Chaos in the Occupied Palestinian Territory under Israeli occupation. FIDH calls for a cease of the attacks.
The International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH) expresses its great concern about the situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and in the Gaza Strip in particular.

In a report published in October 2006 on “The impact of the Economic Strangulation On Human Rights within the Occupied Palestinian Territory”, FIDH was extremely clear about the effect of Israel and the international community's attitude towards the Palestinian Authority: it was leading to further radicalization of the Palestinian people, it was exacerbating competition between Hamas and Fatah on the one hand, and between the government and the presidency on the other hand, leading towards possible open conflict between rival factions; it was leading to the bankruptcy of the PA, postponing as a result the existence of an independent Palestinian State on the West bank and in the Gaza Strip and subsequently pushing back a final peaceful resolution in the Middle East; in the final analysis, this attitude was creating the necessary conditions either for a return to full Israeli occupation, despite the apparent unwillingness of Israel to accept the responsibilities inferred by its status of occupying power, or for the emergence of a "failed state"- an impotent state in which extremist groups, including terrorists might prosper and threaten Israeli civilians".

Today, it seems that this exact scenario has become the reality in the OPT.

FIDH condemns the internal fighting between Hamas and Fatah, the two parties that make up the backbone of the Palestinian unity government, which killed 47 people since it began late last year, with nine people dying in the most recent clashes, according to the Palestinian Centre for Human Rights (PCHR), FIDH member organization in Gaza. Tens of people, including many children, have been injured in the crossfire of the internal clashes, including two children as on the afternoon of Saturday, 19 May 2007.

FIDH welcomes the ceasefire signed between Hamas and Fatah forces in the Gaza Strip on 19 May and calls on them to abide by its terms and those of previous agreements while recognizing the past adverse humanitarian consequences of armed violence between them and attempting to avert future violence by open political dialogue.

While deploring the regrettable internal situation in the Gaza Strip, FIDH recalls that the chaos in the Occupied Territory is taking place under Israeli occupation, now entering its fortieth year. Despite the implementation of the Israeli disengagement plan in 2005, Gaza effectively remains under occupation. The Israeli army effectively controls the life of the civilian population and Israeli economic and military policy towards the economic well-being of the Occupied Palestinian Territory had the effect of leaving no part of Palestinian daily life untouched by hardship.

In addition to the aforementioned civilian casualties related to internal strife, Israel continues its very systematic aggression against civilians: at least 32 Palestinians have been killed and 102 injured in direct relation to Israeli raids in the past week, many of which are reportedly civilian noncombatants, including women and children. FIDH firmly condemns the rocket firing from Palestinian armed groups against Israeli civilian population. Yet, the reaction by the Government of Israel results in a flagrant and serious violation of international humanitarian law. The operations of the Israeli Defence Forces amount to war crimes, according to international humanitarian and criminal law. Israel bears full responsibility for this systematic aggression, which is but one element of a wider occupation policy ranging from open violence to the restriction of movement by checkpoints, the West Bank wall and the creation of exclusive highways for settlers, to the strangulation of economic life by myriad additional restrictions on the use of natural and man-made resources and withholding vital tax revenue from the Palestinian government.

FIDH calls upon the Government of Israel:
Chaos in the Occupied Palestinian Territory under Israeli occupation. FIDH calls for a cease of the attacks

* to cease its raids on the Gaza Strip

* to lift its crushing siege of the Occupied Palestinian Territory,

* to open its crossing points, especially in Rafah in order to allow thousands of Palestinian civilian to get back home and other to leave the Gaza Strip in order to get medical treatment abroad.

* to abide by international human rights and humanitarian law that apply in the Palestinian Occupied Territory, as stated by the International Court of Justice in its Advisory Opinion of 9 July 2004.

FIDH calls upon the Palestinian factions to cease attacks against civilians in Israel and the Palestinian authority to take effective measures to prevent the occurrence of such crimes.

FIDH calls upon the international community :

* and in particular the High Contracting Parties to the Fourth Geneva Convention to fulfill their legal and moral obligations under Article 1 of the Convention to ensure Israel's respect for the Convention in the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

* to comply with its legal obligations detailed in Article 146 of the Fourth Geneva Convention to search for and prosecute those responsible for grave breaches of international humanitarian law, namely war crimes.

* to put an end to the economic sanctions imposed on the Palestinian civilian population.

Post-scriptum :

(1) http://www.fidh.org/article.php3?id_article=3518

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