

# **Fact-Finding Mission to Jenin**

## **Mission Report**

### **Nov - Dec 2001**

#### **Participants:**

United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA)  
Save the Children UK  
Paz y Tercer Mundo (PTM: Spanish NGO)  
Comitato Internazionale per lo Sviluppo dei Popolo (CISP: Italian NGO)  
Peace on Earth (Japanese NGO)

#### **Persons met:**

Mr. Waleed Abu Mowais, Mayor  
Mr. Salahaldin Mousa, Administrative Manager, Jenin Municipality  
Mr. Imad Khader, Head, Electricity Dept., Jenin Municipality  
Mr. Wada Al-Labadi, Head Water Dept., Jenin Municipality  
Mr. Ali Nasharti, Head Road Dept., Jenin Municipality  
Ms. Nadia Zugheibi, International Public Relations, Jenin Municipality  
Mr. Adnan Subah, Public Relations Officer, Jenin Municipality  
Mr. Mohamed Abu Rub, Manager, Ministry of Education, Jenin

#### **BACKGROUND**

The following is a brief mission report on the situation in Jenin town following two visits on 30 November and 10 December to assess the damage sustained during the recent Israeli reoccupation and previous incursions. The Israeli Defence Force (IDF) re-occupied Jenin and five other Palestinian towns on 18 October following the assassination of Israeli Tourism Minister, Rehavan Ze'evi.

Tanks remain at various entry points to the city and the movement of persons and goods in and out of Tulkarem remains highly restricted. This causes particular problems for those from outlying villages who travel to Jenin town for medical care: kidney patients who must travel to Nablus for dialysis treatment can also face delays at checkpoints, although the IDF has officially authorized passage for humanitarian reasons. The educational system in Tulkarem town has been severely affected with attendance at school difficult for both pupils and teachers.

Previously, in August - following an attack in Israel by a suicide bomber from Jenin - the IDF's takeover of Jenin was Israel's first land-based incursion into a Palestinian-controlled city since the Oslo Accords were signed. The IDF destroyed Palestinian police headquarters and additional posts with tanks and bulldozers. Ten people were injured, most of them lightly. There were no reports of Israeli casualties.

On 11 September a more serious incursion occurred when IDF tanks once again moved into Jenin and the surrounding villages of Arrabeh, Tanmun and Tubas. Nine Palestinians were killed in the Israeli tank and missile fire in and around Jenin, including two senior members of Islamic Jihad, a regional commander of the Palestinian Preventive Security, and a nine-year-old girl who died when a helicopter gunship fired a missile at a Palestinian home in Arrabeh. About 50 Palestinians were injured in the fierce fighting around Jenin, 13 of them seriously. Israeli forces remained for almost a week, saying it was again in response to a suicide attack in Israel. A large number of recent Islamic suicide bombers have come from Jenin town and surrounding villages and refugee camps and the Israeli authorities have described the Jenin area as a 'hornet's nest'.

## **OVERVIEW OF JENIN**

The town of Jenin lies 43 kilometres to the north of Nablus in the centre of the fertile Marj Bin Amer plain. Its population of 26,000 makes it a modest size by Palestinian standards, smaller than the other northern West Bank towns of Tulkarem (34,000) and Qalqilia (32,000), and considerably smaller than Nablus (100,000). Jenin camp is situated within the municipal boundaries of Jenin and comprises over 13,000 inhabitants, half of the city's population.

Jenin Governorate covers 578 km<sup>2</sup> and the population of 203,000 people is distributed between 15 municipalities, 67 local councils, and two refugee camps, Jenin and Far'a. There are 51.6 Km<sup>2</sup> of forests and woods in the governorate, most of which lie in Zone C, outside Palestinian Authority control. Jenin Governorate also includes nine Israeli settlements.

Trade and industrial activity is badly affected by the current closure, although the local stonecutting industry continues to function. Agricultural land includes over 580,000 dunums of fertile soil and agriculture is the main economic activity in the area. Some 50,000 dunums are planted with olive trees producing 7,000 tons of olive oil annually. However, only two percent of fertile land is irrigated manually, with the rest dependent on rainwater. Other constraints facing the agricultural sector include a shortage of fruit and vegetable processing industries, research centres and warehouses. Farmers also lack modern agricultural equipment and require training in modern marketing promotion and packaging techniques. Despite the large number of livestock, there is also a lack of dairy industries and slaughterhouses. Agricultural roads, like the roads in general, are inadequate and degraded.

Only 63% of the population of Jenin receive piped water, insufficient to cover domestic, agricultural and industrial needs. Palestinian requests for permits to dig new wells are normally refused. Conversely, large amounts of water are pumped to settlements near Jenin from the joint wells shared between settlements and the Palestinian villages, at the expense of the Palestinian quota.

There is only one fully functioning hospital, which lacks equipment and qualified staff, with only 86 beds to meet a high bed occupancy rate of 87.9. Construction of a new hospital, Al-Razi Hospital in Jenin town, an initiative of the local Zakat Committee, has begun. Al-Razi has x-ray and ultra sound facilities and a laboratory, and medical work is already in progress in the

hospital's emergency room, and in the fields of dentistry, pharmacy and general medicine. Specialised clinics are being established to work in paediatrics, obstetric, orthopaedics, internal medicine and surgery.

Jenin Governorate is in need of new schools and new classrooms in existing schools to meet the high population growth rate. There are 99 schools: 85 government-run, seven UNRWA (all primary schools) and seven privately-owned. Government schools received over 30,000 students in the academic year 1999/2000. The average number of student per class is around 33 students in government schools and almost 40 at UNRWA schools. The schools also lack laboratory and sport facilities, playgrounds, libraries and books. A branch of Al-Quds Open University, which does not yet have its own building, offers higher education. The American Arab University was officially opened in late 2000 and offers courses in administration and finance; health sciences; arts and sciences; dentistry and IT. There is a plan to establish a technical and training college in Jenin for which funding is required.

The Jenin Industrial Estate, located north of the city on the Green Line was launched in 1995 by the Al Shimal group, a private-sector Palestinian/Jordanian investment group and agreement between Israel and the PA was finalised in 1999. The Park will concentrate on light industries, including the manufacture of metal products, food and beverage, chemical and cosmetic products, leather and textile and building supplies. It is hoped that at full capacity some 300 companies will occupy the Park, creating between 10,000-20,000 jobs. On-site infrastructure will be developed by the private investors while donor assistance is being sought to finance off-site connections to existing infrastructure. A joint Israeli-Palestinian co-ordinating office has been established with the assistance of the Fredrik Eibert Fund to assist in co-ordinating infrastructure, establishing environmental safety standards, and facilitating business ties between Israeli and Palestinian businessmen. The intifada, however, has delayed inauguration of the project.

## **Assistance**

Jenin camp, registered population 13,055 was established in 1953, with most of the camp's residents coming from villages which today lie inside the Green Line in Israel. While some camp residents find employment in the agricultural sector around Jenin, many are still dependent on work inside Israel. UNRWA runs two schools in the camp, educating 750 boys and 727 girls. There are some 307 families registered as special hardship cases (SHCs) and over the past three years, UNRWA has assisted around 177 poor refugee families (SHCs and non-SHCs) with rehabilitation of their shelters. As part of UNRWA's poverty alleviation programme, about 25 youth from poor families were provided with skills-training/apprenticeships in marketable skills. As part of its emergency programme, UNWRA donated food to some 2,200 families in Jenin camp in September. Jenin municipality provides water and electricity, as well as some humanitarian assistance, to camp residents.

A number of agencies, including UNRWA, are also engaged in emergency employment generation programmes in Jenin. In addition to its ongoing programmes, the World Bank has inaugurated an Emergency Response Programme (ERSP) to alleviate hardship caused by the

current intifada. The objectives of the ERSP are to relieve hardship in the West Bank and Gaza by rapidly creating jobs for unskilled and semi-skilled labourers, using a high local labour and material content, to circumvent difficulties of mobility and material availability constraints. Projects are implemented with the assistance of municipalities, and village councils, as well as line ministries, in addition to the Palestinian Economic Council for Development and Reconstruction (PECDAR) and the Palestinian Water Authority (PWA). To date the ERSP has financed some 14 emergency job creation projects in the Jenin area at a cost of \$660,000.

Similarly, UNDP launched its Emergency Response Programme (ERP) in October 2000 to provide immediate and critical humanitarian assistance in the wake of the present intifada. The areas of highest priority for emergency assistance were employment generation in the West Bank and Gaza, support to the health sector, restoration of municipal and social infrastructure and agricultural restoration and rehabilitation. In all areas, extensive consideration is given to local conditions and constraints, including restrictions on movement, vulnerability of individuals, and the availability of material. Concentration is on small-scale projects with high labour content and minimum dependence on imported materials. Six such projects have been so far implemented in the Jenin area at a cost in excess of \$270,000.

The Norwegian Representative Office has also initiated an emergency employment generation programme to alleviate the poverty and economic hardship currently affecting Palestinians. To address restrictions on the movement of goods and people, primary responsibility for project implementation has been placed in the hands of local municipalities. The municipalities involved in the project are the contractual partners and have overall responsibility for financial management, planning, monitoring and reporting. In Jenin all projects are implemented through the governorate: Jenin (\$2.5m.) and Nablus (\$1m.) have been the largest benefactors to date. In the Jenin area, 600 water wells were dug by private farmers, who contributed in kind in implementing the project.

In addition, Care International is running a community-based reproductive health education project and assisting some 16 health posts in the Jenin area, by covering the expenses of staff, renovating the premises and providing furniture and equipment. The ICRC is also implementing a Closure Relief Programme, which provides economic support to those whose income is badly affected by the Israeli closures. In the Jenin area, the ICRC's most recent distribution has consisted of 1,920 hygiene parcels and 3,840 blankets.

Neighbourhood committees have been set up in Jenin to help co-ordinate local assistance and also to make reports on local needs. These committees meet once a month with the municipality.

## **MISSION FINDINGS**

### **Municipality**

Palestinian municipalities are responsible for providing most urban services including water, electricity, waste disposal, the establishment and maintenance of schools, planning and

building licenses, and road construction and maintenance. Since the beginning of the intifada, municipal finances have been severely stretched and they have not benefited from external budget support either from the Palestinian Authority or from donors. The World Bank estimates that municipal revenues have declined on average by 17% compared to pre-intifada levels. Local taxes (especially building and professional licenses) have declined because of decreased economic activity and user charges on water and electricity have similarly decreased.

The declines have resulted mainly from arrears as a result of households' inability to pay utility bills. According to a PCBS survey on the impact of the closure on Palestinian households, delaying bill payments was a major coping strategy for 54% of respondents. Many municipalities which relied on electricity to generate cash surpluses have been especially hit by this decline in electricity fee payments and three months of liabilities to the Israeli public water supplier, Mekorot, are common. Jenin municipality reported a 40% drop in electricity consumption in 2000 compared to 1999 because of the decline in industrial activity: the figure for 2001 is not yet known.

Most municipalities have responded by cutting back on maintenance and reducing the level of services, especially garbage collection which account for the highest rate of utility expenditures and the largest share of municipal staffing. Of Jenin Municipality's 600 employees, 100 are employed for garbage collection. So far the municipality has refrained from laying off municipal staff: however the Mayor reported that the municipality has run up an overdraft to meet employees' salaries for the first time in its 135-year history.

## **Employment**

An estimated 100,000 workers crossed daily into Israel from West Bank during the pre-intifada period; now approximately 55,000 enter, the vast majority clandestinely, who now face the possibility of fine and imprisonment. In the West Bank, Tulkarem and Jenin, 31 and 28 percent respectively, had the largest share of their workforce working in Israel. The exact amount of labourers from the Jenin area who are currently employed is not known, but some estimates are as high as 70 percent. Particularly affected are refugees who are almost entirely dependent on work inside Israel, and poverty has risen in Jenin camp. Prior to the intifada, large numbers of Israeli Arabs travelled to Jenin to shop at the weekends; this passage has been totally prohibited since the start of the intifada.

## **Damage**

Up to June 2001, the World Bank had estimated damage to Jenin's infrastructure at \$1.13 million, considerably behind Ramallah, \$9.83 million, Bethlehem, \$6.61 million, and Tulkarem, \$6.23 million. The incursions of August, September and October have increased Jenin's losses considerably, however. The municipality's estimates for September are approximately \$1.1 million and for October, approximately \$900,000. These figures include damage to public and domestic water and sewage systems, roads, pavements and traffic islands, and electricity poles and transformers.

Road surfaces have been particularly damaged by the recent movement of armoured vehicles, and estimates include base course and resurfacing repair required as well as damage to kerb stones and culverts. In the September incursion, damage to water and wastewater infrastructure included a trunk line, reservoirs and boosters affecting the water supply to 11 outlying villages and causing water shortages in Jenin town itself for 10 days. The large British Mandate era complex housing the headquarters of all the Palestinian security forces as well as the prison has been extensively damaged in repeated raids. The Governor's headquarters has also recently been totally destroyed in an F-16 attack.

The incursions and prolonged closure has caused particular difficulties for the disposal of solid waste. The road to the municipal dump outside the city is frequently closed and the surface has been extensively damaged. On occasion, the municipality has had to dump within the city confines, employing extensive usage of insecticides, with confines leading to consequences for environmental health. A large number of garbage containers have also been destroyed by armoured vehicles.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS/FOLLOW-UP**

- Advocacy for continuing support for the municipalities and for UNRWA to ensure ongoing municipal services and support to refugees
- Continuing support for the activities of the World Bank, UNDP and the Norwegian Representative Office in emergency employment generation
- Continuing monitoring of access points to Jenin to ensure safe passage of patients to medical facilities
- Appeal to donors/agencies for emergency assistance to municipality for damaged infrastructure, especially compressor and other vehicles to facilitate garbage collection.