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UNITED NATIONS RELIEF AND WORKS AGENCY FOR PALESTINE REFUGEES IN THE NEAR EAST

Protection of Palestinian students and educational institutions and safeguarding of the security of the facilities of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East in the occupied Palestinian territory

Report of the Secretary-General

1. The present report is submitted to the General Assembly in pursuance of its resolution 44/47 K of 8 December 1989, the operative paragraphs of which read as follows:

"The General Assembly,

"...

"1. Condemns the repeated Israeli raids on the premises and installations of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, and calls upon Israel, the occupying Power, to refrain from such raids;

"2. Also condemns, in particular, Israeli policies and practices against Palestinian students and faculties in educational institutions in the occupied Palestinian territory, especially the opening of fire on defenceless students, causing many casualties;

"3. Deplores the policy and practices of Israel, the occupying Power, which have led to the prolonged closure of educational institutions, a large number of which are operated by the Agency, and the repeated disruption of medical services;

"4. Calls upon Israel, the occupying Power, to open immediately all closed educational institutions and to refrain from closing them thereafter;

"5. Requests the Secretary-General to report to the General Assembly at its forty-fifth session on the implementation of the present resolution."

2. On 28 February 1990, the Secretary-General addressed a note verbale to the Permanent Representative of Israel to the United Nations, in which he drew attention to his reporting responsibility under the resolution and requested the Permanent Representative to inform him of any steps his Government had taken or envisaged taking in implementation of the relevant provisions of the resolution.

3. In a note verbale dated 29 June 1990, the Permanent Representative of Israel replied as follows:

"This resolution is unbalanced, distorting the role and policy of the Government of Israel. The policy of the Government of Israel has been, and remains, to encourage the improvement and development of the educational system in Judea, Samaria and the Gaza District. During the period of Israel's administration, the level of education and literacy in these territories has improved markedly and many new institutions of learning were established.

"Since December 1987, however, the schools have frequently been exploited as centres for the organizing and launching of violent activities. Unrest was caused by masked extremists, affiliated with the PLO and other groups, who forcefully entered classrooms during school hours and compelled students to join violent demonstrations.

"Measures taken by the authorities have been a direct result of, and in reaction to, activities of these extremist elements.

"Such measures have had some degree of success and have enabled the reopening of primary and secondary schools during the present academic year.

"Extremist elements have, however, continued to disrupt the school system, both through violent agitation and frequent strikes.

"This resolution ignores these facts.

"The Government of Israel will continue to make every effort to normalize the educational environment within the framework of the difficult security situation caused by violent agitation and intimidation by PLO and other extremist affiliates."

4. The following information concerning Israel's compliance with General Assembly resolution 44/47 K covers the period from 1 July 1989 to 30 June 1990 and is based on reports from the Commissioner-General of UNRWA. It relates exclusively to UNRWA educational institutions and other facilities. Further information is contained in the Annual Report 1/ of the Commissioner-General of UNRWA for the above-mentioned period.

5. During the period under review, there were 191 cases of unauthorized entry into UNRWA premises in the West Bank by the Israeli authorities. Of these, 112 related to schools and 43 to health centres. In the Gaza Strip there were 555 such cases, of which 295 related to schools and 163 to health centres. UNRWA has taken up these cases with the Israeli authorities who, in a number of instances, have claimed that UNRWA premises were entered because stones had been thrown from within, or stone-throwers were being chased into the premises.
6. During the same period, there were nine fatalities and 3,795 cases of injury among students and trainees at UNRWA educational institutions in the West Bank. The corresponding figures for the Gaza Strip were four fatalities and 3,768 injuries. These casualties were attributable to beatings, tear gas inhalation, rubber bullets and live ammunition. In addition, a total of 371 students and trainees in the West Bank and 111 in the Gaza Strip were detained, of whom 148 in the West Bank and 79 in the Gaza Strip were released by 30 June 1990.
7. UNRWA's training centres in the West Bank, which had been closed by military order from the beginning of 1988, reopened in the spring of 1990. These centres are now working to an abbreviated semester of 24 weeks, until the end of September 1990 in the case of the Ramallah Men's and Women's Training Centre and until mid-October 1990 in the case of the Kalanċia Training Centre. As at 12 September 1990 all three centres were operating. The UNRWA training centre in the Gaza Strip operated without protracted closures during the academic year 1989/90.
8. In the West Bank, the 1989/90 UNRWA school year was shortened from 210 days to 141 days, a loss of 69 days, on account of general closure orders affecting all schools. The 141 operating days were further reduced by various factors such as intrusions by Israeli military personnel, individual school closures, strikes, curfews and local disturbances resulting in an overall loss of 48 per cent of a normal school year. The most seriously affected schools in the West Bank were the five schools in Tulkarm camp serving 2,363 pupils. These schools were closed by military orders from 11 February 1990 to 22 May 1990 and again during several curfews in May and June 1990. UNRWA scheduled these schools to reopen on 10 July 1990 for one month to make up for lost time, but the authorities insisted that the schools remain closed. UNRWA decided not to reopen the schools in order to avoid exposing the children to any risk. In the Gaza Strip, the 1989/90 UNRWA school year was shortened by 10 days from 210 days to 200 days, on account of general closure orders affecting all schools. The 200 operating days were affected by various factors referred to above resulting in an overall loss of 39 per cent of a normal school year.
9. The loss of teaching time has affected the level of curriculum coverage and has forced all UNRWA schools, other than the eight schools in east Jerusalem which were not affected by the general closure order, to concentrate only on basic subjects in the courses. The Israeli authorities also now take the position that UNRWA should conform to the school opening and closure dates and times of schools run by the Civil Administration, which has not helped the Agency in its efforts to try to make up for lost time.

Notes

1/ Official Records of the General Assembly, Forty-fifth Session, Supplement No. 13 (A/45/13), paras. 21, 80-85, 114 and 116.
