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## ***Killings of Lebanese civilians by Israeli forces in south Lebanon must be investigated***

*Amnesty International is calling for an investigation into incidents in which Lebanese were killed in south Lebanon during the withdrawal of the Israel Defence Force (IDF) from south Lebanon and the collapse of the South Lebanon Army (SLA), Israel's proxy militia.*

*Information gathered by Amnesty International, including during a fact-finding visit to south Lebanon, suggests that in at least four incidents on 22 and 23 May 2000 Israeli forces directed tank fire from the Israeli side of the border at Lebanese civilians, killing four people and injuring several others. Details of these incidents are included in a report published today.*

*If these attacks were indeed wilfully directed at civilians, the Israeli army has committed war crimes and those responsible should be brought to justice, Amnesty International said.*

*These killings happened after the withdrawal of the IDF and SLA when there was no hostile military action and many Lebanese civilians were on the move celebrating the withdrawal and their return to their villages, the organization said. The people killed appear all to have been targeted without warning,*

*The organization is writing to the Israeli Prime Minister asking for a thorough investigation into these attacks. The Israeli authorities must bring to justice anyone found responsible for serious violations of the laws of war and compensate the victims of any such violations.*

On 22 May one man and a 16-year-old boy were killed on a road facing the Israeli village of Manara. Hundreds of civilians, including many children, and some armed people had been driving or walking along the road celebrating Israel's withdrawal and the return of villagers to south Lebanon when the attacks took place. According to witnesses, 22-year-old >Abd al-Karim >Assaf from Mays al-Jabal, was killed when a shell fired without warning from an Israeli tank slammed into the Mercedes car he was driving in. Five other people in the car were injured. Shortly after another shell exploded near a pick-up truck which was approaching the burning Mercedes, killing Ibrahim Maruni, aged 16, from Shaqrah.

Later on 22 May Salman Rammal was killed in the Lebanese village of >Adaysah by tank fire apparently coming from the Israeli border near the Israeli village of Misgav Am. According to witnesses, he was operating a bulldozer to remove an SLA roadblock after the SLA had left. Here too there were dozens of people celebrating around him when he was killed.

On 23 May >Abd al-Rahman (>Abed) Taqqush was killed on the same stretch of road facing Manara where the two other fatal attacks had taken place the day before. According to witnesses who were near the car when it was hit, and others watching from Manara, an Israeli tank fired at the stationary car in which >Abed Taqqush was making a phone call. This attack was followed by bursts of machine-gun fire apparently aimed at civilians, including foreign journalists who were sheltering in a nearby building.

The laws of war included in the 1949 Geneva Conventions and its two 1977 Additional Protocols categorically prohibit any direct attack against civilians or civilian objects, including in reprisal. They also prohibit attacks which do not attempt to distinguish between military

*targets and civilians as well as attacks which, although aimed at a legitimate military target, have a disproportionate impact on civilians or civilian objects.*

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