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

**Letter dated 23 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**

The Israeli occupation authorities persist in their daily aggressions, attacks, humiliation, war crimes, State-sponsored terrorism and systematic human rights violations against the Palestinian people. They continue to use more excessive and indiscriminate force, causing more deaths, wounds and humiliation to tens of families on a daily basis. Every single day, tens of Palestinian families mourn their beloved who have perished under Israeli fire just because they happened to be inside their homes when Israeli forces start shelling, for no reason, peaceful homes, or just because they went out to go to their work or school, or to buy basic means of subsistence for their children. Nobody is spared by Israeli fire, be they elderly, women, children, or even newborn babies.

Early Sunday, 22 December, Muhsen Fouad Jabber of Khan Younis was shot and killed by the Israeli occupation forces when they opened fire at him near the illegal Israeli settlement of "Morag", east of Rafah.

On Saturday, 21 December, Israeli occupation forces opened fire on Palestinian citizens in the southern Gaza Strip, killing a 12-year-old girl identified as Hanin Abu Sitta, who was heading home from school on a road near an illegal Jewish settlement in the southern Gaza Strip town of Rafah. Hanin was hit by a bullet in the back as she walked home from school and died later in Rafah hospital while undergoing surgery for her wounds.

On Friday, 20 December, Sadikah Abu Sahloul, a 42-year-old woman, died from severe wounds she received from Israeli gunfire five months earlier during the Israeli occupation forces' invasion of the southern Gaza Strip town.

On the same day, Majdi Mousa, a 25-year-old Palestinian, was killed by Israeli gunfire when Israeli occupation forces, tanks and armoured vehicles invaded Deir al-Ballah town and opened fire at residents and their property.

On Thursday, 19 December, Nada Madi, an 11-year-old girl, was murdered in Gaza Strip, when Israeli occupation troops blindly opened fire on Palestinian civilian homes in the southern Gaza Strip town of Rafah. Nada was hit in the chest by automatic gunfire while she was in her house in Rafah, near the Israeli-controlled border with Egypt.

On the afternoon of Thursday, 19 December, the Palestinian Abdelsallah Robaiaa, 23 years old, from Jenin, was killed when an Israeli armoured vehicle intentionally ran over the car Robaiaa was driving in the company of his cousin.

On Wednesday, 18 December, Alla' Al-Sdodi, a 15-year-old Palestinian child, was killed and three civilians were injured when Israeli occupation forces invaded the southern Gaza Strip city of Rafah. He was killed on the spot after being shot with several bullets in the stomach when Israeli tanks opened fire at Palestinian houses in the al-Barazil neighbourhood in Rafah.

On Tuesday, 17 December, Jawad Zaidan, a 16-year-old boy, was killed when an Israeli tank shelled a number of Palestinian homes for no reason; three other civilians were injured in the same incident.

Also on Tuesday, 17 December, Eid Abu Hlal, a 22-year-old mentally ill person, was shot dead by Israeli occupation troops. He was hit by 10 bullets in the body and neck while walking past the Saladin Gate in Rafah, close to the Israeli-controlled border with Egypt.

On Monday, 16 December, Israeli occupation forces killed three Palestinian citizens in the Gaza Strip, two in the north and another south of the Strip.

The three victims were identified as Hassan Shalukah, 22, who was shot and killed near the illegal Israeli settlement of "Neve Dekalim", and Adel Shabaat and Mohammed Odwan, both in their early 20s, who were killed near the town of Beit Hanoun.

Meanwhile, and in flagrant violations of the provisions of the Fourth Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, particularly its article 53, and also in grave breach of article 54 of Additional Protocol I to the Geneva Conventions, under which it is prohibited to attack, destroy, remove or render useless objects indispensable to the survival of the civilian population, whatever the motive, whether in order to starve out civilians, to cause them to move away, or for any other motive, Israel, the occupying Power, has called for "territorial contiguity" between Kiryat Arba, an illegal colony overlooking Hebron, and dispersed Israeli colonies in the heart of the old city of Hebron, with the aim of minimizing the number of Palestinians living among Jewish settlers and establish Jewish points of presence.

The illegal colonies situated in the heart of Hebron highlight the devastating effects of Israel's ongoing military occupation and its accompanying colonization. Currently, an estimated 400 Israeli Jewish settlers along with 2,000 soldiers of the Israeli army have besieged 130,000 Palestinians. In its latest manifestation of ongoing colonization, Israel has announced that it will demolish 22 more Palestinian homes and expropriate 61 parcels of land in order to establish a corridor (1.7 kilometres long, 6 to 12 metres wide with a 2-metre-high wall) between the illegal colony of Kiryat Arba and the illegal colonies situated in the heart of the old city of Hebron. The corridor, which will only be accessible to Israelis, and not to the indigenous Palestinian population, will leave 110 more Palestinians homeless and result in the destruction of 20 more historic homes.

Furthermore, Israel's policy of destroying homes, objects "indispensable to the survival of the civilian population", not only dispossessing Palestinians, but also forcing Palestinians to move away from occupied Palestinian territory, collective punishment of Palestinians for an offence they have not personally committed, pillage of Palestinian property, reprisals against protected persons and their property, using armoured vehicles to raid Palestinian towns, villages and camps, dividing Palestinian areas into hermetically separated parts, thus preventing Palestinian vehicles and civilians from using the roads, making it impossible for thousands of residents to reach their workplaces, schools, and even homes, storming tens of houses and forcing the residents to stand in the cold and under the rain for several hours, storming hospitals and evacuating from them all persons including the patients, storming holy places such as the Church of the Nativity Square, attacking Palestinian reporters, uprooting fruit trees, destroying water and electricity networks, abducting and detaining dozens of Palestinians, including the imposition of severe restrictions on the movement of persons and goods, the imposition of 24-hour curfews on several cities, towns and refugee camps, thus drastically impacting the Palestinian society in all areas, destroying the Palestinian infrastructure altogether and forcing the whole Palestinian people into a dire humanitarian crisis for months now, are being carried out on a daily basis.

In the light of the continued savage war and tragedy the whole Palestinian people is suffering at the hands of the Israeli occupation authorities, forces and troops. We once again reiterate our call to Your Excellency to intervene with the Government of Israel and urge this Government to refrain from all of the above-mentioned serious violations and grave breaches of international law and international humanitarian law and all the atrocities and heinous crimes being committed against the Palestinian people.

We also appeal to Your Excellency to use all your offices to provide for an international protection force and presence in Palestine to monitor these Israeli daily 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
