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Committee on the Inalienable Rights
of the Palestinian People
364th Meeting (AM)

SPEAKERS AT PALESTINIAN RIGHTS COMMITTEE CALL FOR MASSIVE EFFORTS TO AID GAZA FOLLOWING RECENT CONFLICT

As the world celebrated the International Year of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, the situation on the ground was deteriorating, with the summer's conflict in Gaza having caused the worst impact on civilians of all that had preceded it, and Israel continuing to expand settlements, the Palestinian Rights Committee stressed.

Fode Seck (Senegal), speaking following his election as Chair of the Committee, formally known as the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian people, said that Gaza had endured 50 days of bombing, causing thousands of civilian fatalities and injuries, while Israel took unilateral measures contravening international law and relevant General Assembly and Security Council resolutions. In that context, it was clear that the Committee's role was crucial.

Summarizing the situation in Gaza, Ramesh Rajasingham, Director of the Office of the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, said that over 1,480 Palestinians were killed and 11,000 injured, of whom more than 3,000 were children. At least 142 families had lost more than 3 family members. Displacement had reached 500,000 Palestinians, the highest levels of internally displaced persons since 1967.

Further, he continued, there had been massive damage to property and infrastructure, including some 175 hospitals, making it difficult to tend to the wounded. Damage to water and electricity networks was currently causing 18 hours of power cuts daily, affecting water supply and sanitation. At the height of the conflict, 1.8 million people had no access due both to the damage and restrictions on mobility. Some 100 United Nations facilities had also been damaged. Approximately 20,000 homes had been destroyed, 270,000 displaced persons were being hosted by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), another 30,000 at Government facilities and thousands more were staying with other families. Damage to basic infrastructure left the humanitarian community as the primary source of assistance. The current appeal for \$551.2 million would cover only humanitarian assistance with nothing for reconstruction.

Richard Wright, representative of UNRWA, reiterated that reconstruction needs were in excess of original estimations. Overall need would be about 50 per cent greater than originally anticipated for 50,000 to 80,000 refugees. The cost of clearing unexploded munitions, approximately 10 per cent of what had been used by Israel, would also have to be covered.

In that regard, Riyad Mansour, Permanent Observer of the State of Palestine, supported the call for "stepping up to the plate" for the donor community in response to "the catastrophe" that his people were enduring. He appealed to those participating at the upcoming donor conference in Cairo, aimed at reconstruction, to be generous, expressing hope that that meeting would have a political tenor and create movement towards a permanent resolution of the Palestinian situation. Those attending that meeting would be supporting and strengthening the national consensus Government, agreed upon with Hamas, in undertaking the "formidable task" of restoring Gaza.

Having arrived at today's meeting from discussions on a text for a Security Council resolution on a timetable to end the occupation, he asked the Council to shoulder its responsibility to end the occupation and ensure the independence of the Palestinian State to carry out the consensus for a two-State solution. He noted further that negotiations with Israel under United States Secretary of State John Kerry had failed due to the intransigence of the Israeli side, which had been entrenching the occupation through a 123 per cent increase in settlement activities. That was the wrong message for Israel to be sending its people. Instead, the people should be prepared for the end of occupation.

The Council's tools should be used to that end, he continued. However, if certain parties prevented that, facts would be changed on the ground. "[W]e would open new doors" by joining more agencies and treaties, including the International Criminal Court. "Whenever people close doors before us, we will not give up. We will continue to seek peace, justice and the independence of the State of Palestine," he said in conclusion.

Christopher Grima (Malta), Rapporteur of the Committee, presented a draft report on the work of the committee (document A/AC.183/2014/CRP.2), focussing on its numerous conclusions and recommendations. Among them, the Committee would call for the establishment of a fact-finding mission by the Human Rights Council, and call upon the Secretary-General to expedite the request of the Palestinian leadership that the territory of the State of Palestine be placed under an international protection system by the United Nations.

It would also encourage the State of Palestine to sign further international instruments, he continued, and call upon United Nations Members and Observers to provide support to alleviate catastrophic conditions in Gaza and expedite the rebuilding effort. In addition, it would call upon donors to meet prior commitments and provide additional aid to avert further deterioration.

The Committee then approved the draft report, allowing for further discussion of one paragraph regarding outreach to regional groups at the United Nations.

As today's meeting opened, a moment of silence was observed in memory of Ibra Deguene Ka, a past Committee Chair, who passed away days earlier.

Jeffrey Feltman, Under Secretary-General for Political Affairs, and Wolfgang Gieger, Director, Division of Palestinian Rights, also took part in the meeting.

Also participating today were representatives of Namibia, Nicaragua, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Morocco, Pakistan, South Africa and India.

The Committee will next meet on 14 October 2014 at a time to be determined.

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