

# AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL PRESS RELEASE

AI Index: MDE 15/088/2003 (Public)  
News Service No: 224  
29 September 2003

**Embargo Date: 29 September 2003 00:01 GMT**

## **Israel/occupied territories: No one is safe - the spiral of killings and destruction must stop**

"No one feels safe in Israel and the Occupied Territories. As the *intifada* enters its fourth year there appears to be no end in sight to the growing spiral of killings, violence and destruction", said Amnesty International.

Since the beginning of the Palestinian uprising on 29 September 2000 the Israeli army has killed more than 2,200 Palestinians, including 400 children, and Palestinian armed groups have killed some 800 Israelis, including 100 children. Tens of thousands have been injured, many maimed for life.

"The vast majority of those killed and injured on both sides have been unarmed civilians and bystanders. Both sides have knowingly targeted civilians and shown utter disregard for the most basic principles of human rights and humanitarian law", said Amnesty International.

While claiming that it seeks to avoid harming the Palestinian population the Israeli army tanks and aircraft continue to shell densely populated Palestinian refugee camps and residential areas, knowing that such reckless fire will cause heavy civilian casualties.

Palestinian armed groups, for their part, openly proclaim their determination to kill Israeli civilians. Suicide bombings and other attacks on buses and other public places carried out by Palestinian groups, including the armed wing of Hamas, Islamic Jihad and al Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades, deliberately aim to kill as many Israeli civilians as possible.

The unlawful killings on both sides must stop and those responsible for such crimes must be brought to justice.

"In addition to the killings and injury of civilians by both sides, the Israeli army has continued to commit a wide range of other human rights violations against Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip", said Amnesty International.

The demolition of thousands of Palestinian homes and the destruction of vast areas of cultivated land, factories, workshops and other private and public properties, has left tens of thousands of Palestinians homeless and/or deprived them of their means of subsistence.

Stringent restrictions on the movement of Palestinians within the Occupied Territories impose insurmountable obstacles on daily activities. Hundreds of checkpoints, closures and curfews make going to school, to work, for medical care or to visit relatives, burdensome if at all possible.

“These restrictions effectively confine some three and a half millions of Palestinians to some form of house/town arrest”, said Amnesty International. “Bread-winners have lost their jobs, children have missed hundreds of school days, women have been forced to give birth at checkpoints; any semblance of normal life is simply impossible”, added the organization.

The fence/wall being constructed on Palestinian land in the western part of the West Bank and around Jerusalem further exacerbates the problem. In order to encompass Israeli settlements the fence/wall cuts off Palestinian towns and villages from each others and/or from their land and other essential services. The construction of the fence/wall inside the West Bank must be stopped.

The Israeli settlements in the West Bank and Gaza Strip and the disproportionate measures taken daily by Israel purportedly to protect the illegal presence of settlers in the Occupied Territories violate international law. The settlements must be evacuated.

The above issues must be addressed within the framework of international law – and not be subjected to political manoeuvring and bargaining.

“Previous peace initiatives, including the recent ‘roadmap’ peace plan, failed because they did not address the key human rights issues”, said Amnesty International.

Disregarding or subordinating fundamental human rights to political considerations has brought neither peace nor security - on the contrary.

The international community must act to support Israelis and Palestinians who refuse to participate in human rights violations and who are taking courageous steps to promote peace and justice.

Respect for human rights must be a central part of any peace initiative and to this end the international community must take concrete steps to ensure that the Israeli and Palestinian sides abide by international law.

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