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**QUESTION OF THE VIOLATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN THE OCCUPIED ARAB
TERRITORIES, INCLUDING PALESTINE**

**Written statement* submitted by the World Young Women's Christian Association
(World YWCA) and the World Alliance of Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA),
non-governmental organizations in special consultative status**

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[2 February 2004]

* This written statement is issued, unedited, in the language(s) received from the submitting non-governmental organization(s).

The construction of the Separation Wall by the Government of Israel is violating UN Resolutions and International Law. It involves more land expropriations, the destruction of tens of thousands of *dunams* of Palestinian farm land, annexes some 30 water wells, and cuts off thousands of people from their land and livelihood. It is a direct violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention that forbids a change in the status of occupied territories.

On 21 October 2003, the United Nations Assembly issued a resolution that expressed grave concern over the commencement and construction of a wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territories. The UN resolution, approved by 144 countries, underlined the unanimous opposition by the international community to the construction of the Wall.

The construction of the Separation Wall, has confiscated and destroyed Palestinian land and resources, disrupted the lives of thousands of civilians and de facto annexed to Israel large areas of Palestinian territory. It is not built along the length of the Green Line, but in fact sometimes kilometres to the east of it. Because of this, the construction of the Wall undermines the peace process in the region while the expropriation of land along the Separation Wall is contrary to any genuine peace agreement.

So far, more than 12,000 people living in 15 Palestinian villages and towns, from Salim in the northern West Bank to Mas'ha to the south of Qalqilyah (near the settlement of Elkana), have been trapped between the fence to the east and the Green Line to the west. As construction of the fence continues deep into the territory of the West Bank, more Palestinians will find themselves in this situation.

The fence also displaces some tens of thousands of other Palestinians, whose homes are east of the fence, and whose land, from which they earn their livelihood, is to the west. The route that the first stage of the wall takes up to Elkana on the south has so far cut off from the West Bank about 100,000 *dunams* of Palestinian-owned land. This means disruption in many forms: farmers cannot make their way to their land; greenhouses and orchards have been destroyed; olives are left unpicked; teachers and students fail to get to school because the gate of the separation fence is not opened on time; feed for livestock cannot be delivered regularly so animals are being sold or slaughtered, or left to die; water pipes for drinking or irrigation have been cut; siblings and parents are not permitted to visit each other; garbage trucks are unable to complete their routes; cesspits are not being drained on time.

Furthermore, the building of the Separation Wall and fence, and the roads that run alongside them, has meant the destruction of private houses in many places on a "buffer zone" of 100 – 200 meters wide. Destroying the houses in this way is extending the long term Israeli policy of house demolition.

These examples of disruption to the daily life in the communities affected by the construction of the Wall have been well documented by many NGOs in the area.

The wall as it is planned in the Beit Jala area will separate the villagers of Beit Jala and Al Khader from their fields. It will also surround the village of Al Walaja and create a large belt of confiscated land ready to be used by the Israeli settlements of Gilo and Har Gilo. In other words, the wall will ruin the livelihood of people in the Beit Jala area. The Palestinian Environmental

Non Governmental Organizations Network (PENGON) published special maps illustrating the forthcoming path of the wall. The maps show that the construction of the Wall, as it has done so to many communities, will also separate people from their land and cause the destruction of many houses. Along with demolished houses and olive trees, large tracts of land will be confiscated and the construction will isolate many Palestinians in cantons inside the wall. It will also be impossible for people from Bethlehem and Al Walaja to reach another two farms. The inhabitants will not even be able to tend to olive trees just a few metres from their homes. Villagers from Husan, Nahhalin and Al Khader will face the same problem. This area is of specific importance to the YMCA, the YWCA and all those who have sponsored the planting of new olive trees through the YMCA/YWCA campaign "Keep Hope Alive". The aim of the campaign is to keep hope of a durable peace alive by replanting trees in the areas where trees have been or are in danger of being uprooted. Since December 2000, 2105 olive trees have been planted in the Bethlehem area through the sponsorships of people in Switzerland, Norway, Scotland, United States, Japan and others working to secure peace, justice and human rights all over the world. The fields where the olive trees have been planted as a result of this campaign are among those which the Wall will make inaccessible to the farmers who attend to them.

Today, the construction of the Wall continues and the Palestinian towns of Abu Dis (east of Jerusalem) and Bethlehem (south of Jerusalem) see their territories being destroyed or confiscated on a daily basis.

To say that the enormous and unjust expropriations of Palestinian land required for the construction of the Separation Wall, and the fences around all the settlements, are being done in the name of ensuring Israeli security, is ignoring reality. Despite the Separation Wall and tight closure of Palestinian towns, tiny Palestinian organisations of extremists continuously succeed in sending suicide bombers into the heart of the major cities in Israel to sow death and sorrow among the Israeli population.

Conclusion

The construction of the Separation Wall, declared to contribute to the security of Israel, is defined in an arbitrary way by the Government of Israel and imposed on the Palestinians. It is violating the basic human rights of tens of thousands of civilians in the Palestinian Territories and restricting their freedom in an intolerable way. At the same time, the construction of the Wall is violating UN Resolutions and International Law.

The Palestinian people have the right to a viable sovereign state based on 1967 borders, as do the Israelis who, since 1948, have already had their sovereign state within the territory granted to them by the UN. Both peoples have the right to complete self-determination within internationally recognised borders, to full sovereignty, to international recognition of their elected leadership and to security for their civilian population. But the construction of the Wall undermines the peace process in the region, has displaced and subjected tens of thousands to Palestinians to an inhumane and miserable life as well as jeopardising the community development work of the YMCA and YWCA as well as many other non-governmental organisations.

It is the fate of the Palestinians and the Israeli people to be neighbours. The experience of violence resulting from the relationship of a people occupying another people is causing suffering for both Israelis and Palestinians. The World Alliance of YMCAs and the World YWCA and their counterparts in these areas are convinced that the Separation Wall is not a solution that would foster harmony and ensure peace between Israelis and Palestinians. Peace and security can only be achieved through dialogue and a recognition of and respect for each other's individual and collective human rights.
