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Report on the Israeli Invasion of Jenin Refugee Camp Appendix A: Camp Background and Summary of Invasion

Jenin Refugee Camp was established in 1953 by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA). It lies at the northern edge of the West Bank, approximately 30 Km south of Nazareth. The camp was set up to house Palestinian refugees who were forced to flee oncoming Zionist forces in 1947 and 1948. The majority of the residents come from some 70 villages once extant in the Haifa district. All of them were either destroyed after their evacuation or taken over by Zionist settlers. Since their villages were destroyed or occupied, the refugees have lived proud but impoverished lives, utilizing their ancestral and agrarian connections with the land to survive.

Jenin Refugee Camp endured a massive onslaught from April 3-18, 2002. Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International, and Physicians for Human Rights have written reports on the events. The former two documented and provided clear evidence of war crimes committed by the Israeli military. By the presence of then Chief of Staff Shaul Mofaz and then Defence Minister Benjamin Ben-Eliezer in the camp during portions of the invasion, it can only be inferred that operational procedures, including violations of international law, were ordered from the top political and military echelons of the Israeli government.

- Aerial bombardment for eight days from Cobra and Apache helicopters
- Regular shelling by tanks of homes and other civilian structures
- Armored bulldozers were used as a weapon of “urban warfare” to bulldoze homes and clear paths for other military equipment to enter the narrow streets of the camp
- 1000 well-trained, well-armed Israeli foot soldiers. Estimates of armed Palestinians range between 100 and 200, who had little or no training and often times old weapons.
- Systematic denial of medical care from Friday April 5, 2002
- Execution of civilians and surrendered combatants
- Destruction of civilian structures and civilian property—including household items, animals, legal documents, and family memorabilia—not necessary for military purposes
- Unnecessary harm to civilian persons through denial of food, water, medical care, and death
- Systematic usage of civilian persons as human shields
- Large-scale theft of personal household items such as electronic equipment, money, and food
- Pornographic, supremacist, and wanton graffiti painted in homes, buildings, and in mosques
- Destruction of several hundred acres of agricultural land owned by refugees and residents of Jenin city

- Destruction of both mosques that served camp residents. One was damaged beyond repair, the other sustained minor damage.

Note: The following statistics were posted in the UNRWA headquarters in the camp after their initial assessment—April 2002

(The ratio of homes per building is approximately 3:1)

- 2100-2200 buildings existed in the camp on approximately one square kilometer of land (247 acres) prior to the April 2002 invasion
- 250 buildings were completely destroyed or in need of demolition due to extensive damage suffered in the April invasion; more buildings were found to be in need of demolition due to damage that was discovered in the weeks and months after the invasion sustained from earth tremors by the movement of tanks and other heavy equipment, and from the effects of shelling
- 200 buildings suffered heavy internal damage (to walls, windows, doors, furniture, appliances, etc. from the actions of Israeli soldiers inside the home)
- In all, then, 450 buildings were completely destroyed, need to be demolished, or need significant repairs
- 14,000 camp residents prior to the April invasion
- 750 - 800 homes destroyed or in need of demolition
- 600 homes in need of significant internal repair and replacement of damaged items
- At least 1400 homes, then, totally demolished or in need of significant repairs
- 4,000 camp residents homeless, (approximately 30% of camp population), the majority of whom are children under the age of 18

Most residents of the camp found apartments in the city to rent. However, due to lack of resources, most families lived in apartments that were totally bare—without furniture, beds, cooking utensils, including stoves or ovens, or any kind of heating. Many of them are living this way today, nearly one year after the destruction of their homes.

The Palestinian Ministry of Social Affairs was attempting to care for these displaced refugees by providing social services, meager financial support, and household items. However, in August of 2002 the Israeli military placed explosives around the building which housed the Ministry and blew it up, cutting one of the few sources of assistance to the people and seriously complicating their attempts to survive.

The Jenin Refugee Camp has undergone dozens of invasions since the big one in April 2002. Each time more homes were bulldozed or damaged from tank shells, ransacked by soldiers, looting occurred, and more residents, mainly men, disappeared to unknown locations having been taken away by the soldiers. In addition, tens of residents have been killed in the past year, mainly children, by live ammunition or direct fire from tanks.

Israeli soldiers have also targeted international civilians. In November 2002, co-director of the Jenin Refugee Camp, UNRWA employee, and British national Ian Hook was shot

twice in the abdomen. Attempts to evacuate him were delayed for two hours, causing him to bleed to death. He was shot dead while trying to negotiate with Israeli soldiers to evacuate the hundreds of women and children in the UN headquarters receiving vaccinations that day. Witnesses testify to the soldiers' announcement in English over a loudspeaker not long before shooting Mr. Hook: "We don't care who you are. Fuck the UN." Approximately two hours after shooting Mr. Hook, soldiers also shot Irish citizen Caoimhe Butterly in the thigh. She was trying to shepherd a group of ten children into an alleyway, away from an armored personnel carrier that cornered them for five hours and shot three of them, one fatally.

The struggle for recognition and repatriation of the Palestinian refugees continues today, some 55 year later. Palestinians comprise the oldest and largest refugee population in the world.