



**Economic and Social
Council**

Distr.
GENERAL

E/CN.4/Sub.2/1989/NGO/3
27 July 1989

ENGLISH
Original: FRENCH

COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS

Sub-Commission on Prevention of
Discrimination and Protection
of Minorities
Forty-first session
Item 6 of the provisional agenda

QUESTION OF THE VIOLATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND FUNDAMENTAL FREEDOMS,
INCLUDING POLICIES OF RACIAL DISCRIMINATION AND SEGREGATION AND OF
APARTHEID, IN ALL COUNTRIES, WITH PARTICULAR REFERENCE TO COLONIAL
AND OTHER DEPENDENT COUNTRIES AND TERRITORIES: REPORT OF THE
SUB-COMMISSION UNDER COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS RESOLUTION 8 (XXIII)

Written statement submitted by the International Federation
Terre des Hommes, a non-governmental organization in
consultative status (category II)

The Secretary-General has received the following communication which is
circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council
resolution 1296 (XLIV).

[14 July 1989]

1. The International Federation Terre des Hommes is deeply concerned by the health situation and the provision of medical care in the Israeli-occupied territories and by the resulting denial of the Palestinians' most fundamental rights.

2. During confrontations with the Israeli armed forces, wounded Palestinians are often denied the emergency care they require. In April 1989 at Nablus, soldiers prevented a Red Crescent ambulance from evacuating a wounded man to take him to a hospital. He died as a result. A Red Crescent ambulance was also stopped by the army near Ramallah. The soldiers ordered the driver and nurses to get out of the vehicle. When they refused, the soldiers beat and humiliated them and made them take down the Palestinian flag. In a refugee camp near Ramallah, two adolescents were shot during a demonstration. Soldiers attempted to prevent their family from taking them to a hospital, but the family finally succeeded in evacuating them from the camp.

3. Also in April 1989, three persons with gun shot wounds were denied medical care. Two of them were held in custody until they died and the third was not treated in the hospital where he had been taken. In a refugee camp in the Gaza Strip, a man was beaten by Israeli soldiers who searched his house. When his mother and sister tried to intervene in order to defend him, they were also beaten. An UNRWA ambulance that had come to help them was turned back by the soldiers.

4. In May 1989, a seriously wounded man was deliberately left without care by Israeli soldiers for half an hour. The soldiers threatened to shoot anyone who tried to approach the man. When they left, he was dead. In Gaza, on 6 May, UNRWA ambulances carrying wounded persons were stopped several times and searched by soldiers. In Nuseirat Camp, 41 persons were shot and UNRWA ambulances were delayed several times while attempting to evacuate the wounded.

5. Treatment units and health professionals are constantly being threatened and attacked while performing their duties. At Nablus, in March 1989, one clinic was closed on military orders and its equipment destroyed or confiscated. Soldiers often block the entrance to a hospital in order to check the identity of the wounded persons being brought in. In May, two pharmacies were also ransacked by soldiers at Ramallah and Nablus.

6. Doctors working as volunteers for Palestinian non-governmental organizations, such as the Union of Palestinian Medical Relief Committees (the Union), are constantly being harassed by the authorities. They are frequently arrested and placed in administrative detention or forced to pay very high taxes. One Palestinian doctor was attacked by settlers near Ramallah and his car, which he needed for his work, was damaged. Dr. Mahmoud Ismail Abu Ayyash, a volunteer doctor for the Union, was arrested on 3 April 1989 in the Hebron region in the West Bank because he was aiding the wounded during a confrontation. He was placed under house arrest and served time in prison.

7. As these events are taking place, the quality of medical care in the Israeli occupied territories is constantly deteriorating. The policy of the authorities concerned is partially responsible for this situation. It is reflected in budget cuts, inadequate medical services, the increase in insurance prices and the inequitable distribution of care between Israelis and Palestinians. Whereas in Israel there are 28 doctors per 10,000 inhabitants, this proportion falls to 8 in the occupied territories. Israeli hospitals also do not receive the necessary financial guarantees when they take in patients from the occupied territories.

8. The Government had two State hospitals closed in the Gaza Strip. The number of beds is 1.7 per 10,000 inhabitants, as opposed to 6.8 in Israel. The medical equipment is old and poorly maintained and the hospitals overcrowded. The poor quality of the medical care offered by the Government authorities has led the population of the occupied territories to set up organizations and establish structures, such as the Union, to provide health education and care, in particular for the most underprivileged persons. These organizations are not encouraged by the Israeli authorities, who regard them as a potential threat. The authorities thus keep a tight rein on the distribution of medical care by preventing the Palestinians from establishing their own infrastructure.

9. The most vulnerable groups, such as children, are in a particularly difficult situation. They suffer from a high mortality rate, malnutrition and various infections. A comparative study of three villages in the West Bank established the infant mortality rate at 90 per thousand (the average infant mortality rate in the West Bank is approximately 30 per thousand), whereas it is approximately 12 per thousand for Israeli children. In the areas where a curfew has been in effect for several days or weeks, basic foodstuffs and medicines are running out. Children are thus being deprived of basic care, both preventive and curative. In a village in the Bethlehem region, five cases of infant mortality were recorded for 1988, whereas there had not even been one case in the five previous years. In another urban community, the malnutrition rate for children under three increased fivefold.

10. In conclusion and in view of the foregoing, the International Federation Terre des Hommes would like to recommend the following measures to the Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities:

A. To use all available means to encourage the Israeli Government:

(a) To end all discrimination between Israeli citizens and Palestinians in the occupied territories, especially with regard to the right to life, the right to receive medical care and the right to adequate food for children;

(b) To stop hampering the work of Palestinian non-governmental organizations established to meet shortages in some sectors, particularly that of health care for children, adolescents and adults.

B. To recommend to the Commission on Human Rights that it should study the current status of the 1949 Geneva Convention and its applicability to the Israeli-occupied territories.
