Upon instructions from our respective Governments, we have the honour to bring to your urgent attention the following facts:

Reports in the world press indicate that, during the past few days, hundreds of men and women were arbitrarily arrested in the Israeli-occupied Arab territories; that these innocent civilians are being held by the Government of Israel as hostages; and that the entire population of the occupied territories has been threatened with further measures of greater repressiveness. In view of the persistent refusal by the Israeli occupation authorities to permit international fact-finding missions to visit the occupied territories in fulfilment of their mandate under resolutions of the Security Council, the General Assembly or other United Nations bodies, press reports have been and remain a principal means by which the international community can be informed about the measures of repression which have been systematically pursued by Israel in the occupied territories since the beginning of the occupation.

It may be recalled that the arbitrary arrest and detention of civilian inhabitants of occupied territories in reprisal for actions which they did not personally commit, and the taking of hostages under any pretext whatsoever, are specifically and unequivocally outlawed in the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, of 12 August 1949. Article 33 of the Convention declares that "no protected person may be punished for an offence

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he or she has not personally committed"; and that "reprisals against protected persons and their property are prohibited". Likewise, article 34 declares: "The taking of hostages is prohibited".

It may be further recalled that Israel is a party to the Geneva Convention under reference, and that both the Security Council and the General Assembly, along with other organs of the United Nations, have repeatedly called upon Israel to observe faithfully the provisions of that Convention. Various competent organs of the United Nations, including the Security Council and the General Assembly, have also condemned Israel on several occasions for violating the provisions of that Convention in the Arab territories under its occupation.

However, the recent measures of arbitrary, large-scale arrests, the taking of hostages, and the intimidation of the entire population of the occupied territories constitute a grave escalation of Israel's methodical violations of the Geneva Convention and of all the humanitarian resolutions formally adopted by competent organs of the United Nations in connexion therewith. These recent Israeli measures, in fact, constitute an undisguised defiance of the norms of civilized conduct.

When a Member of the United Nations embarks, as a part of its official governmental policy, upon a systematic programme of collective terrorization of the entire population of territories under its military occupation, its action constitutes a grave provocation of all States in the area and exacerbates existing tensions. Furthermore, the Israeli decision to unleash this new and expanded campaign of terror against the population of the Arab territories under its occupation is a challenge to the principles and ideals, as well as the authority, of the international Organization, on the eve of the twenty-fifth anniversary session of the General Assembly of the United Nations - one of whose principal accomplishments is the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which is now being brutally defied by a Member of the United Nations.

We have the honour to request that this letter be circulated as an official document of the General Assembly and the Security Council.
(Signed) Noureddine HAKMI
(Algeria)
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