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

**Letter dated 18 October 2002 from the Permanent Observer for Palestine
to the United Nations Office at Geneva addressed to the United Nations
High Commissioner for Human Rights**

The Israeli occupation forces continue to commit further human rights violations against Palestinian civilians, including manifestly wilful killings, extrajudicial assassinations, indiscriminate shelling, incursions into Palestinian areas and the razing of agricultural land.

As part of their continued policy of State terrorism, aimed at terrorizing Palestinian civilians even inside their homes, Israeli occupation forces have committed a new massacre in Rafah refugee camp in the south of the Gaza Strip.

Yesterday, 17 October, the Israeli occupation forces invaded the Rafah refugee camp, randomly shelling by tanks a heavily populated civilian neighbourhood and hitting several houses, while the inhabitants were peacefully gathered inside their homes. Over 40 Palestinians were injured, 20 of them seriously. Eight others were killed. Two women, a child and a 4-year-old girl, were among the victims. The death toll is expected to rise as many of the injured are in a serious condition.

The Israeli Defence Forces also fired tank shells and heavy machine gun fire at two schools, one of which is run by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA).

So far in October, more than 50 Palestinians have been killed (including 15 children), and nearly 300 injured, the overwhelming majority of them civilians, as a result of Israeli military action.

The new massacre in Rafah targeting Palestinian families inside their homes is but a new episode in a series of crimes perpetrated by Israel against civilians in the occupied Palestinian territory, in violation of the human rights of the Palestinian people, at the forefront of which is the right to life, and also in total violation of all the principles of international law, international humanitarian law, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the provisions of the Fourth Geneva Convention Relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in time of war of 1949. Besides, all the massacres that have been committed by the Israeli occupation authorities for decades now, and particularly since September 2000, constitute a serious violation of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, in particular.

We reiterate our appeal to Your Excellency to directly intervene with the Government of Israel, urging it to halt such military action in heavily populated areas, to live up to its obligations under international humanitarian law and to ensure the security of the United Nations installations. We also appeal to Your Excellency to publicly condemn this policy of State terrorism, systematic, wilful killings, house demolitions and rampage that amount to war crimes and crimes against humanity at the hands of the Israeli occupation authorities, to hold the Government of Israel responsible before the whole world for its crimes against the Palestinian civilians and to use your good offices in order to provide international protection for the Palestinian civilians until Israel withdraws from all the Palestinian occupied territories.

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

(Signed): Nabil RAMLAWI
 Ambassador
 Permanent Observer
