



EDUCATION SHAPED BY POLITICAL HISTORY IN THE WEST BANK & GAZA STRIP

by Marilyn Umehara

With the enactment of the Early Transfer of Authority Agreement in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip in August 1994, the Israelis handed over responsibility for taxes, health, tourism, welfare, and education to the Palestinians.

Because education is inextricably intertwined with the political history of the region, some awareness of relevant historical events, even though painted in very broad strokes, will help in understanding the education systems currently in place.

AN HISTORIC CROSSROADS

Historic Palestine served as a crossroads between three continents. As the only passable land bridge between Asia and Africa, the area held strategic importance from earliest times for a succession of rulers, among them the Byzantines, Assyrians, Babylonians, Ptolemys, and Romans. Palestine became part of the Ottoman Empire in 1517. It was better known by its Arab-Muslim name of *al-Ard al-Muqadassa* (the Holy Land) because it incorporated the important religious centers of Jerusalem, Damascus and Mecca, and was also known as *Surya al-Janubiyya*, or Southern Syria.

By the middle of the 19th century the area of Palestine had a population of nearly a half million, of whom more than 80 percent were Muslims, 10 percent Christians, and 5 to 7 percent Jews. Turkish was the official language of the empire.

The waning authority of the Ottoman Turks coincided with Westernization of the empire, which introduced new European concepts such as nation, homeland, and freedom, stirring the beginnings of Arab nationalism.

From 1880-1914, Palestine's population increased to just under 700,000 as growth in agriculture, manufacturing, and pilgrimages attracted more settlers. Both economic opportunity and political motivation drew more Jewish immigrants from Europe during this period. The Zionist movement, formally begun at a meeting in Basle, Switzerland, in 1896, adopted what became known as the Basle Program aimed at establishing "a home for the Jews in Palestine." The return to Zion, the name of the hill in Jerusalem on which the palace of King David is believed to have stood, was driven by the conviction that Jews could never be assimilated into other cultures because of extreme prejudice against them. This belief was reinforced

by persistent anti-Semitism in Eastern and Western Europe which encouraged massive emigration of Jews to the United States and Britain and, at first, less so to Palestine. Riots resulted in London, as well as growing demands for restrictive legislation against immigration.

As land prices escalated, Arab landowners found it profitable to sell to Jewish immigrants, dislodging their peasant tenants. By 1914, there were 47 Jewish settlements in Palestine. There had been no resentment against Jewish settlers who were not Zionists, but as Zionist settlements grew, the Arabs became alarmed.

Shortly before the Young Ottoman Turks entered World War I in 1914 on the side of Germany, they set up a military dictatorship throughout the Arab provinces, enforced conscription, and confiscated land, crops, livestock and whole villages to support their troops. Devastation resulted, as well as a loss of whatever support remained for the Turks among the native population. Nearly 1,300 years of Islamic rule ended in 1917 when Jerusalem fell to the British.

YEARS UNDER BRITISH MANDATE

During the war the British and French, in order to gain Arab support in the war effort, promised to encourage and assist the establishment of indigenous governments in the Arab territories whose liberation they sought. Once victory was accomplished, the British determined that control of Palestine was essential to their own interests in northern Africa and the Red Sea—interests which would have been threatened by Arab independence.

In 1916 the British, French and Russians came to a secret understanding, the "Tripartite Agreement for the

Partition of the Ottoman Empire," better known as the Sykes-Picot Agreement, which gave the victors the right to occupy certain former Ottoman territories: Istanbul by Russia, Lebanon and Syria east to Mosul by the French, with Palestine to be separated from Syria. Britain's Foreign Secretary Lord Balfour, with the approval of the War Cabinet, in 1917 pledged support for the establishment of a national home for the Jewish people in Palestine. Both Britain and the U.S. favored this position, which would deflect Jewish emigration from their own countries.

In 1920 Palestinian Arabs were segregated from Arabs in neighboring areas when separate rulers were set up in Iraq and in Trans-Jordan by the British. At the same time, Syria was divided by the French into four separate autonomous provinces: Lebanon, Damascus, Latakia and the Jebel Druze. Customs barriers were erected, and new regulations governing citizenship and nationality left many Palestinians and Syrians living abroad stateless.

In 1922 the League of Nations formally put Palestine under the authority of the British, a Mandate which was to continue for almost thirty years. Even before the Mandate was approved, the British had begun to set up their own government in Palestine and to implement the provisions of the Balfour Declaration. Zionist schools were re-opened and quotas for Jewish immigration were announced. Hitler's rise in Germany, the passage in 1938 of the Nuremberg laws depriving Jews of their citizenship, and tighter restrictions against immigration in Britain, France, and the United States made Palestine seem the only refuge.

By the end of 1939 the Jewish population in Palestine had risen to almost 450,000, or nearly 30 percent of the total population of about 1.5 million. Over 5 percent of total land area in Palestine had been bought for Jewish settlements.

Because immigration quotas were allocated on the basis of labor certificates, only Jewish labor was used on all land settled by the Jews. Eventually all Arab agricultural products also were boycotted by the Jews. These policies created the economic basis for a separate community and imposed great hardships on the peasantry.

The indigenous Arab community in Palestine went unrecognized by the British. Although the Jewish Agency was given a role in formulating Mandatory policy, the Arabs were denied representation, except through their religious leaders, even though Arabs still constituted the majority of the population.

ARAB REVOLT & CIVIL WAR

All of these factors contributed to an Arab uprising and civil war from 1936-39 as rebels protested Mandatory policies and the greed of wealthy Arab landowners. By 1938, rebels controlled most of Palestine. Among other



measures, they declared a moratorium on debts owed to landowners and forbade the selling of land to Jews. Their triumphs were short-lived. It is estimated that about 5,000 Arabs were killed and 15,000 wounded out of a population of about 1.5 million before the rebels were quelled by the combined forces of the British, counter-revolutionary troops organized by Arab landowners, and Zionists.

The Arab revolt caused the British to rethink their policy of encouraging Jewish immigration to Palestine. When the British Peel Commission of 1937 recommended limiting Jewish immigration to 12,000 a year and called for partitioning Palestine into three states—one Jewish, one Arab, and one under British rule—Britain's relations with the Zionists soured. Jewish militants launched a campaign of terror against both British military and civilian targets in Palestine, while Jewish leaders turned to the U.S. for support for their cause.

Desperate to rescue Jews from Nazi persecution in Europe, American Zionists met in New York to call for an end to all controls on immigration and for the establishment of a "Jewish Commonwealth" in all of Palestine. The declaration became known as the "Biltmore Program" after the hotel in which the conference was held.

When World War II ended, the British, no longer able to cope with the partitioning of Palestine, turned the matter over to the United Nations, which voted to terminate the British Mandate and to create two independent states.

DECLARATION OF THE STATE OF ISRAEL

In 1947 about seven percent of land in Palestine was owned by Jews. The boundaries of the new Jewish state were to give the Zionists 55 percent of Palestine, an area which contained hundreds of Arab villages and towns. Thousands of Arabs were driven from their homes by Zionist military assaults, and on May 15, 1948, the new Jewish state of Israel was declared.

Palestinian Arabs immediately declared war against Israel, protesting the division of their land. It briefly appeared that Arab League armies from Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, Trans-Jordan and Egypt would be successful in rallying to aid their Palestinian brothers. The Arab effort was undone, however, by rivalry and varying agendas as well as the surprising military strength of the outnumbered Israelis. By 1949 the Israelis had won armistice agreements which gained them about 70 percent of Palestine. Egypt won authority over a sliver of land along the coast at Gaza. Trans-Jordan, backed by the British, declared itself the new Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, absorbing the West Bank and East Jerusalem. The Palestinian Arabs were left with nothing.

Although the United Nations urged that Arab refugees be allowed to return to their homes in return for a

promise to live in peace with the Israelis, or at least be compensated for their land, this appeal was ignored. Many Palestinians fled to neighboring Arab states. Others emigrated to Europe, Latin American and the United States. The vast majority, totaling about one million people or every three out of four Palestinians, was rendered destitute and homeless, forced to rely on international relief organizations for assistance and to live in makeshift camps. The United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) was set up in 1950 as a temporary measure to provide health and social services.

BIRTH OF THE P.L.O.

The Arab states had agreed to a cease-fire but they refused to make peace or to recognize Israel's existence. Palestinian representatives selected by the Arab states of Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, Egypt, Kuwait, Qatar and Iraq founded the Palestine Liberation Organization (P.L.O.) in 1964, naming Jerusalem as its headquarters.

When Israel moved to secure its borders by launching the six-day 1967 War, both the West Bank and the Gaza Strip were taken over. These areas, as well as the Golan Heights captured from Syria, became known as The Occupied Territories.

An underground movement called *al Fatah*, devoted solely to the reconquest of Palestine and led by Yasser Arafat, Khalil al-Wazir and Salah Khalaf, became prominent after the 1967 War. *Al Fatah* had begun in Kuwait in 1959. The group gained control of the P.L.O. in 1969 and soon elected Arafat president. *Al Fatah* was able to amend the P.L.O.'s National Charter to include its basic principle: "armed struggle is the only way to obtain the liberation of Palestine." Based at times in Jordan, then Syria and Lebanon, the P.L.O. forces adopted terrorism as a tactic to advance their cause.

In 1974 the P.L.O. was declared the only legitimate representative of the Palestinian people at a conference of Arab leaders in Morocco. The United Nations officially recognized the P.L.O. in the same year.

In 1987 the Palestinians launched their *intifada* (popular uprising) against Israel. Schools and universities were closed for a time and then reopened, a pattern which was to repeat itself as strikes, violence and curfews continued.

FAILED PEACE EFFORTS

Initiatives to bring peace to the Arab-Israeli dispute have gone on for years. Resolution 242 by the United Nations Security Council in 1967 called for the inadmissibility of acquiring territory by war and called upon Israel to remove its forces from the West Bank and Gaza strip.

UN Resolution 338 in 1973 asked for the termination of all military activity in the area.

U.S. President Ronald Reagan in 1982 called for Israel to cease all new settlements in the West Bank and to return administrative authority over the area to Jordan.

MUTUAL RECOGNITION

In the early 1990s the time finally seemed right to end decades of strife. The collapse of the Soviet Union left the P.L.O. without one of its main sources of financial and diplomatic support, and its backing of Iraq in the Persian Gulf War alienated other Arab nations. Israel's Labor Party led by Yitzhak Rabin won election and determined to pursue peace. The Israelis also had been unsuccessful in trying to defeat the *intifada*. Secret negotiations began to be held in Norway, and the U.S. threw its support behind the Accord. In September, 1993, in Washington, D.C., the P.L.O. and Israel agreed to recognize each other's legitimacy.

Specifically, the Accord called for the Palestinians to police their own areas, for Israelis and Palestinians to cooperate on economic development, and for Israeli withdrawal from the Gaza Strip and Jericho areas by the end of 1993. Elections were to be held for the Palestinian Council in July 1994. A permanent agreement was to take effect by December 1998.

THE WEST BANK AND GAZA STRIP

Lying on the western bank of the River Jordan, which separates Palestine from Jordan, the West Bank is an area of over 2,200 square miles extending from Central Galilee in the north to the Negev desert in the south. It occupies less than a quarter of the land area of historic Palestine. The Israelis still refer to the area as Judea and Samaria, the Biblical Hebrew names for the territory, rather than the West Bank.

The Israeli Central Bureau of Statistics estimated the Arab population of the West Bank to be about 1,200,000 at the end of 1992, although no formal census has been conducted for the past 27 years. About half of the population was estimated to be less than 15 years of age. According to the World Bank, only about nine percent of the population was living in refugee camps in 1992.

There are also 125,000 Jewish settlers scattered across the West Bank in about 120 communities, intermingled with Arab towns and villages.

The Gaza Strip lies on the eastern coast of the Mediterranean Sea, encompassing an area of about 150 square miles. It is only about 25 miles long and five miles wide, about one-twentieth the size of the West Bank.

From 1948 until 1967, under Egypt's administration, the Gaza Strip became overwhelmed by Arab refugees. The population swelled from 80,000 to 280,000, making the Gaza one of the most densely populated areas in the world. The population now has more than tripled to an estimated 850,000. Only about 18 percent was over 35 years of age in 1990, and that percentage continued to drop because of the high birth rate and declining infant mortality rate.

Nearly 75 percent of the population in the Gaza Strip are registered refugees, according to the World Bank, and 55 percent live in extreme poverty in refugee camps operated by UNRWA. Israel is almost the sole support of the Gaza economy, providing Palestinian day workers with low-paying jobs.

According to a report on the area released in 1993 by the World Bank, the emigration rate from the Occupied Territories has been quite high since 1967. It is estimated that 3,000,000 to 3,500,000 Palestinians now live outside of the Gaza and West Bank, many of whom contribute heavily to the support of Palestinian education.

THE EDUCATION SYSTEM

Four-year elementary schools were first established in Palestine under Ottoman rule before the turn of the century. Because the language of instruction was Turkish and the nearest school for further education was located in Istanbul, the schools had little appeal for Arabs. The Muslim and Christian populations soon established competing private school systems, which were quite successful.

During the 30-year period of the British Mandate, education was free but not compulsory. Most private Muslim schools had been nationalized by the Turks toward the end of their rule, becoming government schools. Under the British the number of government schools increased from fewer than 100 in 1917 to 550 in 1947. About one-third of school age children had some schooling. Private Christian schools also increased in number. Because they offered modern facilities and taught English, they attracted many Muslim students as well.

In 1948, with the ending of the British Mandate and the proclamation of Israel as a state, armistice agreements brought education in the West Bank under the jurisdiction of Jordan, and in the Gaza Strip, under Egypt.

The United Nations established UNRWA in 1950 to provide education to displaced Palestinians. Anyone whose means of livelihood had been destroyed as a result of displacement and who could prove residency in Palestine for at least two years prior to displacement was registered as a refugee and provided with free education, health care, food, and clothing, as well as what was intended to be temporary shelter.

In 1955 the Jordanian General Law of Education stated

that all schools under its jurisdiction, whether government, private or UNRWA, were to follow the same curriculums, administer the same examinations, and have uniform standards.

After its 1967 victory and takeover of the West Bank and Gaza areas, Israel briefly tried to impose its own educational system on the Arab schools. The experiment was soon abandoned and the policies and structures introduced by Egypt and Jordan were retained, with only minor modifications. In the West Bank, schools were administered by the Jordanian Ministry of Education/Department of West Bank Education, District Offices of Education, UNRWA, and the Civil Administration (Israeli military government). However, the Civil Administration had the final say in supervising all educational institutions and reviewing the content of the curricula of all schools.

The Civil Administration placed many obstacles in the way of Palestinian education, particularly higher education, where some students were traditionally agitators. Identification cards were required to travel locally and were often seized and held for months, preventing students from attending classes. The hiring of teachers and administrators was subject to approval by the Israeli military authorities. Curricula, books, and periodicals were censored. With the start of the *intifada* movement in 1987,



many higher institutions were closed for long periods of time and funding withered. The closures seriously disrupted education in the Occupied Territories.



In 1991, the percentage of the Palestinian population over age 15 who had no schooling was 21.3% in the West Bank and 19.9% in the Gaza Strip.

A survey of facilities completed by the World Bank in 1993 found that school buildings were generally in a poor state of repair. Broken windows and doors, leaky roofs and faulty sanitary facilities were common. A significant part of the problem could be attributed to inadequate preventive maintenance and delays in making minor repairs. In addition, many schools occupy buildings constructed as private residences which lack adequate provision for sanitation or sufficient play areas.

In the West Bank, six years of primary education followed by three years of preparatory (lower secondary) education are compulsory and free. The language of instruction is Arabic.

In primary school, six years from age six, the curriculum includes Arabic, religion, mathematics, civics, history, geography, science, drawing, music and physical education. English is taught from grade five.

The curriculum for grades 7 to 9 includes Arabic, religion, English, mathematics, social studies, science, art and physical education. Each boys' school also must offer one of three vocational courses: agricultural, industrial, or commercial. Girls' schools offer home economics courses.

At the end of grade 9 students take the General Preparatory Certificate Examination to advance to secondary school in either an academic (literary or scientific) or vocational (agriculture, commercial, industrial) stream.

Secondary school (grades 10-12) offers a common curriculum which includes Arabic, religion, English, mathematics, drawing, vocational education and physical education. Those in the arts stream also take general science, history, geography, economics and additional Arabic; those in the science stream take biology, physics, chemistry and additional mathematics. Three years of secondary education end with the Jordanian *Tawjihi* (General Secondary Certificate Examination).

Basic education in the Gaza Strip also is compulsory for nine years. Primary education is from ages six to 12. The curriculum includes Arabic, mathematics, science and health, social studies, arts, music, physical education and religion.

Grades 7-9 (ages 12-15) is the second stage of compulsory education. The curriculum includes Arabic, mathematics, social science, biology, physical education, religion, and a foreign language.

Secondary schooling is divided into academic and technical training and five-year secondary and post-secondary teacher training for primary schools in two teacher training institutes, one for women and another for men. The only technical secondary program available in the Gaza Strip is in commercial studies.

Graduates of secondary school earn the Egyptian *Al-*

FINANCING OF EDUCATION

Figures supplied by the World Bank state that the Civil Administration budgeted \$80 million for education in 1992, with more than 70 percent devoted to the West Bank and the remaining 30 percent to the Gaza. The UNRWA budgeted \$52 million for education in 1991, with two-thirds spent in the Gaza Strip.

Per student expenditures in 1991 were about \$153 in government schools, \$334 in UNRWA schools in the Gaza Strip, and about \$425 for UNRWA schools in the West Bank. Differences in salaries, teaching materials and the maintenance of facilities accounted for differences in expenditures.

Most private primary and secondary schools, which enroll about 8 percent of students, are financed almost entirely by student fees.

The total cost of university education in the early 1990s was about \$27 million a year. Students are charged fees of \$400-500 per year. Universities are financially autonomous, and rely on substantial aid from private and foreign donors. This dropped sharply when universities were closed for long periods of time during the *intifada*, and universities now face a financial crisis.

According to figures published by AMIDEAST, educational expenses in 1993 were \$43 million in the West Bank, and about \$37 million in the Gaza. The Israeli government financed education through September 1994.

The Palestinians estimate that an outlay of \$185 million will be needed to create a competent educational system. According to AMIDEAST, almost \$150 million has been pledged to cover expenses for the current school year, and an additional \$100 million has been earmarked for improvements. Saudi Arabia recently donated \$2.5 million towards the renovation of school buildings.

PRIMARY AND SECOND EDUCATION

Figures supplied by the *Statistical Abstract of Israel, 1994*, cite 1,473 institutions of education in the West Bank in 1992-93, of which 856 were government institutions enrolling 284,426 students, 170 were UNRWA institutions enrolling 43,171 students, and 447 were private institutions enrolling 55,789 students.

In the Gaza Strip, Israeli statistics listed 397 institutions in 1992-93, of which 135 were government institutions enrolling 101,194 students, 170 were UNRWA institutions enrolling 107,128 students, and 92 were private, enrolling 12,811 students.

Thanawiyah (Certificate of Completion of Secondary Studies) in either an academic or commercial stream and in teacher training.

UNRWA schools provide only primary education and some post-secondary programs, following the Jordanian system in the West Bank and the Egyptian system in the Gaza Strip.

VOCATIONAL EDUCATION

Vocational and technical education have a poor public image among Palestinians and have never been a serious part of the basic education program. Israel established additional vocational training centers in the main cities of the West Bank and Gaza Strip after 1967 in order to prepare semi-skilled laborers for employment in Israel. Most of these courses last only a few days. The most common course prepared students to pass a written test for a license to drive a truck in Israel.

Because the Israeli government prohibited any courses which might have provided training for military purposes, such as the maintenance of communications equipment, teaching focused on craft skills. There has been little instruction in management or business skills.

HIGHER EDUCATION

Higher education institutions are supervised by the Palestinian Higher Education Council, which is composed of representatives of the colleges and universities and elected leaders from the education sector.

According to the World Bank, there were 20 community and teachers' training colleges in the West Bank in 1993, and one in the Gaza Strip. Four were administered by the Civil Administration, three by UNRWA, nine by the Higher Education Council and five by private entities.

The community colleges, which were first introduced in the West Bank by Jordan in 1981, offer technical, agricultural, commercial, paramedical, social service and teacher training programs. All such colleges in the West Bank require the *Tawjihi* for admission to their two-year programs. Graduates of West Bank community colleges receive a diploma after passing the General Comprehensive Examination. Graduates were not allowed to transfer to West Bank universities.

There are also nine universities—eight in the West Bank and one in the Gaza—which enrolled about 16,400 students during the 1991-92 academic year. All the universities are private and independent, developed by and for Palestinians. There are more universities in the West Bank and Gaza than in any single Arab state, except for Saudi Arabia and Egypt. However, most of the universities have limited enrollments, meager resources, and are seriously understaffed. The universities are:



An-Najah National University, Nablus, West Bank, founded in 1918 as a teacher training school, and granted its present status in 1977, has about 4,200 students. It has faculties of Arts, Science, Economics and Administration, Education, Engineering and Architecture, and Teacher Training. The languages of instruction are Arabic and English. The University offers four-year bachelor's degrees and master's programs in Education, Chemistry, and Islamic Studies, requiring a further two years of study.

Al Quds University/Jerusalem University, Jerusalem, founded in 1982 and comprised of the following autonomous colleges:

- **College of Al-Da'wa and Ussul Al-Din**, Beit Hanina, founded in 1978 as a Teacher's Training Center offering degrees in Principles of Religion, Preaching, and Arabic Language and Literature. The language of instruction is Arabic. Enrollment is about 425;

- **College of Arts for Women**, Jerusalem, founded in 1982. The language of instruction is Arabic. The *Tawjihi* is the minimum entrance requirement. The college offers a four-year Bachelor of Arts and a Teacher's diploma. Enrollment is about 400;

- **Arab College of Medical Professions**, Jerusalem, founded in 1979. Admission requirements are the *Tawjihi*, passing an English examination, a medical examination and an interview. The college offers four-year bachelor's degrees in science, nursing, and medical technology. The language of instruction is English. Enrollment is about 300;

- **College of Science and Technology**, Jerusalem, founded in 1979. Requires the *Tawjihi* and proficiency in English for admission. Offers four-year bachelor's programs in science and technology, and a two-year master's program in science. Arabic and English are the languages of instruction. Enrollment is about 700.

Birzeit University, founded in 1924 and given its present title and status in 1972, has faculties of Arts, (archaeology, education, and Middle East studies), Science, Commerce and Economics, and Engineering. The minimum entrance requirement is the *Tawjihi* and passing an English examination. Offers four-year bachelor's programs and a five-year engineering degree. Also offers a master's degree in education. Arabic and English are the languages of instruction. Enrollment is about 2,500.

Hebron University, Hebron, West Bank, founded in 1971 and given its present status and title in 1980, has colleges of Islamic law, Arts, Science, and Agriculture. Admission requires passing the *Tawjihi* and an Admission Committee's examination. Four-year bachelor's programs are offered, as well as diplomas in education. Arabic is the primary language of instruction. Enrollment is just under 2,000.

Islamic University of Gaza, founded in 1978, has fac-



ulties of Economics and Administration, Education, Islamic Law, Science, Nursing, and Principles of Islam. All programs are five years in length, which includes a preparatory year. The Egyptian *Thanawi* is required for admission. Enrollment is about 6,000.



After 27 years of subjugation by the Israelis, the Palestinians are without formal recognition as a country, without an infrastructure, without any money except for tenuous pledges from foreign nations and support from expatriates, and are led by a man who is increasingly viewed as ineffective in his new role.

TEACHER TRAINING

Most teachers have a two-year diploma from a community or teachers' college. Under Jordanian law, all West Bank teachers were to have a minimum qualification of a Bachelor of Arts degree by 1997.

About 18,600 teachers were employed during the 1991-92 school year, with about two-thirds working for the Civil Administration and another 22 percent employed by UNRWA. Private institutions employed slightly fewer than 10 percent of all teachers.

One of the first acts of the new Palestinian Ministry of Education was to rehire Palestinian teachers who had been fired by Israeli authorities for inciting student protests during the *intifada*, or for promoting political doctrines.

Most money spent on education has been spent on teachers' salaries, but there is still a great shortage of teachers, particularly in the Gaza Strip. Many schools operate on a double shift.

A DIFFICULT FUTURE

This latest twist in the long and savage struggle over land thrusts responsibilities for governance into the hands of a people who are ill-equipped to receive them.

Researchers continually complain about the validity and availability of statistics from past years. Information on future plans for education is hard to come by. The director-general of the Palestinian Department of Education is Naim Abu El Humas. He can be reached by phoning (972) 2-954495 or 2-956526.

According to AMIDEAST, the Palestinian Ministry of Education has established a special department to study the feasibility of unifying the educational systems of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.

Plans are underway to build between 300 and 500 new schools, and to reorganize the rote teaching methods used in Palestinian schools, coordinating these efforts with UNRWA school administrators.

The *intifada* has pledged to stop its disruptive actions in the universities.

Violence continues, however. The deep animosities created by years of bloodshed on both sides will not be easily forgotten. The traditional political roles of the universities will be difficult to put aside. Most of all, the funds desperately needed for maintenance and rehabilitation of the education system may have to be diverted to other equally pressing needs by the Palestinian National Authority. Delicate and difficult times lie ahead. □

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