

**THE COMMITTEE ON THE EXERCISE
OF THE INALIENABLE RIGHTS
OF THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE**

AND

THE DIVISION FOR PALESTINIAN RIGHTS

PRESS BACKGROUNDER



UNITED NATIONS
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IN BRIEF

The Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People was established in 1975 by the United Nations General Assembly of the United Nations to recommend a programme designed to enable the Palestinian people to exercise its inalienable rights defined by the General Assembly as the right to self determination, independence and sovereignty; and the right of Palestinians to return to their homes and property.

The General Assembly mandated the Committee to:

- Promote the realization of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people;
- Raise international awareness on the question of Palestine;
- Mobilize international support for and assistance to the Palestinian people;
- Work towards a peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine.

In pursuance of its mandate the Committee:

- organizes international meetings and conferences;
- provides publications and information;
- monitors the situation relating to the question of Palestine;
- reports and makes suggestions to the General Assembly, the Security Council or the Secretary General;
- maintains liaison and cooperation with civil society organizations interested in the question of Palestine.

The Division for Palestinian Rights was established as the Committee’s secretariat.

CONTENTS

IN BRIEF	2
THE COMMITTEE	3
DIVISION FOR PALESTINIAN RIGHTS	4
INTERNATIONAL MEETINGS	4
CIVIL SOCIETY COOPERATION	4
INTERNATIONAL DAY OF SOLIDARITY	5
UNISPAL	5
CONTACT	6



PRESS BACKGROUNDER - Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People and the Division for Palestinian Rights

THE COMMITTEE

Background

In November 1975, by its resolution 3376 the General Assembly established the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People. The Committee was given the task of recommending a programme designed to enable the Palestinian people to exercise its inalienable rights.

Today, the Committee actively promotes the rights of the Palestinian people by raising awareness of the question of Palestine and mobilizing international support for the Palestinians. The Committee works towards the realization of the inalienable right of the Palestinian People.

Membership

The Committee is comprised of 22 Member States from a variety of regions such as Asia, Africa, Latin America and Western Europe. There are 26 observers to the Committee, including the Permanent Observer of Palestine and regional organizations such as the African Union, the League of Arab States and the Organization of the Islamic Conference.

The elected Bureau of the Committee consists of:

- Chairman: Ambassador Paul Badji of Senegal
- Vice-Chairmen: Ambassador Zahir Tanin of Afghanistan and Ambassador Rodrigo Palmira Díaz of Cuba.
- Rapporteur: Ambassador Saviour Borg of Malta.

Mandate

The Committee is mandated by the General Assembly to promote the realization of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, to support the Middle East peace process, and to mobilize international support for and assistance to the Palestinian people.

The General Assembly requested the Committee to monitor the situation relating to the question of Palestine and make recommendations to the General Assembly, the Security Council and the Secretary General. The Assembly annually considers the Committee's report and reaffirms its mandate.

Since 1991 the Committee has consistently supported the peace process. It has welcomed the 1991 Madrid Peace Conference and has strongly supported the objective, affirmed in Security Council resolution 1397 (2002), of two States, Israel and Palestine, living side by side within secure and recognized borders. The Committee also welcomed and supported the Arab Peace Initiative and the Quartet's Road Map and called on the parties to implement it. The Committee welcomed the holding of the Annapolis Conference and the Joint Declaration reached in November 2007 by Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas, and the Prime Minister of Israel, Ehud Olmert. It viewed this Conference as an important pivotal point for permanent status negotiations.

At the same time, the Committee has expressed grave concern at the many obstacles and delays in the negotiations, the illegal annexation of East Jerusalem, the continuing expansion of settlements and the growing network of checkpoints and roadblocks in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, the construction of the separation wall, and the serious deterioration of the Palestinian economic situation due to prolonged military closures. The Committee has repeatedly condemned acts of violence by extremists. It has reiterated that the Israeli occupation continued to be the root cause of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict.

Programme of work

In order to promote international support for and assistance to the Palestinian people, as well as international awareness of the question of Palestine, the Committee convenes international meetings and conferences in various regions of the world.



PRESS BACKGROUNDER - Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People and the Division for Palestinian Rights

In addition to a publications programme and information activities, each year on 29 November the Committee holds a special meeting in observance of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People.

The Committee also cooperates with a wide network of civil society organizations active on the question of Palestine.

DIVISION FOR PALESTINIAN RIGHTS

The Division for Palestinian Rights was established by the General Assembly pursuant to resolution 32/40. It acts as the secretariat for the Committee on the Exercise of the Palestinian People.

Core functions of the Division

- Providing substantive support and secretariat services for the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People
- Assisting the Committee in the exercise of its mandate and the promotion and implementation of its recommendations
- Monitoring the developments relevant to the question of Palestine
- Planning, organizing and servicing the Committee's programme of international meetings and conferences in various regions of the world
- Maintaining liaison with civil society organizations active on the issue
- Organizing the annual observance of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People
- Preparing studies and publications relating to the question of Palestine and the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people and promoting their widest possible dissemination
- Maintaining and developing a Web-based United Nations Information System on the Question of Palestine (UNISPAL).
- Conducting an annual training programme for staff of the Palestinian Authority

INTERNATIONAL MEETINGS

The Division for Palestinian Rights, under the guidance of the Committee, organizes international meetings and conferences to raise awareness of the various aspects of the question of Palestine.

Invited to such meetings are representatives of Governments, internationally renowned experts, including Israeli and Palestinian, representatives of the United Nations system and other intergovernmental organizations, parliamentarians, representatives of civil society, the media and others.

Among the meetings organized by the Committee are seminars for assistance to the Palestinian People and civil society events in support for Israeli-Palestinian peace. These meetings are held in various regions of the world with the participation of all sectors of the international community. They are geared towards constructive analysis and discussion of the various aspects of the question of Palestine and mobilize international support for and assistance to the Palestinian people.

CIVIL SOCIETY COOPERATION

The Committee and the Division for Palestinian Rights maintain liaison with civil society organizations. The Civil Society Network on the Question of Palestine is the main UN forum for NGOs which are active on the issue of Palestine.

The network consists of more than 1,000 civil society organizations from various regions: national and international, political and humanitarian, NGOs promoting human rights or economic and social development, solidarity-, charitable- or action-oriented groups, churches, trade unions and professional associations, and organizations with special focus on women, children, refugees and prisoners.



PRESS BACKGROUNDER - Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People and the Division for Palestinian Rights

The Committee, on a regular basis, organizes meetings and conferences, which bring together numerous organizations active on the question of Palestine, including Palestinian and Israeli. Panel discussions provide information and analysis on current political developments, focus on the needs of the Palestinian people and improve networking among NGOs. Part of the meetings is devoted to workshops, where NGOs have an opportunity to exchange experience and expertise with kindred groups and elaborate common strategies and proposals.

The reports of the meetings are issued as publications of the Division for Palestinian Rights and are widely disseminated.

The Committee encourages cooperation, coordination and networking among civil society organizations. Through the Division it liaises with national, regional and international coordinating mechanisms. It holds periodic consultations with various organizations on ways and means to enhance its programme of cooperation with civil society.

INTERNATIONAL DAY OF SOLIDARITY WITH THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE

The Committee each year on 29 November holds a special meeting to observe the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People at United Nations Headquarters in New York.

The date of 29 November was chosen because of its meaning and significance to the Palestinian people. On that day in 1947, the General Assembly adopted resolution 181 (II), which came to be known as the Partition Resolution. That resolution provided for the establishment in Palestine of a "Jewish State" and an "Arab State", with Jerusalem as a *corpus separatum* under a special international

regime. Of the two States to be created under this resolution, only one, Israel, has so far come into being.

Speakers at these annual events include the Secretary-General, the President of the General Assembly, the President of the Security Council, and representatives of relevant United Nations bodies, intergovernmental organizations and the Permanent Observer of Palestine. NGOs are invited to attend and a spokesperson for the international community of civil society organizations working on the issue.

Other activities organized in New York in connection with the observance of the Day of Solidarity include a Palestinian exhibit or a cultural event sponsored by the Committee and presented by the Permanent Observer Mission of Palestine to the United Nations, and the screening of films.

Meetings in observance of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People are also held at the United Nations Offices at Geneva and Vienna and in various capitals of the world.

UNISPAL

The Division for Palestinian Rights has developed the United Nations Information System on the Question of Palestine (UNISPAL). It contains the texts of historical and current United Nations documents on the question of Palestine and other issues related to the Middle East situation and the search for peace in the region.

The UNISPAL documents collection includes the texts of resolutions and decisions of the Security Council, the General Assembly, and other United Nations bodies; documents of the



PRESS BACKGROUNDER - Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People and the Division for Palestinian Rights

Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People; reports and statements of the Secretary-General; and documents and publications of the various United Nations system entities.

UNISPAL can be accessed at:

<http://unispal.un.org>

Additional information on the question of Palestine and the United Nations can be found at the Division's Question of Palestine site at www.un.org/depts/dpa/qpal, or via the United Nations home page www.un.org under Peace and Security. The site includes a brief history of the issue, glossary of related terms, a calendar of upcoming and recent events and an overview of action in the General Assembly, Security Council, and other United Nations bodies with regard to the question of Palestine. The site also contains links to relevant United Nations websites and a civil society page.

CONTACT

United Nations Secretariat
Division for Palestinian Rights
Room S-3350
New York, New York 10017
Tel: +1-212-963-5159
Fax: +1-212-963-4199
Email:
dpr-meeting@un.org