



PALESTINIAN CENTRE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

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Mary Robinson
UN High Commissioner for Human Rights
Geneva
Switzerland

15 April 2002

Dear Mrs. Robinson,

I am writing regarding your forthcoming mission to the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPTs) as mandated by the 58th Session of the Commission on Human Rights earlier this month. In light of the emergency situation here in the OPTs, PCHR greatly appreciates the timing of this latest mission and your personal participation. However, PCHR is concerned that you have yet to arrive in the OPTs to conduct your emergency mission, despite the call for its "immediate" deployment. PCHR is concerned that any request to the Israeli authorities for permission to enter the OPTs will only allow them to delay such a mission. Israeli authorities have consistently denied access to areas of the West Bank for humanitarian workers, humanitarian supplies, medical personnel, ambulances, foreign diplomats, local and international human rights workers, and the media. The denial of access to areas including Jenin, Ramallah, Bethlehem, and Nablus has enabled the Israeli authorities to maintain an international silence on their recent military activities. This silence cannot be allowed to continue. In addition to the immediate access for emergency humanitarian supplies and personnel, including medical, to provide essential services (including removal and treatment of the injured, removal of the dead, and distribution of food, water and medical supplies), clearly it is essential that the details of Israel's military activities be investigated by independent international bodies.

Thus the visit of the High Commissioner is particularly significant at this time. In light of failing diplomatic initiatives to halt or even restrain Israel's latest military offensive, it is imperative that independent and detailed investigations, conducted as comprehensively as possible, are conducted immediately. The attempts of the Israeli authorities to delay your and all other visits to investigate the violations of human rights perpetrated by the Israeli military in recent days and weeks, and since the beginning of the Intifada, cannot be allowed to succeed.

We urge you to begin your mission without delay to ensure that the report of the High Commissioner on the current human rights situation in the OPTs is presented to the Commission, as requested, with adequate time for its discussion before the conclusion of the Commission on 26 April 2002. In order to ensure that this takes place, we ask that you either visit without waiting for permission from the Israeli authorities or that you publicly announce Israel's failure to allow you to carry out your mandate in this regard.

I look forward to a rapid response to this urgent request.

Yours sincerely,

Raji Sourani
Director
Palestinian Centre for Human Rights