

# AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL PRESS RELEASE

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## **Israel/Occupied Territories: Inaction is complicity**

*Amnesty International called on the international community to act immediately to save Palestinian and Israeli lives by insisting on an international presence in Israel's Occupied Territories.*

*Over the past ten days, at least 130 Palestinians have been killed. At least 18 wounded Palestinians have reportedly died because of denial of access of medical services. In the same period, at least 33 Israelis have been killed, including 17 civilians.*

*"No country should stand on the sidelines. Palestinian and Israeli children are slaughtered, ambulances carrying wounded Palestinians shot at, Palestinians homes are demolished and their towns and villages sealed off. Remaining silent amounts to condoning the escalation of killings, violence and retaliation," said Amnesty International.*

*"Now is the time to act."*

*"The international community has made many statements and sent many delegates, but these efforts have failed to prevent an escalating human rights crisis," added Amnesty International.*

*"AI has repeatedly called on the Israeli Government to halt unlawful killings and on Palestinian armed groups to cease killing civilians," said Amnesty International. "International monitors with a strong human rights component can help to stop unlawful killings, and the human suffering caused by the bombings, the siege and demolition of homes in Gaza and the West Bank."*

*The Gaza Strip and the West Bank, occupied by Israel in 1967, are governed by the rules of human rights and humanitarian law. Those living under occupation are protected by the rules of the Fourth Geneva Convention which describe as “grave breaches” acts such as wilful killing, wilfully causing great suffering or serious injury to body or health, and extensive destruction and appropriation of property, not justified by military necessity.*

*“Yet grave breaches of the Geneva Conventions and serious violations of human rights standards are daily currency in the Occupied Territories,” Amnesty International emphasized.*

*The number of Palestinians killed since the beginning of the current intifada in September 2000 has now reached more than 1000. The great majority of those killed, who include more than 200 children, were killed unlawfully when no lives were in danger. More than 600 houses have been demolished. In an act of collective punishment villages and towns in the West Bank are consistently sealed off by barriers manned by soldiers or made of earth, concrete blocks or trenches. At the same time at least 300 Israelis have been killed, including at least 200 civilians, among them over 50 children.*

*The Commission of Inquiry established by the UN Commission on Human Rights called in March 2001 for an effective international human rights monitoring presence to be “established immediately and constituted in such a manner as to reflect a sense of urgency about protecting the human rights of the Palestinian people”.*

*A year on, this urgent call remains unheeded. Respect for human rights and humanitarian law is the only viable path towards lasting peace and security for both Palestinians and Israelis.*

*Armed Palestinian groups have also an obligation to respect the Geneva Conventions which forbid the targeting of civilians. "But breaches in humanitarian law by an armed group can never justify a state's breaches of fundamental principles of human rights and humanitarian law it has solemnly sworn to uphold".*

## *Background*

*Since 27 February Israeli troops have entered Palestinian refugee camps allegedly in order to arrest members of armed Palestinian groups. After raids in Balata refugee camp in Nablus and Jenin refugee camp, they also entered Aida and Deheishe refugee camps in Bethlehem, camps in the Gaza Strip and Tulkarem camp. In these camps, which house Palestinians exiled from their homes after 1948 and have a high density population, the Israeli Defence Force (IDF) have used hellfire missiles from Apache helicopters, tank rounds and bullets from heavy machine guns mounted on Merkava tanks. This represents a disproportionate use of lethal force and endangers the lives of ordinary people in the camps. In addition, the IDF in its action over the past three days has frequently targeted ambulances, killing five Palestinian medical workers including the director of a hospital in Bethlehem and the head of Jenin emergency services, while preventing or hindering ambulances from carrying away wounded Palestinians.*

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