



PALESTINIAN CENTRE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

Raji Sourani
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Gaza
Occupied Palestinian Territories

Mary Robinson
UN High Commissioner for Human Rights
Geneva
Switzerland

22 April 2002

Dear Mrs. Robinson,

PCHR is deeply disappointed by your silence on Israel's decision to block the visiting mission that you were mandated to lead by the Commission on Human Rights in resolution 2002/1 (5 April).

PCHR expected that you and the other members of the visiting mission would either come to the OPT, regardless of the position of Israeli authorities, and/or publicly denounce Israel's obstruction of the visiting mission. PCHR also expects that Israel's intransigence will be highlighted in your final report to the current session of the Commission on Human Rights.

PCHR recalls that permission from Israel was not and should not have been a precondition for your visit to the region in November 2000. Similarly, Professor John Dugard, the Special Rapporteur for Human Rights in the OPT, has visited the region twice during the al-Aqsa Intifada without the cooperation of Israeli authorities. PCHR understands the need to seek cooperation and guarantees of security from parties to the conflict. But allowing Israel to veto the visiting mission – especially after the annihilation of the Jenin refugee camp – is to strengthen its impunity for massive and systematic violations of international humanitarian law, including war crimes.

As we have expressed to you on previous occasions, the unprecedented human rights and humanitarian catastrophe that has unfolded is the outcome of the international community's longstanding failure to protect Palestinian civilians in the OPT, a failure that has granted Israel license to act as a state above the law. PCHR is deeply distressed by the fact that killings of Palestinian civilians and widespread wanton destruction of property by Israeli occupying forces not only continued after the adoption of resolution 2002/1 on 5 April, but accelerated, especially in Jenin, Nablus, and Bethlehem.

During this time of unprecedented bloodshed, PCHR has sought your ethical authority to strengthen the voices of victims and we are deeply disappointed that you will not be able to do this through the visiting mission. Given that the situation will continue to deteriorate and that the worst is yet to come, however, PCHR renews its call for you to exert all possible efforts within your mandate to protect human rights in the OPT, to speak truth to power in the face of current and future human



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rights catastrophes. A badly needed first step in this direction is holding Israel accountable for its refusal to cooperate with the visiting mission and its other efforts to evade thorough and impartial investigations of its activities.

Yours sincerely,

Raji Sourani
Director
Palestinian Centre for Human Rights