

# PALESTINIAN CHILDREN IN THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES

*Prepared for, and under the guidance of,  
the Committee on the Exercise of  
the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People*



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## Introduction

On 20 November 1959, the General Assembly of the United Nations unanimously adopted the Declaration of the Rights of the Child. The spirit of the document was reflected in the preamble, which said, in part, "... mankind owes the child the best it has to give". Many of the rights and freedoms set forth in the Declaration were restatements of sections of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other earlier documents, but the international community was convinced that the special needs of the child were so urgent that they called for a separate, more specific declaration.

In 10 carefully worded principles the Declaration affirms the rights of the child to enjoy special protection and to be given opportunities and facilities to enable him to develop in a healthy and normal manner in conditions of freedom and dignity; to have a name and a nationality from his birth; to enjoy the benefits of social security, including adequate nutrition, housing, recreation and medical services; to receive special treatment, education and care if he is handicapped; to grow up in an atmosphere of affection and security and, wherever possible, in the care and under the responsibility of his parents; to receive education, to be among the first to receive protection and relief in times of disaster; to be protected against all forms of neglect, cruelty and exploitation; and to be protected from practices which may foster any form of discrimination. Finally, the Declaration

emphasizes that the child shall be brought up "in a spirit of understanding, tolerance, friendship among peoples, peace and universal brotherhood". 1/

While practical attainment of these rights will continue to be the objective of the international community, it is likely that exceptional circumstances in many parts of the world render attainment even more difficult, thus requiring special attention and more efforts.

The present study attempts to point out aspects of the conditions of children born into "exceptional" circumstances - the Palestinian children in the Arab territories of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip which have been, since June 1967, under Israeli occupation and ruled by military decrees.

#### I. Demographic characteristics

In 1979, the United Nations General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to prepare and submit to the Assembly a comprehensive and analytical report on the social and economic impact of living conditions of the Palestinian people. In an effort to ensure a balanced and objective expert view, the Secretary-General used the services of three experts. 2/

In their report, the experts quoted the Palestinian Statistical Abstract, 1979, which pointed out that at the end of 1977, the population

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1/ See Declaration of the Rights of the Child (New York, United Nations, 1973).

2/ See report of the Secretary-General on living conditions of the Palestinian people in the occupied Arab territories, annex I, p. 2 (henceforth referred to as report of the Group of Experts).

of the West Bank was 681,200 with a natural increase of 20.5 per 1,000 and an actual increase of 10.3 per 1,000. 3/ Of this population, 317,614 were registered as refugees with the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), 82,464 of them living in 20 camps, leaving 598,736 inhabitants (some of whom were unregistered refugees) living in the towns and villages of the West Bank. 4/

The experts also quoted the Statistical Abstract of Israel, 1978, which indicates that the population of the Gaza Strip and Northern Sinai was 441,300, with a natural increase of 15.3 per 1,000 and an actual increase of 12.3 per 1,000 in 1977. Of these, 363,000 were registered as refugees with UNRWA, 202,941 of them living in eight camps. 5/ The breakdown of the population by age groups was as follows: 6/

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3/ Ibid., pp. 6-7.

4/ Report of the Commissioner-General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, 1 July 1978-30 June 1979, Official Records of the General Assembly, Thirty-fourth Session, Supplement No. 13 (A/34/13), p. 64.

5/ Report of the Group of Experts, p. 7.

6/ Ibid.

<u>Population at the end of 1977</u>	<u>West Bank</u>		<u>Gaza Strip and Northern Sinai</u>	
	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percentage</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
0-14 years	316,000	46.4	209,100	47.5
14-29	183,400	26.9	123,100	27.8
30-44	77,800	11.4	50,300	11.4
45-49	60,500	8.9	37,700	8.5
60+	<u>43,300</u>	<u>6.4</u>	<u>21,100</u>	<u>4.8</u>
	681,000	100.0	441,300	100.0

As the above data indicate, almost half the population was less than 14 years old.

## II. Family life and education

Israel's occupation of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip has been the subject of various United Nations resolutions and decisions which, inter alia, call upon Israel to withdraw from Arab territories occupied in the June 1967 conflict and which consider such a withdrawal one of the prerequisites for the attainment of peace in the Middle East. The United Nations Security Council, for example, unanimously adopted at the 1382nd meeting Resolution 242 of 22 November 1967 which affirmed that the fulfilment of the United Nations Charter principles required the establishment of a just and lasting peace in the Middle East which should, inter alia, include the application of the principle of the withdrawal of the Israeli armed forces from territories occupied in the 1967 conflict. 7/

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7/ Security Council resolution 242 (1967) of 22 November 1967.



Moreover, Security Council resolution 465 of 1 March 1980 determined that "all measures taken by Israel to change the physical character, demographic composition, institutional structure or status of the Palestinian and other Arab territories occupied since 1967, including Jerusalem, or any part thereof, have no legal validity and that Israel's policy and practices of settling parts of its population ... in those territories constitute a flagrant violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention relative to Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War and also constitute a serious obstruction to achieving a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East." 8/

The United Nations General Assembly has, on several occasions, declared that acquisition of territories by force was inadmissible and that consequently territories thus occupied must be restored. At its 34th session in 1979, the United Nations General Assembly expressed its deep concern that the Arab territories occupied since 1967 continued to be under illegal Israeli occupation and condemned this occupation. 9/ More recently, at its 35th session, the General Assembly demanded the complete and unconditional withdrawal by Israel from the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967, including Jerusalem, in conformity with the fundamental principle of the inadmissibility of the acquisition of territory by force. 10/ The United Nations, moreover, has consistently maintained that the Geneva Convention Relative to the Protection of

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8/ Security Council resolution 465 (1980) of 1 March 1980.

9/ General Assembly resolution 34/70, 6 December 1979.

10/ General Assembly resolution 35/207, 16 December 1980.

Civilian Persons in Time of War of 1949 applied to these territories. 11/ Israel, however, claims that it is not affected by the provisions of the Geneva Convention and need not consider itself restricted by them. 12/

For 14 years, Israel has continued to maintain its occupation forces. Actions taken by the population in opposition to this occupation, and there is evidence that such opposition is not confined to adults, result in measures taken by the Israeli authorities which, in some cases, affect Palestinian children.

For instance, the conditions of life under which Palestinian children live are dramatically reflected in their artistic expression, depicted through sombre scenes painted in dark and gloomy colours. The education of their children is an important aspect of their daily life affecting a large proportion of the Palestinian population. The impact of occupation on child education is the subject of many recent reports.

The system of education is much the same throughout the occupied territories. It starts with kindergarten for children below the age of 6, followed by the elementary or primary school for children who are normally between the ages of 6 and 12, who then proceed to the preparatory school for three years. The primary and

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11/ General Assembly resolution 33/113 A of 18 December 1978.

12/ United States Senate, "The colonization of the West Bank territories by Israel", hearing before the Sub-Committee on Immigration and Naturalization of the Committee on the Judiciary (95th Congress) (Washington, D.C., 1978), pp. 26, 33-35.

preparatory schools form the compulsory cycle of education and are followed by secondary, vocational and teacher training institutions and institutions of higher learning. The educational institutions are managed by the occupying authority, by private bodies or by UNRWA.

Under an agreement between UNRWA and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the latter is responsible for the professional aspects of the UNRWA/UNESCO education programme which includes, among other things, general education at elementary and preparatory (lower secondary) levels in UNRWA schools. 13/ In general, the schools follow the Jordanian curriculum of education in the West Bank and the Egyptian curriculum in the Gaza Strip.

According to the Statistical Abstract of Israel, 1978, the number of educational institutions in the West Bank increased from 821 in 1967/68 to 1,000 in 1976/77, an increase of 21.8 per cent. Similarly, the number of institutions in the Gaza Strip increased from 166 in 1967/68 to 270 in 1976/77, an increase of 38.5 per cent. According to the 1968-1977 Statistical Abstract of the Region of the Economic Commission for Western Asia, during the same period, the number of educational institutions grew by 33 per cent in the Syrian Arab Republic, by 32.5 per cent in Egypt and by 78.6 per cent in Jordan. 14/ In spite of the Government of Israel's

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13/ See report of the Commissioner-General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, 1 July 1979-30 June 1980, Official Records of the General Assembly, Thirty-fifth Session, Supplement No. 13 (A/35/13), p. 13 (henceforth referred to as report of the Commissioner-General).

14/ Report of the Group of Experts, p. 33.

claim to the contrary, various Israeli newspapers, such as The Jerusalem Post and Haaretz, have claimed that Israeli occupation authorities discouraged efforts by the inhabitants of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip to found new schools or to expand existing ones. 15/

According to the report of the Group of Experts, enrolment rates have increased significantly since 1967, but a comparison of these rates with those of neighbouring countries shows that the growth in enrolment in the two territories has not kept pace with the rate of growth of enrolment in neighbouring countries during the decade ending in 1977. 16/

It is argued that in a population with a high rate of natural increase due largely to high fertility, the fall in the proportion of children in the first year of school in relation to the total population suggests that proportionately fewer children are entering the school system despite the growth in numbers, thus indicating a potential lowering of the literacy level of the population.

Dealing with children at the higher age level and the problems they encounter, the United Nations Economic Commission for Western Asia (ECWA), in its "Social programmes and data in the ECWA region", concludes that students attending various levels of schooling are often compelled to drop out of school in order to supplement the family income as a result of the absence or loss of the father,

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15/ Jerusalem Post, 11 April 1980; Haaretz, 20 March 1980.

16/ Report of the Group of Experts, p. 34.

the separation of families and the high rate of inflation. In addition, in 1976/77 the occupying authorities issued a decree that students who have been arrested or imprisoned should not be re-admitted to school without the approval of the military governor. ECWA further reported that the educational policy under the Israeli occupation severely limited the acquisition of knowledge regarding Palestinian history and culture, that the occupation authorities deleted from the curricula materials which refer to Palestine, love of one's country, Palestinian patriotism and the national identity of the Palestinian people, that references to the Arab contribution to human culture and history were censored, and atlases with the name of Palestine were replaced. 17/

Naturally, there is a relation between the percentage of student enrolment and the availability of job opportunities, since each one of these two variables affects the other. The subject of job opportunities for Palestinian graduates in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip is touched upon in the report of the Group of Experts which states:

"Although UNRWA and the occupying authorities have set up a number of vocational training programmes, there are few corresponding job opportunities for those trained in the various skills. According to the ILO [International Labour Organisation] mission report of 1979, approximately 35,000 trainees received diplomas in various subjects between 1968 and 1977 from the various vocational training institutions. However, according to the mission, in one centre only 20 per cent of those receiving

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17/ Economic Commission for Western Asia, "Social programmes and data in the ECWA region" (Beirut, 1980), pp. 8-9.

diplomas were able to obtain jobs in the occupied territories after graduation. It was pointed out in the report, however, that the Israeli authorities had indicated to the mission that about 40 per cent of all graduates from the vocational training centres found jobs in the occupied territories, while 50 per cent found jobs in Israel. The report also gives the impression that the level of training in these vocational training institutions is not very high, the trainees generally being prepared for semi-skilled occupations in the Israeli economy." 18/

One measure of the time and attention which a pupil receives from his or her teacher is the pupil/teacher ratio. Comparative figures for this measure for the West Bank and Jordan are taken, respectively, from K. Mahshi's and R. Rihan's Education in the West Bank and the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan's Statistical Educational Yearbook, 1977/1978: 19/

	<u>West Bank</u>	<u>Jordan</u>
1968/69	28.0	35.1
1969/70	27.6	33.1
1970/71	26.9	32.7
1971/72	26.2	32.0
1977/78	27.6	27.6

It appears from the above figures that, for the most of the period 1968 to 1978, the West Bank fared better than Jordan and that, theoretically, school children in the West Bank were better off than counterparts in Jordan. However, the report

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18/ Report of the Group of Experts, p. 35.

19/ Ibid., p. 34.

pointed out, the figures show, that the situation in the West Bank has shown little improvement while that of Jordan has improved remarkably.

According to the report of the Commissioner-General of UNRWA, UNRWA schools during the 1979/80 school year operated satisfactorily except for some disturbances and tension resulting from the effects of occupation. 20/

Dealing with the educational conditions in the territories, the report of the Group of Experts noted:

"It would appear that the occupying authorities, through their actions, have created and sustained a feeling of insecurity among teachers and students in all educational institutions. The experts were told of constant harassment of students and staff. These harassments took the form of frequent arrests, beatings, administrative detentions and closure of schools. Sometimes teachers and students were transferred to remote rural areas. Practical training for student teachers in the schools of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip was often disallowed. The occupying authorities justified these actions on grounds of security and maintenance of the law and order."

Government schools in East Jerusalem have had their curriculum modified to conform to that applied in the Arab schools of Israel, and the Israeli textbooks used in Israel for its Arab schools were introduced in these government schools. For the remaining government schools in the West Bank, according to a UNESCO report:

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20/ Report of the Commissioner-General, pp. 15-16.

"the Israeli authorities began to print expurgated and amended versions of the existing Jordanian textbooks used in the West Bank before the occupation ... The list of titles reprinted by the Israeli authorities for use in West Bank government schools shows that a number of geography and civics books and the school atlas prescribed in the Jordan curriculum have been dropped ... The texts themselves are often identical, although several books have phrases, paragraphs or complete chapters suppressed. In a few instances, these have been replaced by new texts ... This is particularly true for maps which, in many cases, are simply reprinted with the word 'Israel' usually in bold type added in the appropriate place either in place of the word 'Palestine' or in a blank space." 21/

There is evidence also that the Israeli occupying authorities impose restrictions on the import from other Arab countries of books which are the primary sources for literature in Arabic and that duties are charged on the imports of such books and equipment. The existence of such restrictions is attested to by the 1980 report of the UNRWA Commissioner-General.

However, A Thirteen-Year Survey (1967-1980), prepared by Israel's Ministry of Defence, claimed:

"Since the start of the Israeli military administration, the educational system has been allowed to operate according to the prevailing formula in each area [of the West

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21/ UNESCO General Conference, Eighteenth Session, 1974, Report by the Director-General on the situation of the national education and the cultural life of peoples in the occupied Arab territories (18C/16), (Paris, UNESCO, 1974).



Bank and the Gaza Strip] ... The Israeli administration has in no way interfered with the traditional Arab system. The only difference is that ... anti-Israeli slanders ... contained in the textbooks were eliminated ... Taking into account the prevailing animosity towards Israel in the neighbouring countries, the Israeli authorities have to clear textbooks for schools in the Administered Territories in order to ensure that anti-Israel ... incitement is not included in these texts." 22/

The report of the Group of Experts notes:

"In discussion with educators from the West Bank, it was repeatedly pointed out to the experts that the climate of occupation was not conducive to the creation of suitable conditions for the educational process. In the first place, because the economy was under the control of an occupying Power and political power was exercised by the army, the normal educational and manpower planning process to meet national goals could not be undertaken. There were no national plans, for which manpower requirements could be identified, leading to the formulation of appropriate educational and training strategies to meet the anticipated requirements of the economy and society." 23/

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22/ Israel, Ministry of Defence, Co-ordinator of Government Operations in Judaea and Samaria, Gaza District, Sinai, Golan Heights, A Thirteen-Year Survey (1967-1980), p. 13.

23/ Report of the Group of Experts, p. 35.

A more recent survey on academic freedom was carried out by a group of eight American professors who visited the West Bank from 24-30 November 1980. In their statement dated February 1981, the group argued that the operations of the universities of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip were hampered by a series of restrictions imposed by the military government. The group contended that this situation had been intensified by the promulgation of military order 854 in July 1980 by the Military Governor of the West Bank, "an order which modified prevailing Jordanian law to extend military control to Palestinian institutions of higher learning." 24/

Under Order 854, the group noted, all universities must renew their operating licences annually, and must submit lists of faculty and students to the military government for approval. New programmes, textbooks, requests for educational equipment and public lectures come under the purview of the military government. The group further claimed that they discerned an extensive censorship of books, the denial or withholding of work permits from foreign faculty, restrictions on faculty and student associations and a general surveillance of cultural activity. 25/ In a letter to the editor of the The Chronicle of Higher Education, Professor Mary W. Gray, who was a member of the group, wrote that, "we saw the harassment of students and faculty by random arrests." 26/

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24/ See "Campaign for academic freedom", February 1981.

25/ Ibid.

26/ Mary W. Gray, "Military control of West Bank Universities," The Chronicle of Higher Education, 6 April 1981.

Dealing with this subject, the United States Department of State noted that, "the military governor amended Jordanian law regarding educational institutions to give himself the power to dismiss university students, bar professors and revoke university charters; ... this move was seen by many Palestinians as an attempt to exert greater political control over the West Bank universities." 27/ Referring to this subject, Hanna Nasir, President of Birzeit University, argued that that amendment threatened academic freedom and human rights in the West Bank. 28/

In his response to a letter concerning education in the West Bank, which Professor Gray sent to the Embassy of Israel in Washington, D.C., Avraham Benjamin, First Secretary for Information at the Embassy noted that the institutions for higher learning in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip enjoyed complete academic freedom and Israel did not interfere in their study programmes, that, prior to 1967, there was no legislation in force which set minimum requirements for certification of institutions of higher education and that, therefore, the administrative order merely filled this vacuum. 29/ Another Israeli spokesman stated

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27/ United States Congress, "Country Reports on Human Rights Practices; report submitted to the Committee on Foreign Relations, U.S. Senate and Committee on Foreign Affairs, U.S. House of Representatives by the Department of State" (97th Congress, 1st Session) (Washington, D.C., U.S. Government Printing Office, 1981), p. 1008.

28/ Statement by Dr. Hanna Nasir, President of Birzeit University, Birzeit University, Public Relations Office, Amman.

29/ Letter dated 1 April 1981, addressed to Professor Mary Gray, by the Embassy of Israel, Washington, D.C.

that "these measures were meant to regulate an area of education not existing under Jordanian rule." 30/

Of relevance to the education of Palestinian children are the project activities of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. The Governing Council of UNDP, at its twenty-sixth session in June 1979, decided to authorize the administrator of UNDP to initiate project activities for a new programme of assistance to the Palestinian people. The administrator recommended to the Council 18 projects. At the twenty-seventh session of the Council, the Administrator stated that, after consultations with all interested parties, agreement had been reached in principle for the more precise identification and formulation of 11 project proposals, 10 in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip and one in the Syrian Arab Republic. 31/

For all projects, the Administrator and the Co-ordinator, who is responsible for the detailed oversight for the projects, have maintained constant and productive contact with the Governments concerned and with representatives of the Palestinian people. The Administrator reported that the implementation stage had been reached for 4 of the 11 projects currently accepted by all parties and he anticipated that 2 other projects would be under implementation not later than July 1981, and that the remaining 5 projects would reach the same stage before the end of 1981. He hopes that it will be possible to secure agreement in due course to proceed with the 7 projects of the original 18. 32/

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30/ United States Congress, op. cit.

31/ See report of the Administrator on assistance to the Palestinian people (DP/514), p. 2.

32/ Ibid.

From among the projects of direct relevance to children are the promotion of pre-primary education, promotion of technical and vocational education, strengthening and development of the Moussa Alami project and children's institutions. As stated in the report, this project will provide the opportunity to achieve an immediate and beneficial impact on the lives of Palestinian children. 33/

### III. Employment of Palestinian children

The subject of employment by Israeli enterprises of Palestinian minor workers from the West Bank and the Gaza Strip has been treated in a number of Israeli and non-Israeli works. Israeli published materials differ in their evaluation of these workers' working conditions. There have been allegations that minor workers are underpaid, ill-treated by their employers and suffer from difficult working conditions. 34/ For instance, it has been alleged in Maariv that minor workers worked as many as 13 hours a day. 35/ However, in A Thirteen Year Survey (1967-1980), the co-ordinator of the operations of the Government of Israel in the territories claimed that the conditions of Arab workers of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip had improved. 36/

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33/ Ibid., pp. 2-3.

34/ Maariv, 13 July 1979.

35/ Ibid., 11 August 1978.

36/ Israel, Ministry of Defence, op. cit., p. 6.

Following an initial visit in April 1978, 37/ a mission appointed by the Director-General of the ILO and led by Mr. N. Valticos, Assistant Director-General and Adviser for International Labour Standards, visited, inter alia, Israel and the occupied Arab territories in Palestine from 25 February to 10 March 1979. 38/

The mission, as stated in the report of the Director-General of the ILO, lasted two weeks during which it had numerous discussions and visited parts of Israel and of the occupied Arab territories in order to continue and intensify its examination of the situation of the Arab workers of these territories, whether employed in the territories themselves or in Israel.

The mission found that apart from the major legal and political issues involved, the state of occupation also gave rise, in the field of labour relations with which the mission was specifically concerned, to psychological and moral problems that could and should not be overlooked.

The estimated employable population was 215,400 in 1978 - 134,300 on the West Bank and 81,000 in Gaza and the Northern Sinai. The very low participation rate is particularly striking: in 1978 the active population represented only 34 per cent of the working age population and a mere 19 per cent of the total population. The mission noted that one of the main reasons for the

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37/ See International Labour Organisation, supplement to the report of the Director-General, International Labour Conference, 64th session, 1978, appendix, pp. 24-32.

38/ Ibid., 65th session, 1979, appendix, p. 22.

low rate of participation in economic activity was the large proportion of young people in the population. 39/

It further considered the employment of young persons to be one of the particularly serious aspects of employment of Arabs outside the official administrative system. The mission was informed that the Israeli authorities had decided as a general rule not to grant permits to work in Israel to persons under the age of 17, and in the view of the mission, this rule was apparently being respected. However, the mission was informed by various sources that it was not unusual for persons well under the stated age to be employed in irregular circumstances, particularly in agricultural or small production units. The mission further indicated that it judged from the number of cases which came before the courts in 1978 that a large number of infringements concerned the employment of minors. It quoted figures which were compiled in the course of a campaign against irregular employment conducted by the authorities in September-October 1978 and which showed that some 20 per cent of the workers from occupied territories irregularly employed in Israel were minors. Considering the importance of the protection and promotion of the interests of young people, the mission strongly recommended that appropriate action should be taken by the labour inspectorate and that suitable penalties should be fixed and applied.

#### IV. Alleged maltreatment and torture

Ever since Israel occupied the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, a large and increasing body of regulations has been issued by the Israeli military

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39/ Ibid.

authorities. This has led to considerable resistance on the part of the Arab inhabitants, including children, and taken the form of demonstrations, throwing of stones at Israeli vehicles, strikes and the distribution of pamphlets, as well as the placing of bombs in public areas. There have been many allegations that those arrested in these incidents, whether they were adults or children, have been subjected to torture in order to wring confessions from them and that those under detention were often ill-treated. 40/

For instance, the Insight Team of the London Sunday Times reported in its 19 June 1977 issue that Israel's security and intelligence services ill-treated Arabs in detention. This report did not identify whether the persons who were allegedly tortured were children or adults, though there have been allegations of the mistreatment of children. For instance, in the course of his testimony before the United Nations Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Population of the Occupied Territories, Mr. Fahd Qawasimi, Mayor of Al-Khalil (Hebron), referred to "a common practice is the arrest and imprisonment of minors and their ill-treatment during their detention. [He] stated that such arrests were commonplace ... He referred to instances where he had had to intervene as Mayor to release youngsters who were being held." 41/

Israel has consistently denied these allegations, maintaining that there was no policy

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40/ National Lawyers Guild, 1977; Middle East Delegation, op. cit., p. 96.

41/ Report of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Population of the Occupied Territories (A/34/631), p. 45.



of torture in the territories, that such allegations are based on unreliable sources and that the judicial system of Israel provided the necessary checks and safeguards to keep offences against prisoners to a minimum. 42/

Of relevance to the subject of relations between the Israeli authorities and youth in the territories are the contents of a letter dated 19 November 1980 from the Acting Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People to the United Nations Secretary-General. The letter notes:

"Reports from the area speak of the inhuman wounding of 11 students of Beir Zeit University by gunfire from Israeli military forces who had fired into the university campus as the students were demonstrating against the closure of the University to prevent observance of Palestine Week by the University ... The attitude of the Israeli authorities is particularly offensive if the report is to be believed that live ammunition was used as a matter of policy, when rubber bullets could have been used just as effectively." 43/

#### V. Conclusion

The foregoing presentation seeks to give a description - based on available information - of a number of conditions such as family life and

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42/ "U.S. leftists accuse Israel of torture", The Jerusalem Post, 3 August 1977.

43/ Letter dated 19 November 1980 from the Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People to the Secretary-General (A/35/648-S/14261).

education, employment of Palestinian children and imprisonment and alleged torture of children, under which a new Palestinian generation is growing up in the occupied territories of the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

These conditions are undoubtedly difficult. While it may be maintained that the international community has, for over 30 years, focused its attention on these Palestinians who have been registered as refugees and has, through such organizations as UNRWA, UNESCO, UNICEF and the International Red Cross, attempted to ensure at least a basic level of subsistence, the political upheavals in the area constitute an element which is not a part of the experience of most children elsewhere.

While the political upheavals have their impact on all children in the countries of the region, children living in the West Bank and Gaza Strip have the additional burden of living, and coping with life since June 1967, in an area under military occupation. Such a situation must inevitably have a significant psychological impact on the children concerned.

These conditions have evoked the sympathy of the international community. The determination of the new generation to survive and to overcome their special predicament has evoked the admiration of many who have witnessed the Palestinian tragedy at first hand and who draw attention to the emphasis that Palestinians in the occupied territories place on the education of their children. Palestinians regard education, quite rightly, as the key to the betterment of their conditions. It is not surprising, also, that they regard their children as their most valuable natural resource.

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