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Sixty-seventh General Assembly

Third Committee
31st & 32nd Meetings (AM & PM)

PROGRESS CANNOT BE HOSTAGE TO FAVOURED AGENDAS, GENERAL ASSEMBLY PRESIDENT SAYS

AS THIRD COMMITTEE CONTINUES DISCUSSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS

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Background

The Third Committee (Social, Humanitarian and Cultural) met this morning to continue its consideration of the promotion and protection of human rights, with eight experts expected to deliver presentations throughout the day. For background information, see Press Release [GA/SHC/4076](#) of 23 October.

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Human Rights in Occupied Palestinian Territories

RICHARD FALK, Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967, introduced his report (document [A/68/376](#)), noting that despite repeated efforts, he had made only one visit in five years of discharging his mandate. He expressed concern that consistent non-cooperation on the part of the Government of Israel, which had hampered his mandate, would continue, emphasizing nevertheless that the inalienable right of Palestinians to self-determination had been unmistakably furthered by the General Assembly's vote in November 2012, conferring on Palestine the status of non-Member Observer State.

He said the report considered the activities of international corporations in relation to Israeli settlements within the normative framework of international humanitarian law, international human rights law and international criminal law. To elaborate on the potential legal implication of corporations in international crimes, the report used two case studies, the first of which examined loans granted by an Israeli subsidiary of the European banking group Dexia to Israeli settlements. The second examined the promotion, advertising and sale of properties in Israeli settlements by the privately held Re/Max real estate company, based in the United States.

The Special Rapporteur then presented a set of recommendations: if current diplomacy failed to produce a solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the General Assembly should request an Advisory Opinion from the International Court of Justice as to the legal consequences of the prolonged occupation of State of Palestine. Israel should cease the creation and expansion of settlements, return Israeli settlers to the Israeli side of the Green Line and provide reparations to Palestinians who had suffered damage from settlement-related activities since 1967. All companies enjoying relationships with settlements comparable to those used as case studies should review their arrangements to ensure they were in accordance with international law and the Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, he said, adding that Belgium and France should compensate Palestinians who had been negatively affected by Dexia Israel's involvement with settlements.

In the ensuing dialogue, many delegates voiced concern that the issue of Palestine had not been resolved for so long, and asked the expert to elaborate on measures to keep pressure on the 500 companies tied to Israeli settlements, and on the latest developments in the Gaza Strip.

Mr. FALK warned that the United Nations would lose its credibility if the problem remained unresolved. Leaving Palestinians without rights, land or resources for decades was the cruellest failure of the international community to uphold fundamental human rights, he stressed, adding that the situation in Gaza had reached the "absolute edge of catastrophe". He said his emphasis on corporate responsibility was a small step towards the end goal, a gesture that "we are doing more than just saying that we take the issue seriously". Calling for solidarity with civil society, he underlined the need to resolve "one of the greatest injustices of our time".

Participants in the dialogue included speakers representing the Observer State of Palestine, Cuba, Mauritania, European Union Delegation, Russian Federation, Norway, Syria, Qatar, Brazil, South Africa, Libya, Iran, Maldives, Indonesia and Pakistan.

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