



DIVISION FOR PALESTINIAN RIGHTS

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Bulletin **on action by the United Nations system and intergovernmental organizations relevant to the question of Palestine**

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*The Bulletin can be found in the United Nations Information System
on the Question of Palestine (UNISPAL) on the Internet at:*
<http://unispal.un.org>

I. COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN ADOPTS DRAFT RESOLUTION ON THE SITUATION OF AND ASSISTANCE TO PALESTINIAN WOMEN

On 1 March 2011, the Commission on the Status of Women adopted a draft resolution on the situation of and assistance to Palestinian women (E/CN.6/2011/L.2), the text of which is reproduced below:

The Commission on the Status of Women recommends to the Economic and Social Council the adoption of the following draft resolution:

Situation of and assistance to Palestinian women

The Economic and Social Council,

Having considered with appreciation the report of the Secretary-General,¹

Recalling the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women,² in particular paragraph 260 concerning Palestinian women and children, the Beijing Platform for Action adopted at the Fourth World Conference on Women³ and the outcomes of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, entitled “Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century”,⁴

Recalling also its resolution 2010/6 of 20 July 2010 and other relevant United Nations resolutions, including General Assembly resolution 57/337 of 3 July 2003, on the prevention of armed conflict, and

¹ E/CN.6/2011/6.

² *Report of the World Conference to Review and Appraise the Achievements of the United Nations Decade for Women: Equality, Development and Peace, Nairobi, 15-26 July 1985* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.85.IV.10), chap. I, sect. A.

³ *Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, 4-15 September 1995* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.96.IV.13), chap. I, resolution 1, annex II.

⁴ General Assembly resolution S-23/2, annex, and resolution S-23/3, annex.

Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) of 31 October 2000, on women and peace and security,

Recalling further the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women⁵ as it concerns the protection of civilian populations,

Recalling the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights,⁶ the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights⁶ and the Convention on the Rights of the Child,⁷ and reaffirming that these human rights instruments must be respected in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem,

Expressing deep concern about the grave situation of Palestinian women in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, resulting from the severe impact of the ongoing illegal Israeli occupation and all of its manifestations,

Expressing grave concern also about the increased difficulties being faced by Palestinian women and girls living under Israeli occupation, including the continuation of home demolitions, evictions of Palestinians and arbitrary detention and imprisonment, as well as high rates of poverty, unemployment and food insecurity, inadequate water supply, incidents of domestic violence, and declining health,

⁵ See General Assembly resolution 48/104.

⁶ See General Assembly resolution 2200 A (XXI), annex.

⁷ United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 1577, No. 27531.

education and living standards, including the rising incidence of trauma and decline in their psychological well-being, and expressing grave concern about the dire humanitarian crisis and insecurity and instability on the ground in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, in particular in the Gaza Strip,

Deploring the dire economic and social conditions of Palestinian women and girls in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and the systematic violation of their human rights resulting from the severe impact of ongoing illegal Israeli practices, including the construction and expansion of settlements and the Wall, which continue to constitute a major obstacle to peace on the basis of the two-State solution, and the continued imposition of closures and restrictions on the movement of persons and goods, which have detrimentally affected their right to health care, including access for pregnant women to health services for antenatal care and safe delivery, education, employment, development and freedom of movement,

Gravely concerned, in particular, about the critical socio-economic and humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip, including that resulting from the Israeli military operations and the imposition of a blockade consisting of the prolonged closure of border crossings and severe restrictions on the movement of persons and goods, as well as the continued impeding of the reconstruction process by Israel, the occupying Power, which has detrimentally affected every aspect of the lives of the civilian population, especially women and children, in the Gaza Strip,

Stressing the importance of providing assistance, especially emergency assistance, to alleviate the dire socio-economic and humanitarian situation being faced by Palestinian women and their families,

Emphasizing the importance of increasing the role of women in peacebuilding and decision-making with regard to conflict prevention and the peaceful resolution of conflicts as part of efforts to ensure the safety and well-being of all women in the region, and stressing the importance of their equal participation and involvement in all efforts for the achievement, maintenance and promotion of peace and security,

1. *Reaffirms* that the Israeli occupation remains the major obstacle for Palestinian women with regard to their advancement, self-reliance and integration in the development of their society, and stresses the importance of efforts to increase their role in decision-making with regard to conflict prevention and resolution and to ensure their equal participation and involvement in all efforts for the achievement, maintenance and promotion of peace and security;

2. *Calls in this regard upon* the international community to continue to provide urgently needed assistance, especially emergency assistance, and services in an effort to alleviate the dire humanitarian crisis being faced by Palestinian women and their families and to help in the reconstruction of relevant Palestinian institutions, with the integration of a gender perspective into all of its international assistance programmes, and affirming its support for the Palestinian Authority's plan of August 2009 for constructing the institutions of an independent Palestinian State;

3. *Demands* that Israel, the occupying Power, comply fully with the provisions and principles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights,⁸ the Regulations annexed to the Hague

⁸ General Assembly resolution 217 A (III).

Convention IV of 1907,⁹ the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, of 12 August 1949,¹⁰ and all other relevant rules, principles and instruments of international law, including the International Covenants on Human Rights, in order to protect the rights of Palestinian women and their families;

4. *Urges* the international community to continue to give special attention to the promotion and protection of the human rights of Palestinian women and girls and to intensify its measures to improve the difficult conditions being faced by Palestinian women and their families living under Israeli occupation;

5. *Calls upon* Israel to facilitate the return of all refugees and displaced Palestinian women and children to their

⁹ See Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, *The Hague Conventions and Declarations of 1899 and 1907* (New York, Oxford University Press, 1915).

¹⁰ United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 75, No. 973.

homes and properties, in compliance with the relevant United Nations resolutions;

6. *Requests* the Commission on the Status of Women to continue to monitor and take action with regard to the implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women,² in particular paragraph 260 concerning Palestinian women and children, the Beijing Platform for Action³ and the outcomes of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly entitled “Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century”;⁴

7. *Requests* the Secretary-General to continue to review the situation, to assist Palestinian women by all available means, including those laid out in the report of the Secretary-General on the situation of and assistance to Palestinian women,¹ and to submit to the Commission on the Status of Women at its fifty-sixth session a report, including information provided by the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, on the progress made in the implementation of the present resolution.

II. UNITED NATIONS HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS REPORTS ON THE HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION IN THE OCCUPIED PALESTINIAN TERRITORY

On 3 March 2011, the High Commissioner for Human Rights issued the third periodic report on the human rights situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory (A/HRC/16/71), covering the period from 4 February to 30 November 2010. The conclusions and recommendations of the report are reproduced below:

...

V. Conclusions and recommendations

55. The human rights situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory remained of profound concern throughout the reporting period. Serious violations occurred on a widespread and persistent basis. The

preponderance of such violations was attributable to acts or omissions by Israel. With regard to international humanitarian law, Israel continued to fail to fulfil its obligations as the Occupying Power.

56. Serious violations of international human rights also occurred due to acts or omissions of other duty bearers,

namely the Palestinian Authority and the de facto authorities in Gaza. Furthermore, the de facto authorities in Gaza violated international humanitarian law, especially by the launching of indiscriminate rockets and mortars toward Israel.

57. It is critical to note that the recommendations made by the Secretary-General and the High Commissioner for Human Rights in recent reports on the Occupied Palestinian Territory have still not been implemented.¹¹ They remain valid and need to be implemented as a matter of urgency.

58. Many of the recommendations contained in the report of the United Nations Fact-Finding Mission on the Gaza Conflict also remain to be effectively implemented (A/HRC/12/48, para. 1979 (b)), including those addressed to Israel (para. 1972 (a)-(i)) regarding the blockade of Gaza and its concomitant regime that limits sea access and agricultural activity; rules of engagement, standard operating procedures and open fire regulations in accordance with international humanitarian law; freedom of movement; Palestinian children detained in Israeli prisons and discriminatory treatment of Palestinian detainees; detention of PLC members; an independent inquiry to assess whether the treatment by Israeli judicial authorities of Palestinian and Jewish Israelis expressing dissent in relation to the Gaza conflict was discriminatory; and the need to reiterate a commitment to respecting the inviolability of United Nations premises and personnel. In relation to recommendations that were addressed to Palestinian armed groups (para. 1973 (a)-(b)), there remains a need to ensure respect for international humanitarian law and, with regard to Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit, to act on the Mission's recommendation to release him on

humanitarian grounds. With respect to recommendations to responsible Palestinian authorities, paragraph 1974 (b) regarding political detainees has not been implemented, and Palestinian non-governmental organizations still are not able to operate freely and independently in line with paragraph 1974 (c).

59. In this context the High Commissioner for Human Rights recommends that the Government of Israel take the following actions:

(a) Fully lift the blockade of Gaza, with due regard to legitimate security concerns. This should include putting in place more efficient measures to facilitate the movement of people to and from Gaza, permitting goods to be exported from Gaza, and ensuring that materials for reconstruction can be delivered to Gaza;

(b) Bring policies and practices regarding the detention of persons from the Occupied Palestinian Territory into compliance with the Fourth Geneva Convention, in particular with respect to detaining them within occupied territory;

(c) Publicly clarify restrictions on freedom of movement inside Gaza, including with respect to its maritime territory. Such restrictions should take full account of the agricultural, fishing and other affected industries in Gaza, and the impact that these industries have on the human rights situation. Further, the methods of enforcing such restrictions should be consistent with Israel's international legal obligations, and should never include the use of live ammunition against civilians;

(d) Adopt effective measures to lessen tension in East Jerusalem, in particular by ending the demolition of Palestinian homes, desisting from building

¹¹ This includes A/HRC/12/37, A/HRC/13/54, A/65/365 and A/65/366.

settlements, facilitating access to the Al-Aqsa Mosque, and preventing, investigating and prosecuting violent acts perpetrated by Israeli settlers;

(e) Bring relevant policies and practices into compliance with the Fourth Geneva Convention's prohibition on the forcible transfer of civilians in occupied territory. This extends to the revocation of East Jerusalem residency and Military Orders Nos. 1649 and 1650. It is recalled that violations of article 49 constitute grave breaches of the Fourth Geneva Convention;

(f) Further improve freedom of movement in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, in particular with respect to access to East Jerusalem from the rest of the West Bank;

(g) Cease the expansion of settlements and dismantle existing settlements, including "outposts", and desist from forcibly evicting Palestinians from their homes and demolishing Palestinian homes;

(h) Bring policies and practices related to law enforcement and military operations carried out in the Occupied Palestinian Territory into compliance with applicable international laws and standards. Ensure that such policies and practices are observed through rigorous training for the personnel involved. Ensure that allegations of violations are promptly, impartially and thoroughly investigated. Where such investigations reveal violations, ensure that personnel who transgress applicable laws are held accountable and victims are remedied;

(i) Ensure that law enforcement and military personnel deployed in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, are aware of their obligation to

ensure public order and safety, in particular with respect to preventing acts of violence by settlers against Palestinians and their properties. Where such acts are perpetrated, ensure that they are promptly, impartially and thoroughly investigated and that perpetrators are held accountable;

(j) Bring relevant policies and practices regarding the arrest and detention of children into compliance with Israel's international legal obligations. Ensure that such policies and practices are observed through rigorous training for the personnel involved.

60. With respect to the Palestinian Authority, the High Commissioner for Human Rights recommends taking the following actions:

(a) Ensure that activities carried out by Palestinian security agencies are consistent with international human rights law and the Palestinian Basic Law, in particular activities related to detention, and that security agencies are fully trained on the legal standards related to their work;

(b) Ensure that civil society organizations, human rights defenders and journalists can carry out their work in an open, safe and secure operating environment, especially in relation to the rights to freedom of association and expression, as well as other applicable international standards.

61. With respect to the de facto authorities in Gaza, the High Commissioner for Human Rights recommends taking the following actions:

(a) Ensure full compliance with international human rights standards, including fully upholding and promoting the right to life, refraining from carrying out

torture and/or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment, and abolishing the use of the death penalty;

(b) Seek to ensure full compliance with international humanitarian law by all armed groups active in Gaza, including by ending the launching of rockets and mortars toward Israel;

(c) Ensure that civil society organizations, human rights defenders and journalists can carry out their work in an open, safe and secure operating environment, especially in relation to the rights to freedom of association and expression, as well as other applicable international standards. Particular concern is expressed regarding ICHR and the need to respect the Paris Principles.

III. UNITED NATIONS INTERNATIONAL MEETING ON THE QUESTION OF PALESTINE CONVENES IN VIENNA

The United Nations International Meeting on the Question of Palestine was convened by the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, at the United Nations Office at Vienna, on 7 and 8 March 2011, under the theme “The urgency of addressing the plight of Palestinian political prisoners in Israeli prisons and detention facilities”. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon’s message to the Meeting was delivered by Maxwell Gaylard, Deputy United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process and United Nations Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator for the Occupied Palestinian Territory. The concluding statement of the organizers is reproduced below:

1. The United Nations International Meeting on the Question of Palestine was convened by the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People at the United Nations Office at Vienna, on 7 and 8 March 2011. Participants in the Meeting included internationally renowned experts, including Palestinian and Israeli, representatives of Member States and Observers, representatives of the United Nations system and other intergovernmental organizations, parliamentarians, representatives of civil society, academic institutions and the media.

2. The objective of the Meeting was to raise awareness of the plight of Palestinian political prisoners and to strengthen the support of the international community for a solution to this issue, namely their speedy release and reintegration into the Palestinian society. The Meeting, among other things, looked

into the current situation and conditions of imprisonment of Palestinians in Israeli prisons and detention facilities, including the situation of women and minors. It discussed legal aspects of the arrests and detentions of Palestinians by Israel, the occupying Power, and considered the issue of Palestinian political prisoners from the point of view of international humanitarian law and in the context of the Israeli-Palestinian political process. Finally, the Meeting discussed ways of strengthening the role of the wider international community, including non-governmental actors, in the search for a solution to the plight of these Palestinian prisoners, on the basis of international law, including the Fourth Geneva Convention.

3. The organizers and the participants expressed appreciation for the opening message by United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, delivered by Mr. Maxwell Gaylard, Deputy United

Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process and United Nations Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator for the Occupied Palestinian Territory. The organizers heard and shared the assessment of Mr. Issa Qarage, Minister of Prisoners' Affairs of the Palestinian Authority, who noted in his keynote address the need to internationalize the issue of Palestinian political prisoners and to treat these as prisoners of war, when applicable.

4. The organizers took note with interest of the Minister's suggestion to explore the possibility of raising the legal issue of the status of Palestinian political prisoners with the appropriate legal bodies of the United Nations, including the International Court of Justice.

5. The organizers noted that this was the first time the Committee had convened one of its international meetings on the issue of Palestinian political prisoners in Israel. According to recent Palestinian statistics, there are currently around 6,000 Palestinians held in 22 prisons and detention camps in Israel and in the West Bank; 300 of these prisoners are under the age of 18. Among the prisoners are also 37 women and some 10 members of the Palestinian Legislative Council.

6. The organizers emphasized that the security argument by Israel, the occupying Power, was not a justification for routine violations of international humanitarian and human rights law. The scope of arrests of Palestinian civilians, the arbitrary use of administrative detentions and the transfer of prisoners to Israel demonstrated that the imprisonment of Palestinians opposing the occupation was a policy of Israel, the occupying Power, aimed at intimidating and subjugating the Palestinian population.

7. The participants noted with concern that the conditions of detention were often extremely poor, and in some cases, life-threatening. They expressed concern at the fact that Israel continued to practice torture and other forms of mistreatment against Palestinian detainees, who have been protesting poor treatment, abuse of their dignity and living conditions. In this context, Palestinian prisoners have drawn attention to their grave situation through hunger strikes since Israel began its occupation in 1967, with the last hunger strike as recent as January 2011. The participants drew attention particularly to the situation of the most vulnerable groups, Palestinian women and minors in Israeli detention, as well as to physically and psychologically vulnerable prisoners, who were reportedly subjected to mistreatment and deprived of adequate health care. The participants noted the devastating effect of detention upon Palestinian prisoners and their families. They stressed the urgent need for reintegration of former prisoners into society.

8. The organizers called upon Israel to guarantee that appropriate standards of detention were maintained, that all detainees were brought to trial without delay, and that minors' and prisoners' visiting rights were guaranteed, in full compliance with international treaties and conventions, including the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, to which Israel is a State party. The organizers commended the consistent and valuable work of the International Committee of the Red Cross aimed at alleviating the detrimental consequences of the Israeli treatment of Palestinian prisoners. The organizers called on the World Health Organization to visit Palestinian prisoners in Israeli jails and detention facilities and

inspect their conditions, and requested Israel to grant such access.

9. The organizers called once again on Israel to release without any precondition Palestinian prisoners arrested in relation to their activities opposing the occupation. The participants furthermore urged Israel to take immediate steps to clearly define “political offences” and undertake with urgency the drafting and enactment of the necessary legal provisions to prevent future arbitrary arrests of Palestinians in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, as well as their unlawful transfer to prisons inside Israel.

10. The participants pointed out that the majority of detainees were being held in violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention in prisons outside of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. In most of the cases, prisoners were even denied access to legal counsel as well as family visitation rights, contrary to international humanitarian and human rights laws. The organizers called upon Israel to fully respect the rule of law in the treatment of all prisoners. The participants also expressed grave concern at Israel’s use of the practice of administrative detention, which contravenes fundamental human rights. In this respect, the participants noted with grave concern that Israel uses administrative detention orders in a highly arbitrary manner, with the right to appeal, but without charge, trial or right of defence. The organizers joined the participants in calling on Israel to adhere to international law, impose restrictions on the use of administrative detention, and meet minimum international standards for due process, including by providing the detainees with prompt and detailed information as to the reason for their detention, and with a meaningful opportunity to defend themselves.

11. The organizers commended the international efforts to shed light on the issue of Palestinian political prisoners, including through the convening of the meetings held respectively in Algeria in December 2010 and in Morocco in January 2011. The organizers joined international calls for an immediate release of political prisoners, who include children and women, and for a proper international inspection of their current condition which should be a priority for the General Assembly, Security Council, human rights organs and the international community.

12. The organizers agreed with the assessment by participants that the issue of Palestinian prisoners had a major impact on both, the Palestinian society and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. In that context, the release of a substantial number of Palestinian prisoners, as well as the immediate release of the imprisoned members of the Palestinian Legislative Council, would constitute a positive step towards establishing a climate of mutual trust needed to resume the permanent status negotiations. Political prisoners should not be viewed as a bargaining chip in peace negotiations.

13. The organizers also pointed out that the Committee had on several occasions called for the release of the captured Israeli Staff Sergeant Gilad Shalit and for humanitarian access to be granted to him. The organizers urged an early release of a large number of Palestinian political prisoners in Israeli prisons and other detention facilities.

14. The organizers concurred with the view of many participants that the issue of Palestinian prisoners in Israeli detention could not be detached from the peace negotiations, but peace could not be complete without the release of all

Palestinian prisoners. It was noted that the continued stalemate in the political process remained a cause for serious concern. The organizers stressed that the vast majority of Member States, including this Committee, considered all settlement construction, including the so-called “natural growth”, to be illegal and had to be halted immediately. A complete and immediate cessation of settlement activities in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, was imperative and would positively contribute to the success of the political process. The organizers also stressed that settlement construction undermined trust between the two sides and obstructed the prospects for the resumption of Israeli-Palestinian permanent status negotiations. The Organizers expressed concern over the worsening situation in and around East Jerusalem, in particular with regard to house demolitions, land confiscation, residency rights revocations and deportations of Palestinian residents.

15. The organizers stressed that the root cause of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict was the illegal Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem. They noted that the occupation had to end without conditions, allowing the Palestinian people to establish an independent State of Palestine, with East Jerusalem as its capital and on the borders of June 4, 1967, thus realizing their inalienable right to self-determination. The organizers took note of the statement of the Quartet principals, issued following their meeting on the margin of the Munich security conference on 5 February, which regretted the discontinuation of Israel’s moratorium on settlement activity, reaffirmed “that negotiations should lead to an outcome that ends the occupation that began in 1967 and resolves all permanent status issues, in order to end the conflict and achieve a two-State solution”, and reiterated “its support for concluding these negotiations by September

2011”. The organizers urged the Quartet at their next meeting to take bold and effective measures to expedite and complete the Israeli-Palestinian peace, based on the well-known parameters for peace, by September 2011.

16. The organizers also acknowledged and welcomed the recognition by a number of Latin American countries, of the State of Palestine based on the 1967 lines and urged countries that have not yet recognized the State of Palestine to do so as soon as possible.

17. The organizers were in agreement with the participants on the importance of the role played by the United Nations and the international community at large in raising awareness of the question of Palestinian political prisoners in Israeli prisons and detention facilities and in calling for an urgent solution to this issue. They highlighted the need for and the obligation of the international community to use all available mechanisms to ensure compliance with international law. They stressed the important role of non-governmental actors, including parliamentarians and civil society, in mobilizing international support for the resolution of the issue. In particular, the organizers urged all the High Contracting Parties to the Fourth Geneva Convention to fulfill their obligations in accordance with common article 1, which requires the High Contracting Parties to respect and to ensure respect for the Convention in all circumstances, and at the individual or collective level. In addition, the High Contracting Parties are urged to take all the appropriate steps for the convening of a High Contracting Parties Conference to address this subject.

18. The organizers expressed appreciation to the United Nations Office at Vienna for hosting the Meeting and the services provided to them.

IV. UNITED NATIONS HUMAN RIGHTS EXPERT URGES ISRAELI AUTHORITIES TO STOP DEMOLITIONS IN THE WEST BANK

On 11 March 2011, the Human Rights Council issued a press release stating that Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967, Richard Falk, had called upon Israeli authorities to stop illegally demolishing Palestinian homes in the West Bank, since they were about to forcibly displace 15 families. Excerpts from the press release are reproduced below:

...

“This pattern of eviction, demolition, expansion of settlements and settlers’ violent expropriation of Palestinian homes in occupied East Jerusalem violates fundamental human rights, as well as provisions of the Fourth Geneva Convention governing belligerent occupation,” Mr. Falk said describing the development as “particularly disturbing.”

Noting that on Sunday, 6 March 2011, the families were given only 10 days to

vacate their homes, the Special Rapporteur said that Israeli authorities often seek to justify demolition of Palestinian homes on the grounds that the owners lack building permits, which are next to impossible for Palestinians to obtain.

“Beyond the immediate dire consequences to individuals and families facing the loss of their homes,” the human rights expert said, “such acts form part of the broader picture of annexation, not as an Israeli legal claim but enacted increasingly as evidence of an Israeli political project.”

V. QUARTET CONDEMNS WEST BANK MURDER OF AN ISRAELI FAMILY

On 14 March 2011, the Middle East Quartet issued the following statement (SG/2172):

The Quartet condemns in the strongest possible terms the violent murder of an Israeli family of five, including three young children, in the West Bank today. The Quartet offers its condolences to the loved ones of the victims and to the Israeli people. Attacks on any civilians are completely unacceptable in any circumstance. The Quartet calls on those responsible to be

brought to justice and welcomes the strong condemnation of this attack by President Mahmoud Abbas and the Palestinian leadership.

The Quartet emphasizes the need to expedite efforts to achieve Israeli-Palestinian and comprehensive Arab-Israeli peace.

**VI. ASSISTANT SECRETARY-GENERAL FOR POLITICAL AFFAIRS
BRIEFS SECURITY COUNCIL ON THE SITUATION IN THE MIDDLE EAST,
INCLUDING THE PALESTINIAN QUESTION**

On 22 March 2011, Oscar Fernandez-Taranco, Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs, briefed the Security Council on the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question (S/PV.6501). Excerpts from Mr. Fernandez-Taranco's briefing are reproduced below:

...

Overall, settler violence considerably increased during the reporting period, with 60 incidents resulting in damage to property and 24 Palestinians injured by settlers in 18 incidents in the West Bank. In one of those incidents, on Monday, a Palestinian was stabbed and injured by settlers close to Hebron. In another incident yesterday, two Palestinians were shot and wounded by settlers. We recall that the Israeli Government must fulfil its obligation to protect the Palestinian population in the occupied West Bank.

Citing security concerns, Israeli security forces conducted 320 search operations in the West Bank. One hundred and eleven Palestinians were injured by Israeli security forces and 217 were arrested. About half of those injuries occurred in the East Jerusalem neighbourhood of Silwan during clashes between local residents and the Israeli police in the context of protests against settler activities in the neighbourhood.

We are also concerned by the increased violence and tensions in and around Gaza during the reporting period. Twelve missiles, one of which was a Grad rocket, and 55 mortars were shot indiscriminately towards Israeli civilian areas, including some 50 mortar shells, in an alarming escalation during the night between 19 and 20 March. We condemn those attacks, which are a violation of

resolution 1860 (2009) and which must cease immediately. More than 20 air strikes and 15 incursions took place, resulting in the deaths of three Palestinian civilians and 28 injured, as well as two militants killed and five injured. All parties must exercise restraint and respect international humanitarian law.

On 15 March, Israeli forces intercepted the ship *Victoria 200* nautical miles from the Israeli coast. The ship carried some 25 tons of weapons and ammunition. The Israeli authorities believe that the arms were destined for militant groups in Gaza. If that destination were to be confirmed, it would constitute a violation of resolution 1860 (2009), which provides for the prevention of illicit trafficking of arms and ammunition.

We are deeply concerned about the decision of 12 March by the Israeli Government to approve the construction of approximately 400 housing units in the West Bank in reaction to the heinous murder in Itamar. On 1 March, the Jerusalem municipality issued a permit for the construction of 14 apartments for Israeli settlers in the Ras al-Amud neighbourhood of East Jerusalem. Those are provocative actions that only serve to exacerbate tensions. Once again, I would like to express the United Nations position that any settlement activity by Israel in occupied territory is illegal under international law and detrimental to efforts to resume negotiations and achieve the two-State solution.

Israeli authorities demolished 59 Palestinian structures throughout the West Bank during the reporting period. As a result, 119 people were forcibly displaced. Israel, as the occupying Power, is prohibited from destroying property belonging to individuals or communities, except when absolutely required by military necessity.

On 7 March, the Israeli Government announced its intention to demolish all illegal West Bank outposts built on private Palestinian land by the end of 2011. We welcome that announcement. However, we note that it fails to address the issue of the existence of more than 100 other West Bank outposts constructed not only in defiance of international law but also in violation of the Israeli Government's own regulations. On 28 February, the Israeli authorities demolished a number of structures in an outpost in the northern West Bank, prompting violent clashes with settlers that led to 17 arrests. Following the confrontation, militant settlers attacked a nearby Palestinian village, fire bombing a house and injuring two children and damaging property. Prime Minister Netanyahu condemned their actions.

...

The situation of the civilian population in Gaza remains a concern. The weekly average number of truckloads entering the Strip during the reporting period was 882, compared to 566 in June 2010, before the announcement of the revised Israeli policy. However, the current imports represent approximately only one third of the June 2007 pre-blockade weekly average.

United Nations projects with a total value of \$155.5 million have been approved thus far by the Government of Israel. It is now important to ensure the timely implementation of those projects and a

steady flow of approvals. The recent movement of 23,650 tons of aggregate from Sufa crossing is a welcome step. However, a fundamental upgrade in the entry of materials through Israeli crossings is necessary for the United Nations to continue its work and, more importantly, for the rehabilitation of the private sector, which is critical to the revival of the economy in Gaza. Based on our estimates, the amount of construction materials that is now entering through the tunnels is substantially more than the amount passing through the Israeli crossings for approved international projects.

I regret to continue to report that Staff Sergeant Gilad Shalit remains in Hamas captivity and has had no humanitarian access for nearly five years. We reiterate our call for his release and for humanitarian access to be provided to him without delay. We are concerned by the continued detention of several thousand Palestinians in Israel, and we call for their rights to be respected.

As far as the regional aspects of the peace process are concerned, there has been no progress in efforts to promote Israeli-Syrian peace negotiations. Settlement activities in the occupied Syrian Golan have also continued. We encourage the parties to pursue the resolution of the conflict in the context of the Arab Peace Initiative.

....

Let me conclude by reiterating a sense of urgency to break the current impasse in the Israeli-Palestinian negotiations. The important achievements, especially those related to the State-building agenda of the Palestinian Authority, will be at risk if the impasse in the political process is not overcome. A decisive effort must now be made by the international community and

the Quartet to bring the parties back to negotiating the final status issues towards implementing the two-State solution. We

urge the parties to demonstrate leadership and to rise to the challenge of making an historic peace.

VII. HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL URGES SUBMISSION OF THE REPORT OF THE UNITED NATIONS FACT-FINDING MISSION ON THE GAZA CONFLICT TO THE SECURITY COUNCIL

On 25 March 2011, the Human Rights Council adopted a resolution on the follow-up to the report of the United Nations Fact-Finding Mission on the Gaza Conflict (A/HRC/RES/16/32). An excerpt from the resolution is reproduced below:

The Human Rights Council,

...

1. *Takes note* of the reports of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on the implementation of Human Rights Council resolutions S-9/1 and S-12/1,¹² and endorses the recommendations contained therein;

2. *Also takes note* of the reports of the committee of independent experts in international humanitarian and human rights law to monitor and assess any domestic, legal or other proceedings undertaken by both the Government of Israel and the Palestinian side, in the light of General Assembly resolution 64/254,¹³ and calls for the implementation of its conclusions;

3. *Reiterates its call* upon all concerned parties, including United Nations bodies, to ensure the full and immediate implementation of the recommendations contained in the report of the United Nations Fact-Finding Mission on the Gaza Conflict, in accordance with their respective mandates;

4. *Regrets* the non-cooperation by the occupying power, Israel, with the members of the committee of independent experts, and its failure to comply with the calls of the Human Rights Council and the General Assembly to conduct investigations that are independent, credible and in conformity with international standards into the serious violations of international humanitarian and international human rights law reported by the Fact-Finding Mission, and calls on all the parties to the conflict including the Palestinian side, to take into account the conclusions of the committee;

5. *Welcomes* the efforts made by the Government of Switzerland, in its capacity as depositary of the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, to reconvene, as soon as possible, a conference of High Contracting Parties to the Fourth Geneva Convention on measures to enforce the Convention in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and to ensure its respect in accordance with common article 1, bearing in mind the statement adopted on 15 July 1999, as well as the reconvening of the conference and the declaration adopted on 5 December 2001, and recommends that the Government of Switzerland continue to pursue its efforts with the aim of resuming the above-

¹² A/HRC/13/54 and A/HRC/16/71.

¹³ A/HRC/15/50 and A/HRC/16/24.

mentioned conference before September 2011;

6. *Calls upon* the High Commissioner to follow up on the determination of the appropriate modalities for the establishment of an escrow fund for the provision of reparations to Palestinians who suffered loss and damage as a result of unlawful acts attributable to the State of Israel during the military operations conducted from December 2008 to January 2009, also taking into consideration Israelis who suffered loss and damage as a result of unlawful acts attributable to the Palestinian side;

7. *Reiterates its call* to the General Assembly to promote an urgent discussion on the future legality of the use of certain munitions, as referred to in the report of the United Nations Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on the Gaza Conflict, drawing on, inter alia, the expertise of the International Committee of the Red Cross;

8. *Recommends* that the General Assembly reconsider the report of the United Nations Fact-Finding Mission on the Gaza Conflict at its sixty-sixth session, and urges the Assembly to submit that report to the Security Council for its consideration and appropriate action, including consideration of referral of the situation in

the Occupied Palestinian Territory to the prosecutor of the International Criminal Court, pursuant to article 13 (b) of the Rome Statute;

9. *Also recommends* that the General Assembly remain apprised of the matter until it is satisfied that appropriate action has been taken at the domestic or international level to ensure justice for victims and accountability for perpetrators, and also remain ready to consider whether additional action within its powers is required in the interests of justice;

10. *Requests* the Secretary-General to present a comprehensive report on the progress made in the implementation of the recommendations of the Fact-Finding Mission by all concerned parties, including United Nations bodies, in accordance with paragraph 3 of section B of Human Rights Council resolution S-12/1, to the Council at its eighteenth session;

11. *Requests* the High Commissioner to submit a progress report on the implementation of the present resolution to the Human Rights Council at its eighteenth session;

12. *Decides* to follow up on the implementation of the present resolution at its nineteenth session.

VIII. HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL ADOPTS RESOLUTION CONDEMNING SETTLEMENT EXPANSION

On 25 March 2011 the Human Rights Council adopted a resolution in which it condemned settlement expansion and urged Israel to reverse its settlement policy in the Occupied Palestinian Territory (A/HRC/RES/16/31). An excerpt from the resolution is reproduced below:

The Human Rights Council,

...

3. *Condemns* the recent Israeli announcements of the construction of new housing units for Israeli settlers in and around occupied East Jerusalem, as they undermine the peace process, constitute a threat to the two-State solution and the creation of a contiguous, sovereign and independent Palestinian State, and are in violation of international law, and calls upon the Government of Israel to immediately reverse its decisions, which would further undermine and jeopardize the ongoing efforts by the international community to reach a final settlement compliant with relevant United Nations resolutions;

4. *Expresses its grave concern at:*

(a) The continuing Israeli settlement and related activities, in violation of international law, including the expansion of settlements, the expropriation of land, the demolition of houses, the confiscation and destruction of property, the expulsion of Palestinians and the construction of bypass roads, which change the physical character and demographic composition of the occupied territories, including East Jerusalem and the Syrian Golan, and constitute a violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, of 12 August 1949, and in particular article 49 of that Convention, and recalls that settlements are a major obstacle to the establishment of just and comprehensive peace and to the

creation of an independent, viable, sovereign and democratic Palestinian State;

(b) Planned Israeli settlement construction in the vicinity of the Adam settlements in the occupied West Bank, which constitutes a new settlement block;

(c) The increasing number of newly built structures, in 2008, 2009, 2010 and 2011 amounting to several thousand, including a large number of permanent buildings and structures, which undermine the efforts of the international community to advance the Middle East peace process;

(d) The so-called E-1 plan aimed at expanding the Israeli settlement of Maale Adumim and building the wall around it, thereby further disconnecting occupied East Jerusalem from the northern and southern parts of the West Bank and isolating its Palestinian population;

(e) The implications for the final status negotiations of Israel's announcement that it will retain the major settlement blocks in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including the settlements located in the Jordan Valley;

(f) The expansion of Israeli settlements and the construction of new ones on the occupied Palestinian territory rendered inaccessible behind the wall, which create a fait accompli on the ground that could well be permanent, in which case it would be tantamount to de facto annexation;

(g) The Israeli decision to establish and operate a tramway between West Jerusalem and the Israeli settlement of Pisgat Zeev, which is in clear violation of international law and relevant United Nations resolutions;

(h) The continued closures of and within the Occupied Palestinian Territory and the restriction of the freedom of movement of people and goods, including the repeated closure of the crossing points of the Gaza Strip, which have created an extremely precarious humanitarian situation for the civilian population, as well as having impaired the economic and social rights of the Palestinian people;

(i) The continued construction, contrary to international law, of the wall inside the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including in and around East Jerusalem;

(j) The latest Israeli plans to demolish hundreds of houses in occupied East Jerusalem, including their decision to demolish more than 88 houses in the Al-Bustan neighbourhood of Silwan, which would result in the displacement of more than two thousand Palestinian residents of East Jerusalem, in addition to the Israeli decision to evacuate Palestinian families from their houses in Al-Sheikh Jarrah and Beit Hanina areas of East Jerusalem and to replace them with Israeli settlers;

5. *Urges* Israel, the occupying Power:

(a) To reverse the settlement policy in the occupied territories, including East Jerusalem and the Syrian Golan, and, as a first step towards their dismantlement, to stop immediately the expansion of the existing settlements, including “natural

growth” and related activities, including in East Jerusalem;

(b) To prevent any new installation of settlers in the occupied territories, including in East Jerusalem;

6. *Urges* the full implementation of the Access and Movement Agreement of 15 November 2005, particularly the urgent reopening of the Rafah and Karni crossings, which is crucial to ensuring the passage of foodstuffs and essential supplies, as well as the access of United Nations agencies to and within the Occupied Palestinian Territory;

7. *Calls upon* Israel to implement the relevant resolutions and recommendations of the Security Council, the General Assembly and the Human Rights Council relating to the situation of human rights in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem;

8. *Also calls upon* Israel to take and implement serious measures, including confiscation of arms and enforcement of criminal sanctions, with the aim of preventing acts of violence by Israeli settlers, and other measures to guarantee the safety and protection of the Palestinian civilians and Palestinian properties in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem;

9. *Demands* that Israel, the occupying Power, comply fully with its legal obligations, as mentioned in the advisory opinion rendered on 9 July 2004 by the International Court of Justice;

...

IX. HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL ADOPTS RESOLUTION AFFIRMING THE RIGHT OF THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE TO SELF-DETERMINATION

On 25 March 2011, the Human Rights Council adopted a resolution in which it reaffirmed the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination and urged Member States to support the realization of that right (A/HRC/RES/16/30). An excerpt from the resolution is reproduced below:

The Human Rights Council,

...

1. *Reaffirms* the inalienable, permanent and unqualified right of the Palestinian people to self-determination, including their right to live in freedom, justice and dignity and to establish their sovereign, independent, democratic and viable contiguous State;

2. *Also reaffirms* its support for the solution of two States, Palestine and Israel, living side by side in peace and security;

3. *Stresses* the need for respect for and preservation of the territorial unity, contiguity and integrity of all of the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem;

4. *Urges* all Member States and relevant bodies of the United Nations system to support and assist the Palestinian people in the early realization of their right to self-determination;

5. *Decides* to continue the consideration of this question at its nineteenth session.

X. HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL ADOPTS RESOLUTION CONDEMNING HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS IN THE OCCUPIED PALESTINIAN TERRITORY

On 25 March 2011, the Human Rights Council adopted a resolution, in which it condemned human rights violations in the Occupied Palestinian Territory (A/HRC/RES/16/29). An excerpt from the resolution is reproduced below:

The Human Rights Council,

...

1. *Demands* that the occupying Power, Israel, end its occupation of the Palestinian land occupied since 1967 and that it respect its commitments within the peace process towards the establishment of the independent sovereign Palestinian State, with East Jerusalem as its capital, living in peace and security with all its neighbours;

2. *Strongly condemns* the continuous Israeli military attacks and operations in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including its regular military incursions, and calls for their immediate cessation;

3. *Condemns* the indiscriminate rocket and mortar fire from the occupied Gaza Strip against civilians, and calls for their immediate cessation;

4. *Demands* that the occupying Power, Israel, stop the targeting of civilians and halt its administrative decisions and practices that directly or indirectly coerce Palestinian citizens to leave East Jerusalem, including evictions, demolitions, forced displacements, cancelation of residence permits and the systematic destruction of the cultural heritage of the Palestinian people, in addition to the destruction of public and private properties, as laid down in the Fourth Geneva Convention;

5. *Condemns* the disrespect of the religious and cultural rights provided for in core human rights instruments and humanitarian law by the occupying Power, Israel, in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including al-Haram al Ibrahimi in Hebron and Bilal Mosque (“Tomb of Rachel”) in Bethlehem and the walls of the old city of Jerusalem, which are on its list of national heritage sites;

6. *Demands* that Israel, the occupying Power, respect religious and cultural rights in the occupied Palestinian territories, particularly in occupied East Jerusalem, as provided for in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the core international human rights instruments, the Hague Conventions and the Geneva Conventions, and that it allow Palestinian citizens and worshippers unhindered access to their properties and religious sites therein;

7. *Expresses its grave concern* at the excavation of ancient tombs and removal of hundreds of human remains from part of the historic Ma'man Allah (Mamila) Cemetery in the holy city of Jerusalem in order to construct a “museum of tolerance”, and calls upon the Government of Israel to immediately desist from such illegal activities therein;

8. *Demands* that Israel, the occupying Power, immediately cease all ongoing diggings and excavation work beneath and around the Al-Aqsa mosque compound and other religious sites in the old city of Jerusalem, and refrain from any act that may endanger the structure or foundations or change the nature of the holy sites, both Islamic and Christian, in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, particularly in and around Jerusalem;

9. *Calls for* immediate international protection for the Palestinian people in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, in compliance with international human rights and humanitarian law, applicable in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem;

10. *Demands* that the occupying Power, Israel, take the necessary measures to ensure the respect of internationally recognized sports principles as enshrined in the Charter of the International Olympic Committee, particularly the free movement and circulation of Palestinian sports teams and athletes within the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including administrative staff, and in relation with the external world, and facilitate the access of internationally donated equipment and sports materials, and that it grant regional and international teams and sports figures unhindered access to the Occupied Palestinian Territory and desist from imposing illegal measures on the construction of sports facilities throughout the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including in East Jerusalem;

11. *Also demands* that the occupying Power, Israel, immediately stop its illegal decisions to demolish a large number of Palestinian houses in East Jerusalem, including in the neighbourhood area of Al-Bustan in Selwan, and the evacuation of Palestinian families in Al-Sheikh Jarrah and

Beit Hanina areas of East Jerusalem, which is resulting in the displacement of a large number of resident Palestinians of East Jerusalem;

12. *Further demands* that the occupying Power, Israel, release Palestinian prisoners and detainees, including women, children and elected members of the Palestinian Legislative Council;

13. *Calls upon* the occupying Power, Israel, to lift checkpoints and open all crossing points and borders according to relevant international agreements;

14. *Demands* that Israel, the occupying Power, immediately lift the siege imposed on the occupied Gaza Strip and that it open all borders and crossing points and allow the free access of fuel, humanitarian needs and medicine in addition to all necessary materials and equipment for the reconstruction and rehabilitation of Gaza, as agreed upon at the International Conference in Support of the Palestinian Economy for the Reconstruction of Gaza, held in Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt, on 2 March 2009;

15. *Decides* to continue the consideration of this question at its nineteenth session.

XI. UNITED NATIONS LATIN AMERICAN AND CARIBBEAN MEETING IN SUPPORT OF ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN PEACE, CIVIL SOCIETY MEETING CONVENE IN MONTEVIDEO

In accordance with the provisions of General Assembly resolutions 65/13 and 65/14 of 30 November 2010, the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People convened the United Nations Latin American and Caribbean Meeting in Support of Israeli-Palestinian Peace in Montevideo on 29 and 30 March 2011. The theme of the meeting was "The urgency of realizing a two-State solution". The Meeting was immediately followed by the United Nations Meeting of Civil Society in Support of Israeli-Palestinian Peace, which was held on 31 March 2011, also in Montevideo. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon issued a message that was delivered by Oscar Fernandez-Taranco, Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs. The concluding remarks by the organizers are reproduced below:

The United Nations Latin American and Caribbean Meeting in Support of Israeli-Palestinian Peace was convened by the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People in Montevideo on 29 and 30 March 2011. Participants in the Meeting included internationally renowned experts, including Israeli and Palestinian, representatives of Member State and Observers, parliamentarians, representatives of the United Nations system and other intergovernmental organizations, representatives of civil society, academic institutions and the media.

The objective of the Meeting, at this time of continued efforts at restarting the Israeli-Palestinian political process, was to encourage broad international action, including by Latin American and Caribbean States, in support of Israeli-Palestinian peace and for achieving a solution to the conflict based on a shared vision of two States, Israel and Palestine, living side by side in peace and security. The Meeting, among other things, looked at obstacles and opportunities on the road to achieving peace between Israelis and Palestinians. It examined support by Latin American and Caribbean countries for a comprehensive, just and

lasting settlement of the question of Palestine. The Meeting also discussed the role of non-governmental actors in Latin America and the Caribbean in promoting a permanent settlement of the conflict.

The organizers and the participants appreciated the opening remarks by the Foreign Minister of Uruguay, Mr. Luis Almagro, and associated themselves with his call for the realization of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people and the recognition of the State of Palestine. They welcomed the message by Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, his principled position on the illegality of the settlements, his call for ceasing all settlement construction in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and his pledge to support the efforts at achieving a two-State solution. The organizers shared the assessment of the Member of the Executive Committee of the Palestine Liberation Organization, Mr. Saeb Erakat, who, in his keynote presentation, stressed that there was no alternative to the two-State solution. A just solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict was of critical global interest and constituted an important element for stability and prosperity in the Middle East.

The organizers shared the utmost concern expressed by many participants about the alarming escalation of violence on the ground. They strongly condemn the killing and wounding of Palestinian civilians, including children, by the Israeli army in the Gaza Strip. They also reiterate their condemnation of rocket fire from Gaza against civilian targets in southern Israel and attacks on Israeli civilians in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem. The impasse in the political process exacerbates the desperation of the Palestinian people and provides a fertile ground for extremists on both sides. The recent surge of violence also threatens to undermine the achievements made so far in Palestinian institution- and State-building.

The organizers shared the assessment made by participants that the current dramatic developments in the wider region of the Middle East and North Africa added to the need to redouble efforts to break the deadlock between Israelis and Palestinians. In this connection, they felt strongly that the solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict must be anchored in the principles of international law, as force and unilateral steps would not bring peace.

The organizers were encouraged by the consensual view among participants that achieving a just, lasting and comprehensive settlement of the question of Palestine, the core of the Arab-Israeli conflict, was imperative for the attainment of peace and stability in the entire region of the Middle East. They expressed serious concern about the prolonged stagnation and impasse of the peace efforts between the Israelis and Palestinians. The Organizers reiterated their full support for the speedy revival of the Middle East peace process, based on the relevant Security Council resolutions, the Madrid terms of reference, including the principle of land for peace, the Quartet road map, the Arab Peace Initiative and the existing agreements between the Israeli and Palestinian sides. The Organizers also appreciated that the participants had stated their firm support for ending Israeli occupation in order to achieve a permanent two-State solution, in which Israel and Palestine would live side by side in peace and security within mutually recognized borders. The organizers joined the participants in urging the parties to resume, without delay, serious negotiations that would lead, within an agreed time frame, to the resolution of the permanent status issues: borders, Jerusalem, settlements, refugees, water and security. They also urged the release of all Palestinian political prisoners currently held in Israeli prisons and detention facilities.

The organizers reiterated the global consensus on the illegality of settlements and shared the serious concern expressed by participants about Israel's resumption of these illegal policies and practices, thus rendering the continuation of permanent status negotiations meaningless. They were alarmed by Israel's ongoing policy in East Jerusalem, which aimed at altering the legal status of the city and its physical, demographic and cultural character. They condemned the illegal expansion and consolidation of Israeli settlements in and around East Jerusalem, as well as the illegal and provocative measures against Palestinian residents, including house demolitions, evictions, land confiscation and residency rights revocations. The organizers noted that the vast majority of Member States, including this Committee, considered that all settlements were illegal, including the so-called "natural growth", and had to be halted immediately. The organizers also stressed that the construction of settlements and the separation wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territory constituted a clear violation of article 49 of the Fourth Geneva Convention, as well as the relevant Security Council resolutions. Alarm was expressed at the rising number of acts of violence and brutality committed by Israeli settlers against Palestinian civilians, the widespread destruction of public and private Palestinian property and infrastructure, and the internal displacement of civilians. A complete and immediate cessation of settlement activities in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, was imperative and would positively contribute to creating a political climate conducive to advancing the negotiations. The organizers support the firm stance by the international community not to recognize any changes to the pre-1967 borders, including with regard to occupied East Jerusalem, other than those agreed by the parties.

It was acknowledged that Jerusalem, sacred for Christians, Jews and Muslims worldwide, represented the common heritage of all humanity, and, therefore, Israeli actions with regard to the City's holy places were totally unacceptable. The organizers fully agreed with the participants that a negotiated agreement on the status of Jerusalem should take into full account the political and religious concerns of all inhabitants of the Holy City. Such an agreement should include internationally guaranteed provisions to ensure the freedom of religion and of conscience of the City's inhabitants, as well as the permanent, free and unhindered access to the holy places by peoples of all religions and nationalities. The organizers also reiterated that any agreement that did not include East Jerusalem as the capital of a future Palestinian State would not lead to sustainable Israeli-Palestinian peace.

Speakers in the Meeting deplored the lack of any appreciable improvement in the humanitarian, economic and social situation in the Gaza Strip. Due to the continued blockage by Israel of materials vitally needed for reconstruction efforts, three quarters of the damage inflicted on buildings and infrastructure during the Israeli military offensive on Gaza remained in a state of disrepair. Water and sanitation infrastructure was nearing collapse. The continued suffocation of Gaza's economy due to the blockade provided a fertile ground for extremists and militants leading to the recent escalation of rocket and mortar fire from the Strip. Speakers called for the immediate lifting by the Israeli Government of the blockade against the Gaza Strip, as well as for halting all rocket and mortar attacks from Gaza at Israeli targets.

A number of participants had drawn attention to the plight of Palestine refugees, whose status and suffering had been passed down from generation to generation over the past six decades. The inherent vulnerability

of the refugees and the dire conditions of their exile called for a just and lasting solution based on the principles of international law and the lessons drawn from successful examples of conflict resolution in other parts of the world. The organizers supported the view that justice for Palestine refugees and the Palestinian people as a whole also encompassed fair recompense and recourse for the wrongs inflicted upon them under occupation.

The organizers supported the participants' argument that a solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict, and in particular the question of Palestine, which is at its core, was an urgent international imperative and that all States and regions had an interest in securing a comprehensive, just and lasting solution. Latin America and the Caribbean, along with the other members of the world community, had a crucial role to play in enlarging the international constituency in support of Middle East peace and bringing additional actors into the peacemaking process. In that regard, the Organizers joined the participants in welcoming the recent wave of formal recognition of the State of Palestine by Latin American and Caribbean countries within its 1967 borders. These important steps constituted a powerful resolve by the countries of this region to engage more directly in Middle East peacemaking and widen the number of international stakeholders in support of a two-State solution.

The organizers took note of the signing on 29 March 2011 of a protocol establishing diplomatic relations between Uruguay and the State of Palestine. They were gratified that the signing of this important bilateral document coincided with the holding of the United Nations Meeting in Montevideo devoted to realizing Palestinian statehood and achieving Israeli-Palestinian peace.

It was noted that 112 countries had already recognized Palestine as a State, with

the majority extending their recognition following the November 1988 declaration of statehood by the Palestinian National Council. The organizers expressed full support for Palestine's diplomatic initiative and considered that the entire international community should be ready to recognize the State of Palestine based on the 1967 borders, including through a Security Council resolution at an appropriate time during the sixty-fifth session of the General Assembly in 2011. The organizers called upon those countries of the region and beyond that have not done so to seriously consider recognizing the State of Palestine within the 1967 borders and to play a constructive role in promoting peace in the Middle East. They should also actively support the institution- and State-building programme of the Palestinian Authority to prepare the institutional, economic and infrastructural framework of the future Palestinian State. This would require significant international political, technical and financial support. Latin American and Caribbean countries and their public and civil society institutions could join other global actors in helping lay the foundation of a future sovereign, independent and viable Palestinian State. The organizers extend this call to the entire international donor community, urging it to continue to provide generous support for the Palestinian efforts at rehabilitation, reconstruction, economic development and State-building.

The organizers reiterated that there was no alternative to the two-State solution, with Israel and Palestine, living side by side in peace and security, based on international law and Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973), 1397 (2002), 1515 (2003), 1850 (2008) and 1860 (2009) and all other relevant United Nations resolutions. Participants underlined that a crucial and indispensable condition for achieving a permanent settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict was an end of the Israeli

occupation of the Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem. They also urged the Palestinian leadership, the leaders of all factions and all Palestinians to strive and work for national reconciliation as an essential condition for achieving a lasting solution of the question of Palestine and the establishment of a viable, contiguous, sovereign and democratic Palestinian State. They commend President Mahmoud Abbas for his principled leadership in all efforts to bring about a peaceful solution of the question of Palestine in accordance with international legitimacy.

The organizers would like to join participants in commending the work of civil society organizations aimed at supporting Israelis and Palestinians in their quest for a just, lasting and peaceful settlement of the conflict. They acknowledged and expressed appreciation for the dedicated work of Latin American and Caribbean organizations in support of the Palestinian people, by implementing specific projects in the West Bank or aiming to overcome the Gaza blockade to bring humanitarian aid to those in desperate need. The Meeting was apprised of the initiative of the Arias Foundation for Peace and Human Progress in Costa Rica and the Global Foundation for Democracy and Development in the Dominican Republic for promoting concrete action by stakeholders in the Latin American and Caribbean region in support of Middle East peace and encouraged these and other organizations to continue their important work.

The organizers wish to acknowledge that numerous speakers in their presentations commended the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People for organizing international events, such as this one in Montevideo, contributing to raising international awareness of the various aspects of the question of Palestine and mobilizing Governments and public opinion worldwide in support of a comprehensive, just and lasting solution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

The organizers, on behalf of the participants, expressed their appreciation for the important initiative of the Government of Uruguay, to invite the Committee to convene this Meeting in its capital, which constitutes a concrete step in the search for a peaceful settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict, and in championing the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people. They noted that the contribution of Uruguay and other players in the region and beyond was crucial to achieving a just and lasting peace between Israelis and Palestinians and for bringing stability to the Middle East. They also expressed their deep appreciation to the Government of Uruguay and its Ministry of Foreign Affairs for hosting the Meeting, for the assistance and support extended to the Committee and the United Nations Secretariat in its preparation, and for the generous hospitality extended to them.

...