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DIRECTORATE OF INTELLIGENCE

29 June 1988

Israeli Management of the Palestinian Uprising

Summary

Despite optimistic public statements from Israeli leaders that the Palestinian uprising is subsiding, the intifada is persisting in the form of selected, but increasingly more violent and destructive incidents in the occupied territories and within pre-1967 Israel.

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fewer mass street demonstrations have occurred recently, but incidents involving Molotov cocktails have increased six-fold and arson fires are causing unprecedented damage to valuable forested land in Israel proper. Most Israelis have consistently supported the harsh measures employed by security forces to quell the disturbances--some criticize the government for failing to crack down even more severely on the Palestinian population.

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When the Palestinian uprising began in December, Israeli troops met the spontaneous and widespread mass demonstrations with force--increasing troop presence, beating demonstrators, and imposing prolonged curfews in particularly troubled areas. Force failed to quell the groundswell of Palestinian support for the youthful demonstrators, however, and violence continued. After three months, Israeli civil administrators began instituting measures--electricity and telephone disruptions, strictly enforced tax collections, and limitations on the amount of money brought into the occupied territories--aimed at subduing the Palestinian population as a whole. Most recently, Defense Minister Rabin has endorsed shooting at Palestinians seen throwing or holding firebombs, punishing individuals and their families with heavy jail sentences and

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finer, and house demolitions. Mass street demonstrations generally have declined but young, hard-core radicals continue to protest against Israeli occupation with violent acts aimed at specific targets. Israeli troops are likely to employ even harsher security and punitive measures to preempt these attacks and discourage popular support. [redacted]

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Riot Control: Reactive Measures

Standard army rules of engagement for riot control in the occupied territories stress that authority be reestablished using minimum force if possible. During mass street demonstrations, the army first tries to disperse them with traditional crowd control procedure--normally firing tear gas into the crowd to disperse it. Several instances recounted in the media and in US diplomatic reporting say that tear gas canisters often land inside enclosed buildings, such as homes and schools. It remains unclear from conflicting eyewitness reports from Palestinians and army spokesmen whether the tear gas is aimed into buildings or whether it is shot randomly and enters open windows or doors. In either case, such gas within confined, enclosed spaces has occasionally proven fatal to Palestinians. When tear gas has no effect on demonstrators or is thrown back, Israeli troops use rubber bullets to deter rioters. Failing these tactics or when soldiers run low on tear gas and rubber bullets, they resort to live fire. According to US Embassy reporting, troops are instructed not to escalate to the use of lethal fire unless they believe their lives are in danger and only after first making use of rubber bullets. [redacted]

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Faced with what they consider life threatening circumstances--a judgment open to wide interpretation--Israeli soldiers are allowed to use live fire; first as warning shots above the heads of the demonstrators, then at their feet and legs, and finally at vital points on their upper bodies. During the first few months of the Palestinian uprising, troops were allowed initially to fire into rioting crowds, but Palestinian casualties mounted quickly sparking intense, widespread international condemnation and forced adjustments in rules for the use of live fire. [redacted]

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In late February, soldiers first were instructed to shoot at individual Palestinians holding Molotov cocktails--considered a lethal weapon--or at individuals seen inciting demonstrations. This order to shoot Molotov cocktail-throwers still stands. A recent draftee into the army recounted that new recruits are instructed to use live fire in two additional circumstances--when the soldier's life is threatened and when an attempt is made to steal his weapon. Rabin told the Israeli Cabinet in early June that he would allow Israeli civilians or settlers to shoot Palestinians seen throwing or preparing to throw Molotov cocktails. Troops are instructed not to fire at rock-throwers or when verbally abused by Palestinian demonstrators. [redacted]

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Beatings

On 4 January 1988, Defense Minister Rabin authorized troops to beat individual demonstrators. Instead of using live ammunition which brought about heavy casualties, Rabin instructed troops to charge the demonstrators and beat and detain demonstration leaders. According to Israeli press, some Palestinians who were beaten were released rather than arrested to serve as examples of what happens to rioters. United Nations Relief and Welfare Association officials have complained to US diplomats that entire neighborhoods in Palestinian refugee camps or towns have been cordoned off at night and that many male residents were taken to secluded locations and interrogated or beaten. [redacted]

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Rabin publicly defends the beating policy despite continuing accusations that some soldiers have brutally abused Palestinians after demonstrations end. In public comments, Rabin has stated that the beating policy was implemented to reassert army authority in the occupied territories, suppress disorder, and prevent the martyring of Palestinians. Israeli army officials insist that nighttime round-ups are directed against individuals who have generally been identified as participants in or instigators of the demonstrations. [redacted]

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Despite Rabin's claims that beatings are only authorized to disperse demonstrations, there are many eyewitness accounts, according to US Embassy reporting, affirming that the policy also is used widely for punishment and deterrence. Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir conceded candidly in a recent public remark that "Our task now is to recreate the barriers of fear between Palestinians and the Israeli military, and once again put the fear of death into the Arabs of the areas so as to deter them from attacking us anymore." The Israeli army has announced publicly that some soldiers have been disciplined or transferred from their units after inflicting excessively brutal beatings, but disciplinary actions have not been widespread or severe. Most troops found guilty of using excessive force have been sentenced to only a few months in jail. [redacted]

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Detentions

One out of every 40 adult male Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip is now incarcerated, according to Israeli press. Rabin stated in a press interview that all the Palestinians detained since the beginning of the intifada in December 1987 have organized agitation or participated in violent activities in the territories. In mid-March, approximately 3000 Palestinians had been jailed for protest activity. In April, Rabin told Israeli reporters that about 4600 Palestinians were in custody, and in June the number of detainees acknowledged to press had climbed to 6000. Approximately half of the 6000 Palestinians are awaiting trial on formal charges or are already serving sentences. The other 2500-3000 are under administrative detention for six months and have not been formally charged with a crime. [redacted]

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Administrative Measures: Subduing the Population

Israeli officials--aware that force alone does not control Palestinian violence--have instituted a two-pronged approach involving both the civil administration of the occupied territories and Israeli security forces. [redacted] 25X1

In January, Rabin authorized the liberal use of curfews to help quiet the occupied territories. According to Israeli press, Rabin gave the various local commanders in the territories broad authority to impose curfews on the areas under their jurisdiction. As a result, each incident of Palestinian violence deemed by the local officer in charge to warrant curfew is reported to the Defense Ministry whose approval is nearly automatic. [redacted] 25X1

According to US Embassy reporting, Rabin allows only food shipments from UNRWA and foreign countries into the camps during curfewed periods--no private donations are allowed to minimize the possible smuggling of weapons. UNRWA officials complain that during prolonged curfew periods in many refugee camps, the Israelis have allowed insufficient time to distribute food to camp residents. [redacted] 25X1

Israeli authorities occasionally have targeted entire Palestinian villages and cities by imposing strict curfews, intermittently cutting off international telephone connections or connections between Israel and certain parts of the occupied territories, and disrupting electricity and water service for several consecutive days. According to US Consulate reporting, Israeli authorities temporarily cut international telephone links to the occupied territories on the grounds that they were being used to relay commands from PLO leaders. [redacted] 25X1

Breaking Commercial Strikes

During the seven months of Palestinian violence, Israeli security forces have compelled Palestinian merchants to remain open during the hours when Palestinian pamphlets instructed them to close and shut shops when merchants were directed to open. In early April, Israeli troops sealed shut ten shops in Bethlehem and took the identity cards of the shopkeepers because the owners had opened their shops during the morning hours as prescribed by the ongoing commercial strike. [redacted] 25X1

According to Israeli press, the defense establishment recently stopped forcing its own hours of operation on Palestinian store owners. Israeli officials claim that some Arab merchants have encouraged the army to force their shops to open to relieve merchants of the threat of revenge from young activists. [redacted] 25X1

Tax Collection and Financial Restrictions

According to US Consular reporting, Palestinian residents on the West Bank claim that tax officials escorted by Israeli soldiers have

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raided homes of local merchants and ordered them to pay outstanding debts. Several cars have been impounded to guarantee payment. [redacted] 25X1

In February 1988, Israeli officials began requiring Palestinians to produce receipts for tax payments before obtaining travel permits or commercial licenses. The Ministry of Defense Coordinator for the occupied territories said the measure is designed to increase revenue in the depleted civil administration treasury as well as to counter the call by Palestinian leaders to provide financial support for the uprising and refuse to pay taxes. [redacted] 25X1

The civil administrator for the West Bank told US officials that to undermine PLO attempts to send money to support the uprising, Israeli officials have restricted the cash that can be carried across the bridges to Jordan--any amount over the equivalent of \$1200 is confiscated. The civil administration also imposed restrictions on movement of funds into the occupied territories. According to US Consular reporting, each bank transfer over the equivalent of \$1200 per individual now requires a permit to cash the check. [redacted] 25X1

ID Cards Confiscated

The Israeli army recently confiscated the identity cards of all male Palestinians in the Gaza Strip over 16 years of age. In place of the cards, the men were given papers requiring several Israeli bureaucratic stamps proving they have paid their income taxes, customs, and value added taxes as well as electricity and water bills. Gazan males are allowed to leave the Strip for work in Israel only after securing the necessary stamps. [redacted] 25X1

House Demolitions

Israeli security forces have for many years sealed houses and demolished homes in the occupied territories, but before April 1988 house demolitions were used mainly to retaliate against families of individuals accused of carrying out acts of violence. On 5 April, the Israeli army demolished three houses belonging to individuals suspected of organizing and inciting violent disturbances, according to Israeli press. This was the first time house demolitions were expanded to include instigators of demonstrations rather than alleged terrorists or those accused of throwing Molotov cocktails. In June, the army also began demolishing buildings from which firebombs are thrown. According to Israeli press, in one operation in mid-June, Israeli authorities destroyed 14 homes and sealed off four others in the territories in a 24-hour period. [redacted] 25X1

Recently, Rabin publicly stated that when a Palestinian detained for throwing a Molotov cocktail confesses, his house is routinely demolished in an effort to make clear that the Israeli army intends to punish severely everyone throwing firebombs. The civil administrator in the Gaza Strip also has said that the army demolishes homes only when the person admits throwing a Molotov cocktail. He also told US

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diplomats that the homes are not necessarily completely demolished; rather some rooms are sealed off, leaving the family some room to live. [redacted]

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Stiffer Court Penalties

Israeli authorities impose stiff penalties. Against Palestinians caught in violent acts. In mid-June, a Palestinian youth convicted of throwing stones at passing cars received a two year jail sentence and a three year suspended sentence. The judge also fined the youth's mother the equivalent of \$3100 in accordance with Israeli laws for punishing youthful offenders. In several recent cases, a military court in Israel handed down heavy penalties--eight to ten years in prison--to four residents of the territories who were convicted of throwing Molotov cocktails. In the verdict the court noted that such attacks should be viewed as assassination attempts--particularly when aimed at civilians in vehicles. [redacted]

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Outlook

Several senior Israeli security officials--including Chief-of-Staff Shomron and Shin Bet Director Peled--told Israeli reporters recently that the number of largescale protests has declined but that Palestinians have found new ways to express their frustration with Israeli occupation. [redacted]

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[redacted] According to Israeli press, military officials are concerned that a trend toward use of lethal weapons by Palestinian activists has begun in the West Bank where, in May 1988, two improvised explosive charges were discovered and in June, over 190 incidents involving weapons--mainly Molotov cocktails but also improvised explosive charges and guns--occurred. [redacted]

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As a result, we expect that Israeli security forces will use even harsher measures to deter Palestinian violence. In a 26 June meeting, the Israeli army general staff implicitly criticized defense policies as being reactive and failing to preempt Palestinian attacks. According to Israeli press, army commanders want troops to show more initiative in mounting preemptive operations against Palestinian organizers and perpetrators of the disturbances. [redacted]

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Senior Israeli officials continue to endorse the liberal use of lethal force and other harsh suppressive measures. Chief-of-Staff Shomron has stated that Israeli troops will continue shooting at Palestinians seen throwing Molotov cocktails just as troops would fire at a person using any weapon. In public comments, Shomron claimed the army will continue its policy to demolish buildings from which firebombs are thrown and the homes of Molotov cocktail throwers. He conceded that this punishment appears harsh but lauded it as operationally effective. [redacted]

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Israeli security forces also are likely to take severe action against individuals caught perpetrating other acts of violence. Riot control measures have proven less effective against the sporadic and potentially more lethal Palestinian violence and troops are likely to continue the use of live fire, allow Israeli settlers to use such fire, and institute even harsher prison sentences and heavier fines. To increase the cost of popular support for the uprising, Israeli authorities will continue preemptive punitive measures against the Palestinian population as a whole by imposing lengthy curfews, extensive utility interruptions, and additional house demolitions.

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