

Israel

Stop escalation of violence in the Occupied Palestinian Territories

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Description :

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The International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH) expresses its deepest concern at the continuing violence in the Occupied Palestinian Territories. While the world's whole attention is centered on Iraq, breaches of international law continue to be committed by the Israeli army in the West Bank and Gaza.

Israeli soldiers continue to carry out unlawful killings of Palestinians in total impunity. Last week, the Israeli army carried out daily incursions in the Gaza strip accompanied by indiscriminate shelling, during which tens of Palestinians civilians were killed and scores wounded. During a single targeted assassination operation in Gaza on Tuesday 8 April, a missile was launched by the Israeli forces, which killed 7 Palestinians including 5 civilians and wounded at least 53 civilians.

The FIDH is also very concerned with the shooting, on April 11, in Rafah of a 22 years old British pacifist from the International Solidarity Movement. On 5 April, two pacifists had been wounded in the West Bank and on 16 March, Rachel Corrie, an American pacifist was run over and killed by an Israeli army bulldozer in the Gaza Strip.

The FIDH recalls that these operations by the Israeli army in the Occupied Palestinians Territories constitute serious breaches of international humanitarian law, particularly in regards to the Fourth Geneva Convention relative to the protection of civilians in time of war, adopted August 12 1949 and ratified by Israel. The Convention provides that the armed forces must distinguish between combatants and non-combatants, and must carry out their operation to realize military objectives only. Such serious breaches of the Fourth Geneva Convention, committed against people and goods protected by the Convention constitute war crimes.

The FIDH denounces any attack against Palestinian and Israeli civilians. Such acts are absolutely and unconditionally forbidden under international humanitarian law.

Destruction or damage to homes and property, constituting collective punishments has also increased these last months. The FIDH recalls that in November 2001, the UN Committee Against Torture concluded that this policy may constitute cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.

The FIDH urges Israel to:

- ▶ End all violations of human rights and international humanitarian law and punish those responsible for these violation;
- ▶ Ratify the Statute of the International Criminal Court.

Considering the obligations for the States party to the Fourth Geneva Convention "to take the necessary steps to bring to a halt acts that are contrary to the provisions of the Convention", the FIDH strongly calls upon the international community to take action for a fair and immediate peace in the Middle East. Peace will not be attainable without the end of the Israeli occupation, and without security for Israel and the Israelis being guaranteed. Peace requires compliance with the United Nations resolutions, the immediate withdrawal of the Israeli forces from the territories occupied in 1967, the dismantling of the settlements, the establishment of a Palestinian State alongside the State of Israel, respecting the legitimate rights and aspirations of both peoples.

The FIDH reiterates its call on States to decide to dispatch on site an international protection force, mandated to prevent the continuation of the violations and to ensure the implementation of the appropria