

# AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

## Public Statement

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### **Israel / Occupied Territories: End collective punishment of Palestinians in Occupied Territories**

One month after Israel reoccupied villages and towns in the West Bank more than 800,000 Palestinians still suffer the effects of prolonged curfews and closures. Israeli soldiers continue to carry out unlawful killings of Palestinians with impunity. Hundreds of Palestinians remain in detention, including in administrative detention without charge or trial, and destruction or damage to homes and property continues.

The organization calls on the Israeli authorities to end curfews, closures at checkpoints and other measures which are designed to punish indiscriminately rather than improve effectively the security of Israel. The effects on the daily life of ordinary Palestinians are devastating.

After 19 June 2002 Israeli Defence Forces (IDF) launched "Operation Determined Path" and reoccupied the West Bank. Official statements said that this was to prevent further attacks on Israelis after two suicide bombings in Jerusalem on 18 and 19 June 2002 which killed 26 Israelis.

Amnesty International is gravely concerned at the worsening conditions and the erosion of basic human rights of Palestinians, as the whole Palestinian population in the Occupied Territories is being punished. As people living under military occupation, Palestinians are "protected people" under the Fourth Geneva Convention Relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War of 1949. Grave breaches of the Fourth Geneva Convention include not only "wilful killing" but also "wilfully causing great suffering". Measures taken by the IDF have included:

Since 21 June most Palestinian towns (except for Jericho) and many villages in the West Bank have been under curfew for up to 24 hours a day forcing Palestinians to live under virtual house arrest. In Nablus the 24-hour curfew has only been lifted once a week for up to six hours. In Tulkarem, the curfew imposed on 20 June has reportedly been lifted only eight times, for up to four hours a day. Even where the curfew has been officially eased it confines inhabitants of towns under curfew to their homes from sunset to sunrise.

More than three million Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip are living under closures. Nearly every road to a town or village is cut by barriers manned by soldiers or closed by blocks of concrete, piles of earth, and trenches. A journey of 40 kilometres can take several hours. Palestinians are barred from many primary roads and special passes, often unobtainable, are needed for Palestinians to travel from one area to the other.

Denial of freedom of movement for the Palestinian population in the Occupied Territories has affected the ability of ordinary Palestinians to access work, education and health care, as well as their ability to conduct business, travel, and maintain family contacts. The impact on the Palestinian economy has been severe. The reoccupation took place at the same time as the final school exams, leaving

teachers, students and supervisors unable to reach schools.

Violations of the right to life and medical care continue. Israeli soldiers sometimes appear to consider that the imposition of a curfew authorizes them to shoot at anyone in the street; in addition soldiers have shot at people in streets even when curfews were lifted. In Jenin three children were killed by fire from Israeli tanks, during the temporary lifting of curfew on 21 and 26 June. Also in Jenin, on 11 July 2002, Israeli soldiers on a tank shot two Palestinian journalists wearing jackets clearly marked "Press"; one journalist died from his wounds.

More than 600 Palestinians are now held under administrative detention, mostly in tents in the detention centres Ofer and Ketziot (Ansar III) . Several hundred other Palestinians, many of them arbitrarily detained over the past three months, are also held in pre-trial detention in centres in Israel and the Occupied Territories.

During the reoccupation of the West Bank the IDF have continued to destroy or damage Palestinian homes and property without absolute military necessity. On 22 June 2002 in Jenin the IDF demolished a house on top of a family with five children, killing a 12-year-old boy, Fares al-Sa'adi. In the Nablus area two houses belonging to families of men wanted for organizing attacks on Israelis were destroyed as collective punishment on 19 July; other neighbouring houses were severely damaged by the force of the explosions set off by the IDF.

It is time for the Israeli government and world leaders to recognize that respect for fundamental human rights is not only compatible with security, but that without human rights there will be no security and no peace.

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