

1 August 2001

AI Index MDE 15/069/2001 - News Service Nr. 134

Israel/Occupied Territories: Israel shows reckless disregard for human life

By killing eight Palestinians in Nablus, Israel showed once again an utter disregard for human life in the Occupied Territories, Amnesty International said today.

The Israeli Air Force killed yesterday eight people, including two children and two journalists, and wounded 15 others, including a human rights defender, as they shot two missiles from an Apache helicopter against the Nablus-based Palestinian Centre for Information, run by a Hamas leader, Jamal Mansur.

Amnesty International reiterated its long-standing calls to Israel to end its policy of liquidations and other arbitrary killings and urged the international community to send international observers with a human rights remit to the area.

"The Israeli authorities must have known and totally disregarded the fact that the media centre targeted was likely to be frequented by journalists and others," said Amnesty International. "In these state assassinations the Israeli authorities offer no proof of guilt, no right to defence. Extrajudicial executions are absolutely prohibited by international law."

The call for international observers has received worldwide support, including by the European Union foreign ministers and US Secretary of State Colin Powell. Up to now it has been blocked by the Israeli Government.

"The international community must no longer accept any excuses or any delay in sending independent observers with a human rights mandate and sufficient expertise, resources and powers to monitor, investigate and make public reports," Amnesty International stressed.

On 30 July six Fatah activists, reportedly *Awanted@* by Israel, were killed by an explosion in a shack near the West Bank village of Fara. The Palestinian Authority said they were targeted by Israel; Israel said they died when their own bomb exploded.

"Independent monitors with military expertise are vital to rule on the claims and counterclaims and clarify the circumstances of each killing," said the human rights organization.

Amnesty International expressed grave concern at *Hamas* statements threatening that Israel would pay a heavy price for the killings. *Hamas* attacks, including suicide bombs in public places in Israel, have killed many civilians, including children.

"Whatever human rights violations are committed by a government, nothing can justify attacks targeting civilians," said Amnesty International. "Nor can any killings by opposition groups justify this shocking disregard for basic human rights principles by a government."

Background

The two *Hamas* leaders targeted, Jamal Mansur and Jamal Salim, had both been held in administrative detention by Israel. Jamal Mansur's case had been taken up again by Amnesty International when he spent more than three years in detention without charge or trial under the Palestinian Authority between 1997 and 2000. A leader of the political wing of *Hamas*, he was a journalist and publicist.

Ahmad Abu Shallal, a human rights defender, critically injured and now in intensive care, works for the International Solidarity organization, based in Washington. He works for political detainees, both in Israel and in the areas administered by the Palestinian Authority. He was reportedly visiting the office of the Palestinian Centre for Information in order to collect material for a report he was writing for the London-based journal *The Return Review* (a/->Awdeh).

Muhammad Beshawi and 'Uthman Qatanan were both journalists apparently interviewing Jamal Mansur at the time of the attack.

Two children, Ashraf Khader, aged six, and Bilal Khader, aged 11, were killed as they played outside, while their mother visited a clinic in the same building.

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