



DIVISION FOR PALESTINIAN RIGHTS

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I. THIRTEENTH UNITED NATIONS SEMINAR ON THE QUESTION OF
PALESTINE, ISTANBUL, 7 - 11 APRIL 1986

Introduction

1. The Thirteenth United Nations Seminar on the Question of Palestine, entitled "The inalienable rights of the Palestinian people", was held at the Büyük Sürmeli Hotel, Istanbul, Turkey, from 7 to 11 April 1986, in accordance with the terms of General Assembly resolution 40/96 B of 12 December 1985. Eight meetings were held and 16 panelists presented papers on selected aspects of the question of Palestine.

2. The Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People was represented by a delegation consisting of Mr. George Agius (Malta), Rapporteur of the Committee, Head of the delegation; Mr. Güennadi I. Oudovenko (Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic), Mr. Alberto Velázquez San José (Cuba), Mr. Mehmet Ali İrtengelik (Turkey); Mr. Zehdi L. Terzi (Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO)). Mr. Agius was Chairman and Mr. İrtengelik was Rapporteur of the Seminar.

Opening Statements

3. The Seminar received a message from Mr. Turgut Özal, Prime Minister of Turkey, which was read out by the Chairman of the Seminar at the opening meeting.

4. Mr. Vahit Halefoğlu, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Turkey addressed the opening meeting of the Seminar. In his statement he stressed that the Seminar was taking place at a time when the Middle East region was undergoing many important developments. Turkey's historical ties and good relations with the Arab and Islamic countries provided it with a unique position to understand the problems of the region better and to explain the just cause of the Palestinians to its friends in the West.

5. Turkey had opposed the United Nations partition plan in 1947 and had defended the legitimate cause of the Palestinians on all occasions and at all international forums, first and foremost at the United Nations. As a member of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, Turkey actively participated in its work.

6. Turkey's relations with the Palestinians were not confined to the international arena. On a bilateral basis as well, it enjoyed relations of friendship and solidarity with the Palestinian people, as with the Arab countries, based on common spiritual and cultural values. Those relations had expanded and been consolidated in a satisfactory way since they had been officially established and the PLO had opened its office in Ankara in 1979.

7. A just and lasting peace in the region could only be found by the recognition of the legitimate rights of the Palestinians, including their right to self-determination, and by the withdrawal of Israel from Arab territories occupied since 1967. Turkey believed that in order for peace to be lasting, all countries in the region must live within secure boundaries. It would continue to support all peace efforts to that end in which

PLO, the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinians, was entitled to participate with the other parties concerned. Turkey wished to see the establishment of peace and stability as soon as possible so that the peoples of the region could devote their energies to the reconstruction of their countries and to a more fruitful co-operation amongst them.

8. At the same meeting, the Chairman of the Seminar gave a brief account of the Committee's work to date. He stressed the particular importance that the Committee attached to the seminars in the various regions. He indicated the Committee's conviction that objective information on the question of Palestine would help to ensure more comprehensive coverage of developments in the region and promote public support in favour of an equitable and peaceful solution. Once all the facts surrounding the question of Palestine were known, the resultant better understanding of the question would help to convince even those who so far had been somewhat indifferent to the just cause of the Palestinian people.

9. The Committee was convinced that the European countries were in a position to play an active role in the search for a solution. European public opinion had to be mobilized, along with that of all the other regions, to make the voice of reason, the voice of peace and respect for people's rights in world affairs, better heard. It had to be mobilized to exert a more significant influence in the formulation of policies calculated to enable the Palestinian people to exercise their inalienable rights to self-determination and independence, rights that they had been unjustly denied for so long.

10. The struggle of the Palestinian people for the exercise of their rights had not only led to conflict in the region but constituted a permanent danger for international peace and security. Because of that danger, the international community felt concerned and was becoming more and more aware of the difficult and complex question of Palestine and the repercussions of its non-solution. Indeed, the basic elements of the question were so closely interwoven that any partial or unbalanced settlement and, in particular, any attempt not to take fully into account the just and legitimate aspirations of the Palestinian people could only place greater obstacles in the way of a solution.

11. The widely attended International Conference on the Question of Palestine, held at Geneva in 1983, had formulated a number of basic principles necessary for a solution, including the right of all States in the region to exist within secure and recognized boundaries and justice and security for all the people, including a future Palestinian State. That Conference had also recommended the convening of an International Peace Conference on the Middle East, under the auspices of the United Nations, with the participation on an equal footing of all the parties to the Arab-Israeli conflict, including the PLO - as the representative of the people directly concerned - together with the United States of America and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.

12. Since its thirty-eighth session, the General Assembly had endorsed the idea of an International Peace Conference on the Middle East. It had also invited the Security Council and the Secretary-General to undertake

all preparatory measures to convene the Conference. By resolution 40/96 D, the Assembly had stressed the urgent need for additional constructive efforts by all Governments in order to convene the Conference without further delay and for the achievement of its peaceful objectives. It had also called upon the Governments of Israel and the United States to reconsider their positions towards the attainment of peace in the Middle East through the convening of the Conference.

13. Strongly supported by the majority of the States Members of the United Nations, the Committee fully endorsed the importance of such a Peace Conference and, as a matter of priority, continued to exert all efforts to promote its early convening. The views of several parliamentarians and policy-makers participating in the Seminar would be of great value in assessing what still needed to be done.

14. Mr. Ribhi Hijazi, Ambassador of the PLO to Turkey, conveyed a message from His Excellency Mr. Yasser Arafat, Chairman of the Executive Committee of the PLO and Commander-in-Chief of the Forces of the Palestine Revolution.

15. The Seminar decided to send a message to Mr. Arafat, thanking him for his message.

16. Mr. Nihat Akyol (Turkey), speaking on behalf of the United Nations Council for Namibia, reaffirmed the Council's support for the General Assembly resolutions relating to the question of Palestine and stressed its solidarity with the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People in the task of securing the practical attainment of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people. The Council was of the view that the problem of the Middle East was inextricably linked to a just solution of the question of Palestine, the absence of which aggravated tensions and conflicts in this region, thereby endangering international peace and security. The question of Palestine, as the situation in Namibia, continued to lie heavily on the conscience of the international community. As in South Africa, the situation in the Middle East was particularly critical and explosive and violence was spreading throughout the region. Only by collective efforts through the application of pertinent decisions of the United Nations could those injustices be rectified.

17. Mr. Guennadi I. Oudovenko (Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic), speaking on behalf of the Special Committee against Apartheid, noted with deep regret that the Palestinian people were still being denied their inalienable right to self-determination and that tensions in the Middle East had escalated further. The questions of Palestine and of apartheid were of the greatest concern to the international community. Both problems emanated from the denial of the rights of self-determination to the peoples concerned. All attempts to bring about a just, comprehensive and lasting solution to the question of Palestine, the core of the Arab-Israeli conflict, as well as to bring about the end of apartheid, had failed due to the obstructive policies of the United States.

18. Each year the Special Committee submitted a special report to the General Assembly and the Security Council on developments concerning relations between Israel and South Africa. Those reports pointed out clearly the nature of the alliance between the two régimes. The concern of the Special Committee in that regard stemmed from the fact that an alliance was detrimental to the interests of African and Arab peoples. The Special Committee reaffirmed its support for the Palestinian people and their heroic struggle to regain their inalienable rights under the leadership of their sole legitimate representative, the PLO.

19. Mr. Velázquez-San José (Cuba), speaking on behalf of the Special Committee on the Situation with regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples, acknowledged with appreciation the important work carried out by the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People.

20. The tenet that governed the work of the Special Committee - the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples - adopted by an overwhelming majority of the members of the General Assembly 25 years ago, proclaimed that the subjection of peoples to alien subjugation, domination and exploitation constituted a denial of fundamental human rights, was contrary to the Charter of the United Nations and was an impediment to the promotion of world peace and co-operation. Within the context of the principles embodied in that Declaration, the Special Committee viewed the plight of the Palestinians with most serious concern. The fact that the Palestine question was regarded as a most complex, difficult and dangerous issue should not discourage the international community in, nor should it serve as a pretext to prevent it from, its intensified search for a just solution to the problem. Israel must be made to realize that it could no longer systematically ignore world public opinion on the question of Palestine.

21. Mr. Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu, representing the Organization of the Islamic Conference, read out a message from Mr. Sharifuddin Pirzada, Secretary-General of that organization.

22. He emphasized that the theme of the Seminar - the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people - was of vital importance to the establishment and maintenance of international peace and security. The growing recognition on the part of the world public opinion and the interest shown by the United Nations and the overwhelming majority of peace-loving nations towards those rights was of great significance.

23. The Organization of the Islamic Conference had been engaged in efforts to create world-wide awareness of the essential importance of the restitution of Palestinian rights as the fundamental prerequisite of a solution of the Palestine and the Middle East questions. The usurpation of Palestine and the denial of the Palestinian people's rights constituted the core of the Middle East conflict. The sixteenth Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers held at Fez in January 1986 had reiterated its call for the earliest convening of the International Peace Conference recommended by the General Assembly.

24. On 7 April 1986, the delegation of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People was officially received by Mr. Vahit Halefoglu, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Turkey.

25. At the closing meeting, 11 April 1986, statements were made by Mr. Tahir Şentürk, Head of the delegation of Turkey, Mr. Ribhi Hijazi, Ambassador of the PLO to Turkey and Mr. George Agius, Chairman of the Seminar.

26. The Seminar adopted a motion of thanks expressing its appreciation to the Government and people of the Republic of Turkey for hosting the Seminar.

Panel discussion

27. Four panels were established to consider different aspects of the question of Palestine. These panels and their panelists were as follows:

(a) Panel I:

"The International Peace Conference on the Middle East (United Nations General Assembly resolution 38/58 C), the need for such a Conference, efforts and prospects to promote a successful outcome and benefits thereof":

Mr. Türkkaya Ataöv (Turkey), Mr. Lasse Budtz (Denmark),
Mr. Marcel Dinu (Romania), Mr. Faik Dizdarevic (Yugoslavia),
Mr. Istvan Fodor (Hungary), Mr. Vafa M. Goulizade (Union of
Soviet Socialist Republics), Mr. Ingo Schoenfelder (German
Democratic Republic), Mr. Pasa Sarioglu (Turkey);

(b) Panel II:

"The role of the Palestine Liberation Organization":

Mr. Sami Musallam (PLO);

(c) Panel III:

"The question of Palestine and European public opinion":

Mr. Bülent Akarcali (Turkey), Mr. Constantine Galanopoulos (Greece),
Mr. Per Gharton (Sweden), Mr. Albrecht Konecny (Austria), Mr.
Michael Lanigan (Ireland), Mr. Mümtaz Soysal (Turkey);

(d) Panel IV:

"The United Nations and the question of Palestine":

Mr. Guennadi I. Oudovenko (Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic).

28. The expert members of the various panels agreed on summaries of the presentations and discussions on each of the topics, which the Seminar decided to include in the report.

Conclusions and recommendations

29. The Seminar, concerned over the dangerous situation in the Middle East, was profoundly convinced that the vital interests of the peoples of that region, as well as interests of international security as a whole, urgently dictated the need for the speediest attainment of a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement of the Middle East conflict.
30. It affirmed that the problem of the exercise of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people remained the core of the conflict in the Middle East and that no comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the region could be achieved without the full exercise of those rights, including the right to self-determination and to create their own independent State, and without the complete withdrawal of Israel from Arab territories occupied since 1967. It further reaffirmed that the PLO was the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people. The settlement of this problem remained a continuous responsibility of the United Nations.
31. Those States Members of the United Nations who did not support the attainment by the Palestinian people of their inalienable rights, especially the United States and Israel, should reconsider their positions towards the solution to the problem. The best way to establish a just and lasting peace in the Middle East was by convening the International Peace Conference on the Middle East under the auspices of the United Nations and with the participation of all parties concerned, including the PLO.
32. The Conference should be convened without preconditions and its proceedings should be conducted in a constructive spirit. The aim of the Conference should be a comprehensive settlement and the signing of a treaty or treaties guaranteeing its implementation.
33. The participation of the United States and the Soviet Union in the Conference was essential. All States should endeavour to persuade the United States to reconsider its current position towards the convening of the Conference. An appeal should be made to the United States to join other nations in convening the Conference.
34. The Conference should be held under the auspices of the United Nations. The organization of that Conference might be entrusted to the Security Council where States could express their views at every step leading to the solution of the Middle East problem. As suggested by the Secretary-General, "other avenues of the United Nations could also be explored to provide the possibilities that the search for a lasting peace would require". 3/
35. The Secretary-General should be more actively involved in the efforts to solve the problem and to break the deadlock with respect to the convening of the Conference.

36. The Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People had an important role to play in promoting the idea of convening the Conference. In that context, the Seminar recommended that the Committee establish contacts particularly with the Governments of those countries that had so far hesitated to adopt a positive approach towards the Conference. In general, the Seminar recommended the intensification of the political and diplomatic efforts by all concerned for reaching a comprehensive, just and durable settlement of the conflict in the Middle East.
37. Every effort should be made to influence public opinion throughout the world through the use of the media.
38. In that connection, the United Nations should make additional efforts to disseminate factual and up-to-date information on the question of Palestine, especially having noted the lack of support of the Western European media and States.
39. The Arab States and the PLO should also increase their efforts to publicize the facts and developments relating to the question of Palestine.
40. The Seminar took note with appreciation of the PLO Declaration made at Cairo on 7 November 1985, wherein it rejected and denounced terrorism.
41. The information provided by Palestinian sources had to become more informative. The message of Palestine could be told in a simple and concise manner using all means of communications more effectively.
42. It was important that the public media should play a more responsive role in providing a more balanced reporting on the Middle East and, in particular, on the plight of the Palestinians in and outside the occupied territories as a dispossessed and harassed people. Institutions such as universities, colleges, research institutes, churches and other religious establishments, as well as national and international non-governmental organizations, had a crucial role to play in the formation of public opinion. Those institutions should be urged to give wider coverage and more balanced treatment to the question of Palestine.
43. Every effort should be made to step up the widespread dissemination of information, as one of the major contributions to the achievement of a just solution to the problem of Palestine on the basis of the attainment by the Palestinian people in Palestine of their inalienable rights. The Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People and the Division for Palestinian Rights of the Secretariat had an important role in such dissemination of information. Furthermore, the Department of Public Information of the Secretariat should make every effort to ensure that accurate information on the question of Palestine received the widest possible dissemination.

II. NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS:
ACTIVITIES AND INFORMATION

44. By paragraph 3 of its resolution 40/96 B on the question of Palestine, adopted on 12 December 1985, the United Nations General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to provide, inter alia, for "additional meetings for non-governmental organizations, in order to heighten awareness of the facts relating to the question of Palestine and to create a more favourable atmosphere for the full implementation of the recommendations of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People". In that connection, the Committee decided that the following activities should be organized during 1986 for non-governmental organizations interested in the question of Palestine:

(a) North American Regional NGO Symposium on the Question of Palestine, to be held at United Nations Headquarters from 11 to 13 June 1986; ^{4/}

(b) European Regional NGO Symposium on the Question of Palestine, to be held at the Vienna International Centre from 30 June to 1 July 1986;

(c) United Nations International NGO Meeting on the Question of Palestine, to be held at the Vienna International Centre from 2 to 4 July 1986.

Notes

1/ Report of the International Conference on the Question of Palestine, Geneva, 29 August - 7 September 1983 (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.83.I.21), chap. I, sect. A.

2/ See Official Records of the General Assembly, Fortieth Session, Supplement No. 35 (A/40/35), annex I.

3/ A/40/779, para. 39.

4/ This symposium will immediately follow the Fourteenth United Nations Seminar on the Question of Palestine, to be held at United Nations Headquarters from 9 to 10 June 1986, to which non-governmental organizations are to be invited as observers.

