

ICRC Press Release

The ICRC is Deeply Concerned over House Destructions in Rafah

Tel Aviv - 18.05.04 (ICRC) The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) is deeply concerned about the humanitarian consequences of the destruction of property carried out during the past days by the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) in Rafah, in the Gaza Strip, along the international border with Egypt. Hundreds of Palestinian civilians, including women, children and elderly were made homeless and their household facilities destroyed. The ICRC has already delivered tents and house destruction relief kits to Rafah families in need and will continue to do so as necessary.

According to International Humanitarian Law (IHL) Israel has the right to take measures to ensure the security of its armed forces. However, these measures must be taken in accordance with the relevant rules of IHL, in particular those of the Fourth Geneva Convention.

The destruction of property in occupied territories is prohibited by IHL, unless such destruction is rendered absolutely necessary by military operations (article 53, Fourth Geneva Convention); that is to say, movements, manoeuvres and other actions taken by the armed forces with a view to fight. Therefore, the destruction of property as a general security measure is prohibited.

Attacks from civilian houses or any other use of civilian facilities to support hostile acts against IDF soldiers is prohibited by IHL as it puts the civilian population in danger. However, such illegal acts cannot justify collective penalties against the residents or the families of those who have committed offenses or those suspected of involvement in such acts.

In addition, the consequences of house destruction must be taken into account: namely Israel, as the Occupying Power, has the duty to ensure basic standards of living of the displaced civilians, such as adequate alternative housing.

The ICRC strongly calls for the respect of all relevant rules of IHL in the operations being carried out in the Gaza Strip.

For further information, please contact:

Simon Schorno, ICRC Jerusalem, tel. ++972 52 956 371
Uriel Masad, ICRC Tel Aviv, tel. ++ 972 64 681 455
Iyad Nasr, ICRC Gaza, tel. ++ 972 59 77 19 48