

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

Public Statement

AI Index: MDE 15/049/2004 (Public)
News Service No: 113
4 May 2004

Israel/Occupied Territories: AI condemns murder of woman and her four daughters by Palestinian gunmen

The deliberate killing by Palestinian armed groups of a pregnant woman and her four young daughters shows once again that these groups utterly disregard the most fundamental principles of international law, notably the absolute prohibition on the targeting of civilians. Amnesty International condemns these murders in the strongest terms.

Thirty four-year-old Tali Hatuel, who was eight months pregnant, and her four daughters Hila, aged 11, Hadar, 9, Roni, 7, and Meirav, 2, were shot dead while traveling by car in the Gaza Strip, near the Gush Katif settlement block, where they lived.

Tali Hatuel and her four children were reportedly shot dead at close range, by Palestinians gunmen who had previously shot at their vehicle and caused it to career off the road.

The Palestinian armed group Islamic Jihad and the Popular Resistance Committees, an umbrella organization of Palestinian armed groups, claimed responsibility for the killings. They reportedly described the murders to the Associated Press news agency as an "heroic" attack, indicating that it was carried out in reprisals for the recent assassinations by the Israeli army of Hamas leaders Sheikh Ahmad Yassin and Abdelaziz Rantisi-

Such deliberate attacks against civilians, which have been widespread, systematic and in furtherance of a stated policy to attack the civilian population, constitute crimes against humanity, as defined by Article 7 (1) and (2)(a) of the 1998 Rome Statute of the International Criminal.

Amnesty International reiterates its call on all Palestinian armed groups to put an immediate end to the deliberate targeting of Israeli civilians, in Israel and in the Occupied Territories.

The organization also reiterates its call on the Palestinian Authority (PA) to take all possible measures to prevent such attacks and to ensure that thorough and impartial investigations are carried out and those responsible for planning, organizing or carrying out such attacks are brought to justice in trials which meet international standards of fairness.

