



June 26, 2014

Dear Member of Congress:

Following last month's killing of two Palestinian teenagers by Israeli soldiers, Amnesty International is calling for major reforms to Israel's system for investigating alleged violations by its military and security forces. Until the Government of Israel enacts serious mechanisms to ensure accountability for human rights violations, the U.S. Congress should suspend all arms transfers to Israel.

The recent abduction of three Israeli teenagers is a violation of international humanitarian law, and Amnesty International calls on those holding the abducted teenagers to release them immediately and unconditionally. However, these abductions cannot justify the Israeli Defense Forces' unlawful collective punishment of hundreds of thousands of Palestinians in the Occupied Palestinian Territories. The recent deaths of several more Palestinians in June are additional cause for concern.

The unlawful collective punishment measures referenced above include the imposition of a complete closure on the Hebron district of the occupied West Bank, which prevents some 750,000 Palestinians from moving between villages and the city of Hebron. Collective punishment of civilians is prohibited under international law at all times.

This unlawful collective punishment by Israeli security forces in the occupied West Bank follows the killing of two Palestinian teenagers by Israeli forces in May. On May 15<sup>th</sup>, Israeli forces shot and killed Palestinian teenagers Nadeem Nowarah (17) and Mohammad Abu Daher (16) in the occupied West Bank. The CCTV security footage of the incident from a nearby establishment shows that the youths were not posing any immediate threat to Israeli forces or anyone else.

Unfortunately, this was not an isolated incident. Over the past three years, the number of Palestinians killed or seriously injured by Israeli forces in non-combat situations has

risen significantly. Indeed, there were more deaths in 2013 than in 2011 and 2012 combined. Amnesty International has documented this alarming trend in our 2014 report, “Trigger Happy: Israel’s Use of Excessive Force in the West Bank.”

Israeli forces have repeatedly responded with extreme violence to Palestinian protests against Israel’s occupation, as well as in response to Palestinian protests against Israel’s discriminatory policies, confiscation of land, and construction of unlawful settlements. Peaceful protesters, civilian bystanders, human rights activists, and journalists are among those who have been killed or injured. In some of the cases that Amnesty International has examined and documented, it appears that Palestinians killed by Israeli soldiers were victims of willful killings. If so, such killings would amount to war crimes.

As a matter of urgency, we ask you to raise this issue with your contacts and counterparts in the Israeli Embassy and government. The Israeli government is currently in the process of reviewing recommendations made by its 2013 Turkel Commission, which proposed major changes to Israel’s system for investigating alleged violations by its military and security forces. Such reforms would bring Israeli accountability mechanisms closer to international standards.

Unfortunately, a year has elapsed since the Turkel Commission’s recommendations were first issued. During this time, there have not been any observable improvements in restraint or accountability. Current investigations of alleged human rights violations by Israeli soldiers are neither prompt nor thorough. Israeli investigators are not independent from the military body that provides legal advice to Israeli soldiers, and they do not have the authority to investigate policies ordered by superior officers.

The U.S. is the largest foreign supplier of weapons, munitions, police equipment, and military aid to Israel. As a consequence, the U.S. has special responsibilities in the context of Israel’s lack of accountability for human rights violations. U.S. policy prohibits the provision of weapons where they will be used in grave human rights violations. The killing of Palestinians who pose no threat, including

children, in the Occupied Palestinian Territories has clearly reached this threshold.

F-16s, Hellfire missiles, U.S. government-issued Caterpillar bulldozers, Apache helicopters and other weapons, munitions and equipment have been directly linked to violations of international humanitarian and human rights law by Israeli forces. Knowing this, the U.S. government is both violating its own law and policy, as well as complicit in the commission of these human rights violations.

In the last three years, at least 261 Palestinians have been seriously injured by live ammunition fired by Israeli forces in the West Bank. This includes 67 children. Since January of 2011, more than 8,000 Palestinians in the West Bank have been wounded by other means, including rubber-coated metal bullets and the reckless use of tear gas. In some cases documented, victims have also died as a result of their use. The 8,000 or more wounded Palestinians include some 1,500 children.

For these reasons, we call on the U.S. government to suspend transfers of munitions, weapons, crowd control devices, and military training to Israel. Such a suspension of U.S. arms transfers to Israel must be maintained until Israel puts in place effective mechanisms to ensure that these transfers will not be used to commit or facilitate violations under international humanitarian and human rights law.

Sincerely,



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