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Report of the Director-General

Appendix

The situation of workers of the occupied Arab territories

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Preface

This year, in accordance with the mandate given by the International Labour Conference, I again sent high-level missions to the occupied Arab territories, Israel, the Syrian Arab Republic, and the Arab Labour Organization and the League of Arab States in Cairo, to report on the situation of Arab workers in occupied territories. The delegations enjoyed the full cooperation of all concerned parties, for which I am very grateful. This reaffirms the broad support that exists for the values embodied by the ILO.

My representatives held in-depth discussions with a wide range of representatives of the Palestinian Authority, employers' and workers' organizations in the occupied Arab territories, constituents in Israel and in the Syrian Arab Republic, representatives of the United Nations and international and non-governmental organizations. All provided valuable information and insights on the situation of workers in the occupied Arab territories, which have guided the preparation of this Report. As always, the mission conducted its fact-finding work with a deep sense of commitment and impartiality.

The Report depicts some improvement of the economic situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory that can be attributed to accelerated growth and a slightly higher rate of employment which is, however, still very low by international standards. Average per capita incomes grew by 3.7 per cent over 2008 to reach US\$1,390, still falling some 15 per cent short of their 1999 peak. As a consequence of the nearly complete Israeli closure of the Gaza Strip, growth has not been evenly distributed between Gaza and the West Bank. The continued conflict situation has hindered economic recovery, a decade after the onset of the second Intifada.

More than one year after the devastating war, Gaza continues to be a "graveyard of industries", as a leading Palestinian industrialist described it, and the longer the closure continues, the more it undermines future prospects of workers and their families, in particular of the young generation. The effect of the war is now taking on another devastating long-term dimension. United Nations Secretary-General, Ban Ki-moon, after his recent visit to Gaza on 24 March 2010, assessed the Gaza closure as "unacceptable, unsustainable and counterproductive".

Four main factors explain what initially appears to be an impressive economic improvement, but which in reality remains precarious. First, it takes place against the background of a substantial reduction in output after 2000. Second, it was led by the extraordinarily high budget and development support given to the Palestinian Authority by the international community, which committed US\$1.4 billion in budget support alone in 2009. Third, the reform agenda of the Palestinian Authority paid off well in terms of security and the rule of law, thus improving conditions for economic activity in the West Bank. Finally, the very welcome easing of some obstacles to access and movement in the West Bank and between the West Bank and Israel contributed to the positive outcome.

By contrast, East Jerusalem is becoming more isolated from the rest of the West Bank owing to a policy of reducing the proportion of Palestinians living and working there. In addition, manifold obstacles impeding access to Palestinian land in Area C

under Israeli control, which comprises about 60 per cent of the West Bank, prevent Palestinians from making more productive use of their land. Although some minor improvements in access to Gaza have recently been noted, the reduction of monthly imports, from 10,000 truckloads in 2007 to a mere 2,000 truckloads at present, while exports remain to all intents and purposes non-existent, tells a sad story.

While the Palestinian people are suffering, while workers' rights and human dignity continue to be violated on a daily basis, and despite the Palestinian Authority's adherence to a strict policy of non-violence, no progress was made in peace negotiations last year. Recently, the Israeli announcement of the continued expansion of settlements in East Jerusalem has cast a cloud on the beginning of proximity talks aimed at bringing about a resumption of substantive negotiations. The most recent military order regarding prevention of infiltration is perceived as a sword of Damocles by thousands of Palestinian families. I can only express my deepest concern at these developments.

"Palestine: Ending the occupation, establishing the State" is the title and the motto of the Programme of the Thirteenth Government from last August, which aims to build the institutions of a free, democratic and stable State of Palestine that adheres to the principles of human rights and equality under the rule of law and lives peacefully side by side with all its neighbours. The Programme has received broad support from the Middle East Quartet, from the League of Arab States, and from the international financial institutions. The Office of the UN Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process has stressed the paramount importance of the international community continuing to support the state-building efforts of the Palestinian Authority. I wholeheartedly join in this call.

The complementary strategy of the Ministry of Labour for the Development of the Labour Sector from February 2010 aims at overcoming current shortfalls in the labour strategy by creating an environment conducive to decent work. The Palestinian Authority has expressed its commitment to respecting the standards laid down in the ILO's eight fundamental Conventions. With the Labour Law of 2000, it has put in place a basic legislative framework for the protection of workers' rights, and it is encouraging to note that the labour sector strategy outlines further action to consolidate and complement existing legal protection. As the labour sector strategy is an integral part of the Palestinian Authority's overall programming, mainstreaming employment must become a principle underlying all government actions aiming to promote private sector growth. I want to highlight the fact that employment must be the focus of a strategy based on a vibrant economy, decent work and good governance.

The ILO's engagement is rooted in the values upheld by the Organization and strongly supported by its global constituency. The ILO has further expanded its programme of technical cooperation, whose priorities are aligned with the labour sector strategy and implemented in partnership with the Ministry of Labour, the Palestinian General Federation of Trade Unions and the Federation of Palestinian Chambers of Commerce, Industry and Agriculture, as well as other key national organizations and members of the international community.

The ILO will continue to work on enterprise development and job creation with the Ministry of National Economy, on social protection with the Ministry of Social Affairs, and on vocational education and training with the Ministry of Higher Education.

Special attention is being given to supporting the social partners and the development of the legal framework for social dialogue and tripartism.

I welcome every effort of the Government of Israel to ease the burden for Palestinian workers and families. The ILO has always maintained that improvements in access and movement have a positive impact on economic development and employment

in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. A lasting solution to the conflict rests on building an independent, democratic and viable Palestinian State living in peace and security with all its neighbours.

Impediments to movement and access constitute the most important barriers to economic development and the establishment of a normal social fabric in the occupied Syrian Golan. Syrian citizens face severe hardship in securing the employment and incomes that would enable them to maintain their Syrian Arab identity.

The ILO remains fully engaged with the United Nations and the international community in supporting the legitimate right of the Palestinian people to statehood and to economic and social development leading to decent work in conditions of freedom, equity, security and human dignity.

May 2010

Juan Somavia
Director-General

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Introduction

1. In accordance with the resolution concerning the implications of Israeli settlements in Palestine and other occupied Arab territories in connection with the situation of Arab workers, adopted by the International Labour Conference (ILC) at its 66th Session (1980), the Director-General again this year sent missions to Israel and the occupied Arab territories, as well as to the Syrian Arab Republic and Egypt, in order to make as full an assessment as possible of the situation of workers of the occupied Arab territories. As in previous years, the missions sought to gather and assess information on the situation of the workers of the Occupied Palestinian Territory (West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and Gaza) and the occupied Syrian Golan.¹
2. The Director-General's representatives were guided by the principles and objectives laid down in the Constitution of the International Labour Organization, including the Declaration of Philadelphia, as well as the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work and the ILO Declaration on Social Justice for a Fair Globalization. The representatives were also guided by the resolutions adopted by the ILC, as well as the principles laid down in the relevant international labour standards and those enunciated by the supervisory bodies of the ILO.
3. In examining all the issues involved, both during the missions and in the preparation of this Report, the Director-General's representatives bore in mind, as they have always done, the relevant standards of international humanitarian and human rights law, in particular the Hague Convention of 1907 (respecting the laws and customs of war on land) and the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949 (relative to the protection of civilian persons in time of war), of which Israel is a co-signatory. The missions were guided by the relevant resolutions of the United Nations General Assembly and Security Council, including Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973), 497 (1980), 1397 (2002), 1515 (2003), 1850 (2008) and 1860 (2009). They were also mindful of the Advisory Opinion of 9 July 2004 of the International Court of Justice (ICJ, 2004).
4. The Director-General entrusted Friedrich Buttler, as his Special Representative, Tariq Haq, Research Economist in the Economic and Labour Market Analysis Department, and Martin Oelz, Legal Specialist in the Conditions of Work and Employment Programme, with the mission to Israel and the occupied Arab territories, which took place from 10 to 17 April 2010. Mounir Kleibo, ILO Representative for the

¹ As has been pointed out in previous reports, the position of the Israeli Government regarding the Golan was stated in the following terms: "The ILO mission is meant to collect material for the Director-General's Report on the occupied Arab territories. It is the position of the Government of Israel that the Golan, to which Israeli law, jurisdiction and administration have been applied, is not now such an area. In view of this consideration, approval for a visit of the ILO mission to the Golan was given as a gesture of good will and without prejudice. The decision to facilitate such an informal visit shall not serve as a precedent and does not contravene the Israeli Government's position." It is recalled that the Golan was unilaterally annexed by Israel in 1981 and that Security Council resolution 497 (1981) calls on Israel to rescind its decision to annex the Golan, which has never been recognized by the United Nations.

West Bank and Gaza, and Rasha El Shurafa, Programme Officer in the Office of the ILO Representative in Jerusalem, undertook all the preparations for the mission, of which they were full members.

5. The Director-General's Special Representative visited the Syrian Arab Republic, on 18 April 2010, for consultations with the Syrian Government and with workers' and employers' organizations, and Egypt, on 18 and 19 April 2010, to meet with representatives of the Arab Labour Organization and the League of Arab States.

6. In the course of the missions, the Director-General's representatives held numerous discussions and meetings with Israeli, Palestinian and Syrian interlocutors.² They met with representatives of various ministries and institutions of the Palestinian Authority and the Government of Israel, Palestinian and Israeli workers' and employers' organizations, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), research institutions and community leaders. The missions also consulted representatives of the United Nations and other international organizations.

7. Once again the Director-General is most grateful to all the parties involved, and wishes to acknowledge that his representatives enjoyed the full cooperation of all parties, both Arab and Israeli, as well as of the representatives of organizations of the United Nations system, in obtaining the factual information on which this Report is based. He also acknowledges the full cooperation extended to his mission by the authorities of the Syrian Arab Republic, the League of Arab States, the Arab Labour Organization and the International Confederation of Arab Trade Unions (ICATU).

8. In addition to data, studies and reports available in the public domain, this Report takes account of written and oral information obtained on the spot by the missions mentioned above. The written submissions received from the Government of Israel, the Palestinian Authority and the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic, as well as the ICATU, are acknowledged with thanks. Information obtained orally from the missions' various interlocutors was considered in a particularly thorough manner and checked as far as possible with other available information. In examining the situation of Palestinian and other Arab workers, the missions conducted their work with impartiality and objectivity.

² A list of interlocutors is contained in the annex to this Report.

1. The context: A stalled peace process

9. While the plight of the Palestinian people continues, particularly in the blockaded Gaza strip, the period 2009–10 was characterized by stalled peace negotiations. The announcement in April 2010 of the building of 1,600 new housing units in East Jerusalem has undermined the start of new “proximity talks” paving the way to direct peace negotiations. Instead, unilateral actions have prevailed, including the further extension of Israeli settlements in the West Bank including East Jerusalem, continuing rocket fire from Gaza, which indiscriminately targets Israeli civilians, as well as Israeli Military Order No. 1650 of 13 April 2010 regarding prevention of infiltration (Amendment No. 2). On the Palestinian side, substantial progress has been made towards improving security in the West Bank and establishing the institutions for a future Palestinian State; however, the divide between the de facto Hamas authorities in Gaza and the legitimate Palestinian Authority remains. The situation is “critical”, according to B. Lynn Pascoe, UN Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs (UNSC, 2010).

The international community: Positions and principles

10. The United Nations is committed to a resolution of all the final status issues – Jerusalem, borders, refugees, water and security – that are set out in the Oslo Accords, the Road Map and the corresponding Security Council resolutions. Its principles include a negotiated solution, based on “land for peace”, meaning a withdrawal from territories occupied in 1967 and an end to claims and conflict, with all States living within secure and recognized boundaries, a just solution of the refugee problem (resolution 242), the endorsement of the Road Map and the requirement of the parties to implement Phase 1 Road Map obligations (resolution 1515), and the commitment to a peace treaty resolving all core issues without exception (resolution 1850).

11. The European Union (EU), through its Council conclusions of 8 December 2009, expressed its serious concern about the lack of progress in the Middle East peace process and called for the urgent resumption of negotiations that would lead, within an agreed time frame, to a two-state solution with the State of Israel and an independent, democratic, contiguous and viable State of Palestine, living side by side in peace and security. It noted that “[a] comprehensive peace, which is a fundamental interest of the parties in the region and the EU, must be achieved on the basis of the relevant UN Security Council resolutions, the Madrid principles including land for peace, the Roadmap, the agreements previously reached by the parties and the Arab Peace Initiative” (EU, 2009).

12. In its statement of 19 March 2010, the Middle East Quartet – UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov, US Secretary of State Hilary Clinton, and the EU High Representative Catherine Ashton – expressed the belief that negotiations should lead to a settlement, negotiated between the parties within 24 months, that would end the occupation and result in the emergence of an independent, democratic and viable Palestinian State living side by side in peace and security with Israel and its other neighbours. It called on Israel and the Palestinians to act in accordance with international law and their previous agreements and obligations, and urged the Government of Israel to freeze all settlement activity, including natural growth, to dismantle outposts erected since March 2001, and to refrain from demolitions and evictions in East Jerusalem (UN, 2010a).

13. Against this background, although some recent positive elements have been welcomed within the overall bleak scenario, improvements in the situation of workers remain fragile. Areas that are particularly critical for building the future State of Palestine and of relevance to the situation of workers in the Occupied Palestinian Territory are summarized below and will be further elaborated in Chapter 2, which considers the economy and the labour market, and in Chapter 3, which is devoted to workers' rights and human dignity. Chapter 4 will turn a critical eye on the particular situation of Syrian workers in the occupied Syrian Golan, and the final chapter is devoted to observations and conclusions concerning the process of building the future State of Palestine, with special reference to areas affecting the situation of workers.

Gaza: A graveyard of industries and prospects

14. After the Israeli military Operation Cast Lead in December and January 2008–09 and the damage caused to the livelihoods of the Palestinians, their economy and workplaces, women, men and their families remain confined to severely constrained coping strategies. While the tight closure of Gaza continues, the “tunnel economy” has developed, the blockade and the tunnel economy each serving as a pretext for the other. Although reliable data on the tunnel economy do not exist, it can no longer be described as clandestine when about 20,000 people are said to be connected with it, when tunnel entries allow big containers to pass, and when Hamas, as the de facto authority, controls traffic and draws revenues which now constitute an important income stream. Recently, some efforts to restrict the tunnel industry have been reported; the outcome is as yet unclear.

15. According to the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East, the Israeli closure of the Gaza Strip; Hamas' rejection of basic principles of the peace process; the lack of unity based on PLO commitments; continued incidents of violence by militants; Israeli military actions; and continued smuggling are the hallmarks of a multidimensional crisis (UNSCO, 2010). Whereas the Government of Israel has recently allowed some humanitarian goods to pass the border, most of the inputs needed for the reconstruction of houses, schools, hospitals, and for industrial production, are still prevented from doing so. “Gaza is a graveyard of industries”, a leading Palestinian industrialist said in his meeting with the mission. While consumer goods, fuel and some building materials are provided by the tunnel economy, production plants remain destroyed or have resumed operating only at very low capacity levels. This is why most workers are unable to earn a decent living, why families without sufficient resources to buy consumer goods in the market are increasingly desperate and aid-dependent, and why children cannot enjoy the schooling and leisure activities they desperately need to grow up in peace. One well-informed observer explained a growing divide within Gaza society between, on the one hand, those profiting from recent developments and, on the other hand, employers, workers and their families whose productive capacities and livelihoods remain crushed. As he pointed out, if this state of affairs goes on, the long-term effects on the social fabric, and hence on the peace process, will be disastrous.

16. In conclusion, both Israeli and Palestinian actors have to play their part. Returning from his recent tour of the Occupied Palestinian Territory, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon on 24 March 2010 qualified the Gaza closure as “unacceptable, unsustainable and counterproductive”. He called on Palestinian actors to “do their part, including by bringing an end to violence and rocket attacks, and rising above partisan interests to pursue the reunification of Gaza and the West Bank”.

Access and movement: Selective progress but tight overall control

17. Restrictions on access and movement in the West Bank including East Jerusalem, which include the Separation Barrier, checkpoints and other physical obstacles, together with an increasingly sophisticated permit system, continue to strongly undermine economic activity, the Palestinian social fabric, enterprises and the well-being of workers. During the period 2009–10 the Government of Israel has taken some very welcome steps to ease restrictions in some parts of the West Bank. However, the same does not apply to East Jerusalem, where restrictions are becoming even tighter, nor does it apply to those other parts of the West Bank which have strategic implications for the final status negotiations. This appears to be the case for the seam zone between the Separation Barrier and the 1949 Armistice Line (the “Green Line”), for the further development of settlements, and for most of Area C separating the north, the centre and the south of the Palestinian territory of the West Bank including the Jordan Valley north of Jericho.

18. The Separation Barrier, where it is built on occupied land rather than on the Green Line, is illegal under international law. Data from the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS) show that the isolated area between the wall and the Green Line amounted to almost 555,000 *dunums*, which represent 9.5 per cent of the West Bank area (PCBS, 2010a; OCHA, 2010a). It remains the single largest obstacle to Palestinian movement and access. Palestinians living in the seam zone and farmers with land and water resources there face significant challenges and a negative economic impact (UNSCO, 2010).

19. Area C represents over 60 per cent of the West Bank, with an estimated 150,000 Palestinians. It is important for both agro-industrial and broader industrial development, as well as for the contiguity and viability of a future Palestinian State. Most of the Jordan Valley forms part of it. Palestinian construction is effectively prohibited in some 70 per cent of Area C, and the lack of construction permits also prevents the Palestinian Authority from providing adequate education, health and other services to the Palestinian communities. Closures restrict access to basic services elsewhere, to economic centres and agricultural and grazing land (UNSCO, 2010). Consequently, the international organizations rightly focus on Area C development as an important element of the contiguity and viability of the future Palestinian State.

20. In the context of occupation, the Government of Israel maintains overall control over all areas A, B and C and reserves the right of incursion if it deems such action to be appropriate. This seems to be counterproductive to the objective of building mutual trust between the parties involved in the peace process.

Settlements: Continuing Israeli policy is contrary to international law

21. Thirty years have passed since the ILC requested the Director-General to submit annual reports to it on the situation of workers of the occupied Arab territories. At the time, the ILC paid particular attention to the establishment of Israeli settlements in these territories, expressing concern “at their economic and social consequences which seriously affect the social and economic rights and interests of the Arab labour force”. In the same year, the UN Security Council had called on the Government of Israel to dismantle existing settlements and to cease establishing, constructing and planning of settlements in the Arab territories occupied since 1967 (resolution 465). Since then

numerous resolutions of the UN General Assembly have expressed concern at the Israeli settlement policy and its serious consequences for the rights and well-being of the Palestinian people and the Syrian citizens of the occupied Syrian Golan, and called for a cessation of settlement activities (most recently resolution 64/93 of 10 December 2009). In its 2004 Advisory Opinion, the International Court of Justice concluded that the Israeli settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory (including East Jerusalem) have been established in breach of international law (ICJ, 2004).

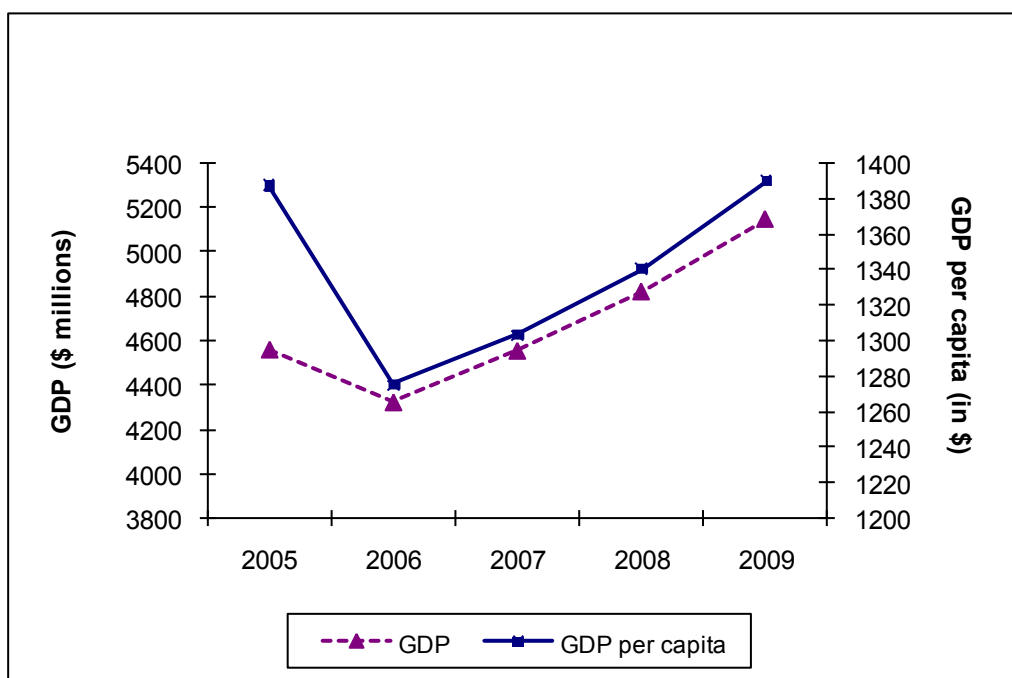
22. Despite such concerns, the policy of the Government of Israel, as described in this Report, of establishing and expanding Israeli settlements in the West Bank including East Jerusalem and in the occupied Syrian Golan continues to seriously affect the rights, dignity and socio-economic situation of the Palestinian people and the Syrian citizens of the occupied Syrian Golan. As reported by UN Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs B. Lynn Pascoe to the Security Council on 14 April 2010, a partial constraint on settlement activities in the West Bank announced by Israel since November 2009, while a positive step, fell short of Israel's obligations under the Road Map to impose a full settlement freeze (UNSC, 2010). Indeed, 2009 ended with 1,703 new housing units in settlements, not including outposts or other construction activity in settlements not authorized by the Government of Israel (World Bank, 2010).

23. Settlements are the primary cause of the depletion of natural resources and confiscation of Palestinian and Arab land, restrictions on access and movement for Palestinians, territorial fragmentation, planning policies impeding Palestinian and Arab development, and violent acts perpetrated by Israeli settlers. Thirty years after the ILC's 1980 resolution, a system of entrenched separation has emerged in the occupied Arab territories that is in stark contrast with the values and principles of the ILO, which recognize that "all human beings, irrespective of race, creed or sex, have the right to pursue both their material well-being and their spiritual development in conditions of freedom and dignity, of economic security and equal opportunity" (ILO, Declaration of Philadelphia).

2. Growth and employment: Uneven and fragile

24. The Occupied Palestinian Territory saw an acceleration of economic activity in 2009. GDP registered an overall growth rate of 6.8 per cent over 2008, while average per capita incomes grew by 3.7 per cent to reach US\$1,390 (see figure 2.1), representing a recovery to 2005 levels, although still falling some 15 per cent short of their 1999 peak. The ongoing occupation and conflict have hindered a full economic recovery, a decade after the onset of the second Intifada.

Figure 2.1. GDP and GDP per capita



Source: PCBS, National accounts, 2009.

25. Growth has not been evenly distributed between the West Bank and Gaza. A preliminary estimate suggests that real GDP growth was around 8.5 per cent in the West Bank and a mere 1 per cent in Gaza (World Bank, 2010). Moreover, the mission was informed that growth trends were uneven within the West Bank itself, with an economically vibrant Ramallah significantly outpacing other areas. Data were not available to allow an assessment of regional growth patterns in 2009.

26. There remains an underlying fragility in the growth revival. It has been driven primarily by donor assistance, which amounted to approximately US\$1.4 billion in budget support in 2009, allowing the Palestinian Authority to maintain a sizeable expansionary fiscal stimulus to the economy, promoting a consumption-led (as opposed to productive investment-led) growth. Improved law and order and Palestinian Authority governance reforms, as well as an improvement in some aspects of movement and access within the West Bank (assessed in more detail later in this chapter), have also contributed to the improved economic environment, but these welcome improvements have not boosted investor confidence sufficiently to spur growth in the private sector to match the performance of the public sector. The productive sectors of the economy have not experienced any large-scale investment or growth. Manufacturing and agriculture retain very small shares in GDP and employment, particularly relative to the services sector, which continues to dominate the Palestinian economy (see table 2.1). Moreover,

the shares of employment in agriculture, commerce and construction significantly outstrip those sectors' shares in GDP, indicating low levels of productivity.

Table 2.1. Sectoral distribution of GDP and employment

	2009 Q4 (%)	
	Share in GDP	Share in employment
Agriculture, fishing and forestry	5.2	12.4
Manufacturing, mining and quarrying	14.4	12.6
Construction	6.9	11.4
Commerce, restaurants and hotels	12.4	19.7
Transport, storage and communication	8.7	6.0
Services and other branches	52.4	37.9
Total	100.0	100.0

Source: PCBS, Labour Force Survey 2009 and National accounts 2009.

27. The largest increase in private sector activity has taken place in the construction sector, which has seen its share of GDP increase to 6.9 per cent in 2009 from 5.6 per cent in 2008, as well as the associated real estate service sector. According to the World Bank, Palestinian Authority civil servants and NGO employees are the main drivers of this market, a fact which underscores the role of donor aid in economic growth (World Bank, 2010).

28. In the words of the Palestinian Authority's Minister of National Economy, "the Palestinian private sector is caged". As a direct result of the Israeli military occupation, it is deprived of access to land and other natural resources needed for development. The closures policy has resulted in the fragmentation of the West Bank, the isolation of East Jerusalem and the complete separation of the West Bank from Gaza, limiting the access to markets of Palestinian businesses; their inability to effectively exploit economies of scale renders them uncompetitive. With Gaza blockaded, the West Bank's trade possibilities are severely constrained by the commercial crossings along the Separation Barrier and the inefficient operation of the Allenby Bridge to Jordan (World Bank, 2008). The Palestinian Trade Center (PALTRADE), which observes the commercial crossings in the Separation Barrier, cites a range of high transaction costs, including the inconvenience and cost of having to palletize goods according to strict limitations, in addition to lengthy waiting, inspection and transfer times associated with the prevailing back-to-back trucking system, as well as the higher risk of damage to products. Another non-tariff barrier to trade mentioned by the mission's interlocutors was the imposition of increasingly strict Israeli standards for the import of Palestinian goods to East Jerusalem. On the other hand, Palestinian markets to the east of the Barrier are flooded with cheap imports against which Palestinian producers often find it difficult to compete. The Palestinian Authority has recently taken a stand against settlement products, with the declared intention of removing them from Palestinian markets.

29. In Gaza, the 1 per cent economic growth that occurred in the face of the ongoing blockade was largely attributable to coping mechanisms, including the reopening of a limited number of enterprises, often offering services that are completely different from the ones they provided previously, determined by the availability of goods in the domestic market. However, most of the 3,900 industrial establishments that existed

before the blockade was imposed in June 2007 remain closed. A more detailed assessment of the situation in Gaza concludes this chapter.

Employment and the labour market

30. The employment and labour market situation in 2009 showed an improvement over 2008, in line with the higher economic growth, and the result was a slightly higher rate of employment³ of 31.2 per cent in the fourth quarter of 2009, compared to 29.8 per cent in the fourth quarter of 2008. This is still very low by international standards. Total employment grew by roughly 15 per cent in both the West Bank and Gaza. However, while employment in Gaza rose from a very low base to return to its 2007 levels, as some donor job-creation schemes were expanded and a limited number of enterprises reopened, the quality of employment for many is of serious concern, in view of the lack of productive economic activity and the growth of the illegal tunnel economy.

31. Unemployment in the West Bank and Gaza fell from 250,000 in the fourth quarter of 2008 to 239,000 in the fourth quarter of 2009. This resulted in a reduction in the unemployment rate from 19.8 per cent to 18.1 per cent in the West Bank, and from 44.8 per cent to 39.3 per cent in Gaza over the same period. The lower unemployment rate in Gaza cannot be interpreted as a sign of improved economic health. It is still among the highest unemployment rates in the world and, moreover, is likely to be an underestimate, as workers who have not been formally laid off but are neither working nor receiving their wages are classified as “temporarily absent employees”, rather than as “unemployed”. Aid dependency and deep poverty continue to characterize life for most Gazans. In May 2008, after nearly a year of the blockade, over 70 per cent of Gazans were living below the US\$1 per day poverty line, and following Operation “Cast Lead” in January 2009, 75 per cent of Gaza’s population were food insecure (OCHA, 2009a).

Table 2.2. Labour market trends, 2008–09

	2008	2009				2009	2009 Q4–2008 Q4
	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Year average	(% change)
Population aged 15+ ('000)	2 165	2 255	2 277	2 299	2 321	2 288	7.2
Labour force ('000)	896	934	950	955	964	950.8	7.6
Employment ('000)	646	697	739	709	724	717.3	12.1
West Bank	406	430	471	454	466	455.3	14.8
Gaza	161	197	192	179	186	188.5	15.5
Israel and settlements	78	70	75	76	72	73.3	-7.7
Unemployment ('000)	250	237	211	246	239	233.3	-4.4
Labour force participation rate (%)	41.4	41.4	41.7	41.6	41.5	41.6	0.2
Unemployment rate (%)	27.9	25.4	22.2	25.8	24.8	24.6	-11.1
West Bank (%)	19.8	19.5	15.9	17.8	18.1	17.8	-8.6
Gaza (%)	44.8	37	36	42.3	39.3	38.7	-12.3

Source: PCBS, Labour Force Surveys, 2008–09.

³ The employment rate is measured by total employment as a proportion of the population aged 15 years and over.

32. The labour force participation rate (LFPR), at around 41.5 per cent, remained extremely low in 2009. The main reason for this is the staggeringly low rate of participation of women in the labour force. While representing a modest improvement compared to a decade ago, the female LFPR was a mere 15.1 per cent in the fourth quarter of 2009, 17.1 per cent in the West Bank and only 11.6 per cent in Gaza. At the same time, 27.3 per cent of Palestinian women in the labour force are unemployed, and approximately 84 per cent of these unemployed women have 13 or more years of education (PCBS, 2009a, b and 2010b–e; Palestinian Women’s Research and Documentation Center, 2009). Prolonged periods of unemployment also carry the risk of educated young women leaving the labour force altogether through frustration, resulting in lost economic potential. There are numerous barriers to women’s employment in the occupied Arab territories, ranging from a skills mismatch as a result of education not meeting labour market needs, through discrimination in practice at the workplace in terms of pay and benefits, to cultural barriers. The military occupation significantly compounds these obstacles through its regime of closure and limiting mobility. Active policies and programmes are crucial to improving the lot of women in the labour market, and in 2009 a multi-stakeholder tripartite National Women’s Committee, chaired by the Palestinian Authority’s Ministry of Labour, was established to coordinate policy and action in this regard.

33. A quota and work permit system continues to control Palestinian access to the Israeli labour market across the West Bank Separation Barrier, and to Israeli settlements on both sides, for those Palestinians already in possession of security clearance and a magnetic ID card. Labour flows to Israel and the settlements fell slightly from an estimated 78,000 workers in the fourth quarter of 2008 to 72,000 workers one year later. This is in contrast with a 5.4 per cent increase in the number of permits issued by the Israeli authorities for work in Israel and the settlements, from 45,900 in 2008 to 48,400 in 2009⁴ (COGAT, 2010). This apparent discrepancy points to a reduction in the number of Palestinians accessing Israeli labour markets without a permit. Of the permits issued, 26,200 were for work in Israel, while 22,200 were for work in the settlements. The mission learned from the Ministry of Labour that the Palestinian Authority would no longer facilitate distribution of work permits for Palestinian workers in Israeli settlements in the West Bank, in conjunction with its efforts not to trade goods made in settlements. The ultimate aim was to stop the flow of Palestinian workers to Israeli settlements altogether, but this would require substantial growth in the absorptive capacity of the Palestinian economy in order to protect the livelihoods of the workers and their families who would be affected.

Prices and wages

34. Consumer prices rose by an annual average of 2.75 per cent in 2009, relative to 2008, as measured by the PCBS consumer price index. This represents a fall in the exceptionally high rate of inflation witnessed in 2008, although prices remain high relative to trends in average incomes. Price increases affected food (a 3.6 per cent rise), clothes (3.76 per cent), household goods (7.21 per cent) and education (4.42 per cent), while the cost of transportation and housing fell (by 2.64 per cent and 0.73 per cent respectively). Prices rose more sharply in Gaza (4.42 per cent) and East Jerusalem (3.54 per cent) than in the West Bank (0.57 per cent). The steeper rise in Gaza may be

⁴ The Israeli Coordinator of Government Activities in the Territories (COGAT) also reports the approval of 5,000 permits for overnight stays for Palestinian workers in Israel, as well as 456 “BMC cards” allowing Palestinian businessmen to enter Israel and an additional quota of 400 trade permits to enter Israel.

attributable to greater scarcity of goods due to the ongoing blockade, and to the inflated prices of those consumer goods smuggled in through the tunnels under the border with Egypt at Rafah. PCBS data indicate that prices stabilized in early 2010.

35. While real wage rises have improved the purchasing power of public sector workers in the West Bank, real wages in Gaza have actually declined (see table 2.3). Of equal concern, the average real daily wage for West Bank workers in the private sector has declined by 8.5 per cent, while wages for work in Israel and the settlements have increased sharply. Palestinian workers in Israel and the settlements now earn almost double the amount of their counterparts in the West Bank private sector. The high incentive to take up work in Israel and the settlements therefore remains.

Table 2.3. Nominal and real average wages and prices, 2009

	West Bank	Gaza
Average daily wage, new Israeli shekels (NIS), 2009 Q4		
Public sector	88.8	71.5
Private sector	79.6	43.7
Israel and settlements	156.4	–
Real wages: Change 2009–08 (%)		
Public sector	4.6	-2
Private sector	-8.5	-0.1
Israel and settlements	12.7	–
2009 Consumer price index (%)	0.57	4.42
Source: PCBS, Labour Force Surveys, 2008–09 and consumer price index data, 2010.		

Movement, but limited access

36. Movement and access restrictions, including checkpoints, roadblocks, the West Bank Separation Barrier, earth mounds, trenches and gates, coupled with a complex, opaque and controlling permit regime, continue to affect the extent of economic development in the West Bank, while Gaza remains in effect blockaded. In 2009 and the first quarter of 2010, there has been an easing of internal West Bank closure measures by the Israeli authorities. Data from the OCHA point to a reduction in the number of closures, from 630 in September 2008 to 550 in February 2010 (OCHA, 2010a), although the average number of random or “flying” checkpoints increased from 65 in 2009 to 100 in early 2010. In addition, the old city of Hebron (H2 zone)⁵ contained a further 92 checkpoints and other obstacles that are not included in the above counts. In parallel, much of the closure infrastructure to the east of the Separation Barrier has been eased, in terms of relaxation of movement control procedures, including the lifting of permit requirements, extension of opening hours, and infrequent and ad hoc (as opposed to systematic) checking. According to the Israeli Coordinator of Government Activities

⁵ The special Hebron Protocol signed between Israel and the Palestinian Authority on 17 January 1997 created a separate zone, H2, covering roughly 20 per cent of Hebron City, for which the Palestinian Authority would provide administrative services, but Israel would retain full security control. An estimated 400 Israeli settlers reside in this area, in the midst of 35,000 Palestinians (and roughly 170,000 Palestinians in Hebron City as a whole). These settlers are protected by 1,500 Israel Defense Forces (IDF) troops.

in the Territories (COGAT), some 357 roadblocks and checkpoints have been eased or removed since April 2008, including 210 in the two months to April 2010 (COGAT, 2010).

37. However, a purely quantitative analysis of closures conveys only a partial picture of the reality with regard to movement and access. The OCHA finds that, despite the easing of movement restrictions, there has been no significant improvement in terms of access to land and use of space in the West Bank by Palestinians, particularly in Area C, which covers 60 per cent of the West Bank (OCHA, 2009b). Moreover, while movement between cities has been eased, this has been achieved in the context of the entrenchment of certain movement control mechanisms, including some key checkpoints and the expansion of an alternative “fabric of life” road network for Palestinians, geared towards achieving “transportational contiguity” at the expense of “territorial continuity”, contributing to the disruption of traditional routes, further land loss and the ongoing fragmentation of the West Bank.

38. The significance of a given checkpoint or roadblock may be gauged by an analysis of its impact on the community and local economy based on the geographical and strategic importance of the obstacle’s location, the number of people affected by it, the direct cost of passing the obstacle (where it is possible at all) and the associated opportunity cost of having to circumvent it. In 2008, the Palestinian Ministry of National Economy presented the ILO mission with a list of 11 particularly “strategic” checkpoints that were situated at critical access points in the West Bank, creating strong impediments to movement and trade. This year, the ILO mission sought an update on the status of these checkpoints from OCHA. Two of the checkpoints have been removed and a further five have been eased, although their infrastructure remains in place. Four are still fully functioning checkpoints, which underscores the fact that, despite some improvements, movement of people and goods within the West Bank remains constrained, and so therefore does Palestinian economic development.

Table 2.4. Strategic checkpoints revisited

Checkpoint name	Governorate	Status as of April 2010
1. DCO Checkpoint, Qalqilya City	Qalqilya	Partial
2. Inab Checkpoint, Nablus Entrance	Nablus	Partial; upgraded infrastructure
3. Der Sharaf Checkpoint, Nablus Entrance	Nablus	Partial
4. Huwwara Checkpoint, Nablus Entrance	Nablus	Partial
5. Za'atara Checkpoint, Nablus/Ramallah	Nablus	No change, full checkpoint
6. Beit Iba Checkpoint, Nablus/Tulkarem/Jenin	Nablus	Removed
7. Jabaa' Checkpoint, Ramallah/Jericho	Ramallah	No change, full checkpoint
8. Al-Kuntainer Checkpoint, Bethlehem Entrance	Bethlehem	No change, full checkpoint
9. Al-Hamra Checkpoint, Jericho/the North	Jericho	No change, full checkpoint
10. Al-Jisser Checkpoint, Hebron City	Hebron	Removed
11. Al-Fahs Gate, Between Hebron/Tarqumiya	Hebron	Partial

Note: Partial = infrastructure remains but the checkpoint is staffed infrequently or rarely.

39. The Separation Barrier is arguably the single largest impediment to movement within the West Bank.⁶ The Barrier is projected to extend a total length of 709 km, 85 per cent of which will lie within West Bank territory. By February 2010, 58 per cent of the Barrier had already been completed and a further 10 per cent was under construction (OCHA, 2010a). The mission heard from its interlocutors that construction work on the Barrier had substantially slowed down over the past year owing to a shortage of funds. Once complete, 9.5 per cent of West Bank land, including East Jerusalem, will fall between the Barrier and the Green Line (the “seam zone”). Over 80 per cent of Israeli settlers will be incorporated in the same area, while 35,000 Palestinians will live in closed areas and a further 125,000 will be surrounded by the Barrier on three sides.

40. Palestinian access to land between the Barrier and the Green Line continues to be subject to a highly restrictive permit regime, including for those residing in such areas. East Jerusalem has been effectively severed from the rest of the West Bank by the Barrier: all Palestinian non-Jerusalem ID holders require permits to enter through one of four designated Barrier crossings, while entry of West Bank goods to East Jerusalem is now severely restricted. Elsewhere along the Barrier, communities are increasingly cut off from large tracts of their agricultural land and water resources; since January 2009, new “seam zone” segments behind the Barrier in the central and southern West Bank now require Palestinian farmers to obtain “visitor permits” to access the land through designated gates (OCHA, 2009b).

41. The Jordan Valley also remains isolated from the rest of the West Bank by virtue of the closure regime, albeit without a Separation Barrier. With the exception of Jericho, most of the Jordan Valley lies in Area C, where the Israeli authorities retain full military and civilian jurisdiction. Area C accounts for 60 per cent of the West Bank, including its largest aquifers and most fertile agricultural land. Palestinian construction is prohibited on 70 per cent of this area, considered to be closed or restricted zones and containing scattered Israeli settlements. The Palestinian Authority is currently unable to effectively deliver services, such as health and education, within Area C localities. Permits are rarely granted by the Israeli authorities for any construction or development in Area C, and this severely constrains both the productive and absorptive capacities of the Palestinian economy.

42. According to the World Bank (2010), continued restrictions on Palestinian activity in Area C and settlement growth remain significant impediments to economic growth. Indeed, the Palestinian Authority has long-standing development plans for four industrial parks in Jalameh (Jenin district), Tarqumiyah (Hebron district), Jericho and Bethlehem, all of which require appropriate land near the commercial crossings with Israel and Jordan. Such land is mostly in Area C, and obtaining permits for development of the sites and their associated infrastructure has involved an immensely time-intensive and bureaucratic negotiation process which has yet to be completed. The mission also learned of a new large-scale Palestinian Authority project now under way to create a new city, Rawabi, near Ramallah. The land required for the main access road to the city falls in Area C and a construction permit has not yet been received. Access to Area C land is absolutely critical for Palestinian industrial and agricultural development, in the context of legitimate Palestinian ambitions for viable statehood.

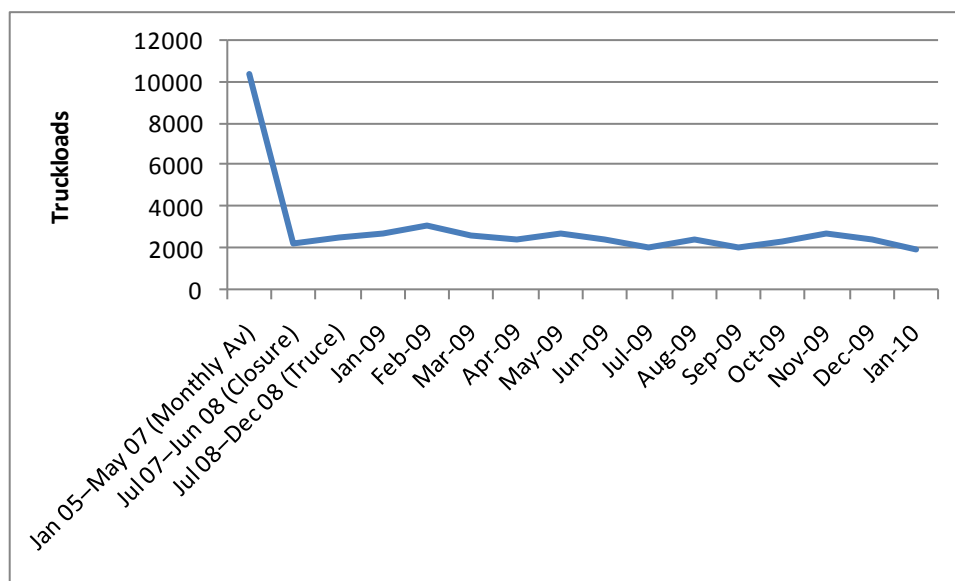
⁶ The Advisory Opinion of the ICJ on the Separation Barrier delivered on 9 July 2004 called for an immediate cessation and reversal of construction activity and reparations for all damage that had been caused by it. This was endorsed by the subsequent UN General Assembly resolution A/RES/ES-10/15 of 2 August 2004.

Lost livelihoods and degradation of the social fabric in Gaza

43. Over 15 months since Operation “Cast Lead”, and nearly three years since the effective takeover of Gaza by Hamas in June 2007, the territory remains blockaded. Livelihoods continue to be destroyed, while the private sector has been transformed into a “graveyard of industries”. The thousands of buildings – houses, schools, hospitals and factories – destroyed during the Israeli military operations have yet to be rebuilt.

44. While the range of products allowed into Gaza by the Israeli authorities for humanitarian purposes increased from 40 to 72 by the end of 2009 (PALTRADE, 2010), this remains a small fraction of the 4,000 commodities that used to enter Gaza before the blockade. Roughly 70 per cent of the permitted imports are food products, while most industrial, agricultural and construction materials – 95 per cent of which used to be imported through the crossings into Israel – have been banned or severely restricted (OCHA, 2009a). Moreover, the volume of imports, mostly brought in through the Kerem Shalom crossing point, at a mere 2,000 to 2,500 truckloads per month (see figure 2.2), can only be described as a slow trickle that is wholly insufficient to meet the needs of 1.5 million Palestinians. Exports remain effectively non-existent, with only 20 truckloads allowed out of Gaza in 2009 (PALTRADE, 2010). These exports have been limited to 44 tonnes of strawberries and 6.8 million carnations (COGAT, 2010). As a result, the local market is saturated with those agricultural products previously exported, negatively impacting producers’ incomes.

Figure 2.2. Gaza imports: Average monthly truckloads



Source: PALTRADE, Gaza Strip Crossings Bi-Monthly Report, December 2009–January 2010.

45. As imports of cement and most raw materials remain banned, and the Israeli borders remain closed to Gazan labourers, the construction sector, which used to account for roughly half of Gaza’s GDP and employed nearly a quarter of Gaza’s workers, has been hit particularly hard. Construction now accounts for less than 1 per cent of employment. The Palestinian Contractors’ Union informed the mission of a growing out-migration of engineers and contractors from Gaza, resulting in a skills deficit that is compounding the material shortages.

46. Since January 2009, the IDF has prevented Palestinians from fishing beyond three nautical miles⁷ off the coast of Gaza, severely limiting the volume of fishing catches, most of which come from deeper waters further off shore. This has resulted in overfishing in the shallow waters, depleting stocks in breeding grounds, and requiring Palestinian fishers to adopt alternative strategies, such as using smaller nets in order to catch the smaller fish present within the three nautical mile limit (OCHA, 2009a). The sector used to employ 3,000 fishers and accounted for 4 per cent of GDP (ILO, 2007), but the situation is becoming unsustainable for many fishers, who find themselves forced to cease fishing and seek alternative livelihoods.

47. The ongoing blockade is exhausting coping mechanisms and driving Gazans underground. The only economic activity now flourishing is associated with the illegal tunnel economy. It is estimated that some 400 to 600 tunnels are now operating under the border with Egypt, largely regulated by the Hamas authorities, for whom they appear to be a valuable source of income. These tunnels allow the import of all manner of consumer goods, from foodstuffs to durables, fuel and even some building materials. However, the limited quantity of cement coming in through the tunnels is of a poorer quality than is needed for structural building work and is sold at highly inflated prices, and so has not stimulated any revival in construction activity. The larger tunnels are reportedly even connected to the Rafah electricity grid and equipped with conveyor belts transporting entire containers.

48. Data on the tunnels are not readily available, although it is believed that up to 20,000 people are employed in the tunnels and associated economy, many in dangerous conditions, without protection and poorly paid. Child labour in the tunnels is said to be rife. Owing to the lack of other productive employment possibilities in Gaza, even university graduates are turning to the tunnel economy in search of livelihoods. While industry remains in ruins and the majority of Palestinian families in Gaza remain dependent on aid, the only economic growth stems from the illegal commercial activity associated with the tunnels. They serve as a commercial lifeline in the face of the siege but do so at the expense of the legitimate private sector, thus contributing to the degradation of the social fabric in Gaza.

⁷ From October 2006, the IDF imposed a strict fishing limit of six nautical miles off the coast of Gaza. This limit already halved the 12 nautical mile limit negotiated in the 2002 Bertini Agreement, whilst the 1995 Oslo Accords gave Palestinians fishing rights up to 20 nautical miles off the Gaza coastline.

3. Workers' rights and human dignity

The right to decent work: Still unfulfilled

49. The bleak economic, social and humanitarian situation in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem and Gaza, which was outlined in Chapter 2, creates an environment in which workers' rights and human dignity are jeopardized. The public sector has reached the end of its absorptive capacity, while the private sector is incapable of creating jobs at a level sufficient to absorb the growing and increasingly young Palestinian labour force in a situation where economic growth continues to be constrained. In the absence of other opportunities, many Palestinians are bound to seek work in the informal economy, often at the price of precarious working conditions and poor labour protection. High rates of poverty indeed suggest that decent work for all Palestinian women and men remains a distant goal.

50. Before discussing some specific issues characteristic of the enduring crisis of workers' rights and human dignity in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, it is appropriate to recall that the International Court of Justice in 2004 confirmed that Israel, in the exercise of the powers available to it as the occupying power, is bound by the provisions of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, including those protecting the right to work and the enjoyment of favourable conditions of work (Articles 6 and 7), the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, as well as the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Under international humanitarian law, Israel has an obligation to protect the safety and well-being of the Palestinian people. All ILO Members have an obligation to respect the rights and principles enunciated in the 1998 Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work, which should apply to all workers.

Freedom of movement and residency: New uncertainties

51. A plethora of permit requirements imposed under Israel's military laws are a dominant feature in the everyday lives of ordinary Palestinians. Permits are needed for Palestinians without Israeli Jerusalem residency status to enter occupied East Jerusalem, to leave and enter Gaza, to access their own land in the seam zone or other "closed areas", and to enter Israeli settlements. Requirements for obtaining permits may change without notice, their issuing may be delayed or rejected without explanation. A shared view of many observers is that the system operates in an unpredictable and arbitrary manner.

52. Together with the elaborate system of closures, involving checkpoints, crossings, settler-only roads and roadblocks, permits are at the centre of Israeli policies fragmenting the Occupied Palestinian Territory, limiting access of Palestinians to their land, which may eventually result in its confiscation, and protecting settlements that have been established in the West Bank contrary to international law. This system has most serious impacts on the enjoyment of human rights of Palestinians, including freedom of movement, the right to education and the right to work. The pool of jobs and the range of education to which Palestinians can aspire and the scope of commercial activities available to them are substantially reduced, with Palestinian women particularly affected (World Bank, 2010). Being subjected to such restrictions in their own land is experienced by Palestinians as discriminatory and deeply humiliating.

53. On 13 April 2010, two Israeli military orders (Nos 1649 and 1650) came into effect, amending Order No. 329 regarding prevention of infiltration applying to the West Bank. Order No. 1650 broadens the definition of the term “infiltrator”, which is now defined as “a person who entered the Area unlawfully following the effective date, or a person who is present in the Area and does not lawfully hold a permit”. Such persons can be deported without judicial review within 72 hours, although Order No. 1649 also provides that the military commander may refer the case to a special committee for review of the deportation order.

54. The UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967 expressed concerns that this new measure contradicts international humanitarian law and Israel’s obligations under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (UN, 2010b). Human rights groups have highlighted the fact that Order No. 1650 is of such a broad nature, especially the reference to a “permit” without specifying any details, that it would provide a legal basis for deporting practically any Palestinian present in the West Bank. It is feared that the military could use this Order in particular to deport Palestinians resident in the West Bank for years but with Gaza addresses on their identity cards. This latest development has created a great deal of uncertainty and fear among Palestinians regarding the manner in which the Israeli military may use this “right to deport” (Hass, 2010) and the effects this will have on Palestinian families and livelihoods.

Degenerating workers’ rights in Gaza

55. When visiting Gaza, the mission held talks with leaders of the Gaza Chamber of Commerce and with a group of representatives of the Palestine General Federation of Trade Unions (PGFTU). Workers and employers both stressed the need for intra-Palestinian reconciliation and hoped that progress would be made in this regard. The mission was impressed by the determination of the ILO’s constituents in Gaza to uphold ILO principles and values, while coping with the difficult crisis conditions prevailing there. It is a matter of serious concern that the ILO’s constituents in Gaza are subject to pressures and interference in their internal affairs on the part of the de facto authorities, in disregard of the principles of freedom of association.

56. The tunnel economy in Gaza has exacerbated the current human rights crisis in this part of the Occupied Palestinian Territory. While there are no exact statistics on tunnel-related incidents, hundreds of Palestinians, including children, have been reported killed or injured while working in the tunnels as result of Israeli airstrikes, tunnel collapses, inhalation of toxic substances or work-related accidents. As of March 2010, the OCHA has recorded 75 deaths and 139 cases of injuries since the war in December and January 2008–09 (OCHA, 2010b). A large number of deaths and injuries have been reported by the mission’s interlocutors in Gaza.

57. The tunnels’ operators make extensive use of children to build the tunnels and move goods from the Egyptian to the Palestinian side, paying them very little and taking advantage of their small size. According to the information gathered by the mission, the de facto authorities have failed to address this worst form of child labour, while taking licensing and electricity fees from tunnel operators. Dramatic footage has emerged in the media on the highly dangerous situation of Gaza’s children working in tunnels to help their families to survive. Children also engage in scavenging for items to be sold, including raw materials from infrastructure destroyed in the Israeli incursion in January 2009, which is extremely hazardous.

Occupied East Jerusalem: Discrimination and displacement

58. When Israel occupied the West Bank in 1967 and annexed some 70 square kilometres, incorporating them into the municipal borders of Jerusalem as defined by Israel, the UN Security Council determined that all legislative and administrative measures and actions taken by Israel which purport to alter the geographic, demographic and historical character and status have no legal validity and must be rescinded (resolutions 476, 478). The establishment and expansion of Israeli settlements in East Jerusalem constitutes a breach of international law, as in any other part of the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

59. According to some estimates, the number of Israeli settlers in East Jerusalem was 195,000 at the end of 2008 (OCHA, 2009c). At the beginning of 2008, some 43 per cent of all persons living in occupied East Jerusalem lived in a neighbourhood with a Jewish majority, as compared to 57 per cent in neighbourhoods with an Arab majority (Jerusalem Institute for Israeli Studies, 2010).

60. Against the background of a higher Arab population growth rate within the Jerusalem municipality as defined by Israel, Israel has accelerated its efforts to reduce the number of Palestinian residents in East Jerusalem, in a move that is widely seen as an attempt to ensure a Jewish majority in the city. In 2008 the Israeli authorities revoked the residency status of 4,577 Palestinian East Jerusalemites on grounds of continued residence of more than seven years “outside of Israel”, i.e. in other parts of the Occupied Palestinian Territory or other countries (Center for the Defence of the Individual – HaMoked, December 2009). The number of residency revocations for 2008 was more than 50 per cent of all revocation since 1967. Israel thus treats Palestinians residing in occupied East Jerusalem in the same way as immigrants under the Law of Entry into Israel.

61. Some 50,000 Palestinians living in communities situated within the Israeli municipality border but separated from East Jerusalem by the Separation Barrier continue to experience neglect in the provision of services by the Jerusalem municipality, despite their obligation to pay communal taxes. In January 2010, an official of the Israeli municipality publicly declared that these Palestinian neighbourhoods were “no longer part of the city” (Hasson, 2010). Such statements confirm the fears expressed by many observers that the Separation Barrier’s double effect, of separating Palestinian communities from the city while including Jewish settlements within the West Bank as well as large chunks of land for their future developments, will eventually also lead to thousands of Palestinians being stripped of their Jerusalem residency status as defined by Israel. If this occurs, the Palestinians concerned will be cut off from occupied East Jerusalem, with all the consequences this entails for their family relations, access to education and employment, commerce and access to Jerusalem for religious or cultural purposes.

Box 3.1
Women's rights in occupied East Jerusalem

In discussions with the mission, advocates for women's rights in the Occupied Palestinian Territory highlighted the examples of Israeli measures affecting women's rights in East Jerusalem:

The lack of building permits for Palestinians in East Jerusalem has led to a return of extended families living together in overcrowded houses. This has increased the incidence of early marriage for girls, who then drop out of education and vocational training, forgoing future employment opportunities.

The Separation Barrier has cut off major Palestinian universities from East Jerusalem. Palestinian women in East Jerusalem thus have limited opportunities to continue their university education, as most families are afraid to send their daughters to the other side of the Barrier because of the requirement to pass checkpoints where they might be subjected to unacceptable treatment.

Many Palestinian women married to Palestinian Jerusalemites are from other parts of the West Bank. Under Israeli law, they are considered to be illegally residing in the city. It is practically impossible for them to obtain Israeli Jerusalem residency status, which means that they are unable to seek employment in the city owing to their "irregular status". They are also deprived of their freedom of movement between East Jerusalem and other parts of the West Bank, which isolates them from their families.

Palestinian women with Jerusalem residency status married to men from the West Bank without such status are faced with the choice between moving out of East Jerusalem to join their husbands and risk losing Jerusalem residency status, or living separated from their husbands.

62. There are signs of deepening discrimination and inequality with regard to the right to education of Palestinians in East Jerusalem, with an acute lack of classrooms in Arab schools as the most visible indicator. An analysis published by the Association for Civil Rights in Israel and Ir Amim in September 2009 suggests that more than 1,000 classrooms for Palestinian children were lacking in East Jerusalem.⁸ Existing schools operate in poor-quality structures, and the quality of the education provided to Palestinian children is reportedly low, leading to serious attainment gaps. While the Government had pledged to build new Arab schools on several occasions, insufficient action is being taken to implement these plans on the ground. As a result, less than half of Palestinian school-age children can attend public schools, while others rely on costly private schools. Some 5,500 children are thought to be deprived of school education altogether.

Work in Israeli settlements in the West Bank: Increasingly controversial

63. Thousands of Palestinians see no other option to secure an income than working in Israeli settlements established in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, contrary to international law. Over recent years, the number of Palestinians working in settlements with permits has risen, to an estimated 22,200 in 2009. According to estimates by Palestinian trade unions and the workers' rights NGO Kav LaOved, there may be an additional 10,000 Palestinian workers in settlements without permits. Work in the settlements involves mainly work in agriculture, industrial undertakings, construction, and employment by Israeli municipal authorities. Women tend to be engaged predominantly in agriculture or industry.

⁸ www.acri.org.il/pdf/EJeducation2009en.pdf, accessed 17 May 2010.

64. The 1995 Interim Agreement excludes Area C, where settlements are situated, from the legislative authority of the Palestinian institutions and assigns full security and administrative jurisdiction there to Israel.⁹ The Palestinian Labour Law of 2000 therefore does not apply to work in the Israeli settlements, nor is the Palestinian Authority in a position to take any action to protect workers employed in the settlements.

65. The Israeli High Court of Justice decided in a 2007 case that Israeli labour law, including the Minimum Wages Law, is applicable to labour contracts between Palestinian workers and Israeli employers for work carried out in Israeli settlements. The ruling, however, appears to allow the application of Jordanian law, if agreed between the parties.

66. The mission received a significant amount of information, including oral testimony, on the working conditions that prevail in practice in workplaces in the Israeli settlements. It also gratefully accepted an invitation by the Israeli employers' representatives to visit a yarn factory in the industrial zone situated in the Israeli settlement of Barkan.

Box 3.2
Israeli industrial zones in the Occupied Palestinian Territory:
Barkan and Ariel

The Barkan industrial zone is one of 20 industrial zones set up by Israel in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. It is located within the Barkan settlement in the Salfit area some 10 kilometres east of the Green Line. The settlement will be attached to Israel by the Separation Barrier if the latter is completed as currently planned. It is easily accessed from Israel through a four-lane highway that is off-limits for Palestinians. The Barkan industrial zone hosts over 100 companies employing around 8,000 workers, including an estimated 4,000 Palestinians. The industrial zone in the nearby settlement of Ariel is currently being expanded. Israeli enterprises in settlements benefit from government subsidies.

67. At the factory visited in the Barkan industrial zone, the mission was briefed by management about the process of recruitment of Palestinian workers and the related security procedures, and had the opportunity to tour the worksite. The enterprise in question relies on the Palestinian assistant plant manager to establish contacts with other Palestinian workers with a view to recruitment. Once the enterprise decides to hire a Palestinian worker, it requests from the Israeli authorities a work permit and magnetic identity card required to access the settlement, which is granted subject to detailed security checks. The permit binds the worker to the enterprise and is subject to renewal every three months. Palestinian workers are authorized to be present in the industrial zone during the hours indicated on the permit.

68. The Israeli employers' representatives pointed out that Palestinian workers in Israeli settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory enjoyed treatment in respect of working conditions in line with the Israeli labour law, including with respect to wages. Both the Israeli employers' representatives and the COGAT also emphasized that, pending the solution of the issues of settlements as a final status issue in a future peace agreement, work in Israeli enterprises, whether in Israel or the settlements, was an opportunity for Palestinian workers while stimulating the Palestinian economy.

69. Information obtained from Palestinian trade unions and Israeli and Palestinian NGOs, as well as testimony obtained from Palestinian workers themselves, continued to point to numerous cases of labour rights violations and abusive and exploitative practices

⁹ Israeli–Palestinian Interim Agreement on the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, Washington, DC, 18 Sep. 1995.

to the detriment of Palestinian workers in settlements. In many cases, the information obtained suggests that the wages received by Palestinian workers are in practice below the legal minimum wage. Non-payment of wages or overtime, falsification of pay slips or work permits, refusal to grant sick leave or holiday, excessive daily working hours and insufficient breaks, were the most frequent complaints.

70. The involvement of Palestinian intermediaries – often referred to as “middlemen” – continues to adversely impact on the situation of Palestinian workers in Israeli settlements, although the mission learned that Palestinian trade unions have recently taken up this issue with the Palestinian Authority. Unregulated and uncontrolled, these middlemen require workers to pay high fees, while workers hired through them may not even be issued a labour contract. They often withhold workers' permits and take responsibility for paying them. The workers may not be aware of their employer's identity or of the amount paid by the employer to the middleman. In practice, there tends to be no clear separation between the fees paid by the enterprise to the middleman and the worker's wages.

71. Public and private Israeli employers in the West Bank settlements have reportedly pressured Palestinian workers to waive their rights under Israeli law. The municipality of Ma'aleh Adumim, a major settlement in which more than 30,000 Israeli settlers live, on the basis of just such a waiver, is applying Jordanian law to some 80 Palestinian employees belonging to the Jahleen Bedouin tribe (Hasson, 2009), depriving them of a range of rights and benefits available to the municipality's Israeli employees. There also appears to be a considerable number of cases where enterprises relying on Palestinian workers have moved to having employment contracts signed between their Palestinian brokers and the workers in an attempt to circumvent any obligations under Israeli labour law.

72. Once again, the ILO's attention was drawn to the issue of occupational safety and health in settlement enterprises. Following a survey carried out by Kav LaOved in 2008 covering 60 factories employing some 3,000 Palestinians in the industrial zones of Barkan, Nitzanei Shalom, Alei Zahav, Karnei Shomron and Emanuel, which found widespread disregard of basic workplace safety standards, it appears that no decisive action has been taken by the Israeli authorities to address the situation (Kav LaOved, 2009a). Unprotected exposure to pesticides continues to affect Palestinian men and women in agricultural jobs in settlements. Work accidents on date plantations continue to be reported regularly and result in serious injuries, permanent disability and lost livelihoods for entire families.

73. According to the Ministry of Industry, Trade and Labour of Israel, responsibility for enforcing labour legislation in the Israeli settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory has been assigned to the Ministry's unit in charge of labour inspection in respect of foreign workers (Kav LaOved, 2009b). A 2010 OECD report concluded that labour law enforcement in Israel is generally weak and labour inspection services understaffed, while labour law infringements are reported to be widespread (OECD, 2010). The mission has not received any indication that inspections of Israeli enterprises employing Palestinian workers in the Occupied Palestinian Territory have taken place in practice.

74. The dependency of Palestinian workers is exacerbated by the fact that their permits and security clearances binding them to the employer can be withdrawn at any stage, and by the apparent absence of labour inspection. This dependency leads many Palestinian workers to accept any terms and conditions to avoid losing their jobs. Workers without permits are even more vulnerable and are at the greatest risk of abuse.

75. Nevertheless, the mission was informed of a number of cases decided by or still pending in Israeli courts, brought individually or collectively by Palestinian workers employed in settlements against their employers with the assistance of the PGFTU and NGOs. It is, however, of concern that verdicts in favour of workers have reportedly led to reprisals against them by the enterprises, including dismissal. In other cases, employers have failed to comply with court rulings (for example, ordering them to raise pay to the legal level).

76. While there are workplaces that treat their workers fairly and correctly, Palestinian workers employed in Israeli settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory remain vulnerable to violations of labour rights and exploitation. The abundant information received in this regard suggests that such practices may be widespread. This problem can hardly be addressed in isolation because its root causes lie in the occupation and the settlement policy it entails, including the establishment of a complex legal system primarily aiming to serve the needs and interests of Israeli citizens and enterprises present in the West Bank. Palestinian workers are left with no other option than to litigate in Israeli courts, which is costly and will remain, for most of them, unfeasible.

77. The Palestinian Authority increasingly regards the employment of Palestinian workers in Israeli settlements as unacceptable. Apart from the illegality of the settlements under international law and the risks of labour rights violations and exploitation, employment in settlements, while providing some income, is perceived as detrimental to the Palestinian economy and an impediment to the ongoing building of a Palestinian State. The Palestinian Minister of Labour stated that his Ministry had stopped facilitating employment in Israeli settlements, while it continued its facilitating role with respect to work in Israel. When receiving the mission, the Minister of National Economy stressed the need to create alternative work opportunities before any steps could be taken to enforce a prohibition for Palestinians to work in Israeli settlements.

78. In the meantime, on 26 April 2010, President Abbas signed a decree banning trade in goods made in Israeli settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, distinguishing them from products made in Israel. In this connection, it is noteworthy that a distinction between settlement products and products made in Israel was also made in February 2010 by the European Court of Justice, which held that products manufactured in locations brought under Israeli control in 1967 cannot be imported to Europe under the preferential conditions provided for under the Euro–Mediterranean Association Agreement between Israel and the European Community (Case C-386/08, Judgment of 25 February 2010).

Work in Israel: The experiences and suffering of undocumented Palestinian workers

79. An estimated 25,000 Palestinian workers are employed and work inside Israel without the required permits (OECD, 2010). Currently, permits are only granted to workers over 30 years of age who are married with children.

80. The mission is alarmed by the testimony received from Palestinian workers and trade unions, as well as information from human rights organizations, with regard to the experiences and suffering of these Palestinian workers. All the testimonies have one thing in common: they manifest a profound desperation and sense of injustice and humiliation of Palestinian men and women struggling to secure for their families the most basic means of livelihood.

81. Particularly serious is the situation of Palestinian workers attempting to reach Israel without a work permit, either in areas where the Separation Barrier remains uncompleted, by penetrating through the Barrier by various methods, or by entering into arrangements to get themselves smuggled through checkpoints and crossings. In all of these cases there is a constant risk of being apprehended by the Israeli security forces. A Palestinian worker heard by the mission described violent beatings he had suffered at the hands of Israeli security forces when discovered as he was being smuggled into Israel together with fellow Palestinian workers in a severely overcrowded car. Because of the risk of being caught, many Palestinian workers stay inside Israel for extended periods, often sleeping under the open sky. Being in an irregular situation, they are prime victims of labour exploitation and abuse, without any possibility of seeking redress.

82. Throughout 2009, the human rights organization Al-Haq recorded dozens of witness statements attesting to the maltreatment and humiliation of Palestinian workers who had been apprehended, illegal use of firearms by the security forces, hours of arbitrary detention, and severe brutality and torture (Al-Haq, 2010). For its part, the Israeli human rights organization B'Tselem has continued to collect and publish reports and testimony regarding beatings and abuses by Israeli security forces of Palestinian workers trying to enter Israel. In a campaign against such violence launched in November 2009, B'Tselem noted that "harm to Palestinians has for some time been standard practice among security forces, rather than random acts, as these are often portrayed in Israel" (B'Tselem, 2009).

Improving regular labour flows to Israel

83. The ILO has always maintained that Palestinian workers should be able to enter the Israeli labour market legally. Being in a regular situation, documented Palestinian workers are in a better position to claim their rights, but are nonetheless still exposed to hardship and at risk of exploitation. Hence, it is crucial that the modalities and mechanisms for the cross-border movement of Palestinian workers are well coordinated between the two sides and that due regard is given to limiting the vulnerability of documented Palestinian workers in Israel.

84. Palestinian workers inside Israel, like workers in Israeli settlements in the West Bank, are vulnerable to exploitation because their permits bind them to a specific employer and are subject to renewal every three months. Information received by the mission indicates a range of issues and practices affecting these Palestinian workers, including the practice by Israeli companies of charging workers for their work permits, unexplained withdrawal of permits and security clearance, and attempts by the Israeli authorities to exact collaboration from Palestinian workers in return for access to the Israeli labour market. Palestinian workers and trade unions highlighted harsh conditions at overcrowded Israeli crossing-points where workers have to stand in line on a daily basis from as early as 2 o'clock in the morning in order to reach their workplaces in Israel on time.

Settler violence in the West Bank

85. The phenomenon of settler violence remains a serious threat to the lives, security and livelihoods of Palestinians living in the West Bank. The OCHA continues to register incidents involving violent acts by Israeli settlers against Palestinians and their property. Israeli settlers uproot olive trees planted by Palestinians, prevent Palestinian farmers from accessing and cultivating their land, and kill livestock. A total of 252 settler-related

incidents were registered by the OCHA in 2009, as compared to 395 in 2008 and 243 in 2007 (OCHA, 2010a). The highest average number of incidents ever was recorded in the first two months of 2010 (34 as compared to 15 in 2006).

86. The number of Palestinians killed in such incidents is on the rise, as is the number of violent acts perpetrated by groups of Israeli settlers (UN, 2009). Palestinian women are particularly vulnerable to attacks from settlers while their husbands are away from home. Having documented cases of settler violence suffered by Palestinian women, the Women's Centre for Legal Aid and Counselling stressed the severe psychological impact on women, many of whom feel too afraid to leave their homes (Women's Centre for Legal Aid and Counselling, 2010).

87. While UN reports have acknowledged certain steps taken by the Israeli authorities to address the problem, law-enforcement deficits still exist. In May 2009, the Committee against Torture expressed concerns at the rise in such violence, while appreciating that a special inter-ministerial committee had been created to address such cases. The Committee called for prompt and impartial investigation of any ill-treatment by Israeli settlers (UN Committee against Torture, 2009). The deployment of Israeli security forces to protect Palestinian farmers on their land close to Israeli settlements during the olive harvest has reduced physical assaults on them, but according to OCHA this has "hardly affected the scope of attacks against property such as olive groves and produce" (OCHA, 2009d).

88. A recent OCHA report sheds light on a deliberate strategy (the "price tag" strategy) applied by Israeli settlers in the West Bank. This strategy consists of exacting a "price" from Palestinian communities by inflicting violence on them whenever the Israeli authorities decide to remove settlement outposts that Israel regards as illegal under its laws and regulations (OCHA, 2009d). A total of 248,000 Palestinians living in 83 communities have been identified by OCHA as being vulnerable to settler violence and in need of protection under a scenario of medium- to large-scale outpost evacuation.

4. Syrian workers in the occupied Syrian Golan

89. Around 30,000 Syrian citizens live in five Syrian villages in the occupied Syrian Golan. The Government of Israel actively encourages and gives support to Israeli settlers to work on the occupied land, which was annexed in 1981. At present, the number of settlers is roughly equal to the number of Syrian citizens.

90. When addressing the situation of the Syrian citizens in the occupied Syrian Golan, it should be kept in mind that successive resolutions of the UN Security Council and the General Assembly have consistently maintained that the Israeli decision in 1981 to impose its laws, jurisdiction and administration on the Syrian Golan which it occupied in 1967 was null and void and without international legal effect.

91. The UN General Assembly has repeatedly called on Israel (most recently in resolution 64/95 of 10 December 2009) to desist from imposing Israeli citizenship and Israeli identity cards on the Syrian citizens, who struggle to maintain their Syrian identity under Israeli occupation, even as the Government of Israel's illegal annexation of the Syrian Golan aims at absorbing it fully into the Israeli economy. Together with the continuing Israeli settlement policy in the occupied Syrian Golan, in violation of international law, the procedures and consequences of this policy constitute the main constraint for the Syrian citizens and their livelihoods in the remaining five villages.

92. The Syrian Government, in its annual report on the situation of workers in the Occupied Syrian Golan 2009–10 (Syrian Government, April 2010), complains of Israeli practices including changing the physical character, demographic composition, institutional structure and legal status of the occupied Syrian Golan, establishment of settlements, land confiscation, control of underground water, imposition of high taxation by force, prevention of citizens from exercising property rights, and other inhuman practices that constitute a flagrant violation of human rights and international law.

93. The report notes that agriculture is the major source of income, and complains of pressure on owners and agricultural workers to leave their land and look for work elsewhere in Israel. This pressure is said to take the form of high taxes, restrictions on the use of water for irrigation, and physical damage to crops and trees.

94. In this context it is noteworthy that, as mentioned in the 2010 report of the Secretary-General on human rights in the occupied Syrian Golan (UN Human Rights Council, 2010), the Government of Israel reportedly announced in 2009 the selling of 11 lots of land in the village of Ain Quniya, with the condition that priority must be given to those who served in the security forces and were recommended by the Israeli Ministry of Defense. The Syrian Government argues that this is likely to change the demographic composition of the occupied Syrian Golan.

95. This Report in recent years has repeatedly drawn attention to discrimination against Syrian Arab workers and landowners in the occupied Syrian Golan, by taking their land, uprooting their trees, restricting the use of their water and charging higher prices as compared to settlers. The mission was told that these practices continue. During its visit this year, the Syrian farmers (landowners, producers and workers) briefed the mission on two incidents that occurred in the summer of 2009 and early 2010. In the first case, a conflict broke out in Majdal Shams when land was said to have been confiscated to allow the expansion of the Nimrod settlement. Another incident reported by the farmers concerned the uprooting of trees on 25 *dunums* of land, with 70–80 trees per *dunum*.

96. Agriculture is still the main productive activity, providing incomes for farmers and, through indirect and multiplier effects, for local construction, trade, handicraft and

service activities. The farmers explained that the construction of some new buildings during the last year was due to the good agricultural takings during the period 2008–09. There is, however, no visible sign of significant modernization of the local economy other than in the production and storage of crops. As a consequence, there are few local employment opportunities, particularly professional prospects for young people, including university graduates, while young women who wish to preserve their Syrian identity will not choose the option of working elsewhere owing to prevailing social norms.

97. In this situation, the market demand for apples, the main export product, and job opportunities in Israel and the associated remittances, largely determine the local income. As reliable subregional income statistics are lacking, two sets of indicators could be used, namely the quantity of crops and their price, and the number of Syrian workers in Israel and their remittances to their home villages. The mission was told that during 2009–10, the number of Syrian citizens working in Israel fell, possibly as a result of a decline in job opportunities during the economic crisis. Whether they have been more affected than other Arab workers or Israeli workers cannot be ascertained because of the lack of data.

98. The production of apples remaining stable, a favourable price level contributed to a positive outcome. It was possible again to ship 8,000 tonnes of first-grade apples to the Syrian Arab Republic, through the Quneitra checkpoint, at a price subsidized by the Syrian Government. As a secondary effect, the quantity of apples offered in the Israeli market was reduced and, consequently, the price level on that market could be maintained. This year the quantity shipped to the Syrian Arab Republic is expected to reach 10,000 tonnes. Second-quality apples were considered by the farmers for further processing to produce juice, but the available quantities of apples were not sufficient to make a local production capacity profitable. Farmers expect the Syrian Government to support the corresponding shipment and processing.

99. To support its citizens in the occupied Syrian Golan, the Syrian Government has enacted new legislation granting the continued payment of wages to Syrian citizens who have been dismissed from employment by the Israeli authorities “due to their commitment to the Syrian national identity and homeland” (Legislative Decree No. 17 of 14 February 2010). Syrian public sector employees will be considered on duty and be paid accordingly if they return to the occupied Golan. No information on the Decree’s implementation has been obtained at this stage.

Concluding observations

100. Occupation and the tightly closed crossing into the Syrian Arab Republic constitute the most important barriers to economic development and to normalization of the social fabric in the occupied Syrian Golan. Syrian citizens who wish to maintain their Syrian Arab identity are facing hardship and severely restricted prospects of earning a decent living. The UN General Assembly has repeatedly called on Israel to desist from imposing Israeli citizenship on the Syrian citizens. The Government of Syria is requesting the international community to strengthen its efforts to end the occupation and to provide Syrian workers with opportunities for decent work.

101. In recent years, the Government of Syria has repeatedly requested technical cooperation in support of the Syrian workers in the occupied Syrian Golan.

5. State building in spite of occupation

102. The Programme of the Thirteenth Government (PNA, 2009) formulates the state-building agenda for the next two years. It is ambitious in its aim “to build the institutions of a free, democratic and stable State of Palestine that adheres to the principles of human rights and equality under the law, without discrimination on any grounds whatsoever”. It wishes to unite the Palestinian people and the international community behind its vision of the State of Palestine within a defined time frame. Under occupation it appears at the same time as both peacefully courageous and vulnerable: “The window of opportunity to secure a viable two-State solution is now mortally threatened by Israel’s settlement policy”, according to the Introduction. This remains true at the time of the 99th Session of the International Labour Conference in June 2010.

Broad international support

103. The state-building agenda has found broad support in the international community. The Quartet, in its statement on 19 March 2010, fully endorsed the programme “which has seen significant improvement in the Palestinian Authority’s performance with respect to security and law and order and improved economic growth” (UN, 2010a). Similarly, the Office of the UN Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, in its contribution to the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee Meeting in Madrid on 13 April 2010, stressed the “paramount importance that the international community continue to support state-building efforts ” (UNSCO, 2010). In its positive assessment of the progress made in translating the Programme of the Thirteenth Government into strategies and measurable programmes, UNSCO has been joined by the World Bank as well as the International Monetary Fund (World Bank, 2010; IMF, 2010). Already in September 2009, the World Bank expressed the view that, “assuming the PA maintains its performance in institution building and delivery of public services ... it is well positioned for the establishment of a Palestinian State at any point in the near future” (World Bank, 2010).

104. The international community is concerned about the sustainability of the fiscal position of the Palestinian Authority; it urges the Government of Israel to ease economic restrictions on the West Bank and Gaza, to unlock the economic potential of Area C and to liberalize economic linkages with East Jerusalem (World Bank, 2010); the Quartet has called on all States in the region and the wider international community to match the Palestinian commitment to state building by contributing concrete, immediate and sustained support. Without any doubt this commitment will continue to be important, however long the economic rehabilitation process after ending the occupation will take.

105. Sector priorities, policies and programmes of the Thirteenth Government Programme include governance, social and economic issues and infrastructure. In the field of labour and social policies, it aims to streamline efforts with a view to enhancing the resilience of the Palestinian people, strengthening economic and social development through private sector growth, and fostering the corresponding institutional capacity of the Palestinian Authority.

A labour sector strategy

106. In February 2010, the Ministry of Labour issued “A strategy for the development of the labour sector in Palestine” (PNA, 2010a), complementing and further defining the Thirteenth Government Programme. It starts with an assessment of existing deficits,

namely the failure of the existing structures in providing services to the public, in leading the national efforts and in coordinating external support in the labour sector, the presence of multiple government agencies and the recurrence of programmes, the absence of a national employment strategy, the weak linkage between employment and vocational training, and the need to strengthen the role of the private sector and social partners in the process. The strategy lists six priorities:

- Priority No. 1: Creating an appropriate environment to create opportunities for decent work:
Required interventions: Developing a national employment strategy, establishment of a public employment agency, supporting the Palestinian Fund for Employment and Social Protection, and updating the labour market information system.
- Priority No. 2: Developing vocational training:
Required interventions: Review of the national strategy for vocational and technical training and education and activating its executive bodies, establishment of a public agency for vocational training and education, application of the Arab standard classification of occupations and adoption of a corresponding legal framework, and establishment of a fund for vocational training and education.
- Priority No. 3: Promoting the cooperative sector:
Required interventions: Adoption of the Palestinian law on cooperatives, development of a general agency for organizing cooperative work, establishing a bank to finance cooperatives.
- Priority No. 4: Improving working conditions:
Required interventions: Formation of a national agency for occupational health and safety, organization and empowerment of labour inspection services and implementation of OSH standards.
- Priority No. 5: Consultation and effective social dialogue:
Required interventions: Enactment of the law of regulating the trade unions, strengthening the role of social partners in the management of the labour market, promotion of the collective bargaining system and capacity-building programmes for the social partner organizations.
- Priority No. 6: Strengthening regional and international cooperation:
Required interventions: The enactment of corresponding legislative tools and the establishment of institutional structures to support Arab and wider international cooperation and follow-up on Palestinian employment abroad.

107. Gender issues are to be mainstreamed throughout the strategy.

108. As can be seen from the priorities, the labour sector programme envisages the creation of specialized, independent and semi-governmental national agencies for the implementation of policies and the delivery of services. It proposes strengthening the legal framework, complementing the Palestinian Labour Law dating from the year 2000. Accordingly, services rendered by the Ministry of Labour are to be delegated to the agencies. The reorganization of structures and the building of new institutions will require the development of a comprehensive capacity-building programme in which the ILO in cooperation with the UNDP is involved.

109. As the labour sector strategy is an integral part of the Programme of the Thirteenth Government, mainstreaming employment must be an underlying trend in all government activities aiming to enable the private sector to develop. Employment should not be seen as a residual by-product, but must instead be the focus of a strategy “based on a booming economy, decent work and good governance” (PNA, 2010b).

Local governance

110. Local business start-up and development requires a conducive and enabling environment. Favourable conditions for employment creation must therefore be supported at both the national and the local levels. The Programme of the Thirteenth Government affirmed the significant role that local government units assume in delivering services: “The Government is committed to developing the capacities of local government units, promote their participation in the development process, and help them attain financial and administrative independence. The Government will also promote accountability of local government units by developing oversight systems within relevant central institutions.” (PNA, 2009).

111. The Palestinian Reform and Development Plan (PNA, 2007) expressed the commitment of the Palestinian Authority to bringing government closer to the citizens. This needs to be embedded in a strategy of municipal development. In 1993, the number of municipalities in the West Bank and Gaza leapt from 30 to 132, an increase due to political rather than functional considerations (World Bank, 2010). The proliferation of local governments and small municipalities lacking sufficient capacities for effectively and efficiently providing public services is a matter of concern. Consequently, the Local Governance Sector Strategy is now part of the Palestinian National Plan 2011–13. It aims to develop joint service councils to provide effective services in small localities and synergy groups on amalgamation, a legal framework, local government unit capacity building and decentralization, which would strengthen policy coordination and harmonization between various actors and avoid duplication (PNA, 2010b).

112. The World Bank reports (World Bank, 2010) that although some 27 different functions are assigned to municipalities by law, there are just six core services that mostly provide solid waste disposal, street maintenance, water, road maintenance, school maintenance and street lighting. Services with large social impacts such as health, education and social services, as well as services with direct local effects, are not legally assigned to municipalities, according to the report. Obviously, the functional reform envisaged by the Palestinian Authority is needed to support local employment growth through the effective provision of quality services for private sector initiatives and the livelihoods of workers and their families at work as well as at home.

113. The location of branches of the new national agencies envisaged in the labour sector strategy is to be aligned with the functional local government reform. A striking example of the positive indirect and multiplier effects of the decentralized concentration of services was provided to the mission by the Governor of the Palestine Monetary Authority: following the opening of new bank branch offices in different major municipalities, a whole range of private sector activities sprung up in the surrounding neighbourhood.

114. Hebron is an example of a municipality seeking to plan and shape its urban development. An illegal Israeli settlement divides the city into two administrative entities. An engaged mayor and his team are on the way to giving a human face to the city, by endeavouring to provide a variety of services, notably electricity, water, roads,

sanitation, construction and environmental initiatives. In addition, the municipality provides services to the industrial and agricultural sectors, as well as cultural and sport services to all sectors of society (Hebron Municipality Achievements, 2010). This demonstrates what women and men can achieve even under harsh conditions.

115. The Palestinian Authority has focused on community developments. With full participation from local residents, 1,000 such projects have been completed and US\$350 million is expected to be committed for more projects in 2010 (UNSCO, 2010). Again, mainstreaming the employment impact will be of paramount importance for the forthcoming 1,000 projects.

Workers' rights: What has been achieved and what remains to be done

116. The Palestinian Authority has expressed its commitment to respecting the standards laid down in the ILO's eight fundamental Conventions, which concern freedom of association and the recognition of the right to collective bargaining, the elimination of all forms of forced or compulsory labour, the effective abolition of child labour and the elimination of discrimination in employment and occupation. With the 2000 Labour Law, the Palestinian Authority has put in place a basic legislative framework for the protection of workers' rights. The Tripartite Labour Policies Committee provided for under the Labour Law has been constituted to play a leading role in labour and social policy matters through tripartism and social dialogue.

117. It is encouraging that the labour sector strategy outlines further action to consolidate and complement existing legal protections through labour law reform and an improved labour inspection system. Indeed there could not be better preparation for statehood in this realm than drawing on the relevant ILO standards and principles when reviewing the existing labour legislation. The envisaged adoption of legislation regulating trade union matters will be critical to ensuring that Palestinian workers fully enjoy freedom of association. The recent establishment of the National Women's Employment Committee is extremely timely. It is well placed to make important contributions to the envisaged establishment of a legal framework for the promotion of gender equality, which is crucial to overcoming the persisting inequalities in the Palestinian labour market and society.

The ILO is engaged: A summary of technical cooperation

118. The period 2009–10 has seen an expanded ILO technical cooperation programme in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, implemented in partnership with the Ministry of Labour of the Palestinian Authority, the Palestinian General Federation of Trade Unions (PGFTU) and the Federation of Palestinian Chambers of Commerce, Industry and Agriculture (FPCCIA), as well as other key national organizations and members of the international community.

119. The areas of ILO intervention to be reported in this context are aligned with the priorities of the aforementioned labour sector strategy, to which the ILO has provided technical support. The intervention relates to strengthening labour market governance and rights, promoting employability through skills upgrading and local economic development, strengthening entrepreneurship for private sector growth through the development of cooperatives and micro-, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs),

social dialogue and social protection, gender mainstreaming and women's economic empowerment.

Strengthening labour market governance and rights

120. Under the Global Capacity Development Initiative, the ILO is working in cooperation with United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) on a pilot project with the Ministry of Labour aiming to establish a technical advisory unit at the Ministry. The unit will support capacity building in strategy development, project management and donor coordination.

121. The establishment of a legal clinic at the PGFTU is being supported as a means of providing legal advisory services for Palestinian workers formerly or currently employed by Israeli enterprises. The project also aims to enhance capacities of the legal department staff at the PGFTU. The project is due to become operational in May 2010.

122. In order to further support private sector development, the ILO is working in partnership with the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA) and the FPCCIA. The inception period of the project will aim at achieving a consensus among the affiliated chambers and the wider private sector community on capacity development, service provision requirements and growth strategy for the FPCCIA. Particular emphasis is to be given to business support for the development of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs).

Promoting employability through skills upgrading and local economic development

123. In partnership with relevant actors, reforms of the technical vocational education and training system are being supported. The findings and recommendations of the ILO mapping and capacity-gap analysis of the sector will inform national policy on the promotion of employability and skills.

124. Procurement of equipment and staff training of the Sheikha Fatima Bent Mubarak Vocational Training Centre for Disabled Persons in Hebron will be provided.

Strengthening entrepreneurship for private sector growth through cooperatives and micro-, small and medium-sized enterprises

125. The ILO has led a number of interventions including an assessment of the Palestinian cooperatives sector and technical support for the drafting of the unified law on cooperatives. Support is being given for the establishment of the General Commission for Regulating Cooperatives as an independent technical service centre.

126. Under the leadership of the Ministry of National Economy, technical assistance is being provided for an integrated national policy for MSMEs. As a first step, the ILO conducted a comprehensive assessment of the conditions for MSME development in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and for the creation of more and better employment for women and men. As a result, the ILO is due to present a corresponding national policy framework to the Palestinian Authority in May 2010.

127. In addition, technical assistance is provided for the Ministries of Labour and of Higher Education to promote entrepreneurship among young women and men through the "Know About Business" package.

Social dialogue and social protection

128. Through its continued effort in assisting constituents to encourage tripartism and social dialogue at the national level, and as a result of the round table held during the Arab Employment Forum (Beirut, Lebanon, October 2009) on revitalizing the Palestinian Tripartite Committee, the ILO supported the members of the Tripartite Labour Policies Committee through a workshop (Turin, February 2010) on the promotion of social dialogue. As an outcome, the Turin Declaration develops a vision and action for the future work of the Committee.

129. A mapping of the social security situation of the Palestinian people is currently being conducted. It covers the West Bank and Gaza and includes the security rights of Palestinians formerly or currently employed in Israel. The results will provide policy recommendations targeting the priority areas of financial sustainability, legal rights, equity and coverage.

130. The ILO is also supporting national efforts to promote inspection and occupational safety and health through the provision of technical assistance including training opportunities for safety and health management in construction.

Gender mainstreaming

131. Together with the UN country team and under the Spanish Millennium Development Goals Achievement Fund, the ILO is participating in an initiative on “Gender equality and women’s empowerment”, which is designed to promote social, economic and political empowerment. The programme aims at reducing all forms of violence against women, increasing the representation of women, promoting women’s issues in decision-making bodies, and advancing equal opportunities for women’s economic participation.

132. A complete update on ILO technical cooperation for the occupied Arab territories is regularly presented to the ILO Governing Body in November (see: *Enhanced programme of technical cooperation for the occupied Arab territories*, GB.306/5, November 2009).

Concluding observations

133. The agenda for building the future Palestinian State is broadly supported by the international community, and the ILO joins the UN system, the Quartet and the League of Arab States in assessing that the reform efforts of the Palestinian Authority have led to substantial results. Progress made in the institutional context, in establishing the rule of law and internal security in the West Bank, have translated into moderate, albeit still fragile, economic growth and employment creation. These efforts should be continued. They need strong backing through the alignment of donor programming and policies, and through advocacy and advisory assistance aiming to ensure the success of the Programme of the Thirteenth Government and the Palestinian National Plan 2011–13, which succeeds the Palestinian Reform and Development Plan 2008–10.

134. In line with the assessment of other international organizations, this Report shares the view that the Palestinian Authority will be ready at some time in the near future to establishing an independent, democratic, contiguous and viable State of Palestine, living side by side with Israel and all other neighbours in peace and security. Without any doubt, progress has been made. “Ending the occupation, establishing the State”, the motto of the Programme of the Thirteenth Government, succinctly describes the preconditions for decent work in the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

135. In this area, the ILO has contributed to defining the labour sector strategy and it will go on supporting its implementation. Support will continue to be provided to the Ministry of National Economy to foster enterprise development and job creation, to the Ministry of Social Affairs with a view to making social security systems inclusive and financially sustainable, and to the Ministry of Higher Education to align vocational educational training with emerging needs of the future Palestinian labour market. Cooperation with the Ministry of Planning and with the ministries in charge of local economic development should encourage mainstreaming employment creation in the implementation of the projects envisaged in the Palestinian National Plan 2011–13. Special attention will be given to supporting the social partners and the development of the legal framework for social dialogue and tripartism in line with the ILO Conventions on freedom of association and the right to collective bargaining. The ILO fully supports the Palestinian social partner organizations' wish to be again represented in East Jerusalem as soon as possible.

136. With a view to the productive absorption of the rapidly growing Palestinian labour force, the creation of productive employment in the private sector must be an even more key priority for the Palestinian National Plan, for the recovery and development efforts of the international community and for the Israeli Coordinator of Government Activities in the Territories. This requires Palestinian access to land and other natural resources, a clear investment horizon, and the possibility of engaging in trade on a level playing field. Ending Palestinian work in the settlements would render the task even more ambitious.

137. The ILO appreciates every effort of the Government of Israel aiming to ease the burden of occupation for the Palestinian workers and their families. The Report has made reference to some improvements in access and movement witnessed in the West Bank, but the situation in East Jerusalem, along the Separation Barrier and in most of Area C, remains of great concern. The ILO has always maintained that improvements in access and movement have a positive impact on economic development and employment in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, and hence on peace negotiations.

138. The siege on the Gaza strip is unacceptable, unsustainable and counterproductive. After Operation Cast Lead more than a year ago, Gaza is still a “graveyard” of factories. The longer enterprise development and productive employment are severely constrained, the more this will undermine the prospects of all Gazans.

139. Workers' rights and human dignity are severely violated, and the right of the Palestinian people to decent work remains largely unfulfilled. The enduring human rights crisis in Gaza, the discrimination and the displacement of workers and their families in East Jerusalem, and the separation of families envisaged by the recent military Order on “infiltrators”, all constitute further threats to peace and security.

140. The ILO has consistently supported the legal employment of Palestinians in Israel, with fair working conditions. The positions taken by the Manufacturers' Association of Israel and Histadrut concerning non-discrimination together with any effort to ensure equal treatment of Israeli and Palestinian workers are welcome. Although Palestinian work within Israel's internationally recognized borders is an option for two States living peacefully side by side, the development of the internal Palestinian economy and labour market must be the overarching priority.

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Annex

List of interlocutors

Palestinian institutions

Palestinian Authority

Ministry of Labour

Ahmed Majdalani, Minister of Labour

Salah Alzaroo, Deputy Assistant for International Cooperation

Asef Said Asa'd, Director-General of Employment

Ministry of National Economy

Hassan Abu Libdeh, Minister of National Economy

Ziad Toame, Director-General, Industry, Trade and Consumer Services

Ziad Karable, Director-General, Policy, Survey and Statistics

Ministry of Planning and Administrative Development (MOPAD)

Estephan Salameh, Special Adviser to the Minister/Interim Head of Aid Management Coordination

Bashar Jumaa, Head of the Reform and Development Plan

Zackaria Sabella, Director of EU Department

Ministry of Public Works and Housing

Mohammad Shtayyeh, Minister of Public Works and Housing

Hebron Governorate

Hussein Al-A'raj, Governor

Ministry of Local Government, Hebron Municipality

Khaled Osaily, Mayor of Hebron

Jawad Sayyed Al-Herbawi, Mayor's Adviser

Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO)/Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC) Members

Saeb Erakat, Head of Negotiation Affairs Department

Office of the President

Amb. Majdi Khaldi, Foreign Policy Adviser

Yasser Abu Khater, Head of Legal Unit

Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS)

Mohammed Al Omari, Director-General of Demographic and Social Statistics

Faed Rayyan, Director of Finance and Government Statistics

Saadi Al Masri, Director of Labour Force Department

Ameneh Khaseib, Director of National Accounts

Saleh Al Kafri, Director-General of Economic Statistics

Afif Abdul-Aziz, Assistant of President for Complementary Affairs

Palestine Monetary Authority (PMA)

Jihad Al Wazir, Governor

Workers', employers' and other organizations

Palestine General Federation of Trade Unions (PGFTU), Nablus

Shaher Sae'd, Secretary-General

Mahmoud Amer, Council Secretary-General (Qalqilya)

Manawel Abdelall, Member of National Secretary

Suheil Saliba Khader, Member of National Secretary

Hussain Fuqaha, Member of National Secretary

Laila N. Sha'ar, Member of National Union Board (PSU)

Fathi Naser, Legal Adviser

Ibrahim Daraghme, Member of Executive Committee

Mahmoud Abdallah, Member of Executive Committee

Moeen Rayyan, Journalist at PGFTU

Ismat Kamel Al Masri, Member of Administrative Committee

Ahmad Darwish, Worker

Mahmoud Hasonah, Worker

Adeeb Bsharat, Worker

Monjed Bsharat, Worker

Zedan Tanour, Worker

Haitham Odeh, Worker

Palestine General Federation of Trade Unions (PGFTU), Gaza

Bashir Al Sici, Head of Executive Committee, Chairman of General Union of Public Services

Ayesh Ebaid, Executive member, Chairman of General Union of Constructive Workers

Tariq Al Hindi, Secretary of PGFTU, Chairman of General Union Agriculture Workers

Mohamed Abu Ajena, Executive member, Chairman of General Union of Transportation

Sameer AlAshqar, Executive member, Chairman of General Union of Municipality

Aref Abu Jaraad, Executive member, Chairman of General Union of Government Employees

Salama Abu Za'ater, Executive member, Chairman of General Union of Health Service Workers

Abdul Haleem Abu Za'ater, Executive member, Chairman of General Union of Banking and Insurance Workers

Mohamed Heles, Executive member, General Union of Construction Workers

Fayez Lubad, Executive member, General Union of Municipality Workers

Faris Al Akhras, Executive member, General Union of Metal Workers

Wael Khalaf, Executive member, General Union of Government Employees

Yehia Abu Allatta, Executive member, General Union of Transportation

Baker AlJamal, Executive member, General Union of Educational Services

Abdul Raouf Mahdi, International Relations Secretary, PGFTU

Sameera Abdul Aleem, Head of Women Forum, PGFTU

Jameel Al Farna, Legal Adviser, PGFTU

Federation of Palestinian Chambers of Commerce, Industry and Agriculture (FPCCIA), Ramallah

Ahmad Hashem Al-Zughayyar, President

Jamal Jawabreh, Director-General

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Ali Muhanna, Director, Planning and SMEs Department

Akram Hijazi, Grant Officer, ILO/FPCCIA Project

Albert Over, ILO/FPCCIA Programme Director

Ramallah Chamber of Commerce and Industry

Mohammad A. Amin, Chairman

Hebron Chamber of Commerce and Industry

Taysir Al Said, Director, Vocational Training Department

South Hebron Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Agriculture

Jalal Makharza, Chairman

Jenin Chamber of Commerce

Samir Soqin, Chairman

Gaza Chamber of Commerce

Mohammed S. Qudwah, Chairman

Bassam S. Mortaja, Managing Director

Maher Al-Tabba', Director of Public Relations

Palestinian Contractors Union, Gaza

Mohammed Hussaini, Executive Director

Mahmoud Abed, Treasurer

Palestine Trade Center (PALTRADE)

Maher Hamdan, Chief Executive Officer

**Palestinian Academic Society for the Study of International Affairs
(PASSIA)**

Mahdi Abdul Hadi, President

Al-Haq, Ramallah

Shawan Jabarin, General Director

Stijn Denayer, Legal Researcher

Pharmacare

Bassim Subhi Khoury, Chairman

Palestinian Centre for Human Rights, Gaza

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Jaber Wishah, Deputy Director

Palestine Economic Policy Research Institute (MAS)

Samir Abdallah, Director

Yasser Arafat Foundation

Nasser Qudwa, Chairman

National Women's Employment Committee

Laila Sha'ar, Finance and Admin Officer, PGFTU Nablus

Zahira Kamal, UNESCO

Fatena Al-Watha'efi, Ministry of Women's Affairs

Fatema Radaida, Head of Gender Unit, Ministry of Women's Affairs

Zeyad Joweiles, DG of Vocational Education, Ministry of Education Higher Education

Iman Assaf, Head of Gender Unit, Ministry of Labour

Khitam Sa'afin, Women's Unit Coordinator, Agricultural Work Committees, Women's General Union

Rasha Amarneh, Head of Legal Department, Ministry of Labour

Hassan Khatib, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Labour

Doa' Wawi, Head of Business Women's Forum

Lamis Al Hantuli, Projects Coordinator, Meftah Association

Naela Odeh, Working Women's Society for Development

Salam Al Khalili, Minister's Adviser on Gender Issues, Ministry of Labour

Faten Nabhan, Project Coordinator, Women's Center for Legal Aid and Counselling

Ayman Abdel Majeed, Researcher and Surveys Coordinator, BeirZeit University

Fatima Shama'a, Head of Gender Unit, Ministry of National Economy

Sama Aweidah, General Manager, Center for Women's Study

Reem Aboushi, General Manager, Asalah Association

Israeli Institutions

Government of Israel

Ministry of Industry, Trade and Labour

Avner Amrani, Senior Research Coordinator, Labour Relations Division

Shlomo Ytzhaky, Chief Labour Relations Officer

Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Tibor Shaler Schlosser, Director, International Organizations Department

Coordination of Government Activities in the Territories (COGAT)

Eitan Dangot, Coordinator of Government Activities

Uri Singer, Head, Foreign Relations Branch

Doron Segal, Head, Economic Branch

Workers', employers' and other organizations

The Manufacturers' Association of Israel

Shraga Brosh, President and Chairman of the Federation of Israeli Economic Organizations

Dan Catarivas, Director of International Relations, The Federation of Israeli Economic Organizations

Daphna Nitzan-Aviram, Director of Economic Research and Strategy Department

Ran Tuttnauer, Chairman of Labour Committee

Avi Barak, Head of Labour and Human Resources Division

Isaac Gurvich, Vice Director-General and CFO, Association of Contractors and Builders in Israel

Histadrut – General Federation of Labour in Israel

Avital Shapira-Shabirow, Director, International Department

Yousef Kara, Histadrut Representative to International Labour Organization, Member of Executive Bureau

United Nations and international organizations

Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process

Robert H. Serry, UN Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process

Anwar Darkazally, Regional Affairs Officer

United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), Occupied Palestinian Territory

Ray Dolphin, Humanitarian Affairs Officer/Barrier Specialist

Hamed Qawasmeh, Humanitarian Affairs Associate, Field Coordination Unit

Tareq Talahma, Humanitarian Affairs Specialist, Field Coordination Unit

United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA)

Margot Ellis, Deputy Commissioner General

Thomas White, Deputy Director, UNRWA Operations, West Bank

John Ging, Director, UNRWA Operations, Gaza

United Nations Development Programme/Programme of Assistance to the Palestinian People

Jens Toyberg-Frandzen, Special Representative to the Administrator

Roberto Valent, Deputy Special Representative to the Administrator

Conal Urquhart, External Relations Adviser

Sufian Mushasha', Project Manager/PHDR

United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, Occupied Palestinian Territory (OHCHR)

Eva Tomič, Head of Office

The World Bank, West Bank and Gaza Country Office

Mariam Sherman, Country Director

Eileen Murray, Lead Operations Officer

Other meetings

Gisha – Legal Center for Freedom of Movement

Sari Bashi, Director

B'Tselem – The Israeli Information Center for Human Rights in the occupied territories

Risa Zoll, Director of International Relations

Kav LaOved

Hanna Zohar, Director

Salwa Alinat, Palestinian Kav LaOved Project

The Alternative Information Center

Shir Hever, Economic Researcher

Occupied Syrian Golan

Majd Kamal Kanj Abu Saleh, Lawyer

Thaer Kamal Kanj Abu Saleh, Director of Industrial School

Kanj Sleiman Abu Saleh, Farmer

Salah Mohammad Moughrabi, Farmer

Said Farhan Farhat, Farmer

Mahmoud Sleiman Merei, Farmer

Hassan Mahmoud Fakhr Al Din, Farmer

Meetings in Damascus, Syrian Arab Republic

Diala Haj Aref, Minister of Social Affairs and Labour

Riad Hejab, Governor of Quneitra Municipality

Issa Maldaoun, Deputy Minister of Social Affairs and Labour

Rakan Ibrahim, Director of Labour, Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour

Fahd Nofal, Director of International Relations, Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour

Rasha Harfoush, Director of Labour Force, Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour

Mohamadia Al Nassan, Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Ahmad Habbab, General Confederation of Trade Unions

Ahmad Al Hassan, General Confederation of Trade Unions

Bashar Hatahet, Damascus Chamber of Industry

International Confederation of Arab Trade Unions (ICATU)

Rajab Maatouk, General Secretary

Mohamed Badran, Assistant Secretary-General

Meetings in Cairo, Egypt

Mohamed M Sobeih, Ambassador and Assistant Secretary-General, Sector of Palestine and Arab Occupied Territories, League of Arab States

Soheir Bessiso, Minister Plenipotentiary

Ahmed Mohamed Luqman, Director-General, Arab Labour Organization