



DIVISION FOR
PALESTINIAN RIGHTS

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

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INTRODUCTION

Pursuant to General Assembly resolution 42/66 B of 2 December 1987, the fifth United Nations North American Regional NGO Symposium on the Question of Palestine was convened at United Nations Headquarters in New York, from 29 June to 1 July 1988. The theme of the meeting was "The inalienable rights of the Palestinian people".

Forty-seven non-governmental organizations (NGOs) took part in the work of the Symposium, 34 of them as observers.

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

The Symposium was opened by H.E. Mr. Alberto Velazco-San José of Cuba, who addressed the meeting on behalf of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People. In his statement, he pointed to a new dimension in the work of the North American NGOs since the Palestinian uprising began in December 1987. The Committee, he stressed, had noted with satisfaction and encouragement that various NGO meetings were marked by an increased attendance and all the declarations adopted by those meetings called for the convening of the International Peace Conference on the Middle East, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 38/58 C, and contained a pledge by NGOs of further efforts to promote that objective. He said that the United Nations was also facing another development of profound importance, the action by the United States, the Host Government, emanating from the legislation adopted by the United States Congress in the "Foreign Relations Authorization Act, Fiscal Years 1988 and 1989", to close the Permanent Observer Mission of the PLO to the United Nations in New York. In this connection, he referred to the General Assembly resolutions reaffirming that the Permanent Observer Mission of the PLO was covered by the provisions of the Headquarters Agreement, that the PLO had the right to establish and maintain premises and adequate functional facilities, and that the personnel of the Mission should be enabled to carry out their official functions.

He further said that the Committee hoped that the Symposium would provide further opportunities to strengthen dialogue and co-operation amongst the various constituents of the NGO community of the North American region and between them and the Committee and the Division for Palestinian Rights of the United Nations Secretariat. The Committee also greatly valued the symposia, international meetings and preparatory meetings organized for NGOs and continued to place great emphasis on the strengthening of those bonds of co-operation. He expressed hope that the deliberations of the Symposium could become another building block for peace in the Middle East and for the construction of a better future for the Palestinian people.

Ms. Jeanne Butterfield, Vice-Chairperson of the North American Co-ordinating Committee for NGOs on the Question of Palestine (NACC) and Chairperson of the Symposium, in her introductory statement, said that it was especially urgent for the North American NGOs to come together at the time

when the world's attention was captured by the Palestinian intifadah in the West Bank and Gaza and when the urgency of convening an international peace conference, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 38/58 C was so apparent. North American NGOs, she continued, were committed to building a consensus of public opinion in North America in support of a lasting peace in the Middle East and for justice which provided for the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people. She further said that the North American NGOs had published a periodic newsletter to inform NGOs of upcoming activities and hosted tours of Palestinian women from the occupied territories, with the assistance of the International Co-ordinating Committee for NGOs on the Question of Palestine. NACC had endorsed or sponsored two fact-finding emergency delegations to the occupied territories which had brought back first-hand accounts of events to be used in their work of community education. Most significantly, NACC had presented a programme on the Middle East and the Palestinian questions for 4,000 social studies teachers at their annual convention in Texas in November 1987. In conclusion, she expressed the determination of the participants to adopt a dynamic plan of action that would contribute to strengthening public opinion in North America in support of Palestinian rights and of the goal of convening the International Peace Conference on the Middle East.

Two discussion panels were established at the Symposium. Under Panel I, "The uprising in the occupied Palestinian territories: the urgency of convening the International Peace Conference on the Middle East in accordance with United Nations General Assembly resolution 38/58 C", the following panelists presented papers:

Ms. Hanan Mikhail-Ashrawi (Dean of the Arts School, Bir Zeit University);

Ms. Tikvah Parnass-Honig (Committee to Confront the "Iron Fist");

Mr. Mubarak Awad (Director, Palestine Centre for the Study of Non-Violence).

Panel II, "Implications of the United States legislation affecting the promotion in the United States and the United Nations of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people", was addressed by the following panelists:

Ms. Jeanne Butterfield (Palestine Solidarity Committee, Vice-Chairperson, NACC);

Mr. Hanna Halaq (professor, Bir Zeit University);

Mr. Ramsey Clark (Former United States Attorney-General).

Ten workshops were established to discuss the following topics, under the general theme "Overcoming obstacles and organizing in North America:"

- (a) Congressional and parliamentary;
- (b) Breakthrough in the media and beyond;

(c) Forging links between the Palestinian and North American trade union movements;

(d) Religious communities; obstacles created by Christian conservative fundamentalists; building support for Palestinian rights;

(e) Effects of occupation on Palestinian children;

(f) Educating and mobilizing women in solidarity with Palestinian women;

(g) Violations of international and United States laws; attacks on Palestinians and the PLO in the United States;

(h) Understanding American Jewish policy and problems of organizing within the American Jewish community;

(i) The importance of the Israeli/Palestinian issue to the peace and disarmament movements;

(j) Obstacles and strategies for organizing students in support of Palestinian rights.

The Symposium unanimously adopted a Declaration which is attached to the present report (see annex I). A number of resolutions were also adopted by majority vote (see annex II).

PANEL DISCUSSION

Panel I

"The uprising in the occupied Palestinian territories: the urgency of convening the International Peace Conference on the Middle East in accordance with United Nations General Assembly resolution 38/58 C"

Ms. Hanan Mikhail-Ashrawi, Dean of the Arts School, Bir Zeit University, was of the view that the intifadah in the West Bank and Gaza, its achievements, premises, and objectives must be understood and placed in the context of its urgent demand for a political solution based on the recognition of the Palestinians' right to self-determination leading to the establishment of an independent Palestinian State.

The intifadah, as an expression of the collective will, had maintained a dual function/role in actively pursuing its objectives; the more visible and dramatic aspect was the external expression of rebellion in open clashes such as demonstrations, stone-throwing, tire-burning, sit-ins, and marches. These acts served to attract the attention of Israel and the world to the Palestinians' total rejection of the occupation and were consciously carried out in overt defiance of its alien authority.

The second and less dramatic aspect of the uprising was the more enduring and significant process of restructuring society, at once severing the ties of inequality, dependence, and exploitation as imposed by the Israeli occupation, while painstakingly and systematically creating alternative Palestinian structures based on authenticity and an effective reordering of priorities and lifestyles.

She noted that the intifadah had succeeded in demythologizing the Palestinian-Israeli conflict by challenging misconceptions and distortions and dispelling the cloud of ignorance, racism and prejudice which had engulfed the Palestinian problem. While Israel's success at the tactics of distraction and distortion had obscured the essential realities of the problem, it had also created an unhealthy albeit comfortable (for Israel) international complicity which had relegated the problem to a limbo of stasis and neglect, perhaps in the hope that it might eventually disappear or consume itself by sheer inertia and oversight.

She concluded that the uprising was a means and not an end, and its achievements had been dearly paid for by the Palestinians. If the world failed to take up this opportunity and challenge, it would not only be betraying the Palestinians but also its own human and political integrity.

Mr. Bernard Sabella, assistant professor of sociology, Bethlehem University, expressed his belief that the intifadah was the strongest message of peace that the Palestinian people had given to the world. He underlined that military occupation was always an unjust situation and was always characterized by relations of control; people under occupation become simply objects, they become dehumanized and it was only natural for dehumanized people to rise up and seek an end to their dehumanization and this was what the intifadah had done.

Mr. Sabella emphasized that the intifadah signified the Palestinians' desire to change the balance of power because as a people, they were no longer satisfied to be controlled, checked and stopped. As a Palestinian from the occupied territories, he expressed his hope that NGOs would translate some of the recommendations and resolutions adopted at the Symposium into co-operation with, and help and assistance to, the Palestinian people, their NGOs and their organizations. He called upon international NGOs and the international community, especially the United States Government, to press into establishing relations with the legitimate representative of the Palestinians, the PLO, and to initiate the political process, in the framework of an international peace conference, as called for in General Assembly resolution 38/58 C.

Mr. Mubarak Awad, Director, Palestine Centre for the Study of Non-Violence, noted that ten years after Camp David, the Israelis and Palestinians were no closer to a peace process. The Palestinian uprising, in his opinion, was a message for the Palestinians as well as for the whole world and the United Nations that the Palestinians were fighting hard to have justice and peace. He added that the intifadah had shown the whole world that the Palestinians were able and capable of doing it.

He further pointed out that the movement toward a comprehensive peace was gaining support among both Israelis and Palestinians. Mr. Awad expressed hope that this support would spread to the United States as well as to other countries. He underlined that this support had to be affirmed also by the Arab countries. In his view, the Palestinians could help and support the Israeli organizations interested in peace.

He concluded by referring to the ability of the Palestinians to accept reconciliation. It was time for NGOs, he stated, to start pressing hard for all parties to the conflict to come together. He was also of the view that the proposed International Peace Conference on the Middle East, under the auspices of the United Nations, could serve as a model for those efforts.

Ms. Tikvah Parnass-Honig, Committee to Confront the "Iron Fist", discussing the significance of the intifadah, said that it was, in her view, an expression of the accumulated rage at the daily repression and humiliation caused by the occupation régime. But the nature of the uprising, its organization, the means of struggle, its demands and goals, were the product of a social and political change on the Palestinian side which had begun a few years before the uprising.

In recent years, the emphasis of the Palestinian struggle had shifted from the military activities and struggle of brave individuals to open mass political struggle. This political struggle had been characterized by three developments:

1. The establishment of an infrastructure of social institutions which activated the Palestinian masses in various areas of life - such as trade unions, community health centres, women's organizations, voluntary work organizations, etc.;
2. The organization of specific initiatives fighting for democratic rights, such as the committees for prisoners, for family reunification, and for assistance to the refugee camps;
3. The first steps towards a general organization, under the leadership of the national institutions, for a mass political struggle against the occupation and its manifestations.

She pointed out that the intifadah had aroused the protest movement in Israel, which had been dormant since the invasion of Lebanon. Among wide circles of Israeli society, the awareness was growing of the heavy cost of occupation, which would definitely grow in the future - a cost of insecurity, of damage to human values, and mainly a cost to the nature and image of Israeli society, and the danger of its degradation and "South Africanization".

The intifadah had accelerated the polarization of Israeli society: on the one hand, the protest movements against the occupation were widening, which inevitably would also widen Israeli-Palestinian co-operation, while, on the other hand, large parts of the political centre and right had crystallized politically, with the aim of wiping out the national aspirations of the Palestinian people by brutal repression and expulsions.

Panel II

"Implications of United States legislation affecting the promotion in the United States and the United Nations of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people"

Ms. Jeanne Butterfield, Chairperson of the Palestine Solidarity Committee and Vice-Chairperson of NACC, expressed satisfaction at the ruling by the United States District Court to the effect that the PLO Observer Mission to the United Nations should remain open because to close it would in fact violate international law. Success, however, had only been partial since the ruling had also sustained the provisions prohibiting the expenditure of PLO funds in the United States and had affirmed that any other office of the PLO in the United States could be closed. She then outlined the background and the legal and political implications of the United States legislation in question, which had been sparked by the American-Israeli Political Action Committee and its election-year organizing. She described in detail the positions taken on this issue by the United States Department of State, the United Nations and the International Court of Justice. Referring to other legislation pending in the United States Congress, she expressed concern that the United States Government remained committed to silencing the voices of Palestinian rights in the United States. The Government continued to say "No" to the PLO at a time when the PLO must be heard and be included as a full and equal partner at the International Peace Conference on the Middle East under United Nations auspices.

In conclusion, she called upon NGOs to take action and to assert their right as United States citizens, as NGOs and as organizations concerned with the Palestine question and with Middle East peace, to meet with and hear the views of the PLO, not only at the United Nations but anywhere across the United States. She called for support for efforts by some congressmen to repeal the legislation in question, and stated that NGOs demanded that the United States Government listen to them when they express their view that a just peace in the Middle East required the participation of the PLO.

Mr. Hanna Halaq, assistant professor, Bethlehem University, in addressing the issue of the role of the PLO in the struggle of the Palestinian people, underlined that the PLO enjoyed absolute backing of the Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza. This, in his view, was one of the clear messages of the intifadah.

He added that at this stage of the intifadah, when the Palestinians expected certain moves by the United States Administration towards normalizing relations with the Palestinian people, the opposite was taking place. This led to the loss of United States credibility not only with the Palestinian masses but also with the Arab masses in the region.

He described the intifadah as an unarmed effort by the people under occupation to redress the heavily shifted equilibrium of the Middle East balance of forces and to create appropriate conditions for a peaceful settlement. Mr. Halaq, concluding his statement, expressed his opinion that a more concrete effort was required in the international arena to achieve real change and progress in favour of a Palestinian State under the leadership of the PLO.

Mr. Ramsey Clark, former Attorney-General of the United States, expressed satisfaction at the ruling of the United States District Court upholding the right of the PLO to maintain a permanent observer mission to the United Nations. Quoting from an article by a former Under-Secretary of State for Political Affairs of the United States Department of State, he said that the United States democratic system had created a Congress particularly vulnerable to minorities that can give generously to political campaigns. Israeli interests constituted such a minority and had used that technique to great advantage.

The same author had stated that United States laws permitting tax-exempt contributions for charitable purposes had been freely used to provide Israel with funds for its development, including support, at least indirectly, for controversial Jewish settlements in the occupied West Bank. The United States had provided Israel with the most advanced military technology, giving Israel a clear superiority over its neighbours. As a permanent member of the Security Council, the United States provided an almost certain veto of any resolution unfavourable to Israel. Israel had proceeded with nuclear weapons development without adhering to international safeguards and without any of the Congressional pressures on non-proliferation experienced by other States friendly to the United States. Laws that condition United States military aid on human rights practices were not applied in the case of Israel's punitive actions in the occupied Palestinian territories. Israel had accordingly been able either to frustrate peace efforts it did not like or to turn them to its advantage. Mr. Clark went on to say that it did not make any difference whether Congress appropriated economic or military aid for Israel since money is fungible, and Israel received a vastly larger amount from the United States than any other aid-receiving country.

He went on to say that the legislation adopted by Congress had provided an important opportunity for the United States and its courts to answer the question whether the United States, as a super-Power, intended to abide by the law of nations. The argument he had presented to the court was that Congress had not manifested an unambiguous intent to violate the Headquarters Agreement and international law and compel the closure of the PLO Mission to the United Nations, and the judge had had to concur with that argument. The judge had thereby upheld the primacy of international law over domestic law, although his ruling was unfortunate in other respects. Much work remained to be done to secure fully the independence and integrity of the United Nations. The work of the United Nations to preserve the rights of the PLO and its essential voice and presence in all peace efforts remained of the highest importance.

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H.E. Mr. Alexander Borg Olivier of Malta, in his closing statement, underscored the significance of the testimonies by the experts from the occupied territories and Israel. He pointed out to the role of the workshops established during the Symposium and designed to move the North American NGO community in its strategies for broadening the basis of understanding and support for the question of Palestine in North America. In his view, the conclusions reflected in the Declaration that was adopted by the Symposium were concrete and action-oriented.

Annex I

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

We, the non-governmental organizations (NGOs) participating in the fifth 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 the present meeting possible. We are indeed honoured by the reception, and the presence of the members and observers of this distinguished United Nations body.

We wish also to thank the Chief of the Division for Palestinian Rights and are especially grateful for his enthusiastic support throughout our deliberations. We wish to thank also the Liaison Officer, the staff of the Division and the Department of Conference Services for their invaluable assistance in the preparation and execution of the present meeting.

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.

We note with satisfaction the record attendance and participation in this year's Symposium, and the commitment to Palestinian rights and a just and lasting solution that such participation represents.

We believe the present Meeting contributed to the constructive interaction between the United Nations and the North American NGO community concerned to promote the implementation of General Assembly resolution 38/58 C of 13 December 1983, a resolution whose implementation we hold to be indispensable.

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.

We recognize and express our concern for the role that racism, both de facto and de jure, plays in the situation and treatment of Palestinians inside and outside the 1967 occupied territories. State actions directed against the Palestinians by the Israeli Government, coupled with the uncritical support by the United States Administration of these Israeli policies, shows clearly that racism serves as a buttress for denial of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people.

We express our admiration for the unity, courage, determination and self-sacrifice of the Palestinian people in the uprising. We commit ourselves to provide moral, political and material support for the intifadah. We request that the United Nations Security Council and the Secretary-General seek to arrange for an interim international peace-keeping force to replace the Israeli occupying forces in order to provide protection and ensure respect for the human and political rights of the Palestinian population of the West Bank and Gaza.

In doing so, we affirm our support for the goals of the intifadah as repeatedly stated in leaflets issued by its united national leadership:

1. Refusal to deal with or give legitimacy to any Israeli-appointed civil authority (police, revenue service, department of motor vehicles, etc.), specifically, municipal council and mayors, which have usurped the rights and responsibilities of an elected national authority. The resignation of such appointed individuals and bodies is an immediate and unequivocal public demand (which has been heeded by most appointees so far);

2. The rejection of all attempts at creating an "alternative" Palestinian leadership from the occupied territories and exposing them as attempts at undermining the unity and legitimate PLO leadership of the Palestinian people everywhere;

3. The qualitative transformation of the intifadah into a full-fledged situation of civil disobedience (more accurately, civil disobedience/rebellion);

4. Nullification of the emergency laws (Ottoman, British) and an immediate end to Israel's application of them;

5. The dismantling of Israeli detention camps and centres and the release of all Palestinian prisoners in addition to the cancellation of the Israeli programme of intimidation and terror, including the deployment of troops against civilians in populated areas;

6. The cessation of all Israeli measures aimed at creating new geopolitical and demographic facts in the occupied territories such as the confiscation of land, the erection of settlements, the expropriation of resources, the deportation of Palestinians, and the demolition of houses;

7. The demand for the immediate end of the occupation, since Israel has been proven totally unfit to remain in charge of a civilian population whose human rights it has constantly violated in direct defiance of the Fourth Geneva Convention;

8. Instituting free elections under the auspices of a neutral international body whereby the Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza may elect their own local civil authority;

9. Requesting international intervention in the form of an interim neutral caretakership of the West Bank and Gaza (whether United Nations or

or European Economic Community or other) to safeguard Palestinian rights and to prevent Israel from creating further "facts" and from altering the demographics in the area;

10. Urging temporary caretakership so that the Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza can practice their rights, including freedom of expression, freedom of political organization, and freedom of access to Palestinians everywhere, including their legitimate PLO leadership. All of this is in preparation for the convening of the International Peace Conference on the Middle East as called for in General Assembly resolution 38/58 C;

11. The launching of a concerted Palestinian peace offensive clearly expounding political strategy, objectives, and commitments.

The aim of this meeting was to develop practical strategies and support projects for concerted action by North American NGOs. Our primary work was conducted in workshops. We receive their recommendations as we have amended them below, and commend them to all NGOs for their careful consideration.

Workshop 1. Congressional and parliamentary, recommends that:

(a) NGOs launch a campaign to lobby the United States Congress to cut aid to Israel. Utilizing many strategies, the campaign's major thrust should be that aid to Israel must not be unconditional, but rather must be tied to United States laws which stipulate that nations which are violators of human rights standards cannot be recipients of aid;

(b) NACC facilitate such a campaign by providing data detailing: the breakdown of United States foreign aid to the region, showing comparison of this aid with aid programmes to other developing regions, and comparing this aid to domestic funding of United States social programmes;

(c) North American NGOs lobby Congress and Parliament for resolutions in support of the urgency of convening the International Peace Conference in accordance with United Nations General Assembly resolution 38/58 C;

(d) The NGO Resource Guide being formulated contain texts pertinent to effective lobbying in North America.

Workshop 2. Breakthrough in the media and beyond, keeping in mind the window of opportunity created by the intifadah, recommends that:

(a) NACC establish a sub-committee on media relations to co-ordinate a media-monitoring programme;

(b) For 1988-1989, the NGO emphasis be a local/national media watch with focus on the press. NGOs should co-ordinate with NACC sub-committees to collect local and national press coverage on the occupied territories and Israel, to analyse the frequency and context of the reporting, and to forward this information and the relevant articles to an NACC collection-agent to be designated;

(c) The NACC sub-committee on media relations also co-ordinate the creation of a resource list of experts for use by the media. This will consist of individuals and/or their contact organizations, as well as their areas of expertise. This list will be compiled locally by NGOs and forwarded to the NACC sub-committee for national compilation;

(d) NGOs work with local press/media to cultivate contacts, to provide accurate, well-formulated information, and to suggest local experts who are accessible to the media;

(e) Recognizing the necessity for this media watch-programme to extend to local and national radio and television as soon as the human and technical resources are available, all NGOs carry out this electronic media scrutiny in their regions of operation. Collaboration with existing compatible media watch-programmes is highly encouraged;

(f) Effective letters to the editor to encourage media accountability be an integral part of all NGO programmes. Letters should be both persistent and scholarly and copies should be sent to NACC sub-committees;

(g) A list of specialized publications such as trade journals, religious publications, educational journals, should be compiled according to occupation, affiliation and special interest. These publications should be targets for articles on the Israeli-Palestinian question unique to those interests. These specialized publications should be encouraged to speak out in support of their counterparts under occupation;

(h) Support be cultivated for Palestinian and progressive Israeli journalists who are subject to arrest, torture and detention. Journalists' organizations and societies should be informed of the conditions of their counterparts in Israel, the West Bank and Gaza;

(i) Press/media be encouraged to send journalists to the West Bank and Gaza;

(j) Coverage of United Nations news relevant to the question of Palestine receive greater encouragement;

(k) Media kits be made available to all NGOs.

Workshop 3. Forging links between the Palestinian and North American trade union movements, recommends that:

(a) NACC sponsor a delegation of Palestinian trade unionists to speak in the United States and Canada;

(b) NACC establish a sub-committee on trade union relations to identify and develop a nucleus of supportive labour groups and labour leaders. It is recommended that the sub-committees be composed of one or more NGO members which will focus their NGO activities in developing this nucleus. It is suggested that the sub-committee initiate its work through developing relations with South African, Central American and the Jackson campaign's labour organizations;

(c) NACC send a letter to the United States trade representative requesting hearings on Israel's persistent violation of internationally recognized workers' rights. In addition, NACC should request that each NGO send a similar request;

(d) NGOs work for the immediate release of all trade unionists administratively detained; the reopening of all union premises closed by the Israeli authorities; the normal and uninterrupted functioning of trade unions in all matters related to union activities; the lifting of travel restrictions on unionists; and the end of all discrimination against Palestinian workers;

Workshop 4. Religious communities: obstacles created by Christian Conservative Fundamentalists; building support for Palestinian rights, recommends that:

(a) Whereas the evangelical/conservative population is deeply concerned with the nuclear family and edification of children, that NGOs undertake an action plan to support the family and the children of Palestine, which calls for: (i) the end of violent abuse of children, with United States Government expressing said concern directly to the Israeli Government; (ii) the immediate release of the more than 200 children under the age of 16 being held in Israeli prisons, and the urging of the United States Government to state this concern to the Israeli Government; (iii) the continual and uninterrupted education of all children; and (iv) support of the Palestinian family, both financial and emotional/spiritual;

(b) Concerned churches and religious institutions call for the re-opening of In'Ash El-Usra (the Society for the Preservation of the Family), which benefits 34,000 Palestinians, including 15,000 women and children, and which has been closed since 20 June 1988, and the lifting of all restrictions on Mrs. Sameeha Khalil, the Society's founder/president, who faces military trial and deportation;

(c) NGOs study the feasibility of organizing a "witness of peace" movement from the NGOs of North America and Europe, to be co-ordinated with the Middle East Council of Churches and with Palestinian institutions in the occupied territories. Such a movement must take into consideration the present self-sufficiency efforts of Palestinian society, Israeli retaliation against host families, non-duplication of local Palestinian work, etc. Therefore, a witness for peace in the Middle East project must utilize the skills recommended by Palestinians and the Middle East Council of Churches.

Workshop 5. Effects of occupation on Palestinian children, recommends that:

(a) NGOs be alert to, and inform their constituencies and other community organizations of, Israeli violations against the human rights of Palestinian children. Furthermore, NGOs should take an active role in providing related information to policy-makers and media on a continuous basis;

(b) NGOs be responsive to the actual needs of community projects such as kindergartens, health care, day-care and community centres, and provide resources to acquire books, supplies, learning toys, hot meals, etc.;

(c) NGOs support both the International NGO Meeting, to be held at Geneva from 29 August to 2 September 1988, and the December Jerusalem Conference on Palestinian Children, sponsored by the International Co-ordinating Committee on Palestine and the Palestinian women's organizations;

(d) NGOs support and initiate the exchange of professionals, including health-care specialists, teachers and counsellors;

(e) NGOs help tour exhibits of Palestinian children's art;

(f) NGOs strongly condemn the imprisonment by Israel of approximately 200 Palestinian children under the age of 16 years old, and call for their immediate release;

(g) NACC send a letter, on behalf of North American NGOs, condemning the closure of Palestinian charitable organizations, such as In'Ash El-Usra, to the United States Secretary of State, the Canadian Government, and top Israeli officials;

(h) NGOs inform themselves of the proposed United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, and lobby their respective Governments to ratify the convention when it comes up for adoption by the United Nations in November 1989;

(i) This Symposium support and publicize the International Peace Conference for Children and Youth to be held at United Nations Headquarters in New York in the summer of 1990. The Peace Conference will be based on United Nations General Assembly resolution 38/58 C, with the participation of children and youth around the world, including Palestinians, in the hope that children can show adults that peace is not impossible.

The recommendations of the workshop participants are based on the realization that, ultimately, real improvement in the lives of Palestinian families can be achieved only by reaching a comprehensive, just and lasting solution that will allow for Palestinians to exercise their right to self-determination, and thus achieve independence and sovereignty on their national soil.

Workshop 6. Educating and mobilizing women in solidarity with Palestinian women, recommends that:

(a) NACC call for the enforcement of Geneva Conventions in the West Bank and Gaza, particularly in the light of Israel's violation of human rights in its attacks on Palestinian hospitals and health care personnel and patients, administrative detention of Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza, as well as those with Israeli citizenship, and inhumane treatment and health conditions of Ansar III and Neve Tertza women's prison;

(b) NACC facilitate networking between women in the United States and Palestinian women;

(c) Tours of women from the West Bank and Gaza be encouraged and continued in order to effect a call from the North American public for

congressional/parliamentary hearings on human rights violations in the occupied territories and in Israel;

- (d) NGOs support Palestinian women's projects in the West Bank and Gaza.

Workshop 7. Violations of international and United States law: attacks on Palestinians and the PLO in the United States.

The workshop participants committed themselves and their constituent groups and urge other NGOs to avoid complacency because of recent partial legal victories. NGOs are further urged to inform themselves on each of the specific legal attacks that threaten the survival of the PLO in the United States. To this end, the workshop recommends that:

- (a) Public educational forums (meetings, seminars, study groups, conferences, etc.) be established to inform and organize broad-based opposition and resistance to the politically motivated legislative and immigration attacks on Palestinians and the PLO. Discussion should be linked to the need to change United States Middle East policies, with special reference to the repeal of the Grassley "Anti-Terrorist" Amendment. (The Hon. George Crockett, Sponsor (H.R. 4178) and Barney Frank's amendments to the McCarran Walter Act (H.R. 4427));

- (b) NGOs confront and attack forthrightly, through as many media as is possible, the current United States Government's initiatives to influence the people of the United States uncritically to equate the PLO with terrorism, with a particular focus on the internationally recognized legal right of peoples struggling for self-determination to armed struggle to achieve their liberation and political human rights;

- (c) NGOs consider ways to create a network of political and material support for the establishment of legal information centres to provide information and resources for Palestinian and solidarity groups under attack in the United States;

- (d) Urges NGOs to commit themselves to a people-to-people dialogue with PLO representatives, by organizing speaking opportunities, conferences and other initiatives.

Workshop 8. Understanding American Jewish policy and problems of organizing within the American Jewish Community, recommends that:

- (a) In order to give voice to all peace-loving forces in Israel and support their actions by bringing Israeli speakers to tour the United States and Canada, NGOs participate in the upcoming tour of two Yes G'vul members, and an urgent action alert network be established;

- (b) Committees in different cities be established to increase media coverage for alternative Israeli and American Jewish views;

- (c) Encouragement be given to Jewish organizations to increase dialogue and co-operation with Palestinian support activists;

(d) To appeal, in the name of all North American NGOs, for Jews throughout the world to pressure Israel to take part in the International Peace Conference.

Workshop 9. The importance of the Israeli-Palestinian issue to the peace and disarmament movements, recommends that:

(a) NGOs bring representatives of peace groups from the Middle East (all countries), to meet with peace groups here, in order to increase their visibility and engage in discussions on issues of mutual concern;

(b) NGOs launch a campaign to stop North American funding of the Israeli occupation;

(c) A mailing list of peace and justice, disarmament and other organizations be developed in order to communicate to them the activities and concern of the North American NGO Symposium on the Question of Palestine, and of NACC;

(d) A campaign be launched to demilitarize and denuclearize the Middle East.

Workshop 10. Obstacles and strategies for organizing students in support of Palestinian rights, recommends that:

(a) NGOs sponsor a tour of the United States and Canada by Palestinian students and faculty members from the occupied territories, to speak on campuses and communities. This tour should target campuses and areas not reached by previous NGO tours;

(b) NGOs strengthen ties with local educational institutions. As a first step, we call on all NGOs to adopt a two-stage letter-writing campaign in support of the academic freedom of Palestinian educational institutions. This campaign should be undertaken by NGOs who would then urge local educational communities to do likewise. The NGO would target the various individuals and groups within a given academic setting (i.e., deans, students, alumni, university presidents, etc.). Letters should be written in support of Palestinian academic institutions in the occupied territories. Letters of protest should be directed to Minister of Defense Rabin and Minister of Education Yitzak Navon, demanding (i) the immediate reopening of all Palestinian schools and universities; (ii) the release of all Palestinian faculty and students currently under detention or imprisonment by the Israeli military authorities; (iii) an end to interference and harassment of Palestinian academic institutions;

(c) NGOs adopt a used textbook drive to benefit Palestinian schools and universities. Textbooks should be sent to student councils at these institutions. This campaign will be co-ordinated by the Palestine Human Rights Campaign - Columbia University chapter.

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 their common objectives and strategies. The NGOs present request a

report from the Committee at the 1989 North American symposium in order to evaluate its efforts. We urge continuing North American NGO support for the objectives stated in the present Declaration.

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 a NACC preparatory meeting so that NACC can fulfill its obligations in relation to the 1989 North American NGO Symposium on the Question of Palestine.

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.

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

Annex II

RESOLUTIONS ADOPTED BY THE NORTH AMERICAN
REGIONAL NGO SYMPOSIUM ON THE QUESTION OF PALESTINE

Resolution 1

Resolve that North American NGOs wage a national campaign to protest the closure of In'Ash El-Usra, the largest society serving orphans, women and families under occupation. This closure by Israeli forces will affect over 15,000 Palestinians who receive services from this institution. Therefore, women's organizations, family societies, churches and religious organizations, peace and human rights groups should be urged to join a mass campaign to reopen In'Ash El-Usra and secure its full and unimpeded operation, and the security of its staff;

Furthermore, resolve that the NACC of the North American NGO Symposium be charged with sending a letter to the Secretary-General of the United Nations to intervene in behalf of In'Ash El-Usra, and demand that the Israeli military authorities rescind the order concerning the closure.

Resolution 2

Noting the special relationships of the United States and the Canadian Governments with the Government of Israel,

Recognizing our special moral obligation as North Americans to address the demands underlying the current Palestinian uprising and to support a just resolution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict,

Considering that a long-term solution can be achieved based on concrete peace proposals rooted in mutual and simultaneous recognition,

Bearing in mind that the price in human suffering of failing to act boldly is unacceptably high,

We, the undersigned,

1. Call on the Canadian and especially the United States Governments to support the rights of the Palestinian people to self-determination and to a State of its own in the West Bank and Gaza Strip alongside Israel, with peace and security for both States;

2. Urge the United States and Canada to recognize the PLO as the chosen representative of the Palestinian people;

3. Demand that the United States and Canada support the convening of a United Nations-sponsored international peace conference with the permanent members of the Security Council and with delegations from the PLO, Israel and each of the Arab countries involved in the conflict.

Resolution 3

Whereas the Palestinian people are struggling to end the suffering they have endured during 20 years of Israeli occupation by means of the intifadah, we urge all North American NGOs, through their organizations, to petition their governments to withhold military aid to Israel and withdraw the supplement promised by the United States Government for suppression of the intifadah and enforce the implementation of human rights in the occupied territories.

Resolution 4

The intifadah catalyses and empowers our continuing central task: to protect the Palestinian population and to support their self-determination.

Whereas the intifadah has rendered this work even more imperative, we the NGOs of North America,

Recognizing that the dispossession and expulsion of the indigenous people of Palestine since 1948 have succeeded in part due to the absence of critical outside observers,

Conscious of the fact that our own witness and the crucial role of the press constitute a needed defence of the vulnerable Palestinian population against further victimization,

Bearing in mind the extreme current danger to the Palestinian population, NACC-dispatched two delegations as witnesses and gatherers of new and useful information which has become part of the larger process of educating North Americans about the realities of the situation and the immediate and long-term dangers to the Palestinian people,

Painfully aware that these dangers do not only include the immediate killing, torture, disappearance, imprisonment, rendering homeless, starvation and other collective punishment of children, women and men,

Aware also that these dangers continue a long-term policy - now more than 40 years in the process - to "cleanse" the land of its indigenous people, and that the long-term threat involves mass transfers and genocide,

1. Reaffirm our role and responsibility to contribute to ending these dangers and supporting the Palestinian people's struggle for justice and determination;

2. Reaffirm all relevant international laws and United Nations resolutions providing for the protection of the Palestinian population, wherever they reside, and for the right of the Palestinians to return and their self-determination;

3. Once again recognize the responsibility of States - and especially our Governments - to implement these international laws;

4. Hereby affirm the recommendations of the NACC Emergency Delegation of March/April 1988:

- (a) To place United Nations observer teams on the ground;
- (b) To send foreign medical teams committed to staying three months or more;
- (c) To aid in information gathering and distribution;
- (d) To send material aid: funds to enable local institutions to buy food and medical supplies.

5. Further determine that the vehicle for supporting the Palestinian people's struggle for justice and self-determination is the immediate convening of the International Peace Conference as spelled out in General Assembly resolution 38/58 C;

6. Emphasize once again the importance not to let ourselves be distracted from what has been and continues to be this central task.

Resolution 5

We strongly urge the cessation of the camp wars in Lebanon; and we call upon all member States of the Arab League to do everything in their power to urge and aid the cessation of hostilities.

Resolution 6

Whereas Latif Dori and three of his Israeli colleagues have been convicted by the Israeli courts for their peace overture to the Palestinian people, and whereas this same law that convicted Latif Dori and his colleagues is the anti-peace law which forbids the Palestinian and Israeli people to meet together,

Therefore, be it resolved that the North American NGOs, in their meeting in New York from 29 June to 1 July 1988, condemn the Israeli law that convicted Latif Dori and his colleagues;

And be it further resolved that we, the NGO delegates, call on the United Nations, the United States and the Canadian Governments to work toward the repeal of the anti-peace law as well as to ask the Israeli Government to overturn Latif Dori's and his colleagues' conviction.

Resolution 7

We support all groups struggling to replace the occupation with their vision of full equality for both Palestinians and Israelis;

In particular, we are encouraged by Israelis and Palestinians working together to create the model for a future in which two peoples, in two independent States, will co-operate in pursuit of their common welfare.

Resolution 8

Whereas the Canadian foreign policy, under the leadership of External Affairs Minister Joe Clark, has been moving slowly towards an even-handed policy,

and whereas this policy is reflected in a speech by the Right Honourable Joe Clark to the Canada-Israel Committee of 12 March 1988 where the Minister harshly criticized Israel for its brutality in dealing with the Palestinian people in the occupied territories,

and whereas the Minister has shown great concern for relief and development aid to the Palestinian people,

Therefore, be it resolved that the North American NGOs, at their meeting in New York from 29 June to 1 July 1988, commend the Right Honourable Joe Clark and urge the Canadian Government to take further steps that will facilitate the implementation of United Nations resolutions and the convening of the International Peace Conference on the Middle East.

Resolution 9

Whereas the Canadian Government has been pursuing a policy of harassment against Mr. Mahmoud Issa Mohamed, a Palestinian immigrant to Canada since February 1987, and whereas the Canadian Government is accusing Mr. Mahmoud Issa Mohamed of being a member of the PLO and is seeking to expel him,

Therefore, be it resolved that we, the delegates at the North American NGO Symposium, urge the Canadian Government to stop the proceedings to deport Mr. Mohamed from Canada.

Annex III

1988-1989 NORTH AMERICAN CO-ORDINATING COMMITTEE
FOR NGOS ON THE QUESTION OF PALESTINE

American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee (ADC)
American Friends Service Committee (AFSC)
Canadian Arab Federation
National Board of Global Ministries, United Methodist Church
National Lawyers' Guild
Najda: Women Concerned About the Middle East
Near East Cultural and Educational Foundation of Canada (NECEF)
New Jewish Agenda
Palestine Human Rights Campaign (PHRC)
Palestine Solidarity Committee (PSC)
Presbyterian Church USA

Annex IV

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

On the occasion of the North American Regional NGO Symposium on the Question of Palestine, it gives me pleasure to express to you, on behalf of the Palestinian people and on behalf of my brothers, members of the Executive Committee of the PLO, our great appreciation for the excellent work you are doing in solidarity with our people in support of our inalienable rights, including the right of return, the right of self-determination and the right to establish our independent State.

I also wish to express, on this occasion, our appreciation to H.E. Mr. Javier Pérez de Cuéllar, Secretary-General of the United Nations, and to the Division for Palestinian Rights, for the work undertaken to enable peoples in their struggle to attain their inalienable rights as a necessary and important step towards the establishment of international peace, security and stability.

Your current Symposium is being held in the United States at a time when the intifadah of our people inside our occupied Palestinian land is entering its seventh month. By the intifadah, our people, through its demonstrations, protests, strikes and civil disobedience, is manifesting its rejection of Israeli occupation and its determination to terminate such occupation, so that it can regain and exercise its national inalienable rights.

In the intifadah, our people is confronting Israel's "iron-fist" policy and bone-breaking practices implemented by the Israeli Government, troops and colonial settlers. Such forces deploy an array of different United States weaponry. Israeli policies include such brutal measures as demolishing houses, confiscation of properties, closure of schools, universities and educational centres, desecration of religious holy sites such as churches and mosques, and the random use of weapons on Palestinian civilians, including the use of internationally prohibited toxic gas.

Israel's brutal practices include burying people alive, dropping them from helicopters, or burning them. All this and more. Additionally, tens of our Palestinian brothers have been deported. The number of martyrs is nearing approximately 400 and the number of wounded, 10,000. More than 20,000 Palestinians have been arrested and detained. Israel is carrying out these brutal practices in conformity with a planned policy aimed at terrorizing our people while attempting to demoralize its national will with a view to liquidating its national cause and negating its national rights.

At a time when the international community, as well as peace- and freedom-loving forces stand by the just struggle of our people to terminate Israeli occupation, the Government of the United States stands by the acts of State terrorism and repression implemented by Israel. The Government of the United States supports the policies of negating the inalienable national

rights of our people and advances with plans and projects to consolidate the occupation and to bypass our people and its sole representative, the PLO. The Government of the United States furthermore undertakes legislative action to enact laws to prohibit activities by the PLO, and to deny and prevent support of the American people, the closure of the Palestine Information Office in Washington, and attempts to close the office of the Permanent Observer Mission of the PLO to the United Nations, a blatant violation of the Headquarters Agreement with the United Nations.

NGOs in North America are shouldering great responsibilities. NGOs reflect informed public opinion in support of truth, justice and peace, and against repression and terrorism. Our people look towards your fruitful efforts as you have sent delegations representing unions and other public sectors. Your motives have been not only to demonstrate in an active way your participation in the plight of our people, but also, as a practical participation, to confront the policy of censorship of information imposed by the occupying Power.

I wish to commend all NGOs which have sent delegations to the occupied territories so that they will be witnesses, raising their voices against occupation, repression and brutality, and in support of truth and justice.

Our people stands united and determined to frustrate and defeat Israel's brutal measures which are supported by the United States. Our people perseveres in its just struggle to terminate Israeli occupation and to retrieve its inalienable national rights, including the right of return, the right to self-determination and the right to establish its independent Palestinian State.

As we have affirmed in the past, we declare once again today that the best process to achieve just peace in the region is the convening of the International Peace Conference on the Middle East, in conformity with United Nations General Assembly resolutions 38/58 C and 41/43 D, under the auspices of the United Nations and within it, and with the participation of the five permanent members of the Security Council and all the parties to the Middle East conflict, including the PLO, on an equal footing with the other parties. Any other process will only further complicate the situation and expand the crisis spots in the region.

We are confident that you will give the items before you all your attention and that, through your deliberations, will arrive at tangible results conducive to practical means, within the work of the United Nations and international legitimacy in support of our people and our just struggle to recover our freedom, independence and sovereignty

I wish you success in your important activity of solidarity.

Revolution until victory.

Annex V

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS AND OBSERVERS

NGO participants

American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee
American Educational Trust
American Friends Service Committee
American Jewish Alternatives to Zionism, Inc.
Arab Women's Council
Association of Arab-American University Graduates
CAFIOT-Committee for Academic Freedom in the Israeli Occupied Territories
Canada Palestine Association
Canadian Arab Federation
Canadian Friends Service Committee
Capital District Committee for Palestinian Rights
Church Women United
Commission of the Churches on International Affairs/World Council of Churches
Database Project (on Palestinian Human Rights)
EAFORD (USA)
Federation of Arab-American Organizations
General Board of Global Ministries - United Methodist Church
General Union of Palestinian Students
International Association of Democratic Lawyers
International Jewish Peace Union (IJPU)
International Movement for Unity Among Races and Peoples (UFER)
Jewish Committee for Israeli-Palestinian Peace
Jewish Peace Fellowship
Lawyers' Committee for Human Rights
Mennonite Central Committee
Middle East Fellowship of Southern California
Middle East Outreach Council
Middle East Research and Information Project (MERIP)
NAJDA: Women Concerned About the Middle East
National Association of Arab Americans
National Council on US-Arab Relations
National Lawyers Guild
Near East Cultural and Educational Foundation of Canada
New Jewish Agenda
Palestine Aid Society of America
Palestine Human Rights Campaign
Palestine Solidarity Committee
People's Anti-war Mobilization
Presbyterian Church (USA)
Save the Children Federation (USA)
Union of Palestinian Women Association
US Peace Council
War Resisters International
Women's International League for Peace and Freedom
World Muslim Congress
World Organization of Jews from Islamic Countries

NGO observers

Advisory Associates International, Inc.
AMIDEAST
Arab Community Center
Arab-Palestinian Center
ASAC INC.
Association of Palestinians for Return (APR)
Association of University Graduates
Boston Mobilization for Survival
Carolina Association for Palestinian Human Rights
Church of the Brethren
Finnish Arab Friendship Society
Friends of Jerusalem (American Neturei Karta)
Friends of Palestinian Prisoners
Episcopalians
First Unitarian Church
Jews for a Just Peace
Middle East Children's Alliance
Middle East International
Middle Eastern Society
National Council on Islamic Affairs
Pakistan Democratic Committee
Palestine Center for the Study of Non-violence
Palestine Congress of North America
Parliamentary Association for Euro-Arab Co-operation
Princeton Middle East Society
Quaker UN Office
ROOTS - The Palestine Youth Organization
Society to Educate People (STEP)
The Generation After
Union of Palestinian/American Women (UPAW)
United Church of Christ
United Nations Association in Canada (UNAC)
Women Strike for Peace
World Peacemakers
YMCA

Panelists

Mubarak Awad, Palestine Centre for the Study of Non-Violence
Jeanne Butterfield, Palestine Solidarity Committee
Ramsey Clark, former United States Attorney-General
Hanna Halaq, Bir Zeit University
Hanan Mikhael-Ashrawi, Bir Zeit University
Tikvah Parnass-Honig, Committee to Confront the "Iron Fist"

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

China
Cuba
Guyana
Jordan
Malta
Nigeria
Pakistan
Syrian Arab Republic
United Arab Emirates

Intergovernmental organizations

League of Arab States

National liberation movements

Palestine Liberation Organization

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

United Nations Headquarters, New York
29 June-1 July 1988

Corrigendum

Page 1

1. Paragraph 2 of the Introduction, for

Forty-seven non-governmental organizations (NGOs) took part in the work of the Symposium, 34 of them as observers read

Eighty-one non-governmental organizations (NGOs) took part in the work of the Symposium, 35 of them as observers.

Page 2

1. Add the following name to the names of panelists participating in Panel I

Mr. Bernard Sabella (Assistant Professor, Bethlehem University);

2. Under Panel II, for

Mr. Hanna Halaq (Professor, Bir Zeit University) read

Mr. Hanna Halaq (Assistant Professor, Bethlehem University).

Page 25

1. Add to the list of NGO observers the following organizations

- America-Israel Council for Israeli-Palestinian Peace
- American Society for Medical Aid
- Catholic Near East Welfare Association
- United Holy Land Fund;

2. Add the following name to the list of panelists

Mr. Bernard Sabella, Bethlehem University;

3. Under the subtitle "Panelists", for

Hanna Halaq, Bir Zeit University read

Hanna Halaq, Bethlehem University.
