

## HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION IN THE ISRAELI OCCUPIED TERRITORIES

### ISSUE

Human rights violations in the territories occupied by Israel since 1967 continue to be of major concern to the international community: Canada shares this preoccupation. Situations of military occupation, such as that in the West Bank and Gaza, are governed in international law by the Fourth Geneva Convention on the Protection of Civilians in Times of War, which establishes limits within which the occupying power must act. Canada has urged Israel to apply the provisions of this Convention to the occupied territories. The ongoing Palestinian uprising or Intifada, now over two years old, has led to serious and repeated breaches of the Convention by Israeli military and civilian authorities, despite appeals by the UN Security Council, the UN General Assembly and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC).

### BACKGROUND

The Palestinian uprising has focused the attention of the international community on human rights violations in the occupied territories. Several organizations have the institutional authority both to monitor and protest such violations: the ICRC and the U.N. Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA). As trustee of the Geneva Conventions, the ICRC is the authority on their significance and application. The ICRC has in 1989 felt it necessary to denounce publicly violations of the Fourth Convention and call upon Israel to apply it.

Specifically, it has drawn attention to expulsions, arbitrary arrests and detentions, conditions of detention, and collective punishments such as destruction of houses and economic sanctions.

UNRWA has protested other forms of behaviour which breach the Convention, such as uncooperative behaviour on the part of the occupying forces and interference in the Agency's programmes, including harassment of staff.

The UN Secretary-General, the Security Council and the General Assembly all support the applicability of the Fourth Geneva Convention to the occupied territories, and have repeatedly called upon Israel to abide by it. Two Security Council resolutions were adopted in 1989 (06 July and 30 August) which dealt with specific human rights violations such as deportations. A number of General Assembly and Human Rights Commission resolutions (43/233 and 44/2) were also adopted, which pertained to human rights of the Palestinians in the occupied territories.