

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

Public Statement

AI Index: MDE 15/020/2008 (Public)

Date: 29 April 2008

Israel/Occupied Palestinian Territories: Amnesty International calls for independent investigation into killings by Israeli Forces

Amnesty International is again calling on the Israeli government to end reckless attacks by its forces on populated areas and to order an immediate, independent investigation into yesterday's strikes in Gaza which killed six Palestinians, including four children under five and their mother. An investigation by the Israeli army, as offered by Prime Minister Ehud Olmert, will not meet international standards as a thorough, independent and impartial investigation.

The attack on 28 April appears to have been carried out with reckless disregard for the lives of local residents, including children, uninvolved in hostilities between Palestinian militants and Israeli forces. It was the latest in a pattern of such attacks, which are unacceptable. So far this year, some 335 Palestinians have been killed in attacks by Israeli forces. Most were killed in Gaza and more than half of them were unarmed civilians taking no part in hostilities and offering no threat to Israelis. In the same period, 23 Israelis, including 14 civilians, were killed in attacks by Palestinian armed groups.

Amnesty International is also calling on Palestinian armed groups to cease launching attacks from populated areas and against Israeli civilians.

The Israeli attack on 28 April in Beit Hanoun killed five members of the Abu Mu'atq family - four children under five and their mother, Maysir Abu Mu'atq, aged about 40 - as they sat down to have breakfast at 8.15 in the morning. The area had apparently been surrounded since two hours earlier by about 20 armoured cars of the Israeli army. Minutes before the Mu'atq family home was hit, an Israeli strike killed Ibrahim Hujuj, aged 20, who is reported to have been a member of a Palestinian armed group.

In recent weeks, other attacks by the Israeli army have killed scores of Palestinians, many of them unarmed civilians. On 16 April nine Palestinians reportedly uninvolved in hostilities - including six children - were killed, apparently by missiles fired from a helicopter, in Juhor al-Dik village. Shortly afterwards a Reuters cameraman, who had just left his car clearly marked "press" and "TV" to film an Israeli army tank, was killed by a shell fired from the tank. The shell, which contained "flèchettes" - thousands of steel darts - killed two others on the same road.

Between 28 February and 2 March more than 100 Palestinians, about half of them not involved in the fighting, were killed during Israeli incursions in the Gaza Strip, which - with 1.5 million people living there - is one of the most densely populated areas in the world. Many attacks were carried out with reckless force.

On 1 March, an Israeli plane bombed the Attallah family's home at 5pm, killing six people and injuring six others. The targets of the attack are believed to have been the brothers Ibrahim Abdel Rahman and Khaled Abdel Rahman, members of a Palestinian armed group, but the attack was carried out with dangerous disregard for others present in the house who were not involved in the hostilities.

Amnesty International believes that Israel has clear obligations under international law to protect Palestinian civilians. It calls on the Israeli army never to use disproportionate or reckless force, including in densely populated areas where they endanger children and other unarmed civilians.

Public Document

International Secretariat, Amnesty International, 1 Easton St., London WC1X 0DW, UK

www.amnesty.org