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UNITED NATIONS RELIEF AND WORKS AGENCY FOR

PALESTINE REFUGEES IN THE NEAR EAST

REPORT OF THE SPECIAL COMMITTEE TO

INVESTIGATE ISRAELI PRACTICES AFFECTING

THE HUMAN RIGHTS OF THE POPULATION OF

THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES

SECURITY COUNCIL

Forty-fourth year

Letter dated 17 July 1989 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the
Permanent Mission of Israel to the United Nations addressed to
the Secretary-General

I wish to draw your attention to the statement made by the Defence Minister of Israel, Mr. Yitzhak Rabin, regarding preparations to reopen the schools in Judea and Samaria.

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. Accordingly, since 1967, many new institutes of learning were established with the assistance of the Israeli authorities, including five universities and a number of other institutions granting academic degrees and diplomas, where none existed before.

Indeed, the level of education and literacy in the territories has improved markedly. In 1967, 75 per cent of the population over the age of 15 was illiterate, while 80 per cent of the working-age population had less than nine years of schooling. Today, on the other hand, about 90 per cent of school-age children are

* A/44/59/Rev.1.

educated in a system that provides 12 years of free schooling, the first nine years of which are compulsory. Consequently, the number of pupils, teachers and classrooms has more than doubled. Furthermore, during this period, 26 vocational training centres have been established in which approximately 65,000 people, comprising one quarter of the total work-force in the territories, have been trained.

Since December 1987, however, the schools have frequently been exploited as centres for organizing and launching violent activity in the territories. The decision to close schools in Judea and Samaria was taken following months of severe disturbances that originated from school premises. The unrest was perpetrated during school hours by professional inciters and masked extremists who forcefully entered the classrooms and compelled the students to join in the rioting.

The use of schools and educational facilities as centres for incitement and violence is unacceptable. Israel had no choice, therefore, but to close the schools. While Israel has repeatedly attempted to reopen the schools, extremist elements continued to manipulate and incite students, thereby obstructing normal classroom activity.

In contrast to the situation in Judea and Samaria, the schools in the Gaza District have not succumbed to the violence and have remained open. Local organizations, school administrators, teachers and parents have refused to allow extremists to disrupt the schools. As a result, 98 per cent of all high school students in the Gaza District recently completed their matriculation examinations, which will enable them to enter colleges and universities. By the same token, nurseries, kindergartens and vocational training centres in Judea and Samaria and in the Gaza District have remained open.

Israel's desire to normalize the educational environment is steadfast. For this reason, on 12 July 1989, Defence Minister Yitzhak Rabin ordered preparations for the gradual reopening of schools in Judea and Samaria. Accordingly, the Defence Ministry spokesman has now announced that the schools will reopen on 22 July 1989. School administrators and teachers have been called to return to work on 18 July 1989. In the first phase, high school seniors and first through sixth grade students, representing over 50 per cent of the total student population, will resume their studies. A further announcement regarding the resumption of studies by the rest of the students will be made in the near future.

I should be grateful if you would have the text of this letter circulated as an official document of the General Assembly, under items 77 and 78 of the preliminary list, and of the Security Council.

(Signed) Johanan BEIN
Ambassador
Acting Permanent Representative
