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

**Letter dated 14 October 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 forces added during the last two weeks at least two new massacres to their list of massacres, as part of their continuous campaign of war crimes, State terrorism and systematic human rights violations against the Palestinian people in the occupied Palestinian territory, defying all the resolutions of the United Nations and violating all principles of international law, international humanitarian law, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the provisions of the Fourth Geneva Convention Relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War.

On Sunday, 13 October, Israeli occupation forces, backed by tanks and armoured vehicles, invaded the city of Rafah in the southern tip of the Gaza Strip, killing two civilians, including a 4-year-old boy, who was crushed to death after blowing up his family's house. He was killed by falling masonry, as Israeli soldiers dynamited a nearby house with a charge so strong that it destroyed the child's house and the one next door. Twenty-five other people were injured when Israeli troops dynamited an area in southern Gaza while the occupants were sleeping.

The Israeli troops with armoured vehicles imposed a curfew on the re-occupied neighbourhoods, threatening to shoot any one who disobeys orders. Israeli bulldozers demolished a number of citizens' homes, some of which were demolished while their inhabitants were still inside, and soldiers opened fire indiscriminately at citizens' homes and property. Dozens of Israeli snipers were deployed on the roofs of civilian buildings and were shooting at any one who was spotted in the streets. Israeli soldiers also occupied dozens of citizens' homes, turning them into military outposts.

The second massacre took place in the early morning hours of Monday 7 October, when Israeli tanks, supported by gunships, invaded the town of Khan Yunis. The Israeli occupying forces shelled several neighbourhoods in the town, shot randomly at the inhabitants and at some point fired a missile on a large crowd in the neighbourhood of Al-Amal, killing at least 13 Palestinians and injuring 110 others, at least 25 of whom were in critical condition. This criminal and terrorist Israeli behaviour continued to such point that Israeli troops opened fire at Khan Yunis Hospital where the injured were being treated.

The heaviest losses were sustained on Monday night, 7 October, as Israeli troops were withdrawing after attacking Khan Yunis. When local residents went out in the streets to assess the damage and help the injured, an Apache helicopter suddenly turned around and fired missiles at the crowds, instantly killing at least eight.

In addition to these mass killings and massacres, the Israeli occupation forces continue to perpetrate daily hideous crimes against the most vulnerable groups of the Palestinian people, namely the elderly, women and children. Children are often targeted and chased by Israeli tanks and soldiers while on their way to or from school. Several of them are killed or injured each day. They have no safe place any more where they can live peacefully, not even inside their homes. Maisa Inad Zanun, a 12-year-old girl was studying in her bedroom on Tuesday night, 8 October, when Israeli troops fired at her house with heavy artillery, injuring her in the chest and killing her instantly.

I regret to inform you that since 28 September 2000, at least 1,947 Palestinians have been killed by the Israeli war machine and approximately 21,000 others injured, many of whom have sustained injuries and permanent disabilities.

Once against we appeal to Your Excellency to directly intervene with the Government of Israel and publicly condemn this policy of State terrorism, systematic, wilful killings, house demolitions and rampage which amounts to war crimes and crimes against humanity at the hands of the Israeli occupation authorities, to hold the Government of Israel responsible before the whole world for its crimes against the Palestinian civilian population, crimes which violate the most basic human rights, most important of which is the right to life and the right to live in peace and dignity, and to call for providing international protection for the Palestinian civilian population until Israel withdraws from all Palestinian occupied territories.

I would be most grateful if you could arrange to have this letter and the annex* thereto circulated to the distinguished members of the Commission on Human Rights, as an official document of its fifty-ninth session under agenda item 8.

(Signed) Nabil RAMLAWI
Ambassador

* Reproduced as received, in the language of submission only.

