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### UNITED NATIONS RELIEF AND WORKS AGENCY FOR PALESTINE REFUGEES IN THE NEAR EAST

#### Protection of Palestinian students and educational institutions and safeguarding of the security of the facilities of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East in the occupied Palestinian territory

#### Report of the Secretary-General

1. The present report is submitted to the General Assembly in pursuance of its resolution 45/73 K of 11 December 1990, the operative paragraphs of which read as follows:

"The General Assembly,

"...

"1. Condemns the repeated Israeli raids on the premises and installations of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, and calls upon Israel, the occupying Power, to refrain from such raids;

"2. Deplores the policy and practices of Israel, the occupying Power, which have led to the prolonged closure of educational institutions, a large number of which are operated by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, and the repeated disruption of medical services;

"3. Calls upon Israel, the occupying Power, to open immediately all closed educational institutions and to refrain from closing them thereafter;

"4. Requests the Secretary-General to report to the General Assembly at its forty-sixth session on the implementation of the present resolution."

2. On 15 February 1991, the Secretary-General addressed a note verbale to the Permanent Representative of Israel to the United Nations, in which he drew attention to his reporting responsibility under the resolution and requested the Permanent Representative to inform him of any steps his Government had taken or envisaged taking in implementation of the relevant provisions of the resolution.

3. In a note verbale dated 2 July 1991, the Permanent Representative of Israel replied as follows:

"This resolution is unbalanced, distorting the role and policy of the Government of Israel. The policy of the Government of Israel has been, and remains, to encourage the improvement and development of the educational system in Judea, Samaria and the Gaza District. During the period of Israel's administration, the level of education and literacy in these territories has improved markedly and many new institutions of learning were established.

"Since December 1987, however, the schools have frequently been exploited as centres for the organizing and launching of violent activities. Unrest was caused by masked extremists, affiliated with the PLO and other groups, who forcibly entered classrooms during school hours and compelled students to join violent demonstrations.

"Measures taken by the authorities have been a direct result of, and in reaction to, activities of these extremist elements.

"Such measures have been extremely successful and have enabled the Government of Israel to permit five of the seven institutions of higher education in the administered territories to reopen. Four of the institutions have in fact opened their doors and they are: Al-Bireh University, Bethlehem University, Abu-Dis University and the Islamic University in Hebron. Permission was also granted to Al-Najah University to reopen, on condition that the student body would not interfere in the formation of the faculty. Though the administration of Al-Najah agreed to the stated condition, they were subsequently subjected to hostile threats from extremist elements and have not yet reopened. The reopening of Bir Zeit University will be considered based on the experience of the other institutions.

"As a result of the Gulf War, most schools were closed for a period of one month. Additional days were missed because of security problems and various schools lost still more days of classtime upon instructions to close from extremist groups such as the PLO and Hamas. Due to these disruptions, the school year was extended to June 10 in the Gaza District and July 1 in Judea and Samaria in order to compensate the students for

the school days which were missed. Extremist elements have, however, continued to disrupt the school system, both through violent agitation and frequent strikes.

"This resolution ignores these facts.

"The Government of Israel will continue to make every effort to normalize the educational environment within the framework of the difficult security situation caused by violent agitation and intimidation by PLO and other extremist affiliates."

4. The following information concerning Israel's compliance with General Assembly resolution 45/73 K is based on reports from the Commissioner-General of UNRWA. It covers the period from 1 July 1990 to 30 June 1991 and relates exclusively to UNRWA educational institutions and other facilities. Further information is contained in the annual report 1/ of the Commissioner-General of UNRWA for the above-mentioned period.

5. During the period under review, there were 251 cases of unauthorized entry into UNRWA premises in the West Bank by the Israeli authorities. Of these, 140 related to schools and 48 to health centres. In the Gaza Strip there were 367 such cases, of which 152 related to schools and 153 to health centres. UNRWA has taken up these cases with the Israeli authorities who, in a number of instances, have claimed that UNRWA premises were entered because stones had been thrown from within, or stone-throwers were being chased into the premises.

6. During the same period, there was one fatality and 1,678 cases of injury among students and trainees at UNRWA educational institutions in the West Bank. The corresponding figures for the Gaza Strip were one fatality and 1,503 injuries. These casualties were attributable to beatings, tear gas inhalation, rubber bullets and live ammunition. In addition, a total of 286 students and trainees in the West Bank and 181 in the Gaza Strip were detained, of whom 174 in the West Bank and 146 in the Gaza Strip were released by 30 June 1991.

7. UNRWA's training centres in the West Bank, which had been closed by military order from the beginning of 1988 until spring 1990, thereafter reopened and completed an abbreviated academic year of 24 weeks, instead of 36 to 40 weeks, at the end of September 1990, in the case of the Ramallah Men's and Women's Training Centres, and in mid-October 1990 in the case of the Kalandia Training Centre. The 1990/91 academic year began in November 1990 but was interrupted virtually continuously from 31 December 1990 through 20 March 1991 as a result of military closures and the general curfew imposed during the Gulf War. Apart from this serious interruption, the centres operated for the most part normally, with some additional days lost due to strikes. The first semester ended in late June 1991, with the second semester scheduled to continue immediately through and beyond the summer until the academic year is completed. The UNRWA training centre in the Gaza Strip was

closed for a total of 132 teaching days from 1 September 1990 to 30 June 1991. As a result of a military order, the 1990/91 academic year began only in October 1990 instead of September 1990. The centre was closed from 16 January until 17 March due to the general curfew imposed during the Gulf War and lost additional days due to other military closure orders, curfews and strikes. Otherwise, the centre operated for the most part normally, and is expected to complete the 1990/91 academic year by operating through the summer.

8. In the West Bank, a total of 40 per cent of school time was lost between September 1990 and June 1991, due primarily to military closures, general strikes, and curfews, including the general curfew imposed as a result of the Gulf War. The most seriously affected schools in the West Bank were the five schools in Tulkarm camp serving 2,208 pupils, which students attended for only 33 days from the beginning of the academic year until classes were allowed to reopen on 12 June 1991, following negotiations between UNRWA and the Israeli authorities. In the Gaza Strip, a total of 41 per cent of school time was lost from September 1990 to June 1991. These interruptions stemmed primarily from military closures, general strikes, and curfews, including the general curfew imposed as a result of the Gulf War.

9. During the reporting period, the Agency provided students in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip with distance education and self-learning materials, but such measures can provide only partial compensation for lost classroom time. Preliminary analysis of achievement tests that UNRWA administered in 1990 to all grade levels in these areas discloses a detrimental effect on the educational performance of students, especially those in the lower elementary grades, and on subjects such as mathematics and sciences. The Israeli authorities have taken the general position that UNRWA should conform to the school openings and times of schools run by the Civil Administration. UNRWA did not agree to subordinate the opening and closure of schools to the Civil Administration programme but was, however, forced to end the school year at the same time as schools operated by the Civil Administration because security considerations were invoked and a military closure order served on UNRWA.

#### Notes

1/ Official Records of the General Assembly, Forty-sixth Session, Supplement No. 13 (A/46/13), paras. 66-69 and 76-79.

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