

THE WEST BANK AND GAZA

ISSUE

There has been little change in the human rights situation in the West Bank and Gaza in the past year. Human rights problems for Palestinians in these areas persist due to the continuing Israeli occupation of large areas of the West Bank, Gaza and East Jerusalem and violations by organs of the Palestinian Authority.

BACKGROUND

As a result of the Oslo accords and follow-up agreements between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), most large urban centres and most of the Palestinian population in the West Bank and Gaza are now under the jurisdiction of the Palestinian Authority. Israel continues to control security, borders and freedom of movement over the vast majority of the territory in the West Bank and Gaza.

Israeli Practices

Canada has strong concerns regarding on-going settlement expansion in the Occupied Territories, ill-treatment and torture of detainees, land confiscation, housing demolitions and the use of administrative detention. There has been some improvement, however, in the use of comprehensive closure over the past year. Canada considers Israeli practices regarding the confiscation of Jerusalem ID cards to be contrary to international humanitarian law and to Israel's obligations under the Fourth Geneva Convention and to cause significant hardship.

There are a number of resolutions passed annually in UN fora which are often political texts that remain largely unchanged year to year. At the 53rd session of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA), three resolutions relating to the West Bank/Gaza were adopted under the agenda item *Report of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories*. The Commission on the Status of Women and the Economic and Social Council each pass an annual resolution on the situation of Palestinian women. Five resolutions on the Occupied Territories are passed each year at the Commission on Human Rights (CHR). A Special Rapporteur has reported to the CHR annually since 1993 on Israeli practices in the Occupied Territories. Also, an Emergency Special Session of the UNGA has called for the convening of a conference of the High Contracting Parties to the Geneva Convention to consider measures to ensure the enforcement of the Convention in the Occupied Territories. In May 1998, the UN Committee Against Torture reiterated that the use of "moderate pressure" during interrogation by Israeli security forces contravenes the UN Convention Against Torture as well as the Fourth Geneva Convention.

Palestinian Authority (PA)

The situation in the Palestinian territories has not improved significantly over the past year and the human rights record of the PA remains a matter of serious concern. Particularly worrying are the operations of security forces, including arbitrary arrest, ill-treatment of Palestinian detainees and trials which do not meet international norms. The PA is frequently criticised by

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