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HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION IN THE TERRITORIES
OCCUPIED BY ISRAEL SINCE 1967

ISSUE

Human rights violations in the territories occupied by Israel since 1967 continue to be of major concern to the international community. As a party to the Fourth Geneva Convention Relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in the Time of War (the Geneva Convention), Canada strongly advocates that Israel, the occupying power, respect the Convention. Although serious human rights violations appeared to be on the decline in recent months, major breaches of the Convention by the occupation authorities continued despite appeals by the UN Commission on Human Rights, and the International Committee on the Red Cross (ICRC). The Israeli practice of using rocket attacks to demolish the houses of alleged insurgents and more recently, the expulsion of 415 fundamentalist activists, violate the Convention and have led to a crisis that threatens the peace process itself.

BACKGROUND

Despite a decrease earlier this year in serious human rights violations in the occupied territories (including a decrease in the number of arrests and the number of Palestinians held in administrative detention, as well as the re-opening of most universities and colleges), the general situation remains of serious concern. Collective punishment, such as lengthy curfews and limitations on freedom of movement, restrict Palestinian rights. Unacceptable levels of force in quelling disturbances and methods of interrogation continue. Of particular concern is the increase in violent incidents by Israeli settlers, and intra Palestinian communal conflicts.

Given Israel's democratic traditions, human rights issues are better tracked in the occupied territories than in many neighbouring states. There is widespread access to reporting on human rights issues by both Israeli and international NGOs and governments. Several international organizations have authority to monitor and protect human rights violations when they occur, specifically the ICRC and UNWRA (the UN Relief and Works Agency in the Near East). The ICRC maintains a regular presence to monitor violations of the Fourth Geneva Convention and to intervene on behalf of civilians when necessary. A number of Israeli and international NGOs also closely follow developments regarding human rights in the occupied territories.

CANADIAN POSITION

The Canadian Government, through its Embassy in Tel Aviv and international bodies, keeps abreast of political and economic events and human rights within the occupied

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