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News Flash

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Israel: IDF inquiry into Qana a whitewash

The investigation carried out by the Israeli Defence Force (IDF) into the air-missile attack on Qana was clearly inadequate and reinforces the need for the urgent dispatch of the International Humanitarian Fact-Finding Commission (IHFFC).

"We cannot allow any investigation into the events in Qana to be a whitewash. What is needed here is an independent investigation which can look at all credible reports of serious violations of international humanitarian law taking place in this conflict. Any investigation needs the capacity to cross borders and talk to survivors of the attack as well as to the forces involved," said Kate Gilmore, Executive Deputy Secretary General of Amnesty International.

"It is not enough that the Israeli army investigates themselves. Israel has a history of either not investigating civilian deaths, or conducting similarly flawed inquiries."

The results of the IDF investigation state that the IDF "operated according to information that the building was not inhabited by civilians". Yet survivors of the attack interviewed by Amnesty International researchers in Qana shortly after the bombing, stated that they had been in the building for some two weeks and that their presence must have been known to Israeli forces whose surveillance drones frequently flew over the village.

Amnesty International declared that issuing warnings to the civilian population to leave the area does not absolve Israel of their responsibilities under customary international humanitarian law. Intentionally launching a disproportionate or indiscriminate attack, or intentionally directing attacks at civilians or civilian objects is a war crime. Amnesty International stated that the concept of 'free-fire' zones is incompatible with international humanitarian law.

Note to editors

Amnesty International is calling on the parties to agree for the urgent dispatch of the International Humanitarian Fact-Finding Commission (IHFFC), established under Article 90 of Protocol I relating to the Protection of Victims of International Armed Conflicts (Protocol I), to investigate incidents where serious violations of the Geneva Conventions and the Protocol are alleged to have taken place. Scrutiny by the IHFFC will be essential to establish the facts independently and authoritatively. It can also act as a deterrent against further abuses by the parties to the conflict.

Public Document

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