

Executive Board
United Nations Educational,
Scientific and Cultural Organization

Hundred-and-sixteenth Session

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Item 5.1.5 of the agenda

**IMPLEMENTATION OF 21 C/RESOLUTION 14.1 CONCERNING EDUCATIONAL
AND CULTURAL INSTITUTIONS IN THE OCCUPIED ARAB TERRITORIES:
REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL**

ADDENDUM

SUMMARY

In this addendum, the Director-General submits a summary of communications received by the Secretariat referring to cases of poisoning of schoolchildren on the West Bank in March and April 1983.

1. At the end of March and in April 1983, the Secretariat received communications from the Director-General of ALECSO, the Chief of the Education Department of the PLO in Damascus, the national Office of the Palestine Human Rights Campaign in the United States, the National Office of the Moroccan National Teachers' Association and, the Commission on Arab Women, which was holding its tenth session in Tunis, referring to numerous cases of poisoning of Palestinian schoolchildren, especially girls, in Jenin, Arraba, Tulkarm and, the Hebron region on the West Bank.
2. The communications stressed the gravity of the cases of poisoning and requested the Director-General 'to intervene and find ways and means of rapidly putting an end to the new and terrible ordeals inflicted on Palestinian young people'. Some communications called for the setting up of an international commission of inquiry to investigate the matter thoroughly.
3. The Director-General of ALECSO said in his telex message of 31 March 1983 that 'schoolchildren, especially girls, in the Arab occupied territories, particularly in Jenin, have been the victims of duly attested acts of poisoning, to which the media of the occupying power itself have drawn attention'.
4. The participants in the tenth session of the Commission on Arab Women held in Tunis said in their telex message of 30 March 1983 that they were 'convinced that the responsibility lay entirely with the Israeli authorities' and requested the Director-General to intervene 'to put a stop to this genocide and protect the life of the Palestinian people'.
5. The Permanent Delegate of Israel sent a letter, Ref/205 dated 2 May 1983, to the Director-General stating that 'the media and certain political spokesmen, mostly Arab, have recently launched a campaign alleging so-called poisoning of high-school students, most of them girls, in Judea and Samaria'.
6. According to the letter from the Permanent Delegate of Israel, this phenomenon had been looked into by Israeli medical experts, who had concluded 'that there was no evidence to indicate that there was any poisoning in the area'. Nevertheless, the letter continued, the Minister of Health of Israel had invited a team of researchers from the Public Health Service, Centers of Disease Control, in Atlanta (Georgia) in the United States 'to conduct an independent assessment on the spot'. The Permanent Delegate of Israel said that the analyses and examinations carried out by this team, which had just published a summary of its report, 'have failed "to detect the consistent presence of any environmental toxin" and that 'this phenomenon "was induced by anxiety"'.
7. She enclosed with her letter a copy of the summary of the report by the Public Health Service, Centers of Disease Control, in Atlanta, dated 4 April 1983, in which its authors state, inter alia:

We conclude that this epidemic of acute illness was induced by anxiety. It may have been triggered initially either by psychological factors or by sub-toxic exposure to H₂S. Its subsequent spread was mediated by psychogenic factors. Newspaper and radio reports may have contributed to this spread. The epidemic ended after West Bank schools were closed. We observed no evidence of malingering or of deliberate fabrication of symptoms. We observed no evidence of reproductive impairment in affected patients.

8. In a letter to the Permanent Delegate of Israel dated 7 June 1983, the Director-General acknowledged receipt of her letter Ref/205 and of the enclosure. The Director-General enclosed with his letter copies of the communications received by the Secretariat on the subject and requested the Permanent Delegate to let him have any comments the Government of Israel wished to make on the matter. In addition, he informed her that the

content of the two documents and of the other communications on the subject received by the Secretariat would be summarized in an addendum to document 116 EX/16.

9. The Director-General was further informed that the members of the United Nations Security Council met informally on 4 April 1983 and asked the Secretary-General to carry out independent inquiries into the causes and effects of the grave problem of reported cases of poisoning in the Arab occupied territories of the West Bank.

10. The Director-General was also informed that the World Health Organization had sent a mission to the Arab occupied territories on 4 April 1983 to conduct an independent inquiry. At the Thirty-sixth World Health Assembly, which was held in Geneva from 2 to 18 May 1983, this matter was discussed under item 32 of the agenda 'Health conditions of the Arab population in the Arab occupied territories, including Palestine' and referred to in the resolution adopted on that item on 16 May 1983.

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CONCERNING EDUCATIONAL AND CULTURAL INSTITUTIONS
IN THE OCCUPIED ARAB TERRITORIES: REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL**

ADDENDUM 2

SUMMARY

This addendum contains a letter dated 7 June 1983 which was sent to the Director-General by the Permanent Delegate of Israel to Unesco in reply to a letter from the Director-General dated 19 February 1983, of which a detailed summary is given in paragraph 35 of document 116 EX/16.

Paris, 7 June 1983

Permanent Delegation of Israel
to Unesco

Sir,

I wish to refer to your letter reference 14/9010/17.13 dated 19 February 1983.

Before commenting on the various points raised in it, I should, like to point out that the education system, the curriculum, the teaching methods and the textbooks in Judaea and Samaria are identical to those used in Jordan and, in the case of the Gaza Strip, identical to those used in Egypt.

Thus, candidates for the secondary school leaving certificate examination in Judaea and Samaria receive the examination papers from Jordan. The papers are distributed by the local teaching staff and sent back to Jordan. The results are published and the certificates awarded by the Jordanian Government. The same procedures are followed in the Gaza Strip with the leaving certificate examinations of the Egyptian Ministry of Education. Whenever reforms are introduced in Jordan and Egypt, they are automatically applied in Judaea and Samaria and the Gaza Strip.

I should also like to draw attention to the increase in the number of pupils sitting final secondary school examinations. In Judaea and Samaria, there was an increase from 2,132 for the school year 1967/1968 to 8,315 for the school year 1981/1982. In the Gaza Strip, the corresponding figures were 3,654 and 5,475.

With regard to the planning and co-ordination of educational activities, I should like to point out that a Board of Education composed of ten local educationists and teachers operates in Judaea and Samaria. This Board co-ordinates education activities and adapts them to the specific needs of the population, taking care to remain within the framework laid down by the Jordanian education system.

I am satisfied that this Board of Education will find ways of stepping up its activities in the light of your suggestions in order to identify priorities for education as a whole and for technical education in particular.

As far as the content and methods of teaching are concerned, the Board of Education and local teachers endeavour, with the assistance of the Israeli authorities, to review the application of curricula continuously with a view to bringing them into line with modern ideas.

The suggestion regarding the establishment of a technical and educational research centre for vocational training will be submitted, to the competent educational authorities, who will look into the possibility of setting up such a centre with the assistance of UNDP.

The UNDP has, in fact, investigated development needs on the spot and has already drawn up a number of projects, some of which are now being implemented. The projects include, inter alia, centres for children to be used for extra-curricular activities, a technical institute providing specialist training for women in various fields, a community centre in the Qasbah of Nablus and a series of technological and vocational specialization projects. With regard to the training of teachers, further training courses, in Arabic and English, are held regularly during the summer holidays for teaching staff in Judaea and Samaria and in the Gaza Strip. Most of these courses take place in those areas, although a number are held in Israeli universities which have the necessary facilities, experience and administrative structures. Arrangements for these courses are made in accordance with the recommendations of local inspectors of education and approved by the board of education, thus, this year, training courses will be held in fourteen centres spread throughout all the districts of the territories in question and will be attended by 1,120 primary, preparatory and secondary-school teachers from Judaea and Samaria and 710 from the Gaza Strip in such subjects as mathematics, the natural sciences, art education, languages, sport, domestic science and technical education. In addition, during the present school year, 340 preparatory and secondary-school teachers have attended further training courses in Israeli higher education institutions, specially in mathematics, the natural sciences and English. A hundred-and-fifty teachers will take part in similar courses during the coming summer holidays.

The directors of the district offices of the educational services, the education director and his deputy and two officials responsible for the organization of examinations regularly attend working meetings and seminars together. At these meetings there is discussion of such problems as textbooks, the curricula, training courses, appointments, teaching material, the level of studies, etc. The inspectors of education have monthly meetings in their different fields in order to discuss specific matters concerning the teaching of the subjects in their particular field. Twenty meetings of this kind have been held during the present school year.

The administrative staff of the educational system meets at least once a year to attend short study courses and refresher courses. For their part, the inspectors organize, within each district, short refresher courses for the teachers. These meetings, organized according to the different subjects, take the form of discussions which provide useful educational and pedagogical information. Approximately 120 meetings of this kind have taken place this year.

Another innovation has been the organization of summer camps, which started eight years ago. This year twenty-two summer camps will be held in all the districts and will be attended by 4,000 pupils under the supervision of about 300 local monitors.

I should be grateful if you would be so kind as to circulate this letter as an addendum to document 116 EX/16.

Accept, Sir, my thanks and the assurances of my highest consideration.

Yael VERED
Ambassador
Permanent Delegate

Executive Board

United Nations Educational,
Scientific and Cultural Organization

Hundred-and-sixteenth Session

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ADDENDUM 3

SUMMARY

In this addendum, the Director-General informs the Executive Board of two communication received by him concerning the closing of Al-Najah University and of the telegram he sent to the Israeli Minister of Foreign Affairs in this regard.

1. On 8 and 9 June 1983, the Permanent Observer of the PLO at Unesco sent the Director-General two letters informing him that the Israeli military authorities had ordered the closing of Al-Najah University for the period 4 June to 1 September 1983. He requested the Director-General to intercede in order to put an end to this new infringement of academic freedom.
2. With his letter of 9 June 1983, the Permanent Observer of the PLO at Unesco enclosed a copy of the telex he had received on 8 June from Mr. Munthir Salah, President of Al-Najah University, containing the text of an official announcement issued by the University.
3. This announcement reads as follows:

'AN-NAJAH NATIONAL UNIVERSITY WAS ORDERED TO BE OFFICIALLY CLOSED FROM 4TH JUNE, 1983 UNTIL 1ST SEPTEMBER, 1983. THE FORMAL MILITARY CLOSURE NOTIFICATION WAS HANDED TO UNIVERSITY OFFICIALS ON 5TH JUNE, 1983.

ON 4TH JUNE, 200 AN-NAJAH STUDENTS STAGED A RELATIVELY PEACEFUL DEMONSTRATION AT THE UNIVERSITY ENTRANCE TO MARK THE FIRST ANNIVERSARY OF THE ISRAELI INVASION OF LEBANON.

THE ISRAELI SOLDIERS WHO SURROUNDED THE UNIVERSITY FIRED RUBBER BULLETS, TEAR GAS AND, IN SOME CASES, USED REAL BULLETS.

MORE THAN THIRTY STUDENTS WERE TAKEN TO HOSPITAL AFTER THE DEMONSTRATION SUFFERING FROM THE EFFECTS OF ASPHYXIATION.

LATER IN THE AFTERNOON OF THE SAME DAY, ISRAELI SOLDIERS INVADED THE UNIVERSITY AND ENTERED CAMPUS.

THE OFFICIAL CLOSURE OF THE UNIVERSITY IS THE LATEST IN A LINE OF ISRAELI MEASURES AIMED AT PREVENTING THE UNIVERSITY FROM PURSUING ITS ACADEMIC MISSION.

LAST YEAR 28 PROFESSORS FROM AN-NAJAH UNIVERSITY, INCLUDING THE PRESIDENT AND THE VICE-PRESIDENT, WERE DEPORTED AFTER REFUSING TO SIGN THE LOYALTY OATH PRESENTED AT THE TIME BY THE ISRAELI AUTHORITIES. IN THE COURSE OF THIS YEAR, MEMBERS OF THE STUDENT COUNCIL WERE TWICE ARRESTED. THE ISRAELI AUTHORITIES ALSO CLOSED THE UNIVERSITY BY MEANS OF ERECTING ROADBLOCKS, MANY TIMES AND WITHOUT GIVING REASONS.

THE OFFICIAL CLOSURE OF THE UNIVERSITY MEANS THAT 3,500 STUDENTS WILL BE UNABLE TO CONTINUE THEIR STUDIES. THE TOO STUDENTS WHO WERE DUE TO GRADUATE THIS SEPTEMBER FACE A LONG PERIOD OF DELAY. THE FACULTIES WILL BE UNABLE TO GO ON WITH THEIR DAILY DUTIES.

THUS WE CALL UPON ALL PARTIES CONCERNED ABOUT THE ACADEMIC FREEDOM OF PALESTINIAN STUDENTS TO PROTEST AGAINST THIS DECISION AND TRY TO HAVE IT REVOKED'

4. On 11 June 1983, the Director-General sent a telegram to the Israeli Minister of Foreign Affairs stating that he had just been informed, that the Israeli military authorities had ordered the closing of Al-Najah University from 4 June 1983 to 1 September 1983. The Director-General also noted that this closure, occurring just before the end of the academic year, would mean a delay for 700 final-year students in obtaining their diplomas, and would, at the same time, disrupt the academic schedule of the student body as a whole. Recalling that, on a number of occasions, the international community, during the proceedings of the General Conference of Unesco and the Executive Board, had voiced concern in regard to the need to ensure that the populations of the occupied Arab territories received education in keeping with their aspirations and cultural identity, in the same way as all other peoples, the Director-General requested the Israeli Minister of Foreign Affairs to intercede personally with a view to the reopening of the University as soon as possible. A copy of this telegram was sent to the Permanent Delegate of Israel to Unesco.