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News Service Nr. 19

Editor in Chief,

Al-Arab Newspaper.

Dear Editor in Chief,

In a column published in your daily newspaper al-Arab issue No 6066 on 30 January 2001 you allege that a leading official from Amnesty International advised the Israeli Defence Forces (IDF) on how to deal with complaints about the killing of hundreds of Palestinians. This is simply untrue.

The column titled "Top Secret" is scurrilous and baseless to the extent that its author is unwilling to reveal their name. The only substantiation for the claim is information from an "unnamed Palestinian source close to Amnesty International."

Amnesty International delegates and Amnesty International sections world-wide have had meetings with Israeli officials or members of Israeli diplomatic missions in many countries. In none of these meetings did any member of Amnesty International tell the Israeli Government to "claim that individuals were responsible and that they were punished".

It is a matter of public record that Amnesty International has campaigned, since the beginning of the current Intifada, for the immediate cessation of the unlawful killing practised by the Israeli forces against the Palestinians and lobbied for carrying out impartial and independent investigations into these incidents.

Amnesty International has sent four delegations to Israel and the Occupied Territories including the areas under the jurisdiction of the Palestinian Authority. It has issued two reports: titled "Excessive Use of Lethal Force" and "Mass arrests and police brutality" based on the findings of its research teams to Israel and the Occupied Territories and a number of press releases.

The work of Amnesty International speak for itself. We have addressed various issues including the killings of children, violations against medical personnel and the use of helicopters. We have researched, with a military advisor, the shooting at residential areas and the Israeli practice of extrajudicial executions.

Amnesty International's message to the Israeli government was crystal clear from the first day: to stop the unlawful killings, to investigate each death and to bring to justice those who use force unlawfully.

It is disappointing that the editors of al-Arab have so little regard for their reputation and credibility.

Amnesty International believes that Al-Arab would serve its readers better if it published in full some of our important reports on the intifada rather than misleading information which does not serve the interests of the victims of the current violence in the area.

Yours sincerely

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