

July 8, 2006

Bloodbath in Gaza: Israeli War Crimes Continue with Impunity

Palestinian National Initiative

Israel's bloody re-occupation of the Gaza Strip entered its 10th day on Saturday. In the 4-day period between Wednesday 5th and Saturday 9th July alone, a total of 46 Palestinians have been killed in a series of Israeli aerial, artillery and ground attacks, predominantly in the Beit Lahiya and Atatra areas of the Gaza Strip where 44 people have been killed. A further 2 Palestinians were killed during an Israeli military incursion into Jenin last Thursday.

One of those killed in the attacks on Gaza was 20-year-old Shadi Omar, a disabled man suffering from a hearing and speech impairment. Another man had been handcuffed and blindfolded before being executed through a shot to the head at close range.

A further 115 people have been injured, predominantly in the Gaza Strip, the majority of whom are civilians and half of whom are children. Fourteen are said to be in critical condition.

Israeli tanks now stand within 500 metres of Gaza City, and all former Israeli settlements in northern Gaza, abandoned under last August's 'disengagement plan' have now been reoccupied by the Israeli army, together with the industrial zone.

With the prolonged closure of the Rafah crossing, 5,000 Palestinians have been stranded on the Egyptian side of the border without adequate food and shelter. Hundreds of chronically ill patients, including cancer and heart patients requiring essential life-saving medical treatment in Gaza itself, have been unable to leave. One man, 78-year-old Abu Khalid Daoud, died at the crossing on Friday 7 July.

Meanwhile, 27 parliamentarians, including 8 cabinet ministers, kidnapped at the beginning of the crisis remain under detention without charge, representing a serious attempt by Israel to undermine democratically elected Palestinian institutions.

The Palestinian National Initiative strongly condemned the continuation of Israel war crimes in the Gaza Strip, and expressed shock at the international community's willingness to allow these acts to continue with impunity.

As such, the PNI urgently appeals to the international community, particularly to United Nations bodies, and members of the Quartet, for immediate intervention in calling on Israel to

- Seek a diplomatic solution through negotiations;
- End its bombardment of the Gaza Strip and stop the targeting of civilian infrastructure;
- Allow for immediate repairs to begin on Gaza's electricity and water plants;
- Open all crossings into the Gaza Strip and facilitate the movement of people as well as the entry of fuel, food, and other essential items; and
- Immediately release all democratically elected parliamentarians and cabinet ministers being held without charge

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