
Human rights chief concludes visit to Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory

"International human rights law and international humanitarian law are not negotiable. No individual or state can be considered exempt, if they violate the law," Navi Pillay told a press conference in Jerusalem on 11 February when she concluded her first visit to Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT) as the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights.

She said of "paramount concern" is that "the politics of conflict, peace and security are constantly leading to the downgrading, or setting aside, of the importance of binding international human rights and humanitarian law."

"My mandate is independent and impartial and my comments, reports and actions are always firmly rooted in international human rights law. I do not do politics, I do law. I am particularly concerned about whether or not the rule of law is being applied in line with international standards," the High Commissioner stressed.

Pillay highlighted key human rights concerns and specific issues both in Israel and the OPT. Among others, she said the settlement of Israeli citizens in the OPT "should be stopped altogether" and described how she had seen for herself the "intensely negative impact the fragmentation of the West Bank by the Wall, settlements and checkpoints is having on human rights, peace, development and the Palestinians' right to self-determination."

The High Commissioner also urged "the militants in Gaza to halt firing rockets immediately."

"They are not only committing war crimes and continuing to terrorize large numbers of civilians, they are also doing a disservice to the Palestinian people by placing a major obstacle in the path of the peace process and playing into the hands of those who wish to maintain the blockade," she said.

"Another overarching human rights concern is the lack of accountability on many fronts. Individual officials and members of the security and military forces in Israel and the OPT, including the de facto authorities in Gaza, have been violating international human rights law for years, with few prosecutions, successful or otherwise," said Pillay.

During her visit from 6 to 11 February 2011, Pillay met officials at the highest level including Israeli President Shimon Peres, Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas and Prime Minister Salam Fayyad, Israeli and Palestinian human rights defenders, as well as civilians and UN agencies on the ground.

[Read the full opening statement of the High Commissioner's press conference.](#)