

Review of The Occupied Palestinian Territories Country of Origin Information (COI) Report, 2 December 2010

Prepared for the Independent Advisory Group on Country Information (IAGCI) by Dr Alan George (St Antony's College, University of Oxford)

(A) Introduction

1. This review assesses the 2 December 2010 *The Occupied Palestinian Territories* COI Report on the basis of instructions from the Independent Advisory Group on Country Information (IAGCI) and the UK Border Agency.

2. In undertaking this Review, I have been conscious that COI Reports are not intended to provide detailed accounts of countries' or territories' histories and present conditions. Rather, they are intended to function as 'data bases of sources' (as stated to me by an official of the UKBA's COI Service) relating to issues that arise frequently in asylum claims.

3. The invitation to tender for the contract to review this COI Report stated that the 'main purpose' [was] to...help ensure that [COIS country information was] as accurate, balanced, impartial and up to date as possible'.

4. This review has a series of distinct elements, namely:

- Assessing the extent to which information from cited sources reflects the requirements for accuracy, balance, impartiality and timeliness, and making appropriate recommendations;
- Identifying any additional sources;
- Noting and correcting any specific errors and omissions;
- Making recommendations for general improvements in the overall structure and approach of the Report.

(B) About the Author

5. Alan George gained his first degree, in geography, from Oxford University in 1970. He obtained his Master's degree (on Middle East geography) at Durham University in 1972, and his PhD, on Syria, also at Durham in 1978. Since 1984 he has worked as a freelance journalist, researcher and expert witness in political asylum cases involving the Middle East. As a journalist, he contributed to a wide range of UK and international publications including the *Observer*, the *Independent* and the *Guardian*, and he frequently commentates on Middle Eastern affairs for radio and television. He is a former Head of Research at the Arab-British Chamber of Commerce and a former Assistant Director of the Council for the Advancement of Arab-British Understanding (CAABU). His publications include *Syria: Neither Bread Nor Freedom* (Zed Books, London, 2003); and *Jordan: Living in the Crossfire* (Zed Books,

London, 2005). In 2003 he was elected a Senior Associate Member of St Antony's College, Oxford University.

(C) Summary

6. The Palestinian Territories are the main arenas for the protracted Arab-Israeli dispute. As a result, they have complex histories in which even basic facts are disputed by the parties, and where propaganda (often very subtle) is rife. Preparing *any* COIS Report is challenging. This particular Report is especially so. Not only are there two (three, if East Jerusalem is considered as a quasi-separate entity) actual Palestinian Territories - the West Bank and Gaza Strip - geographically separated, each with its own set of historical, economic and social conditions and with antagonistic political regimes; also there is the pervasive presence of Israel (as a colonising power in the West Bank and as a military and economic hegemon in and around the Gaza Strip); and, finally, there is the influence of the neighbouring states of Jordan (with regard to the West Bank) and Egypt (with regard to the Gaza Strip). Preparing a COI Report on the Palestinian Territories in effect involves the preparation of a series of several separate, albeit inter-related reports.

7. Against this challenging background, the December 2010 *Palestinian Territories* COI Report is an impressive reference work for those involved in the field of asylum and immigration. In its 138 pages of main text and 38 pages of annexes it covers all the key areas and issues relevant to the adjudication of asylum and immigration claims. While the essential purpose of the present review is to identify ways in which the Report can be improved, rather than to hail its existing strengths, it would be remiss of me not to record that the Report, even as it stands, is of high quality and utility.

8. There are a number of minor typographical and textual errors and deletions that can easily be corrected.

9. The only major shortcomings/corrective tasks that I have identified are:

- several instances where significant items should be included;
- a requirement to update material extracted from annual reports such as the US State Department's human rights reports and the annual reports of Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International (although I am well aware that this need arises solely from the cut-off date for this COIS Report);
- a requirement to amend parts of the Report to take account of very recent developments, especially involving Egypt and the Gaza Strip and relations between Hamas and the Palestinian Authority;
- reliance on the Palestine Facts and MidEastWeb for Co-existence websites, which are brazenly propagandist;
- a possibly excessive reliance on Jane's Information Group Ltd's *Sentinel Country Risk Assessments, Gaza and the West Bank*, a source whose information is sometimes questionable;
- reliance at Annex A on a chronology of Israel/Palestine that is in part propagandist;

COIS – we comment on the specifics of these points in the narrative below. In general we accept all, though we have some reservations regarding which sources should or should not be used.

(D) Typographical errors/minor corrections

10. Page 10: Delete the 25 November 2010 item from the *New York Times*, concerning Jewish connections to the Western Wall in Jerusalem. This is really a very marginal and esoteric issue when set in the context of the core issues of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

COIS: Accepted – this item from Latest News will not be incorporated into the next report

11. Page 14, 1.03. It is correct that the UN map cited, which is reproduced in the Report, refers to ‘Khan Unis’, ‘Nabulus’ and ‘Ram Allah’; but these are highly unusual transliterations of these place names. The usual formulations (which appear elsewhere in the Report) are Khan Younis (or Khan Yunis), Nablus and Ramallah. Perhaps the best way around this would be to refer at this point to *both* the UN map *and* the OCHA maps (see below), and to refer to the towns using the usual transliterations and specifically citing the OCHA maps.

COIS: Accepted – this will be amended and clarified in the next report

12. Page 18. There really should be a one-page reproduction of the July 2010 OCHA Access and Movement map of the Gaza Strip here, to complement that provided for the West Bank.

COIS: Accepted – more recent OCHA maps of both territories will be included in the next report

13. Page 23, 3.05. The quoted extract refers to ‘many terror raids and Israeli reprisals’. This is essentially propagandist: the Palestinians/Arabs do ‘terror raids’; Israel does ‘reprisals’. The word ‘terrorism’ anyway has very little (if any) meaning, other than as a term of abuse. In my view, this extract could simply be deleted. It actually adds nothing to the story of the 1948-49 conflict.

COIS: Accepted – this will be removed from the next report

14. Page 28, 3.24. ‘The Israeli armed forced’ should be ‘The Israeli armed forces’.

COIS: Accepted – [sic] will be added

15. Page 44 ‘SECURITY SITUATION’. ‘see the country specific pages on the websites of country specific pages on the websites’. Should be ‘see the country specific pages on the websites of’.

COIS: Accepted – this will be deleted

16. Page 60, 10.04. The COIS Report offers a source for ‘further information on terror attacks against Israel, and Israel’s response to such incidents’. This is a propagandist formulation: The Palestinians perpetrate ‘terror attacks against Israel’; Israel merely ‘responds’.

COIS: Accepted – this will be appropriately amended

17. Page 76, 15.18. The quotation from the State Department report describes Hamas as ‘the terrorist group Hamas’ and the PFLP as a ‘terrorist group’. These descriptions reflect the position of the US Administration. Other governments take the same position, but the ‘terrorist’ designation of Hamas and the PFLP is by no means universal (see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_designated_terrorist_organizations#cite_note-13).

COIS: Accepted – this will be appropriately amended or removed

18. Page 81 sub-heading ‘HUMAN RIGHTS INSTITUTIONS, ORGANISATIONS AND ACTIVISTS’. This is the sub-heading for Section 17 of the COIS Report. Yet *all* the material in this section (extending from page 81 to page 84) relates to humanitarian aid, rather than ‘Human Rights Institutions, Organisations and Activists’. It seems to me that the sub-heading could be changed to something like ‘Humanitarian aid’. At the same time, I think there would be scope for a section on Human Rights Organisations and Activists, containing a range of relevant material. An excellent initial source for this would be the US State Department’s human rights report.

COIS: Partly accepted – the information provided in this section is intended to provide a picture of how HR Institutions, Organisations and Activists are able/unable to carry out their work in terms of how they are treated/assisted/hindered by the various authorities/groups in the OPTs. Some of the information does relate to human rights groups – for example paragraph 17.04, a quote from the USSD human rights report. But we accept that this section’s focus is on humanitarian organisations, rather than human rights group per se.

We will look to provide more information specifically on human rights groups and their workers.

19. Page 109, 22.32. ‘Palestinian resources the West Bank’. The word ‘in’ is missing after the word ‘resources’. But it is also missing in the original reference! Perhaps ‘in’ could be inserted within square brackets?

COIS: Accepted – [sic] will be added

20. Page 117, 23.24. ‘An United Nations’. This should be ‘A United Nations’.

COIS: Accepted – this will be corrected.

21. Page 133, 27.05. This quotation includes the assertion: ‘Jordan controlled the east and denied Jews access to their holy sites in the Old City’. I am not aware that Jordan prevented Jews from visiting religious sites in East Jerusalem. Certainly *Israelis* were not able to enter Jordan, just as Jordanians were unable to enter Israel, as the two states were at war. But it is essentially propagandist to accuse the Jordanians of practicing what would have amounted to anti-semitism.

COIS: Accepted – this will be appropriately amended

22. Page 137, 28.12. In the 6th line of the quotation, ‘Bank. 48 PA’ appears. The ‘48’ is a footnote reference from the original publication, and should be deleted.

COIS: Accepted – this will be deleted

(E) Substantive recommendations

23. Pages 10-11. This ‘Latest News’ section could of course be updated to include, notably, the impact of the ‘Egyptian Revolution’ on the blockade of the Gaza Strip (but see also my Paragraphs 62-67 below); and the attempts (so far abortive) to engineer a reconciliation between Hamas and Fatah.

COIS: Not accepted – however, only because the Latest News section aims to reflect the very latest major news releases just prior to the publication of the COI Report; the subjects mentioned above will be included in the Recent developments section, and other sections, where relevant, of the next report.

24. Pages 19 and 20, 2.02. ‘3 February 2010’ (which occurs twice) can be updated to ‘2 June 2011’.

COIS: Accepted – source dates will be amended to reflect the most recent date just prior to the agreed cut-off date

25. Page 20, 2.07. These exchange rates need updating.

COIS: Accepted – Exchange rates will be changed to the exchange rate as of the agreed cut-off date.

26. Page 21, 2.08. The latest US State Department report on *Israel and the occupied territories* was issued on 11 April 2011. This note applies to all references to this publication throughout the COIS Report.

COIS: Accepted – this and all other annual reports where a new version has been published will be updated in the next report

27. Page 22, 3.03. There is a glaring error/omission here. The existing material states that fighting broke out with the declaration of Israeli statehood on 14 May 1948. In fact, fighting was already well under way by then, having intensified after the UN Partition vote in November 1947. There were already very substantial numbers of Palestinian refugees by the date of Israel’s establishment. I appreciate of course that, in and of itself, this might not be considered crucial in a document of this type, but I do think it is very important to provide a balanced and accurate context, and the existing material at 3.03 does not achieve that. May I recommend as a source Walid Khalidi’s ‘The Hebrew *Reconquista* of Palestine’ (see <http://desip.igc.org/MiddleEast/khalidiMERconquista.htm>). He states, for example:

In the civil war phase of the first Palestine war, from December 1947 until the declaration of the Israeli state on 14 May 1948, the combined operations of the Haganah and the Irgun and Stern paramilitary forces had already destroyed the fabric of Palestinian society, triggered the Palestinian exodus, conquered major Arab towns and scores of Arab villages and established Jewish control over the bulk of the territory allocated to the Jewish state and territories well beyond. The regular war, which began with

the entry into the country of units of the regular Arab armies on 15 May 1948, would not have occurred had these events not preceded.

COIS: Accepted – the advice and suggested source is gratefully received

28. I note that one of the sources cited is the MidEastWeb for Coexistence. This source should be treated with great caution as it is propagandist. I note that this same source was used at Paragraph 3.05 upon which I commented at Paragraph 13 of my Review.

COIS: Accepted – this source will be removed from the next report

29. Page 23, 3.06. I appreciate that the 1956 Arab-Israeli war is not critical in asylum/immigration cases, but I think it might be useful to record it, at least *en passant*, perhaps in a new Paragraph. See, for example, the relevant entries in the Chronology at http://www.securitycouncilreport.org/site/c.glKWLeMTIsG/b.2692949/k.D60D/MiddleEast_including_IsraelPalestinebr_Historical_Chronology.htm.

COIS: Partly accepted – the COIS researcher appreciates the reviewer's expertise, however this point will need to be considered during the process of updating the report in order to weigh up what it will add balanced with the aim to not over complicate or produce a report of intimidating length

30. Page 23, 3.07. I really think there should be some mention of UN Security Council Resolution 242, which was passed after the 1967 war and provided for Israel to withdraw from 'territories' occupied in the conflict in exchange for peace. This Resolution has been a bedrock of peace efforts ever since, but nowhere in this COIS Report is its substance actually summarised. For example (see http://www.merip.org/palestine-israel_primer/plo-un242-pal-isr-primer.html):

After the 1967 war, the UN Security Council adopted Resolution 242, which notes the "inadmissibility of the acquisition of territory by force," and calls for Israeli withdrawal from lands seized in the war and the right of all states in the area to peaceful existence within secure and recognized boundaries. The grammatical construction of the French version of Resolution 242 says Israel should withdraw from "the territories," whereas the English version of the text calls for withdrawal from "territories." (Both English and French are official languages of the UN.) Israel and the United States use the English version to argue that Israeli withdrawal from some, but not all, the territory occupied in the 1967 war satisfies the requirements of this resolution.

For many years the Palestinians rejected Resolution 242 because it does not acknowledge their right to national self-determination or to return to their homeland. It calls only for a just settlement of the refugee problem. By calling for recognition of every state in the area, Resolution 242 entailed unilateral Palestinian recognition of Israel without recognition of Palestinian national rights.

COIS: Accepted – the omission of any detail of UN Resolution 242 was an oversight.

31. Page 23, 3.08. Again, I appreciate that the October 1973 Arab-Israeli war, in and of itself, is not important in most asylum/immigration cases, but I think it deserves some

mention - along with Security Council Resolution 338, which ended it. A very good summary is given by MERIP (see <http://www.merip.org/october-1973-war-camp-david-i>).

After coming to power in Egypt in late 1970, President Anwar Sadat indicated to UN envoy Gunnar Jarring that he was willing to sign a peace agreement with Israel in exchange for the return of Egyptian territory lost in 1967 (the Sinai Peninsula). When this overture was ignored by Israel and the US, Egypt and Syria decided to act to break the political stalemate. They attacked Israeli forces in the Sinai Peninsula and the Golan Heights in October 1973, on the Jewish holy day of Yom Kippur. The surprise attack caught Israel off guard, and the Arabs achieved some early military victories. This prompted American political intervention, along with sharply increased military aid to Israel. After the war, US Secretary of State Henry Kissinger pursued a diplomatic strategy of limited bilateral agreements to secure partial Israeli withdrawals from the Sinai Peninsula and the Golan Heights while avoiding negotiations on more difficult issues, including the fate of the West Bank and Gaza. By late 1975 these efforts had exhausted their potential, and there was no prospect of achieving a comprehensive Arab-Israeli peace settlement.

In late 1977, Sadat decided to initiate a separate overture to Israel. His visit to Jerusalem on November 19, 1977 led to the Camp David accords and the signing of an Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty in 1979.

In September 1978, President Jimmy Carter invited Sadat and Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin to Camp David, a presidential retreat in Maryland. They worked out two agreements: a framework for peace between Egypt and Israel, and a general framework for resolution of the Middle East crisis, i.e. the Palestinian question.

The first agreement formed the basis of the Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty signed in 1979. The second agreement proposed to grant autonomy to the Palestinians in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, and to install a local administration for a five-year interim period, after which the final status of the territories would be negotiated.

Only the Egyptian-Israeli part of the Camp David accords was implemented. The Palestinians and other Arab states rejected the autonomy concept because it did not guarantee full Israeli withdrawal from areas captured in 1967 or the establishment of an independent Palestinian state. In any case, Israel sabotaged negotiations by continuing to confiscate Palestinian lands and build new settlements in violation of the commitments Menachem Begin made to Jimmy Carter at Camp David.

COIS: Partly accepted – again this point will need to be considered during the process of updating the report in order to weigh up what it will add balanced with the aim to not over complicate or produce a report of intimidating length

32. Page 24, 3.10. I think it would be useful to provide more than one background reference to the peace process in 1991-95. What happened to the multilateral Madrid

process, and why the Palestinians and Israelis abandoned Madrid and secretly launched the bilateral Oslo process, needs to be spelled out a bit. I think that, again, MERIP offers as good a summary as any of this complex period. See http://www.merip.org/palestine-israel_primer/madrid-conf-pal-isr-primer.html:

After the Gulf War, the US sought to stabilize its position in the Middle East by promoting a resolution of the Arab-Israeli conflict. Despite their turn against the PLO, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia were anxious to resolve the Arab-Israeli conflict and remove the potential for regional instability it created. The administration of President Bush felt obliged to its Arab allies, and pressed a reluctant Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir to open negotiations with the Palestinians and the Arab states at a multilateral conference convened in Madrid, Spain, in October 1991. Shamir's conditions, which the US accepted, were that the PLO be excluded from the talks and that the Palestinian desires for independence and statehood not be directly addressed.

In subsequent negotiating sessions held in Washington, DC, Palestinians were represented by a delegation from the occupied territories. Participants in this delegation were subject to Israeli approval, and residents of East Jerusalem were barred on the grounds that the city is part of Israel. Although the PLO was formally excluded from these talks, its leaders regularly consulted with and advised the Palestinian delegation. Although Israeli and Palestinian delegations met many times, little progress was achieved. Prime Minister Shamir announced after he left office that his strategy was to drag out the Washington negotiations for ten years, by which time the annexation of the West Bank would be an accomplished fact.

A new Israeli Labor Party government led by Yitzhak Rabin assumed office in June 1992 and promised rapid conclusion of an Israel-Palestinian agreement. Instead, the Washington negotiations became stalemated after December 1992, when Israel expelled over 400 Palestinian residents of the occupied territories who were accused (but not tried or convicted) of being radical Islamist activists. Human rights conditions in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip deteriorated dramatically after Rabin assumed office. This undermined the legitimacy of the Palestinian delegation to the Washington talks and prompted the resignation of several delegates.

COIS: Partly accepted – once again this point will need to be considered during the process of updating the report in order to weigh up what it will add balanced with the aim to not over complicate or produce a report of intimidating length

33. Page 24, 3.11, 3.13; I am very concerned at the reliance on the Palestine Facts website. It is acknowledged that this website is ‘undated’. But it is also *anonymous* and is a pretty thinly disguised work of propaganda. For a useful analysis of this website, see <http://bujassem.blogspot.com/2009/09/website-review-httpwwwpalestinefactsorg.html>. The relevant ground should be covered from reliable, independent sources. One such might be a BBC summary at http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/6666393.stm. MERIP also offers a very good summary of these developments. See http://www.merip.org/palestine-israel_primer/oslo-accords-pal-isr-prime.html.

COIS: Accepted – the COIS researcher is grateful for the suggested sources.

34. Page 24, 3.14. It is stated: ‘The MidEastWeb for Coexistence Israel and the Palestinians: History since Oslo, updated 21 June 2010, reported: “The peace process with the Palestinians led to the withdrawal of Israeli troops from the Gaza Strip and most cities and towns of the West Bank by early 1996’. I have already cautioned above about the reliability of the MidEastWeb for Coexistence. As it stands, this entry can be understood to mean that all Israeli forces withdrew from the Gaza Strip by 1996. That is not accurate. Israeli forces remained there until September 2005.

COIS: Accepted – this source will be removed from the next report

35. Page 27, 3.20 cites an undated B’tselem report that is said to be titled The Gaza Strip – Background. In fact, this report is titled Background on the Gaza Strip (see http://www.btselem.org/gaza_strip). The extract from this report that appears in the COIS report is inaccurate. The correct text is:

In September 2005, Israel completed the "Gaza disengagement plan," which included dismantlement of the settlements in the Gaza Strip, evacuation of the settlers to Israel, and withdrawal of the army from the Strip. After the plan was completed, Israel issued an order declaring the end of the military government in the Gaza Strip and claimed it was no longer responsible for the safety and well-being of the residents there.

However, Israel continued to control the crossings into Israel and the air and sea space of the Strip, and decisions regarding the movement of persons and goods into and from the Strip remained in its hands.

COIS: Accepted – this will be amended accordingly. We believe this undated source was edited since publication of the last COI Report – hence the inaccuracy.

36. Page 32, 4.08. Reference is made to ‘the expiry of Israel’s settlement building moratorium’. This is the first mention of this moratorium, and I think something should be recorded about when and why it came into being. A *Reuters* report on 30 November 2009 had recorded (see <http://uk.reuters.com/article/2009/11/30/uk-palestinians-israel-settlements-idUKTRE5AT29U20091130>):

The 10-month freeze on new housing projects was announced by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu last week, who pitched it as an attempt to persuade Palestinians to return to U.S.-sponsored peace talks suspended since December [2008].

The temporary moratorium does not apply to areas in the West Bank that Israel annexed to its Jerusalem municipality after capturing the territory from Jordan in a 1967 war.

Palestinians, who seek to establish a state in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, brushed off the Israeli step as insufficient and a ruse.

Netanyahu's decision pits the government against settlers who claim a biblical birthright to the land and who, in many cases, have long expanded their enclaves without state approval.

COIS: Partly accepted – whilst this would be useful to include further information on the moratorium, again it needs to be considered during the process of updating the report in order to weigh up what it will add balanced with the aim to not over complicate or produce a report of intimidating length

37. Page 34. A short Paragraph 5.05 could be inserted here recording the so far abortive Egyptian mediated attempts to reconcile Hamas and Fatah. Judiciously edited extracts could be taken from the following three sources:

<http://uk.reuters.com/article/2011/06/14/uk-palestinians-reconciliation-idUKTRE75D4Y420110614>; <http://uk.reuters.com/article/2011/06/19/uk-palestinians-unity-idUKTRE75I1ET20110619>; and <http://www.jpost.com/MiddleEast/Article.aspx?id=230439>.

COIS: Accepted – although developments in the last six months prior to publication of the next report are likely to be more usefully included in the Recent developments section, and other sections where relevant

38. Page 37, 6.05. I must point out that there is a big difference between the number of *registered* refugees (at least in Lebanon) and the *actual numbers* present - an estimated 260,000-289,000 compared with the official UNRWA total of 425,640. I refer to *Socio-Economic Survey of Palestinian Refugees in Lebanon*, a report published by the American University of Beirut in December 2010;

<http://www.unrwa.org/userfiles/2011012074253.pdf>).

COIS: Accepted – perhaps of secondary importance to a user of the OPTs report but it will be corrected.

39. Page 40, 7.02. The Foreign and Commonwealth Office has now issued its *Annual Report on Human Rights 2010*. This note applies to all references to this publication throughout the COIS Report.

COIS: Accepted – this and all other annual reports where a new version has been published will be updated in the next report

40. Page 40, 7.03. Amnesty International has now issued its *Report 2011*. This note applies to all references to this publication throughout the COIS Report.

COIS: Accepted – this and all other annual reports where a new version has been published will be updated in the next report

41. Page 40, 7.04. Human Rights Watch has now issued its *World Report 2011*. This note applies to all references to this publication throughout the COIS Report.

COIS: Accepted – this and all other annual reports where a new version has been published will be updated in the next report

42. Page 44, 7.17. The Freedom House organisation has now issued its *Freedom in the World 2011*. This note applies to all references to this publication throughout the COIS Report.

COIS: Accepted – this and all other annual reports where a new version has been published will be updated in the next report

43. Page 50, 9.10. The extract from Jane's Sentinel concerning the General Intelligence Service refers to this agency as 'Mukhabarat Salamah'. I am mystified as to the origin of this name. I have not encountered it before, and I can find only very few internet references to this name - and these may, themselves, be based on the Jane's report! In Arabic, this agency is *al-jihaz al-mukhabarat al-'ama*. There is no 'Salamah'.

COIS: Accepted – we are grateful for the clarification and will replace Jane's reference.

44. Page 51, 9.10. I think the Palestinian Preventive Security Organization, Presidential Guard and Civil Defense (which are listed at 9.06) deserve their own brief paragraphs. The Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada have quite a useful report on the Preventive Security Organization (see <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/publisher,IRBC,,PSE,4b20f033c,0.html>). I have not been able to locate suitable, ready-made entries for Presidential Security and for Civil Defense, but I would strongly recommend the use (whether as a free-standing item to be inserted after 9.06, or, suitably edited, to supplement the existing sections of '9. SECURITY FORCES' of the following lengthy footnote from the excellent International Crisis Group publication *Squaring the Circle: Palestinian Security Reform under Occupation* (see <http://www.crisisgroup.org/~media/Files/Middle%20East%20North%20Africa/Israel%20Palestine/98%20Squaring%20the%20Circle%20--%20Palestinian%20Security%20Reform%20under%20Occupation.ashx>):

Presidential Decree Concerning the Unification of Security Forces, 14 April 2005. The reorganisation also included the dismantling of branches (for instance, Force 17, which had served as Arafat's private protection force, was merged with the Presidential Guard); attempts to harmonise the Gaza and West Bank branches of Preventive Security met with limited success.

Today, there are six main forces. In broad terms, the Palestinian Civil Police (8,000 officers) is responsible for internal crime prevention, including daily policing, traffic control and ordinary crime. The National Security Forces (NSF) (some 7,000 personnel) is a gendarmerie-style civilian police with some military skills, but in the Palestinian context is the closest to a national army. It functions as a strategic backup for other forces, especially at demonstrations. The Presidential Guard (2,500) protects important PA officials and infrastructure, provides back-up during periods of unrest and sometimes participates in arrests. Preventive Security (4,000, including paid informants) is charged with internal counter-terrorism and monitors and polices opposition groups. General Intelligence (4,000) theoretically focuses on intelligence-collection outside the West Bank, conducts counter-espionage and liaises with intelligence agencies of other countries, but in practice, it largely overlaps with Preventive Security. Both agencies maintain executive arms in addition to dedicated intelligence

personnel. Military Intelligence (2,000) is responsible for countering threats to the PA from within the security apparatus. Some, including the interior ministry, add a seventh force as well: Civil Defence, which deals with fire prevention, serious traffic accidents and contingency planning for natural disasters and pandemics. Crisis Group interviews, Palestinian security officials, June 2010. Palestinian security personnel in the West Bank total some 29,500. The PA continues to pay around 36,500 security personnel in Gaza, inactive since Hamas's takeover in June 2007.

COIS: Partly accepted – the above sources will be carefully considered during the next update of the report and the most relevant material may be used, especially if no more recent sources are available

45. Page 54, 9.23. This extract from Jane's Sentinel states that Hamas' Internal Security Service was 'established in October 2007'. This is not correct. It was established in September 2007, as is stated correctly in a separate extract from Jane's Sentinel at 9.21.

COIS: Accepted – the COIS researcher is grateful for the clarification and will correct this.

46. Page 60, 10.01. In this reference from Jane's Sentinel it is stated that Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades is 'Fatah's military wing'. This is *not* correct, and conflicts with the account provided at page 146 of the COIS Report.

COIS: Accepted – the COIS researcher is grateful for the clarification and will correct.

47. Page 77, 16.06. I would recommend inclusion of a Reporters sans Frontieres report, dated 6 August 2010, entitled 'Political tension continues to take its toll on journalists in Gaza and West Bank' (see <http://en.rsf.org/palestinian-territories-political-tension-continues-to-06-08-2010,38099.html>).

COIS: Accepted – this source will be carefully considered during the next update of the report and the most relevant material will be used, especially if no more recent sources are available

48. Page 78, 16.09. The Palestinian Center for Development and Media Freedoms has now issued its 2010 *Annual Report*. This note applies to all references to this publication throughout the COIS Report.

COIS: Accepted – this and all other annual reports where a new version has been published will be updated in the next report

49. Page 79, 16.20. The information from the cited RSF report is somewhat dated. I would recommend replacing it with extracts from the Palestinian Center for Development and Media Freedoms' (MADA's) *Annual Violations Report: 2010*; and from Human Rights Watch's report, dated 6 April 2011, *West Bank/Gaza: Stop Harassing Journalists*.

COIS: Accepted – the COIS researcher is grateful for the 2011 sources suggested for inclusion in the next report

50. Pages 84 - 86, 18.02 - 18.09. Replace the existing extracts from the October 2009 US State Department *International Religious Freedom Report* with equivalent extracts from the latest such report, dated 17 November 2010.

COIS: Accepted – this and all other annual reports where a new version has been published will be updated in the next report

51. Page 87, 20.02. ILGA's May 2011 Report is now available.

COIS: Accepted – this and all other annual reports where a new version has been published will be updated in the next report

52. Pages 87-88. 20.01 20.07. I think there may be scope for widening the range of sources. I would recommend for possible inclusion: a BBC news programme entitled *Palestine and homosexuality*, broadcast on 30 May 2005, the script of which is reproduced on the website www.globalgayz.com; and Brian Whitaker's article 'Unspeakable Love', in the Summer 2006 edition of *The Jewish Quarterly*. (see <http://www.jewishquarterly.org/issuearchive/articled87d.html?articleid=218>).

COIS: Partly accepted – these sources, though somewhat dated (we aim to use sources no more than two years old where possible), will be carefully considered during the next update of the report. The relevant material may be used, especially if no more recent sources are available

53. Pages 102-103, 22.05. I think it would be useful to include here something about Palestinian passports (as opposed to ID cards). Perhaps the following short extract would suffice from *Rafah Crossing: Who Holds the Keys?* a March 2009 report by the Israeli human rights organisation Gisha (see http://www.gisha.org/UserFiles/File/publications_/Rafah_Summary_Eng.PDF). This records:

Palestinian passports are issued by the PA only to residents of the OPT who are registered in the population registry managed by Israel.

COIS: Partly accepted – the above source will be carefully considered during the next update of the report and the most relevant material may be used, especially if no more recent sources are available

54. Page 110, 22.35. This section on Mental Health could perhaps be a bit more substantial. See, for example (although it dates from 2004), 'Mental health needs in Palestine' by Abdel Hamid Afana *et al* (see <http://www.odihpn.org/report.asp?ID=2663>); and 'Mental Health Treatment In Palestine: Electroshocks And Out-Dated Medicine', in *Palestine Monitor*, 27 October 2010 (see <http://www.palestinemonitor.org/spip/spip.php?article1586>).

COIS: Accepted – we make the changes as suggested.

55. Page 111, 23.01. The *Health and economic situation in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, and in the occupied Syrian Golan* – Fact-finding report, which is the annex to the World Health Organisation's (WHO) *Health conditions in the occupied Palestinian territory, including east Jerusalem, and in the occupied*

Syrian Golan – Report by the Secretariat of 7 May 2009. The equivalent publications for May 2010 and May 2011 are available. These contain substantial new information that should perhaps be included.

COIS: Accepted – the 2010 and 2011 reports will be carefully considered for inclusion in addition to, or as a replacement of, the 2009 report.

56. Page 112, 23.03. UNRWA's 'May 2010 report'. The equivalent report for May 2011 is available.

COIS: Accepted – this and all other annual reports where a new version has been published will be updated in the next report

57. Page 115, 23.17. It might be useful to add something from *The World's Largest Prison Camp: A Report on Access to Gaza*, issued in November 2010 by the Britain-Palestine All Party Parliamentary Group (BPAPPG) following a fact-finding mission to the Gaza Strip by a BPAPPGC delegation in October 2010 (see http://www.ochaopt.org/documents/opt_prot_caabu_gaza_worlds_largest_prison_nov_2010.pdf).

COIS: Partly accepted – the above source will be carefully considered during the next update of the report and the most relevant material may be used, especially if no more recent sources are available

58. Page 115, 23.19. I suggest the insertion of a new paragraph with extracts from 'Medical supplies at crisis level, health ministry warns', by Eva Bartlett, *The Electronic Intifada*, 20 June 2011 (see <http://electronicintifada.net/content/medical-supplies-crisis-level-gaza-health-ministry-warns/10091>).

COIS: Partly accepted – the above source will be carefully considered during the next update of the report and the most relevant material may be used

59. Page 122, 24.07. I would suggest inclusion of extracts from *Movement and Access Restrictions in the West Bank: Uncertainty and Inefficiency in the Palestinian Economy*, a report by a World Bank technical team published on 9 May 2007 (see <http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTWESTBANKGAZA/Resources/WestBankrestrictions9Mayfinal.pdf>). This states: 'Currently, freedom of movement and access for Palestinians within the West Bank is the exception rather than the norm contrary to the commitments undertaken in a number of Agreements between GOI [Government of Israel] and the PA [Palestinian Authority]'. The report concludes:

The policy of closure, which broadly consists of comprehensive restrictions on the movement of people and goods within the West Bank, highly constricted movement of goods across the border with Israel, and a near total separation of economic and social interaction between the territories of Gaza and the West Bank, has resulted in a highly fragmented Palestinian economy. In economic terms, the restrictions arising from closure have not only increased transaction costs, but have also led to a level of uncertainty and inefficiency which has made the conduct of business difficult and therefore has stymied the growth and investment which is necessary to fuel economic revival.

Within the West Bank context, closure is implemented through a complicated agglomeration of policies and practices which has fragmented the territory into ever smaller and more disconnected cantons. While Israeli security concerns are undeniable and must be addressed, it is often difficult to reconcile the use of closure for security purposes from its use to expand and protect settlement activity and the relatively unhindered movement of settlers in and out of the West Bank. Limiting Palestinian access to the important agricultural and tourist potential of the Jordan Valley is one such example. It is also difficult to account for the discriminatory enforcement of zoning and planning regulations which minimize the amount of land available for the normal growth and development of Palestinian areas including the development of new housing, industrial land, waste facilities and other infrastructure while allowing for expanded construction of settlements and their supporting infrastructure.

While GOI has shown a willingness to consider a relaxation of specific restrictions, such as providing several hundred permits to “unique categories” such as businessmen, worker permits, or the removal of certain physical impediments, incremental steps are not likely to lead to any sustainable improvement. This is because these incremental steps lack permanence and certainty and can be easily withdrawn or replaced by other restrictions. This uncertainty applies not only to residents of the West Bank, but also to foreign investors and expatriate professionals who are critical sources of investment and future growth. Moreover, as long as large areas of the West Bank remain inaccessible for economic purposes -- including the settlements and their municipal jurisdiction, the “seam zone”, the Jordan Valley and other “closed areas”, and unpredictable movement remains the norm for the vast majority of Palestinians, sustainable economic recovery will remain elusive. Economic recovery and sustainable growth will require a fundamental reassessment of closure practices, a restoration of the presumption of movement, and review of Israeli control of the population registry and other means of dictating the residency of Palestinians within WB&G as embodied in the existing agreements between GOI and the PLO.

COIS: Partly accepted – the above source will be carefully considered during the next update of the report and the most relevant material may be used, especially if no more recent sources are available

60. Page 124, 25.01. Again, I would recommend inclusion of extracts from the World Bank report that I cite in my previous paragraph.

COIS: Partly accepted – as previous reply

61. Page 124, 25.03. The extract refers to ‘the colour of ID cards’. It is *very* important to make clear that it is *not* the *card itself* that is coloured, but the plastic wallet that contains the card. As it stands, this paragraph could cause great confusion.

COIS: Accepted – the COIS researcher is grateful for the clarification and would appreciate any assistance that can be offered to locate a suitable source of this information

62. Page 132, 27.01 - 27.07 The issue of citizenship and status in the West Bank, Gaza Strip and East Jerusalem is *hugely* complex, with the devil often lying in the detail. The

existing content of this section is fine, so far as it goes, but I think it could be improved considerably. Much of the necessary material is there; but it needs to be ordered a bit more logically. The section needs to start with a clear exposition of the *nature* of nationality and citizenship for Palestinians. This is critical. Many are Palestinians by nationality but stateless. There needs to be material charting, a bit more systematically than the present material, the history of citizenship (or lack of it) amongst the Palestinians. Also needed quite early in the section is an account of the census conducted by Israel after occupying the Territories in 1967 (mentioned at 27.04), as this was the basis for the Population Register that still determines who may reside in the Territories, who may receive ID cards and who may receive Palestinian passports. I would strongly recommend extracts (especially from pages 27-28 and 35) from the excellent *Palestinian Nationality and Citizenship: Current Challenges and Future Prospects*, by Dr Asem Khalil of the Law Faculty of Bir Zeit University in the West Bank, a report published in 2007 by the Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies of the European University Institute in Florence (see <http://cadmus.eui.eu/bitstream/handle/1814/8162/CARIM?sequence=1>).

COIS: Accepted – the COIS researcher is grateful for the very constructive criticism and will look to address the above issues for the next update

63. Pages 135 137, 28.01 - 28.12. I think it would be very useful to include material on the specific (and quite complex) regulations governing the procedures under which the children, born abroad, of parents from the Territories can return to reside in the Territories. Under the Oslo Accords the PA can itself register on the population registry the children of persons already on the registry, subject only to the Israeli authorities being informed. To the best of my knowledge, this applies only to children born *within* the occupied territories. For the registration of children born abroad of parents who are on the population registry, the *physical presence* of those children within the occupied territories at the time of the application for registration is a requirement. I refer to the website of the Israeli human rights NGO B'Tselem (http://www.btselem.org/English/Family_Separation/Index.asp). This states:

First, a person seeking to be united with his or her family in the Occupied Territories must be physically present in the Territories in order to become registered in the population registry and receive an identity card. Therefore, the possibility of realizing the approval given by Israel depends on receiving a visitor's permit which enables entry into the Occupied Territories. Presence is also required for the registration of children born abroad to parents who are residents of the Occupied Territories. In this case, too, there is a close connection between the two procedures. Second, given that the family unification process has always taken several years to complete, many persons need to repeatedly obtain visitors' permits in order to enable them to live together with their families, even for short periods of time.

COIS: Accepted – the COIS researcher agrees clarity on this issue is required

64. The rules stipulate, however, that young children of Palestinians with residence status do not require a visitor's permit to enter the Territories. I refer to *Family Unification of Residents in the Occupied Palestinian Territory*, a report authored by Asem Khalil and

published in 2009 by the Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies of the European University Institute in Florence (see http://cadmus.eui.eu/bitstream/handle/1814/11216/CARIM_ASN_2009_19.pdf?sequence=1). Citing the PA's website, this records: 'Residents' children born abroad can enter the territories without visitors' permit if they are younger than five years. The original birth certificate is enough'.

COIS: Partly accepted – the above source will be carefully considered during the next update of the report and the most relevant material may be used, especially if no more recent sources are available

65. Page 137. I would recommend a new section sub-headed 'Impact of the Egyptian Revolution of 2011' covering the implications for the blockade of Gaza of the toppling of President Mubarak's regime in Egypt this year. On 25 May 2011 Egypt's state news agency, *MENA*, reported that the Rafah crossing, on the Gazan-Egyptian border, would be opened permanently from 0900 to 2100 every day except Fridays and holidays, beginning Saturday 28 May, adding: 'Palestinian women of all ages will be exempted from visas as will men under 18 or over 40'. *MENA* said that the move formed part of efforts 'to end the status of the Palestinian division and achieve national reconciliation' - a reference to Cairo's attempted mediation of a reconciliation between Hamas and Fatah.

COIS: Accepted – developments in the country conditions and human rights situation will be reflected in the next version of the report; the above source will be carefully considered alongside other relevant sources during the process of updating

66. I refer to 'Freedom of movement in Gaza gets a boost' published by the UN's *IRIN* news agency on 31 May 2011 (see <http://www.irinnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportID=92848>). This recorded:

Palestinians were allowed to pass freely from Gaza into Egypt through Rafah for the first time in four years. The decision marked a huge shift in Egyptian foreign policy, introduced after the fall of President Hosni Mubarak, and provides a critical valve for the 1.6 million people trapped within Gaza's borders since June 2007.

The crossing was partially opened in May last year after the deaths of international activists on board a flotilla attempting to break the siege. It operated a five-day week, from noon until 4pm, but was open only to foreign passport holders, Palestinians with foreign visas and medical patients.

The restrictions had made it incredibly difficult for Palestinians to enter Egypt, even on genuine medical grounds. From April 2011 to date, around 2,100 Palestinians have been denied entry into Egypt for unspecified reasons, according to the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs.

Under the new rules, all women, minors and any man under 18 and over 40 will be able to pass freely without a visa six days a week from 9am until 4pm.

67. The border opened on 28 May but problems quickly emerged. The same *IRIN* report noted:

For men aged 18-40, the reopening makes little difference. Unless they can provide proof of having a place at university abroad or a foreign visa, they will remain stuck in the Gaza Strip.

There are also hundreds of Palestinians in Gaza, mostly refugees, without identification documents who cannot leave. While it officially withdrew from the Gaza Strip in 2005, Israel retains control of its maritime, air and most of its land borders. It also retains control of its population registry, including the issuance of Palestinian ID numbers without which it is impossible to travel.

68. The *IRIN* report continued:

Sana Easa, 39, has not seen her family in Cairo since she moved to Gaza to marry her husband Salah 12 years ago. Both need medical treatment unavailable in Gaza's hospitals, but even with the new policy at Rafah, they are stuck.

Sana is a Palestinian but was born in Cairo and lived there most of her life. Her parents left Gaza as refugees in 1967. Her Egyptian passport expired in April 2004 but in order to renew it, she must go to Cairo in person. She is still waiting for the Palestinian ID number she applied for 12 years ago.

"The last time I tried to cross Rafah with my husband was in May 2010," she says. "We got to the Palestinian border at 4am and reached the Egyptian side at 11pm. The Egyptian officials told my husband he and my son could pass through but they told me that because I have expired Egyptian travel documents and I don't have a Palestinian ID I had to turn back".

COIS: Partly accepted – the above source will be carefully considered alongside other relevant sources during the next update of the report (response to paragraphs 63-65)

69. An *Agence France Presse* report of 1 June 2011, headed 'New rules set for Rafah crossing limits', states (see <http://reliefweb.int/node/405260>):

New rules at the recently reopened Rafah crossing will cap the number of Palestinians entering Egypt at 400 a day, Palestinian and Egyptian officials said on Wednesday.

The travel cap is one of several new restrictions announced just days after Egypt reopened the crossing, the only way in and out of Gaza that is not controlled by Israel.

But both Gaza's Hamas rulers and Egypt denied seeking the new restrictions, with the Islamists insisting Cairo had imposed the cap, and Egyptian officials saying it was done at the request of the Palestinians.

An Egyptian security source said Palestinian officials had asked their counterparts to set a daily number of people who would be allowed to cross from Gaza each day.

But Salama Baraka, the head of the Hamas police at the Rafah crossing, said in a statement that Egypt had announced the new limit during a meeting with Palestinian officials on Tuesday.

Under the new rules, Palestinians crossing for medical reasons must have their cases assessed by an Egyptian medical committee, and travellers planning to enter Egypt must submit their names at least one day in advance.

70. An article in the *New York Times* on 2 June 2011, entitled ‘Open border at Gaza is not so open, Palestinians find’, (see <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/06/02/world/middleeast/02gaza.html>), stated:

Days after Egypt, with great fanfare, opened its border permanently with Gaza, new restrictions have been imposed on Palestinians who want to cross, and the area’s Haas rulers spoke on Wednesday with frustration and anger.

Only three buses, carrying a total of 150 passengers, entered the Egyptian hall at the Rafah crossing on Wednesday, while five others remained stuck on the Palestinian side, Hamas officials said two hours before closing.

“Since Tuesday, we are witnessing complications that we cannot understand,” said Salama Baraka, director of the crossing, who blamed “the Egyptian side for the nearly paralyzed movement of travelers.” Local reports said that Hamas was considering shutting the border in protest...

...Sari Bashi, executive director of Gisha, an Israeli human rights group focused on freedom of movement for Palestinians, said the Egyptians had told Hamas on Tuesday that crossings would be limited to 400 a day and that everyone, including women and children, now needed to clear their names a day in advance.

In recent months, the daily average of those leaving Gaza through Rafah was 300. Before the Hamas takeover of Gaza, under a system that included European monitors from November 2005 to June 2006, about 660 people moved into Egypt every day, according to Gisha.

COIS: Partly accepted – the above sources will be carefully considered alongside other relevant sources during the next update of the report (response to paragraphs 66-67)

71. Pages 139-142 Annex A. This chronology is grossly biased, and omits absolutely key events. The November 1947 UN resolution partitioning Palestine is not mentioned; nor the eruption of fighting that followed that resolution, during which the first wave of

Palestinian refugees was created; nor the Deir Yassin massacre of April 1948 that gave a sharp boost to the flight of the Palestinian Arabs.

COIS: Accepted – the COIS researcher is very grateful for the reviewer’s knowledge and expertise. We accept the timeline should not be used given its flaws, and we will seek a more balanced alternative.

This response applies to the following paragraphs (69-79), which will be usefully referred to during the process of updating the report.

72. The chronology’s entry for May 1948 is appallingly simplistic: ‘Israel War of Independence [an expression that Palestinians would never use!] (1948 War) - Declaration of Israel as the Jewish State; British leave Palestine; Egypt, Syria, Iraq, Lebanon, Jordan, Saudi Arabia declared war on Israel. Egyptian, Syrian and Jordanian invasion began’. It should be pointed out that as of Israel’s declaration in May 1948, Zionist forces had *already* invaded large parts of the areas destined for the Arab state under the UN Partition Resolution; and that the Jordanian forces (which were British-officered) were deployed only in the areas of Palestine allocated by the UN for the Arab state. They never intended any ‘invasion’ of Israel - i.e. of the Israeli state as defined by the UN Partition Resolution.

73. The assertion, in the entry for 1964, that the PLO was founded ‘with the aim of destroying Israel’ is not acceptable in a serious publication. From the perspective of the Palestinians and Arab states that founded the PLO, the organisation was founded to liberate the usurped Palestinian homeland, in line with international law. That certainly would have involved the ‘destruction of Israel’ - but simply to state this as the sole motivation for the PLO’s formation is absurd.

74. The March 1978 entry states that ‘the PLO hijacked a bus’. This is incorrect. The PLO is an umbrella organisation for a range of Palestinian groups. The bus hijack was undertaken by Fatah.

75. The March 2000 entry states: ‘Israeli-Syrian peace negotiations fail when Hafez Assad rejects an Israeli offer’. This is absurd. Israel’s offer was for the return of most of the occupied Syrian Golan Heights. In exchange for peace, Syria demanded the return of *all* its occupied lands. The entry could just as legitimately be: ‘Israeli-Syrian peace negotiations fail when Israel rejects a Syrian offer’!

76. The May 2000 entry refers to Hizbollah ‘kidnapping three Israeli soldiers’. These soldiers were *captured* by Hizbollah guerrillas during an armed confrontation. It is inappropriate, and propagandist, to portray this as a ‘kidnapping’.

77. The March-April 2002 entry refers to ‘operation Defensive Shield in the West Bank’. As it stands, this looks quite innocuous; but this ‘defensive operation’ was the largest Israeli military operation in the West Bank since the 1967 war. It caused the deaths of some 500 Palestinians and 30 Israeli soldiers, and massive damage, especially to refugee camps.

78. The March 2006 entry specifies that ‘over 40’ Qassam rockets fell on the Israeli town of Sderot; and that Israel ‘responds with shelling of launching sites and Israel Air Force (IAF) raids to kill [Palestinian] leaders’. Once again, Israel is portrayed as the victim of

mindless attacks, to which it ‘responds’. The context needs to be explained, at least marginally.

79. In the entry for June 2006 there is another ‘kidnapped’ (*not* ‘captured’) Israeli soldier!

80. The November 2006 entry states that ‘Palestinian terror attacks’ continue. This is a propagandist formulation. The word ‘terror’ lacks almost all meaning. As I have mentioned earlier, it is essentially a term of abuse.

81. The February 2007 entry records: ‘ Hamas officials reiterate that they will never recognise Israel’. In reality, the Hamas position is far more nuanced than this. On numerous occasions Hamas has indicated that, while remaining formally attached to its non-recognition of Israel, would be ready for a Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza Strip to co-exist with Israel within its 1967 boundaries.

82. In the January 2009 entry, again the Israel Defence Forces (IDF) undertakes ‘retaliations’, whereas the Palestinians undertake ‘rocket fire’. I must point out that, from the Palestinian perspective, it is *they* who are ‘responding’.

83. I have not been able to find a really good, ready-made substitute for the Annex A chronology. I note that the Timeline of the International Institute of Strategic Studies (IISS) (listed as source 89a) is a subscription-only source, and I have not, therefore, had an opportunity to peruse this. It may be that this would be an effective replacement (subject to copyright considerations) for the present Annex A. I think it might be necessary, however, to create a chronology comprising elements of several published timelines. A good starting point would be the chronology published on the website of *Security Council Report* (see http://www.securitycouncilreport.org/site/c.gIKWLeMTIsG/b.2692949/k.D60D/Middle-East_including_IsraelPalestinebr_Historical_Chronology.htm). Amazingly, however, this does not actual have an entry for the June 1967 war! *The Guardian* presents a very useful timeline of peace talks in the 1991-2010 period at <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/jan/23/timeline-middle-east-peace-talks>.

COIS: Accepted – we will review the chronology in light of your comments, and construct a more balanced timeline. Thank you for your insights.

84. Page 145. It is stated that Fatah was ‘founded in 1950’. Apparently, this assertion derives from Jane’s Sentinel country risk assessments. I am not aware that Fatah was founded in 1950. Informally, it was established in the late 1950s. Its formal foundation date, however, was January 1965.

COIS: Accepted – the COIS researcher is grateful for the clarification and will replace Jane’s with an appropriate and accurate source in this instance.

85. Page 146. The second entry for the Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades, extracted from Jane’s Sentinel country risk assessments, states that the organisation comprised ‘autonomous, largely independent terrorist cells’. The adjective ‘terrorist’ is propagandist and lacks any substantive meaning.

COIS: Accepted – we remove “terrorist” and look for additional sources on this.

86. Page 148. The entry for the PFLP, extracted from Jane's Sentinel country risk assessments, is seriously confused. The PFLP is *not* the same thing as the PFLP Special Command. The latter was a small breakaway faction, formed in the late 1970s. It appears to have been dormant for some years. The PFLP-SC was of marginal significance even when it was active. To assert, as the entry does, that the PFLP-SC poses 'a significant risk in the Palestinian territories' is absurd.

COIS: Accepted – the COIS researcher is grateful for the clarification and will replace Jane's with an appropriate and accurate source in this instance.

87. Page 148. I note that the 'ultimate aim' of the PFLP is said to be 'the destruction of the state of Israel and the establishment of a democratic society achieved through a social revolution in its place'. I must observe that the phrase 'destruction of the state of Israel' is a standard phrase of Israeli propaganda (which has also occurred elsewhere in this COIS report!)

COIS: Accepted – the COIS researcher will replace Jane's with an appropriate and more balanced source in this instance. We will take care in using the phrase "destruction of the state of Israel" out of context in future.

88. Page 148. I note that the PFLP-GC's aims are said to be 'the destruction of the state of Israel and the establishment of a Palestinian state, with a pro-Syrian foreign policy'. With regard to 'the destruction of the state of Israel', I refer to my previous paragraph. This is the first time that I have seen 'a pro-Syrian foreign policy' of a future Palestinian state as a factor in PFLP-GC objectives!

COIS: Accepted – the COIS researcher will replace Jane's with an appropriate and more balanced source in this instance.

89. This section of the COIS report should include an entry for the Popular Resistance Committees in the Gaza Strip.

COIS: Accepted – reliable, balanced information will be sought and included in the next update

90. Pages 154 - 156. Annex D. It is stated that there are 'four variations of ID cards', including Jewish Israeli cards. This account is incomplete and over-simplified. Israeli-issued Palestinian ID cards in the West Bank had orange covers, those in the Gaza Strip had maroon covers, while ID cards for Palestinians living in occupied East Jerusalem were issued with blue covers (see the footnote on page 12 of *Family Unification of Residents in the Occupied Palestinian Territory*, a report authored by and published in 2009 by the Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies of the European University Institute in Florence (see http://cadmus.eui.eu/bitstream/handle/1814/11216/CARIM_ASN_2009_19.pdf?sequence=1). After the establishment of the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) in 1994, the Israeli-issued cards in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip were replaced by an ID card with a green cover issued by the PNA, while Israel continued to issue the ID cards with blue covers for Palestinian residents of occupied East Jerusalem.

COIS: Partly accepted – the COIS researcher is grateful for the suggested source, which will be carefully considered during the next update of the report and the most relevant material may be used, especially if no more recent sources are available

91. The situation is further complicated by the issue by the Hamas administration in Gaza of their own ID cards, which are not recognised by the Israelis or by the PA. Gisha's report 'Rafah Crossing : Who holds the Keys?' of March 2009 records:

In February 2006, the Hamas-run Interior Ministry in Gaza began issuing local identity cards for people without resident status. These cards have no validity outside of the Gaza Strip and cannot be used to leave Gaza, because their bearers are not registered in the population registry approved by Israel, and therefore they cannot travel through the Gaza Strip crossings, either Rafah or Erez. Even inside Gaza, their use is limited, and they are not valid, for instance, for the purpose of opening, a bank account, something that can be done by presenting a visitor permit approved by Israel.

COIS: Partly accepted – the COIS researcher is grateful for the suggested source, which will be carefully considered during the next update of the report and the most relevant material may be used, especially if no more recent sources are available

(F) Sources and accessibility

92. The sources used in this COIS Report are generally reputable and respected. I am impressed with their wide range, and with the wide extent of reliance (for this Report dealing with highly contested facts!) on independent, unbiased sources such as UN agencies, Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch. There are, however, some important exceptions that I have noted in my Review above. I would caution, in particular, against reliance on the 'Palestine Facts' website (listed at Annex F as sources 11a and 11b); I would replace the Chronology at Annex A with a chronology from a better source than source 10c; and I would urge great caution with the Jane's Sentinel country risk assessments (source 28a).

COIS: Partly accepted – we agree that some sources should be treated with caution – thank you for identifying those that you think we should. However we are reluctant to exclude all sources out of hand. Though sources may be biased or inaccurate on some matters, they may yet still prove useful on other issues and, if used alongside other sources, may be provide valid information.

There is, perhaps, a need to be more explicit about the origins and motivations of sources in reports – at least for such politicised places as the OPTs.

93. Two sources - Jane's Sentinel country risk assessments (source 28a) and the IISS Timeline (source 89a) - are available only on a subscription basis. This is unfortunate, and especially so in relation to the Jane's source as it is relied upon repeatedly and because some of its information is either questionable or plain wrong.

COIS: Partly accepted – the COIS researcher will attempt to limit the use of subscription services by locating alternative sources where possible.

94. I have not checked every single url listed at Annex F, but those I did check all functioned correctly.

(G) Conclusion

95. Generally, the 2 December 2010 *The Occupied Palestinian Territories* COIS Report is an impressive publication. Generally, it is accurate, balanced, impartial and up-to-date, and it relies on reputable and accessible sources.

96. There are a relatively few minor typographical and similar errors. Far more importantly, the Report requires updating; and certain limited - but significant - corrections are required.

97. Should those instructing me require any clarifications of any element of my present Review, I trust that they will not hesitate to contact me.

(28 September 2011)