

**Statement of the Palestinian Independent Commission for Citizens' Rights to the
8th Annual Meeting of the Asia Pacific Forum of National Human Rights
Institutions**

**Kathmandu
16 April 2003**

The Palestinian Independent Commission for Citizens' Rights is the first truly independent National Human Rights Institution in the Arab World. It was established in 1993 by President Yasser Arafat, and given a broad mandate to ensure respect for human rights in Palestine by all official Palestinian bodies.

To this end, PICCR must ensure that human rights safeguards are provided for in Palestinian laws and legislation, and in the work of the various departments, agencies and institutions of the Palestinian National Authority, as well as Palestinian Legislative Council institutions. The Commission has been aiming to achieve this via a variety of activities.

The Commission's programme revolves around the complaints handling mechanism. This investigates complaints received from citizens who believe their rights have been violated, usually as a result of maladministration or an abuse of power. PICCR follows up on these complaints with official and semi-official parties in order to attain appropriate amicable solutions.

A second key element of PICCR's work is the preparation of an Annual Report which provides an overview of the status of human rights in Palestine, including a report on the performance of the three branches of Government from a human rights perspective.

The Commission also works to ensure conformity between Palestinian legislation and international human rights norms and standards; both by presenting commentaries on existing laws and draft legislation, as well as plans and policies; and by submitting draft laws or amendments for enactment.

PICCR produces three types of publications which investigate specific legal and governance problems in Palestine: Special Reports and Legal Reports, which provide recommendations for overcoming these problems, and Reports on Israeli Violations against Palestinian Citizens' Rights

Finally, PICCR has an extensive programme of training courses, public lectures, school workshops, television emissions, poster and newspaper advertisements which inform Palestinian citizens about their rights and freedoms and the mechanisms for their protection.

As a result of its diligent professional activities for almost ten years, and in spite of the repressive conditions imposed by the Israeli occupation authorities, the Commission has succeeded in consolidating its presence, independence and standing

in Palestinian society. In this time, we have grown from one small office in Jerusalem to having four offices in the West Bank and Gaza with a team of over twenty five people (not including the Board of Commissioners).

PICCR's independence is vital to its integrity as a National Human Rights Institution and is ensured in its establishing legislation, as well as in its finances, governing arrangements, and operation.

PICCR is looking forward to full-fledged membership in the family of National Human Rights Institutions, and contributing to and gaining insight from this cooperative effort in enhancing human rights. We are very pleased to have this opportunity to observe the proceedings of this important meeting

PICCR would like to thank the Secretariat of the Asia Pacific Forum in Sydney for their constant support and assistance. We would also like to express our gratitude to the New Zealand Commission for Human Rights for sending a senior representative to our offices to provide technical assistance, and for supporting our application for membership to the APF. We also express our gratitude to the United National Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights in both Palestine and Geneva for their continuing cooperation and support.

I thank you.