

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL PUBLIC STATEMENT



Index: MDE 21/3892/2016

22 April 2016

Hamas must condemn attacks on civilians following Jerusalem bus bombing

After the Hamas movement in Bethlehem claimed the person who detonated a bomb aboard a Jerusalem bus earlier this week as a member, Amnesty International reiterates that deliberate attacks on civilians can never be justified, and calls on Hamas to condemn all such attacks.

On the evening of 18 April, 20 people were wounded when a Palestinian man detonated a bomb on an Israeli bus in Jerusalem. As of the evening of 21 April, three of those injured were still in intensive care, according to the Israeli newspaper *Ha'aretz*. Abd al-Hamid Abu Srour, a 19-year-old Palestinian man from Aida refugee camp in Bethlehem who was identified as the attacker, succumbed to his wounds late on 20 April.

On 21 April, the Hamas movement stated that the attacker was a member and one of its "committed activists" in Bethlehem. Israel police spokesperson Micky Rosenfeld stated that a "Hamas terrorist" carried out the attack, and the Israel Security Agency announced the arrest in the Bethlehem area of several "Hamas activists" suspected of involvement in the attack. While it does not appear that Hamas' leadership or its military wing in Gaza ordered the attack, the involvement of the Hamas movement, possibly including members of its military wing in Bethlehem or elsewhere, is a worrying development. Hamas, including its political leadership in Gaza and elsewhere, must clearly condemn all attacks targeting civilians. Such attacks can never be justified and represent a serious violation of international humanitarian law.

In the upsurge of violence since the beginning of October 2015, 29 Israelis and two US nationals have been killed in Palestinian stabbing, shooting, and car-ramming attacks on Israeli soldiers, police and civilians.¹ The vast majority of these attacks, however, have been carried out by individuals not affiliated with any Palestinian armed group, though Palestinian political factions and armed groups, including Hamas and its military wing, the Izz al-Din al-Qassam brigades, have frequently praised the attacks. During the same period, at least 197 Palestinians have been killed by Israeli forces and civilians, the

¹ Amnesty International has condemned attacks on Israeli civilians. See, for example, Amnesty International, "Israel/OPT: No justification for deliberate attacks on civilians, unlawful killings by Israeli forces, or collective punishment of Palestinians" (Index: MDE 15/2633/2015), 9 October 2015, available at www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde15/2633/2015/en/

majority of whom were reportedly either carrying out or perceived as intending to carry out attacks.

While deliberate attacks against civilians are never justifiable, the Israeli authorities have an obligation to uphold international law at all times, including in their response to such attacks. Amnesty International has documented a series of unlawful killings of Palestinians – including attackers or alleged attackers who were not posing an imminent threat to life when they were shot – by Israeli forces since the beginning of October 2015.² Some of these killings appear to have been extrajudicial executions.³ In addition, Israeli forces have increased measures that amount to collective punishment against Palestinians, such as demolishing the family homes of attackers, imposing arbitrary restrictions on movement, and carrying out mass arbitrary arrests.⁴ Collective punishment is prohibited under international law, including Article 33 of the Fourth Geneva Convention, which applies to Israel as the occupying power.

Background

Palestinian bombing attacks in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories, including suicide bombings on buses, were common during the second Intifada, which began in September 2000. Amnesty International documented and repeatedly condemned these attacks.⁵ However, suicide bombings have been rare since 2006, and the Jerusalem bus bombing is the first such attack in years.

² See Amnesty International, “Israeli forces in Occupied Palestinian Territories must end pattern of unlawful killings”, 27 October 2015, available at www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2015/10/israeli-forces-must-end-pattern-of-unlawful-killings-in-west-bank/

³ See Amnesty International, “Israel/OPT: Investigate apparent extrajudicial execution at Hebron hospital”, 12 November 2015, available at www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2015/11/israel-opt-investigate-apparent-extrajudicial-execution-at-hebron-hospital/

⁴ See Amnesty International, “Israeli authorities must end collective punishment of Palestinians in Hebron, protect human rights defenders in the city” (Index: MDE 15/3529/2015), 25 February 2016, available at www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde15/3529/2016/en/

⁵ See, for example, Amnesty International, *Without distinction: Attacks on civilians by Palestinian armed groups* (Index: MDE 02/003/2002), July 2002, available at www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde02/003/2002/en/

Field Code Cha

Field Code Cha

Field Code Cha

Field Code Cha