

Arabs is much more than that paid by Jewish citizens. Ariel Sharon, who owns 4000 dunums of land, pays next to nothing in property tax.

Education neglected

Palestinian education and culture are an integral part of the process of liberation, and the embodiment of Palestinian national identity. Aware of this fact, the Zionist authorities

THE OLIVE TREE

for Janan

*The wind on the hill is growing still.
So many buildings appear to smother the air.
A 90 year old Palestinian man and his son
live on the hill among the buildings of Israel,
their stone home earlier bulldozed against
their will, their current cold tent in jeopardy.
The town still requires room. The old man
and his son wait for the bloom on the olive tree
they planted--a strong tree though it takes long
till the fruit. The town grows rapidly, protected
by an army. The tent is surrounded by soldiers.
They've come to uproot the olive tree.*

*And if you listen well, you can still hear
these questions on the wind: How can there
ever be peace? How can one be expected to extend
an olive branch when a war has been declared
on the olive tree? Olives are tumbling in groves
into the road. The road is tree-lined with men
and if you listen well, you can still hear the wind
crying, «Palestinian agriculture was uprooted,
Palestinian economy uprooted.» The dying wind
whispers «slave labor, slave labor»
and Palestinian men await at junctions
to be picked up by Israeli construction trucks.*

*Stones race toward the road, rebel-stones
on the loose from the bulldozing
of a woman's house--strong, ancient black stones
but it takes long before structures made from them
deteriorate. Now they're tumbling like fruit
shaken loose from the tree.
Black stones
and black olives
and unseen olives
are becoming interchangeable.
In the road and on the hill,
Palestinian children stand shoulder to shoulder
against Israeli soldiers,
not in peace
not in fear
not unaware
but clearly in strength
and the olive tree lives.
It's just that now, it sprouts olives
with their pits on the outside and their thin skin
sealed within while the wind on the hill
keeps growing awesomely still.*

—by Yvonne Lubov Rusiniak

—January 1986

implement a policy aimed at obliterating anything which asserts this. Lack of funds, dilapidated schools, primitive school facilities, unqualified teachers and outdated curricula constitute some of the conditions which the Zionist Ministry of Education deliberately perpetuates in the campaign against the Palestinians of the 1948 occupied area. Former minister of education, Zevulon Hammer, announced that a special committee would be established to investigate the curricula with a view to «curb Arab nationalism among Arab youth.»

The Zionist authorities are disturbed by the growing participation of both teachers and students in protests against the fascist, discriminatory policies. Under the pretext of teachers being «disloyal to the state of Israel», the occupation authorities carry out campaigns of dismissal and harassment. Even those who are merely suspected of not sympathizing with the state do not escape being victimized. One teacher says, «I have not been promoted for the last 16 years...I hold two degrees in Arabic history and language. They resort to this method against me and many others because, according to the law, they cannot fire competent, veteran teachers without clear reasons.» Only two Palestinian teachers' seminaries exist in the 1948 occupied area. According to the *Israeli Statistical Abstracts* (1981), the number of teachers accepted fell from 813 to 415 in 5 years. This is clearly intended to sabotage the Palestinian educational system by decreasing the number of qualified Palestinian teachers.

Numbers show most clearly the severity of the educational crisis. There is a shortage of 1500 classrooms. Forty percent of the existing ones are overcrowded, lack proper facilities, running water, electricity, laboratories, etc. Some schools remain without desks, while a considerable number of students study in makeshift rooms, stores or outdoors. Out of 140 towns and villages, only 13 have public libraries, and only 3 have proper gymnasiums. In Jatt, a town of 5000, there is no high school. In a Jewish settlement of the same size, there would be several high schools.

Palestinian students who finish primary schooling travel long distances to another district to complete their studies. This hits hardest on girl students because parents hesitate to allow them to travel between districts since harassment is common. This is one factor contributing to the dropout rates. The Zionist Ministry of Education states that dropout rates are higher among secondary school pupils who have to travel long distances to get to class. According to the ministry's statistics, only 40% of the 16,000 Palestinian students in the Naqab reach high school, and only 15% complete their high school studies. Because of these inhuman conditions, the percentage of Palestinian students, ages 14-17, who go to high school is only 50%, while 90% of the Jews of the same age go to high school. Only 25% of the Palestinian students reach the final school classes, while among Jews the rate is 50%. Moreover, only 40% of those Palestinians who reach the final class obtain the general certificate.

Another aspect has to do with the services provided to the schools. Any new service introduced to the Israeli educational system takes years to be introduced to Palestinian schools. For example, counseling was introduced for Jewish students ten years before it was made available to Palestinian children. Even then, Palestinian counselors had to operate within the boundaries imposed by the Zionist authorities.

The plot to submerge Palestinian national identity is clearly depicted in the outrageous neglect of the Arab language curriculum. Although the Zionist authorities did set up a committee to revise the Arab language curriculum, under the