
UNITED NATIONS INTERNATIONAL MEETING ON THE QUESTION OF PALESTINE

The urgency of addressing the plight of Palestinian political prisoners in Israeli prisons and detention facilities

United Nations Office at Vienna, 7 and 8 March 2011

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Executive summary

The United Nations International Meeting on the Question of Palestine focused on the plight of some 6,000 Palestinian political prisoners who were held in Israeli prisons and detention facilities outside the Occupied Palestinian Territory in contravention of the Fourth Geneva Convention. Among the prisoners were members of the Palestinian Legislative Council, women and children. The Meeting discussed the current situation and conditions of imprisonment, legal aspects of the arrests and detentions by the occupying Power and the issue of Palestinian political prisoners in the context of the Israeli-Palestinian political process.

The keynote presentation delivered by the Minister for Prisoners' Affairs of the Palestinian Authority highlighted the plight of the Palestinian political prisoners in Israeli detention, as well as the strategies adopted by the Palestinian Authority in this regard. The Minister spoke of the need to internationalize the issue of prisoners and to treat them where appropriate as prisoners of war, including the possibility of referring their status to the International Court of Justice.

During the two days of deliberations, the participants noted with concern that the conditions of detention were often extremely poor, and in some cases life-threatening. Israel continued to practice torture and other forms of mistreatment against Palestinian detainees, who have drawn attention to their situation through hunger strikes, the most recent in January 2011. The participants focused particularly on the situation of the Palestinian women and minors, and on the 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 on Palestinian prisoners and their families, and stressed the urgent need for reintegration of former prisoners into society.

The participants expressed grave concern at the widespread use by Israel of administrative detention without charges, trial or a right of defence. They called on Israel to apply the Third and the Fourth Geneva Conventions and to meet minimum international standards for due process. They also called on the High Contracting Parties to the Geneva Conventions to act to ensure the respect of their provisions in the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

The participants underscored that the issue of Palestinian prisoners had a major impact on 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 legislators, would constitute a positive step towards the resumption of the political process. Many participants felt that peace could not be complete without the release of all Palestinian prisoners. The continued stalemate in the political process, and the continuing settlement construction, remained a cause for serious concern.

The Meeting called upon the international community to urgently address the plight of the prisoners. It called on Israel to abide by international humanitarian law and stop torture and mistreatment, arrests of minors, detentions without trial and prisoner abuse, and stressed that a fair and just resolution of the issue of Palestinian political prisoners was key to efforts towards the realization of the objective of two States, Israel and Palestine, living side by side in peace and security.

The Meeting concluded with the issuance of the concluding statement of the organizers.

I. Introduction

1. The United Nations International Meeting on the Question of Palestine was held in Vienna on 7 and 8 March 2011, under the auspices of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People (hereinafter referred to as “the Committee”) and in accordance with the provisions of General Assembly resolutions 65/13 and 65/14 of 30 November 2010. The theme of the Meeting was “The urgency of addressing the plight of Palestinian political prisoners in Israeli prisons and detention facilities”.
2. The Committee was represented at the Meeting by a delegation comprising Abdou Salam Diallo (Senegal), Chair of the Committee; Zahir Tanin (Afghanistan); Pedro Núñez Mosquera (Cuba); Saviour F. Borg (Malta); and Riyad Mansour (Palestine).
3. The Meeting consisted of an opening session, three plenary sessions and a closing session. The themes of the plenary sessions were: “The current situation and conditions of imprisonment of Palestinians in Israeli prisons and detention facilities”; “Arrests and detentions of Palestinians by the occupying Power: legal aspects”; and “The issue of Palestinian political prisoners and the Israeli-Palestinian political process”.
4. At the Meeting, presentations were made by 15 experts, including Palestinian and Israeli experts. Representatives of 45 Governments, Palestine, two intergovernmental organizations, the Inter-Parliamentary Union, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean, three United Nations bodies, 13 civil society organizations, two media outlets, and special guests and members of the public attended the Meeting.
5. A concluding statement by the organizers was introduced during the closing session of the Meeting. (see annex I to the present report).

II. Opening session

6. A statement was delivered on behalf of **Ban Ki-moon**, the Secretary-General of the United Nations, by his representative at the Meeting, 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. In that statement, the Secretary-General said that urgently addressing the plight of Palestinian political prisoners was very important to reaching a just and lasting peace, and recalled that he had publicly urged the release of prisoners last year during a visit to the Occupied Palestinian Territory and Israel. The Secretary-General stressed that the detainees’ release would serve as a significant confidence-building measure, and pledged that the United Nations would continue to raise the issue with the Israeli leadership.
7. The United Nations would also continue to follow closely the well-being of those in detention, including approximately 200 minors and 200 individuals held in administrative detention without trial. The Secretary-General insisted that it was the responsibility of Israel to comply fully with its obligations as an occupying Power under international law, including the Fourth Geneva Convention, and pointed to the important role of the International Committee of the Red Cross in this regard.
8. The Secretary-General noted with concern that elected Palestinian representatives had been detained by Israel, and stressed that the United Nations opposed measures of forcible transfer and remained engaged on the issue. He furthermore reiterated the calls of the United Nations for the granting of humanitarian access to Israeli Staff Sergeant Gilat Shalit in accordance with international law and the Fourth Geneva Convention, and for his release.
9. The Secretary-General expressed frustration at the stalled efforts to achieve Israeli-Palestinian peace. He reiterated that the settlements, illegal and contrary to the Road Map, were among the main impediments, and it was Israel’s obligation to freeze settlement activity. He praised the progress by the Palestinian Authority in institution-building and the delivery of public services, which was important for the establishment of a State. He also welcomed the package of confidence-building measures announced in February by Israel, and urged its speedy implementation, while pointing out that it was not a substitute for a political agreement.
10. In conclusion, the Secretary-General called upon the international community, including the Quartet, to intensify its efforts to help the parties overcome the obstacles and achieve a comprehensive, just and lasting peace, based on relevant Security Council resolutions, and for peace, the Madrid principles, agreements between the parties, the Road Map and the Arab Peace Initiative.

11. **Abdou Salam Diallo**, Chair of the Committee, delivered an opening statement on behalf of the Committee. He said the Meeting was the first such gathering organized by the Committee devoted exclusively to the issue of Palestinian political prisoners in Israeli prisons and detention facilities. Nevertheless, he stressed, the issue of prisoners had always been central to the concerns of the Committee, and he expressed the hope that the Meeting would put the issue of Palestinian prisoners under renewed international scrutiny.
12. The Committee's first report to the Security Council, in 1975, he recalled, had recommended that Israel, pending its withdrawal from the areas occupied in June 1967, should release all Palestinian prisoners. That recommendation remained the "burning question of our time", and the Palestinian leadership accorded the same importance to that painful matter as to the permanent status issues.
13. An estimated 700,000 Palestinians had been arrested by Israel since the beginning of the occupation in 1967, and thousands remained incarcerated today, outside the Occupied Territory, in contravention of the Fourth Geneva Convention, he said. The Palestinians in the Occupied Territory were living in fear, under arbitrary Israeli military laws that fell far short of minimum international legal standards, criminalizing legitimate protest and political self-expression, painting everything with the broad brush of "security offences", which had not been clearly defined.
14. A system of military orders allowed Israeli soldiers to arrest Palestinians without giving a justification, said the Chair. Palestinians tried in military courts were often convicted on "secret evidence" based on confessions extracted under duress or torture and denied access to lawyers, and children were tried as adults, in contravention of international law. Many did not even get a trial. They suffered in detention, sometimes for years, not charged with any specific offence. This harsh treatment by Israel of the Palestinian prisoners was in stark contrast to its leniency towards violent Israeli settlers, who brutalized Palestinians with impunity on a regular basis. Prisoners were huddled in overcrowded unsanitary facilities and family visits were severely restricted. They were denied access to health services, abused and beaten by the guards and subjected to solitary confinement.
15. The Chair joined the calls of the international community for Israel to abide by international humanitarian law and stop torture and mistreatment, arrests of minors, detentions without trial and prisoner abuse, and stressed that a fair and just resolution of the issue of Palestinian political prisoners was key to efforts towards the realization of the objective of two States, Israel and Palestine, living side by side in peace and security.
16. **Issa Qaraqe**, the Minister for Prisoners' Affairs of the Palestinian Authority, delivered a message on behalf of Mahmoud Abbas, President of the Palestinian Authority. In his message, President Abbas stressed the importance of the Meeting to raise awareness of the situation of Palestinian prisoners in Israeli jails, adding that the prisoners' families looked to the conference as a ray of hope and a serious step towards ending the brutal treatment of their family members and their release from the "prisons of occupation".
17. President Abbas also underscored that the organization of the conference was pinned on a question central to the permanent status issues; it was not merely a humanitarian issue, but a basic element of a just peace in the region and a step towards ending the conflict. The Meeting should highlight the miserable conditions of Palestinian detainees and prisoners and the crimes perpetrated against them by the Israeli authorities.
18. The message by President Abbas concluded with the statement that the Palestinian prisoners were prisoners of war, and a reaffirmation that the end of the conflict and the realization of peace "will not take place without the settlement of all these matters, including the question of Palestinian prisoners and detainees through their full release from prisons before and during the independence of our State".
19. **Ann Clwyd**, President of the Committee on Middle East Questions of the Inter-Parliamentary Union, stressed that the plight of Palestinian political prisoners had to be placed in the more general context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the peace process. The Union was well-placed to contribute to the peace process and, in 1987, had set up the Committee on Middle East Questions to promote direct contacts between Arab and Israeli parliamentarians and to further parliamentary action in support of the peace process.
20. The President had reiterated on numerous occasions that continued conflict would get the parties nowhere. What was needed was a sense of responsibility and actions, with the dialogue being the only way forward. The Committee on Middle East Questions was trying to underscore this message and get a process under way for parliamentary dialogue. Meanwhile, the Union's Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians was actively examining individual human rights cases of members of the Palestinian Legislative Council, many of whom were in jail.
21. Ms. Clwyd said that the Union had become, through those cases, very much aware of the situation the Palestinians were facing, the "utter arbitrariness" to which they were exposed and the Israeli authorities' contempt for their obligations under international humanitarian and human rights law. In conclusion, Ms. Clwyd expressed the hope that this meeting would explore more effective means of ensuring Israeli respect for the human rights of the Palestinians, particularly political prisoners languishing in Israeli jails.
22. **Sergio Piazzi**, Secretary-General of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean, noted that while the issue of the prisoners was not always highlighted as a key component of the peace process, the Assembly had fully embraced it two years ago as a top item on its agenda, at the request of the President of the Lebanese Parliament to use all tools available to parliaments to bring about an agreeable solution. Since then, the Assembly had used every opportunity to request the Israeli authorities to allow visits to the prisoners and ensure their proper treatment.
23. Mr. Piazzi noted there were currently some 6,000 Palestinians in detention for political reasons, many of them members of the Palestinian Legislative Council. Israel had to comply with its responsibilities under international law and fully respect human rights principles, particularly those enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. He furthermore stressed that it was impossible to talk about the prisoner issue without recalling the persistent violations of the Fourth Geneva Convention, and pointed out that the right to a fair and public trial was fundamental in a State governed by the rule of law, and essential to respect of the detained person. Torture and degradation had to be strictly prohibited.
24. In conclusion, Mr. Piazzi expressed the conviction that regional platforms such as the Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean could assist in bringing about concrete solutions to the situation. He informed the Committee that the Assembly was planning to organize a meeting between Israeli and Palestinian parliamentarians to attempt to restart the peace talks, and intended to also reiterate its call for an Assembly delegation to visit the Palestinian political prisoners in Israel.

25. **Issa Qaraqe**, Minister for Prisoners' Affairs of the Palestinian Authority, delivered the keynote address. His presentation began with a short video clip depicting the scene of a 12-year-old boy being seized by Israel Defense Forces soldiers from a residential street in front of his family.

26. Mr. Qaraqe said that the twenty-first century should be the age of justice, globalization, democracy, human rights and the rule of law, when oppressed peoples rose against dictatorships and repressive police States to gain dignity, freedom, respect for their humanity and freedom from fear, oppression, imprisonment, persecution or terrorism. At the same time, however, a wave of religious and racist extremism was gathering speed in Israel. It was imperative to face up to ideas of enmity and extermination that were gaining ground in Israeli society. The difficult and deteriorating conditions of detainees in occupation prisons were largely a result of the militarism and extreme nationalist education of Israeli society, both of which affected the treatment of prisoners. Peace and the teaching of human rights were totally absent in Israeli school curriculums.

27. Mr. Qaraqe said that the prisoners were treated inhumanely, as demonstrated by the testimonies of all kinds of torture and abuse. He urged the conference to ask Israel and the Israeli Army why it executed prisoners after it had arrested and handcuffed them, why it had fired on prisoners who had carried a white flag during the Gaza war, and why it had used civilian human shields during those operations, as highlighted in the Goldstone report. In addition, Israel also retained the corpses of Palestinians within secret military cemeteries, sometimes for as long as 30 years.

28. He expressed his concern at the lack of effective intervention by international institutions to counter the continuing policy of torture, the use of internationally prohibited techniques on young and old alike, the extraction of confessions under pressure and threats, and the denial of access to legal counsel. He also expressed his alarm at the treatment of the ill, disabled and paralyzed and at the continuing imprisonment of young children, the policy of employing arbitrary administrative arrest, the denial of family visitation rights, and the use of solitary confinement.

29. Mr. Qaraqe noted that there were currently some 6,000 men and women Palestinian prisoners, including members of the Palestinian Legislative Council held in 22 prisons, camps and detention facilities inside Israel, in contravention of article 76 of the Fourth Geneva Convention. He expressed the hope that the meeting would support the decision of the leadership of the Palestine Liberation Organization, the Palestinian Authority and civil and human rights institutions to request the General Assembly to seek an advisory opinion from the International Court of Justice on the legal status of Palestinian prisoners and detainees held by the occupying Power, and the nature of the legal responsibility imposed in that regard on the occupying Power and third parties.

III. Plenary sessions

A. Plenary I

The current situation and conditions of imprisonment of Palestinians in Israeli prisons and detention facilities

30. The speakers in Plenary I addressed the following sub-themes: "The history, scope and conditions of imprisonment of Palestinians from the Occupied Palestinian Territory"; "The situation of Palestinian women and minors in Israeli detention facilities; physical and psychological concerns and denial of family visitation rights; the urgency of protection"; and "The effect of detention on Palestinian families and the whole society, and the need for integration of former prisoners".

31. **Qadura Fares**, Head of the Ramallah-based non-governmental organization Palestinian Prisoners' Club, said Israel was currently detaining more than 350 children and 37 women. The oldest prisoner, now 84, had been confined for 33 years. The youngest prisoner was 11. The captives were held in 27 prisons, 1 detention centre and 1 Israeli Army camp, none of which were in compliance with international standards in terms of space allotted to each prisoner, lighting, ventilation or health facilities. He said "regular, continuous and comprehensive" torture was suffered by 90 per cent of prisoners.

32. Mr. Fares noted that for four years, Israel had prevented the family members of child prisoners from the Gaza Strip from visiting their children in prison, on the grounds that they would constitute a danger to the occupying State. Close relatives of child prisoners from the West Bank and those living outside of the Palestinian Territory had also been prevented from visiting imprisoned children. Moreover, Israel had withheld the bodies of more than 350 Palestinians who had died in detention, refusing to return them to their families for traditional burial.

33. **Roberto Garretón**, human rights lawyer with the United Nations Working Group on Arbitrary Detention, spoke on the history, scope and conditions of imprisonment in Israeli prisons and detention centres. He pointed out that detainees were treated as if they were posing a security risk to Israel Defense Forces or to Israelis in general, when in fact they were only protesting, assembling, demonstrating, writing, thinking or praying. He explained that detention was considered arbitrary when it was impossible to invoke any legal basis whatsoever for the arrest, when the person was arrested for exercising a protected right to speech or assembly or when the violation of the right to a fair trial was particularly egregious.

34. In all the detentions, the operative word was "security", he said, asking whether Palestinian citizens living in the occupied areas enjoyed security, particularly security against being arbitrarily detained. Every person must have the security of not being arbitrarily detained and, in the case of detention, enjoy the rights recognized in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and all other instruments accepted by States to ensure the greater security of their citizens, he concluded.

35. **Fabrizia Falcione**, Project Manager at the Women Human Rights Unit with the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) in Jerusalem, noted that in terms of numbers, Palestinian female political prisoners and detainees "almost disappeared" in the face of thousands of Palestinian male political prisoners. She said that UN-Women deemed it essential to give voice directly to the Palestinian female political prisoners in an effort to ensure that their situation, conditions of imprisonment and protection gaps were urgently addressed. She described the physical and psychological concerns for Palestinian female political prisoners, quoting an inmate released a few months ago, who told her: "No matter how hard I try to describe the cell to you, I cannot. It is like an underground grave".

36. Ms. Falcione said the brunt of the infringement of cultural and religious norms from arrest through imprisonment was disproportionately borne by women. There were reports of ill treatment and punishment of women prisoners by prison guards both male and female, and violations of women's right to privacy. Untried Palestinian women political prisoners were detained and placed among convicted criminal offenders, where they were threatened and humiliated by Israeli prison guards through verbal and physical abuse.

37. Disruption of family and social relations also had severe psychological repercussions, Ms. Falcione noted. Family visits were theoretically permitted twice a month, but were drastically restricted because prisoners were incarcerated outside the Occupied Palestinian Territory. As a result, trips to and from the prison took around 10 hours, owing in part to movement restrictions and policies. No physical contact, including with children, was allowed during the typical one-hour visit, as visitors and detainees were separated by a thick glass divider. Physical separation between mother and child under the guise of "security" had a severe impact on both mothers and children. Palestinian female prisoners from Gaza were completely denied family visits.

38. Addressing the situation of Palestinian children, **Iyad Misk**, Coordinator of the Legal Unit at the Defence for Children International – Palestine Section in Jerusalem, said the children were routinely arrested at checkpoints, in the street and, most commonly, in their homes. There had been some 1,000 instances of juvenile imprisonment in 2010, most of them in Jerusalem and the areas along the separation wall. By the end of last year, more than 200 juveniles had remained in detention. Every year, some 700 West Bank Palestinian minors were put on trial in Israeli military courts, interrogated and imprisoned by the Israeli army. More than 7,500 had been imprisoned since 2000.

39. Mr. Misk said that children were often hit, kicked and then blindfolded and placed in the back of a military vehicle. In most cases, the child confessed to spurious charges during the first two hours of interrogation. It was common for the child to be given a statement of confession written in Hebrew, a language that very few Palestinians understand. Defence for Children International was concerned at the number of young child prisoners, aged 12 to 15, tried under the Israeli military court system. During detention, which lasted from a few hours to several months, children were often subjected to various forms of torture and degrading and cruel treatment.

40. Mr. Misk asserted that torture and abuse were not the exception, but a deliberate technique used on hundreds of prisoners, especially children. Some 90 per cent of the latter were subjected to brutal torture before being brought before official interrogators or transferred to official detention or interrogation centres. He touched on several forms of torture and an analysis done by his organization on incidents of mistreatment. Also significant, he said, was that in 81 per cent of the cases documented by Defence for Children International, Palestinian children had made confessions under coercive interrogation, and in 32 per cent of those cases, the confession had been written in Hebrew. Moreover, the interrogation sessions had been conducted without a lawyer or family member present.

41. Mr. Misk concluded by saying that between 150 and 200 child detainees were represented and defended in military courts each year. In 2010, 163 child detainees had been defended in military courts, and of those cases only 14 children had been released on bail, while the rest had been held in prison until the end of their court proceedings. The defence of children was in most cases conducted while the child was languishing in prison, which made the defence attorneys reluctant to prolong the proceedings by examining witnesses and presenting arguments, and predisposed them to accept the plea bargains that were offered in order to avoid lengthy proceedings that would leave the child in prison longer than the sentence offered in the plea.

42. **Niv Michaeli**, Intervention Coordinator for the Prisoners and Detainees Project at Physicians for Human Rights – Israel, said that most of the obstacles facing Palestinian inmates in their attempt to have their rights respected, in particular the right to health, were the result of systemic failures that harmed Israeli inmates as well. Those obstacles included long waits for appointments and operations, prison physicians with inadequate expertise, subordination of the health services to the security services, lack of transparency and oversight, and lack of social and mental health services, including psychotherapy.

43. Mr. Michaeli said the combination of poor-quality treatment and ineffective oversight among prison medical services led to unfortunate consequences. In addition, the psychological damage caused by the violence, torture and solitary confinement of inmates was not being sufficiently addressed by the mental health services. The problem was not only misdiagnosis, but also that prisoners received only psychiatric medications and not psychotherapy. Palestinian prisoners did not have access to social workers except in isolated, unusual cases. Female Palestinian inmates were subjected to all of those problems, compounded by inadequate gynaecological services.

B. Plenary II

Arrests and detentions of Palestinians by the occupying Power: legal aspects

44. The speakers in Plenary II addressed the following sub-themes: "Israeli legal claims and arguments used for arresting and detaining Palestinians from the Occupied Palestinian Territory"; "The use of administrative detention and the denial of due process"; "Responsibilities of the occupying Power under international humanitarian and human rights law – the need for compliance with international standards"; and "Available legal mechanisms to ensure compliance with international law and responsibility of Third Party".

45. **Shawan Jabarin**, General Director of Al-Haq, was unable to travel from Ramallah and joined the Meeting via video link. He said the practice of detentions precluded family visits and infringed on the detainee's right to maintain contact with his or her family or defence counsel. Detainees had a right to human dignity and to the practical considerations surrounding their detention. He also noted that Palestinian detainees were often held in Israeli prisons located outside the Occupied Palestinian Territory. Lack of knowledge about the reasons for the arrest and detention, the prevention of visits, lack of a fair trial and other violations were commonplace and amounted to war crimes under the Statute of the International Criminal Court and a grave breach of the Fourth Geneva Convention.

46. As did previous speakers, Mr. Jabarin lamented the Israeli practice of administrative detentions, in which charges were often based on evidence that could not be accessed by the defence counsel. Palestinians were in most cases not informed of the alleged crimes for which they were detained, and their incarcerations could be extended indefinitely. The High Court of Justice of Israel was a "rubber stamp to legitimize the illegitimate", he noted.

47. **Nasser Alryyes**, advocate and legal researcher with Al-Haq in Ramallah, also unable to travel, referred in his presentation delivered via audio link to recent Security Council actions. These included the veto by the United States of America in February 2011 of a resolution condemning Israeli settlements, and the unanimous adoption the previous week of a pro-sanctions resolution concerning Libya and the referral of that situation to the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court. Those events, he said, only served to “double our disappointment” that the Council continued to turn a blind eye to the plight of the Palestinians, who wished to be treated on equal footing with the peoples of the rest of the world.

48. Turning to the situation of Palestinian detainees, he said the occupying State was dealing with Palestinian detainees as if they were criminals who had violated security and the rule of law, rather than recognizing their legal status as freedom fighters. From the outset, the occupying State had denied the Palestinians the right to a fair trial and imposed on the detainees psychological and physical torture. The conditions of detainment were deplorable; medical care was denied, as was the right to education and family contact. Palestinians were even obliged to cover the expenses of their detention. Many of those practices could qualify as “gross violations and war crimes” based on article 147 of the Fourth Geneva Convention and article 85 of the First Geneva Protocol.

49. Mr. Alryyes emphasized that the States parties to the Fourth Geneva Convention had the responsibility to confront such Israeli practices, and the United Nations should exercise its Charter-based legal responsibility to pressure Israel to fulfill its obligations vis-à-vis the detainees. The States parties could resort to article 146 in case of Israeli failure to do so within a specific time frame, and should also seriously consider boycotting measures to pressure Israel into complying with international law.

50. For its part, the international community should oblige Israel to transfer back all detainees from its territory to the Occupied Palestinian Territory and exert pressure for the release of the sick, women and detainees held for long periods of time, he continued. Moreover, an international fact-finding committee should be established to investigate the situation of Palestinian detainees. Finally, it was necessary for the international community to intervene in resolving the question of the Palestinian prisoners by supporting a move by the Palestinians to obtain a legal opinion concerning the legal status and rights of the prisoners and the obligations of the occupying Power in that regard.

51. **Tamar Pelleg-Sryck**, Advocate in the Legal Department of HaMoked – Center for the Defence of the Individual in Jerusalem, said that administrative detention was among the numerous measures used by Israel to keep the Palestinian population of the Occupied Palestinian Territory in check. It was a convenient tool, owing to the flexibility and ease with which it was invoked: it simply required the signature of a military commander citing “security reasons” on the request of the “General Security Service” and was supported by secret materials. Such an order could be issued for six months and indefinitely renewed, allowing for long-term imprisonment without charge or trial. To finalize the order, all that was needed was a short “judicial review” by a military judge authorized to confirm, shorten or cancel it.

52. Ms. Pelleg-Sryck said the detainees generally learned very little, if anything, about the reason for their detention. They could be told that they represented a security danger, in most cases because of their “terrorist supportive” activities, and were sometimes labeled as “terrorist”. In very few cases, the detainees were alleged to have intended or planned to perform, or have been involved in, a “terrorist” or “military” activity. They did not know the facts of their own case and thus were unable to defend themselves. The administrative detainees were victims of secret proceedings, and the public’s right to know, as well as other democratic rights attendant to that right, were trampled upon.

53. The official reason given by Israel for the use of administrative detention was that it was “derived from security constraints and carried out for preemptive purposes in the framework of the ongoing war against terrorism”, said Ms. Pelleg-Sryck. The real aim, she noted, was to expand and reinforce Israeli rule in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, in violation of international legal standards.

54. **Sahar Francis**, the Director of the Addameer Prisoners’ Support and Human Rights Association based in Jerusalem, similarly described administrative detention as a tool commonly used by repressive regimes to circumvent the legal process and to hinder access by political dissidents to protection.

55. Owing to the lack of due process and the risk of abuse in detaining a person without charge or trial, tight restrictions have been placed on administrative detention under international law which allows the occupying Power to use administrative detention only under explicit and exceptional circumstances. Article 78 of the Fourth Geneva Convention gives the occupying Power the authority to take “safety measures” concerning protected persons or inhabitants of the occupied territories, including internment for “imperative reasons of security” and not as a means of punishment. The Israeli authorities in most cases, however, had used administrative detention indiscriminately and as a means of punishment.

56. Ms. Francis said that the Palestinians had been subjected to administrative detention since the beginning of the Israeli occupation in 1967, and under the British Mandate for Palestine before that. According to testimonies given to Addameer, detainees had been held under administrative detention orders during periods ranging from six months to six years. The frequency of the use of administrative detention had fluctuated throughout the occupation and had risen steadily since the outbreak of the second Intifada in September 2000. She asserted that administrative detention had been used as a means of collective punishment of Palestinians who opposed the occupation.

57. Maintaining that the practice of administrative detention in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory was in contravention of fundamental human rights and was used in a highly arbitrary manner without even basic safeguards, Addameer demanded that all administrative detainees held on account of their political views or activities carried out in resistance to the occupation be released promptly and unconditionally. Addameer further demanded that the occupying Power adhere to international law and that restrictions on the use of administrative detention be imposed. It insisted that the judicial review of administrative detention orders must meet the minimum international standards for due process. The authorities must provide detainees with prompt and detailed information as to the reason for their detention, and offer them a meaningful opportunity to defend themselves.

58. **Said Benarbia**, Legal Adviser for the Middle East and North Africa Programme at the International Commission of Jurists in Geneva, spoke about the applicability of international law to questions of arrests and detentions. He noted that while there were some differences between international human rights law and international humanitarian law, both were applicable to the Gaza Strip, West Bank and East Jerusalem. The Israeli authorities, however, rejected the applicability of both sets of laws to the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

59. With regard to the situation in the Gaza Strip, Israeli authorities argued that since its disengagement of 2005, Israel could no longer be

considered an occupying Power. Nevertheless, it was clear that a territory was considered occupied when it was actually placed under the authority of a hostile army, which was the case in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including the Gaza Strip, as its airspace, water, borders and daily life were under the control of the occupying army.

60. Mr. Benarbia pointed out that protection granted in situations of conflict must be found in international human rights law and international humanitarian law. The position held by Israel was in contravention of international law and the position expressed by the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia, which stated that respect for human dignity was the *raison d'être* of these laws. The main concern here was not only that the Israeli authorities presented such arguments, but that the Supreme Court of Israel regarded specific issues of torture and administrative detention in a way that tended to dilute or undermine the protection provided for Palestinian civilians under international law.

61. **Shawqi al-Issa**, Director of the Ensan Center for Democracy and Human Rights in Bethlehem, acknowledged that important comments made by many speakers during the Meeting indicated a preoccupation with the living conditions of the prisoners and the support for their cause. As for the legal aspect, however, available options were a sensitive matter, and thus the legal scope of the conflict was often neglected.

62. He noted that Israel had a long-standing position of refusing to apply Security Council and General Assembly resolutions, as well as the opinions of the International Court of Justice, and had used all possible pretexts to refrain from the implementation of the Fourth Geneva Convention. He stressed that insufficient attention had been accorded to the application of international law; rather, the attention had been focused on diplomatic activity and negotiations. While the Palestinian Authority had recently become more aware of the significance of resorting to international law, the United States and other States insisted that international law should not be applied in this context, or only selectively. That was made clear by the recent veto in the Security Council on the subject of settlements, which were explicitly outlawed in the Geneva Convention.

63. Mr. al-Issa referred to the situation of prisoners in Jerusalem, who he said were treated “differently from the rest” though Security Council resolutions were “very clear” in that regard, indicating that East Jerusalem was part of the Occupied Palestinian Territory and that laws applying to the remainder of the Territory also applied to Jerusalem. He thought a dedicated tribunal should be set up to broach the matter of the Palestinian prisoners and the applicability of international law to their plight, and work should be undertaken to ensure the implementation of the extremely significant recommendations of the Goldstone report.

C. Plenary III **The issue of Palestinian political prisoners and the** **Israeli-Palestinian political process**

64. The speakers in Plenary III addressed the following sub-themes: “The importance of addressing the question of political prisoners in the peace process”; “Strengthening the support of the international community for a solution to the question of Palestinian political prisoners”; and “The role of non-governmental actors, including parliamentarians and civil society in raising awareness about the issue”.

65. **Aisling Byrne**, Project Coordinator at the Conflicts Forum, based in Beirut, spoke about the importance of addressing the question of political prisoners in the peace process. She asserted that an “assiduous construction of a police State”, disguised as State-building and good governance, was taking place in the West Bank. Statehood no longer signified independence or a just solution to the conflict, but rather “alleviated occupation”, which was essentially a management strategy of containment. That basis of State-building was the self-definition by Israel of its own security needs, and by extension its definition of the requirements for Palestinian security collaboration—a principle to which the United States, the European Union and the Quartet more broadly had acquiesced, she said.

66. Ms. Byrne furthermore asserted that because of the “securitization” of the political process, the number of Palestinian prisoners was growing. The Oslo agreements from the beginning implied the primacy of security needs of Israel over self-determination. Inevitably, such a premise implied detention and imprisonment of political opponents, she noted. She claimed that the so-called moderates, including the elite who were partners in the implementation of the State of neo-occupation, were supported, while the “extremists”, or those opposed to that political project and who continued to resist occupation, were marginalized, targeted and labeled terrorists. That, she said, included Palestinian political prisoners.

67. **Ann Clwyd**, President of the Committee on Middle East Questions of the Inter-Parliamentary Union, and Member of the British Parliament, said that thanks to the work of the Union’s Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians on the individual human rights cases of the members of the Palestinian Legislative Council, the Union had become fully aware of the plight of Palestinian political prisoners. The cases being examined had similar features: the concerned individuals had been seized by the Israel Defense Forces in their homes in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, taken to Israeli detention facilities and subjected to unfair trials which, apart from Marwan Barghouti, had been held before military tribunals. All the prisoners suffered the same treatment in prison.

68. Ms. Clwyd asserted that all of the cases revealed grave breaches of international humanitarian law, in particular the Fourth Geneva Convention; breaches of international human rights law, especially regarding international standards of fair trial and the right to liberty; and the failure to respect international standards on the detention of prisoners. In all cases, the Inter-Parliamentary Union had called for the release of the members of the Palestinian Legislative Council. Ms. Clwyd then provided details of several specific cases under examination by the Committee.

69. **Bana Shoughry-Badarne**, Director of the Legal Department of the Public Committee against Torture in Israel, based in Jerusalem, focused her remarks on the long-term Israeli policy that had allowed the use of torture by investigators and intelligence officers. Torture underpinned and supported the occupation, she asserted, and was intended to prevent Palestinians from achieving self-determination. In 1999, certain methods of torture had been banned, such as flogging, handcuffing of prisoners, covering their heads with wet bags, compelling them to sit in uncomfortable positions for long periods, and depriving them of sleep.

70. Ms. Shoughry-Badarne said that all methods of violence had been employed, despite a total ban on torture enshrined in human rights treaties and covenants to which Israel had acceded. Violation of those standards was a serious matter, and even a war crime. Moreover, the security authorities in Israel had developed new and additional physical and mental tortures while implementing a policy of impunity. More than 200 visits to prisons by her organization, including to minors, had borne witness to such torture and ill-treatment. Additionally, the denial of Palestinians’ right to

legal counsel was not the exception, but the rule. Ms. Shoughry-Badarne then provided details of specific cases.

71. **Saleh Hijazi**, researcher at Human Rights Watch in Ramallah, shared his personal experiences with arrests and detentions in the West Bank, from the arrest of his father to fellow students at the university, pointing to the fact that arrests and detentions were ever-present phenomena in the life of the Palestinians in the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

72. Mr. Hijazi highlighted the need for protection of Palestinian non-violent activists. The international community could make a direct and effective impact by supporting those Palestinian individuals and communities, who—often joined by international and even Israeli activists—were defending their rights, he said. The international community could focus on targeted arrests and detentions in communities involved in protests against home demolitions, land confiscation and settlements. He provided examples where such interventions would be helpful, noting that the evidence collected by Israeli and Palestinian human rights organizations, and by international groups like Human Rights Watch, showed that in communities that were taking an active role in protecting and promoting their human rights, the Israeli military had repeatedly arbitrarily detained leading advocates for non-violent protests, including women and children. It was very important that the international community pay special attention to arbitrary arrests and detentions in those communities.

73. Human rights organizations would continue to document such violations impartially and try to raise their profile in the media and with Governments, said Mr. Hijazi. In addition to monitoring the situation and raising the matter in proper forums, the representatives of the international community could visit non-violent activists and threatened communities to show there was international support for those struggling to protect human rights in the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

IV. Closing session

74. **Saviour F. Borg**, Rapporteur of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, introduced the concluding statement by the organizers of the Meeting (see annex I).

75. **Riyad Mansour**, Permanent Observer of Palestine to the United Nations, spoke on behalf of Palestine, thanking the organizers for tackling the issue of Palestinian political prisoners and noting that it was the first time in the 35-year history of the Committee that a conference had been organized exclusively around the issue of prisoners. In every cell, in every corner of every Israeli jail, a prisoner wanted to have his or her story told, to regain their freedom and to “internationalize” their experience so as to contribute to the building of the Palestinian society and the Palestinian State.

76. The Palestinian story was multifaceted, Mr. Mansour said. It was not only the story of prisoners and the right of return, or of removing the settlements or the wall, or of putting an end to the Gaza blockade; it was the story of a struggle to attain the inalienable right to self-determination and an independent State for its people to live in freedom and dignity.

77. Mr. Mansour implored the Meeting to trust the Palestinian people who have been trying hard to end the occupation, to study the lessons of revolutionary changes sweeping across the Middle East and to rally around the cause of Palestinian youth, helping the Palestinians put an end to the divisions and to the occupation. He expressed appreciation to Indonesia for hosting the Ministerial Conference of the Non-Aligned Movement in May 2011, which had a special segment on Palestinian political prisoners in Israeli jails and detention centres.

78. Mr. Mansour also said that the huge amount of information that was shared at the Meeting on the issue of Palestinian political prisoners would be studied and followed up on, including the decision by the Palestine Liberation Organization, the Palestinian Authority and civil and human rights institutions to request the General Assembly to seek an advisory opinion from the International Court of Justice on the legal status of Palestinian prisoners and detainees held by the occupying Power. The Committee would also continue to press for the convening of a conference, by Switzerland, of the High Contracting Parties to the Geneva Conventions on the application of its article 1. He concluded by saying that the issue of Palestinian political prisoners would from now on be discussed among the other permanent status issues, including Jerusalem, refugees, borders, settlements, water and security.

79. In closing remarks, **Abdou Salam Diallo**, in his capacity as Chair of the Committee, stressed that the international community had to shoulder its responsibilities to ensure that Israel ceased its grave violations of prisoners’ rights. A concerted diplomatic action, supported by civil society campaigns, was now needed to make this happen, and the Committee was ready to support this endeavour. As the Palestinian leadership entered into final status negotiations with Israel, the issue of prisoners would be an important part of the overall package of agreements, considered to be a seventh final status issue. The Chair also pointed out that the solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict could be durable only if it rested on a solid foundation of international legitimacy.

80. In conclusion, the Chair assured the participants that the Committee would continue to work towards a negotiated settlement, and called on all present to participate in upcoming meetings and conferences on the matter.

Annex I

Concluding statement of the organizers

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 experts, representatives of United Nations 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 Palestinian society. The Meeting looked into, among other things, 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 to strengthen the role of the wider international community, including non-governmental actors, in the search for a solution to the plight of the 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 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 Qaraqe, Minister for 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 them as prisoners of war, when applicable.

4. The organizers noted with interest 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 some 6,000 Palestinians held in 22 prisons and detention camps in Israel and in the West Bank, and of these, 300 prisoners are under the age of 18. Also, among the prisoners are 37 women and 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 poor 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 particular attention 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 upon the World Health Organization to visit Palestinian prisoners in Israeli jails and detention facilities and inspect their conditions, and requested Israel to grant that access.

9. The organizers called upon Israel once again to release without any precondition Palestinian prisoners arrested in relation to their activities opposing the occupation. The participants also urged Israel to take immediate steps to clearly define "political offences" and carry out 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 the use by Israel of the practice of administrative detention, which is in contravention of fundamental human rights. In this respect, the participants noted with grave concern that Israel uses administrative detention orders in a highly arbitrary manner, holding detainees without charge, trial or right of defence, but offering them the right to appeal their detention. The organizers joined the participants in calling upon 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 the meetings held in Algeria in December 2010 and in Morocco in January 2011. The organizers joined international calls for an immediate release of political prisoners, including children and women, and for a proper international inspection of their current condition, which should be a priority for the United Nations General Assembly, the Security Council and 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 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 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 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 cause for serious concern. The organizers stressed that the vast majority of United Nations Member States—and the Committee—considered all settlement construction, including so-called “natural growth”, to be illegal and should be halted immediately. A complete and immediate cessation of settlement activities in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, was imperative and would 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 4 June 1967, thus realizing their inalienable right to self-determination. The organizers took note of the statement of the Quartet principals, issued following their meeting in the margins of the Munich Security Conference on 5 February 2011, which regretted the discontinuation of the moratorium by Israel 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 had 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 fulfil 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 for the services provided to them.

Annex II

List of participants

Speakers

Mr. Shawqi al-Issa
Director, Ensan Center for Democracy and Human Rights
Bethlehem

Mr. Nasser Alryyes
Advocate, Legal Researcher
Ramallah

Mr. Jawad Ammawi
General Director of Legal Unit, Ministry of Prisoners' Affairs, Palestinian Authority
Ramallah

Mr. Said Benarbia
Legal Adviser, Middle East and North Africa Programme
International Commission of Jurists
Geneva

Ms. Aisling Byrne
Project Coordinator, Conflicts Forum
Beirut

The Rt. Hon. Ann Clwyd MP

President, Committee on Middle East Questions,
Inter-Parliamentary Union, Member of the British Parliament for Cynon Valley
London

Ms. Fabrizia Falcione
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United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women
Jerusalem

Mr. Qadura Fares
Head, Palestinian Prisoners' Club
Ramallah

Ms. Sahar Francis
Director, Addameer Prisoners' Support and Human Rights Association
Jerusalem

Mr. Roberto Garretón
Human rights lawyer, United Nations Working Group on Arbitrary Detentions
Santiago

Mr. Saleh Hijazi
Researcher, Human Rights Watch
Ramallah

Mr. Shawan Jabarin
General Director, Al-Haq
Ramallah

Mr. Niv Michaeli
Intervention Coordinator, Prisoners and Detainees Project
Physicians for Human Rights – Israel
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Mr. Iyad Misk
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Defence for Children International – Palestine Section
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Ms. Tamar Pelleg-Sryck
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Mr. Sergio Piazzi
Secretary-General, Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean
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H.E. Mr. Issa Qaraqe
Minister for Prisoners' Affairs, Palestinian Authority
Ramallah

Ms. Bana Shoughry-Badarne
Director, Legal Department, Public Committee against Torture in Israel
Jerusalem

**Delegation of the Committee on the Exercise of the
Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People**

H.E. Mr. Abdou Salam Diallo
Permanent Representative of Senegal to the United Nations
Chair of the Committee and Head of Delegation

H.E. Mr. Zahir Tanin
Permanent Representative of Afghanistan to the United Nations
Vice-Chair of the Committee

H.E. Mr. Pedro Núñez Mosquera
Permanent Representative of Cuba to the United Nations
Vice-Chair of the Committee

H.E. Mr. Saviour F. Borg
Permanent Representative of Malta to the United Nations
Rapporteur of the Committee

H.E. Mr. Riyad Mansour
Permanent Observer of Palestine to the United Nations

Representative of the Secretary-General

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

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Argentina
Mr. Ariel Gonzalez, Counsellor
Permanent Mission to the United Nations Office at Vienna

Austria
Mr. Stephan Heislen, Deputy Head
Permanent Mission to the United Nations Office at Vienna

Belarus
Mr. Vadim Pisarevich, Counsellor
Permanent Mission to the United Nations Office at Vienna

Belgium
Mr. Skander Nasra, Attaché
Permanent Mission to the United Nations Office at Vienna

Brazil
Mr. Felipe Flores Pinto, First Secretary
Embassy in Vienna

Brunei Darussalem
Ms. Norliana Mosli, Second Secretary
Embassy in Vienna

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Ambassador
Ms. Mila Francisco Ferrada, Third Secretary
Permanent Mission to the United Nations Office at Vienna

China
Ms. Peijie Chen, Counsellor
Permanent Mission to the United Nations Office at Vienna

Costa Rica
Mr. Francisco José Abellán Centeno, First Secretary
Permanent Mission to the United Nations Office at Vienna

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H.E. Mr. Marios Lyssiotis, Permanent Representative to the United Nations Office at Vienna and
Head of Delegation
Ms. Polly Ioannou, First Secretary
Ms. Meropi Christofi, Second Secretary
Mr. Spyros Miltiades, Second Secretary
Permanent Mission to the United Nations Office at Vienna

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Mr. Jiri Svoboda, Counsellor
Permanent Mission to the United Nations Office at Vienna

Democratic People's Republic of Korea
Mr. Kim Song Chol, Counsellor

Mr. Chang Bom Hong, First Secretary
Permanent Mission to the United Nations Office at Vienna

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Ms. Wendy Olivero Rivera, Minister Counsellor
Permanent Mission to the United Nations Office at Vienna

Egypt
Ms. Serenade Gamil, Counsellor
Permanent Mission to the United Nations Office at Vienna

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Ms. Julia Villatoro Tario, Minister Counsellor
Mr. Gerardo Pérez, Attaché of the General Management of Protocol and Order, Ministry of External Relations
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Mr. Gabor Mulnar, Adviser
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Mr. Aris Munandar, Minister Counsellor
Indonesian Embassy in Vienna
Mr. Jean Anes, Minister Counsellor
Mr. Nanda Avalist, Third Secretary
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Mr. Luka Petek, Adviser, Head of Delegation
Permanent Mission to the United Nations Office at Vienna and International Organizations in Vienna

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Ms. Souhad Khriesat, Third Secretary
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Kuwait
Mr. Fawzi Abdulaziz al-Farah, Counsellor
Permanent Mission to the United Nations Office at Vienna

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Permanent Representative of Lebanon to the International Organizations in Vienna
Ms. Jeanne Mrad, First Secretary
Permanent Mission to the United Nations Office at Vienna

Malaysia
Mr. Ismail Salam, Minister Counsellor
Permanent Mission to the United Nations Office at Vienna

Malta
H.E. Mr. Christopher Grima, Permanent Representative to the United Nations Office at Vienna
Mr. Bernard Charles Mifsud, First Secretary
Permanent Mission to the United Nations Office at Vienna

Morocco
Mr. Abdellah Larhmaid, First Secretary

Permanent Mission to the United Nations Office at Vienna

Namibia

H.E. Mr. Raphael N. Dinyando, Permanent Representative to the United Nations Office at Vienna

Mr. Elvis T. Shiweda, Adviser

Permanent Mission to the United Nations Office at Vienna

Nicaragua

H.E. Mrs. Isolda Frixione de Flores, Permanent Representative to the United Nations Office at Vienna

Mr. Ralf Arne Mirus, support staff

Permanent Mission to the United Nations Office at Vienna

Nigeria

Mr. Adeshida Foluso, Minister/Chargé d'affaires a.i.

Mr. Ngozi Ukaeje, Minister Counsellor

Permanent Mission to the United Nations Office at Vienna

Oman

Mr. Abdullah bin Taher Ba'Ómar, Counsellor

Embassy in Vienna

Pakistan

H.E. Mr. Khurshid Anwar, Permanent Representative

Mr. Asif Hussain Memon, First Secretary

Permanent Mission to the United Nations Office at Vienna

Panama

Ms. Deborah Siraze Garcia, Third Secretary

Permanent Mission to the United Nations Office at Vienna

Philippines

H.E. Ms. Lourdes O. Yparraguirre, Head of Delegation, Permanent Representative to the United Nations Office at Vienna

Mr. Charlie P. Manangan, Minister

Ms. Maria Elena P. Algabre, Minister

Permanent Mission to the United Nations Office at Vienna

Qatar

H.E. Mr. Ali al-Mansouri, Ambassador

Permanent Mission to the United Nations Office at Vienna

San Marino

H.E. Ms. Elena Molaroni, Ambassador, Permanent Representative to the United Nations Office at Vienna

Permanent Mission to the United Nations Office at Vienna

Saudi Arabia

H.H. Prince Mansour al Saud, Ambassador

Mr. Usama Suleiman, Researcher

Embassy in Vienna

Sri Lanka

Mr. Srimal Wickremashinghi, Deputy Chief of Mission

Permanent Mission to the United Nations Office at Vienna

Syrian Arab Republic

H.E. Bassam Sabbagh, Ambassador

Mr. Wael al-Khalil, Attaché

Embassy in Vienna

Thailand

Mr. Paradorn Rangsinaporn, First Secretary

Permanent Mission to the United Nations Office at Vienna

Tunisia

Mr. Sabri Chaabani, Counsellor, Chargés d'affaires

Permanent Mission to the United Nations Office at Vienna

Turkey

Mr. Sedat Önal, Deputy Director General for the Middle East

Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs

United Arab Emirates

H.E. Mr. Mohammed Omran al-Shamsi, Ambassador
Mr. Ayad al Yasiri, Adviser
Permanent Mission to the United Nations Office at Vienna

Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)
H.E. Dr. Ali Uzcátegui Duque, Permanent Representative to the United Nations Office at Vienna
Mr. Rodrigo Yáñez Pilgrim, First Secretary
Ms. Crosby Plaza Hernandez, Third Secretary
Permanent Mission to the United Nations Office at Vienna

Viet Nam
H.E. Mr. Ba Son Nguyen, Ambassador
Permanent Mission to the United Nations Office at Vienna

**Entities having received a standing invitation to participate as
observers in the sessions and the work of the General Assembly
and maintaining permanent offices at United Nations Headquarters**

Palestine
H.E. Mr. Issa Qaraqe, Minister for Prisoners' Affairs
Mr. Alaa A.N. Abudaqqa, Coordinating Officer, Minister's Bureau
Mr. Saleh T. M. Nazzal
Mr. Adlmonem A. M. Abdelrazik
Mr. Yasser I. I Amouri
Mr. Alaa A. N. Abudaqqa
Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Palestinian Authority

Intergovernmental organizations

League of Arab States
H.E. Dr. Mikhail Wehbe, Head of the Mission
Permanent Observer Office to the United Nations Office at Vienna

Organization of the Islamic Conference
Dr. Shaher Awawdeh, Palestine Desk Officer
General Secretariat
Jeddah, Saudi Arabia

**Other entities having received a standing invitation to participate as
observers in the sessions and the work of the General Assembly
and maintaining permanent offices at United Nations Headquarters**

Inter-Parliamentary Union
The Honorable Ann Clwyd, President of the Committee on Middle East Questions
Ms. Ingeborg Schwarz, Head of the Human Rights Programme and
Secretary of the Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians

Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean
H.E. Mr. Sergio Piazzi, Secretary-General

United Nations organs, agencies and bodies

United Nations Environment Programme
Mr. Harald Egerer, Head of Office
Mr. Matthias Jurek, Consultant
Vienna

Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
Mr. Sabine Okonkwo, Senior Liaison Assistant
Ms. Julia Sophie Bartl, Intern
Vienna

Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process
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
Mr. Samer Abu Jobara, Political Affairs Officer

Ms. Arzu Hatakoy, Special Assistant to Mr. Gaylard
Jerusalem

Civil society organizations

Adalah: The Legal Center for Arab Minority Rights in Israel
Ms. Abeer Baker, Senior Lawyer
Haifa

Arab Organization for Human Rights – Vienna
Mr. Hassan Mousa, President
Mr. Husnieh Awad, Vice President
Vienna

Arabische Organisation für Menschenrechte in Österreich
Mr. Dhia Aldin Shamari, Schriftführer
Ms. Christine Shamari, Vienna

Mandela Institute for Human Rights and Political Prisoners
Ms. Buthainah Matar Abed Doqmaq, General Manager
Ramallah

Migratory Letters Campaign
Mr. Mohammed S. M. Iqtifan, Campaign Coordinator
Mr. Ghazi M. S. Murtaja, External Relations Coordinator
Gaza

Olof Palme International Foundation
Mrs. Anna Balletbò Puig, President
Barcelona, Spain

The Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries Fund for International Development
Dr. Fatimah Zwanikken, Information Officer, Department of Information

Palestinian Housing Council
Mr. Omar Moh'd Rawhi Hannon, General Manager
Al-Bireh

The Palestinian Return Centre
Mr. Nasim Ahmed, Senior Researcher
Mr. Ghassan Faour, Member of the Board of Trustees
London

Palestinian Community in Austria
Mr. Munther Merai, President
Vienna

Palestinians without Frontiers
Mr. Salim M. M. Alzanoon
Mr. Samir M. A. Ayyad, Coordinator of Europe Office

Portuguese Movement for the Rights of the Palestinian People and Peace in the Middle East
Mr. Silas Cerqueira, Secretary for International Relations
Lisbon

Progressive Party of the Working People
Ms. Stavri Kalopsidiotou, Member of the Central Committee, International Affairs Bureau
Nicosia

Media

Rense Radio
Ms. Kawther Salam, reporter and photographer
Vienna

Hard News
Ms. Hehru Asif, Hasuain, reporter
Vienna

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