

30 October 2001

AI Index MDE 15/099/2001 - News Service Nr. 191

Israel/Occupied Territories/Palestinian Authority: The only way forward is respect for fundamental human rights

On the tenth anniversary of the opening session of the Middle East peace talks in Madrid on 30 October 1991, Amnesty International repeated that respect by all parties for the fundamental principles of international humanitarian and human rights law is the only way to achieve peace and security.

“Unlawful killings, demolitions of homes, denial – for a population of more than three millions – of the right to freedom of movement are gross violations of human rights obligations which the Israeli Government has itself solemnly agreed to uphold”, said the worldwide human rights organization.

The organization also condemned the killing of four Israeli women in Hadera on 28 October claimed by Islamic Jihad. Amnesty International emphasised that it is a basic principle of customary law that civilian lives must at all times be respected. Those who commit and order such unlawful killings should be arrested and brought to justice in fair trials.

The day after the assassination, claimed by the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), of the Israeli Tourism Minister Rehavam Zeevi on 17 October Israeli tanks entered six towns in the West Bank. Over the past 12 days, in response to this unlawful killing:

- Israeli forces have carried out random shelling and shot recklessly, killing at least 50 Palestinians. Numerous eyewitnesses said that several of those killed were shot when there was no Palestinian shooting whatsoever. Those reported to have been unlawfully killed include Palestinians in their homes and bystanders in streets, cars and schools. **Reham Nabil Wared**, aged 12, killed on 18 October 2001, was hiding with fellow-pupils in a classroom when tanks shelled the Ibrahimiya Elementary School in Jenin.*

· Towns and villages in the West Bank were sealed for several days by the Israeli army and most Palestinians were unable to travel to work, to hospital, to school, to shop. A woman in labour, **Fatima 'Abed Rabbo**, was turned back twice on 22 October 2001 as she tried to cross checkpoints to go to hospital a few kilometres away; soldiers only allowed her through as the baby was being born; attempts to save the baby in hospital failed. "This incident is only a recent example of many deaths of those prevented by soldiers at checkpoints from reaching medical attention over the past year," Amnesty International said.

· In the six towns and elsewhere Palestinian homes, schools and offices have been shelled and made uninhabitable. Other homes, housing dozens of Palestinians including children have been totally demolished without possibility of appeal. In Beit Rima, on 24 October 2001 three homes were demolished as a punishment, the reason given by the Israeli authorities was that members of the family were members of armed groups. No legal process was invoked before their destruction.

Israel's treatment of Palestinians in the Occupied Territories must comply with the rules of the Fourth Geneva Convention governing treatment of protected persons under occupation. Certain acts are considered as "grave breaches" of the convention; they include "wilful killing, torture or inhuman treatment ... wilfully causing great suffering or serious injury to body or health, unlawful deportation or transfer or unlawful confinement of a protected person,...and extensive destruction and appropriation of property, not justified by military necessity and carried out unlawfully and wantonly".

"Wilful killings, extensive destruction of property not justified by military necessity are grave breaches of the Geneva Convention. Those who order or commit such acts are committing war crimes", said Amnesty International.

"Closures of towns and villages punish a whole people; they do not prevent killers from passing as the killing of the four Israeli women showed", said Amnesty International.

"The only way forward lies in a return to fundamental human rights principles, including the respect for life. The international community, which

encouraged and started the peace process, is failing in its obligation to ensure respect for the Geneva Conventions and human rights principles in Israel's Occupied Territories", the organization added.

\ENDS

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>