

BUREAU OF PALESTINIAN RIGHTS COMMITTEE ISSUES STATEMENT**ON SITUATION IN OCCUPIED PALESTINIAN TERRITORY**

At its meeting on 15 May 2002 at the United Nations Headquarters in New York, the Bureau of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People adopted the following statement concerning the situation in the occupied Palestinian territory, including Jerusalem and efforts at resuming meaningful political negotiations between the parties:

The Bureau of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People reiterates the Committee's grave concern at the adverse effect that the Israeli military offensive has had on the livelihood of thousands of Palestinian people and on the Palestinian Authority infrastructure. This brutal campaign in the cities, villages and refugee camps in the West Bank, has caused significant loss of life and has resulted in enormous damage to public infrastructure and private property. Moreover, it has severely diminished the capacity of the Palestinian Authority institutions to deliver much-needed services and has stifled the Palestinian economy. Tight closures and other restrictions, including those imposed on international agencies and donor missions, have made efforts to provide emergency relief to the suffering Palestinian population virtually impossible. The full scale of the destruction perpetrated in the course of this military operation is yet to be assessed by the international community.

Against this backdrop, however, the Committee welcomed the greater engagement of the United Nations Security Council on the issue at hand. In a series of important resolutions, adopted over the past two months, the Council affirmed the vision of two States, Israel and Palestine, living side by side within secure and recognized borders; called for the withdrawal of Israeli troops from Palestinian cities; and welcomed the establishment by the Secretary-General of a fact-finding team regarding events in the Jenin refugee camp. Our Committee, however, regrets the fact that the Council has been stymied in its ability to follow up on its own resolutions regarding the situation in the occupied Palestinian territory, including Jerusalem. Israel's position vis-à-vis the Council and the Secretary-General is indeed unacceptable. Therefore, we were profoundly disappointed by the failure of the Council to discharge its responsibility under the Charter and take firm steps in the face of outright contempt at its position and decisions.

As it became evident that the action of the Council would prove inconclusive, the General Assembly resumed its Tenth Emergency Special Session. [Resolution ES-10/10](#) of 7 May 2002, by an overwhelming majority, requested the Secretary-General to present a report on recent events in Jenin and other Palestinian cities, drawing upon the available resources and information. The Committee believes that the report should be prepared promptly and should be as thorough as possible.

In the immediate wake of these developments and in order to make use of the narrow window of opportunity, presented by the ending the Israeli military siege of Chairman Arafat's headquarters in Ramallah and the Church of the Nativity, and a substantial reduction of violence, swift steps should be taken for the resumption of a political process with a view to reaching a final settlement. It is high time that the widely accepted vision of two peacefully coexisting States -- Israel and Palestine -- becomes a reality. An international conference with broad participation could help define the steps and time frame for this to happen, as envisaged by the "Quartet" at its meeting in Washington on 2 May. We support such efforts, including a greater involvement of the United Nations and its Secretary-General, which have already proven to be constructive and helpful.

At the same time, we are gravely concerned by attempts by Israel at undermining or delaying the prospects of any progress in this direction, through setting new preconditions and even by challenging the very foundations of the two-State solution and defying the letter and spirit of Madrid and Oslo. We believe that statements, such as the recently adopted resolution of the Likud Central Committee, rejecting the establishment of a Palestinian State, are indeed worrying and may have far-reaching negative implications for efforts at achieving peace and stability in the region.

Our Committee is of the view that the parties should steadily and decisively move forward towards a meaningful political process. The international community and its representative organs, functioning within the framework of the United Nations Charter, should assume their responsibilities and carry them out in full. Swift steps should be taken for the establishment of a sovereign and contiguous Palestinian State in the Palestinian territories occupied by Israel since 1967, with East Jerusalem as its capital. The occupying Power should not be allowed to delay indefinitely the reaching of or dictate unilaterally the terms of a final settlement, the outline of which is already known and widely accepted, namely the United Nations resolutions [242 \(1967\)](#), [338 \(1973\)](#), [1397 \(2002\)](#), the principle of "land for peace", and the norms of international law.

While political efforts are being pursued, the international donor community is once again called upon to provide the Palestinian people with emergency humanitarian and economic assistance. Today, in the face of the extreme devastation on the ground, there is an acute and growing need to support the Palestinian people through an expanded economic relief effort.

With a great sense of urgency, we again appeal to the international community to help the parties extricate themselves from the continuing quagmire, by restoring normality and returning to the meaningful political dialogue, with a view to finally reaching the goal of a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement of the question of Palestine. Faithful to the mandate entrusted to it by the General Assembly of the United Nations, the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People will continue to keep the situation under review and to intervene in support of the attainment of the aforementioned goal.

