

AI INDEX: MDE 15/13/96  
26 FEBRUARY 1996

ISRAEL: AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL CONDEMNS KILLING OF CIVILIANS

Amnesty International strongly condemns the killing of civilians in a suicide bombing on Sunday 25 February 1996 and calls on *Hamas* to stop such bombings.

“We utterly condemn this appalling attack,” said Amnesty International’s Secretary General Pierre Sané, who recently led a delegation to Israel and the Palestinian Authority.

“The deliberate and arbitrary killing of civilians can never be justified in any circumstances. We call on *Hamas* and other armed opposition groups to stop such attacks immediately.”

Amnesty International also urges the Israeli Government and the Palestinian Authority to adhere strictly to international human rights and humanitarian standards in any measure they may take in response to these attacks. Human rights abuses by opposition groups can never justify abandonment of international human rights principles and those arrested should be treated according to international standards prohibiting torture and ill-treatment.

A bomb shattered a commuter bus in Jerusalem’s main shopping street, Jaffa Street, shortly before 7am, killing 25 people, including the bomber. At least 15 of those killed in the attack were civilians. A second suicide bomb in a booby-trapped car 50 minutes later killed two people, including one woman soldier who was waiting at a bus stop and hitchhiking post used by soldiers returning to their bases after the weekend. The second victim may have been the bomber. At least 80 people are said to have been wounded in the two attacks. Responsibility for the bombings has been claimed by the ‘Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades, the military wing of *Hamas* (the Islamic Resistance Movement) an Islamist movement opposed to the Palestinian Authority’s peace agreements with Israel.

The bombings were said by *Hamas* to have been carried out in reprisal for the killing of a *Hamas* member, Yahya Abu Ayyash, said to have made bombs used by suicide bombers in the past, who was killed in Gaza on 5 January 1996 by a booby-trapped telephone. The killing was thought to have been carried out by Israeli intelligence services although the Israeli Government has not claimed responsibility or denied involvement in the attack.

“No action can ever justify the deliberate and arbitrarily killing of civilians,” said Amnesty International. “The right to life is a fundamental right which must be respected by all. There has to be an end to such acts of carnage.”

/ENDS