

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL PUBLIC STATEMENT



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Israel/OPT: International Commission of Inquiry needed to ensure accountability for Israel's deplorable use of excessive force in response to protests

Amnesty International is dismayed and alarmed at the mass killings and injuries of Palestinians in the context of the "Great March of Return" protests in the Gaza Strip.

In their response to these protests, since 30 March, Israeli forces have killed at least 102 Palestinians, including at least 12 children, two journalists and one paramedic. As many as 60 people died in one day alone, on 14 May, during protests commemorating 70 years of Palestinian displacement and dispossession.

Eyewitness testimonies, and video and photographic evidence suggest that many were deliberately killed or injured, while posing no imminent threat to Israeli soldiers and snipers.

Israeli forces have used high-velocity military weapons and ammunitions to disperse protesters, injuring approximately 3,600 Palestinians, including men, women and children—a shocking and appalling number. Many who have not died have suffered life-changing injuries, and will likely face further complications, infections and some form of physical disability. Others, including health workers treating the injured, have suffered tear gas inhalation, while ambulances have been partially damaged. Hospitals are struggling to cope with the volume of serious injuries without adequate resources and chronic shortages of fuel, electricity and medical supplies caused mainly by Israel's illegal blockade.

Some protesters have engaged in some forms of violence including by throwing stones and Molotov cocktails or burning tires. Others have attempted to cross or breach the fence. But we are not aware of any protesters that have posed an imminent threat to Israeli soldiers and snipers located behind the fence, and protected by gear, sand hills, drones and military vehicles.

The high number of apparently unlawful killings, including possible wilful killings, and injuries in the context of these recent protests is unprecedented and requires accountability that we believe Israel is unwilling to deliver.

The Israeli army has announced in April that it would launch an investigation into some of these killings. We believe such an announcement is not sufficient, in light of Israel's historic failure to ensure independent, impartial, thorough and transparent criminal investigations for alleged war crimes and other serious violations in the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

The Human Rights Council's establishment of an international Commission of Inquiry investigating the circumstances of the deaths and injuries in the context of these recent protests would be an important step towards achieving much needed accountability for many whose lives have been shattered by this violence.

ENDS