

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL PRESS RELEASE

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Israel/Occupied Territories: Security Council must stick to its commitment to establish the truth

Amnesty International today urged the UN Security Council, including the United States which supported the establishment of the UN fact-finding mission, to live up to their responsibility to establish the truth into what occurred at Jenin refugee camp during the incursion of the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) in April.

The organisation strongly criticised what it described as unacceptable Israeli demands that led to the United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan informing the Security Council of his intent to disband the fact-finding team which he established to investigate what occurred at Jenin refugee camp. The team is likely to be disbanded by Mr Annan today because Israel would not cooperate unless the UN team operated under conditions that the UN Secretary-General considered would prevent it from conducting a thorough and credible inquiry.

"Determining accurately and independently what occurred not only in Jenin but also during Israeli incursions in other places including Nablus, Ramallah and Bethlehem and the recent incursions in Hebron and Tulkarem, is vital to the peace and security of the region," Amnesty International added.

Amnesty International said that its delegates who visited the camp shortly after the IDF withdrew from the camp found credible evidence of grave breaches of international humanitarian law and violations of human rights during the incursion. These demand a full and independent investigation.

"It is essential for any fact-finding team to have complete access to all available information without hindrance. This would require access to witnesses and all relevant documents," Amnesty International said.

"Failure by any party to cooperate with a UN fact-finding mission should never be a cause to abandon an investigation the UN has established and the international community is continuing to call for," said Amnesty International.

"Establishing the truth is a first step to accountability and justice."

Background:

For many days the IDF blocked ambulances and humanitarian aid from reaching residents of Jenin refugee camp, including the sick and wounded. During this period the IDF reduced to rubble by bulldozers a large area of the camp, containing more than 100 two and three storey houses. It appears much of this demolition took place without absolute military necessity. An unknown number of people were buried under the rubble of bulldozed houses while the Israeli Defense Forces continued to block access.

In addition to those who died under the rubble, the IDF appear to have killed a number of residents of the camps unlawfully; Professor Derrick Pounder, a pathologist taking part in an Amnesty International delegation, carried out an autopsy on two bodies and said that the circumstances of their deaths gave cause for suspicion. Delegates were told by family members of victims of other unlawful killings including of two unarmed Palestinians summarily killed by soldiers.

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