

**Statement by Bader al Dafa**  
**Executive Secretary**  
**Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia**  
**New York, 22 October 2007**

**Economic and social repercussions of the Israeli occupation on the living conditions of the Palestinian people in the occupied Palestinian Territory, including Jerusalem, and the Arab population in the occupied Syrian Golan**

Mr. President,  
Distinguished delegates,

I have the honour of presenting, on behalf of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), the note of the Secretary-General on the economic and social repercussions of the Israeli occupation on the living conditions of the Palestinian people in the occupied Palestinian Territory, including Jerusalem, and the Arab population in the occupied Syrian Golan.

In its resolution 2006/43 of 27 July 2006, the Economic and Social Council requested the Secretary-General to submit to the General Assembly at its sixty-first session, through the Council, a report on the implementation of that resolution. The Assembly, in its resolution 61/184 of 20 December 2006, also requested the Secretary-General to submit a report to its sixty-second session. The annexed report, which has been prepared by the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, in cooperation with a number of concerned United Nations entities, is submitted in response to the two resolutions.

Mr. President,

In its resolution 61/184, the General Assembly reaffirmed the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people and the population of the occupied Syrian Golan over their natural resources, including land and water, and called upon Israel, the occupying Power, not to exploit, damage, cause loss or depletion of, or endanger the natural resources in the occupied Palestinian territory, including Jerusalem and in the occupied Syrian Golan.

The Assembly stressed that the wall being constructed by Israel in the occupied Palestinian territory, including in and around East Jerusalem, is contrary to international law and is seriously depriving the Palestinian people of their natural resources. In this regard, the General Assembly called for full compliance with the legal obligations stipulated in the 9 July 2004 advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice and in resolution ES-10/15.

The Assembly called upon Israel to cease its destruction of vital infrastructure, including water pipelines and sewage networks, which seriously compromises the ability of the Palestinian people to exercise their rights to access and derive benefit from their natural resources.

The Assembly requested the Secretary-General to submit a report to it at its sixty-second session on the implementation of the resolution.

Mr. President,

The report before the Assembly today clearly indicates that the occupation of Palestinian territory by Israel continues to place profound hardship on the Palestinian people.

Israeli closures within and around the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, mobility restrictions and the withholding of Customs and VAT revenues (since the first quarter of 2006), are but a few causes of Palestinian adversity.

The closure policy has contributed to high unemployment, estimated at 30 per cent, while poverty has soared up to 64 per cent in the occupied territory. Today, there are 2.1 million poor Palestinians, compared with 1.3 million at the end of 2005. The most pronounced increase can be seen in the Gaza Strip, where 87.7 per cent of households live below the poverty line.

The majority of Palestinians endure an increasingly poor quality of life, including growing food insecurity and greater economic dependency and aid reliance. Sixty-five per cent of households rely on informal borrowing to make ends meet. Decreasing family incomes, as reflected in the lower per capita GDP, has led to a decline in food consumption of 8 per cent.

Mr. President,

The suffering of Palestinians is exacerbated further by arbitrary arrests and detentions, population displacement and property destruction and confiscation. As of March 2006, over 9,400 Palestinian prisoners were in Israeli prisons. In 2006, UNRWA recorded a total of 233 Palestinian structures demolished by the Israeli army in the West Bank, of those 115 were residential homes. From March 2006 to the end of January 2007, the Israeli army demolished 3,077 refugee shelters in the Gaza Strip, affecting 3,356 families. Direct damages from the Israeli military offensive of 26 June to 28 August 2006 were estimated by UNDP at US\$ 46 million in the Gaza Strip alone.

Mr. President,

Contrary to international law, Israel continues to construct a 703 km long barrier, which is having a major humanitarian impact on Palestinian communities. On the basis of the current route, 60,500 Palestinians living in that area will be severely affected with respect to their access to the West Bank and main sources of livelihoods, and 31,400 will be completely encircled by the barrier. Once completed, 80 per cent of the barrier will lie within the occupied Palestinian territory.

Also deemed illegal by the international community are Israeli settlements in the occupied Palestinian territory. In March 2006, the Israeli settler population in the West Bank totaled 246,100. Their growth rate remains high, at 5.1 per cent, in contrast with the 1.8 per cent general population growth rate in Israel.

There are 33 Israeli settlements in the occupied Syrian Golan. In April 2006, Israel began the construction of three new tourist settlements on the occupied Lake Tiberias lowlands. Israel officially seeks to double its Golan Heights settler population in the next 10 years.

Mr. President,

As is apparent, a combination of intensified external and internal closures, the withholding of vital financial assistance from the Palestinian Authority and intensified conflict in 2006 has led to a deepening of the socio-economic crisis in the occupied Palestinian territory. All social and public health indicators reveal declining standards in living conditions, social and spatial dismemberment, growing despair and violence.

The only option for creating better conditions lies in ending the occupation. I wish to highlight the urgent need to re-launch the peace process, a process that would achieve a comprehensive, just and lasting solution to the Palestinian-Israeli and Syrian-Israeli conflicts.

Thank you, Mr. President.