



Social Security: How Palestinians Survive a Humanitarian Crisis

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Source: *Middle East Report*, No. 240, Life under Siege (Fall, 2006), pp. 12-19

Published by: [Middle East Research and Information Project \(MERIP\)](#)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25164741>

Accessed: 20/06/2014 17:00

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Waiting to refill gas cylinders on June 8, 2006 in al-Nusayrat refugee camp in Gaza.

ISMAEL MOHAMAD/UPI/LANDOV

Social Security

How Palestinians Survive a Humanitarian Crisis

Lori Allen

As soon as Hamas members elected in January 2006 took their seats in the Palestinian legislature, Israel stopped transferring customs revenue owed to the Palestinian Authority by treaty. When Hamas appointed a cabinet of ministers, the United States and other international donors halted their financial aid. Since its other revenues are meager, the Palestinian Authority has been unable to make payroll for months. How are all the Palestinian families who depend on civil service salaries getting by?

In the Jenin refugee camp, on the outskirts of the West Bank town of the same name, remnants of the rougher days of the second *intifada* persist. Akram Abu al-Siba' is here to tell a French delegation, one of the few making the trek to Jenin these days, about the latest in the camp's long list of dramatic and tragic experiences. In early July, he relates, disguised Israeli operatives drove into Jenin camp, burst out of the car and sprayed gunfire at a group of men gathered to offer condolences to the family of a man killed the day before. The apparent target of this operation, Zakariyya Zubayda, leader of the al-Aqsa Brigades in Jenin and a man much wanted by Israel, escaped unharmed. Thirty-four others were not so lucky. Three men were killed instantly, and a fourth, 18-year old Mahmoud Husam al-Saadi, died later of his wounds. Thirty others were injured, including Abu al-Siba', president of the Committee for Political Prisoners in Jenin camp and general secretary of Fatah in the governorate of Jenin. Abu al-Siba' sits gingerly on the edge of his chair, massaging his bandaged leg. Gripping a tall crutch and smoking non-stop, he completes his tale.

As soon as he saw the car pull up and all four doors open at once, he says, he took off running. Three bullets hit him in the posterior and the backs of his thighs. He continued running, bleeding, to the hospital. His treatment at the public institution was free. But they have no extra bandages for when he will need to change them.

Such shortages are just one of many effects of the five-month blockade on international funding for the Palestinian Authority (PA) imposed when the Hamas cabinet took office. PA institutions, including hospitals and the Ministry of Health, have received only token portions of their regular allocations since March 2006. PA employees—doctors and orderlies, schoolteachers, civil servants, members of the Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC) and others—are all living, as they say, by the grace of God. That, and loans from friends and relatives.

The PA employs 160,000 people. Counting their dependents, one million people, or 30 percent of the population of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, rely on PA salaries for sustenance. How, when almost all are in the same sinking boat, can anyone afford to give a loan? "I take a loan from this one," Abu al-Siba' explains, his hand spinning in the air, "he takes from someone else, then he borrows from another" and around it goes. This is Palestinians' form of "social security," he says.

Cut Off

Among those most in need of loans are the many families that used to receive PA stipends in recognition of family

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members who have been killed or jailed by Israel. In Jenin, the family of an unmarried political prisoner got 1,000 shekels (about \$227) per month, plus 270 shekels to be used in the prison canteen during visits. A married prisoner's family was given an additional 100 shekels per month. Many of the dead, wounded and imprisoned were heads of households, the main or sole breadwinners for large families. A prisoner exchange was the goal inspiring the summer 2006 captures of Israeli soldiers by Palestinians and Hizballah. Such an exchange is the only hope many prisoners have of ever being released.

Now that the PA can no longer provide support for these families, many are depending on personal loans. But grocery stores in Jenin camp have stopped running tabs, Abu al-Siba' observes.

Firas, who runs a small shop in 'Aida refugee camp in Bethlehem, still supplies his goods on loan. A jokester with a round face and a sardonic tone, he can recite from memory the amounts due to him from a great number of people in the camp, including, with a smile, those in the room. All together, camp residents owe him 10,000 shekels, a huge amount for a tiny market like his. Firas, like other shopowners, is a major source of food supplies for most of his extended family. Siblings, parents and grandparents often live in the same cluster of houses. These one-room shops have become a supporting nucleus.

Isma'il, a schoolteacher for 20 years, is another one of the 160,000 Palestinians who are going unpaid. He has run up a tab of more than \$1,000 at his brother-in-law's mini-market. The World Bank calls this kind of arrangement a "family- and clan-based form of social protection and risk sharing."¹ But it would be a mistake, the Bank warns, to conclude that this social safety net is enough to avert a humanitarian crisis.

Isma'il's economic difficulties are just another in a long line of personal tragedies. In 2002, Israeli forces invaded 'Aida, and blew open the door to his house. His wife, severely hurt in the explosion, bled to death in front of her children when the army refused to let an ambulance pick her up. Israel then refused Isma'il a permit to enter Jerusalem, where he taught: he might try to seek "revenge," the army claimed. He was forced to find work in another town, which required a daily commute, sometimes two or three hours long because of checkpoints, that cost him 24 shekels per day of his 3,000-shekel monthly salary. Between him and his five school-age children, Isma'il's family was paying 55–60 shekels for transportation every day. Because his wife was martyred—killed because of the occupation—Isma'il pays reduced school fees for his children. But he, like many others, has sold some of his wife's gold to support his household, which includes his elderly mother.

The PA paid one installment of about 1,500 shekels (roughly \$300) to its employees four months after their salaries were stopped. Another installment was transferred

to employees' bank accounts in late July. But these small amounts do not go very far, and Abu al-Siba', for one, thinks they should be refused. "Let the people starve in the streets so the world sees what is really happening," he insists. Nisrin, a teacher in a village public school, says she would have put off collecting her second payment if she'd had to endure the same bureaucratic chaos she encountered the first time: three hours in a post office crowded with tense people shuttling from room to room. "I felt like a beggar," she laughs bitterly. Her sister is a nurse employed by the Ministry of Health and married to another civil servant. With a mixture of anger and astonishment, Nisrin's sister remarks upon how quickly she and others in a similar plight have gone from asking for their salaries to looking forward to receiving the partial installments. Palestinians' famous ability to adapt to adversity leads to painful ironies.

Nisrin is now waiting to go to the post office to collect the money owed her for working as an elections monitor—in January. In August, rumor spread that all back pay owed to PA employees would be delivered to bank accounts by the end of the summer. Although there has been no official news about how this might happen, the small announcement in the local *al-Quds* daily informing civil servants

of the coming funds makes Nisrin suspect that European countries have found a way to transfer money directly to the office of Palestinian president Mahmoud 'Abbas. Perhaps Israel's August 6 imprisonment of 'Aziz Duwayk, a leading Hamas member and the speaker of the PLC, facilitated this process.

Although Isma'il collected his two partial salary installments, he and his family have stopped attending events such as relatives' weddings, normally a social obligation that most Palestinians take quite seriously, because he cannot afford transportation or gifts. He has also stopped paying utility bills. Water, electricity and phone companies have stopped trying to collect from PA employees. They have not cut off services, with the understanding that their customers will pay their bills when the salaries start coming in again. They also know that camp residents would protest loudly if their utilities were discontinued. In places like Jenin, where Israeli companies supply electricity and water, the Israeli government uses some of the Palestinian taxes they have stopped transferring to the PA to pay for these utilities.

When Isma'il's 8-year old daughter comes to him asking for pocket money, he has to refuse. "She asks me, 'Is it my fault that you don't have any money?' It's not her fault,"

Isma'il says. "It's not the father's fault, either." He is not a political person, Isma'il insists, but he knows that it is the PA's responsibility to pay employees' salaries. If salaries remain unpaid when the school year starts, he will not be able to go to work. Not only will he be unable to pay for transportation, Isma'il says, he will not want to go, either. Echoing many others, this patient, gentle man warns of social meltdown if the embargo on the PA continues much longer.

When conversation with Firas turns to discussion of a couple of men who had recently been arrested for petty theft, he says, only half-jokingly, "Why couldn't they have gotten arrested after they paid me? Now how am I going to collect what they owe?"

Stranded

Three of Firas' brothers are now in prison. Not only has PA aid to his family been cut off, so have the visits to his imprisoned siblings. Firas' mother has not been able to visit them, but siblings had been going every month or so, delivering much needed extra food and supplies. When an Israeli soldier was kidnapped in Gaza on June 25, even those visits were forbidden. One of Firas' brothers is due to be released in August. There are 18 people in the family's house, including Firas' siblings and their children. His parents recently married off a 17-year old daughter. Early marriage is also on the rise because of the economic situation. Firas' father, a plumber, has a hard time finding work. Nor has the UN Relief and Works Agency, the body tasked with Palestinian refugees' upkeep since 1949, offered anything extra with their monthly handouts of bulk supplies like flour and sugar. Despite these hardships, the family has managed to gather the fine of 4,000 shekels that must be paid to Israel before Firas' brother can go home. They have no idea how or when they will be able to pay back the people from whom they borrowed the money. Two more brothers carrying similar fines are to be released in the coming months.

'Isa Qaraq'a', one of the few Fatah candidates elected in January, is the long-time head of the Fatah-related prisoners' support association, Nadi al-Asir, in Bethlehem. He calls the circumstances of 2006 "a disaster, a real economic tragedy." In his view, families of political prisoners are being hurt the most. There are 1,200 families of prisoners in Bethlehem alone, and 9,000–10,000 Palestinian political prisoners in Israeli jails and detention centers.

Two Palestinian laws exist to protect prisoners' families, the Law of Prisoners and the Law of Released Prisoners. The first guarantees to every prisoner's family a respectable monthly sum, health insurance and free education for his children, at both the secondary and university levels. But since the international boycott of the Hamas-led PA, the ministry does not have any money to disburse. "Families aren't getting anything now. The law protects them. But

there's no income." Qaraq'a' says there is an effort underway to help these families with 500-shekel coupons.

The Ministry of Social Affairs had been responsible for distributing aid to prisoners and other needy families. According to Muhammad al-Qiq, student council president at Birzeit University, the PA had not actually paid the university fees of prisoners' and martyrs' children for two years prior to the boycott.

The World Food Program is now trying to take care of the poorest sector, what they call "social hardship cases." Part of this assistance is coming thanks to a 2,000 metric ton donation of wheat flour from the Japanese government, a portion of a \$1.4 million contribution. Giving voice to an obvious, but not oft-stated, fact, Qaraq'a' says, "Even if this help comes once in a while, every four or five months, this doesn't solve the problem." According to al-Qiq, referring to a proposal put forward by Hamas, the way to take care of all the cash flow problems is the nationalization of utilities. Until that happens, the Hamas-majority student council provides students with coupons for lunch, and arranges with town shopkeepers to sell goods to students at reduced prices.

End of Corruption, End of Aid

Qaraq'a' reiterates the common observation that "people support each other. Those who have help those who don't, but when this situation affects everyone, they can't help each other. People are begging." More children are weaving through traffic, washing windshields and selling newspapers or tissues to passengers in passing cars.

"Every day people come crying at the doorstep of Nadi al-Asir, asking for money—because they have no money. They come a lot. And this situation is hard," Qaraq'a' says. "It should be the government that gives them money. I might be able to help a family with 200 shekels, but we can't help everyone."

Many think that the PLC members are themselves ready sources of financial assistance. "They were raised on the ideas of Abu 'Ammar," Qaraq'a' observes, referring to the late PLO and PA head Yasser Arafat. Arafat channeled funds to members of the previous PLC, part of the corruption for which his administration was notorious, and those monies then trickled down to constituents. "But now there is no Abu 'Ammar. The situation has changed." People have become angry when Qaraq'a' refuses them the material support they request. "They stand at the door and curse me. 'Why did we elect you?' But they understand things wrong. Abu 'Ammar could bring money to some people and not others. Some were pleased; others were not. The whole program was wrong. But people think they are still living in that system." If Qaraq'a' has extra cash, he tries to make personal donations to poor constituents. "If I don't, I can't."

As a PLC member, Qaraqa' himself has not been paid since the boycott. "I can't work. I have no office. I don't have assistants. No telephone or car. We work with difficulty." He has taken out loans from acquaintances, since banks will not give them. "I'm lucky that my wife works at the YMCA, a private organization, so there's money from her. When I go to Ramallah, I take 100 or 200 shekels from my wife. I take money from her to buy cigarettes."

Hamas, as a political organization, has money and is supporting its members, Qaraqa' claims.² Fatah, on the other hand, "doesn't even know the names of its members in the PLC," he complains. Qaraqa' wrote an article in a local newspaper criticizing Fatah's neglect of its elected members. In it he wrote: "Aside from coming and having a cup of tea, they don't ask about us." Party officials were not happy with his public criticisms. He is not happy that, despite the sharp blow his party was dealt in the January elections, Fatah has yet to take a hard look at itself and reorganize.

Palestinian Brotherhood

The Palestinian communications group, PALTEL, along with the influential Nablus-based holding company Padico,

is slated to dole out the coupons for needy families that Qaraqa' mentions. Families of prisoners and PA employees who normally earn less than 1,500 shekels per month, regardless of political affiliation, will be given vouchers in the amount of 500 shekels to be used in local grocery stores. Fifty thousand families will receive this support, and 500 volunteers from PALTEL companies will be placed in each governorate to distribute the coupons. Reflecting a growing sensitivity to corruption in Palestine, Ra'id 'Awad, the public relations representative from the PALTEL group, repeats that this program "is totally transparent." Aside from provision of lists of employees, there was "no mediation by the government." His group hopes, 'Awad says, "that all private companies in Palestine will do something like this." This program, dubbed "Palestinian Brotherhood," will draw 30 million shekels, about \$7 million, from the companies' social responsibility fund. "We try to feel with the people, with their pain," says 'Awad.

The coupons may be used in shops like those run by Firas, perhaps helping him stay in business a little while longer. He opened the store in 'Aida camp in December 2005, taking out loans from friends to get started. "This shop is running by debt on debt," he laughs. At first, he was doing a brisk

business, taking in 900 shekels every day. Now sales are down to 100–200 shekels. If no one is paying, how does he buy from wholesalers? In the beginning, Firas says, “I bought 10,000 shekels of goods a month, then it went down to only 4,000 shekels, last month, 2,000. By Ramadan, I’ll have closed.” His hand turns an imaginary key in the air. He is grinning, but obviously frustrated. “God willing,” says his mother, “God will get us out of this. The believer does not lose hope.”

Samir Hazboun, head of the Chamber of Commerce in Bethlehem with a Ph.D. in applied economics, also predicts that the autumn of 2006 will be an extremely difficult period. “People can manage for five months, maybe six, seven at the very most.” But come September and October, the social security net will not be able to support the weight of these economic losses. In September, university fees and the costs of school supplies will start piling up. Jewish holidays begin on September 22, which usually means several days of closure imposed on the Palestinian territories. Closure, in turn, means that goods and workers cannot move, leading to a sharp decrease in income. Then, on September 26, the Muslim holy month of Ramadan begins, likely bringing doubled spending and decreased productivity.

White Money, Black Days

“You cannot understand the economy without understanding the culture,” Hazboun points out. An important part of Palestinian culture is frugality. A Palestinian saying instructs, “Save your white money for your black days.” Many people do not store their savings in banks. “A husband will pull one over on his wife,” jokes Hazboun, “and buy her some gold. He gives it as a gift.” But when times get tough, her present—*iktinaz*, Hazboun calls it in Arabic—can be exchanged for cash. The World Food Program calls this selling of assets “negative coping measures.” Palestinian savings outside of market circulation, the kind hidden under beds or in the form of gold presents, are gone. Humanitarian organizations, such as the World Food Program, have also exhausted their accounts. According to a June 2 press release, the program “has no money beyond July to fund its current operation.” “A disaster is coming,” Hazboun admonishes. The black days are here and the white money is fast running out.

Faris, another ‘Aida camp resident, has been compelled to sell much of his wife’s gold to support their seven-member household. A manual laborer, he usually manages to find work only a few days each week, if that. His wife did not disagree with his decision to sell their “white money” for cash to support the household. “When there’s a level of understanding between husband and wife, that helps matters a lot,” Faris says. His daughter ‘Abir, a very well-spoken 15-year old, says she understands that her father is out of work and tries not to ask for too many things.

But these economic pressures can cause familial and social strife. The problem of loans, debts and collecting on them has caused troubles in the neighborhood. Members of a family in Hebron came to Faris’ neighbors to collect on a very large and long-standing debt, and the argument got heated. Although Faris managed to calm things down for the time being, the matter is not settled. The people from Hebron need the money, and Faris’ neighbors do not have it.

In addition to rows such as these, anecdotal evidence also suggests that the incidence of divorce, theft and begging is on the rise. In Bethlehem, stories circulate of pharmacies being robbed of infant formula and diapers. In Jenin, those with no money for cooking gas have taken to preparing

The refugee camp shopkeeper laughs, “This shop is running by debt on debt.”

meals over open flames. Even in Ramallah, a comparatively well-off economic center in the West Bank, children can be seen digging through garbage, searching out anything edible or sellable. But unlike in the United States, al-Qiq remarks, despite these horrible conditions you will not find anyone sleeping on the street.

Economist Hazboun, like everyone else, recalls that these economic problems did not begin with the international boycott of the democratically elected Hamas ministers. As of May, the PA was in debt to local private banks to the tune of \$640 million and owed another \$660 million in arrears to local commercial suppliers. Much of this debt predates the 2006 financial squeeze.³ ‘Adnan Shehadeh, head of al-Jami’a al-‘Arabiyya Hospital in Bayt Jala, an NGO specializing in rehabilitation services, says that the PA owes his hospital 40 million shekels, a debt incurred long before the election of Hamas and the PA’s bankruptcy.

Nice Gestures

In every respect, the economy in Gaza is much worse than in the West Bank. Shortages of electricity and water, depleted fuel stocks and consequent garbage collection stoppages, skyrocketing rates of diarrhea, Israel’s closure of the Karni crossing (the major import-export point for Gaza, through which most humanitarian assistance arrives), 79 percent

poverty and 40 percent unemployment are just some of the factors adding to the disaster that is Gaza. In September 2002, when the political and humanitarian situation was similarly bleak throughout the territories (as it has been ever since), civil society leader Mustafa Barghouti noted, "An increase in food aid from donor countries, while a nice gesture, is not a solution."⁴ Indeed, no solution has been forthcoming.

Humanitarian organizations, including the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), the World Food Program and the World Health Organization, have been sending out renewed warnings of impending crisis in the Occupied Territories since May. The World Bank warns of "the early emergence of a supply-induced humanitarian crisis."⁵ OCHA is concerned about "a public health crisis."⁶ The World Health Organization is appealing for funding to support the "urgent action" that is "required in order to avert a humanitarian crisis" in the territories.⁷ The only clear reference to the political causes of this humanitarian disaster that appears in these mountains of reports and press releases is a reminder by the World Bank of Palestinians' "anger at Israel as the perceived agent of economic distress" during the period of "intense economic pressure in 2001–2002." The Bank describes Palestinian resistance to occupation as "the violence that Israel was acting to prevent" and goes on to advise that "countering the current fiscal crisis and its potentially dangerous consequences requires the restoration of an adequate flow of budget funds" that would, among other things, help "preserve the functionality of the security services."⁸

In 2002, UN head Kofi Annan sent Catherine Bertini to the Occupied Territories as his personal humanitarian envoy. In August of that year, she cautioned that "the crisis might spiral out of control within months" if Israel did not ease its restrictions on movement of people and goods.⁹ If, as the World Food Program reported in July, 70 percent of the Gazan population now lives under conditions of "food insecurity," does that count as a crisis? Is the 160 percent increase in bloody diarrhea found by the World Health Organization since 2005 something that is "out of control"?

Corruption upon Corruption

Meanwhile, only patients with private medical insurance can pay for health services. Al-Jami'a al-'Arabiyya Hospital tries to help patients who cannot afford to pay, Shehadeh says, but they have had to turn people away. They do admit emergency cases if someone's life is at risk. Shehadeh goes on to complain that his hospital has been long neglected by the PA, because it is unaffiliated with a party. In contrast, "civil society organizations associated with Fatah get totally supported by Fatah. They sell services to the government. Look at the corruption upon corruption."

Since Hamas came to power and the money stopped, "the suffering has been more and more," Shehadeh observes.

"There is a lack of medicine. The rate of anemia in children has gone up. We launched a fundraising campaign, but still there's no answer from donors. This because of the boycott" imposed by Israel and the US, "and the Arabs too," the doctor is quick to add. His description of the health and economic situation soon turns to the politics that have helped create it. Referring to the US and Israel, he says, "they want the government of Hamas to fail. They don't want a government that resists. We have to respect democracy and elections. But they don't. They want elections like in Egypt. I think every Palestinian is for the return to the 1967 borders. But Fatah is not really trying to make a coalition with Hamas. I don't blame everything on Hamas." Shehadeh also blames the other political parties for refusing to form a united government.

Despite these desperate economic conditions and Shehadeh's clearly bitter attitude toward Fatah and the PA, al-Jami'a al-'Arabiyya Hospital, like society in general, is still sharing. When other institutions run out of supplies, Shehadeh's hospital gives from its stocks. "We sent saline solution to Bayt Jala hospital"—a public hospital—"when they ran out. We are not selfish. We are one society, a solid one. We work in solidarity. We share what we have. This is part of our resistance."

While Fatah has suffered mightily since the January elections, so has Hamas. Their victory caught them by surprise, and it was not clear to anyone that they had a strong set of plans for governing the country. But once again, Israel has saved the Islamist party, with the help of Hamas' own extremist factions. In the estimation of many, Hamas was going to fall on its own merits—or missteps—on the eve of the crisis of late June. Voices calling for the self-dissolution of the PA and the reestablishment of formal Israeli occupation were growing, including some in the PLC.¹⁰ That is, until Israel imprisoned over 60 ministers and PLC members, and began its harsh assault on the Gaza Strip, following the capture of Cpl. Gilad Shalit at the Kerem Shalom army post on the border between Gaza and Israel. From June 25 to August 3, the UN reported, 174 Palestinians were killed, with Hamas leaders being targeted, and a majority of those killed were civilians, including 40 children. As Israel pounds Gaza, no Palestinian will speak out against Hamas. That would be tantamount to support for Israel's occupation measures, something no one can abide.

While few blame Hamas for the economic siege on the Palestinian Authority that the US and Israel has imposed—and European and Arab governments have upheld—there was no way that the PA could practically endure under such conditions. Drafted by jailed Palestinian political party leaders, the prisoners' document was an attempt to save the PA and end the economic blockade. Since Shalit's capture, just before the parties' signing of the document, the plan is no longer being discussed. Local analysts guess that this situation is just as those who implemented the

soldier's capture intended. Despite the fact that the prisoners' document indicated a real change within Hamas, or at least the "moderate elements" therein, those who were ready to accept an Israeli retreat to the 1967 borders and join in a coalition government with Fatah, Israeli leaders described it as a "terrorist document."

Today, Hamas, Fatah and the Palestinian economy are in dire straits. Hizballah of Lebanon is the most well-respected party in Palestine. Its leader, Sayyid Hasan Nasrallah, is a hero. Palestinians discuss his speeches with clear delight, remarking on his logical and slogan-free delivery, which is so unlike the bombast of other Arab leaders. "Maybe the other Arab leaders should wear a hat like his," jests a camp resident, referring to Nasrallah's ever present black turban, "and maybe their brains would stay in their heads, too."

Not only are many Palestinians happy that an Arab militia defended itself under Israeli attack, but they also admire Nasrallah's down-to-earth style, and especially his seeming ability to carry out his promises. Similarly, they had admired Hamas for its organizational capabilities, its ability to provide social support, the straightforward talk of its leaders and the oft-noted "politeness" of its members.

During an appearance on al-Jazeera, Nasrallah said he had surprises in store for Israel. For Palestinians, the missile strike on a large ship in Israel's flotilla blockading the Lebanese coast, as well as the long-range rockets hitting

Haifa and other northern Israeli cities, was proof that he did. In March, the Hizballah secretary-general said 2006 would be a year for freeing Arab political prisoners in Israeli jails. He swore he would not back down, despite the destruction wrought upon Lebanon, until a prisoner exchange occurs. Tens of families in 'Aida camp and throughout the Occupied Territories are still hoping that Nasrallah will come through on this promise, too. In any case, the Palestinians from Haifa who fled Hizballah attacks to fill Bethlehem hotels infused some much-needed cash into the local economy. ■

Endnotes

- 1 World Bank, "The Impending Palestinian Fiscal Crisis: Potential Remedies," May 7, 2006, p. 6.
- 2 Others reiterated this claim, but I was unable to confirm it with Hamas press officers, because they have either been imprisoned by Israel or have decided to lay low, refusing to meet with foreign journalists.
- 3 Mohammed El-Samhuri, *Humanitarian Conditions in the Palestinian Territories: Short- and Long-Term Perspectives on a Developing Crisis* (Houston: James Baker Institute for Public Policy of Rice University, May 2006), p. 12.
- 4 Lucy Mair, "Humanitarian Crisis or Political Crisis?" *Palestine Now*, September 24, 2002.
- 5 World Bank, "Crisis," p. 3.
- 6 OCHA, "Gaza Strip Situation Report," July 12, 2006, p. 1.
- 7 World Health Organization, "Averting a Humanitarian Health Crisis in the Occupied Palestinian Territory," June 13, 2006.
- 8 World Bank, "Crisis," pp. 6-7.
- 9 Personal Humanitarian Envoy of the Secretary-General, Mission Report, August 11-19, 2002.
- 10 Palestinian Center for Public Opinion, Poll 153, conducted April 14-17, 2006. Of those responding, 17.9 percent called for the dissolution of the Palestinian Authority, in light of the funding blockade and Israeli escalations.