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## **Israel/Gaza: All sides must step back from the brink to protect civilians**

Israel's assassination of Ahmad al-Ja'abari, the head of Hamas' military wing has placed civilians in Gaza and southern Israel at grave risk by re-igniting the armed conflict there, said Amnesty International.

"All sides have to step back from the brink in order to protect civilian lives," said Ann Harrison, Deputy Director of Amnesty International's Middle East and North Africa Programme.

The killing of al-Ja'abari in Gaza City today signalled the start of a new Israeli military operation, "Cloud Pillar", which continued with further airstrikes throughout the Gaza Strip. There are also reports of civilian casualties.

It comes despite an intensive international effort towards a ceasefire in the wake of civilian casualties on both sides in recent days.

At least five Palestinian civilians have been killed and more than 50 injured in multiple Israeli military attacks on Gaza since 8 November.

Amnesty International has gathered evidence that suggests at least two of these attacks, on 8 and 10 November, were indiscriminate and, therefore, in violation of international humanitarian law.

"The Israeli military must not carry out further indiscriminate attacks, or attacks in densely-populated residential areas that will inevitably harm civilians," said Harrison.

Palestinian armed groups fired more than 120 rockets into southern Israel between 10 and 12 November, injuring at least 4 Israeli civilians. Amnesty International condemns the firing of these rockets - which are not directed at a specific military objective.

"Palestinian armed groups in Gaza meanwhile must not fire indiscriminate rockets into Israel. The international community must put pressure on both sides to fully respect the laws of war and protect civilian lives and property," said Harrison.

Both parties must ensure a prompt, thorough and independent investigation of all allegations of serious violations of international humanitarian law and human rights violations committed by forces under their control.