

3. Conditions of detention

32. The previous report of the Secretary-General (A/C.5/42/14) describes the ill-treatment inflicted on some staff members in the course of detention and the fact that, despite the Secretary-General's appeals, the authorities in the countries concerned have refused to allow the staff members to receive the necessary care. All too often, visiting rights, both of representatives of the Secretary-General and of the families, are refused, trials, if any, are held in camera and counsel appointed by the United Nations cannot take part in them. The report in question also states that in "many of the cases reported by UNRWA and UNIFIL ... the staff members concerned are being detained not for the alleged commission of any offence, but merely as part of large groups of persons who happen to live in a particular locality or village" (para. 10).

33. As stated earlier, the staff representatives of the United Nations Secretariat expressed concern over serious medical problems reportedly suffered by staff members in detention. In this regard, they reiterated their request that medical teams or officers be granted immediate access in such cases (A/C.5/43/27, para. 30).

B. Killings, executions, deaths in detention

34. According to the report submitted by the staff representatives to the Fifth Committee of the General Assembly in 1988 (A/C.5/43/27 and Corr.1), over the past 12 years, 12 staff members have been killed, executed, assassinated, have died, or are presumed to have died, in detention in conditions that have never been clarified.

C. Disappearances

35. According to the report by the staff representatives (A/C.5/43/27 and Corr.1), 20 staff members are still reported missing. The oldest cases dated back to 1976.

D. Ban on leaving a country

36. Sometimes, an official on mission or on home leave is not authorized to return to his or her duty station. In most cases, after some time a letter of resignation - signed or unsigned by the staff member - reaches the Secretary-General, who has no assurance that the resignation is an act freely decided on by the staff member, since he cannot talk openly and directly with the staff member.

E. Violation of the rights of the families

37. The arbitrary arrest, death or disappearance of a staff member, in itself, means that the human rights of that person's family are violated. Moreover, the person in question is often the one who supports the family and therefore the family may experience serious financial difficulties. In cases of arbitrary arrest, the United Nations generally continues to pay the staff member's salary.

38. In a communication dated 22 July 1988, UNTSO reported that three children of a local staff member had been arrested by the Israeli authorities. One of them was released after 25 days without any charge being brought against him. The other two have been charged.