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Israel/Occupied Territories/Palestinian Authority: International human rights observers needed to end the cycle of violence

After today's horrific suicide bomb attack on a bus in Israel Amnesty International stressed the need for international observers with a clear human rights mandate to be sent to the region. The organization expressed dismay over the bomb attack on the bus and the cycle of violence.

The suicide bombing of a car which crashed into a bus at Megiddo junction at 7.15 a.m. on 5 June 2002 killed at least 16 Israelis and injured dozens of others. Many of those killed and injured were civilians.

"We condemn this attack and all targeting of civilians," said Amnesty International. "Such deliberate killing of civilians is contrary to the basic principles of humanitarian law."

"International observers should now be accepted by Israel and sent by the international community to ensure respect for human rights by all sides. The present cycle of attacks and reprisals is only leading to more killings, more shattered lives in an atmosphere of destruction and hatred."

Palestinians in the Occupied Territories are suffering human rights violations, including closures, arbitrary detention and prolonged curfews. The lack of any hope for the future, political as well as economic, is leading to despair. "But there can never be any justification for deliberately targeting civilians," Amnesty International insisted.

The organization commented that, if international observers had been sent to Israel and the Occupied Territories when the organization had first called for them in October 2000, lives of both Israelis and Palestinians might have been saved. "Nineteen months later, after 1,400 Palestinians and more than 400 Israelis including more than 350 Israeli civilians have been killed it is now time to act," the organization commented.

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