



General Assembly

Distr.
GENERAL

A/HRC/7/NGO/88
25 February 2008

ENGLISH ONLY

HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL
Seventh session
Agenda item 7

HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION IN PALESTINE AND OTHER OCCUPIED ARAB TERRITORIES

**Written statement* submitted by International Organization for the Elimination of
All Forms of Racial Discrimination (EAFORD), a non-governmental organization 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.

[11 February 2008]

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

The wide dissemination of certain interpretations on sectarian clashes among the Palestinians helped to hide a neglected but important truth behind these developments. The collisions, hastily labeled as contradictions within the Palestinian society, were in fact the outcomes of a series of decisive acts that Israel and the United States had been putting into operation for some time.

The Palestinian scene had been mercilessly under the disruptive influence of certain acts even before the January 2006 elections that favoured the Hamas alternative. For instance, Israel's so-called "security wall" that cost 2 billion dollars shaped new militarized ghettos, allowing the theft of at least 40,000 acres of Palestinian cultivable land. Although the U.S. Congress conditioned the loan guarantees, totaling 9 billion dollars, to their use within the Israeli frontiers prior to 5 June 1967, they helped finance the plan of separation and embezzlement. Sanctions that followed, upon Israel's insistence, devastated Gaza and the West Bank, expanding poverty even further. Gaza was sealed off from the outside world, and close to 500 Palestinians, mostly unarmed, were killed. Israel bombed and demolished indiscriminately. It displayed in Gaza greater brutality than ever before.

In the United States, not only the Republican administration, but also the Democratic leadership has been indifferent, to say the least, to the eradication of the rule of law and human rights as far as the Palestinians were concerned. In fact, the whole American intellectuals sub-class was timid in this respect. And those who purported to speak for the American Jews revealed moral bankruptcy.

Even the criticism leveled at Jimmy Carter's recent book, entitled "*Palestine Peace Not Apartheid*", disclose the degree of partisanship on the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. Many notables and counselors of the Democratic Party, including the incoming House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, announced that this former occupant of the White House was not speaking for the American Democrats on Israel. Carter's book actually exposes little about the Jewish State. The author, who apparently believes that Israel is a democracy, limits his own criticisms only to some outstanding cruelties in the occupied territories. One may find faults with this published work, not because he disapproves with some of the savageness displayed in parts of Palestine, but that he is too kind to the Israeli administration. Carter's assertion that Israel is a democracy would surprise, above all, the 1.3 million Israeli Arabs who live as second-class citizens. Their lack of citizenship rights, poverty rate, meager job opportunities, dwelling restrictions, and the like indicate the perpetuation of discriminatory laws and practices.

Objective criticism should go much beyond the Carter approach. It was Israel that closed Palestinian territory even before the 2006 elections and thus contributed to the economic crisis that followed. The latter was soon coupled with sanctions, both eventually feeding clashes among the Palestinians. To portray such confrontation as a domestic discord emanating from the Palestinians themselves is a calculation to indoctrinate the public in the false cause.

The truth is that Israeli actions with U.S. consent condemned more than half of the Palestinian inhabitants to live under the international poverty line. A high percentage of their children suffered from serious undernourishment. The Palestinian Authority could not pay even the salaries of its employees, whose number, together with family members, reached a million or more. Hence, a struggle for a share in dwindling resources, which had been meager in the first place but became more and more insufficient, inevitably led to rivalries, breaks and clashes. Such collisions satisfied only those who saw Palestinian unity as a threat to themselves. Israel hopes, moreover, to perpetuate the closure of the Palestinian economy and the sanctions so that the race for diminishing resources may eventually bring about a civil war.

It must be emphasized now that, apart from the animosity and injustice inherent in this policy, such a development will only mean an indefinite prolongation of Israeli-Palestinian confrontation and will further jeopardize local and regional peace, with adverse worldwide repercussions.

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