

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL PRESS RELEASE

AI Index: MDE 15/062/2002 (Public)
News Service No: 75
26 April 2002

Israel/Occupied Territories: International Days of Mourning

On 27 and 28 April, Amnesty International members around the world will be joining in solidarity people in Israel and the Occupied Territories to mourn all victims of the human rights abuses committed in the region since the start of the second Intifada and to demand justice and respect for human rights.

Amnesty International has declared 27 and 28 April International Days of Mourning. During those days, the organization's Secretary General, Irene Khan, will carry out her first visit to Israel and the Occupied Territories, where she will meet both Palestinian and Israeli victims and their families, human rights defenders and non-governmental organizations. The Amnesty International delegation will also include: the organization's researcher on Israel, the Occupied Territories and the Palestinian Authority, Dr Elizabeth Hodgkin; military expert David Holley; the Director of Amnesty International Norway Petter Eide; and senior press officer Kamal Samari.

Meanwhile, thousands of people in over 20 countries will be marking the International Days of Mourning. Highlights of the planned activities include: silent demonstrations with black flags in six Moroccan cities, accompanied by an advert on national television; a black flag march through the centre of Bern, Switzerland; candle-lit vigils and street rallies in the USA; awareness-raising activities in Senegal; and a mass march in Yemen with candles and black flags.

"It is time to stop playing politics with people's lives and suffering," said Irene Khan. "The international community must act now to end the human rights violations against both Palestinian and Israeli civilians. Any solution for this crisis must have human rights at its heart."

Background

Amnesty International estimates that since the start of the Intifada in September 2000, at least 1,200 Palestinian adults, 260 Palestinian children, 260 Israeli and foreign civilian adults and 52 Israeli children have been killed.

Black Flag Actions:

In 1956, after a curfew was imposed on Kafr Qassem (a village in Israel), Israeli soldiers killed 47 Palestinians, including 15 women and 11 children, who returned to the village late after the day's work, unaware that a curfew had been imposed. In the resulting court case, the Supreme Court judge stated that the soldiers obeyed an illegal command: "The distinguishing mark of a manifestly illegal order is that above such an order should fly, like a black flag, a warning saying: 'Prohibited!' "

In the context of Amnesty International's Crisis Response, the black flag symbolizes:

- mourning and solidarity with victims on all sides;
- the responsibility of each person to stand up against actions which breach international humanitarian and human rights law, whether they are committed in the name of security or in the name of liberty.

Light a Virtual Candle - http://web.amnesty.org/web/web.nsf/pages/IOT_mourning

Join Amnesty International's action by lighting a virtual candle to show solidarity with all victims. We will send all the 'candles' to Israeli and Palestinian non-governmental organisations who work for human rights in both Israel and the Occupied Territories to show support and solidarity with their work.

**** To arrange an interview with Amnesty International delegates to Israel and the Occupied Territories please call Kamal Samari on (+44) 7778 472 126.**

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>