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**QUESTION OF THE VIOLATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN THE OCCUPIED
ARAB TERRITORIES, INCLUDING PALESTINE**

**Letter dated 10 December 2002 from the Permanent Observer for Palestine
to the United Nations Office at Geneva addressed to the United Nations
High Commissioner for Human Rights**

Israel, the occupying Power, continues to commit both serious violations and grave breaches of international humanitarian law against the Palestinian people in the occupied Palestinian territory.

Last Friday, 6 December 2002, the Israeli occupation forces committed a new massacre, to be added to their already long list of massacres, in el-Bureij refugee camp in the Gaza Strip, which left 10 people dead, including two United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) aid workers, and at least dozens of others injured, when some 40 Israeli tanks and armoured vehicles, under a barrage of heavy gunfire from Apache gunships backing up the military sweep, stormed the densely populated camp, casting a pall over celebrations of the Muslim Eid el-Fitr holiday.

Osama Hassan Tahrawi, a 31-year-old school attendant at the UNRWA Bureij Boys' Preparatory School, was killed together with six friends and relatives by a rocket fired from a helicopter while he was standing in his yard watching the military operation.

Ahlam Riziq Kandil, 32, a schoolteacher in the UNRWA Bureij Elementary Co-educational school, was hit while in her home and died from her injuries.

Their deaths came just two weeks after another UNRWA worker, Iain Hook, was killed by an Israeli soldier in Jenin camp.

During the raid, a missile slamming into a two-storey house in the camp killed four members of the same family, while three others were killed when they left their houses fearing the bombing.

Later, Israeli tanks fired several shells at Palestinian homes wounding five people. The Israeli occupation forces prevented ambulances from reaching the camp to evacuate the injured.

Most of the 10 Palestinians killed in the raid were civilians, including the two UNRWA staff members.

At the same time, Israel continues to commit war crimes, State-sponsored terrorism and systematic human rights violations against the Palestinian people under its occupation while it relentlessly pursues its military campaign throughout the occupied Palestinian territory. In all areas, this incessant campaign of killing and destruction and collective punishment has had a devastating impact on the socio-economic conditions of the Palestinian people, resulting in a dire humanitarian situation. The Palestinian people, including children, women and the elderly, continue to suffer daily as a result of the illegal policies and practices being carried out by the Israeli occupation forces. Indeed, Palestinians continue to be killed almost daily, extrajudicial killings continue to be carried out, Palestinians continue to be abducted and detained, severe restrictions on movement, curfews and siege continue to be imposed and the destruction of public and private property, including homes, agricultural lands, fruit trees, water networks and electricity networks, also continues on a daily basis.

On 4 December, Israeli occupation forces shot dead an elderly Palestinian woman while she was on her way to the city of Ramallah in a taxi on a dirt road, to buy gifts for her 19 grandchildren, ahead of Eid el-Fitr. Fatima Obeid, 95, was shot dead in the back, and two other civilians were injured.

On Tuesday, 3 December, Israeli occupation forces killed Maher Sakallah, 19, who was found bullet-riddled in a local market in Tulkarem, after the Israeli occupation forces stormed the market with tanks and charged at civilians shopping for the upcoming Eid el-Fitr. Seven other people, including three children, were wounded. They also detained dozens of citizens in several raids in the West Bank.

This came one day after Israeli occupation forces killed a 16-year-old boy and wounded 16 others in another crowded market in the West Bank city of Jenin, on Monday, 2 December.

We appeal to Your Excellency to condemn the el-Bureij massacre, the Israeli war crimes and all the atrocities committed by the Israeli occupation forces against the Palestinian people, to take serious measures to bring a halt to such Israeli crimes and violations of international law and international humanitarian law and bring the perpetrators to justice, to remind the Government of Israel of its obligations as an occupying Power to protect the civilian population, and urge this Government to ensure that the Israeli occupation forces behave with greater restraint and discipline and in conformity with international humanitarian law.

We also appeal to Your Excellency to use all your good offices to provide for an international protection force and presence in Palestine to monitor these daily Israeli aggressions, massacres and crimes and protect the Palestinian protected persons until Israel has withdrawn its forces from all the occupied Palestinian territories, including East Jerusalem.

I would be most grateful if you could arrange to have this letter distributed to the members of the Commission on Human Rights, as an official document of the fifty-ninth session of the Commission under its agenda item 8.

(Signed): Nabil RAMLAWI
Ambassador
Permanent Observer
