

THE TWENTIETH YEAR

A REPORT ON THE STATUS OF ACADEMIC FREEDOM
AND HUMAN RIGHTS AT BIRZEIT UNIVERSITY
IN THE TWENTIETH YEAR OF THE ISRAELI MILITARY OCCUPATION

ACADEMIC YEAR 1986-87



Prepared in draft on the occasion of Birzeit University's International Conference: TWO DECADES OF OCCUPATION: FROM RESISTANCE TO UPRISING, held March 25 - 26, 1988 in Jerusalem. With supplementary material on the current situation of the University and a brief review of the University's development under occupation.

BIRZEIT UNIVERSITY
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INTRODUCTION

At this writing, in April 1988, all universities and schools in the occupied West Bank are closed by order of the military authorities, as well as most schools in the Gaza Strip and Gaza's only university. Soldiers manning army checkpoints have blocked attempts by teachers and students to return to their institutions. Birzeit University has been closed by three successive one-month closure orders, followed by a general "announcement" in early April that schools and universities in the West Bank would continue to be closed until May 8.

Israeli spokesmen have argued that the mass closure of schools and universities is a necessary "security" precaution dictated by the unusual circumstances of the Palestinian uprising in the Occupied Territories. The following review of Birzeit University's last academic year, 1986-87, - the twentieth year of the military occupation - offers evidence to the contrary. The patterns of harassment and violations described herein indicate a consistently hostile and punitive policy towards Birzeit University and the University community.

This policy extends towards Palestinian education in general. As a March 1988 statement signed by administrations, faculties, boards of trustees and employees of Palestinian universities in the Occupied Territories noted: "About 40% of the population ... are effected by the closure of schools and universities. This closure is the stark culmination of the military authorities' policy towards education, which as been characterized since 1967 by hostility towards education - and especially towards academic freedom, freedom of expression and educational development."

The brief history of Birzeit University that follows offers a case in point. The more detailed examination of the University in the twentieth year of the occupation and an update from the past several months offers documentation on the current situation of the University today.

The case of Birzeit University is not unique. Other Palestinian universities in the Occupied Territories face the same repressive measures and the same challenge to try to continue with their educational mission under these difficult circumstances.

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BIRZEIT UNIVERSITY: BUILDING A UNIVERSITY UNDER OCCUPATION

In 1967, when the occupation commenced, Birzeit College had been functioning as a two-year junior college since 1961, with a student body of several hundred students, and as an educational institution since 1924. Its academic reputation was well-established and its graduates transferred at advanced standing to universities abroad. With the occupation, however, new imperatives arose for local educational institutions. Students found it increasingly difficult to travel abroad to study; at the same time, community demand for higher education dramatically increased.

FROM COLLEGE TO UNIVERSITY: DEVELOPMENT MEETS REPRESSION

After careful planning, Birzeit College launched a four-year program of study in 1974. A brief examination of Birzeit records from that year to the present offers glimpses of an ever-hardening policy on the part of the military authorities towards the developing university, as well as documents the University's attempts to combat repression and build the University in the tradition of academic freedom, academic excellence and community service.

In the same year, for example, on November 21, 1974, the President of the College, Dr. Hanna Nasir, was summarily deported from the country, along with four other Palestinian community leaders. At the time, the Birzeit Student Council appealed to international and Israeli student unions, noting the military authorities' closure of schools in the West Bank and the recent death of two West Bank female students, as well as the deportations. The Council concluded that "these repressive measures obstruct the attempts at the establishment of a just peace in the area and at achieving coexistence between the Jewish and Palestinian people."

The next year Birzeit College became Birzeit University and began to expand its facilities and academic programs, as well as incorporating into its student body youth from villages, refugee camps and towns throughout the Occupied Territories. The two dynamics of 1974 - one one hand, the development of an independent Palestinian university serving the needs of the community and on the other, military repression against the University and the University community - would continue to collide in the intervening years.

One year after the President's deportation, on November 21, 1975, the University enumerated its grievances, including, among other points, "the intrusion of Israeli army units onto the campus of the University, the latest being on November 10, 1975;" the



"suspension of the publication of the University paper for nearly two years," "administrative detention of faculty members and students without charge or trial," and "forbidding the University, since September 1975, from admitting academically eligible Israeli Arab students."

DETENTIONS, CENSORSHIP, ILLEGAL TAXES

The arbitrary detention and maltreatment of students became an increasingly visible concern of the University in the late-1970s. On December 1, 1978, for example, the University issued a statement protesting at "yet another wave of harassment," noting that eighteen Birzeit students had been "seized or summoned, often in the middle of the night, for interrogation at military headquarters... Some of the eighteen have been beaten and tortured." The statement also protested that "hundreds of Birzeit students on their way to and from the University are being stopped at military checkpoints. Their academic books and class notes are being checked and sometimes destroyed.."

During the same period, University administrators and faculty became increasingly concerned over the question of Israeli censorship of books and periodicals. A January 15, 1979 statement noted that "repeated attempts for over a year by the University to gain permission to subscribe to some 50 academic periodicals in Arabic (all of which are subscribed to by the Hebrew University) have resulted in permission for one periodical subscription."

The expansion of facilities, including the commencement of construction of an entire new campus, also focused the University's attention on what it termed "illegal custom duties." It pointed out in a March 16, 1979 statement that "Before 1967, Birzeit University was exempt from customs duties under Jordanian law. On October 8, 1970, a request for continuation of custom-exempt status was made. It was refused, contrary to international agreements calling for the maintenance of the status quo in occupied territories. The amount paid in duty in the interim is sufficient to have built a new building or completely equipped a laboratory..."

On March 12, 1979, the first Birzeit student was injured by army gunfire. Soldiers near the old campus opened fire and wounded four youth, including second-year student Fa'iq Muhammed Ali, who was shot in the jaw. Subsequently, on March 26, the University received a one-week closure order. On May 2, as Israeli settlers from the right-wing Gush Emunim movement marched through the West Bank to celebrate Israeli Independence Day, the University received its first lengthy closure order - an order that originally read "until further notice" and was later changed to two months. The order followed the unprovoked shooting of Birzeit student Ra'id Nakleh Daoud, who was sitting on a bench near the



old campus, by an Israeli settler.

MILITARY ORDER 854

The issuance of Military Order 854 in July 1980 ushered in a new stage in the conflict between military authority and independent Palestinian education. This order gave the authorities broad powers over the universities, including control over curriculum, admission of students, and the hiring and firing of faculty, among other crucial matters. It was met with fierce local resistance and widespread international protest. The faculty and staff unions at Birzeit and Al Najah universities, for example published a detailed analysis of the order immediately after its issuance and noted, among other points, that "academic choices are transferred from the university professors to whom they naturally belong, and are placed in the hands of a foreign army." UNESCO and other international bodies condemned the order as illegal under international law.

At the beginning of the 1980-81 academic year, on August 27, 1980, the "Officer for the Military Authorities, System of Education," as he was termed, wrote to the University informing it that "the temporary license granted for the University has expired as of the end of the last academic year" and that a new application must be submitted adhering to Military Order 854. Birzeit did not submit such an application. In November, the University was closed for one week after the military authorities decided Palestine Week, a traditional student cultural activity, should come under their control or be cancelled.

At the end of the 1980 - 1981 academic year, the denial of work permits to some of the non-resident faculty, seen as one of the measures of Military Order 854, and the detention of students and faculty were the subjects of most concern. In the first two weeks of June, the latter increased, and by June 15, 24 students and one faculty member were under detention without charge. On that time, 1000 faculty, staff and students set out on a peaceful march from the University to deliver a protest message to the Military Governor in Ramallah demanding the students' "immediate release to enable the students to resume their studies and the University to fulfill its academic program." The march was halted two miles from Ramallah and Vice-President Dr. Baramki told it was not allowed to proceed.

1981-82: WATERSHED YEAR

The 1981-82 academic year was remarkable for a qualitative and dramatic increase in both army repression and international support for the beleaguered University. In the West Bank, the establishment of the "civil" administration in November 1981 marked a new and explicit Israeli strategy to suppress Palestinian institutions and national expression. At Birzeit, a student rally against the civil administration on November 2 was



broken up by army teargas and bullets; students were subsequently detained as they left the campus. An army raid in Birzeit the evening of November 3 led to a peaceful protest march by Birzeit students the next day: soldiers broke up the march and evacuated the University by force, despite an injunction by the High Court. A military order then closed the University for two months.

The November closure was met with widespread protest, particularly from universities abroad. The Rector of the University of Bremen wrote on November 26, 1981: "The University of Bremen protests in the most emphatic way the occupation and closure of Birzeit University and asks for the immediate release of the arrested students and the teachers under house arrest, as well as for the immediate reopening of Birzeit .." Petitions from French, German and American academics, among others, echoed these sentiments.

In addition, as a Birzeit University press release noted on December 5, 1981: "Many may be surprised to learn that the first acts of support and solidarity with Birzeit University came from Israel...on November 7, around 100 professors and students from the Hebrew University and Tel Aviv University took part in a demonstration and a sit-in inside the Birzeit University campus which was then, and still is, surrounded by the Israeli army."

A month earlier, in October 1981, five respected professors from the Hebrew University issued a report based on months of investigation on "The Condition of the Universities in the Occupied Territories." The report recommended that the military government "rescind Order 854" and "refrain from closing universities as a means of punishment or to prevent disturbances."

The University was closed by military order two other times in the 1981-82 academic year, for a total of seven months, including the November closure, causing severe disruption to the academic process, despite attempts to continue teaching off-campus. In addition the entire nine-person Student Council was placed under restriction order (town arrest), as well as three other students. Detentions reached almost one hundred cases, including eight faculty members, all of whom were eventually released without charge. Soldiers conducted collective harassments of the student body: on July 12, 1982, for example, soldiers seized 63 identity cards from students, forcing them to go to military headquarters for interrogation to return them. On the night of June 29, soldiers ordered male students in the town of out from their houses and forced them to run through the streets shouting "Potato, tomato."

FOREIGN FACULTY CRISIS

The 1981-82 academic year ended with another attempt to enforce the provisions of Military Order 854: in August 1982, foreign



faculty were given a "loyalty oath" to sign along with their regular work permit application, which already included a commitment to obey the laws of the land. The faculty members refused, noting in a September 23, 1982 statement from foreign faculty at Al Najah, Bethlehem and Birzeit universities, that "this document is a political statement. We assert our right to refuse to take political stands. This right has always been respected by the Palestinian administrations of our universities."

As the military authorities intensified their efforts to force foreign faculty to sign the pledge, a number of faculty members - especially those holding Jordanian passports and lacking local residency - were expelled. On November 11, thirteen faculty members at Birzeit University, including U.S., British, French and Swedish citizens, were barred from teaching, to be followed by others. The "foreign faculty crisis" lasted well over a year, until a compromise was reached in November 1983, and the pledge was struck from the application. Even then, despite promises from the authorities, no work permits were actually issued for almost two years.

Earlier, in November 1982, international and local protest forced the military authorities to announce that Order 854 itself was frozen, although, as the example of foreign faculty clearly shows, the authorities continued to try to implement some of its provisions.

STUDENTS BEHIND BARS

The 1982-83 academic year was marked by the foreign faculty crisis, as discussed above, but passed without any military-ordered closures. It was the first year student enrollment reached 2000. Dr. Gabi Baramki, Vice-President of the University, noted in reviewing the year in the October 1983 Birzeit University Newsletter that "Birzeit University completed its 1982/83 academic year on schedule, a "normality" we have not been able to enjoy for several years, and one which enabled us to make a number of gains in our academic and institutional development ... our faculties and departments were able to reorganize curricula and create new programs. Research projects were initiated and we advanced our academic and research ties with other institutions."

But Dr. Baramki also noted that "it is deeply troubling that our last academic year ended with mass arrests of students on July 27 and a series of harsh prison sentences." Birzeit students had been detained on July 27 for allegedly participating in a demonstration protesting the killing of three students by Israeli settlers at Hebron University on July 26 - a demonstration itself broken up by army gunfire and the wounding of two students. Fourteen students received prison terms of 1 1/2 years and one student a two year sentence, sentences the Jerusalem Post of



August 3 called "among the harshest ever handed down by a military court in the territories for an offence of this nature." In a Birzeit University press conference on August 8, the University pointed out that "the students were victims of random selection by the soldiers" and concluded "The harsh measures taken by the military authorities against our students seem designed not to punish specific offenses but to strip our young people of hope and create a generation of despair."

DOUBLE CLOSURE, DOUBLE BURDEN

The 1983-84 academic year was once again marred by military closures. The military authorities ordered Birzeit University's old campus, which at the time housed three-quarters of the University's facilities, closed for three months on February 2, 1984, in the wake of a January 31 incident during which soldiers besieged students holding a rally inside the old campus for five hours. A second closure order, issued on April 2, shuttered the new campus for one month.

In both cases, the University issued statements opposing the "unchecked power of the military authorities to impose cruel and unusual punishment on universities in the West Bank," and considered both closures as "collective punishment at the hands of the military authorities simply for fulfilling Birzeit's function as a university," and allowing students freedom of expression. Vice-President Dr. Baramki noted in the February 1984 Newsletter that: "We are punished, it seems, because we are a real educational institution. Our students have inquiring minds and a sense of community service; our faculty upholds academic freedom and independence of thought."

A DEATH ON CAMPUS

On November 21, 1984 - ten years to the day after the deportation of the University's President - soldiers opened fire without warning on a crowd of about 200 students gathered near the old campus in a show of support for an upcoming Palestine National Council meeting. Fifth-year honors engineering student Sharaf al Tibi was shot and subsequently died of his wounds, and a number of other students were injured.

A Birzeit University report entitled No Mercy: A Report on Army Actions at Birzeit University on November 21, 1984, drew on sworn affidavits from eyewitnesses, and came to two major conclusions. First, "That the army unconscionably and illegally obstructed the transfer of the wounded to hospital," including delaying and harassing ambulances and stopping the private car carrying the mortally wounded Sharaf al Tibi at an army checkpoint for 25 minutes. Second, "That the army employed 'shoot to kill' heavy gunfire against students without any form of warning."

The University managed to make strides in its development during



this academic year - including a cooperation agreement with the University of Amsterdam, a lively series of guest lecturers from abroad, and the opening of the new library at the end of the year. It was hampered however, by a new military order closing the University's new campus from March 8 - May 8, 1985, a closure the University termed the "most calculated and punitive to date." The closure followed a March 1 army raid on both campuses, where soldiers seized the contents of a student book exhibit, and other magazines and books from student rooms and lockers: no official University publications or library materials were confiscated. No charges for illegal literature were ever preferred against either students or the University itself. The University noted at the time that the raid's purpose seemed to be to "orchestrate damaging publicity, as the illegal methods of search and seizure underline." Many of the materials seized were available legally in Jerusalem. Ironically, most of the material was returned about a year later, after repeated efforts of the University and an attorney.

IRON FIST AND ACADEMIC FREEDOM

The 1985-86 academic year began with the introduction of the "iron fist" policy, announced by Israeli Defense Minister Rabin on August 4, 1985. Five Birzeit students were among its immediate victims, and were placed under administrative detention (imprisonment without charge or trial) for six months, to be followed by three other students and one University employee in the course of the year.

At the end of the academic year, the Public Relations Office of Birzeit University issued a detailed report, Academic Freedom at Birzeit University, 1985-1986, which placed the harassments faced by the University and its students and staff in the framework of internationally-recognized human rights. The report concluded that 1985-86 was the worst year on record in terms of violations of the human rights of individual students, noting the reintroduction of administrative detention, a sharp increase in restriction orders (town arrest), and an overall increase in the number of student detainees, as well as a pattern of maltreatment of detainees under interrogation by the military authorities. Although the University suffered no official military-ordered closures, the report warned of a new policy of "closure by checkpoint," citing 36 incidents during the year.

In 1986-87 - the twentieth year of the occupation - violations of individual rights continued to escalate, with the tragic addition of three student fatalities caused by army gunfire and an intensification of institutional harassment: Birzeit University suffered four military-ordered closures, including a four-month closure, and two large-scale army raids on campus.



THE TWENTIETH YEAR: ACADEMIC YEAR 1986-87

All areas of violations are not covered in this review of the 1986-87 academic year, because of lack of access to University facilities at the time of writing, due to military-ordered closure. For a general overview of the problems of censorship of books and periodicals, discrimination in taxes and customs, problems of research and travel of faculty, restrictions on work and building permits, and other issues, please refer to the earlier Academic Freedom report on the 1985-86 period.

The academic year is defined as October 1 - October 1, for purposes of statistical analysis.

A. DEATH OR WOUNDING BY ARMY GUNFIRE

"Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person."

- UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS, Article 3

Three students killed, fourteen wounded

In retrospect, the deaths of three Birzeit students by army gunfire in the 1986-87 year seem like a tragic dress rehearsal for the scores of deaths of Palestinian civilians during the uprising. Birzeit reports issued after these killings documented the same disregard by soldiers for human life and the same "battlefield tactics" directed against students that were later to be employed on the population as a whole.

The report on the 1985-86 academic year noted a pattern of "closure by checkpoint." In the first week of December 1986, a series of checkpoints erected at the entrance to the University led to tragedy on December 4, when soldiers fired tear gas and detained a faculty member, Dr. Saleh Abdul Jawad, at a checkpoint after students and faculty began a peaceful sit-in demanding access to the University. In protest, students on the old campus rallied and began a march in the streets near the old campus, building barricades to prevent army access. Soldiers opened fire and two senior Birzeit students, Jawad Abu Selmieh and Saeb Dhahab, were killed by army gunfire. Ten other students were wounded with chest, leg and arm injuries that required hospitalization.

Students Under Fire, a report issued by the Public Relations Office in the wake of the events of December 4, cites faculty and student eyewitness statements collected within three days of the events and concludes that "The number of different incidents at different locations indicates a clear pattern of army behavior on December 4, rather than a single incident where soldiers 'lost control,' as was claimed by the career army officer who killed



Jawad Abu Selmieh."

The report noted: "Although a few tear gas canisters were fired initially, the army quickly abandoned the use of tear gas and began to fire live ammunition directly at students. The first serious injury was sustained within minutes of the first army-student confrontation. The number of chest and leg injuries sustained by students, as well as the two fatal injuries indicate that soldiers were shooting not to control the situation, but to wound and perhaps to kill."

The report also proved that the two fatal injuries both occurred at the end of the period of shooting, when many students were inside campus and the army was in control of the town of Birzeit. Student eyewitnesses testified that soldiers had taken positions and were able to carefully aim at students before firing. A faculty eyewitness, Dr. Ahmed Harb, confirmed that Jawad Abu Selmieh was shot in the side, after he had turned towards the university in an attempt to get into the old campus and safety.

On April 13, 1987 a third student, Musa Hanafi was shot dead by the Israeli army. He was killed in circumstances described by eye-witnesses as "a battle scene" (in Battlefield Tactics at Birzeit University, Birzeit Public Relations Office, May 1987), a massive military operation directed at unarmed students.

"Scores of soldiers in jeeps and trucks were at the checkpoint with more reinforcements arriving. A large number of soldiers were on the reservoir hill.....Shortly before 10.30 am, a large number of soldiers began running in unison down the western side of the reservoir hill. At the same time, jeeps and trucks began to move down the main road from the army checkpoint, with soldiers walking between them. It looked like a battle scene."

-Dr. Hanan Mikhail-Ashrawi, Dean of Arts.

The report also noted the army's disregard of its own stated procedures:

"They did not use tear gas, water cannon or rubber bullets before they started shooting with live ammunition... there must have been 100 soldiers firing at once... it was complete confusion among the students. It was like the sound of a battlefield."

- Imad, student eye-witness.

Musa Hanafi was killed within minutes of the Israeli army opening fire. Students were fleeing from the advancing soldiers and there was no apparent danger to the armed soldiers. The firing was deliberate:

"There was a group of maybe five soldiers firing directly at



students, taking aim. The rest seemed to be firing to scare people. When Musa was shot, there could only have been 15 metres between the soldiers and the students. They shot directly at him. We could see which one did it."

-Adnan, student eye-witness.

Four other students were injured by army gunfire in the course of the same events, two of whom spent the following six days handcuffed to a hospital bed and under round-the clock armed guard before their release. A third was taken to prison after one day in hospital for treatment of a bullet wound in the right buttock. The fourth, who sustained a light injury to the shoulder did not go to hospital for fear of detention.

The pattern the University discerned in its two reports on the killing of students - of the army's flagrant disregard for human life and its treatment of students as armed combatants - is etched more clearly and widely in the towns, villages and camps of the Occupied Territories today, where at least 99 Palestinians lost their lives in the first 101 days of the uprising.

B. MILITARY-ORDERED CLOSURES AND CHECKPOINTS

"Everyone has the right to education... higher education shall be equally accessible to all..."

-- UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS, Article 26

CLOSURES: Four military-ordered closure, one for four months

Military orders were issued four times closing Birzeit University in the 1986-87 academic year. Two orders were issued after the killing of students by army gunfire: an order closing the old campus from December 8-January 3, 1987 and a four-month closure order following the death of Musa Hanafi, from April 13-August 13, 1987, an order the University called "the longest and most punitive in University history.

In both cases, the University strongly objected, in the words of a December 8, 1986 press release, to the military authorities "answering international protest over the army shootings with the collective punishment of the victims. The closure order also constitutes another provocation by the army of the University community, already gripped by grief and tension over the deaths of its colleagues."

The other two orders were a new feature in this academic year: preventive closure orders allegedly issued to prevent an event or rumored event of which the military authorities disapprove. The two brief closures of the University - from February 18-21 and from March 27-30, 1987 - fall into this category. In both cases, orders were issued at the same time closing other universities:



at the end of March, all universities in the Occupied Territories were ordered shut. Preventive closures illustrate both the escalating and the arbitrary nature of closure orders, which are issued solely at the discretion of the Area Commander and need cite only the phrase "for reasons of security and public order." Closure orders cannot be appealed.

CHECKPOINTS: 21 checkpoints; one leads to tragedy

The first two months of the academic year (October - December 4, 1986) witnessed the continuation of the policy of "closure by checkpoint." The army erected 13 checkpoints, some completely barring entry and others delaying entry through the checking of identity cards. After December 4, 1986, the army used checkpoints somewhat less frequently - eight in total - but placed two provocatively on August 29 and 30, as the University was attempting to resume normal academic life after four months of closure.

C. ARMY RAIDS ON CAMPUS

"No one shall be subjected to arbitrary interference with his privacy...Everyone has the right to the protection of the law against such interference or attacks."

-- UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS, Article 12

Two large-scale army raids

One of the most fundamental aspects of academic freedom is the sanctity of the University campus -- in the case of universities in the Occupied Territories, this means freedom from military presence on campus. In the 1986-87 academic year, the University was subjected to two large-scale army raids. Neither case resulted in any legal charges being pressed against the University or any of its members, suggesting that the raids, conducted without a search warrant, represent pure harassment, even under the wide-ranging security legislation in force in the Occupied Territories.

In the early hours of November 3, 1986, at 1:30AM, a large contingent of soldiers entered the old campus of Birzeit University and confiscated posters, books and cultural artifacts from a student exhibit. On the evening of March 19, 1987, about one hundred soldiers broke into the new campus of the University and conducted a four-hour search of buildings, offices and classrooms. Materials confiscated included publications of the Public Relations Office and almost the entire contents of the Student Council office, including a collection of used textbooks circulated to needy students. A March 21 press release from Birzeit University noted that "the search was both random and wide-ranging, seemingly without a specific purpose." No search warrant was shown, and no list of seized materials was given to



University officials. An official complaint lodged by the University attorney asking for compensation for damages and the return of confiscated materials has not been answered to date.

D. ADMINSTRATIVE DETENTION AND ARBITRARY ARREST

"No one shall be subjected to arbitrary arrest, detention, or exile."

-- UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS, Article 9.

ADMINISTRATIVE DETENTION: Two students receive administrative detention orders

Administrative detention, an extrajudicial procedure which allows the military authorities to imprison individuals without charge or trial, was reintroduced in the Occupied Territories on August 4, 1985 by Israeli Defense Minister Yitzhak Rabin. Nine Birzeit students and one University employee were placed under administrative detention in the 1985-1986 academic year.

In the 1986-87 academic year, two Birzeit students, Jamal Idris Al Salqan and Tariq al Ghoul were served administrative detention orders. Amnesty International adopted Jamal Idris Al Salqan as a prisoner of conscience during his term of administrative detention. The day prior to his release, April 27, 1987, he was served with a restriction order (town arrest) banning him from leaving the refugee camp where he resides, an order without any relation to alleged offences, Jamal having spent the previous six months in prison.

ARBITRARY ARREST: 68% of detainees released without charge

In the 1986-87 academic year 116 students and 6 staff members were detained. Of the 116 students, 78 were released without charge. Thus, 68% of all Birzeit University detainees (excluding administrative detainees) were held in prison without charge, for periods of time ranging from twenty-four hours to sixty-eight days. In Birzeit University records for the past five years, the percentage of detention without charge is consistently high: in 1985-86, 62% of all detainees were held without charge; in 1984 - 85, the figure was a staggering 90%.

The consistent pattern of students detained without charge strongly indicates a routine use of arbitrary arrest. Under Military Order 378, any policeman or soldier is empowered to make a detention without a warrant. This period can be extended to eighteen days before the detainee is brought before a military court, either to have his or her detention further extended or to be charged. Birzeit University records indicate that the military authorities have used these wide powers to detain students without specific cause.



In the cases under consideration, 7 detentions were extended beyond the initial eighteen-day period, including student Riyad Mansour, who was held for 68 days before being released without charge. 23 of the students were held for 16-18 days, suggesting that the authorities often hold detainees to the end of the eighteen-day period without cause. This is confirmed by the accounts of detained students who state that their interrogation ended after two or three days, but they were released at the end of the eighteen-day period. It should be noted that most detentions are accompanied by maltreatment.

Detention without charge more seriously hampers the academic process than any other measures directed against individual students, because of the number of students it affects. In 1986-87, students spent 983 days in prison without charge. In the 1985-86 academic year, students spent 794 days in prison without charge (excluding administrative detainees who spent 1121 days in prison during that period.)

Because the period of detentions are relatively short and because there is no judicial or administrative procedure, arbitrary arrest is hard to combat on the basis of individual cases. Amnesty International, however, draws attention to the practice in the section on Israel and the Occupied Territories in its 1985 report:

"...Amnesty International continues to be concerned about the widespread practice of arbitrary arrest and short-term detention without charge or trial. It received a number of reports of schoolchildren and students being kept in incommunicado detention for up to 18 days - frequently without being interrogated or informed of the reasons for their arrest. Some people have been arrested repeatedly in this way."



E. DEPORTATION

"Individual or mass forcible transfers, as well as deportations of protected persons from occupied territory to the territory of the occupying power or any other country, occupied or not, are prohibited, regardless of their motive."

-- FOURTH GENEVA CONVENTION, ARTICLE 49

First deportation of Birzeit student

On May 14, 1987, Birzeit Student Council President Marwan Barghouti was deported to Jordan, under a deportation order served to him on April 27. Deportation orders are issued under Article 112 of the draconian 1945 Defense Emergency Regulations, although deportation is clearly prohibited by international law, and in particular by the Fourth Geneva Convention. Deportation is an administrative, not a judicial procedure, so there are no official charges against the deportee. Cited reasons for Marwan's deportation, however, included a list of speeches given by Marwan at various public occasions. The University is thus concerned that Marwan was targeted for his activities as an elected representative of the Birzeit Student Council.

F. RESTRICTION ORDERS

"... Everyone lawfully within the territory of a state shall, within that territory, have the right to liberty of movement and freedom to choose his residence."

-- INTERNATIONAL CONVENANT ON CIVIL AND POLITICAL RIGHTS, A. 12-1

Nineteen students, one employee, served restriction orders

In the academic year 1985-86 thirteen students at Birzeit and one employee in the Student Affairs Office were served with restriction orders. At that time, these fourteen represented the highest number of restriction orders in one academic year in University history. In the 1986-87 year, the use of restriction orders further escalated, with nineteen students and one employee served these orders.

Restriction orders (sometimes called town arrest) are issued by the military commander and restrict an individual to a specified area, usually his or her hometown, or ban him or her from entering an area for a period of time, ususally six months. Restriction orders are renewable. The destructive effect on the academic careers of students is obvious. Of the nineteen students listed below, three are female.



Restriction Orders

<u>Name</u>	<u>Dates of Restriction</u>	<u>Terms of Restriction</u>
'Azam Abu Hamam	24.10.86 - 24.04.87	Restricted to Sa'ir
'Issam Younis	1.11.86 - 1.05.87	Banned from West Bank
Nihad Kafarneh	1.11.86 - 1.05.87	Banned from West Bank
Amani Filfil	1.11.86 - 1.05.87	Banned from West Bank
Walid Zaqut	1.11.86 - 1.05.87	Banned from West Bank
Atef al-Shweikh	1.11.86 - 1.05.87	Banned from West Bank
Ilham Zakut	1.11.86 - 1.05.87	Banned from Birzeit
Sabri Tameizeh	19.03.87 - 19.09.87	Banned from Birzeit
Mohsin Abu Ramadan	15.02.87 - 14.08.87	Banned from West Bank
Ra'id Samara	19.09.86 - 18.03.87	Banned from Birzeit
Abdullah Abdullah	4.03.87 - 4.09.87	Restricted to Ya'bad
Nayef Sweitat	4.03.87 - 4.09.87	Restricted to Jenin
Jamal Salgan	27.04.87 - 26.10.87	Restricted to Balatta
Abdel Kariim Ismail	27.04.87 - 26.10.87	Banned from Birzeit
Rashid Mansour	19.03.87 - 18.09.87	Banned from Birzeit
Ziad Sara'ous	23.03.87 - 22.09.87	Restricted to Yitma
Haytham Hammoureh	10.03.87 - 9.09.87	Banned from Gaza Strip
	10.05.87 - 9.11.87	Banned from West Bank
Majdi Wa'ri	10.03.87 - 9.09.87	Banned from Gaza
	10.05.87 - 9.11.87	Banned from West Bank
Riyad Atari	4.03.87 - 3.09.87	Restricted to 'Arrabeh

Restriction order on University employee

Adnan Shalabi | 9.05.87 - 8.11.87 | Restricted to Mazra al-Sharqiyya

E. MALTREATMENT UNDER INTERROGATION

Maltreatment is routine practice

As noted above, interrogation of student detainees is frequently accompanied by maltreatment. Accounts taken from students during this period indicate a pattern of maltreatment similar to past experiences of student detainees.

In a majority of recorded cases, the detainee has been taken from his or her home, usually late at night, hooded and handcuffed and driven to the nearest military headquarters. In some cases, the illegal arrest of family members has taken place in order to pressure the detainee into presenting him or herself to the authorities.

In the first days of interrogation, the detainee is sometimes made to stand outside, still hooded and handcuffed, in all extremes of weather conditions. Periods of up to five days outside were reported to the University in this period, during which the detainee was not allowed to sleep and was subjected to periodic kicking, beatings, verbal abuse and deprivation of food



and access to toilet facilities.

Interrogators can inflict even more severe treatment on detainees including beatings with fists, clubs or electric cable. Humiliation also plays an important part in interrogation, with sexual insults and spitting on detainees reported during this period. Female detainees in previous periods have been threatened with blackmail and sexual abuse. The interrogation period for those later released without charge is often a few days, and sometimes does not even include specific accusations.

- 1. 4.11.86 (partial)
- 2. 5.11.86 (partial)
- 3. 16.11.86 (partial)
- 4. 17.11.86 (partial)
- 5. 18.11.86 (partial)
- 10. 28.11.86 (total)
- 11. 30.11.86 (total)
- 12. 1-12.86 (total for students; some engineering allowed)*
- 13. 4.12.86 (partial but led to closure of school)**
- 14. 12.1.87 (partial - police state war)
- 15. 12.2.87 (partial)
- 16. 11.4.87 (partial)
- 17. 12.4.87 (partial)
- 18. 10.7.87 (partial - through student workshop)
- 19. 21.8.87 (partial)
- 20. 20.8.87 (partial)
- 21. 27.8.87 (partial)

* On the same day, December 1, Birzeit University issued a press release warning that "the policy of 'closure for suspension' is humiliating and poses a serious threat to the University's ability to function in a proper academic atmosphere." On December 4, students at a makeshift law school set up at a group of students' homes (Birzeit University) issued a statement denouncing the latest wave of arrests that led to the death by one student of two Birzeit students and the wounding of the other.

DATES OF ARMY CHECKPOINTS: 1986-87 ACADEMIC YEAR

1. 15.10.86 (partial)
2. 18.10.86 (partial)
3. 30.10.86 (total)
4. 1.11.86 (total)
5. 3.11.86 (partial)
6. 5.11.86 (partial)
7. 15.11.86 (partial)
8. 17.11.86 (partial)
9. 18.11.86 (partial)
10. 29.11.86 (total)
11. 30.11.86 (total)
12. 1.12.86 (total for students; some employees allowed)*
13. 4.12.86 (partial but led to closure of area)**
14. 12.1.87 (partial - yellow plate cars)
15. 12.2.87 (partial)
16. 13.4.87 (total)
17. 19.6.87 (partial)
18. 30.7.87 (partial, to disrupt summer workcamp)
19. 29.8.87 (partial)
20. 30.8.87 (partial)
21. 27.9.87 (partial)

* On the same day, December 1, Birzeit University issued a press release warning that "the policy of 'closure by checkpoint' is escalating and poses a serious threat to the University's ability to function in a proper academic atmosphere." On December 4, soldiers at a checkpoint threw tear gas at a group of students and faculty assembled at the checkpoint, unleashing the fatal chain of events that led to the death by army gunfire of two Birzeit students and the wounding of ten others.



BIRZEIT UNIVERSITY: OFFICIAL MILITARY-ORDERED CLOSURES

NB: The following includes only closures of the University where an official military order was received. It does not include "unofficial" closures, such as closures by army checkpoint.

1. December 15, 1973 - December 31, 1973 (two weeks)
2. March 26, 1979 - April 4, 1979 (one week)
3. May 3, 1979 - July 2, 1979 (two months)
4. November 14, 1980 - November 22, 1980 (one week)
5. November 4, 1981 - January 4, 1982 (two months)
6. February 16, 1982 - April 16, 1982 (two months)
7. July 8, 1982 - October 8, 1982 (three months)
8. February 2, 1984 - May 2, 1984 (three months - old campus)
9. April 2, 1984 - May 2, 1984 (one month - new campus)
10. March 8, 1985 - May 8, 1985 (two months - new campus)
11. December 8, 1986 - January 3, 1987 (one month - old campus)
12. February 18, 1987 (one day, both campuses); February 19-21, 1987 (three days, both campuses). Two separate orders.
13. March 27 - March 30, 1987. (four days, both campuses)
14. April 13 - August 13, 1987. (four months, both campuses).
15. January 10 - February 10, 1988. (one month, both campuses).
16. February 10 - March 10, 1988. (one month, both campuses).
17. March 10 - April 10, 1988. (one month, both campuses).*

*Update: In early April, the military authorities announced that all schools and universities in the West Bank would remain closed through May 8. The University did not receive a separate order or any communication in writing.



INCREASE IN REPRESSION SINCE UPRISING

The increase in repression in the Occupied Territories since the start of the Palestinian uprising has received its share of publicity. According to Israeli sources, administrative detentions alone since December 9, 1987, have reached 1700, whereas a lawyers' meeting on March 20 in East Jerusalem gave a estimate ten times higher - between 20 -30,000. Such is the extent of repression including deportations, administrative detentions, arbitrary arrest and Israeli Defence Minister Rabin's now notorious policy of beating, it is impossible to arrive at accurate figures.

This is also true for members of the University. The University has not functioned without harassment since the start of the uprising and has been closed by the Israeli military authorities for four consecutive months by separate military orders beginning January 9. This has made it impossible to keep track of students at the University, a situation compounded by prolonged curfews, particularly on the refugee camps of the Gaza Strip, the severing of telephone communication for periods of time between the West Bank and Gaza, travel restrictions between the West Bank and Gaza Strip limiting the flow of information, and the complete sealing off of the Occupied Territories on occasions, as happened for three days around Land Day, March 30, 1988.

Since December 9, 1987, there have been 75 reported cases of deportation order, detention or restriction order imposed upon members of the University community including 9 members of staff. Of these only 14 have been have been charged with any offence:

Deportation orders:	1
Administrative detentions:	8
Restriction orders:	2
Charged and convicted:	2
Charged and awaiting trial (including 5 released on bail)	14
Still in detention:	30
Released without charge:	18
	--
Total:	75

In addition to the above measures there have been 10 reported cases of University students subjected to beatings by Israeli troops.

As yet it is difficult to suggest any pattern to the repression. A number of those detained were held for periods up to 18 days and released without any accusation levelled at them or any interrogation of them. Some of those were detained apparently because of previous political activity; others at random.

The continued policy of deportation has brought wholesale



international condemnation. The Israeli authorities have carried out twenty deportations already this year, with another four Palestinians scheduled for exile from their homeland. This number includes an employee in the University's Literacy Unit and a recent graduate of the University. Despite the illegality of the measure according to the IV Geneva Convention of 1949, and international censure reaching the Security Council of the United Nations, Israel has renewed its threats to continue employing deportations.

The legal safeguards for those in administrative detention have been dispensed with. Previously an administrative detention order had to be ratified with 96 hours of detention by a military judge, and the detainee had the right to a review of his or her detention within three months. This has greatly simplified the process of administrative detention for the Israeli military authorities. An order for detention can now be issued by any Area Commander, it needs no higher confirmation and the detainee has no right to a review. In previous circumstances, administrative detention orders were issued for periods of six months. Administrative detention orders have in recent weeks been used in a blanket manner with over 1700 such detentions since the start of the uprising, according to the Israeli daily, the Jerusalem Post. This has rendered even the appearance of the judicial process irrelevant, if so required, with one University employee informed that he was being administratively detained and subsequently released 18 days later.

Previously, administrative detention was used against articulate spokespersons within the University community. It now appears that anyone is a legitimate target.

Those charged have been accused of participating in demonstrations, including five employees of the University's Services Department who were swept up by an army patrol in front of the University's Board of Trustees building in Ramallah, as they were waiting for a University vehicle. They were released on bail on March 20, after over five weeks in detention, and are awaiting trial, despite a number of eyewitnesses to their innocence.

An Israel Radio report in January stated that the extent of detentions suggests that the military authorities no longer knew who to arrest. In the University's experience this appears to be the case.



IN DHAHRIYA DETENTION CENTER: A STUDENT ACCOUNT

The following is an account from Samed, a 19 year old student in the Faculty of Engineering at the University, of his detention and the subsequent 17 days spent in the newly-established Dhahriya detention camp near Hebron.

"On January 15 I went to the mosque in al-Bireh. It has become a tradition in the period of the uprising that marches start from the mosques and churches. I took part in the march which was immediately dispersed by the army with tear gas and lots of rubber bullets. I ran off and soldiers chased after us. When a soldier shot rubber bullets in my direction and a few rounds of live ammunition, I stopped. I was detained by three soldiers who put plastic handcuffs on me with my hands behind my back and then began beating me repeatedly with clubs on my knees until in the end I could no longer stand up.

"One of the other youths detained with me had his head banged against the window of a nearby building until the window broke. They shot rubber bullets at a woman who tried to stop them.

"I was blindfolded with the keffiyeh I was wearing. A group of about twelve of us were pushed into a military car and driven to Ramallah Prison. On the way they beat us like they were playing drums with their fists and clubs. At the prison I was literally thrown off the bus and led to a tent. We were all lined up in the tent and given numbers. If one of us forgot his number then the soldiers would single him out for beating. We were then made to squat down on the floor and I was kicked on the calves. Also in the tent while I was still blindfolded one of the soldiers made me stand and with my back towards him he picked me up and dropped me so I fell with all my weight with the base of my spine against his knee which he had stretched out. I still have problems with my back as a result of this.

"On this first day we were given only a bit of chocolate to eat. We were taken to a room where we spent the next three days. We were sat on chairs. The windows were kept open, although it was the middle of winter and we weren't given blankets or anything. The soldiers came in occasionally. They would say, "Who's a maniac?", and if anyone refused to say, "Arafat's a [sexual epithet] they would kick and punch him. The same would happen when they said "Who's alright?" and we refused to say "Shamir and Peres". On the second and third days we received food but they stole all the cigarettes we had with us.

"On the third day, Sunday, we were handcuffed behind our backs at 7PM, and put in a military bus. We were blindfolded. We were so long on the road that I thought we were going to Gaza, but at about 10PM we arrived at Dhahriya detention camp. When they took us off the bus they first confiscated possessions and all the



time they were swearing at us and insulting us. They led us to an open area and about 25 of us were made to stand there handcuffed behind our backs and blindfolded for the next four or five hours. Then they sat us down which made me even colder, losing the heat of my body through the ground. At about 10AM the next morning we were given breakfast. They brought us blankets and a mattress and led us to a room.

"I spent the next 14 days in this room. It was about 4m. x 12m. There were an average of 40 of us kept there. It was a new building not yet completed. There was no plaster on the walls inside. We had no access to a WC and had to use a bucket in the room itself. There was a gallon tank of water brought to us every day. Whenever a soldier knocked on the door, we had to jump and stand by the wall with our heads bowed. If your number was called you had to say in Hebrew, "Yes, captain". We got food three times a day, a blob of jam, a few olives and two slices of yellow cheese. For lunch we got dried beans and rice that was barely cooked at all. We went on hunger strike one day when they brought us six trays of food between forty of us. They cancelled our ration of five cigarettes a day as punishment.

"During the whole period I wasn't interrogated at all. Maybe there were just too many detainees, about 350 in the camp when I was there. About 4 days before I was released, they asked me for my thumbprints. I refused as what was written on the paper was in Hebrew which I don't understand and I'd heard that other detainees had given their prints to find out later that they'd given them at the bottom of a confession.

"I was released on February 1, after 17 days without any charges against me."



IN ANSAR III: AN ACCOUNT FROM A UNIVERSITY EMPLOYEE

The following is an account of the prison experience of WALID ABDEL SALAAM, 32 years, an employee at Birzeit University and a well-known musician in the Occupied Territories. He was detained in both the detention camp at Dhahriya and in the recently constructed camp known as Ansar III in the Negev desert south of Beersheva.

"On the night of March 17, about twenty soldiers and two intelligence officers came to my house at half past midnight. They told me to get dressed and that I was being detained. I asked what was the reason but they gave no explanation. Once outside, they handcuffed me behind my back and blindfolded me. I was taken to Ramallah Prison, and the next day, still blindfolded and without having eaten, I was taken to Dhariyeh where I remained until March 25. During this time, I was occasionally beaten and conditions were quite bad.

"On March 25, a group of us were taken out, our hands bound and eyes blindfolded. We were put into a bus. We arrived at 4PM. Our blindfolds were removed and I saw the desert. I didn't think we were stopping there at first, and then I saw the camp (Ansar III).

"We had to go through the same process of the medical check and the confiscation of possessions. Each of us was given five blankets and a towel. We didn't know where we were but we thought it must be serious.

"The camp was in sections of tents. When we arrived the camp had just been opened. Detainees from Gaza and the West Bank were kept apart. The section we were in was surrounded by three barbed wire fences. There were eight tents in the section, each with about thirty detainees. There were kids of fifteen years up to an imam from a mosque of seventy-six years. Over thirty detainees in our section were over fifty. Each section had toilets and taps for washing. When we arrived ours was the only section which was full. The whole time they were building, however. When I was released five sections had been completed. Every day they brought busloads of people from all regions of the West Bank.

"The day began at 5.30AM when we had to roll up the sides of the tents and get ready for roll call. My number was 1101. The procedure of roll call took about half an hour and we had to go through it four times a day. Only after the fourth could we roll down the sides of the tent and go to sleep, and for instance on Land Day (March 30) the last call wasn't until 1.30AM. During the day we were allowed to move between the tents.

"The weather was a big problem in Ansar III. It was bitterly cold at night. I wouldn't be surprised if it was below zero. With one blanket under your body, one as a pillow and three over you it



was too cold to sleep properly. In the morning there was about ten minutes after the sun came up before it got very hot. You couldn't move about much it was so hot, so from the morning till the evening we would stay in the tents. When the sun went down it was still warm for about one and a half hours, when we could move around comfortably.

"The water was in tanks and delivered by lorry. When a tank was finished we had to wait until the next delivery. One day there was no water from morning until 5PM. As the supply of water was so unreliable, we took a decision not to take showers unless absolutely necessary, in order to conserve water for drinking.

"We got food four times a day. We would get a cup of rice and a cup of something cooked, hummous, lentils or corned beef. There was never enough. More than once we refused the food.

"No one knew how long they were going to be there for. On the second day an officer of the camp came and told us that we were all in administrative detention. A teacher from al-Najah University who was among the detainees said to him that under administrative detention we had certain rights that weren't being observed. The officer replied, "All the laws concerning administrative detention in your head, forget them. Now there's new laws". The next day a more senior officer came and adopted a softer approach, informing that we would just have to wait for the legal adviser who would inform us all of how long we would be there and if we would be charged. We weren't given any newspapers or radio. There wasn't in fact, any way to occupy your time at all, in addition that detainees there didn't generally know each other and so reluctant at first to engage in activities together.

"It felt like we were at the end of the world. While I was in Ansar III there were no visits from the Red Cross or from lawyers.

"The climate in the desert created medical problems too. I suffered an inflammation of the throat for which I was offered two tablets from what should have been a course of treatment. Dust in the eyes was a constant irritation. I was lucky. I got out after eighteen days. How could anyone stand six months there? Indeed after I got out we heard there was an outbreak of food poisoning and two hundred people got sick. I lost six and one-half kilos during my detention.

"Beatings went on the whole time. They came and beat a group of detainees because they were practising dabke (a traditional Palestinian dance). On one occasion when they were beating someone we all left the tents and reinforcements of soliders quickly arrived with tear gas and arms ready to use them should anything happen.

"On April 3 we were all waiting to see what would happen, it



being the end of the first eighteen days when legally we should be brought before a military judge. Two o'clock came and went, then three, six and seven, and we thought that's it. Then they called me and four others from our section. They gave us our belongings and said we were being released. There were five of us from the West Bank section and three from Gaza. A military vehicle arrived. They tied our hands and blindfolded us. At about 9.30PM we moved. We stopped at 10.45PM we stopped and were told to get out. The untied and hands and took off the blindfolds. We saw a sign which said 38 kilometres to Hebron, and the soldiers told us to get moving. We refused at first. We had no proof that we had been in prison. We had very little money between us, but the soldiers just said it was none of their responsibility. They left.

"There was no movement on the road at all. We were scared. We had no proof of what we were doing there but we started walking. After about 10 kilometres we came to a bridge. We decided to stay under the bridge for a while. We were very cold and had little idea where we were. We were too scared to sleep so we went back up to the road and carried on walking. By chance a car came along with Palestinian workers going to the Dimona nuclear plant. They gave us a lift but when we arrived at Dhahriya there was a military checkpoint. I could just see the whole story beginning again when the soldiers checked our IDs and asked us what we were doing there. Fortunately they didn't ask for our IDs after they'd seen the permits of the workers at Dimona and let us carry on. At about 2.15PM we arrived in Hebron. One of us was from the town so we went to his house and slept. At about 5.30AM we woke. It was a general strike but we managed to arrange transport. The drivers in fact refused to take any money from us when we told them what had happened.

"It all felt like a dream afterwards. Three prisons in eighteen days. I was lucky. Being an employee at a university I imagine they were more careful with me, and I wasn't really subjected to any beating. I was taken for any interrogation during the whole period. I daren't imagine what they do to kids they pick up off the streets.

"All these movements are calculated so that you can't relax. The aim is to make people think that if this can happen when I haven't done anything, what happens if I have, and to isolate people. But I think for most people the opposite result occurs. It makes people more prepared to resist, and I didn't imagine I would ever get the opportunity to get to know two hundred people from the villages around Jenin at one time."



APPENDIX A: AN OPEN LETTER TO THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY
FROM THE EDUCATIONAL COMMUNITY IN THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES

March 1988 (With over 100 signatures)

We, the faculties, administrations, boards of trustees, and employees of universities and schools in the occupied West Bank and Gaza address this open letter to the international community at a time when all universities and schools in the West Bank - and many in Gaza - have been closed by military fiat. We wish to draw the attention of international organizations, governments, educational institutions and human rights organizations to the critical situation facing our institutions and the hundreds of thousands of young people that they serve.

All schools in the West Bank were ordered closed on February 2, after two months of an uprising in the Occupied Territories that has been marked by extreme army brutality, including the death by army gunfire of over eighty Palestinians. We affirm that our people in the Occupied Territories have launched a genuine popular uprising against an illegal military occupation. The events we witness daily in our towns, cities and refugee camps are not, as Israeli spokesmen claim, "incidents of rioting and public disorder." Rather, an entire people - the young and the aged, students, merchants, workers and professionals - is acting to reclaim our national and human rights in order to live in freedom and dignity. With one voice, the Palestinian people demand an end to the military occupation and the establishment of an independent Palestinian state under the leadership of our sole, legitimate representative, the Palestine Liberation Organization.

The military authorities have answered the just demands of this uprising with one strategy: force and more force. A cruel policy of collective punishment is in effect and touches every village, camp and town: curfews are imposed on residential areas, under which the army is free to enter homes, vandalize property and beat and club people irrespective of age or sex. Individual news reports, however powerful, cannot capture the scope of army brutality in the last two months. Today, our hospitals are overflowing with the wounded, many suffering severe injuries, including paralysis, broken limbs, and grave internal injuries. Thousands are detained in prison. As educators, we deplore and condemn the physical brutality - and we are deeply concerned over the physical and psychological effects on the whole population, especially the young, who both witness and endure these brutalities.

This policy of collective punishment has spread to affect all educational institutions. The February 2 order closing all West Bank schools "until further notice," was accompanied by the closure of four universities by military order. All levels of schools - elementary, preparatory, secondary and community colleges - have been closed, including government, UNRWA, and



private schools, about 800 schools in total. We note that the military government's Education Department, which issued the order, has, even under Israeli regulations, no authority to issue closure orders: the order itself is patently illegal.

About 40% of the population of the West Bank - about 300,000 people - are effected by the closure of schools and universities. This closure is the stark culmination of the military authorities' policy towards education, which has been characterized since 1967 by hostility towards education - and especially towards academic freedom, freedom of expression, and educational development. The occupation has sought to spread ignorance among the new generation of Palestinian youth: it has not succeeded, but the closure of all schools and universities is its latest and most grim attempt.

The military authorities claim that the closure of schools was ordered to protect the lives and security of students. This claim is baseless and hypocritical. The military authorities' suppression of the population in the Occupied Territories has reached barbaric proportions: children are killed not only by army bullets, but by clubbing. The military occupation has never shown any interest in protecting us: the Israeli government's persistent refusal to apply the Fourth Geneva Conventions is one telling indicator. Our only protection lies in an end to this brutal occupation and a withdrawal of its forces from our land.

The closure of schools and universities "until further notice," or by closure orders extended month after month, should alarm all those who cherish the values of education and human rights, not only in our country, but throughout the world. We thus appeal to international organizations, governments, educational institutions, and human rights organizations throughout the world to join us in demanding:

* Reopen all schools and universities. The Palestinian people have a right to education - to learn and teach - free of military interference, as well as the right to protest the indignities imposed upon them.

* Enforce the Fourth Geneva Convention: An immediate end to deportation and collective punishment. No Israeli settlements on occupied land.

* End the military occupation and restore national and human rights to the Palestinian people, including the right to self-determination and the establishment of an independent state under the leadership of the Palestinian people's sole, legitimate representative, the Palestine Liberation Organization.



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 9, 1988

Ramallah - Today, Dr. Gabi Baramki, Vice-President of Birzeit University, was summoned to Ramallah Military Headquarters and given a military order closing the University for another month. It was the third successive one-month closure order and thus starkly illustrates the Israeli military occupation's policy towards Palestinian universities and schools, which can be summed up at present in one phrase: "Education is forbidden."

The closure order against Birzeit University represents a further escalation of the military's offensive against education; today, all universities in the Occupied Territories are closed, as are all schools in the West Bank since February 2, despite attempts by faculty and students to return to their institutions. The order is a vengeful act of collective punishment against a Palestinian university by an army which is unable to quash a popular rebellion and a government unable to confront the just demands of this rebellion for self-determination.

Birzeit University notes that it cannot continue its academic programs and its mission - which includes educating its students in a tradition of academic freedom and excellence - under the hostile caretakership of the Israeli army. Palestinian educational institutions are today in the irresponsible, internationally illegal, and hostile, hands of the military authorities, who have proved themselves totally unfit to supervise a genuine educational process. Birzeit University thus urges the international community to act immediately to enforce the Fourth Geneva Convention in the Occupied Territories and to insist that international bodies intervene to guarantee that Palestinian universities and schools continue to exist and fulfill their educational and community mandates.

Birzeit University's third closure order came as the Palestinian uprising in the Occupied Territories marked the conclusion of its third month. The events of these months have exacted a bitter toll on the Palestinian population, but they have also offered new opportunities to end a two-decade-old illegal occupation and establish a just peace in the region. Birzeit University urges the international community to rise to this historic challenge and to concretely support Palestinian self-determination, including our society's fundamental right to education.

-END-

