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PREPARED BY: Jamil Hilal
Majdi El-Malki
Yasser Shalabi
Hassan Ladadweh

PRODUCTION

Editorial Assistants Karen Mann
Sami Kilani
Translated to English by: Khalil Touma
Layout Lina Abdallah

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© 2000 Palestine Economic Policy Research Institute (MAS)
P.O. Box 19111, Jerusalem and P.O. Box 2426, Ramallah
Telephone: +972-2-298-7053/4
Fax: +972-2-2987055
e-mail: MAS@planet.edu

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Foreword

The main aim of development in any country is to improve standards of living for the population and enhance national prosperity.

It is acknowledged that external factors, primarily Israeli policies and practices, have severely restricted the development of the Palestinian economy during the interim period, with the subsequent implications on social conditions. However, internal factors have also had an important role and have restricted the improvement of social performance. The continued absence of Palestinian national vision for the required development, along with appropriate policies, strategies and programs with well-defined objectives and priorities, is detrimental to efforts to improve national performance and ultimately, the prosperity of the Palestinian people.

This third annual *Social Monitor* provides an assessment of social conditions during 1998 through the monitoring of prominent social developments and trends. The data show that, six years after the beginning of the peace process, social indicators do not yet reflect the anticipated peace dividend and consequent improvements in standards of living. The socio-economic gap between the West Bank and Gaza Strip, and between the different social classes, is still as apparent as prior to the peace process. Poverty, unemployment, low standards of social services, including education, health, culture and social security, still constitute major obstacles and challenges to the Palestinian developmental process.

In addition to the goal of assessing social conditions and disseminating related information, it is the task of the *Monitor* to attract the attention of the relevant authorities and institutions to the main areas of weakness that require urgent action to improve and develop public services.

The *Monitor* also aims to raise public awareness of vital social issues. This encourages greater accountability by public institutions and enhances democratic public debate.

This issue introduces a new section on the legal environment. The aim of this section is to monitor the development of the legislative framework in Palestine as a springboard for development.

It is planned that the forthcoming issue of the *Social Monitor* for the year 2000 will be a special issue comprising an overview of social developments during the interim period (1994-1999).

MAS expresses its appreciation to all the individuals and institutions who supplied information and data for this third issue of the *Social Monitor* and to the research team of the Social Monitoring Unit that worked actively to produce this issue.

MAS also wishes to express its gratitude to the Ford Foundation and the International Development Research Center (IDRC) of Canada for their financial support.

Ghania Malhis
Director

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CONCEPTS AND DEFINITIONS

The Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS) has adopted UN international standards to define the concepts and terminology used in its surveys. These terms and concepts were adjusted to meet the objectives of surveys and also to take into account the special circumstances surrounding the lives of the Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip (WBGS).

Age-sex structure: The composition of a population as determined by the number or proportion of males and females in each age category. The age structure of a population is the cumulative result of past trends in fertility, mortality and migration rates. Information on age-sex composition is an essential prerequisite for the description and analysis of demographic data.

Age-specific enrollment rates: The number of students of a certain age group actually enrolled at school compared to the total population of that age group.

Crowding rate: Average number of individuals per room. This is calculated by dividing the number of individuals who live in the household by the total number of rooms occupied by that household.

Daily wage per employee: This is the total net wages paid to all employees divided by the total number of work days. Wages received in different currencies are converted into New Israeli Shekels according to the exchange rate in the survey month.

Dependency ratio: The number of dependents, including children under the age of 15 and the elderly over the age of 65, per 100 people of working age (those between the ages of 15-65).

Disability: Any long-term (lasting 6 months or more) physical or mental restriction or lack of ability to perform an activity in the manner or within the range considered normal for a human being. This could limit the ability to move freely, to interact comfortably with surroundings and community, inability to use public transportation or work, or any condition that might result in social isolation or staying in bed for a period of more than six months.

Dropout rate: Number of students who left school (basic and/or secondary education) and did not register at any other school during the scholastic year beginning in September and ending on the 31st of August the following year, compared to the total number of students registered.

Economic activity: The type of work carried out at an establishment where the worker is employed (regardless of his/her profession). This is in case of employment at an establishment. In the case where he/she is self-employed, then this refers to the type of work, goods or services that they produce or trade with.

Geographical divisions: According to current administrative divisions, the Palestinian Territories are divided into two geographic areas: The West Bank and Gaza Strip. The West Bank was divided into 9 governorates and sometimes into 3 districts.

North of the West Bank: including the governorates of Nablus, Jenin, Tulkarem, Qalqilia, Tubas and Salfeet.

Center of the West Bank: including the governorates of Ramallah/El-Bireh, Jerusalem and Jericho.

South of the West Bank: including the governorates of Bethlehem and Hebron. The exclusion of East Jerusalem in some sections is due to the nature of the data available on this area of the West Bank.

Household: One person or more (related or not) living together in the same housing unit or part of it who makes common provisions (arrangements) for providing themselves with food or other essentials for living.

Household expenditure: is defined to include the following:

1. Cash spent on the purchase of goods and services for living purposes.
2. The value of goods, services and payments or part of payments received from an employer.
3. Cash expenditure spent on taxes (non-commercial or non-industrial), gifts, contributions, interest on debts and other non-consumption items.

Household consumption is defined to include:

1. Cash spent on the purchase of goods and services for living purposes.
2. The value of goods, services and payments or part of payments received from an employer.
3. Own-produced goods and food, including consumed quantities during the recording period.
4. Estimated rent value of the household dwelling.

Infant mortality rate: The number of infant deaths in a given year per 1,000 live births.

Labor force: is defined as the economically active population. This consists of all persons aged 15 years and more, who are either employed or unemployed at the time of the survey.

Live birth: A birth is considered as live if the baby born has shouted, cried, or shown any sign of life at birth.

Occupation: The kind of work done during the reference period by the person employed, or the type of work done previously if unemployed, irrespective of the industry or employment status of the person. Occupations are grouped together mainly on the basis of the similarity of skills required to fulfill the tasks and duties of the job. Occupations are classified according to the International Standard Classification of Occupation (ISCO 1988).

Private schools: Any licensed, local or foreign, non-governmental educational institution or UNRWA school that is established, directed, run or financed by foreign individuals, groups, societies or bodies.

Sex ratio: The ratio of males to females, expressed as the number of males per 100 females.

Standard of living: this is calculated by dividing food consumption by total consumption (Engel's Law of Poverty). This indicator is based on the assumption that the standard of living is defined as the proportion of consumption on food out of total consumption. This indicator is divided into three categories:

- Well-off: whose food consumption to total consumption is less than 30%.
- Middle category: whose food consumption to total consumption is between 30%-44%.
- Worse-off: whose food consumption to total consumption lies between 45%-100%.

Total fertility rate: The average number of children that would be born alive to a woman (or group of women) during her life if she were to pass through her childbearing years conforming to the age-specific fertility rates of a given year. The total fertility rate is calculated by the sum of the age-specific fertility rates multiplied by 5.

Underemployment: This phenomenon exists when a person's employment does not match his/her occupational skills, education or when they are working fewer hours than they would wish. The underemployed are classified into two groups:

1. Visible underemployment: refers to insufficient working hours per week, that is persons working less than 35 hours during the reference week or working less than the normal hours of work in their occupation.
2. Invisible underemployment: refers to the existence of fundamental imbalances between human resources and other factors of production, such as insufficient income, under-utilization, poor working conditions, etc.

Under-5 mortality (child mortality): The proportion of children born who die before reaching their fifth birthday.

The unemployed: Unemployed persons are individuals who are 15 years and over who do not work at all during the survey's reference week, who are not absent from their job and are available for work and actively seeking a job during the reference week. Persons who work in Israel or are absent from work due to border closure are considered as unemployed.

Working age population: All persons in the West Bank and Gaza Strip aged 15 years and over.

West Bank And Gaza Strip- Selected Social Indicators, 1998

Indicator	Unit	1996	1997	1998
Population*	.000	2534.6	2783.1	2897.5
Sex ratio	male/100 female	102.1	101.9	101.9
less than 15 years old	(%)	47.9	46.8	46.9
15-64 years old	(%)	48.5	49.7	49.7
65+ years old	(%)	3.6	3.5	3.4
Dependency ratio	(%)	106.2	102.2	101.3
Population Growth Rate**	(%)	5.8	1.8	4.1
Life Expectancy**	Years			
Male & female		71.7 ↘	71.35	71.5
Male		70.0 ↘	69.76	69.9
Female		73.5 ↘	72.99	73.1
Infant mortality rate **	per 1000 live births	27.3	24.2	23.7
Male		30.3	26.9	26.3
Female		24.0	21.4	21.0
Maternity mortality rate	per 100000 live births	70- 80 ↘	-	-
Fertility rate **	births/ woman	6.06	6.04	5.94
used a contraceptive method	(%)	45.2	-	-
Crude Birth Rate**	births/ 1000 Persons	40.02	42.69	42.0
Crude Death Rate **	per 1000	6.23	4.78	4.65
Singular Mean Age at Marriage/ male	Year	23.0 ↘	23	23.90
Singular Mean Age at Marriage/ female	Year	18.0	18	18.70
Urban Population	(%) as of total	-	54.0	-
Refugee camps population	(%) as of total	-	15.9	-
Refugee Population	(%) as of total	-	41.4	-
Adult literacy rate	(%)	84.3 ↘	86.1	-
Male		91.5	92.2	-
Female		77.0	79.7	-
Dropout	(%)	2.8	2.2	2.1
Average number of students per teacher	student/ teacher	-	29.2	29.5
Average number of students per class- (basic education)	student/ class	37.2	37.3	37.2
Average number of students per class- (secondary education)		30.2	29.9	30.2
Rate of BA. students as % of total population	(%) as population	1.8	1.8	2.10
Connected to water network	(%)	84.1	83.7	85
Connected to sewage system	(%)	34.0	33.8	38
Access to electricity as % of total households	(%)	98.1	94.7	94.6
Owns computer	(%)	-	4.0	7
Owns TV	(%)	89.6	85.0	89
Housing density***	persons per room	2.45	2.0	1.88
Family owning home library (ratio)	(%)	22.9	13.9	-
Public library* ***	No.	295	-	13
Monthly personal expenditure (by 1996 prices)	J.D (1996 prices)	84.1	84.4	82.6
Food expenditure	(%) as total expenditure	38.7	38.5	40.3
GNP per capital	US dollars	1774.4	1762.8	1889.6
Beneficiaries receiving assistance from	(%) as total population	3.5	3.6	3.4

Indicator	Unit	1996	1997	1998
Ministry of Social Affairs				
Beneficiaries receiving assistance from (UNRWA)	(%) as total population	3.5	3.3	3.4
Labor force	(%) as population 15+ years	40.0	40.5	41.4
Unemployment rate	(%)	23.8	20.3	14.4
Male		24.5	20.3	14.4
Female		19.6	20.1	15.2
Employed in public sector	(%) as employed	17.6	17.6 ◇◇	16.4
Employed in Israel & settlements	(%)	14.1	17.1	21.7
Labor force in agriculture	(%)	14.2	13.1	12.1
Labor force in industry	(%)	16.8	16.4	15.9
Female share of adult labor force	(%)	13.9	14.2	13.6
Rate of labor force to population	(%) as total population	20.8	21.5	22.0
Median daily net wage **** *	NIS (prices 1996)	46.2	46.5	50.8
Female wage/male wage **** *	(%)	70.6	68.0	66.8
Hospital Bed (ratio)	bed/ 1000 persons	1.00	1.17	1.13
Doctors (ratio)	doctor/ 100000 persons	-	99	114.9
Registered crimes***	عدد No.	6726	8765	22286

*PCBS population projections.

** 1998 data based on PCBS assumptions.

*** Excluding East Jerusalem.

**** Number of libraries in 1996 includes all public libraries (including mosque libraries), but the 1998 data includes only libraries supervised by Ministry of Culture.

***** Data of wages in WBSG includes wages of workers from WBSG in Israel & settlements, but data of wages in WB or GS excludes WBSG workers in Israel & settlements.

◇ Data for 1995.

◇◇ Third quarter 1997.

1- INTRODUCTION

This third issue of the *Social Monitor* by the Palestine Economic Policy Research Institute (MAS) presents data monitoring social changes in the fields of population, health, education, culture, social security, quality of life, income levels, crime, and the legal environment. The comparison of 1998 data with that of 1996 and 1997 reflects changing trends with regard to these social indicators as far as statistical data and time permit. In line with the goal of expanding coverage of the most prominent social indicators, MAS introduces in this issue a new indicator, the legal environment. This indicator monitors the most important laws issued by the Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC) and also the shifts in the relationship between the legislative, executive and judicial authorities.

In initial plans, it was intended that this issue of the *Social Monitor* would provide a detailed analysis of the results of the Population, Housing and Establishments Census of 1997 published by the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS). However, the late publication of detailed data pertaining to the census prevented this analysis from being included here.¹ The MAS Social Research Unit also decided to restrict analysis relating to the population to the data on marriage and divorce in the Palestinian territories since no new detailed demographic data were available for 1998.

This *Social Monitor* monitors regional gaps and differentiations according to a number of indicators. These show that gaps between the West Bank and Gaza Strip (WBGs) still exist, mostly in favor of the West Bank. Differences between the north, center and south of both the West Bank and Gaza Strip are also apparent - often in favor of the central West Bank compared to the north and south, of Jerusalem compared with the rest of the West Bank, and of the north of the Gaza Strip and Gaza City compared with the rest of the Strip.

There is still differentiation in workers' wages and income levels between the West Bank and Gaza Strip, and between governorates. Cultural activity also varies in both quantity and quality on a regional basis. In terms of employment, there are obvious differences in employment opportunities according to sector. The public sector in the Gaza Strip, for instance, employs a labor force that is twice as large as that employed by the same sector in the West Bank.

The differentiation between both sexes is still in favor of males. Despite an improvement in the status of females, according to some indicators, the gap is still large. As regards education, despite the fact that the gap between the two sexes is almost nonexistent at the basic stage, it still appears at secondary and university levels. The secondary stage dropout rate has greatly increased among females in comparison with males. The scientific stream is more of a male domain, while the literary stream is more a female domain. This reveals a specific gap between the two sexes. The male: female ratio at Palestinian universities is still in favor of males, although this situation is reversed at community colleges, which helps to reduce the overall gap. However, the specializations offered by universities differ from those offered by community colleges. This difference reflects later on the type of employment and occupational roles of each of the two sexes.

The gap between the two sexes is also evident in regard to the labor market, wages, and early marriage. The number of females joining the labor market is very low in comparison to the number of males, and the average female wage is noticeably less than the average male

¹ Detailed results of the 1997 Population, Housing, and Establishments Census were published at the end of 1999.

wage in various economic sectors. In terms of age at marriage, the results showed that the phenomenon of early marriage is still much more prevalent among females than among males.

In terms of the new section on the legal environment, this issue of the *Social Monitor* shows that five years after the advent of the Palestinian National Authority (PNA), there is still duplication of laws in the WBGS despite the enactment by the PLC of a number of consolidating laws.

It should be stated that a number of variables are missing, due either to the non-availability of data on some indicators or the absence of good quality data that allows for deep analysis. These points are referred to in each section.

It should be stated that some indicators included in this issue of the *Social Monitor* are discussed in a limited manner. This is because an analysis of the social implications reflected in these indicators entails analytical research or even field studies to be conducted. The available data on issues like crime and its victims, education, health, social security and the legal environment allow for qualitative changes to be monitored but does not allow monitoring of their specific variables or accumulative quantitative transformations that convert into qualitative changes. The *Social Monitor*, therefore, can highlight topics worthy of research or academic dissertation and which will be of benefit to Palestinian social research.

2- POPULATION, MARRIAGE AND DIVORCE

No detailed data are available on vital statistics pertaining to births and deaths in the period that followed the general census conducted by the PCBS in 1997. The demographic data here will consequently be restricted to the demographic projection made by the PCBS for the years 1997-2025 based on the output of the 1997 census.

PCBS annual reports on marriage and divorce in the Palestinian territories during 1996, 1997 and 1998 provide information on marriages according to region, average age of spouses, the duration of the marriage and divorce.

2-1 Demographic estimates of 1998

Based on demographic projections conducted by the PCBS, **the population of the Palestinian territories increased to 2,897,452 by the middle of 1998.** Of this total, 1,857,872 Palestinians lived in the West Bank and 1,039,580 in the Gaza Strip.² The estimation of the population in 1998 is based on the following assumptions: an increase in net average immigration from 1.8 percent in 1997 to

3.45 percent in 1998, a decrease in the gross mortality rate from 4.78 per

thousand in 1997 to 4.65 in 1998, a fall in the gross fertility rate from 42.69 per thousand in 1997 to 42.01 in 1998, and a hike in average demographic growth from 3.97 percent in 1997 to 4.08 percent in 1998 (PCBS 1999h).

PCBS demographic projections for 1998 are based on the assumption that the total fertility rate is 5.94 children per woman of reproductive age in the WBGS (5.49 in West Bank and 6.84 in Gaza Strip). These assumptions are based on the results of the Population, Housing and Establishments Census of 1997, which showed the WBGS fertility rate to be 6.04 children per woman of reproductive age (5.61 in West Bank and 6.9 in Gaza Strip).³

In comparison with international figures, especially neighboring countries, the total fertility rate in the WBGS appears high. The fertility rate among Palestinians within the 'Green Line' was 4.7 children per woman in 1996 (Israeli Central Bureau of Statistics 1998, p.7).

In 1997, the number of children per woman of reproductive age was 2.7 in Israel, 4.9 in Jordan, 3.4 in Egypt, 3 in the

² The PCBS relied on the outcome of the census as a base year for demographic projections between 1997-2025. The component method was adopted in estimating future population figures. This method relies on assumptions made regarding future trends of fertility, mortality, and immigration. Only the number of people normally residing in the Palestinian territories were included (including the part of the Jerusalem governorate annexed by Israel following the occupation of the West Bank in 1967), based on the final data of the census pertaining to sex and age (PCBS 1999h).

³ PCBS projections of the fertility rate in 1998 based on the results of the Population, Housing and Establishments Census of 1997 differ from those of the Ministry of Health. According to the Ministry of Health, the total fertility rate in the WBGS was 5.58 children per woman of reproductive age: 5.61 in the West Bank and 5.54 in the Gaza Strip. The Gaza Strip rate was based on the number of registered births, while in the West Bank, the fertility rate was based on the results of the Population, Housing and Establishments Census of 1997.

developing countries, 4.1 in Arab countries, and 2.7 internationally.⁴

Drastic changes are not believed to have taken place in demographic or age distribution in the population centers. No radical changes or events occurred between 1997 and 1998 that may have affected this distribution. Therefore, it can be stated that the percentage of urban dwellers, 54 percent of the total WBGS population, has not undergone any significant change. The projections prepared by the PCBS confirm that the youthful nature of Palestinian society is still a feature as about **46.9 percent of the population are below the age of 15.**

The age distribution of the WBGS population creates a higher dependency ratio than in other countries. According to the PCBS projections, the dependency ratio in 1997 was 101.3 percent compared to 70.1 percent in Egypt, 83 percent in Jordan, 61.9 percent in Israel, 62.5 percent in the developing countries, 65.7 percent in Arab countries, and 59.6 percent internationally as a whole in the same year.⁵

2-2 Marriage and Divorce

2-2-1 Rise in number of marriages, divorces stable

PCBS data show an increase in the number of marriage contracts registered in the Palestinian territories in 1998 compared with 1997. The number of marriages increased by 3.9 percent from 23,492 in 1997 to 24,400 in 1998. These were distributed as 16,285 in the West Bank, an increase of 2.5 percent, and 8,115 in the Gaza Strip, an increase of 6.6 percent over 1997 figures (Appendix, Table 2-1).

The percentage of marriage contracts in relation to the population over 15 years

of age, the group of marriageable age, was stable in the WBGS between 1997 and 1998 at 1.59 marriages per 100 persons. This percentage increased slightly in the Gaza Strip to 1.57 compared with 1.54 in 1997, but fell slightly in the West Bank to 1.59 compared with 1.61 in 1997.

There was no significant change in the number of divorce cases recorded in 1998 compared to the previous year. There were 3,465 divorce cases in 1998, of which 2,213 were recorded in the West Bank. This equals 7.1 cases per 1,000 married males and 6.8 per 1,000 married females. The number of divorce cases in the Gaza Strip was 1,252, which equals 7.7 cases per 1,000 married males and 7.3 per 1,000 married females. In 1997, there were 3,449 divorce cases, of which 2,143 were registered in the West Bank and 1,306 in the Gaza Strip (Table 2-1).

2-2-2 Highest number of marriages in Hebron and Gaza governorates, highest number of divorces in Ramallah and Gaza governorates

Figures on marriage contracts according to region show that the number of marriages in the Hebron and Gaza governorates was proportional to the size of the population in these areas. The Hebron district recorded the highest number of marriages in the West Bank in both 1997 and 1998 with 3,416 and 3,792 contracts respectively. The Jericho governorate, on the other hand, had the lowest number of marriages in the two years (Appendix, Table 2-1). In terms of population, Hebron is the largest governorate in the West Bank and Jericho the smallest. The Gaza governorate, the largest in the Gaza Strip, recorded the highest number of marriages with 2,891 contracts in 1997 and 3,076 in 1998, while the Rafah governorate, the smallest in the Strip, recorded the lowest number.

The Ramallah and Gaza governorates recorded the highest numbers of divorce cases. In the Ramallah governorate, figures

⁴ Figures on the total fertility rate in other countries extracted from UNDP 1999, pp.197-200.

⁵ Dependency rate figures in other countries: Ibid, same pages.

for 1997 and 1998 were 439 and 437 respectively, while in the Gaza governorate the figures were 486 and 487 for these years.

2-2-3 Approximately half of divorcees were married for one year or less

Marriage contracts registered with the religious courts in July and August represented 26 percent of all marriages in 1997 and 27 percent of all marriages in 1998. In 1997, February had the lowest number of registered marriages (4.6 percent of the total). In 1998, the lowest number of registered marriages was in January with 3 percent of the total.

The high percentage of marriages registered in the summer is due to the fact that at that time many people take leave from work, students are on holiday, and expatriates and relatives return from abroad.

The highest number of divorces were registered in August in both 1997 and 1998, representing 10.6 percent and 12.5 percent respectively of the total number of marriage contracts.

The divorce rate amongst those married for one year or less is high. There were 1,674 divorces by people married for one year or less in 1998, of which 1,097 were in the West Bank and 577 in the Gaza Strip. These constitute 84 percent of all divorces in 1998, a considerably higher figure than the 50 percent of 1997.⁶ It is generally accepted that the first year of marriage may have special problems that may lead to divorce and there is undoubtedly a need to collect field data in order to explore the reasons for this phenomenon (including details on the level of education of the spouses, housing conditions, age groups, whether or not there is a pregnancy in the first year, and family considerations).

⁶ 1998 data from PCBS 1999g, pp.86-88. Data for 1997 from PCBS 1998c, pp.83-85.

2-2-4 Early marriage prevalent amongst females

The majority of males who married in 1996, 1997, and 1998 were aged between 20-29 years, whereas the majority of females who married were below 20 years of age. Males aged 20-29 years made up 69.8 percent of men marrying in 1996 and 71 percent in 1997 and 1998. Males below the age of 20 made up 11 percent of the total during these years. Amongst females below the age of 20, the percentage of those who married in 1996, 1997, and 1998 was 61 percent. The percentage decreases to 32 percent in the 20-29 age group (Appendix, Table 2-2).

Data from the two reports on marriage and divorce in 1997 and 1998 indicate that the percentage of girls under 15 years of age who married for the first time was 3.5 percent of 1997, dropping to 1.4 percent in 1998.⁷ It should be noted that the minimum age for official registration of a marriage contract in the religious courts is 15 lunar years or about 14.5 solar years (Appendix, Table 2-3). The PCBS data show that the average age at the time of a first marriage was 18 for females and 23 for males in 1997. The average ages rose in 1998 to 18.7 for females and 23.94 for males.

These data point to the prevalence of early marriage in the WBGs, especially among females. This phenomenon may reflect the status of women in Palestinian society and may also be linked to the shortage of job opportunities available to women in the formal sector of the economy. Cultural factors encourage females, and to a lesser extent males, to marry at an early age.

2-2-5 More than half of marriages are between individuals of less than 25 years of age

In 1997 and 1998, approximately 53 percent of marriages registered at the religious courts were concluded between

⁷ Did not include marriages involving males below the age of 15.

males and females of less than 25 years of age. Approximately 3 percent (706 cases) of the marriage contracts were concluded between males over 30 years of age and females of less than 19 years old. There were only 40 marriages in 1998, and 32 cases in 1997, where the wife was over 30 years of age and the husband less than 24 years.

The data also show a relative proximity in age between spouses despite the fact that it is socially acceptable for a man to marry a wife who is ten years or more his junior. However, it is less acceptable for the wife to be older than the husband. This reflects the low status of women in Palestinian society, the expectation that they should care for their husband throughout his old age, in addition to the social expectation of high fertility (Appendix, Table 2-3).

2-2-6 Polygamy persists in Palestinian society

Marriages by WBGS males to a second wife in 1996, 1997, and 1998 constituted 6.5 percent, 6.5 percent, and 6.2 percent respectively of all marriages during these years. In the West Bank in 1998, 5.6 percent of marriages were to additional wives, while in the Gaza Strip the percentage was 7.3 percent. In the majority of these marriages, the second wife was not previously married (71.8 percent in West Bank and 52 percent in Gaza Strip), while divorced second wives made up 25.9 percent in West Bank and 39.2 percent in Gaza Strip in 1998. In 22 percent of polygamous marriages, the male was under the age of 30, the percentage increasing to 73 percent for men below 40 years of age, and decreasing to 11.5 percent for men over the age of 54. In 1998, 67 percent of polygamous marriages that year were to wives below the age of 30.

Reproduction and a desire for male children may be among the motives for polygamy among younger groups. It is widely believed in Palestinian society that women are biologically responsible for

deciding the sex of the child. Polygamy among the elderly often appears to be linked to the husband's need for the care of a relatively young wife in cases where the first wife is in ill health.

2-2-7 More than one quarter of divorced women are under 20 years of age

In 23 percent of divorce cases in 1996, the female was below 20 years of age. This percentage rose to approximately 27 percent in 1997 and 1998. Males aged less than 20 were involved in 4.9 percent of divorce cases over these three years. It is apparent that 25.9 percent of all divorced women are in the 20-24 years age group and were married when they were below 20 years of age. This strengthens the supposition that early marriage is an important reason behind divorce (Appendix, Table 2-4).

Comparing the ages of male and female divorcees in 1998, 12 percent of divorced women were under 20 years of age and married to husbands in the same age group compared to 79 percent of divorced males under 20 years of age and married to women in the same age group. Divorced women whose husband had been in the 20-24 age group made up 49.7 percent of female divorcees but this rate drops gradually with the increase in age of the husband. This again points to the impact of early marriage on higher divorce rates, especially among women.

An analysis of divorce cases according to the number of years of marriage shows a general decrease in the divorce ratio the longer the marriage lasts. Approximately 65 percent of all divorces in 1998 were concluded when the marriage was less than four years old. This ratio declined to 15.8 percent among those who had been married for more than eight years.

Data indicate that the divorce ratio is high when it comes to 'young' marriages. Reasons for this may include failure to

bear children or the scarcity of social commitments, which makes the option of separation easier to contemplate. It is expected that social pressure on the part of relatives escalates with the increase in social commitments, especially children, thereby reducing the possibility of divorce as an option.

2-2-8 High divorce rate among the less educated, especially females

Data from the religious courts, as cited in the 1998 PCBS report on marriage and divorce, indicate that 80.6 percent of divorced men and 87 percent of divorced women had graduated at high school level or earlier. This does not necessarily mean that a low level of education leads to divorce, particularly if we take into consideration that about 60 percent of those concerned are under 24 years of age. The effect of the age factor (the young ages of the spouses) may be more influential than the impact of the educational level.

Education may indeed have a positive influence on the success of a marriage, but is not necessarily a restraint in terms of divorce. On the contrary, it may enhance the woman's economic independence from her husband and family, and increase the couple's liberation from the pressure of society against divorce should there be a lack of understanding. Proof of a close correlation between educational level and divorce entails the examination of a number of variables that are not provided by the existing statistical data.

Differences in the level of education of spouses are a factor that contributes to divorce. Sixty-two percent of divorced men with a bachelor's degree had wives whose education was Tawjihi level or less. In comparison, 33 percent of divorced women with a bachelor's degree had a husband with Tawjihi level education or less.

Summary

Data on marriage and divorce in the Palestinian territories provided by the PCBS for the years 1996, 1997, and 1998 point to the rise in the number of marriages and consistent numbers of divorce cases. The data also show the prevalence of early marriage among females in particular and high levels of divorce among individuals with lower levels of education, couples that marry young and during the early years of marriage.

These data, however, are insufficient to analyze and monitor the relationship between the variables that may be related to marriage and divorce. Data are needed that take account of divorce and kinship relations among husbands and wives according to area of residence, the number of children in the family, occupation, and the practical status of women. Survey studies on these topics would allow in-depth analysis to be conducted and conclusions to be reached that can serve planners and decision-makers in formulating influential demographic and social policies.

3-HEALTH

This section of the Social Monitor is based on the report of the Palestinian Ministry of Health for 1998 and on PCBS data related to certain health indicators. Some of the important data is based on official records, especially new births and deaths. However, as not all births and deaths are registered, these indicators may not reflect the true situation and should be treated with caution when making comparisons with data obtained from field surveys.

3-1 Large discrepancies in infant mortality rate⁸

There were 88,708 reported live births in the WBS in 1998, 51,648 of which occurred in the West Bank and 37,060 in the Gaza Strip. In comparison with 1997, the number of births in the WBS increased by 3.8 percent and in the West Bank alone by 7.9 percent. Reported live births in the Gaza Strip, however, decreased by 1.3 percent. Figures for 1998 marked a decrease of 2.6 percent from those of 1996, a decrease of 2.3 percent in the West Bank and 2.9 percent in the Gaza Strip.

In comparison with 1997, reported births per 1,000 people in the WBS in 1998 marked a slight increase from 34.3 to 34.5 in 1998 despite the decrease in the Gaza Strip. Rates for the West Bank alone were 32.3 in 1997 and 33.7 in 1998 while the rate decreased in the Gaza Strip from 37.5 in 1997 to 35.6 in 1998.⁹

The reported infant mortality rate for the West Bank improved in 1998 in spite of an increase in deaths in the Gaza Strip. In 1998, the rate was 15 infants per every 1,000 live births in the WBS - 9.5 in the West Bank and 22.7 in the Gaza Strip - compared with 15.8 in the WBS - 12.6 in the West Bank, and 20 in the Gaza Strip in 1997¹⁰ (Appendix, Table 3-1).

PCBS projections take the infant mortality rate to be 22.1 infants per every 1,000 live births in the West Bank and 26.2 in the Gaza Strip (PCBS 1999h). The different rates in both regions require detailed health studies to be conducted to explore

why the rate is higher in the Gaza Strip than in the West Bank.

PCBS assumptions also point to a difference in the infant mortality rate between the two sexes. The infant mortality rate is higher among males than among females in both the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Figures for 1998 are assumed to be 26.3 male infant deaths and 21 female per every 1,000 live births in the WBS. In the West Bank alone, figures are stated to be 24.6 male infants and 19.6 females per every 1,000 live births and 29.2 male infants and 23.2 females per every 1,000 live births in the Gaza Strip (PCBS 1999h).

In comparison with other countries, the infant mortality rate for the WBS is average. The rate in Israel in 1997 was six deaths per 1,000 live births, 20 in Jordan, 54 in Egypt, and 58 internationally – 6 in developed countries and 64 in developing countries (UNDP 1999, pp.168-171).

There were 185 deaths amongst children between one and five years of age in absolute figures in 1998, down from 212 in 1997¹¹ and 207 in 1996. It is impossible to determine the rate of change over various years in comparison with the number of live births due to the lack of sufficient data (Appendix, Table 3-1).

3-2 Ratio of physicians per population

In 1998, the average number of physicians per 100,000 people in the WBS was 114.9, a higher figure than the general average of 99 in 1997.

⁸ Reported births and deaths do not include the Jerusalem governorate.

⁹ 1997 data from the Palestinian Ministry of Health 1997, p.65, and 1998 data from Ministry of Health 1998, p.71.

¹⁰ The *Social Monitor* Issue No. 2 reported that the infant mortality rate per 1,000 live births in the West Bank was 12.4 based on a preliminary draft of the Ministry of Health's annual report. When the final official report was published however, the correct rate was found to be 12.6.

¹¹ The *Social Monitor* Issue No. 2 reported that child mortality in the West Bank was 216 in 1997, whereas the correct number is 212. The reason for the difference is related to the fact that the issue relied on the preliminary draft of the Ministry of Health's annual report. The adjustment was made in accordance with the official final copy of that report, published after the *Social Monitor* went to press.

Although the figure rose in both the West Bank and Gaza Strip, the increase in the latter was greater than in the West Bank. The average number of physicians in the Gaza Strip rose from 156 in 1997 to 178 in 1998, while in the West Bank the average rose from 73 to 79.6 over these two years.¹² These averages are based on the administrative records of the Physicians Union in the West Bank and the Medical Association in the Gaza Strip. In addition, a number of practicing physicians are not registered with either of these two institutions. According to PCBS statistics, the number of physicians registered with these two institutions has fluctuated over the years and it is therefore difficult to give very accurate estimates of the average ratio of physicians per total population. The figures above represent only minimum averages.

Compared with surrounding countries, the average number of registered physicians per population in the WBGS is low. In 1997, this average was 459 physicians per 100,000 people in Israel, 158 in Jordan, 202 in Egypt, 191 in Lebanon, and 109 in Syria. **The WBGS are close to international averages and outdo the average in developing countries, but they fall short, to a large extent, of the average in developed countries.** The average in developing countries is 76 physicians per 100,000 people compared to 253 in advanced countries and 122 internationally (UNDP 1999, pp. 172-175).

3-3 Decline in hospital beds in the West Bank

According to data from the Palestinian Ministry of Health, there were 3,183 hospital beds in the WBGS, of which 1,941 beds were in the West Bank and

1,242 beds in the Gaza Strip.¹³ These figures should be compared with those in the 1997 annual report of the Ministry of Health, where it was reported that the number of beds in the WBGS were 3,227, of which 2,070 were in the West Bank and 1,187 in the Gaza Strip. The Ministry of Health figures also show that the average number of beds per total population has declined severely in the central area of the West Bank. This caused a decline in the number of hospital beds in the WBGS as a whole, despite the fact that the average improved in the north and south of the West Bank. Average figures did not change in the Gaza Strip in 1998 in comparison with 1997. The decline in hospital beds was the result of a shortage of beds in the non-governmental hospitals (NGO hospitals) and the fact that the number of beds in government hospitals remained the same in 1998. This also applies to UNRWA hospitals, although a slight increase was registered in the number of available beds in private sector hospitals (Appendix, Table 2-3).

It is clear that the decline in hospital beds is due to the fact that the Palestinian Ministry of Health as the major provider of health services in the WBGS, did not increase the number of beds in its hospitals nor expand the hospitals themselves during the past year to meet the natural population growth. The decline in the number of beds in NGO health institutions, on the other hand, is more probably due to the decline in the volume of foreign finance enjoyed by these institutions and competition with other health services providers, especially the private sector.

¹² Figures on the average number of physicians in relation to the population are taken from PCBS unpublished data.

¹³ The 87 beds in rehabilitation therapy centers - Abu Rayya, Bethlehem Rehabilitation Center, and the Princess Bassima in Jerusalem - should be added to this number. These beds are included in the figures given in the Ministry of Health's report of 1997 pp. 24-25 and in the bed rate per 1,000 population.

3-4 Decline in people with health insurance

The Palestinian Ministry of Health report indicated that the 40 percent of families are covered by the governmental health insurance scheme in the West Bank and 60 percent of families in the Gaza Strip in 1998. In WBGs, 1,035,761 people had government health insurance,¹⁴ 448,149 of them in the West Bank. Data show a decline of 5.2 percent in the number of people in the West Bank with government health insurance, principally those in voluntary and collective insurance. The decline in voluntary insurance was high, reaching 64.8 percent, while the decline in collective insurance was 5.8 percent. There was an increase in health insurance among other groups such as government employees, social welfare cases, and workers, especially those working in Israel. **The overall reduction in the number of people covered with health insurance can be attributed to the decline in the quality and efficiency of health services in 1998 and the consequent lack of public confidence in governmental health services.** This situation is not surprising in light of the financial crisis faced by the Ministry of Health.

In 1998, the percentage of people with government health insurance was 40.4 percent in the WBGs (excluding the Jerusalem governorate)¹⁵ : 29.5 percent in the West Bank (excluding the Jerusalem governorate), and 56.4 percent in the Gaza Strip. These percentages indicate a decline in the West Bank from 31.9 percent in 1997, although the percentage in the Gaza Strip grew slightly from 55.4 percent in 1997. The drop in the number of people with government health insurance in the West Bank caused a decline on a national

level (41.4 percent in 1997 and 40.4 percent in 1998).¹⁶

The fact that government health insurance is mandatory for some sectors, including government employees, social welfare cases and workers, especially those who work in Israel, is one of the factors that prevented a greater decline in health insurance participation in 1998. The number of people with health insurance in relation to the general population was progressively increasing after the advent of the PNA and prior to 1998. This highlights the negative impact of the financial crisis in the Ministry of Health, which worsened in mid-1997. No data are available on the number of people with private health insurance, or insured through the work place. As a result, the possibility of accurately estimating the percentage of the population with health insurance or the number of those who switched from government to private health insurance is hampered.

3-5 Rise in the number of hospital births

Data indicate that there is a trend towards giving birth in hospitals and a decline in home births in WBGs in 1996-1998. The percentage of births at governmental and non-governmental hospitals in the WBGs was 73.3 percent in 1998, an increase of 2.1 percent in comparison with 1997, and 6.9 percent in comparison with 1996. Home births fell from 14.7 percent in 1996 to 9.7 percent in 1997 and 7.2 percent in 1998. The trend towards giving birth in hospital is greater in the West Bank than in the Gaza Strip. In the West Bank, 84.8 percent of all reported births in 1998 were in hospitals compared to 57.3 percent in the Gaza Strip. Women in the Gaza Strip give birth at governmental and private

¹⁴ This figure does not include employees in the security services and their families.

¹⁵ Excluding employees in the security services and their families.

¹⁶ 1997 data from the Ministry of Health 1997, p.26. 1998 data from the Ministry of Health 1998 and from the Ministry's draft general report on West Bank governorates.

clinics more than women in the West Bank (Appendix, Table 3-3), mainly due to the nature of the maternity services available in the WBS.

3-6 The crisis at the Ministry of Health

The WBS health sector witnessed a real crisis in 1998, both in terms of the provision of health services and their quality. Reasons for the crisis center on the shortage of financial resources allocated to this vital sector. The issue made the headlines of the Palestinian newspapers more than once in 1998 and occupied a significant place in discussions at the PLC.

The Minister of Health described the extent of this crisis to the PLC. The verbatim text appeared in the minutes of the discussions as follows:¹⁷

- One: There is a shortage of drugs because suppliers refused to provide the Ministry of Health with medicines, medical equipment, vaccines and food provisions. There were 44 vital drugs now unavailable at government drug stores and the Ministry of Health expressed fears that this number would escalate to include 400 out of the 575 basic drugs normally stocked by the Ministry. The accumulation of debts by the Ministry had caused suppliers to cease their supply of medical requirements. The Ministry was now using the provisions stored up over the previous four years and which would meet demands for only six months.
- Two: The Ministry was obliged to postpone non-vital operations in order to save surgical thread and

anaesthetic for extreme emergency cases due to the shortage of funds.

- Three: The Ministry was unable to carry out the required periodical maintenance of medical apparatus and equipment in government hospitals and medical centers.
- Four: As a warning measure, the Electricity Company cut the current when the Ministry failed to pay its bills. Cleaning companies followed suit, refusing to carry out their job fully in government hospitals when the Ministry of Health reneged on its financial obligations.

The financial crisis at the Ministry of Health reverberated on Palestinian hospitals such as Maqassed, the Augusta Victoria (Al-Mutala'), St. John's Ophthalmic Hospital, St. Joseph's Hospital, the Abu Rayya Rehabilitation Center, and the Arab Rehabilitation Society in Bethlehem, because the Ministry failed to reimburse these parties. The debts of the Ministry of Health to Maqassed Hospital, for instance, amounted to NIS6 million (approximately US \$1.6 million) in 1998,¹⁸ jeopardizing the hospital's ability to function and develop.

The Minister of Health¹⁹ held the Ministry of Finance responsible for the crisis, which began in the second half of 1997. The Ministry of Finance gave the Ministry of Health only NIS30 million of the original sum of NIS168 million allocated in that year's budget. The accumulated deficit of the previous year added to the crisis since in 1998 the budget endorsed by the PLC and approved by the PNA President was not complied with.

According to data presented by the Minister of Health, the monthly budget of the Ministry was NIS14 million distributed as follows: NIS7 million for drugs (40

¹⁷ The session was held on 9 June 1999 for PLC members to pose questions to a number of PNA ministers, including the Minister of Health.

¹⁸ The average exchange rate of the dollar was NIS 3.81 in 1998 (PCBS 1999a).

¹⁹ Verbatim text of the minutes of the PLC session of 9 June 1999.

percent of which were from local factories and 60 percent imported) and NIS4 million in operation costs for the 14 government hospitals and 236 government healthcare centers.²⁰ The operating costs comprise food for patients, ambulances, bedding, electricity, water and telephone bills, and NIS3 million to pay the bills of patients sent abroad for medical treatment as they could not be treated in local hospitals (Ministry of Health 1999a).

The Minister of Health pointed out to the PLC that the decline public participation in the governmental health insurance program is one of the consequences of the deterioration in governmental health services. The Minister also stated that data show that the income gleaned from health insurance fees totals approximately NIS150 million per year, only NIS18 million short of the NIS168 million annual budget of the Ministry of Health. In fact, during a period of 17 months (1998 and five months in 1999) the Ministry of Health received just NIS141 million out of an original sum of NIS238 million (based on a monthly budget of NIS14 million). This means that the Ministry of Health has a deficit of NIS97 million. Health insurance fees over the same period totaled NIS220 million, NIS79 million more than the sum remitted to the Ministry of Health by the Ministry of Finance.

Summary

The health sector has been subjected to an acute financial crisis that has affected the volume and quality of health services provided to citizens. The impact of the crisis was clear in the decline of health services as the Ministry found itself unable to provide essential drugs for patients or to upgrade and expand health services in terms of the number of physicians and hospital beds to meet the natural growth in the population.

²⁰ As reported in the verbatim text of the minutes. According to the Ministry of Health reports, there were 335 governmental health centers in the WBGS in 1998, of which 300 were in the Gaza Strip (Ministry of Health 1999a, p.21).

The falling number of people with health insurance in relation to the total West Bank population is a clear indication of public lack of confidence in the quality of health services provided by Ministry of Health institutions. The *Social Monitor* did not have indicators with which to measure changes in the quality of the health services, but the data presented by the Minister of Health lead to the conclusion that existing health services are insufficient and of low quality, with the consequent negative repercussions on public confidence.

If the quality of health services provided in the WBGS is to be improved, the Physicians Union and other health sector workers must assume a more active role in developing services and maintaining a high level of professionalism. The Ministry of Health must maintain strict control over the health sector in order to ensure a high level of services for the public, including a guarantee of appropriate drugs and sound professional practices. Detailed studies are required to examine the state of existing health services, in particular their quality, availability and distribution in WBGS population centers.

It is clear, however, that the absence of a comprehensive health program and an obligatory health insurance system have left their impact on the volume and quality of available health services. There is therefore a need for the relevant bodies to guarantee the rights of the public in terms of health services, improve living conditions, and reduce inequalities in access to medical treatment.

4-EDUCATION

This section includes indicators related to kindergartens, and schools at basic and secondary levels. It also comprises

*indicators on Palestinian community colleges and universities, as well as on students and staff at all stages of education. This particular issue of the Social Monitor deals with the educational crisis in both schools and universities in the WBGS.*²¹

4-1 Rising numbers in kindergartens, particularly males

The total number of pupils in WBGS kindergartens increased from 75,032 in 1997/1998 to 77,173 in 1998/1999, marking an increase of 2.9 percent. The increase in male enrollment (3.8 percent) was double that of females (1.9 percent) (Appendix Table 4-1). The enrollment rate of children in the 3-5 year age group²² fell slightly in the scholastic year 1998/1999 to 25.5 percent compared with 25.7 percent in 1997.

The enrollment rate of children aged 3-5 years in West Bank kindergartens was 28.4 percent in 1998, a rise of 0.8 percent compared to 1997. The enrollment rate in Gaza Strip kindergartens was 21.2 percent, less than the West Bank and down by 1.6 percent compared to 1997.

The average pupil-teacher ratio in WBGS kindergartens was 28.6 pupils in

1998/1999, slightly higher than the average of 28.4 in 1997/1998. The rise in the average was exclusively in the Gaza Strip, where it rose from 27.4 pupils in 1997/1998 to 28.2 in 1998/1999. The West Bank witnessed a slight decline from 28.9 pupils per teacher to 28.8 (Appendix Table 3-4).

The number of kindergartens increased from 789 in 1997/1998 to 823 in 1998/1999, all of them run by the private sector or NGOs (Appendix, Table 4-1). This had a positive impact on the average number of pupils per kindergarten, which fell to 27.1 pupils in the WBGS in 1998/1999 in comparison to 27.9 in 1997/1998. In the West Bank, the average fell from 27.5 pupils to 26.8 in two years, and in the Gaza Strip, from 28.5 pupils in 1997/1998 to 28 pupils in 1998/1999.

²¹ The following indicators are based on the series of educational statistics published in the PCBS & Ministry of Education *Education Statistical Yearbook, 1998/99*, which is the principal source of data on the educational sector. The book includes data on the main elements of the educational process, such as students, teachers, subjects, classrooms, services and facilities, all of which are detailed by district, supervisory authority and educational level.

²² This rate was calculated by dividing the number of children enrolled in kindergartens by the number of children in this age group according to PCBS 1999h, Tables 10, 11, 12.

4-2 Female enrollment improves in basic education

Students at the basic level of education accounted for 91.9 percent of the total number of WBSGS students. There were 812, 712 basic level students in WBSGS schools in the 1998/1999 academic year, 6.5 percent higher than the previous year. The increase among female students was 6.9 percent and continued to exceed the male increase rate of 6 percent. Although the ratio of males remained higher than that of females at 50.7 percent, it continued to decline in comparison with previous years. The ratio of female students went up from 48.9 percent in 1996/1997 to 49.1 percent in 1997/1998, and to 49.3 percent in 1998/1999. At secondary level, the ratio of male and female students remained almost equal.

4-3 Males continue to dominate sciences

At secondary education level, 33.6 percent of male students are enrolled in the scientific stream compared to 26.3 percent of female students. This is approximately the same ratio as the two previous years and reflects the continued dominance of males in the sciences, while females are concentrated in the arts. Of female students, 72.1 percent were in the literary stream compared to 61.1 percent of males. These rates are the same as the two previous years.

There was a slight rise in the number of male students enrolled in the vocational stream during the scholastic year 1998/1999 in comparison with the previous two years. The ratio rose to 5.1 percent of male students at secondary level compared to 4.83 percent in 1997/1998. The number of female students also rose from 1.17 percent in 1997/1998 to 1.4 percent in 1998/1999.

These data indicate that students still favor

academic studies and that gender-based disparity continues to exist, with males dominating the sciences and females the arts. Enrollment in the vocational stream is still low among males and even lower among females, reflecting the social stereotyping that differentiates academic education from vocational education and concentrates females in certain gender-related specializations. An educational campaign involving students and their families would help to promote interest in vocational education and the expansion of activities in institutions in this field. This is of particular importance in light of the prevailing unemployment among academic graduates and the shortage of manpower with vocational qualifications.

4-4 Two-thirds of school students attend government schools

In the 1998/1999 scholastic year, 67.5 percent of school students attended government schools, a slightly higher percentage than the 67.6 percent of the previous year. The percentage of students in UNRWA schools remained stable at 26 percent. The government schools, therefore, maintained their prime position in the provision of educational services (Appendix, Table 4-2).

4-5 Private education high in central West Bank

Data from the *Education Statistical Yearbook* of the PCBS and the Ministry of Education for 1998/1999 indicated that the number of students in private schools is still high in the central region of the West Bank compared with other areas. Private schools were attended by 23 percent of all students in this area, compared with 8.5 percent in the south and 4 percent in the north. This is probably due, at least in part, to the higher standards of living in the central West Bank, a higher concentration of expatriate children (most

of whom are from the United States and usually attend schools in which English is the main language), and the special situation in the city, which was coercively annexed to Israel after the June War of 1967.

4-6 Slight decline in dropout from basic education, a rise at secondary level

The school dropout rate decreased slightly in 1997/1998 to 2.1 percent of students in 1997/1998 compared with 2.2 percent in 1996/1997. This is considered a minor change compared to the decrease of 0.6 percent that occurred between 1996/1997 and 1995/1996. The fall was the same for both male and female students. The female dropout rate fell from 2.1 percent to 2 percent over the two-year period 1996 to 1998, and from 2.2 percent to 2.1 percent among males. This is also considered a minor decrease if 1996/1997 figures are compared to those of 1995/1996 when the dropout rate was 2.8 percent for females and 2.7 percent for males.

The lower dropout rate was restricted to basic education.²³ At secondary level, there was a noticeable increase from 5.8 percent in 1996/1997 to 6.2 percent in 1997/1998. The decrease in the dropout rate of female students was confined to basic education. Among female secondary students, the dropout rate in 1997/1998 (8.3 percent) still surpassed that of males (4.3 percent) and was noticeably higher than in 1996/1997 when the dropout rate was 7.9 percent for females and 3.9 percent for males. It is difficult to explain the wide gap in the dropout rate between secondary level male and female students without obtaining the necessary field data. Factors that may contribute to this

²³ The Ministry of Education reduced the number of pupils permitted to re-sit the school year, leading to a decrease in the dropout rate.

phenomenon are the reluctance of some families to allow their daughters to study in locations outside the immediate area where they live, as well as the common phenomenon of early marriage of females (as mentioned in the section on demographic indicators).

The 1997/1998 dropout rate in government schools (2.6 percent) was higher than that in UNRWA schools (1.4 percent) and both were greater than that in private schools (0.4 percent). These differences in dropout rates may be due to class differences (income, wealth, and nature of work) among Palestinian families since the cost of studying in private schools is higher than in government and UNRWA schools. It is expected that families whose children study in private schools have a higher income than those whose children study in government and UNRWA schools. It may be assumed, therefore, that the class status of families has a direct impact on the volume of the dropout phenomenon. Another probable factor why students from poor families drop out of school is the need to join the labor market to contribute to the family income.²⁴

4-7 Rise in student-teacher ratio

The average number of students per teacher in the WBGS in 1998/1999 was 28.5 in government schools, 39.4 in UNRWA schools, and 18.6 in private schools. These ratios are a little higher than those for 1997/1998, which were 28.3 percent, 38.7 percent, and 18.2 percent respectively. They are also higher than the ratios for 1996/1997, which means that

²⁴ We tried to obtain data on regional school dropout rates in order to compare these with the poverty rate in each governorate and explore possible links between the two. This was not possible since the area covered by the governorate and that covered by the educational directorate was not the same in some regions.

student-teacher ratios in the WBGS are continuing to increase. One reason is clearly that additional teachers are not being employed to cover the annual increase in the number of school students. It also reflects the fact that insufficient resources are allocated to meet this need, especially in the UNRWA and government schools (Appendix, Table 4-3).

Data provided by the PCBS and the Ministry of Education for 1998/1999 show different student-teacher ratios according to the level of education. The ratio was 30.9 students per teacher at basic level compared with 20.2 students per teacher at secondary level. **A big disparity is apparent between the West Bank and Gaza Strip, with 27.7 students per teacher in the West Bank compared with 37.4 in the Gaza Strip at basic level and 19 students per teacher in the West Bank and 22.1 in the Gaza Strip at secondary level²⁵ (Appendix, Table 4-3).**

4-8 Number of students per class unchanged

Data on the average number of students per class in the WBGS does not show any significant change over recent years. This is applicable to both basic and secondary levels. The basic education average was 37.2 students per class in 1998/1999, 37.3 in 1997/1998, and 37.2 in 1996/1997, while the secondary education average was 30.2, 29.9, and 30.2 respectively (Appendix, Table 4-4). The constancy in the figures indicates that the classes created annually cover only the natural increase in the number of school students

and no classes are created for the purpose of reducing the average number of students per class.

Looking at the West Bank and Gaza Strip individually, the average number of basic education students per class in the West Bank in 1996/1997 was 33.4, compared with 33.1 in 1997/1998 and 33.2 in 1998/1999. The average in the Gaza Strip was 45.3, 45, 45.4 for the three years respectively. **These data reiterate the constancy in average class sizes at basic level in both the West Bank and the Gaza Strip and confirm the disparity between the two regions.** At secondary level, the average number of students per class remained constant in the West Bank at 25.9 in 1996/1997, 25.5 in 1997/1998 and 25.5 in 1998/1999. However, the average number of students per class in the Gaza Strip registered an increase for the second year in a row. The average was 39.2 students in 1996/1997, 39.7 in 1997/1998, and 40.4 in 1998/1999 (Appendix, Table 4-4).

Private schools at basic level are the only schools that achieve progress in average class sizes on an annual basis. The average number of students per class fell from 27.2 students per class in 1996/1997 to 26.6 in 1997/1998, and then fell again to 26.3 in 1998/1999 (Appendix, Table 4-4). The decrease was greater in the Gaza Strip than in the West Bank, falling from 30.3 students per class in 1996/1997 to 28.1 in 1997/1998, and 26.1 in 1998/1999. In the West Bank, the average fell from 26.8 in 1996/1997 to 26.6 in 1997/1998 and to 26.3 in 1998/1999. There was no fall in class sizes at basic level in government and UNRWA schools (Appendix, Table 4-4).

At secondary level, the average number of students per class in private schools increased to 17.2 students in 1996/1997, 17.3 in 1997/1998, and 17.4 in 1998/1999. There was a decrease confined to the Gaza Strip, where the average fell continuously from 33.7 students per class in 1996/1997,

²⁵ The data on the average number of students per teacher by level of education in the WBGS is taken from the PCBS and the Ministry of Education 1999, and the Education Survey Database 1998/99 (unpublished data). Since some teachers teach at both secondary and basic level, the average number of students per teacher was calculated based on the teacher's workload, i.e., the number of teaching hours at each level.

to 29.2 in 1997/1998, and to 26 in 1998/1999. However, in the West Bank, the average number of students per class rose from 16.3 in 1996/1997 to 16.6 in 1997/1998, and 16.9 in 1998/1999. In government secondary schools, the data show slight fluctuations in the average over a number of years and a consistent gap between the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Secondary education in UNRWA schools was not studied (Appendix, Table 4-4).

Available data indicate that the average number of students per class in private Gaza Strip secondary schools is greater, or at least equal to, that at basic level. The most likely reason for this is the fact that UNRWA does not operate secondary schools and some students therefore have to enroll in private schools. The lack of secondary education at UNRWA schools may explain why the number of students in government secondary education does not fall in spite of the high dropout rate amongst students. The difference between both average class sizes is small (Appendix, Table 4-4).

Private schools have the lowest number of students per class at both basic and secondary level, while the highest average is found in UNRWA schools at basic level and in government secondary schools (Appendix, Table 4-4).

4-9 Female students still outnumber males at community colleges

There were a total of 5,436 community college students in the WBGS in 1998/1999, of whom 2,533 were male and 2,903 female (PCBS and Ministry of Education 1999). This figure does not include students at the Falasteen Religious Institute (Al-Azhar) in Gaza, on which no data is available. The male-female student ratio was 87 males to every 100 female students (Appendix, Table 4-5).

4-10 Male-female ratio at Palestinian universities

There were 61,748 students at Palestinian universities in 1998/1999, an increase of 17.8 percent over the previous year when the figure was 52,427 (Ministry of Higher Education 1999).

The increase in the number of female students was 20.1 percent, higher than for male students at 15.9 percent. (The number of female students rose from 22,881 in 1997/1998 to 27,496 in 1998/1999, and the number of male students from 29,546 in 1997/1998 to 34,252 in 1998/1999.) These data point to the narrowing of the gap in numbers between male and female students in Palestinian universities. The male-female ratio was 76.5 females to each 100 males in 1996/1997, rising to 80.2 in 1998/1999 (Appendix, Table 4-6). This is a positive indicator in respect to the education of females and may have a positive impact on female participation in the formal labor market.

4-11 Rise in university students per total population

The percentage of Palestinian university students per total population in 1998/1999 increased from 1.8 percent in 1997/1998²⁶ to 2.13 percent. The percentage grew over this time period in both the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, from 1.47 percent to 1.74 percent in the West Bank and from 2.38 percent to 2.83²⁷ percent in the Gaza Strip.

²⁶ Includes only Palestinian students studying at WBGS universities and does not include those who study abroad.

²⁷ The policy of WBGS universities to increase admission rates to cover their financial crises has contributed to the increased percentage of university students attending their local university.

The Gaza Strip maintained a higher rate of increase than the West Bank.

It seems that the rise in university students in the Gaza Strip is due to the fact that data on include only those enrolled in Palestinian universities and not Palestinian students studying at overseas institutions. Since there are more opportunities available to the West Bank population to travel and study abroad than to the Gaza Strip population, the number of West Bank students at overseas universities is often higher. This may result in a higher percentage of university students per total population in the Gaza Strip than in the West Bank. **It is certain that the percentage of Palestinian university students is higher than existing figures, in the West Bank in particular, if we add on students at universities abroad.** However, it was not possible to calculate the exact figures due to the lack of data on students studying abroad at the Ministry of Higher Education or the PCBS ²⁸

4-12 Local intake of universities continues

The dominating trend is still that students tend to enroll in universities located in their region and a rise was noted in the number of students joining local universities in 1998/1999 in comparison with previous years. Students from the northern region of the West Bank comprised 94 percent of all students at the sole university located in this region, namely An-Najah National University, compared with 93.6 percent in 1997/1998 and 92.4 percent in 1996/1997. Students from the central West Bank made up 61.3 percent of students at local universities compared with 61.1 percent in 1997/1998 and 60.4 percent in 1996/1997. The same

²⁸ It is difficult to make comparisons with other countries because the percentages are restricted to students enrolled at WBGS universities, while the data of other countries include students enrolled abroad.

trend also applied in the southern West Bank where the percentage of local students at the two universities, Hebron and Bethlehem, rose to 79.8 percent in 1998/1999 compared with 78.9 percent in 1997/1998 and 75.1 percent in 1996/1997²⁹ (Appendix, Table 4-7).

In addition to the Israeli policy of dividing the West Bank and Gaza Strip, the lack of labor division and specialization in Palestinian universities has reinforced their localized nature and most WBGS universities offer similar educational courses.

In the Gaza Strip, the status quo was maintained with 100 percent of students coming from the local population. Gaza Strip students attending West Bank universities are becoming fewer than in previous years (Appendix, Table 4-7). The percentage of Gaza Strip students enrolled at university in the northern West Bank declined from 1.9 percent in 1996/1997 to 1.2 percent in 1997/1998 and to 0.6 percent in 1998/1999. In the central region, the percentage of Gaza Strip students declined from 4.5 percent to 3.6 percent and then to 2.8 percent over three consecutive years. In universities of the southern West Bank, the percentage of Gaza Strip students declined from 0.8 percent to 0.4 percent and then to 0.3 percent over the three years. Israeli policy of separating the West Bank from the Gaza Strip contributes to this trend of local intake in Palestinian universities.

4-13 The crisis in education

²⁹ The Jerusalem Open University was not included because this university has a branch in each Palestinian governorate. The College of Education and the Ramallah College for Women were also not included because one belongs to UNRWA and takes students from all regions, while the other is government-run and provides specific training for student teachers from all regions.

Both Palestinian schools and institutes of higher learning are facing a number of problems, some related to the inadequacy of financial resources and others to the lack of a clear and specific educational strategy (in terms of objectives, curricula, approaches and means). Indicators to these problems are the strikes waged in schools by teachers in protest against low wages and to demand the implementation of the Civil Service Law, which would provide them with greater benefits. This Law was endorsed by the PLC and approved by the PNA President. The Civil Service Law was put into practice on 1 December 1998, but suspended two months later on the 1st of February 1999.

Although it is assumed that the low salaries paid to teachers in government schools will be reflected in their performance, the true impact cannot be measured due to the lack of field studies in this area. There are some indicators, however, that a certain percentage of teachers have second jobs to boost their income and this may have a negative effect on their performance. The scarcity of resources allocated to education is evident in the high number of students per class and the high student-teacher ratio, as shown in the data of the government education sector of 1998/1999. The rise in these figures points to the limited resources allocated for the construction of new schools or for the addition of new classrooms in existing schools to meet the annual increase in the number of students.³⁰ It also points to the fact that the Ministry of Education did not employ

sufficient teachers to meet the annual increase in the number of students.

The same problems exist in UNRWA schools. UNRWA has announced that it is facing a financial crisis that affects the various services it renders, including education. Data on education in UNRWA schools show a rise in the average number of students per class and an increased student-teacher ratio. This is due to the insufficient number of teachers and the absence of additional classrooms to meet the annual increase in the number of students in its schools.³¹

It is not one of the tasks of the *Social Monitor* to evaluate the educational curricula adopted or the means of education. It is useful, however, to mention that there is a debate underway on these two topics. This debate revolves around the formulation of curricula through a new vision and interests. It aims to liberate education from the existing traditional methods based on dictation, rote learning, and the failure to develop critical abilities, with the subsequent obliteration of freedom of thought and expression. It also aims to encourage respect for the personality of the individual student and to link education to basic human rights. The debate includes

³⁰ *Al-Ayyam*, Ramallah-based Arabic daily, 4 September 1999, published a report on page 11 entitled "When Schools Turn into Sardines Tins" dealing with the issue of overcrowded schools in the WBGS. The report stated that schools meet only half of the actual demand for new classrooms required for the annual increase in the number of students. Although this issue of the *Social Monitor* covers the year 1998/99, we find it necessary to refer to this report because it indicates that overcrowding still exists in 1999/2000.

³¹ *Al-Ayyam* Arabic daily published on its front page, 7 September 1999, a news item on the collapse of part of the Deheisheh UNRWA School for Boys. This event could have proven disastrous had the 1,200 students and teachers been present at the time. The report stated that the school was established in the early fifties. Cracks and crevices had appeared in the walls and roof several months before the incident, but UNRWA had made no attempt to remedy the situation. Deheisheh camp inhabitants and other bodies protested to UNRWA for its failure to carry out renovations to its schools. Although this issue of the *Social Monitor* covers the scholastic year 1998/1999, this report is important because renovations must be carried out on a continuous basis. The collapse of part of the school was the result of accumulated damage to the structure of the building.

the weaknesses of universities as centers of academic creativity, their isolation from research and criticism of society, and their failure to produce mature graduates with multi-dimensional characteristics. There is an absence of coordination between universities and they have so far failed to serve the current and future needs of Palestinian society.

4-13-1 Palestinian universities in crisis

The shortage of financial resources is one of the most prominent problems that face Palestinian higher education. This was reflected in discussions at the PLC, which held a special session on 21 July 1999 to discuss the "severe financial crisis"³² affecting Palestinian universities. The impact of the crisis is felt by university employees and their families since the payment of salaries in some universities is delayed for months at a time. The crisis is also reverberates on the academic level of students and there is genuine concern that universities will eventually be unable to attract highly-qualified personnel with the ability to make a positive contribution to the educational process.

The budget deficit of Palestinian universities in 1998 was estimated at US \$18 million. This should have been covered by US \$5 million from the Ministry of Higher Education, US \$9 million from the Ministry of Finance based on a pledge by the Finance Minister during the endorsement of the 1998 budget, and US \$4 million from a grant from the European Union to Palestinian universities. These sums did not materialize according to the minutes of the PLC. The EU did not remit the grant, the US \$9 million pledged by the Finance Minister did not appear in the 1998 budget, and the Ministry of Higher Education did not remit the US \$5 million allocated in its budget for the universities.

³² The report of the Committee for Education and Social Issues on the financial crisis in Palestinian universities was presented at this session.

4-13-2 Absence of comprehensive university planning

The report of the PLC Committee on Education and Social Issues contained a number of observations. The most important of these pertain to the absence of comprehensive planning for Palestinian universities and higher education in general, with each university acting on a unilateral basis. The report called for a detailed study and workshops by the relevant parties to draw up a comprehensive plan for Palestinian higher education based on a clear educational philosophy to serve development. The report remarked on the absence of proper coordination between the universities and the Ministry of Higher Education, especially in terms of post-graduate studies, leading to a situation where universities are in competition with each other rather than offering complementary courses of study. The Committee called for improvements in coordination to eliminate the duplication of courses on offer at universities.

The report was of the opinion that Palestinian universities are capable of greater development in the field of research and offering technical expertise, especially to the PNA, and called on the PNA to approach universities for such services. The report also deemed that vocational education be given special priority to meet the needs of society in accordance with a Palestinian development plan. The expansion of Masters' programs in some universities without accurately calculating the expenses and related fees involved had created a huge financial burden for those universities, the report noted.

It called on universities to establish income-generating projects to compensate for the decline in external financial resources over recent years. It also urged universities to be vigilant in collecting all fees from students, restricting fee exemptions to needy students only, but warned not to raise university fees due to

the severe situation of the Palestinian economy as a whole. The report also called on universities to review their structure in accordance with a specific policy and to "remove all features of cumbersome administration, to invoke the admission rates decided by the Ministry of Higher Education, and to rationalize expenditure in general".

The Committee's report called on the Ministry of Finance to honor its commitments in the 1998 budget through paying the financial arrears due to the universities. It also called on the Ministry to remit future higher education dues on time and to increase actual support to universities in the 1998 budget to at least US \$15 million. The recommendations of the report were that universities be committed to admitting only the permitted number of students, collect fees, rationalize expenditure, and take effective measures to find external financial resources. It called on universities to adhere to the Law of Higher Education in terms of licensing and endorsing post-graduate studies and also underlined the PLC resolution obliging the Ministry of Higher Education to force universities to apply the salary scale agreed upon by the university employees union, university administrators and the Ministry of Higher Education.

Summary

Although some quantitative indicators pertaining to the various stages of education in the WBGS point to an overall improvement, qualitative indicators are troubling. The increase in the number of students joining kindergartens, schools and universities was not matched by an increase in the number of teachers, nor in the development of places of learning, or improvements in educational resources and methods of education. Although dropout rates declined in schools, the decline was very slight and was restricted to basic education. At secondary level,

dropout rates increased, especially among female students.

Existing problems in the educational sector were exacerbated by the scarcity of financial resources, manifested in repeated strikes by schoolteachers and Palestinian university students and staff.

Despite the significant changes introduced to the educational sector over recent years, there is still a need for the formulation and implementation of a clear and specific educational strategy (in terms of objectives, curricula, methods and means). This is applicable at both school and university level as there is an absence of a comprehensive plan based on a clear educational philosophy to serve Palestinian society.

5- CULTURAL LIFE

This section is based mainly on the PCBS Cultural Statistics report of 1998 which covers significant gaps in information on Palestinian cultural life in the WBGS. The report included data on licensed cultural institutions and their activities, based on the administrative records of cultural institutions and the relevant ministries.³³ Comparisons with cultural indicators in previous issues of the Social Monitor should be made with caution due to differences in the classification or degree of coverage of data. This section monitors trends in public cultural life wherever data are available. There is particular emphasis on monitoring regional disparities in Palestinian cultural life. Some of the topics in this section benefited from data provided by the Ministry of Culture and Information.

³³ PCBS 1999c. The report includes data only from institutions licensed by the Ministry of Culture.

5-1 Minimal role of the cinema

There were three licensed cinemas in the WBGS in 1998, one each in Al-Bireh, Tulkarem, and Nablus. A total of 18,000 people visited the cinema in 1998 (PCBS 1999c). These data show the minimal role played by the cinema in WBGS cultural life. No data are available on local cinema production or the nature of films screened at cinemas.

Some cultural centers display films within the framework of their cultural activities, focusing on selected films with a limited audience, normally of an intellectual nature. These centers, the most prominent of which are the Popular Art Center and the Khalil Al-Sakakini Center, are located in the cities of Ramallah and Al-Bireh.

5-2 Less than half of licensed cultural centers are in operation³⁴

In 1998, there were 179 cultural centers in the WBGS licensed by the Ministry of Culture. Only 46 percent of these were in operation, 71 percent in the West Bank, and the rest in the Gaza Strip. The active centers in the West Bank were distributed by region as follows: 49 percent in the south, 41 percent in the north, approximately two-thirds of them in the Nablus governorate, and the rest in the central region. More than 58 percent of the cultural centers in operation in the Gaza Strip were located in Gaza City and the north of the Strip (PCBS 1999c, p.51).

The large number of cultural centers gives a misleading picture of cultural life in the various regions of Palestine. In fact, these cultural centers comprise a variety of

bodies with activities that vary in nature and volume. In addition, some institutions carry out activities of a cultural character although the institution is not registered as a cultural center. Charitable societies and NGOs, for example, are not registered by the Ministry of Culture, nor centers like the Baladna Cultural Center in Ramallah, which belongs to the Nature Protection Society.

According to PCBS classification, the activities of these centers in the WBGS were as follows: 38 percent general courses (training and education), 32 percent symposiums and lectures, 23 percent art festivals and 7 percent art exhibitions (Appendix, Table 5-1).

Data reveal a disparity of interests between West Bank cultural centers and their counterparts in the Gaza Strip. Approximately half of the activities of West Bank cultural centers are educational courses, while in the Gaza Strip symposiums and lectures made up 41 percent of all activities (Appendix, Table 5-1).

Although only 10 percent of all centers in operation are located in the central West Bank, their activities made up more than one quarter of all West Bank activities. The available data indicate that centers operating in the central West Bank tend to be larger than in other regions, particularly those functioning in the south. It can be deduced from Table 5-1 that the majority of the art festivals were held in the central West Bank, most art exhibitions in the south of the West Bank, and most of the educational courses in the north of the West Bank.

There were 185 symposiums and conferences reported in the local press in 1998. These were distributed by region as follows: 42 percent in the Gaza Strip, 28 percent in the northern West Bank, 22 percent in the central West Bank, and 8 percent in the southern West Bank. The topics discussed were: 40 percent political and intellectual topics of a general nature; 33 percent on democracy, relations with

³⁴ These are institutions licensed by the Ministry of Culture as cultural centers and conducting cultural activities. This means "they include materials used in art, craft and sports, which facilitate the promotion of cultural activity in the larger context" (PCBS 1999c).

the PNA, and human rights; 13 percent on topics dealing with the economy and the needs of local society; 9 percent on women and their rights, and 4 percent on other miscellaneous subjects.³⁵ The organizers were as follows: 76 percent non-governmental organizations and institutions, 14 percent ministries and governmental institutions, and 10 percent political parties and organizations.³⁶ These data indicate the significant attention accorded to political issues and relations with the PNA by the elite in Palestinian society. They also make clear the crucial role played by NGOs in organizing discussions and dialogue within WBSG society.

The current issue of the *Social Monitor* does not touch on workshops organized in the WBSG although there are a large number (the Ramallah-based *Al-Ayyam* Arabic daily monitored some 40 workshops in June 1998 alone) due to the lack of sufficient data and poor press coverage of this kind of activity. There are also a significant number of workshops carried out as an internal activity in governmental and informal institutions.

5-3 Scarcity of data on research centers and local publishing bodies

³⁵ We used documentation from *Al-Siyasa Al-Falastiniyya* magazine and referred to local newspapers (*Al-Ayyam* and *Al-Hayat Al-Jadeedah*) for the periods not covered.

³⁶ Information from the Center for Palestine Research and Studies, *Al-Siyasa Al-Falastiniyya*, issues 18-22. *Al-Ayyam* and *Al-Quds* Arabic dailies of March and June 1998. It is clear that *Al-Siyassa* and the local press do not cover symposiums and conferences held in the WBSG comprehensively. The figures quoted for symposiums represent only 40 percent of the total number of symposiums organized by cultural centers according to PCBS data. We used the local press to give a picture of public trends in the organization of these symposiums and the issues discussed.

With the exception of Ministry of Information data on licenses issued to research centers and local publishing houses, there is no other credible data on these bodies and their activities. Until sufficient data become available, the *Social Monitor* will make only the following remarks. Some research centers have been able to maintain and develop their activities and have established for themselves a distinguished research reputation. Such institutions include the Palestinian Institute for the Study of Democracy (Muwatin) in Ramallah, the Arab Thought Forum in Jerusalem, the Palestine Center for Research and Studies in Nablus, the Institute of Jerusalem Studies in Jerusalem, the Palestinian Academic Society for the Study of International Affairs (PASSIA) in Jerusalem, the Applied Research Center in Bethlehem, the Palestine Center for Study and Research in Gaza, and The Palestine Economic Policy Research Institute (MAS) in Ramallah. The same applies to certain research centers and programs in local universities, in particular the Development Studies Program and the Women's Studies Center, both at Birzeit University.

A large number of PNA ministries and institutions conduct research through their study centers and also publish research relevant to the activities of these ministries. Specialized periodicals³⁷ are also published by some ministries and institutions.

It can safely be said that the role of WBSG universities³⁸ on Palestinian intellectual life is limited. Their role does not appear to be that of fostering knowledge, nor as a

³⁷ For example, the *Masha'il* magazine published by the Ministry of Social Affairs, *Bina' Al-Watan* by the Ministry of Public Works, *Dakhiliyyah* by the Ministry of Interior, *Al-Iqtisad* by the Ministry of Economy, *Al-Manbar* by the Waqf and Religious Affairs Ministry, *Isra* by the Dar Al-Ifa, *Milad* by the Office of Public Institutions, *Dafater Thaqafiyya* by the Ministry of Culture, and *Sehha* by the Ministry of Health.

³⁸ For example, the magazine of Azhar University in Gaza and the *Risalat* of An-Najah National University

regulator and motivator of intellectual and cultural discussion.

5-4 More than half of licensed newspapers are not published

There were 29 licensed newspapers in the WBGs at the end of 1998, although only 13 newspapers were actually being published. Most newspapers that had ceased publication or had never published a single issue were in violation of the Publications Law now in force in the WBGs. The Minister of Culture issued a decree abrogating the licenses of a number of these publications in early August 1999.³⁹

Eight newspapers are published in the central West Bank: six in Ramallah and Al-Bireh and two in Jerusalem. In the Gaza Strip, five newspapers are published, four in Gaza City and one in Deir Al-Balah. It can be concluded that the publication of Palestinian newspapers is concentrated in the central West Bank, namely in Ramallah and Al-Bireh, and then in Gaza City.

There were nine political newspapers, three of which are dailies, and four non-political newspapers. We cannot use the data on the number of copies published and distributed because they are not accurate (PCBS 1999c).

According to PCBS data, 42 magazines were published in 1998 out of a total of 99 licensed magazines. Eighty percent of these magazines were published in the West Bank, approximately two-thirds of them in the central region. Seven magazines were published in Gaza City out of a total of eight magazines in the Gaza Strip.

Half of the magazines published in the WBGs were classified as non-specialized and were not directed at any particular social group (age or profession). Sixty percent of these magazines are published on a monthly basis (PCBS 1999c).

5-5 No private radio or TV stations in the Gaza Strip

In the West Bank, there were seven private radio stations, three based in Ramallah and one each in Jenin, Qalqilia, Nablus, and Bethlehem. All of the activities of these stations were of a local nature and most of their programs entertainment oriented (PCBS 1999c).

5-5-1 Palestine Radio

Palestine Radio (the only national radio station) was on the air approximately 19 hours daily during 1998. Its programs were broken down into the following categories: 38 percent news-oriented programs, 34 percent entertainment programs, 9 percent religious programs, 5 percent cultural programs, 1 percent each for educational and children's programs, and 12 percent for others (PCBS 1999c). The amount of time allocated for educational and specialized programs (those for children, women, and workers) is low compared to that allocated for entertainment programs.

A poll conducted by the Jerusalem Media and Communications Center (JMCC) in early 1999 indicated that Palestine Radio came second to the Israeli radio programs in Arabic in terms of the number of WBGs listeners. The percentage of listeners to Palestine Radio was as low as 9 percent in the Gaza Strip and 24 percent in the West Bank.⁴⁰ The Palestinian Radio and TV Corporation need to pay special attention to public opinion polls in order to develop their radio and TV programs.

³⁹ The Minister of Culture abrogated the licenses of nine newspapers and 34 magazines (*Al-Quds* newspaper, 3 August 1999).

⁴⁰ *Al-Quds* newspaper, 28 January 1999. The Voice of Palestine is not picked up satisfactorily in the Gaza Strip.

Twenty-nine private TV stations were operating in the West Bank during 1998. All of these were small local stations: 17 in the north of the West Bank - nine in Nablus, two each in Jenin and Qalqilia, and four in Tulkarem; five in the center of the West Bank, all in Ramallah including two whose transmissions are still at an experimental stage; and seven in the south of the West Bank, three in Hebron, and four in Bethlehem, one of which was still experimenting with its transmissions (PCBS 1999c). The Ministry of Interior closed a TV station in Bethlehem in 1999.

Programs on the private TV stations still depend mainly on re-transmitting from Arab satellite channels and are predominantly of a light entertainment type (songs, films and soap operas). Most of the local programs of these stations are game shows. Some stations have displayed an interest in national and local issues by sponsoring TV symposiums. Jerusalem Educational TV is unique in transmitting sessions of the PLC in addition to some cultural and intellectual recorded activities.

5-5-2 Large disparities in Palestine TV viewers in WB and GS

The JMCC poll showed that the 65 percent of families without a satellite receiver in the Gaza Strip watch Palestine TV compared to 13 percent in the West Bank⁴¹. The poll also showed that Palestine TV is regarded as serving the Gaza Strip, whereas Palestine Radio is regarded as serving the West Bank. In other words, each is more popular in its region of transmission. The reasons why Palestinian citizens in the WBGS regard each of the Palestinian main audio and visual media apparatuses differently in the two regions are worth examining. It is also important to try to develop both of these services to the point at which they become vehicles for the national media

⁴¹ *Al-Quds* newspaper, 28 January 1999.

capable of attracting the attention of citizens regardless of where they live.

It can be deduced from the PCBS media and computers survey⁴² conducted in the second quarter of 1999 that the percentage of Palestinians in the WBGS who prefer Palestine TV for entertainment (approximately 31 percent) is higher than those who prefer it for news (28 percent). The results again highlighted big differences between the Gaza Strip and the West Bank as regards Palestine TV. Only 13 percent of West Bankers prefer Palestine TV for both entertainment and news compared with 70 percent in the Gaza Strip who prefer it for entertainment and 63 percent for news. By way of comparison, approximately one quarter of Palestinian families prefer the Israeli radio station as a source of news. This percentage is similar in both the West Bank and Gaza Strip, but for entertainment the percentage falls to 2 percent in the West Bank and 5 percent in the Gaza Strip (PCBS 1999j).

There is a large disparity in the preferences of the Palestinian public in the West Bank and Gaza Strip with regard to the TV stations they watch for entertainment. While 70 percent of Palestinian households in the Gaza Strip prefer Palestine TV, approximately half of West Bank households prefer the Jordanian TV channel, with only 13 percent of West Bank households preferring Palestine TV (PCBS 1999j).

5-5-3 Jazira satellite channel is the most popular with satellite viewers

The PCBS survey showed that the main source of news in the WBGS for satellite owners is the Jazira channel (broadcast from Qatar), preferred by about 80 percent

⁴² The survey was conducted as a supplement to the Labor Force Survey in the second quarter of 1999 and included 7,559 families.

of viewers.⁴³ The percentages are similar in both the West Bank and Gaza Strip. The percentage of those who prefer the Palestine satellite station for news was less than one percent in both WBSG regions.

5-5-4 Households with satellite receivers

Approximately 31 percent of WBSG families who own TV⁴⁴ sets had satellite receivers in the second quarter of 1999. The percentage was close in both the West Bank and Gaza Strip (31 percent and 30 percent respectively) (PCBS 1999j). These results are similar to the results of the poll conducted by the Center for Palestinian Research and Studies in early 1999,⁴⁵ which showed that 30 percent of WBSG households own a satellite receiver. This figure can be compared to the 27 percent found in the June 1998 survey by the Center. The percentage of households that own TV sets and have a satellite receiver is higher in the center of the West Bank than in the other Palestinian regions, tending to decrease further north or south. The percentage ranges between 43 percent in the Jerusalem and Ramallah-Al-Bireh governorates, to 12 percent in the Tubas governorate, and 14 percent in the Jenin governorate. The level of satellite receiver ownership is higher in Gaza City and decreases further south in the Gaza Strip (38 percent in Gaza and 21 percent in Rafah) (PCBS 1999j). This is compatible with the map of poverty prevalence in the WBSG.

⁴³ In the middle of 1999, 31 percent of families owned a satellite receiver in WBSG (PCBS 1999j).

⁴⁴ 89 percent of WBSG families own a TV set: 92 percent in the West Bank and 83 percent in the Gaza Strip (PCBS 1999j).

⁴⁵ The poll was conducted between 28-30 January 1999 and included 1,318 people over 18 years of age, 823 of whom were from the West Bank. The margin of error is 3 percent.

5-6 Public libraries

PCBS data show that 12 of the 13 public libraries for adults supervised by the Palestinian Ministry of Culture were located in the West Bank. The Ministry supervised one library in each West Bank governorate, with the exception of Ramallah and Tulkarem governorates, each of which have two libraries. The Bethlehem governorate has no public library supervised by the Ministry and there is one Ministry-run public library in the Rafah governorate in the Gaza Strip (PCBS 1999c).

There were 57 public libraries for children supervised by the Ministry of Culture in the WBSG,⁴⁶ 70 percent of them located in the West Bank. The children's libraries in the West Bank were distributed as follows: 40 percent in the north, 28 percent in the center (9 libraries in the Ramallah governorate out of 11 libraries in the central area), and 32 percent in the south (PCBS 1999c, p.68).

It should be noted that these data do not convey a true picture of the prevalence of public libraries in the WBSG since they do not include libraries not operated by the Ministry of Culture but still serving the public.

No data are available on the contents of libraries, their services, or the number of beneficiaries. Such information is vital for any attempt to evaluate the degree to which the public benefits from library services.

5-7 Majority of museums, theaters and art festivals in the center of the West Bank

There were 14 museums in the WBSG in 1998, ten of which were in operation.

⁴⁶ Public libraries that have sections for children were counted twice, once as a children's library and once as an adult library.

These were located as follows: nine in the West Bank (six in the center of the West Bank and one in each of the governorates of Nablus, Bethlehem and Hebron) and one in the Gaza Strip. The museums comprised two archeological museums in the city of Jerusalem, three archeological and heritage museums in the governorates of Nablus, Jerusalem and Hebron, two museums specialized in costumes and heritage in the governorates of Ramallah and Bethlehem, and three other types of museum in the governorates of Jerusalem and Gaza (PCBS 1999c, p.48).

A total of 53,000 Palestinians from the WBGS visited these museums in 1998, as well as 48,985 non-Palestinians. The figure is close to the percentage of people who said they normally visit museums in the WBGS, according to a survey conducted by the PCBS in 1996. The archeological museums located in Jerusalem were visited by approximately two thirds of WBGS museum visitors (PCBS 1999c, p.50).

The decline of the theater

There were only seven functioning theaters in the WBGS in 1998, five of which were in the West Bank; two each in Jerusalem and Jericho and one in Tulkarem. Of the two theaters in the Gaza Strip, one was in Gaza City and the other in Khan Yunis.

These theaters presented 157 plays, of which 93 percent were at the West Bank theaters and 95 percent of those were in the central West Bank region (PCBS 1999c, p.56).

Forty-three percent of the plays produced were directed at children and 40 percent for adults. The remainder targeted various age groups. The number of theatergoers in the WBGS in 1998 was about 71,000 (PCBS 1999c, p.60).

Festivals and art exhibitions concentrated in central West Bank

Twenty-five festivals were organized⁴⁷ in the West Bank in 1998. Of these, 12 were organized in the center of the West Bank, nine in the south and the rest in the north of the West Bank (PCBS 1999c, p.66). Twenty-one art exhibitions were also organized in the WBGS, 17 of which took place in the West Bank - 11 in the north, (seven in the Nablus governorate), three in the center, and three in the south - in addition to four in the Gaza Strip (PCBS 1999c, p.67).

5-8 Computer ownership predominates in West Bank

In the second quarter of 1999, 7 percent of all WBGS households owned a computer (PCBS 1999j). The figure was 4 percent in 1997⁴⁸ according to the results of the Population, Housing and Establishments Census of that year. The data showed a large disparity between the West Bank and Gaza Strip, with 9 percent of households in the West Bank owning computers compared to 3 percent in the Gaza Strip. The same picture also appears in regard to the Internet (1 percent and 0.1 percent of households in the West Bank and Gaza Strip respectively) (PCBS 1999j).

More than one third of computers are in the central West Bank area

More than one third of the families owning computers (approximately 36 percent) are located in the central area of the West Bank, despite the fact that it comprises only 20 percent of the total WBGS population. In the Gaza Strip, 14 percent of households own a computer although it represents more than 35 percent of the

⁴⁷ Festivals supervised by the Palestinian Ministry of Culture are restricted to dancing, singing, music, children's activities and folklore. They do not include cinema and theater festivals (PCBS 1999c, p.66).

⁴⁸ According to the Center for Palestine Research and Studies in Nablus, 12 percent of families owned a computer in June 1998, six months after the PCBS general census was conducted.

total WBGS population. The percentage of households with computers is almost the same in both the north and the south of the West Bank (PCBS 1999j).⁴⁹

Computer ownership is an urban phenomenon

Approximately 75 percent of families with computers live in urban areas, although urban dwellers represent 56 percent of all WBGS households. Eighteen percent of families with computers live in rural areas and 7 percent in refugee camps, although rural areas comprise 29 percent of WBGS households and refugee camps comprise 15 percent (PCBS 1999j). This means that computer ownership is concentrated in the cities rather than rural areas and refugee camps.

Medium-sized families comprise the majority of computer owners

Data show that medium-sized households (5-8 people) are the most likely to own a computer. Although half of WBGS households are in this size category, they own two thirds of all computers. Data also indicate that households headed by high-level administrators, senior-level employees, and highly-skilled personnel constitute approximately half of all computer owners, in spite of the fact that they form only about one fifth of WBGS households (PCBS 1999j).

5-9 Majority of sports clubs are in West Bank

There are 320 sports clubs in the WBGS, 88 percent of them located in the West Bank. Approximately 38 percent of West Bank sports clubs are located in the center of the West Bank, 27 percent in the south

and 35 percent in the north. In the Gaza Strip, 38 percent of clubs are in Gaza City (PCBS 1999c, p.69).

There are 26 youth centers⁵⁰ in the WBGS, 69 percent of them located in the West Bank. There are also 18 clubs and centers specifically for women, all located in the West Bank. More than 70 percent of these women's centers are located in the north of the West Bank, one third of them in the Nablus governorate (PCBS 1999c, p.69). Seventeen clubs and youth centers opened in 1998.

5-10 Some charitable societies perform activities of a cultural nature

There were 352 licensed charitable societies in the WBGS in 1998, of which 85 percent were located in the West Bank. Forty-seven percent of West Bank licensed societies were located in the north of the West Bank, 23 percent in the center, and 30 percent in the south (PCBS 1999c, p.70). Charitable societies are included in this section of the *Monitor* because some of them are involved in various cultural activities, like the In'ash Al-Usra Society, which is one of the institutions most concerned with Palestinian heritage. This society has established a heritage museum and research center and issues a specialized magazine on the subject. Some societies and clubs operating in villages represent the most important venues through which young people can participate in cultural and recreational activities.

Summary

Cultural life in the WBGS improved in terms of the frequency, variety, and volume of activities available and, to a certain extent, in the number of people participating in and organizing these

⁴⁹ The average size of families differs according to region in the WBGS (6.1 in the West Bank and 6.9 in the Gaza Strip) according to PCBS 1998e. Also, see *Social Monitor*, Number 2. (The difference between the number of families who own computers in the West Bank and in the Gaza Strip is large).

⁵⁰ They are located only in refugee camps and their activities are similar to those of the clubs.

activities. The *Social Monitor*, however, does not have the necessary data to evaluate the substance of these various cultural activities or the degree of public participation in them. This task, which is of great importance, is probably outside the ambit of the *Social Monitor's* capabilities and scope of competence.

It is apparent that cultural life in the WBGS tends to be restricted to particular types of activity. While festivals, especially summer festivals, have become a regular event involving several regions, there is still an acute dearth in the sphere of theater and cinema as well as in terms of art exhibitions and musical performances.

A large gap exists between regions (both between the West Bank and Gaza Strip and between governorates) in terms of the volume and type of activities, the presence of cultural institutions and their impact, and the possession of resources to permit the continuity of cultural activities.

The PCBS Cultural Statistics report of 1998 did provide data on aspects of cultural life in the WBGS. This report is an important step towards filling the gap in data on the cultural life of Palestinian society.

Nevertheless, the data on culture need to be supplemented with the cooperation of relevant parties such as the Ministries of Culture and Information. This would make possible the collection of more comprehensive data on cultural aspects. Topics to be covered, as far as possible, would be the various aspects of the production and delivery process and more accurate information on the extent of participation in the available activities. Other important cultural activities like local publishing houses need to be monitored, even if they are included under a different statistical classification.

It is legitimate, after five years of operation, to expect the Ministries of

Culture and Information to be aware of the licensed and unlicensed cultural and media institutions in the WBGS in terms of their efficacy, the type of activity they offer and the difficulties affecting the process of intellectual and cultural production. This is essential, not for the purpose of imposing controls, but in order to identify the role of official institutions in encouraging Palestinian cultural life, enhancing its local resources, and deepening its Arab humanitarian and emancipatory character.

6- SOCIAL SECURITY AND QUALITY OF LIFE

This section relied on data from the PCBS, the Palestinian Ministry of Social Affairs, the Ministry of Labor, the Ministry of Local Government, the Waqf and Religious Affairs Ministry, as well as on data collected by MAS from various other sources. This represents the first time that the PCBS has conducted surveys on working conditions in the WBGS and on the home environment, and these two surveys provide important indicators relating to the quality of life in the WBGS.

6-1 Working conditions and workers' rights⁵¹

The PLC endorsed the draft Labor Law in a second reading in October 1999. It also endorsed modifications exempting workers from paying legal fees in labor disputes, granting severance indemnities in the case of the resignation of workers, and setting

⁵¹ While writing this report, an accident at a lighter factory in Hebron occurred, killing 14 female workers. The tragedy revealed the absence of public safety measures in factories and, to a large degree, the exploitation of women and children (employing under-age children). The very weak supervision by the departments responsible for monitoring the implementation of laws guaranteeing the safety of the public and workers was also apparent.

weekly working hours, i.e., 45 hours divided over six days. In addition, the PLC endorsed the right of women to maternity leave of ten weeks assuming that they have completed 180 days of service in the same place prior to delivery. The PLC also set the amount of compensation to be paid in the event of a work-related accident/death or a worker suffering a serious disability (in this case, the equivalent of 3,500 days' salary).⁵² It should be mentioned that this draft law

provoked prolonged discussions in which the government, represented by the Minister of Labor, participated as well as labor unions, employers, and institutions concerned with workers' rights, particularly the Democracy and Workers' Rights Center.

Current labor legislation in practice in the WBGS has many defects due to its age (Palestinian Labor Law No. 11 of 1964 in the Gaza Strip and the Jordanian Labor Law of 1960, modified in 1965). For instance, we find that the law in the Gaza Strip authorizes work inspectors to impose a fine of JD 10 on any establishment that violates the Labor Law (with regard to issues like the hiring of children under 14 years of age, public safety measures and work safety). This also applies to the West Bank. Lacking in the existing legislation is a system of courts specialized in adjudicating labor disputes. In light of the current situation of the judiciary, this means that labor cases remain pending for many years.⁵³

The PNA suspended the application of the Civil Service Law in early 1999 following its implementation for just one month at the end of 1998. The application of this law resulted in many problems since it required the PNA to re-grade employees in accordance with set criteria, taking into account time spent by the employee in the national struggle, and to provide the

necessary finance to enable the law to be implemented. Some PLC members and Palestinian leaders blamed the manner in which the law was put into effect because it required an executive decree, gradual application, and the endorsement of the organizational structures of the ministries (PLC 1999).

6-1-1 Less than half of establishments have work accident insurance

The General Labor Inspection Directorate at the Palestinian Ministry of Labor issued an annual report on the outcome of visits made by its staff to 12,620 establishments in the WBGS with a total number of 82,732 workers (an average of 6.6 workers per establishment). The report showed that only 45 percent of establishments have insurance against accidents at work.⁵⁴ The percentage of accidents in the surveyed establishments involved 1.2 percent of workers, equivalent to 1,029 work accidents (562 minor accidents, 453 major accidents, and 14 accidents resulting in death).

6-1-2 Better working conditions in the public sector

The PCBS conducted a survey on working conditions in the middle of 1997 as a supplement to the labor force survey carried out between 24 May and 10 July 1997.⁵⁵ This survey showed that approximately 15 percent of waged employees in the WBGS were registered in labor unions in 1997 (15.3 percent in the West Bank, 15.6 percent in the Gaza Strip, and 14.2 percent among those who work in Israel and the settlements). The percentage is a little higher among women

⁵⁴ Some establishments circumvent the legal requirement for work accident insurance by insuring a set number of unnamed workers. In the case of injury, a worker then receives medical treatment from this insurance.

⁵⁵ The sample included 4,622 families with 4,736 workers (PCBS 1999k). Due to the importance of the indicators it dealt with and it being the first statistical survey on working conditions in the WBGS, it was used in this report. In addition, no significant developments have been introduced to working conditions in the WBGS.

⁵² *Al-Ayyam* Arabic daily, 28 October 1999.

⁵³ *Al-Yaum Al-Thamen*: weekly *Al-Ayyam* supplement, 28 October 1999.

than among men (17.2 percent and 14.7 percent respectively). There are no significant differences between the West Bank and Gaza Strip in this regard. The survey also showed that just over half of employees with identified wages and members of labor unions were working in the public sector, with approximately one third of employees working in the private sector and the rest, i.e., 17 percent, in other sectors (PCBS 1999k, pp. 48-51).

Union members receive better wages

PCBS data collected in mid-1997 showed that the wages of workers who were members of labor or professional unions were better than those of waged workers who were not union members. The average wage in the second group was 79 percent of that in the first (71 percent for workers in the West Bank, 79 percent for workers in the Gaza Strip, and 86.5 percent for WBGS workers employed in Israel and the settlements) (PCBS 1999k, p.52). Professionals such as engineers, physicians, and lawyers contribute to raising labor and professional union membership and normally receive higher salaries than workers in other categories, particularly unskilled laborers. Fifty-three percent of union members had completed 12 years of schooling, although this group constitute only 19.5 percent of all waged workers (PCBS 1999k, pp.43 & 49).

Labor contracts

Forty percent of WBGS employees worked according to written contracts in mid-1997. Among West Bank employees, this percentage was 46 percent and 67 percent in the Gaza Strip. Only nine percent of those who worked in Israel and Israeli settlements in the same period had written contracts (PCBS 1999k, p.57). The differences in the percentages can be attributed to the fact that public sector employees usually work according to written contracts.

WBGS employees enjoy privileges not given to workers in Israel and Israeli settlements

With the exception of wages, the percentage of employees who enjoy labor rights and benefits in the WBGS is higher than among those who work in Israel. This includes every kind of labor right and benefit, except insurance against work accidents where the percentage is the same as in the West Bank but falls short of that in the Gaza Strip. Workers in the public sector enjoy much greater labor rights and benefits than those in the private sector (Appendix, Table 6-1).

6-2 Decline in Palestinians receiving assistance from the Ministry of Social Affairs

The monthly average number of families who received assistance from the Ministry of Social Affairs in the WBGS was 29,198 in 1998. Of this number, 25,802 families received cash assistance on a monthly basis, 2,655 received free health insurance, and 876 (all from the Gaza Strip) received assistance in kind. The monthly average number of individuals who received cash assistance from the Ministry in 1998 was 97,192, a decline of 1.9 percent compared to 1997. It is not certain that this is due to an improvement in the livelihood of poor families in the WBGS. The percentage of individuals in the WBGS population receiving financial assistance from the Ministry also decreased from 3.6 percent in 1997 to 3.4 percent in 1998. In the Gaza Strip, the decrease was from 5.2 percent in 1997 to 4.9 percent in 1998 and from 2.6 percent in 1997 to 2.5 percent in 1998 in the West Bank.⁵⁶

⁵⁶ The percentage was calculated as follows: the monthly average number of family members who received assistance from the Palestinian Ministry of Social Affairs during the year divided by the estimated population in the middle of that year. (Sources: The Palestinian Ministry of Social Affairs monthly statistics on the number of recipients of their assistance in 1997-1998. For the population projections, we relied on the PCBS

No modifications were introduced to the Ministry's scale of assistance, which was decided in early 1988 and is based on a progressive scale increasing in line with the size of the family (a one-member family is paid NIS 96). The real value of the Ministry's assistance is eroded by the fall in the purchasing power of the Israeli shekel, which devalued by 20.6 percent from the beginning of 1996 to the end of 1998.⁵⁷

The Institution for the Families of Martyrs, Prisoners, and the Injured also provided monthly assistance to 7,779 families in the WBGS (November 1998), benefiting a total of 33,335 individuals, of whom 15,831 (4,220 families) were in the West Bank. The families of martyrs were paid an average of NIS 468 in the Gaza Strip and NIS 343 in the West Bank, while the families of prisoners were paid NIS 600 in the Gaza Strip and NIS 657 in the West Bank. Released prisoners also received a one-time payment, which, on average, amounted to NIS 4,668 in the Gaza Strip and NIS 4,798 in the West Bank.⁵⁸

6-3 Rise in recipients of UNRWA assistance

There were 23,527 families, or 92,100 individuals in WBGS receiving assistance from UNRWA in 1998. Sixty-four percent of these families lived in the Gaza Strip, representing 69 percent of all individual recipients of aid. The number of families receiving UNRWA assistance in 1998 increased by 7.5 percent in the Gaza Strip

1998e and the press conference on the final results of the general census of 1997).

⁵⁷ The real value of the Israeli shekel in February 1995 was 38 percent of its value in the same month of 1988 (MAS - Shaban and Al-Botmeh 1995).

⁵⁸ Palestinian Ministry of Social Affairs statistics on assistance given by the Institution for the Families of Martyrs, Prisoners and the Injured in November 1998.

and by 2.3 percent in the West Bank in relation to 1997 figures. The number of individuals that received assistance in the WBGS increased by 6 percent in the same period (7.3 percent in the West Bank and 5.4 percent in the Gaza Strip). The percentage of recipients of UNRWA assistance in the WBGS increased by 0.1 percent in relation to the total population between 1997-1998. In 1998, this percentage was 3.4 percent (WBGS), 6.5 percent (Gaza Strip) and 1.6 percent (West Bank).⁵⁹

6-4 Rise in recipients of assistance from Zakat committees

Assistance provided by the Zakat committees mainly takes the form of cash, especially for the registered families that require regular assistance. These committees also provide assistance in kind to both these families and other families considered less needy. In addition, the Zakat committees provide services to the registered families, as well as cut-price services to families and individuals who use the committees' facilities such as hospitals, medical clinics, schools, and kindergartens (MAS – Hilal & Malki 1997, pp.39-40).

In 1998, there were 64 Zakat committees operating in the WBGS belonging to the Zakat Fund at the Waqf Ministry. Of these committees, 51 were in the West Bank and 13 in the Gaza Strip. These committees assisted 9,301 orphans, of whom 8,701 were in the West Bank and the remaining 600 in the Gaza Strip, and 15,144 families, 7,144 in the West Bank and 8,000 in the Gaza Strip. The Zakat Fund records showed a 13.4 percent increase in the number of orphans in the Zakat 'Orphan

⁵⁹ Taken from UNRWA statistics on the number of recipients of assistance in 1997 and 1998. The number was calculated in the same way as for the Palestinian Ministry of Social Affairs.

Sponsoring' program in 1998 compared with 1996.⁶⁰

The Zakat committees belonging to the Zakat Fund provided emergency (i.e., non-regular) assistance to an unlimited number of families. Thousands of families also benefit from the facilities they provide, especially in the field of health. Their programs include assistance to needy students in the form of payment of school fees and providing stationery and schoolbags, and, in some instances, assistance to university students. No precise data are available on these services.⁶¹

The assistance given to orphans was NIS 100 monthly in both the West Bank and Gaza Strip, and to needy families about NIS 150 in the West Bank and between NIS 50-100 in the Gaza Strip according to the size of the family.⁶² Although the number of those who benefit from the committees' services is high, their contribution to the alleviation of poverty is limited due to the meager sums offered.

6-5 Low demand for homes for the elderly

⁶⁰ Data about the Zakat Committees in the Gaza Strip are restricted to those that are registered with the Zakat Fund in the Waqf Ministry. These committees provide only a small amount of assistance compared to the other unregistered committees that exist. A MAS study revealed that there are three other Zakat committees in Gaza, in addition to three Islamic charitable institutions, that perform similar services. These institutions provided assistance to 5,281 orphans and 25,330 families. The Gaza Zakat Committee (not included in the Zakat Fund list) provided assistance to 1,870 orphans and 3,250 families in 1997 (MAS - Hilal and Malki 1997; MAS - *Social Monitor* issue number 2).

⁶¹ Data relating to Zakat committee assistance in 1998 taken from the Waqf and Social Affairs Ministry.

⁶² Ibid.

In 1998, there were 18 homes for the elderly in the WBGS, 15 in the West Bank and three in the Gaza Strip. The West Bank homes were located as follows: nine in the center (three in the Ramallah governorate, five in the Jerusalem governorate, and one in Jericho), three in the north (two in Nablus and one in Jenin), and three in the south (one in Bethlehem, one in Beit Jala, and one in Hebron) (Shalabi 1999).

Twelve of the homes were run by local NGOs, five by foreign institutions, and one by the government (Shalabi 1999).

The accommodation capacity of these homes was 439 beds: 53 in the Gaza Strip, 259 in the central West Bank, 81 in the south and 46 in the north. There were 328 inhabitants in these homes in 1998, an occupancy rate of 75 percent. This figure also includes 69 handicapped people, who ideally ought to be accommodated in specialized institutions. The real occupancy rate is therefore only 59 percent of the total capacity. This clearly indicates that there is a low demand for the services of these homes in Palestinian society, due mainly to cultural and social reasons. These homes provide services to only 0.5 percent of the total number of elderly Palestinians in the WBGS. A study by Fahoum Shalabi recommended that no new homes for the elderly be built at present and that attempts should be made to keep the elderly in their own homes and provide them with various services there (Shalabi 1999).

6-6 Water and electricity supplies enjoyed by majority of West Bank

Data from the Palestinian Ministry of Local Government indicated that 89 percent of population centers in the West Bank are linked to a public electricity grid. The percentage of population centers

linked to water grids is 71 percent,⁶³ and locations not linked to the grid are provided with water by way of rainfall collection wells or nearby local sources.

The percentage of WBGS households linked to a public water grid accessible from inside the house was 85 percent in 1998 (79 percent in the West Bank and 99 percent in the Gaza Strip). The percentage in the center of the West Bank was 97 percent compared with 72 percent in both the southern and northern regions (PCBS 1999I, p.170).

Six percent of WBGS households relied on domestic rainwater collection wells as a source of water for domestic use in 1998. This was common in the West Bank but very rare in the Gaza Strip (only one percent of Gaza Strip families use domestic collection wells). The percentage becomes much higher in the north and south of the West Bank than in the central area. Approximately one percent of households, all located in the West Bank, rely on a spring for their domestic water requirements.

The average monthly water consumption of households relying on public networks for domestic use is higher than in households that rely on other water sources (21 cubic meters compared with 11 cubic meters for families using wells, 11 cubic meters for families using springs, and 8 cubic meters for those who obtain their water from water tanks).

In addition, 96.5 percent of WBGS households evaluated the quality of water they receive as good. Only 15 percent of Gaza Strip households, where the quality of the water is greatly inferior to that in the West Bank, evaluated their water supply as good compared with 86 percent of West Bank households. One percent of

households in the West Bank considered the water they receive as poor compared with 31 percent of Gaza Strip households (PCBS 1998a, p.35).

The houses of 38 percent of WBGS families were linked to a public sewerage network (32 percent in the West Bank and 52 percent in the Gaza Strip), compared with 33.7 percent at the end of the previous year (24 percent in the West Bank and 51 percent in the Gaza Strip), indicating that progress is being made in this field (PCBS 1999i, p.169).⁶⁴

Ninety percent of Palestinians in the WBGS owned their homes or occupied them free of charge in 1998 (88 percent in the West Bank and 96 percent in the Gaza Strip). The percentage of families owning their homes in the center of the Bank (78 percent of households) is lower than in the north and south of the West Bank (91 percent and 93 percent respectively) (PCBS 1999i, p.168). Roughly the same percentages were found in the Population, Housing and Establishments Census of 1997.

Summary

No significant modifications have been introduced to legislation relating to social security or work conditions. Up to the time of preparing the material for this issue of the *Social Monitor*, no clear social policy, or even individual programs for particular groups (the elderly, orphans), had been formulated. The PLC is now in the process of endorsing the Labor Law, which will contribute to consolidating and updating labor legislation in the WBGS. It should be mentioned that the PNA suspended the Civil Service Law following several problems resulting from attempts to implement it. The Ministry of Social Affairs is still drawing up a social policy to improve the social care of weak and disadvantaged sectors of society.

⁶³ Ministry of Local Government statistics on electricity and water projects in the West Bank. According to these statistics, there are 480 population centers in the West Bank.

⁶⁴ No comparison should be made between the percentages because the 1997 percentage was the result of the general census, while the 1998 percentage was the result of a sample survey.

Data reveal weak union organization among Palestinian employees, in addition to deterioration in work conditions and rights in the private sector compared with those in the public sector.

In 1998, there was a decline in the number of recipients of assistance from the Ministry of Social Affairs, while the numbers of those who received assistance from UNRWA and the Zakat committees increased. The assistance scale, however, remained the same, which points to erosion in the real value of assistance given by these various parties to needy families and makes the need for the formulation of a national strategy to eradicate poverty more urgent.

STANDARDS OF LIVING

Data from the third round of the PCBS⁶⁵ Household, Expenditure and Consumption Survey covering the period January-December 1998 showed a slight decline in standards of living in the WBS compared with 1997. The data also revealed that variations in standards of living still exist between the Palestinian regions, although a limited improvement was recorded with regard to the gap between the West Bank and Gaza Strip compared with the previous two years.

7-1 Increase in food expenditure

The average monthly household consumption⁶⁶ in the WBS in 1998 was

⁶⁵ The sample included 2,851 families in the WBS, of whom 1,965 were in the West Bank.

⁶⁶ Family consumption includes money spent on buying commodities and paying for services, the

JD 600, representing a decline of 4.6 percent compared with 1997 and 6 percent compared with 1996 calculated at current prices. However, the purchasing power of the Jordanian dinar compared with the Israeli shekel increased by 7.05 percent between 1996-1998.⁶⁷ This means that the average household consumption in the WBS in 1998 according to 1996 prices equals JD 642, indicating that average consumption in 1998 decreased by 1 percent compared with 1997, roughly equal to 1996 average household consumption. The average monthly household consumption in 1998 was JD 547 at current prices, which equals JD 585.5 at 1996 prices. This points to a 2 percent decline in real average household expenditure compared with 1997. These results should be treated with caution for the following reasons:

One: The effect of a possible observation error in regard to the percentage of change cannot be ignored.

Two: The rise in the purchasing power of the dinar has a different impact on households according to their standards of living. The positive impact of the dinar's greater purchasing power on households with a lower standard of living is much less than its impact on better-off households. This is due to the large share of food provisions in the average inflation rate and their large share in the total consumption of

value of commodities and services received by the family from the employer and allocated for family consumption, and commodities produced by the family itself and consumed during the period of registration, as well as the estimated value of owned property. (PCBS 1998f).

⁶⁷ The purchasing power of the Jordanian dinar was calculated as follows: the change in the annual average JD exchange rate in 1997 and 1998 and the period of one year during which the first round of the Household Expenditure and Consumption Survey was conducted (October 1995 to September 1996), deducting from it the annual average rise in the consumer price index of 1997 and 1998. The JD exchange rate and consumer prices were based on PCBS data.

households with lower standards of living.⁶⁸

Data on average monthly per capita consumption in the WBGS has the same implications. The real average per capita expenditure in the WBGS in 1998 (at 1996 prices) declined by 2.2 percent compared with 1997 and by 1.8 percent compared with 1996, despite a drop in unemployment ratios, a higher number of workers employed in Israel, and an improvement in wages. The decline, therefore, points to a rise in the saving levels of households and their attempts to settle debts that they had incurred over the two previous years (UN Special Coordinator 1999).

The general trend that appeared in WBGS between 1996-1998 of greater expenditure on food usually indicates a decline in standards of living (Appendix, Table 7-1). In the same period, however, there was a slight rise in housing expenditure and a tangible decline in the payment of taxes.

7-1-1 Slight decline in consumption and expenditure disparity between WBGS

Data on household consumption and expenditure point to a narrowing of the gap between the West Bank and Gaza Strip. The percentage of per capita expenditure rose in the Gaza Strip in relation to the West Bank from 64 percent

in 1996 to 69 percent in 1998.⁶⁹ Although this decline has positive indicators, the fact that the gap is still large should not be ignored.

The average monthly household rate of consumption in the Gaza Strip in comparison to that in the West Bank rose from 80.2 percent in 1996 to 82.7 percent in 1998, while the average monthly household rate of expenditure in the Gaza Strip in relation to the West Bank rose from 80 percent in 1996 to 83 percent in 1998. A comparison of the data on per capita consumption and per capita expenditure in both the West Bank and the Gaza Strip shows that the gap between them shrank tangibly between 1996 and 1998 (Appendix, Table 7-2).

Data show that in the Gaza Strip percentage expenditure on food in relation to total expenditure was stable during 1996-1998. The data also indicate that the share of food in total expenditure in the West Bank during the same period increased by 1.3 percent between 1996-1998, which can be attributed to the increased share of food in total expenditure in the north and central West Bank. It should be noted, however, that per capita expenditure on food in the Gaza Strip is only two thirds of average per capita expenditure in the West Bank (Table 1).

For the purpose of comparison we will take two expenditure baskets: the first comprises food, clothing, and housing (basic needs basket) and the second, the items of the first basket in addition to health and personal care, education, transportation, telecommunications, utensils, furniture, and other household necessities (average needs basket).

⁶⁸ Food provisions represent 40.5 percent of the basket on which the consumer price index is calculated. The average annual inflation of food provisions went up by 7.3 percent in 1997 and 1998, while the rise in the general price index was 5.6 percent (PCBS 1999a). Food contributed about 98 percent to inflation in the WBGS in the first half of 1998 and 55 percent in the second half (MAS - *Economic Monitor*, Nos. 4 and 5). This indicates that the rise in the purchase power of the JD had a less positive impact on the lower standard of living groups because their consumption is primarily food, whose prices increased by a percentage that equaled the increase in the purchase power of the JD.

⁶⁹ Average per capita monthly expenditure in the West Bank in 1998 was almost equal to that of 1996 according to 1996 prices.

The percentage expenditure of the first basket (basic needs) in relation to total expenditure in the West Bank rose by 2.9 percent (54.3 percent in 1996 compared with 57.2 percent in 1998), while the share of this basket in relation to total expenditure in the Gaza Strip remained almost unchanged (53.2 percent in 1998 compared with 52.8 percent in 1996) (PCBS 1999d, p.150-151).

We find no significant change in the percentage of expenditure on the second basket (average needs) in relation to total expenditure in 1996, 1997, and 1998 in both the West Bank and Gaza Strip. The percentage of expenditure on the second basket in relation to total expenditure is more in the West Bank than in the Gaza Strip by 5 points, having reached 82.6 percent in 1998 (PCBS 1999d).

These indicators should, however, be treated with great caution due to the different patterns of consumption between the two regions, the differences in the prices of commodities and services, and the absolute value of the household budget in each of the two regions. The lower the average monthly expenditure per capita, the less flexible the distribution of the household budget becomes. The family in this case is forced to distribute its expenditure on things it cannot do without, such as basic food supplies, transportation, household necessities, health care and education.

7-1-2 Decline of average per capita expenditure in central West Bank

According to data provided by the Household Expenditure and Consumption Survey, there was a decline of 6 percent in real average monthly expenditure per capita in the central West Bank in 1998 compared with 1997. There was also a slight decline of 0.9 percent in the north of the West Bank, while the south of West Bank recorded an increase of 4.3 percent.

There was no significant change in real average per capita expenditure in the Gaza

Strip, though there was a tangible decrease in the north of the West Bank (at 1996 rates), and to a lesser degree in the center of the West Bank compared with 1996. The Gaza Strip and the south of the West Bank recorded a tangible improvement in the same period (Appendix, Table 7-2). It should be noted that these two regions are the most impoverished of the PNA territories.

The gap in average household and per capita consumption and expenditure that exists between the central West Bank and the rest of the Palestinian districts is large, despite the slight relative improvement in the situation in the north of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. The gap between the central West Bank, which is the region with the highest standard of living, and the Gaza Strip, the region with the lowest standard of living, has shrunk, although it is still large. The gap also grew between the central West Bank and the northern West Bank between 1996-1998. The central West Bank recorded a decline in average monthly expenditure per capita in 1998 compared with monthly per capita expenditure in the WBGS.⁷⁰

We draw attention to the following considerations:

In 1998, both the West Bank and Gaza Strip were subject to fewer days of closure by the Israelis than in 1997 and 1996. The data allow for recognition of the disparity in the impact of closure exerted on various regions. The data also reflect the fluctuation in expenditure and consumption levels in the north of the

⁷⁰ The sharp decline in average monthly per capita expenditure in the Ramallah and Jericho governorates in 1998, which was 14 percent in comparison with 1997 and about 10 percent in comparison with 1996, was responsible for this. The small size of the 1998 sample may have been a factor, particularly as no economic, social or political developments were recorded that might explain the sharp decline in average monthly per capita expenditure.

West Bank more than in any other region, indicating that it was affected by closure more than other regions.

It is quite likely that the limited decrease in expenditure and consumption levels in various regions is accidental. The period studied is not sufficient to make accurate assumptions concerning the stability of these trends. The decrease does not necessarily mean that there was an improvement in standards of living in the poorer regions, particularly as the average monthly expenditure per capita (nominal and real) in the central West Bank declined during the previous three years.

A disparity appeared in average prices among WBGS regions and governorates, as well as in regard to inflation rates. This means that the same quantity of money can be exchanged against varying quantities of commodities and services in the different regions and cities and requires greater care to be exerted in making comparisons between these areas.

The Palestinian regions are listed in the following order according to their average per capita expenditure compared with that in the central West Bank in 1998: If the average per capita expenditure in the central West Bank is considered as 100 percent, then that in the south is 66 percent, in the north 56 percent, and in the Gaza Strip, 52 percent. There are also differences in the various regions of the Gaza Strip, listed here in order according to their average per capita expenditure compared with that in the West Bank: Gaza City 60.5 percent, the north of the Gaza Strip 55 percent, the central Gaza Strip 50 percent, and the south of the Gaza Strip 42 percent.

Household expenditure and consumption data of 1998 show an increase in expenditure on food provisions in the central West Bank. It should be noted that the absolute value of average expenditure on food provisions (at current prices) changed little. There has been, however, a tangible decrease in

relative expenditure on transportation, telecommunications, education and tax items. It is also noticeable that the percentage of expenditure on food in the Gaza Strip is less than in other regions, which is not consistent with other indicators showing that the Gaza Strip is the most impoverished region. The average expenditure on meat is lower than in other regions, which may partially explain the low percentage of food consumption to total consumption in the Gaza Strip. The percentage of expenditure on education, recreation and tax in the Gaza Strip was higher than the average of these items in the WBGS, while the percentage of expenditure on clothing, footwear, transportation, telecommunications and medical care was lower.

Disparities between the West Bank regions were mainly related to the percentage of expenditure on selected consumption groups in addition to food. In the central West Bank, more is spent on housing and recreational activities, while in the south more is spent on medical care and less on taxes and housing. In the north, more is spent on transportation, telecommunications, taxes and education.

7-2 Regional disparity in standards of living widens

In terms of average monthly per capita expenditure, WBGS governorates were classified on a descending scale as follows: Jerusalem, Ramallah-Al-Bireh-Jericho, Bethlehem, Nablus, Tulkarem, Qalqilia, Hebron, Jenin, and Gaza governorates. There is a big discrepancy between the Gaza Strip governorates (with the lowest average expenditure) and Jerusalem (with the highest average expenditure). The average monthly per capita expenditure in the Gaza Strip governorates is only 39.8 percent that of Jerusalem, while the average monthly per capita expenditure in the governorates of Jenin and Hebron is also less than half of that in the Jerusalem governorate. The

Ramallah governorate came second after the Jerusalem governorate in terms of average monthly per capita expenditure, but this average was still only 61.5 percent of that in Jerusalem. In the Bethlehem governorate, the average was 58 percent of that in the Jerusalem governorate.

Real average monthly per capita expenditure in the Ramallah-Al-Bireh and Jericho governorates declined in 1998 by 16 percent compared with 1997, and in the Nablus governorate by 4 percent. In the Jerusalem, Bethlehem, and Hebron governorates, real average per capita expenditure improved by 7 percent, 4.8 percent, and 4.4 percent respectively over the same period. The improvement was slight in the Jenin and Tulkarem governorates (1 percent in each). There was no significant change in real average per capita expenditure in the Gaza Strip in 1998 compared with 1997.

Data on monthly per capita expenditure in 1996, 1997, and 1998 indicate that the gap between the Jerusalem governorate and the other governorates has grown larger. Monthly per capita expenditure in the Gaza Strip declined compared with the Jerusalem governorate from 40.6 percent in 1996 to 39.8 percent in 1998, having previously gone up to 42.6 percent in 1997 (Appendix, Table 7-3).

The share of food in average total monthly per capita expenditure in all the Palestinian governorates increased, with the exception of the Hebron governorate where it declined. The Gaza Strip maintained almost the same share. In terms of the share of food in relation to average total per capita expenditure in 1998, the Palestinian governorates are listed in descending order as follows: Ramallah-Al-Bireh and Jericho 44.1 percent, Bethlehem 44 percent, Hebron 41.3 percent, Tulkarem 41.1 percent, Jerusalem 39.4 percent, Jenin 39.1 percent, and the Gaza governorates 38.3 percent. It is noticeable that the results of this indicator are not consistent with the other indicators relating to standards of living, especially in the Gaza

Strip. Other indicators place the Gaza Strip towards the bottom of Palestinian governorates in terms of standards of living, while this indicator put it at the top. This poses a serious question regarding the ability of this indicator to classify standards of living in Palestinian society (PCBS 1999i, pp.50-51).

The percentage of expenditure on health care in the Hebron governorate rose remarkably from 4.2 percent in 1997 to 7.3 percent in 1998. This may point to increasing public reliance on private health services. The Jerusalem governorate maintained the same low percentage of expenditure on health care, while the percentage decreased in the Jenin district and the Gaza Strip governorates. Changes in other governorates were slight (PCBS 1999i, pp.50-51). Data on Jerusalem indicates that a high percentage of people in that governorate depend on services provided by health insurance while Gaza Strip data appears to reflect an improvement in the provision of governmental health services there.

The proportion of total per capita expenditure on education remained high in the Gaza Strip and Nablus governorate, i.e., 4.7 percent in each for the second year in a row. The proportion remained low at 2.9 percent in the Jerusalem governorate and did not change in the other governorates (PCBS 1997a, 1998b, 1999d).

The Gaza Strip governorates recorded a relatively high average of expenditure on recreational activities in 1998, i.e., 4.9 percent of total per capita expenditure, compared with the other Palestinian governorates. The Tulkarem and Qalqilia governorate spent the least (1.5 percent) after Nablus (1.77 percent) (PCBS 1999d, pp.50-51). This may be explained by the high percentage of workers, double the number, who work in the public sector in the Gaza Strip compared with the West Bank.

The general trend in the period 1996 to 1998 was towards increased expenditure on the 'basic needs' basket. The percentage of expenditure on basic needs in the Jerusalem, Jenin, Nablus, Tulkarem, Qalqilia, Ramallah, and Al-Bireh and Jericho districts went up, declining only in the Hebron district. The Gaza Strip and Bethlehem governorates did not witness any significant change. The percentage of households' monthly expenditure on the 'basic needs' basket in 1998 ranged from 59.9 percent of total per capita expenditure in the Jerusalem governorate to 52.6 percent in the Gaza Strip. Meanwhile, the percentage of expenditure on the 'average needs' basket went up in relation to monthly average per capita expenditure in 1998 compared with 1996 in the governorates of the north of the West Bank. No significant change occurred in the other governorates.

The governorates were put in the following descending order in terms of the proportion of the 'average needs' basket in relation to total expenditure: Bethlehem (84.5 percent), Hebron (84.4 percent), Nablus (84.2 percent), Ramallah and Jericho (82.6 percent), Tulkarem and Qalqilia (81.9 percent), Jerusalem (80.6 percent), Jenin (80.4 percent), and finally the Gaza governorates (77 percent) (PCBS 1997a, 1998b, 1999d).

7-3 Families with the lowest standards of living prevail in north and south of West Bank

Data on household expenditure and consumption in 1996, 1997, and 1998 point to a decline in the percentage of worse-off households in all regions, with the exception of the central West Bank where the percentage increased. **Compared with 1997, the percentage of worse-off households in 1998 increased tangibly in the governorates of the central West Bank and to a lesser**

degree in the south of the West Bank, raising the percentage of worse-off households in the West Bank and therefore in the WBGS as a whole. The percentage of well-off households declined in the governorates of the central and south West Bank and increased in the north, while the percentage remained stable in the Gaza Strip (Appendix, Table 7-4).

7-4 Large households have lower standards of living

PCBS data of 1998 does not show any significant change in the correlation between household size and the standard of living. These data indicate that a clear correlation still exists between household size and the standard of living. The percentage of well-off households is higher amongst small households and decreases with the increase in the household size. The percentage of worse-off families increases with household size, except in households consisting of 1-3 members, in which case the percentage of worse-off households increases rather than decreases compared with households with 4-5 members. This may be attributed to the fact that a high percentage of these 1-3 people households consist of elderly people.

Data also show that the majority of well-off households depend on the public sector for their income. Well-off households can be classified in the following descending order by their source of income: wages and salaries from the public sector, family business, wages and salaries from Israel and abroad, wages and salaries from the private sector, and finally, financial assistance from inside and outside the country. This may reflect the tendency of WBGS workers who work in Israel and settlements to save earnings in anticipation of closures imposed by Israel on the WBGS and highlights the occupational insecurity of these workers. It may also

indicate that the families of workers in the public sector have access to various sources of additional income, such as overtime, second jobs, or private projects.

7-5 Gap between wages in WBGS and Israel and settlements

The median wage at current prices increased at various rates in all regions between 1995 and 1998. Calculating these rates at 1996 prices and adopting this year as a base year, the median wage can be seen as stable at the fixed prices in both the West Bank and Gaza Strip in 1998 compared with 1996. The median wage of workers from the WBGS who work in Israel and settlements witnessed a rise of approximately 10 percent, while their average daily wage at current prices between 1995-1998 increased by more than one third. The median wage in both the West Bank and Gaza Strip also increased and, at current prices, has increased in general in all regions.

PCBS data also show an improvement of 2.4 percent in the real average daily wage of WBGS workers employed in Israel and the settlements in 1998 and an increase of 5 percent in the real average daily wage of workers in the West Bank. The average declined in the Gaza Strip by 2.1 percent in 1998 compared with 1996 (Appendix, Table 7-7).

A gap appears between average wages in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, as well as between WBGS workers and those worked in Israel and settlements in the period between 1995-1998. Although the gap between the wages of West Bank and Gaza Strip workers shrank between 1995-1996 and 1996-1997, it widened again in 1998.

7-5-1 Wage gap between sexes

PCBS data indicate that the gap between male and female wages widened between

1996 and 1998. The gap expanded in agricultural activities, construction, transportation, storage and communications, but contracted in mining, quarries, manufacturing industries, commercial activities, restaurant, hotel and other service activities and other fields (Appendix, Table 7-6).

7-5-2 Disparity in average wages between sectors

Wages according to economic activity in the WBGS are listed in descending order as follows: construction,⁷¹ transportation-storing-telecommunications, commerce-hotels-restaurants, mining-quarries-manufacturing industry, services and other branches, and agriculture. The average daily wage in agriculture is about 59 percent of that in construction. This percentage rose during the previous three years.⁷² It should be noted that these figures hide large differences between the regions. For example, the average daily wage in 1998 in agriculture in the West Bank was NIS 44.7, in the Gaza Strip NIS 27.3, and amongst Palestinians working in Israel and the settlements NIS 64.2. The same differences apply to all economic sectors.⁷³

⁷¹ WBGS workers employed in construction in Israel receive higher average daily wages than their counterparts in other sectors in Israel. The same applies to construction workers in the West Bank. However, the situation in the Gaza Strip differs. The average daily wage of construction workers in the Gaza Strip was NIS 39.2 compared to NIS 47.5 for workers in other sectors. Care is required, therefore, when placing economic sectors in order according to the average daily wage.

⁷² Of WBGS workers employed in Israel in 1998, 56.7 percent worked in the construction sector. In that period, 21.7 percent of all WBGS workers were employed in Israel. The average daily wage in construction was as follows: West Bank NIS 70.6, Gaza Strip NIS 39.2, and Israel NIS 109.7 (PCBS 1999f, pp.61, 82-85).

⁷³ The percentage of the average WBGS wage in relation to that of Palestinian workers employed in Israel in 1998 by sector was as follows: agriculture, hunting, and fishing (69.6 percent in the West Bank and 42.5 percent in the Gaza Strip), mining, stone-cutting, and manufacturing

7-5-3 Gap between West Bank and Gaza Strip wages expands

PCBS data show that wage differences between the West Bank and Gaza Strip increased in 1998, with the average wage in the Gaza Strip decreasing from 85 percent in comparison with the West Bank in the first quarter of the year to 79 percent in the fourth quarter. At the same time, the gap between the average wages of West Bank workers and the wages of those who work in Israel and the settlements contracted, with the average wages of West Bank workers increasing from 57 percent in the first quarter of 1998 to 60 percent in the fourth quarter of the same year in comparison to workers in Israel and the settlements. In the Gaza Strip the percentage remained almost stable (PCBS 1999e).

7-6 Decline in unemployment rates

Unemployment rates in the WBGS declined in 1998 compared with the two previous years to 14.4 percent, the lowest rate since 1995. The general tendency in 1998 was towards a decrease in unemployment in the West Bank and the stabilization of figures in the Gaza Strip (Appendix, Table 7-5).

The PCBS estimated the WBGS labor force to be approximately 661,000 people in the last quarter of 1998. While 84,000 individuals were fully unemployed, another 87,000 had given up hope of ever finding work and had withdrawn completely from the potential labor force. The unemployment rate doubles, therefore, when one considers those who are outside

industries (58 percent and 40.58 percent), construction (64.4 percent and 35.7 percent), commerce, restaurants, and hotels (51.8 percent and 33.9 percent), transport, storage, telecommunications, (65.7 percent and 42 percent), the services sector and other branches (60.80 percent and 57.7 percent) (PCBS 1999f, pp.76-81).

the labor force due to the fact that they believe it is pointless to attempt to seek work (PCBS 1999e).

Workers in the governmental sector in the WBGS remained almost stable at about 17 percent of the active labor force in 1998. The percentage in the Gaza Strip fluctuated from 26-28 percent and in the West Bank, from 13-14 percent during the four rounds of the labor force survey conducted by the PCBS in 1998.⁷⁴

7-6-1 Rise in the workers in Israel and the settlements

The percentage of WBGS workers employed in Israel and the settlements in 1998 rose in comparison with previous years. The percentage was the highest since 1995, marking an increase from 20 percent of the total labor force in the West Bank in 1995 to 24 percent in 1998. The percentage also rose in the Gaza Strip over the same period from 3 to 16 percent, despite the fact that it had decreased in 1996 and 1997 (PCBS 1999f, p.61).

Summary

In 1998, there was a tangible decrease in unemployment compared with the previous two years. The number of WBGS workers in Israel increased and there was also a sharp drop in the number of days of closure imposed by the Israeli authorities on the Palestinian territories. Along with the fact that wages also improved, these observations point to a probable improvement in standards of living in the WBGS. Nevertheless, the available indicators on expenditure and consumption levels of Palestinian households in the WBGS show a decline in real average expenditure. This may be attributed to the inclination of people to save money or to cover the deficit in the family budget of the previous years.

Although it would appear that there was a slight contraction in the gap between the West Bank and Gaza Strip in 1998

⁷⁴ PCBS unpublished data.

compared with the two previous years, this gap is still large in terms of standards of living and wages, in addition to regional variations. The level of contraction and the short period of time covered are insufficient to conclude that the narrowing of the gap between the two territories is following, or will continue to follow, a set pattern. Data from 1998 also point to tangible differences between the wages of the two sexes in a number of economic sectors and it is vital that PNA policy should attempt to reduce the large gaps that exist not only between the two regions, but also between men and women.

8- CRIME, VICTIMS AND ROAD ACCIDENTS

Data in the PCBS Crime and Victimization Statistics of 1998 provide details on criminal acts reported to or uncovered by the Palestinian police, people detained or convicted in Palestinian jails, road accidents in PNA areas, and court cases. These data do not include any information relating to the part of the Jerusalem governorate annexed by Israel following its occupation of the WBGS in 1967. Far more data were available for 1998 in comparison with 1997 and this may be attributed mainly to improvements in the registration departments at Palestinian police directorates. It is difficult, as a result, to make quantitative comparisons between the two years.

8-1 Rise in reported crime

The number of criminal acts reported in the Palestinian territories increased from 8,765 in 1997 to 22,286 in 1998, 13,397 of them in the West Bank (excluding Jerusalem) and 8,889 in the Gaza Strip. The offenses were classified as follows: criminal assault (29.2 percent), offenses against morality (22.1 percent), theft (12.6

percent), and fraud and forgery (8.1 percent). Other crimes included threatening behavior and physical attacks on public sector employees, crimes related to drugs, kidnapping and attempted kidnapping, rape and attempted rape, and others. It is most probable that the significant rise in criminal offenses is due to an improvement in the performance of registration departments at police directorates in terms of investigating and registering reported offenses. It should also be noted that the public is becoming increasingly prepared to report criminal acts to the police (Appendix, Table 8-1).

8-2 Two-thirds of crimes are classified as assault

The majority (68.1 percent) of all assault offenses in WBGS are classified as assault and battery. In crimes against morality, 17.6 percent in the West Bank are related to drunk and disorderly conduct in a public place. Offenses relating to threatening behavior come first in offenses against morality in the Gaza Strip (44.2 percent). The majority of fraud and forgery offenses (45.6 percent) are classified as issuing checks without sufficient funds (Appendix, Table 8-1).

8-3 Tulkarem governorate has highest crime rate, Nablus the lowest

In 1998, the Tulkarem governorate recorded the highest rate of criminal offenses in the West Bank at 19.7 percent. The second highest was the Ramallah governorate at 15.8 percent, then the Hebron governorate at 14.7 percent and the Jenin governorate at 14.2. The Nablus governorate, the largest in the West Bank, witnessed a tangible decline in the rate of reported criminal acts in 1998, with 7.3

percent of all reported offenses. This represents a reverse of 1997 figures when the Nablus governorate was ranked first in reported West Bank crime, followed by the Ramallah governorate at 20.4 percent, then the Tulkarem governorate at 13.4 percent.

In the Gaza Strip governorates, Khan Yunis had the highest rate of reported criminal offenses at 25.9 percent. Gaza City dropped to second place from 56.6 percent in 1997 to 20.8 percent in 1998. The governorates of the northern Gaza Strip reported 20.5 percent and Rafah 17 percent.

8-4 Ramallah has highest cases of theft

The Ramallah governorate recorded the highest number of cases of theft in the Palestinian territories in 1998 at 21.3 percent, followed by the Qalqilia governorate at 13.5 percent. The Khan Yunis governorate recorded the highest number of assault offenses at 16.3 percent, followed by the governorate of the north of the Gaza Strip at 14 percent and Gaza City at 10.5 percent. The Qalqilia governorate had the highest rate of reported crimes against morality at 15.8 percent, followed by the Rafah governorate at 15.6 percent and the Hebron governorate at 15.4 percent.

8-5 High number of prisoners accused of assault

There were 6,952 detainees in the Palestinian territories, 4,722 in West Bank jails and the rest in Gaza Strip jails. The most common offenses charged were those of assault at 29.4 percent, theft at 13.4 percent, and fraud and forgery at 11.2 percent. These rates correspond to the incidence of these crimes in the total number of criminal offenses recorded in the Palestinian territories. More than one

third (35.3 percent) of prisoners in Palestinian jails, estimated at 1,842 persons, were convicted of crimes of a financial nature. Those convicted of theft made up 15.5 percent of prisoners, assault 11.7 percent, and fraud and forgery 7.8 percent. These rates differ from the incidence of these crimes in the Palestinian territories.

8-6 Most juvenile offenders come from large families

There were 1,460 juvenile offenders, 706 from the West Bank and 754 from the Gaza Strip. Females represented 2.7 percent (1.4 percent in the West Bank and 1.3 percent in the Gaza Strip) of juveniles charged with an offense. Most of the charges (70.5 percent) leveled against these juveniles involved attacks on others or on property (Appendix, Table 8-2).

More than half (57.6 percent) of the accused juveniles were from the 16-18 age group. This percentage drops to 34.9 percent in the 13-15 age group and to 7.5 percent in the under-12s. The majority of these juveniles (60.1 percent) are illiterate or finished only elementary level education. Most (65.4 percent) belong to families with more than seven members, and 72 percent of accused juveniles in the Gaza Strip come from families with more than eight members. Most of the accused juveniles in the West Bank (72.3 percent) belong to families with medium-size incomes (Appendix, Table 8-2).

There were 786 juveniles institutionalized in approved reform schools in the Palestinian territories in 1998. The most common convictions related to burglary, theft, and battery (63.6 percent). In 1998, there were 527 juveniles on remand in Al-Rabi' Institution for Social Care in the Gaza Strip, including 143 convicted juveniles.

8-7 More than a quarter of a million cases before Palestinian courts

There were 169,959 cases heard at Palestinian regular courts in 1998, of which 108,249 cases were in the West Bank and 61,710 in the Gaza Strip. Approximately 80 percent of the cases in the West Bank and 98 percent of those in the Gaza Strip were concluded. It should be noted that in addition to the cases heard in 1998, a large number - 101,469 - were carried forward from 1997: 89,102 in the West Bank and 12,367 in the Gaza Strip. There were, therefore, more than a quarter of a million cases (271,428) registered at the regular courts in the Palestinian territories in 1998, of which 197,351 were at West Bank courts and the rest in the Gaza Strip. Only 54.5 percent of the cases heard that year or carried forward from previous years were concluded. The remaining cases, 123,375 or 45.5 percent, are classified as pending. Of these, 109,873 were in the West Bank and 13,502 in the Gaza Strip (Appendix, Table 8-3).

The accumulation of cases and the high percentage that are pending are a negative indicator of the failure of the judiciary. There is no doubt that concerted efforts are required to develop the Palestinian judicial system.

The PCBS Crime and Victimization Report of 1998 shows that there were 69 judges of both sexes in Palestinian courts, which means 2.38 judges per 100,000 citizens. Of these judges, there were 33 males and one female judge in the West Bank, which means 1.83 judges per 100,000 citizens, and 34 males and one female judge in the Gaza Strip, which means 3.37 judges per 100,000 citizens. The number of working lawyers of both sexes in the Palestinian courts was 1,040 in 1998: 633 males and 52 females in the West Bank and 320 males and 35 females in the Gaza Strip. There were 45 public prosecutors in the WBGs in 1998, 18 in the West Bank and the remainder in the Gaza Strip. All the public prosecutors

were males.

8-8 Road accidents, casualties, and fatalities continue to rise

The number of reported road accidents in the Palestinian territories rose from 7,186 in 1996 to 7,640 in 1998 (5,607 in the West Bank and 2,033 in the Gaza Strip). This represents an increase of 6.3 percent, a significant amount, especially in light of the fact that casualties resulted from 77.8 percent of these accidents. The number of casualties resulting from these accidents was 8,806. Of these, 5,513 or 62.6 percent were light injuries, 2,456 or 27.8 percent medium injuries, 639 or 7.2 percent serious injuries, and 198 or 1.7 percent fatalities. There was an increase of 10 percent in the number of fatalities compared with the figure of 180 in 1997. These figures point to the need to continue to implement traffic control measures on WBGs roads, to increase the monitoring of traffic and vehicles, and enhance public awareness of road accident hazards.

A little more than one fifth (20.8 percent) of the road accidents in the West Bank occurred in the Ramallah governorate, followed by the Hebron governorate (17.7 percent) and the Nablus governorate (16.3 percent). The governorates of Gaza and north Gaza came first in the number of road accidents in the Gaza Strip, representing 60.1 percent of the total.

The Nablus governorate had the highest number (20.8 percent) of casualties resulting from road accidents in the West Bank, followed by the Hebron governorate (16.8 percent) and the Ramallah governorate (14.3 percent). In the Gaza Strip, the majority of casualties resulting from road accidents (53.9 percent) occurred in Gaza City and north Gaza (Appendix, Table 8-4).

There were 1,487 children below the age of seven injured in road accidents in the Palestinian territories in 1998. Of this figure, 972 were injured in the West Bank and the rest in the Gaza Strip. There were also 58 child fatalities from road accidents, 27 in the West Bank and 31 in the Gaza Strip, compared with 80 child road accident fatalities in 1997.

Summary

There has been a noticeable improvement in the performance of the authorities responsible for monitoring and registering criminal offenses, road accidents and casualties. Nevertheless, crime data still continue to have several shortcomings, most important of which is the continued reluctance on the part of the public to report accidents or criminal offenses due to the prevailing tribal system of solving differences and problems. In addition, the public has a low level of confidence in the efficiency of the relevant authorities and in the ability of the judiciary to adjudicate at an appropriate speed.

Data on crime are characterized by a lack of statistics on variables such as gender, age group, social and occupational status. There is also a lack of consistency in regard to the classification of reported criminal offenses in the West Bank and Gaza Strip and from one governorate to another. Also, the inconsistent classification of cases and different courts in the West Bank and Gaza Strip make it difficult to compare the data of the two regions.

The 1998 data point to the need for the relevant authorities to pay special attention to tackling juvenile crime and its causes. The judicial system must be strengthened and assisted to replace that of tribal adjudication. The high number of road accidents must be addressed since there are many casualties -some resulting in serious handicaps - and deaths every year.

Criminal offenses need to be defined more clearly and specifically in the classifications adopted by the police and the PCBS. For instance, some acts of violence against women (by the husband, brother or father) are not even classified as a criminal offense. The same applies to children and this situation requires special legislation. Data should also include violations perpetrated by the security services against citizens (imprisonment on political grounds or detention without charge or trial). It would also be helpful to identify the place of the crime and the relation of the perpetrator to the victim. It is apparent that some offenses are not reported for various reasons (family considerations, lack of awareness of rights, or lack of confidence in the confidentiality of data). It is therefore essential to develop suitable forms of research related to the relevant subject and not to restrict research to police data or general surveys.

9- LEGAL ENVIRONMENT ⁷⁵

After being officially inaugurated, the Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC) faced the task of consolidating the existing laws in the PNA territories.⁷⁶ These laws are a combination of Egyptian law, Israeli military orders (in both the West Bank and Gaza Strip, but with some variations), and Jordanian laws.

Since the inception of the PNA in 1994, the legislative process has passed through two stages, one prior to the election of the PLC and the other after the PLC assumed its responsibilities.

⁷⁵ This section is limited to monitoring the development of the legislative process in the PNA.

⁷⁶ PLC: Laws 1996-1998, p.5.

9-1 The first stage: the PNA Council holds legislative and executive powers

Initially, the PNA Council held both legislative and executive powers according to the Oslo II Agreement (September 1995). The President of the PNA specified the legislative procedures in Law No. 4, promulgated on 17 April 1995. The law states that the competent ministry or body should prepare the legislative document or basic elements to be included in the draft law, then refer them to Diwan Al-Fatwa (Al-Fatwa and Legislation Department), which in turn formulates them in an appropriate manner. The Diwan Al-Fatwa would confer with the relevant ministry or body, as well as with other related ministries, and coordinate among them to produce a draft legislation for the Secretary General of the PNA Council. The Council would then refer it to a ministerial committee formed according to a decree issued by the PNA President. The committee, comprising a number of ministers and the Head of the Fatwa and Legislation Department, would study the legislation and submit its recommendations to the Council of Ministers. Once endorsed by the Council of Ministers, the legislation would be returned to the Fatwa to be put it in a suitable legal form, submitted by the Diwan to the PNA President for promulgation and published in the Official Gazette (Sisalem et al. 1998, pp.29-30). Law No. 5 of 1995 affirmed that the President of the PNA should promulgate legislation after endorsement by the PNA Council (Sisalem et al. 1998, pp.31-32).

These two laws, Nos. 4 and 5, regulated legislative procedures at the PNA in the period prior to the PLC. Prior to these two laws, five other laws were endorsed and promulgated by the PNA President. They related to the transfer of powers and filling the legal vacuum that resulted from the implementation of the Palestinian-

Israeli agreement known as the Gaza-Jericho Accord.⁷⁷

The PNA President promulgated 12 laws in 1995 and four laws in 1996. These laws dealt with economic issues,⁷⁸ the establishment of governmental and public institutions, and regulating the functions of certain institutions.⁷⁹ They also dealt with modifications to certain rules in the applicable laws and regulating the legislative and presidential elections,⁸⁰ issues relating to interpreters, and exempting diplomatic and consular vehicles from licensing fees.

Some specialists believe that this stage of legislation "confused basic legislation (laws) and secondary legislation (regulations and bills)" and was distinguished by "the weak role of the Council of Ministers in legislation," as well as the fact that "the legislator in some cases did not refer to the source of his/her power".⁸¹ Some laws were strongly

⁷⁷ The President promulgated two laws in 1994. These laws transferred authority for municipal and village affairs to the Ministry of Local Government and extended the jurisdiction of the High Court to the West Bank. The President also promulgated three laws in 1995. These were the law on government law suits, a law to abrogate a number of military orders, and a law establishing the Traffic Department.

⁷⁸ The President promulgated three laws organizing certain aspects of economic activity. These were the law on the intensification of investment, the law modifying the exchange of money and the law on the ownership of property.

⁷⁹ These were the law establishing the energy authority, the law to form a customs committee, the law establishing the water authority, the law to form the administration of the salaries fund, the law modifying the regulation of insurance and salaries, the law modifying the Labor Union Law, the law on telecommunications, and the law on the General Control Bureau.

⁸⁰ The Elections Law and the law modifying the Elections Law.

⁸¹ Decision No. 1 of 1994, on the continued application of the laws, regulations and orders that were applicable prior to 5 June 1967, decision No. 8 of 1995 granting officers, non-commissioned officers and members of the intelligence services the status of judicial police, and decision No. 287 of 1995 regarding the powers of the Attorney General. All these

criticized, like the Investment Intensification Law⁸² that was repealed.

9-2 The second stage: the PLC

The mechanism of promulgating laws changed following the election of the PLC. The PLC became the competent legislative authority, with the legislative process defined in by-laws and in the Basic Law.⁸³ Draft legislation is submitted to the PLC by the Council of Ministers or by a member of the PLC or one of its committees. The PLC refers draft legislation⁸⁴ to the specialized committee for study and comment and the committee presents its report to the PLC for discussion. The legislation is also referred to the PLC Legal Committee for comment and assessment prior to discussion in the PLC in two separate readings. In the first reading, the articles of the legislation are discussed and voted on article by article, followed by voting on the legislation as a whole. In the second reading, proposed modifications are discussed and voted on. The legislation may still require a third reading, if requested in writing by the Council of Ministers or one-fourth of PLC members,

decisions modified the laws (Abu Hannud 1998, pp.50-53).

⁸² It was prepared by foreign experts in English and then translated into Arabic. It was criticized on both economic and legal grounds. The law was not implemented and was abrogated by another law submitted by the PLC (Abu Hannud 1998, p.36).

⁸³ It was endorsed by the PLC in October 1997 but had not been approved by the PNA President up to the time of writing this report.

⁸⁴ The PLC has 12 permanent committees in addition to the ad hoc committees. The permanent committees are: the Jerusalem Committee, Land and Settlement Committee, Refugee and Palestinians Abroad Committee, Political Committee, Legal Committee, Finance and Budget Committee, Economic Committee, Interior Committee, Education and Social Issues Committee, Natural Resources and Energy Committee, Human Rights and Public Freedoms Monitoring Committee, and the PLC Affairs Committee (Standing Orders of the Legislative Council, Article 48).

before being submitted to the PNA President for assent.

According to PLC by-laws, the PNA President has 30 days in which to ratify legislation once it has been passed by the PLC. Unless the President refers the legislation back to the PLC within this time period with remarks or reasons for rejection, the legislation should be considered as promulgated and must be published in the Official Gazette.⁸⁵ If the President refers the legislation back to the PLC, it is voted on again and, if endorsed by an absolute majority of PLC members (45 members), is considered as passed and published immediately in the Official Gazette.⁸⁶ These procedures aim to expedite the promulgation of legislation organizing the life of society in various fields. The failure to ratify the Basic Law passed by the PLC means that legislation remains subject to the will of the executive authorities.

The Palestinian Independent Commission for Citizens' Rights (PICCR) considered the PLC formula in which a draft law may be considered in force one month after it is referred to the executive for ratification to be: "unsuitable in the Palestinian context due to the lack of legal awareness and of a constitutional or legal tradition to define the relationship between the three branches" (PICCR 1998, p.49). The executive is not bound by the by-laws of the PLC and there is no specific

⁸⁵ The executive used this power one time only when it returned the draft Charitable Associations and NGO Law to the PLC to modify the article that deals with which body is responsible for registration. The executive demanded that the authority for registration be given to the Ministry of Interior. The opposition of PLC members created a legal crisis since voting did not result in an absolute majority, i.e., 45 votes. The PLC Legal Committee finally decided that the objection of the executive was legal and the Ministry of Interior became the body authorized for registration.

⁸⁶ PLC standing orders, Articles 65-72.

mechanism that obliges the executive to respect its will (PICCR 1998, p.48).

9-3 Forty-three draft laws submitted to PLC

In total, forty-five draft laws had been submitted to the PLC by the end of 1998, including three⁸⁷ in 1996 and 17 in 1997. The PLC merged two draft laws together and divided one into two draft laws, making the final number actually 43. The Council of Ministers submitted more than two-thirds of the draft laws, while the rest were submitted by members of the PLC and its committees (14 percent and 17 percent respectively).

The draft laws concerned the following issues:

Approximately half of the draft laws were concerned with regulations related to the functioning of PNA institutions, local authorities, and public institutions. Three-quarters of these draft laws were submitted by the Council of Ministers;⁸⁸ and the rest by PLC⁸⁹ committees (18 percent) and members (5 percent).

Twenty eight percent of the draft laws submitted to the PLC dealt with regulating economic activities. Most of them (58 percent) were submitted by the Council of

Ministers.⁹⁰ The rest were submitted by PLC committees and members (25 percent and 17 percent respectively).⁹¹

Four draft laws were concerned with social and legal issues, two of them submitted by the Council of Ministers⁹² and two by PLC members.⁹³ Two draft laws were aimed at regulating specific professions, one submitted by the Council of Ministers (Draft Law Regulating Veterinarians) and the other by a PLC committee (Draft Law Regulating Lawyers). Another draft law was to regulate higher education. The remaining draft laws were the Draft Political Parties Law, the Draft Firearms and Ammunition Law, and the Draft Civil Service Law.

The Draft Basic Law submitted by the Minister of Justice, was the first draft law to be submitted to the PLC. It was endorsed by the PLC in a third reading and referred to the PNA President in early October 1997. The President did not ratify the law, considered as the constitution of the interim period that officially ended on 4 May 1999.

9-4 Oversight by the PLC remains inadequate

The report of the Independent Commission for Citizens' Rights stated that 1998 witnessed developments in the monitoring role of the PLC compared with the previous year. PLC committees "investigated a number of complaints, public issues and violations committed by the executive" (PICCR 1999, p.64). Nevertheless, the report asserts that the

⁸⁷ Most important is the Basic Law, which was endorsed by the PLC and referred to the President for approval on 4 October 1997.

⁸⁸ They include the draft laws on the Civil Service, Monetary Authority, Palestinian Petroleum Authority, Civil Defense, Public Statistics, Supplies, Administrative Structure, Local Government, Election of Palestinian Local Government, Appointment of Mukhtars, Public Supplies, Government Contracts, Environment, Founding of a Palestinian Center for Rural Development and the Development Bank.

⁸⁹ Including draft laws on the public budget, the judiciary, government health insurance, correction and reform centers, and support for the families of martyrs, prisoners and the wounded.

⁹⁰ They include draft laws on animal health, hallmarking and control of precious metals, the preservation of natural resources in the Gaza Strip, industrial zones, citrus fruits, and banking.

⁹¹ Draft laws on the possession of property by foreigners in Palestine, income tax, Palestinian labor, the intensification of investment in Palestine, the regulation of trading agents.

⁹² Draft laws on public gatherings and civil laws.

⁹³ Draft laws on Charitable Associations and NGOs and the Rights of the Disabled.

PLC was “incapable of putting an end to many cases of disorder and violations committed by the executive, although the activity of the PLC prevented more violations from occurring”(PICCR 1999, p.64).

The Independent Commission for Citizens' Rights believed that the **PLC had failed to fully exercise its powers to monitor and enforce accountability** (PICCR 1999, p.65). However, the PLC did exercise its right to impose questions, criticize, make recommendations, form investigative committees in regard to a number of public issues, question ministers and endorse ministerial policy statements, and to ratify the budget. The PLC also threatened to use its right to withdraw confidence from the government but did not actually put that right into practice. It did not succeed in monitoring agreements reached by the government with external bodies (PICCR 1999, pp.65-66).

The executive ignores the PLC and insists on refusing to be accountable to the PLC for its actions. The executive also insists that the PLC function under its dominance and control (PICCR 1999, p.67). The non-ratification of the Basic Law, rejection of PLC by-laws as a regulator of relations between both powers, failure to define the relationship between executive and legislature with legal provisions, the repeated delay in submitting the budget, and repeated instances of disregarding PLC decisions and recommendations, are all indicative of the executive's general attitude towards the PLC.

9-5 An improvement in executive ratification of legislation

The PLC referred 22 laws to the PNA President after endorsing them in the necessary readings. The President had

ratified 15 of these⁹⁴ by the end of 1998, one law in 1996, two laws in 1997, and 12 laws in 1998. The laws ratified were submitted by the following bodies: 12 laws submitted by the Council of Ministers, two by PLC committees and one by a PLC member. More than half of these laws were related to the functioning of PNA institutions, local government, and public institutions, while four laws dealt with economic activities. The other laws included the Higher Education Law, the Firearms and Ammunition Law, and the Public Gatherings Law.⁹⁵

The President failed to ratify three laws referred to him by the PLC in 1997 or to send them back for further discussion according to the PLC by-laws. These laws were the Basic Law, the Law concerning Possession of Property by Foreigners in Palestine, and the Palestine Petroleum Authority Law. Another three laws were referred to the PNA President by the end of 1998⁹⁶.

The PLC returned two laws to the executive. These were the Law for the Preservation of Natural Resources in the Gaza Strip and the Law for the Development of a Palestinian Center for Rural Development. The PLC also rejected the draft law on the appointment of *mukhtars* after it was presented for general debate.⁹⁷

9-6 Greater involvement by civil society institutions and legislative specialists

⁹⁴ The PNA President approved the Natural Resources Law at the beginning of 1999. The Council also referred the Civil Status Law to the President for approval at the beginning of 1999 (PLC Laws: 1996-1999). The PNA President promulgated the Civil Status Law in the middle of 1999 (Fatwa and Legislation Department 1999, *Al-Waqa' I Al-Falastiniyya*, Issue 29).

⁹⁵ PLC Laws 1996-1998.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

The involvement of civil society institutions and specialists in discussing various draft laws submitted to the PLC differed in terms of the volume of participation and effectiveness according to the sector involved. The fourth report of the Independent Commission for Citizens' Rights states that "conferring with specialists and the public developed (in 1998)" (PICCR 1999, p.57). This was achieved through the participation of PLC members in workshops on the draft laws put before them and with the PLC and its committees listening to the opinions of specialists and experts on the issues under discussion, as in the Charitable Associations and NGOs Law, the Judiciary Law and the Labor Law. The Independent Commission for Citizens' Rights played an effective role in preparing studies on some of the proposed legislation, organizing workshops with the participation of relevant parties, and holding legal consultations on issues of importance to legislators aimed at the formulation of modern legislation.

In addition, related institutions and organizations concerned with some of the proposed draft laws functioned as pressure groups in order to introduce modifications to the proposed legislation and protect the interests of the groups they represent. These institutions included the Palestinian NGO Network, the General Union of Charitable Societies, the General Federation of Labor Unions, women's organizations, and the Association of Palestinian Local Authorities.

The following cases represent different patterns of participation in the formulation of draft laws:

a. The Civil Service Law

The Civil Service Law provoked a huge debate in the various stages of its preparation and endorsement as well as after its promulgation. The law affects thousands of WBGs families with members employed in local government. **Despite**

considerable participation and discussion by experts prior to endorsement, the implementation of the law created several problems, leading to its eventual suspension. The most serious problems included the financial cost involved in implementing the law and the need for suitable regulations that take into consideration the circumstances of the Palestinian situation (ex-employees in the PLO and its affiliated factions, prisoners released after many years in prison, former employees in the Civil Administration). Another major problem was the situation stemming from the ad hoc employment policy implemented after the advent of the PNA. It is noticeable that the targeted parties of this draft law (various categories of employees) did not form a pressure group to voice their collective interests during the period of preparing and discussing the law. While some groups demanded the implementation of the law (teachers, Ministry of Health employees), others (specifically those with a militant background and who had been personally harmed by the occupation) demanded that the mechanisms of the implementation of the law be modified so that their years of struggle as militants would be taken into consideration. The law was finally suspended one month after its implementation at the end of 1998.

b. The Charitable Associations and NGO Law

When the first draft of the Charitable Associations and NGO Law was presented, the NGO Network succeeded in forming lobbying groups with the General Federation of Charitable Associations. They worked actively with various related parties and were able to enlist support for their viewpoint, particularly

among PLC members. At certain stages during the endorsement of the law, there was tension between the NGO Network and the executive. The executive succeeded in palliating the achievements of the NGOs by stating that the Ministry of Interior should be the governmental body responsible for registering charitable associations and NGOs.

Not a single PLC member had voted in favor of the Ministry of Interior when this issue had been discussed in the third hearing of the law. Two members had stated opposition to the Ministry of Justice assuming registration and voted in favor of the Ministry of Social Affairs, though it had not originally been suggested as a candidate for the task. Only 12 PLC members voted in favor of the Ministry of Interior as the registering body when the executive returned the law to the PLC, while 38 others opposed it. The results of the voting presented a crisis in regard to the legality of the voting since PLC by-laws state that an absolute majority of PLC members is necessary in order to rebut the opposition of the PNA President. Eventually, the law with the modifications made by the executive was accepted by the PLC.

c. Public Gatherings Law

The Independent Commission for Citizens' Rights succeeded in introducing modifications to the first proposed draft of the Public Gatherings Law in a bid to protect the rights of the public. It also contributed through direct action with the PLC to endorse a draft law that maintains the basic rights of citizens in regard to assembly and expression. The PNA President promulgated this law on 28 December 1998.⁹⁸

d. Draft Labor Law

The Ministry of Labor prepared the first draft of the Labor Law and organized a number of workshops on national, regional, and local levels. The three parties most concerned with the law, namely, the Ministry of Labor, labor unions, and employers, plus the Center for Democracy and Workers' Rights, continued to work with the PLC throughout the various stages of the law's endorsement. The law was endorsed in a second reading (October 1999) after modifications were introduced to meet the requests of the labor unions. According to these modifications, the number of weekly work hours was set at 45 instead of 48, maternity leave of ten weeks was approved with full pay for working mothers, and it was made illegal to sack a woman for taking maternity leave. The modifications also included financial compensation equal to the wages of 3,500 working days to a worker who incurs a permanent disability in a work accident.

In its session of 21 October 1999, the Committee of Education and Social Issues at the PLC prepared several proposals for submission to the PLC. These included exempting workers from paying legal fees in cases of labor litigation, allowing workers to receive severance pay when they resign from their jobs, and issues related to weekly working hours and maternity leave.⁹⁹

e. Draft Administrative Structure Law

The Association of Palestinian Local Authorities organized a campaign against the draft of the Administrative Structure Law, which was endorsed in a first reading by the PLC. Through direct action with the PLC, the Association was able to convince it to return the draft law to the executive because it was

⁹⁸ PLC Laws, p. 217.

⁹⁹ *Al-Ayyam* Arabic daily, 22 October 1999.

incompatible with the previous Local Commission Law in terms of the powers given to local authorities and the governor.

f. Draft Political Parties Law

The draft Political Parties Law was opposed by Palestinian political organizations on the grounds that a law regulating the activities of political parties was inappropriate to the situation of Palestinians and the continued Israeli occupation of large parts of the WBGS. These organizations tried to win support for a rejection of the draft law in symposiums and workshops and through work with the PLC. The draft law was not submitted to the PLC.

g. Draft Judiciary Law

The PLC endorsed the draft Judiciary Law in a third reading and referred it to the PNA President on 5 December 1998. The draft law brought to an end the duplication of laws and judicial regulations in the WBGS. The PLC gave the draft law a third hearing following the demands of the Palestinian Independent Commission for Citizens' Rights and other human rights organizations to consider issues brought to light by the draft law in its second reading, and which were expected to create many problems upon application. It should be noted that a number of proposed modifications were introduced by various human rights organizations.

9-7 Relationship between executive and legislative still not clearly defined

Despite the ratification of several laws endorsed by the PLC, the executive still controls the pace and course of the legislative process due to the absence of legislation that regulates and controls

relations between the legislative and executive powers. The Independent Commission for Citizens' Rights reached the following conclusion:

"The legislative power of the PLC in 1997 remained limited because its relations with the executive were not organized in a legally binding form, leading to the executive making a negative contribution to the promulgation of legislation, particularly by suspending legislation submitted by the PLC and neither rejecting nor endorsing it" (PICCR 1998, p.49).

The report of the following year reached a similar conclusion:

"The entire process (formulating legislation), particularly endorsing draft laws, remained fully under the hegemony and control of the executive, which endorses whatever it wants and whenever it wants and ignores whatever it wants without the PLC doing anything except complain and wait" (PICCR 1999, p. 48).

9-8 Absence of independent judiciary

The fourth annual report of the Palestinian Independent Commission for Citizens' Rights remarks that: "No positive developments occurred in respect to the situation of the Palestinian judiciary in 1998. The judiciary remained lacking in effectiveness and independence as a result of not dealing with the issues and problems from which it suffers"(PICCR 1999, p.75).

For example, there is an acute shortage of courts and judges,¹⁰⁰ leading to the

¹⁰⁰ For instance, there are nine magistrate's courts and 14 judges in the West Bank and six magistrate's courts and 15 judges in Gaza Strip. (These are courts specialized in adjudicating in simple civil cases). This makes an average of one judge per 106,161 citizens in the West Bank and

postponement of cases for long periods, sometimes lasting years (PICCR 1999). So bad is the situation that lawyers resorted to a one-day strike on 15 April 1999 in protest against deteriorating conditions in the judicial system.¹⁰¹

Major problems faced by the Palestinian judicial system 1998 included the undermining of the jurisdiction of the civil judiciary¹⁰² and attempts by the executive to control the affairs of the judiciary by appointing judges, pensioning them off and transferring them.¹⁰³ The administration of the judiciary remained in the hands of the PNA President, the Ministry of Justice, and the General Employees Bureau. The security services also continued to interfere in the activities of the Attorney General's office, usurping some of its powers and interfering in the work of judges and the implementation of Palestinian court decisions.¹⁰⁴ Other problems include the shortage in the number of courts, judges and prosecutors,¹⁰⁵ the low remuneration and lack of experience of judges, the small

size of courts and their lack of equipment (PICCR 1999, p.96-100).

9-9 Many draft laws but....

The 1998 Independent Commission for Citizens' Rights report points out "the absence of a clear policy or a stable pattern governing the legislative process" and states that "the only clear policy is realizing the largest possible quantity of draft laws" (PICCR 1999, p.54). The report believes that this may affect the quality of legislation since some projects dealing with essential issues "have defects in their formulation and substance" (PICCR 1999, p.55).

There is an absence of a clear legislative policy that decides on priorities. Despite the promulgation of several vital pieces of legislation, the PLC has preoccupied itself with legislation that could be postponed in order to concentrate on other more urgent legislation of a higher priority.¹⁰⁶ In addition, some institutions established in accordance with the law are still without legislation to regulate their functioning and powers.

9-10 Citizens' rights

In 1998, the Israeli authorities continued their violation of Palestinian human rights in an official government policy. **The Israeli judiciary is lenient towards the Jewish perpetrators of crimes against Palestinians** (PICCR 1999, p.3). Thirty-seven Palestinian civilians were killed in 1998 by Israelis: 21 by Israeli soldiers, eight by settlers, four whilst under interrogation, and the rest by undercover Israeli military units in uncertain circumstances. The military prosecution has closed the file on Israeli soldiers who shot at Palestinian workers at the Tarqumiya military checkpoint, killing three of them. An Israeli court also

one judge per 66,771 citizens in the Gaza Strip. The President issued a decree to form three new courts of first instance in the West Bank as from the beginning of 1997 but the decision was not put into practice until the end of 1998 (PICCR 1999, pp.77-78).

¹⁰¹ *Al-Waqa' Al-Barlamaniyyah*, April 1999.

¹⁰² By giving special courts the authority to hear cases that are within the jurisdiction of the civil judiciary. These include military courts that hear cases involving civilian parties and the State Security Court, in addition to non-judicial bodies like branches of the security services, legal committees in the governorates, and tribal adjudication, all of which continue to deal with disputes that are within the jurisdiction of the civil courts. This is normally accompanied by coercion exerted on the parties to the conflict (PICCR 1999, p.96).

¹⁰³ The one-day strike by judges in October 1999 in protest against conditions in the judicial system.

¹⁰⁴ This included branches of the security services and some civil ministries. Further details in the annual reports of the Palestinian Independent Commission for Citizens' Rights.

¹⁰⁵ For instance, the average number of cases heard per day by a judge is 28 cases (PICCR 1999, p.98).

¹⁰⁶ Like regulating the security services (Ibid).

released on bail the settler who killed a Palestinian child in Betunia, describing him as a “splendid citizen” (PICCR 1999, p.7-8).

The use of torture on Palestinian detainees was sanctioned by Israeli officialdom at legislative, judicial, and executive levels. A report published by the Israeli human rights group, B'Tselem, noted that 850 Palestinian prisoners are subjected to torture every year by the Israeli security services, 'Shabak'. More than 105 different kinds of torture are used against Palestinian detainees, causing the death of four Palestinians in Israeli jails in 1998.

Israeli continued its policy of house demolitions in 1998. At least 150 houses were demolished in the WBGS as well as shanty homes and tents. **The Israeli authorities also continued their policy of land confiscation and settlement building.** There were 195 Israeli settlements established in the WBGS at the end of 1998, inhabited by 350,000 settlers. Ariel Sharon, Israeli Minister of Foreign Affairs at the time, called on settlers to seize hilltops because “what we control now will become ours” (PICCR 1999, p.15-20).

The 1998 report of the Independent Commission for Citizens' stated that “human rights are still undergoing clear violations in various aspects, although they are supposed to be protected and adhered to by all official parties” (PICCR 1999, p.184). Violations monitored by the Commission focused on various aspects of legal procedures. Of a total number of 1,719 violations, 1,083 were related to the due process of the law.¹⁰⁷ The Commission concluded the investigation of 55 percent of the violations monitored in 1998 and criticized the relevant authorities in 47 percent of these cases. The Commission also concluded

investigations into 48 percent of violations of the due process of law and blamed the relevant authorities in 54 percent of the cases. Most of the violations were in the form of arbitrary detention (87 percent), half of which were without an arrest warrant and without charges.

The violations monitored included 74 cases of detention due to political activity or affiliation. Of these 74 cases, 29 files were closed by the Commission, concluding in criticism of the relevant authorities in 25 cases (PICCR 1999, p.177 & 184). It is noted that these violations took place “in light of the negative position of the general prosecution and its failure to carry out its duties” (PICCR 1999, p.184).

The Independent Commission for Citizens' Rights, which is an official Palestinian commission formed by a decree of the PNA President, concluded in its report that, despite the cooperation of most PNA departments and security services in helping to follow up violations: “failure to take the law seriously and weak accountability have started to reach a dangerous level”. It added that there are: “violations of citizens' rights, especially rights relating to personal freedom, equality before the law and the judiciary, and not being subject to harassment and torture” (PICCR 1999, p.18).

Summary

The first four years of the PNA featured the consolidation of the Palestinian Legislative Council as a source of legislation and improvements to its performance in this regard. The executive continued to exert control over the legislative process due to the absence of the Basic Law or a constitution regulating the relationship between the executive and legislative powers.

The continued interference of the executive and security services in the performance of the judiciary was noted. This has contributed to an increase in the

¹⁰⁷ This figure includes only the number of violations monitored by the Commission.

number of people who resort to tribal adjudication or favors from influential figures in the civil and security departments to defend their rights and interests. Such a situation weakens the process of establishing a modern state in which the rule of law holds supremacy and in which citizenship is based on rights and duties.

The era since the advent of the PNA has been characterized by the enhanced

effectiveness of societal organizations and specialists in the field of legislation. There was also greater transparency, such as the willingness of the PLC to involve concerned parties in the formulation and passing of legislation. Meanwhile, these parties have also improved their mechanism of expressing their opinions through the formation of lobbying groups both inside and outside the PLC.

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Note: Some of these publications appear in both Arabic and English. References to specific pages in the text refer to the Arabic version of the publication.

STATISTICAL ANNEX

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