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

**Letter dated 3 March 2003 from the Permanent Observer for Palestine
to the United Nations Office at Geneva addressed to the United Nations
High Commissioner for Human Rights**

In blatant violation of all norms of international law, international humanitarian law, human rights law and United Nations resolutions, the Israeli occupation forces continue relentlessly to carry out their bloody massacres and military campaigns against the Palestinian people, causing hundreds of deaths, vast destruction, the crippling of the Palestinian Authority and untold suffering for the Palestinian civilian population in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem. Not a single day passes in which the Palestinian people do not suffer from the wrath and brutality of the Israeli occupation forces. Not a single aspect of Palestinian life has remained unaffected by this military campaign. Indeed, every sector and every generation of Palestinian society have been severely impacted by the war crimes, State terrorism and systematic human rights violations being committed by the Israeli occupation forces on a daily basis.

During the month of February, the Israeli army has stolen the lives of at least 68 Palestinian people, 10 of whom were children under the age of 18. Three people who died were killed by Israeli assassinations. Some persons died at a checkpoint when they were refused passage by unethical Israeli soldiers. All of the other people were killed when the Israeli army brutally stomped into the world's most crowded neighbourhoods, already in shambles, and randomly shot people down in the street and in their homes, as they went about daily life.

In a tragic incident on Wednesday, 5 February, in the Gaza Strip, the occupation forces killed a 65-year-old Palestinian woman, Kamila Suleiman Sa'eed, when they demolished her home and crushed her to death. This is not the first time that this illegal Israeli measure of collective punishment, namely the demolition of Palestinian homes, has also caused the death of Palestinian civilians. Such killings and demolitions are among the countless compound war crimes being committed by the occupation Power against the civilian population under its occupation.

Also, on Wednesday, 5 February, the occupation forces killed two Palestinian paramedics at Al-Wafa Hospital for the Elderly in Gaza City: Abdelkarim Anwar Libid, age 22, and Omar Saad al-Din Hassan, age 21, as they were working in the hospital. The killing of these two young men represents one of many attacks by the Israeli occupation forces on medical personnel, vehicles and institutions over the course of the past 29 months. There have been over 250 attacks on ambulances recorded, dozens of which resulted in the injury or death of medical staff.

Israeli forces have killed at least 22 Palestinian paramedics and nurses since September 2000. Clearly, there is no Israeli respect for the protection accorded to such persons and facilities by international humanitarian law.

In accordance with international law and the Fourth Geneva Convention these acts are nothing short of war crimes and are a direct violation of international human rights. Palestinian medics are not only in danger because of the nature of their work, they are directly targeted by trigger-happy soldiers who have yet to be held accountable for the many crimes committed over the past 29 months.

On Sunday, February 16, during an operation to arrest Taysir Khaled, a member of the Executive Committee of the Palestine Liberation Organization, Israeli troops backed by armoured personnel carriers besieged a Nablus building, then opened fire on a crowd, killing Ayman Abu Zant (17), Mohammad Takruri (35) and Firas Mabruka (22). Another 28 were injured during the Israeli attack on Nablus, which lasted about three hours and took place when the streets were full of civilians - including many students heading home from school.

The killings and destruction by the Israeli occupation forces continued on Monday, 17 February with more than 35 tanks, backed by helicopter gunships, invading Gaza City. The occupation forces attacked and blew up a residential building, killing two Palestinians and wounding at least four other people.

Later in the day, the occupation forces committed yet another extrajudicial execution when they ambushed and killed a Palestinian man, Riyad Abu-Ziad, near Al-Bureij refugee camp.

Moreover, in the early morning hours of Tuesday, 18 February, the occupation forces carried out another extrajudicial execution with the killing of Mohammed Salman Al-Murr (28) from Yatta, south of Hebron city.

On Wednesday, 19 February, Israeli forces, including heavy machinery, armoured personnel carriers and ground troops spread out into Nablus old city. They entered the area using heavy fire directed at residential areas. After taking control of the old city, Israeli forces entered the Souq al-Basal area, Bab al-Saha, the al-Qaryoun, Jasmine, Ras al-Ain, Khalet al-'Amoud areas, raided homes and took control of several buildings, including two schools, killed two Palestinians during this raid in Nablus, including Mohammed Rabie Saber, a 15-year-old boy. Moreover, in the raid, more than 40 Palestinians have been abducted and detained by the occupation forces in the Nablus area.

Also on 19 February, the occupation forces continued to carry out intense assaults and raids throughout the Gaza Strip. In the pre-dawn hours, at least 40 tanks, backed by helicopter gunships, invaded the Shajaiyeh neighbourhood of Gaza City, while another raid was launched on the Tufah neighbourhood of the city. During these attacks, the Israeli occupation forces blew up four metal workshops, ripped out electrical cables, cutting off the electricity supply to the city, and caused damage to several other buildings. In the Tufah area, three Palestinians were killed, crushed to death when the occupation forces were blowing up the workshops. Also among those killed by the occupation forces were three Palestinian officers killed by helicopter missiles fired at a position held by the Palestinian security forces. In total, 11 Palestinians were killed and another 30 were wounded as a result of the excessive and indiscriminate force used by the Israeli occupation forces during these assaults.

On Thursday, 20 February, Nasser Abu Sufiyyeh was heading to his workplace in the Jasmine quarter in Nablus old city with his father, more than 70-years-old. An Israeli jeep stopped them, began beating Nasser's elderly father. The soldier ordered Nasser at gunpoint to leave the area without his father. When he was at a distance of 40 metres from the soldiers, one opened fire at him without any justification. He was shot three times in the back and died of severe internal bleeding before his father's eyes.

Mohammad al-Saber (15) was shot in the shoulder while standing on the roof of an apartment building in the Ras al-Ein area. He was killed instantly.

Seven others, including four children, were injured: Said al-Bouz (16); Sabrine al-Tak (16); Mohammad Qadiri (17); Ahmad al-Badawi (17); Amid Ayyad (19); Tawfiq al-Najjar (20); Samir Asmar (24).

Also on 20 February, Israeli forces killed a grandfather and his grandson. Ahmad Abu Zahra (55) and his grandson, Ahmad Abu Zahra (17), were returning home, when an Israeli sniper opened fire on them. Ahmad was shot in the head and chest, and fell into a pool of his own blood. His grandfather tried to help him. He was also shot at in the head and chest.

On Saturday, 22 February, Israeli occupation forces committed another massacre in Nablus, killing at least seven people, including three children, alongside the material destruction of some of Palestine's most historic buildings. Among those killed were Sami Halawa (43), Walid al-Masri (22), Nasr Ja'ara (14).

On Sunday, 23 February, Israeli tanks, backed by helicopter gunships, committed another massacre when they invaded the town of Beit Hanoun in the northern Gaza Strip, killing six Palestinians, seriously wounding several others and destroying properties, including several homes.

Ahmad Khalil abu Aylwan, 13, from Rafah, was also killed when Israelis shelled the area from a nearby settlement. The shelling was random and Ahmad was hit by shrapnel all over his body. Another 10 Palestinians were injured in the attack.

Also on 23 February in Gaza, the occupation forces killed a 14-year-old Palestinian boy, Mahmoud Mohammed Abu Zaher, in a playground in Khan Younis.

On Tuesday, 25 February, a Palestinian man who was shot by Israeli forces during an invasion of Qalqilya died after an Israeli hospital that had been treating him abandoned him at a checkpoint during one of the worst storms to hit the region in decades. The hospital had just thrown him out in sub-zero temperatures.

Ala Jaodat Abu Sharkh, 23, also died on 25 February from wounds sustained in an attack some days previously. He was shot in the head by Israelis when they invaded a building in Nablus; three Palestinians were killed in the same attack.

On Sunday, 2 March, Israeli soldiers in tanks and jeeps, with Apache helicopters hovering overhead, invaded Al Bureij and An Nuseirat refugee camps in the Gaza Strip and proceeded to open fire on the area, occupying houses and detaining residents, killing at least eight people, including two boys aged 13 and 16, and a 33-year-old woman, Sabri Swaidat, and leaving scores of others wounded and homeless.

Israeli troops also invaded Khan Younis killing four Palestinians including a 9-year-old boy. A Palestinian mother, Azeeza Alkaseer, completely paralysed during an earlier Israeli invasion, when her house was demolished on top of her, also passed away.

Here are the names and ages of the 11 latest victims of Israel's military invasion of the Gaza Strip:

1. 9-year-old Abd El Rahman Jadallah;
2. 13-year-old Tarek Akel;
3. 33-year-old Sabri Swaidat;
4. 50-year-old Azeeza Alkaseer;
5. 50-year-old Abed Rabbo El Sar
6. 25-year-old Mohammad Abd El-Hadi;
7. 22-year-old Muhammad Ali Al-Babdi;

8. Maha Uissa Ar-Rifa'i, 23;
9. Walid Al-Abed Al-Khatib, 24;
10. Fadi Al-Hawajri, 16;
11. Mutassam Al-Khalili al Aqel, 27.

As usually happens when Israeli troops invade Palestinian areas, ambulances were prevented from reaching the wounded. The wounded were transferred to the local clinic inside the camp, but staff were unable to provide suitable treatment due to the lack of proper equipment and resources.

Since 29 September 2000, nearly 2,200 Palestinian human beings have been killed at the hands of the Israeli army; 384 of these people were children under the age of 18 (201 under age 15, 183 aged 15-18), not even legal adults, yet they suffered the cruel death of men. Killing children has never been a recipe for peace. And 384 children cannot all be "accidentally killed".

Also immoral and in need of acknowledgement is the fact that Israel has assassinated 122 Palestinian human beings. That means these people were murdered without any chance of a trial, fair judgement or opportunity for repentance. Assassinated, blown out of their cars, helicopter bombed in their houses, etc., their neighbours or innocent people standing by them killed as well.

In addition to the killing of these Palestinians, the Israeli occupation forces also continue to raid, bulldoze and demolish homes, abduct and detain Palestinians, ransack homes and offices, to impose a suffocating military siege and severe restrictions on the movement of persons and goods, including round-the-clock curfews on several Palestinian towns and cities, and to impose illegal confiscation and annexation of land.

The imposition of such collective punishments, in direct contravention of provisions of international humanitarian law, has gravely impacted the socio-economic situation of the Palestinian people. It is widely known that the situation is one of a dire humanitarian crisis that only continues to worsen with each passing day.

I regret to inform you that as a result of the increasing number of Palestinians who continue to be killed and injured at the hands of the Israeli occupation forces with every passing day, the toll of Palestinian martyrs, since September 2000, increased to nearly 2,200 and at least 22,000 others were wounded, most of whom sustain severe and permanent disabilities.

In the light of the continued campaign of massacres, bloodshed and destruction being waged by the Israeli occupation authorities, forces and settlers in all Palestinian towns, villages and camps, we once again reiterate our call to Your Excellency, to hold Israel responsible and accountable in accordance with international and humanitarian law, to strongly condemn the Israel escalation of war crimes, massacres and bloodshed and to take immediate measures to compel Israel, the occupying Power, to cease its vicious military campaign against the Palestinian people and the Palestinian Authority, to abide by international law, to ensure that

fundamental human rights are protected and to put an end to all its violations of the principles of international law, international humanitarian law, particularly the Fourth Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

We also appeal to Your Excellency to use all your offices to provide international protection to protect the Palestinian protected persons from the ruthless Israeli attacks until Israel has withdrawn its forces from all the Palestinian Territories, occupied since June 1967, including East Jerusalem.

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

(Signed): Nabil RAMLAWI
Ambassador
Permanent Observer
