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### **BUREAU OF PALESTINIAN RIGHTS COMMITTEE ISSUES STATEMENT ON ISRAEL'S DECISION**

#### **TO DECLARE GAZA STRIP ' HOSTILE TERRITORY'**

The following statement was issued today by the Bureau of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People:

The Bureau of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People is greatly alarmed by yesterday's decision of the Israeli Security Cabinet to consider the Gaza Strip a "hostile territory" and to apply additional sanctions to the Territory, in order to restrict the passage of various goods to the Gaza Strip and reduce the supply of such vital services as fuel and electricity. We consider this decision to be a violation of international law, including international humanitarian law, and yet another form of collective punishment of the Palestinian people, which, if implemented, is bound to substantially worsen the already deplorable living conditions of the civilian population in the occupied Gaza Strip.

The Bureau of the Committee is of the view that the decision clearly violates the obligations of Israel under the Fourth Geneva Convention, to which it is a High Contracting Party. As the occupying Power, Israel has an obligation to provide protection and essential services to the civilian population under its occupation. The Convention's applicability to the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, has been repeatedly confirmed by the General Assembly and the Security Council.

The Bureau of the Committee reiterates its position condemning the killing of innocent civilians by both sides, including Israeli military operations and the firing of rockets and mortar rounds by Palestinian groups. Such attacks by both sides must be stopped immediately, and those responsible must be brought to justice.

In addition, this decision of the Israeli Government may considerably complicate current efforts of the international community to revitalize the Israeli-Palestinian peace process and prevent the Palestinian Authority from promoting and marshalling public support for dialogue towards peace. Nobody, including the Israeli people, will benefit from such a scenario.

The Bureau of the Committee calls on the Government of Israel to reverse the decision. We also call on the High Contracting Parties to the Fourth Geneva Convention to live up to their responsibility to "undertake to respect and to ensure respect for the ... Convention in all circumstances," as specified in article 1 of the Convention.

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