
AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL NEWS SERVICE 68/94

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7 April 1994

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL CONDEMNS KILLINGS IN ISRAEL AND THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES

Amnesty International today expressed grave concern about recent political killings in Israel and the Occupied Territories and called on both the Israeli authorities and Palestinian armed groups to observe basic standards of human rights and humanitarian law.

Amnesty International said that the killings of six members of Fatah in the Jabalia refugee camp on 28 March by an Israeli undercover unit was "a classic example" of the heavy-handed methods it had repeatedly complained about to the Israeli authorities. At the same time Amnesty International condemned the killing yesterday of seven Israeli civilians by a suicide car-bomber for which the Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas) claimed responsibility.

The attack, which killed four women, two girls and a man, was described by Hamas as "legitimate retaliation" for the murder of at least 29 Palestinians by an Israeli settler in the Haram al-Ibrahimi mosque in al-Khalil (Hebron) on 25 February 1994.

In January 1994, in a response to earlier appeals by Amnesty International, Hamas stated that it "is bound by the Islamic Shri'ah (sic) Law which sanctifies life, guarantees human rights and strictly prohibits the killing of women, children, clerics and civilians who do not carry arms against Muslims so long as the enemy adheres to the same principle."

Amnesty International condemns such deliberate and arbitrary killings, that violate fundamental principles of humanitarian law. "Respect for such principles must be unconditional", Amnesty International said. "Any violation of human rights or humanitarian law by the Israeli authorities cannot justify the perpetration of such killings. All armed groups should end attacks against civilians immediately."

Amnesty International said that it was renewing its urgent appeal to the Israeli Government to review the methods used by its forces following the killings in the Jabalia refugee camp. All six were apparently shot without warning. One may have been summarily executed -- he was reportedly shot in the head after having been wounded and apprehended.

"Last year we expressed concern that changes to guidelines on opening fire would permit the killing of armed individuals who were not directly endangering lives without any attempt being made to arrest them, in contravention of international standards on the use of force", Amnesty International said. "In this instance this may well be what happened."

Amnesty International was also concerned about the use of massive firepower in al-Khalil on 22 and 23 March against several houses in which men sought for arrest by the authorities were suspected to be hiding. Amnesty International said: "We have never had satisfactory responses to questions we raised last year about house destruction operations, including what other measures to try to arrest such people are considered before such a drastic measure is taken." According to reports, shots were fired on both sides, with a pregnant woman dying in the crossfire. Israeli forces were stationed on the roof of a nearby hospital, among other places. After repeatedly shelling the houses with anti-tank missiles and other ammunition for hours, Israeli forces reportedly demolished at least one of the houses with explosives and bulldozed it to the ground.

Amnesty International is calling for thorough, prompt and impartial investigations to be carried out into these incidents, the methods and findings of which should be made public in conformity with international standards. "Investigations, however, are not enough,"

the organization said. "These incidents illustrate the urgent need for Israeli forces' methods in the Occupied Territories to be reviewed. Proper police training and tactics should be implemented to avoid any unnecessary deaths in the future."

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