

PUBLIC

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Fear for safety

13 December 2001

ISRAEL/OCCUPIED TERRITORIES/
PALESTINIAN AUTHORITY

Civilians

After an attack on a bus and suicide bombings killed 10 Israelis on 12 December, Israel today broke off diplomatic links with the Palestinian Authority and bombed Gaza, Ramallah and Nablus. With this escalation in the violence already endemic in Israel and the Occupied Territories, many more civilians will be killed or injured unless Israel, the Palestinian Authority and all armed groups recognize the fundamental importance of the right to life and physical integrity.

The bus was on its way to the Israeli settlement of Emmanuel in the West Bank when it was partly destroyed by two bombs planted by the road. Gunmen opened fire on fleeing passengers and rescue crews, and threw grenades, killing 10 Israelis, including civilians and a 13-year-old child, and injuring 24 others. The attack was claimed by a joint force of *Hamas* and the *al-Aqsa* Brigades (said to be close to *Fatah*). Earlier that evening, two suicide bombs had injured four Israelis in the Gush Katif settlement in the Gaza Strip. *Hamas* claimed responsibility.

The Israeli response included raids by F16 fighter aircraft on Nablus, Ramallah and Gaza. Two Palestinians were killed and more than 40 injured, including six children who were reportedly shot from an Israeli army position in Rafah on 13 December. F16s flew low over towns throughout the night; the Palestinian radio transmission station in Ramallah was bombed as well as security installations.

The Israeli Government has stated that it intends to continue with its policy of state assassinations of Palestinians suspected of planning or carrying out attacks. During the attempted assassination of an Islamic *Jihad* activist on 10 December two children, aged three and 13, were killed by missiles from an Apache helicopter.

Palestinian armed groups have stated that they will continue attacks and suicide bombings.

In the past week alone 20 Palestinians (including two suicide bombers) and 10 Israelis have been killed in an increasingly violent cycle of attacks.

The Israeli army yesterday set up blockades, dividing the 45km-long Gaza Strip into three. For more than a year they have blocked nearly every road to each town or village in the West Bank with piles of earth, concrete blocks, trenches and army-manned barriers, imprisoning the inhabitants in their own homes. Even ambulances are frequently not allowed to pass checkpoints, and a number of Palestinian civilians have suffered life-threatening medical complications when they were delayed on their way to hospital. On 6 December a 45-year-old schoolteacher died of a heart attack after his ambulance was stopped at several Israeli army checkpoints.

The Israeli Government has stated that closures are for security reasons. However, suicide bombings and other attacks have continued. The closures, which increase poverty and despair, constitute the collective punishment of more than three million people for attacks that are the work of a few.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Since the present Palestinian *intifada* against Israeli occupation started, on 29 September 2000, more than 700 Palestinians have been killed by the Israeli security services. The vast majority were unlawfully killed when no other lives were in danger. At least 50 died in state assassinations, which have also killed more than 30 bystanders.

Palestinian armed groups or individuals have killed more than 200 Israelis, including 150 civilians killed in drive-by shootings or suicide bombings. At least 150 of the Palestinians killed and 30 of the Israelis have been children.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send appeals to arrive as quickly as possible, in English, Hebrew (for Israeli authorities), Arabic (for the PA or armed groups) or your own language:

- calling on the Israeli authorities to end random shooting at residential areas, state assassinations, which are prohibited under international law, and other unlawful killings;
- urging them to agree to the introduction of international observers with a strong, public and transparent mandate, to monitor respect for international humanitarian law and human rights;
- urging them to remove punitive restrictions on the movement of Palestinians within the Occupied Territories, including East Jerusalem, which are a form of collective punishment;
- calling on President Yasser Arafat to arrest and bring to justice those who order or carry out attacks against civilians, in trials that meet international human rights standards;
- calling on *Hamas*, *Fatah* and *Islamic Jihad* to end all attacks on civilians and to respect fundamental principles of international humanitarian law.

APPEALS TO:

Prime Minister Ariel Sharon
Office of the Prime Minister
3 Kaplan Street, PO Box 187
Kiryat Ben-Gurion
Jerusalem 91919, Israel

Telegrams: Prime Minister, Jerusalem

Fax: + 972 2 651 2631

Salutation: Dear Prime Minister

Lieutenant-General Shaul Mufaz
Chief of General Staff
c/o Ministry of Defence
7 'A' Street, Hakiryia
Tel Aviv, Israel

Fax: + 972 3 691 6940

Salutation: Dear Lieutenant-General

Benjamin Ben-Eliezer
Minister of Defence
Ministry of Defence
Kaplan Street, Hakiryia
Tel Aviv 67659, Israel

Fax: + 972 3 691 6940

Salutation: Dear Minister

President Yasser Arafat
Palestinian Authority
Office of the President
The Beach Forum, Gaza City
Palestinian Authority

Fax: + 972 8 282 2366

Salutation: Your Excellency

Sheikh Ahmed Yassin
Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas)
Gaza, Palestinian Authority

Faxes: + 972 8 286 6990

Salutation: Dear Sheikh Ahmed Yassin

Marwan Barghouthi
General Secretary, Fatah
Ramallah, West Bank, via Israel
Fax: +972 2 298 5729
email: marwanbargouti@hotmail.com
Salutation: Dear Mr Barghouthi

`Abdallah al-Shami (Islamic *Jihad*)
Fax: +972 8 280 3924

COPIES TO: diplomatic representatives of Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organisation accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 24 January 2002.