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LETTER DATED 29 MARCH 1983 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE
OF JORDAN TO THE UNITED NATIONS ADDRESSED TO THE PRESIDENT
OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL

I have the honour to transmit herewith the letter of the Deputy Permanent Observer of the Palestine Liberation Organization, Mr. Hasan Abdul Rahman, on the incidents of collective poisoning to which more than 1,000 Palestinian schoolgirls were exposed in the West Bank, in addition to other acts of repression against Palestinian students and civilians.

Because this matter is of enormous consequence for the material existence and the health and also the psychological situation of the civilian inhabitants of the occupied Arab territories and because the situation in those areas is constantly deteriorating further as a result of Israel's expansionist and repressive policies against the Arab citizens in the occupied Arab territories, I would be grateful if you would arrange for this letter and its annex to be circulated as an official document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Abdullah SALAH
Permanent Representative

Annex

Letter dated 29 March 1983 from the Deputy Permanent
Observer of the Palestine Liberation Organization to
the United Nations addressed to the President of the
Security Council

[Original: English]

On instructions from Yasser Arafat, Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Palestine Liberation Organization, I am requested to bring the following to your most urgent attention.

Since last Wednesday, 23 March 1983, 6 Palestinian girls' secondary schools in the Jenin district, and a number of schools in other areas of the Israeli occupied Palestinian West Bank have been the targets of terrorist attacks. Over 1,000 Palestinians, mostly schoolgirls have been hospitalized as a result of these acts of terror and mass violence.

On 23 March 1983, 72 schoolgirls at the Arraba secondary school near Jenin were rushed to hospitals in Jenin and Haifa after being poisoned by gas. Five girls were placed on the danger list, and 40 girls were readmitted to the hospital on the following day for recurring symptoms.

On 27 March 1983, at 8 a.m., girls at the Jenin secondary school were overcome by odious smells emitting from their classrooms. They stumbled helplessly into the street, dozens fainting, most complaining of nausea, vomiting, dimming of vision and headaches. Shortly thereafter, girls from the Jenin girls' intermediate school and the Barquin secondary school were also rushed to the Jenin hospital, exhibiting the same symptoms. The administrative staff at the Jenin secondary school discovered yellow sulfurous powder on the windowsills. Nylon bags containing yellow sulfurous powder were discovered at the Maithaloun girls' secondary school in Yaabad. The Israeli occupation authorities were contacted in both cases at 8 a.m. in the morning, however, they did not come to the schools to investigate until 10 p.m. that night.

On 28 March 1983, another attack was perpetrated against Palestinian schoolchildren in the village of Saha'ir in the Al-Khalil (Hebron) area. A coke bottle containing a highly noxious substance and emitting fumes was discovered by children playing between a boys' school and a girls' school. A teacher and two children were rushed to Aliya hospital in Al-Khalil, all exhibiting the same symptoms as the children previously hospitalized. Other Palestinian children at the school fled in sheer terror from the area.

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Six of the schoolgirls poisoned on 23 March 1983 were readmitted to the hospital with recurring symptoms. The symptoms recurred with such severity that none of the girls could stand up and each had to be carried into the hospital.

On 29 March 1983, the Jenin hospital reported that 600 new cases of gas poisoning occurred last night. The new cases included men, women and children of all ages. The attacks of terrorism are now being perpetrated against residential areas. The latest affected areas are the whole eastern part of the Israeli occupied Palestinian city of Jenin, and the village of Almaniyeh, east of Jenin.

Of the children poisoned between 23 and 28 March 1983, 145 remain hospitalized or under intensive medical care.

All those poisoned have suffered in varying degrees from the following symptoms: severe headaches, respiratory difficulties, fainting, chest pains, vomiting, dark blue spots on the palms and on the hands, pains in the back and joints, general weakness, dizziness, dilated pupils and blurred vision.

The Israeli occupation authorities imposed a curfew on Jenin, the purpose of which could only be to prevent any assistance reaching the victims. Israeli military patrols in the stricken areas have been intensified, and vehicles transporting victims have been hindered and delayed.

Doctors in the Israeli occupied Palestinian West Bank indicate that the substance, which has poisoned over 1,000 Palestinians, will take at least two weeks to isolate from blood samples, and that the Israeli occupation authorities are withholding test results from direct samples taken at the affected schools. Doctors also report that the Israeli occupation authorities will not allow Palestinian doctors on the occupied West Bank to participate in, or have access to results of, their investigation.

Palestinian doctors are fearful that the poisonous gas may have long-term effects, and that the substance could have sterilizing consequences, since the majority of the sites attacked were girls' schools.

Fifteen teachers from the Arraba girls' secondary school were arrested, as was Kaddura Musa, correspondent for Al-Fajr, for reporting on the poisoning.

It is common knowledge to all that the Israeli occupation authorities and Zionist settlers have been involved in acts of terrorism against Palestinian individuals, leaders and institutions. It is without question that a new phase in Israel's campaign of genocide against the Palestinian people has been launched, and I should like to recall that only two weeks ago, Israeli war minister Arens warned that new methods would be used by the Israeli occupation authorities against the Palestinian population under occupation.

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The Palestinian Liberation Organization holds Israel criminally responsible for these monstrous terrorist attacks on the Palestinian population under military occupation.

We call on the United Nations to form an international medical committee to go to the Israeli occupied territories to fully investigate, document and report on the poisoning of the Palestinian people under Israeli occupation.

(Signed) Hasan Abdul RAHMAN
Deputy Permanent Observer, ad interim
