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Letter dated 29 December 1987 from the Acting Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People addressed to the Secretary-General

In my capacity as Acting Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, I wish to draw your urgent attention to the very grave situation in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip created by the cruel policies of the Israeli authorities against the Palestinian population.

Since my letter of 11 December 1987 (A/42/877-S/19337), the situation has continued to deteriorate in these territories. According to the Christian Science Monitor of 24 December 1987, the use of live ammunition by the Israeli troops has caused the killing of at least 23 Palestinians and the injuring of hundreds of others.

The New York Times reported on 26 December 1987 that the number of Palestinian youths arrested by the Israeli army for suspected involvement in the recent wave of protests in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip has, based on official sources, risen to nearly 1,000. However, the same day, the Palestine Press Service in Jerusalem reported that the information received from its reporters in the territories indicates that the number of Palestinians arrested since 9 December was more than 2,000.

Further, according to The New York Times, the Palestinians were picked up at their homes in the West Bank and Gaza villages and refugee camps by squads of Israeli soldiers, who arrived at their doors at all hours of the day and night with arrest warrants issued by the army. Moreover, the army has opened two makeshift prisons to detain the hundreds of prisoners until trials could be arranged. The conditions in these prisons are reported to be extremely harsh.

On 27 December, The New York Times reported that the Israeli army was preparing to begin military trials for the arrested Palestinians. The newspaper

said that, based on past experience, defence lawyers expect the trials to be what is called "swift proceedings - in effect, a mass court-martial". Defence lawyers have not been allowed to see the detainees. Furthermore, Palestinian lawyers in the Gaza Strip have been boycotting the military trials, accusing officials of putting pressure on the defendants by offering one-month prison terms to those who confessed and threatening much longer sentences for those who insisted on trials.

On 24 December, a military official told the Jerusalem Post: "Where the law allows us to arrest, we will arrest, where we are allowed to expel, we will expel. There will be no mercy shown". The army has also reportedly ordered the closing of several universities as well as about 800 schools on the West Bank and 92 schools in the Gaza Strip.

The Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People wishes to express its utmost concern at the policies and practices of Israel, which violate the human rights of the Palestinian people in the occupied territories, and in particular, the use of live ammunition as well as brutal force by the Israeli army against young defenceless Palestinians. These policies and practices are in clear violation of United Nations resolutions and the Fourth Geneva Convention of 12 August 1949.

The Committee appeals to you to take such measures as may be available to you for alleviating the sufferings of the affected Palestinians and for promoting the safety and protection of the Palestinian civilians under Israeli occupation. Further, the Committee appeals to you to intensify your efforts to bring about a comprehensive, just and lasting solution to the question of Palestine, in accordance with United Nations resolutions, in particular through the convening of the International Peace Conference on the Middle East, pursuant to General Assembly resolution 38/58 C.

I should be grateful if you would arrange for the text of this letter to be circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under the item entitled "Question of Palestine", and of the Security Council.

(Signed) Oscar ORAMAS-OLIVA
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Committee on the Exercise
of the Inalienable Rights
of the Palestinian People
