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Letter dated 15 January 1990 from the Chairman of the Committee
on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian
People addressed to the Secretary-General

In my capacity as Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, I wish to draw your most urgent attention to the further escalation of repression by Israel, the occupying Power, against Palestinians in the occupied Palestinian territory.

Since my letter to you of 6 December 1989 (A/44/851-S/21009), more Palestinians have been killed and injured. According to a recent report of the DataBase Project on Palestinian Human Rights, the number of Palestinians killed between the beginning of the intifadah in December 1987 and 8 December 1989 has reached 823, of whom one quarter were children under 16. The Al-Fajr newspaper reported on 4 January 1990 that 28 Palestinians, including 10 children under 17, had been killed by the Israeli army during December 1989.

On 14 December, the Israeli daily Ha'aretz reported that, according to autopsy findings released by the army, 22-day-old Baraá Labadi from the village of al-Yamun in the West Bank had died of suffocation. The findings confirmed the mother's report that the baby had choked to death during a pre-dawn raid on her house by Israeli soldiers and not as a result of exposure, as claimed by the army.

On 26 December 1989, The Jerusalem Post reported that two pathologists had concluded that Khaled al-Sheikh Ali from Gaza had died a week earlier in the Shin Beth (Security Service) prison from a beating, although his family had been told by the Gaza military commander that he had died of a heart attack. Israeli civil rights lawyers and Gazan lawyers, who had requested the autopsy, suspected that the death, the third of its kind in Gaza, might have been caused by torture during a Shin Beth investigation.

In its January 1990 newsletter, Amnesty International said that "it feared the Israeli Government had effectively condoned and even encouraged extrajudicial executions of Palestinians by its forces in order to help control unrest during the intifadah in the occupied territories". The organization expressed concern that "the guidelines appear to permit the unjustifiable killing of people who are involved in activities which do not necessarily endanger life or who may simply be wearing masks".

Harsh collective punishment also continues to be imposed, aimed particularly at children. The Jerusalem Post reported on 14 December 1989 that a military order closing universities and other institutions of higher education in the occupied Palestinian territory had been renewed for an additional three months. The universities have been closed by military order since February 1988. The New York Times reported on 12 December 1989 that the Israeli army had announced that it would begin impounding property or sealing homes belonging to the parents of Palestinian children who threw stones at soldiers. A military spokesman was quoted as saying that "in lieu of bail, valuables can be confiscated or a room can be sealed for a period of time". Previously, the army had tried to deter children by fining, arresting and gaoling their parents.

Deeply alarmed at the extreme gravity of these increasing incidents of oppression and the mounting loss of life, the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People deplores once again the repressive policies and practices of Israel, the occupying Power, which are in violation of its obligations under the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War of 12 August 1949 and are contrary to the provisions of Security Council and General Assembly resolutions. The Committee considers that the adoption of urgent measures by the Security Council to provide international protection to Palestinian civilians, as requested by the General Assembly in its resolutions 43/233 of 20 April 1989 and 44/2 of 6 October 1989, is imperative. The Committee would also greatly appreciate appropriate action by you and by the organizations of the United Nations system to alleviate the suffering of the unarmed Palestinian civilians under occupation, especially women and children.

The Committee wishes to stress once again the urgent need to advance towards a comprehensive and just settlement of the question of Palestine in accordance with the principles reaffirmed by the General Assembly in its resolution 44/43 of 6 December 1989, and it reiterates its appeal to you and to all concerned to intensify all efforts to attain this essential objective.

I should be grateful if you would have this letter circulated as an official document of the forty-fourth session of the General Assembly, under agenda item 39, and of the Security Council.

(Signed) Absa Claude DIALLO
Chairman
Committee on the Exercise
of the Inalienable Rights
of the Palestinian People
