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pretext of security," says Saeb Erakat, professor at Nablus al-Najah University.

While the Israeli government claims the opening of Palestinian universities threatens its national security, al-Haq, the West Bank affiliate of the International Commission of Jurists provides another view: "The Israeli government's actions force the conclusion that it is education itself that is targeted and that it is... another means of collective punishment."

Declared one United Nations Relief and Works Agency official: "[the Israelis] want people to suffer and... to yield. They know how much Palestinians value education." Many young Palestinian children are now growing up illiterate, while older children have forgotten much of what they were taught. The majority of high school graduates have been unable to begin, continue or complete their higher education.

## deplorable conditions

Dr. Hanan Ashrawi, dean of the Faculty of Arts at Bir Zeit University, has spoken at length about the deplorable conditions Palestinians face in the occupied territories. In a

June lecture at the University of Toronto, Ashrawi declared that "real hunger" is occurring and economic "deprivation" has reached unprecedented levels.

As for U.S. peace efforts in the region, Ashrawi observed that "peace cannot be achieved without justice."

Israeli military suppression of the uprising has led to over 942 deaths, 111,529 injuries, 15,000 administrative detentions and some 1,910 house demolitions. Curfew days totalled 9,945 (excluding the Gulf war); thousands of acres of land have been confiscated, while well over 100,000 trees have been uprooted.

In view of the deteriorating situation, a June United Nations symposium on Middle East peace was held in Montreal. The delegates called for a peace conference based on two longstanding UN resolutions: one prohibiting the acquisition of land by force; the other supporting the right of Palestinian self-determination.

Unfortunately, the reality remains that efforts toward peace between Arabs and Israelis are proving, once again, to be futile — the occupation continues and the suffering grows.

Meanwhile, students at Bir Zeit university may spend a fourth academic year barred from class.

*Mazen Bouri is a third-year arts student at York. Born in Beirut, Lebanon, he moved to Canada two years ago.*

**"In one fell swoop, over 15,000 Palestinian students were deprived of the internationally recognized right to higher education"**

