

Annan voices 'serious concern' over attempted extra-judicial killing by Israel

Press Release, 10 June 2003 - United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan voiced "serious concern" today over Israel's attempted extra-judicial killing of a Palestinian political leader in Gaza and again called on the Israeli Government to "desist from the disproportionate use of force."

"He reiterates his consistent opposition to such actions," a statement issued by a spokesman for Mr. Annan said of the attempt against Hamas leader Abdel-Aziz al-Rantissi. "Today's action is likely to complicate even further the efforts by the Palestinian Prime Minister to halt violence and terrorism by Palestinian groups."

Mr. Annan condemned the killing in the attack of Palestinian civilians, including a mother and her three-year-old daughter. "He calls again on the Government of Israel to desist from the disproportionate use of force, especially in densely populated areas," the statement added.

The Secretary-General, who yesterday deplored violence by Palestinian groups over the weekend, said he believed Israelis and Palestinians faced a stark choice. "Either they follow the Road Map that leads to the establishment of two states, Israel and Palestine, living side by side in peace and security; or they take the low road that spirals down into an endless cycle of violence, counter-violence and revenge," the statement declared.

"Events of the past few days illustrate in graphic form the consequences of the latter course," it said.

Mr. Annan urged leaders on both sides to "show the wisdom, courage and restraint needed to commit themselves to implementing the Road Map," the plan drawn up by the diplomatic quartet - UN, United States, European Union and Russia - calling for Israelis and Palestinians to take a series of parallel and reciprocal steps over the next three years towards the vision of establishing two states living side by side in peace and security.