

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

PRESS RELEASE

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Israel/Occupied Territories: Excessive use of force

Amnesty International is concerned about the deterioration of the human rights and humanitarian situation as a result of the Israeli army incursion in the Jabaliya refugee camp and surrounding areas in the northern Gaza Strip (including sectors in the nearby towns of Beit Hanoun and Beit Lahiya).

In the past week (since the evening of Tuesday 28 September) more than 70 Palestinians have been killed, more than a third of whom were unarmed and including some 20 children. Hundreds of others have been injured.

The Israeli army has repeatedly used excessive force, including heavy shelling from tanks and helicopter gunships. Experience has shown that the use of such weapons and the manner in which they have been deployed by the army in densely populated residential areas (the Jabaliya refugee camp is one of the most densely populated places in the world, with more than 100,000 Palestinians living in less than two square kilometres), invariably results in a high rate of death and injury of bystanders and people who are not involved in armed confrontation. These tactics betray a lack of respect for fundamental human rights principles, including the right to life.

In certain areas the Israeli army has also unlawfully destroyed or damaged homes, schools, water and electricity networks, roads, and other crucial infrastructure. Israeli forces have hindered access to medical services -- not only for those injured in the military operation but also those who need medical care for other reasons, including women who need to give birth. When able to reach those in need (they often cannot reach those in need of medical treatment) ambulances have on several occasions come under Israeli army fire.

Strict closures have also been imposed throughout the Gaza Strip in the past week, cutting the Gaza Strip into four isolated sections, paralysing all aspects of life, with people unable to reach their workplace and students unable to reach the universities. In addition schools in the area besieged by the Israeli army in the northern Gaza Strip are closed. Thousands of people living in the besieged areas are also experiencing shortages of food and other essential goods.

Amnesty International is calling on the Israeli authority to:

- put an immediate end to the use of excessive lethal force
- put an immediate end to unlawful destruction and damage of Palestinian homes and properties, roads and other infrastructure
- allow immediate access to medical care and other essential services for the Palestinian population in the affected areas
- respect the right to freedom of movement for the Palestinian population elsewhere in the Gaza Strip

Amnesty International also calls on Palestinian armed groups not to initiate attacks and armed confrontation with Israeli troops from amongst residential areas, as this puts the local residents at risk of return fire and retaliation from the Israeli army, and reiterates its call on Palestinian armed groups to put an end to attacks directed against Israeli civilians in Israel or in the Occupied Territories.

Public Document

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