

**STATEMENT BY THE HIGH COMMISSIONER
FOR HUMAN RIGHTS TO
THE 58TH SESSION OF
THE COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS**

Mr. Chairman and members of the Commission,

May I first express my appreciation for the efforts of the Commission to address the difficult human rights situation that has developed in Israel and the occupied Palestinian territories since 29 March. In particular I note the determination of the Chairman, the Bureau, and the members of the Commission to maintain high standards of debate appropriate to this important body and this very serious issue.

I addressed the Commission on the subject of the occupied Palestinian territories on 2nd April and I continue to receive reports of an increasingly distressing situation. As you will know, on 4 April, the Security Council adopted unanimously [resolution 1403 \(2002\)](#).

When I addressed the Commission on 2nd April, I envisaged that members of the Commission itself might constitute a visiting mission. I have since noted the proposals that have been tabled before you. I note that paragraph 3 of the draft resolution on the situation of human rights in the Occupied Palestinian Territories;

"requests the High Commissioner for Human Rights to head a visiting mission that would travel immediately to the area and return expeditiously to submit its findings and recommendations to the current session of the Commission on Human Rights."

Mr. Chairman, I am ready, in principle, to head such a visiting mission. I would do so and on the understanding that there is broad support in the Commission, as well as full cooperation on the part of Israel and the Palestinian Authority. The implementation of a visiting mission would also depend on whether security conditions would permit it.

In constituting a visiting mission, I would be guided by the previous practice of the Office of High Commissioner. During the Kosovo crisis in 1999 and while the Commission was in session, I constituted a visiting mission consisting of my personal envoy and a special rapporteur. Also in 1999, in undertaking a visit to Sierra Leone, I invited a high level delegation including the former President of Botswana and a serving member of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination to join me. In constituting a visiting mission to the occupied Palestinian territories, if such be agreed, it would be my intention to ask two prominent international personalities to join me on the mission. I shall inform the Chairman of the Commission of my selection once I have confirmation of their readiness to join the mission.

The parameters of a visiting mission would be those that apply in fact-finding activities in the United Nations human rights programme, namely: the independence of the members of the mission, freedom to visit places they wish and to speak with those they select, diplomatic immunity, guarantees of safety and security, and the faithful cooperation of the parties.

In planning for the mission, I shall consult with the Secretary-General.

It would be my intention to have the mission depart as soon as practicable and to return within a week from departure to report to the Commission.

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Related document:

- [UNCHR adopts resolution \(press release\)](#)
- [E/CN.4/RES/2002/1](#)
- [UNCHR press release \(dated 08.04.02\)](#)
- [UNCHR press release \(dated 09.04.02\)](#)
- [UNHCHR statement](#)
- [UNHCHR status report](#)
- [UNCHR decision](#)
- [UNCHR decision - press release](#)

- [UNCHR press release \(dated 17.04.02\)](#)