our clear explanation that we had no involvement in what was shown in the featured video. A generic banner for the whole festival in question was used as the backdrop for this "play" without any permission being sought or given from Interpal for the use of our logo in this way nor, we would imagine, from the other sponsors of the festival. We wish to stress that the play shown is against everything that we as a humanitarian aid agency stand for, and that our funding was used for purely educational and recreational purposes with children already sponsored by the charity.

Given that Interpal and our chair of trustees have dealt with most of the issues in the article which have been raised repeatedly by the *Mail* and other newspapers — as the journalist in question must know very well — this has all the appearances of a witch-hunt and an attempt to drag the charity into political affairs which have nothing to do with its charitable work in the field.

Interpal is reporting this to the Charity Commission as a serious incident. The charity will cooperate fully with the commission, as it always has done on previous occasions when vexatious complainants have raised doubts about its integrity. Discussions are also under way with the charity's legal representatives regarding any additional action that might be taken.

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