



## General Assembly GA/PAL/1152

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Committee on the Inalienable Rights  
of the Palestinian People  
322nd Meeting (PM)

### **PALESTINIAN RIGHTS COMMITTEE CONSIDERS STATUS OF EFFORTS TO LAUNCH PROXIMITY TALKS,**

### **REVIEWS COMMITTEE'S ACTIVITIES, LOOKS AHEAD TO NEXT WEEK'S SEMINAR IN VIENNA**

The Palestinian Authority had embraced proximity talks to revive Middle East peace negotiations, but they had been spurned by Israel through the announcement of additional building plans in East Jerusalem and other provocations, the Permanent Observer Mission of Palestine told the Palestinian Rights Committee this afternoon.

Its representative, Feda Abdelhad Nasser, addressed the Committee, known formally as the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, as it met to receive updates and to approve its provisional programme for the Seminar on Assistance to the Palestinian People, to be held at the United Nations Office at Vienna, on 24-26 March.

Ongoing Israeli settlement activity in and around East Jerusalem, along with other provocative Government declarations, were contradictory to the two-State solution agreed upon by the international community, Ms. Nasser told the Committee. "These illegal Israeli practices must cease; the peace process is dependent on it," she urged.

She also called on all Member States to support follow-ups to the Goldstone Report on last year's fighting in Gaza, as well as the Swiss Government's efforts to bring together a conference on the Geneva Conventions in that light, in the interest of accountability and justice under international humanitarian law.

Reconciliation and unity remained a national priority for the Palestinian people, she said, acknowledging however that the ongoing talks, in conjunction with Egypt and the Arab League, had not accomplished their goal and had even slackened in intensity recently, owing to various distractions.

In response to questions from the representative of Malaysia, Ms. Nasser said that boycotts of settler-produced and other Israeli goods were being organized, as well other non-violent efforts to resist the Israeli occupation.

Opening the meeting this afternoon, the Committee's Chairman, Paul Badji of Senegal, briefed on Committee activities conducted since the body's first meeting of the year on 21 January. He also drew attention to four letters addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council from the Permanent Observer Mission of Palestine concerning events on the ground and in the diplomatic arena.

Briefing the Committee on the upcoming Seminar in Vienna, to be followed by a one-day United Nations Meeting of Civil Society in Support of the Palestinian People, Mr. Badji said that the Seminar was being organized to garner support for the Palestinian Authority's programme entitled "Palestine: Ending the Occupation, establishing the State".

The Seminar would also assess the current socio-economic situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and discuss the urgency of bringing relief and reconstruction to the Gaza Strip, he said. In addition, it would consider ways to advance the Palestinian State-building agenda, mobilize broad international assistance in support of the Palestinian economy and alleviate the suffering of the Palestinian people.

Reporting on the outcome of February's International Meeting in Support of Israeli-Palestinian Peace, in Malta, also organized by the Committee, Vice-Chairman

Pedro Núñez Mosquera of Cuba said participants had shown a commitment to achieving a permanent two-State solution. In plenary sessions on the state of the peace process and creating a political climate conducive to its advancement participants had urged a resumption of negotiations to resolve the permanent status

issues of borders, Jerusalem, settlements, refugees and water.

Among other things, he said, participants had reiterated that demolishing homes and evicting Palestinian residents was illegal under international law and threatened to make a two-State solution impossible. They had expressed hope that the 10-month freeze on settlement expansion declared by the Israeli Government would be comprehensive, extended to East Jerusalem and retained indefinitely.

At the meeting, national parliaments and inter-parliamentary organizations were seen as having a special role to play in advancing the Israeli-Palestinian political process, Mr. Núñez said. In response to a question by Malaysia's representative, Chairman Badji added that the Committee had indeed done outreach to United States lawmakers, but that those efforts had not yet borne fruit.

Rapporteur Saviour Borg of Malta noted that a valuable video conference with United States Congressman Dennis Kucinich had taken place at a previous meeting in Cyprus. Further engagement of parliamentarians was of particular strategic importance to the Committee, he confirmed.

Updating the Committee on the work of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), its New York Director, Andrew Whitley, said there would soon be two high-level visitors to Gaza – Catherine Ashton, the European Union's High Representative for Foreign Affairs, and United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon.

Israel had agreed to their entry, leading to cautious hope of a "slight easing" of the two-year blockade, he said. At the moment, some building materials were being allowed in, so construction of stalled United Nations projects, worth \$93 million, could continue. So far, glass was being allowed in for windows, but metal for window frames was not. UNRWA had been unable to repair its premises, notwithstanding the \$10.5 million received from Israel for compensation of damage sustained during "Operation Cast Lead".

He said Gaza's illegal tunnel economy continued to thrive, undermining legitimate businesses, forming a kind of "gangster economy" with links to the ruling party. Although Hamas was strengthening its hold over the economy, it was leaving UNRWA alone.

Confirming that power and cooking gas were still scarce in Gaza, Mr. Whitley said, however, that discussions were taking place with Israel to restart water and sanitation projects, and he expressed hope that the Secretary-General's upcoming visit would advance those talks.

Also today, the Committee approved the applications of two non-governmental organizations for accreditation to the Committee: the Euro-Med Movement, which supported the creation of institutions that could foster peace in both Israeli and Palestinian society; and Grassroots International, which supports community-led sustainable development projects.

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