

25 years of service

ANERA Newsletter

American Near East Refugee Aid

Number 102 Summer 1993

OFFICIAL CLOSURE IN THE TERRITORIES



Not Just Disruption for the West Bank But Social and Economic Disintegration in Gaza

The young Gaza schoolteacher sat back and folded her arms grimly during a recent interview held at her office this spring. "Since the closure you can feel it everywhere. People are hurting, not just the unemployed, but the economic conditions and the violence affect everyone, down to the man who sells falafel in the street." She shook her head. "It is a virtual prison for these young people."

The teacher is referring to the deep emotional despair and poverty resulting from the continuing forced closure of the Occupied Territories, a military order imposed by the Israeli government on

March 30, 1993. Made in response to some of the highest levels of Arab-Israeli violence since the *intifada* began, the closure has effectively sealed off the West Bank and Gaza Strip and carved them into four zones: The northern West Bank, the southern West Bank, East Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip. Passage into Israel is restricted by army checkpoints on all roads and entry points. Movement through Jerusalem to any of the zones or between the West Bank and Gaza is denied to all but a few Palestinians. The restrictions' impact on daily life is punishing. They prohibit, among other things, access to jobs, visits to medical clinics, shipment of goods and agricultural produce, worship in Jerusalem mosques and churches, and attendance at cultural events. The result is economic paralysis, and in Gaza, economic collapse.

The 800,000 residents of Gaza were already impoverished, they are now desperate. Before the closure, the wages

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More Refugees

ANERA Condemns Bombing, Assists Southern Lebanon

Israeli forces shelled and bombed villages in Southern Lebanon during the week of July 25-31, 1993, using artillery, aircraft, and gunboats. The army claims the attack was in retaliation for recent Hezbollah rocket attacks into Northern Israel. However, the intense bombardments specifically targeted civilian populations, towns, and villages resulting in the displacement of 500,000 people. According to the International Committee for the Red Cross and UN agencies, the bombing destroyed between 70 and 80 villages, leaving 20,000 to 25,000 families homeless, almost 25% of the population of Southern Lebanon.

ANERA has issued an urgent plea for funds for Lebanon, and will forward all donations to local Lebanese relief agencies. Cash donations are preferred as relief supplies of food, blankets and medicines are available locally for purchase. American humanitarian agencies, including ANERA, are working with a consortium of Lebanese relief agencies, and are relying on both their assessments of damages and needs and on their help in distributing relief supplies and planning long-term rehabilitation for affected families.

ANERA condemns the attacks on civilians and calls for Israeli respect for Lebanese territorial sovereignty.

Official Closures

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brought home by 30,000 to 35,000 Palestinian laborers traveling to Israel for low-paying day jobs accounted for over 60% of the total Gazan economy. Since the closure, lost revenue is estimated at over \$500,000 a day and few workers have been issued permits to return to work in Israel. The marginal Gazan economy cannot withstand the blow, lacking the jobs, capital, natural resources and infrastructure to sustain itself after 26 years of occupation.

"Officially, unemployment is 40%, but it is at least twice that," continued the schoolteacher. "And we don't have a

**"THINGS ARE WORSE
THAN THEY'VE
EVER BEEN."**

social welfare system in the Gaza Strip, even though there is something under this name in the government. That means that we have literally thousands and thousands of people in the Gaza Strip that have no source of income whatsoever. Day after day, week after week, month after month, year after year, it is just a struggle to figure out how they will manage, how they are going to feed and clothe their kids. I have many mothers coming to me, asking for help, who can only give their children something to eat once a day."

The results of such massive unemployment and loss of income, coupled with the lack of jobs in Gaza, have been ruinous. The main market in Gaza is crowded with people selling their belongings at a fraction of their cost. Families have long since run out of savings. Food purchases have declined by 50-70%, forcing many shops out of business. People can no longer afford fruits or vegetables, meat, milk or cheese, but are relying instead on such staple foods as wheat flour, chickpeas and lentils. While serious malnutrition is not yet widespread, hunger is. The United Nations Relief and Works Agency, UNRWA, reports that the number of families needing food in both the West Bank and Gaza Strip has never been

higher, and it is now distributing emergency food rations on a regular basis for the first time since the Gulf War.

"I had a woman come to my back door in tears the other day," a colleague in Gaza added. "She was crying and begging me to buy her radio. She said to me, 'Next I will have to sell my furniture. What am I supposed to do? How are we supposed to live?'"

How indeed. As noted by economist Sara M. Roy in the August 2, 1993, issue of *The Nation*:

"What is happening in the Occupied Territories at present represents a stark departure from even the most recent past. Israeli claims of a benign or humane occupation, always a dissemblance, are now so transparently false that even the government has ceased making them. No longer are the people under occupation in need of ad hoc assistance, having temporarily lost their income due to curfew or other "short-lived" punitive measures. Rather, for the first time since 1967, a large and growing number of people in the Gaza Strip and West Bank have permanently lost their jobs, their sole means of income, with absolutely no alternative or compensation in sight. To Israelis closure means complete separation — a misnomer, since Jewish settlers have free access to the West Bank and Gaza. To Palestinians closure is a form of apartheid, segregation in its most bitter and destructive form....The feeling of desperation is palpable."

Crossing the border into Gaza, one sees rows of men digging ditches in the sand alongside the road. The project? Long-awaited sewer pipes have been approved. The Israeli military government's civil administration has so far placed at least 10,000 Gazans on such work-schemes to increase employment. Each worker is hired for 15 days and then laid off indefinitely. Wages are about \$9.00 a day compared to the previous average of \$25.00 for Palestinians working in Israel. While there is evidence that this has somewhat slowed the rapid rate of economic decline, it has not significantly increased people's incomes or contributed to the growth of



new jobs or businesses. Make-work schemes, street-sweeping, and ditch digging exercises are of little benefit to the Gazan economy.

Continued military occupation and economic restrictions have created a permanent emergency situation in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Humanitarian organizations have stated their concern and alarm over the current crisis. They consider the closure a breach of Israel's obligation as an occupying power to balance its legitimate security concerns against the imperative to safeguard the welfare of the population under occupation.

The Jerusalem-based Coordinating Committee of International Non-Governmental Agencies, CINGO, which includes ANERA, has called upon Israel to respect the right of Palestinians to the free movement of goods, capital and people within and between the West Bank, including East Jerusalem and Gaza, and allow access to Arab and foreign markets for Palestinian products. CINGO notes the need for much more extensive infrastructural public works programs, especially in Gaza where conditions are horrible. Without significant long-term investment, handouts and make-work schemes do not work.

Finally, the Gaza Strip is economically and politically inseparable from the rest of West Bank, including East Jerusalem. Any and all economic development programs must include all of the occupied territories.

Compiled from reports and personal interviews by Paula Stinson, ANERA vice president. Thanks to Sara M. Roy, and to William Carter who took the accompanying pictures during a trip to Gaza in May, 1993.

We Cannot Be Silent

AUGUST 10, 1993

"In the international community, this measure {the closure} is widely condemned as collective punishment, which is illegal under the Fourth Geneva Convention—the document that defines acceptable occupier conduct. Some critics consider Israel's punitive practice a substantial new burden that hinders progress in the peace process and intensifies the sense of oppression among Palestinians living in their 27th year under military law and army rule.

"Our concern as humanitarian organizations is the welfare of people. In human terms, we regard the closure as unacceptable and call for its immediate lifting."

Statement in the *Washington Post*,
Tuesday, August 10, 1993

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JUNE 2, 1993

"Palestinians throughout the Occupied Territory including East Jerusalem are suffering deepening hardship as a result of the continued military closure of the West Bank and Gaza Strip from Jerusalem and Israel...the longer this closure goes on the more profound its implications. **The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA)** now warns that *the poorest sectors of society cannot feed themselves.*

"According to UNICEF and UNRWA the continued closure will result in decreased nutrition standards and in an increase in psychological stress. UNICEF notes that all populations are likely to be increasingly at risk of malnutrition unless the economic decline is reversed, or effective food distribution is organized to families and the unemployed."

CINGO—COORDINATING COMMITTEE
OF INTERNATIONAL NGOS—
a group of non-profit organizations
working in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

MAY 27, 1993

"Amnesty International is extremely concerned at the deteriorating human rights situation in the Gaza Strip, occupied by Israel since 1967. It is particularly concerned about the upsurge in killings of Palestinian civilians by Israeli forces since the deportation to South Lebanon of more than 400 alleged supporters of the Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas) and Islamic Jihad in December 1992.

"Since then, more than 100 Palestinians have been shot and killed by Israeli forces, at least 70 in the Gaza Strip. More than 30 were 16 years old or younger. The month of May has already registered the highest monthly death toll since the end of 1992, with up to 24 people shot dead by Israeli forces."

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL—London

MAY 25, 1993

The president of the **International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)**, Dr. Cornelio Sommaruga, after an official visit to Israel, issued the following statement:

The major issues related to the Fourth Geneva Convention raised by the Presi-

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YES, I want to join ANERA's 25th Anniversary Campaign

___ \$10,000 and above: Builders

___ \$500 to \$999: Sustainers

___ \$2,500 to \$9,999: Benefactors

___ \$250 to \$499: Creators

___ \$1,000 to \$2,499: Sponsors

___ Please send me more information about the
25th Anniversary Campaign

Contributions of \$250 or more will be recognized by category in ANERA's Annual Report (FY94) and listed in an album of contributors to be placed in Jerusalem and Gaza and at the conclusion of the 25th Anniversary Campaign. In addition, all contributors of \$500 and above will receive a 25th Anniversary plate of traditional Jerusalem pottery.

Please rush my Humanitarian Aid to:

Lebanon Disaster Relief

Gaza Emergency

___ \$200

___ \$100

___ \$75

___ \$50

___ \$35

___ \$25

Other _____

Name: _____

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Scholarship:

*I would like to provide a
1-year scholarship
(\$100 per child) in:*

The Gaza Strip

East Jerusalem

Beirut, Lebanon

School with the greatest
needs

*Sponsors receive a photo of the
child and a letter from the
school during the year.*

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We Cannot be Silent,
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dent of the ICRC were *the respect by security forces of civilian lives and private property*, the treatment of detainees under interrogation, the policy of deportation, the policy of settlement and its consequences, as well as the humanitarian consequences of the closure of the Occupied Territories.

INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE OF THE
RED CROSS—Geneva

MAY 17, 1993

"34 Palestinian children have been killed by security force gunfire during the past six month (December 9, 1992 to May 16, 1993). Twenty two of those killed were ages 13-16, and 12 were under age 13. *This is a the highest number of children killed in a six month period.* Since the beginning of the Intifada (December 9, 1987), 221 children have been killed in the Territories by security force gunfire."

B'TSELEM—THE ISRAELI INFORMATION
CENTER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS
IN THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES

ANERA

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ANERA has received gifts...

In Honor of:

Massada Suboh Ali ■ Dr. Subhi D. Ali ■ Dr. Muhammad Anwar ■ my parents, from Ghazi & Dolly Bidwan ■ George Bush ■ Noam Chomsky ■ Ms. Cohen ■ Thomas D. Collier ■ Mr. & Mrs. John Davis ■ Domenica Defano ■ Richard Ghozinyah ■ Grace Dodge Guthrie & family - founders of American University of Beirut ■ Steven A. Hirst ■ Hedaya El-Husseini ■ Jesus Christ ■ Martin Luther King, Jr. ■ with respect and love for Elizabeth Nasir ■ Harold S. Nelson ■ Peggy Penrose ■ marriage to Pat Pool ■ engagement of Kathy Powell and Keith Arnold ■ Mos'ab Ahmad Hassan El Reageb ■ Mr. & Mrs. Larry Temple ■ engagement of Steve Webster

and Karen Boltz ■ the Gaza Strip ■ the Palestinian people ■ Palestinian refugees ■ suffering Palestinian families

In Memory of:

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Transitions

ANERA bids farewell to Jan Segna and Tom Webster, who are leaving to respectively pursue a career in business and to attend graduate school. We welcome Traci Little, a recent graduate of American University, who replaces Jan as director of communications and scholarship programs, and Stacy Kelly, of Penn State University, who replaces Tom as administrative assistant. We wish them all well.



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