

22 April 2002

AI Index MDE 15/058/2002 - News Service Nr. 71

Preliminary findings of Amnesty International delegates' visit to Jenin

On their return from a research mission to Israel and the Occupied Territories, Amnesty International delegates presented today their preliminary findings during a press conference at the Foreign Press Association. Delegates interviewed eye-witnesses and met government representatives, including from the Israeli Defence Forces. They visited Rumaneh village, Jenin city, Jenin City Hospital and Jenin Refugee Camp.

"The evidence compiled indicates that serious breaches of international human rights and humanitarian law were committed, including war crimes, but only an independent international commission of inquiry can establish the full facts and the scale of these violations," said Javier Zúñiga, Director of Regional Strategy of the organization's International Secretariat.

The delegation received credible evidence of such serious violations including:

- * Failure to give civilians warning or time to evacuate Jenin refugee camp before Apache helicopters launched their first attacks.

- * Failure by the Israeli Defence Forces to protect the people of the refugee camp, who are "protected people" under the Fourth Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilians Persons in Time of War.

- * Allegations of extrajudicial executions

- * Failure, for 13 days, to allow humanitarian assistance to the people in the camp who were trapped in the rubble of demolished houses or running out of food and water.

- * Denial of medical assistance to the wounded in the refugee camp and deliberate targeting of ambulances.

- * Excessive use of lethal force and using civilians as a "human shield".

- * Ill-treatment, including beatings and degrading treatment, of Palestinian detainees.

- * Extensive damage to property with no apparent military necessity.

Commenting on his preliminary findings following the autopsies he carried out in Jenin Hospital, Professor Derrick Pounder said :

"What was striking is what was absent . There were very few bodies in the hospital. There were also none who were seriously injured, only the 'walking wounded'. Thus we have to ask: where are the bodies and where are the seriously injured?"

"Delegates stressed that the UN fact - finding mission which was being set up was an important first step towards establishing the truth. However, an independent international commission of inquiry should follow without delay. This should have the means and the expertise necessary to carry out a serious and thorough investigation. "The report of this investigation must be made public and those found responsible brought to justice".

\ENDS

public document

For more information please call Amnesty International's press office in London, UK, on +44 20 7413 5566

Amnesty International, 1 Easton St., London WC1X 0DW web : <http://www.amnesty.org>