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Health conditions of, and assistance to, the Arab population in the occupied Arab territories, including Palestine

At the request of the Permanent Observer of Palestine to the United Nations and Other International Organizations at Geneva, the Director-General has the honour to transmit the attached report to the Fifty-fifth World Health Assembly.

ANNEX

**State of Palestine
Palestinian Higher Health Council –
Palestinian Ministry of Health**

**HEALTH CONDITIONS OF, AND ASSISTANCE TO, THE ARAB POPULATION
IN THE OCCUPIED ARAB TERRITORIES, INCLUDING PALESTINE**

Report submitted to the Fifty-fifth World Health Assembly

April 2002

INTRODUCTION

Following the Oslo peace agreements, signed in May 1994, the Palestinian Health Ministry began implementing its first five-year health plan. Implementation of the second five-year health plan was started in May 1999.

In spite of difficulties imposed by the Israeli occupation in its refusal to implement the signed accords that stipulate withdrawal from Holy Al Qods (Jerusalem), the West Bank and Gaza, we have been able to establish a wide network of primary health care centres in villages and towns which ensures equal distribution of services, facilitates access for patients and applies the overall family care concept.

At the same time, the Ministry has also been engaged in restoring and expanding existing hospitals and creating new ones in deprived areas. It has thus been possible to provide one bed for every 650 citizens alongside additional tertiary care services including heart, brain and neurosurgery.

We have also been providing services such as health care for women of child-bearing age, family planning, school health and health education. A list of essential drugs has also been established and applied with the technical assistance of the World Health Organization. We have also established treatment protocols for chronic diseases and a manual for drug use.

Nevertheless, we have unfortunately been facing a war waged by Israel since 29 September 2000; this has involved land, air and sea blockades, as well as the use of missiles, explosives, harmful gases, probably depleted uranium, and other internationally banned weapons. Children were not spared and they have been shot at and injured, especially in the head, eyes and the upper body.

Blockade and dismemberment have deprived whole villages of access to treatment in towns. On the other hand, immunization, disease prevention and environmental health teams have been unable to reach nearby villages. As a consequence, immunization rates have dropped from 95% before the years of aggression to between 65% and 75%, especially in village areas. Mother and child care have suffered the same fate. In March-April 2002 Israeli forces reoccupied Ramallah, Tulkarem and Qalqilya and perpetrated a horrendous massacre at the Jenin refugee camp, displacing 13 065 women and children. They killed 500 citizens, 380 in the refugee camp at Jenin and in Jenin itself, and 120 citizens at the old city of Nablus, using planes and tanks. The Israeli forces prevented all ambulances, whether belonging to the Palestinian Red Crescent or to the International Red Cross or to UNRWA, from helping the injured, thus causing their death either by leaving them to bleed to death or by shooting them.

The Director of Al-Yamana Hospital at Bethlehem, the director of emergency services at Jenin, as well as 17 doctors, nurses, ambulancemen and ambulance drivers were killed by Israeli fire. Thirty-two ambulances were totally destroyed and 250 ambulance men and women and nurses were injured. The Israelis cut water and electricity supplies to villages, cities and camps. Hospital water and electricity networks were totally destroyed.

To date the number of injured people has reached 35 696; the 2176 martyrs include 416 children. We have lost 32 ambulances which were totally destroyed. Seventeen pregnant women and 13 babies died in childbirth at Israeli checkpoints.

Despite all these tragedies we have never lost hope and we still believe that our strategic option is a just and comprehensive peace which will lead to the establishment of a Palestinian State with

(East) Jerusalem as its capital side by side with the State of Israel pursuant to the relevant resolutions of the United Nations.

Despite the reigning utter darkness, the light of Peace shall shine. Despite all difficulties, peace shall reign supreme.

Dr Riad Al-Zaaniun
Minister of Health

I. DEMOGRAPHIC INDICATORS

The population

The population of Palestine was 3 298 951 in 2001 (1 196 591 in the Gaza Strip and 2 102 360 in the West Bank). Refugees constitute 65.1% of the population in the Gaza Strip, and 26.5% in the West Bank. Population density per square kilometre is 3161 in the Gaza Strip and 347 in the West Bank. It should be taken into consideration that large areas of the Gaza Strip and the West Bank are still occupied by Israeli settlers, hence the actual density ratio is higher than that recorded.

Population distribution shows that 46.9% are under 15 years of age and 18.5% are under 5, whereas 4.7% of the population is 60 years of age or older. The average family size is 6.1 and the number of children for each married woman is 4.54, of whom 4.31 survive.

The environmental situation

84.8% of the population is served by the water supply system (80.7% in the West Bank and 93.3% in the Gaza Strip). 53.5% of the population in the Gaza Strip and 34% in the West Bank has access to the sewage system, whereas absorptive pits constitute the remaining percentage, which has an immense impact on the health and environmental situation of the population. Moreover, the unhealthy methods of garbage collection and disposal are responsible for the bad quality of drinking-water and air pollution.

Dependency rates

The dependency rate is 100.6% (112.8% in the Gaza Strip and 94.3% in the West Bank). The dependency rate in Palestine is the highest of all the countries in the region. It is 54% in Cyprus, 67% in Egypt, 82% in Jordan and 64% in Lebanon.

Population growth

Population growth rate was 2.8% in 2001, as compared to 5.2% in 1995.

Birth rate

It was 33.2/1000 per year in 2001, whereas it reached 46.5/1000 in 1995.

Life expectancy

The average life expectancy at birth was 71.82 years in 2000, whereas it was 71.50 years in 1998. The average life expectancy at birth for women was higher than that for men (73.43 years for women and 70.27 years for men).

Fertility

The fertility rate in Palestine is one of the highest in the world. It was estimated at about 5.93 per woman in 2000. It has remarkably decreased over the last six years from 7.5 in 1994 to 5.58 in 1998, due to efforts in the fields of family planning and reproductive health.

Reproductive health and family planning

The total number of family planning clinics increased from 97 in 1997 to 178 in 2001, with a rate of increase of about 83%. The rate of women using various contraceptives also increased to 27% for those using the coil, 48% for those using contraceptive pills and 19% for condoms.

Education

There are 2610 schools in Palestine, with 942 942 students in 26 449 classes, taught by 32 051 teachers.

The Palestinian economy

According to the Palestinian Monetary Authority (PMA), Gross National Product (GNP) in Palestine has been subject to high fluctuations during the past five years; per capita GNP decreased from US\$ 1983 annually in 1998 to US\$ 1771 in 2000. The number of Palestinian workers in Israel also declined from 126 100 in 1999 to 112 900 in 2000. Work in Israel has almost stopped since 2001. Workers inside Palestine have also decreased from 667 000 in 1999 to 575 900 in 2000, due to the prevailing political situation in Palestine. The unemployment rate was 14.1% in 2000 and 60% in 2001, and unstable due to the political situation and the conditions of occupation and closure of areas.

Morbidity

Palestine is experiencing what is called the “epidemiological transition” where epidemic and non-epidemic diseases exist side by side. Hepatitis A, B and C are endemic in the country while the incidence of bacterial and viral meningitis increases every year. Brucellosis is still one of the major diseases reported in Palestine, along with parasitic diseases and anaemia. As for non-epidemic diseases, diabetes affects 9% of the population, whereas heart diseases, hypertension and cerebral stroke constitute an increasing burden every year. The morbidity rate for malignant neoplasm is 60/100 000, whereas it affects 350/100 000 men of 50 years of age and above, and 382/100 000 women in the same age group.

Mortality

In 2001, the mortality rate was 2.8/1000, whereas in 1995 it was 4/1000.

Infant mortality

In 2001, the infant mortality rate was 2.8/1000, whereas at the beginning of the 1990s it was 30/1000. The mortality rate is 2.9/1000 in children under five years of age, 0.4/1000 in the 5-19 age group, and 35.1/1000 in the 60 and above age group.

Maternity mortality

The maternity mortality rate (MMR) is one of the major indicators of the health status of women. Although the rate of births in health institutions has increased in recent years, several risks still affect this factor, especially the instability of the political situation, curfews, closures, and the frequent isolation of the Palestinian areas. These are specific factors for the increasing risks of MMR, which is estimated at about 80/100 000 among women of childbearing age.

II. THE PALESTINIAN HEALTH SYSTEM

Primary health care

There is a network of primary care clinics in the Palestinian territory that covers all districts, totalling 595 clinics (100 clinics in the Gaza Strip and 495 in the West Bank). Sixty per cent of them belong to the Ministry of Health, 31% belong to nongovernmental organizations, and 8.5% belong to UNRWA.

Hospitals

There are 70 hospitals in Palestine, one for every 47 127 persons, and there are 4522 beds for every 729 persons or 1.4 beds per 1000 persons.

Human resources

There are 7458 staff working in the Ministry of Health, of whom 4931 are health professionals. There are 1380 physicians (28% of health professionals) of whom 575 are specialists and 805 are general practitioners; there are 2025 persons and 1.9 beds per physician. There are also about 2457 nurses accounting for 50% of the health workers. There are 843 health professionals accounting for 17.1% of health workers, as well as 136 pharmacists and about 115 dentists. The rest (2527) work in various health services. Thirty-three per cent of the staff of the Ministry of Health work in the primary health care institutions and 54% work in the secondary health care institutions.

The following are the main impacts of the Israeli occupation on all aspects of Palestinian life.

I. The impact of current events on the various health sectors of the Palestinian people

1. Health insurance

The annual income of the Ministry of Health from health insurance is 33% less than in 1999, with the highest decrease being in the workers' sector.

TABLE 1. RATE OF HEALTH INSURANCE INCOME IN 1999 AND 2001

Type of insurance	1999	2001	Difference	Percentage
Optional insurance	6 543	3 561	-2 892	-45
Compulsory insurance for government officials	43 148	48 551	5 403	13
Workers' insurance	40 827	4 720	-36 107	-88
Corporate insurance	23 408	12 785	-10 623	-45
Insurance as social assistance for needy cases	18 369	19 232	863	5
Total	132 205	88 849	-43 356	-33

2. Drugs

The Ministry of Health allocations for the purchase of drugs amount to US\$ 20 million annually. The rate of subsidies and drug purchases that reach the Ministry of Health is about US\$ 12.5 million, which means that there was a shortage of US\$ 7.5 million in 2001 (37.5%), leading to a shortage in the amounts of available drugs, especially the identified basic drugs in addition to the drugs needed for the treatment of chronic diseases and malignant tumours as well as the essential antibiotics, despite the large increase in the rate of drug disbursements by the Ministry of Health, for the following reasons:

- The increase in the number of families benefiting from the *intifada* health insurance scheme as a result of the deterioration in living conditions and the purchasing capacity of the Palestinians;
- The events of the current *intifada* and the large number of martyrs and wounded as a result of the Israeli military aggression against Palestinian civilians.

3. Medical supplies

The Ministry of Health allocations for the purchase of medical supplies amount to about US\$ 7 million annually. The rate of subsidies in the form of medical supplies which reached the Ministry of Health amounted to US\$ 1 million, which means that there was a shortage of US\$ 6 million in 2001 (85%), despite the large increase in the rate of medical supply disbursements, due to the current events in the Palestinian territories.

4. Laboratories and blood banks

The annual allocations are US\$ 2.8 million, the volume of subsidies is US\$ 350 000 and the amount provided through the Islamic Bank, the Ministry of Health and other donors is US\$ 1.9 million. Contributions were mainly blood bottles for the blood bank, material for sample analysis (HIV, HBV and HCV), tumour markers and hepatitis markers. Laboratories suffer from lack of spare parts for laboratory equipment and maintenance operations due to frequent closures.

5. The impact of current events on work in health centres and hospitals

• Primary care

The rate of visits to primary care centres in Palestine increased by 33.4% in 2001. This led to increased pressure on primary care centres which may affect the standards of service.

TABLE 2. NUMBER OF VISITS TO THE PRIMARY CARE CENTRES

Area	2000	2001	Difference	Percentage
Gaza Strip	2 267 022	3 107 796	840 774	37
West Bank	1 298 186	1 649 994	351 808	27
Palestine	3 567 208	4 759 791	1 192 582	33.4

- **Hospitals**

**TABLE 3. HEALTH INDICATORS FOR THE HOSPITALS OF
THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH IN 2000 AND 2001**

Indicator	2000	2001	Difference	Percentage
Number of beds	2 024	2 167	152	7.5
Days of stay in hospital	496 013	608 268	112 255	22.6
Number of admissions	185 356	222 909	37 553	20.3
Number of discharges	180 357	220 594	40 237	22.3
Emergency services	491 036	677 943	186 907	38.1
Visits to outpatient clinics	806 187	1 352 104	545 917	67.7
Number of surgeries	55 943	71 540	15 597	27.9
Number of births	39 562	49 869	10 307	26.1
Number of deaths	2 886	3 081	195	6.8

The number of days of stay in government hospitals increased by 22% while emergency services and visits to outpatient clinics increased by 38% and 67% respectively; surgery increased by 27% and births in hospitals increased by 26%.

6. Environmental health

The rate of food samples collected from markets for the purpose of bacterial tests increased by 33% due to the increasing suspicion that infectious diseases may be carried by food.

Water sampling from underground wells for the purpose of bacterial tests decreased by 30%. Sampling of wells in villages fell by 43%, which may lead to an increase in the rate of water-borne diseases.

Seven wells that supply drinking-water and 44 agricultural wells which are sometimes used for drinking-water were destroyed.

Garbage has been accumulating. Since the dumps are in border areas, drivers of trucks transporting the garbage are endangered. This may lead to an increase in environmental and health risks.

Screening for infectious diseases has declined. For cholera, there is 26% less testing of drinking-water, 12% less testing of sewage water and a 47% decline in the testing of vegetables.

Poliomyelitis: the decrease in the rate of screening of sewage water for this dangerous disease is 27%. Unfortunately, type 1 wild poliovirus appeared in samples of sewage water taken from the Rafah area on 16 February 2002, which led the Ministry of Health to take the necessary measures and launch a vaccination campaign for children in the surrounding area on 6 April 2002.

7. Vaccinations

In spite of the continuous high coverage of all essential vaccinations for children, there is substantial concern that the rate of children's response to these vaccinations may be affected in the future due to the delay in the transportation of these vaccines from the main depots to the clinics, in addition to the frequent electricity cuts and the severe shortage in maintenance operations for refrigerators as well as the difficulties faced by the health workers in reaching the health clinics, especially the clinics in villages and remote areas. The vaccination programmes broke down in the occupied areas and the besieged cities in the West Bank at the beginning of March 2002, and there is a threat of epidemics. Therefore, the international community has to bear its responsibilities in this respect.

8. Infectious diseases

Despite the significant success achieved by the Ministry of Health in controlling most infectious diseases, especially the dangerous ones, the actions of the Israeli occupation army has unfortunately reduced the ability of the health authorities to control many of the major epidemic diseases such as cholera and polio. Screening for acute flaccid paralysis has decreased to less than 1/100 000 children under 15 years of age. A case of rabies was detected in one child from Hebron, decades after the last case in a human being had been recorded in Palestine.

This is a cause of concern, especially as this case involved a child named Hishan Mohammed Shihata (aged 9 years) from the Al Shihu area in Hebron; in addition, the virus was isolated from the head of a donkey which had bitten a child and a man from the Al Karja family in Halhul district of Hebron. This incident led the Ministry of Health to declare the area of Hebron an area infected by this disease. The military occupation of Palestinian cities and camps since 29 March 2002 has also led to the following:

- The destruction of infrastructure, resulting in accumulation of waste water with the threat of increased numbers of mosquitoes and other vectors of epidemic diseases such as West Nile fever, foot-and-mouth disease, and typhoid;
- The destruction of the sand fly control programme, which may lead to the outbreak of leishmaniasis;
- The detention of citizens in narrow, badly ventilated rooms, which may lead to the prevalence of fungal diseases and tuberculosis;
- A risk of increasing incidence of neonatal tetanus due to non-hospital births;
- A risk of hepatitis B in infants, due to the disruption of the infant vaccination programme, since about 3% of pregnant women are carriers of this disease;
- Disruption of rabies and brucellosis vaccination programmes due to the inability of the veterinarian teams to reach and vaccinate the animals; this may lead to zoonoses;
- The dispersal and decay of corpses, which were eaten by animals, may lead to the pollution of the environment and the outbreak of several epidemic diseases.

9. Other impacts of occupation on health matters in Palestine

The number of visits by children suffering from malnutrition increased by 46%, and the health survey rate of phenylketonuria cases decreased by 5%. Visits by pregnant women increased by 30% while the number of women suffering from complications of pregnancy increased by 53%. This can be attributed to the Israeli repressive measures, involving the use of internationally prohibited tear gases in addition to the psychological pressure to which the Palestinian women are subjected. The number of births at home increased by 15% due to the inability of women to reach the obstetric health centres. The cases of bed-wetting and anxiety among children and schoolchildren increased significantly.

II. The martyrs and the injured

The number of martyrs was 2176 and the number of injured was 35 696 (416 martyrs and 41% of the injured were under the age of 18). One thousand two hundred and forty of the injured received treatment in Arab and friendly hospitals. About 42% of the total injuries were caused by live ammunition, and more than 50% of the injuries were in the upper part of the body, which proves that the Israeli occupation army opened fire on the Palestinian citizens with intent to kill. These injuries caused permanent disability in 5500 cases; among these disabilities was the loss of one or both eyes by 32 persons. In addition, Israeli special units continue their elimination and illegal and cold-blooded killing of Palestinian civilians: a total of 209 citizens have been assassinated and killed in cold blood.

Exposure to a strange gas

Fifty-five cases were recorded of children under the age of 18 being exposed to a strange gas on 12 and 13 February 2001 in the Khan Younes area, and on 30 March 2001, 60 cases were admitted to the Erahidya hospital, Nablus, after exposure to the same gas.

III. EDUCATION

One hundred and seventy four schools were closed because of the siege, and 900 000 students were deprived of study due to the closure.

IV. ARRESTS

The occupational authorities continue to detain more than 5200 Palestinians and Arabs in 10 central prisons and investigation centres. Among those arrested were prisoners under the age of 18 as well as others of advanced age suffering from various chronic diseases. Israel has also detained those prisoners of war in prisons outside their areas of residence, in violation of article 49 of the Fourth Geneva Convention, in addition to thousands of prisoners of war who have been arrested since March 2002 and whose numbers and fate are still unknown because they were sent to unknown detention camps.

V. DEMOLITION OF HOUSES

A report by Amnesty International stated that Israel has demolished no less than 5422 houses since 1987, and as a result 31 200 persons became homeless.

VI. SETTLEMENT IN THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES

Land confiscation and settlement in Palestinian territories, as well as the displacement of their original inhabitants, have been and still are general policy applied by successive Israeli governments. This policy is considered a violation of article 49 of the Fourth Geneva Convention. It is also a war crime according to article 8 of the agreement on the establishment of the International Criminal Court. This crime is conducted according to a plan and in spite of its illegality as confirmed by the international community through resolutions adopted by the General Assembly and the Security Council of the United Nations, especially Security Council resolution 452 issued in 1979, according to which the Israeli policy of settlement in occupied Palestinian territories has no legal foundation and constitutes a violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War. Forty-five new sites were established by settlers in 2001, in addition to land confiscated to build special access roads, the total surface area of which amounted to 2224 dunums. Another 12 400 dunums were also confiscated in the south of the West Bank in order to build industrial settlement regions, in addition to the confiscation and bulldozing of 26 352 dunums of Palestinian lands in the West Bank and Gaza Strip since 29 September 2000, which accounts for about 7.5% of the total agricultural land.

VII. THE ISRAELI INCURSION AND OCCUPATION OF THE PALESTINIAN AUTHORITY AREAS

Since 29 March 2002, the Israeli occupation forces have continued their incursions into all cities, villages and camps in the West Bank, with the exception of Jericho, and carry out their killings and deportation of hundreds of Palestinian civilians. They also carried out ruthless operations and collective arrests, reminding the world of a black decade in human history during the Second World War. They have also destroyed the civilian scientific, educational, religious and security institutions as well as the infrastructure of the Palestinian authority.

1. Ramallah

The occupation forces continue their siege of the headquarters of President Arafat, cutting off all supplies for those besieged in the headquarters, in violation of all international conventions signed by the Israeli Government. They also imposed a total curfew on the city, lifting it for a couple of hours every three days, during which they opened fire in the direction of civilians who went out to buy their necessities. They also besieged Al-Tabouk building in the centre of Ramallah, which houses the offices of news agencies and the correspondents of the satellite channels. On 30 March 2002, they committed a crime by killing five members of the national security forces after arresting them. They also bombarded the headquarters of the Preventive Security Command in Detonia area, using Palestinian citizens as human shields in an attempt to break into the headquarters where 300 to 400 citizens were working. In addition to the administrative staff, their families and their detainees, the occupation forces obliged about 60 Palestinian citizens who were held in a nearby building to stand in front of the Israeli tanks and military vehicles, using them as human shields. They used Palestinian ambulances to break into the houses of Palestinian citizens. They broke into the three-storey building

of Ramallah hospital, detained about 55 citizens, including nine injured people, inside the various departments, fettered their hands, compelled them to lie prostrate, and tortured them, before leaving the hospital at about 10 p.m. They also prevented the workers, including the head of the hospital, from having any contact with the outside world. The Israeli occupation forces arrested Mr Younis Al Hatib, head of the Palestinian Red Crescent Society, and eight of the first aid officials.

2. Nablus

The city of Nablus, especially the old city where some of its buildings are 3000 years old, was subjected to random bombardment by F16 aircraft, helicopters, tank artillery and machine guns, which resulted in about 120 victims and the destruction of the houses of all their inhabitants. The occupation forces compelled the citizens to leave their houses and gather in Gamal Abdul Nasser school, then arrested about 1000 of them and took them to Hawara camp outside the city. They besieged the field hospital in Bique mosque, broke into it and arrested the injured who were receiving treatment inside. There are several corpses of martyrs still under the ruins.

The city and all its districts remained under complete darkness and cut off from the outside world as a result of electricity, telephone and water cuts. Meanwhile, the occupational forces broke into the building of the National "Najah" University and turned it into a military barracks. Medical sources reported the arrival of 59 corpses in the hospitals.

3. Bethlehem

In the city of Bethlehem, the occupation forces continued their siege of the Church of the Nativity as well as the Churches of the Virgin Mary (Santa Maria), the Assyrian Church, and a building affiliated to the Orthodox Church used as a dormitory for the monks. The occupation forces carried out intermittent shelling of the Church of the Nativity to force about 250 citizens who took refuge inside to come out. Firing on the church resulted in the killing of the bellringer, whose body was found in one of the internal yards of the church. The occupation forces destroyed the southern gate of the church and the occupation soldiers opened fire in the direction of the church, which led to the burning of the bedroom of one of the monks. A number of the besieged citizens inside the church hurried to put out the fire and they came under fire from the occupation soldiers.

4. Jenin refugee camp

The local and medical sources in the Jenin refugee camp, where about 13 000 people live on an area of 64 dunums, estimated the death of at least 380 martyrs whose bodies are still scattered inside the camp, in addition to hundreds of injured who were left bleeding in the alleys and streets and inside houses for several days. On the morning of 7 April 2002 the occupation forces compelled the citizens to gather in Al-Damj neighbourhood on the outskirts of the camp and executed two Palestinian youths in front of their families. The sources confirmed that all kinds of food, medicines and drinking-water have run out and the camp was subjected to a humanitarian tragedy as reported by Mr Justin Huggler and Phil Reeves of the British Independent newspaper in an article published in the Palestinian newspaper Al-Qods on 15 April 2002 entitled "Israel buries the corpses but cannot bury the evidence", in view of the strict embargo imposed by the Israeli tanks on the journalists, to prevent them from attempting to enter the camp. Eye witnesses who fled the camp reported that they saw Israeli soldiers burying the bodies of martyrs in a collective tomb in Al-Howashi neighbourhood, where they dug a large hole in the ground, filled it with bodies and used a huge bulldozer to cover the tomb with waste material. They also reported a foul smell released by the decaying bodies in the narrow alleys, which were closed to prevent international and local humanitarian organizations from sending ambulances

and physicians to evacuate the injured and remove the bodies. International officials all agreed that Israel has clearly violated the Fourth Geneva Convention and that there was a humanitarian tragedy and a crime committed and that Israel is trying to hide it. A senior diplomatic source said "it is clear that they have something to hide". An official in the United Nations organization said "people who approach the boundaries of the camp find a very bad smell". The number of buildings in the camp which are still intact is unknown; some reports say that one third of the camp was razed to the ground, other eye witnesses said that they saw for themselves people bleeding to death in the streets and a child of ten years of age thrown on the ground with a big hole in his side and his arm detached from his body. The Palestinian citizens who hid in the camp and were surrounded, lived without water or medicine and were shot at by Israelis if they tried to break the curfew. Two to three thousand people fled the camp to the neighbouring villages and are currently living in schools and mosques in very bad conditions with limited food and medical supplies. A French journalist from Agence France Presse who spent 48 hours in Jenin refugee camp reported a very bad smell coming from the corpses in the camp occupied by the Israeli army. Pierre Barbancey, a journalist working with Humanité newspaper, who was at the Jalma checkpoint near the northern entrance to Jenin, said "according to several reports by the Palestinians, the Israeli army buried the bodies in a hole in the central square of the camp and filled it with cement". He added that he smelt the bad smell of the bodies and saw heaps of garbage, insects, terrible health conditions, dirty children and wailing women carrying their children because they couldn't clean them due to the shortage of water. Supplies of food and milk for children were almost cut off and a number of citizens had to drink sewage water. The Israeli army itself declared on Friday 12 April 2002 that hundreds of Palestinians were killed or injured during the battle. Forced deportation of Palestinian civilians is also carried out through collective arrests and removal to neighbouring villages. Eye witnesses from the camp confirmed that occupation forces carried bodies in trucks and transported them outside the camp in addition to digging collective graves to bury other bodies.

In accordance with the Israeli practice of targeting the medical teams, the Jenin hospital came under intensive shelling by the occupation forces on Thursday and Friday; this led to severe damage to the laboratory and the oxygen unit. Moreover, electricity supplies became so weak that the refrigerators for preserving the dead bodies became unable to function. The decayed bodies which were brought to the hospital from other parts of the city were buried in the hospital garden. Al-Razi Hospital in the city was subjected to similar shelling, which led to the breakdown of work inside the hospital. Ambulance teams were unable to help seven injured people who collapsed 100 metres from the hospital. The occupation forces were intent on denying the ambulances freedom of movement to evacuate the injured, and they threatened the medical teams with death and prevented them from moving. When they moved they came under fire and their members were detained for several hours; they were forced to take off their clothes, and they were inspected along with the injured, after they had brought them out of the ambulances. This led to the death of a number of persons.

On 6 April 2002, in Tobas town of Jenin province, the Israeli forces committed a cold-blooded killing; the victims of this crime were six citizens, who sustained wounds to their heads.

In Araba town of Jenin province the occupation forces committed another terrible crime on 10 April 2002 by killing a Palestinian farmer and his wife in cold blood.

These measures led to the expression of outrage by several officials of the international community:

- Mr Kofi Annan, the Secretary-General of the United Nations, called for the immediate dispatch of multinational forces to the occupied Palestinian territories.

- Mr Terje Roed Larsen, the United Nations special envoy, said when visiting the Jenin camp that the devastation in the camp which was occupied by the Israeli army was horrific beyond belief. He added that the camp was completely destroyed as if it had been hit by an earthquake. He reiterated that this was totally unacceptable and horrific beyond belief. He went on to say “we have expert people here who have been in war zones and earthquakes and they say they have never seen anything like it”. He added “it is totally unacceptable that the Government of Israel did not allow search and rescue teams to come for 11 days. This was morally repugnant; the stench of death is horrible”. Mr Larsen felt that the priority was to dispatch rescue teams and to start the search for survivors. He said that the United Nations would try to find out what exactly happened during the battles when the Israeli army was pursuing the Palestinians.
- Mr Peter Hansen, the Commissioner General of UNRWA, said that Israel had used disproportionate force in its attack on the Jenin camp, demolishing houses which accommodated up to 5000 Palestinians. He added that the Israeli attack had led to widespread destruction and that there was evidence of apparent massive and disproportionate use of force.
- Mr Burns, the United States Assistant Secretary of State, said that what we see in Jenin is a terrible humanitarian tragedy, adding that what happened here caused huge humanitarian suffering for thousands of Palestinian citizens. He called on the Israeli authorities to allow international relief organizations access to the camp.
- Mr Vidovin, the Russian envoy, expressed his shock at the magnitude of destruction in the Jenin camp, saying that there had been huge destruction which he had never imagined on such a scale. He added that he had a terrible impression, having seen the real humanitarian tragedy and experienced it in the camp. He had seen in the Jenin camp scenes of widespread devastation and destruction.
- UNRWA reported that the Israeli authorities had prevented rescue teams and rubble-removing equipment from entering the Jenin refugee camp in the West Bank, where some people were buried alive under the ruins of their destroyed houses. The refugee rescue office of UNRWA reported that the Israeli army had reduced the greater part of the camp to ruins.
- Yossi Sarid from the Israeli newspaper Yediot Aharonoth said “a terrible tragedy took place in the Jenin camp and I am ready to give my testimony”.

VIII. MEASURES OF COLLECTIVE PUNISHMENT

Occupation forces are still exerting pressure on Palestinian civilians through the policy of comprehensive blockades imposed on the occupied Palestinian territories, and the isolation of Palestinian cities and towns. They have imposed a total ban on the movement of goods and civilians. This blockade prevents thousands of students and employees from reaching their universities, schools and places of work, thereby denying them their economic and social rights and paralysing all facilities of life. During the Al-Aqsa *intifada*, the occupation authorities established 80 additional checkpoints on the road to control the main access roads to the West Bank in addition to the checkpoints, of which there are 40 on the roads to the Israeli borders and Jordan.

IX. ATTACKS ON HEALTH ESTABLISHMENTS AND EQUIPMENT AND ON MEDICAL TEAMS

1. Violation of the right to life and personal safety of members of the Palestinian medical teams

The right to life, freedom and personal safety is one of the fundamental human rights established in international human rights law. Article 3 of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights and article 7 of the International Covenant on Civilian and Political Rights confirm these rights. Several medical teams and ambulance drivers were exposed to real danger while carrying out their humanitarian tasks. The excessive and random use of force by the occupation soldiers and settlers resulted in 17 martyrs and 250 injured among those teams. The German doctor Harry Fischer was killed in The Greater Jala area after being hit by a rocket while treating one of the injured when the city of Bejallah came under missile and artillery attack on 15 November 2000. Dr Thabit Thabit, the head of Tulkarem Health Centre, was killed, as well as the head of Al-Yamama Hospital in Bethlehem and the head of ambulance services in Jenin while carrying out their humanitarian tasks.

2. Aggression on the Palestinian medical units and ambulances

In a report on the damage and difficulties faced by its medical teams since the beginning of the Al-Aqsa *intifada* on 29 September 2000, the Palestinian Red Crescent Society pointed out the following:

TABLE 4. ACTS OF AGGRESSION ON AMBULANCES AND MEDICAL TEAMS

Description	Number
Ambulances attacked	176
Ambulances hit	80
Ambulances damaged	30
Ambulance drivers and officers injured	250
Ambulance drivers, officers and medical teams killed	17
Preventing ambulances from reaching hospitals or carrying the injured	350

3. Assaults on health institutions by Israeli military occupation forces

From their inception in many Palestinian cities, Palestinian field hospitals have operated near confrontation areas in order to facilitate the work of medical teams in providing field medical services to injured persons, subsequently reducing the strain on government and domestic hospitals. Field and established hospitals, as well as health centres, were attacked 95 times.

4. Burying martyrs in hospital yards

During the past months hospital infrastructures in the country governorates have been constantly bombarded and destroyed. Israeli occupation forces besieged the government hospital in Ramallah, prohibited entry to and exit from the hospital, and stormed it. They prevented citizens from collecting

their relatives' bodies, leading to a potential environmental disaster, given the large numbers of martyrs and the incapacity of the hospital to receive them all. Hence, the hospital management had no other choice but to bury martyrs in the hospital yard.

5. Closure and internal blockade affecting dramatically the right to health care

The policy of total closure and tightened blockade was not limited to the Palestinian cities but also covered remote and marginalized villages that do not have access to minimum health care services needed for Palestinians in order to treat their children, women and elderly people. Tightening the internal blockade in the West Bank and Gaza Strip increased the suffering of civilians:

- the number of patients dying at barriers reached 45;
- there were 31 childbirths at barriers;
- there were 17 fetal deaths at barriers;
- ambulances were prevented 350 times from reaching injured persons or hospitals.

6. Prohibiting the entry of drugs and medical assistance

The closure policy seriously prejudiced the right of Palestinians to enjoy the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health, as the Israeli occupation forces blocked medical supplies from abroad. They also prohibited entry of the ambulances donated by several States in order to scale up outpatient and treatment services for the population. Imposing blockade and closure on the Palestinian territories resulted in nearly half of the Palestinian population living under the poverty line. During the period from October 2000 to September 2001, there were 240 closure days, representing 66.6% of the whole period, as the period of total closure imposed on the West Bank governorates represented 65.8% while partial closure represented 34.2%.

X. PALESTINIAN ECONOMIC LOSSES

Since the signing of the Oslo Agreement in 1993, the Israeli blockade on Palestinian territories has become a repeated policy. Following the onset of the Al-Aqsa *intifada* in September 2000, the occupation authorities imposed a permanent blockade of the Palestinian territories. The total losses to the Palestinian economy amounted to US\$ 7500 million during the period from the onset of the Al-Aqsa *intifada* to early January 2002; this was caused by the sustained Israeli aggression policy, continuous bombing and destruction of Palestinian property and a tightened blockade on various Palestinian cities and villages, as well as by impairment of the various activities of the Palestinian economy.

1. Domestic production losses

Domestic production losses totalled US\$ 2462 million during the period from October 2000 to September 2001. The Ministry of Finance stated that the amount of the Authority's financial entitlements blocked by Israel reached US\$ 520 million at the end of 2001.

2. National Authority financial deficit

The deficit in the National Authority budget for 2002 may exceed US\$ 350 million if the status quo is maintained and Israel continues its seizure of the Palestinian Authority financial entitlements.

3. Income tax revenue decline

During 2001, income tax revenues declined by 40%-50% from the previous year's figures. For information, total income and property taxes for the year 2000 amounted to approximately US\$ 60 million.

4. Detriment to work and workers

- The number of unemployed persons reached 257 000;
- The unemployment rate in the West Bank and Gaza Strip reached 60%;
- The daily losses incurred by the workers who had been working in Israel amounted to US\$ 3.6 million;
- The decline in per capita income amounted to 47%;
- The percentage of Palestinians living under the poverty line reached 64%;
- The total losses caused by the closure in 2001 reached US\$ 1700 million;
- The total daily losses are estimated at US\$ 12-15 million.

In view of the above, Mr Jacques Diouf, the Director-General of FAO, stated that "the Israeli blockade on the West Bank and Gaza Strip aggravates hunger suffered by Palestinians".

5. Agricultural sector losses

**TABLE 6. KINDS OF TREES UPROOTED BY THE
ISRAELI OCCUPATION FORCES, 2001**

Kinds of uprooted trees	Number of trees
Olive trees	122 900
Forest trees	13 371
Palm trees	13 251
Banana trees	12 000
Vines	43 494
Other trees	190 000
Total number of uprooted trees	395 016

**TABLE 7. NUMBER OF DUNUMS BULLDOZED BY THE
ISRAELI OCCUPATION FORCES, 2001**

Bulldozed dunums	Number of dunums
Tree area bulldozed	13 781
Vegetable area bulldozed	3 410
Public paths area bulldozed	4 315
Field crop area bulldozed	1 283
Surface soil bulldozed	30 000
Total number of bulldozed dunums	52 789

6. Livestock losses

The livestock losses amounted to US\$ 18.7 million, while losses due to fodder price increase exceeded US\$ 10 million.

7. Fish stock losses

The fish stock losses totalled US\$ 3.8 million.

8. Contractual work sector losses

The total amount of losses incurred by the contractual work sector, from the onset of the *intifada* to the end of December 2001, is estimated at more than US\$ 320 million. Many contractual work company owners had recently no choice but to close their companies after their activities totally stopped owing to the continuous Israeli blockade and the constraints on the entry of raw materials.

9. Building sector losses

According to Ministry of Finance estimates, the total losses incurred generally by the building sector, from the onset of the *intifada* to mid-October 2001, reached approximately US\$ 532 million. This is because the productivity of this sector fell by 80% as a result of the Israeli blockade, which prevented the provision of the necessary amounts of cement, iron and other building materials.

10. Infrastructure losses

Dr Mohamed Ashtia, the Director-General of the Palestinian Council for Development and Reconstruction (PCDAR), stated that the infrastructure losses exceeded US\$ 230 million, including losses in roads, buildings and houses that were destroyed, as well as water and sewage networks, and all other elements related to the infrastructure.

CONCLUSION

The State of Palestine had hoped that its annual report this year would be on the fruits of international assistance to the health sector in rehabilitating the Palestinian health system, so that it could continue to provide health services to our Palestinian people. But continued Israeli aggression has made the achievement of these health goals impossible, has destroyed what had been achieved, and has halted the process of development in its tracks. The Palestinian health system has instead prepared itself, with the help of Arab and international support, to face Israeli aggression, which has burdened health institutions with the task of receiving thousands of casualties, as well as the future responsibility of dealing with thousands of disabilities.

The Ministry of Health calls upon the international community to exert pressure on the Israeli occupation authorities in order that they immediately allow injured persons to be brought to hospitals and health centres, allow people with kidney and chronic diseases into hospitals, allow free movement for medical teams and ambulances which are constantly bombarded, allow martyrs' bodies to be brought to hospitals and properly buried, enable hospitals to be supplied with drugs, medical equipment and materials and oxygen, as well as making available water, foodstuffs and emergency supplies; the Israeli occupation authorities must halt the bombing, storming and misuse of hospitals as well as harming and arresting patients and medical team members, besides the degrading treatment of medical team members during the inspections carried out by the Israeli army.

This requires a firm international stand, international protection for the Palestinian people and its health institutions and urgent and prompt action to provide the assistance needed to save and protect human lives in Palestine, to completely dislodge the occupation, and to accord Palestinians their legitimate right to establish their own State with full sovereignty over its territories and natural resources, and freedom of movement in all parts of its own homeland, with international access to all countries of the world.

The Palestinian people look to all countries of the world to stand by it and support the people in their quest for their rights and the achievement of the noble objective of WHO.

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