

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL PRESS RELEASE

24 January 2002

AI Index MDE 15/010/2002 - News Service Nr. 15

Israel / Occupied Territories / Palestinian Authority: Injustice and repression are not the answer

Two days after the latest arbitrary armed attack on Israelis Amnesty International condemned the attack and urged the Israeli authorities to change their policy.

"Injustice and repression have proved that they cannot stop these attacks," said Amnesty International delegates leaving today for Jerusalem. "Justice and human rights are the only way forward and we call on Israel to choose it."

Israel has consistently committed grave violations of human rights including unlawful killings when no life was in imminent danger, house demolitions and administrative detention. The Israeli Defence Forces (IDF) has sealed off the Gaza Strip with a high wire fence and closed every town and village in the West Bank behind concrete blocks, piles of earth and barriers manned by soldiers. These closures have not stopped members of Palestinian armed groups from escaping closed areas to carry out arbitrary attacks on civilians on the roads of the West Bank and in crowded places within Israel.

In the latest armed attack, on 22 January 2002, a single gunman gunned down passers by in Jerusalem's main shopping street killing two Israelis and wounding 14. The attack was claimed by the al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades, apparently a faction close to Fatah. This was in retaliation for the killing of four Hamas members in Nablus and the occupation of Tulkarem.

"The way out of a cycle of violence and repression is not more violence and more repression. It is a return to justice," Amnesty International said, reiterating its call for international human rights observers to be deployed in Israel.

Background

After three weeks of relative ceasefire, on 10 and 11 January, the IDF demolished 59 Palestinian houses in Rafah and damaged some 200 other houses. The Israeli government alleged that this was because Palestinians had constructed tunnels to smuggle arms but the demolitions were apparently in reprisal for an attack the previous day on an Israeli army post. Three days later, on 14 January, the IDF apparently extrajudicially executed an alleged Fatah leader said to be responsible for a December attack on a bus carrying Israeli settlers in the West Bank which killed 10 people. Over the next two days, the Palestinian armed groups killed four Israelis in the West Bank, including a 72 year-old man. On 18 January, in another random shooting of civilians claimed by the al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade, an armed gunman killed six and wounded 33 in a Bat Mitzvah celebration in Hadera within Israel.

*** Amnesty International will begin a mission to Israel, the Occupied Territories and the areas under the jurisdiction of the Palestinian Authority today, 24 January 2002. The delegation is composed of two staff members of the organization's International Secretariat, Elizabeth Hodgkin and Maartje Houbrechts; Maria del Pozo, a staff member of the Spanish Section of Amnesty International; Karen Kennedy, a coordinator from the US Section of Amnesty International; and David Holley an independent military adviser. Delegates will investigate human rights concerns in Israel, the Occupied Territories and the areas under the jurisdiction of Palestine Authority, including unlawful killings of Palestinians and Israelis, closures and house demolitions.

\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>