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QUESTION OF PALESTINE

SECURITY COUNCIL  
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Letter dated 13 May 1988 from the Acting Chairman of the Committee  
on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian  
People 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 express the Committee's serious concern at the continued grave situation in the occupied Palestinian territories. Armed repression as well as mass arrests and various forms of collective punishment continue to be used indiscriminately against Palestinians in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. The toll of Palestinians known to have been killed by Israeli gunfire since December 1987 is at least 180. Dozens of others have been reportedly killed by beatings and by suffocation from the particularly toxic kind of tear gas used by the armed forces. In addition, the Israeli authorities have introduced new administrative measures against the entire Palestinian population in the occupied territories in order to tighten control over the area in further efforts to quell the uprising.

Despite growing restrictions on the press and the detention of several Palestinian journalists, information reaching the Committee indicates that the uprising is continuing and that a number of grave incidents have occurred since my letter of 13 April 1988 (A/43/302-S/19769). The daily Ha'aretz reported on 19 April that Israeli authorities expelled eight Palestinians to Lebanon, including six residents of Beita village, in defiance of Security Council resolutions 607 (1988) and 608 (1988). Muharak Awad, a Palestinian-American civil rights activist, was also served a deportation order and is in jail pending a final decision on his appeal.

\* A/43/50.

The Middle East International reported on 16 April that, according to Israeli sources, the number of Palestinian prisoners had topped 7,000, but Palestinian sources placed the figure at nearly 13,000, of whom 1,200 have been placed under six-month administrative detention. According to Al-Fajr and Ha'aretz, some 40 houses and five stores belonging to Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza were demolished during the month of April. Hundreds of trees were also uprooted in many villages.

According to Reuter and United Press International, today 13 May riot police fired rubber bullets in clashes with Palestinians praying at the shrine of Al-Haram Al Sharif, wounding an as yet unknown number of persons. Agence France Presse reported that Gaza is completely isolated since 12 May and some 3,000 troops are deployed in the city, while the towns of Ramallah, Hebron and Bethlehem have been declared closed military zones. Nablus and surrounding refugee camps have been placed under curfew.

According to The New York Times of 11 May 1988, Israeli authorities have initiated administrative steps intended, according to a senior Defense Ministry official, "to exhaust the interest of the great majority of the people to continue participating" in the uprising. As examples of the new strategy it was reported that the Israeli authorities are now "aggressively collecting back taxes that might have been overlooked". Palestinians seeking marriage, divorce or birth certificates "must clear up any Government obligations".

On 10 May Reuter reported that the military authorities had announced that all Palestinians 16 years of age and older in the Gaza Strip would be required to replace their green identification cards with new red cards. These steps are seen by the Palestinian community as another effort to strengthen Israeli control over the Gaza Strip.

In view of the gravity of these developments, the Committee wishes once again to express its concern at these repressive policies and practices by Israel, the occupying Power, which are in contravention of the Fourth Geneva Convention, international human rights instruments and United Nations resolutions. These repressive measures, which are aimed at preventing the Palestinian people from exercising its inalienable rights in accordance with internationally recognized principles and United Nations resolutions, pose grave obstacles to the attainment of a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the region.

The Committee reiterates its appeal to you to take all possible measures for ensuring the safety and protection of the Palestinian civilians under occupation and to intensify your efforts towards the convening of the international peace conference on the Middle East in accordance with 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 item 37 of the preliminary list, and of the Security Council.

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

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