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

**Letter dated 30 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 continue to terrorize the Palestinian people by their heavily armed incursions and excessive use of force against the Palestinian people, causing wide destruction to the Palestinian infrastructure and causing death, injury, panic and total devastation among civilians all over the occupied Palestinian territory.

In their campaign targeting Palestinian children, the Israeli occupation forces have added to their long list of shooting to death innocent children, the killing of Abdelkarim Salameh, on the morning of Sunday, 29 December 2002. The boy was returning home from a school exam when Israeli troops opened fire from a jeep, fatally wounding him and injuring another boy, aged 11, in the legs.

On Saturday, 28 December, Hanin Abu Suleiman, a 9-year-old Palestinian girl, was shot dead by the Israeli occupation forces in the Khan Yunis refugee camp in the southern Gaza Strip, as she was hit in the head by a bullet fired from an Israeli position close to the Israeli illegal settlement of "Gush Katif", near the refugee camp in the southern Gaza Strip.

In flagrant violation of articles 3 and 147 of the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War and its Additional Protocol I, and also in gross violation of human rights norms that affirm the right to life and the prohibition of execution of civilians, the Israeli occupation forces committed further extrajudicial executions, grave breaches and war crimes against the Palestinian people in the occupied Palestinian territory last week.

In the early morning hours of Thursday, 26 December, a large number of Israeli forces besieged Qabatiyyeh town, south-east of Jenin, on three sides, protected by around 10 tanks, armoured personnel carriers, a number of jeeps and military ambulances.

Israeli forces ordered the family of Yusef Abu al-Rabb, 40, to leave their home. Using Abu al-Rabb's wife and children as human shields, they besieged the building and asked him to surrender. An Israeli sniper opened fire on him, and he was shot around 10 times, at a distance of no more than 100 metres, in several places in his body, but particularly around his head and chest. He was killed immediately.

After the Israeli forces ordered the body to be taken away, the house was destroyed. Five people used to live in the house, including three children.

On the same day, Israeli Special Forces reached a home in the western part of the city of Tulkaren, with the protection of a large number of Israeli troops. They surrounded the home of Jamal Yehia, 32. The Special Forces, dressed in civilian clothes, opened fire on Jamal Yehia from a distance of no more than 1 metre. He was shot nine times in his body, particularly around the chest, stomach and neck. He fell into a pool of his own blood in front of his family. The Special Forces forbade anybody from assisting him or calling paramedics.

Also on the same day, in Ramallah, Special Forces using a Palestinian car and armed with rifles and guns besieged the main street of Ramallah, Duwar al-Saa'a. They surrounded a Palestinian and began to shoot at his head using a gun at extremely close range. The man was identified as Bassam al-Ashqar, 26, from Ein'Arik near Ramallah.

Israeli soldiers driving through the town in at least three military vehicles opened fire, killing 19-year-old Mahdi Sameer Abu Ubied, a senior student at the Ramallah governmental high school. He was killed by three live bullets in his chest.

Also on 26 December, Israeli forces attacked the hospital in Ramallah. The Israeli soldiers entered the grounds of the Ramallah hospital, burst into a room, shot dead one man and arrested four others - including a 55-year-old Palestinian.

In Nablus, also on 26 December, Mohammad Ashour from Nablus was killed in the old city, after being shot twice in the chest and face. Israeli forces surrounded the old city and opened indiscriminate fire on residents. More than 30 people were injured by the bullets and shrapnel, some critically.

On Monday, 23 December, Mustafa Baqa, 30, was riding on agricultural equipment with a colleague, Shaman Sabah, 29. They were taking a dirt road called "Wad Hassan" around 3 kilometres west of Burqeen in Jenin, when they were confronted by a number of Israeli Special Forces in a Palestinian-registered car. The Special Forces opened fire on the two, who were killed instantly. Both were shot around 20 times in the back, head and chest, from a distance of no more than 50 metres.

Over the last two years, at least 2,104 Palestinians have been killed by the Israeli occupation forces and armed settlers, 185 of whom were killed in extrajudicial assassinations; 76 of those 185 were either bystanders or were mistakes by the Israeli soldiers.

Meanwhile, Israeli practices assaulting Palestinians continue in every field of life, such as preventing patients from obtaining access to medical care, including the chronically ill and mothers or infants, using excessive, indiscriminate and disproportionate force against the civilian population, continuing military raids on Palestinian cities, towns, villages and refugee camps, abduction and detention of thousands of Palestinians. Currently, there are more than 5,000 Palestinians, mostly males between the ages of 15 and 55, who continue to be held by the occupying Power in prisons or detention centres. Wanton destruction and widespread damage affect both public and private Palestinian property - thousands of homes, including refugee shelters, hundreds of vehicles, vital infrastructure, including water, electricity and sewage networks and roads, institutions of the Palestinian Authority, religious and historic sites, and agricultural land. These are all practices to which the besieged Palestinian people is subjected on a daily basis, in flagrant violation of all human rights norms, particularly the right to life and the right to live in dignity, and also in flagrant violation of the principles of international law, international humanitarian law and the provisions of the Fourth Geneva Convention of 12 August 1949.

In the light of the continued savage war and tragedy that the whole Palestinian people is suffering at the hands of the Israeli occupation authorities, forces and settlers, we once again reiterate our call to Your Excellency to intervene with the Government of Israel and to urge this Government to refrain from all of the above-mentioned serious violations and grave breaches of international law and international humanitarian law and from 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 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 on Human Rights under its agenda item 8.

(Signed) Nabil RAMLAWI  
Ambassador  
Permanent Observer

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