



## General Assembly GA/PAL/1109

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### **STATEMENT BY BUREAU OF COMMITTEE ON PALESTINIAN RIGHTS ON SITUATION IN GAZA STRIP**

The following statement by the Bureau of the Committee of the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People on the situation in the Gaza Strip was issued in New York, 31 December:

The Bureau of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People condemns in the strongest possible terms deadly military assaults and destruction perpetrated by Israel, the occupying Power, in the Gaza Strip that have reportedly killed, by various accounts, more than 390 Palestinians. The number, which has been constantly growing since Saturday, 27 December, includes many civilians, including women and children. Considering the high number of those injured and the fact that the Israeli military operation is continuing, the death toll resulting from this escalation of violence is likely to rise.

The Bureau of the Committee demands that Israel end, immediately and unconditionally, its brutal military campaign against the Palestinian people in the Gaza Strip. The occupying Power should be held accountable for the killing and wounding of the innocent civilian population in Gaza, including women and children, as a result of its massive missile attacks and heavy artillery fire. All these actions have caused untold suffering to the Palestinian people, flagrantly violating norms of international law. They are bound to spur further hatred, violence and mistrust. The Bureau of the Committee also demands that Israel immediately open the Gaza border crossings in order to allow for delivery of emergency medical aid and other vital supplies to those in desperate need. The tight blockade of the Gaza Strip in the course of the past year has already caused a humanitarian catastrophe, as well as the heightened sense of anxiety, fear and despair among the Palestinian population.

The Bureau of the Committee wishes to emphasize that the Fourth Geneva Convention obligates an occupying Power to protect the civilian population under its occupation, including through the provision of basic services, such as food and medicines. The Bureau of the Committee has consistently condemned Palestinian rocket firing into Israel, but nothing can justify the illegal collective punishment by Israel of the entire population of the Gaza Strip. The Bureau strongly believes that actions by a few do not justify the collective punishment by Israel of the entire population of the Gaza Strip. The Bureau would like to remind the Government of Israel that the applicability of the Fourth Geneva Convention to the Occupied Palestinian Territory has been repeatedly affirmed by the Conference of the High Contracting Parties of the Convention, as well as by the United Nations General Assembly and the Security Council. The Gaza Strip remains an Occupied Territory by virtue of the fact that Israel fully controls every single aspect of the daily life of the Palestinian population. The international community must urgently act against the violation of the Convention by Israel. In particular, we call on the High Contracting Parties of the Fourth Geneva Convention to take urgent and decisive action to uphold their obligation, under article 1, to "respect and to ensure respect for the present Convention in all circumstances".

The current situation is deeply disturbing. It is an unacceptable affront to the principles of international law and values upheld by the United Nations. The Bureau of the Committee considers that it is the moral responsibility of all of us to see to it that the bloodshed is stopped. Given the gravity of the situation, we firmly believe that it is incumbent on the Security Council to exercise its responsibilities under the United Nations Charter. The Council should engage itself fully with a view to defusing the crisis. Council Members should decide on tangible, effective and urgent steps aimed at protecting the civilian population, bringing the bloodshed to an immediate end, ensuring that an immediate and permanent ceasefire is brought about, that humanitarian assistance is provided, and that dialogue is encouraged between the parties. The Bureau of the Committee believes that, in order to achieve this, the Council should work in close coordination with the Quartet and regional partners. Such a consolidated effort should help avoid further casualties and de-escalate the situation on the ground. The Bureau of the Committee continues to reiterate that the solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict must be based on taking the current negotiations process forward, leading to the establishment of a viable Palestinian State existing side by side with Israel in peace and security.

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