



DIVISION FOR PALESTINIAN RIGHTS

UNITED NATIONS NORTH AMERICAN
REGIONAL NGO SYMPOSIUM ON THE
QUESTION OF PALESTINE

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INTRODUCTION

The Fourth United Nations North American Regional NGO Symposium on the Question of Palestine was convened at United Nations Headquarters in New York from 24 to 26 June 1987 in pursuance of General Assembly resolution 40/96 B of 12 December 1985. The theme of the meeting was "The inalienable rights of the Palestinian people".

The symposium was attended by 74 NGOs, 29 of them as observers.

The meeting received a message from Mr. Yasser Arafat, Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) (see annex II).

H.E. Mr. Alberto Velázquez-San José, speaking on behalf of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, opened the Symposium. In his statement, he pointed out the evolution of responsible involvement of NGOs in the work of the United Nations, in particular the North American Co-ordinating Committee for NGOs on the Question of Palestine (NACC). The Third International NGO Meeting, he continued, had called for the observance of 1987 as the fortieth anniversary of the adoption of General Assembly resolution 181 (II), in addition to marking 20 years of Israeli military occupation of the West Bank and Gaza. Petition campaigns based upon the theme of the observance were addressed to the Governments of the United States of America and Canada. He stressed the efforts made by the NGOs to help build a consensus for the convening of the International Peace Conference on the Middle East in accordance with General Assembly resolution 38/58 C of 13 December 1983.

In her introductory statement, Ms. Ethel Born, chairman of NACC, described the large number of activities carried out since 1986 by NACC, with special attention to the urgency of ending 20 years of occupation and the support to designate 1987 as the Year of the Palestinian People. The most significant accomplishment of NACC had been the publication of a newsletter which, through its distribution to individuals and organizations, had contributed to the expansion of the committee's constituency. NACC needs a broad-based support system so that it will not be seen as an instrument of any particular organization or organizations.

One panel discussion, entitled "The need for convening the International Peace Conference on the Middle East in accordance with United Nations resolution 38/58 C: the urgency of ending twenty years of occupation", was established with the following panelists presenting their papers:

- (a) Mr. Tawfiq Abu Ghazaleh (Gaza Centre for Rights and Law);
- (b) Mr. Latif Dori (Committee for Israeli-Palestinian Dialogue);
- (c) Rev. Benjamin Weir (Presbyterian Church, USA).

Eight workshops were set up to debate the following topics:

- (a) Media/public relations;
- (b) Challenges in defending human and civil rights;
- (c) Coalition-building;
- (d) Grassroots organizing;

- (e) Women;
- (f) Peace and anti-intervention;
- (g) Religion and relief groups;
- (h) Third world communities.

The Symposium unanimously adopted a final declaration which is attached as annex I to the present paper.

PANEL DISCUSSION

"The need for convening the International Peace Conference on the Middle East in accordance with United Nations resolution 38/58 C:
The urgency of ending twenty years of occupation"

Mr. Tawfiq Abu Ghazaleh, Attorney with the Gaza Centre for Rights and Law, in his statement, stressed the importance of the exercise of the right of return for the Palestinian refugees in accordance with the United Nations Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Since Israel declared the right to return to every Jew in the world, the Palestinians must practise the same right, focusing it on the Partition Plan. Furthermore, he said, all peoples have the right to self-determination so peoples who have not achieved self-determination have the same right to it as those who exercised it previously. Under occupation there can be no protection of dignity of the human being. For the Palestinians living under the Israeli-declared "iron fist" policy, this means daily humiliations, collective punishment, deportation, administrative detention, imprisonment and all kinds of coercions, discrimination and degradation.

In his view the enforcement of the United Nations system of legal order will free Palestinians as well as Israelis from all kinds of violence unless the International Peace Conference on the Middle East that will provide the basis for peace and justice is convened.

Mr. Latif Dori, founder and Secretary of the Committee for Israeli-Palestinian Dialogue, was of the view that the great military victory of the Six-Day War had become the greatest disaster of the State of Israel, since instead of exploiting that victory in order to achieve a peace agreement, Israel's leaders had preferred to continue holding on to the territories. He summarized the events of the last 20 years as follows:

- (a) Most nations of the world had condemned Israel and severed diplomatic relations with her;
- (b) World public opinion had shifted its sympathies from Israel to the Palestinians;
- (c) The United States had showed its imperialist face by supporting Israeli policies and opposing a peace solution that included representatives of the PLO, the representative of the Palestinian people;
- (d) The Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, socialist countries and some Western European nations had remained steadfast and unwavering in their

struggle for an agreed solution to peace through the convening of the proposed International Peace Conference;

(e) The PLO had gathered great public support and had become the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people;

(f) Oppressive measures enforced by Israeli authorities could not subdue the struggle of the Palestinian people;

(g) The settlement policy had severely damaged the Israeli economy;

(h) Right-wing forces had brought about a major political revolution by coming into power in 1977;

(i) Israeli leaders had missed historic opportunities to reach peace by not recognizing the right to self-determination of the Palestinian people and returning the occupied territories, as they did with Egypt;

(j) The withdrawal from Lebanon had been mainly due to the pressure exerted by Israeli public opinion;

(k) The occupation endangered the peace achieved with Egypt;

(l) Opposition to an international conference existed within both blocs in the Israeli Government, the difference being only tactical.

He indicated that after 20 years of occupation Israel faces the choice of either becoming another South Africa or of reaching a just peace with its neighbours. The Israeli-Palestinian Committee had organized a series of activities during the month of June to end the occupation. Two other organizations of Oriental Jews, the East for Peace Movement and the Eastern Front, maintained a high level of co-operation and were active on the peace front in Israel. He pointed out the change in Israeli public opinion in recent years concerning the participation of the PLO as the representative of the Palestinian people in negotiations for peace. In 1970 only 14 per cent had supported this idea, whereas nowadays the number had reached 36 per cent. As regards the November 1986 historic meeting of an Israeli peace delegation with the PLO delegation in Romania and a second recent meeting held in Hungary two weeks previous, he explained that they demonstrated that the Palestinian side was extending its hand in peace while the current Government of Israel was rejecting that hand and refusing to sit together with the PLO. But no force in the world could prevent the continuation of this dialogue. In this line, he appreciated the resolution of the Palestine National Council in Algeria about "developing relations with the Israeli democratic forces".

Rev. Benjamin Weir, of the Presbyterian Church (USA), discussing the effects over the past 30 years of the unresolved issue of the Palestinian need for a homeland and independence, noted that the cost was too great to allow the situation to continue festering any longer.

As regards the cost in terms of human lives, he recounted his personal experiences in the siege of the Tellaz Zaatar camp in Lebanon in 1976, as well as the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982. In relation to the cost in terms

of the human spirit, he explained how the Israeli military authorities were determined to prevent Palestinian leadership from developing and becoming effective. Expulsion of political and intellectual leaders through the years had become systematic, and the closure by the occupation authorities of Palestinian universities as well as other institutions had become common practice. The cost in terms of time should also be taken into serious consideration, as opportunities fostering Palestinian self-determination and freedom had passed by. In commenting on his experience with Shiite Muslim extremists when he was kidnapped in May 1984, he pointed out that though he neither accepted their methods nor agreed with their interpretation or objectives he could easily understand their passion for justice since they had been reacting angrily to the 1982 Israeli invasion which had disastrously swept over south Lebanon and its predominantly Shiite population. In his view, the present must be seized since there was still a measure of hope.

The Presbyterian Church (USA) had held a conference in San Francisco two months previous, which was attended by a large number of representatives from across the United States. The Conference reviewed a series of resolutions that had been adopted by the General Assembly in 1984. One of them focused on "the foundation for a just peace in the Middle East" as enunciated in 1974 and acknowledged and supported the role of "the United Nations as the prime instrument for bringing about peace in the Middle East". Participants in the conference supported the need for an international peace conference dealing with the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people and its need for self-determination, including its choice of representatives for such a conference. In his closing statement, an appeal was made for progress towards an international peace conference on the Middle East.

In his closing statement, H.E. Mr. Alberto Velázquez-San José underscored the importance of the testimony that the Symposium had heard from experts from the Occupied Territories and Israel since, in his opinion, their views lifted the participants beyond thinking of Palestine not just as a question but also as it is lived by those who deal with the situation on a daily basis.

Annex I

DECLARATION AND WORKSHOP RECOMMENDATIONS
ADOPTED BY THE NORTH AMERICAN REGIONAL
NGO SYMPOSIUM ON THE QUESTION OF PALESTINE

1. We, the non-governmental organizations (NGOs) participating in the Fourth United Nations North American Regional NGO Symposium on the Question of Palestine, wish to thank the United Nations Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People for making this meeting possible. We are indeed honoured by the presence of the members and observers of this distinguished United Nations body.
2. We wish also to thank the Chief of the Division for Palestinian Rights, the NGO liaison officers, the staff of the Division and the Department of Conference Services for their invaluable assistance in the preparation and execution of this meeting.
3. We wish also to voice our appreciation to the distinguished expert panelists, workshop organizers, resource persons and facilitators who offered their invaluable insights into the question of Palestine and the potential central role to be played by NGOs in North America. The practical suggestions and strategies developed in the workshops assisted us in formulating future collaborative efforts in North America and in linking our efforts to a broader global network.
4. We believe this meeting contributed to the constructive interaction between the United Nations and the North American NGO community concerned with the non-implementation of General Assembly resolution 38/58 C of 13 December 1983, a resolution whose implementation we hold to be indispensable in securing a just and durable solution to the question of Palestine.
5. We call upon the peoples and Governments of the United States of America and Canada to take all possible steps to secure the implementation of General Assembly resolution 38/58 C, in order to secure a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Arab-Israeli conflict, the core of which is the question of Palestine.
6. We resolutely reaffirm the international consensus that the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) is the sole and legitimate representative of the Palestinian People. We affirm the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people to self-determination without external interference and to establish an independent Palestinian State on its own national territory under the leadership of the PLO and the right of return, in conformity with all relevant United Nations resolutions.
7. We further strongly support the convening of the International Peace Conference on the Middle East as called for at the International Conference on the Question of Palestine, August-September 1983, and as adopted by the General Assembly in resolution 38/58 C. We applaud the continuing efforts of the Secretary-General to establish a preparatory committee for the

Conference. It is essential that the International Peace Conference be inclusive and be attended by representatives of both Israel and the PLO, those Arab States party to the conflict, the United States and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. We are encouraged by the declaration of the European Community of February 1987 and the declaration of the Nordic countries of March 1987 and hope that they will lead to initiatives which will result in the convening of the Conference.

8. Within our larger concern for equal rights and justice for all people, we reaffirm that our focus as participants in this symposium is the Palestinian people and its struggle to achieve its inalienable rights; and that our goal and responsibility is to support this struggle through the strategies and activities proposed in our workshops.

9. As NGOs, we have the unique opportunity to contribute to this struggle without governmental constraints. Our guidelines must come from our consciences, which are informed by history, the knowledge of current events, and respect for international law.

10. Events in the territories occupied in 1967 must be seen as part of both an historical pattern and a continuum. The history of the Palestinian community living in pre-1967 Israel is instructive in two respects. The first is Israel's systematic attempt at removing the people from their land; the second is the Palestinian people's unyielding determination, which has empowered them to succeed in remaining on their land.

11. The Palestinians of 1948 have taught us the importance of "samed" (steadfastness). As NGOs, we must therefore be committed to support concurrently both the struggle of the Palestinians of the 1967 occupation to remain on the land and the struggle of the entire Palestinian people to attain self-determination.

12. NGOs in Canadian and United States society take special note of their role as representatives of an important segment of public opinion on the Palestine question. NGOs constitute an unquenchable force to be reckoned with that derives from this public consciousness. In view of this special role and status, non-governmental organizations in North America also recognize as part of their responsibility that they go beyond the self-imposed limitations of States and governments to contribute positively to the speedy restoration of national rights to the victimized Palestinian people.

13. The non-governmental organizations here convened recognize with appreciation the contributions that States Members of the United Nations have made to the provision of standards of world order through the promulgation of international law. Humanitarian and human rights statutes constitute the legal basis for the self-determination of peoples, including the Palestinian people. In particular, such legal instruments as the United Nations Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of the United Nations and other international covenants and conventions guarantee this right for the Palestinian people.

14. The international community had already affirmed the right of the Palestinian Arab people to their State in Palestine as early as 1947 with the

"Plan for Partition with Economic Union". The denial of that right over the ensuing 40 years, and particularly throughout the 20 years of Israel's occupation by force of the West Bank and Gaza districts of Palestine, dramatize the failure of the international community of States to uphold the standards that they themselves have set forth. We as non-governmental organizations in North America call upon our respective Governments to respect and implement the inalienable rights of Palestinians as a people and nation, in accordance with international law.

15. In our constant attention to the issue of Palestine, the North American NGOs cannot confront this conflict in isolation from the considerations held in other parts of the world as well.

16. As people of conscience, we cannot conduct activities in our own countries in isolation from the world consensus and expect to contribute to a positive future.

17. The NGOs in North America affirm their commitment to co-operate in good faith with the international peace community - in the Americas, Europe, Israel, in the non-aligned countries and elsewhere - in their efforts towards the restoration of Palestinian rights, both for its own sake and in conjunction with efforts to reduce the continuing violence and risk of war in the Middle East.

18. Among the suggestions emanating from the discussion groups that merit serious attention and endorsement was that of convening an NGO-sponsored conference in North America (with the site of preference Washington, the alternate, Ottawa) bringing together representatives of the PLO and Israeli notables, and repeating the opportunity offered by the Constanta and Budapest meetings. Representatives of interested Governments, particularly from the European Community, the USSR and North America would also be invited.

19. We also recommend that the International Co-ordinating Committee on the Question of Palestine (ICC), in co-operation with the North American Co-ordinating Committee on the Question of Palestine (NACC), convene a model International Peace Conference utilizing NGO representatives from Israel, the PLO, the five permanent members of the Security Council and the Arab parties to the conflict. It should be held in New York under United Nations auspices in conformity with General Assembly resolutions 38/58 C and 40/43 D. We further urge that this proposal be adopted by the NGOs participating in the Fourth United Nations International NGO Meeting on the Question of Palestine in Geneva, 7-9 September 1987. The other small group discussion recommendations are annexed to the present paper.

20. The symposium supports the Israeli citizens, both Jews and Arabs, who are peace activists and who are in danger of going to prison as a result of their struggle to bring peace and security to their people and their nation.

21. The symposium condemns Israeli Government attempts to limit the activities of Israeli peace activists by promulgating anti-democratic laws such as the "Law for Prevention of Terrorism".

22. In the light of the above, the symposium requests that Israel re-examine the law and its negative influence and abrogate this law. In addition, the symposium calls on Israel to drop all charges against the peace activists.

23. The aim of the present meeting was to develop practical objectives and strategies to be implemented by North American NGOs in this the Year of the Palestinian People. Our primary work was conducted in workshops, and we affirm their conclusions as we have amended them below.

24. The Media/Public Relations Workshop made the following recommendations:

(a) NACC, in close co-operation with North American NGOs, will undertake the development of a standardized guide on how to deal with the media and an annotated experts list representing the various sectors of North American society.

(b) The experts will be selected for their ability to work effectively with the electronic and print media. The guide and list will be made available to NGOs co-operating with NACC.

(c) The workshop repeatedly voiced a concern for humanizing the North American public's perception of the Palestinian people. To change minds, the participants concluded that it is necessary to develop effective techniques. NGOs shall focus on issues of high value to their targeted audiences, the moderate public of the United States and Canada. They should provide new information in concise form to media sources. Finally, in conformity with the suggested experts list, NGOs should offer credible spokespersons to the media and the public to comment on the issues.

(d) Awareness of Palestinian culture is one method to humanize perceptions of Palestinians. We therefore urge the North American NGOs:

(i) To co-operate closely with ICC tours of Palestinian women and artists through North America in the fall of 1987 and at other times as one way of introducing North Americans to Palestinian people, their culture and their concerns;

(ii) To target mainstream civic and social organizations in North America (i.e. Rotary, Kiwanis, Lions, Soroptimists) in order to schedule sympathetic speakers on the Middle East conflict, the role of the United States and the question of Palestine;

(iii) To request the United Nations to establish a permanent display of Palestinian cultural heritage to join the existing display on Palestinian political history currently on the third floor of the United Nations General Assembly building;

(iv) To create a mobile exhibit on Palestinian culture and history to be displayed throughout North America, which could be used in conjunction with programmes in local churches, libraries and universities.

25. The Challenges in Defending Civil and Human Rights Workshop reaffirms the Third North American NGO Declaration of June 1986 and:

(a) Calls upon Israel to observe the Fourth Geneva Convention (1949) concerning the treatment of the Palestinian population in the occupied territories;

(b) Condemns the use of any "alleged" legal system as a tool of foreign policy and as an instrument of repression of the Palestinian people;

(c) Affirms the right of the Palestinian people to resist the Israeli occupation;

(d) Affirms the rights of free speech and political association both in the occupied territories, in Israel and in the United States, particularly during the two hundredth anniversary of the Constitution of the United States;

(e) Opposes the Dole and Kemp bills and all related legislation and pledges collective action to defeat these bills;

(f) Calls for legislation in support of the International Peace Conference on the Middle East as proposed by United Nations General Assembly resolution 38/58 C;

(g) Supports Palestinian family reunification in the occupied territories, the "Los Angeles Eight" ^a/ defendants case and other similar cases in the coming year;

(h) Reaffirms the NGO theme/campaign to end the 20 years of occupation;

(i) Salutes all those Israelis who work for Palestinian human and civil rights.

26. The Coalition-Building Workshop recommended the development of a broad-based coalition in North America drawing in participants from new constituencies such as third world groups; religious communities; labour unions; and peace, anti-intervention and women's groups. Its work shall be aimed at redirecting United States Middle East policy by:

(a) Influencing public opinion, particularly in the United States, in support of the Palestinian people in its right of self-determination, including the right of return, and in support of an international peace conference to include the PLO, Israel, the five permanent members of the Security Council and the Arab States who are parties to the conflict;

(b) Ending the Israeli occupation of Palestinian and other Arab territories;

(c) Addressing human rights violations;

(d) Creating a forum for debate of Middle East issues in the 1988 United States presidential campaign, to result in planks in major party platforms covering United States support for Palestinian self-determination and United

States recognition of the PLO as the representative of the Palestinian people and support for an international peace conference.

The NACC might further facilitate the work of this coalition by overseeing and encouraging contacts between NGOs along geographical lines throughout the US and Canada.

27. The Grass Roots Organizing Workshop:

(a) Recommends that NACC establish a national guide book of NGOs registered with the United Nations Division for Palestinian Rights to include:

- (i) National office address and one-paragraph description;
- (ii) Regional and local affiliates;
- (iii) A listing of each organization's available human and material resources;

(b) Recommends that NACC facilitate additional speaking tours on a national and local level to address grass roots organizations, i.e. coupling Palestinians and Israelis on national tours, matching Palestinians, blacks, Latinos, Asians and Jews and other experts living in local areas;

(c) Recommends that NACC co-ordinate simultaneous regional (to include Canada), one-day symposia to promote the International Peace Conference before the next North American symposium. The intent is to develop greater local participation in the promotion of the Peace Conference.

In an effort to broaden the base of the NGOs, a committee was formed to approach other organizations in order for these organizations to become aware of the NGOs and to join the NGO movement.

28. The Women's Workshop endorses the call of the United Nations General Assembly to convene an International Peace Conference on the Middle East in conformity with the provisions of resolution 38/58 C. The women assembled further call upon all United Nations organs and specialized agencies and other intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations to provide immediate and adequate assistance projects which will contribute to improving the living conditions of Palestinian women and children. To these ends, the women and groups assembled committed themselves to the following specific projects to be undertaken during the next 12 months:

(a) Cultural exchanges and speaking tours, to include the tour currently being set up by NACC and ICC;

(b) The creation of high visibility for the International Peace Conference. Taking a lesson from the role of entertainers in bringing African issues into the homes of America, participants agreed to seek out well-known artists and entertainers to promote the International Peace Conference and to establish a dialogue with prominent public women likewise to seek their endorsement;

(c) Letter writing campaigns for Palestinian prisoners, particularly women and children;

(d) Material aid and community development projects, with the understanding that it is imperative to work in tandem with Palestinian women's institutions in the area, in response to their needs, to undertake specific aid projects. At the same time, participants recognized the educational benefits accruing from such a campaign.

An interim task force was set up to ensure follow-through on the four agreed areas of activity.

29. The Peace and Anti-Intervention Workshop recommends the reaffirmation and implementation of the resolutions of the 1986 North American Symposium on the Question of Palestine and calls on NGOs:

(a) To pressure the United States to support the convening of the International Peace Conference as defined in General Assembly resolution 38/58 C and to educate the peace movement about this resolution. NGOs should work to popularize the concept of the International Peace Conference through campaigns that include slogans;

(b) To urge all peace and anti-intervention groups to work to end United States support for Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza now and co-operate closely with North American NGOs on the question of Palestine;

(c) To commit symposium participants to convening local committees of NGOs to visit local congressional/parliamentary representatives to discuss the International Peace Conference and the pursuit of Middle East peace with them;

(d) To salute efforts towards peace undertaken by Palestinians, Israelis and other peace-loving forces around the world;

(e) To respond effectively to United States global foreign policy in a unified and collective way, particularly co-operating with the peace and anti-intervention community.

30. The Religious and Relief Groups Workshop

(a) Urges religious organizations to encourage "Holy Land tours" which give inclusive perspectives of people, ideas and sites. Good models are available and should be sought to urge greater youth exchange programmes;

(b) Urges NACC to explore the possibility of promoting an interfaith day of Middle East peace and appointing a task force of organizations to develop ideas for activities to be circulated in NACC newsletter;

(c) Urges immediate investigation and other appropriate action against the treatment of United States citizens (Palestinian and other Arab Americans) who, with their families, journey to Israel and the occupied territories for a visit. They are often not allowed into the country. If they are granted a short stay their passports are held and high bonds (thousands of dollars) are required till their departure;

(d) Urges increased advocacy efforts through continuous monitoring, questioning, challenging and influencing of public policy, in Washington and Ottawa and through district offices in local communities;

(e) Urges an ecumenical approach to constituency education utilizing the model given by the Presbyterians in their Moderator's Conference on the Middle East held in April 1987. In addition, urge circulation of available resources through NACC;

(f) Urges listing of resources on the Middle East through NACC network, establishing some means to network with one another about what is available;

(g) Encourages the National Council of Churches in its dialogue with the United States evangelical Christian community concerning theology related to Middle East issues.

31. The Third World Communities Workshop considered the problems and opportunities for increasing co-operation and interchange between the movement for peace and justice in the Middle East and third world communities and their organizations. The workshop took note of the failure to attract the participation of nationally oppressed minorities and urges the adoption of the following recommendations:

(a) The facilitation of greater interchange with and participation of third world organizations;

(b) The pursuit of discussions with Congressional black and Hispanic caucuses on the question of Palestine, especially to promote an international peace conference;

(c) The development of a network of third world activists and experts on the question of Palestine;

(d) The organization of delegations to the Middle East;

(e) The creation of an NACC sub-committee to implement the above recommendations.

32. Additional, more comprehensive strategies and tactics emanating from the workshops and discussion groups are reproduced in annexes I and II to the present paper and should be carefully considered by the NGO community.

33. NGOs attending the present meeting have selected a North American Co-ordinating Committee. During the coming year, the Committee is charged by this meeting to co-ordinate the work of the North American NGOs present in pursuing our common objectives and strategies. The NGOs present request a report from the Committee at the 1988 North American symposium in order to evaluate its efforts. We urge continuing North American NGO support for the North American Co-ordinating Committee as it works to accomplish the objectives stated in the present Declaration.

34. The North American Regional NGO Symposium on the Question of Palestine reaffirms the importance of the work of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) and strongly supports contributions from the Governments of the United States and Canada at the current or higher levels. The NGOs strongly reject attempts on the part of some in the United States to de-legitimize the importance of the work of UNRWA.

35. We, the North American NGOs, have taken note of the continuing assaults on Palestinian refugee camps and have duly condemned the atrocities committed, called for the siege to be lifted permanently and called for the free flow of medical assistance and other relief to the camps.

36. We urge all people and organizations working towards an end to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict to support, through an international peace conference the Palestinian rights of return, the right of self-determination and the establishment of an independent Palestinian State alongside Israel as a basis for a comprehensive and lasting peace.

NACC wishes to continue to act as a resource for the United Nations Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People and the Division for Palestinian Rights, as requested. NACC requests that the United Nations continue its financial support of an NACC preparatory meeting so that NACC can fulfil its obligations in relation to the 1988 North American Symposium on the Question of Palestine.

37. In order to continue collaboration between the United Nations and the North American NGO community, we urge both the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People and the Division for Palestinian Rights to send representatives to the major North American NGO conferences.

38. We urge the Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People to convey this Declaration to the General Assembly at its forty-second session as part of the Committee's report.

Notes

a/ The Immigration and Naturalization Service is seeking to deport seven Palestinians and one Kenyan under the McCarran-Walter Act, accusing them of membership in an organization which promotes international communism as well as other technical immigration violations.

Annex II

MESSAGE FROM MR. YASSER ARAFAT, CHAIRMAN
OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE PALESTINE
LIBERATION ORGANIZATION, TO THE SYMPOSIUM

Revolutionary Greetings,

1. On the occasion of the convening of your esteemed North American Regional NGO Symposium in New York, I am pleased to send to you, on behalf of our Palestinian Arab people, on behalf of the members of the Executive Committee of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and on my own personal behalf, the most cordial greetings and sincere best wishes for your Symposium's success in attain the objectives for which it has been convened.

2. I avail myself of this opportunity to express to you our people's gratitude and appreciation for the worthy efforts which you are making to aid and support the just struggle of our people, under the leadership of the PLO, its sole legitimate representative, for the restoration of its inalienable national rights, including its right to return, its right to self-determination and its right to establish its independent State on its national soil, Palestine. I wish also to cite and commend the valuable efforts and activities of your Committee to enable our people to exercise its inalienable national rights.

3. Your NGO Symposium is being held at a time when grave, sensitive and difficult conditions beset our people, both inside the occupied homeland and outside, in dispersal and exile, and at a time of intensification of the imperialist-Israeli conspiracy against our Palestinian Arab people aimed at liquidating its identity and its national rights, effacing and eliminating its sole legitimate representative, the PLO, and imposing capitulation on it.

4. In our occupied land, our people are facing the "iron fist" policy being implemented by the Zionist occupation authorities, whose forces and armed gangs are carrying out acts of repression, oppression, arson, murder, assassination, expulsion and deportation against our people and our nation. With the support and protection of the Government of the Zionist enemy, these Zionist gangs and forces daily practise organized terrorism against our people, violate the sanctity of religious holy places, both Christian and Muslim, confiscate property land and water, build Zionist settlements on the usurped sites and close down schools and universities. These extremist gangs even attack the camps, such as Dheisheh and Balata, as well as attacking towns and villages, as happened in the case of Qalqilya and Rafah. These extremist, terrorist forces are still engaging in these acts of savagery against our people, our towns and our camps under a planned policy supervised by the Israeli occupation authorities, with due distribution of role. Things have come to the point of continual and constant perpetration of the crime of the Judaization of Islamic and Christian holy places, which has even affected the Holy City of Jerusalem. All this is being done with the goal of inducing our people to emigrate and leave its home country.

5. In Lebanon, in application of the policy of contentiousness and arrogance of power and with absolute support from the United States Administration, Israel, through its air, naval and land forces, is launching almost daily raids against our people's camps, using the most modern weapons and military material produced by the United States arsenal, as well as carrying out a naval blockade of the Lebanese coast and preventing medicines and food from reaching the camps. Israel is also backing and supporting certain client forces in Lebanon, which have imposed a total blockade on our camps, which still continues, and have launched a war of genocide and starvation against our people in the camps, in implementation of the United States-Israeli plan aimed at liquidating the Palestinian presence in Lebanon and dividing and fragmenting Lebanon into small factional States in preparation for the Balkanization of the whole region.

6. On another level, and in the context of the policy of aggression and the declared war being waged against our people inside and outside the occupied land of Palestine, with support from the United States Administration, some members of the United States Congress are entering a new chapter in the conspiracy - the aggressive plot against our people and its legitimate representative, the PLO. This is reflected in the aggressive attempts to close the offices of the PLO in Washington and New York, in spite of the fact that one of these offices operates within United States law and the other is the Permanent Observer office of the PLO at the Headquarters of the United Nations, which is bound to the United States Administration by an irrevocable Agreement on non-interference with States that are Members of or Observers to the international Organization. At the same time, leading officials such as President Reagan and, on his behalf, Mr. Shultz attack the PLO and our National Council, which is constituted of representatives of the Palestinian people, and attack its resolutions, the most prominent of which is the one that insisted on the convening of the International Conference, with the participation of the permanent members of the Security Council and the parties concerned in the conflict in the Middle East, together with the PLO, in order to establish a just, lasting and comprehensive peace in the region.

7. The escalation of these attempts during the present period is but a part of the United States policy of hostility to our people, disregard for its national rights and refusal to recognize the PLO as the sole, legitimate representative of the Palestinian Arab people. It is therefore incumbent upon you at this Seminar to elucidate and study this question, legally and politically, and to furnish objective proofs and arguments to repel this campaign of random charges directed against the PLO and the struggle of our people in order to prevent our people from exercising its inalienable rights.

8. Our Palestinian Arab people, in spite of all these conspiracies and challenges confronting it, will continue its military course with firm resolve and a strong will to achieve its national aspirations of freedom, independence and national sovereignty.

9. The struggle being waged by our people is a struggle for the establishment of a just and lasting peace in the region, a peace based on resolutions having international legitimacy as represented by the United Nations, resolutions which recognize the legitimate and inalienable rights of

our people. Our people has stated its desire for the establishment of peace through the resolutions adopted by its National Council, convened at Algiers from 20 to 25 April 1987. These resolutions supported the call for the convening of an international peace conference on the basis of United Nations General Assembly resolutions 38/58 C of 13 December 1983 and 41/43 D of 2 December 1986, i.e., on the basis of international legitimacy as represented in all the United Nations resolutions concerning the question of Palestine and the question of the Middle East, including Security Council resolution 242 (1967), and on the basis of the right to self-determination of the Palestinian Arab people and its right to establish its free and independent State.

10. You bear upon your shoulders great responsibility for contributing to bringing about a just, lasting and comprehensive solution to the conflict in the region. Hence the importance of the convening of your Symposium in these particular circumstances, so that you may, through your valuable and serious studies and discussions, contribute to finding the appropriate and possible ways and means and suitable mechanisms, solutions and prescriptions for a settlement of the chronic conflict in the Middle East region. We are confident that the discussion and studies that will emerge from your Symposium will have great importance and utility in helping to enable our people to exercise its inalienable rights, as well as the cause of peace, regional as well as international.

11. In conclusion, I reiterate to you my deep gratitude and appreciation and wish your Symposium abundant progress and success in its work.

12. It is revolution until victory.

Annex III

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS AND OBSERVERS

Non-governmental organizations

America-Israel Council for Israeli-Palestinian Peace
American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee
American Baptist Churches
American Friends Service Committee
American Jewish Alternatives to Zionism
Arab Palestine Association
Arab Women's Council
Association of Arab-American University Graduates, Inc.
Canadian Arab Federation
Catholic Near East Welfare Association
Christian Peace Conference
Church of Humanism
Commission of the Churches on International
 Affairs of the World Council of Churches
Federation of Arab-American Organizations
Federation of Islamic Associations in the US and Canada
General Board of Global Ministries
General Union of Palestine Students in the US
International Association of Democratic Lawyers
International Jewish Peace Union
International Movement for Fraternity Among Races and Peoples
International Organization for the Elimination of All Forms
 of Racial Discrimination
Jewish Peace Fellowship
Middle East Fellowship of Southern California
Muslim World League
NAJDA: Women Concerned About the Middle East
National Lawyers Guild
National Association of Arab-Americans
National Conference of Black Lawyers
Near East Cultural and Educational Foundation of Canada (NECEF)
New Jewish Agenda
November 29th Committee for Palestine
Palestine Aid Society
Palestine Human Rights Campaign
People's Anti-War Mobilization
Presbyterian Church (USA)
Quaker United Nations Office
Save the Children Federation
United Holy Land Fund
US Peace Council
Washington Area Jews for an Israeli-Palestinian Peace
Women's International Democratic Federation
Women's International League for Peace and Freedom
World Muslim Congress
World Organization of Jews from Islamic Countries
World YWCA

NGO observers

Advisory Associates International, Inc.
Alliance Against Women's Oppression
America-Israel Council for Israeli-Palestinian Peace
American Middle East Peace Research Institute
American Professors for Peace in the Middle East
Arab American Institute
Baptist World Alliance
Canadian Friends Service Committee
Canadian Palestinian Society
Center for Constitutional Rights
Centre d'etudes arabes pour le developpement (CEAD)
Committee for a Democratic Palestine
Finnish-Arab Friendship Society
General Board of Global Ministries
General Union of Palestine Students in the US
International Co-ordinating Committee for NGOs
on the Question of Palestine
International Jewish Peace Union
National Council on Canada-Arab Relations
Network for Peace and Justice in the Middle East
New Jewish Agenda
November 29th Committee for Palestine
Oriental Front
Palestine Arab Fund
Palestinian-American Health Association
Palestinian Arab Center
Resources for Change in the Middle East
Union of Palestinian Women Associations in the US
United Nations Associations of New York
Wainwright House

Panelists

Tawfiq Abu Ghazaleh, Gaza Center for Rights and Law
Latif Dori, Committee for Israeli-Palestinian Dialogue
Rev. Benjamin Weir, Presbyterian Church

Members and observers of the Committee on the Exercise
of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People

Cuba
India
Jordan
Malta
Nigeria
Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic
United Arab Emirates

Intergovernmental organizations

League of Arab States

National liberation movements

Palestine Liberation Organization

South West Africa People's Organization
